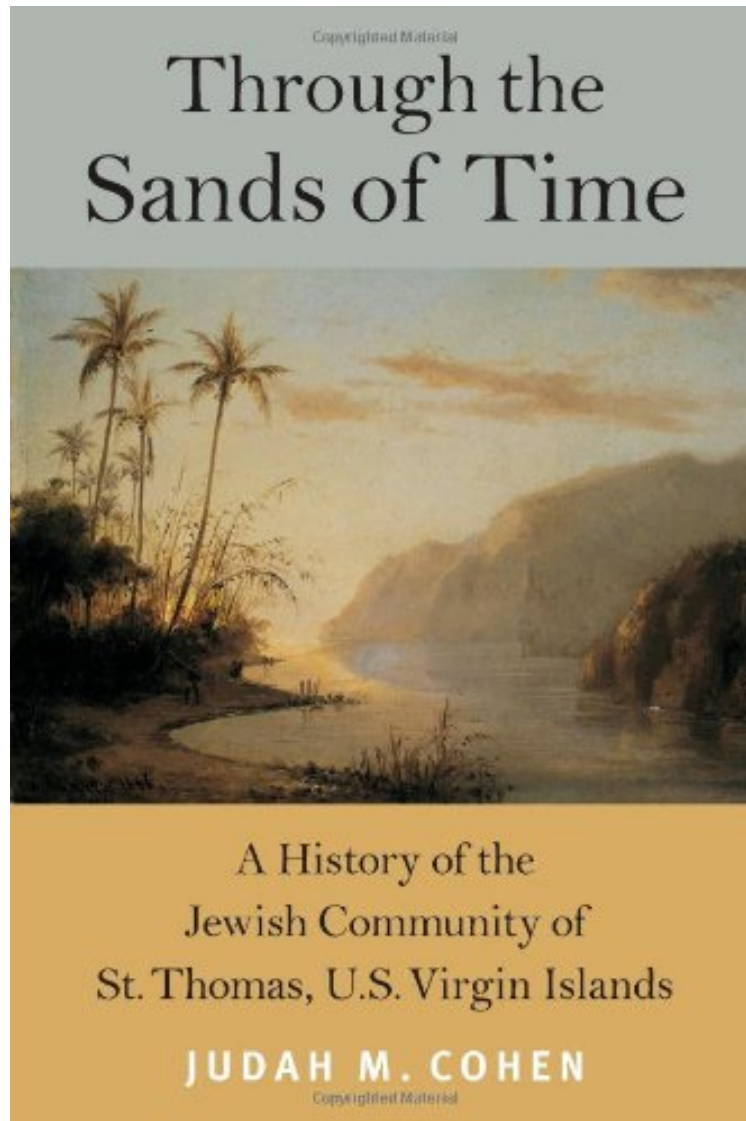


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Through the Sands of Time: A History of the Jewish Community of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands (Brandeis Series in American Jewish History, Culture, and Life)

Judah M. Cohen

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Judah M. Cohen : Through the Sands of Time: A History of the Jewish Community of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands (Brandeis Series in American Jewish History, Culture, and Life) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Through the Sands of Time: A History of the Jewish

Community of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands (Brandeis Series in American Jewish History, Culture, and Life):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A very good read. By Sheila Very informative, well documented and interesting read. Judah Cohen makes the case for the St. Thomas as a thriving, international port with a small, yet vibrant Jewish community that gave rise to significant many national and international leaders. Quite impressive and culturally impressive. A very good read. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Great Historical Reading By Robert Deutchman Dr. Cohen presents a well-written account of the Jewish community of the Virgin Islands. I'm a direct descendent of Solomon Benjamin, a vessel merchant mentioned in the book and it was fascinating to learn more about my ancestry. Judaism generally is seen from a European-perspective. Since the Inquisition in 1492, many Jews found their way to the British West Indies, but little is written about their settlements, accomplishments and ways of life. This book shows a historical look at communities, both religious and economic.

In 1796, the Jews of St. Thomas founded the first Jewish congregation on this Caribbean island. By 1803, new arrivals from England, France, and the neighboring islands of St. Eustatius and Curaao increased the original number from a handful of congregants to twenty-two families. Their small synagogue was destroyed by fires and rebuilt several times. The congregation numbered sixty-four families by the time the present synagogue was erected in 1833. It is by now the oldest synagogue in continuous use under the American flag. The congregation was also among the first to receive copies of the new West London Reform liturgy when it came out in 1841 and the first in this hemisphere to hold a Jewish confirmation ceremony, two years later. In addition, the St. Thomas Synagogue has produced its own unique religious literature relating to hurricanes! While the synagogue has served for over 200 years as a central religious and social gathering place, the Jews of St. Thomas have been highly mobile members of a progressive, cosmopolitan society that at times rivaled any in the world. As an accepted part of the larger community, members were accomplished, model citizens in a highly tolerant Danish colonial society. Jews took positions in government, served as auctioneers, participated in the local Masonic lodges, and represented other countries as consuls in St. Thomas. As traders in a mercantile culture, the Jews contributed to the activity of one of the worlds busiest harbors and played a crucial role in St. Thomass nineteenth-century rise to prominence in the northern Caribbean.

The final work is very engaging . . . informative and satisfying . . . Cohen has ably set the stage for comparative studies of Jewish modernization and cultural formation in the West. American Jewish History