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WICO Marks 107 Years of Service to the Virgin Islands Community

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Aerial Shot of the WICO Dock. By. Ernice Gilbert for the Virgin Islands Consortium.

This week, The West Indian Company, Ltd. (WICO), manager of the U.S. Virgin Islands busiest cruise ship port, marks its one-hundred-seventh year of continuous operation, WICO said Thursday.

Anthony Ottley, WICO's interim president and CEO felt this anniversary to be significant, saying, "This is an exceptional accomplishment as there are only two other major companies still in operation since the islands' Danish era. WICO is in rare company, and we are proud of our legacy of service to the Virgin Islands." Mr. Ottley identified the two remaining centennial companies as Cruzan Rum and I. Levin.

Through a charter issued by the Danish Government, WICO was founded to assist in the economic development of the then Danish West Indies. The company constructed a dock on Long Bay's southeastern shore to provide bunkering and transshipment services to ships in anticipation of the Panama Canal's completion. In addition to constructing the West Indian Company dock, the company's accomplishments include introducing electricity to downtown Charlotte Amalie and building seven cottages on St. John's K.C. Bay, the current location of Caneel Bay. WICO also initiated regular ferry service between St. Thomas and St. John.

The West Indian Company was the forerunner to many local industries and businesses. It opened the territory's first gift shop and served as agent/distributor for European and American brand goods imported to the territory.

"Undeniably, WICO's most enduring accomplishment is the development of cruise tourism in the U.S. Virgin Islands," Mr. Ottley stated. "Our contributions assisted in transforming these islands from a popular Danish colony to a premiere tourism destination."

Mr. Ottley credited the company's longevity to its vision and adaptability. "From transshipment port developer to bauxite transporter, to agent and distributor then cruise ship port, WICO has transformed itself over the years to meet the needs of the time to benefit the Territory. This effort will be proudly carried forward for our next 107 years," he said.