

# Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal

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OFFICIAL QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE KEY WEST MARITIME HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## The Golden Years

by Mary L. Haffenreffer

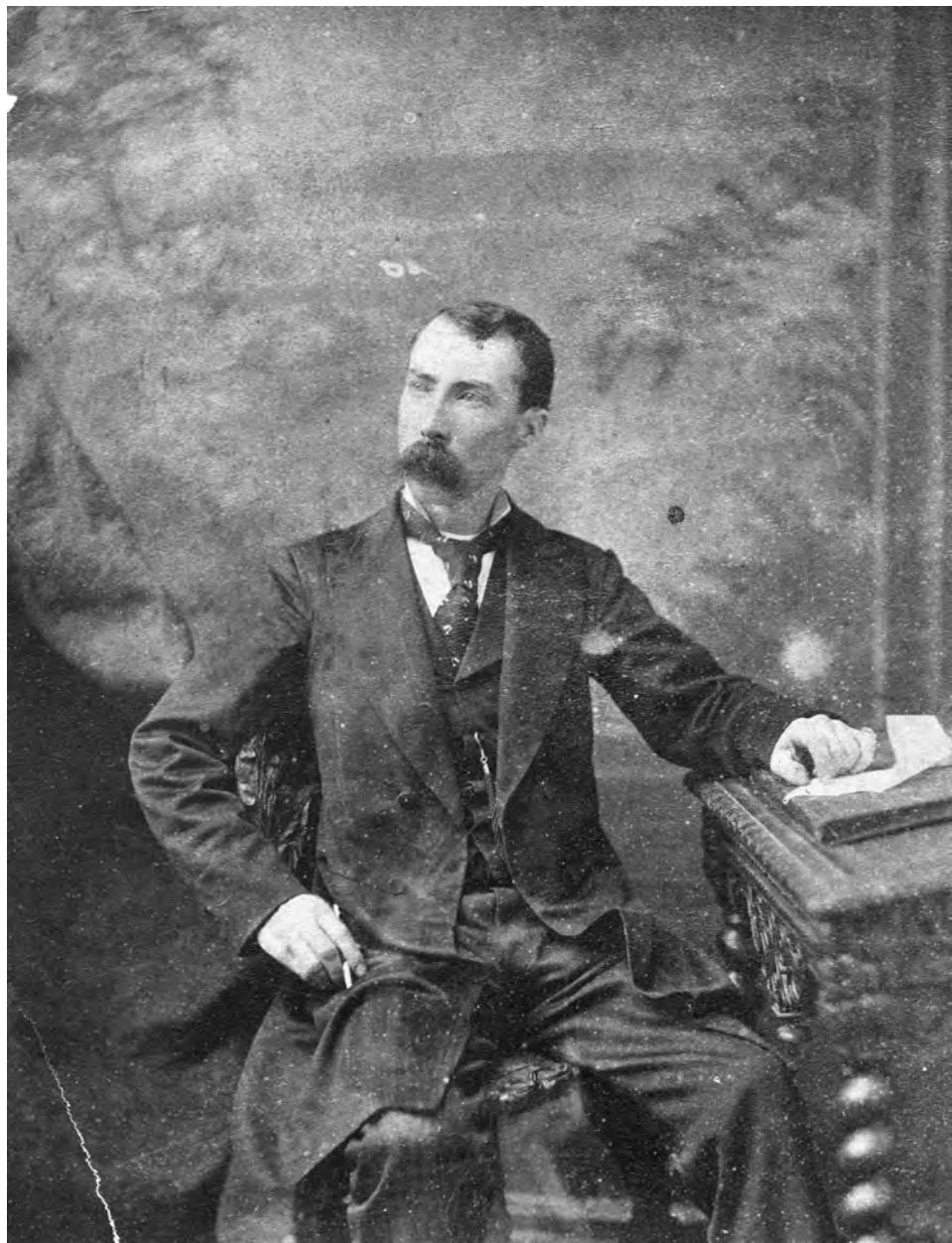
The Ferguson Letters were written in 1849 and 1850 between Thomas Ferguson, while journeying to and striking gold in California, and his wife Rosalinda, while enduring poverty with their children in Key West. The first part of the Letters was published in the Fall 2012 issue of the *Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal*. The present issue publishes the rest of the Letters, followed by the story of their life after Thomas's return to Key West as a multi-millionaire

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Key West June the 19<sup>th</sup> 1850

My Dear Husband,

Your letter came duly to hand on the 17<sup>th</sup> instant. It gave me much joy to hear you are well and your prospects good. I assure you it is no fault on my part not receiving letters. I have written every mail with exception of two mails since I got your first letter from San Francisco. Your brother George [has] written often – not receiving



(Continued on page 3)

Thomas J. Ferguson. Photo credit: Ferguson Family.

Society News  
by Tom Hambright



*The Board of Directors of the Key West Maritime Historical Society bids farewell to Joan Langley (center front). Joan, a longtime supporter and Board member of the Society, has moved to North Florida. Photo credit: Board member Mary Haffenreffer.*

## Daniel Ferguson

Daniel Ferguson: Researching the Ferguson Letters, Mary Haffenreffer found descendants of Thomas and Daniel Ferguson who provided photographs and information on both brothers and their descendants. In the Letters, Thomas proposes to bring Rosalinda and their children out to California, but for unexplained

reasons this never happened. Daniel did return to Key West and bring his family back to California: his descendants still live on the West Coast. The brothers must have remained in contact, for Daniel died in Maryland on September 28, 1876, by which time the transcontinental railroad facilitated travel between the coasts.

## Henry J. Hornbeck's Diary

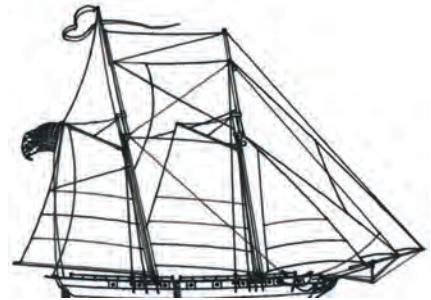
Henry J. Hornbeck's Diary: This issue begins the Civil War diary of Henry J. Hornbeck in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where Hornbeck enlisted in the 47th

Pennsylvania Volunteers Regiment at the age of 18. The Diary starts on page 14, when the regiment sails in December 1863 for Key West.

