

The City of Key West has the opportunity to share a sense of joy and pride upon the 200th anniversary of the city. Discovering the life and times of the people who built and served this community has been a wonderful way to span the years from the beginning until now. Our community is built on the foundation of those who have come before – Key West has a powerful history that is exciting.

Other cities have some way of preserving their legacy. There might be historical data available in the clerk's office or in a more visible way having a display in the public or other waiting areas of the city building. It is helpful for the public to see the work that went into making the city what it is today.

As part of celebrating the 200th anniversary of Key West – Grace Epperly with Wesley House asked me to provide photos and information about the people who served the community. This was challenging while I was able to find out information about the early leaders – there were a few portraits available but that was before the era of photography. The clerk's office did not have any photographic or historical records of the mayors. My research even took me to the historical society in Stonington Connecticut to find out more about one of their citizens who came to Key West.

The materials i.e. the full-sized photos and portraits were printed by the staff at Wesley House. It was their hope to provide this to the city. They currently have the information should photos need to be reproduced.

The Florida History Room at the Key West Library has been storing these materials – but they lack the storage space as their vault is so small. The materials will need to be stored until the arts council and the city work out the details on how to best handle this project.

Petty Darst

*Some little known trivia about
our mayors.*

Fri, Mar 18, 10:36 AM (8 days ago)

Betty
Darst <bettydarst@gmail.com>
to Grace

Veteran of the War of 1812 and mariner from Stonington Connecticut - served six one year terms - Alexander Patterson

He was post surgeon at Fort Jefferson until the Civil War - Dr. D.W. Whitehurst

Signed the first telegraph to the mayor of Havana - E O Gwynn

First Cuban Mayor who returned to Cuba after the Spanish American War - Carlos Manuel de 'Cespedes

Served as mayor when the great fire of 1886 destroyed the business district - James G Jones

In 1908 he opened the Eloise Maloney Hospital the first private hospital on the island. Dr. John B. Maloney

partner in the first Ford agency in Key West. - Benjamin Douglas Trevor

Mayor of Key West when Flagler arrived to open the railroad in Key West in 1912 - Dr. Joseph N. Fogarty

- Allen B. Cleare

Conchs were known for their nicknames - his nickname was Big Six - Leslie A. Curry

Formerly managed a cigar factory and later served as school superintendent - He was mayor when Franklin D Roosevelt visited - Willard M. Albury

Former superintendent of the Seventh Lighthouse District - William W Demeritt

Served as the police chief of Key West before being elected mayor - Louis M.J. Eisner

Co owner of Strand and Monroe Theater was educated in Havana - John Carbonnell

One of the towns dentists - Delio Cobo

Helped found Bahama Village and water skied from Cuba - served as mayor for ten years longer than any of his predecessors - Sonny McCoy

Formed the tongue in cheek Conch Republic - Dennis Wardlow

On his sixth try for office defeated Tom Sawyer - Captain Tony Tarracino

The motto "One Human Family" was adopted during his tenure -- Jimmy weekley

Served five terms as mayor and named mayor emeritus - Craig Cates

First woman to be re-elected mayor - Teri Johnston

Oliver O'Hara
1832-1833

A commission agent from Charleston, South Carolina, Oliver O'Hara was one of the early merchants of Key West. He owned large warehouses and one of the major wharfs. He was consul for several foreign countries and agent for nine insurance companies. He was a member of the Key West Union Volunteer Corps during the Civil War.

He was the first man to hold the title of mayor when elected in 1832 under the new charter. Before 1832 the Town of Key West had a council with a President. He was elected mayor on April 2, 1832. He served as a county judge in 1837. He died in 1867. Often referred to as Colonel

Fielding A Browne
1833-1834
1836-1837

A native of Virginia and one of the first permanent settlers on the island. He was a merchant. He died in 1851 at the age of 60. His great nephew was Jefferson B. Browne. Later he was a county commissioner.

