

Our Current Archiving Activities, under the expert guidance of Sue Huffaker, have unearthed the following fascinating article which enabled the Oldest House staff to identify two historic portraits of Watlington family members.

Emeline Watlington Ward's Portrait to greet guests of Cocktail Party

From The Key West Citizen, 24th April, 1979

Emeline, the third child among the fabled nine daughters of Captain and Mrs Francis Watlington, who romped in the Duval Street residence now known as "The Oldest House" more than 100 years ago, has finally come home.

Emeline married her first husband, Lt. William Ward and lived with him in the house. After her husband's death, she married Joseph B. Roberts and moved from the house. Emeline died in 1903.

No candle in the window, no burning gas light greeted Emeline, but modern electricity and the welcoming smile of Mrs. Francis Smith, chairman of the Oldest House Committee. "Mag" Smith received Emeline's portrait with open arms.

If Emeline could gaze from her framed portrait over the once familiar backyard, she would not see her father's coach house, or the old time "privy", or chickens pecking in the dirt. She would be amazed to behold broad, brick-paved areas, great arching trees, flowers and shrubs in the newly designed garden of The Oldest House Museum.

Much has changed since Emeline was a little girl in the 1840's. She would probably feel shy to notice tourists peeking into the family parlor which displays her silver "baby cup" with "Emeline" engraved upon it. And upstairs she would see a doll's house furnished in the period when Willie Ward was probably courting her.

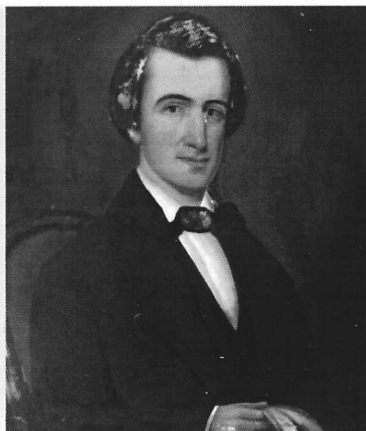
The portraits of Emeline Watlington Ward and Lt. William Henry Ward have been donated to the museum by Garth Cold Sr. of Coconut Grove, the grandson of Emeline and Lt. William "Willie" Ward.

The two paintings will be on display inside The Oldest House Museum during the evening of Friday, April 27th, during the celebratory cocktail party welcoming Emeline and her husband back home!

Following some restoration work, the two paintings (shown below) will once again be placed on display after 40 years of neglect, and hopefully celebrated by a similar cocktail party as the one held in 1979.



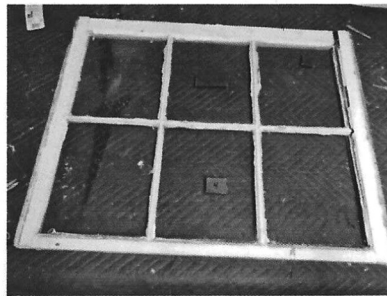
Emeline Watlington Ward



Lt. William Henry Ward

Oldest House Preservation

Thanks to a grant from the Monroe Tourist Development Council and funds from our OIRF supporters, all sixteen of the downstairs windows in the Oldest House Museum are being restored. The work is painstaking but the results are rewarding.



Each window is removed and taken to an offsite location for the restoration process. Each pane is carefully removed to preserve the original wavy glass.



The sashes are disassembled as needed and new wood is fabricated from river recovery heart pine to replace muntins, rails and stiles that are damaged or rotted. The sash is sanded and primed, the glass is replaced and push points and glazing is installed to hold the glass in place and provide a good seal against the wind and rain. Finally a topcoat is applied and the sash is returned to its original location to complete the process.

In April, a crew of contractor Fred Finohr and volunteers David Rooney and Dave Hubbert attacked the rotting deck and structure of the ramp that provides access to our visitors at the Oldest House Museum.

The support structure was reinforced and the old decking was completely removed and replaced. Now all it needs is several coats of paint.

It's projects like this that keep the Oldest House looking its best. If you have skills to do jobs like this and are willing to volunteer your time and talent please give us a call at 305-294-9501, send an email to oif@oif.org or go to www.oif.org and fill our volunteer form.



Are you a member of OIRF?

Through private donations and memberships from individuals, business, and public agencies we are working to raise funds to preserve and maintain the Oldest House in south Florida, provide innovative programming, and provide grants for significant and worthy historical restoration projects in Key West. You can help us make it happen here: www.oif.org