

A GARDEN FOR THE WATLINGTON HOUSE
322 Duval Street, Key West, Florida

This house was built around 1823 and is considered to be the oldest house in Key West. As it is being restored more or less to its original condition the garden surrounding it should be planted and maintained in a condition consistent with what gardens would have been like in the early days of Key West. In setting up this project an arbitrary date of pre-1850 has been suggested but in keeping with it being the oldest house I think it can be planted with plants that we know or strongly suspect were grown in the Florida Keys in the 1830s.

We have several reports to guide us in selecting plants. First we have the Whitehead report of 1834 describing the city of Key West in a letter. Whitehead mentions coconuts, bananas and plantains, oranges, lemons, limes, and vegetables, specifically sweet potatoes and beets as doing well.

In the 1830s the botanist, John Loomis Blodget lived in Key West and sent many botanical specimens to botanists in the north. Although most of these are wild species some were cultivated ornamentals from the Bahamas or Cuba. Among these are the yellow elder (Stenolobium stans) and the golden dew drop (Duranta repens).

Another interesting report is a published letter from Hester Perrine in 1839 describing plants she saw growing on Indian Key. For example, she mentions periwinkle (Catharanthus or Vinca roseas) as a common weed there. Some of the plants she mentions are obviously ones that had been very recently planted and ones we now know are not well adapted to growing on the Florida Keys. Among those well adapted to the Keys including Key West at that time are the guava, fig, horseradish tree, sapodilla, Turksap hibiscus, date palm, gooseberry tree, pomegranate, papaya and hog plum.

We also know that seeds of many plants were sent to Key West to John Dubose by Henry Perrine in the early 1830s. These included spanish lime, tamarind, canistel, sugar apple and soursop, star apple, bixa and cotton. Seeds of these were probably brought in by others also and it is very likely that they flourished then as they do now.

Finally we know that the Spanish had introduced many plants to St. Augustine and the fig, date, banana, oleander, pomegranate, and various citrus fruits were growing there and probably were spread over much of South Florida.

It is therefore recommended that the plantings at the Watlington House be restricted to the above species with a few additions which we know were cultivated during that period in areas that had contact with Key West and thus there would at least be a possibility of them being grown there.

The following species are growing at present in the garden of the Watlington House;

Agave spp.
Annona muricata
Antigonon leptopus
Asparagus setaceus

Century plant
Soursop
Asparagus fern

Bombax malabaricum
Bougainvillea spectabilis
Brachychiton discolor
Brassaia actinophylla
Breynia nivos
Cassia surattensis

Castanospermum australe
Catharanthus roseus
Chamaedorea sp.
Chorisia speciosa
Cocos nucifera
Codiaeum variegatum
Cordia sebestena
Cordyline spp.
Crescentia cujete
Crinum sp.
Dracaena deremensis
Guapira longifolia
Hibiscus rosa sinensis
Ixora coccinea
Jacobinia spicigera
Kigelia pinnata
Leucaena leucocephala
Manilkara zapota
Melicoccos bijugatus
Murraya exotica
Pachira aquatica
Parmentiera cerifera
Philodendron sp.
Polycias spp.
Pouteria campechiana
Ptychosperma elegans
Sansiviera spp.
Schinus terebinthifolius
Stenolobium stans
Thespesia polypulnea
Triphasia trifoliata
Turnera ulmifolia

red bombax

Australian bottle tree
Queensland umbrella tree
Snow on the mountain
yellow flowered shrub from
Australia

Moreton Bay chestnut
Periwinkle
Cane palm
Silk floss tree
Coconut
Crotons
Geiger tree
Ti plant
Calabash

Blolly
Hisbiscus

Sausage tree
Leadwood
Sapodilla
Spanish lime
Chalcas or orange jasmine
Guaiana chestnut
Candle tree
Self heading philodendron
Aralia
Canistel
Solitaire palm
Snake plant
Brazilian pepper
Yellow elder
Portia or cork tree
Limeberry
Buttercup

Actually the majority of these species are represented by young plants planted in the last few years. Most of these new plants should be removed since they are not known to have and not likely to have occurred in Key West prior to 1850.

