

SAN CARLOS INSTITUTE & SOME CUBAN-KEY WEST HISTORY

BY

Dr. Julie DePoo

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Evilio Cabot and

Dr. DePoo was interviewed by Mrs. Mary Malone. It was felt that he could a very authentic story of the San Carlos Institute as he was president of the Institute at one time. He is also well-versed in Cuban History on the Island.

Being asked his age, Dr. DePoo stated he was born in Havana in 1897. He came to this country in 1930 when many Cubans had to evacuate Cuba and come to the United States. He came to Key West in 1933.

Regarding San Carlos Institute: It was a big enormous project to get it started as not many of us had much money. It was organized first on Anna Street and then it was eventually moved to Duval Street--opening November 28, 1871. The original function was to organize against Spain. Since the beginning, the Institute was part of the school system. This school was unique in that it was the only one where the teacher was paid by the Cuban Government. She taught Spanish subjects but the Monroe Co. School Board paid the English teacher. Fidel Castro stopped this arrangement.

San Carlos Institute was destroyed twice; the second time was the building on Duval Street (destroyed by a hurricane) and Mr. Martinez ^{H.E.R.A.T.A.}, a Cuban patriot and deciple, restored the building on Duval Street. That was still a wooden building. People from Cuba sent over \$200,000 to build the present building which was done in this century, and dedicated on Oct. 10, 1924.

In the beginning, the San Carlos Institute was used as a cultural center; it was used as an opera house. Pavlova danced there. Many famous singers and actors gave performances. * At this time, it seems inevitable that we will lose the San Carlos Institute because it is not able to pay the taxes. This used to be tax exempt but three years ago, laws were passed that every club had to pay taxes. The building actually belongs to a group of Cubans. We have tried to keep it well maintained and as clean as possible. Joe Allen, the tax assessor, is trying very hard to help us keep the institute and hope he will succeed.

(Some of this tape was blanked out and conversations could not be understood)

Mrs. Malone had an old Spanish-American Dictionary and looked up the word Cayo Hueso. The meaning given was "a piece of ground". Dr. DePoo stated that it was a phonetic word. She also stated that when she came to Key West, the Cuban Flag was displayed along with the American Flag in the Courtroom.

* A restoration movement was begun in 1976. Various fund-raising entertainments have been staged, and volunteers work at cleanup jobs. The dream is to make it a cultural center again.