

V A U C R O S S O N

My property on The Bay

The following is a story of how I acquired a famous property on the Bay in the historical Lower Town of St.Eustatius. But more than that, I want to highlight the fact that how historical hobbyists through their research are unraveling many mysteries of the past. This property is located not too far from where my ancestor Mark Horton had a warehouse building. This building is now being restored by Mrs. Leontine Durby and her husband.

I was good friends with A.J.C. Brouwer better known as "Jan". His father was the well-known "Broertje" Brouwer of the newspaper "De Slag om Slag" which he published back in the nineteen thirties. Jan was named after his grandfather A.J.C. Brouwer who had been Governor of the three Windward Islands for thirty years. This was back in the late eighteen hundreds, early nineteen hundreds, when the three islands had their own Governors. So that A.J.C. Brouwer had served 7 years each as Governor of Saba and then St.Eustatius and after that he served for sixteen years as Governor of St. Maarten. Jan's mother was one of the Van Romondt's. In those days people were no different than now. Allan Richardson used to tell me that Broetje's brother took the blame for him. However Allan used to deliver the newspaper for Broetje and one day when Broetje had a little too much to drink he gave Allan an intense look and said "Don't tell anyone, but I am your father." Years later Allan told me and Jan confirmed that he always had that suspicion and so case closed.

Jan studied engineering in Holland and got stuck over there during the Second World War. His father's tragic death left a scar on him which he carried with him for the rest of his life. When he returned to the Antilles he was in charge of Federal Government buildings. Stationed in Willemstad he used to visit all of the islands. He married late in life to a Jonkhout whose family is partly from Saba (Barnes). Jan lived well into his eighties. He had a son and a daughter and was able to see some grandchildren before he died on Aruba where he had lived for

many years. Jan was also a cousin of the well-known Siegfried Lampe who recently passed away on Statia.

Once ,years ago, in a conversation about property Jan informed me that he was part owner of a property on the Bay in Statia in the former “Lower Town”. He said he would like to acquire a piece of land on Saba. I made a joke with him that I would trade a piece of Saba for his land on the Bay. Years later my brother Eric told me that a Mr. Brouwer had called one night when I was off-island about land on Statia. Negotiations started and I gave him considerably more land on Saba than he gave me on Statia. Siegfried Lampe also signed the transaction. After Jan died I bought the adjacent piece from his widow and children. Since my ancestors Mark, James and Richard Horton, in the seventeen hundreds, lived not too far from where the property is located, I am quite sentimental about my property on the Bay and I intend to do something with it.

After I acquired the land, Senator Kenneth van Putten told me that his mother “Maachie” used to call the property “Woocassin” and that there was a well on the property. This information intrigued me and I went in search of “Woocassin”, and I found him. There are a lot of records around about these islands which have survived hurricanes, fires, George Rodney and other modern arsonists who seem to get a kick out of burning down Government buildings and destroying archives.

Let me share some correspondence which I had with researchers who are working on piecing the puzzles of the past together.

Friday, May 5th. 2006. Dear Will, Thanks for stopping by the archaeology site a couple of weeks ago. We were away last week and have just received a reply from Ron Wetteroth who has built a database of Statia residents. I will try to track down Vaucrosson’s will. Below please find the information that Ron has for Vaucrosson. Regards, Grant. (R.Grant Gilmore III).

May, 05, 2006: Ron, The Island Council Member on Saba, Mr. Will Johnson, owns the land that Vaucrosson had his house/merchant home down on the Bay. This was directly across from our current excavation site. This may mean that he also

owned the warehouses that we are excavating. I am trying to find a will that we have of his. Will keep you apprised. Cheers Grant.

Grant:

Antoine Wachter Vaucrosson was born on Guadeloupe probably around 1740. The name is variously spelled Veaucrosson, Vancrasson, and Van Crasson. He is listed as a Jongman in his 1769 marriage to Maria Louisa Haley who was born 28 Feb 1745 on Statia and died there 20 Aug 1795. She was the daughter of Daniel Haley and Maria Louisa Audain (There were two Daniel Haleys at the time; her father is probably the one born Statia 1717, whose father, also a Daniel, was listed in the 1699 Census.)

Antoine and Maria Louisa had six known children all born on Statia. Louisa was born 1771, and married Walter Clifton of St.Kitts in 1790. James Antoine was born 1772. Ann was born 1774 and married Francis Forbes of St.Kitts also in 1790. Jean Jacques was born 1775, Rosetta was born 1783 and died 1795 and Lise was born 1788. I assume Vaucrosson was still alive in 1795, since his wife is listed as his "huisvrouw" (housewife) rather than his widow in her 1795 death record.

May 19th, 2006. Grant: As I look at the records, I become more convinced that Daniel Haley born Statia is in fact the father of Antoine Vaucrosson's wife. My main reason for this assumption is that Olivier Oyen was a witness to the Vaucrosson/Haley marriage. Oyen (one of the signers of the 1781 surrender to Rodney) was this Daniel Haley's brother-in-law. Looking further, we get an interesting set of marriages here. Just as the plantation owners intermarried, so apparently did the merchants. Daniel had four known sisters who married what I assume were merchants. Catharina married Christoffel Emy, Anna married Jan Godlieb Frederick and then Cornelis Low (the first cousin of Adolphus Roosevelt) Maria married Oliver Oyen (Governor in 1785) and Sarah married Joseph Low, who I assume is related to Cornelis. Another witness to the Vaucrosson/Haley marriage was Elisabeth Texier, tied in with Texier and Chabert families from Guadeloupe (where Vaucrosson was born) who was born Audain and I assume was the sister of Daniel Haley's wife Maria Louisa Audain. Best regards Ron.

