

Watlington Family

- Francis Benjamin Watlington was born April 1, 1804 in Christiansted, St. Croix. Francis was the youngest child of Thomas Watlington and his second wife, Sarah.
- Francis's father, as well as most of his brothers, uncles and cousins were sea captains, many dying "at sea."
- A Watlington (no first name mentioned) sailed on a slave trading voyage in 1803 on the ship Sally between St. Thomas and Havana. Of the 315 slaves leaving St. Thomas only 300 survived the voyage to Havana.
- Thomas Watlington died in 1806, when Francis was only two years old, after "falling off a ship".
- Francis's family owned between ten and fifteen slaves while his father was alive. Francis's Uncle Bernard, who lived only a few blocks away, owned up to twenty-three slaves, of which seven were "sailor negros" probably working on his ship.
- Between 1818 and 1828 Francis emigrated to New York City, following his cousins Thomas and Benjamin Watlington, who were "shipmasters" and "Master Mariners". Thomas was "lost at sea" in 1846. Benjamin's son, Capt. Benjamin T Watlington, master of the steamer Melville was lost at sea in 1865.
- Francis Watlington, age 24, married Emeline Matilda Johnson, age 16, in New York City May 29, 1828.
- Emeline was the youngest child of Charles and Hannah Quereau Johnson. Charles Johnson, along with his two sons John W. and Charles Jr., worked as a wrecker and pilot for the Key West warehouse firm of Pardon Green

and his partners John Whitehead and John Simonton. Charles also, between 1820 and 1825, piloted the schooner "Florida" traveling between Boston, New York, Savannah, Charleston and Cape Florida. The schooner carried "copper, old iron, snuff, turtle, lines and sugar" from Florida to New York and Boston. June of 1823 Johnson arrived in Charleston on the Schooner Florida with 48 bales of cotton and the crew from the brig Orbit that wrecked on the Ledberg Reef located in the Keys.

- Emeline Johnson Watlington's brothers, Charles and John, worked as wreckers in the Florida Keys.
- In 1825 Capt. Johnson was indicted in New York on ten counts of fraud for his misconduct in the wrecking incident of the brig Hercules which wrecked on Carysfort Reef located 6 miles off Key Largo. It was believed Johnson knew in advance that the ship was going to wreck on the reef and was guilty of not fore-warning them and that he misrepresented the facts claiming poor condition of the cargo which he was believed to have ripped open and soaked with salt water and then bought at a bargain rate. This story drew tremendous publicity for its day. Johnson died December 7, 1828, before the trial was completed. Johnson's heirs waited ten years before probating his will – possibly waiting for the scandal to die down so that division of property would not be eyed too closely.
- Francis Watlington worked for the Treasury Department as Key West Customs Inspector, Lightship Captain, Coastal pilot, harbor pilot, and was hired by the US Navy as a Pilot during the Second Seminole War.
- Francis Watlington was in command of the schooner Florida in 1828 and 1829. The Schooner Florida, under Watlington's command, was overturned in bad weather February 12 of 1829 and was towed by the sloop Splendid, which was under his brother-in-law Charles Johnson Jr.'s command, to Lower Sound Pt. Charles Johnson Jr. was salvaging wrecks in the Florida Keys with his sloop Splendid from April of 1829 until May of 1830 when the Splendid was wrecked.

- The only record of Watlington as a wrecker was September of 1832 when Francis Watlington, commander of the Schooner Motto, was in charge of the salvage of the cargo from the English ship Eliza Plumer.
- Francis and Emeline Watlington had nine daughters born from 1834 to 1855. Seven daughters survived to adulthood and all but the youngest daughter married. The oldest and third oldest daughters (born in 1834 and 1837) were born in New York City, the rest (born from 1836 to 1855) were born in Key West. Emeline may have been staying with her mother, who lived in New York until her death in 1839, for the births of her first and third daughters. Emeline's sister, Maria Louisa, was married June of 1837 in New York and it is possible Emeline traveled to her sister's wedding and stayed for the birth of her daughter four months later.
 - Hannah Amelia 3/20/1834 – 10/30/1912
 - Sarah Maria 4/30/1836 – 1/3/1900
 - Emaline Frances 10/26/1837 – 5/1/1903
 - Maria Louisa 8/20/1841 – 4/16/1911
 - Job ○ Susan Queruau 10/8/1844 – 8/17/1850 of yellow fever
 - Mary Amanda 10/24/1846 -11/19/1936
 - Job ○ Ellen Mallory 2/4/1850 – 10/18/1851
 - Florence Earle 6/1/1852 – 2/4/1909
 - Elizabeth Lily 3/15/1855 – 4/7/1936
- In 1834 Francis J. Watlington and his brother-in-law, Charles M. Johnson, were appointed as two of the nine pilots for the port of Key West. In 1834 and 1835 Francis was also piloting the brig Black Hawk and ship Caroline between Nassau and Key West collecting salvage and transporting goods.
- By 1836 the Watlington family was living on Duval Street – occupancy confirmed through a deed of a property on the corner of Duval and Caroline street that mentions the Watlingtons living on Duval street in 1836.