## New Members

Scott Adamson, Key West; Jake & Cookie Beal, Key West; Robin Lloyd, Chevy Chase, MD; Elaine Seet Mason, Big Pine Key; Juan L. Riera, Miami; Stuart Schaffer,

Sugarloaf Key; William M. Schutt, Key West; Chuck Sherman, Key West; Walter Simon, Key West; Paul Toppino, Key West; Bobby Whitten, Richmond, VA.



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Editor: Tom Hambright

Letters and articles are welcome. Please write to: Editor, Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal, KWMHS, P.O. Box 695, Key West, FL 33041 or visit our web site [Keywestmaritime.org](http://Keywestmaritime.org).

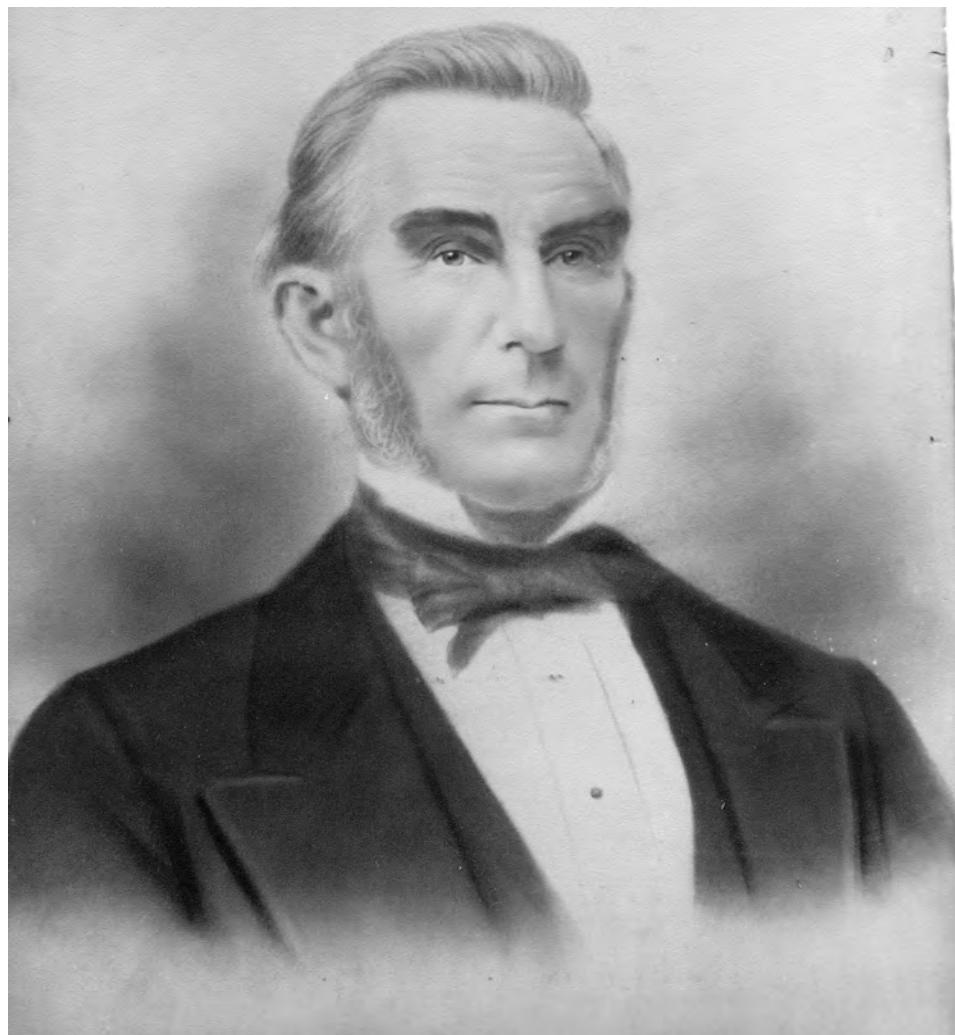
Key West Maritime  
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(Ferguson from page 1)

but [?] letters from you and none from Daniel. The babies are on the mend, thank God. Thomas raises but little blood now, as the cough is delaiting, his appetite is increasing. Cecelia walks around in the daytime. Her fever is high at night. I think with care they will get better. That they shall fare, I assure you, was it to cost me everything I have. Isabel is a fine strong child and has got over the whooping cough easy. She has good times and enjoys herself. Well, my health is good. My cheeks begin to obtain that Irish blush they once had. I am ready to travel to any part of the world where you think the climate will suit the children. It shall be my home with the greatest of pleasure. Thomas is a bright boy. I shouldn't like to deprive him of any advantages we'll afford him. He is a [genius], every bit of him. I never watched for a fall with so much anxiety. As for this, do let me know in your next letter what month you intend to leave for home. Come all the way by steam as you are always sick at sea. I think the short[er] you are at sea the better for you. The **Isabel** makes her trips regular twice a month. The fall brings gales to Panama. When you come to Havana don't forget my dress nor the rings or rubies – do not forget them in your trunk in California. Times is dull here. We have had no good wrecks here in six months. Key West grows but few good buildings. Your brother Fernando works with George on the Miami. Dealy and the children is going north not to return to Florida. She declares that she never will go to California. That she never will deprive herself of the society of her friends. Mrs. Mallory is a good old friend. George Clark died on the 8<sup>th</sup> instant. He filled a drunkard's grave as I always expected. He



*Daniel Ferguson. Photo credit: Jill Foster.*

paid me no rent for three months before. I preposed Phoebe \$50 for Chambers Dictionary. She said she never would sell it. The house waits now for a new tenant. God bless you and send you safe to me and the babies. No more. A present from your ever affectionate wife.

