

Benedict Arnold on St. Croix: 1766, 1768, and 1773–1774

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The original blog post and images of all the relevant materials can be found at <https://discoveringhamilton.com/Benedict-Arnold-St-Croix/>.

Introduction

Benedict Arnold is well known for his activities during the American Revolution, but before he gained fame as a soldier and a traitor, he was a merchant and ship's captain. This business took him to the West Indies and to St. Croix, where he possibly crossed paths with Alexander Hamilton.

Some Arnold biographers have already written about some of his voyages to the West Indies, based largely on letters Arnold send to his wife and business associates.¹ I will not be repeating what had previously been known, except to provide context. I will instead focus on the newly discovered material, which greatly increases our knowledge of Arnold's activities as a merchant on St. Croix.

Unfortunately, most of these newly discovered records are written in Gothic Danish and many of them are poorly preserved. Moreover, they involve complex legal and financial matters. As a result, I cannot guarantee the accuracy of my translations and summaries. Even when I am correct in the assessment of these documents, it would be nice to have full, accurate translations to give us more details into Arnold's activities on St. Croix. Perhaps someone in the future who is more fluent in Gothic Danish will be able to fully translate these records and give us even more accurate information.

April 1766: Mortgage on St. Croix

On April 25, 1766, [James Cradock made out a mortgage to Benedict Arnold](#).

I do hereby mortgage and make over unto Mr. Benedict Arnold four negro slaves...as a security to said Benedict Arnold for the sum of one hundred & eighty pounds currency, which is lawfully due to said Benedict Arnold for value received of him payable the last of May next...

¹ See, for instance, James K. Martin, *Benedict Arnold, Revolutionary Hero* 50–51; Stephen Brumwell, *Turncoat: Benedict Arnold and the Crisis of American Liberty* 31–34.

The two witnesses to this mortgage were Andrew Burr and George Dewar.

This mortgage was entered into [St. Croix's register three days later on April 28, 1766](#).

The location where the mortgage was agreed to, signed, and witnessed is not given, but having been entered into the mortgage book of St. Croix just three days after the date recorded in the mortgage document, clearly it must have been agreed to and signed on St. Croix.

It is of course possible that Benedict Arnold was not on St. Croix when Cradock made out this mortgage, but future events make it clear that he was on the island shortly afterward. Accordingly, Arnold probably was on St. Croix on April 25, 1766, when James Cradock made out a mortgage on four slaves to cover the £180 he owed to Arnold.

May – June 1766: Benedict Arnold on St. Croix and Legal Disputes

Benedict Arnold was involved in at least five legal disputes on St. Croix in May 1766.

It is not entirely clear how involved Arnold was in the prosecution of these cases. Clearly he was involved in several disputes on St. Croix, but he did not have to be there for his attorney, Kummel, to initiate the cases and certainly not to prosecute them to their conclusion. In fact, Arnold had certainly left St. Croix long before the final resolution of at least one of these disputes.

On [May 9, 1766](#), Benedict Arnold sued Doctor Robert Mears for 56 pounds, 18 shillings, and 9 pence in Christiansted's *Gæsterets* [*Guest Court*]. A second lawsuit by Arnold against Mears was also entered into the same day, but no amount of damages was listed.

An interesting sidenote before we continue: David Beekman and Nicholas Cruger lived and ran their mercantile operations out of Robert Mears's house in [1766](#) and [1767](#). Beekman and Cruger stayed in the house in [1768](#) but Mears no longer owned it. Also of note, David Beekman acted as a witness to one of Robert Mears's declarations, as will be seen below.

On [May 15, 1766](#), Christiansted's *Gæsterets* [*Guest Court*] heard a case involving Benedict Arnold and John Adolph Fischer wherein Arnold was trying to collect £33 from Fischer. Robert Mears is also mentioned in this record. The reasons for this case will become clear later.

On [May 16, 1766](#), the court ruled in Arnold's favor and ordered Robert Mears to pay the £56.18.9 in the first case and £25 for the second case and to pay court costs of 33 rigsdalers for each case.

