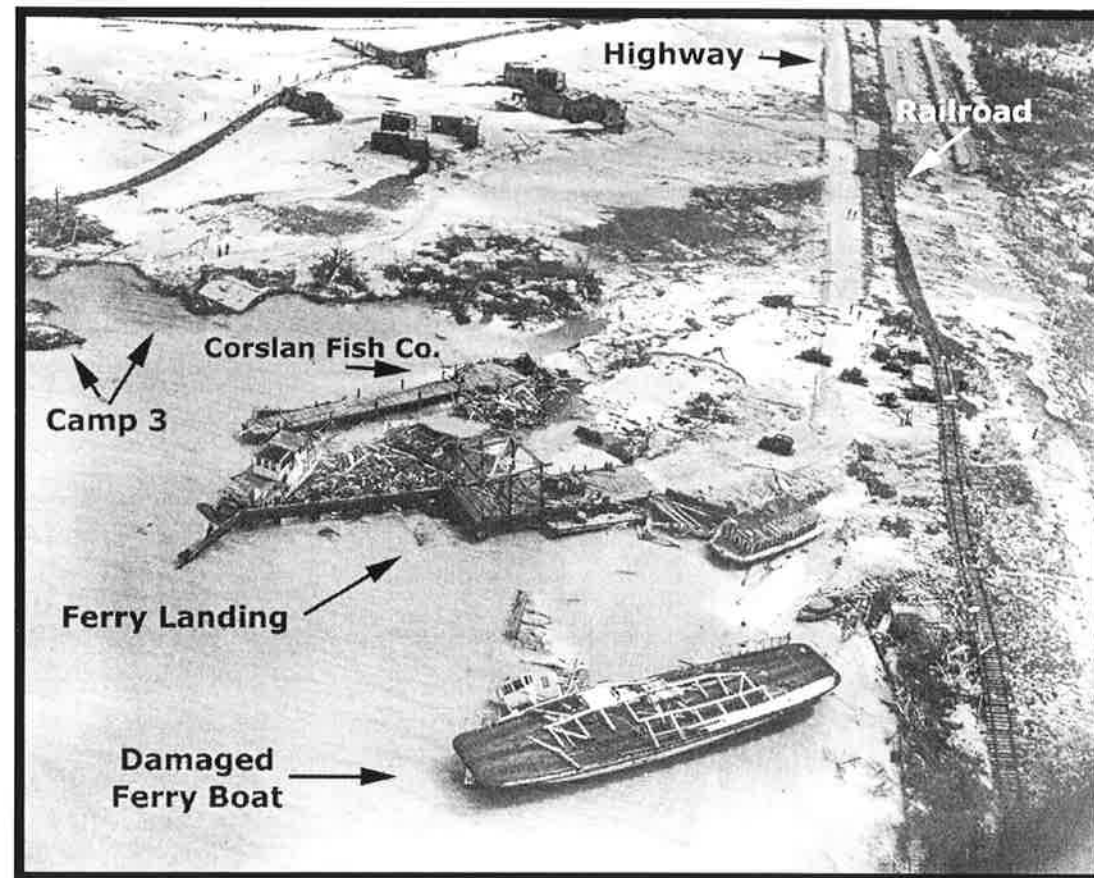




Aerial of the southern tip of Lower Matecumbe Key depicting Camp 3 of the WW-1 veterans at the upper left, the ferry slip in the center, the wreck of the ferryboat Monroe County at lower center and the railroad to the right.

History Talk, Fall 2001 Page 272

**The Historical
Preservation Society
of the Upper Keys**
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HISTORY TALK

FROM THE UPPER FLORIDA KEYS

Issue 17  LUCI NIEBLER-SPARE EDITION  Fall, 2001

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History of Lower Matecumbe Key By Jerry Wilkinson

Early records for location of the sinking and salvaging of the 1622 Spanish shipwrecks (*Atocha* and *Margarita*) referred to a small group of Florida Keys east of the Tortugas as the "Matecumbe Keys." The word Matecumbe is used frequently in early derroteros (literally "rudder" but meaning sailing guides). However, the writings of a 1595 Spanish cosmographer, Don Juan Maldonado, placed Matecumbe between Key Largo and Bahia Honda.

This misled the early treasure salvors to search for the 1622 *Atocha* wreck site in the Upper Matecumbe Keys. After all, the Spanish had specifically recorded the sinking of the *Atocha* in the "Matecumbe Keys." When the *Atocha* was not found in the Upper Keys after years of searching, Mel Fisher located it sank in the Marquesas with the research abilities of Spanish scholar Dr. Eugene Lyon. Dr. Lyon found that the "Matecumbe Keys" later had been re-named the Marquesas after the Marquis de Cadereita for his efforts in salvaging a 1622 wreck for the Spanish. Dr. Lyon was in the employ of the late Mel Fisher

and most know the *Atocha* story from then on.

The name Matecumbe has had many spelling variations such as Matacombe, Maticumbe, Mateconbe, Mattecumbe, Maticombe, etc. Its first use was in 1571 describing an attack by the cacique (Indian tribal chief) "Matacumbe" on nine Spanish soldiers who had stopped to fish. The name "Matacumbe" was again used by Pedro Menendez de Aviles in 1573 in regard to the bloodthirsty Indians of South Florida. Regardless of the spelling, Matecumbe is a very old name in the Florida Keys.

Which Matecumbe islands these were is not absolutely clear. One would think they were the present Matecumbe Keys; however, that was what the first *Atocha* treasure seekers thought, were misled and for decades searched in the wrong place.

The place name Matecumbe was defined as being in the Upper Keys on excellent maps made in 1733 for its shipwreck sites. Lower Matecumbe was clearly shown as Matecumbe Viejo, meaning in Spanish, Old Matecumbe. Upper Matecumbe was Matecumbe Nuevo, or New Matecumbe.

The use of the associated words Lower and Upper to describe the Keys began when Charles Smith surveyed in 1872, but he spelled them as Lower and Upper Metacumbe Keys.

