

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Historic Cannons At Fort Christiansvaern To Be Preserved, Causing Temporary Closure Of Water Battery

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ST. CROIX -- The National Park Service on Thursday began the conservation of several of the historic cannons at Fort Christiansvaern, the park said in a release.

The five 18-pounder cannons on exhibit at Fort Christiansvaern were cast at the Danish gun foundry in Laurvig, Norway in the 18th century. These cannon types were used on warships and fortresses. Three of them date from 1784 and two from 1786. They were carried to St. Croix in 1790 and used at Fort Christiansvaern for defense of the harbor. The average weight of the 18-pounder type cannon is approximately 4800 pounds.

In addition, 3 of the fort's smaller cannons -- the six and eight-pounders located on the south bastion alongside interpretive waysides explaining the history of the fort's defense -- will be conserved as well. These cannons were traditionally mounted on wooden naval-type carriages. The mounts were commonly used in garrison settings as they were deployed directly from naval vessels. The color scheme is dark green with painted black iron hardware, in keeping with their, and the rest of the park's mid-1800s appearance.

The cannon tubes will receive professional metal conservation treatment by Tuckerbrook Conservation LLC, the park said. Over the next 3 weeks, the Tuckerbrook team will have the cannons removed from their carriages and positioned onto low work mounts resting on a protected work surface on the fort's water battery, according to NPS. Tuckerbrook will then begin the delicate removal of the old paints and coatings and eventually recoat the restored tubes with an engineered siloxane paint to reduce future corrosion, the release said.

During the cannon conservation work, some of areas within the fort will be offline for purposes of public safety, including the water battery and parts of the north and south bastion.

"We look forward to watching the cannon conservation process and welcome visitors to view the work from the positions behind the orange construction fencing on the bastions," NPS said. "Unfortunately the water battery will be closed during cannon conservation process."

"The Christiansted National Historic Site is 67 years-old in 2019," said the park. "And we hope that you have an opportunity to come and visit your park to see some of the oldest Danish colonial period buildings that the National Park Service maintains for the public trust."