Rosalinda Ferguson

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Key West July the 29, 1850

Dear Husband,

Your letter came duly to hand on the 17 instant. It gave me much comfort to hear that you are well as health is the greatest comfort

we have on earth. The children are over the whooping cough. Thomas has not raised any blood for the last three weeks. Your orders was good and pay is here. Mr. Wall is a good friend. He has the means and is willing to accommodate me. He would not accept of any payment for his troubles. I have good friends here, I thank God. I wish you had sent for me 10 months as your time is so precious in that land of gold. Send me the means and let me know the shortest route and what I shall do with the property here. It is a valuable one. The house is hard wall finished. It is the comfortablest house in Key West. We shall never get first cost for it. I have spent two hundred and 40 odd dollars on it since you left. I should like

(Continued on page 4)

(Ferguson from page 3)

to have it insured as it may come in play, one of those for the children. I don't know whether this will reach you before you leave or not. I shall wait for further orders as I hope you will accompany me to California yourself. The time seems long to me as you are the only friend I have. I hope we will soon meet never to separate again while life remains. I hope the climate will suite the children and me as I am ready to go to you any hour. I should like to go to New York to see mother and to take a passage from there clear through. Your brother Fernando has the gold fever bad. He says he shall leave in the fall for that happy land. George is doing well on the Miami. Adelaide tells me she is to leave here this month for New York not to return no more to Florida. She thinks George is making plenty to support her north. Col. English leaves here on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August for California with a splendid steamboat, 400 horsepower, also a small pram steamboat. Moreno goes as clerk on her. I wish that I was ready to go along, too, as there is a great many of our respectable citizens going. I have written every mail for this last five mails. Really yours please me lately. I don't care how often you send them but never mind, I hope I shall be with you soon to take care of all your loose dimes. At this moment the babies is as busy as bees. I wish you were here to see them play as the Musketeers, It is so bad they cannot sit still. I think this is the warmest month I have every experienced in Florida. There is a young Irish woman here that is wants to come with me. She is willing to serve me until I be perfectly satisfied for her expenses. Take good care of yourself and God bless you. The babies prays for you earnestly.

From your ever affectionate wife.

Rosalinda Ferguson

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Sacramento City July 30, 1850

Dear Wife,

I improve this chance to write you a few lines in answer to your letter received by a former mail as I get none from you by this mail for I can't go to San Francisco now, time is too precious. I came down here yesterday, have bought what goods I want here and shipped them on what we suppose will be the last steamer that will get up to Marysville this spring as water is getting very low and the river is full of snags. We have now commenced mining on our old rich diggings. I have worked one day myself. Now, when I return, I shall stay for the next three or four months for that is the place where I can make money the fastest and we have a good deal of business there now to attend to. We have shares in two damming companies turning the river out of its natural bed right by our old diggings where we know it to be rich. Daniel is president of one company and treasurer of the other. The presidency of the other company was offered to me the day I left with the present of a share worth two thousand dollars if I would accept it which I think I shall when I return, as the present president doesn't manage to the satisfaction of the company nor quite so much to our interests as I think I can, The treasurer of that company is our clerk so that the money all has to go into our iron chests, a sight into which would astonish some people even now to see the bags of dust of our own and

deposited there by other people for safe keeping; and I think in four months from now my pile in it would astonish some people, too, if I don't have very bad luck. I received a letter from George by the last mail which I haven't time now to answer. He seems to be in high hopes of his success in the coontie business. I hope he may realize all his anticipations but give me the digging of the root of all evil, not coontie roots. The emigration over land begins to pour in here fast. I hired some men yesterday to take up with me for a hundred and fifty dollars a month for four months. We have been paying ten dollars a day for men to dig the races to turn the river. In the next four months is worth all the rest of the year here for mining during that time. I shall be in the mines mostly, I may not be down at all but I will write every mail and let you know how we succeed. Write me by every mail, don't fail. George's letter informs me you were all well which I was very anxious to hear for when you wrote your last that I have got you were yet sick and the health not fairly recovered. I never was in better health and Daniel too. After this mining season is over Daniel or I will, one of us, go home. I then shall decide whether I go or send for you, one or the other certain. I can't stay here without you much longer. Make yourself contented and take care of your health. I was much pleased to hear you wrote your last letter yourself. Don't get out of practice. I love to pay the postage. I wish I could have an opportunity oftener. Kiss the children for me. These words starts the tears to my eyes in spite of me but forgive the weakness of an over affectionate father. I can't write no more, I leave here in an hour for home, time presses, so good bye for the present. Give my respects to all friends.



*The Ferguson House in Maryland C 1880. Rosalinda is sitting on the porch. Photo credit: Ferguson Family.*

This from your affectionate husband,

Thomas J. Ferguson

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San Francisco August 15, 1850

Dear                              Wife,

I this morning received two letters from you date the 8<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of June. I was much pleased to hear you were well and the rose was getting on your cheek again and, also, that the children were recovering from their afflictions. When I left home I didn't think of coming further than Sacramento City, when there I found no letter for me. I hadn't received a letter from you for two mails so I had to come down to get them. The last letter I received from you was a very desponding one. My anxiety was very great to hear from you. Now I am better contented. We have just commenced our mining

operations for the season. I have been to work myself for the last week. It comes rather hard though after playing gentleman so long, though I like it because I like to see the gold shine and to think of the gratification I will have in spending it in rearing and educating our children as they should be. This stimulates me to exertion and enterprise, with the favor of fortune's smiles for a short time longer. I hope to accomplish my fullest expectations. Our mining operations has been retarded by the high water. In another week shall put in the dam and turn the river then I will give you a more detailed account of our success. The water has prevented us from working down deep enough in our old claim to find it very rich. We have been working off the top above water. I dug some six inches below the water the other

day and took out a pan full of dirt and washed it out and got twenty eight dollars worth of gold out of it, so that I find the gold is there yet and I hope to be turning it out by the thousands. You shall hear all about it as we progress. You ask me to inform you when I shall leave for Key West. That question I can't answer you positively at present. It will depend somewhat upon my success for the next three months for I must have my pile now I am here and I must either go home next winter or you must come here of which I will inform you in due time. This leaves us all well except one of our clerk[s], young Benedict, who you have heard me speak of in my letters. He has been quite sick though he is now getting better. I hope will soon recover. People are coming here very fast from all parts of the world. This country is getting full of people. There is large towns  
(Continued on page 6)

(Ferguson from page 5)

and cities in the mountains. Write me often, let me hear all about matters and things. Take good care of your health and the children. Kiss them for me. This from your ever affectionate husband.

Thomas J. Ferguson

P.S. The mail is about to close. I haven't time to write him now.

