

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JUN 2 1976  
DATE ENTERED JUN 19 1976

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC *261*  
Sion Hill

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

*w of Christiansted*

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Christiansted

VICINITY OF

1

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

U.S. Virgin Islands

78

St. Croix

0800

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

**OWNERSHIP**

**STATUS**

**PRESENT USE**

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Mrs. Keith Merrill

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 191

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Christiansted

VICINITY OF

St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Government House

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Christiansted, St. Croix

U.S. Virgin Islands

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

June, 1960

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

National Park Service

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Washington, D.C.

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Sion Hill, located 0.8 miles north of Center Line Road in Queen's Quarter (3.1 miles west of Christiansted), St. Croix, has an outstanding collection of ruins of an 18th century sugar plantation and rum distillery. It contains the buildings required in the production of sugar and rum--a grinding mill and factory (incorporating a distillery)--as well as a great house, overseer's house, cookhouse, stable, and other structures. Most walls are standing to their full, original height, and the masonry has been stabilized and is in good condition. Traces of original finishes remain in various sections of selected buildings, but most wood members have disappeared. The grounds are well-tended, and accentuate the impressive complex of buildings.

The following descriptions are based on HABS records, compiled in 1960.

### Great House

The great house is the southern-most building of the Sion Hill complex. It is one story, with a basement, and measures about 30' by 50'. The building is situated on ground sloping to the southeast.

The foundation is constructed of dressed limestone masonry. It is articulated on the exterior by a four inch projection, slightly below the level of the first floor.

The walls are constructed of the same material, with cut sandstone surrounds, quoins, cornice and other trim.

The building is five bays long by two bays wide. The main entrance, centered on the long side of the building, faces east. The center bay on the east side of the building projects one bay to form an enclosed front porch. To the north, a doorway is centered at the end of the building, giving this side the appearance of three bays. Except on the east side, the basement windows do not line up with the regularly spaced windows of the first floor.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

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SPECIFIC DATES 1765

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Sion Hill has an outstanding collection of ruins of an 18th century sugar plantation and rum distillery. Besides the buildings required in the production of sugar and rum, and other outbuildings, it contains a superb early example of a Classical Revival greathouse. In the Sion Hill complex, most walls are standing to their full original height. The masonry has been stabilized and is in good condition.

Early owners of Sion Hill were the Tuite family and Thomas Bradshaw (1803). In 1829 the owner was a Major de Nully, who listed as a debtor to the Land Treasury for taxes. De Nully also borrowed 34000 pounds sterling from the Pinney merchant house. The Pinneys eventually foreclosed on Sion Hill.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Dookhan, Issac. A History of the Virgin Islands of the United States. Epping, Essex: Bowker Publishing Company, 1974. Lewisohn, Florence. St. Croix Under Seven Flags. Hollywood, Florida: The Dukane Press, 1970. HABS records, Sion Hill Estate, 1960. J. Michael Everett and Frederick Gjessing

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

17° 44' 33" North Latitude

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY

10 SRR 64° 44' 50" West Longitude

UTM REFERENCES

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Samuel N. Stokes

Russell Wright, Annie Hillary, Margaret Proskauer, V.I. Historical Survey

ORGANIZATION Virgin Islands Planning Office

DATE

May 22, 1976

STREET & NUMBER P.O. Box 2606

TELEPHONE

(809) 774-1730

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands -00801

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE     

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Thomas R. Blake*

TITLE Director of Planning

DATE

May 25, 1976

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

7/19/76

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

July 16, 1976

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U.S. Virgin Islands Inventory of Historic Places

May 1976   x   State

Virgin Islands Planning Office

Charlotte Amalie U.S.V.I.

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All first floor door and window openings have cut sandstone surrounds and a dropped and panelled keystone. Over the rear, west doorway, the keystone carries the inscription "I.B. 1765, S.H.", which refers to I. Bradshaw and S. Heilliger. The keystone over the front entrance which had been defaced now carries the inscription "K.M. 1958", referring to Keith Merrill, the former owner of the estate, responsible for its stabilization.

All windows and doors have flat arches on the exterior, segmental arches in the interior with splayed jambs, and in the case of the windows, recessed sills. The basement windows have flat arch heads on the exterior and interior, and do not have surrounds.

