



Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal

VOL. 3, NO. 3

SPRING 1993

OFFICIAL QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE KEY WEST MARITIME HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Capt. John Lowe, Jr. Was Pioneer in Maritime Industry

By Carole Heinlein

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Imagine, if you will, what it must have been like a hundred years ago to follow Capt. John Lowe, Jr. up to the top of the four-story cupola above his home on Southard Street. From there, we could observe the comings and goings of sailing vessels that made up the life-long trade of this great mariner and pioneer in Key West industry. Later, we could stroll with him the few short blocks down Elizabeth Street to his sponge warehouses at the corner of Greene and Elizabeth Streets. Capt. John Lowe, Jr. may have enjoyed the venture, also, as it is said that he was a kindly man with a "sunshiny disposition".

Key West was in its infancy when Capt. John Lowe brought his wife, Bianca, and small children from Green Turtle Cay in the Bahamas. His was one of the numerous families that relocated here for the lucrative wrecking trade that was to make the island a wealthy town. The sea captain was known to be a large and powerful man and would teach his young sons the ways of a sea faring life aboard his wrecking schooner, the "Lavinia". John, Jr. frequently sailed with his father as a boy, earning his ship master's license in 1846 at age 13.

These voyages provided the young man with a unique view of the world and this perspective may have provided him with the vision to embark on a new trade, commerce. His sister, Euphemia, had recently married William Curry, a proprietor of the growing chandlery and mercantile business, Bowne and Curry which was relocat-



John Lowe, Jr.

ed on the waterfront at the corner of Front and Simonton Streets after the 1846 hurricane. When John, Jr. was only 15, he was offered a position with his brother-in-law's lucrative new enterprise, one that would later make Curry reputedly the county's first millionaire. After

he bought out his partner in 1861, Curry renamed the chandlery business, appropriately enough, William Curry's Sons, as his family was growing.

John, Jr. had worked for Bowne and Curry off and on since he was 12 as an
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