Peter Thurland
Christiansted, St. Croix
February 18, 1892-March 18, 1984

Peter Thurland Sr. has been the finest mastercraftsman on St. Croix for over half a century. As a cabinetmaker he was skillful at designing, shaping, repairing and assembling. Many examples of his work can still be seen in homes, offices and historical buildings including churches not only in the Virgin Islands but elsewhere. They all reflect his dexterity with the processes of inlay, doweling, carving, finishing and all the fine arts of woodworking.

A few examples which stand as testimony of his craftsmanship are: an inlaid table which was made for President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Hyde Park New York study; a pure mahogany desk was made for President Harry S. Truman on his visit to St. Croix. This desk is still at the Annaly Farm on St. Croix where the president stayed. In the 1930’s he also made furniture pieces for the executive mansion on St. Croix. The ‘lazy’ man’s chair or the planter’s chair was another specially designed item. These are featured at the museum at Whim Great House, Estate Whim, St. Croix.

A man of outstanding character and discipline, he is remembered also for this strength and stamina. These qualities were nurtured from his childhood when as a student at Mount St. Mary’s School he walked long distances from town to work at Estate Bethlehem in the countryside and returned home each day.

In September of 1917, shortly after the Transfer of the Danish West Indies to the United States, young Thurland joined the United States Navy and served with distinction until September 20, 1928.

A dedicated citizen, he also contributed of his other talents to his community. A music lover, he played the trombone with great proficiency and extended this interest in music to others. He is credited with founding the St. Croix Community Band, an agency, which stands as another memorial to his name.

A former educator, he taught elementary grades at Christiansted Grammar School, but later switched to junior high school level where he taught crafts to hundreds of students, several of whom are outstanding Virgin Islanders.

Taking a short spell from his work bench, Mr. Thurland once entered the political arena and ran for a seat in the Municipal Council. He lost in his bid against his opponent, David Hamilton Jackson.

A former member of the Literary and Debate Club and a charter member and a life member of the American Legion Post 85, Thurland was an avid reader and was quite knowledgeable and conversant on a variety of subjects.

Married to the former Ruth A. Simmonds they were the he parents of five children, Genevieve, Winifred, William, Peter Junior, and Albert, who like their father, are contributing in various ways to the further development of St. Croix.