- 1837 Francis Watlington succeeded Capt. Whalton, who was killed by Indians at Key Largo, as keeper of the Careysford Lightship. Watlington had been keeper of the Sand Key Light at this time. In 1838 Watlington was inspector of Customs at the Carysfort Lighthouse.
- From February to August of 1838 Watlington was employed as a pilot to help U.S. Navy search for hostile Indians during the Second Seminole War.
- June 4, 1838 The "Oldest House" was sold by R.W. Cussans to William H. Wall – at that time it was briefly occupied by Mr. Blodgett. William Wall was an English man who was shipwrecked and settled in Key West about 1824. In the 1830s he owned the first cigar factory and became a wealthy land owner and merchant.
- In 1840 Watlington was appointed Port Warden for Key West. On the 1840 census both the Francis Watlington and Charles Johnson families each has one slave listed as living with the families. About 1841 Francis' mother, Sarah, came to live with Francis and his family until her death in 1848.
- January of 1842 William H. Wall sold the house to Nicholas D. Herder. Nicholas was a prosperous New York Grocer who, in 1837, married Emeline's older sister, Maria Louisa.
- At the time of the hurricane of October 11, 1846 Watlington was the Boarding Officer of the Custom House. Of the six hundred structures on the island, only eight escaped damage – one of which was the Watlington house on Duval Street.
- In 1848 Francis took command of the U.S. schooner Activa, a dispatch supply boat between Key West and Tortugas bringing supplies for the construction of Fort Jefferson.
- On the 1850 census Francis Watlington and his brother-in-law, Charles Johnson, live next door on Duval Street.

- July of 1853, from William Randolph Hackley's diary, mentions "Captain Francis Watlington arrived in schooner Activa from Tortugas bringing up his family from Tortugas where they had been staying since the work ceased last summer. Watlington being left in charge".
- 1853 entries from Hackley's diary:
 - 8/2/1853 "at 8PM Miss Hannah Watlington and Edward Howe were married at the house of her father by the Methodist preacher"
 - 8/8/1853 to 1854 Hackley's daughters Harriet and Charlotte attend school at Sarah Watlington's residence. Sarah, age 17, also teaches her two younger sisters and Annie Porter. Hackley paid \$100 for Charlotte's schooling and \$150 for Hatty (Harriet)
- 1858 Francis Watlington served two years as State Senator. He resigned his seat to join the Confederate Navy. He was appointed "Lieutenant for the war" by his old friend and Secretary of the navy for the confederacy, Stephen R. Mallory.
- Francis went to Mobile, Alabama, and served aboard the steam gunboat Gaines, possibly as a blockade runner. Watlington also was given second in command of the Mobile Navy Yard where the famous steamer Tennessee, successor to the Merrimac, was finished. He surrendered May 4, 1865 and was paroled May 10, 1865. Francis's son-in-law, Edward Howe, as well as Watlington nephews living in New York served in the Union army.
- Francis Watlington returned to Key West after the war but could not find employment. He had converted most of his money into Confederate money and when the war was over he was a poor man. He returned to Mobile and obtained command of the steamer Margaret on the route between New York, Mobile, New Orleans, Key West and Havana. Francis lived at a rooming house in Mobile during the 1870s while his wife and daughters lived in Key West on Duval Street. Francis does not return to live in Key West until after his wife's death.

- August 13, 1869 Nicholas and Maria Herder of New York sell to Emeline Watlington the house and lot on Duval Street for \$1700. Maria Herder is Emeline's older sister.
- 1881 Emeline Watlington dies in Key West. 1883, due to a throat infection, Francis Watlington returns to Key West. By 1885 Francis was living with his widowed daughter, Maria L. King, unmarried daughter Lily, and three Cuban cigar maker tenants in the house on Duval Street.
- April 7, 1887 Francis Watlington, age 83, dies in Key West.
- 1888 Sarah and Perry Wall sell their interest in "the oldest House" to Sarah's sisters, Marie King (widow) and Elizabeth L. Watlington. Maria died in 1911 and Elizabeth L. (Lily) occupied the house until her death in 1936.