Adam Gordon
1834-1835

An American who settled in Pensacola after Florida became a state. In 1825 he was one of the founders of the Tallahassee newspaper, The Florida Intelligencer and editor of the Pensacola Gazette. He was appointed Customs at Key West 1838-1845. He also served as a judge, school superintendent and on the town council. He left Key West before the Civil War.

William A. Whitehead
1837-1838

William Whitehead arrived in Key West in 1828 to work with his brother who owned $\frac{1}{4}$ of the island. He was Collector of Customs from 1830-1838. He served on the Town Council in 1831. He defeated George Weaver by 38 to 18 votes. He resigned his office on July 1, 1838 in a dispute with the city merchants over paying taxes. He returned to his native New Jersey

Tomaso Sachetti
1838-1839

Sachetti was the candidate of a group of merchants who opposed occupational licenses that Mr. Whitehead was trying to pass. Sachetti from Minorca spoke little English and ran a sailor grog shop. He was elected March 14, 1838 without opposition.

William C. Greene
1839-1840

He was listed in the U.S.Census of 1850 and 1860 as a mariner.

Philip J. Fontaine
1840-1841
1842-1844
1848-1849

Philip Fontaine came to Key West from St. Augustine in 1823. He was a grocer and ship chandler. Fontaine served as an alderman in 1832. He died at the age of fifty.

Alexander Patterson
1841-1842

1849-1851

1856-1857 He did not win in 1855

1861-1864

1865-1866

1867-1868

Born in Stonington, Connecticut in 1791. He was a veteran of the War of 1812. Also, he was a merchant, auctioneer, and Customs official. He represented Monroe County in the Florida legislature and served in the Union Volunteer corps during the Civil War. During the Civil War, he was in charge of the Naval Station.
(he lost the election in 1852 ro Fernando J Morena.

Benjamin Sawyer
1844-1846

Born in Connecticut, he came to Key West in the 1820's as a merchant. He was one of the founders of the Baptist Church of Key West. He died in Mystic, Connecticut in December 1856.

Walter C. Maloney
1846-1848

He was born at Darien, Georgia on February 7, 1813. He moved to Key West in 1837 then to Indian Key where he worked for Jacob Housman and served as Clerk of Dade County. He returned to Key West where he later studied law, and was admitted to the bar. He was elected to the state legislature for one term. He remained a supporter of the Union during the Civil War and organized the union volunteer corps in Key West.

Fernando J. Moreno
1852-1853

Born in Pensacola in 1822, he came to Key West shortly after his sister Angela married Stephen R. Mallory. He worked with William H. Wall and Company and remained with that firm until the 1880's when he returned to Pensacola. For many years he also

represented Mr. John W. Simonton's interest in Key West. He was an underwriter agent for Lloyds of London and other insurance companies.

John W. Porter
1853-1855

John Porter was born in South Carolina and may have been a brother of J.Y. Porter. He was a merchant and an auctioneer. John W. Porter was serving as Mayor in November 1854 when the town council granted the right to construct a wharf and street railway to Geiger.

John P. Baldwin
1858-1861

A former sea captain from Nova Scotia he settled in Key West and became a merchant. In 1844 he represented Dade County in the Legislative Council. He served as Collector of Customs. He was removed from the office of Mayor on May 17, 1861 when all state officers were disqualified. It appears he was pro southern and also was removed as Collector of Customs.

Judge William Marvin
1861

He may have served as mayor in May of 1861 for the period when all the state of Florida officials were removed from office until Patterson was elected mayor on May 25, 1861

Dr. D.W. Whitehurst
1868-1869

A native of Norfolk, Virginia, he was born in 1807. As a young man he was active in the African colonization society and visited Liberia. He came to Florida shortly after it became a territory as an attorney. He served with distinction in the Seminole War as a member of the Florida Volunteers attaining the rank of Major. He established the St. Augustine News in 1838. In 1841 he went to New York and studied medicine at New York University. After receiving his degree, he opened a practice in Key West and later was Post Surgeon at Fort Jefferson until the Civil War. He was suspected of Southern sympathies and returned to Key West. This was the first election after the new Florida Constitution became effective.