Like many Keys' names, the specific origin of Matecumbe is troubling. Some think it is derived from the Spanish imperative form of "to kill man", i.e., matar hombre. The imperative form would be *mate hombre!* Others think it comes from the early Keys' Indian village mentioned by Fontaneda "Guarugunbe." Perhaps, it was the reverse; that is Guarugunbe came from the original Indian word Matecumbe. Others believe that the island of

Ahecambey described by Ponce de Leon in July 1513 was both the Matecumbe islands and later described as two islands. Therefore at this time, the exact derivation of the name joins other Florida Keys names such as Tavernier, Marathon, Cudjoe, etc. as speculation.

In early times Lower Matecumbe was probably better documented than most Keys because of the abundant fresh water available. I quote from an 1820 document of the Keys titled *Piloting Directions for the Gulf of Mexico*, (under a subtitled section, WATERING PLACES): "... but the principal Watering Place is at the north end of Old Maticumbe, where there is a natural well in a rock, about four feet deep, which is constantly full of excellent water, being kind of a spring. On this account Maticumbe is much frequented by the wreckers and turtlers, as there is no fresh water for many leagues to the eastward."

One could wonder if the above watering place could have been the "Fairy Grotto" described by Hester Perrine in recounting the death of her father, Dr. Henry Perrine, in the Indian Key raid of August 7, 1840.

While living on Indian Key, Dr. Perrine used Lower Matecumbe Key as his principal gardening spot for the cultivation of tropical plants. Hester wrote in her remembrances "One memorable day, only three days before the Indians came to Indian Key, Father and I went over, and he did but little work and then telling me that 'he had found a place where it would be pleasant for us to lunch' took me about a mile down the beach and then turning into the forest soon brought me to a spot where he parted the branches and there was a 'Fairy Grotto.' In the center was a small sparkling spring perhaps ten or fifteen feet across; various cacti in bloom and fruit, with other flowers upon the bank."

As with most of the unincorporated Florida Keys, it is difficult to trace the land ownership of Lower Matecumbe Key until it was surveyed by the U.S. Surveyor General. The survey was done by Charles Smith on November 20, 1872 and recorded it as Township 64 South, Range 36 East. After state and federal processing, the land could be sold or homesteaded and legal title obtained. Surveying of Florida began in 1824 at

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Tallahassee. The late surveying of the Keys delayed use of the federal Homestead Act of 1862.

It appears from survey records the entire island except 4.5 acres in section 16 was first deeded to a group of four men, Lewis W. Pierce, D. J. Sweeney, Peter A. Williams and George D. Warren in 1882. This was about 818 acres. The 4.5 acres was first deeded to Emily M. Collins in 1886.

In 1883, Lewis Pierce sold his interests to Sweeney, Williams and Warren.

In the meanwhile, Commodore Ralph Munroe's wrote of his first sailing trip to the Keys, in *The Commodore's Story*: "On the twentieth [September 20, 1877] we parted the centerboard pennant [part of the tackle to raise and lower the centerboard] and put in at Hurricane Harbor at the west end of Lower Matecumbe for repairs." Therefore, the name Hurricane Harbor was in use in 1877.

Like many of the Florida Keys, Lower Matecumbe appeared not to have had much practical use until Henry Flagler wanted to build the railroad tracks across the island. From 1905 to 1908 Flagler obtained land and permits for the bridges from the state. He purchased right-of-way property across Lower Matecumbe from the descendants of Sweeney and Williams. All in all Flagler bought about 40 acres for \$2,125 on Lower Matecumbe. With the opening of scheduled rail service to and from Knight's Key Dock in 1908, the Upper Keys effectively became part of the mainland. Automobiles were just a matter of time.

The first Overseas Highway was formally opened in 1928, although started in 1925 - the 1926 hurricane caused the delay. When vehicles reached the lower end of Lower Matecumbe Key, through traffic had to board a car ferry. The service provided by the car ferries was slow and unreliable. Equipment failure and too shallow waters were the primary problems.

To serve passengers waiting for the car ferry, a cafe and gas station were opened at the ferry landing. It was listed as the Terminal Lunch on the 1928 business brochure. The ferry schedule shows it leaving at 8:00 A.M. and 1:00 P.M. Lower Matecumbe then had its first business.

The rest of Lower Matecumbe was then owned by Tropical Cays Corporation which sold

the island to the Matecumbe Properties Corporation (MPC). The MPC defaulted on payment and Tropical Cays foreclosed in January 1929 and promptly resold to William J. Matheson. Mr. Matheson passed away in 1930 and ownership was passed to his son, Hugh.

In the early 1930s, a project was initiated to extend the highway and bridge the water gaps served by the ferries with concrete bridges as substantial as the railroad's. This would eliminate the slow and unreliable ferryboats; however, no funds were appropriated.

In 1932 the Great Depression was taking its toll. World War-I veterans from all over the country marched on Washington, D.C. demanding to be paid their WW-1 service bonus previously approved to be paid in 1945. A solution found in 1934 was to send the out of work veterans to construct bridges over the water gaps. The first bridge would be between Lower Matecumbe Key and Jewfish Bush Key, now named Fiesta Key.

Two of the three WW-I veterans' work camps in the Keys were located on Lower Matecumbe Key. The principal one, Camp 3, was just west of the Lower Matecumbe ferry landing and the Terminal Lunch. The other, Camp 5, was on the northeast end. Each camp housed some 250 men. (There were 12 WW-I veteran's camps in Florida operated by the Florida Emergency Relief Administration {FERA}.) A water desalination plant was built at Camp 3 to provide fresh water. The desal plant had been tested, approved and was ready to be accepted by the government on the Friday before the Labor Day Hurricane struck on Monday, September 2, 1935. Photographs show that most buildings were destroyed on Lower Matecumbe Key, but the two water towers and tanks remained standing.