Certainly the old Spanish lime trees should be kept as the basic planting of the garden. There is very good reason to believe that this West Indian species was introduced from the Bahamas or Cuba during the earliest settlement of Key West. Several of the species are native plants of the Keys and these should be preserved. These include the Geiger tree, (*Cordia sebestena*), Blolly (*Guapira longifolia*), Portia tree or Cork tree (*Thespesia polypulnea*) and the buttercup (*Turnera ulmifolia*).

Other plants on the list that should be retained are soursop (Annona muricata), Periwinkle (Catharanthus roseus), Coconut (Cocos nucifera), Calabash (Crescentia cujete), Leadwood (Leucaena leucocephala), Sapodilla (Manilkara zapota), Canistel (Pouteria campecheana) Yellow elder (Stenolobium stans).

In developing the garden, I recommend a planting of Key limes in the back, a clump of bananas (Orinoco variety) and a group of Golden or Yellow Malay coconuts. These species represent what were perhaps the most important plants in early Key West. Although the Malay coconuts were not introduced until perhaps after 1900 they would represent the species in case of loss of the other coconuts to the lethal yellowing disease.

On the east side of the house there is a shrub with orange flowers (Jacobinia spicigera). This shrub was used for making an indigo dye but so far I haven't been able to determine its antiquity of culture in Key West. I believe it should be kept until we learn more about it. There are two types of Sansiviera or snake plant growing in the garden. These are originally from Africa but may have been introduced at an early date. They can be kept until more information is available. Also questionable are the agaves and the Antigonon leptopus.

The oleander was introduced by the Spanish and was undoubtedly grown in Key West at an early date. It can be used for screening as well as to provide color.

To add a feminine touch to the garden I suggest the planting of the Louis Philippe rose by the gate. This fine variety was introduced in 1834 and still is grown in the Keys and the mainland of South Florida. The Key lily or beach spider lily (Hymenocallis keyensis) can be planted near the gate also.

I strongly recommend that the garden be kept very simple with plants that are easy to maintain. Any plants that require much supplemental water, such as some of the herbs or the roses should be grown adjacent or very close to the house or cookhouse.

*Supmen
Japox
Vital
Palm*

PLANT LIST
FOR
THE OLDEST HOUSE
KEY WEST, FLORIDA

QUANTITY	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME	DESCRIPTION
TREES			
1	ARTOCARPUS ATILIS	-BREADFRUIT-	LARGE AS POSSIBLE
1	BURSERA SIMARUBA	-GUMBO LIMBO	10'-12' HT.
1	CAESALPINIA PULCHERRIMA	-DWARF POINCIANA-	4'-5' HT.
14	COCCOLOBIS UVIFERA	SEAGRAPE	4'-5' HT.
8	COCOS NUCIFERA	COCONUT	6'-8'-10' HTS.
5	CITRUS SPP.	KEY LIME	5'-6' HT. - 400 ea
2	PSIDIMUM GUAJAVA	GUAVA	6'-7' HT.
1	PUNICA GRANATUM	-POMEGRANITE	LARGE AS POSSIBLE
1	TAMARINDUS INDICUS	-TAMARIND-	" " "
(46) (80)	THRIXAX PARVIFLORA	THATCH PALM	6' to 14' Ht.
SHRUBS			
7	CARICA PAPAYA	PAPAYA	4'-5' HT.
123	DURANTA REPENS	-GOLDEN DEWDROP	EGG CAN
4	LOUIS PHILLEPE ROSES	ROSES	2'-3' HT.
101	MALVAVISCUS ARBORIA	-TURKS CAP	EGG CAN
18	MUSA HYBRID	ORINOCO HORSE BANANA	3' HT.
19	NERTUM OLLANDER	OLEANDER	EGG CAN
112	STENOLOBITUM STANS	-YELLOW ELDER	EGG CAN
385			
VINES			
3	PASSIFLORA QUADRANGULARIS	GIANT GRANDILLA	2-3' HT.
6	VITUS MINSONIANA	WILD GRAPE	LARGE AS POSSIBLE
GROUND COVER			
	HYMENOCALLIS LATIFOLIA	KEY LILY	CLUMPS OR GALS.
	NEUROLEPTIS EXALTATA	BOSTON BERN	" " 125 gal
	SANSEVIERIA SPP.	SNAIL PLANT	CUTTINGS
GROUND COVER QUANTITY TO BE DETERMINED BY THE SIZE PLANT ACQUIRED. SMALLER PLANTS COULD BE PLANTED CLOSER THAN IN- DICATION. AS LARGER PLANTS COULD BE PLANTED FARTHER APART			