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Parks Bar, Uba Sept 14<sup>th</sup> 1850

Dear Wife,

I write you now the first time for some time from the diggings. We still stick to our old place. I will now give you a small account of what we are doing. About a week since I purchased a share in a damming company for which I paid six thousand dollars. I took charge of the Company and worked four days. I then sold it for nine thousand and proceeds of the diggings which was over a thousand more. I then was elected President of the next company above on the river which is close by our old diggings and store, of which Daniel has formerly been President in that we had three shares which cost us seventeen hundred dollars. I sold one of them before we got the water turned out of this river for twenty five hundred dollars. There is thirty four shares. We have the water turned now and worked one day and took out thirty three pounds nine ounces. That is pretty good diggings. Daniel is to work on our old claim today. He tells me he has taken out fifteen pounds in which there is three of us to share expenses for wages and other things, about a hundred dollars a day. We haven't got into our richest

diggings yet where we dug last year. When we open the old hole again, which is now full of sand, washed in by the high water this year, I will then tell you about rich diggings. We also had one and a half shares in the next Company above still, which turns the water past our old diggings. I sold one share for two thousand dollars the other half we still hold. The Company has found the river rich. The share and a half cost us a thousand dollars. We have closed up two of our stores. We are concentrating our business as much as possible in order to be ready to start for home as soon as the mining season is over which will be in November or December. In twenty-five days from that time look out for me. I want to send you some money but I don't know any person going to San Francisco by which I can send for a draft. I will send it to you the first opportunity. I must now go to bed.

Sunday Sept the 15<sup>th</sup>

I will now give you an account of the two last days in our old diggings. Friday we took out thirty eight and a half pounds in the amalgum that is with the Quicksilver on it as it comes out of the mashiness. When the Quicksilver is retorted off, it will yield about twelve dollars to the ounce in pure gold which would be five thousand five hundred and forty four dollars for the day's work to be divided between three of us. It was the work of twelve men, ten hired, and our partner and Daniel. The hands we pay some ten and some eight dollars per day, the partner gets no wages, Daniel and myself draws twelve dollars a day out of the general funds before we divide, that is the terms on which we took the partner in. Yesterday we don't know how much we did

got. We haven't weighed it yet. We have been very busy and the store has been so full of people we haven't had a chance. We don't like to let everybody know what we are doing though the stories have got out very large. We have a great many spectators around our diggings. We have to keep watch of them all the time to keep them from panning it out. I took a pan of dirt yesterday noon and washed out four ounces out of it. Daniel thinks we didn't get as much yesterday as the day before. He thinks there is between twenty five and thirty pounds. The ground is not all alike, the layers in some places there is more top dirt on it than others. We haven't got deep enough for the richest layer yet. We are now digging off the top one. We dug a hole last year down through three separate layers, the bottom richer than both the others. If it extends all over our digging as rich as it was in the hole we dug we shall have our PILE CERTAIN. Our prospect is good. We have taken out a hundred pounds the last week. We are now just getting ready to work. I think we will sell all our interest in the Damming Companies then I will resign my office as president and go on to our old diggings myself. Daniel sold one of our shares yesterday in one of the damming companies for twenty seven hundred and fifty dollars which we have already got out of the first dividend as much as it costs. We have one and a half shares left which also don't stand us in anything for which I can get thirty five hundred dollars. This is a history of our mining operations thus far. Show this to George. It is what he asked of me in his last letter but I haven't time now to answer it. This leaves Daniel and myself both well with the prospect of soon going home which is no small gratification I assure you.



The house at 907 Whitehead Street C 1900. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.

Take care of yourself and the children. Give them a kiss for me.

God bless you all  
from your husband.

T. J. Ferguson

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Parks Bar, Uba River

Nov 25<sup>th</sup> 1850

Dear Wife,

I haven't received a letter from you for some time in consequence of my not going to San Francisco or Sacramento. My business has been such I couldn't leave here. I have sent for them, my letters, but don't

get them. We are now setting up our business preparatory to going home. We expect to get ready to start by the fifteenth of next month. I think nothing will stop us starting then except the report that there is cholera on the roads. If the reports is bad we may stay a little longer in the diggings. It is very healthy here we are doing well. We have been taking out from ten to forty two pounds of gold, not comfty, per day for the last two weeks. The three days previous to this we took out over a hundred pounds. We have our claim pretty near worked out. We expect to finish it in four or five days more. We had some bad weather since I wrote you last. The prospect looked very bad. We

didn't much expect to do anything more this season. The rain set in immediately after I wrote you in my last letter. The river rose so much as to brake our dam and race so as to let the water into its old coarse again, so we had to suspend operations and repair damages for some time, but kind fortune has smiled upon us again till we are now pretty well satisfied to go home. We have drove business I assure you since the water fell. We have worked two sets of men, one in the daytime and the other in the night, we haven't let our machines stop for nothing. We have taken out so much gold in so short a time that the Fergusons and

(Continued on page 8)

(Ferguson from page 7)

Fergusons diggings has become almost as noted here as Jenny Lind is in the States. You will ask how much have you got. I will answer you by saying more than I can lift which I know is very indefinite but when I get home I will show you. So be content that I am very well satisfied with my pile. I wish I could send you some of it with this letter, I know you must stand in need of some by this time. I should like to send you more than enough to meet your absolute necessities that you might be the better prepared to receive me when I come but it is impossible for me to get it to you now without going to San Francisco which I can't do at present and in all probability I shall get to you as soon as this will. We will then be able to arrange our matters to take a little more comfort and ease than we have done thus far. I have got enough with prudence that we needn't work anymore as long as we live, which is no small consolation I assure you. I expect to return by the way of Havana. If I do I shall be prepared with some few things for you and the children which I can get there. I shall also bring you something in the way of dress from California that can beat anything I ever saw in the States. A hundred dollar dress won't hurt me, not bad, now and you shall have it though I know you will say I had better keep the money for some better purpose but I have made it to enjoy it and I can't enjoy it any better than seeing you as well dressed as anybody is. I can afford it now and you richly deserve all I can give you as recompense for your love, constancy and prudence. My greatest happiness will be to see you and our children enjoying to the fullest extent what Kind Fortune has been pleased to bestow upon me. You can imagine my anxiety to be with you now that I have



Adolphus Ferguson in 1918. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.

accomplished what I came here for and have it my power to return and place you in a different sphere of life from that which I left you which has stimulated one to make great exertions to accomplish that which I have. Now my greatest desire is to get home to enjoy it with you. I think we can now see down under our vine and fig tree and be [unreadable] world way on. I shall be with you now as soon as possible. Till then do the best you can and take good care of yourself and the children. I will be with them soon and take the kisses myself. This is from your ever affectionate husband.