The roof is missing, but traces observable in the top of the walls indicate the former roof was hipped over both the main body of the building and the front porch, and that the eaves extended slightly over the projecting cut sandstone cornice that carries around all sides of the building.

The access to the main central entrance porch is by seven cut sandstone steps with slightly splayed stringers. There is a terrace extending the full length of the building along the west side, which is reached by six sandstone steps from the ground level.

The terrace is carried on a broad elliptical arch under its central section, which provides the only access to the basement floor. The terrace has a masonry rail, and the supporting walls along the west and south sides have a projecting masonry band at the level of the terrace floor.

The interior plans of both floors consist of two large central rooms three bays wide, flanked by two pairs of smaller rooms, one bay on each side. The basement floor has no access from the main floor.

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Except for traces of lime plaster, nothing remains of the former interior finishes. Blocking set in the masonry in the central room towards the east, indicates that this room originally had a wainscot.

Cookhouse

The cookhouse is located to the west of the great house which it served, on the down grade below the terrace. It is one-story, with a basement, measuring about 16' by 24'. It is constructed of limestone blocks and has a gable roof covered with galvanized metal. A cistern lies to the south, set into the side of the hill along the same north-south axis of the main building.

Stable

The stable, located north of the great house, is a one-story rectangle running on the east-west axis, measuring about 16' by 96'. The building material is limestone marle, and the walls were originally stuccoed. The western half of the ruins have been stabilized, while the eastern end has been converted into a guesthouse.

There are five arched openings topped by a masonry band on the southern facade. The arches spring from piers with bases. The west end is solid, but the rear of the north wall is pierced by long, narrow windows. There are three openings in the northwest corner, the center openings containing a bell.

There are fragment remains of a terracotta tile roof on the top of the walls, but the west end at present has no roof. The corners of the walls support pinnacles identical with those on the southern section of the factory (to be discussed). The interior is a single, open space, with no floor. A car port has been added adjoining the western end.

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Factory

(see attached plan)

The factory lies to the north of the stables. It is two stories, measures approximately 130' by 60', and is constructed of the same cut limestone blocks as the other buildings on the site. Of note is the factory's H-plan, a variation from the usual T-shape plan found on St. Croix. The factory also contains a distillery, and there is a long, well-detailed storage building on the south end, and vaulted chambers supporting the cisterns on the north.

The following description of the factory is from a HABS report compiled in 1960:

"The factory lies NNE. It will be divided into 5 sub areas for clarity in description. (A) to the N consists of cisterns over a barrelvaulted storage room. These vaults are on the lower of the 2 main levels of the building. The cisterns have a flat concrete roof reached by steps. Next to the S, (B) consists of one large room on the upper level. Both (A) and (B) have an E-W axis. (C) is the boiling house and consists of an arcaded firing trench to the west, and an arcaded boiling room with the boiling bench for "coppers" to the east. The boiling trench is at a lower level. This section of the factory runs N and S. (D) is another storage room two stories high. The 2nd floor is on the same level as the boiling room and with an E-W axis. One gable remains as do tiles from the roof. (E) consists of the large chimney connected to the firing pits; the ruins and chimney of the distillery and the remains of two small cisterns. To the W of section A is the mill resting on its grass platform whose retaining wall abutts the north end of the factory. To the W of section D is a terrace followed by a walk and the present house of the Estate.

"All walls are of limestone marble blocks. Openings are formed by arches, flat and segmental, with some windows retaining wood frames.

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"The vaults in section (A) are of the same marble, with the four entrance barrel vaults meet by two cross barrel vaults. Between each vault on the N facade are massive piers. The arcades and archways are round or extended curves. 3 arches are found in the S wall of (B) and in section (C) two arcades. The remainder of the openings are segmental arches on the interior and flat on the exterior. Bands encircle the various sections immediately above the keystones of the windows and at the plate line. The chimneys are square in plan, tapering upward with a cornice band near the top of the larger. The W gable end of section (D) show on the interior the slots of timber bracing for the roof. Square <sup>urns</sup> are at each corner and atop the gable of (D).

"The room within the vaulted chambers is closed off by iron and wood barred windows and door. Some of the 2nd story windows of (D) retain not only their wood frames, set into a groove in the masonry, but also have some horizontal wood bars, segments of frames appear in almost every window and door in (D).