On [May 17, 1766](#), Christiansted's *Gæsterets* [*Guest Court*] again took up the case "af Benedict Arnolds med Johan Adolph Fischer [of Benedict Arnold with Johan Adolph Fischer]." Robert Mears is also mentioned but so are several other people, including Captain Bird and Andrew Bord, both of whom are probably the Andrew Burr who served as a witness on the mortgage between James Cradock and Benedict Arnold in April 1766. Also mentioned is the "schooner the Charming Sally," which we will see later was Benedict Arnold's ship. Also mentioned are Captain Tribute, Captains Forbes and Foles (possibly the same person, each name appearing twice in the text), Matross Cooper, Hugh O'Donnell, a Rogiers, Port (probably Porth), Seybeck, Roger Ferral, and Roger Hansen Moller (the last few are names I frequently see in the St. Croix records). Benedict Arnold certainly was making a lot of people aware of his presence

and possibly making quite a few mad at him (I am not sure which of these people were disputing with Arnold and which were on his side, if any).

On [the same day](#), the same court took up another case of “Benedict Arnold contra J A Fischer.”

Christiansted’s *Gæsterets* [*Guest Court*] again took up the case of “Benedict Arnold contra J A Fischer” [on May 21, 1766](#). This record again mentions Robert Mears.

Christiansted’s *Gæsterets* [*Guest Court*] took up yet another case involving Benedict Arnold on [May 23, 1766](#). This is a great example of why these court records are so hard to interpret. The case mentions a £33 debt “from 15 Marty [March]” due to Benedict Arnold. Of course we know that Arnold on May 15 went to court to collect £33 from Johan Adolph Fischer. In this record, Fischer is not named and the date was given as March 15 instead of May 15, though I believe that March 15 refers to an obligation with that date. It appears that Arnold was now trying to collect his £33 from the court or from the government’s agent, *Advocatus Regius* [Royal Lawyer] Seybeck.

On [May 26, 1766](#), Christiansted’s *Gæsterets* [*Guest Court*] took up a new case involving Benedict Arnold, this time “contra [against] J Tuite.”

“J Tuite” was John Tuite, as shown in the continuation of this case on [May 27, 1766](#).

On this same day, [May 27, 1766](#), the case involving the £33 from Fischer and then from the court or royal lawyer was taken up again by Christiansted’s *Gæsterets* [*Guest Court*]. The record goes on for six pages. Anyone interested in translating six pages of Gothic Danish handwriting?

On [May 28, 1766](#), Christiansted’s *Gæsterets* [*Guest Court*] took up a new case, “Benedict Arnold contra Ralph Hansen.” If I’m reading this correctly, the case concerned “giæld ikke var Contracteret [debt (that) was not contracted],” but no amount was listed.

On [May 29](#) ([perhaps, the date is not clear](#)), 1766, the court recorded a ruling involving yet another Benedict Arnold legal dispute. In this case, I believe, Arnold had the court summon the widow of Thomas Wobly regarding a debt of 49 pounds originally owed to Peter Heyliger Jr, the note having been given over to Arnold. It appears that Arnold won the case and Madame Wobly was ordered to pay the £49 plus interest plus court costs of 31 rigsdalers. (I hope I got that right, or mostly correct.)

On [May 29, 1766](#), the court issued its ruling on the case of Benedict Arnold against Johan Adolph Fischer, also mentioning Robert Mears. I believe it says that Arnold won the case and that Fischer had to pay him thirty pounds and an additional 38 rigsdalers and six reals in court costs plus 8 more rigsdalers for the procurator’s salary.

On [May 30, 1766](#), Benedict Arnold’s attorney requested that Christiansted’s bailiff execute the “guest court’s judgment of May 16, 1766, in favor of Benedict Arnold” against Robert Mears. In the first case, Arnold was to receive £25 or 85 rigsdalers, 2 reals, and 4 styvers. Mears was also to pay court costs of 33 rigsdalers and execution costs of 10 rigsdalers and 4 reals. In the second case, Arnold was to receive £56.18.9, which translated to 189rd 6r 2st, with Mears again to pay the court costs of 33 rigsdalers and execution costs of 10 rigsdalers and 4 reals. I’m not sure what the text here says, but later evidence indicates that Mears did not pay Arnold his money.