Thomas J. Ferguson

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*After Thomas's return from California, W. H. Wall wrote him the following letter, accounting for funds and other business that Wall was transacting for him in his absence.*

Key West July 5, 1851

Dear Sir:

I received a few days since per mail from R. L. Maitland my receipt to you for \$3400 saying that you wished the amount remitted to you at Baltimore. I enclose herewith my draft on R. L. Maitland at the 15<sup>th</sup> instant for \$3338.50 which is the amount due as per statement below.

I placed your Boy Lewis onboard of the Light Ship on the 1<sup>st</sup> instant but he was discharged immediately as he would not cook! He is now working at the Fort for myself and Mr. Mallory where

he will be kept until I can find some other employment for him.

You black woman is sick and cannot cook and I have put her to board with Mr. Pitcher.

I have charged you 3% for the difference of exchange on your sums: which is the rate of exchange at this time.

Respectfully  
obedient  
servant,

W. H. Wall  
per N. Pinkney

Amount of Sovereigns	\$2,050
Less exchange 3%	\$61.50
	\$1988.50
Amount in Am Gold	\$1,350.00
Amount of draft	\$3,338.50.

28-inch-thick stone walls, vast front steps to the first porch, two beautiful colonial double-hung doors, 14-foot-high ceilings, imported blue Italian marble mantelpieces over large fireplaces, a wine cellar, and white pine woodwork throughout. There were slave quarters and a smokehouse. Two great porches caught the summer breezes in a "homey" atmosphere.

In 1852 Rosalinda gave birth to their last child, a son, Adolphus Mallory Ferguson. Every winter the Fergusons moved with their children back to Key West, where they were highly esteemed and enjoyed their golden years with many old friends. They were never to be separated again, and kind fortune smiled upon them until the end of their days. In 1884 Thomas, described as a man "of great inventive genius", was in Key West testing a machine for cleaning and preparing Manila hemp when a Dr. Kaffenberger diagnosed him with cancer. He died on May 20th in Key West, and was buried in Maryland.

The Florida Times Union, of Jacksonville, recorded Rosalinda's comings and goings through 1890, when it wrote: "Mrs. T. J. Ferguson, a venerable lady of 80 years, one of Key West's oldest and wealthiest citizens, is expected home on Wednesday from Baltimore, where she has spent the summers for the past 40 years on her estate with her daughter." The newspaper's last report on Rosalinda was her obituary: she had passed away on the Baltimore estate on March 3, 1901. The obituary noted that she was a distant relative of President Andrew Jackson and Stephen R. Mallory, Secretary of the Confederate Navy; that she had supported the Confederacy during the Civil War; and that the family possessed many letters from the South's soldiers imprisoned

in Union jails in the North, thanking her for her kindnesses.

The Fergusons' youngest son, Adolphus "Doc" Ferguson, inherited the family home at 218 Caroline Street after the death of his father. He married a Florida girl, Margaret "Maggie" Cowart, and established himself as a "capitalist" in Key West. In 1890 he bought the livery stable business of A. A. Brooks at 19 Front Street, opposite the Marine hospital bordering Ferguson Street.

Years later, as the livery business was waning, Adolphus became a partner of Ferguson and Ward Marine and Structural Engineering and General Contracting. Located on the grounds of the former livery stable, the business fabricated large, solid cement "Indian" blocks, such as were used in building the town's big cigar factories and some of the cigar factory workers' houses. Adolphus's last known profession is listed in the City Directory as "driver," at a time when few knew how to operate the new "automobile".

In 1904 the U S. government condemned Adolphus's home for the purpose of housing the Navy's first communication headquarters and building three immense communication antennas there. Adolphus then purchased the house at 907 Whitehead Street from the estate of Asa Tift, the wealthy owner of a wrecking warehouse. (The property later became famous when Ernest Hemingway bought and lived in it, and today it is the Ernest Hemingway Museum.) Maggie died in the house in the fall of 1918. Adolphus died there, too, after a long illness from cancer in the summer of 1925, just one year past the golden anniversary of his father's great adventure. Maggie and Adolphus are buried in the Key West Cemetery.

## Epilogue

by Mary Haffenreffer

In the winter of 1850-1851 Thomas Jefferson Ferguson returned from the gold fields of California to his wife and his children, who in his absence had suffered life-threatening illnesses, loneliness, uncertainty, and poverty. Thomas had traveled more than 10,000 miles, venturing from Key West to San Francisco and back, across two oceans and over the Isthmus of Panama's disease-infested swamps and jungle. He bought and worked gold claims, built sluices and dams, established and supplied trading posts for prospectors, invested in real estate, and bought and sold shares in various start-up mining companies, then returned to his family with approximately \$7.5 million (in 2013 dollars) – all in less than two years.

Thomas and Rosalinda kept their home in Key West, but in 1851 bought a large estate near Baltimore. The house was grand, with 16 rooms,

# Ferguson House

by Tom Hambright

Tracing the history of any house in Key West can be challenging. Before 1884 Monroe County Deed Books and other official documents rarely recorded information about structures on property. The earliest document showing what buildings looked like is the 1884 Birdseye View of Key West. The most important documents for establishing dates when buildings were extant are the Sanborn Maps of Old Town, which are dated 1889, 1892, 1899, 1912 and 1926, this last being revised in 1948 and again in 1962. Research into buildings constructed before 1884 is limited to a few surviving photographs, tax records, legal documents, maps, family papers and legends, though these can also sidetrack the investigation. All the above sources were used in researching the history of Thomas and Rosalinda Ferguson's house.

