

USS SHARK

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From Slavery To Freedom And Success Sandy Cornish and Lillah Cornish (circa 1793-1869) - (circa 1813-1870's)

By Lewis G. Schmidt
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Trapped in the institution of slavery in the first half of the 19th Century, Sandy and Lillah Cornish migrated from the area of Cambridge, Maryland to Florida, through their labor freeing themselves from the bonds of slavery, and eventually locating in Key West where they achieved success and respect and lived out the remainder of their lives.

The Cornish¹⁷ name is well known to Black history and relatively common in the area of eastern Maryland and Delaware. Samuel Cornish, who was born free in Delaware in 1795, "was the first black man to undergo the normal exacting training and testing procedures required of Presbyterian ordination... After being licensed to preach, Cornish spent six months as a missionary to slaves on the eastern shore of Maryland". He later founded the first Black Presbyterian Church in New York City, and was the first African-American journalist.¹⁸

Joshua Cornish, born about 1790, immigrated to Liberia with his family in June 1835, and won awards for best farming. In 1842, he returned and recruited other members of his race for an immigration to Liberia.²⁰

Other than general areas of birth, ethnic origin, and the fact that in time they were contemporaries, there is no known connection between Samuel, Joshua and Sandy Cornish. All were born in the last



Uncle Sandie from "After The War", Whitelaw Reid; Moore, Wilsbach & Baldwin, 1866. Engraved for the book by W.G. Jackman.

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Society News



KWMHS President Ed Little and Park Ranger Carolyn Wiley at Fort Jefferson during the Society's trip in November 1995

Lectures and Fields Trips by John Viele

No Name Key Walking Tour

Led by environmental educator and No Name Key resident, Jeannette Gato, a group of intrepid Society members hiked the wilds of No Name Key in early April 1994. Braving a burning sun and voracious mosquitoes, they heard descriptions of the Key's early history, visited the site of the first highway ferry landing, and examined several old homestead sites deep in the woods.

Dr. Tindall on Early Key West Physicians

At the Society's annual meeting on April 25, 1994, Dr. Herbert Tindall related fascinating tales of medical care in Key West's early days (1822-1845).

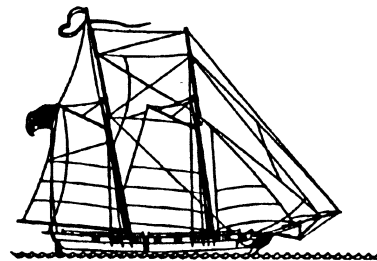
Among the colorful pioneer physicians he told about was the multi-talented Dr. Lacey who had also served as county auctioneer, notary public. At one time he ran for the state legislature and at another acted as second to William McRea in the famous Hawkins-McRea duel.

Richard Drew on Keys Hurricanes
Hurricane researcher Richard Drew was guest speaker at the May 1994 meeting. He provided interesting historical data on hurricanes that have visited the Keys since the days of Columbus. He also presented a scenario of events that could be expected for a hurricane striking the lower Keys today and discussed Monroe County evacuation plans and procedures.

NEW MEMBERS

Wilbert Baumler, Summerland Key; Arthur & Janice Drinkwater, Key West; Kitty & Jack Hake, Big Coppitt Key; Roger & Winnie Hofstra, Bay Point; Robert

Morin, Key West; Pierre Moulton, Key West; Edsel K. Rintala, Key West; Bob Watson, Key West; Ray Woods, Clearwater, FL;



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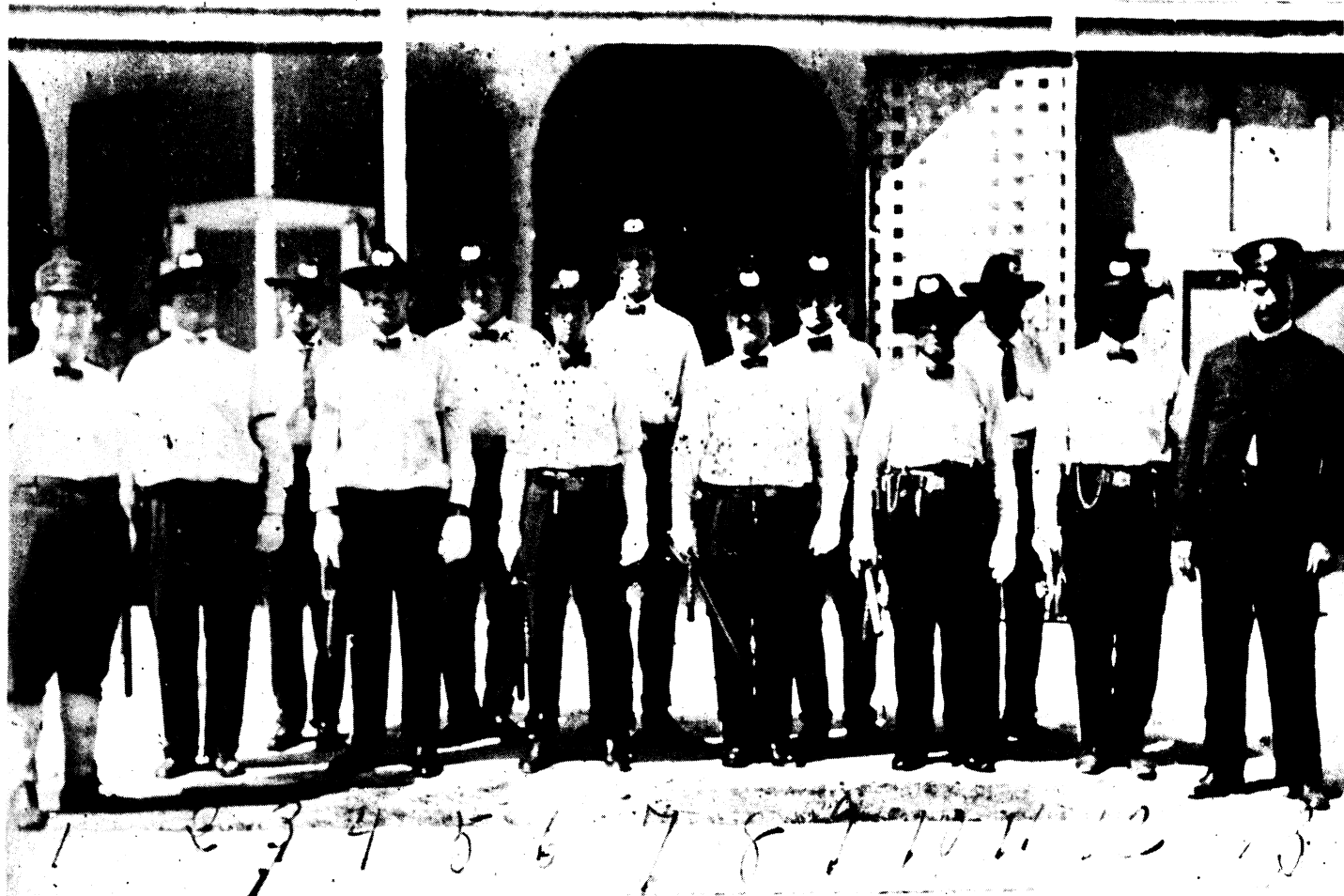
Letters and articles are welcome. Please write to: Editor, Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal, KWMHS, P.O. Box 695, Key West, FL 33041 The KWMHS headquarters are located at 631 Greene St, in space donated by Key West Seaport, Inc. Appointments recommended. (305) 292-7903.

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Crime And Punishment In Old Key West



Key West Police force about 1900. Identified in the photograph are 1. Whitmore Gardner, 2. Eddie Albury, 3. Richard Hicks (future sheriff), 4. John Kirschenbaum, 5. Jim Bissell, 6. Ray Shehee, 8. Bill Fagan, 10. Tom Pent, 12. Jim Hopkins and 13. Frank Albury. Photo credit Monroe County Library.

By Tom & Lynda Hambright
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During most recent elections many campaign promises have been made about reforming the criminal justice system to put criminals in jail and having them serve their full sentence. Has society deteriorated or is today a repeat of history with more people and a more permissive society? A murder case in Key West, early in this century, has all the elements of the failure of the justice system much as today except it ends in a violent display of frontier justice.

The story begins, in March, 1904, when Key West Police Officer Clarence K. Till is killed in the line-of-duty while answering a disturbance call at a coffee shop. The following article describes the crime as was reported in the Jacksonville newspaper The Florida Times-Union of March

15, 1904. "Key West, March 10.—Police-man C.T. Till was shot down in cold blood by "Dutchy" Melbourne Monday night, backed by a crowd of drunken chums. The entire town was indignant when the news of the murder was spread.

"The affair began in a coffee shop where Melbourne, Will Cash, Arthur Sheppard, George Roberts, Harry Wellcott and others were raising a disturbance. One of the members smashed a show window, and the proprietor summoned a policeman. Officer Till responded and Melbourne, having admitted that he had broken the glass, Till attempted to arrest him, when Melbourne grabbed him, the others joined in and severely beat him and took his pistol from him.

"During the fracas Harry Wellcott received a blow on the head intended for

Arthur Sheppard, who dodged it. Finally the officer was thrown to the floor and Arthur Sheppard took his pistol and gave it to Melbourne. Officer Till received a cut across his forehead from ear to ear, it being the intention to scalp him. This is said to have been done by Will Cash. The officer being disarmed, extricated himself from the crowd and went to Mayor Trevor's house, a short distance away, and ask for a pistol, giving the Mayor an account of the affair. The Mayor gave him the pistol and he borrowed another from a neighbor, and went toward the corner of Division [Truman Avenue] and White Streets. By this time the gang had made their plans, and as soon as the officer came up, Melbourne opened fire on him. The first shot took
(Continued on page 4)

effect and Till fell, when Melbourne put several shoots into the body, any one of which would have caused death, Melbourne then remarked: 'This is an old Grudge'

"While Melbourne was shooting, Mayor Trevor opened fire and wounded him in the arm, but his gun hung fire.

