



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman  
Antique Maps Inc.**

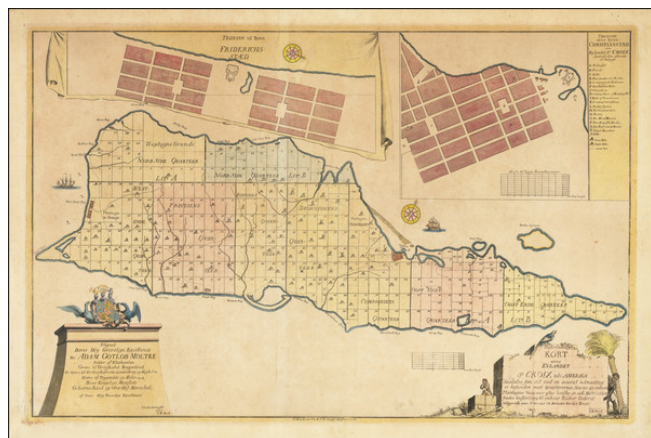
7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
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**[Saint Croix, Virgin Islands] Tilforladelig Kort over Eylandet St. Croix udi America  
Saaledes som det ved en acurat udmaaling er befunden med Quarterernes Navne og  
enhver Plantagies Nummer efter hvilke udi Matriculen findes Indførte og til enhver  
Kiober Cederet . . .**

**Stock#:** 69471  
**Map Maker:** Beck  
  
**Date:** 1754  
**Place:** Copenhagen  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 29 x 19 inches  
  
**Price:** \$ 9,500.00



**Description:**

***The First Reliable Chorographic Map of St. Croix***

Rare Danish map of the island of St. Croix, drawn by Jens Michelsen Beck and engraved by O.H. De Lode in Copenhagen.

First published in 1754, Beck's map of St. Croix is the first modern map of St. Croix. It served as the main reference and base map of the island for much of the second half of the eighteenth century.

As noted in the title, the island is divided into "Quarteers" (which are named), with the quarters further sub-divided into numbered plantations.

Atop the map are two large insets showing early town plans for Fridirchstaed and Christenstaed. The latter has a key locating eighteen points of interest including a fortress, two public squares, several warehouses, a forge, a cemetery, the Lutheran Church, the Church of England, the Reformed Church, and other points of interest.

Two areas are noted as "Neger Quarteer" (Negro Quarters). The island's economy depended on enslaved labor, with most working on sugar and cotton plantations.

The cartouche in the lower right corner is embellished with an enslaved man, a monkey perched on a bale of cotton, a parrot, a snake, a pile of cane stalks, and a palm tree—all defining sites of life in St. Croix in



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the eighteenth century. At sea are two fully-rigged ships and a fine compass rose. An interesting feature of the map is the scale table, rather than the scale bar that was more common on maps of this period. There are two such tables on this map, one for the main map and one for the inset of Christianstaed.

The map bears an ambitious dedication to Adam Gottlob Moltke in the lower left corner, the president of the Danish West India and Guinea Company and a prominent Danish politician. The dedication is placed on a monument topped with Moltke's coat of arms and twin eagles.

### **St. Croix: history of European interaction to the eighteenth century**

St. Croix was initially settled by the Igneri people, and then the Taino, who called it Ay Ay. The Caribs (Kalinago) arrived in 1425. Christopher Columbus landed on November 14, 1493, re-naming it Santa Cruz (Holy Cross; the French would translate this to St. Croix). Columbus' men engaged in a skirmish with the Kalinago, one of the first fights between indigenous peoples and invading Europeans. Although the Spanish did not colonize the island, their presence nevertheless resulted in the scattering and death of the native population. By the end of the sixteenth century, the island was reportedly uninhabited.

The seventeenth century saw a rotating bevy of settlers and colonists, including the Dutch, English, French, and even, from 1651 to 1664, the Knights of Malta. After the Knights left, the island came under the control of the French West India Company. However, the French had to abandon the island in 1695, during the War of the Grand Alliance. For the next 38 years, the island remained empty of permanent settlement.

The Caribbean island drew the attention of the Danes; as early as 1725, the governor of St. Thomas, Frederick Moth, encouraged the Dutch West India and Guinea Company (*Vestindisk-guineisk Kompagni*) to buy St. Croix. They did so in 1733, with Moth named the first governor.

The company's shareholders were promised plantations on St. Croix in return for their development of, and reinvestment in, the island. By 1742, there were 120 sugar plantations and 122 cotton plantations. There were 360 European settlers (English and Danes).

