An archaeological assessment of Steward plantation, St. Eustatius, Caribbean Netherlands

Ruud Stelten MA
Client
Ministerie van Defensie
Dienst Vastgoed Defensie
Directie West
Postbus 90004
3509AA Utrecht

Contractor
St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological Research
Rosemary Lane
St. Eustatius, Caribisch Nederland
info@secar.org
+599 318 0066

Principal Investigator, Author, and Site Director
Ruud Stelten MA
Archaeologist
St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological Research
ruudstelten@gmail.com
+599 586 0873

Date: 2 February 2012
Acknowledgements

SECAR would like to thank José Romero and his team from Paradise Landscaping for the clearing of the archaeological sites and cutting the paths through the research area. Their outstanding work was instrumental in bringing this project to a successful end. SECAR also likes to thank Ronald Mettraux for the excellent aerial photography flight.
Table of contents

1. Introduction 1

2. Historical background 2

3. Cartographic evidence 16

4. Research methodology 25

5. Results 26

6. Discussion and recommendations 45

7. Bibliography 47

Appendix: Aerial overview of sites
1. Introduction

In November 2011, the St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological Research was asked to conduct an archaeological assessment of Steward plantation. The reason for this assessment to be carried out was the proposed construction of a correctional facility at this location that will serve both Statia and Saba.

The research area is located on the eastern slope of the Quill volcano (Figure 1), and houses several known archaeological remains. These were mapped and documented by archaeologist Jay Haviser in 1981. Furthermore, there was a high potential for the presence of additional archaeological sites. The construction of the proposed facility will have a direct impact on various archaeological sites.

This report comprises a historical introduction to the island in general and a detailed cartographic study of Steward plantation in addition to an in-depth assessment of the archaeological remains found on the surface in the research area and their place within the wider plantation landscape. It further contains recommendations for future research and preservation of the archaeological remains encountered.

Figure 1. The location of Steward plantation, indicated by the red arrow.
2. Historical background

It was Wednesday 13th November 1493 when Christopher Columbus, on his second voyage to the New World, sailed by St. Kitts and became the first European to lay eyes on St. Eustatius. He did not land here, but he gave the island a name: \textit{S. Maria de la niebe} (this name was later given to the island currently known as Nevis). Later explorers called the island by its Amerindian name \textit{Aloi}, meaning ‘cashew island’. Throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the island appeared on charts and in documents as \textit{Estasia, Estaxia, St. Anastasia, St. Eustatius, Statia, Eustathio} and \textit{S. Eustachio}. In the end, two of these names are still used today.

In the sixteenth century the Spanish, who constituted the majority of Europeans in the Caribbean, did not settle on Statia. One of the reasons for this is that the island did not have the things that the Spaniards were looking for: treasures like gold and silver. Furthermore, it did not have many (if any) Indian slaves who could be employed to mine these precious metals. Not surprisingly, other European powers came to have a presence in the area as well during the sixteenth century, and over time they were successful in making dents in the Spanish monopoly in the Caribbean. The Spanish, forced to defend their major ports and the treasure fleets, directed their attention to the Greater Antilles. The Lesser Antilles, including St. Eustatius, served as entry points for pirates and buccaneers, but later also for merchants, leading eventually to a presence in the Caribbean for, among others, the English, French and Dutch. They soon saw the value of the islands beyond points from which to attack the Spanish. In the early seventeenth century these European powers started to see potential in agriculture and commerce, resulting in rapid colonization of the Lesser Antilles. The organization that facilitated the first permanent European settling of St. Eustatius finds its origin in a war between the then most powerful European empire and one of the richest areas in Europe that started in the preceding century.

\textit{The founding of the Dutch West India Company}

The story of the first permanent European colonization of St. Eustatius begins with the founding of the Dutch West India Company (WIC). The events leading up to its foundation can be traced back to 1568, when the people of the Seventeen Provinces started the so called ‘Dutch Revolt’ against Philip II, the king of the Spanish empire to which they were subjected. The main reason for this revolt was the persecution of Protestants by the Spaniards during the Protestant Reformation. The revolt resulted in the Eighty Years’ War, started by William the Silent to liberate the Calvinist Dutch from the Catholic Spaniards. In 1581, the northern provinces signed the Union of Utrecht and the Act of Abjuration, which can be seen as a
Dutch declaration of independence. The provinces which declared themselves independent of Spain called themselves the Republic of the Seven United Provinces.

Due to the war that was going on between this newly formed republic and Spain, the Dutch could no longer trade with Spain and its dominions (which also included Portugal). Until this time, the Dutch had distributed goods imported from the overseas colonies of Spain and Portugal. One of the main commodities they imported from Portugal was salt. The prosperous Dutch herring industry required large quantities of this commodity to conserve the herring. When the trade of salt with the Iberian peninsula was forbidden in 1598, the Dutch merchants had to build up an independent trade and search for salt elsewhere. Due to the former trade with Spain and Portugal they were well acquainted with the riches of the West Indies and South America where Spain and Portugal had a number of colonies. Moreover, the Dutch had a large number of sailors, capable ship-owners and sufficient capital. After the Twelve Years’ Truce, the Dutch Republic founded the First Dutch West India Company (WIC) in 1621. The WIC was a trading company that would increase trade with the West Indies and South America and establish settlements there which would be used as permanent trading posts. This was, however, not its main goal, since the WIC was an explicit instrument of war against Spain. This was to be, at all times, its main objective. The aim of the Dutch was not so much the occupation and colonization of the many easily available islands, as the gathering of information concerning the movements of the Spanish treasure fleets (Goslinga 1979:21). This information was used to capture the cargoes of Spanish ships, such as the famous silver fleet seized by Admiral Piet Heyn in 1628.

The Dutch merchants started an illicit trade with the Spanish colonies. As early as 1629, the Dutch had begun obtaining salt regularly on Tortuga. Salt was also obtained from St. Martin, Anguilla, the Curaçao islands, and the lagoon of Punta de Araya and the coastal area around the Uribe River in Venezuela. This aroused Great Britain’s jealousy since they were conducting illegal activities in the area as well, despite the monopoly position of Spain.

