

KEY WEST STREET NAMES - HOME REMEDIES  
CONCH NICKNAMES

BY

Maggie Kivel

Maggie, known as Maggie Bartel when reporting for the New York Daily News for many years (now making Key West her home) tells this story about how Key West decided on their street names; also some of the home remedies used and interesting details of Conch nicknames.

Maggie lives in a Conch House on South Street and never could figure out why it was called South Street as it runs due east and west. It develops that it was the Southernmost street for years because beyond it were only salt ponds and it ended at the southernmost point of the U. S.

Now, some of the odd street names as they were, and as they are now includes:

- \* Grunt-bone Alley, which is now Peacon Lane.
- Chicken Alley, now Bahama Street.
- High-tide Alley, which is now Elgin Street.
- Johnny Cake Alley, which is now the left-hand end of Love Lane.

One of Key West streets, Truman Avenue, had a number of names. Before designation of its present name, it was Rocky Road and Division Street. At the intersection of Truman Avenue and Margaret Street, we have the Margaret Truman Launderette. Bet Margaret got a big kick out of that.

<sup>Wall</sup>  
~~Walls~~ Street, one block long, was originally Water Street. It was named for a merchant named William H. ~~Wall~~ <sup>Wall</sup>....1825.

Of twenty-nine street, 14% of them ~~are~~ named for women r relatives. For example, we have Catherine Street, Frances Street, Lavinia Street, Margaret Street, Angela Street, Ann Street, Rose Street, Rose Lane.

We had Billy <sup>Boat</sup> Lane <sup>in</sup> which is now Hibiscus Lane; Frances Street downtown turned into Walton Street. We have Free School Lane, Warehouse Lane, Shavers Lane, and Passover Lane which is by the cemetery. Now, you can figure out why they named this lane "Passover Lane."

\* So named because the residents ate so many grunts - a small, bony fish easily caught with a hand line - and perhaps threw the bones in the street.

Now, for some of the local beliefs.

There are people here that believe that some barracuda is poisonous, but that if you cut up the big fish and boil it with a dime--if the dime turns black, you should throw out the fish; if the dime stays shiny, it's okay to eat it. The theory behind this is that it all depends on where the barracuda feeds. For example, if it feeds on bottom fish who have eaten blue-green algae, that is reputed to make it poisonous.

Now for some of the remedies--and, incidentally, some of the Conchs down here seem to live for years and years. I know my doctor told me the days they lived on grits and grunts during the days of the depression didn't hurt them a bit. He said they went through cardiograms like they were 16 years old. Here are some of their recipes for keeping healthy.

If you have stomach pains, take some hot water with a pinch of salt; if you have congestion, take sugar with two drops of kerosene; that reputedly will break it up.

For a cut finger, you stick it in a glass of kerosene; that reputedly stops the bleeding, sterilizes the wound, and eases the pain.

Now, if you should happen to step on a rusty nail, the Conch's don't believe you should run to the doctor and get a shot of tetanus. Oh, no! Put a penny on the puncture and bandage to keep the coin in place and -- as they say down here--"Let it lay where Jesus flung it."

Now we'll go into a few little anecdotes about odd nicknames. There was a very well-known chap named Charlie Rice and he passed away. His mother was heartbroken when almost none of his friends appeared for the funeral services. It developed later that none of his friends knew that Charlie Rice had passed away because the obituary in the paper referred to his proper name which was Charles Roberts.

Another odd name was Arthur Edward Law who was named "Ah,ah" and there was quite a story about Ah ah Law being remembered as a fine soft-ball pitcher.

A very famous man was called Date Pie Papy. Certainly, he had a yen for date pie until he became very rich and they forgot about the Date Pie Papy and called him Mr. Papy.

I have a neighbor across the street--Henry Higgs and his wife, Phyllis; they're real Conchs, descendants of Conch families. His father was called Bubba; he has an uncle who was known only as "Two by Four" and another uncle was called "Old Ropes."

We hope you find this entertaining.

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