

# St. Eustatius Fort Oranje

Ca 1755

SE-128

**A Historical Archaeological and Architectural Assessment**



Written By  
Madeline J. Roth

Principle Investigator  
R. Grant Gilmore III

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Site drawings were digitized by Madeline Roth and Kelly Riemersma. Photographs were taken by SECAR volunteers Nikki Ray and Madeline Roth.

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## ***Introduction***

The Dutch have had a presence on St. Eustatius ever since Pieter Van Corselles and his men moved from Tobago to colonize the island in 1636. As a result of the Dutch occupation, a fort was constructed on the island overlooking the Bay in order to protect the island. With increasing island development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, SECAR is attempting to identify the fortifications that the Dutch built and continued to maintain during the Colonial Period. The first fort built on the present site of Fort Oranje was built in 1629 by a French exploratory party. The Dutch repaired the wooden fort left by the French naming it “Fort Oranje”. The present stone fort was constructed in 1703 by the English after the Dutch had burned the wooden palisaded fort. This report focuses on the stone fort that was built after the wooden Fort Oranje burned. Our research goals include:

1. Identify the possible function of stone stairs identified during this investigation
2. Record the remains of the stairs
3. Incorporate this information into our overall understanding of the settlement of Oranjestad and the importance of the fort in Statian society

While examining the stairs found during repair of the government offices, we realized that it would be necessary to document the stairs and foundation of the gatehouse in order to understand earlier stages in the development of the modern Fort Oranje.

**Site History**

*St. Eustatius*

The island of St. Eustatius, commonly referred to as Statia, is located in the Dutch West Indian islands. The island is 22 sq. kilometers with a width of almost 5 kilometers, and a length of 7 kilometers. At the Northern end lie hills, the largest of which is called “Boven hill”. The Southern end of the island houses a dormant 600 meter conical volcano. The first settlers are thought to have arrived from the Orinoco River valley in South America ca. 300 C.E (Johannes



**Figure 1** St. Eustatius in the Caribbean Basin. It is located in the Dutch Windward Islands at an accessible cross road between the Caribbean islands and the African Easterly trade winds. Statia is located at an ideal location for favorable currents, and winds for old and new world trade.

Hartog 7). The South American Indian populations living on the island left later on, and in 1493 Columbus sailed past the island naming it *S. delanerbe* (Johannes Hartog 14).

The first Europeans to settle on the island of St. Eustatius were the French. They established a palisaded fort at the present location of Fort Oranje in 1629 (Johan Hartog 24). The island was used as a supply station for privateers raiding the Spanish treasure fleets and colonies prior to French settlement. In 1636 the Dutch West Indies Company established a fort overlooking Oranje Bay on the southern leeward shore and the Dutch replaced the French as the local population on the island (Johannes Hartog 19).

The initial island economy focused on tobacco and cotton plantations. However, these endeavors proved unprofitable in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Statia was used as a slave trading port for ships coming from the East coast of Africa and other Caribbean islands (Johannes Hartog 26). There were two facilities, Fort Amsterdam and Crook's Castle, at either end of Oranje Bay to house slaves while waiting for auction. In 1746, trade became the main source of income on the island when merchants began to build the first of 200 warehouses on the bay (Leech 84). The harbor, Fort Amsterdam, Crook's Castle, private homes, and warehouses in Oranje Bay made up "Lower Town" Oranjestad. The merchants on St. Eustatius lived in "Upper Town" Oranjestad which overlooked the harbor and Oranje Bay. Outside the town of Oranjestad were plantations which were regarded as "country estates" in documentation, second in economic importance to the trade at the harbor.

The concept of socio-economic status is played out in the urban vs. rural context on St. Eustatius, and ownership of a plantation was an expression of social status. Plantations did contribute to the economic stability of St. Eustatius due to sugar processing into both sugar loaves and rum (Johannes Hartog 35). Plantations on other islands (particularly Jamaica, St.

Kitts and Nevis, and the French islands) would send much of their cane to be processed on Statia to avoid high taxation associated sugar processing on their islands. One example of this occurred in 1779 when Statia plantations produced 13,610 pounds of sugar, but ended up exporting 24 million pounds (Johannes Hartog 39). Lower Town Oranjestad played the largest economic role on the island due to both documentary and archaeological evidence. Trade continued to dominate Statian economy, and it reached its zenith in the 1790's after the American Revolutionary War. The French and English occupied the island from 1795-1816, and trade severely declined in this period due to both taxation and a shift in commerce from the Caribbean to the United States. Over the next century and a half, there was a mass reduction in population on St. Eustatius which led to a general urban decay of the island.

### *Oranjestad*

Over the past three centuries, Oranjestad has been through multiple stages of growth and decay. The island's economy was tied to trade, particularly the sugar trade, however the aspects of society that had a larger influence on urban development and expansion were taxation policy and commodities (Leech 83). In the Colonial Period, the amount and variety of cultures on Statia due to commerce are not found in many other places in the region. Dutch, Spanish, French, English, Swedish, Italian, and Jewish (Ashkenazi and Sephardic) merchants were living on the island, and the commerce that developed as a result formed the community of Oranjestad (Leech 83). In the 1790's, there were over 30,000 people living on the island (Johannes Hartog 45). Statia was nicknamed "Golden Rock" in the eighteenth century due to the amount of trade that occurred on the island. By the 1770's, the harbor was the busiest trading port in the world, and by the 1790's, over 3,500 ships landed on Statia each year (Johannes Hartog 40). The enslaved African population on the island provided the labor for the harbor, the plantations, and



the warehouses on Statia. Documents indicate the enslaved population crewed boats and ships across the Caribbean to trade for their masters and themselves. The geographic locations across Statia can be associated with different socio-economic, religious, and cultural populations. Archaeological excavation and historic documentation of these areas has provided insight into the social and economic relationship that these communities had with each other and the relationships that developed due to the intense trade environment.

In Upper Town Oranjestad development continued throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The core of Upper Town Oranjestad was formed from religious buildings, urban plantations, and military structures. The largest religion on the island was the Dutch Reformed Church. The first Dutch Reformed Church building was built in the 1630's (Johannes Hartog 62). Unfortunately the church was destroyed by the French in 1689, and a new church was not constructed until 1755, near the site of Fort Oranje.

There was a considerable population of Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews on St. Eustatius due to the trade opportunities available on the island. The population increased when the Dutch government granted the Jewish population the same rights as Christians on St. Eustatius in 1730 (Johannes Hartog 56). *Honen Dalim*, the Synagogue on the island, was built in 1739. The Synagogue ruins still stand in the center of town, where they could be the center of Jewish life for both Spanish and Eastern European Jewish populations (Johannes Hartog 58-59).

The tension that arose between people living in Oranjestad and people living on plantations outside of town has been briefly discussed above. There certainly was a tension, however there is evidence to the contrary that suggests Oranjestad was similar to other colonial towns in the Americas. It is possible that individuals established 'urban' plantations in Oranjestad, where small versions of working plantations were located in the town. One example

of this is the Simon Doncker House, located in downtown Oranjestad near the Catholic Church and Fort Oranje. Simon Doncker was one of the richest merchants living on St. Eustatius in the late eighteenth century. In the back of his lot there were crops and outbuildings to create a presentation of wealth in the urban environment (Leech 87). Another property in Oranjestad, the Godet House, was also an urban plantation with a separate kitchen, hurricane house, cistern, and outhouse made of local stone and yellow brick. A similar set up is seen in other colonial contexts, such as Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia. The Payton Randolph House in Williamsburg has a separate kitchen and other outbuildings including a windmill and a carpentry shop (Leech 87).

As has already been stated, St. Eustatius had a privileged geographic position in the Caribbean, and trade flourished on Statia in the mid to late eighteenth century. The St. Eustatius Port, as well as St. Maarten, was developed as a free port where any ship could anchor. Dutch trading was set up in a capitalist economy in comparison with the mercantilist systems created by other colonial powers. Due to the capitalist freedom of Statia, smuggling was a key component of trade between the Dutch and other European nations in the Caribbean. The illegal sugar trade was one large source of profit for Statian merchants. Besides the sugar and slave trade on the island, illegal weapon trading was another source of income. During the American Revolutionary War, St. Eustatius supplied arms and ammunition to the rebelling English colonies. In 1776, the *Andrew Doria* sailed from the newly created United States to Statia with the Great Union Flag dipped as a sign of greeting in order to buy gunpowder (Johannes Hartog 71). The governor didn't recognize the flag, and instructed that the fort greet the ship with a counter salute, which was the custom. However St. Eustatius (representing the Netherlands) was the first foreign power to recognize the rebellious United States as a sovereign nation (Attema

40).

