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Dansk Vestindisk Selskab

# MAGASINET

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**WHO WAS  
QUEEN LOUISE?**

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## TO OUR USVI READERS

This is the second issue of Magasinet, the DWIS circular, in an abbreviated and digested version, where we have selected articles, which are deemed of interest to our USVI readers. Please share with as many friends as possible, and we will welcome e-mail addresses from anybody interested in receiving

the circular, which is published digitally five times a year – free of charge.

*Michael Keldsen*

*Editor*

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### EDITORIAL

**The Covid-19 crisis has limited the activities of DWIS, including meetings and other projects this year. I hope that everybody has come through this strange period in good health.**

As it looks now, DWIS will be able to start up its activities again from August, since the corona virus is now under some kind of control in Denmark; however we still have to observe restrictions, such as keeping distance – min. 1 meter – washing hands and only cough in the elbow. There are no requirements for wearing masks – as yet; but it may be made mandatory for airline passengers, once we can start flying again.

The Danish Government introduced harsh measures as of March 11, 2020, effectively locking down society, including closing the borders in an attempt to get the corona virus under control. Although the Government had to move into unknown ground – the last pandemic was in 1918-20 – the measures have proven to be effective with “only” 580 deaths (defined as “with corona”, not “of corona”) of a population of 5.8 mill. Our neighbours, Germany and Norway have been similarly successful with only a minimum of casualties. However, our brethren in Sweden took a different route and kept society open,

their government leaving the handling of the crisis to the country’s health authorities with no political interference. And they are – sadly – still struggling with getting the virus under control, and to date almost 5000 deaths with corona out of a population of 10 mill. have occurred. And consequently, now we have opened our borders to Norway and Germany, but due to the Swedish situation the borders to this neighbor is still closed.

And not to mention UK or USA. We can’t help feeling sorry for their populations – so severely battered by the virus and lockdown! Strange, that the corona virus should hit so hard in those communities – sophisticated, wealthy countries, leading in many scientific fields! Could the reason be present political leadership – or maybe lack of the same – so different to what the West has been used to for decades?

Well, when next issue of Magasinet comes out in September, we all hope that things have normalized as much as is possible. And I am sure, that there are many of our readers who are looking forward to be able to come back to the three wonderful Virgin Islands.

In the meantime, have a nice summer.

*Michael Keldsen*

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## CLARITY IN THE TIME OF CORONA

**Anna Monica Villa, member of the board of DWIS, has made this personal and moving account of the impact in St. Thomas of the corona virus, where she lives and works part of the year.**

*By Anna Monica Villa*

Although the following essay is written in English, I am writing it primarily for friends of the Virgin Islands in Denmark who are interested in how the pandemic has affected the USVI. It is no more or less than my own account of what it was like to be on St. Thomas, when something we could not see made very visible and very tangible changes. In some respects, it might resemble what it was like to be in Denmark, but, the uniqueness of each place on the globe has been clarified by the way in which the same event has been handled differently. (In the islands, the pandemic is often compared to an invisible hurricane).

Fear is channeled into preparedness prior to the hurricane's arrival, and, "sheltering in place" is a familiar exercise for surviving the worst of the storm -nu med mundbind. In the case of COVID19, however, we have no experience that can prepare us for the "aftermath". In addition to survival skills such as resilience, determination, and optimism; we will need leadership as well as friendship to come through the hyperactive hurricane season which started in June.

### **MARCH 13, 2020**

March 13th, 2020 was a Friday. Friday the 13th. It was possibly one of the most memorable days in my life. Denmark had closed

its borders on March 11th in response to the global pandemic, but, guests were still arriving in the Virgin Islands. In the 10 days that would pass before the Governor made it clear that he could not close our airports, I continued to work as a guide. Fear spread before the virus arrived by plane from New York. The person infected with the Corona virus acted responsibly by sequestering himself, and, he prevented the spread of the virus in that one instance.<sup>1</sup>

### **LAST CRUISE SHIPS**

The last cruise ship left the harbour on March 14th. Prior to that, Charlotte Amalie was on the short list of "the busiest cruise ship destinations in the world". The pulse of everyday life on St. Thomas pre-Corona was determined by how many passengers arrived by cruise ship.<sup>2</sup>

From one day to the other there was no "pulse", less noise, and almost no traffic. Those of us who lived in town noticed other subtle changes. Besides noticing the appearance of a dolphin and turtles in the harbor, we started to notice each other. My neighbors and I started talking to each other across the narrow streets that wind up and down Denmark Hill. The Shelter in Place orders came with the Governor's declaration of the State of Emergency, and, for us that meant that only the nurses and the workmen among us left for work in the mornings.