Joseph B. Browne
1869-1872

He born in Windsor, Virginia on November 6, 1814. He arrived in Key West in 1830. He was a member of the St Joseph convention, served as United States marshal, clerk of the United State Court, member of legislature of Florida, and Postmaster of Key West. His wife was Mary Ximinez -- one of his for children was Jefferson B. Browne who wrote Key West the Old and New
He was active in St Paul's Episcopal Church

E. O. Gwynn

1864-1865
1866-1867
1874-1875
1881-1882

A native of the Bahamas he was one of the early cigar manufacturers in Key West. Later he was employed as an auctioneer. He served in the Union Volunteer Corps in the Civil War.
As Mayor he signed the first telegraph to the Mayor of Havana on August 21, 1867

William S. Allen
1873-1874
(may have served 1868-1869)

William S. Allen a native of Enfield, Connecticut. He was educated in Connecticut and Massachusetts. He was a merchant, a special deputy collector of customs and Clerk of the U.S District Court.

Henry Mulernnan
1870-1871

Henry Mulernnan was a native of Scotland. He came to this country when he was 11 years old and worked as a printer's helper in New York. He was in the Mexican War and after being discharged from service settled in Key West, During the Civil War he served in the Confederate Army and in 1864 was captured running the blockade. He was imprisoned at Fort LaFayette. He returned to Key West and was elected mayor.

William D. Cash
1871-1872

Born in Harbour Island, Bahamas in May 19, 1834. He came to Key West in 1858. He taught school for several years. He was a clerk for William H. Wall & Company. After that he went into the mercantile business. For many years the firm of Cash and Curry was the largest auctioneers in Key West. He was one of the first automobile dealers in Key West as agent for the Buffalo Gasoline Motor Company. He served for ten years as president of the Board of County Commissioners. He was the first president of the Chamber of Commerce when it was organized in 1902 and served until 1911.

Winer Bethel
1872-1872

Winer Bethel was born in Nassau, Bahamas. He moved to Key West in 1847. He was an attorney and Judge of the Probate Court. His son Judge L. W. Bethel was also Mayor of Key West.

Carlos Manuel de 'Cespedes
1875-1876

Appears to be the first Cuban mayor. He was the son of the famous Cuban revolutionist of the same name who first called for Cuban Liberty. Carlos Manuel de Cespedez was among the early Cubans who migrated to Key West. He was active in the revolution in

Cuba and was president of the Revolutionary Club of Key West. Carlos led the Centennial celebration and gave a speech in English at the dedication of City Hall on July 4, 1876. He returned to Cuba after the Spanish American War.

Livingston W. Bethel
1876-1880

A native of Nassau he was the son of Winer Bethel. He moved to Key West with his family when he was two. He was admitted to the bar in 1869. He was elected Lieutenant Governor in 1880. In 1895 he was appointed Judge of Criminal Court of Records. In 1911 he was named Judge of the Eleventh Florida Circuit Court. He also served as a delegate to the constitutional convention of 1885. He was senior warden of the Holy Innocents Episcopal Church.

Dr. Robert J. Perry
1881-1882
1891-1895

Dr. Robert Perry was born in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. A leading physician and surgeon. He served a representative of Monroe County in the legislature and as Superintendent of Public Instruction. He was active in the Masons and served as Grand Master of the State of Florida.

William McClintock
1882-1883

A Philadelphian he came to Key West in 1862 as a captain in the U.S. NAVY. HE was assistant manager of Wall and Company. He was president of the Board of Alderman in 1876. He resigned in September 1883 to take a job in the Custom House.