The early years
In the 1630s the Dutch began to colonize various Caribbean islands. St. Maarten was colonized in 1631, Curaçao in 1634, Aruba, Bonaire and St. Eustatius in 1636 and Saba around 1640. In December 1635 the Zeeland merchant Jan Snouck and his partners received permission to establish a colony on St. Croix. They fitted out a ship, appointed Peter van Corselles as leader of the future colony and sent him with sufficient men to the West Indies. On arrival the island appeared not to live up to expectations regarding fertility and anchorages, so they concentrated on the nearby St. Eustatius. This island was occupied by the Dutch in the spring of 1636. The expedition found the island uninhabited. The Amerindians who had lived there had probably died out or moved to other islands.
The English were the first Europeans to settle on St. Eustatius in 1625, but they moved soon after, probably due to unsuccessful agriculture (Alofs et al. 1997:76). Van Corselles and his men found the ruins of a deserted bastion on the island, on which they built Fort Oranje.

The bastion Fort Oranje was constructed on was built in 1629 by the French. In this year they temporarily settled on Statia, because they were afraid that the Spanish were going to use the island as a base from which to attack the French settlement on St. Kitts. Insufficient quantities of drinking water made their stay a short one. The Dutch strengthened the French fort with some cannon (Goslinga 1979:79). In 1636 the new population of St. Eustatius consisted of 40-50 people. These were mainly Zeelanders, Flemings and Walloons. They set up tobacco, sugar cane and cotton plantations and called the island ‘Nieuw Zeelandt’. Coffee and indigo were also grown on the island. As the plantations increased, so did the number of imported black and red slaves. Because of the international trade, several European merchants settled on the island as well, although the emphasis in this century lay on agriculture. In 1665 the population had grown to 330 white people and 840 Negroes and Indians. The yields from the plantations, which by 1650 were even to be found on the slopes of the hills, were exported to Zeeland. Prosperity increased steadily, but it was probably not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that urban development started to take place. Habitation in the seventeenth century most likely consisted of scattered farms around the fort (Purmer 2003). There were also a few warehouses built indicating small-scale trade. All this Dutch activity on the island caused Great Britain to be envious, particularly since a royal patent of 1627 declared Great Britain the owner of St. Eustatius. Despite these irritations these first few decades were very peaceful.

Turbulent times
In 1663 peace was disrupted when the Englishman Robert Holmes sacked the island. The English occupied St. Eustatius in 1665 during the Second Anglo-Dutch War after an attack led by Edward Morgan. In 1667 St. Eustatius was given back to the Dutch after the Treaty of Breda. In 1672, during the Third Anglo-Dutch War, Statia was under English control again, but a year later the Dutch took over the island. At the Treaty of Westminster in 1674 it was officially returned to the Netherlands, but the English were afraid it would fall into French hands, so they held on to it. This was agreeable to the Heren XIX, the board of the West India Company; in this way they did not have to spend any money on the defense of the island (Attema 1976:18). In 1679 it was taken back into Dutch hands. In the same year though, the French attacked the island and destroyed the whole settlement. A year later a joint English/Dutch attack placed the island in Dutch hands again.
At this time the West India Company thought St. Eustatius would be very suitable as a transit harbour for slaves. Until now, Statia had been owned by various ‘patrons’. These were individual merchants and representatives of the Zeeland Chamber, who had a large capital at their disposal and were responsible for law and order and the appointment of a commander. In 1682, the island became completely the property of the Second Dutch West India Company. The Zeeland merchants who had owned the island gave it to the Second WIC, since the constant disruption to planting and trading activities by pirates and privateers proved too difficult for them. In 1689, St. Eustatius was captured by the French during King William’s War. They hauled away a booty close to two million dollars. By 1697 the Dutch found themselves again in possession of the island, after the English recaptured it for them (Goslinga 1979:81). The poor state of the island’s defense, including cannon that refused to fire or would even explode, was one of the main reasons why it was often given over without any significant opposition during the last four decades of the seventeenth century. Moreover, the inhabitants over time lost the will to resist, since the Dutch Republic most of the time failed to supply them with sufficient ammunition.

The multiple changes of power and an economic recession led to great poverty on the island at the end of the seventeenth century (Purmer 2003). People sometimes did not even have money to buy shoes. Because land was extremely cheap, people from other islands started moving to Statia. Between 1705 and 1715 the population on the island more than doubled from 606 to 1,274 inhabitants. Because of this population increase and the prevailing poverty, in 1717 the Statians wanted to colonize St. Croix, but an answer from the States General of the Republic was never received (Hartog 1976:35). During the first three decades of the eighteenth century family feuds and rivalries increased dramatically, ruining all chances of good and stable government and undermining a solid basis for prosperity. Since Statia was not very productive at that time, the Heren X did not really care about this turmoil.

**Forts and batteries**

The first record of a fort other than Fort Oranje is found at the end of the seventeenth century. It was in this period that the Waterfort was built, although the exact year of construction is unclear. It contained sixteen cannon but was hardly ever used. As a result, it quickly fell into disrepair. In the late 1680s a battery was built on Gilboa Hill, overlooking Tommelendijk (Tumble Down Dick) Bay. When Isaac Lamont accepted the post of commander in 1701, he found the forts in a sad state. He asked the Heren X of the WIC for building materials and craftsmen to strengthen them, but his needs were never met. In 1709 French filibusters captured the island. Out of joy at their easy conquest, they wanted to fire off a cannon, but not a single one was fit for use (Hartog 1976:33). The French soon took off with a large booty, after which Lamont resumed possession of the island. By this time there were three
other batteries in use apart from Fort Oranje: Dolijn, Tommelendijk and a new fort between Tommelendijk and Oranje. Nearly 30 years later, during the command of Isaac Faesch, not much seems to have changed, for the forts were still in a poor state. In 1737 the taxes were raised to finance their repair and the WIC sent 30,000 bricks for the forts’ renovation. The walls were strengthened and the platforms for the cannon were rebuilt, but despite from that everything remained much as before (Attema 1976:24).