On [June 12, 1766](#), Benedict Arnold's attorney requested that Christiansted's bailiff execute the "guest court's judgment of May 24" against Madame Wobly "in favor of Benedict Arnold." The court had found that Wobly owed Arnold £49, which equals 163 rigsdalers, 2 reals, and 4 styvers. Wobly also owed various court costs, bringing her total to 207 rigsdalers, 4 reals, and 4 styvers.

On the [same day](#), Benedict Arnold's attorney requested that Christiansted's bailiff execute the "guest court's judgment of May 29" against Ralph Hansen "in favor of Benedict Arnold." Hensen owed Arnold £24 or 80 rigsdalers. With court costs, Hansen owed a total of 124 rigsdalers and 4 reals. It would appear that to cover this payment Hansen had to sell or surrender one slaves worth 50 rigsdalers.

Yet again on [the same day](#), Benedict Arnold's attorney requested that Christiansted's bailiff execute the "guest court's judgment of May 29" against Johan Adolph Fischer "in favor of Benedict Arnold." Fischer owed Arnold £30 or 100 rigsdalers. Court costs, of course, were added, bringing Fischer's total to 161 rigsdalers and 4 reals.

The case of Benedict Arnold against Robert Mears was taken up again by Christiansted's *Gæsterets* [*Guest Court*] on [July 4, 1766](#). A few new names appear in this record, including Richard Irwin and John Campbell.

The confusing case of Benedict Arnold against Robert Mears, in which it appeared that Arnold won but Mears never paid him, can be partly explained by an entry in the probate of Richard Irwin. Irwin [had died on or before April 12, 1766](#), and people were now submitting their claims against his estate. On [February 10, 1768](#), James Hopkers submitted a claim against the Irwin estate, which included statements from July 4, 1766, in which Robert Mears declared he had sold goods belonging to Benedict Arnold to Irwin. Mears refused to pay Arnold, claiming that Irwin was supposed to have paid him. It would thus appear that even though Mears lost his claim in court, he must have appealed and pushed the obligation off himself and onto Richard Irwin, or rather onto his estate.

The English text reads:

St. Croix 4th July 1766

Personally appear'd before me Doctor Robert Meares and made oath that the good Deliver'd to him by Benedit Arnold to be sold on commission for the said Arnold were sold by said Meares to Richard Irwin taylor in the name of Mr Arnold to be paid for as followeth, said Irwin to give his obligation payable to said Arnold in the month of February last in [illegible] at the Kings price cotton or cash which obligation was to have been deliver'd by order of said Arnold to Mr John Campbell as his attorney_ and the said Mears declares the he did nott sell the said good in his own name but in the name of said Arnold as abovementioned

Upon all which he gave his oath so true help him God and his holly word.

...

Note of the following goods sold by me the underwritten to Mr Richard Irwin
for acct of Mr Benedit Arnold

25 Dressing Glasses at 8/ ... £10

8 Ditto...10/ ... 4

2 Tea Chests...18 ... 1.16

54 pair sleeve buttons 4/ ... 10.16

17 pair Ditto 5/6 ... 4.1.6

6p pair Mens Thread hard 7/ ... 2.2

6 pair Ditto 6/ ... 1.16

Trunk ... 0.8

Lawfull money £35.12.6

Addition 33 1/3 procent ... 11.17.3

... £47.9.9

Advance at 20 pro cent ... 9.9

... £56.18.9

I do hereby declare that the above articles amounting to fifty six pounds eighteen shillings & nine pence currency are the property of Mr Benedit Arnold, & sold by me on Commission for his acct to Mr Richard Irwin. The Executors therefore of the deceased Mr Irwin will be pleased to pay the above amount to Mr Benedit Arnold on his order witness my brand in St. Croix this 4th July 1766.

