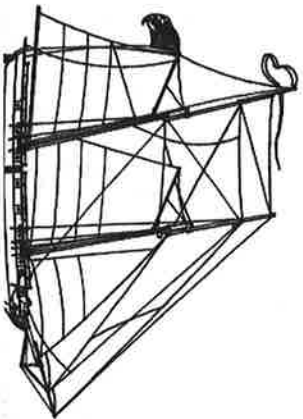


USS SHARK



# Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal

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## Richter Perky

### The Bats Didn't Come to Sugarloaf

By John Viele.

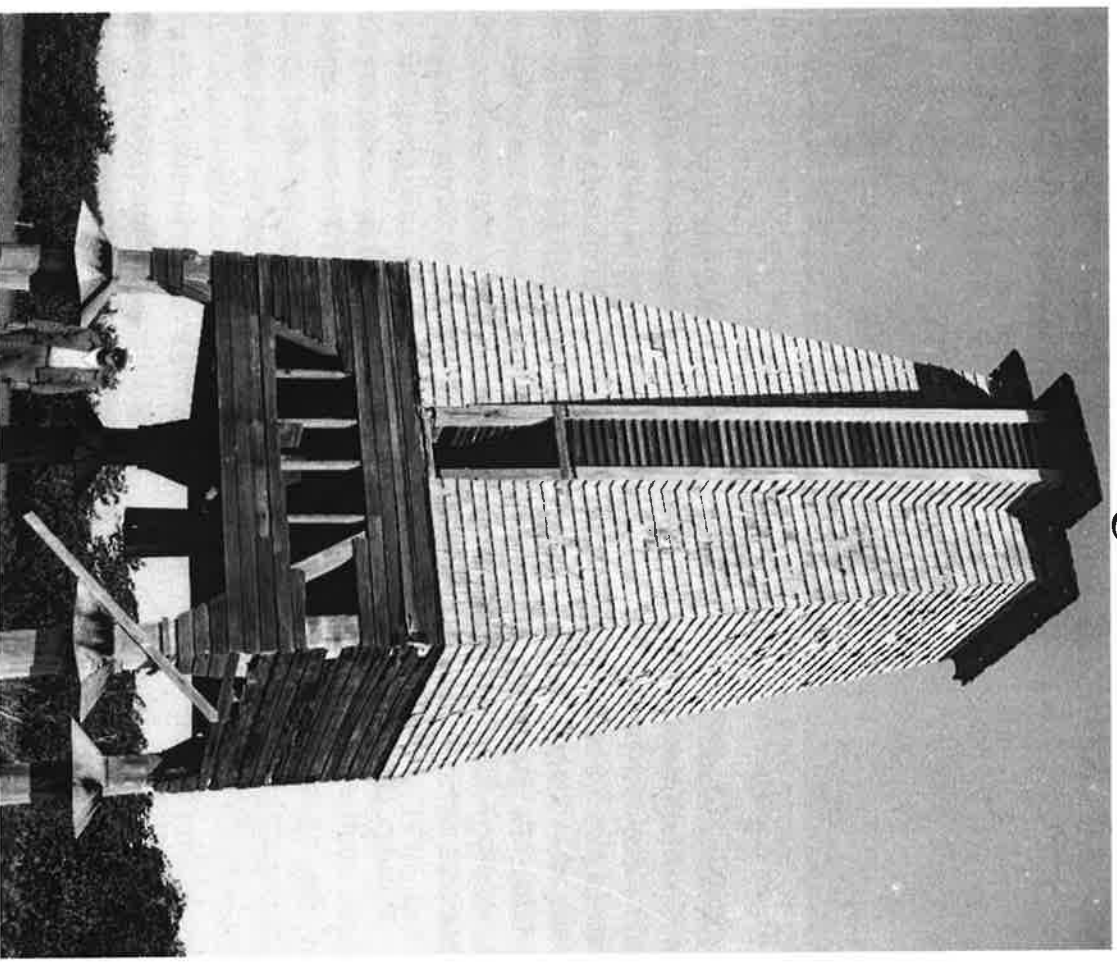
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This article appeared in the  
Island Navigator in 1993

Perky, a place that faded into obscurity over 50 years ago, still occasionally appears on maps of the Florida Keys. Located on Sugarloaf Key near the present-day site of the Sugarloaf Lodge resort, it was once the vacation retreat of the largest private land owner in the Florida Keys. It was also the scene of failed efforts to revive artificial-cultivation of sponges, to eradicate mosquitoes with bats, and to develop a luxury fishing resort.

In the mid-1930s, Perky was the home of Fred Johnson who was the settlement's postmaster, general superintendent, and sheriff. This is the story of Perky, the Johnson family, and life on Sugarloaf Key in the 1930s.

In 1925, a wealthy Florida real estate salesman, Richter C. Perky, purchased the Chase brothers' sponge-farming property eventually owned some 23,000 acres in the Keys, more than any other individual or company except the Florida East Coast Railroad. Sugarloaf Key was to be a vacation retreat from his home office in Miami. He also planned to try



*Fred Johnson and the Bat Tower. Photo credit: Pat Parks.*

his hand at artificial cultivation of of reaching it was by small boat or train from Miami or Key West.

When Perky first acquired the However, construction of the first Sugarloaf property, the only means (Continued on page 3)