"Till never spoke after being shot, and died without regaining consciousness, in about ten minutes, in Fogarty's drug store.

"After the shooting the crowd dispersed, Melbourne disappearing, and was not found until nearly 3 o'clock in the morning, when he was arrested by Sheriff Hicks and Police Captain Albury at his mother's house. Will Cash was placed under arrest at Fogarty's drug store shortly after the shooting. Arthur Sheppard and George Roberts were arrested by officers Collins and Baker. The former attempted to escape, but met a gun in his face and surrendered.

"The Mayor first, and later the coroner's jury instructed Sheriff Hicks to hold Melbourne as the principal, and Cash and Sheppard as accessories. The others are held as witnesses.

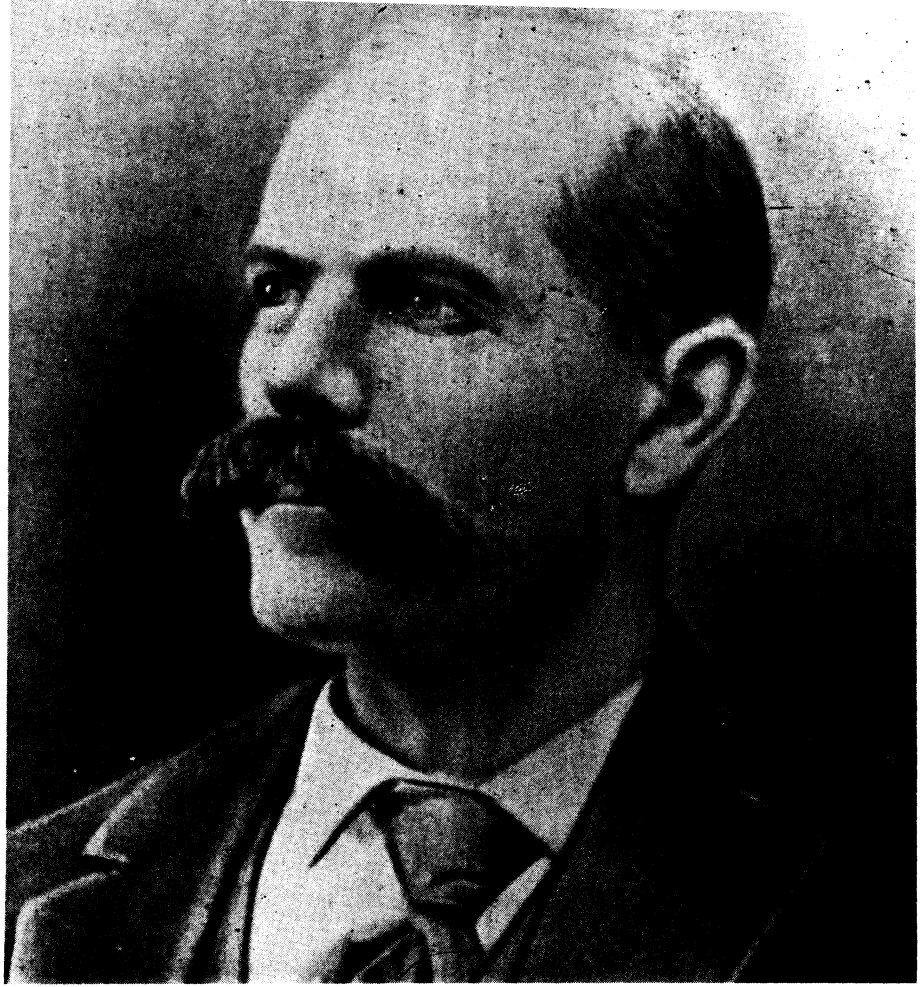
"The Sheriff took Will Cash in charge, but later released him on \$1,000 bond. This raised such a howl of indignation that Cash was rearrested, and is now in jail.

"As soon as the coroner was notified of the shooting, he came down to the drug store and impaneled the following jury: Joshua Curry, foreman; T.O. Otto, William McKittip, Fablo Olivieri, Percy Albury and Charles Wallace.

"The jury examined the witness and ordered the arrest of Herbie Melbourne as principal, and Arthur Sheppard and Will Cash as accessories, and that George Cash be detained as an important witness, who was probably implicated.

"Since his arrest Melbourne has made no statement, except the remarks made to Police Captain Albury, while en route to jail, saying the only thing they could do would be to kill him, and he expressed regrets that he did not have another shot and finish somebody. The person referred to is supposed to be Mayor Trevor, as Melbourne also shot at him during the fracas, but missed. The Mayor fired back, wounding him in the arm.

"Nothing ever happened in Key West



Sheriff Frank Knight. Photo credit Monroe County Library.

that caused so much comment as this. Officer Till was universally respected. He was a conscientious, fearless officer, and as far as can be learned, had not an enemy in town. He knew his duty and did it without fear or favor. He was a man of no bad habits and as a devoted husband and father. His funeral was held Tuesday afternoon, from the Congregational Church and as largely attended, the city officials, the Masons and Odd Fellows, being in attendance."

Officer Clarence K. Till was born in Ellow, South Carolina and came to Key West with the U.S. Army. During his tour of duty in Key West he married Julia Demeritt on June 23, 1896. He left the Army and joined the Key West Police force. Clarence and Julia had two children. He was 37 years old when he was killed.

Herbert or Urbie "Dutchy" Melbourne was from a prominent Key West family. His mother, Julia Ann Beiglett Melbourne, was a half sister to Frank W. Knight who was Sheriff of Monroe County 1893 to 1901 and 1905 to 1909.

Herbert "Dutchy" Melbourne was 24 years old when he killed Officer Till.

The Coroner's Jury results was reported in the Florida Times-Union of March 15, 1905. "Key West, March 14—Coroner W.A. Gwynn and the jury who was selected to investigate the murder of Policeman C.E. Till, have been in secession since Monday night, and have examined a great many witnesses. They have had a great difficulty in drawing out the evidence, as many persons who had seen or heard of the trouble did not seem to be willing to testify. After a thorough search, which took up five days the jury finally brought in a verdict." Herbie Melbourne was declared the principal, with William Cash, Arthur Sheppard and George Roberts, as accomplices. The jury also ordered the arrest of Harry Walincott. Every vestige of the testimony has been sifted out by the jury, and investigation was a thorough one.

"A preliminary hearing of the case will probably be held early next week. No bonds will be given the young men, and they will have to be confined in the county

jail until trial.

"Joseph Smith, a relative of Melbourne, was arrested Thursday, charged with carrying concealed weapons and making certain remarks. He was fined \$100 and cost, in the Police Court, and appealed."

The grand jury results were reported in the Florida Time-Union of May 3, 1904. "The grand jury found a true bill against Herbie Melbourne for the murder of Officer Till. His attorney, L.A. Harris, ask for a change of venue, which was denied, after which a continuance was granted until the November term."

The Key West newspaper the Inter-Ocean started a subscription "for the widow and two orphans of Policeman Till." By March 14, 1904, over \$270.00 had been collected and the paper hoped to purchase a home for the family. The effort was successful as the Monroe County Land Records show Mrs. Julia A. Till purchased the house at 1215 Newton on May 24, 1904, for \$650.00. The Florida Times-Union reported the event in the paper of July 4, 1904. "Key West, July 3—Mrs. C.K. Till, widow of Officer Till, was presented with the deeds of a house and lot, bought by subscription by citizens, as a token of the esteem in which her husband was held by the people of the community. The list is a long one, as everyone, rich and poor, contributed. The amount in cash was \$650, which was \$30 short of the desired sum, the deficiency being made up by the First National Bank."

Dutchy received his day in court during the November term of the Circuit Court. The results were reported in the Florida Times-Union of November 30. "Key West, Nov. 29—The November term of the Circuit Court opened Wednesday morning with Judge Wall on the bench and Prosecuting Attorney Phillips, assisted by Messrs. Phipps and Brooks, for the State, and L.A. Harris, attorney for the defendant, in the case of the State against Herbie Melbourne, charged with the murder of Officer Till. Mr. Harris made a motion for a continuance of the trial until the next term of the Circuit Court. He then read an affidavit by the defendant, to the effect that his only and material witness in the case, Shelton Atwell, is absent from the city and cannot be had. The affidavit was followed by one from the attorney himself, which was substantially the same. The question then

arose whether Mr. Atwell was a material witness or not. Mrs. Atwell was sent for, and made an affidavit to the effect that Shelton Atwell was in bed during the entire evening until he (Atwell) was awakened by Herbie Melbourne some time during the night. Mr. Harris then set up a counter plea for his client, producing evidence, given before the coroner's jury, but Judge Wall refused the continuance on the grounds that the wife of the absent witness had positively sworn that he was in bed, and therefore his evidence was not material.

"The Jury.

"The jury had been selected by Thursday noon, and after dinner the first witness was out on the stand.

"The following are the jury: Conard Kemp, B.A. Roberts, W.L. Bates, Henry Albury, Chas. L. Albury, W.H. Lloyd, Jeff Sawyer, Benj. J. Carey, Wm. M. Carey, Richard Roberts, Robert J. Roberts, Geo. F. Gwynn, with Mr. C.W. Richards as bailiff.

"Dr. J.N. Fogarty was the first witness, and he and others told the same story as before the coroner. The Judge announced that there would be a night session Thursday, but the fuses of the electric light burned out, and court had to be adjourned until Friday morning.

"Damaging Evidence.

"The most damaging evidence against the defense Friday was that of Mayor Trevor, who stated positively that he saw Melbourne shoot Till, and then walk over to the body and fire at the prostate form.

"The examination continued, and a number of witnesses were examined. Very damaging evidence was that given by Vernon Hicks. The State closed with the testimony of ex-Policeman Fleming. The defendant was then placed on the stand and told a straightforward and very different story from that produced by the evidence. After this the Judge ordered that the court take a recess until 2 p.m.

"The arguments, both for and against the prisoner, occupied but a short time. Messrs. Brooks and Phipps for the State spent but little time. Judge Phipps built up a story that was convincing in the extreme. From the beginning to the end of the argument he wound the skein of guilt about the defendant, taking each incident in the chronological order and connecting them together in a word picture startling and vivid. Judge Phipps

was followed by Mr. L.A. Harris for the defense.

