

Winter - Early Summer 2005 NEWSLETTER

St. Croix Hiking Association, P.O. Box 5060, Kingshill, St. Croix, V.I. 00851-5060

A Brief History of the St. Croix Hiking Association

It all started in 1998, when a group of St. Croix residents wanted to learn more about the natural, cultural, historical, and marine environment of the Virgin Islands and the Caribbean Region. Mario Moorhead, a popular local radio host, suggested to naturalist and ecologist Olasee Davis, (after he had returned from a hiking trip on Trinidad and Tobago) to lead a hike –open to the general public - exploring the northwest side of St. Croix.

The hike covered such places as Sweet Bottom Bay, Wills Bay, and Annaly Bay and took eight hours to complete. The route included tropical moist forests, historic sites, and coastal areas. It was on the ridge of Estate Annaly, overlooking the Caribbean Sea, where the enthusiastic participants conceived the idea to create a hiking club.



Not long after, a small group of individuals met and drew up by-laws and articles of incorporation thus establishing the St. Croix Hiking Association. Over the years, the organization has grown and today has more than 70 members. With regular monthly meetings and scheduled hikes and field trips, the Association has introduced innumerable residents and visitors to the natural and cultural wealth of the Virgin Islands – St. Croix in particular. In addition, its yearly off-island trips have let the members experience the varied riches of other is-

Maroon Ridge/Ham's Bluff Lighthouse Hike - A Pilgrimage by Esther Sweeney

For me, the Maroon Ridge/Ham's Bluff Light House Hike was more than just a hike. It was a journey - a pilgrimage - and one of the best hikes I have done since the inception of the St. Croix Hiking Association. Every aspect of this hike was excellent: the weather, the timing, the people, the mood, and the distance.

In 1987, while attending University of the Virgin Islands - St. Croix Campus as a Social Sciences major, I was compelled to write a research paper on the Maroon Community on St. Croix. This was one of many research assignments Dr. Arnold Highfield gave in his Caribbean Heritage course. After writing about this powerful and emotional event in the history of St. Croix, I made a vow to visit the mountain top called Maroon Ridge . On Sunday, May 16, 2004, at about 8 o'clock in the morning, I was finally able to stand at the very spot where my African ancestors sought refuge from enslavement. This was a very emotional moment for me. Having ascended to the top of the ridge, I knew I was standing on sacred ground. This is the spot from where my ancestors plunged about 300 feet to the ocean below to avoid being taken back into captivity. At that moment, I was unable to stop the flow of tears that fell to the ground.

As I tried to visualize my ancestors living and surviving in such a barren area, two of my fellow hikers reminded me that the vegetation was probably different during that era--more foliage. I sought comfort in this knowledge, but still my emotions were raw. And if at any time I did not appreciate the many sacrifices my ancestors made, at that moment I was forced to come to terms with the ultimate price they paid for freedom: their lives. Freedom does not come cheap. *(continued on page 4)*

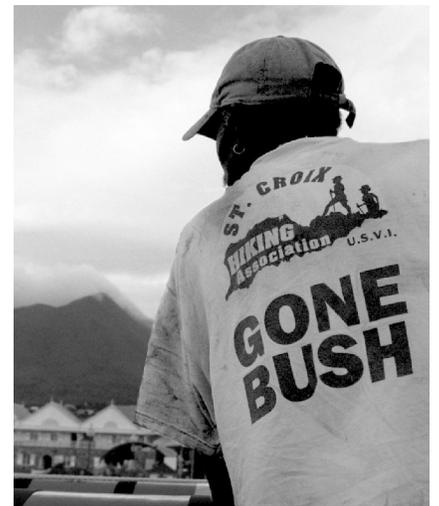
Annual Off-island Trip

St. Kitts



June 26—July 4, 2004

& Nevis



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It is my belief that every school child on St. Croix, who is able, should visit Ma-roon Ridge, to see where the Maroon community was established.

Other than fulfilling my vow to visit Ma-roon Ridge because of its significance, this hike was memorable for a few other reasons. One was the number of individuals on the hike. Only eight (8) persons participated making it easy to set an enjoyable pace. The relatively low turnout was possibly due to the inclement weather. Ironically, this weather was excellent for hiking. It remained cool, windy and overcast throughout the entire hike, preventing the hikers from becoming overheated and tired. A down-pour of rain began when we were less than a quarter of a mile from the finish. No one made a complaint about it. All the hikers welcomed the rain.

The view from the Lighthouse and Ma-roon Ridge was breathtaking. This was a wonderful hike. Maybe, I will make the trek to Maroon Ridge - *where the spirits of my enslaved African ancestors live forever* - an annual pilgrimage.

Thank you - Cathy, Doreen, Ivan B, Joyce, Milton, Mona and Olasee - for a great hike.

Calendar of Events February to July 2005

(All Events Subject to Change)

March

- 2nd** General Meeting - 6pm, Room 133 UVI
- 13th** Beast and Bitch Hike - Carambola
- 20th** Hassel Island & Botany Bay Hike- St. Thomas

April

- 6th** General Meeting - 6pm, Room 133 UVI
- 16th** Pearl B School to Gasperi Farm Hike

May

- 4th** General Meeting - 6pm, Room 133 UVI
- 15th** Hermitage to Calcahoun Hike

June

- 1st** General Meeting - 6pm, Room 133 UVI
- 3rd** Turtle Watch at Sandy Point
- 18th** Brooks Hill to Mahogany Road

July

- 2nd** Off Island Trip to Puerto Rico - return July 9th
- 13th** General Meeting - 6pm, Room 133 UVI

Newly Elected Officers February 2, 2005

President	Sonia Maynard-John
Vice President	Ivan Butcher
Secretary	Dorothy Flash
Assistant Secretary	Joyce Francis
Treasurer	Tom Zimmerman
Assistant Treasurer	Cathy Prince



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