In 1742 there were 1,906 enslaved people; by 1754, that number had ballooned to 7,566. By the mid-eighteenth century, when this map was made and the plantation system was at its height, there were nearly 20,000 enslaved people on St. Croix, with no more than 2,000 whites in residence.



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Perhaps the most famous resident of St. Croix was Alexander Hamilton, who came to the island with his mother and brother in 1765. He lost practically all of his family by 1769, when he became the ward of Thomas Stevens, a merchant. After several years clerking, local entrepreneurs funded his education in New York, where he joined the rebels planning for revolution.

### **Mapping St. Croix**

Prior to 1750, there had been no concerted effort to map St. Croix. Two printed maps existed, the first by de la Point which appeared in J.B. Du Tertre's 's *Histoire generale des Antilles habities par les francois* (1671). The second was by Gerard Van Keulen, a later copy of the de la Point map in 1719.

The founding order for the colony included a provision directing the survey and subdivision of the island into plantations, specifically that:

*300 large sugar works plantations, each of 2 000 feet breadth and 3 000 feet length, are then to be surveyed out of the lands which are considered to lie most conveniently, to be most fruitful, and are of equal terrain ... [I]t would be wished most preferably that these plantation lots as far as possible were next to one another in one quarter if it is practicable.*

With respect to the mapping of St. Croix, the order further directed that

*The engineer and his assistants shall as soon as possible draft an accurate map of the land in general of such large scale that not only the land's extent and all the coves and harbours but every plain [?], wooded ground, and plantation can be distinguished with number, length, and breadth, as well as expressed by means of characters whether it is a sugar or cotton plantation, of which map, for whose correct and prompt execution the Chief [of the St. Croix government] will take all care and pains, 3 copies are to be made . . .*

The land was distributed by lottery, with the island divided uniformly in quarters and plantations. A formal cadastral survey was not completed until 1750, mainly under the supervision of Johann Cronenberg and Johann von Jaegersberg. A single manuscript example of Cronenberg's survey of the island is known to survive.

The Danish West India Company was dissolved by the Danish Crown in 1754, at which time Denmark retook administration of its colony in St. Croix. It was at this moment that Jens Michelsen Beck's map of



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St. Croix was created. Jens Michelsen Beck arrived on St. Croix in 1742 and served in various capacities in the administration until 1753, including as surveyor from time to time between 1749 and 1753. Beck was later taken to court, accused of graft and extortion in connection with the survey. He left St. Croix and the service of the Danish West India Company under the cloud of these charges. However, he rose to some social prominence later in life and lived comfortably near Copenhagen, apparently on the income of a St. Croix sugar plantation.

Within a year of his departure from St. Croix, an engraved map of St. Croix bearing his signature was published in Copenhagen. The map was drawn largely from the earlier work of Cronenberg and Jaergesberg but the coastline was rendered more accurately. While Beck's map offers little topographical detail, it preserved the plantation grid laid out by the Danish West India Company and copies of the map in circulation at the time were often annotated with the names of the plantation owners. The Beck map proved influential; for example, it was the primary reference for an audit of land ownership conducted by the Crown.

This was therefore the first detailed and rigorously drafted map of the island. As noted by the *Geographic Dictionary of the Virgin Islands of the United States*, published by the US Coast & Geodetic Survey:

*The first reliable chorographic map of St. Croix, exhibiting the subdivisions into quarters and estates, which have continued with little change until the present time, is the "Tilforladelig Kort over Eylandet St. Croix," drawn by I. M. Beck, and engraved by O. H. de Lode at Copenhagen in 1754. The tracts are properly numbered, the proprietors' names added in legible script, and each proprietor's holdings distinctively hand tinted.*

The next mapping of St. Croix would not appear for several decades, when military engineer Peter Lotharius Oxholm made his map of 1794.

#### **Rarity**

The map is rare, with OCLC listing institutional examples at the Library of Congress, Harvard, the Clements Library, and BYU.

The example in the Library of Congress is annotated to show the names of each of the plantation owners. The example in the collection at Harvard includes a pastedown list of plantation owner at the bottom center of the map. The Clements example includes a manuscript date of 1767 and also has other



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manuscript additions.

The Danish National Library holds several examples of the map.

**Detailed Condition:**

Old color. Minor toning. Signature of an early owner on the verso (J. C. Beny or Berg 1796 ?).