

PRESS RELEASE

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HLSCC To Commemorate The Centennial Of The Fancy Me Tragedy Through Special Exhibition

Release Date: 27 July, 2026



One hundred years after the sinking of the *Fancy Me*, one of the most significant maritime tragedies in Virgin Islands history, H. Lavity Stoutt Community College (HLSCC), through the Jennie Wheatley Virgin Islands Studies Institute, will commemorate the centennial anniversary with a special exhibition honouring the vessel, its passengers, crew, and the enduring legacy of the event.

The exhibition will form part of the College's ongoing efforts to preserve and share the stories that have shaped the Virgin Islands and will serve as a key feature of the reimagined Virgin Islands Maritime Museum.

The announcement comes as HLSCC undertakes significant modernisation and restructuring efforts at its maritime heritage facility, located within the Centre for Applied Marine Studies at the Paraquita Bay (South) Campus. The initiative reflects the College's commitment to preserving Virgin Islands history while creating new opportunities for learning, engagement, and cultural appreciation.

The special exhibition will mark the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the *Fancy Me*, which occurred in July 1926 during a hurricane off the coast of the Dominican Republic.

At the time, many Virgin Islanders travelled throughout the Caribbean in search of employment and opportunity. Among them were passengers aboard the *Fancy Me*, a schooner owned by brothers of Carrot Bay. In late July 1926, the *Fancy Me* departed San Pedro de Macorís carrying sugarcane and passengers eager to return home for the August Festival season. During the voyage, the vessel encountered severe weather, ultimately wrecking near La Saona in the Dominican Republic. Of the approximately 80 persons aboard, 59 lost their lives.

The tragedy profoundly affected communities across the Virgin Islands, touching nearly every district and leaving an impact that would be felt for generations.

"The *Fancy Me* remains one of the most significant events in our maritime history and collective memory," said Rochelle Smith, Director of the Jennie Wheatley Virgin Islands Studies Institute. "Its story continues to resonate because it touched so many families and communities throughout the Virgin Islands. As we commemorate the centennial anniversary, we have an opportunity to honour those

who were lost, remember those who survived, and preserve an important chapter of our history for future generations."

According to Smith, the exhibition will provide an opportunity for residents and visitors alike to reflect on the historical significance of the tragedy and its place within the wider story of the Virgin Islands' maritime heritage.

"The story of the *Fancy Me* is part of the larger story of who we are as a people," Smith added. "It speaks to our relationship with the sea, the movement of people throughout the Caribbean, and the resilience of Virgin Islands families and communities. It is a story worth remembering and sharing."

The exhibition is one of several initiatives being developed as part of the transformation of the Virgin Islands Maritime Heritage Museum into the Virgin Islands Maritime Heritage Exhibit.

The renovation project, which is currently underway, will modernise the facility and create a more welcoming, accessible, and engaging environment for visitors. Work completed thus far has included the removal and archival cataloguing of artefacts and collections as preparations continue for the next phase of development.

As a result, the Maritime Heritage Museum is temporarily closed to the public while renovations progress. The College will continue to share updates on the renovation and exhibit development in the months ahead and asks for the public's patience and support as improvements are completed.

"Preserving the Virgin Islands story remains one of our institutional priorities," Smith said. "As we look toward the future of this space, we are equally committed to safeguarding the stories, experiences, and heritage that continue to define us. The *Fancy Me* exhibition represents an important part of that commitment."

Further details regarding the exhibition and future public engagement opportunities will be announced as plans progress.

ABOUT HLSCC

The H. Lavity Stoutt Community College (HLSCC) is the leading, accredited community college of the British Virgin Islands and the Territory's national

institution for tertiary education and workforce development. Accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, HLSCC delivers accessible, high-quality academic programmes, technical and vocational training, and continuing education that support individual advancement and national growth. Through its emphasis on academic excellence, applied learning, and community engagement, the College prepares students for meaningful careers, lifelong learning, and leadership in the Virgin Islands and beyond.

ABOUT THE JENNIE WHEATLEY VIRGIN ISLANDS STUDIES

The Jennie Wheatley Virgin Islands Studies Institute at H. Lavity Stoutt Community College advances the research, preservation, promotion, and interpretation of Virgin Islands history, culture, heritage, and identity through education, scholarship, and public engagement.

PHOTO CAPTION:

1. Historical image of the Fancy Me. **(Photo Credit: VISI Archives/HLSCC)**

Additional Documents or Media

- [press release hlsc to commemorate the centennial of the fancy me tragedy through spe](#)