In the evenings women and girls on Bjerge Gade got exercise by walking on the step streets and roads in the historic district. Afterwards they sat on the steps that Mr. Lockhart built 'back in the day' because he didn't want cars driving past his house.<sup>3</sup>



*The harbor in Charlotte Amalie  
– pre corona times.*

By 7:00 it was dark, and, I plugged in the outdoor Christmas lights at the corner where Norre Gade, Bjerge Gade and Crystal Gade meet. The pearly-white lights were my little contribution to the hygge in our corner of Denmark Hill. Perhaps some of my neighbors missed the light show from the cruise ships. In the absence of the cruise ships, however, we were able to see across the harbor to the lights of the Mariott. The Mariott has been under reconstruction since the devastating hurricanes of 2017, and the lights gave us hope that it was possible to rebuild. In truth, they also reminded us that we were still in the “aftermath” of hurricanes Irma and Maria. According to today’s newspaper, the Marriott has suspended work on the 300 million dollar rebuild citing DiamondRock Hospitality’s losses in the first quarter of 2020 and the COVID-19 related financial crisis. Our hope that the over 400 jobs produced by the resort and the over 100 million dollar annual contribution to the local economy has also been suspended. The harbor itself was full of “fairy

lights” from the many sailboats that had begun to arrive when the British Virgin Islands closed their ports.

### **EXPLORING TOWN**

After my 14-day quarantine period was over, I began to explore step streets and neighborhoods that I had never visited before. With help from a new friend, I finally found slagter Petersen’s old butcher shop on Lille Gronnegade. I greeted the very polite young men who usually sell drugs there. Apparently, the drug business was fairing no better than the business of selling diamonds on Main Street. As I walked by, one young man was lamenting all the young men he knew who were either dead or in jail...

As I walked on Nye Gade and Nye Stræde, people were fixing their homes. They were following distancing guidelines, but, getting closer as a community. Time that would otherwise have been spent getting to work, and, working to get home, was now being spent Being Home. Strangely enough, Money that was not being earned was being spent at Home Depot.

Main Street was closed, but, the beautification project to replace asphalt with brosten and beton with bluebitch was still underway. A historic brick sidewalk had been unearthed on the southside of Dronningensgade. It was perfectly in "vatter" as though the bricks had just been laid. Historic Preservation documented its existence, before work to create a bluebitch sidewalk at street level was allowed to continue.

Every other day was a journey of discovery for me in the town that had once been Denmark's second largest. Some days I was elated, and, some days I was devastated by what I found.

Before the pandemic, I had never been to the gut where people live without rooves over their heads, running water or electricity. The issue of hygiene is a heightened concern as handwashing is a primary deterrent to the spread of the virus. I wonder how these people maintain their dignity. The Daily News started a series of articles with photographs and biographies of homeless people. Some of the people who used to be invisible, have now been introduced to the community. Mental illness, however, is still invisible and there is apparently no treatment for it in the USVI.

## WALK TO PRAY

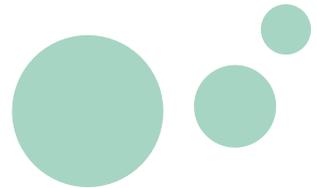
When the beaches were closed and Church services were cancelled, it was difficult to remain optimistic. Some people chose to attend church "on-line", but, since church is about fellowship for me, I sought out the one Church activity that had not been cancelled because of Corona: The Walk to pray for our community. It was Lent and we were "praying with our feet". The idea of walking and praying was inspired by the Civil Rights Movement. As a congregation we would walk through the neighborhoods of our town and pray for healing.

We prayed for the young men who are using each other to commit 'suicide'<sup>4</sup>. We prayed for the wisdom and decisiveness of our leaders, we prayed for first responders, and for businesses in the territory. We prayed for a future brighter than our present.

## OUR FUTURE

The smoke that was constantly pumped out of the cruise ships enormous chimneys no longer clouds our view, nor does it deposit "diamond-dust" on our tabletops. It is both scary and potentially empowering to contemplate a future without our economic mainstay.

1. To date we have had only 70 confirmed cases of Covid19 in the USVI. The last 500 consecutive tests have been negative for the virus. 6 people have died after being infected.
2. Because of strategies to prevent the spread of COVID19, 60 cruise ships that were scheduled to bring 191,000 passengers between March 14th and May 28th **did not arrive**. WICO translates that into lost revenues for the company of 1,302,000 dollars, and, lost revenues for the territory of 35 million dollars.
3. Many mistakenly think that the steps to the west of the Crystal Palace are a step street. Others who orient themselves with the help of a GPS just as mistakenly think that it is still a road.
4. While 6 people in the territory have died after being infected with COVID19, 20 young men have died as a result of gun violence.



