

December 22, 1970

The Nature Conservancy
Key Project
P. O. Box 8227
Coral Gables, Florida

Mary Alice Rogers
Keys Project Coordinator

Dear Mary Alice Rogers:

It is the pleasure of the
Upper Keys Garden Club to donate \$126.50 towards the
purchase of Lignumvitae and Shell Keys. Our check
for that amount is enclosed.

Yours very truly,

Hester V. Oliver, Treas.
207 Apache Street
Tavernier, Florida 33070

BEHIND THE FRONT PAGE

Lignum Vitae Isn't Bought Yet

BY JOHN PENNEKAMP

NATURE CONSERVANCY, the national agency which lighted the fuse that brought Florida's Lignum Vitae Key into public ownership, got action so fast that it is a little embarrassed.

With Lignum Vitae the state also acquired Shell Key, of ecologic and conservation importance, and, in another transaction, Indian Key, regarded by many historians as probably South Florida's most important historic natural landmark.



Pennekamp

Lignum Vitae and Indian Keys have been in almost steady danger of development with land fills, bulldozing, and causeways, endangering all their natural values.

Conservancy's embarrassment comes from the fact that it still has to raise \$200,000 in a campaign now under way while most folks believe it's all over — wrapped, sealed and delivered.

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HERE ARE the details:

A group of scientists from the University of Miami, Harvard and Cornell a year or so ago set about preserving Lignum Vitae, the highest (16 feet above sea level) in Florida's unique key landscape.

In addition to its history of Indian habitation and Spanish control, its appeal lies in the fact that it has the largest and best preserved stand of

tropical hardwood forest in the United States.

Also, it has the best preserved lowland forest of West Indian type to be found anywhere — including the West Indies.

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THE SCIENTISTS undertook negotiations for the key and soon were confronted with the need for money. They had settled with the owners for a price of \$1,950,000.

After exploring several money-raising possibilities they went to Nature Conservancy, the only privately-supported conservation organization devoting its total resources to preserving lands of outstanding scenic and ecological value. Headquarters is in the District of Columbia.

Since its origin in 1917 it has spent millions achieving its purposes.

Through Thomas W. Richards, its president, Nature Conservancy approved the purchase price, payment \$20,000 for an option. It undertook to raise \$200,000 more to "hold the deal," while seeking for the remainder. A nationwide money raising campaign was considered.

It learned, too, of Florida's long interest in preserving Lignum Vitae, as well as Shell Key, and went to the Department of Conservation for help.

Last week the Cabinet "bought the package" agreeing to add \$1,750,000 to Conservancy's \$200,000. Conservancy still has to raise its share and fears that the speed with which the negotiations moved has given the impression that its campaign has become unnecessary.

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EACH of the three keys lies a

short distance off the Overseas Highway, roughly 68 miles southwest of Miami.

Lignum Vitae dominates the chain of keys through its height. It is west of the highway and includes 280 acres.

In addition to its trees and shrubs, say the scientists, it includes also a rich variety of threatened insects, reptiles and birds, including the American bald eagle and white crowned pigeon.

Its archaeological values include traces of Indian occupation 1,000 years ago, and relatively undisturbed evidences of Spanish occupation in the 1500's.

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SHELL KEY, 188 acres, has a lake in the center, a red mangrove perimeter and a black mangrove interior and is a rich source of marine life.

Indian Key, for which the state paid \$240,000, is some seven or eight acres of sand and coral rock. Once a pirates' lair it was regarded as one of the most corrupt settlements of its time. To it later came the benign and learned Dr. Henry Perrine to start his experiments in an effort to have Florida compete with the soil-produced riches of Mexico's Campeche.

He was killed with other occupants of the island in an Indian massacre in 1840.

Mary Alice Rogers is key project coordinator for Nature Conservancy in its efforts to raise the \$200,000 of the purchase price for Lignum Vitae and Shell. Contributions should be sent to Key Project, P.O. Box 8227, Coral Gables, Fla. 33134.

Miami News, Feb 23rd, 1970

PAGE OF OPINION AND COMMENT

Help save
these Keys

To The Editor:

"Paradise in Keys saved from de-

LETTERS From Our Readers

velopers" (The Miami News, Oct. 14)
is not true. The Nature Conservancy
did not "purchase Lignumvitae Key

and neighboring Shell Key . . . for
\$1,950,000," but did put a down pay-
ment of \$20,000 as the first step to-

ward their purchase. The fight to save
them has just begun. The two keys
can be saved only if everyone who
cares will come to their rescue and
give what they can. If we aren't suc-
cessful, they will be sold commercial-
ly.

I saw the developer's plans. The
last stand of tropical hardwood forest
in the United States would be bul-
dozed down to make room for high
rise apartments, and the vanishing
Bald Eagle driven from yet another
disappearing habitat. Tons of fill will
be dumped into the islands crystal
waters, smothering the life of one of
the nation's best bonefishing flats, in
order to yoke the unique tropical gar-
den to Hwy. No. 1 with a concrete
causeway and parking lots.

The national, non-profit Conser-
vancy is the means by which the is-
lands' ecological and archaeological
treasure-trove can be saved for scien-
tific research and for the benefit of
future generations. Contributions are
tax deductible and can be sent to
KEY PROJECT, P. O. Box 8227,
Coral Gables, Florida 33124.

MARY ALICE ROGERS,
Coral Gables
Keys project coordinator