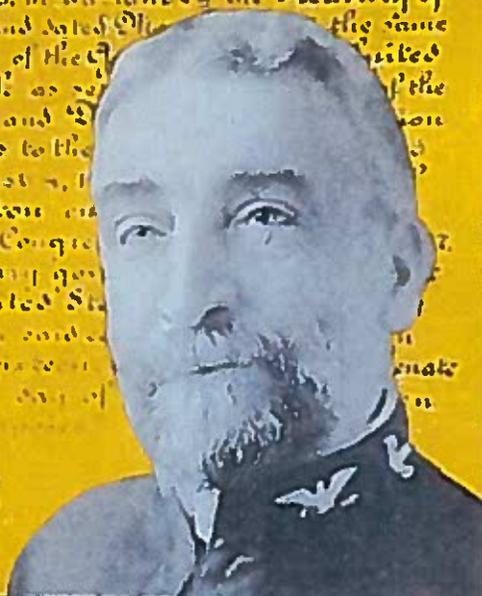


# VIRGIN ISLANDS VIEW

Received from the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States of America the sum of \$75,000,000 gold, in warrant on the Treasury of the United States, numbered 13,225, and dated the 15th day of the same month, being in full payment of the obligation of the United States to the Government of Denmark, as provided in the Convention between the United States and Denmark of the 11th day of July, 1867, for the purchase of the Danish West Indian Islands to the City of New York on August 1, 1867, which were exchanged at Washington on August 1, 1867, the amount being provided by an Act of Congress entitled "An Act to provide a temporary government for the Virgin Islands acquired by the United States by the convention entered into between said United States and Denmark, and to provide for the government of the said islands." Approved August 1, 1867.

