

**Historical research of
14AB Church Street, Christiansted, 1742 – 1916**

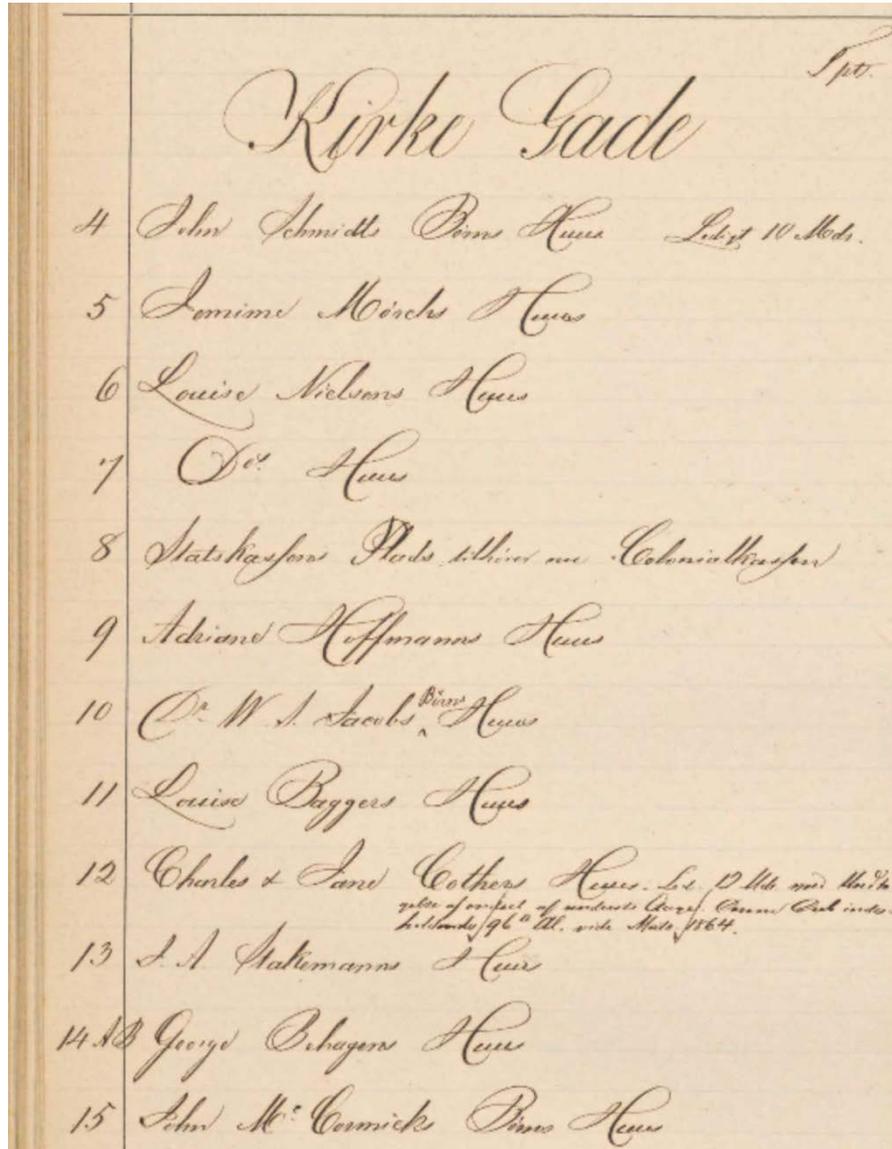


Figure 1 – Inhabitants of Church Streets, 1865, Danish National Archives

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I would like to thank Andy Simpson for his interest in the Danish past of the former Danish West Indies. He solely took initiative to this project and he is the solely supporter of the conducted research.

Introduction

This report has been prepared as an historical research on the initiative of Andy Simpson of 14AB Church Street, Christiansted, 1698 – 1917 and it is based on archival research in the Danish National Archives, The Royal Danish Library and M/S Maritime Museum of Denmark image database.