In 1748, during the command of Johannes Heyliger, the citizens voluntarily raised a sum of money for the building of some new coastal forts. Two new forts were built: Hollandia and Zeelandia. The Heren X supplied the forts with cannon, but they forgot to send the cannonballs. Fort Oranje was renovated as well, but by 1755 its condition had again deteriorated. The original plan of Fort Oranje incorporated four bastions, one of which eventually collapsed along the cliff edge. Drawings dating to 1765 clearly depict the current three-bastion design. Enclosed within Fort Oranje were magazines and barracks.

In the mid-eighteenth century, commander De Windt built various batteries along the northern coast of the island: Turtle Bay, Concordia, Corrie Corrie and Lucie. In the south he built a battery named after himself: Battery De Windt. By 1781 fourteen military sites were present on the island, all in severe disrepair. At the end of the same year the French, who had taken over the island, restored the neglected forts and built four new ones: Panga, Jussac, Royal, and Bouille. They also constructed a network of roads linking the forts and batteries. By the end of 1782 Johannes de Graaff mentions that the island had been brought ‘in a formidable state of defense’ (Hartog 1976:97).

Figure 2. Drawing by Jan Veltkamp depicting slaves working on a Statian sugar plantation around 1750. Source: National Maritime Museum, Amsterdam.
Figure 3. Drawing by S. Weuijster depicting slave traders in the roadstead of St. Eustatius in 1763. Goods and people are being transported between ships. One of the sailing ships bears the name Sara Helena. Source: Atlas van Stolk collection, Rotterdam.

All these sites were not used simultaneously. The Statian garrison numbered around fifty men of a low standard. They were vagrants, ranging from seventeen year old boys to 67 year old men. The attitude of the WIC was one of the reasons why the fortifications time and time again fell into negligence. Everything had to be done as cheaply as possible. This was not exceptional in the Caribbean, since defense works of the British and French islands fared no better.

Slavery and the slave trade
In the 1630s the Dutch conquered parts of Brazil and Guinea. From this time on they improved their position as slave traders. In the period 1660-1670 Curaçao developed into an important slave depot for the West Indies. After 1730 everyone was allowed to export slaves from the Dutch West African coast, but had to pay tribute to the WIC to do so. The WIC lost a lot of money to smugglers who did not pay and could offer slaves for a cheaper price. On St. Eustatius these smugglers sold a lot of slaves, since the WIC failed to supply slaves time and time again. Already in 1675 St. Eustatius provided the French, Spanish and English islands with slaves (Hartog 1976:49). By 1725 the Dutch shipped 2,000 to 3,000 slaves per year to the island, almost all in transit (Figure 3). Slave ships brought their cargo to Statia to be auctioned to buyers from the surrounding islands. Fort Amsterdam, at Oranje Bay’s northern end, hosted slave auctions and served to store slaves. Initially, the main building was only one storey; however it was expanded to two in 1742 to accommodate additional slaves. Sometimes the slaves were transferred from one ship to another without even coming ashore.
Slaves were delivered dressed, and if you wanted to get a good price for a slave, he/she needed to be well fed. The Statian slaves worked not only on plantations (Figure 2), but also as crewmen on ships, ship workers, transporters of goods to and from ships, and as servants. They possibly also helped in making illegally imported raw sugar into rum. The slave trade reached its peak in the early 1770s. Towards the end of the eighteenth century people started to protest against this trade. The slave trade in the Dutch colonies was ended in 1814, but it was not until 1863 that the Dutch abolished slavery. In town, slaves lived both in and around the merchants’ homes; various inventories indicate that slave dwellings were part of these properties in addition to other outbuildings. There is also strong evidence that a large number of freed slaves lived in areas at the periphery of Oranjestad. On plantations slaves lived in little villages, often referred to as ‘slave quarters.’ Interestingly, whereas on most other Caribbean islands the slave dwellings were in sight of the plantation owner’s house, on Statia this was not the case, suggesting that surveillance of the slaves’ home lives was more limited. Owners could have, as was found elsewhere, placed slave housing in an area that was more easily observed. However, the owners may have felt no need to constantly watch their slaves due to the small size of Statia. As a result, slaves probably enjoyed a much different physical and social environment that those living on other islands. On Statia, slaves moved between the plantations and throughout the trading district with relative ease.

Thus the living conditions were likely less difficult for slaves on Statia compared to those in other places. Here they could earn money with which they could purchase their freedom. These so called ‘free blacks’ would sometimes have a few slaves of their own (Gilmore in Haviser & MacDonald 2006:78). Nevertheless, it often happened that slaves tried to escape, not always without success. In 1750, a ship named the Young Elias lay at anchor at St. Eustatius. The only people on board were four slaves, who hoisted sail and escaped to Puerto Rico, where, once they were baptized, they did not have to worry about being sent back.

Figure 4. Het Eyland St. Eustasie. View of St. Eustatius in 1759. Cultivated land can be seen extending high up the slopes of the Quill to the right. Source: National Archives, The Hague.
Growing prosperity and the Golden Era

The economic situation of Statia changed for the better after 1730. In 1739 a synagogue (Honen Dalim) was built in the center of Oranjestad for the growing Jewish community of the island. Most people, however, were Christian, resulting in the building of various churches over time. By the 1740s it was no longer possible to expand agriculture, since all arable land was under cultivation. The demand for sugar soared in this decade. As a result, the plantations growing cotton, coffee and tobacco were converted into sugar cane plantations. A 1742 map of the island shows 88 plantations and/or landholdings. Nearly four decades later, in 1781, this number had diminished to about twenty, indicating an economic shift from agriculture to trade. On Statia, plantations were designed for two primary purposes: first, to process illegal sugar for re-export and second, to grow provisions for re-supplying ships and for slaves on other islands.