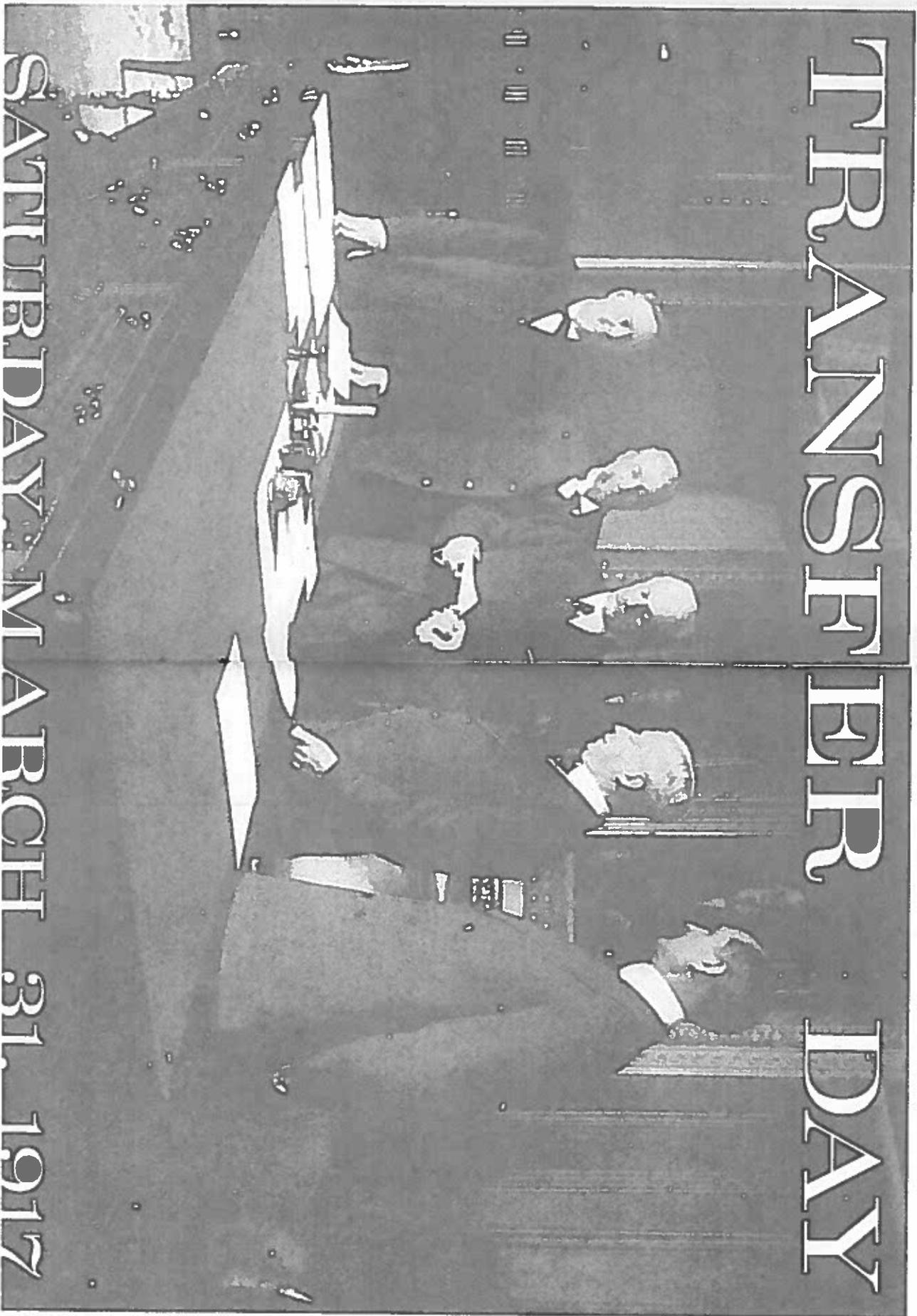


*Rear Admiral James H. Oliver  
First American Governor, 1917*

## SEMICENTENNIAL COMMEMORATIVE

MARCH 1967 • FIFTY CENTS

# TRANSFERR DAY



SATURDAY MARCH 31, 1917

**R**EAR ADMIRAL JAMES H. OLIVER, first American governor of the Virgin Islands, was present in Washington at the formal transfer of the Islands from Denmark to the United States. Secretary of the Treasury William G. McAdoo smiled as he told the Danish Minister, Constantine Brun, that \$25,000,000 in gold would have weighed almost 48 tons, so he had brought a Treasury warrant instead.

McAdoo gave the warrant to Secretary of State Robert Lansing, who handed it to Minister Brun in exchange for a formal receipt.

As soon as this had been done, two messages left the Navy Department by special telegraph wire to New York, where they were put on the Puerto Rican cable, to be radioed to the U.S.S. *Hancock*, anchored in the St. Thomas harbor, from which they were promptly brought ashore.

One message informed Commander Pollock, captain of the *Hancock* and the man designated as acting American governor, that the transfer had taken place and he should now receive the Islands in the name of the United States of America.

The other message informed Danish Acting Governor Konow that payment had been received, and "all conditions for the definite transfer of the islands have been fulfilled."

The U.S.S. *Olympia*, whose band was assigned to St. Thomas, anchored at noon off Frederiksted in a pouring rain. Because of her deep draught Captain Bierer decided against proceeding to the harbor at Christiansted, so after refreshments at the home of Robert L. Merwin, the American Counselor Agent, he sent a detachment by automobile to the ceremony in Christiansted.

At four o'clock in Frederiksted the Policemaster ordered the Dannebrog lowered, and Parson Faber asked the people to join him in a prayer for the old flag, for what good had been accomplished un-

der it, and prayed that the shortcomings and mistakes made under it might be forgotten, after which twenty-one gun salutes were fired on the lowering of the old flag and the raising of the new.

The Gendarmes at Kingshill lowered the Dannebrog, but no American flag replaced it.

From early morning to late afternoon people poured into Christiansted, gathering on Herald Square. Captain Fuglede and Lieutenant Willing, respectively, commanded the Danish and American contingents. The Industrial Band played *King Christian* as the Dannebrog came down.

According to the *Herald's* editor, D. Hamilton Jackson, "It was a touching sight to see the Old Flag pulled down, but, at the same time, it was a glorious one to see the Star Spangled Banner go up."

In St. Thomas, the day opened dull and drizzly. At the hoisting of Dannebrog at the battery the old flag went up slowly to the top of the mast for the last time. It could not open out, there was no breeze, and it looked as if it were drooping in sorrow, clinging in a last farewell embrace to the pole that had proudly borne it aloft for years.