As trade increased due to the Seven Years War and the American Revolutionary War, the lives of merchants living in Oranjestad changed with the increase in income. In Lower Town, the number of warehouses tripled from 200 in 1746 to 600 by the 1770's due to the increase in illegal armament trade (Leech 89). It was at this time when over 3,500 ships landed on Statia per year (Johannes Hartog 40). As a comparison an average of 1,419 ships landed in New York Harbor and 356 in Bristol per year at their peak during the eighteenth century. The Dutch West Indies Company divided land on St. Eustatius into  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre (0.1 hectare) plots. In some of the wills and inventories that remain from the period there are plantation owners and merchants who own both land in Upper Town Oranjestad, Lower Town, and plantations on Statia. For example, Madam Judith Stewart owned Fair Play plantation, nineteen rental properties, four houses in Lower Town and one house in Upper Town at the time of her death. Abraham Heyliger owned two plantations and a domestic house with outbuildings in Lower Town (Leech 86-89). These examples illustrate the prosperity on Statia, and the reality that both men and women could own multiple country and town residences.

In 1781, British Admiral Sir George Brydges Rodney sacked St. Eustatius in the fourth Anglo-Dutch War. Rodney auctioned the goods stored in the warehouses in the bay which amounted to over £3,000,000. The 1783 Annual Registrar later called the auction "the greatest which was ever held in the universe". In addition to this, over £4,000,000 in bullion was confiscated from the residents of the island (Leech 89). These monetary sums are in 18<sup>th</sup> century terms, and the sum taken from Statia is the largest single amount take in a time of war by any nation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Rodney instituted a Reign of Terror on the island, and the entire male Jewish population was deported to other Caribbean islands (Attema 40). However the Jews did

return to St. Eustatius to re-establish trade networks, and trade was greater in the 1790's on Statia than it had been during the American War for Independence. Eventually the Dutch regained control of the island, and stayed in power until the Dutch West India Company was forced into bankruptcy and returned to the Netherlands.

In 1795, the French took over the Netherlands as a satellite state, and taxes were instituted on Statia. From 1795-1816, the economy of Statia fell into a downward spiral that never recovered due to French taxation and mercantilist economy (Leech 91). The Dutch regained control of the island in 1816, but it never recovered from the economic downturn. The trade connections had moved from the West Indies to North America. The result of economic downturn is seen in auction records from the early nineteenth century. Properties rapidly declined in value, and speculators purchased properties at auctions, rapidly consolidating ownership in Oranjestad. The slaves were freed in 1863, however there was no stable economy on the island, and the emancipated population grew cotton, yams, sweet potatoes, and bred animals on the arid landscape. The warehouses in Lower Town fell into disrepair, and Europeans left the island by the 1890's (Attema 47). Buildings in Oranjestad collapsed, and the town shrunk as the population did.

Development in colonial St. Eustatius was not linked to a plantation monoculture as it was on other Caribbean islands, but rather the trade networks. Statia depended on trade, and Statian society was affected by the trade that came to St. Eustatius (Leech 92). Thus the society that was created on Statia differed from all other colonial societies in the Caribbean. Merchants and planters depended on strong relationships with others in order to increase monetary gain, and social structure demanded certain degrees in the display of wealth. The enslaved population on St. Eustatius was different in regard to other islands that they were involved in trade as opposed

to plantation labor. The enslaved community was involved in actively trading for their owners, and also bettering their own living conditions.

### *Oranjestad Neighborhood*

In Upper Town Oranjestad, the Fort is located in the area that was settled in the first half of the seventeenth century. The Fort is close to the town center at a prime location overlooking Oranje Bay. To the North of the Fort is the Bay Path down to Lower Town. The area was likely residential with some commercial enterprises.

### *Site Background History*

The earliest account of a fort on the island dates from 1629. The French who had formed an expedition party constructed a wooden palisaded structure on a bluff overlooking what would later be known as Oranje Bay. The French left shortly after arriving on the island, and it was not until April 25<sup>th</sup> 1636 that Europeans returned to the island. A party of Dutch settlers from the province of Zeeland took possession of St. Eustatius. The group found the French fort remains and rebuilt it, mounting mounted 16 cannons and calling it Fort Oranje (Johan Hartog 28). The location of the early Dutch fort is in the present location of the modern Fort Oranje (Johannes Hartog 21).

Little is known about the fort between 1629 and 1700. It is known that there were strong ties between the church and the fort in this period. The church was used as barracks for the garrison for a short time, and church services were held in the fort. According to a clause in 1700, the fort flag was hoisted as a sign that the Lord's Supper was going to be celebrated (Johannes Hartog 23).

The average number of soldiers living in the fort was fifty men “of a low standard”. In St. Eustatius the soldiers were vagrants, gathered from different countries. The force included boys 17 years old as well as men 67 years old. All men 16 to 60 years of age, excepting Jew, were liable to military service (Johannes Hartog 28).

In defensive terms, the fort was insufficient to protect St. Eustatius. Multiple accounts in the history of St. Eustatius describe the fort as in constant need of repair, and often unfit for protecting the island and the inhabitants. Hartog states in his history of Statia that when alarm threatened, entrenchments were thrown up at the most vulnerable spots and gradually simple forts developed in this way (Johannes Hartog 23).

In 1673, the fort was burned by the Dutch, and it was not until later in the year that the fort was rebuilt by the English. It is assumed that the fort burned by the Dutch was a wooden palisaded structure located on the current site of Fort Oranje. In 1689 the French took over the fort, and they reinforced the walls of the Fort with doubled palisades (Johan Hartog 34). Between 1689 and 1690, the French built a dry moat around Fort Oranje.

The next account dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, 1701. Isaac Lamont was placed in charge as commander of the fort, and his personal letters describe the state of the fortifications on the cliff overlooking the bay (Johan Hartog 28). The fort was in a derelict state. The walls had been built from piles of stones a half man in height (85 centimeters), and were threatening to collapse (Johan Hartog 28). The original design of the fort was square with bastions at each corner. The four bastions were Nassau, Bockepunt, Oranje Point, and Sea-side point. These had been constructed of stamped down earth in which the wheels of the gun carriages stuck, making it impossible to carry out any gun drill (Attema 22). The cliff broke away and the west point (Bockepunt) fell into the sea. No known drawings or plans of the fort remain from this period.

We do know that Bockepunt disappeared between 1703 and 1765 when Governor De Windt renovated the fort (Johan Hartog 29).

Records indicate that in 1701 the fort consisted of an entrance gate, the four bastions with deteriorated guns, a dilapidated powder house, the guard's house, a house for church services, three water tanks, and a dilapidated commander's house that was unfit to live in. Commander Lamont states in a request to the Dutch West India Company that he is interested in repairing the fort, and he asks for good flat stones to rebuild the walls. In records, he hired bricklayers and carpenters. Furthermore, Dutch red and yellow bricks, sent from Holland as ballast for ships, were used in the buildings together with native volcanic rocks and limestone. Unfortunately, the repairs to the fort were not begun until 1704, when Doncker replaced Lamont as commander of the fort due to alleged corruption (Attema 22). Doncker states that when he took over as the commander of the fort, the bockepunt was about to collapse, and the fort was still in a bad condition (Attema 22).

In 1709, Lamont was reinstated as the commander. When the French landed on Statia on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1709, Statians had to surrender and Lamont fled from the fort. At this point, the fort and everything in it were destroyed—the guns were spiked and the gun powder was ignited (Attema 23). We assume that the fort that was destroyed in 1709 had stone foundations, and could have been constructed entirely from stone. No records exist describing the condition of the fort after the attack and the next known record dates from repairs begun in 1737. However in 1721, the first regulation passed on Statia regarding slaves that required them to help repair the fort on the island (Fort Oranje) because Statian slaves, as in other colonies, were required from time to time to provide labor on public property and military sites (Haviser & MacDonald 80).

There was a tax collected in 1737 which allowed for a restoration of the fort (Attema 25). It was decided that a trench would be built around the fort in 1738, however the record states that the ‘palisades were not replaced’. By 1740 the fort was nearly finished and in 1741, the fort with the drawbridge, new entrance gate, and wall were finished (Attema 25).

In 1755 the forts were checked for readiness for the New War—the Seven Year’s War—and Fort Oranje was found to be in ‘unsatisfactory conditions’. The bastions were undermined and threatened to collapse from the weight of the cannons (Attema 25). Bills and records from 1757-1762 state that carpenters, bricklayers, and a smith were hired to build a new bridge and commander’s house. In this time they also repaired water tanks and the prison. The constable had always lived within the Fort, but this time his house was in such a state that it was decided to build a new one with the two prisons underneath it (Attema 26). De Windt was commander of the fort at this time (Governor from 1753-1775). De Windt decided that the two prisons beneath the constable’s house should consist of a civil prison and a criminal prison (Attema 51).