Alfred R. Monsalvatage
1883-1885

Son of a Spanish born missionary his family lived in various countries and parts of the United States. As a young man he and his brother Washington settled in Key West and became merchants. They were partners in Monsalvatage and Reedy Company. He was president of Union Bank when it was organized in 1892.

James G. Jones
1885-1886

A French Canadian he was enroute to New Orleans when he was shipwrecked and brought to Key west. He was in the restaurant business with E. L. Ware. During the Civil War he was in charge of the Government warehouse. Jones served as Justice of Peace, Tax Collector, Sheriff, U.S. Marshall, Deputy Clerk of U.S. Court and U. S. Commissioner

He was serving as mayor when the Great Fire of 1886 destroyed the business district.

Dr. J.W.V.R. Plummer
1886-1888

Born in Baltimore in 1842 he came to Key West in the Civil War. A prominent physician and civic leader he also served in the State Legislature.

James. A. Waddell
1888-1889
1895-1897

A native of Canada, he was born in 1842. He came to Key West in 1881 and took a position with the John White Bank. In 1886 Waddell purchased the bank and extensive real estate interests. He was elected Mayor in October 1888. On May 16, 1889 Florida began a new system of government where all local officials were appointed by the Governor. He left office on that date when a new city commission took power. he was elected by the commission as mayor in 1895.

Walter C. Maloney Jr
1889-189

Walter C. Maloney Jr. was born in Florida studied law with his father and was admitted to the bar in 1867. He served with the Confederate Seventh Florida Regiment during the Civil War. He also served as Key West Tax Collector, Tax Assessor, Attorney and Monroe County Attorney.

Dr. John B. Maloney
1897-1898

He was born in Key West in 1867, received his medical education at the university of Pennsylvania graduating in 1890. He was a resident physician in Philadelphia until returned to Key west and opened his practice at Key West in 1892. In 1908 he opened the Eloise Maloney Hospital the first private hospital on the island. He served on the school board and was also president of the Board of Trade and Chamber of Commerce.

He was the first to be elected Mayor after resumption of elections by the people.

George L. Bartlum
1898-1903

He was the son of John Bartlum Florida's famous shipbuilder. He attended Moore's Business College in Atlanta. He worked in the Custom House as a cashier. He was a member of the volunteer fire department.

Benjamin Douglas Trevor
1903-1905

Born in Topshan in the County of Devon, England in 1867. He came to America with his father. He came to Key West in 1893 and worked as cashier for the Cortez Cigar Company, He was at various times connected with William Curry Sons, Consumers Ice Company and president of Columbia Steam Landry. He was a partner in the first Ford agency in Key West.

George L. Babcock

1905-1907

Son of an Army Colonel who helped build the reef lighthouses. He was born in Key west at 508 Duval. He owned a large grocery. He also served as 2nd Lieutenant of the Island City Guards in 1888. He served as a tax collector and on the City Council.

Dr. Joseph N. Fogarty

1907-1915

Born in Key West in 187, he studied medicine in New York. After graduation in 1894 he returned to Key West to open a practice. He married a grand daughter of William Curry. He was mayor when the railroad was opened. After he left office he moved to St Augustine to be Chief Surgeon for the Florida East Coast Railroad. In 1926 he was elected mayor of St. Augustine.

Norberg Thompson.

1915 - 1917

Born in Key West in 1884, he was the grandson of a Norwegian seaman that was shipwrecked on the Florida reef. He started as a sponge dealer and expanded his Thompson Enterprises to include a fish house, turtle cannery, cigar box factory, and ice company. The firm discovered the shrimp beds off Key West. He also owned extensive real estate in Monroe County. He served twelve years as a County Commissioner.

Allen B. Cleare

1917-1919

Born in Harbour Island, Bahamas on April 30, 1878. He was a merchant and owned one of the large auction houses in Key West. He served on the City Council and School Board. He saw the first air mail letter to arrive in Key West.