"The Defense.

"Mr. Harris made an able and eloquent plea for his client, building up a structure of innocence that seemed strong and indestructible. The case, however, was weak, and Mr. Harris waged an uphill fight, during the whole trial. He worked hard, and no point that could be shown in favor of the defense was overlooked. In winding up the case for the State, District Attorney Phipps made one of the most sweeping arguments ever heard in the county. The argument for the defense was systematically picked to pieces. Nearly every point was taken up and shown to be merely a flimsy thread that would not hold when the light of the true facts of the case was turned on. When the prosecution had finished and the case rested with the jury, His Honor Judge Wall charged them and they retired.

"The jury was out for a walk Saturday morning, and it was then known that a verdict had been agreed upon, and a big crowd assembled at the courthouse.

"The Verdict Rendered.

"When the jury filed into the courtroom and took their seats, every breath was held, and every person in the courtroom strained forward in intense anxiety to catch every word that was uttered. The twelve men who held the fate of the accused in their hands, showed by the solemn expression on their faces that they realized the sternness of the duty before them. When the verdict of murder in the first degree was read, a faint murmur was heard all over the courtroom, which soon subsided. As the lawyer for the defense arose to give notice of an appeal, Judge Wall granted the attorney until 3 o'clock Saturday afternoon to file his motion. This case has attracted considerable attention, and every effort was made to get the facts of the case.

"Attorney Harris at 3 o'clock filed a motion for a new trial, which was refused, but the Judge allowed four months in which to make his appeal to the Supreme Court.

"The Death Sentence.

"The Judge then sentenced the prisoner to be hanged.

"There are three murderers now in jail

(Continued on page 6)

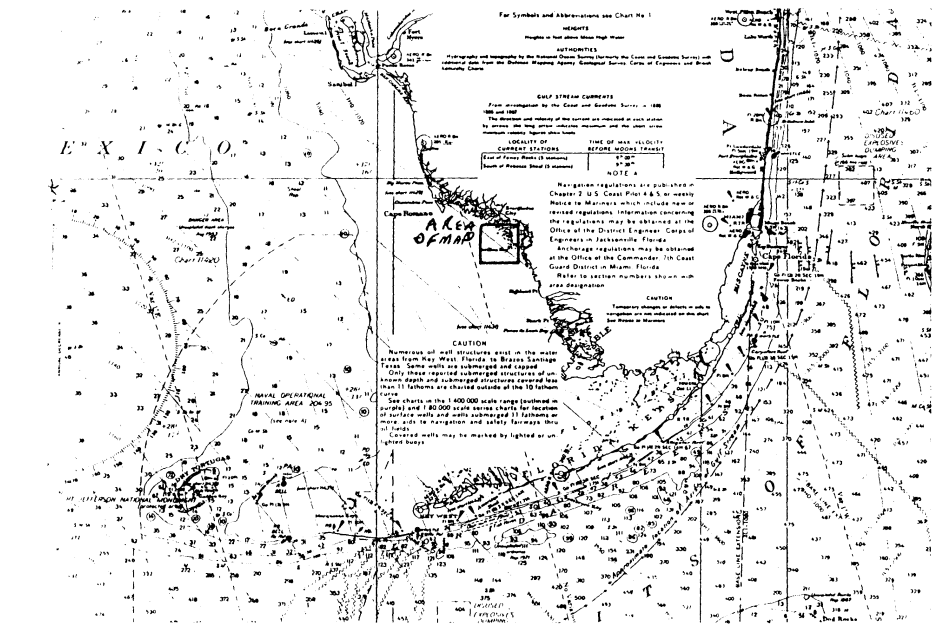
(Crime from page 5)

here waiting to be hanged. Fred Ewert, for the murder of Frank Whitaker; Simon Reyes, for killing his sweetheart, a Cuban girl and Herbie Melbourne.

"The first will be hanged December 2. The Reyes man's case is now before the Supreme Court."

The appeal to Florida Supreme Court was heard by the June 1905 term of the Court. The Court overturned the case and returned it to the Circuit Court of Monroe County for retrial. The Supreme Court ruled that Dutchy could only be tried for manslaughter, which was a bailable offense. Melbourne was released on \$2,500 bail in April 1906. After more delays the new trial took place at the end of 1907. The Florida Times-Union of December 3, 1907 reports on the new trial. "The circuit court has been in session this week with Judge J.P. Wall presiding and Attorney H.S. Phipps, district attorney. Herbie Melbourne, known as "Dutchy," who is charged with the murder of Policeman T.C. Brown, [Till] came up. A venire of thirty-six jurors were summoned for the regular term of the court and an order of fifty special venire for the Melbourne case. Owing to the relationship of Sheriff Knight to the defendant, W.W. Thompson was appointed eisor by the court and to summon the jury. The case was opened Wednesday and completed by Friday, when the jury brought in a verdict of manslaughter and asked the mercy of the court. The judge gave the prisoner one year in the county jail. In the first trial, several years ago, a verdict of murder in the first degree was given and Melbourne was sentenced to be hanged, but the case was taken to the supreme court and a new trial granted."

Dutchy could not make it through the one year sentence before he was arrested along with Leon Sawyer, Floyd Dillon and Richardo "Bundigo" Martines and charged with robbery and arson of the Cortez Cigar Factory. The Florida Times-Union of May 10, 1908, gave the details. "Key West, May 9.—There are no new developments in the robbery and burning of the Cortez factory Wednesday morning. The men arrested, with the exception of Periman, are in the county jail. The latter has been released on a bond of \$1,000. It is understood that Attorney Harris of the criminal court has



Map of South Florida with area of detailed map marked

complete statements from two of the men implicated, and there need be no delay in securing a trial. The criminal court will meet Monday morning and no doubt this will be among the first cases called. It is also claimed that some very sensational evidence will be presented that will astonish the natives.

"Investigations are now going on that will trace number of burglaries that have been committed for months past, it is alleged, to this gang. The robbery and burning of Antonio Escass's store on Simonton street, about two months ago are being traced to them, and the goods sold to a store in this city. The case of Herbie Melbourne is a peculiar one. He, with a crowd of others, assaulted a policeman some years ago, and when the policeman went for the mayor of the city and returned to arrest him was shot down. After many delays he was given a hearing in the circuit court and convicted and sentenced to be hanged. An appeal was taken and after several years delay a new trial was granted. At this trial, before Judge Wall, which took place last year, he was convicted of manslaughter and was given one year in the county jail. He was then bought out as a convict from the commissioners, at \$15 a month, and began driving a dray, and it is alleged he was connected with many queer dealings in handling freight, and was not allowed to go into one of the large steamship yards for freight. He was next sold into the Key West fire department, as he was still a convict and had not served his year. He

then it is alleged, organized his gang, two of them being at one fire station and one at another. This, it is believed, explains why the fire apparatus was slow at times in getting to fires that this gang is supposed to have set. Now the question is, will he have to serve his former sentence before being tried, or can the county hold the parties by whom he was employed responsible for this last crime.

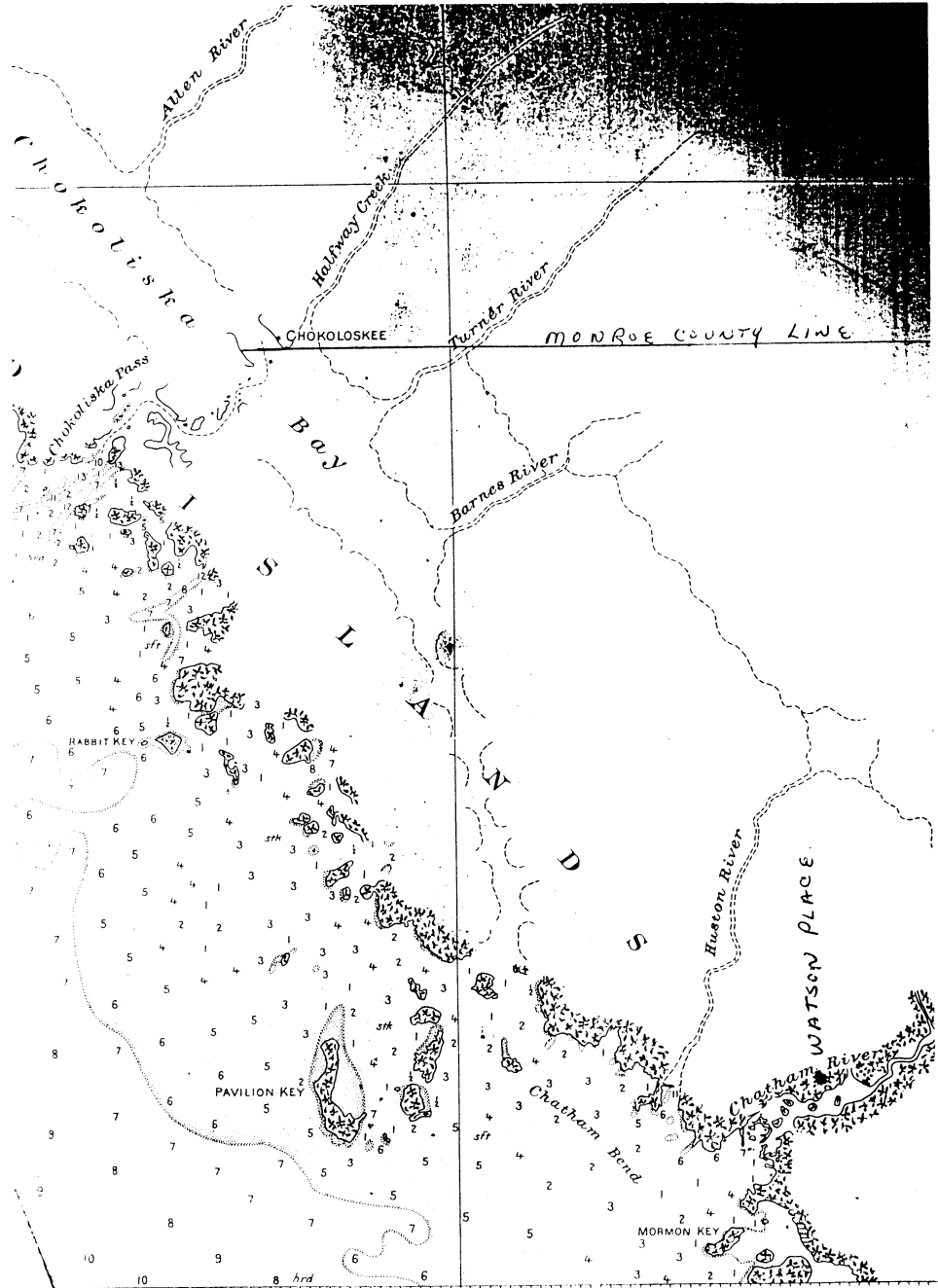
"Careful estimates place the loss of the Cortez factory Wednesday morning at about \$30,000, fully covered by insurance. The safe in which the books were kept was not damaged, and there will be no trouble adjusting the loss. Manager Lightbourne has a force of men busy moving out the undamaged material, and strenuous efforts are being made to resume work Monday morning in the brick factory formerly occupied by the Armes de Oro Company. The regular force will be employed."