The next account dates from a report in 1775, focusing on the condition of Fort Oranje. The two roomed stone building was dangerous. Weapons were lying around and powder was stored in open barrels the cellar underneath the house. The civil and criminal prisons were also under the house, but prisoners were not locked up a night due to a lack of jailers (Attema 40). At this time, the other buildings in the fort consisted of the sergeant’s house, the constable’s house and the commander’s house. A guard room, and a kitchen, and a gunner’s house were also built at this time (Attema 41).

By 1777, the fort had already fallen back into disrepair. The houses in the fort were all in a poor condition and that the powder house was extremely dangerous. When the commander de Graff was asked why the fort was not repaired, he stated that it was too expensive and the West



India Company couldn't afford it (Attema 41).

Rodney landed on Statia in 1781. Hartog states in his history that the Netherlands did little to secure the safety of inhabitants in the Caribbean and all entrenchments and forts around 1780 were in ruins, thus it was easy for Rodney to take control of the island (Johannes Hartog 27). When Rodney took control of Statia, he left the Dutch flag flying in the Fort for a month so that he could seize the cargoes from unsuspecting ships (Attema 40). In 1781 there were 25 cannons in the fort, 5 which were in working order, and a garrison of 50 men (Attema 41). During Rodney's reign, Fort Oranje was renamed Fort George and 650 men manned it. No repairs were made to Fort George because it was seen as having little defensive purposes. Furthermore, the walls of the fort were made from poor quality materials and were so close to the edge of the cliff that part of the parapet fell off when the cannons were fired (Attema 42). Rodney and the British eventually left Statia, and the fort was called Fort Oranje once again.

Fort descriptions dating from 1785-1791 state that Fort Oranje was no longer used for defensive purposes (Attema 42). In 1781, there were proclamations similar to that of 1721 which required slaves to work on military sites. Another proclamation was passed in 1795 (Haviser & MacDonald 80).

Very few records of the fort exist from the nineteenth and twentieth century. Records indicate that the garrison buildings were still in the fort in 1816, however by 1829 the fort was very much decayed with crumbling walls and an over grown court yard. In 1834 the fort was restored, and the walls were rebuilt. The fort was abandoned by the military in 1846. The gate house was converted into the commander's house and in 1935, the tax collector was established in the commander's house (Attema 43). Today the fort houses the department of tourism, and the office of the Government Prosecutor.

Looking at the history of Fort Oranje, it appears that as soon as the fort was repaired, it was left to fall into an uninhabitable state soon after. It was the duty of the Dutch West India Company to protect the island, and in that respect they may have failed. However, the Netherlands cannot be reproached too harshly as French and British Islands also fared no better. The fortifications on those islands would only be repaired in case of need. As soon as danger passed, they would become neglected (Johannes Hartog 28).

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### ***St. Eustatius Fort Oranje in Images***

There are few drawings of the fort that exist, and the earliest depiction we have of the fort is found on a map dating from 1723 (**Figure 2**). The fort seen in the cropped image is four sided, with two bastions. This image of the fort corresponds with early descriptions indicating a four sided Dutch fort pre-dating bastion Bockepunt falling off the cliff (Attema 22). Lamont does state in personal letters that the fort had four bastions, but this image only depicts two. It could be possible that Lamont is referring to the corners of the fort as bastions, or that two more

bastions were built after this map was drawn.

The second and third depictions of the fort are close ups from a water color painting series done by A. Nelson in 1774 (**Figures 3 and 4**). **Figure 3** was painted looking north. In the image, building #1 is the Church, building #2 is the Fort, and building #3 is the house of Jan de Windt, governor of Statia. The house is also labeled as the seat of government on Statia. The number four depicts Panga Mountain. The fort in the image has three visible corners of the wall. **Figure 4** was painted with a Southern perspective of the island. In the image, the number five depicts Fort Oranje “having 26 cannons” (Nelson). Building #6 is the government office building in Fort Oranje, and building #7 is the Dutch Reform Church.

The earliest plan views with all the buildings in Fort Oranje date from sometime after the repairs in 1772 (**Figures 5 & 6**). In **Figure 5**, Structure A in the drawing is the Commander’s House. Structure B depicts the town offices. Structure C is the constable’s house with the gate, civil, and criminal prisons in the basement. All structures labeled D are barracks for the garrison. Structure E is a cistern, and F is the Powder Magazine. Structures A, B, C, E, and F still remain in the locations depicted on the plan view. Some of the barracks remain, but some have been destroyed. There is no date associated with **Figure 5**, however the functions of the structures match the description of the repairs done in 1772.

**Figure 6** dates from after Rodney left the island, and the structures are the same, however the functions of the buildings have changed. Structure A is the hall with the gate, which replaced the commander’s house. The town hall moved to the Commander’s House above the gate, and the old hall next to the Commander’s House became the arsenal. Structure B is the Captain’s Residence. Structure C is the public house beneath a warehouse. Structure D is the arsenal, Structure E is the barracks, and Structure F is the powder magazine. Structures labeled G are the

cisterns (another was constructed after **Figure 5** was drawn). Structure H is the drawbridge and Structure I is the flag.

There are very few images of the fort before the twentieth century where the entrance to the fort is clearly visible, along with the gatehouse over the gate. **Figure 7** is a mezzotint dating from 1860, based on an 1820 sketch from within the Catholic Church courtyard. The gate and guardhouse of the fort are seen clearly in the image.

Two early photographs exist of the gate house in the fort dating from 1912 (**Figures 8 & 9**). The design of the gatehouse has changed slightly from the structure seen in the 1860 mezzotint. The roof over the gate has been raised, and another floor level has been added.

Later photographs dating from the nineteen fifties show that another structure has been added to the left of the gatehouse when facing the entrance gate to the fort (**Figures 10 & 11**). A wooden roof has also been placed to the right of the gatehouse, although the structure remains a single story (**Figure 10**). **Figure 11** shows the gatehouse from inside the fort. The walls of the foundation of the gatehouse have been painted or plastered over. The structures in the photograph are still present in the fort today.

In 1989, a basic plan of the fort was recorded. **Figure 12** is the guard house plan, completed in 1989. When scaled to the measurement of the buildings taken recently, it was found that the dimensions from the 1989 survey are incorrect. However, the basic plan view of the guard house building is correct.



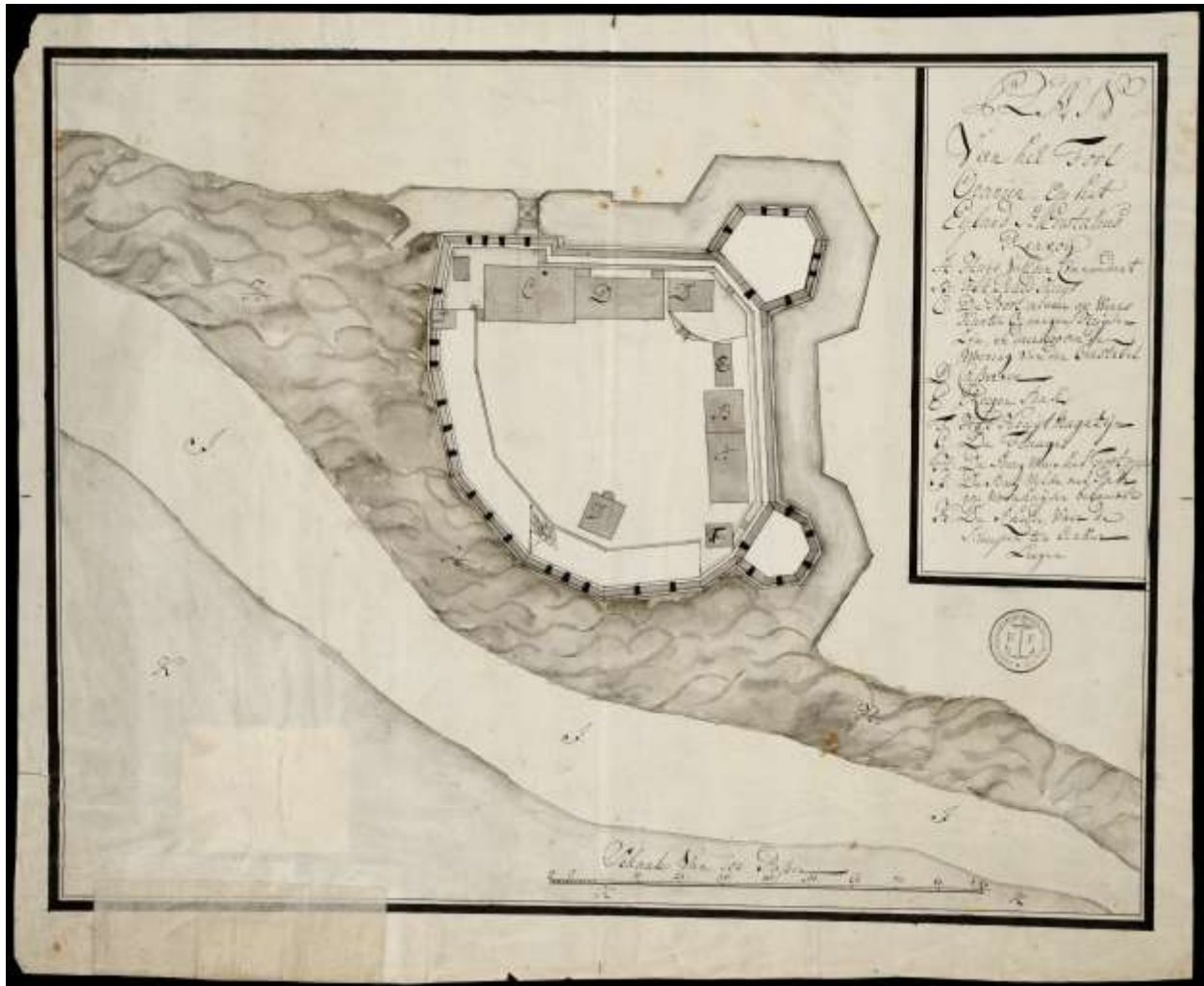
**Figure 2** 1723 depiction of the fortifications on St. Eustatius. The fort has two bastions, and is four sided.