A brief introduction to Danish West Indies and St. Croix

St. Croix was the last Caribbean island to be colonized by the Danish-Norwegian kingdom in 1733 through the well-established Danish West Indian Company. The Danish West Indian Company became legitimate on the 11. of March 1671 and was established in line with other trade companies in the Caribbean, as well as in the rest of the world – such as the Netherlands, the British and the Spanish.¹ With the establishment the Danish West Indian Company Denmark-Norway entered a phase of colonial trade – both with commodities and humans - in the Caribbean region that lasted until 1917, where St. Croix, together with St. Thomas and St. Jan (now St. John), was sold to the United States of America. Along with sugar and other crops the islands gave truly wealth and profit for the involved planters (most profound on St. Croix), which were willing to travel across the Atlantic Ocean and take up their life in Europe, during the most prosperous periods in the 1700 and 1800 century. Their wealth and profit were based on intense field labour from enslaved Africans transported by sea to the Caribbean islands. Denmark-Norway was no exception in this exploitation of human beings and no exemptions of slavery in a European context.²

¹ Hornby 1980 p.26.

² For a deeper introduction please see Olsen, 2017.

Historical narrative of 14AB Church Street, Christiansted, 1742-1916

Outlines

This part of the report explores and clarifies the ownership of the “14AB Church Street” during the period from 1742 – 1916.³ What is now referred as 14AB Church Street as one address, was during the Danish period in some periods referred to two independent addresses with different renters. Although the majority of time the address was owned by the same owner.

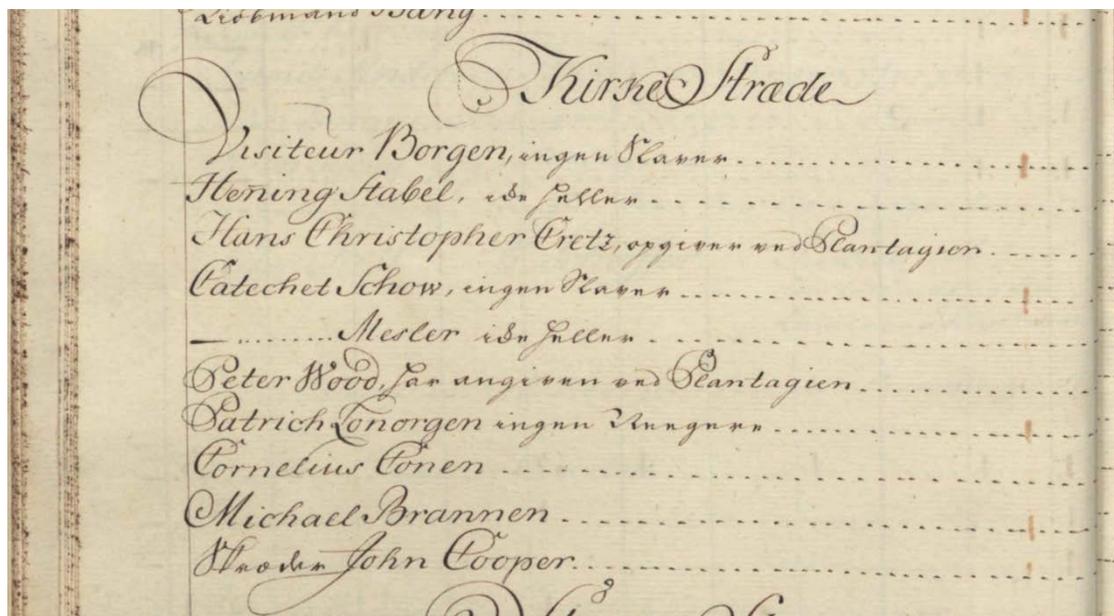


Figure 2 - Inhabitants of Church Street, 1761, Danish National Archives

The historical narrative of the address indicates both several distinctive incidents and a very close relation to the common picture of the general occupations of urban buildings during the Danish period; several owners and renters for short period as well as used and unused periods. However, the research narrative of 14AB Church Street in Christiansted reveals other interesting factors and interesting owners.

14AB Church Street had a minimum of fourteen different families or family-related persons as owners, besides numerous persons living on the address. Most of the time the address was inhabited by a family or several single persons, but it was also left inhabited and even in ruins during various periods.

³ Be aware that the period from 1742 to 1766 is difficult to trace as the tax records in this period is not linked with a specific address.

The following shows a brief presentation of the ownership of 14AB Church Street from 1766 to 1916 compiled from the available tax records. The period before (from 1742) the available tax records only covers names in the city with no link to exact addresses. There is plenty evidence that people lived on Church Street, but it is difficult to link them to a specific address in Church Street.