May 21st, 2006. Dear Will, Having learned from an E-mail this morning from Daniel Blanchard, the present chairman of l'ASBAS that l'ASBAS still have two copies left of WWW and intends to acquire more copies of WWW, I recommend you to contact Daniel, when he is back from his trip to Sweden. He is now in Paris and all friends of St.Barthelemy are very much looking forward to meet him and his group of islanders in Sweden on June 1st. Anyway, he is now informed about your interest in WWW.

May I use this occasion to tell you that I am of course mostly fascinated by the former Swedish island of St.Barths but also by its neighbor Saba. Arriving under sail I have had the privilege to step ashore twice on your island (first time way back in Feb 1976, was met at the top of Ladder Landing by a policeman named Peter Johnson and was driven around the island by a taxi driver named Joseph Livingstone) and I like it a lot. With my very best wishes. Per (Tingbrand).

Per Tingbrand is the author of the book Who Was Who on St.Bartholomew during the Swedish epoch? Two editions of this book have appeared in the Swedish language. The English edition contains more than 6000 (six thousand) names, representing a serious attempt at listing samples of the people, cross-sections of men, women and children, who in times gone by once breathed the salubrious air of St. Bartholomew regardless of nationality, social positions and reason of his or her being on the island, be it friend or foe. It does not lay claim to include more than a fraction of the people living on the island or just passing by between 1783 when Viktor von Stedingh arrived, and 1878, when the last Swedish officials left the island. During the Swedish epoch many of the leading families of St. Eustatius and Saba, wanting to take advantage of the increased economic opportunities on St. Bartholomew, moved to that island. Among the many people from St. Eustatius who moved to St. Bartholomew was Anthony Wachter (the Elder) Vaucrosson born around 1724(or 174?) and died 1813.A merchant of St. Eustatius married to Marie Louise Haley. The shipping business and his family home of the 1780's in the Lower Town of St. Eustatius is described by Dr. Johan Hartog in his History of St. Eustatius (1976, pp.43-44) in the following manner: "Soon there was a double row of dwelling-houses and warehouses along the beach below the fort, extending for a mile and a half. Some merchant houses on the bay were of

palatial dimensions. The house of a certain Vaucrusson topped them all. The rooms were richly upholstered and from the upper gallery a bridge spanned the street to a garden laid out on the roof of a warehouse; listed as Anthony Waghtar Vancrasson in Admiral Rodney's list of burghers in St. Eustatius, February 1781; moved from St. Eustatius to St. Barths after Sweden's acquisition of the latter island and set up a business house in St. Barths; the transfer seems to have taken place at the earliest in 1789 because there are no members of the Vaucrosson family listed in the censuses of 1787 & 1788; according to the register of town lots of March 28, 1791, Vaucrosson had already in 1787 bought a lot from Aron Ahman situated in the quarter b.b. (p.41); this block bordering in the south to Storgatan (Rue Chancy), in the north to Kopmansgatan (Rue Duquesne or Rue de Pitea), in the east to Strandgatan (Rue Jeanne d'Arc) and in the West to Hwarfsgatan (Rue Schoelcher) but he may have bought it for the purpose of storage only since he was not listed 1787/8 (dated June 10, 1788); most probably he relocated his business to St. Barths at the earliest in the latter half of 1793; a widower after his wife's death Aug 19, 1795; listed in the census of 1796 as head of a household in Gustavia counting 23 people, of which 5 white men, 1 white woman, 15 slaves and 2 female slaves; in the autumn of 1797 he became involved together with two sons in the notorious so called Vaucrosson coin lawsuit in which the family was suspected of circulating false gold coins. They were arrested and after a long appeal His Majesty the King of Sweden dropped the charges.

One of the sons was Jean Jacques Vaucrosson (1775-1837) born April 19th, 1775 on St. Eustatius. He assumedly witnessed as a young boy Admiral George Rodney's punitive expedition against and subsequent pillage of St. Eustatius in February 1781; he lived lifelong together with the free mulatresse Jane Wallace from St. Kitts and became in that relationship father of at least nine children. When his father retired on January 1st, 1805, he continued the family business together with his brother Pierre Auguste Vaucrosson. Among the vessels belonging to the family business were the schooners "Minerva", "Diligente", "Iphigenie" as well as the brig "Union".

I have much more information on the Vaucrosson family but not relevant to this story. The family name as far as I can tell from the telephone books does not exist

on any of the islands anymore. So many more former prominent families from all of these islands have disappeared into history. This goes to show the futility of living just to accumulate wealth. It also goes to show that only a historian like myself would be interested in knowing the history of a piece of property. However as you can see it is interesting to know the history of things which you own and can pass on this information to the next generation. If a lesson can be learned from the Vaucrosson family it is that a "poor island boy" descendant of the Horton neighbours, down the street from their palatial building, ended up with their property on the bay. I cannot promise to duplicate the Vaucrosson mansion, but who knows, if I make a start one of my descendants can complete it. Some of the Vaucrosson's were married into the Simmons family. If I can establish that from that branch they are related to me then the Vaucrosson property would have come full circle back to me where it should belong in the first place.

Will Johnson