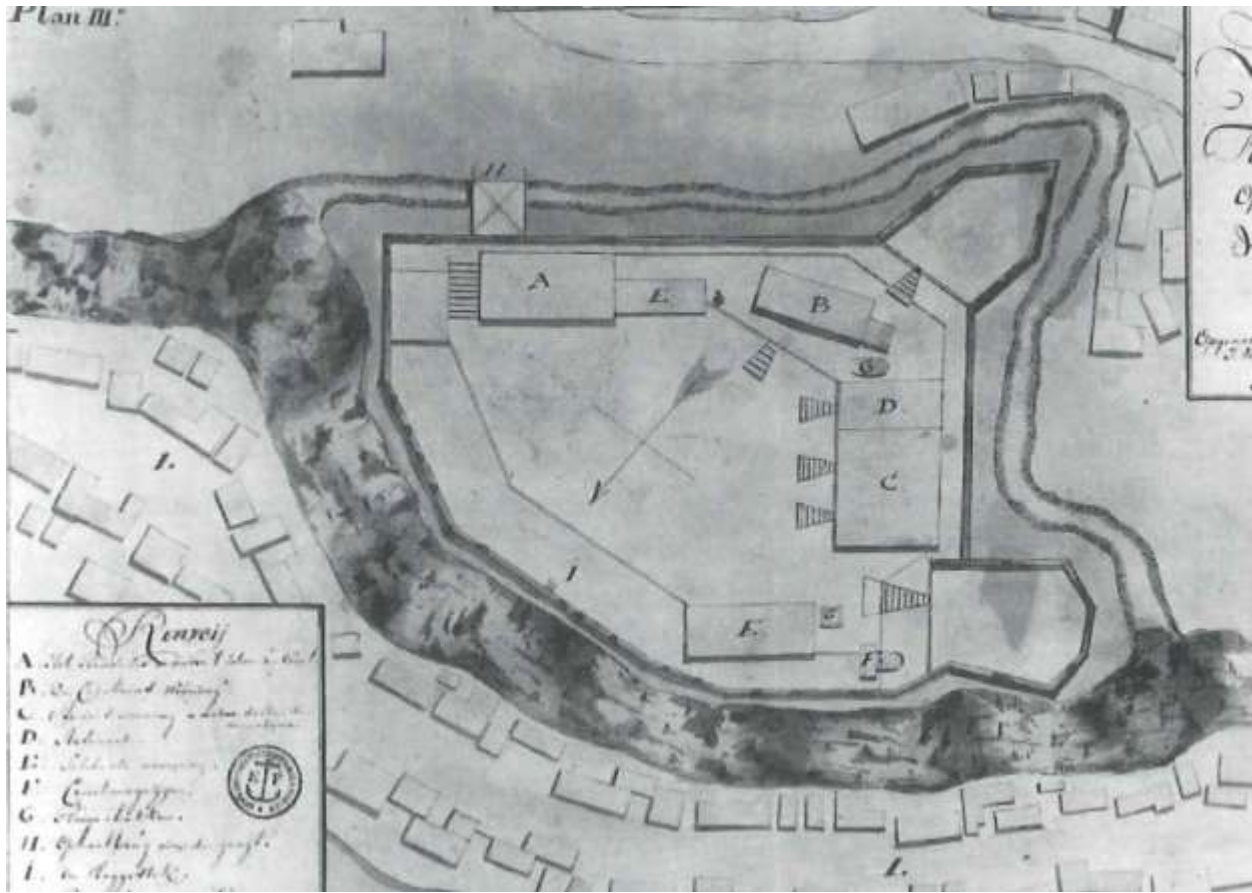
**Figure 3** Detail from a water color by A. Nelson (1774). Number two is Fort Oranje. There appear to be three corners of the fortifications shown in this picture.



**Figure 4** Detail of Upper Town Oranjestad from A. Nelson Watercolor (1774). The number five depicts Fort Oranje and the number six depicts the government offices inside the fort.



**Figure 5** Plan View of Fort Oranje post 1772. Structure A is the commander's house. Structure B is the town office building. Structure C is the constable's house/gatehouse with the civil and criminal prison underneath. Structures labeled D are barracks. Structure E is a cistern and Structure F is the powder magazine. Structures A-C and E-F still remain in the fort today with only minor modification made.



**Figure 6** Detail from J.W. Overmeer Fisken Fort Oranje map dated 1787. Structure A is the Hall and the gate. Structure B is the Captain's Residence. Structure C is the public house beneath the warehouse. Structure D represents the arsenal. Structure E is the barracks. Structure F represents the magazine. Structures labeled G are the cisterns, and H is the drawbridge over the moat. Structure I is the flag.

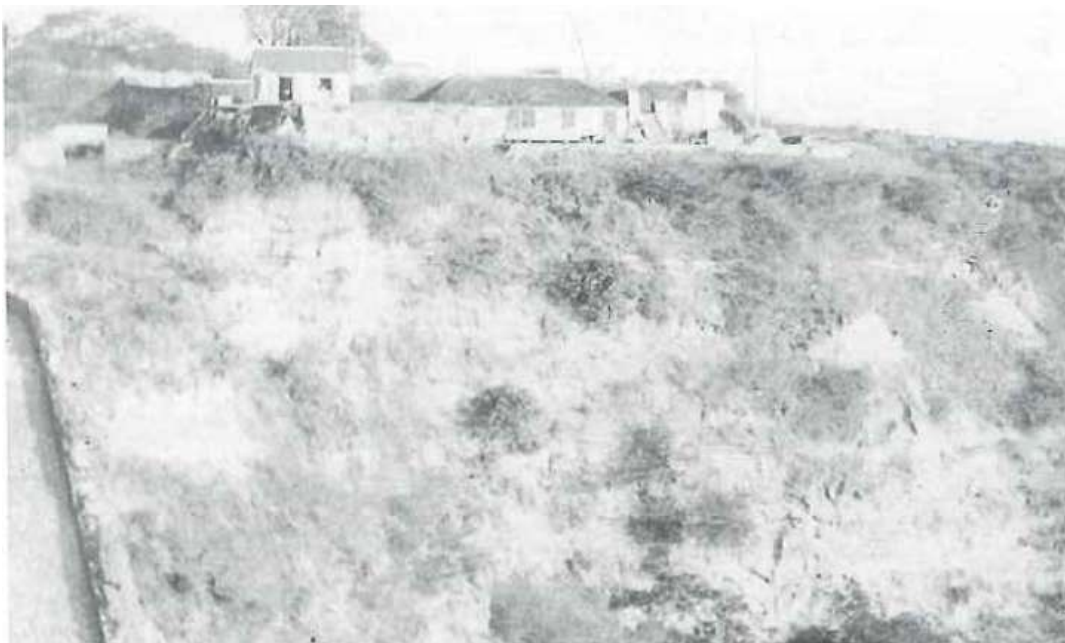




**Figure 7** View of the fort from Catholic Church by G.W.C. Voorduin (1860). The front entrance to the fort is visible, as is the roof over the former constable's house.