Robert Meares

Present:

David Beekman

John Campbell

This entry may also explain Robert Mears's appearance in Arnold's dispute with Johan Adolph Fischer (having a full translation of those records would be better). As in the case with Irwin, Mears may have sold goods for Arnold to Fischer but Arnold never received payment and was now suing one or both of them to collect.

Arnold does not appear in any of St. Croix's court records for some time, but then Christiansted's *Gæsterets* [*Guest Court*] of [August 2, 1768](#), mentions an "obligation" of £19 10s "to Benedict Arnold...from 1st March 1766." This record also mentions Samuel Foles, who had appeared earlier in the legal record of May 17, 1766, and something about a quittance for 45 of some currency with a date of June 28, 1766.

And then Arnold appears again in Christiansted's *Gæsterets* [*Guest Court*] register on [August 8, 1768](#), along with David Porth, James Cradock, Richard Andrew, George Dewar, Samuel Foles, and Robert Mears. Five of these names had previously appeared in the Arnold records from 1766.

Three days later, on [August 11, 1768](#), Benedict Arnold appears again in the Christiansted bailiff records in a case over £242.5.6 involving Richard Andrew and Andrew Burr, names that

have previously appeared in disputes with Arnold. Captain James Hopkins also appears. He could be the James Hopkersons of earlier.

Benedict Arnold appears yet again in Christiansted's *Gæsterets* [*Guest Court*] register on [April 22, 1769](#). This case is not about Arnold and the record is quite lengthy (so I won't include images), but Arnold is mentioned at least four times. Richard Andrew's name also appears, so the case may be related to earlier cases in which both Arnold and Andrew appear.

Two days later, on April 24, 1769, Arnold again appears in [Christiansted's Gæsterets \[Guest Court\] register](#) and [the bailiff's register](#). This case appears to have a Captain Plemont acting as Arnold's attorney against Richard Andrew and John Aikers in a dispute over £248.17.6.

Benedict Arnold on St. Croix in 1766

Unfortunately, it is not known from these records how much time Benedict Arnold stayed on St. Croix. It would appear from the mortgage that he was on the island by April 25, 1766. Other records suggest he may have been on St. Croix as early as March 1 and March 15 (we would need accurate translations to be sure). It would seem that he was still on St. Croix in May 1766 and possibly into June, but he may have left before judgment was proclaimed at the end of May and before they were taken to execution in June.

While it is not known how much time Benedict Arnold spent on St. Croix, it is clear that he caused quite a stir during his brief stay on the island, being involved in at least five legal disputes that went to court, attracting the attention of many people.

Benedict Arnold's 1766 Voyage To and From St. Croix

While details of Benedict Arnold's voyage to and from St. Croix are missing, it apparently was an interesting one. According to one Arnold biography:

In January 1767, his "good sloop *Charming Sally*" returned to New Haven after making a long trading voyage to St. Croix in the West Indies, from there across the open Atlantic to Holland, and then back again by the same route to Connecticut. Arnold was not aboard. According to ship's mate Rutherford Cooke and another crewman, Caleb Comstock, they had arrived in Amsterdam on August 30 to find Arnold waiting for them; when they made sail for St. Croix on October 5, they left him "on shore." ... Evidence for the outcome of the story is missing, but Arnold must have been on hand soon after to deal with the situation in person: he married Margaret Mansfield in New Haven just weeks later.²

Based on this account and the records of Arnold arriving on St. Croix in March or April 1766 and leaving perhaps in June 1766, it would seem that Arnold sailed on his own "good sloop

² Stephen Brumwell, *Turncoat: Benedict Arnold and the Crisis of American Liberty* 31–32.

Charming Sally” to St. Croix but was then abandoned by his crew who took his ship to Amsterdam. Given all the legal disputes he was involved in and the delays these caused to his voyage, perhaps it is no surprise that his crew abandoned him.