## WHO WAS QUEEN LOUISE?

**Many of our readers will undoubtedly in St. Croix have heard about or even seen for themselves Queen Louise Home. Now the question is: Who was Queen Louise?**

During the corona crisis, and in other situations, which strike unreasonably hard in smaller communities like USVI, we are many in Denmark, f.inst members of DWIS, who have received a call for donations to Queen Louise Home in Frederiksted in St. Croix. The institution cares for children in need, and offers somewhere to stay and be medically treated for elderly citizens in the island.

And where does this institution come from, when did it start and why is it called, what it is called?

### **PRINCESS LOVISA, WHO BECAME QUEEN LOUISE**

King Frederik 8th, the great grandfather of our present queen, Margrethe, became king of Denmark in 1906 after the death of his father, King Christian 9th, who had been ruling since 1863 and had been married to Princess Louise of Hessen-Kassel, effectively Danish queen of German origin, under the name Louise. She had lent her name to a children's hospital in the centre of Copenhagen, "Queen Louise's Children's Hospital". She had been very active in the establishment of this and remained protector until her death in 1898. But she had nothing to do with Queen Louise Home, because the story to be told here is about Dronning Louises Børnehjem" in Frederiksted in St. Croix. It was established in 1904, and the old Queen

Louise had already at that time been dead for many years.

The person, who was the driver behind the establishment of the children's home in St. Croix was Lovisa. Lovisa was the daughter of the Swedish King Karl 15th, and at the age of 17 she was in 1869 married to the Danish Crown Prince, Frederik, the eldest son of King Christian 9th and his queen, Louise. Most of Lovisas life was spent as Crown Princess and the mother of eight princes and princesses, including the later King Christian 10th of Denmark and King Haakon 5th of Norway (his Danish name was Carl). Lovisa was not made Queen until 1906

*Mother-in-law, Queen Louise (of Hessen-Kassel) married to King Christian 9th.*





*Crown princess Louise (Lovisa). Married to Crown prince Frederik, the later King Frederik 8th.*

in watching lynching of black people.

### **ON OWN ACCOUNT**

When this conversation, which undoubtedly must have shaken ambassador Egan, took place, Lovisa had already in 1903 taken initiative to the founding of “The society for Sick- and Childcare in The West Indian Islands” (Foreningen for Syge- og Børnepleje på De vestindiske Øer). The background

was the terrible conditions many children in the islands lived under. This had recently been described by the commission, which had been sent out from Denmark after the sales treaty with USA of 1902 had fallen in the Danish Parliament. As Lovisa wrote: “serious improvements are required in our West Indian Colonies”! The first winter after the founding, she spent out of her own pocket the dispatch of four nurses to the islands<sup>1</sup>. But apart from this the Society raised through own efforts substantial amounts, i.e. several of the European royal houses, who had close connections with the tiny Danish royal house through inter-marriages etc., contributed lavishly. The yield from those donations enabled the Society to acquire the first property in Frederiksted. A couple of years later Lady Garvagh donated premises in Christiansted to the Society. In 1904, the first deaconesses – nurses – were sent out from Denmark on a permanent basis with the task of functioning as nurses

– under the name Louise, like her predecessor and mother-in-law – when Frederik was made king. Lovisa was a very active and committed woman, who had a very tense relationship with her mother-in-law.

### **A NOTCH IN THE SPOUT TO USA**

One of the tasks Lovisa at a point of time took up was the conditions for the African population in USA and the Danish West Indies. When in 1907 Maurice Francis Egan, very influential also in 1917 in connection with the USA purchase of the DWI, was accredited as new US ambassador to Denmark, he was called – after the official presentation to the King – into a chambre separee, where Lovisa told him in very undiplomatic language, “that the coloured race in America had not achieved, what President Theodore Roosevelt would have called fair conditions”, and she continued by saying, that she could not understand, how (white) folks, who let black people look after their children, apparently had great pleasure

as well as arranging education of local girls, who then could undertake the vast and unsolved health challenges<sup>2</sup>.

At the beginning, the name of the institution was “The Child Care Station in Frederiksted”, but was shortly after renamed to “Crown Princess Louises Childrens` Home”, and after Lovisa in 1906 became queen to “Queen Louise Home for Sick and Neglected Babies”, and today known as “Queen Louise Home”.