**Figure 8** Entrance to Fort Oranje before ca. 1912 (Unknown 1912). There is only one structure over the gate house, as opposed to the three seen in the photos from the fifties. The photo is from the private collection of Walter Hellebrand.



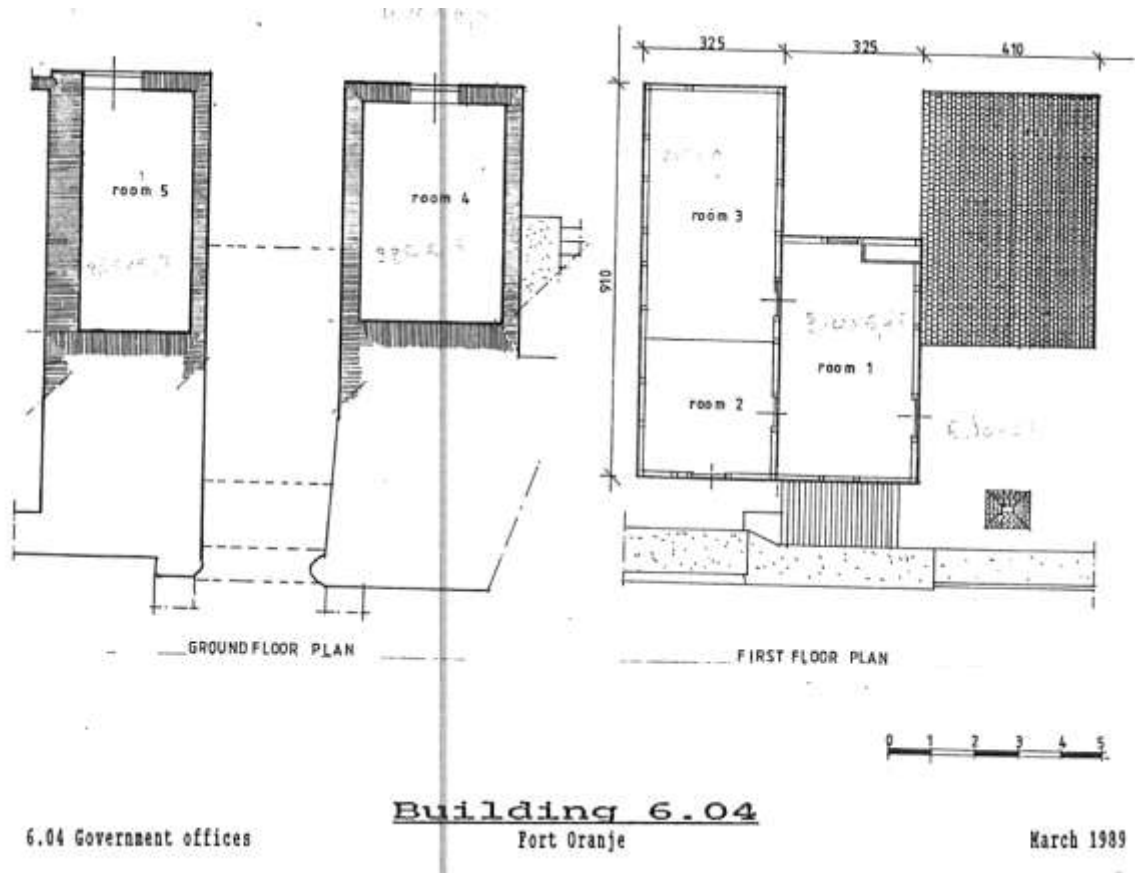
**Figure 9** The fort as it is seen in 1912. There is the single structure over the entrance (Unknown 1912). The photo is from a private collection.



**Figure 10** Photo of Fort Oranje Entrance ca. 1940-50 (Unknown). The two structures over the entrance are the renovated Constable's house. The photo is from a private collection.



**Figure 11** Photo of the southside of entrance to Fort Oranje (Unknown 1950). The wooden structures are the constable's house, and the stone structures are the prisons underneath. The photo is from a private collection.



**Figure 12** Plan View of Guard House in Fort (1989). Measurements in the drawing are incorrect. Floor plan layout is correct. The plan is part of the D2 architectural assessment of St. Eustatius (Volume 2).

### ***Previous Investigations***

There have been no previous archaeological or architectural investigations in Fort Oranje other than the basic recording of the structure completed by Plan D2 in 1989.

### ***Recording Methods***

Digital photographs, a plan view of the building and the stairs, and profiles of the stairs were completed. The building interior and exterior were visually examined. No photographs were taken of the exterior or the other rooms in the building's interior. Drawings of the stairs, plan views, and profiles were done. The bottom of the stairs was excavated.

### ***Recording Results***

The structure is located inside the walls of Fort Oranje, which is currently owned by the Government of St. Eustatius. All four foundation walls are clearly visible, as are the stairs (**Figure 13**). The core masonry room measures 3.18m x 3.05m. From the top step to the wooden floor above it, the wall measures 1.22m. The East, South, and West facing walls were constructed from stone, and have newer mortar than that found in the stairs and the North facing wall.

The North facing wall is made from volcanic basalt, limestone, Dutch red bricks, Dutch yellow bricks (*Ijsselstein*), and Dutch roof tile (**Figure 14**). It is possible that the North wall was built in the fort renovations of 1700 because the building materials found in the wall correspond

to the materials listed in the Dutch West India Company Records (Attema 22). The maximum height of the wall from the lowest stair to modern poured cement is 2.07m. The width of the wall is 1.6m at the widest point. The poured cement and the wooden floor were added in the 1967-76 fort renovation.

The East facing wall is constructed entirely from stone, and was constructed on top of the top stairs (**Figure 15**). The stone portion of the wall measures 2.06m x 0.94m. The poured cements and the wooden floor date from the renovations that took place between 1967 and 1976 in the fort. A plaque placed on the floor joists above the fort entrance commemorates renovations completed under the Historic Core Renovation Project in 1999.

The West wall adjacent to the stairs was constructed after the stairs were. The wall contains three different types of mortar, with the most recent dating from the 1967-76 renovation of the fort (**Figure 16**). It is possible that the bottom step was cut out to add the West wall. The wall is constructed from stone and measures 2.0m x 2.0m.

The South wall is entirely constructed from stone, and was built at the same time as the East wall due to the stones in the joined corner (**Figure 17**). The stone portion of the wall measures 1.55m x 1.0m.

The Stairs are hewn from volcanic basalt, and limestone. There are also coral inclusions found in the bottom step. The top step measures 2.0 m x 0.44 m, and has a depth of 0.28m (**Figures 13 & 14**). The next step down measures 1.48m x 0.44 m, and has a depth of 0.36m. The final step measures 1.46m x 0.42m, and has a depth of 0.34 m. The space below the bottom step has a depth of 0.72 m, however, there is an indication of mortar at a depth of 0.26m. It is possible that there was a fourth step; however it was cut out when the West wall was constructed.

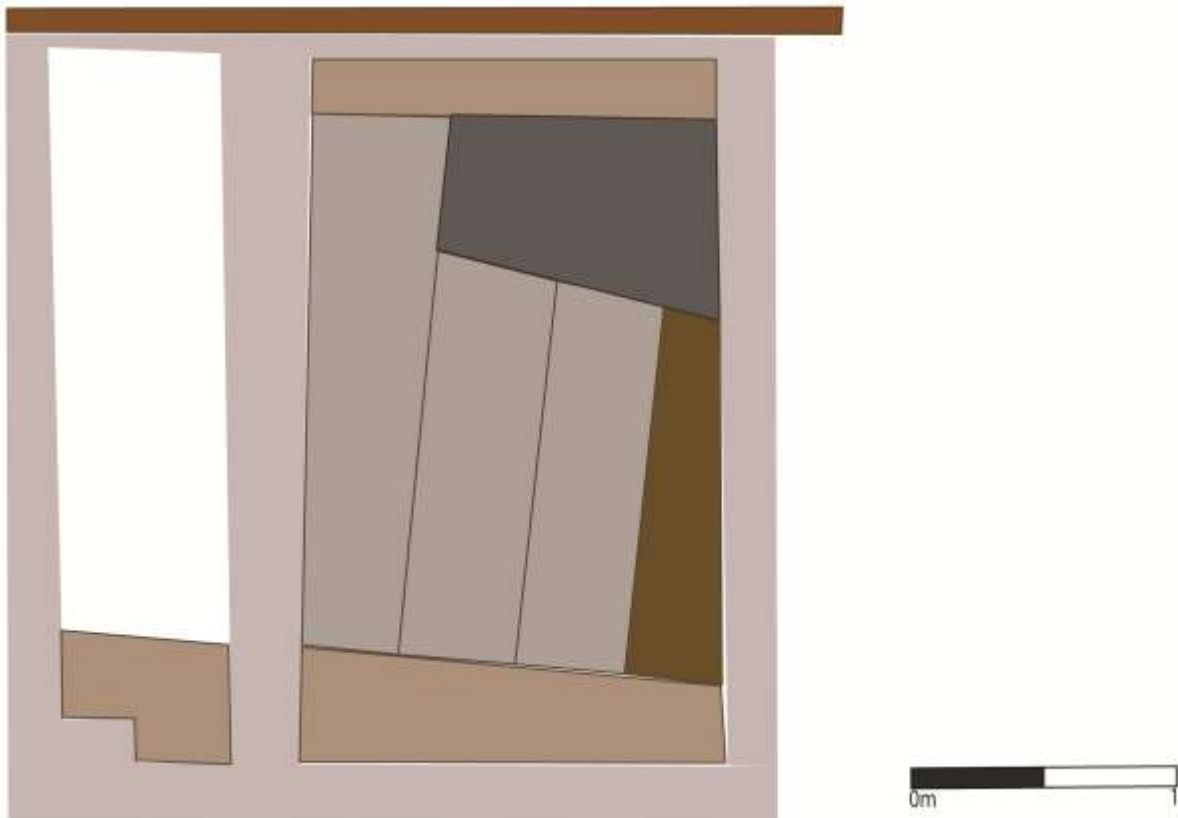
The North wall was constructed after the stairs were constructed (**Figure 18**).