The residential and commercial areas on the island were enlarged in the eighteenth century despite various setbacks and difficulties like lazy workers, conflicts about landownership and devastating hurricanes in 1772 and 1780. The bay area, where Lower Town is located, was extended by reclaiming land from the sea and Upper Town by newly built merchant houses on a stretch of land called the ‘Compagniessavane’, a West India Company owned plantation above town. The latter was laid out in lots approximately 0.1 hectares in size. Lower and Upper Town were divided by high cliffs. Several steep paths connected the two parts of the town. Lower Town started to become a trade locus towards the end of the first half of the eighteenth century. Due to steady population growth, housing was scarce and rental of a house was very expensive. This caused merchants to build houses on the bay after 1760, some of which were of palatial dimensions.

Besides the residential houses new warehouses, trade offices and a new weighing house were built. In the latter half of the eighteenth century building activities and trade increased resulting in a strip of an estimated 600 two-storey high warehouses that stretched for two kilometers along the bay (Figures 5 & 6). They were sometimes so full that the doors could no longer be used. An account from the Scottish lady Janet Schaw dating to 1775 shows Lower Town to have been a continuous market displaying goods of different types and qualities sold by people from all over the world:

“From one end of the town of Eustatia to the other is a continuous market, where goods of the most different uses and qualities are displayed before the shop doors. Here hang rich embroideries, painted silks, flowered Muslins, with all the Manufactures of the Indies. Just by hang Sailor’s Jackets, trousers, shoes, hats, etc. The next stall contains the most exquisite silver plate, the most beautiful indeed I ever saw, and close by these iron pots, kettles and shovels. Perhaps the next presents you with French and English Millinary wares. But it were endless to enumerate the variety of merchandise in such a place, for in every store you find every thing, be their qualities ever so opposite.” (Journal of a Lady of Quality: Janet Schaw, 1731-1801)
Figure 5. View of St. Eustatius from the northwest as it appeared in 1774. The large building in Upper Town is the residence of Jan de Windt. To the left of the church tower is the town hall. The first building (with the blue roof) at the front of Lower Town is the weighing-house. The building behind the weighing-house is the headquarters of the Dutch West India Company. Watercolour by Emants, after a drawing by A. Nelson. Source: SECAR collection.

Figure 6. View of St. Eustatius from the southeast as it appeared in 1774. The house left of the church tower, with the flag, is the governor’s house. Between this house and the church tower Fort Oranje is situated. Saba can be seen in the background on the left. Most ships are flying the Dutch tricolour, but there are also English flags (the St. George’s Cross) to be seen on the ships. Watercolour by Emants, after a drawing by A. Nelson. Source: SECAR collection.
After 1760, the number of ships arriving on Statia numbered between 1,800 and 2,700, reaching a maximum of 3,551 ships in 1779. They came from Europe, Africa and the Americas. Almost 20,000 merchants, slaves, sailors and plantation owners were crowded on this small island in its heyday (a large proportion of these were temporary residents). In the 1770’s imports exceeded the capacity of the island’s warehouses and sugar and cotton were piled up high in the open air (Klooster 1998:96). This was the time at which St. Eustatius reached its greatest prosperity and earned its nickname the ‘Golden Rock’.

In these years Statian society was composed of a small group of long-term residents and a majority of people who were short-term immigrants from Europe and the Americas, hoping to become rich in a short time. This resulted in a constant influx of new goods and ideas. Both politically and economically, Statia was dominated by a small elite group of men who controlled the trade. Dutch, Spanish, French, English, Swedish, ‘Italian’, and Jewish merchants, participating in commerce on a massive scale, formed this community. The wealth and power of these men was symbolized and transmitted to the Statian population. This resulted in a culture focused on material possessions such as large numbers of slaves, extensive landholdings, large houses, and fancy objects such as Chinese porcelain. Johannes de Graaff, the commander of the island from 1776 to 1781, is a perfect example of this. His personal possessions included an army of slaves, chests filled with gold and silver coins and even a duck pond. It was not unusual for wealthy residents to own several properties, both in town and on the countryside.

A distinction can be made between those who owned and operated plantations and those who were merchants and resided in town. However, the available evidence suggests that Oranjestad was similar to some other colonial towns in the Americas, in that wealthy individuals would establish “urban plantations” containing all of the architectural elements of a typical rural plantation, including outbuildings and sometimes even small plots where crops were grown, just on a reduced scale. On St. Eustatius, one such home was constructed by one of the wealthiest merchants, Simon Doncker. He built on a substantial lot in very close proximity to the town centre. Towards the rear of the property he grew crops, and outbuildings were built between these and the main house. Other smaller homes, such as the one known as the Godet property, were condensed even further. Still standing on this property are the kitchen, hurricane house, cistern and outhouse, all built of hewn stone and imported yellow Dutch brick.

There were several reasons for Statia’s economic success. First, it had an ideal location on the busy sea-lanes between the Greater and Lesser Antilles. Second, the harbour was ideally situated on the leeward side of the island and geological conditions inhibited the condensation of rain clouds on The Quill. This reduced the quantity of rainfall, restricting the quality and quantity of tobacco, sugar cane and other farm products that could be produced.
on the island. Left with no agricultural promise, trade was the best option for the residents (Gilmore in Reid 2008). Third, the island was surrounded by colonies of various European countries. These colonies were dependent on supplies from their mother countries according to the monopoly system, which were not always sufficient or on time. Every colonial power tried to monopolize trade with its colonies in order to keep the prices high (Alofs et al. 1997:77). Since it was a Dutch custom to favour free trade and the Republic was in a neutral position in many European wars, in 1754 St. Eustatius was made into a free port which was in an excellent position to ship not only slaves but also other illegal supplies such as sugar, tobacco, foodstuffs, gunpowder, and weapons to these colonies. This illicit trade between the Caribbean islands, the Spanish-American mainland and the North American colonies is termed the *kleine vaart*. On Statia this took on enormous proportions. For example, around 1770 Statia produced about 600,000 lbs of sugar annually, but it exported 20 million lbs. The remaining 19.4 million lbs were brought over from other islands and sold tax free on St. Eustatius to maximize profit (Gilmore 2004:49). Weapons and gunpowder, originally coming from Europe, were shipped in great numbers to the English colonies in North America in exchange for commodities such as sugar and tobacco. This trade reached its peak during the American War of Independence. The outbreak of this war in 1774 brought as many as twenty North American ships at a time crowding into the small bay at St. Eustatius to buy supplies needed by the rebels. Even the English merchants on the island were willing to sell whatever the enemies of their country needed. In 1775 the export of arms and war equipment to North America from Dutch ports was forbidden by the Dutch government under pressure from Great Britain, but on Statia this was ignored and the illegal trade continued to flourish. This is aptly illustrated by a letter from Abraham van Bibber, the Maryland agent on the island, written to his superiors, saying: ‘*obedience to the law would be ruinous for the trade*.’ Gunpowder was shipped in boxes labeled as tea or in bales labeled as rice, officials were bribed and the control by customs officers was faulty (Goslinga 1985:144). These three factors caused the island to become the major trading center in the Atlantic World during the late eighteenth century.

