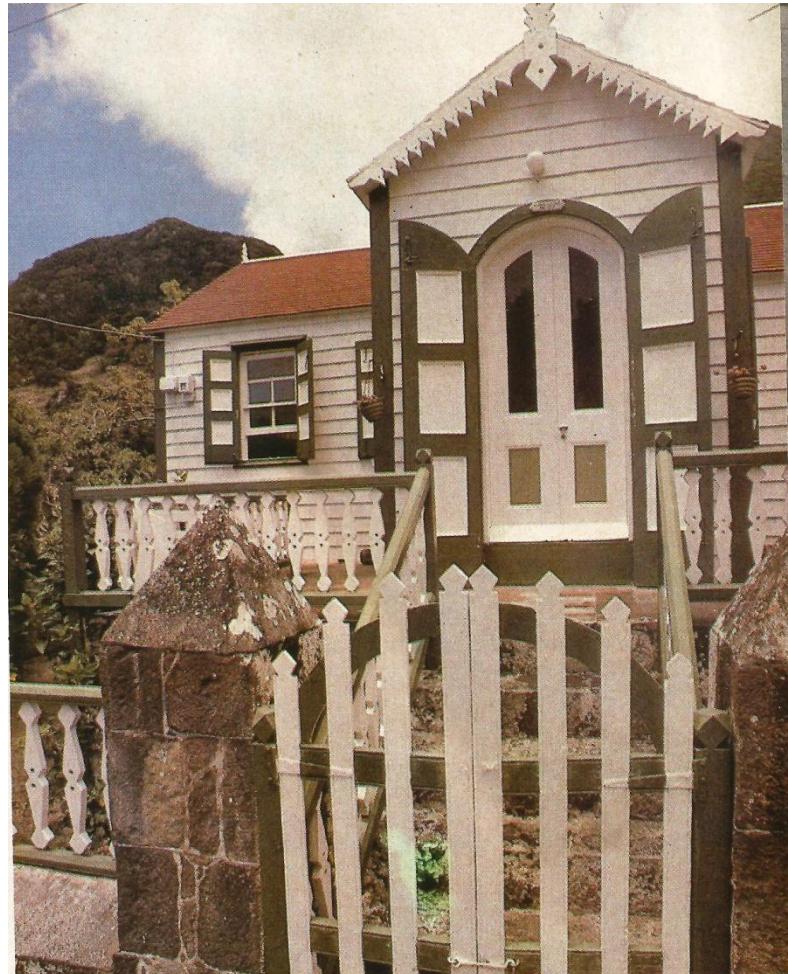


## A typical Saba House

By; Will Johnson



Floral Cottage - Miss Marguerite's House

This lovely home known to all nowadays as "Miss Marguerites House" was built by Mr. Bloomfield Hassell a prominent merchant in his day.

In probably the first photo taken of this part of Windwardside between 1870 and 1875 the lot was vacant but the still existing cistern is pictured. There may have been a house before that photo was taken. A mulatto family related to the Every/Peterson families lived in the now vacant lot between this house and the Museum.



**Figure 1 Miss Lilly Every, neighbour of Miss Marguerite.**

There were three small slave huts there and they can be seen in the photo referred to here



**Figure 2 Mr. Bloomfield Hassell with suspenders with his sister Marah.**

Mr. Bloomfield Hassell also owned across the street from his home where the conference room of Juliana's Hotel is now located. When Mr Bloomfield Hassell died, that property was sold to Mr. Joseph "Mano" Emanuel Vlaun who employed Mr. Arthur Chester Hassell to manage this store for him.

Mr. Bloomfield Hassell was born on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1878 and died at the age of 74 on August 28<sup>th</sup> 1952. His parents were Henry Bloomfield Hassell and Rose Ellen Holm. He was married to Ethel Hassell who died on Saba on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1943 at the age of 58. Her parents were Lovelock Hassell and Agnes Holm.

They were cousins and were married on Tuesday May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1908.



Figure 3 Miss Marguerite as a young woman doing Spanish Work

In those days it was customary to visit the home of the bride to be while engaged and to be engaged in building a new home for the bride to be. So it is reasonable to assume that the house was built and completed no later than 1908. Further research in the Registry of Properties will be able to shed more light on this matter as to when the property was acquired by Mr. "Bloomy" as he was known. That style house would have been built with hand tools only in a period of six weeks for \$140.—by a Master carpenter and at most two helpers. In Windwardside there were some famous Master carpenters who also built some of the former lovely homes on the Front Street in Philipsburg, St. Martin. Among the best were "Bo Willie" Leverock and his son

Cyrillus, also Alphonsius "Connor" Hassell and a number of others. The wood would have been imported from New York to which port Saban owned schooners called on a monthly basis back then. There were times that as many as three large Saban schooners would be docked at pier 17 at South Street Seaport. They would carry sugar from St. Kitts, salt from either St. Martin or Anguilla and passengers from the Eastern Caribbean. They would also trade between Barbados and New York. The return trip they would bring back general merchandize, lumber, shingles, and passengers.