The exterior structure around the stairs may have been built as early as 1755, in a renovation of the fort. The constable's house was built during this time with the two prisons in the basement. Although the structures over the prison were rebuilt sometime between 1834 and 1912 (**Figures 7 & 8**), it is possible that the stone prisons are the originals dating from 1757-62 (**Figure 18**). When these structures were built, the Commander's House and Barrack's were constructed at the same time (Attema 26, 51). The footprint of the stairs and Constable's house is noted in **Figure 18**.

Key:

-  Modern Poured Cement
-  Modern Wooden Boards
-  Stone Stairs
-  Stone Wall
-  Plastered Stone Wall
-  Excavated Area

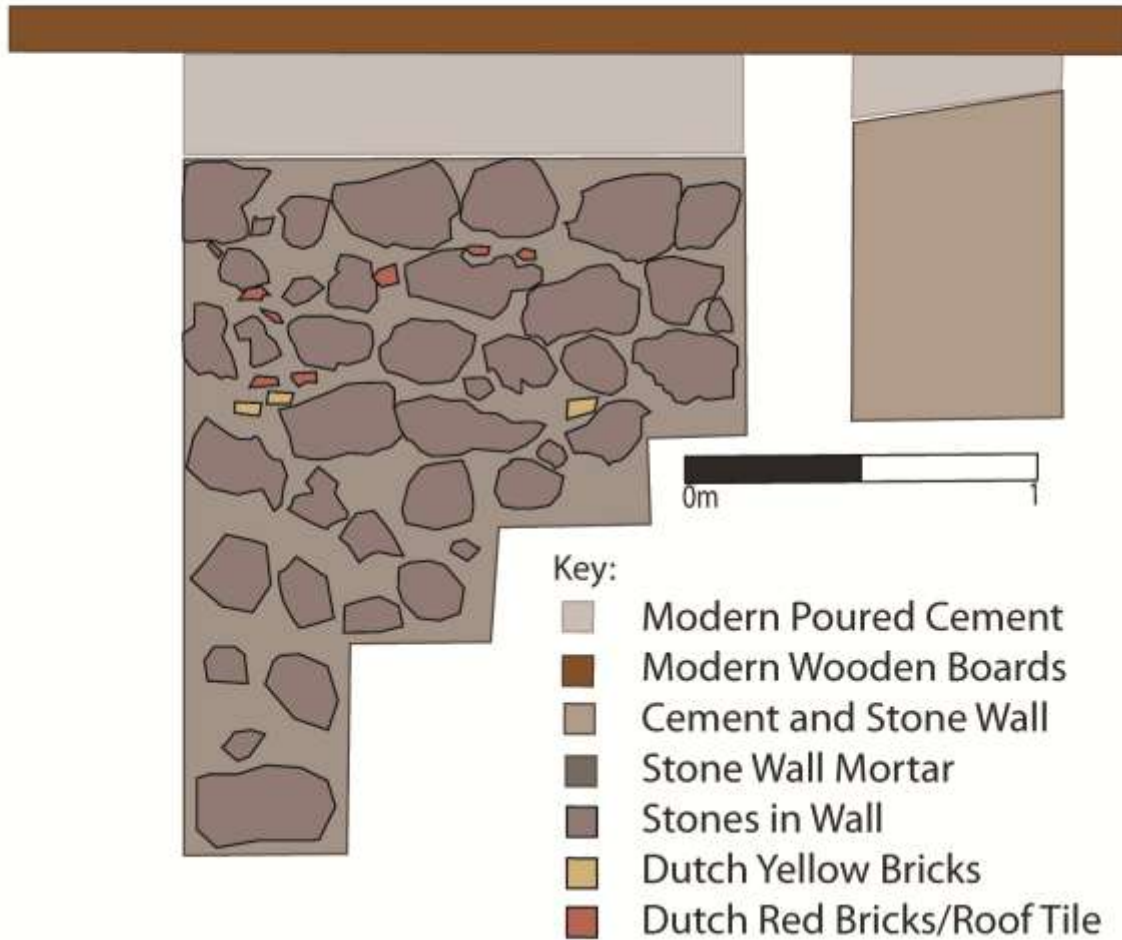
SE\_128\_Fort\_Oranje\_Unknown\_Staircase  
Contractor for Fort Renovation: John Patrick  
Drawn 14 July 2011 Digitised 17 July 2011 by MJR



**Figure 13** Plan View of Previously Unknown Staircase in Fort Oranje.



SE\_128\_Fort\_Oranje\_Unknown\_Staircase\_North\_Wall\_Profile  
Contractor for Fort Renovation: John Patrick  
Drawn 14 July 2011 Digitised 17 July 2011 by MJR



**Figure 14** Profile of the North Wall Adjacent to the Staircase. The wall contains multiple types of building materials.

SE\_128\_Fort\_Oranje\_Unknown\_Staircase\_East\_Wall\_Profile  
Contractor for Fort Renovation: John Patrick  
Drawn 14 July 2011 Digitised 17 July 2011 by MJR

Key:  
■ Poured Cement  
■ Modern Wooden Boards  
■ Stone Wall

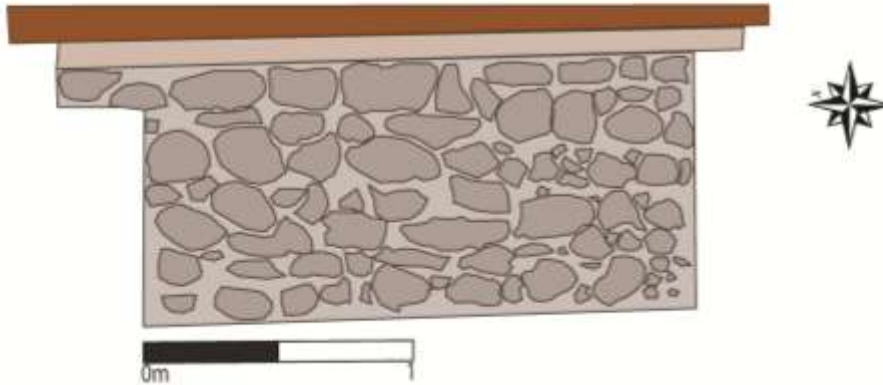


Figure 15 East facing Wall Profile. The wall is adjacent to the top step.