Period	Owner
1766-1770	David Porth
1770-1775	Axel Wilhelms
1775-1780 ⁴	Clerk Lund
1780-1789	Lady Schuster
1789-1793	Secretary Müller and his wife
1793-1794	Mademoiselle Hauschildt
1794-1818	Hans Bretfeldts
1818-1820	Hans Bretfeldts heirs
1821	Louisa Bretfeldt
1821-1825	Prosecutor Hoffmann
1825-1849	Louisa Bretfeldt
1849-1878	Georg Behagen
1878-1906	Otte Mørch
1906-1916	Hans Bishop

⁴ Clerk Lund is the owner in 1775, but is unsure when Schusters wife took the ownership (or if there was other persons owning the address) between 1776 and 1780 due to a lacuna in the tax records in this period. Due to time and the scope of this report, this period is left to a minimum of research.

Ownership of 14AB Church Street

David Porth and the early period, 1766 -1770

The early ownership of the buildings associated with 14 Church Street is connected to David Porth, the custom manager in Christiansted at this time.⁵ Even though he owned the buildings relating to the address (and also owning other buildings in Christiansted) he did not live there. The different people stated as living on the address is Ferdinand August, Hans Georg Røder, Johan Bernhard Engelhoff, Christopher Harsteen, Hans Høgh in 1766. Later in 1767-1768, Henning Jacob Stabel and Christian Stakard resides at the address. The people living there did so on their own, as no enslaved people is listed in the tax records. This could indicate that, at least in 1766, were the five men resides at the address, were not rich planters, merchants or likewise. As St. Croix were about to bloom in this period, the men could also be newcomers seeking fortune on the newly acquired island as they were only listed this year. From 1766-1769 it seems that the building was further developed with extra cubits.⁶

Alex Wilhelm and the address in Church Street, 1770 - 1775

Onwards from 1770 Alex Wilhelm owned the building in Church Street. In 1770 madam Holm is stated as living on the address on her own.⁷ In 1772 John Hart were registered at the address together with his wife and nine enslaved people, whereas one enslaved person was missing and four of them were under 12. For a two-year period, Ober Conducteur (supervisor of a major job; for example. at landing, road construction, fortification) Rohr lived on the address.⁸ Julius von Rohr was prominent man and he made several maps of the Danish West Indies, many of them used for administrative purposes.⁹ At this time, the address is not divided into A and B buildings, which indicates that the in the division happened later.

The division of A and B and madam Schuster, 1780-1789

Following the ownership of Clerk Lund, the address was acquired by madam Schuster in the period of 1775-1780.¹⁰ Madam Schuster lived in the house A in the late 1780'es and in the B section, several clerks lived. In 1787 madam Schuster lived together with her servant

⁵ RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1769-1771

⁶ RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1763-1767

⁷ RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1769-1771.

⁸ RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1769-1771, RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1772-1775.

⁹ See for example Olsen 2017 p. 117

¹⁰ As indicated above, the lacuna in the tax records means that the ownership is harder to trace through throughout this period.

Anna Jager (not identified if Anna was enslaved or not) and eight enslaved men and eight enslaved children.¹¹ Madam Schusters house was also vacant for a period of time, but as for example in 1783, Niels Hanson, his wife and four children together with their enslaved servant occupied both A and B.¹² When madam Schuster lived in A in 1787, Clerk Nannestad lived in B, but then he moved out the year after and the buildings were handed over to Clerk Bush.¹³

Secretary Müller, 1789-1793

After madam Schuster moved out of Church Street 14 A both buildings were handed over to Secretary Müller in 1789. Although the buildings changed hands both Clerk Nannestad and Clerk Bush were still registered as renters at the address in 1789, respectively Nannestad in A (now with his wife) and Bush in B. They, however, moved out and the new residence were A: Madame Bridgey and John Deytt in A and Charlotte Brady and Mary Seliva. Brady and Seliva did not pay taxes and is only registered as “staying” at the address. Onwards until the death of Müller both buildings were uninhabited.¹⁴ Müllers wife managed to rent out section B to Madame Breckfeldt and her children.¹⁵