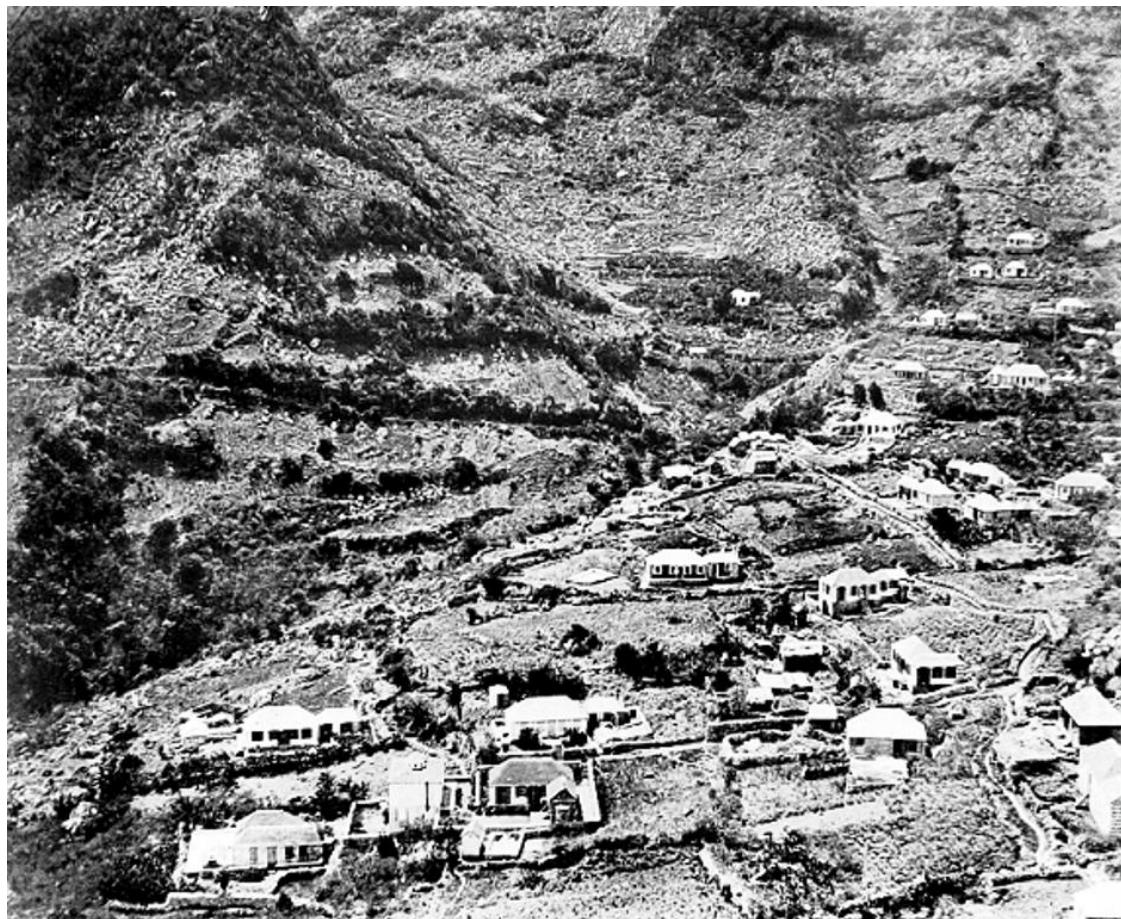


Figure 4 Under The Hill, photo taken between 1870 and 1875.

His wife died in 1943 on May 15<sup>th</sup> at the age of 58 and he passed away on Thursday August 28<sup>th</sup> 1952. Shortly after his death the grocery store and surrounding land was sold to Mr. Joseph Emanuel Vlaun. The home was first sold to Mr. John Joseph Simmons and his wife Lillian Hassell (parents of Lloyd and Harry Simmons, among others) after Mr. Bloomy died. When Mr. Simmons was about to retire from the ESSO oil refinery on Aruba another house on the way to "Booby Hill" became available and Mr. Simmons bought that house from Mr. Johnny Hassell. Mr. Bloomy's House was then sold to Miss Marguerite Hassell whose parent's home was and still is located above this home. That would have been around 1959 or so. I remember Miss Marguerite

living in her new home in early 1962 as she and I worked for a while together in the Post Office in Windwardside. She lived there for the rest of her life with the only exception when she would visit her brother Norman and his family in the United States. And so the house became known as Miss Marguerite's House.

