

*Building Our Future Through
Education, History and Culture!*

March Holidays Celebration Recognition in the United States Virgin Islands

March:

Transfer Day ... Tuesday, March 31st

*Holidays observed by the United States Virgin Islands
strengthen an important process in the development of the territory.*

Compliments of:

*Virgin Islands Department of Education
Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education*

Transfer Day

Transfer Day, which is honored on March 31, is a local holiday celebrating the transfer of the United States Virgin Islands from Denmark to the United States of America. With this year marking its 98th anniversary celebration, it was March 31, 1917 when the Danish West India Islands were formally sold for twenty-five million dollars to the United States and became the United States Virgin Islands simultaneously on all three islands (St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas) at 4:00pm.

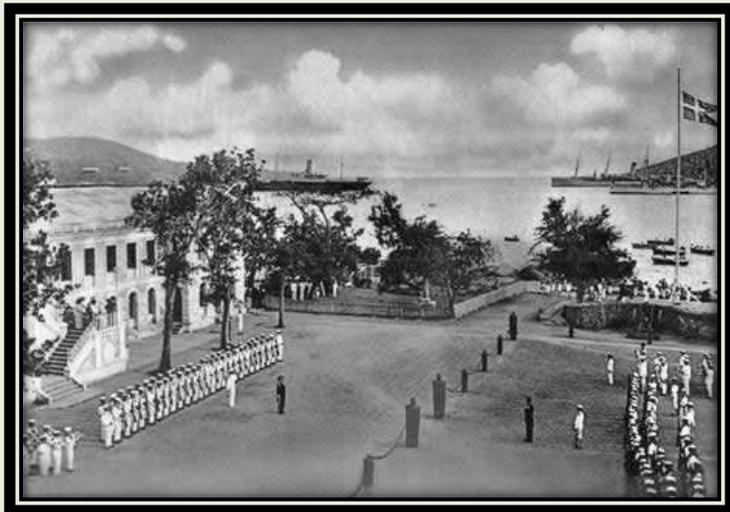
Dating back as early as the Civil War, because of a need for a Caribbean Naval base, the US was interested in the Virgin Islands. Although the Americans were mostly interested in St. Thomas, the Danish wanted all three islands sold. So conversations to acquire them started in the mid-1860's and in 1867 Denmark agreed to sell St. Thomas and St. John for seven and a half million dollars in gold, however it never matured due to a hurricane, an earthquake, a tsunami, and a fire that hit the islands the next year.

With an continued interest in these beautiful Virgin Islands, the purchase was finally completed in 1917. The then residents were given ten years to use the option to either keep their Danish citizenship or become an American citizen after the purchase. Rather than becoming American citizens, the majority headed to Denmark; however they missed the Virgin Islands, its beautiful tropical weather, and the West Indian foods, music, fruit trees and plants.

To re-enact the initial ceremony, there are special annual ceremonies. During such ceremonies the Danish flag is lowered and the US flag is raised symbolically as in 1917. Participants include government officials, community members, and local schools, as well as community groups such as the V.I. Humanities Council, St. Croix Friends of Denmark Society, the St. Croix Landmarks Society, Inc., and visitors to include the Danish West Indian Society.

Although the Virgin Islands are no longer a possession of Denmark, the islands maintain a warm relationship with the Danish people. The Danish cemeteries, the forts, street names, and the ruins of the former sugar plantations bear testimony to a rich Danish past.

Happy Transfer Day!



Suggested Classroom and Family Activities:

Participate and/or attend a Transfer Day parade

Research the history of the Transfer Day holiday and with creativity share what you have learn with someone

Attend special ceremony commemorating the Transfer Day holiday

Visit the March 31, 1917 Transfer Day site on at least one of the three islands

Interview and/or read about someone who experienced the Transfer Day and/or who lived under both the Danish and American flags

Courtesy of

Text: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transfer_Day; <http://voices.yahoo.com/observance-transfer-day-virgin-islands-5765624.html>;

<http://www.dkconsulateusvi.com/transfer/transfer.html>; <http://virginislandsdailynews.com/news/v-i-marking-transfer-day-with-array-of-events-1.1293384>;

Pictures: <http://www.waterislandhistory.com/earlyhistory.html>; <http://www.dkconsulateusvi.com/transfer/images/Program.jpg>;



To receive monthly complimentary electronic holidays' recognition, kindly contact



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