Hans Bretfeldt and his heirs, 1795 – 1821

After a short ownership by mademoiselle Hauschildt, Church Street 14 was owned by Hans Bretfeldt for the first longer consistent period. Mademoiselle Hauschild is most likely Frederikke Louise later married Bretfeldt.¹⁶ Hans Bretfeldt himself first moved to the address in 1804, but the buildings were not vacant before this period.¹⁷ Many persons lived on the address in the period, but Georg Limeburner and his family were registered on the address for at least nine years.¹⁸ Georg’s last name could indicate his profession. Georg Limeburner and his wife only lived in one of the buildings at a time and in several occasions, they shared the address with other people, such as Clerk Hauptmann, Controlleur (a kind of accountant) Rosenfeldt, Controlleur Landemann, Dorothea Jager, Clerk Jørgen Sund and madame Spiegelberg. In the meantime, the other building associated with Church Street 14 were occupied with the widow of Voight, the family of Clerk Hauptmann and with Judge Advocate Sonsberg.

¹¹ RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1787-1788.

¹² RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1783-1786.

¹³ RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1787-1788.

¹⁴ RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1789-1790.

¹⁵ RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1793-1794.

¹⁶ Ryberg p. 228.

¹⁷ Note the missing tax records from 1807-1813.

¹⁸ RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1796-1797, 1798-1799, 1799-1800, 1801-1802, 1803-1804.

Hans Bretfeldt was born in Holstein in northern Germany, but at that time a part of the the Danish Duchy of Schleswig, and he is believed to be an innkeeper on St. Croix.¹⁹ Hans Bretfeldt first set foot on St. Croix in 1763 and died in 1819. His grave stone can be found in the Danish Cemetery in Christiansted.²⁰ With a maximum number of 12 enslaved persons he was a significant person in the streets of Christiansted. Other noteworthy persons on the address is in 1818 were Doctor and Landfysikus (medical doctor) Block and mademoiselle Maria Krause.²¹

Louisa Bretfeldt, families and women, 1821 - 1850

After the death of Hans Bretfeldt the buildings on Church Street come into his heir's ownership for a three-year period. It is most likely being managed by Louisa Bretfeldt as she is already stated as the owner in 1820 and later took over the address herself.

For another three-year period, Prosecutor Hoffmann lived there with his family.²² Hoffmann was born in Denmark and later bought the building relating to Company Street 51AB.²³ Hoffmann also had a debt with the Company.²⁴

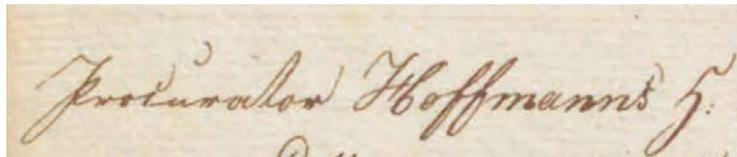


Figure 3 - Title and name of Prosecutor Hoffman, 1824, Danish National Archives

Louisa Bretfeldt was baptized in 1787 and is in the church book stated as “house renting” as occupation.²⁵ She was unmarried, but her house renting was profitable as the buildings were rented out most of the time. However, in 1835 and 1836 respectively A and B were stated as “in ruins”.²⁶ And towards the middle of the 1840'es the buildings (both A and B) were vacant for up till 9 months at a time.

¹⁹ Ryberg p. 80.

²⁰ Grave #61.

²¹ RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1817-1818.

²² RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1822-1823 and 1824.

²³ Census 1835, www.visharoots.org.

²⁴ Gælds Likvidationsdirektion, 1823-1837. This debt could be researched further.

²⁵ Rigsarkivet, St. Croix Census 1841, www.visharoots.org.

²⁶ RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1835-1836.

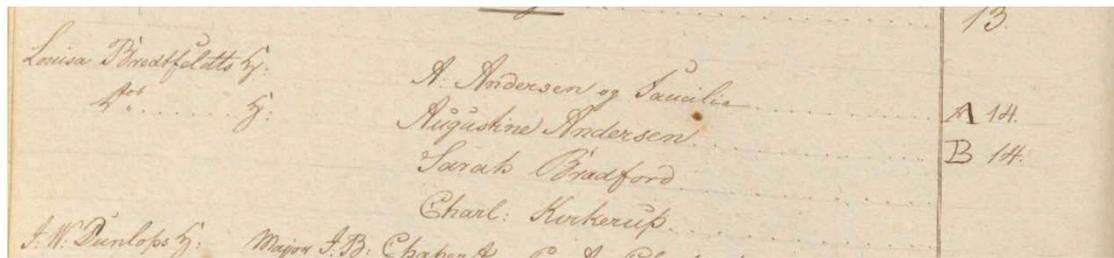


Figure 4 - Louisa Bretfeldt and Church Street 14AB, 1826, Danish National Archives