While Thomas was in California, he and Rosalinda apparently owned a house in Key West on a rented lot, which was not uncommon during the 1800s. In several of Rosalinda's letters she refers to repairs to the house that would exceed what would be expected of a tenant, but she does refer in one letter to the fact that she had not paid the rent on the lot. Further evidence that the lot was rented is found in the 1850 Monroe County tax rolls, indicating that Thomas Ferguson owned a structure but no land. The location of this house could not be determined from the records available.

The first official record of the Fergusons owning land in Monroe County was in 1851 when Thomas returned from California. In April of that year he purchased a lot at the corner of Caroline and Front



U.S. Army map of Key West C 1860 showing the Ferguson House in the square.  
Photo credit: Monroe County Library

James L. Curtis	owner of	John York	orn	by	Estate of	Frank Shavers
	stad	Turner		Ben H. S.		
	Jeffrey	O'Hara		Austin	Shavers	Jose Maria
	Slopes,	Austin		Primus	Days	Arteaga
						Margaret
						Matthews
						Mrs. Williams
Thomas Street						

The Key West tax roll for 1873 showing the Ferguson property with a house.



The Ferguson House on the 1884 Birdseye View of Key West. Photo credit: Monroe County Library

Streets, described as Lot 2 of Square 28 on William Whitehead's map of 1829. The 1852 tax rolls show that Thomas owned a house on the lot. A circa 1860 Army map shows the lot and the house. The 1874 tax rolls value the house and lot at \$8,000. The 1884 Birdseye View of Key West affords the first view of the house. The Sanborn Maps of 1889, 1892 and 1899 show the house's footprint.

The Key West City Directory of 1893 shows Rosalinda Ferguson as living in the house with her son, Adolphus M. Ferguson, who had inherited the house after his father's death. For the first time the house has an address of 299 Front Street. Adolphus was also shown as owning a livery stable at 213 Front Street.

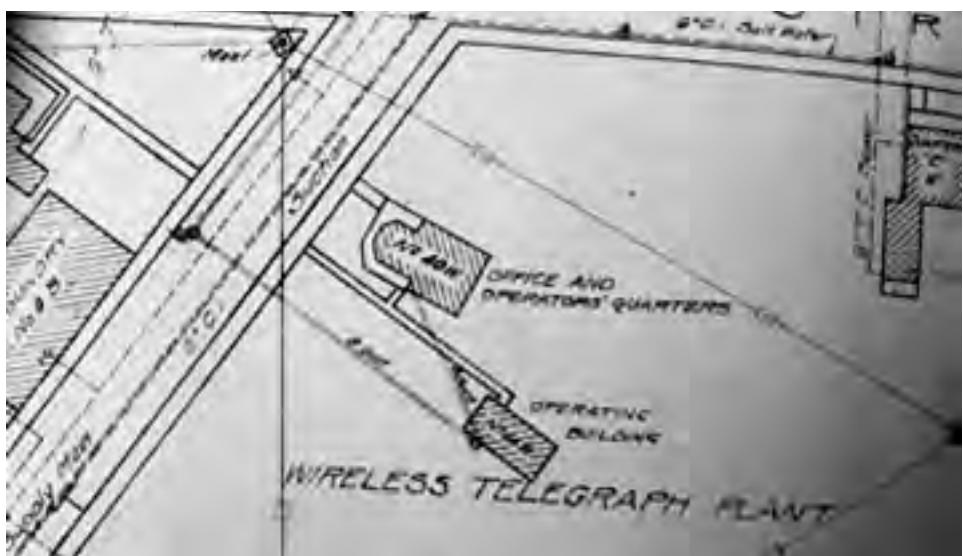
In 1902 the United States Government acquired by condemnation all the land bounded by Greene, Whitehead and Eaton Streets in order to build the first naval wireless operating station. Adolphus is listed as the legal owner of the Ferguson house and lot included in this transaction.

The Navy maintained drawings of the Naval Station showing the buildings, their usage and their assigned Navy numbers. Some of these drawings have survived and are filed in the Monroe County Library. The Ferguson House was called Building 40 by the Navy. In a 1906 drawing Building 40 is shown as the Navy wireless operating station and quarters.\* In a Navy photograph taken from one of the radio towers about 1918 the back of Building 40 can be seen; the wings of the house had been enlarged for use as the wireless operating station. During World War One, as part of the continuing expansion of the Naval Station, new officer quarters were built. One of

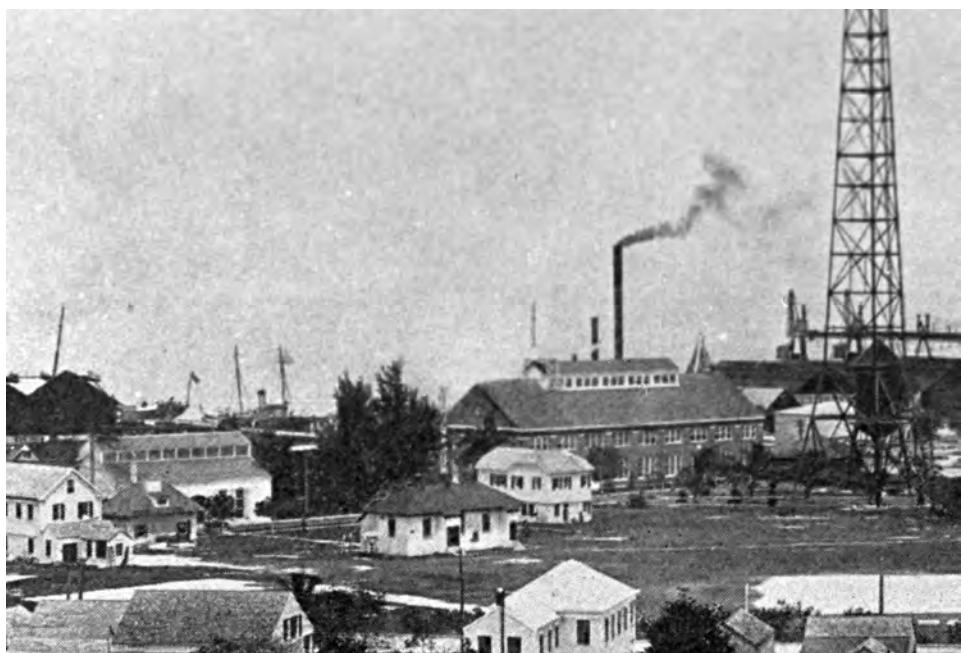
(Continued on page 12)



*The Ferguson House C 1890. Photo credit: Monroe County Library*



*Naval Station blueprint showing the Ferguson House in use as part of the Naval Communication Station. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.*



*The Ferguson House as part of the Naval Communication Station C 1918. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.*

(House from page 11)

these was designated Quarters G. After the War this designation was changed to M-1, when it became the quarters for the Commanding Officer of the Marine Barracks. This change freed up "Quarters G" as a designation.