### **A POLITICAL MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN**

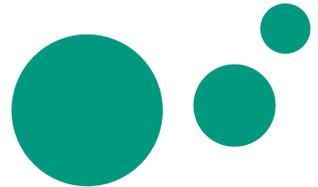
Crown Princess Lovisa acted in her role as crown princess and later queen during a time, where royals could get away with political views and even to express them and act accordingly. Lovisa was intensely engaged in social matters and she circulated from time to time clear and public messages particularly about children's conditions. Specifically about the Danish West Indies she expressed, that Danish sovereignty should be kept over the islands, and that one of the approaches to this would be to secure a closer relation between Denmark and the population on the islands. Therefore, Denmark should have much more attention

on securing education and health, and the children should be protected already from their infant years. It is in this political light, that her interest, engagement in, and initiative to establishing Queen Louise Home shall be seen.

### **AFTER TRANSFER DAY**

After sale of the islands, the Lutheran Church in USA took over the activities in Queen Louise Home. Those activities were in 1960 transferred to the Lutheran Welfare Society, and in 1967 to Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands (LSSVI), a local organization, which seeks and finds financing of its activities through public and private donations. More information, including over the opportunity to donate to the institution can be found on [www.lssvi.org/donate](http://www.lssvi.org/donate).

*By Michael Keldsen*



1. The Swedish royal family, the Bernadottes, was very affluent, and Lovisa had received a substantial inheritance after her father, Karl 15th. The Danish royal family was at that time considered as one of the poorest royal families in Europe!
2. Committee member Hans Jørgen Laursen has written several articles in DVS Magasinet regarding the deaconesses' work: June 2014, No. 3, page 9ff. "Søster Maren på St. Croix 1908-1945" and in Magasinet No. 2 and 3 2018, both articles titled "Søster Maren".

## ALBERTA AND VICTOR

**One of the colourful, but embarrassing episodes of Danish colonial history is the "exhibition" in Dansk Koloniudstilling (Danish Colonial Exhibition) in Tivoli Gardens in 1905 of Alberta and Victor, two young children, who had been brought over from The Danish West Indies to become "artefacts".**

**Jens Villumsen here presents a fraction of this story.**

*By Jens Villumsen*

Dansk Kunstflidsforening (Danish Crafts Organisation) was established by Emma Gad, a bourgeois female, married to an admiral, but also a pioneer for women's rights. The first event organized by the new



*Negerbørnene fra Sct. Thomas.*

organization was a Colonial Exhibition in Tivoli Gardens in 1905, where the main purpose would be to present crafts from Danish colonies, through representatives from the Danish West Indies, Greenland, Faroe Islands and Iceland. The inclusion of the Faroe Islands and Iceland brought protests from them, as they would not accept being presented as colonized or colonials. Subsequently the name of the exhibition was changed to Dansk Koloniudstilling samt Udstilling fra Island og Færøerne ("Danish Colonial Exhibition as well as Exhibition from Iceland and the Faroe Islands").

### CHILDREN IN THE EXHIBITION

The organisers were engaged in providing representatives among the populations in the exhibiting areas, who could introduce and present local crafts. It proved difficult to find a suitable family in the Danish West Indies, and time was running short for the organisers. At last the following message was sent to the representative of the exhibition in the Danish West Indies: "Send two negro children".

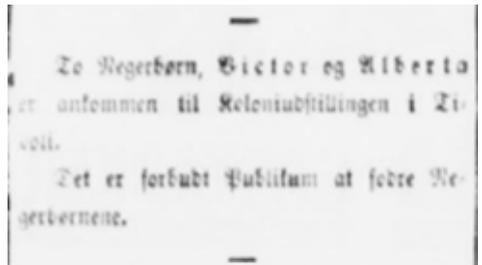
No doubt influenced by the time pressure the local representative in collaboration with the head of the school authorities in the Danish West Indies managed to "convince" the parents of two children to have their children sent to Denmark, against promises



*Dansk Kunstflidsforenings udstilling  
i Tivoli 1905*

of favours to the parents as their children. Immediately Victor Cornelins (originally Cornelius, but Cornelins due to a spelling mistake in the Registry) and Alberta Viola Roberts were shipped off to Denmark, 6 and 5 years old respectively. Thus the organisers could now give the public and the visitors to the Exhibition an opportunity to see for themselves, what such West Indians looked like. No doubt, the appearance of Victor and Alberta was a sensation, and you may get an impression of the view of that time of the Danish West Indies and its population, when you read a notice, that was brought in a Copenhagen evening paper on August 10, 1905:

“Two negro children, Victor and Alberta have arrived to the Colonial Exhibition in Tivoli Gardens. It is forbidden to the public to feed the negro children.”