The following perspective of the 1935 hurricane damage is from a FERA report of the hurricane aftermath dated September 16, 1935, titled CASE AIDES' REPORT OF GENERAL CONDITIONS OBSERVED ON UPPER KEYS FROM MATECUMBE TO KEY WEST. The complete report is available in the Islamorada Library or at our web site.

"... Matecumbe Ferry Slip. We were able to contact only two people at Matecumbe Ferry Slip, or Lower Matecumbe, who lived there before the

storm. These two men were Edgar Taylor and Edward Richard Ashbee. Neither of these men was injured, but both of their boats were damaged and sunk. These two men were dependent entirely upon fishing for a living. They need assistance in refloating their boats and also in purchasing necessary equipment. They gave information of who previously lived at the Ferry Slip including Carson Bradford, Jr., stating that Carson had a general store [the Terminal Lunch]. This man's business is a complete loss. [He leased docks along the water behind the cafe.] Mr. Jack Corslan, who owns the Corslan Fishing Company in Miami, suffered a total loss of his fishing house at the Ferry Slip. This place of business is only used during the winter months when Spanish mackerel are running and there was no caretaker at the place, as it is closed during the summer months. The Monroe County Ferry that ran between No Name Key and Matecumbe is against the railroad fill about 400 feet from the slip. This is a total wreck, also the Ferry Slip. Think possibly the Monroe County Ferry Slip at Matecumbe can be made ready for use in a very short while as it did not receive much damage although at present it is unusable. [This was true; however, the bridges and roads, especially Indian Key Fill, were badly damaged.] Most of the old key residents that previously lived at lower Matecumbe are in Miami at present. Quite a number of these people were killed, some injured and some went to Miami to be taken care of by the Red Cross. . . ." See photo on page 272.

There were no civilian permanent residences on the Key at that time. The Key was once again silent except for the rescue teams. All that remains today of the veterans' work are the decaying concrete bridge piers in the bay at about mile marker 73.

The 1935 hurricane destroyed 40 miles of railroad track, but all the steel and/or concrete railroad bridges were serviceable. The railroad right-of-way property was sold for \$640,000 and was converted into what the author refers to as the second (1938) Overseas Highway. This highway was a continuous vehicular road from the mainland to Key West with two tollgates. The Upper Keys tollgate was located at about the same

place as the old ferry slip had been. The new service facility was the Toll Gate Inn.

In back of Wynn Tyler's Toll Gate Inn was his fish camp. During WW-II, the price and demand for cod liver oil went up and the Tyler's Fish Camp became a shark fish camp. The shark livers were used to extract shark oil as a substitute for cod liver oil. The late Islamorada resident, Jimmy Woods, worked on the construction of the water desalination plant for the WW-1 veterans and worked at the shark fish camp.

Shortly after the end of WW-II, the entire Lower Matecumbe Island of 818 acres except the Toll Gate Inn property was sold to Lewis Hall, Jack Davis and Ellis Giddens for \$120,000. About 17 acres of the upper end were promptly resold to Capt. Buck and Ruth Starck in 1946. The Starcks moved a small lime packing house down to serve as construction quarters while building the first private residential home on the island. Next door they built Starck's Fishing Camp. At that time they, along with the owners of Wynn Tyner's Toll Gate Inn and Fish camp, they were the only full-time residents of Lower Matecumbe Key. The Indian midden on the upper end of the key was on the Starck property. The Starcks say that only artifacts generally associated with an Indian living site were found - no human bones. The burial site on Lignumvitae Key was most likely the burial ground for all the nearby Indian villages.

Buck and Ruth Starck began selling lots and Angus Boatwright built the second residence. On Saturday, April 23, 1960, Captain Angus Boatwright, who docked his charter boat at Whale Harbor, departed for the Bahamas with a mate and four fishing customers on the *Muriel III*. Off of Elbow Cay, Bahamas, two Texas desperadoes ran out of gasoline and took refuge at a vacant lighthouse. Spotting the passing *Muriel III*, they swam out and shot Angus twice who died of these wounds. The modern day pirates fled to Cuba and the widow later retrieved the *Muriel III*. Boatwright's rifle was recovered with a jammed bullet in the chamber.

Across the highway on the ocean, close to where the uppermost Lower Matecumbe veterans' camp had been, George and Genevieve Grayson built the Malibu Motel in 1951. At that time, the

veterans' camp water cistern was still there. A short time later, Donald Wollard built the third year-round residence.

Hall, Davis and Giddens eventually sold lots throughout the island. Houses and businesses began to spring up along side the highway. Early motels were the Bayside, Evening Shade, Matecumbe, Tropic Aire, Whitegate Courts and the Malibu.

From this beginning, the community of Lower Matecumbe grew. Local contractor Alonzo Cothron did much of the work. This included major dredge and fill projects, since much of the island was very low in elevation. Cothron moved to Lower Matecumbe and built a home and an aircraft landing strip.

The Boy Scouts of America have slowly built a sea-base for senior scouts on the very southwestern tip. Thousands of scouts get their sea training there every year. This property was the site of the vehicle ferry landing. To its northwest was Veterans' Camp 3 from which the bridge approach was built out to the remaining concrete bridge piers. The island between the piers and land is the remains of the bridge approach which some refer to as Veterans Key.

Before leaving the Lower Matecumbe area, a few words of its neighbor to the south, the community of Craig. Craig was once known as Camp Panama according to the *Miami Daily News* dated January 28, 1931. In the edition it featured a short article titled "Camp Panama Offers Excellent Angling. . . . Located 90 miles below Miami, about two miles below the ferry landing on the lower Matecumbe, Camp Panama is right in the very best key fishing grounds. . . ." The article concluded ". . . For the convenience of visitors to Miami the camp maintains an office at 409 City National Building in charge of R. W. Craig."

The original Craig was not the two small islands that are there now - these were dredged and filled in the 1950s by Alonzo Cothron for Rowland W. Craig - but a wide place on the railroad right-of-way and later, the highway. Craig's cabins and restaurant were on the ocean side and the docks on the bayside. Deep-water access was by way of the Channel Five Bridge.