In 1921 the wireless operating station was moved to different quarters. Building 40 (the former Adolphus Ferguson House) was moved to the corner of Whitehead and Eaton Streets, which was still on Navy property. During this relocation the two wings of the house were removed. The 1923 drawing of the Naval Station shows that the building's use was changed to officers' quarters, and its designation was changed from Building 40 to Quarters G. Some Navy records show that the house was built in 1923 when the designation was changed, but a 1941 photograph shows that the house's basic structure was the same as that of Building 40, its original designation.

Sometime in the 1960s the Navy wrote a history of the buildings on the Naval Station. From confusion, lack of research or to please the commanding officer, a building on Caroline Street that was home to the commanding officer was called the Ferguson House and was identified as the former home of George Ferguson, Thomas' brother, who had also lived and conducted business in Key West. However, a search of the Monroe County legal records disclosed no property on the former Naval Station owned by George Ferguson.

Quarters G (Adolphus's former house) remained on the Naval Station and in use as officers' quarters until 1974, when the Naval Station was closed and the area was renamed Truman Annex for President Harry S. Truman,



A view of Building 40 about 1920. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.



Naval Station blueprint of 1921 which shows the Ferguson House as building number 40 after it was moved to Whitehead Street. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.



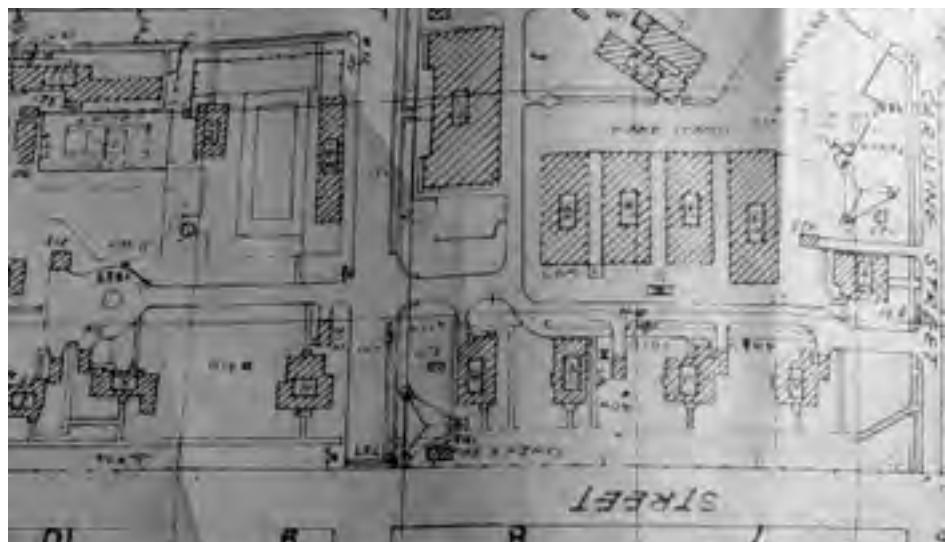
Naval Station blueprint of 1921 showing the Ferguson House as Naval Quarters G. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.

who vacationed there during his presidency. In the years after its closure a number of studies were conducted about what to do with the former Naval Station, including Quarters G. In 1986 developer Pritam Singh purchased all of Truman Annex from the U. S. Government and began to develop the property. In 1995 Quarters G (the Ferguson House) was moved from Whitehead Street to 328 Caroline Street to make room for the TIB Bank. (Also during the redevelopment the house that the Navy had misidentified as the Ferguson House was moved to Front Street.) Thus Thomas and Rosalinda's and then Adolphus's home, whose use and structure were modified many times over the years, returned in much its original form close to its original 1850 site.

\*The creation of the Navy Wireless Station began in July 18, 1904, when the Department of the Navy let a contract to DeForest Wireless Telegraphic Company to construct five wireless telegraph stations to cover the Caribbean. Key West was one of the five locations planned for construction. In February 1905, Navy Wireless Telegraph Station Key West was brought on line to provide standard communication with ships at sea and other shore stations. Through the years, the unit has gone by various names; Naval Wireless Telegraph Station, Naval Radio Station, Communications Department of the Naval Station, Naval Submarine Base and Naval Air Station; Naval Communication Station and Naval Communication Unit. The Naval Radio Station was the only Naval unit to remain in Key West during the Great Depression. The Naval Communication Unit closed in 2013 after 108 years of continuous service.



*The Ferguerson House as Naval Quarters G on September 23, 1941. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.*



*Naval Station blueprint of 1986 showing the Ferguson House as Quarters G. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.*



*The house in 2013 on Caroline Street on Truman Annex. Photo credit: Tom Hambright.*

# Hornbeck's Diary

Sunday Dec. 14. Rose as usual. Went to office. Very busy all morning writing out orders, relieving all extra duty men of the 47th Pennsylvania Volunteers. Received an order to draw my pay for the time engaged in the office. Wrote letters to sister & others of our departure for Florida, then went to camp and prepared for leaving in the morning. After supper, Quartermaster Heebner, Tom Leisenring and myself went to the "Stevens House" where we were treated by the Quartermaster & different officers. Tom & myself then went back to Camp. The boys had a large bonfire made, and a good deal of fun is going on, being the last night in Beaufort S.C. retired at 10 o'clock.

