

THE WATLINGTON HOUSE, 322 DUVAL ST.

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The Watlington home, is the earliest existing prototype in the evolution of the typical Key West architecture. Erected about 1825, of pine and cedar in a climate where man made structures soon succumb to the ravages of time and termites, this building has stood virtually unchanged for more than a century, and is still in good repair. It was probably Capt. Richard Cussans who built the house on its original site ✓ Whitehead near Caroline Street, and certainly it was Capt. Dick who before 1832 moved it to the present location, where Capt. Frances Watlington purchased it and sent north for his family. In 1837, ^{replaced} Capt. Watlington the roof scuttles with six dormer windows, uniquely individual. The Captain did not see eye to eye with the proponents of architectural symmetry: He built the three front dormers in progressive sizes. Through the house stands today on its high foundations abutting on the side walk, the casual observer is prone to miss the little point of eccentricity for the larger dormer is obscured beneath the foliage of a spreading Spanish laurel.

The overall plan ^s demonstrates of the one-and a half story house are about 40x40 feet; a low porch supported by plain square ^g columns extends across the front, and there are two small side entrance porches, each a ² separate unit. The high roof ridge is athwart the length of the plan and marks the peak of a roof sweeping in an unbroken line to cover the low front porch. The plan revolves about a central stair-hall that opens left into a long living room, at right into a double bed room, at rear into a supplementary kitchen, adjoining bath and store room. The dining room and another bath are accessible through a hall opening from the bed room, although the dining room also has a opening to the side porch. There are two rear entrances, one from the supplementary kitchen, and another from the dining room, hall. The latter leads over a covered walk

to a detached kitchen and dutch oven, used today just as in the old days.

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The Watlington house in many respects reminiscent of Northern sea coast homes, yet it is well adapted to Key West's subtropical climate. It does not have the cool height of later structures, the openings are small, and it boasts large dormers instead of the more typical upper story ventilations, and every opening is shuttered.

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KEY WEST ARCHITECTURE

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