

The Anna Heegaard Project: Honoring Her Legacy with Reinterment and Land Transfer

Virgin Islands 175th Emancipation Commemoration Committee to preside over reinterment of Anna Heegaard on Wednesday, July 31

ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS, July 31, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Anna Heegaard, a pivotal figure in the history of emancipation in the Virgin Islands, will be reinterred on July 31, 2024, at her burial site in Orange Grove, St. Croix. This initiative, known as "The Anna Heegaard Project, Part 1 – The Reinterment and Real Property Transfer", also includes the official transfer of the property to the people of the Virgin Islands of the United States.

The reinterment ceremony, organized by the 175th Emancipation Commemoration Committee (ECC) in collaboration with the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) and State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO), will be attended by Governor Albert Bryan Jr., and landowner H. C. Ruparelia, developer and owner of Innovative Asset Group, who will facilitate the property transfer. The event commemorates Anna Heegaard's enduring legacy and highlights efforts to recognize the contributions of significant historical figures in the struggle for freedom and equality.

Carol Burke, ECC Chairwoman and a descendant of Heegaard, said that under the authorization of SHPO, the remains were shipped to Denmark for authentication testing. "Her remains have now returned to St. Croix, and we look forward to this important historical development as we enact this reinterment in a pine casket that has been customized for her," the former USVI senator stated.

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Chairwoman Burke explained that the property owner has agreed to deed to the Virgin Islands Government the parcel of land containing the private cemetery in which Anna Heegaard, her

brother, and other relatives were buried. The family cemetery was rediscovered during land-clearing by the current owner, H. C. Ruparelia, whose work to rehabilitate the cemetery was authorized by DPNR and SHPO. The restoration of the site ensures that Virgin Islanders for generations to come can pay respect to the woman who played a crucial role in the story of emancipation.

Born in Christiansted, St. Croix, to Susanna Uytendahl, a formerly enslaved woman, and Jacob Heegaard, a white Danish official, Anna Heegaard was classified as a free mulatto woman. Her relationship with Governor-General Peter von Scholten led to progressive reforms and the eventual emancipation of slaves in 1848.



Once she had gotten close to him, Anna Heegaard let no opportunity go by to describe to von Scholten the plight of the 'free-colored', the urgent need for reforms and the kind of reforms that were needed, according to an article on the St. Croix Landmarks Society website (stcroixlandmarks.org).

In response to a major slave uprising, Governor-General von Scholten decided to abolish slavery in the Danish West Indies in 1848. While the historical records do not explicitly mention Heegaard's influence, her longstanding relationship with von Scholten, along with her personal experiences and background, strongly suggest that she had a significant impact on his decision.

Anna Heegaard died in 1859 and was buried in her family's cemetery at Aldershvile, in what is now called Estate Orange Grove.

The reinterment of Anna Heegaard honors her place in the history of emancipation and is a powerful reminder of the ongoing struggle for justice and equality for oppressed and marginalized persons around the globe.

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