*The turn of the tide*

On 16th November 1776 Johannes de Graaff, the commander of St. Eustatius at the time, ordered a return salute to be fired to the *Andrew Doria*, an armed North American brigantine flying the colours of the rebelling thirteen colonies. Although this counter salute was insufficient for a recognition of the sovereignty of a foreign state (it was not in accordance with protocol) and De Graaff did not have the slightest competency to do such a thing, the act was interpreted by the English as clear recognition of the rebellious colonies’ newly found state by St. Eustatius. The English were furious and felt betrayed by the Dutch because Statia,
the representative of what was at that time still an allied state, chose the side of their enemy (Jameson 1903). The Statians, however, just wanted to make as much profit as possible, and ships like the Andrew Doria always came to buy arms and ammunition (Hartog 1976:72). Moreover, it was not the first time that a ship flying the Grand Union Flag received a return salute. Earlier that year it also happened on St. Croix and St. Thomas (Jameson 1903). The big difference with Statia was that here the flag was flown by a commissioned naval vessel whose captain, Isaiah Robinson, was a Captain of the Navy. The Statians had no idea of this, because the Andrew Doria did not look like a naval vessel by outward appearances (Hartog 1976:70).

Nevertheless, this event, together with the capture of an English ship by the American ship Baltimore Hero near Statia in 1776, the continued saluting of North American ships buying arms by commander De Graaff whom the English wanted to be fired, the constant equipping and fitting-out of privateers to prey on British commerce, and the steadily growing envy of the English to the prosperity of St. Eustatius led to increased conflict with Great Britain - which declared war on the Republic in December 1780 - and the capturing of the island by Admiral George Brydges Rodney in February 1781 (Jameson 1903). Together with Sir Samuel Hood and General Vaughan he arrived on St. Eustatius with 3,000 men in 23 ships of the line, five frigates and a number of smaller ships (Figure 7). The odds were clearly against the Dutch garrison of fifty men in their neglected forts and batteries and the two Dutch men-of-war lying at anchor. Nevertheless, a few shots were fired for honour’s sake before the island surrendered. Rodney kept the Dutch flag flying from Fort Oranje for a
In order to seize the cargoes of unsuspecting ships arriving on the island, the warehouses were sealed and all shops had to remain closed. When Rodney landed, the yearly rent on the warehouses totaled £1,200,000. Over £3,000,000 was realized from goods that were auctioned from the warehouses in what the 1783 Annual Register described as “one of the greatest auctions that ever was opened in the universe.” In addition to this sum, over £4,000,000 in bullion was confiscated from island residents. All of these figures are in eighteenth-century terms. They represent the largest single booty taken in time of war by any nation during the eighteenth century. The intended destruction of the island, which Rodney called ‘a nest of vipers which preyed upon the vitals of Great Britain’, did not take place (Attema 1976:40).

Towards the end of 1781 the French managed to take over the island with a surprise attack. At this time, France and the United Provinces were allies against Great Britain. St. Eustatius returned to Dutch control in 1783. In 1784, after the actual change of government had taken place, St. Eustatius again became a free port and trade recovered, causing the economy to flourish even more than it had done so in the previous decade. The population increased to a record breaking 8,000 at the end of the 1780’s, of which almost 5,000 were slaves.

Around 1795 the importance of St. Eustatius as a transit harbour declined. The United States had become independent and trade moved to North America. To make matters worse, the end of the slave trade was looming. On top of all this the French captured the island in 1795. The French policies governing trade inhibited the free transactions that built the island's wealth. These events signaled the end of prosperity on what a mere fifteen years ear-

Figure 8. View of Fort Oranje and the Crater as it appeared in 1860, by G.W.C. Voorduin. Source: SECAR collection.
lier was the richest trading centre in the Caribbean. In 1801 the English seized St. Eustatius again, but a year later Dutch rule was reinstated with the peace of Amiens. In 1810 St. Eustatius surrendered to the English. In 1814 Great Britain agreed to return the six Caribbean islands to the Dutch. The actual change occurred two years later, causing the Dutch flag to reappear in the West Indies. In the following decades the warehouses that used to be stuffed to their roofs decayed, just like the forts and batteries. The houses in Upper Town fared a bit better. In 1840 there were just ten plantations left. The size of Oranjestad rapidly decreased along with the population density. After the abolishment of slavery, slaves left the countryside to settle in the town and as a result the cultivation of crops came to an end. In order to provide some income 80,000 warehouse bricks were exported in 1855. Another way the people on the island made money in these years was by exporting trass, a volcanic earth that makes good mortar, to other Caribbean islands. Devastating hurricanes in 1898, 1899, 1900, 1923 and 1928 caused a lot of damage and increased the rate of decline. The population decreased from 2,668 people in 1816 to a mere 921 in 1948. The island that was once known as one of the leading ports of the world became an almost forgotten community.
3. Cartographic evidence

Various maps of St. Eustatius were made throughout the colonial period. Many of these provide a wealth of information on various aspects of the island’s history and archaeology. They are particularly useful when it comes to investigating the plantation landscape on the island.