Arnold then sailed to Amsterdam, where he arrived before his own ship, but his crew again left him “on shore” when they returned to St. Croix. There is no record of whether Arnold, in departing from Amsterdam, headed for St. Croix or back home to Connecticut. Certainly he was back home by February 22, 1767, on which date he married Margaret “Peggy” Mansfield.

July – August 1768: Benedict Arnold Again on St. Croix

On May 18, 1768, Benedict Arnold left New Haven in his sloop *Charming Sally* for Barbados.

It took Arnold thirty-four days to reach Martinique. From there, he went to St. Kitts. On July 14, he wrote to his wife that he had “engaged a freight” for St. Croix, but he first stopped at St. Eustatius on the way.³

The earliest record of Arnold on St. Croix during this period is [a letter he wrote to his wife on July 25, 1768](#). In this letter, Arnold explained that he had arrived from St. Eustatius on St. Croix within the last four days, since which he had “discharged” his “freight from St. Kitts” and was “beginning to load” his ship with new goods, “which will help make up a bad Voyage.” He expected to leave St. Croix “in three weeks,” or about August 15. He adds that he had “issued One Hundred pounds of Burr & Andres Mony & some other small Debts the remainder shall be obliged to leave behind.” Burr could be Andrew Burr and Andrew could be Richard Andrew, both of whom we ran into earlier. He was looking forward to leaving St. Croix, which he called “this savage island,” and promised to write as often as possible from “this most Disagreeable Corner of the Earth.”

On August 8, 1768, he reported that he had failed to collect on some debt and he had suffered “a few days illness with a fever (but thank God am very well present).” On August 13, he wrote his wife that he would soon sail for home, stopping only in the Bahamas on the way.⁴

Arnold returned to New Haven on September 16, 1768.

Unfortunately, St. Croix’s customs journals from this period are badly damaged, making it hard to trace Arnold’s comings and goings. Nevertheless, one Arnold record has been found. On August 15, 1768, “Benedit Arnold of Nyehavn [Benedict Arnold of New Haven]” arrived in Frederiksted from Christiansted with a variety of goods.

It will also be recalled that three records regarding Arnold’s legal disputes of 1766 appear in the court record on August 2, 8, and 11, 1768. These appear more than two years after Arnold’s previous appearance in the court registers. Perhaps these matters were brought up before the court at this time because of Arnold’s reappearance on St. Croix.

Sadly, no other records of Arnold’s stay on St. Croix in 1768 have been found. It would seem that Arnold did not get into any legal disputes on St. Croix in 1768 as he had in 1766.

³ James K. Martin, *Benedict Arnold, Revolutionary Hero* 50–51.

⁴ James K. Martin, *Benedict Arnold, Revolutionary Hero* 51.

April 1769: Benedict Arnold in the West Indies

Benedict Arnold was back in the West Indies in April 1769, sending a letter to his wife from Barbados.⁵

There is no record of Benedict Arnold visiting St. Croix during this trip, but it may be no coincidence that after not being found in any St. Croix court records since August 1768, he suddenly reappears in the court record in April 1769. If he visited St. Croix at this time, there is no specific record of it.

March – June 1770: Benedict Arnold in the West Indies

When the Boston Massacre occurred on March 5, 1770, Benedict Arnold was away from home, already in the West Indies or on his way there. It was not until June 9, 1770, that he heard the news “the other day.” From St. George’s Key, which lies off the coast of Belize, Arnold wrote “of the most cruel, wanton & inhuman murders, committed in Boston by the soldiers. Good God, are the Americans all asleep and tamely giving up their Liberties?”⁶

There is no evidence that Arnold stopped in St. Croix during this voyage, but he surely did visit other West Indian islands, though no record of which exists.⁷

March 1772: Nicholas Cruger to Benedict Arnold

On March 30, 1772, [Nicholas Cruger wrote a letter to Benedict Arnold](#) in New Haven, Connecticut. Cruger informed Arnold that the brig commanded by Captain Hall had arrived and that Arnold’s hoops and staves had been sold in Christiansted, but that the ship “was obliged to go to West End [Frederiksted] to deliver one half [of the] lumber.” The ship then returned to Christiansted, where they loaded it with “a parcel” of rum, but it was “detained” as they tried “to get all the freight” onto it. Cruger closed by assuring Arnold that he “shall at all times be glad of an opportunity of rendering you any service on this side [of] the water.” Nicholas Cruger sent this letter via Captain Hall along with [another containing the same information to Samuel Mansfield](#), Arnold’s father-in-law and partner in numerous business ventures. Sending his “compliments to Mrs. Arnold” via Samuel Mansfield, Nicholas Cruger clearly was a friend of Benedict Arnold and the Mansfield family.