Towards afternoon the weather cleared beautifully for the ceremony that was to take place. All the effect that military glamour lends to such an occasion was demonstrated by the most perfect order and behaviour throughout the proceedings.

Though there was the shortest possible notice given for effecting arrangements, every detail of the program was carried through faultlessly. It was sad but grand. There was full naval, military, and civil representation, along with the Police Corps and Fire Brigade.

As the hour of four approached, the people gathered by dozens, by scores, by hundreds, until thousands were packed along the promenade and approaches to the barracks-yard and on the battlements

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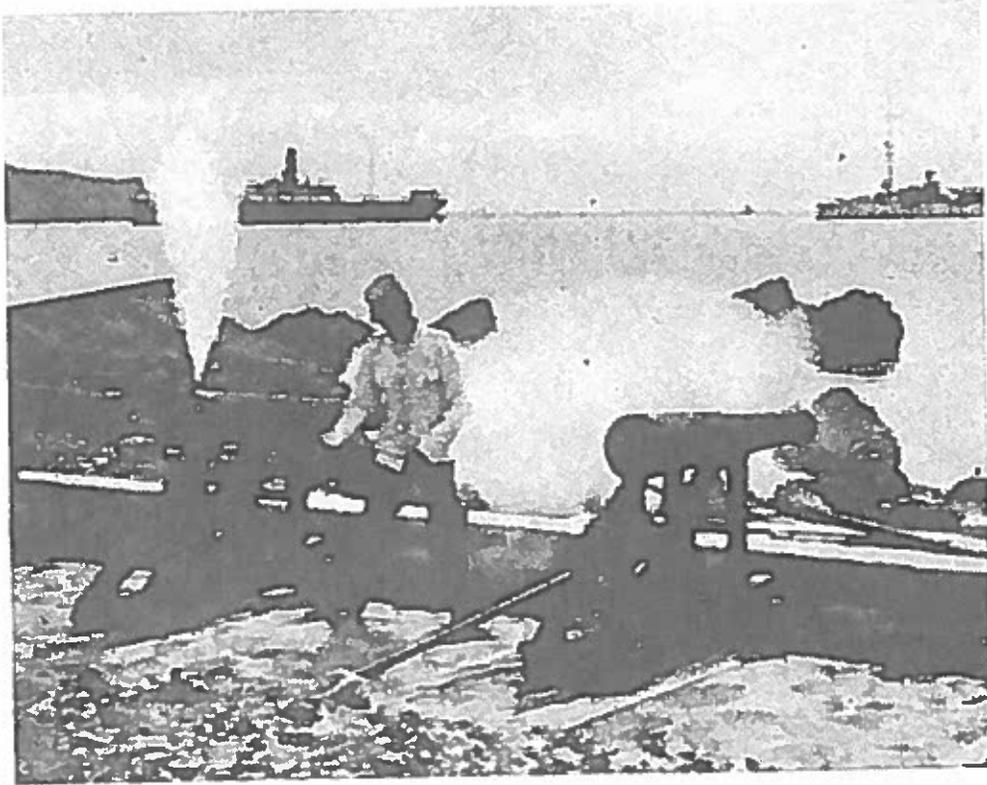
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of old Fort Christian, besides the thousands who took up positions from vantage points on our hills and in boats in the harbor. By-and-by the guard of honor from the Danish cruiser *Valkyrien*, under Lieutenant Jorgensen, landed and lined off on the pier; they were quickly followed by the *Hancock's* men under Lieutenant Leach, who briskly marched to the position assigned them, while the Danes waited to honor Commander Pollock on his landing, after which they took their place just in front of the barracks. The bands stood to the right of the two groups.

The gun crew took their stand at the salute battery, and men designated to lower and hoist the flags took their places at the staff.

Three sailors, each with an American flag rolled up, passed in. A murmuring buzz went through the crowd on seeing the emblem which in a short while would change their nationality.