The first known map of St. Eustatius, made by an anonymous person, dates to 1742, and shows Steward plantation to be owned by widow G. Lindesaij. A copy of this map with updated information on plantation owners, made by Reinier Ottens in 1775, shows Steward plantation to be owned by the widow of Robert Stuwart. In 1775 the plantation was called ‘Ruym Sigt’. On both maps the plantation is indicated by one building.

Following the English conquest of Statia in 1781, a map was made by P.F. Martin which shows all plantations existing on the island at the time in great detail. Steward plantation is indicated as being owned by the heirs of Stuart. From this map it appears that there was no industrial complex in the research area at this time. What is depicted is one structure and three slave huts, all surrounded by trees. The plot of land across the road owned by the same people contained one structure and two slave huts.

On the map of the island made by William Faden in 1795, all plantations, including Steward, are depicted as a single building. This map also shows the plantation boundaries, but no information about the owners is included.

After 1812, a map was made by W. Blanken on which all existing plantations are depicted. Nearly all plantations are indicated as rectangles on this map. It shows Steward to be owned by Engle Heiliger.

In 1829, Samuel Fahlberg, the Governor of the island at the time, made a map on which all plantations, including Steward, are depicted. Steward is indicated by two buildings. No information on the owners is shown on this map.

The earliest map on which Steward plantation does not appear is the map made by A.H. Bisschop Grevelink between 1839 and 1846, indicating that sometime between 1829 and 1846 Steward plantation fell out of use. At this time, a cattle farm was located to the northwest of Steward, but no plantation is indicated in the research area.

The J.V.D. Werbata map, published in 1915, does not show any plantation remains or features of any kind in the research area, except for a few trees. The area is indicated as Steward on this map.

The KLM aerocarto map of 1963 shows the research area in more detail: the large cistern (site 1) is indicated, as are all the stone pile walls located in the area. On this map the area is indicated as Steward.
Figure 9. Map made by an unknown person in 1742. Steward plantation is indicated by the green arrow. Source: Algemeen Rijksarchief 4.MIKO 339.
Figure 10. Map made by P.F. Martin in 1781. Steward plantation is outlined in green. The complex in the research area is indicated by the green arrow. Source: SECAR collection.
Figure 11. Map made by William Faden in 1795. Steward plantation is indicated by the black arrow. Source: Schiltkamp & Smidt, *West Indisch Plakaatboek* (1979).
Figure 12. Map made by W. Blanken after 1812. Steward plantation is indicated by the green arrow. Source: Leiden University library, Leeszaal Bijzondere Collecties, signatuur COLLBN 002-10-030.
Figure 13. Map made by Samuel Fahlberg in 1829. Steward plantation is indicated by the black arrow. Source: Algemeen Rijksarchief 4.MIKO 1706.
Figure 14. Map made by A.H. Bisschop-Grevelink between 1839 and 1846. Steward plantation is outlined in green. Source: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 4.MIKO 645.
Figure 15. Map made by J.V.D. Werbata, published in 1915. Steward plantation is outlined in green. Source: Algemeen Rijksarchief 4.MIKO 2107.
Figure 16. The KLM Aerocarto map and aerial image of 1963. Steward plantation is outlined in green. Source: KITLV library, request number D A 44, 11.
4. Research methodology

The only way to accurately map and study archaeological remains in a densely overgrown area such as Steward plantation is to remove the vegetation, as one could originally see only about 2-3 meters far before the start of the project. This can be done either with a mechanical excavator / bulldozer or by hand with machetes and chainsaws. As the former will do too much damage to archaeological remains, it was decided to use a crew of 5 people who cleared the vegetation around the archaeological sites and cut paths through the research area using machetes and chainsaws.

The archaeological sites were then documented by SECAR using a Nikon D3100 digital SLR camera at a resolution of 14 megapixels, and mapped using a Garmin etrex handheld GPS. The paths through the research area served two purposes: first, to identify archaeological sites not noted by Haviser in 1981 (most notably slave quarters), and second, to make it easier to move through the area.

It should be noted that SECAR did not investigate the entire property, only the areas that are going to be impacted by the construction of the new correctional facility.
5. Results

Six archaeological sites were found in the research area during this campaign. In addition, numerous stone pile walls were discovered, which are all depicted on the 1963 KLM Aerocarto map (Figure 16). Several of these walls were partly cleared so as to document them. Below is an inventory and interpretation of the archaeological sites encountered. The Appendix contains an aerial image on which all sites are indicated.
Site 1

17°29’11.2” N
62°57’25.5” W

This is the largest site in the research area, and comprises of two parts:

The first is a large rectangular cistern made of stone and mortar. It is in very good condition. It has cut basalt stones on the outside and inside. The inside is plastered. A concrete catchment area was added to the cistern after 1981, as Havisier makes no mention of it in his notes. A roof made of wooden beams and corrugated iron sheets was put over the cistern in recent times. A plastic white pipe is sticking out of a hole in the cistern’s northern wall, and runs north. On the northeastern corner of the cistern, a wall is attached that runs north-south. The cistern is 9.5 m long and 4.6 m wide. Its depth is 3.35 m, and its walls are 65 cm thick.

The large wall extending north of the cistern is likely to be part of a building. It seems to be stepped with multiple levels of faced stones, indicating these might have been terraces. The upper wall is made of stone and mortar, with cut basalt stones on the inside and outside. Part of this wall is made of red tiles, which might have been a support for a post. The wall is 14.1 m long. Several meters down the slope, a large chunk of brick wall that has fallen off can be found. As there are no remains of any other large structure visible in the research area, this building is likely the one depicted on the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century maps.

Surface artifacts are few, but include creamware, shell-edged pearlware, and tin-enamel ware fragments, sherds of glass, and several red and yellow bricks and red tiles.
Figure 17. The cistern and modern catchment area as seen from the southwest. Scale: 1 m.

Figure 18. The cistern as seen from the east. Scale: 1 m.
Figure 19. The cistern as seen from the north. Scale: 1 m.

Figure 20. The terraced wall, facing northwest.
Figure 21. The terraced wall and cistern as seen from the north.