Although there is no evidence that Hamilton helped Cruger write these letters and these copies are not in Hamilton’s handwriting, Hamilton surely was involved in unloading and selling Arnold’s cargo and shipping him rum and other freight on the return voyage. Thus, by March 1772, if not earlier, Hamilton knew of Benedict Arnold. Moreover, this connection between Cruger and Arnold suggests that the two may have interacted during Arnold’s previous visits to St. Croix.

⁵ James K. Martin, *Benedict Arnold, Revolutionary Hero* 51.

⁶ [Historical Magazine with Notes and Queries, April 1857, 119.](#)

⁷ See James K. Martin, *Benedict Arnold, Revolutionary Hero* 57–58; Stephen Brumwell, *Turncoat: Benedict Arnold and the Crisis of American Liberty* 32.

December 1773 – February 1774: Benedict Arnold on St. Croix and More Legal Disputes

On [December 11, 1773](#), Benedict Arnold advertised in *The Royal Danish American Gazette* goods he had “just imported from Quebeck, in the Brig. Harriot, and to be sold by the subscriber, at Mr. Barry’s Tavern,” including “a cargo of excellent draught and saddle horses, single and in pairs. Also, English pease [peas], brown bread, pickled and smoke salmon.”

On [December 28, 1773](#), Daniel Fox wrote to Benedict Arnold, the first extant letter regarding a dispute with Joshua Singleton. Besides the argument, the letter is noteworthy in mentioning that Arnold “was very ill.”

Mr. B. Arnold

Sir

I was in town the day before yesterday in order to see you abbout [about] the gun Mr. Singleton shipt by you but hearing you was very ill did not chuse to trouble you with business. The bills of loading [lading] is my property, when your [*sic*] well shall beg that you’ll let me know what the gun sold for, & what you have brought in return. I am sir

You most humble servant

Daniel Fox

Dec. 28, 1773

To Capt B. Arnold

Daniel Fox wrote yet again to Benedict Arnold in an [undated letter](#), which must have been the letter of January 7 that Arnold later mentions (even though it appears in the notarial record after the letter of January 19).

Capt Arnold

Sir

I am not well enough to come to town or should have waited on you after the receipt of yours 2^d Instant you [illegible] as tho[ugh] you was displeased. I have done nothing of that nature that I know of. I am willing you should have all the advantage of l[a]ying out the money at Quebeck and only pay me what is sold for there[.] If this is agreeable let me know by a line. I shall come to town some time next week if I am well enough.

I am sir your most humble servant

Daniel Fox

To Captain Benedict Arnold

On [January 12, 1774](#), Arnold advertised in *The Royal Danish American Gazette* that he “wanted to purchase, negroe boys, from 12 to 20 years of age.” He even indicated that “rogues and runaways will answer, provided they are found.”

On [January 14, 1774](#), a John Jordan wrote to Arnold about his dispute with Singleton and Fox.

Sir

I received yours concerning Singleton and as far as I can recollect you have complied with his orders in buying which you thought best for his interest & I told him so some time ago. I have some thing to say to you about the Hheads [hogsheads] you sent me the pease [peas] in[,] for on my asking you if your pease [peas] were in rum hhds [hogsheads] you certainly told me the[y] were and it was on that condition that I bespoke six. I am Sir your obedient servant

Jno. Jordan

14 January 1774

To Capt B. Arnold

The next day, [January 15, 1774](#), John Jordan wrote again to Arnold.