Captain Buck Starck remarked that in his early

days (1920s and 1930s) of chartering out of the Royal Palm dock in Miami, Craig was the "center of the universe for Miami charter captains." Captain Starck and others used large 100-foot boats towing their smaller fishing skiffs, and needed six to seven feet of water to dock for supplies. The only places were the Angler's Club, Long Key Fishing Camp and Craig. The first two catered primarily to their own members, but it was Craig that made it in *Ripley's Believe It or Not*. Ripley's depicted the small building on the left of the highway and telephone/telegraph poles and lines with the caption "Town Built on a Highway - instead of a Highway Built thru the Town."

The 1935 census lists Craig with 21 residents. R. W. Craig was listed as manager/fishery and Mrs. Craig as postmistress. The Craigs had twin daughters, Sally and Suzanne, one and a half years of age on the census. Craig was affectionately known as "Poor Ole Craig." Craig defeated T. Jenkins Curry, the first county commissioner from the Upper Keys, and served in the position from 1940 to 1942. He was defeated by Harry Harris.

Postal records show the post office at Craig, Florida was established on February 25, 1933, discontinued on August 31, 1944 and re-established on April 1, 1946. The lowest official recorded barometric pressure at sea level of 26.35 inches during the 1935 hurricane was at Craig. The barometer used to establish the record was the property of Captain Ivar Olsen. Capt. Olsen and others rode out the hurricane in his boat which was out of the water and propped up on tall timbers in the Craig area. Since the barometer's needle was below the scale, he scribed marks on the brass casing. Evidently the hurricane eye wall ranged from Craig to Long Key.

More from the aforementioned September 16, 1935 FERA report, "Craig, Florida. This place was not visited. The information that follows was obtained on Sept. 14th from Edward Ashbee at the Matecumbe Ferry Slip.

"Craig is built up on a fill made by the Florida East Coast Railway Company and is about 3 1/2 miles below Matecumbe. This fill is about one-half mile long. There were quite a number of people living there. Most of them were single men and acting as fishermen. These fishermen either lost

their boats or their boats were damaged very badly. There were no deaths at Craig but some inhabitants received minor injuries. At present there are only six men on this small island and these men are trying to either salvage or get their small boats in shape so that they can move to Tavernier or somewhere else where dealers will come down and buy fish from them, as at present there are no railroad connections to Craig or any other means of transportation within 30 miles where they can get fish to the mainland.

"The only thing left standing on this island was the bridge tender's home. This place belongs to the F. E. C. Railway. The bridge tender [R. L. Jackson] and his wife received no injuries and the FEC has transferred him to Homestead, it is understood. [The Jacksons also were in Olsen's boat.] "Mr. R. W. Craig, whom the island is named after, had a fishing camp there and also a yacht basin where rich people would come down during the winter months and fish. R. W. Craig ran a general supply camp such as selling gasoline, beer and all other yachting needs. It also had quite a number of cottages that the rich people used to live in. His place of business is a total loss. Every thing washed to sea. Although he received no injuries, he at present is safe in Miami. . . ."

Hurricane Donna in 1960 more or less doomed Craig. Craig closed the post office whose services were transferred to Long Key in July 1963.

The two dredged islands were originally named Maloney and Coo Keys. Craig sold Coo Key, the west Key, to Mr. C. A. Eaton who had Alonzo built him a winter home. Eaton sold to Cynthia and Carl Twitchell who had purchased the storm damaged Olney Inn in 1961 and renamed it the Cheeca Lodge. In 1964 Alonzo remodeled and enlarged the house. While Carl was away fishing, Cynthia called it "Kooky Key" because of the boredom. The house was next sold to Ray Brown while Joe Pinder was the caretaker. In fact, Brown purchased both Keys and Tea Table Key.

The east Key was Maloney Key and was also dredged and filled by Alonzo. The *Key West Citizen* of June 1964 published an article concerning a house at 701 Seminole, Key West that, ". . . Was slowly placed on a barge anchored in adjacent waters, and prepared for a 75-mile

ocean ride to Maloney Key." Key Westers thought it was a first, when a house emigrated by water. (Many houses had immigrated from the Bahamas.) The small house is presently the caretaker's house.

The name Craig, Florida because of the now defunct post office was changed to Craig Key in 1971. The two small islands are now populated. A few pilings remain off the oceanside of US-1 as a reminder of the original settlement of Craig.

Farther south is another island named Jewfish Bush Key. In 1947, the Greyhound Post House, Incorporation, of Chicago purchased the Key and renamed it Tropical Key. They contracted with Alonzo Cothron to build \$150,000 of structures. Through use as the Greyhound bus terminal, the key became known as Greyhound Key. The name once again changed in 1966 when the Kampgrounds of America (KOA) Corporation purchased Greyhound Key and changed its name to Fiesta Key. The large KOA campground opened in 1967.

Long Key will be in the next issue.

1840

A REQUEST FROM ANN PERRINE

By Dr. Joe Knetsch

(We thank Florida history scholars for contributing to our quest for documenting and publishing Florida Keys historical events. A special thanks to "Dr. Joe" of the Florida Division of State Lands for his continued efforts. Perhaps in some closet, museum, etc. one or more of the Perrine items may be found. J. W.)

Readers of the Indian Key special edition are well aware of the now famous "Perrine Massacre" of 1840. The family's harrowing escape from Indian Key and the sacrifice of Dr. Henry Perrine are now part of our history. These were exciting and perilous times and Perrine had been warned about the dangers of living on Indian Key by the Secretary of War, Joel Poinsett. In addition to the special edition, Michael Schene's fine article in Volume 34, 1976 edition of *Tequesta* gives some of the main details of the massacre and its aftermath. What has been missing, however, is an inventory, total or partial of some of the materials

the Indians took from the Key. In the document transcribed below, some of the mystery will be lifted.

