

Saint John Island, Virgin Islands  
~~near the main, upper main~~

Sept. 4, 1957

The following photographs are of specimens of cultural artefacts collected on Saint John Island and the adjacent outliers (Cay & island). See notes of this expedition on specifics of these collections. A note of the history of the islands will put the collection of artefacts in proper time sequence. There is, however, no information, except the specimens, that would allude to the period of the occupation of the islands.

Columbus was the first European to see Saint John. At that time, Carib Indians were occupying the islands. These Indians were pre-Columbian. The petroglyphs on the rocks at Reef Bay near the waterfalls and those on Congo Cay and Carval Rock were made before arrival of Columbus. Potsherds on Old Oven Hill near Leinster Bay have been associated with these Carib Indians. The Caribs came from South America by island hopping on the Lesser Antilles. In 1555 the Caribs were driven off the <sup>Virgin</sup> Islands by Charles the Fifth of Spain. There were no Indians on the <sup>St. John</sup> Islands when the first <sup>European</sup> settlers arrived in the 17th century. The settlers on the Virgin Islands was 1625 but St. John was not successfully settled until 1684. Earlier attempts to settle on St. John failed because English from Tortola drove them off. In 1687 the Danish West India & Guinea Company laid claim to St. John but it was not until March 25, 1717 that the permanent colony was founded. Twenty planters & 5 soldiers landed at Coral Harbor and defended it against the British. Fort Berg was built on Fortberg Hill to help defend the island. By 1726 all land on St. John was taken for sugar plantations. On November 13, 1733 the slaves revolted and planters fled to Peter Sturlieu's estate (Caneel Bay Plantation). They remained there until soldiers from Martinique Island stopped the riot and carried many of the negroes back to Martinique. With the abolition of slavery in mid 1800's it was impossible to keep up the old estates and the settlers returned to their respective countries, mostly Danish. Since the the country has returned toward the original climatic forests The the original conditions. Complete deforestation of the island for opening areas for sugar cane cultivation and need for wood energy eventually cause the population to leave the island, a case of overutilization of a resource, which in this case was wood.

The following photographs represent some period of the above history  
 570904-1 to 570904-14 (entire collection artefacts)