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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Estate Annaberg HABS No. VI-18

Location: North shore of St. John Island just west of Mary's Point in Maho Bay Quarter. In the St. Thomas and St. John land records, it is listed as plantation No. 4 and on the Oxholm map of 1800 as plantation Nos. 8 and 9.

Present Owner: U. S. National Park Service

Present Occupant: None

PART. I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The plantation was under cultivation by 1731, though the earliest available documented evidence for Annaberg is the P. L. Oxholm Survey of 1780. The Oxholm Survey indicates that the estate had been cleared by that time and that ten small buildings, presumably slave quarters, two medium-sized ones and two larger structures stood on the present factory site. Although these structures correspond to the approximate location of existing remains of the "village" and the factory, the Oxholm Survey does not provide conclusive historical data. For example, the horsemill of the 1800 map is depicted as a symbol only. The auction notice of 1827 gives additional information about the existence of the boiling house but is otherwise so sketchy that the existence of the windmill at that date is left open to doubt.

2. Original and subsequent owners: At the time of the Oxholm Survey, the estate was owned by Lind and Jonah (Jones?). The neighboring estates to the west, Friedricksdal and Mary Point, were owned by August Kragh. Sometime during the following six years, Mary Point was incorporated with Annaberg, for in 1786 Benjamin Lind deeded Annaberg and Mary Point to Robert Milner, a total acreage of 518. Robert Milner cultivated sugar cane and either he or his predecessor had constructed the horsemill shown on the 1800 Oxholm map.

In 1816 Annaberg was purchased by a Danish government official, the Colonial Adjutant Thomas Sheen. The following year his wife Mary Sheen acquired possession of the property during what appears to be a marital rift. In 1827, when Thomas Sheen received permission to return to Denmark due to poor health, there was a reconciliation and a settlement of property, which resulted in the auctioning of off Annaberg with adjoining lands. Thomas Sheen died in Cherbourg on the return voyage about two months before the final date of the auction, and thus reaped few benefits from the transaction.

It was bought by Hans Henrik Berg, the later Vice Governor of the Danish West Indies, who held it until his death in 1862. Except for 21 acres that Berg had willed to twenty of his former employees, Annaberg was again auctioned off in 1863. The 250 acres of Mary Point were acquired by George Francis and the 247 acres that remained of Annaberg proper were acquired by A. C. Hill who sold them the same year to Thomas Lloyd. For a brief period in 1875, Mary Point and Annaberg were again joined when George Francis bought the latter estate. He resold it, however, the same year to E. F. Murphy. In 1884 Annaberg was acquired by A. Anduze and then it passed in quick succession to G. F. Henri in 1897, to Mathevine Gerrard in 1899, to the estate of L. E. Lagarde and widow in 1899 and to Carl Emanuel Francis in 1900. Francis and his wife lived on Annaberg and ran it as a cattle farm until 1935 when he deeded it to Herman Creque. It was inherited by Creque's wife, Emily Creque, in 1950, who later sold it to Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc., in 1955.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: In type and general appearance, the windmill would generally be assumed to date from the second or third decade of the nineteenth century, and operated under the ownerships of Robert Milner, Thomas and Mary Sheen, and H. H. Berg. In most respects, the mill follows the norm of the Virgin Islands windmills. Its interior height is noticeably greater than its largest diameter. The openings correspond in number and placement to common practice for a mill with clockwise turning wings. Also, traces in the masonry indicate that the framing for the machinery was standard as found in the Clay Gut windmill on Nevis. It is somewhat larger than most mills in the Virgin Islands and is further distinguished by the existence of a fireplace.

2. Condition of fabric: The site is in ruins.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The windmill stands on a level platform about 110' x 80', centered north-south and 6' from its east edge. The platform is bordered by retaining walls on all sides except west. The walls vary in height from 20' at the northeast to 5' at the southwest corner.

The mill tower is a 38'-high truncated cone with an exterior diameter of 34' at its base and 20'-2" at its top. The interior has a diameter of 20' diminishing upward to 14'-6".

