

The Virgin Islands Consortium

July 3 Marks 170th Virgin Islands Emancipation

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The Virgin Islands will observe two very significant holidays on July 3 and 4 - the 170th anniversary of the Emancipation of enslaved Africans in the former Danish West Indies and the 242nd Independence of the United States of America.

In a Government House release issued Monday, Governor Kenneth Mapp encouraged residents to participate in Emancipation and Independence Day activities throughout the territory. Mr. Mapp will observe both holidays on St. John.

St. John's Emancipation Day activities will commence on the St. John Festival Village stage with Emmanuel Boyd blowing the conch shell at 1 p.m. on Tuesday. The Caribbean Ritual Dancers, the St. Thomas Spiritual Dancers, Haile Israel, In Harmony,

Eddie Bruce, Delroy “Ital” Anthony and historian Mario C. Moorhead will participate in the program, Government House said.

On July 4, the Festival Parade will begin at 11 a.m. in Cruz Bay followed by fireworks at 9 p.m.

It is most fitting that residents remember with pride and gratitude the events leading to the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation by Governor General Peter Von Scholten after thousands of slaves from plantations across St. Croix converged on Fort Frederik to demand freedom in the early morning hours of July 3, 1848, Governor Mapp said.

“This bold march for freedom rattled the corridors of European powers and brought a staggering end to years of brutal oppression and exploitation of human beings for financial profit,” he said. “Each day, we must remain forever vigilant to ensure and protect human freedom with our actions.”

The chief executive noted that 101 years after the Virgin Islands joined the American family, the United States of America will observe the 242nd Independence from Great Britain on July 4.

“The Virgin Islands is thankful for the assistance and support of our great nation as we rebuild our islands from the devastation of two Category 5 hurricanes,” Mr. Mapp said. “We recognize the rights and privileges afforded to us under the American flag.”