Sir

I received your letter the other day viz I received it on Thursday [January 13] and sent you an answer yesterday by Mr. M. O'Maley which was to the best of my recollection as you mention it to bring him whatever should best for his interest. I shall God willing be in town next week. I am

Sir

Your obedient servant

Jno. Jordan

15 January 1774

To Capt Benedict Arnold

That same day, [January 15, 1774](#) (misdated 1773), Benedict Arnold wrote to Otto Christian Muller, notary public of St. Croix, about how Joshua Singleton refused to accept goods he had ordered.

Inclosed is an account current with Johsua Singleton, by which you will please to observe, I have brought him out from Quebec sixty eight & half hundred, brown bread, loose & in hogsheads, twenty keggs salmon, and twenty two & half bushell peas, which I have tendered to him and which he has refused accepting. I have now & beg the favour of you to tender him the above mentioned goods in a legal way, to let him know at the same time that unless he received his goods and pay the freight & dutys amounting to sixty odd pounds

St Croix currency I shall be obliged to sell as many of said good as will pay the freight, dutys, charges, etc. arising, as soon as the law will allow which will be the 24th instant. Your compliance with the above will much oblige.

Sir

Your most humble servant

Benedict Arnold

Muller received Arnold's letter and recorded some sort of note or decision (it needs to be translated to determine what it is) on [January 17, 1774](#).

On [January 19, 1774](#), Daniel Fox wrote again to Arnold.

Capt Arnold

Sir

Please to let me know by a line if you except [accept] the propose [proposal] I made you yesterday[.] I'll weight [wait] for the payment till the middle of April which may save Expense & trouble to both partys.

I am sir your most humble servant

Daniel Fox

January 29th, 1774

To Capt Benedict Arnold

On [January 21, 1774](#), Arnold wrote again to Muller. Arnold officially filed a protest and sued "for damages or the charge of my vessel lying here" against Singleton, who he claimed failed to take delivery of goods ordered and failed to pay.

St. Croix 21 January 1774

Sir

Inclosed is three letter from Mr Daniel Fox dated the 28 December the 7th and 19 January also two notes from John Jordan Esq. By the first of Mr. Fox[']s letters he informs me the bills loading [bills of lading] I signed to Joshua Singleton had terms his property & desired to know what I had brought out for him, which I according acquainted him with. In the [illegible] he wants me to pay him the proceeds of the [illegible] & [illegible] the goods to my own accounts between the [illegible] and last letter I saw him when he acquainted me the bills loading were left with him but that he did not know whether they were his property or not, I have offered him the goods repeatedly, which he refuses to take. I have offered to submit the matter to merchant which he does not compete with & as I was uncertain whose property the bills loading were I have had the goods tendered to Mr. Joshua Singelton who says Mr. Fox will receive them, but

as [word missing] has refused, I beg the favour of you to tender the goods to him, with [illegible] account tendered Mr. Singleton, the goods are six eight and a half hundred brown bread part in twelve hogsheads & the remainder loose, seventy two & half bushels peas and twenty kegs salmons. The freight & charges which have arose amount near seventy pounds, & I desire to protest against him for the same, as well as all charges that have or may arise, also for damage or the charge of my vessel lying here with said goods / as he is ready to sail, were the out / at five pounds this currency per day. Your compliance will oblige

Sir

Your most humble servant

Benedict Arnold

That same day, [Muller again recorded some sort of note or decision.](#)

With this legal dispute ongoing, or at the least Arnold not yet having collected what he believed was owed to him, sometime in [January 1774](#), “Benedict Arnold of New Haven in Connecticut but now in St. Croix” appointed a “Joseph Orsborn [*sic*] of Middletown in Connecticut but now in St. Croix” as his “true and lawfull attorney” on St. Croix “to recover all and every sum or sums of money due to me or that shall hereafter be due to me in the Island of St. Croix.”

On the same day Arnold wrote to Muller to file a protest and sue Singleton, January 21, 1774, Arnold wrote to his wife.⁸ He mentions nothing about his troubles on St. Croix. No location is given in this letter and the contents do not suggest where he was, but it obviously was from St. Croix since Arnold wrote to Muller on this same day.

