

1400-1700
From the 1.5 inch of GAIL SANDSON
THE NATIVE INDIANS OF THE FLORIDA KEYS:
THE SOUTHERNMOST SAGA

INDIANS IN THE FLORIDA KEYS PRIOR TO 1800

1400-1500 Fontaneda, writing in 1575, states that Cuban Indians had migrated to South Florida many years prior to his captivity. "Anciently, many Indians from Cuba entered the ports of the Province of Carlos in search of it; (The River Jordan) and the father of King Carlos, whose name was Senquene, stopped these persons, and made a settlement of them, the descendants of whom remain to this day." (Memoir of D^o

d'Escalante Fontaneda, Trans. by Buckingham Smith, Washington, 1854, p.29.)

1527? Additionally, in a letter from Mathias de Leon Castellano, who was a priest in Havana, written to the King on July 3, 1732, Castellano describes the Indians of the Keys as "Those poor naked ones and few natives who withdrew from this Island (Cuba) to that region during the conquest (of Cuba)." Apparently he was suggesting that some of the ancestors of the Keys Indians of his day had migrated to the Keys from Cuba during the sixteenth century. (Letter, Mathias de Leon Castellano to the King, Havana, July 3, 1732, AGI 58-2-10/5)

1549? The King of Spain issues a decree to the natives of all the territory from the river Las Palmas (the Rio Grande) to the Cape of Florida reminding them that they must recognize the Church, the Pope, and the King and Queen as highest authorities. If they fail to do so, they will be punished with slavery. (The Calendar of the Stetson Collection ST AGI 32-4-29/35 Contr 3309 bnd 20, pp 29-32.)

1549? Testimony of man whose ship "struck a rock" and who married an Indian. Father Escobedo, in his La Florida, written at the close of the sixteenth century, tells of a shipwreck victim who was spared by the Indians when they killed the other survivors of the wreck. He lived with the Indians for seventeen years, taking a wife and fathering two daughters. He was spared by the Indians because he was a silversmith, and was able to fashion their silver and gold into jewelry. He was rescued by Menendez in 1566.

(Pirates, Indians, and Spaniards: Father Escobedo's La Florida James W. Covington, 1963, pp. 86-88.)

1549 Hernando D'Escalante Fontaneda shipwrecked in the Keys at age 13 years. He was captured (or adopted) by the Indians, with whom he lived for the next seventeen years. Fontaneda's Memoir is the earliest and most detailed description of the Indians of the Keys and South Florida we have. He describes their customs, culture, religion, costumes, language, food, etc, in addition to describing the geography and natural history of South Florida. Fontaneda stated that there were two Indian towns on the Keys, Guarungunve (probably Matecumbe) and Cuchiyaga (probably Big Pine Key) Both were subject to the Indian King Carlos. He further stated that "The Indians of Guaragunbe are rich" due to their salvage of goods & treasure from shipwrecks. (Memoir of D^o d'Escalante Fontaneda Respecting Florida, Written in Spain, about the year 1575 Translated from the Spanish with notes by Buckingham Smith, Washington, 1854.)