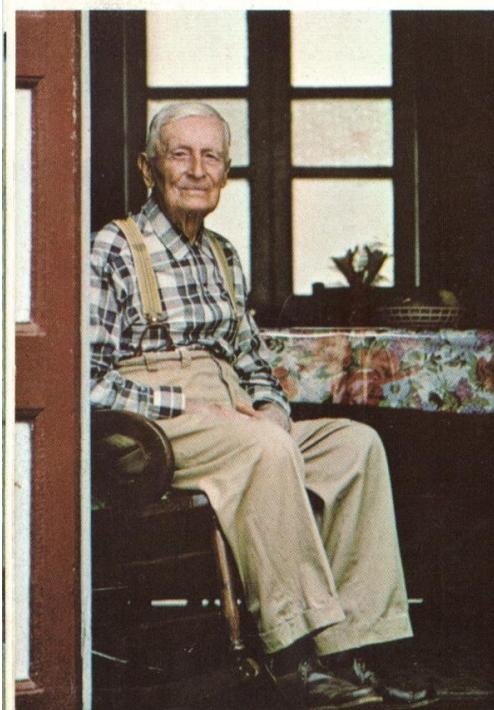


Figure 5 Henry Johnson Hassell "Mr. Heck" Marguerites father.

Miss Maugerite (spelled this way) was born on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1919 and passed away on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011. At her funeral I did a eulogy on her life which is attached (noe see below) to this brief history of this house. Miss Maugerite took loving care of this beautiful home and was assisted by Miss Helen van Putten who was her housekeeper most of her life. And so it is no wonder that the house is universally known now as:"Miss Marguerite's House"!



Figure 6 Miss Marguerite at the age of 47.

## EULOGY, by Will Johnson

Miss\*Maugerite Hassell was born on Saba on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1919, and she passed away in the early morning hours of September 9<sup>th</sup> 2011, with her sister-in-law Joan and other members of her family at her side.

Miss Maugerite as she was universally known was the daughter of Mr. Henry Johnson Hassell and his wife Verena Hassell born Johnson.

Her only living sibling was her brother the late Mr. Norman Hassell. A sister who was born before her died as a baby. Norman and Maugerite both grew up here on Saba and Norman later left for work in Aruba and after that to the United States. Miss Maugerite stayed on and Norman came almost every year to visit his parents and her, and to reconfirm his roots to this island and its people he loved so much. Miss Maugerite would also visit Norman and his family in the United States as often as she could. All her life her vacations consisted of going to see her brother Norman and his family or to take time off to entertain them when they came to Saba.

Her father" Mr. Heck" as we called him was a sailor and was many years away to sea and worked in the United States as well. In those days you knew you had a father but realized that it was not of his own choosing that he could not be around, so your mother had to father you as well. Life here when I was a boy growing up was so different to now that it is difficult for anyone to imagine how it was. We did not have the distractions of today like radio, television or telephone. So after school I would do my chores around the house like getting wood for my mother to cook on. After that it would be wandering around the village doing messages for the old folks and listening to their stories. Mr. "Heck" was one of my friends. He used to keep sheep up in The Level and do a bit of farming up there, but most of his farming was done next to his house. He was forever painting the house it seemed. So I did not know that he had spent a big part of his life away at sea. It seemed to me as a young boy as if he had always been keeping sheep, farming around the house, and painting the roof.

In the meantime Miss Maugerite had her own life to live and started to work for the Postoffice in the nineteen thirties. In those days it was a great privilege to get a government job. Miss Maugerite had to walk to the Bottom for seven years and was paid seventy five guilders a month. I was under the impression that she had only walked but Guy and Ronnie corrected me in front of the Church. She used to ride a horse to work as well and even fell off the horse once and broke her arm. Things were different then as I am sure that as soon as the cast was on, Miss Maugerite had to walk to her job in The Bottom the next day in order to save her job. There was no time for sick leave back then. And during her entire career she hardly ever called in sick.

I worked with her in 1962 for a few months at the Postoffice here in Windwardside. I remember we were working together the day when a helicopter landed at Flat Point where they were clearing off for the new airport. Although it was a big event we had to hear about it. There was no time to leave the job to go and sight see. I was living on St. Maarten at the time. I had been sent here to campaign for Mr. Claude Wathey and it was a tough election. Miss Maugerite was not a fan of politics as you all know. Thaday of the election the Post Office was like the doctor's clinic, with people coming from all over for instructions on how to vote, as I was actually campaigning for Mr. Van Hugh Hassell who was my Brother Freddie's godfather. Anyway after hearing Miss Maugerite grunt a couple of times, I apologized to her and posted a sentry around the corner of the building to warn people not to come in to the Post office and that when I got my time off to vote that I would give instructions outside. Other than that Miss Maugerite and I enjoyed a lifelong good relationship. I imagine that the reason both Norman and Miss Maugerite liked me so much is because as a small boy I enjoyed a relationship with their father Mr. Heck which perhaps they had been denied because of his being away at sea when they were my age. They were also a great help to me with my hobby of