Lewis Otto

1919-1921

Lewis Otto was born in Key West. He was a pharmacist and operated a drug store. He was a member of the Odd Fellows and Red Men. He also served as police justice and postmaster. He later moved to St. Petersburg.

Frank H. Ladd

1921-1925

Frank H. Ladd was born in Oswego County, New York. He was refrigeration engineer and came to Key West to work for Key West Ice Company. He was one of the organizers of Consumers Ice and Cold Storage Company where he was the first president. He was the Monroe Tax Collector from 1933 until January 1941

Leslie A. Curry

1925 – 1933

Leslie Curry was born in Key West. He was a pharmacist and operated a drug store. He was closely associated with Dr. John B Maloney and Dr. Harry C. Galey. His nickname was Big Six.

Walter H. Malone
1933-1935

Born in Key West he read law under Judge Jefferson Browne and graduated from the Law School of Washington and Lee University. He served in the Florida House and Senate. He moved to Miami in 1938

He was appointed mayor by the City Commission on the death of Leslie Curry in office. He was elected for one term and defeated in his re – election bid in 1935 by Dr. Harry C. Galey

Dr Harry C. Galey
1935-1937

Born in Philadelphia in 1886, he came to Key West in 1903 and was a pharmaceutical apprentice for his uncle Dr. J. B. Maloney. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1913. He interned in Colon Hospital, Panama Canal Zone. He began his practice in Key West in 1915. when Dr. Maloney died he took over his practice. When he opened a hospital. He named it for Dr. Maloney. The name was later changed to Galey Hospital.

Willard M. Albury
1937-1945

Willard M. Albury was born in Key West in 1885. After his education in Key West he attended business college in Jacksonville. He returned to Key West to work for the P & O Steamship Company. He managed a large cigar factory. He served on the school board, city council and as city auditor before he became mayor. He left the mayor's office in 1945 to become school superintendent. In 1950 he became administrator of Monroe General Hospital. He also served on the Overseas Road and Toll Bridge District.

William W Demeritt
1945-1947

Born in Key West in 1880. He entered the Lighthouse Service in 1898. In 1913 he was promoted to Superintendent of the Seventh Lighthouse District. He became a Captain in the Coast Guard when the Coast Guard and Lighthouse service merged.

A Maitland Adams
1947-1949

Maitland Adams was born in Key West in 1896. He attended business college studying book keeping and shorthand. In 1914 he went to work for Thompson Enterprises and became business manager. He remained with the company for fifty-five years. He served on the Key West Commission and Monroe County Commission. He is in the memorial sculpture garden

Louis M.J. Eisner
1949-1951

He was born in New York in 1898. He was educated in Brooklyn. He served in the New York City Police Department from 1922 to 1944 when he retired. In 1944 he moved to Key West. In November 1944 he was appointed Police Chief of Key West. He served on the Key West Commission and the Florida Keys Aqueduct Board.

The commission elected the mayor after the new charter was adopted in 1945. He was elected mayor by the commission in 1949

John Carbonnell

1950-1951

John Carbonnell was born in Key West in 1906. He was educated in Havana and Beorgia Military Academy. He was co-owner of the Strand and Monroe Theaters. He was first elected to the city commission and served a total of 14 years.

C.B. Harvey

1951-1957

1961-1963

C. B. Harvey was born in Louisiana in 1908. He attended school in Louisiana and graduated from Tulane University. He served in the Navy during the war and after was employed by the Public Works Department of the Naval Station. He retired from Civil Service in 1976.

Delio Cobo

1957-1961

1969-1971

Delio was born in Key West in 1911. He attended the schools in Key West, the University of Florida and received his degree in dentistry from Emory university in Atlanta Georgia. He served on the Utility Board and the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority.

Kermit H. Lewin

1963-1969

Born in Key West in 1921. He was educated in Key West. Kermit worked as an announcer for WKWF, owned an office supply store, was director Key West Housing Authority and Monroe County Administrator

Charles E. McCoy Jr

1971-1981

Charles McCoy born in Key West in 1928. After education in Key West he received a degree in architecture from the University of Florida. He was a practicing architect in Key West.