The people who resides and rented the buildings from Louisa Bretfeldt were families, such as Albert Andersen and his family, Lund Morek and family, Oberst Stabell and family and Madame Dohmerty and family. The families mostly occupied Church Street 14A. Church Street 14B is noteworthy as many single women resided here. Sometimes three women together, such as in 1826 were Augustine Andersen, Sarah Bradford, Charlotte Kirkerup resides in 14B, or alone as Emilie Hatchett in 1834.²⁷ Other women can be associated with the address; Adriana Richardson, Ann Hallway and other unidentified women. Charlotte Kirkerup is continuous woman on Church Street 14 as she lived there at least for ten years. Charlotte Kirkerup was unmarried and her occupation was “baking” and “hire of servants” in the consensus of 1841 and 1846.²⁸

George Behagen, 1850 - 1878

After Louisa Bretfeldt died, the house was owned by Georg Behagen. Shortly after he took over the buildings the tax records indicate that some of the existing buildings was remove, as the size of the buildings were lowered from 993 to 954 cubit. It is most likely that is was George Behagen that bought the famous schooner Vigilant in the mid 1820'es. In 1824, "Vigilant" belonged to the captain Bjørn, then surrendered the ownership to a man named Holm. The next owner should have been a Høyer and then Captain Dahl. Georg Behagen then took over Vigilant jointly with H. Elliot, who was quickly bought out. Finally, Behagen sold the Vigilant to the Captain Pentheny.²⁹

²⁷ RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1826 and 1833-1834.

²⁸ www.visharoots.org.

²⁹ Thomsen p. 91-92. For info in English, please see Hamilton, David M. “The schooner Vigilant of St. Croix: The last Baltimore clipper”, 1980.



Figure 5 - The Schooner Vigilante

Under the ownership of George Behagen, Church Street 14AB seems to be very stable, but the tax records don't specify if he stayed there or just own the place and rented it out.

Otto Mørch, 1878-1906

The same applies for the address when Otto Mørch took over as the owner in 1878.³⁰ Here the size changes from 954 cubit to 523 cubit in 1878, and again from 523 cubit to 667 cubit in 1889.³¹ In 1899 it changed again to 683 cubit. Mørch owned the buildings in a total of 28 years before it was sold to Hans Bishop in 1906.

³⁰ If George Behagen resides in Frederiksted, as the census from 1870 specify, the year 1878 coincides with the Fireburn of 1878, where the culmination of a working resurrection in Frederiksted on the West Indies in October 1878 took place. After several years of poor crop yields, a number of natural disasters and humbling working conditions resulted in five days of revolt and fires. This event could indicate that George sold his property to manage the incurred damages. This is only an indication as it would need a deeper research.

³¹ RRVR: Matrikel for St. Croix: 1888-1889



Figure 6 - Church Street seen from corner of Company Street, 1888

Hans Bishop, 1906 – 1916

The last period of Danish rule in the Danish West Indies was dominated by a debate to reform the colonial society. The people of the Danish West Indies participated actively in the debate, and sought to influence society's development, including Hans Bishop. Hans Bishop travelled to Denmark in the summer of 1914, but both his visit and his person are more or less a mystery. The trip to Denmark has not been a major place in present history writing, and Bishop's role is most often made as a precursor to the famous Hamilton Jackson.³² Bishop wanted a new land reform, as the reform movement on the islands had previously claimed. Bishop also criticized the gendarms, officials and hospital conditions, claiming that there was still no resemblance to the law. In the Danish West Indies Bishops two talks in Denmark were reproduced in the West End News. The reform movement became aware that time was favourable for performing claims to the Danish government. Bishop's visit was therefore not without results. He soldered the mood in Denmark and fertilized the ground for new inquiries from the reform movement in the Danish West Indies. It is unknown if Bishop stayed at the address or rented the buildings out, but it is certain he owned the buildings relating to the address.

³² Herbst p. 54-55.

Maps

Outline of Oxholm map, 1779

On this map of Christiansted from 1779 On this section of a highly detailed map of Christiansted from around 1779 Church Street 14AB is clearly acquired with buildings. Furthermore, the buildings are surrounded by other buildings and Church Street 14AB doesn't lie remotely.