*Two negro children, Victor and Alberta have arrived to the Colonial Exhibition in Tivoli Gardens. It is forbidden to the public to feed the negro children.*

They were truly placed in a cage in the exhibition, but allegedly because they kept disappearing from the West Indian exhibition stand, and were often found playing with the children from Greenland in their stand. But, no doubts Victor and Alberta were very popular among the exhibition guests, which i.a. can be seen from the enclosed cartoon from a Danish paper September 11, 1905:

## Fra Vestindien

The Danish text runs in English:  
“A reader of the conservative newspaper *Nationaltidende*” has made complaints over the 2 negro children Victor and Alberta in the Colonial Exhibition, that they are cheeky, and that the leading lady of the exhibition (Emma Gad) apparently approves their antics.  
– God, imagine that there are still people around who want to sell the West Indian Islands”



En Indsender i »Nationaltidende« klager over, at de to Negerbørn Victor og Alberto paa Koloniuudstillingen er saa uartige, og at deres Uartigheder finder Bifald hos Udstillingens ledende Dame.

»Gud, at tænke sig, at saa er der endnu Folk, der vil sælge de vestindiske Øer.«

### AFTER THE EXHIBITION

After the Colonial Exhibition Victor and Alberta were placed in an orphanage school in Copenhagen, and Victor later came on a teachers training college in Jonstrup, Denmark and qualified as teacher. He was employed as teacher in Nakskov, south of Zealand, had a large family and finished his career as deputy head master of a local school. Through his life he greatly influenced musical life in his local community, not least as founder of the still existing “White Choir” in Nakskov – which mainly feature nurses as singers.

### THE FATE OF ALBERTA

But, unfortunately, Alberta did not fare well in life. She died of typhoid in St. Josephs Hospital in Copenhagen on March 24, 1917, and was buried on 31st March 1917, exactly on the day and almost on the time, as the Danish flag, Dannebrog, for the last time, was taken down in the Danish West Indies.

She was buried on Frederiksberg Church Yard, and her grave was annulled 20 years

later, and such, Alberta disappeared into history. Victor Cornelius wrote about her in his biography from 1977 “From St. Croix to Nakskov”.

For Danish readers reference can be made to Philip Samsons article “Farvel Alberta” from March 31, 2017, which can be downloaded on <https://pov.international/farvel-alberta/>

# PAINTING DONATED TO DWIS

**DWIS has been contacted by mr. Arne Jerner with a donation.**

When looking through his family's attic, Arne Jerner in Espergærde, Denmark found a painting and two artefacts, which have Danish West Indian background/motives, and once belonged to the founder of Danish West Indian Society, August F. C. Neumann. Neumann was married to Arne Jerner's wife's aunt. When her aunt died, Arne Jerner's wife inherited the painting, and for many years it hung in her parents home in Frederikshavn, Denmark. Arne Jerner's wife died recently, and Arne has now donated the painting and the two artefacts to the Danish West Indian Society. DWIS is very grateful for this donation.

The motive of the painting is Fort Christiansvaern in Christianssted, St. Croix. However, not with a colour, that is the normal colour for forts in DWI. They were either white or yellow; and if they were refurbished as police stations they would be painted red. But the colour in this painting is grey. As we do not know who the painter is, we do not know, whether it was painted "on location"; or in Denmark using a post card, or the painter simply had decided, that he wanted it grey. Or, not unlikely, the façade of the fort is full of dirt, mug and fungus, which cover the original colour!

August F.C. Neumann and three of his former colleagues of the Danish West Indian Gendarmery founded on June 15, 1917 "The Danish West Indian Club", which in 1938 changed its name to "Foreningen Dansk Vestindien" – "The Danish West Indies



*Board members of DWIS with the paintings*

Association". He remained chairman for 36 years until 1953, and was subsequently made honorary member of the Association. He died in 1953.

August F.C. Neumann had a military career through his active life, and served during the years 1896 to 1917 several times in various military arms in the Danish West Indies, where he also was appointed public surveyor.

In 1969 the Association was reorganized under the initiative of the then chairman Einar Kirk, and was now renamed "Dansk Vestindisk Selskab" – Danish West Indian Society, which is the name, that is carried today.

DWIS is very grateful for donations, and will reiterate its invitation to as well members as well as friends of DWIS to donate artefacts with a link to the Danish West Indies, so that those can be preserved for posterity.

On the enclosed picture is the painting, and the two artefacts ( a plaque commemorating August F.C. Neumann's long service as chairman in the Association, and a map over St. Thomas and St. John) presented by some of the members of the board of DWIS.