Justice may not have been any more enduring than today, but it was swift, as the first two men went to trial seven days after the arrest and all four were sentenced 10 days after the crime. The Florida Times-Union of May 15, 1908 reported on the trial "Shortly after the convening of the court the prosecuting attorney, J. Vinning Harris, suggested that inasmuch as the sheriff was closely related to one of the prisoners that a temporary jailer should be appointed. The court named Capt. Leon Baker to act as jailer. Dr. J.N. Fogarty was the first witness and gave statement as to the appointment of a special officer to watch

the Cortez factory. Officer Roland Curry followed and testified that he saw Martinez and Sawyer enter the building from the rear window. Urbin Melbourne was called and testified that after the robbery Martinez said he would burn the building, and he, Melbourne begged him not to do it, when he returned to the fire room. Floyd Dillon's testimony was the same as Melbourne's. It seemed by the testimony of those implicated that all were against burning but Martinez. When the defense put their witnesses on the stand Martinez said that it was discussed and all agreed to burn the building, and used oil from his carriage to do the work. The jury later brought in the verdict of guilty. The trial of Dillon and Melbourne will take place tomorrow on a charge of arson. It seems an effort was made to lay all the blame on the Cuban, Martinez, and help Dillon and Melbourne on the serious charge of arson."

This strategy did not work and the results of the trial was reported in the Florida Times-Union of May 19, 1908. "Key West, May 16—Judge L.W. Bethel of the criminal court sentenced the four men charged with grand larceny and arson Saturday morning. The court room was crowded with people to hear what the judge had to say. He gave then a good talking to of their wayward way, and told them that their sentences would be as light as possible. A petition was presented asking leniency for Martinez, the Cuban, but the court could find no reason for making an exception in his case. The men sentenced were Herbie Melbourne, Leon Sawyer, Floyd Dillon and Martinez. The judge gave each three years for grand larceny, and ten years for arson. The general public is fully satisfied with the sentence."

The men did not leave Key West without one more incident which was reported in the May 24, 1908 Times-Union "There was quite a sensation at the county jail Tuesday evening, when Sheriff Knight refused to turn the four prisoners, who were convicted of grand larceny and arson and sentenced to thirteen years at the last term of the criminal court, over to the elisor of the court, Capt. Lem Baker. It seems that Judge L.W. Bethel deputized Capt. Baker to take charge of the jail during the trial and to take them to the penitentiary, as the sheriff, F.W. Knight is a relative of one of the pris-



Detail map of Southwest Florida showing Chokoloskee and Ed Watson's Farm copied from U.S.C. & G.S. chart dated 1924.

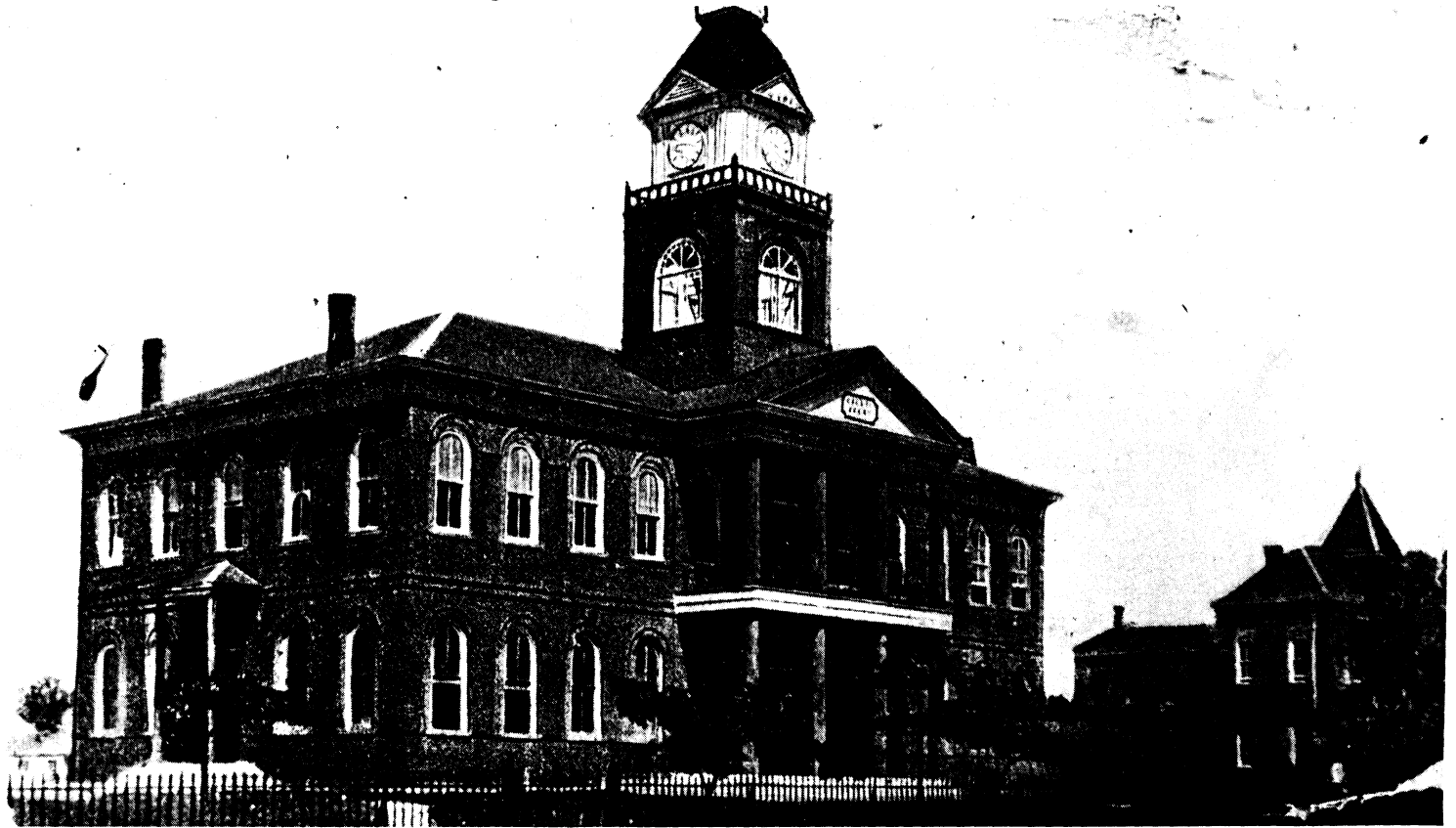
oners. Knight wanted Baker to take the prisoners Saturday, but the latter wanted to be home to vote for the primary and when the captain went for the prisoners Tuesday evening, the sheriff refused to give them up, stating that he had telegraphed for guards to take them off. During the interview a personal altercation took place between Capt. Baker and Jeff Knight, son of the sheriff. Fortunately mutual friends intervened and prevented further trouble. The guards arrived Wednesday on the Olivette from Tampa, and it is likely the prisoners will leave Thursday night."

The prisoners were taken to the state penitentiary. Dutchy did not remain in prison for long but this time he did not leave legally. He escaped on October 21, 1909 and returned to Monroe County.

The area of Monroe county where he returned is not what we think of today as part of the county. He made his way to the southwest Florida coast. This part of Florida was then the frontier where the law of the gun was more common than law enforcement officers. Since the area was sparsely populated there were

(Continued on page 10)

Fred Ewert Pays The Penalty Of His Crime



The Monroe County Courthouse on Whitehead Street. The building to the right is the jail and yard where Fred Ewert was hanged. Photo credit: Monroe County Public Library.

**By Tom & Lynda Hambricht
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Not all persons sentenced to be hanged escaped the gallows. When Dutchy Melbourne was condemned to be hanged there were two other men in the Monroe County Jail awaiting execution. The only one to pay the penalty was Fred Ewert. Ewert has the distinction of being the last person executed in Monroe county. Dutchy's story is told in the article on page three. The other condemned man, Simon Reyes, was reprieved by the Governor to a life sentence. After 1904 all executions were carried out at the state prison. Fred Ewert also told his own story of the crime and penalty in a poem that was published in the Key West newspaper the Inter-Ocean and is on following page. The undated clipping published by the Inter-Ocean in the fall of 1904. Fred Ewert was hanged on December 2, 1904 and the story appeared in the Florida Times-Union of December 6, 1904. "Key West, Dec. 5—Freddie Ewert aged about twenty-two, paid the penalty of the law at 11:22 Friday morning

in the inclosure of the county jail. In the fall his neck was broken, and he did not move a muscle.

"The condemned man spent the morning very quietly. He had requested that no visitors except the priest be allowed. Father Suebelin spent the morning with him reading prayer and speaking words of consolation.