2. Wall construction: The mill tower is built of rubble masonry with battered and stepped walls measuring 4'-10" thick at floor level and 2'-10" at the top.

3. Structural system, framing: Traces of the interior framing correspond to that of the mill at Clay Gut. The greater height of the Annaberg mill, both actual andd relative to the diameter (25'-6" to 20" against 22" to 21"), was distributed between the two lower tiers and demanded a taller "cage" and a longer spindle.

4. Porches: Access to the mill was from the west. The ramp leading to the elevated entrance was originally either T- or L-shaped and supported on vaulted storage chambers. At an unknown date it was rebuilt, possibly twice, and in its latest form the ramp spread fanwise from the entrance.

5. Openings:

   a. Doorways and doors: To the left of the entrance facing northwest is the discharge opening for the bagasse and to the north the tall narrow slit for exchanging the internal parts. Opposite the latter on the south side is the opening for the cane juice gutter. All openings are arched and framed in neatly cut coral block. On the exterior they are decorated with keystones and projecting voussoirs. Additionally the exterior has a collar band, two framed masonry panels above the entrance and a projecting base.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: The floor level is 11' above grade and still has remains of the original brick pavement.

2. Heating: Facing the entrance, east-northeast of the mill center, is a shallow fireplace built into the masonry and projecting only slightly from its interior face. The flue follows the curvatures of the wall and opens immediately below the collar band on the north side of the mill (see HABS drawing of mill). This unusual feature has been observed in three other mills in the Virgin Islands, Bodkin, Diamond Keturah, both of St. Croix, and Solberg on St. Thomas. The St. Croix mills are from 1821 and 1824, respectively. Solberg mill, judging from the generous use of "Flensorg Sten" a hard yellow brick imported from Denmark and extensively used in the Virgin Islands during the early period. The purpose of the fireplace is not understood. One theory is that it allowed for heating water for washing the machinery after each use. The cleaning is essential, but the hot water was not. The fire hazard was

considerable and the risk taken seems to call for more substantial advantages.

The four mills themselves do not provide any ready answer to the fireplace question. They differ from each other in several respects. Diamond Keturah and Solberg are alike in having five openings, but Diamond Keturah has a basement story like the Two Brothers mill on St. Croix and the Hammer Farm mill on St. John. Bodkin has only three openings and of these one is placed opposite the entrance. Solberg mill must have ground far more than the capacity of the estate's relatively small factory and adjoining the mill is a large collecting cistern. At Annaberg the factory is sizeable but there are traces of two cisterns at the southeast corner of the mill platform that can hardly be understood in terms of water storage. Both mills might well have ground cane for neighboring estates. Bodkin mill is more than a quarter of a mile from its factory and the cane juice was led down the hill through gutters supported on high masonry pillars. Diamond Keturah, on the other hand, has a large factory only a few yards away and, unlike Annaberg, is not the only windmill in the immediate neighborhood; moreover, it is the most recent of the mills in the area. Until some additional information is uncovered or more comparative material studied, the fireplace must be assumed to be a technical innovation of experimental nature that did not win wide popularity and was not copied in the later mills, as, for example, the mills built by Guayama and Arroyo in Puerto Rico.

D. Site

1. General Setting:

A description of the ruin of Annaberg windmill is not complete without mentioning its spectacular setting. The factory site crowns a small hill that stands free of the main range to the south. The hill rises abruptly from Leinster Bay to the north and the swampy mangrove flats on both sides. It dominates the shoreline and overlooks Mary Point and the entrance to Drake's Channel with the British islands in the background. The contrasting vegetation of the flats and the arid hillsides, the vivid colors of the bay and the sea give the landscape, for all its brightness, an abandoned look and a very special beauty. The weathered appearance of the impressive retaining walls, the sizeable ruins and the towering mill stump add to this character, which is far more than purely romantic in its suggestiveness.