"The two arcades of section (C) are formed of single arches with no capital bands or bases. The continued motif of keystone with attached band directly above is the only trim. The east arcade of 5 arches on the upper level formed the outer wall for the roof over the line of boiling pots against the central wall which separates the upper from the lower level.

This middle wall has the open remains of 5 openings overlooking the lower 4 openings of the W arcade whose shed roof protected the five pits.

"The N facade shows four deep rounded openings recessed behind 5 large piers with heavy cornice and bands, and bases. The openings have keystone and band arrangements as found elsewhere. The 4 vaults extend back some 15' before meeting the first of 2 secondary cross vaults.

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"All areas except (A) are without covering; (A) having a recent concrete slab over its cisterns. The other areas show evidence of a terra cotta wing tile pitched roof on a wood rafters laid above (D); and shed roofs probably over both sides of (C) but definitely over the W side. No eaves, cornices or dormers exist.

"Of the 2 chimneys the one connected to the fireboxes of the boiling bench is by far the largest, rising 50' - 60'. It is square and tapered with a moulded cornice some 3' - 4' from the top one iron band encircles the 4 sides 12' from the ground. The smaller chimney is 15'-20' high and was part of the distillery. It has a simple band and beveled top edge. Each chimney is connected to its particular fire pits although the decay of the ruins in this part makes a clear understanding difficult.

"In general the processing of the crushed sugar cane through the Factory was as follows:

The crushed cane juice flowed down hill from the mill to the boiling bench in area (C), where it was boiled down to sugar. Once boiled down the sugar dried on the upper floor of (D); with the finished product most likely kept on the 1st floor. The cisterns in area (A) are not a typical feature of the factory layout, and supplied an abundant quantity of water for both the sugar and rum production. From the molasses remaining after the sugar processing, rum was distilled in area (E) with the smaller chimney connected to the still. Area (B) may have served as a storage area for the rum production. The firing trenches under the bench were all connected to the common large chimney. The large wall openings on the upper level ensured ventilation from the heat of the boiling pots.

"The only steps are the 9 steps leading to the top of the cisterns. Most areas at this time have no other floor than packed earth. A rough stone paving has been laid dry in and around the E arcade of section (C).

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"Originally stuccoed and limewashed, the walls are now almost entirely bare blocks, repointed during stabilization. Within the vault entrance remains of stucco and red wash are found. The only remaining ceiling would be the vaults of section (A) which are treated as are the walls.

"Conditions are the same as exterior doors except for the iron grill gates within the vaults of (A) which are of recent date.

"The only fittings left to the windows and doors are scattered pindels and bar brackets in section (D). One iron band encircles the larger chimney. The 3 remaining boiling pots are shallow, the largest being 6' across and less than 2' deep.

"On the lower level set into the masonry below the boiling bench are half a dozen furnace openings. The large chimney is connected directly to the last one to the N, the other pits being also connected in line. The firebox of the distillery is in ruins.

"The entire complex is contained by two encircling retaining walls. The one to the W is within 12'-20' of the W side of the Factory. The platform of the mill is contained by a curving retaining wall which butts into the factory at the NE corner of section (A). A stairway leads down the side of this retaining wall to the lower level."

Mill

The mill occupies the northeast corner of the Sion Hill complex. The main drive and the access road to the mill is east of the mill, between an outer, arched retaining wall and the stepped terrace adjoining the mill to the south.