"A few minutes after 11 o'clock Sheriff Hicks unlocked the door of Ewert's cell and the doomed man walked out. He asked permission to see the other prisoners and was allowed to visit the occupied cells.

"He stopped to talk with Herbie Melbourne and Simon Reyes, two other young men who are now under sentence of death in the county jail.

"He told both of the them that he merited the punishment to be meted out to him, and that he would go on the scaffold with no ill-feeling toward anyone.

"When he had said good-by to his fellow-prisoners he held out his hands for the Sheriff to tie.

"Into the yard

"At 11:11 the doomed man passed from the jail into the yard, and with the Sheriff and priest, ascended the stairs to the gallows. Arriving on the platform he bowed and spoke pleasantly to the doctors, after which he said some prayers with the priest. When he had finished he turned to the Sheriff and said: "I am ready, Mr. Hicks."

"At 11:14 Deputy Sheriff Sands began preparing the prisoner, who submitted willingly to the preparations. With a smile on his lips, he bade those around him good-by, and took his place in the center of the trap.

"The Black Cap.

"He was then tied, hand and legs, and the black cap adjusted, and, all leaving the doomed man on the scaffold.

"At 11:22 Sheriff Hicks pulled the catch, and the unfortunate man was launched into eternity. Ten minutes and twenty-two seconds after he fell Drs. Fogarty, Light and Gardner pronounced him dead, and the body was cut down and turned over to Undertaker Lopez for

burial.

"The doctors agreed that the dead man was rendered unconscious instantly.

"That the doomed man was thoroughly penitent is testified to by those who have watched and talked with him during the past few days, and also by his actions this morning. He went to his death without asking leniency from his earthly Judges, but with a prayer on his lips for mercy at the great tribunal he must face hereafter.

"Sheriff Hicks and Deputy Sands performed their solemn duty in such a way as to carry out every request of the doomed man, and he in turn did all that he could to aid them.

"There was a great crowd in the court yard and the streets surrounding the jail. The scaffold was inside of a twenty-foot closed fence, but the gallows was sufficiently high for the man's head and shoulders to be plainly seen from the streets. Quite a number of invited persons were inside the inclosure including the court officials, local press, ect., but the representative of the Time-Union in this city did not receive an invitation, although he went personally to the Sheriff and asked for one.

"Ewert's Crime.

"The crime for which Fred Ewert was executed was committed some eighteen months ago. He and Frank Whitaker were out walking one evening, when the latter showed a large roll of bills. Ewert invited Whitaker to go and get some clam chowder on a vessel in the harbor. They went, and while the chowder was being cooked Ewert asked Whitaker for some money to get bread. Whitaker cursed him, and said he was a beat. This enraged Ewert, who attacked Whitaker with a an ax, killing him and throwing his body into the sea. Next morning the body was found and several arrest were made.

"After coming from the schooner that night, Ewert took a hack and rode for some time, and spent money freely, and about midnight took several hundred dollars tot he proprietor of a coffee shop for safe keeping. He was arrested next day and made a confession. He was given an early trial and convicted, when the case went to the Supreme Court, which reaffirmed the decision of the lower court, when the date of his execution was fixed for December 2, between the hours of 11 and 2"

Fred Ewert Write Verse About his Crime and the Penalty

The following is from an undated clipping from the Key West newspaper the Inter-Ocean. "While on a visit to the jail Saturday morning a representative of the Inter-Ocean was requested to print the following lines, written by Fred Ewert, the condemned prisoner now in jail. Ewert says that the lines were all composed by him and he wants them published. We have made some corrections in spelling but otherwise the lines are his:

It was on the 18th night of May,
When I threw my life away,
I thought it would not be known,
Now here I am all alone,
To suffer what it may be,
But God bless the penalty,
I am not punished too severe,
For the law has done its best,
When I sit and think,
With my good instinct;
And when the clock does roar
In my life there seems a flaw.
I have come to the point
where I must think deep,
And prepare a place to sleep,
For time is drawing near,
And I surely must prepare.
I know my soul is in a bade state,
And I must make no mistake,
If I have to leave this dreadful earth.
I will not go in a flirt.
Some people seem to sympathize,
But they really can't comprize,
What makes me feel so sad,
And makes me feel so bad,
Is to see that there were three
That were charged like me,
And were let off without a fine.
It might be right,
But it ain't so in my sight,
Now look at this with a sigh,
And see if I was justified.
Don't take this as an insult,
It is a parting ones consult,
Now take this as a warning,
All that think you are on top,
And take care that you are not
Placed in the very spot.
I am sorry for the punishment,
Here on earth.
But when I die,
And have the pleasure to speak,
Of what has passed within
This wicked life,
Only trouble and strife.
While there is life there
I hope they say
Now it is for the Governor to say
It is the people who know
And they know it is not right.
For such a young boy
To be cast from this earth.
It looks like a piece of dirt,
To look at what has been done.
But I must keep mum,
And I must pay the cost

Of the other soul that's lost.
The day of my sentence
I took it as a penance.
Judge Wall done his duty,
As the verdict did command,
To be thrown without mercy
At his hand.
But three of th jury
Tried to hang for mercy
But the most of them
Seemed to be thirsty
But I must look to God for mercy
As here on earth I have none
All I can do is to keep mum.
The Christians come to my cell
To teach me the pain of hell.
But people of good faith
Take steps in this mistake
And see if this is right,
To try and take my life.
I beg all who have done wrong
Not to look on me with scorn
That would cause the death of my
mother
And God would charge them with
another.
I am glad to see the people
Take interest in my soul
I hope they will never get in the hole.
Lawyer Roberts did his best
As the Judge himself said
There was not a single stone
That he did not test.
The sheriff seems to take it sad
His children may get bad.
For hi is Sheriff high and mighty
And his duty cannot slight.
So I will say to the young
For them to keep mum.
Obey your parents what they say
And you'll never go astray
when my parents talked to me
I thought it all in vain
But now I've come too see
That I have got the stain.
It seems to be a made up thing
To put me to the string
My chances were scant
there was nothing they would grant.
They even tried me first
To prevent an outburst
For it was a made up thing
To give Toby 2 years in Sing Sing.
They knew if he was tried
And got off with two years
They would never get a jury
To hang me by the ears.
It is left to God to say
If I was justified
But if it is God's will
I am sure it is the best.
Take this in consideration
Remember rum was the instigation
It shoulds be the people desire
This little piece to admire.
Everybody's heart has a string
And this little piece might hit that
string.
So I will come to a close
To all who knows in sorrow deep
And ask the world to keep out
Of my footsteps deep."



Lynda Hambricht in the spring of 1994 in front of Ted Smallwood's store at Chokoloskee. Photo credit Tom Hambricht.

(Crime from page 7)

no Monroe County law enforcement officers in the area. The Sheriff could call on the Sheriff of Lee County in Fort Myers to handle emergencies but was legally required to make the long trip to enforce the law. This required travel by private boat, regular steamship service or cattle boat. The tax payers had not allocated money for the sheriff to maintain a private boat. The regular steamship service went to Tampa and left a long trip south back to Monroe county. The cattle boat landed closer at Punta Rassa but by all accounts was not a pleasant means of travel. By what ever means he reached the west coast the sheriff still had to travel by boat, as no road existed in that part of Florida and very few even today. The nearest outpost of civilization was Smallwood's store on Chokoloskee Island.

Dutchy made his way to Chatham Bend to the farm of Ed Watson, who is one of the truly legendary characters in Florida History. He had a reputation for murder and a complete disregard for law and order. The story of Mr Watson and his neighbors is in "The Story of Chokoloskee Bay County with the reminiscences of pioneer C.S. "Ted" Smallwood" by Charlton W. Tebeau and the award winning fictional account "Killing Mister Watson" by Peter Matthiessen. Right or wrong, Mr. Watson

had a reputation for hiring farm workers, who he would murder when the harvest ended so he did not have to pay. This was never proven in court but a lot of people that worked or had dealings with Watson met a sudden and violent death. Watson also had a reputation for attracting and housing men with criminal pasts. Because of fear, the quest for justice and desire to establish law and order in southwest Florida, Watson's neighbors gathered at Smallwood's store and killed him.

According to Ted Smallwood, Dutchy went by the name of Duchy Melvin. Matthiessen used the name Dutchy Melvin. What ever name he used, Dutchy made a fatal mistake. Dutchy was killed by Watson, or a man named Lesly Cox, or a combination of the two, the truth has never been found. The murder of Dutchy, and later Watson, occurred as the major hurricane of October 17, 1910, swept across Key West and southwest Florida leaving a path of destruction. The following account of the murder of Herbie "Dutchy" Melbourne (Melvin) appeared in the Fort Myers Press of October 20, 1910. "MONROE COUNTY IS SCENE OF MURDER. White Man and Negro Get in Bloody Work at Chatham Bend Last Week. White Man is Still At Large. One of Murdered Trio A. Walham Who Had Been Living Down There For Many

Years—Cause Unknown. Last Monday a week ago a crime was committed down at Chatham Bend, at the plantation of Mr. E.J. Watson, that for brutality has few equals. It was the murdering of three person by a man by the name of Leslie Cox and a negro whose name we have not learned. The murder was committed on the plantation of Mr. E.J. Watson while that man was away with his family at Chokoloskee. On his return he was horrified to find the crime had been committed and as hastily as possible hastened to this city to get the sheriff that he might go down and arrest the murderer.

"The negro connected with the killing was brought to this city and is now confined in the county jail. He will be taken to Key West in due course of time to answer to the charge of murdering three persons. Those killed were Miss Smith, known to the residents around Needhelp, a man by the name of Waller, and another man by the name of "Dutchy," who came from Key West and is said to have been an escaped convict.

"The negro was brought to this city by Capt. Thad Williams, who is engaged with a crew of men working at the clam bars at Caxambas. Capt Williams stated that the negro said Cox, the white man had forced him to help kill the victims. He said they were cut open, weight-

ed down with iron, and thrown in a creek close by. Some party coming that way saw the body of the woman floating in the creek and informed the men on the clam bars, and they went over and found the body and gave it burial. The negro later escaped from Cox and went over to the island where the men were working on the bar and told them the story of the killing, but that Cox was the man who had planned it and forced him to shoot one of the men after he was dead. The particulars are hard to get at, as the negro tells all kinds of tales about it, and is badly frightened.