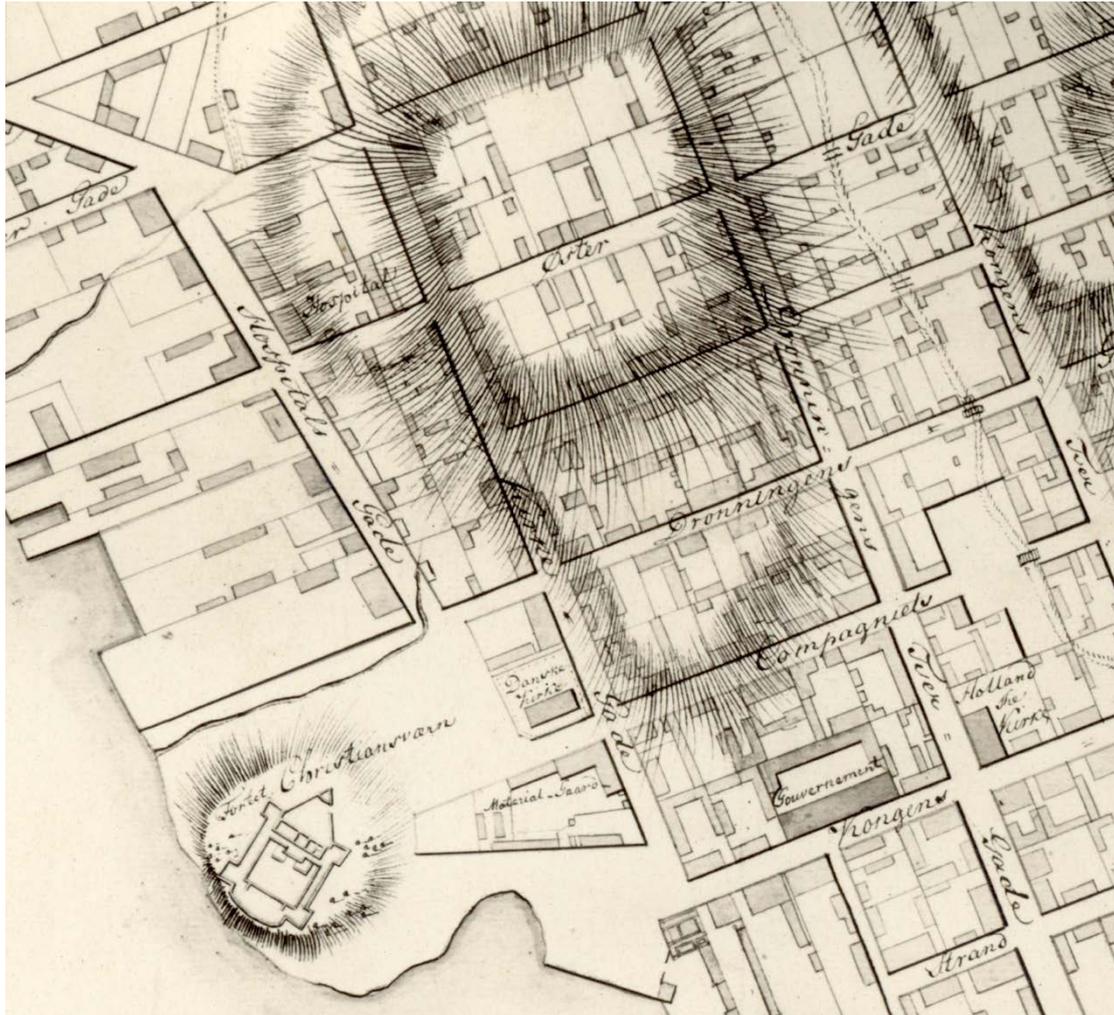


Figure 7 - Oxholm, 1779

Outline of Zöllners map, 1750-1800

The outline Zöllners map from 1750-1800 shows that the early maps produced in the Danish West Indies were mostly for administrative use, hence administrative buildings and plantation. On the outline there is no doubt that Church Street 14 was a part of the Christiansted as the area is mapped out. However, there is no identification of any buildings as the map was for administrative use and correlated with the tax records.

Zöllners maps is most likely drawn from the maps of Julius von Rohr, who resides in Church Street 14 in 1773-1774.