There, of course, have been stories circulating for years as to the items taken from Perrine and the others. Rumors of Dr. Perrine's fancy guns, for example, have made their way into print as actual history, although no one has fully documented any part of this tale. The request of Ann Perrine, the Doctor's widow, printed below, will now substantiate the existence of some special weapons that were in the possession of Dr. Perrine at the time of his death. Also listed in the request are some very important and fancy items not normally found in such a remote, frontier location.

These possessions indicate the wealth of the Perrine family and that they were not the "typical" poor yeoman farmer or Keys wrecker.

The following document was found on pages 17 and 18 of Roll # 12, in the "Letters Sent by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series) January 2, 1841 - November 21, 1842," National Archives and Record Service Microcopy M565, Record Group 94. A copy of this microfilm can be found in the State Library of Florida, Florida Department of State, R. A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street, Tallahassee, Florida, 32399-0250. The transcriber would like to thank the efficient staff of this facility for their many efforts in aiding our research.

"No. 48 Adjutant General's Office
Washington, Jany 18th, 1841.

"Lieut. Col.
W. S. Harney
2 d. Dragoons Sir.
St. Augustine I am desired by the Secretary of War to send the following memorandum left by Mrs. Perrine with a request that should you be able to recover any of the articles named therein, the same be disposed of agreeably to her wishes, as expressed in the annexed memorandum.

"List of some of the articles taken by the Indians at Indian Key belonging to Dr. Henry Perrine August 7th, 1840:

2 six barrel rotary Pistols
2 small brass barrel do [do is old style ditto]

1 silver hunting watch, marked H.P.

[Perrine} and a heavy gold chain and seal.

2 fine gold chains alike with small snaps.

1 large gold chain, flat form.

4 gold belts, with clasps set with stones.

1 pair old fashion ear nubs.

2 rings with places to set hair, alike.

1 pair gold suspender buckles.

1 do silver do do.

1 large plain gold watch, with gold face.

1 do with china face, back some braised.

Tea table & desert spoons, some marked

J.A.T. [Townsend], some A.F.T., others

A.M. [May], others S.C.M.

"If any of the above articles are recovered from the Indians, they may be left for me with Charles Howe Esqr. at Indian Key.

"Ann F. Perrine

"Washington, Jany 15th, 1841.

"I am sir, &c. R. Jones, Adj. Genl"

1915

The Railroad Car Ferry

By Jerry Wilkinson

From the late 1800s Henry Flagler had expressed a desire to connect his rail system with Havana, Cuba. No doubt this interest was advanced with the Panama Canal project approval in 1903. In fact, he almost immediately sent William J. Krome across the Everglades seeking a rail route to Key West. It is conjecture to whether his real goal was Key West or Havana; however, he usually built a huge hotel at any new rail terminus, which he did not do at Key West.

The Key West terminal was constructed with capability for railroad car ferries, even though Mr. Flagler did not live to see them operate. It is a common misunderstanding to think that the passengers rode in these ferryboats. These were designed for freight car service; however, it was envisioned for ferries for Pullman cars in the future. At this time passengers rode aboard his passenger ships of the Peninsular and Occidental (P&O) Steamship Company.

The P&O began in 1893 under Henry Plant as the South-Eastern Steamship Company and in July 1900 combined with the Flagler System with

Henry Flagler as president. The ferryboats operated as Florida East Coast Ferry Company.

One source of information about the railroad ferries comes from the *Scientific American Supplement No. 2037 - To Cuba by Rail* - written by Harry Chapin Plummer and published January 16, 1915. This following quotation concerning the railroad car-ferry steamer called the *Henry M. Flagler* is from the Library of Congress.

"This powerful craft [the *Henry M. Flagler*], which bears Flagler's name, was designed specially for the 90 mile run between Key West and Havana by the Cramp Shipbuilding Yards of Philadelphia, whose naval architect was M. C. Furstenau of the Florida East Coast Railway System. The keel was laid April 20, 1914; it was launched on Sept. 22, 1914 and put into service in February 1915.

"The ferry was equipped with four sets of railroad tracks of standard gauge on the car deck, which is 360 feet long and provides accommodation for 30 of the largest size refrigerator cars. In addition she is fitted with 3 cargo holds that can be loaded directly from the cars on three cargo ports along the side of the vessel. The dry cargo capacity of the steamer is approximately 3000 tons with an additional provision in one of the forward ballast tanks for the shipment of bulk molasses. Each cargo hold is served by an independent double-drum electric cargo hoist of two tons capacity. The necessary filling and discharging machinery was fitted to the intended molasses tank. The vessel was subdivided into ten water-tight compartments for ballast purposes. These deep tanks with a capacity of 3000 tons were interconnected by a system of pipes with two 12" centrifugal pumps capable of clearing all the tanks in 75 minutes.

"The voyage from dock to dock of 90 miles was made in 8 hours at an average speed of 12 miles per hour.

"Two triple expansion engines having cylinder diameters of 20 - 32-1/2 - 34 inches with a 36-inch stroke were used. The engines each produce 1500 indicated horse-power at 100 RPM's when operating under 170 pounds of steam pressure.

"The boiler plant was made up of a battery of

four Scotch type boilers each 13' 2" in diameter and 12 feet long. A notable feature of the ship during that era was the four individual baths provided for the officers while the crew's quarters were equipped with four shower baths. Running hot and cold water was furnished for each room and cold salt water for showers and bath.

"At the time the railroad reached Key West it had built a substantial dry-dock with ample wharf so that all was ready when the time came to inaugurate the ferry system."

The ferry was 350 feet in length, 57 feet wide, drew 22 feet of water and had a cruising speed of 12 knots with 2,300 tons of freight. The freight car capacity was 30 cars. Bulk molasses was also transported in storage tanks designed to act as ballast.

The *Key West Citizen* dated December 11, 1913 provides a glimpse of the progress, "Work on constructing the new wharf in Key West to accommodate the new large ferryboats is well underway. The water has been deepened to 27 feet in a number of places and where ever vessels of deep draught are to be berthed, there will be a water depth of 24 feet. . . ."