SE\_128\_Fort\_Oranje\_Unknown\_Staircase\_West\_Wall\_Profile  
Contractor for Fort Renovation: John Patrick  
Drawn 14 July 2011 Digitised 17 July 2011 by MJR

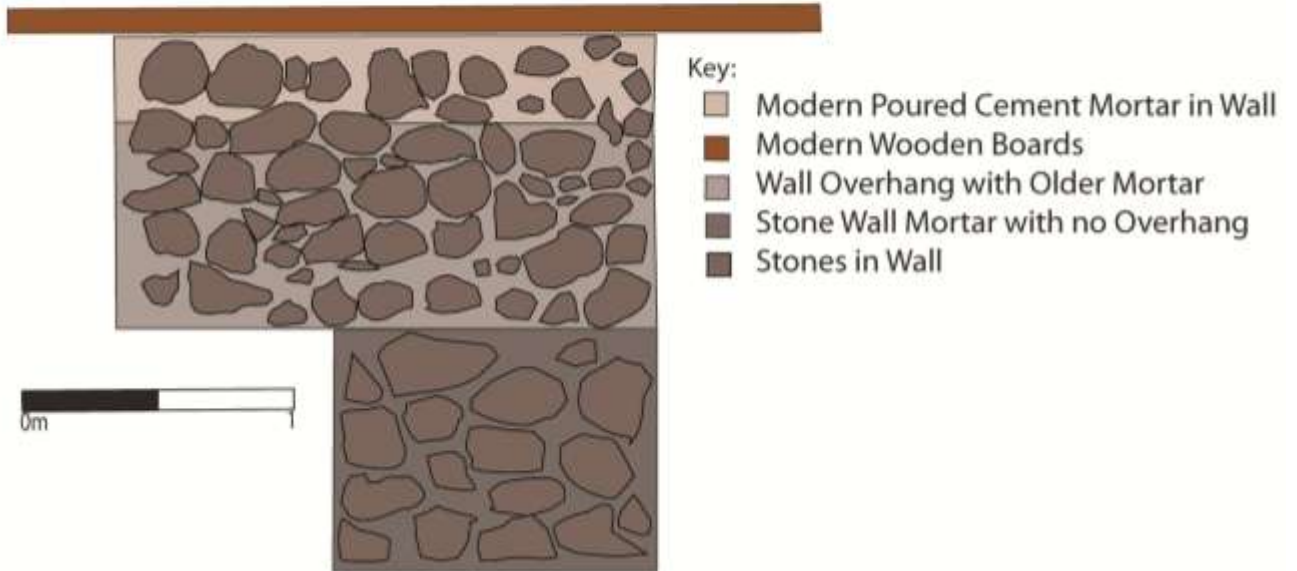



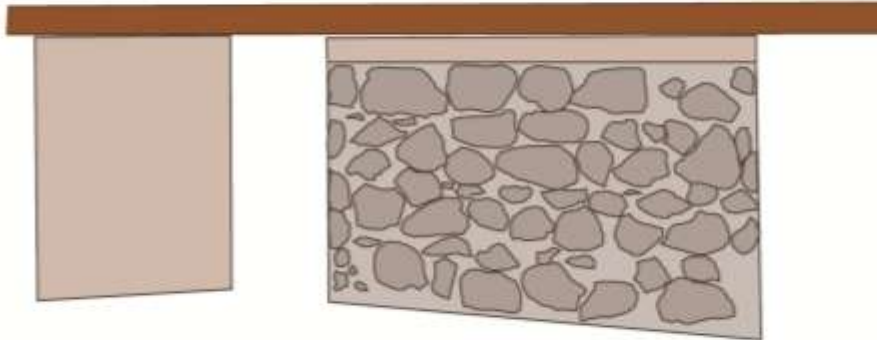


Figure 16 West facing wall profile. There were three types of mortar used in the construction of the wall.

SE\_128\_Fort\_Oranje\_Unknown\_Staircase\_South\_Wall\_Profile  
Contractor for Fort Renovation: John Patrick  
Drawn 14 July 2011 Digitised 17 July 2011 by MJR

- Key:
-  Poured Cement
  -  Modern Wooden Boards
  -  Stones in Wall
  -  Mortar in Wall



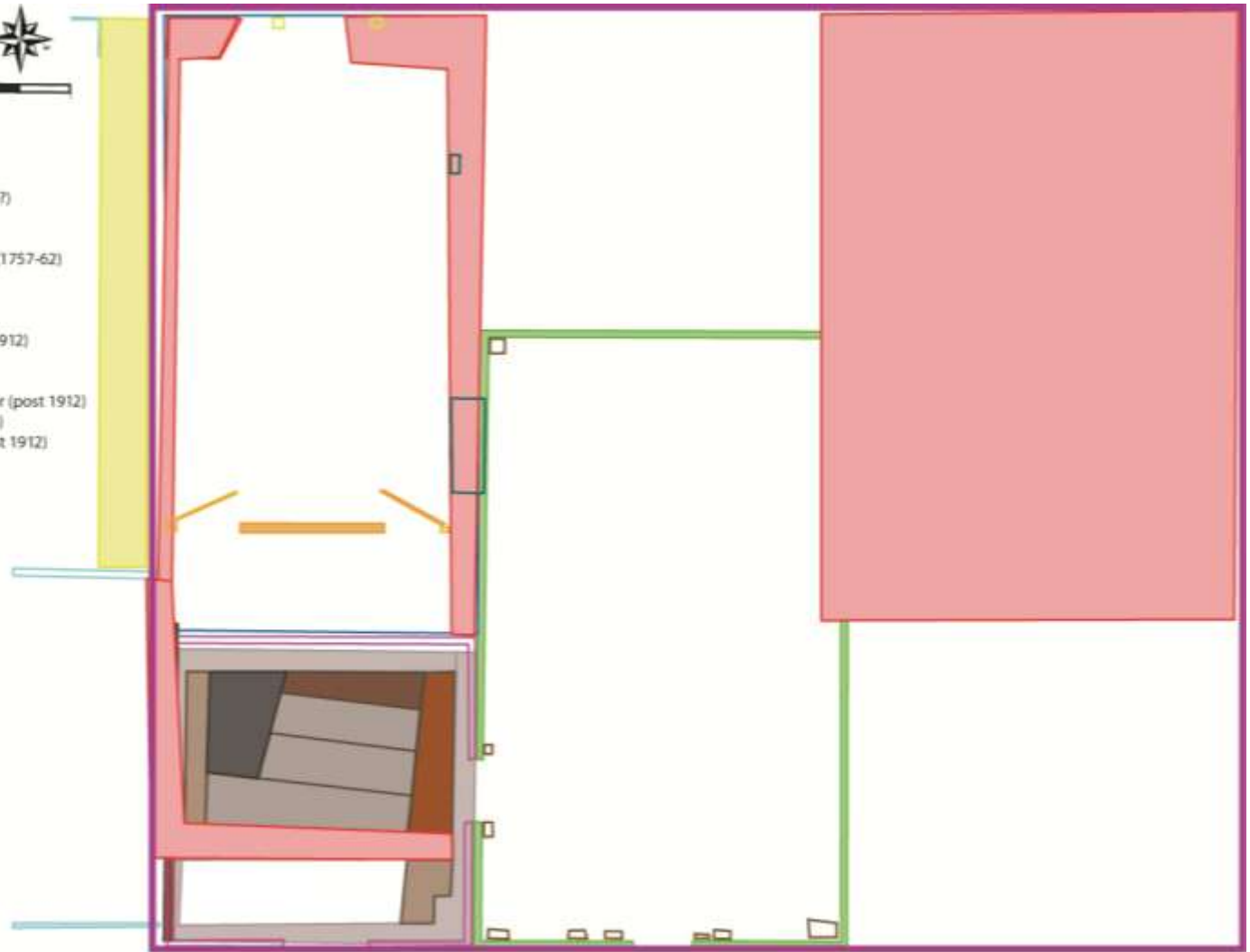
**Figure 17** Profile of the South wall adjacent to the stairs.

SE\_128\_Fort\_Oranje\_Unknown\_Staircase  
 Contractor for Fort Renovations: John Patrick  
 Drawn 14 July 2011 Digitised 17 July 2011 by MJR



Key:

- Modern Poured Cement (1967-76)
- Modern Wooden Boards (1967-76)
- Stone Stairs (1704)
- Stone Wall (1704)
- Plastered Stone Wall with Bricks (1704)
- Excavated Soil (T.P.Q. 1664)
- Constable's House (1757-62)
- Prison Cells under Constable's House (1757-62)
- Fill added in Renovation (1967-75)
- Electrical Closet Wall (1912-75)
- Gate House Upper Floor (1834-1912)
- Wooden Building Frame- First Floor (1912)
- Barrack's Wall (1757-62)
- Inside of Outer Fort Wall (1757-62)
- Wooden Building Frame- Second Floor (post 1912)
- First Floor Storage Room Extent (1834)
- Second Floor Office Room Extent (post 1912)
- Plastered Stone Wall (post 1757-62)



**Figure 18** Plan View of Staircase in the larger gate house structure.

### ***Excavation Methods***

Artifacts were recovered to establish preliminary dates for the last renovation of the fort and a preliminary date of the fill from the stair construction. The artifacts can provide information about the economic and social status of area's occupants.

The site was excavated using standard archaeological techniques. Soil was excavated stratigraphically and screened through 0.65 centimeter mesh. The artifacts were placed in polyethylene bags and appropriately labeled for each context. Detailed plan and profile drawings were made of the structure and the excavation site. Digital photographs were used to document the excavation progress. Standard St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological Research Context Record Forms were completed for each context.