"Mr. Watson came to the city this morning, and his statement was to the effect that he had gone with his family to Chokoloskee and to report to the sheriff the man named Cox, whom he said he believed was planning to kill him and his whole family. On his return home he was horrified to find the three persons killed. As soon as possible he hastened to this city but Sheriff Tippins has already left for Chatham Bend, so Mr. Watson left immediately to overtake him and assist in the capture of Cox, who is still at large down in the islands somewhere. Should he be captured he will more than likely be brought to this city and then sent to Key West for trial as the crime was committed in Monroe county."

Mr. Watson's neighbors didn't believe Cox had acted on his own or that Watson was innocent. The neighbors gathered at Smallwood's store on Chokoloskee Island and when Watson did not produce Cox as requested, Watson was killed by his neighbors. The following account of the killing is from the Fort Myers Press of October 27, 1910. "THE END OF A MOST DEPLORABLE TRAGEDY HAS COME DOWN NEAR CHOKOLOSKEE."

"Last Monday morning Sheriff F.B. Tippins, accompanied by Sheriff C. Jaycock and son, of Monroe County, went down to the scene where the three unfortunate victims were murdered, and account of which appeared in The Press last week. They got as far as Chokoloskee, where they met several citizens, and the sheriff say the following is what he learned:

"Last week E.J. Watson, owner of the place where the crime was committed, came to Fort Myers to consult the sheriff upon what was to be done. He missed

the sheriff and immediately returned to his home down the coast.

Sheriff Tippins on his first trip, did not go any further than Marco, and returned. He waited until the officer from Monroe County came over, and as stated above they went down. The sheriff says when they got to Chokoloskee he met some of the citizens returning from an island known as Rabbit Key, where they had been to bury Mr. Watson. He says they told him that on the return of Mr. Watson he was requested to produce Leslie Cox, the man said to have killed the three people spoken of last week. The story goes that when Watson returned to Chokoloskee he brought back a hat and gun, which he stated belonged to Cox, and that he had found Cox and had gotten him. Those interested wanted more proof and requested Watson to go with them and show them Cox's body. This he refused to do. One word brought on another, when Watson stepped either back in his boat or toward the boat, and threatening to shoot, snapped his gun at them, when the posse killed him. That is the story told the reporter, and there seems to be little doubt of the truth of same. One fact is vouched for: Mr. Watson is dead and it is supposed Cox is to.

"The negro that came up in the charge of Thad Williams and who had been in jail, will be taken to Key West for trial. Thus ends one of the darkest tragedies that has gone down in the history of the State, and perhaps the real truth of the matter will never be learned.

"We understand that Mrs. Watson and children will arrive from down the coast to-day, and will proceed to her people in West Florida.

"Parties from down the Coast state that the people down there are very much worked up over this murderous affair, and in future will not tolerate such actions on the part of anyone, and those who go down there in future to reside will have to live up to the standard or move out."

Sip Linsy, the African American, arrested and in jail in Fort Myers, was brought to Key West to stand trial. The Florida Times-Union of December 1, 1910, reports, the outcome. "Key West, Nov., 30—The circuit court adjourned Saturday afternoon, after a week's session of court. Sip Linsy, the negro who was implicated in the murder of Dutchy

Melbourne and two others, was discharged by the grand jury Saturday afternoon. Linsy gave a complete statement of the whole affair and it was evident that his actions in the murder were involuntary. It is the general opinion here that Cox, who was implicated in the murder with Watson, is not dead. The posse killed Watson, who stated that Cox has been seen since. Linsy stated that his home was in Georgia and wanted to go there. He was given clothes, a ticket and money and told to keep in touch with the sheriff in case Cox is caught. He left Saturday night for his home."

The last information found on Leslie Cox was in the Fort Myers Press of November 10, 1910. "We can't learn whether Mr. Leslie Cox is still living or not. No one has yet reported seeing him dead or alive since the killing of Mr. Watson. The river has been watched, but no signs of him yet."

We still don't know what really happened at Chatham Bend that day in 1910. Cox was never found and most people believe he was killed by Watson before the "posse" killed Watson. The Monroe County Grand Jury records have not been found. Probably because he was black no one saved the testimony of Sip Linsy, the only man other than Cox who knew what happened that day at Chatham Bend. Thus ended one of the most violent series of events in Florida history.

Footnote: Records have not been found of the legal action against the other men implicated with Melbourne in the murder of Officer Till. Of the other three members of the gang sentenced for larceny and arson, Leon Sawyer received a pardon in 1912 and an effort was being made to secure one for Ricardo (Bondigo) Martinez. Floyd Dillon was killed by a prison guard. Records have not been found of Mrs. Till, after she purchased the house, or her two children. They are not list in the U.S. Census for 1920 or the city directories for 1918, 1923 or 1927.

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(Sandy from page 1)

decade of the 18th Century and each appears to have had a positive experience in their background that seemed to impell them to achievements above the norm, and in that respect there may also be some connection.

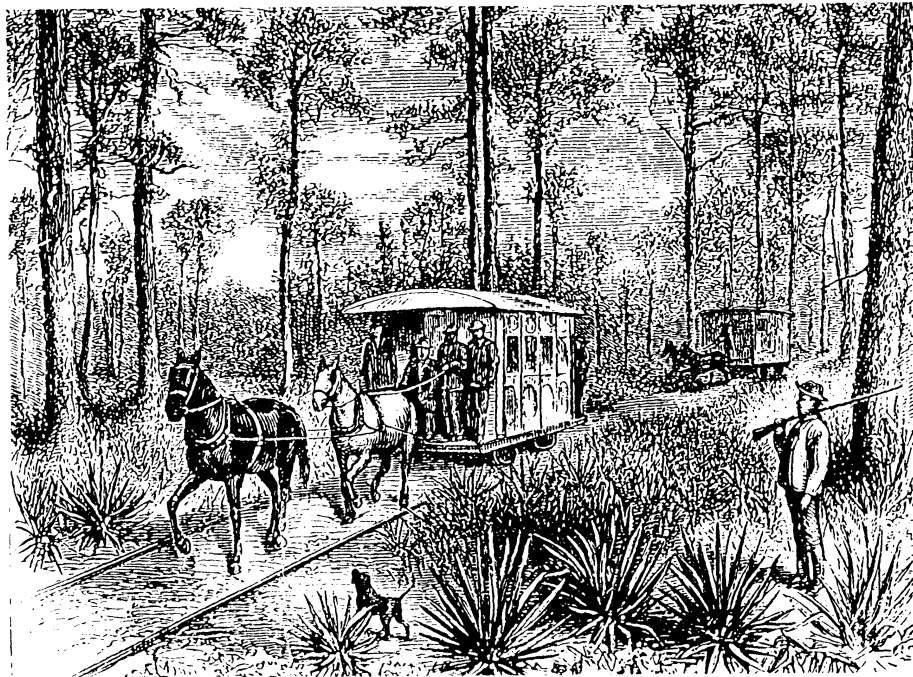
Claiming Maryland as his place of birth, Sandy Cornish related that "My ole massa was William Eccleston of Cambridge, Maryland. I waited on him. I never worked in de field, not I, till I was thirty year old. Wen he die, my young massa gave me my time for \$83 a yeah. Dat was about \$40 more dan common people paid."³⁸

Sandy's master William Eccleston appears in the Dorchester County census records of 1790, and again in 1810, 1820 and 1830. In William's household in 1790 were three slaves, and also listed in the same census were the free blacks Sam and Anny Cornish. Sandy was born about three years later. William's name does not appear in the census records of 1840, and other sources report his death in March of 1838.

In May of 1839, a "Sandie...faithful Negro Interpreter" appeared in negotiations with the Seminole Indians at Key Biscayne in Florida's northern keys.⁴⁵

Although within the next ten years "Sandy" Cornish and his wife Lillah would settle in Key West in the southern keys, where they would spend the remainder of their lives, all other apparently reliable information would seem to preclude the possibility that "Sandie" and "Sandy" are the same person. An investigation of other sources fails to place Sandy in Florida in time to become sufficiently proficient in the Seminole language and act as an interpreter. In addition, any involvement in May of 1839 would have had to have been prior to his work on the railroad in the Panhandle of northern Florida. Water was almost certainly their route to employment on the railroad, and to reach the Panhandle from Maryland would require passage around the southern keys, and is probably the time when they were first exposed to Key West, their future home.

It was probably sometime late in 1839 (Sandy claimed October 2, 1839 as the date) that Sandy and Lillah left Maryland and migrated to Florida where Sandy was employed for nine years, at \$600 per year, in the construction of a railroad at "Port Leon". Lilly was a



Horse drawn railroad. From Scribner's Monthly, November 1874.

freewoman and received \$15 per month. Sandy was probably "hired out" by the son² of William Eccleston after the death of his father in 1838, and was employed at Port Leon in the Florida Panhandle on the railroad being constructed from Tallahassee to St. Marks. It was with the savings from these wages that they were later able to buy Sandy's freedom for \$3200,³⁹ and Sandy stated that his wife Lilly "had to see paid" the sum which purchased his freedom. "She made herself a slave to go wid me".⁵⁸

In 1826, a wagon road had been surveyed from Tallahassee to St. Marks, and was used to ship cotton to the coast for transport by water to other markets.⁴⁷ In 1835, a seven hour stage coach connection was established between the two areas, at a cost of \$2.50 per passenger. With the development of steam powered railroads ten years before, it was not long before a need was recognized to establish a railroad to serve the area, and its construction was considered as early as 1831, and the Leon Rail Way Company was incorporated in 1832. A lack of funds resulted in the company's demise and a new attempt to effect the construction of the railroad was initiated in 1834, resulting in the establishment of the Tallahassee Rail Road Company.

The new company received its first grant of land in March of 1835 although construction of the line had already begun the previous January with 40 to 50 hired slaves. By November 8, 1837, the rail-

road was in operation from Tallahassee to St. Marks.