Figure 22. Close-up of part of the terraced wall. Scale: 1 m.
Figure 23. Close-up of the tiled feature, a possible support for a post. Scale: 50 cm.

Figure 24. The corner of the outer terraced wall. Scale: 50 cm.
Site 2

17°29’12.0” N
62°57’27.3” W

This site comprises of two cisterns. The first cistern is rectangular and made of stone and mortar, with basalt cut stones on the inside and outside, and plaster on the inside. It is almost completely intact besides several cornerstones that have fallen off. It is 3.55 m long and 2.3 m wide. Its walls are 45 cm thick, 2.5 cm of which is the layer of plaster on the inside.

A 3.3 m long wall is attached to the western part of the cistern, which acts as the border of the catchment area. A small part of the catchment area was exposed, and found to be made of plaster. In addition, numerous stones are scattered around the site.

A modern cistern made of cinder blocks was constructed immediately to the south of the historic cistern. This must have happened after 1981, as Havisier makes no mention of it in his notes. A stone pile wall is located immediately south of the modern cistern, running east-west.

Surface artifacts comprise of only one fragment of spongeware.
Figure 25. Overview of the site as seen from the northeast. The historic cistern is the one to the right.

Figure 26. The inside of the historic cistern. Scale: 1 m.
Figure 27. The catchment area. The wall is indicated by the red arrow, part of the plastered catchment area by the green arrow. The picture on the right is a close-up of the catchment’s area plaster. Scale: 1 m on the left picture, 50 cm on the right picture.
Site 3

17°29’11.6” N
62°57’27.9” W

A round well made of stone and mortar. The walls have basalt cut stones on the inside and outside. The inside is plastered. The eastern part of the well is in very bad condition and is falling apart. The western part is in better condition. The well has an inside diameter of 2.55 m. Its walls are of varying thickness, ranging from 49 – 75 cm.

A stone pile wall running east-west is located immediately south of the well.

Only a few artifacts are visible on the surface. They include shell-edged pearlware and creamware fragments.

In his 1981 survey, Haviser noted that this site could either be a cistern or a well. Given the fact that no features were added to it in modern times, this is more likely a well. Furthermore, there is a large bamboo several meters to the north, indicating that the ground water might not be very deep below the surface.

Figure 28. The inside of the well, as seen from the southeast.
Figure 29. The outside of the well, as seen from the northwest. Scale: 1 m.
Site 4

17°29’11.0” N
62°57’23.6” W

A rectangular cistern with rounded corners, made of stone and mortar. It has cut basalt stones on the inside and outside, and plaster on the inside. Corrugated iron sheets were put over the cistern in recent times. It is 4.2 m long, 2.72 m wide, and its walls are 61 cm thick. The depth is 2.5 m.

Attached to the western side of the cistern is a basin from which animals could drink. A modern animal drinking basin was added to the southern part of the cistern after 1981, as Haviser makes no mention of it in his notes. The foundation of the cistern is partly exposed.

Attached to the eastern side of the cistern is a feature with an as yet undetermined function. It consists of some sort of floor lined with cut basalt stones.

A lot of modern trash is scattered around the site, among which are some historic artifacts, including red bricks and shell-edged pearlware.

The catchment area or building associated with the cistern has not been found yet, but the remains of one of the two should be in close proximity to the cistern.

Figure 30. The cistern as seen from the northwest, with the historic animal water basin to the right. Scale: 1 m.
Figure 31. The cistern as seen from the southeast, with the modern animal water basin to the left. The partly exposed foundation is clearly visible. Scale: 1 m.

Figure 32. Feature with an as yet undetermined function, attached to the eastern wall of the cistern. Scale: 50 cm.
Site 5

17°29’11.6” N
62°57’28.7” W

A tombstone, positioned upside down and most likely *ex situ*. When clearing the area to the west as a preparation for cultivation, many large stones were moved to the side, including the tombstone. The grave associated with it is thus located somewhere else. It is likely that there are more people buried in the vicinity.

The tombstone has a 12 cm thick base made of stones, mortar, and a double row of yellow bricks on the outside. The dome is made of cut basalt stone surrounded by plaster and is 83 cm in length. No inscriptions are visible. Based on its shape and size, this is most likely a seventeenth-century tombstone of a child.

No artifacts were found on the surface. One noteworthy feature is a large bamboo located about 4 m south of the tombstone.

Figure 33. The tombstone as seen from the west. Scale: 50 cm.
Figure 34. The tombstone (indicated by the red arrow) and its surroundings. Many stones were pushed to the side in the past, including the tombstone. The bamboo can be seen in the background.
Site 6

17°29’12.7” N
62°57’27.4” W

This site is characterized by a large L-shaped elongated pile of stones, which does not seem to be a regular stone pile wall given its construction and location: it is located very close to another stone pile wall at a slight angle, and the stones seem to be stacked in such a way as to provide shelter. On the inside there are several rows of stones which seem to be walls. Furthermore, many artifacts can be found on the surface, including red and yellow bricks, chunks of mortar, numerous fragments of shell and coral, and various types of ceramics and glass. This site might be a slave settlement, although this can only be verified by excavations. As the site extends beyond the research area, it was only partly cleared and investigated.

Figure 35. View of the site, looking northeast.
Figure 36. View of the site looking southeast.

Figure 37. Possible stone wall. Scale: 1 m.
Stone pile walls

A large number of stone pile walls are located in the research area. They are all depicted on the 1963 KLM Aerocarto map (Figure 16). Sections of several walls were recorded during this campaign. They consist mostly of basalt stones, with some bricks and tiles in between.

Figure 38. The largest stone pile wall in the research area, running northeast-southwest from the road to just past site 2. Scale: 1 m.
Figure 39. Stone pile wall running northwest-southeast from site 2 to site 1.

Figure 40. Stone pile wall immediately next to site 3. Scale: 1 m.
6. Discussion and recommendations

During this campaign, six archaeological sites were found: two isolated cisterns, one cistern with a building attached to it, one well, one tombstone, and a possible slave settlement. In addition, several stone pile walls were recorded.