### ***Excavation Results***

The area at the bottom of the stairs was excavated in order to gain a fuller understanding of the stair's purpose, and the construction used. In the first two layers of digging, Beer bottles (one whole Heineken bottle, 14 shards) and bottle caps (12) were recovered. They are assumed to date from the 1967-76 renovations that were done in the fort. The 10 cent Netherlands Antillean Guilder Piece found in the first layer of fill dates from 1971. The top two layers also contain numerous molded manufactured nails, dating from either the 1971 renovation, or the 1934 renovation of the jails cells into offices.

Multiple nails dating from 1920-1976 renovations were found in each layer indicating that there are inclusions in the soil found at the bottom of the stairs.

In the second layer of fill at the base of the steps, there were three pieces of ceramics—one large fragment of lead glazed coarse unrefined earthenware, a small fragment of transitional pearlware/whiteware (1810-1830), and a small fragment of North Staffordshire comb slipware (1750). The lead glazed earthenware cannot give a date indication, however the other two pieces can give an insight into the stair's construction. The west wall may have been constructed when the constable's house was constructed (between 1755 and 1762). The North Staffordshire Comb slip ware would be included in the fill from removing the bottom step and pushing the fill back behind the west wall in the construction of the prison. The transitional pearl/white ware dates from a later period, possibly from the 1834 renovation of the fort.

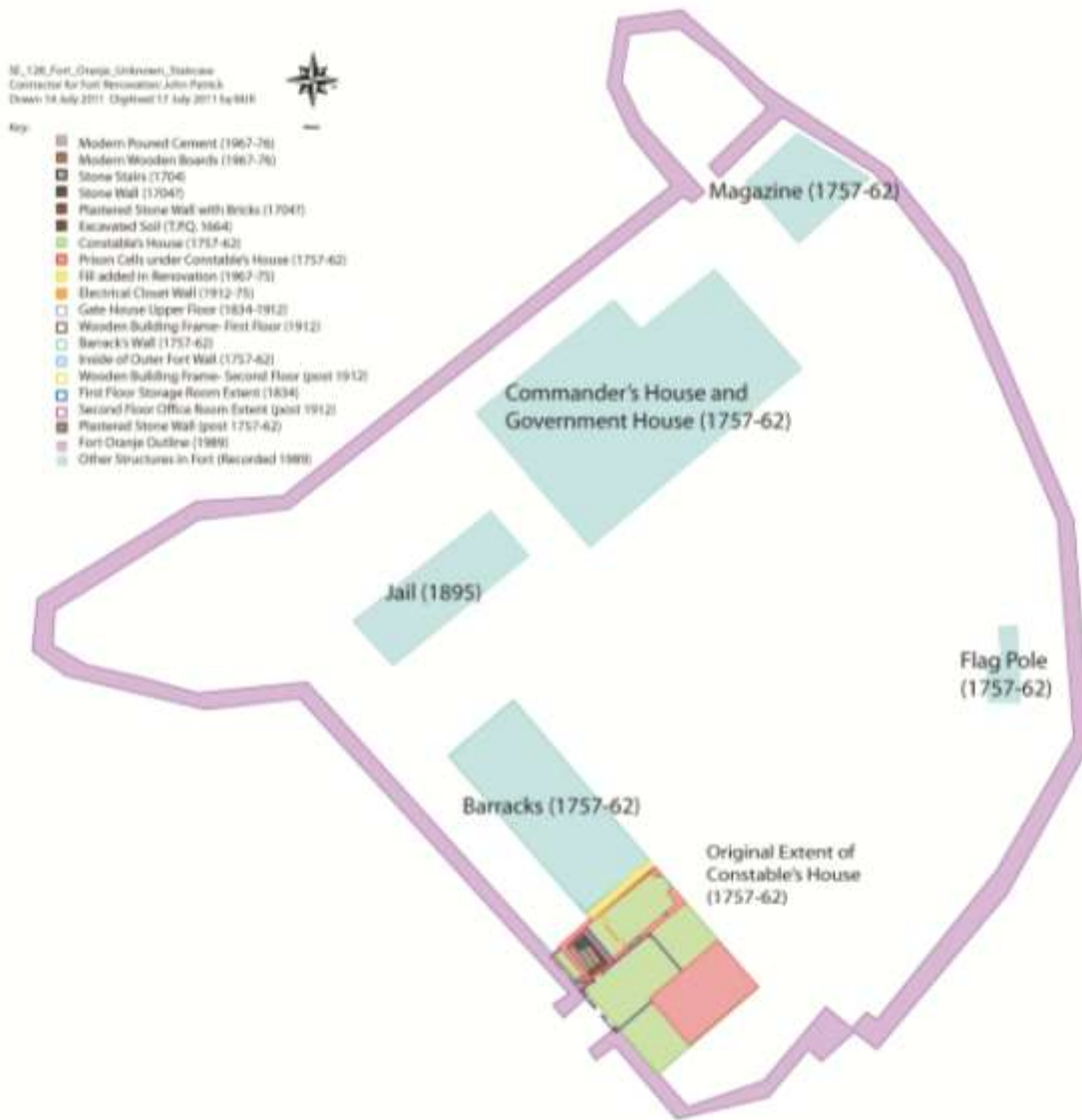
In the third layer of soil excavated, there were three fragments from kaolin pipe stem. Using Binford's Method for calculating the dates of Kaolin pipe stems, the bore diameters of the pipe stems indicate that they date from 1664 (Hume 299). Using this information, it may be that the bottom soil layer dates from the soil piled under the stairs as a foundation from fort renovation in 1704. A Copper Alloy pin with two tongues from the backpiece of a buckle was found in the last fill layer. The buckle tongue indicates that the buckle is not part of a knee buckle or a shoe buckle because it is made from two separate pieces of copper alloy. It is impossible to date the buckle without the frame or front piece of the buckle (Stelten 17). However, we do know that the buckle could be part of a backpack, holster, or a horse rein.

## **Conclusions**

### *Property Timeline*

Using the above information, a timeline and plan (**Figure 19**) of Fort Oranje can be constructed:

1629	French construct wooden palisaded fort
1636	Dutch rebuild French fort, calling it Fort Oranje
1689	The French reinforce the walls of the fort with a double palisade.
1700	Fort Oranje is walled in
1701	Fort is in a state of disrepair. The fort has four bastions.
1704	Repairs are begun in the fort by Commander Lamont. Dutch red and yellow bricks, volcanic stone, and limestone are used in construction of fort. The fort is stone instead of wood
1704-1765	Bastion Bockepunt (NW bastion) collapses and falls off the cliff
1709	French destroy the fort
1721	Slaves are required to maintain the fort
1737	Fort is restored by Dutch with tax money
1738	Trench built around the fort
1741	Drawbridge, entrance gate, and wall are finished
1755	Bastions are threatening to collapse, fort is found in general state of disrepair
1757-1762	New bridge, commander's house, constable's house, and two prisons are constructed in the fort.
1775	Constable's House is in a state of disrepair
1777	All houses in the fort are in a poor condition. Repairs are not done due to bankruptcy in the West India Company. 50 men are living in the fort.
1781	Lord Rodney captures the fort and renames it Fort George. 650 men are living in the fort. No repairs are made to the fort, and part of the parapet falls off the cliff. Slaves are required to maintain the fort.
1781-1795	The hall in the fort moves above the gate, and the arsenal replaces the hall in the Commander's House Structure. Another cistern is constructed.
1795	Another law is passed requiring slaves to maintain the fort
1816	The garrison in the fort is still in use
1829	The fort is decayed with crumbling walls and an over grown court yard
1834	The fort is restored and the walls rebuilt
1834-1935	The commander moves into the gate house
1935	The gate house becomes the office of the tax collector



**Figure 19** Current Fort Plan View with area of excavation.

The architectural and archaeological evidence illustrates the history of Fort Oranje and the modifications that occurred during the fort's use. The stairs found beneath the former constable's house date from an early version of Fort Oranje, quite possibly from the first stone fort built at the present fort's location. The stairs from an early fort could have led to the walkway behind the walls of the earlier palisaded fort, and they can help to understand the fortifications that were deemed necessary in the founding of St. Eustatius. The materials used in



the construction of the stairs and the North wall match the list of materials in the Dutch West India records dating from 1704. The stairs predate all of the current structure in the fort, and help to give dimension to the structure of the first forts built on St. Eustatius.

The many layers of renovations that were continuously done in the fort can lead to understanding the fort's role in the history of St. Eustatius. The constant repairs illustrate that citizens wanted an impressive fort, perhaps to illustrate the wealth of the island, yet the lack of care for the structure gives evidence that the Dutch West India Company did not feel it was necessary to provide protection for the island. The fort wasn't a symbol of fear from attack; it was a symbol that illustrates the great prosperity of trade on the Golden Rock.

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