A need had been recognized in 1835 for the railroad to continue across the St. Marks River and the town of Port Leon was established, selling the first lots in April of 1838. With this connection, the railroad was 24 miles long. A visitor to the town in 1841 described it as a town of about twenty houses, and "The people. Oh my! The `ruff scuff' of civilization and as to law...they don't know what it means." Drinking, swearing, smoking and billiards were the prevailing pastimes, although the town boasted a hotel, tavern and newspaper, but no jail and church. Port Leon and the three miles of railroad on the south side of the St. Marks River were destroyed in a hurricane on September 13, 1843 and were never rebuilt, and the line then terminated where it intereseected the river.

Claiming he worked on the railroad for nine years, it may have been sometime during the mid to late 1840's that Sandy's "free papers" were lost. "The town cotch fire and burnt my papers, and pretty smart money. All de money was burnt, 'cept a little silver and gold."⁵⁹ With nothing to prove that he was a free Black, he was seized "one night after I'd been out fishin. I was settin' stripped off, washin' my feet", when some unprincipled opportunists with the intent of profiting from his sale in the New Orleans slave market approached him. He broke free from his "six"⁶⁰ captors, suffering head injuries in the process, and

before he could be recaptured, inflicted severe personal injuries on himself to frustrate any attempt to resell him in the slave market.^{6N}

The next morning, a Thursday, "He deliberately proceeded to the public square, accompanied by his wife, cut the muscles of his ankle joint, plunged a knife into the hip joint on the other side, and then sinking down on a wheel-barrow, finished the work by chopping off with a hatchet the fingers of his left hand!"^{7B}

Another description of the event from the same source, in the words of Sandy, describes the scene as follows: "I axed for de stickin' plaster...Den I put de needles and de stickin' plaster into a box...We went togedder, and to de public squar, and I gave free yells, so dey cud be heard all ober town. Everybody gathered around de squar. We de people was all standin roun', but some distance off, I tole 'em I didn't want dis (putting his hand on his right leg), nor dis (left arm), nor dis (left leg), but did want dis (right arm)."^{8E}

"Meanwhile, an awe-struck crowd of white men gathered around, but made no attempt at interference. Finally, brandishing the bloody knife, Sandie shouted to the crowd that if they persisted in their effort to sell a free man into slavery after he had once, at an extortionate price, bought himself out of it, his right arm was yet strong, and he had one blow reserved, after which they were welcome to sell him for whatever he would bring."^{9E}

"Den I libitly run my knife froo de heelstrings and cut em out; Den I stoop down on de wheel barrow, wid my needles, and seew it up, and stuck de stickin' plaster on it. Den I tuck a knife and drove it into my right hip heah (showing over the hip joint a very ugly scar, nearly eight inches long), and dey sed I work de knife back and forward four times, but I don't know zactly how many times. But I cut hole ten inches long, and four inches deep, till my leg hung useless. My wife Lily she freaded de needles; and den held de lookin' glass, so I could see to make long stitches, and sew it up, and stick on de stickin' plaster."^{10E}

"Den I set it down, and chopped my hand as hard as I cud wid de hatchet, and cut one finger clean off (holding up the left hand, with the shockingly mutilated fingers). Dat little finger I tuck up and put in my mouf, and smoked it for a cigar, till de blood from it run down

my lips. Dat I sewed too, and den tole 'em if that wouldn't do, I would cut open my belly, and put de entrals before 'em. But dat I wouldn't go to New Orleans for a slave agin, for I was free."^{11E}

"Den dey tuck me—not de whites, dey not come near me, afeared, but de brack people—and wheel me home on de wheel barrow, wid de utensils. I was down sick two months. After dat could go about on crutches."^{12E}

"That the essentials of this story are true, there is unquestionable evidence. The fingers on his left hand are mutilated, and the scars on the hip and ankle are fearfully distinct, while besides there are still white eye-witnesses to testify to the main facts. Sandie's powerful constitution brought him through; he was confined to bed for six months; then he began to hobble about a little, and at the end of the year was again able to support himself."^{13E}

Any children that Sandy and Lillah may have had prior to their arrival in Key West in the late 1840's were probably already of an age that enabled them to leave the household and establish themselves and their own families. None were included with Lillah in the Key West Monroe County census when she first appeared in the records in 1850, and when members of households were first included in the listings. The census records would have to be searched in Maryland or in other areas of Florida in an attempt to identify their migrations and family structure.

Sandy's wife Lillah, also called "Auntie" in one account from the period of 1865-66, had established herself in Key West by 1850 when she was included in the census of Monroe County as a 38 year old Black female. And on April 21, 1851, Lillah purchased from the Simonton Estate two lots on Division St., between Duval and Simonton Sts. The area of Sandy's orchard was identified slightly east of this location^{7F} on a map in the National Archives dated September 1861 (see map on page 16).

During the Civil War, many of the Union soldiers stationed at Key West visited and described "Old Sandy's" fruit orchard.^{8F} They considered him to be one of the richest men in Key West and a leader of the Black community. He cultivated about 20 acres, raising^{9F} 4,000 pounds of grapes and other fruits, and charged those who visited his establish-

ment 50 cents for a plate of fruit.^{14E}

A post Civil War visitor to "Old Sandie's farm" described it as follows: "A rude fence separated this from the surrounding waste land, but the soil was equally stony, and apparently sterile."^{15E} One patron recorded the experience as he wrote: "We were ushered into the house, and took seats around a square table in the parlor, and then gave our order for some fruit which he brought to us on individual plates. There were delicious grapes, guavas, oranges, etc., and after we had eaten what fruit we wanted, we each paid him fifty cents, his price per plate of fruit, and then we took a look about the garden and retired."^{16E} He also provided the soldiers with entertainment at his orchard in the form of fortune tellers.^{17E} Another visitor described the house as "a little hut with two rooms" and nearby, a "lean to" or "piazza".^{18E}

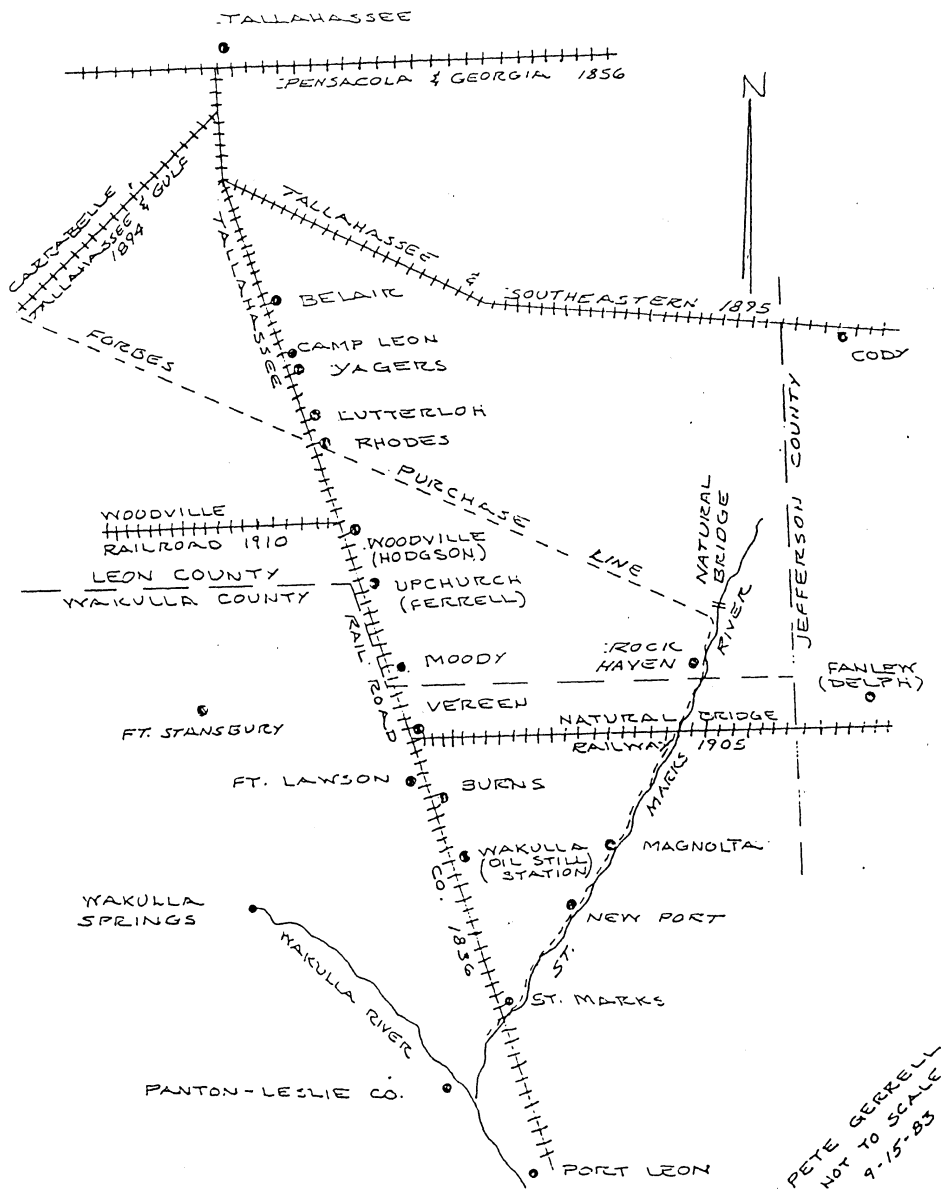
"Ripe sapadillos hung from the trees; and a particularly large 'sour-sop' was pointed out as especially intended for our dinner. He had a little patch of tobacco; green cocoanuts [sic] rested at the tops of the palm-like stems, and tamarinds were abundant; the African cayenne pepper berry was hanging on little bushes."^{19E}

The Federal soldiers spoke well of Sandy and seemed to like and respect him, describing him as "the aristocratic farmer of the race" who led parades, occasionally made speeches at local festivities,^{10F} and delivered the sermons at some of the burials.^{20E} On New Years Eve, December 31, 1862, a group of soldiers from the 47th Pennsylvania Regiment "went out towards the beach and visited Old Sandy, a great Union Nigger, and roused him up, and gave him a salute"^{21E}.