Arnold’s continued presence on St. Croix can be found in the island’s newspaper.

A notice appears in *The Royal Danish American Gazette* on [January 22, 1774](#), announcing “On Wednesday next the 26th instant, at 3 o’clock in the afternoon, by request of Mr. Benedict Arnold, will be sold at public auction at Mr. Barry’s tavern: Sundry dry provisions, on account of Mr. Joshua Singleton, to pay the freight due to said Arnold.” It is thus clear that Arnold was indeed collecting on the money Joshua Singleton owed him for “freight.”

It would seem that the auction of January 26 did not raise enough money to cover Singleton’s debt to Arnold because another notice appeared in *The Royal Danish American Gazette* on [January 29, 1774](#) and again on [February 2](#), that an auction on February 4 will be held for the same purpose. To be auctioned off were “72 ½ bushels of pease [peas], 20 kegs salmon, 68 ½ hundred brown bread.”

The results of this February 4, 1774, auction was [recorded in the island’s record books](#) along with a long description of the dispute between Arnold and Singleton and Fox. Unfortunately, this description is in Gothic Danish and would need translating. The auction itself raised 345 rigsdalers and 9 skillings.

⁸ [The Magazine of History with Notes and Queries, April 1906, 259.](#)

A different kind of notice related to Benedict Arnold appeared in *The Royal Danish American Gazette* on [February 5, 1774](#). Joseph Osborn, the attorney Arnold had recently appointed, advertised that two seamen—an about 30-year-old seaman named John Clarke and “a sturdy fellow, about 30 years of age” named Alexander Owens—had run away from Benedict Arnold’s brig *Harriott*. Rewards were offered for the apprehension and return of both sailors.

Benedict Arnold and Alexander Hamilton

There is no record of Benedict Arnold and Alexander Hamilton meeting when Arnold was on St. Croix in 1766 or 1768 and of course Hamilton had left before Arnold returned in December 1773. Nor is there any record of Arnold interacting with David Beekman or Nicholas Cruger on St. Croix. But we do know that Arnold got into a legal dispute in 1766 with the landlord of Beekman and Cruger and that Beekman acted as a witness regarding a debt owed to Arnold. We also know that Arnold and Cruger were friendly from Cruger’s letter of March 1772 mentioning the business they had done together and sending regards to Arnold’s wife. As Cruger’s chief aide, Hamilton would have been aware of this professional and personal relationship.

With all these interactions and the Christiansted community being relatively small, one assumes that Alexander Hamilton crossed paths with Arnold. [Alexander Hamilton started working for Beekman and Cruger sometime in 1766 or very early 1767](#), so he may have been employed by them when Arnold was on the island in the spring and early summer of 1766. Hamilton certainly was working for Beekman and Cruger when Arnold was on the island in July and August 1768. And of course Hamilton knew of Arnold, if he had not previously met him, when Cruger and Arnold did business together in March 1772 and Cruger sent letters to both Arnold and to Arnold’s father-in-law.

Of course, there is no way to know what impressions Hamilton had of Arnold. While Beekman and Cruger apparently were friendly with Robert Mears, who got into a dispute with Arnold, there is no evidence that the dispute was anything other than civil or that Beekman and Cruger took sides in the matter. While Cruger appears to be friendly with Arnold, this could be politeness rather than genuine friendship.

So while Hamilton likely met Benedict Arnold on St. Croix, perhaps in 1766 if Hamilton was already working for Beekman and Cruger, and more likely in 1768, we do not know how well they became acquainted or what each thought about the other.

Translating Gothic Danish

As mentioned at the outset, so many of the above records were written in Gothic Danish. I did my best to translate as much as was necessary to understand the nature of their contents, but I am simply unable to translate them fully or accurately. To correct any errors and to get a fuller and more accurate account of Arnold’s activities on St. Croix, full translations of these letters would be needed, a task that evidently few people are able to accomplish and even they apparently do so with much difficulty.