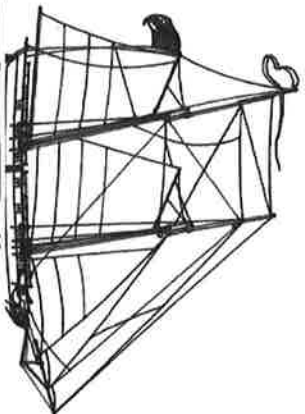


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## Kinfolks: The Key West Connection

How a wrecker's venture into the cattle business enabled the publication of one of the South's most prized family history resources.

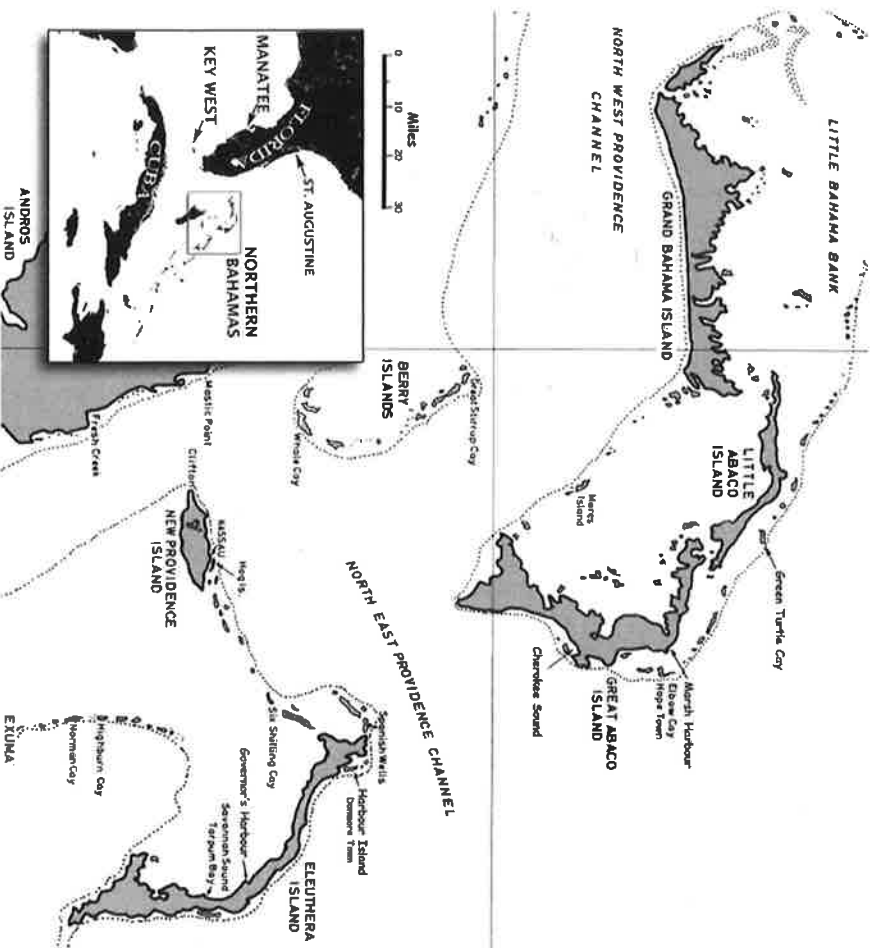
By

Thomas Neil Knowles

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In the mid 1930s, William Curry Harlee completed one of the most extensive family history projects of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. His remarkable genealogy covers a population the size of a city and spans generations more than two hundred years back. Commonly referred to as "Kinfolks" (see the notes at the end of this article for the full title), the four-volume work provides information on 27,841 people primarily from families that resided in the Carolinas, Tennessee, Florida, and the Bahamas. An invaluable reference for genealogists and historians researching Southern families, "Kinfolks" exists because of a Key West girl born in 1852. She was destined to become the author's mother through circumstances derived from a wrecker's decision to go into the cattle business, the chaos of the post-Civil War era, and the realignment of fortunes caused by yellow fever and accidental death.

Mary Ellen Curry was a descendant of Colonel Joseph Curry of Scotland, a surveyor who came to the American Colonies



*The mild climate of the Northern Bahamas appealed to many Loyalists searching for a place to relocate after the Revolutionary War. Winter temperatures seldom fall much below 60°F and usually reach about 75°F during the afternoon. Summer temperatures are typically 78°F or less at night and seldom rise above 90°F during the day. Photo credit: the Author.*

sometime before August 1755 as an official of the British Government. In going about his duties, he was able to identify and take advantage of real estate opportunities for personal gain. When he died about a year before the signing of the

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