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William Arnold's Key West

By William Arnold

William B. (Bill) Arnold wrote the following article in 1983. He died at age of 90 on April 21, 1999. He began his career as an automobile dealer, then worked as agent for Greyhound Line for 20 years. He was then a partner in the Johnson & Johnson Real Estate firm. He served as chairman of the First Federal Savings and Loan Association from 1955 until 1980 when he retired. He served twice as member of the Florida Keys Aqueduct Commission, first on the original three-member commission from 1937 to 1941 and again from 1958 to 1962. He also served as a member of the Overseas Road and Toll commission from 1952 to 1954.

It is the winter of 1983, and the winter of my life, I was born in 1908 on the island of Key West, Florida and it has been suggested that I write of my impressions of Key West in the early part of this century.

One of the things I recall most vividly is the smell of a summer rain on the dry dusty dirt roads, few of the streets were paved then. The cry of the street vender in Spanish, he pushed his cart of vegetables and fruit through the streets, and the tinkle of the bell around the neck of the cow being driven to provide



William Arnold center signs bonds for the Florida Keys Aqueduct Commission to help finance the first water pipeline. Left is William Dougherty, chairman of the commission and on the right Ross Sawyer, Clerk of Circuit Court. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.

strictly fresh milk at each stop.

Ice was delivered along a route by a horse drawn wagon, which the children would follow to snatch a small piece of ice, while the ice man was making his delivery to the ice box in the home.

Drinking water was drawn from cisterns in the back yard or under the house, by hand operated pitcher pump. The water was collected during the raining, season by gutters from the roofs. Also well water from hand-drilled wells were found in the yards, and provided water for bathing, washing of clothes or watering the small

gardens. In most houses, the pitcher pump was located over a steel sink in the kitchen, toilets were in main part, strictly outdoors.

Radio and television were unknown, and entertainment was provided by games, music, or conversation. As an example, in my family, we would gather around the piano played by my sister Josephine, while Marguerite and Winkie (Emma) would play the mandolin and violin. All of us would sing or try to. Sometimes, in the summer, we would all sit on the front porch

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