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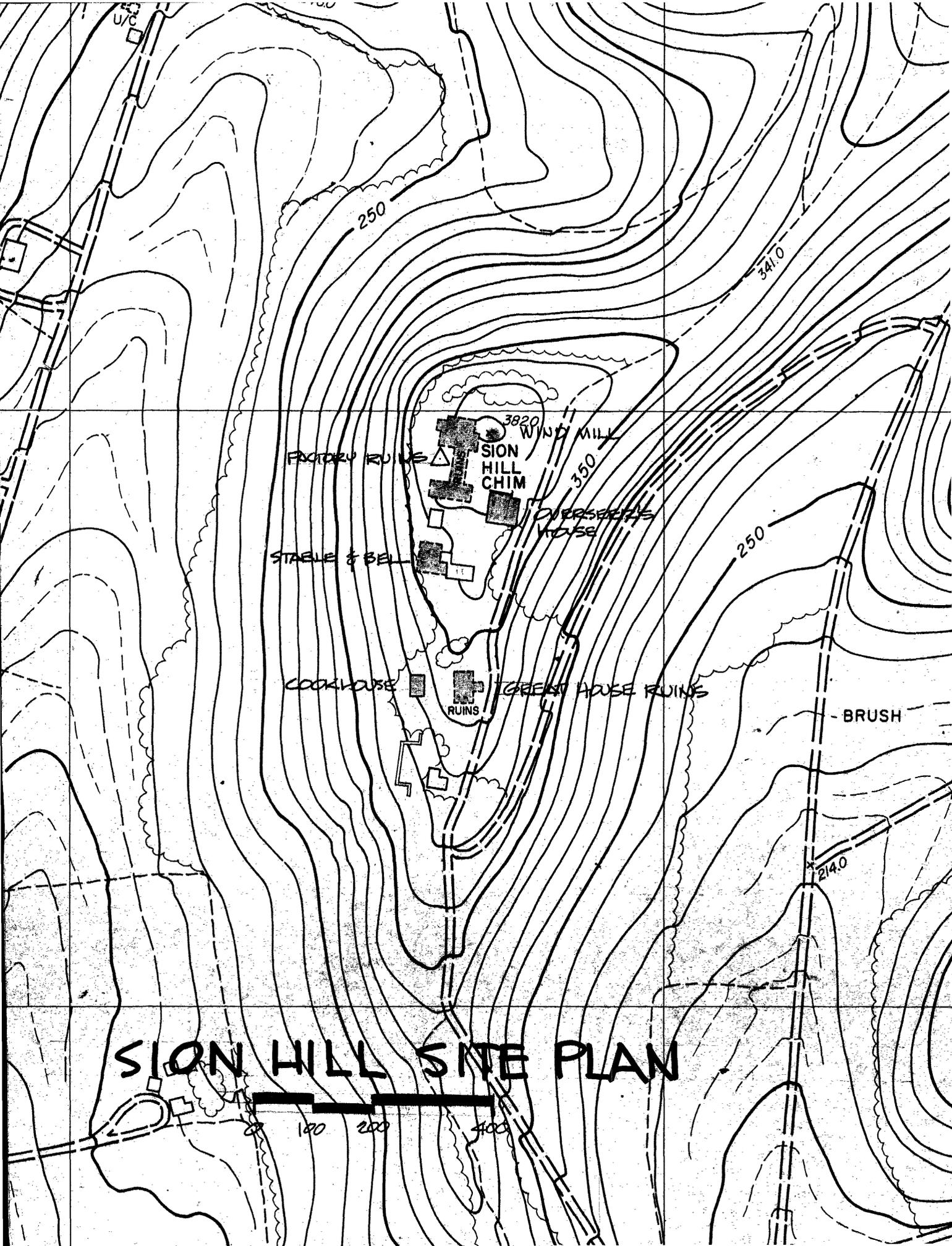
The mill is an early example of the typical cone shape mills found on the islands, as evidenced by the incision carried on the main doorway keystone--"Bradshaw 1757". The mill thus pre-dates the great house by eight years.

The mill is situated to the east of the factory on a higher grade, a placement which facilitated the passage by gravity of the sugar cane juice from the mill to the factory.

The walls of the mill are constructed of limestone marle blocks, with coursed and dressed blocks above the projecting course near the top of the walls. The mill rests on base walls that project about six to eight inches from the main walls, which taper from four feet to two feet thick.

There are three arched openings remaining in the wall fabric. The main doorway is located on the west, and measures seven and a half feet wide by six and a half feet high. The doorway has the key-stone (already mentioned). The doorway is approached by six limestone block steps. The wall opening on the south measures three feet wide by 14 inches high, and has a wood lintel on the interior, curving with the interior wall. There is an unmarked keystone at the head of the arch on the exterior. A third opening located four feet up above the base of the walls and measuring three feet wide, is located between the main entrance and an earlier fourth opening on the north measuring five feet wide and three feet high which has been filled in with masonry.

On the interior, the top six feet around is marked with vertical reveals, ending at their base in square beam holes, measuring six inches by six inches. The floor is paved with stone and concrete, and there is no roof.



250

341.0

3920

350

250

214.0

# SION HILL SITE PLAN

0 100 200 400

0 100 200 400

0 100 200 400