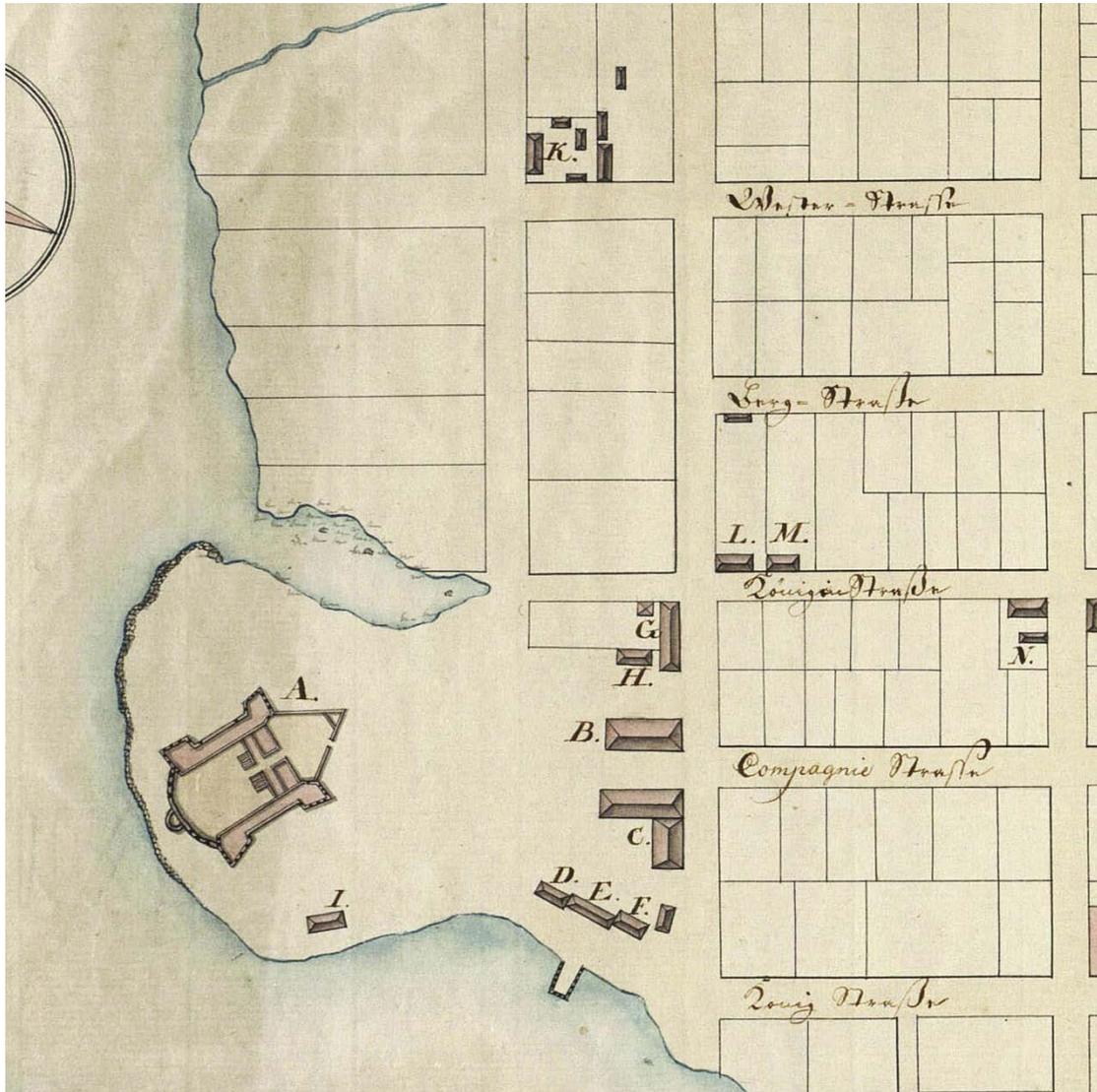


Figure 8 - Zöllners map from 1750-1800

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The abbreviation used in this report for the sources located in the National Danish Archives is short titled with indications of the archival series the source belongs to, the name of the archival and the year(s) of the used source:

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Sager vedr. prokurist H.G. Hoffmanns gæld (1823 - 1837)

Reviderede Regnskaber, Vestindiske Regnskaber: Matrikel for St. Croix 1758 - 1916

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