MISCELLANEOUS

BLANCHES
ARBORS
NEW PLANT
RAILS
GRASS

ALL IN AREAS SO INDICATED ON THE PLAN

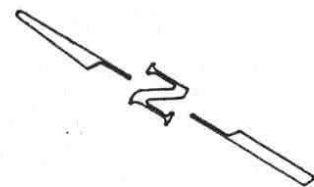
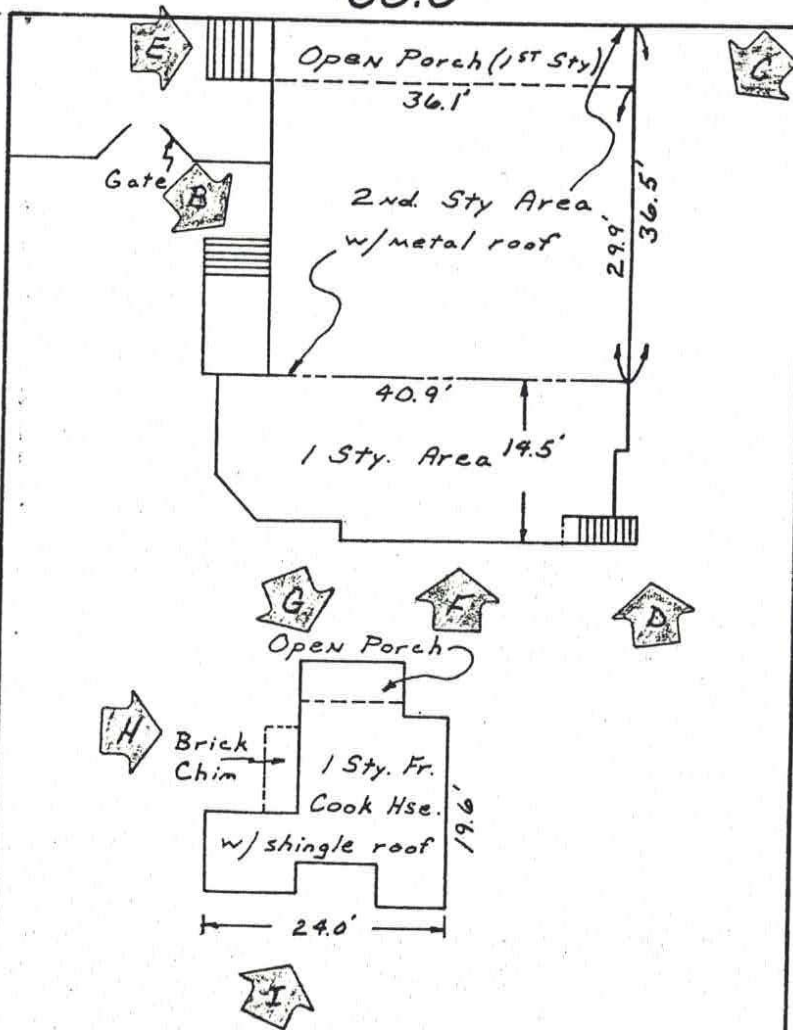
Consider -
Spathophyllum (C)
Anthurium (C)
Bougainvillea (V)
Lignum vitae (T)
Star Apple (T)
Pineapple (C)

List supplied James E. Voss

10/20/77

DUVAL STREET

80.0'



Scale 1" = 20'

197.75'

197.75'