Sandy was described by contemporaries "as an institution. He is a genuine darky, large headed, large souled, big of stature, full of vigor and brawn, and the most perfect gentleman in Key West. He was formerly a slave—paid \$2300 for his own freedom with the help of his wife who sold herself into slavery for his sake—has some thousands of dollars in bank" in February of 1864.^{22E}

Another description recorded him as "a stalwart negro, with the physique of a prize fighter; body round as a barrel, arms knotted with muscles that might have belonged to a race-horse's leg, chest

(Continued on page 14)



Tallahassee Railroad. Drawing courtesy of Allen R. Gerrell, Sr.
(Sandy from page 13)

broad and deep, with room inside for the play of an ox's lungs...The head was large, but the broad forehead was very low. Above it rose the crisp, grizzled wool, almost perpendicularly, for a height quite as great as that of the exposed part of the forehead; and the bumps above the ears and at the back of the head were of a corresponding magnitude. The face was unmistakably African, glossy black, with widely-distended nostrils, thick lips and a liquid but gleaming eye...an old man—now in my sebenty-tree yeah^{11F}—yet the strongest man on the island, the richest of the negroes, the best farmer here.^{12B}

"Since the war, his remarkable history has attracted many visitors...and brought him many attentions that might readily have turned the head of a less judicious person...[He] appeared in the

village in a faultless suit of broadcloth, with a well-brushed silk hat...and standing, hat in hand, under the cocoas" he told the story of his life.^{24E}

For some unknown reason, Sandy himself has never been identified in the Monroe County census records,^{12F} although his 38 year old wife Lillah (also Lilla or Lily) has been identified in 1850; and again in 1860 as a 45 year old washerwoman; and finally, in 1870, the 66 year old Lilly was keeping house.

In 1864, Sandy was involved in the establishment of the Cornish Chapel of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, now located at 702 Whitehead St. in Key West. Sandy had "contributed largely to the erection of a handsome church for the negro congregation, of which he is the leading spirit",^{25E} and frequently conducted services for the congregation.

Sandy's 1866-67 Monroe County tax

records listed his assets as follows: 19 acres of land, \$240; one horse, \$100; one carriage, \$50; and 50 sheep, \$260.

No further record pertaining to Sandy has been discovered, and it was probably about 1869 that he died and was more than likely buried in the City Cemetery in Key West, in a grave that over the years has lost its identification. An inventory of his estate was recorded on January 7, 1870, and a value of \$138.75 was placed on the estate, which included: crockery ware, pots and stoves, tables, bedding, iron, tumblers, tables, sofa, smoothing irons, crow bars, brass boiler, tin ware, tubs, knives and forks, castor and fruit dish bench, rocking chair, pitcher, press, trunk, bake oven, and pickaxe.

Lillah survived her husband, living until sometime in the 1870's, having appeared in the 1870 but not the 1880 census. She is also probably buried in what is now an unmarked grave in the City Cemetery at Key West.

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Sandy and Lillah Cornish were first encountered by this researcher while preparing for publication "A Civil War History of the 47th Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteer Regiment", and later additional material was discovered while preparing for publication "The Civil War In Florida, A Military History, Volume III, Florida's Keys and Fevers". Both works were authored by Lewis G. Schmidt, and a need was recognized to contribute the Cornish's story to American history.

The research materials that form the basis for this biographical sketch have been included in my files and in a file established at the Monroe County Library in Key West, Florida.

The holdings at the Maryland State Archives at Annapolis were reviewed for materials pertinent to this project, as were those at the Dorchester County Public Library at Cambridge, MD and the State Archives at Dover, Delaware.

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US Census Records, Monroe County Library

FOOTNOTES (F)

1. The Cornish name was mentioned in Maryland records as early as 1652.

2. Possibly Joseph Richardson Eccleston, born January 12, 1811.

3. Various reported as \$2300, \$3200 and \$3350 by primary sources.

4. The following account of the railroad construction between Tallahassee and St. Marks, and Port Leon, has been edited from a paper at the Florida State Archives by Allen R. "Pete" Gerrell Sr. of Tallahassee, FL. See the bibliography for a list of Mr. Gerrell's sources.

5. Sandy also claimed to have "thirty-nine head Buckshire hogs" at this time. 6. Also described as 15 men.

7. This may have been an error by the mapmaker, or the tax records describing the transaction may have mislocated the property.

8. See "The Civil War History of the 47th Regiment of Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteers", and "Volume III, Florida's Keys and Fevers" of the series "The Civil War in Florida", all by Lewis G. Schmidt.

9. Henry Hornbeck of the 47th Pennsylvania Regiment mentioned buying sweet potatoes and melons from an "old gentleman", possibly Sandy who he frequently visited.

10. On new years day 1864, Sandyspoke on "the speedy down fall of Charleston", and acting as "chief marshal" led the parade (from Volume III of the Civil War in Florida, by Lewis G. Schmidt).

11. In 1865-1866.

12. Having lost his papers proving his status as freeman, he may have been attempting to conceal his whereabouts from Federal authorities in the pre Civil War era census of 1850 and 1860. He was deceased by the time of the 1870 census.

ENDNOTES

For quoted material during the Civil War period, see A Civil War History of the 47th Regiment of Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteers; and The Civil War in Florida, Volume III, Florida's Keys and Fevers, both by Lewis G. Schmidt

1. Black Prophets of Justice, by David E. Swift; 1989. Swift footnotes other sources regarding Samuel Cornish, including "Samuel Cornish, Pioneer Negro Journalist", an M.A. thesis, Howard University, 1931, by Howard N. Christian.

2. Early Black Dorchester, 1776-1870 by Kay McElvey

3. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid
4. Macomb's Mission to the Seminoles, John T. Sprague's Journal

5. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

6. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

7. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

8. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

9. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

10. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

11. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

12. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

13. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

14. Peter Eltinge, 156th New York Regiment, letter December 15, 1862

15. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

16. By Gone Days, Acting Asst. (Navy) Paymaster Eugene Chapin

17. Henry J. Hornbeck diary, 47th Pennsylvania Regiment

18. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

19. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

20. A Civil War History of the 47th Regiment of Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteers, by Lewis G. Schmidt.

Also, The Civil War in Florida, Volume III, Florida's Keys and Fevers, by Lewis G. Schmidt

21. Henry Hornbeck, 47th Pennsylvania Regiment, letter December 31, 1862

22. John A. Wilder, 2nd USCT, letter March 5, 1864

23. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

24. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

25. After The War, 1865-1866, Whitelaw Reid

Lewis G. Schmidt is a resident of Allentown, PA. Since he retired in 1979 from Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania, he has been able to pursue his study of history. He has published The Civil War in Florida A Military History a four volume set (six books, 4,559 pages, 19,433 endnotes). He also published Civil War History of the 47th Regiment of Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteers and a study of the Military Cemetery Key West.

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TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP
of the Island of
KEY WEST

Compiled and drawn under the

direction of

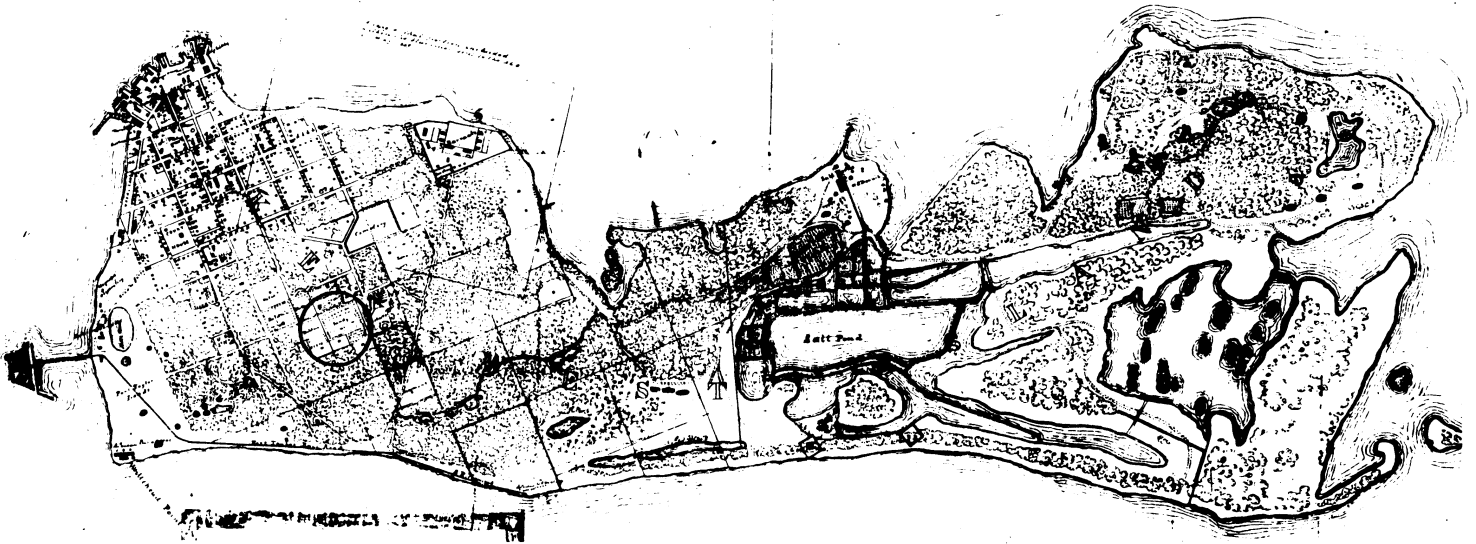
Capt. E. B. Hunt Corps of Engineers

BY

Gen. C. Gray Draughtsman & Taylor

September 1861

Scale 7 inches to 1 Mile



Topographical Map of Key West compiled and drawn under the direction of Capt. E. B. Hunt dated September 1861. Sandy Cornish's farm is in the circle. Photo credit National Archives.

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