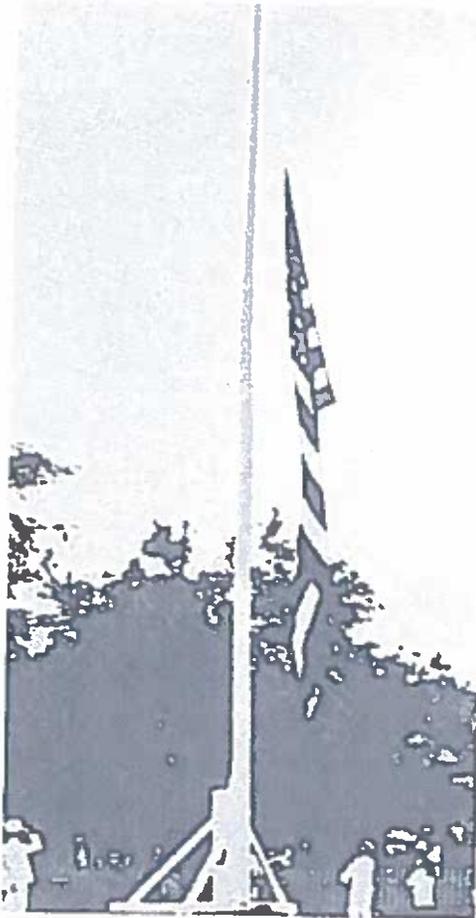
When the Representative of the Unit-

ed States left the American man-of-war a salute of fifteen guns was fired from the *Valkyrien*, which flew the United States Flag from her foremast, and the same salute was fired from shore when he landed. He was received by the Governor and together they passed along the front of the Danish guard of honor.

The distinguished representatives then advanced along the line of gentlemen, officials, officers of the *Valkyrien* and the *Hancock*, the Colonial Council, consuls and invited guests, to whom the new Governor was introduced, and he shook hands with each.

They proceeded to the Harbor Office, accompanied by several officials, where articles of the transfer were read and signed. As the moments passed anxiousness became tense, increasing with palpitating impatience as they left the room.

The moment had come. Returning to the barracks yard, Commodore Konow, with a graceful sweep, drew his sword from the scabbard, and facing Governor



Pollock, who did the same, in clear tones announced that by order of King Christian the Tenth he delivered the Danish West Indian Islands to the United States of America, and ordered the Dannebrog to be lowered.

As the last words fell from his lips the band from the *Valkyrien* struck up the Danish anthem and amid the boom of the ships and battery each saluting with twenty-one guns, the Danish flag was lowered, sliding down slowly and waving gracefully until it went out of view, watched with mingled sentiments of gladness and sorrow, a scene of profound but touching beauty, one that moved stout hearts and faint hearts to tears which could not be restrained, and which none were ashamed to shed — a spectacle never to be witnessed again and, never to be forgotten.

Then the guards reversed positions, Commander Pollock, on behalf of the United States of America acknowledging the cession, announced the same in a clear voice, and expressed the hope that the people of the Islands would have no cause to regret the change.

At a few minutes to five, as the ship and battery again saluted with twenty-one guns and the band of the U.S.S. *Olympia* played the *Star Spangled Banner*, the American flag was hoisted, its bright stripes gleaming in the sunlight, to the joy of those who long wished to see it there, and now the hope of all who are called upon to pay it allegiance.

Commodore Konow and Commander Pollock again saluted each other in military style, and shook hands. Commodore Konow with his men then left the scene for his ship.

The proclamation of President Wilson was then read by the new Acting Governor, who announced that the territory would hereafter be known as the "Virgin Islands of the United States of America," the name suggested by Dr. Viggo Christensen, and he hoped that the change would be fraught with good for the Islanders. He then called on Moravian Bishop E. C. Greider for prayer, and the Benediction was given by Bishop Charles B. Collymore, the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Puerto Rico.

After the completion of the ceremony, Commander Pollock again shook hands with the consuls, councilmen, and officials, expressing to all the hope that he would have the opportunity of further acquaintance with them, and we are glad to say that during the few minutes' contact he created a very pleasant impression.

Commander Pollack then returned to the U.S.S. *Hancock*, whereupon a salute of seventeen guns was fired in his honor as Acting Governor of the Virgin Islands of the United States of America.

*Compiled from Accounts of the Day*