Ferry service actually began on January 8, 1915 using three ferryboats. The FEC Car Ferry Company was taken over by the government during WW-II and never re-activated.

1906

The Wreck of the *St. Lucie*

By Jerry Wilkinson

To construct the Key West Extension Henry Flagler purchased a fleet of boats, ships and barges of practically all types. Many were converted into special uses with some of the conversions major and others minor. The coal fired steamer *St. Lucie* was one of these and carried crew workers as well as towed barges.

Until she sank the *St. Lucie* was considered the workhorse of the fleet; however, she was not the only one. Some of the other better known steamers were the *Wanderer*, *Peerless*, *Phil Sheckel*, *Columbia*, *Virginia*, *George Stout*, *Defiance*, *City of Key West*, *Biscayne* and *Kennedy*. Then there were a host of launches, tug

boats, quarterboats, pile drivers, dredges, concrete plants and barges of all sizes.

The principal loss of Flagler's first experience with a hurricane was the wreck of *Houseboat Number 4* on the reef. It had been moored at Long Key, broke loose with 150 men aboard, torn apart on the reef, survivors picked up by passing ships and taken to all parts of the globe - 83 perished. However, another significant loss was the *St. Lucie*.

The *St. Lucie's* home port was Tampa. She was built in Wilmington, Delaware in 1888. She was 105 tons net, 122 feet long, 24 feet wide, manned by a crew of 13 and was formerly in service at New Haven, Connecticut. The crew of the *St. Lucie* were: Captain Steve Bravo, Mate Robert Blair, Second Mate, Grant, Chief Engineer Kehoe, Quartermasters Alfred Bolt and Tom Sweeting, Purser C. B. Pennock, Jr., Stewards Lovell and Elijah Meridith.

The *Jacksonville Times-Union* of Jacksonville, Florida, October 19, 1906, related the fate of the *St. Lucie* very well and as follows: "A large number of boat owners, as soon as the signals were hoisted on the government weather bureau tower in Miami, arranged to take their boats up the Miami River. This was hastened by the unusual low barometer readings. A few did not heed the warning and the result is that there are numerous boats piled upon the shore and some are sunk. The steamer *St. Lucie* of the extension fleet, in spite of the warning, left dock at 6 P.M. for Key Largo."

"When it was evident that the *St. Lucie* was doomed, Capt. Bravo ordered everyone to put on a life preserver and be ready for the worst. There were sufficient life preservers for all. When the boat finally turned on its side, boats were lowered and sent toward Elliotts Key which they found to be under water to a depth of 6 or 8 feet. They finally succeeded in gaining admission to a building that had been partially washed away remaining there until rescued. Those remaining onboard went into the water where 26 were drowned.

"The following is the story of the loss of the *St. Lucie* as told by Capt. Stephen Bravo: We left the terminal dock in Miami on Wednesday evening about one hour late, and that delay, was caused by waiting for a piece of machinery,

caused me to lose my boat, for if we had left on time, I could have made Steamboat Creek after the storm struck us. After we got through the channel I turned the boat over to the mate and directed him to call me if anything occurred during the night. The barometer had been showing low, but not more so that it had for the last two weeks and was steady when we left. 'When at Featherbed Banks [just to the east of the Intracoastal waterway approaching Elliott Key from the north], the mate called me at 3 o'clock Thursday morning. I immediately went on deck and found the wind blowing a gale from the east. I immediately put the boat's head for Elliotts' Key and anchored off that Key in seven feet of water [depending on the exact location it would be about 900 yards to shore]. I had two anchors thrown out, and shortly after ordered another lowered. The wind was rising all the time and I could see that Elliott's Key was being washed with the waves and that everything on the Key in the shape of a house or other improvements had been washed away. At 6 o'clock the seas were coming aboard the boat and I ordered the engineer to get up steam so that we could make a run for it if necessary. Just at 7 o'clock the shutters of the gangways blew out and the upper decks were started. When 8:30 arrived we were fighting for our lives. I ordered every person on the boat off making out into deeper water and perhaps finding shelter to the lee of the mainland. We got two of the cables loose but could not cast loose the third, and it was just then that the early blow did us the most damage. I ordered every person on the boat to put on life preservers and my officers and others assisted those who did not know how to adjust them, to put them on. There was no nervousness and everyone took things as they came without the least signs of fear. Then came the lull. The barometer stood at 28.80 the lowest I ever saw. I knew that the lull was but the prelude to something worse, and knew, too, that when the wind came again it would come from the west and that we had no place to which to flee, even if we could have done so. During the time those on board who did not know what to expect livened up and even took to swimming in their life preserver around and through the partly submerged boat. And then it came. Down from the west the gale

came blowing at times at least 120 mph. When it struck the boat began to vibrate and quiver, and I saw she could not long hold together. I ordered out the lifeboats and sent Mrs. Pierce and her little son and six of the passengers to try to make a landing on Elliotts Key. Then I manned the other and sent it loaded with 6 colored women and 2 men to the same place. Both landed. Then the *St. Lucie* began to go to pieces and the water was filled with dangerous pieces of wreckage. All hands took to the water, clinging to timbers and trying to get to the shore each for himself. I want to say just here that out of a hundred persons I never saw so many brave people. Quartermaster Bolt and I were the last to leave, I believe, and we both found ourselves on the same piece of wreckage. How we or any one reached shore alive is a mystery to me. The waves beat as I never saw them before, and every once in a while a piece of wreckage would be lifted entirely out of the water by the wind and hurled among the people floating in the water. This is what, in my opinion, caused most of the deaths. Only a few were actually drowned. Most of us finally made our way to the Key, bleeding and bruised. Here we clung to the tree tops being thrashed by the winds, rain and pelting hail for hours. When it finally subsided we made at our way to the houses, the frames of which were still clinging together. I found that about 26 persons were killed or drowned, mostly laborers and one colored woman. There is one thing that I want to place on record and that is, that no captain ever had a braver set of officers than I had on the *St. Lucie*. Capt. W. B. Munson of the *McAdoo* was on board the *St. Lucie* as a passenger, and added upon being questioned that not enough could be said for the bravery of Capt. Bravo."

