

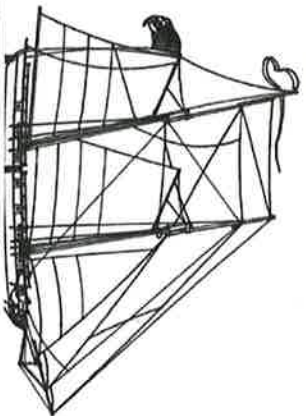
# Florida Keys

## Sea Heritage Journal

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USS SHARK



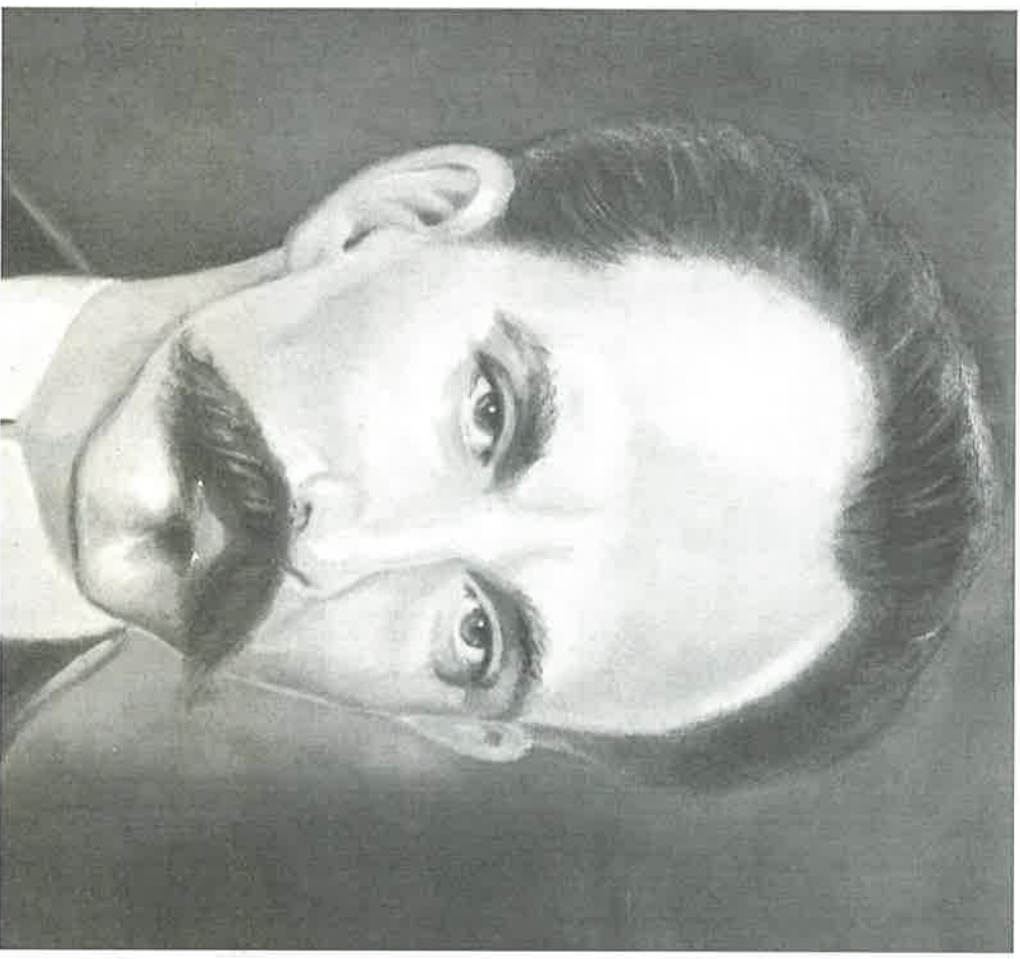
OFFICIAL QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE KEY WEST MARITIME HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## The Insurgents of Key West and the Expedition of 1895

By Dr. Consuelo E. Stebbins

When Jefferson Browne published his history on Key West in 1912, he acknowledged the important role that the Cuban emigre colony had played in the revolutions in Cuba. Browne (115) wrote, A history of Key West which does not treat of the several revolutionary movements in Cuba, with which Key West was

closely connected, would fail in its purpose of faithfully portraying the events which have shaped or affected its destiny. The flood of Cuban emigres to Key West began during the Ten Years War (1868-78) when Cuban exiles fled Spanish persecution in Cuba and found work in the cigar factories in Key West. Even after the Ten Years War ended in 1878, the majority of these exiled Cubans remained in Key West where they plotted and sacrificed their earnings to support an insurrection in Cuba. Here, only 90 miles from their native island, the emigre colony dedicated themselves to liberating Cuba from Spain. The 1885 census of Key West demonstrates the extent of the Cuban emigre population in Key West. The census shows Key West with a total population of 13,945. The population can be divided into three sections based on birthplaces: the largest group, 4,741



*Jose Marti the leader of the Cuban Revolutionary Party. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.*

(34%), cited their birthplace as Key West. The second largest group was Cubans, 4,517 (32%), followed by Bahamians, 3,458 (25%). The 1885 census reported a work force of 5,100. Approximately 2,111 (41%) worked in the cigar industry followed by maritime with a much smaller workforce at 785 (15%). Key West's reputation as one of the major centers for providing the rebels in Cuba with guns and munitions is well documented in

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