It has become clear that even though this area used to be a sugar plantation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, no processing of sugar ever took place here. No remains of a mill, boiling house, or curing house were found. Furthermore, on the 1781 map (Figure 10), no mill is depicted in the research area, making it very unlikely that any other industrial buildings were located here, as the cane juice would normally flow directly from the mill to the boiling house. It is hypothesized that the cane grown and harvested in the research area was processed at other plantations. In 1781, the heirs of Stuart owned a large plantation on the Atlantic side of the island as well, which did have an industrial complex. This was one of the largest on the island at the time. It is not unlikely that the cane, at least at this time, was processed on this other plantation owned by the same people.

On the 1781 map, three slave huts are depicted in the research area. Slave quarters will normally only manifest themselves on the surface by a concentration of artifacts and ecofacts, as they were usually built of perishable materials. One area contained a concentration of artifacts and shells much higher than the surrounding areas, which might be an area where slaves were living. Furthermore, the large stone pile wall and smaller walls associated with it might have been part of one or more structures. This is, however, very hard to prove without further research.

In the 1980s, the research area was used to grow fruits and vegetables. This explains the modern additions to the old cisterns: they were reused in modern times to irrigate the crops cultivated in the area. This might also have been the time when the tombstone was pushed aside.

The tombstone is a clear indicator that there are burials in the area. Exactly where they are located is impossible to say, as they do not necessarily have markers on top. At least one grave without marker is present in the area, but it is very likely that this was not an isolated grave.

There are several stone pile walls in the research area. Some of these could have served as boundary markers, although the exact use of them will have to be determined at a later stage.

Why there are so many cisterns in the area is hard to say; excavations will clarify if they were used simultaneously or at different points in time. According to Havisier, two more cisterns can be found close to the research area. The fact that Steward plantation was located quite far from town probably accounts for the large number of cisterns in this area. Moreover, slaves, animals, and whites could have each had their own cistern. The cistern comprising site
4 has an animal drinking basin next to it, while the cistern comprising site 2 is located only a few meters from site 6, the possible slave quarters. The cistern at site 1 is related to the large building next to it, which might have been the big house.

This area should not be viewed in isolation; it is part of a plantation landscape that extends from Big Stone all the way down to the Botanical Garden, on both sides of the road. In this area, many small plantations were located in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Numerous archaeological remains are located in this area, including big houses, industrial complexes, slave quarters and most likely (slave) burials, stone pile walls, fortifications, and prehistoric sites. As very little development has taken place over the last two centuries, many remains of these plantations can still be found throughout the area. This is a unique situation in the northern Leeward Islands. On many neighbouring islands, such as St. Maarten, extensive modern development has destroyed most of this plantation landscape.

The only two sites that will directly be impacted by the construction of the new correctional facility are sites 1 and 4. It is recommended they are left in situ whenever possible. If the facility is moved closer to the road, these sites may not be impacted. At the time of writing, the design of the prison was not finalized yet, so it is not possible to give any recommendations as to how the archaeological remains can be integrated into the facility.

If the facility is going to be built on the planned location, and in situ preservation of the sites is not possible, archaeological excavations on the impacted sites need to be carried out in order to determine their age, use, layout, details in construction, and association with each other. Furthermore, it is recommended test trenches be excavated across the area that is planned to be developed, as there is a high probability of unmarked slave burials being located anywhere on the property. In addition, prehistoric sites might be present in the research area as well, as several prehistoric sites can be found on the eastern side of the island. Prior to any archaeological excavations, be it test trenches or a full-scale excavation, a Program of Requirements (Programma van Eisen) needs to be composed, that outlines the goals of the excavations and the requirements regarding the execution of the fieldwork.

It is recommended that no clearing of vegetation using heavy machinery such as mechanical excavators takes place on the property without the presence of an archaeologist. No bulldozers should be used to clear vegetation, as this will do too much damage to potential archaeological sites located just below the surface.

It is strongly recommended that the correctional facility be built on the location indicated on the spatial development plan. This original location, Man of War, located at the southern edge of the northern hills, has a very low expectation for archaeological remains. From a cultural historical and especially an archaeological point of view, Man of War would be a much better choice, as Steward plantation is part of a unique plantation landscape that is almost completely untouched by modern development, and which houses an important part of both the European and African heritage of St. Eustatius.
7. Bibliography

Alofs, Luc et al.  

Attema, Ypie  

Barka, Norman F.  

Barka, Norman F.  

Cockburn, James, Sir  
1783  *Dedicated to the army, and more particularly to the late garrison of St. Eustatius, the proceedings on the trial of Lieut. Col. Cockburn for the loss of the island of St. Eustatius*. Printed for J. Debrett.

Dethlefsen, Edwin; Gluckman, Stephen J.; Mathewson, R. Duncan; Barka, Norman F.  

Figueredo, D.H. & Argote-Freyre, Frank  

Gilmore III, Richard Grant  

Gilmore III, Richard Grant  

Goslinga, Cornelis Ch.

Goslinga, Cornelis Ch.
1985  The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas 1680-1791. Edited by Maria J.L. van Yperen. Van Gorcum, Assen.

Hartog, Johan

Hartog, Johan

Howard, B. P.

Jameson, Franklin T.

Josselin de Jong, J. P. B. de

Klooster, Wim

Nagelkerken, Wil
1985  Preliminary report on the determination of the location of the historical anchorage at Orange Bay, St. Eustatius, Netherlands Antilles. Report of the institute of archaeology and anthropology of the Netherlands Antilles No. 1.

Nagelkerken, Wil

Purmer, Michiel

Southey, Thomas


Stelten, Ruud


Stelten, Ruud


Versteeg, A.H. & C. Schinkel (eds.)

Appendix

Aerial overview of sites
Aerial image of Steward plantation, taken on 31-1-2012. The property boundaries are outlined in yellow, the location of the prison in red.
Aerial image of Steward plantation, taken on 31-1-2012, showing the locations of the archaeological sites and the paths cut through the research area.