A later article, and there were hundreds, also from the *Jacksonville Times-Union* was on October 20, 1906: "C. B. Pennock, purser on the *St. Lucie* arrived safe with only a few bruises. He came up from Planter on the mail boat.

"The report from Soldier Key is to the effect that everything on the small island, including the clubhouse and keeper's house, was washed away by the waves during the storm. The schooner *Olivette*, 30 Tons, is high and dry on Long Key."

From an unidentified clipping from the Krome collection, but dated December 8, 1907, we read:

"THE ST. LUCIE AT THE WAYS

- Vessel From Which Thirty Lives Were Lost is at the Ways and Will be Rebuilt. -

"Looking very different from the trim craft that sailed out of this port on the 17th of last October. The day before the big storm, the *St. Lucie*, or what is left of her, was towed to the terminal ways last night by the steamer *Wanderer*.

"This, it will be remembered, was the ill fated boat that was caught in the storm off Elliott's Key and from which nearly thirty persons were drowned.

"The boat was under the charge of, Capt. Bravo, who was among the survivors and who was deputed by the company to raise the hull of the lost vessel.

"Work of raising the vessel has been going on for several weeks, and was finally successful, although attended with considerable danger and trouble.

"All that now remains of the vessel are her iron hull and parts of her engine, the boiler and the stern wheel. All the rest was torn away during the storm or was cut away in order to facilitate her raising.

"The *St. Lucie* will be rebuilt as soon as possible and will again be placed in commission on the extension work."

The *St. Lucie* was raised and restored to operation primarily under the direction of her captain, Steve Bravo.

1893

More on Henry Flagler

By Jerry Wilkinson

An interested piece about Henry Flagler and the concept of the building the Key West Extension trivia was recently passed on.

From Flagler's first visit to Florida in 1878 he was displeased with Florida's backward transportation system. He must have known this when he started planning for three plush hotels at St. Augustine in 1886. It resulted in not one hotel but three, the huge Ponce de Leon, the Cordova and the Alcazar. An equally plush transportation

link with the northern states was a must and Flagler took the initiative almost immediately. The business finagling of acquiring, combining and improving a handful of smaller short-line railways is a story in itself.

In 1893, the Florida legislature desiring to open up development south of Daytona Beach, increased the land grants to its south for new railroad creation from 3,840 acres per mile to 8,000. Flagler immediately created his first own railway company, the Jacksonville, St. Augustine and Indian River Railway and headed south to New Smyrna Beach. He was on his way south to Palm Beach and Miami, possibly even farther.

From the Board of Directors meeting in St. Augustine, Florida, I transcribed the following:

Meeting of the Board of Directors
of the Jacksonville, St. Augustine and
Indian River Railway Company, duly
called, was held at the office of the
President, the nineteenth day of April,
A.D. 1893, at St. Augustine, Florida.

"Present: Messrs. H.M. Flagler

J.R. Parrott

J.E. Ingraham

"The minutes of the last were read and approved.

"The following resolution was offered and passed being voted for by Messrs. H.M. Flagler, J.R. Parrott and J.E. Ingraham: 'Be it Resolved that the line of the Company be changed so as to run and extend from some point on Biscayne Bay, in Dade County, on and across the Florida Keys to the Island of Key West, in Monroe County, and that the line from said point aforesaid on Biscayne Bay, westwardly at, or to a point near the City of Tampa, in Hillsborough County, Florida, as provided in said company charter, shall be considered as a branch to the main line.'

"The Secretary was instructed to send a certified copy of the foregoing resolution to the Secretary of the State of Florida.

"On motion, the meeting adjourned.

J. C. Salter

Secretary"

From the above is depicted his resolve to proceed to Key West in 1893. Also shown is his staff of James Parrott and James Ingraham whom

Flagler had acquired in previous short-line railway acquisitions and who would serve him throughout his life. A director not shown present was his son, Harry Harkness Flagler.

THE GULF STREAM

By Jerry Wilkinson

Historians can be called "the scientists of hindsight." Hindsight can be focused on a single event or a chain of events. Much of Keys history is chained to the great quantity of ships passing, or trying to pass, their shores since they were discovered. Why are thousands of ships lying sunken on and off our reefs? Some answers are the flow of the Gulf Stream, bad weather and poor judgment.

The Gulf Stream exerted a tremendous influence on the colonization of North America. Most all colonization from Virginia to the south chose the southern route across the Atlantic even though it was 2,000 to 3,000 miles farther. Few return voyages to Europe failed to utilize at least part of the Gulf Stream.

Hernando Cortez was perhaps the first to send large numbers of ships from Mexico northward through the Florida Straits, then eastward following the clockwise motion of the Gulf Stream to return to Spain. A visit with any of the shipwreck museums will reveal the results of the unsuccessful voyages.

A notation in the Antonio Herrera's summary of Ponce de Leon ship's log, on April 22, 1513, noted, "A current such that, although they had great wind, they could not proceed forward, but backward and it seems that they were proceeding well; at the end it was known that the current was more powerful than the wind." This is probably the first written evidence of the Gulf Stream and Ponce de Leon is considered its discoverer.

It was not until six years later that Anton de Alaminos set sail for Spain from Vera Cruz, Mexico following the Florida coastline northward before turning eastward to Europe. This same Anton de Alaminos was the chief pilot aboard Ponce de Leon's ship on his earlier trip and had also sailed with Columbus on his last voyage. Some historians credit Alaminos with the discovery of the Gulf Stream, since he was the

first to take advantage of it.

The use of the Gulf Stream resulted in many treasure-laden ships traveling northward along the Keys, some of which wrecked upon its reefs. The indigenous Indians were the first to take advantage of these unfortunate shipwrecks. Soon an industry followed known as "wrecking," or salvaging goods from wrecked ships. The Bahamians perfected the wrecking industry. When Florida became a U.S. territory, Key West and Indian Key became the Keys' primary headquarters for this industry. A captain Ben Baker, known as "King of the Wreckers," settled on Key Largo in 1866 and grew pineapples between shipwrecks.