genealogy, finding out the history of our people and who was and is related to whom. Norman was always proud that he had a Scottish ancestor Colgohoun (pronounced Cohone) Johnstone after whom "Mars" Cohone's Hill is named. Also on their father's side they are descended from Hercules Hassell who was from St. John's and was the Island Secretary and Kings Attorney for nearly forty years. His excellent handwriting can still be seen in the old property registers in the Government building in The Bottom. To show how things have changed. Norman told me once that he and his father was visiting an old relative on St. John's. When asked how she was she replied: "I am a blessed woman as my niece in the United States sends me TWO dollars a month."

Miss Maugerite also functioned as the Island Secretary for the first years after representative government came to the island. When the Island Council would meet she would take minutes of the meetings of the Council. I have those minutes in safe keeping after I found them dispersed on a field after hurricane George. Of course when one worked in the Post office in those days, one was called on to do other work, such as working for the Receivers Office, and writing letters for the Administrator and so on. So when I say that she worked for the Post office, it was mostly when she worked in Windwardside, but she was called on by the Administrator of the Island to do other work for the government as well. Also Miss Maugerite was the Librarian for the Windwardside for many years. This was done without pay of course. After I started living here and when she was off-island I would fill in at the Library for her and I would enjoy it. She was given a Medal of recognition for her service to her island by Her Majesty the Queen. Also a couple of years ago the Island Government of Saba honoured her with a Plaque recognizing her contribution to the island.

Salaries remained small and I know that by the time Miss Maugerite retired that her salary, though no longer seventy five guilders a month, was probably less than seven hundred a month.

Miss Maugerite was also a lifelong faithful member of her church, the Church of England and was a regular communicant in the Anglican community here on Saba.

We must mention the relationship she had with Miss Helen van Putten. One could not call Helen a servant, though that would seem to have been her duties. She worked for Miss Maugerite for so long that they became more like sisters than boss and servant. When Miss Helen got so old and after she had an accident on her way home her son Eric took her to St. Maarten to live. He told me that each morning his mother would get up and insist on help to put on her sneakers and her hat as according to her, she had to go by Miss Maugerite's to her work.

Miss Maugerite was also a well known handicraft worker which we call "Spanish Work". She was the photo model for a number of history books written about the island and so she will not be forgotten to those like me who collects all these old books about Saba.

Her lovely home has also appeared in a number of books and magazine articles written about Saba. The home had originally belonged to Mr. Bloomfield Hassell who was a merchant. When he passed on Mr. Josie Simmons bought the house and then sold it to Miss Maugerite. I remember one evening I had to pass by her to arrange a legal document and my son Peter who was then only six years old accompanied me. Although he sat very still throughout, when the opportunity presented itself he whispered to me to ask Miss Maugerite if he could see the rest of the house. She overheard him and told him: "Of course, you can." When we left he said to me "Daddy that house is like a museum." When I got home I called her on the telephone to tell her what Peter had said.

A particular friend who had a relationship with her like a son with a mother must also be mentioned. It was from Glenn that I learned that Miss Maugerite had been placed in the Henry Every Home for the Aged. I went there one day with the intention to see her but regrettfully she was fast

asleep in the chair and I did not want to disturb her. And with the storm which was passing the island I was unaware that she had passed away until Sunday morning when Donna called to ask me to do the eulogy.

On behalf of Miss Maugerite's sister-in-law, and her nieces and nephew, I want to express their thanks to those who have befriended her in one way or the other and especially Mr. Glenn Holm who was a good neighbor in word and in, deed.

Saba is a small place. In the past many people never even left the village in which they had been born. Miss Maugerite after this service will be taken to be laid to rest next to the home in which she grew up in and will be buried in the same grave as her grandparents. Just as when she was, for the short time, in the Home for the Aged she longed to be in her lovely home, in death she will be placed in the grave of her ancestors and not too far from where she grew up and not too far from her own home which she cared for and loved so dearly to the very end.

In closing I would like to quote from the great writer Robert Louis Stevenson a small word of consolation:

“She is not dead, this friend; not dead,  
But, in the path we mortals tread,  
Gone some few, trifling steps ahead,  
And nearer to the end;  
So that you, too, once past the bend,  
Shall meet again, as face to face, this  
Friend  
You fancy dead.”

May she rest in peace!

\*Note: In the birth registers her name is spelled Maugerite.