He applied for and received millions of dollars in federal grants. The money paid for a major overhaul of the city's sewer system, mortgage loans for low income housing and repairs to the city swimming pool. Federal dollars also funded a new tourist attraction,

“Bahama Village” along Petronia Street. He served for ten years as mayor and held the office longer than any of his predecessors.

Dennis Wardlow

1981-1983

1991-1997

Dennis Wardlow was born in Key West in 1944. He was educated in Key West. He served on the city commission from 1973 to 1981. In 1982 when the U.S. Border Patrol established a road block that was choking off the tourist trade, Wardlow and other formed the tongue-in-cheek Conch Republic with Dennis as Prime Minister. He was elected in 1981 for one term and again in 1991 for one term. In 1993 the mayor's term was changed to four years he was elected again. In June 1995 Wardlow was charged with taking a bribe he was suspended by the governor. In September 1995 he was found not guilty in Federal Court and was re-instated by the governor. During the time he was suspended the governor appointed Tom Sawyer acting mayor.

Richard A. Heyman

1983-1985

1987-1989

Richard Heyman was born in 1935 in Grand Rapids, Ohio. He graduated from the Ohio State University. He was an Eagle Scout. He taught English in Springfield City Schools in Ohio. He moved to Key West in 1973 and opened the Gingerbread Square Art Gallery. He served on the city commission from 1979 to 1983.

He was the first openly gay man to hold the office of mayor in Key West.

Tom Sawyer

1985-1987

1995

Tom Sawyer was born in Key West in 1948 and graduated from Mary Immaculate High School. He worked for First Federal Savings and Loan and was President of the Key West Jaycees – was chairman of the Chamber of Commerce.

He was elected mayor in 1985 and served one term. He was appointed by the governor as acting mayor when Dennis Wardlow was suspended from office from June to September 1995

Died 2005

Captain Tony Tarracino

1989-1991

Tony Tarracino was born in New Jersey. He came to Key West in 1947 and has been a charter captain and owner of Captain Tony's Saloon.

He was elected mayor in 1989 and served one term. He won on his sixth try for office

Defeated Tom Sawyer by 32 votes

Sheila Mullins

1997 – 1999

Sheila Mullins was born in England to American father and English mother. She grew up in the United States. She came to Key West in 1971. She was elected mayor in 1997, the first woman to hold the office.

Jimmy Weekley
1999-2005

During his time as mayor the slogan for Key West – “One Human Family” was introduced. Weekley was instrumental in passage of a Growth Management Ordinance. The ordinance insured that growth in the hotel sector would be matched with the production of work force housing. The ordinance received the Award for Excellence from the Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association. Weekley was also active in cultural and environmental preservation initiatives designed to protect the character of Key West in the face of rapid economic and social change. He and his family own Faustos Food Palace -- He is a fourth generation Conch and continues to serve on the Commission.

Morgan McPherson
2005 –2009

During his time as mayor he was a strong advocate for affordable housing. Prior to serving as mayor he worked with non- profits and was Deputy Director of the Boys and Girls Club of the Keys. He graduated from Key West High School and attended Florida State University.

Craig Cates
2009-2018

Craig Cates is a fourth generation Conch born and raised in Key West, Florida. His mother, Emma Cates, served on the Key West City Commission for four years. Prior to serving as mayor, he owned a Napa Auto Parts store for ten years and was a world champion boat racer. Some of the projects completed during his five terms as mayor include Glynn Archer City Hall, Amphitheater, and Truman Waterfront Park.

Teri Johnston

2018 – present

Teri is the first woman in the 200 -year history of Key West to be re-elected as mayor. She envisions herself as the mayor for all of the people. Johnston has been a resident of Key West for 22 years.