Not much was written about this ocean river in the years that followed Ponce de Leon's discovery. Perhaps they were keeping it as secret as possible. Alexander Dallas Bache of the U.S. Coastal Survey began observations of the phenomenon in 1845. Matthew Maury in 1855 wrote, "There is a river in the ocean. In the severest droughts it never fails, and in the mightiest floods it never overflows. Its banks and its bottoms are of cold water, while its currents are warm. The Gulf of Mexico is its fountain and its mouth is in the Arctic Seas. It is the Gulf Stream. There is in the world no other such majestic flow of waters. Its current is more rapid than the Mississippi or the Amazon."

The Gulf Stream generally flows northward between the Keys and Cuba up the northeast coast toward Cape Hatteras and then turns eastward across the north Atlantic. The temperature of the stream differs from its surrounding water. In fact, the temperature at the surface may be around 80 degrees while 400 fathoms down it may be 45 degrees.

Years before the above observations, Benjamin Franklin while in England in 1769 was told of complaints that westward mail from Europe to America took weeks longer than the east-bound ships from America. Franklin was the U.S. Deputy Postmaster General, so he was interested in the alleged complaint. A Nantucket whaler by the name of Timothy Folger said that the English ships had to buck the Gulf Stream.

Franklin, being the scientist that he was, took water temperature measurements on three more

North Atlantic crossings, and scientifically recorded the readings. From his readings, he could determine whether a vessel was in or out of the stream, and even approximately how close or distant a ship was from America. Franklin postulated that, "This Stream is probably generated by the accumulation of water on the eastern coast of America between the tropics, by the trade winds that constantly blow there . . ." He also recorded that the western bank of the stream is significantly cooler (shallower water) than the eastern bank. He reasoned that the velocity of the stream gradually slowed as it flowed north, but could maintain its relative warmth to the colder North Atlantic.

In typical Franklin style, his observations were quite extensive and resulted in a relatively accurate engraved chart accompanied with scientific observations of the stream. He published a chart in 1770 to assist the mail ships in avoiding it on their westward journeys. Franklin is generally given credit for correctly explaining the stream's cause.

Franklin even suggested the name "Gulf Stream," even though it is a huge, circular motion in the Atlantic Ocean and has little to do with the Gulf of Mexico.

Later, corrections to Franklin's postulates were made for ocean-bottom changes, declinations of the moon and surface wind effects. Most agree, though, when all the temporary changes are accounted for, the Gulf Stream is accurately predictable and over a great period of time is immutable.

Today, northbound ships choose the maximum velocity stream current while southbound ships hug the outer edges to conserve fuel. One problem is that the stream does not have definitive banks as a terrestrial stream does, but it meanders back and forth as it proceeds north. The maximum current off the coast of Florida ranges from two to four knots, although speeds of eight knots have been reported. Its width varies, but generally is 40 to 50 miles in width.

The Gulf Stream was probably the vehicle that carried the strange woods and fruits found on the shores of Europe long before Columbus sailed.

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More Upper Keys Genealogy

One of the more difficult tasks the new researcher confronts in Upper Keys history is the genealogy of the pioneers. The commonality of Bahamian surnames, and the lack of church and baptismal records hinders research, so I use primarily census data. Assuredly, there are some errors and omissions. The elder member is to the left and each younger generation is indented to the right. Brothers and sisters are normally aligned on the same vertical line beneath their parents, but due to space considerations some are separated by commas. Children are not necessarily shown in order of birth. Multiple spouses are in (). Underlined names indicate the change of surname of children due to marriage - Jerry Wilkinson

Genealogy of Charles Butters

Charles and Lulu Butters, together with their son, Charles Edward (Capt. Ed) and his second wife, Fern, moved to south Florida in 1926 and purchased property on Card Sound Road where they built their first restaurant, The Key Inn. Capt. [Charles] Ed and Fern later purchased the Matecumbe Hotel in Islamorada that housed a number of the F.E.R.A. workers when the 1935 hurricane crossed the Florida Keys. The hotel did not survive the vicious storm and they moved to California to be with Fern's family, but could not resist the magnetism of the Keys and returned in the 1940s. They purchased and ran the Fern Inn in Islamorada from 1950-1967.

1. Charles Edgar Butters (1869-1948) m. Lulu Maud Slusser (1871-1934)

1. Charles Edward (Capt. Ed) Butters (1893-1964) m. (1) Alice ?

(2) Fern Telva Drey (1892-1975)

1. Loretta Ilene Butters (1913-1987) m. Olin Etherage Perdue (Mr. Pete) (1908-1967)

1. Olin Edward (Pete) Perdue m.(1) Freddie Shaw

1. Barbara Michelle Perdue

2. Sandra Lee Perdue m. Jeff Harding

Shauna

Dawn

Jonathon

m. (2) Joey Woods

2. Jack Edward Butters (1922-1985) m. Alberta (Bertie) Blanche Whitman (1926-1990)

1. Jack Chester Butters m. Gayle Ann McCrindle

1. Jack Travis Butters m. Suzanne Crawford

1. Jack Brandon Butters

2. Roman Edward Butters

2. Cynthia Ilene Butters m. Raymond E. Jensen

1. David Edward Jensen m. Brandi Paige Gardner

1. Casey Jensen

2. Alicia Jensen

2. Raycine Lynn Jensen m. Jason Wayne Wagner

1. Tiffany Rae Wagner

2. Gregory Andrew Wagner

3. Danell Anne Jensen m. Michael Zelnar

1. David Zelnar

2. Zachery Zelnar

3. Levi Zelnar

3. Chester Daniel Butters (1923-1945 World War II)

2. James R. Butters (1904-1981) m. Genevieve (resided his whole life in Indianapolis, Indiana)