Monday Dec. 15th. Rose as usual. After breakfast, packed up duds, and proceeded to the wharf. Drew my extra duty pay, at Capt. Cornell's office, Post Quartermaster, then got aboard the steamer Cosmopolitan. The whole regiment embarked at about 12 o'clock. We did not get ready to start until 2 o'clock, having a large amount of baggage to be laden. The band played a beautiful piece as we left the wharf, along which were scattered the 55<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, 6<sup>th</sup> Connecticut, 8<sup>th</sup> Maine to see us off & who gave us three hearty cheers, which were as heartily responded to by us. The sail from Beaufort to Hilton Head was fine, the scenery being so beautiful. Stopped a short time at Hilton Head, and took aboard the wounded of our Regiment. General Brannan also came on board for a few minutes. We then started. We seem to be unfortunate in traveling by sea, as our trip was very stormy, and we were in great danger all along. We were three

days on the water. We kept rather close to shore, along the Florida Coast, and arrived at Key West, Fla. on Thursday morning at 11 o'clock. This is a fine place being very warm at noon. We immediately after landing went into the restaurants and regaled ourselves. Cool drinks are to be had in every shop, and every kind of fruit in abundance, especially cocoa nuts, the place is full of cocoa nut trees, lemon trees &c which bear the fruit abundantly. In the afternoon Frank Good, P. Bernd, E. Crader & myself went to the beach to search for sea shells which are very plenty but, the tide being high, we did not procure any of beauty. The Regiment is entirely divided, Four Companies D. H. K. & F. are sent to Fort Jefferson, Tortugas Island to garrison said Fort. Two Companies, C. & I, are in Fort Taylor, at this place, and Companies. B. & E. are in the old barracks, & Companies A. & G. are in the new barracks, in which latter, I also am. We have very fine quarters, & am much better pleased than at Beaufort S. C. nothing of importance, further, I was detailed as clerk in the Quartermasters Office on the 20th. Kept pretty busy, as Lt. Gibbs, Quartermaster is relieved and turns over the stores to F. G. Heebner, his successor.

Wednesday Dec. 25th Christmas. No work at the office today. Went to the wharf and witnessed the departure of the 90th New York State Volunteers for Beaufort, which Regiment we relieved. John Lawall, Frank Good & few others, then, took a walk about Key West. I forgot to mention that last evening we received a mail from Beaufort & I received a letter from sister Mary which was sent there. Everything seems satisfactory at home & with them. Very happy to hear from her. Saw also in the Allentown Democrat of 10th inst. that Uncle, Capt. E.

R. Newhard was paroled, and was home on furlough. Very glad to hear that. Our Christmas dinner, was a "Pot Pie," which was very good, and is considered something extra in camp. After dinner Peter Bernd & myself went out to the beach, and collected a lot of curiosities in the shape of sea shells. Found some very fine ones. After supper Frank Good, P. Bernd, Wm. Steckel & myself went to Catholic church. it was a grand sight the Church being decorated with spruce and with cocoanut leaves, and a great number of lights burning. After Church went to barracks and retired. The day here is celebrated like the 4th of July in the north, firing squibs &c. This is a great week for the Negroes, they having dances and enjoying themselves all day long. This afternoon out, on the beach the Black "Gemmar" & ladies, had dancing until dark, to be again resumed to-morrow. How different this Christmas from last year when all was Joy at home. Mary & myself for the sake of a Joyful surprise, placed upon the plate (before Breakfast) of Dear Mother, a Christmas Gift, and how pleased she was for that present, which was entirely unexpected. Now, alas, she is no more, never more are we to see

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her in this world. No one who has not lost a dearly beloved Mother, can feel that loss or have the least idea of what the loss of his or her dearest friend on earth is, until he or she experiences what we have, Standing at the death bed of a dying parent, and to feel as we felt, alone in this wide world. Retired at 10 o'clock. Retrospection is often times pleasing and also horrifying. I wish you a "Merry Christmas.

Dec 26 Friday. Rose as usual, not very busy this morning. Today we had a turtle soup, which was very good. Turtle are plenty here, & are found about the Islands of immense size. Witnessed a "Spanish Fandango" this evening, Also a dance by Blacks, then went to camp, where we also had music and a dance. Retired at 10 o'clock.

Dec. 27. Saturday. Rose as usual. Not busy to-day. Mess near the office with the clerks & employees in this office, having two blacks to do our cooking. We have very good meals. This evening the band serenaded the different companies. Went to Methodist Church where the Free Masons met, and heard an address on Free Masonry, by Capt. J. Gobin of our Regiment. Very good lecture. After meeting was over went to the house with Luther Mennig, and we were serenaded by some members of Companies B. and E. very good music. Remained at the house all night. I lodge in camp but mess in town.

Dec. 28. Sunday. After breakfast went to camp, and had a good wash. Went to town after dinner, with Wm. Weiss. We purchased some oranges at the wharf, after which we went to the house (our mess house) and I procured a cocoa nut from a tree, which are very plenty here. After regaling ourselves on cocoa nut, I went to our quarters & Billy to his. Read

the remainder of the afternoon. After supper D. Wannermacher, W. Weiss & myself went to the Episcopal Church. The church is finely decorated at present. Retired at 10 o'clock.

Dec. 29. Monday. Rose as usual. After Breakfast, busy in office in the, afternoon wrote two letters one to Aunt Elemina & one to sister Mary as the steamer Ericsson leaves for the north tomorrow. After supper went to barracks, retired at 9 o'clock.

Dec. 30 Tuesday. Rose as usual. After breakfast went to office. Kept busy. The steamer transports returning from the Bank's Expedition, putting in here to coal. After dinner wrote a letter to brother Molton also to brother John. Slight sprinkling of rain this morning. Very warm this afternoon. After supper went to barracks retired early.

Dec. 31. Wednesday. Rose as usual, busy all day, settling up accounts, and busy also on account of the many vessels in port. Weather warm & fine. The Regiment was today mustered for pay. At 9 o'clock, the band serenaded us at the barracks. We also had a "string band", composed of Blacks, playing all evening. At 12 o'clock. a party consisting of Wm. Hertz, James Knerr, George Henry, Henry Reiss, Will Steckel, Julius Lascon, James Geidner, Henry Getter & myself, visited the captains & lieutenants of our Company & Company A. being together in the new barracks at the Lighthouse, and wished them a Happy New Year and fired a salute. We were all called in and got something to drink. We then went out towards the beach, and visited Old Sandy, a great Union Black, and roused him up, and gave him a Salute, didn't get to bed until about 3 o'clock

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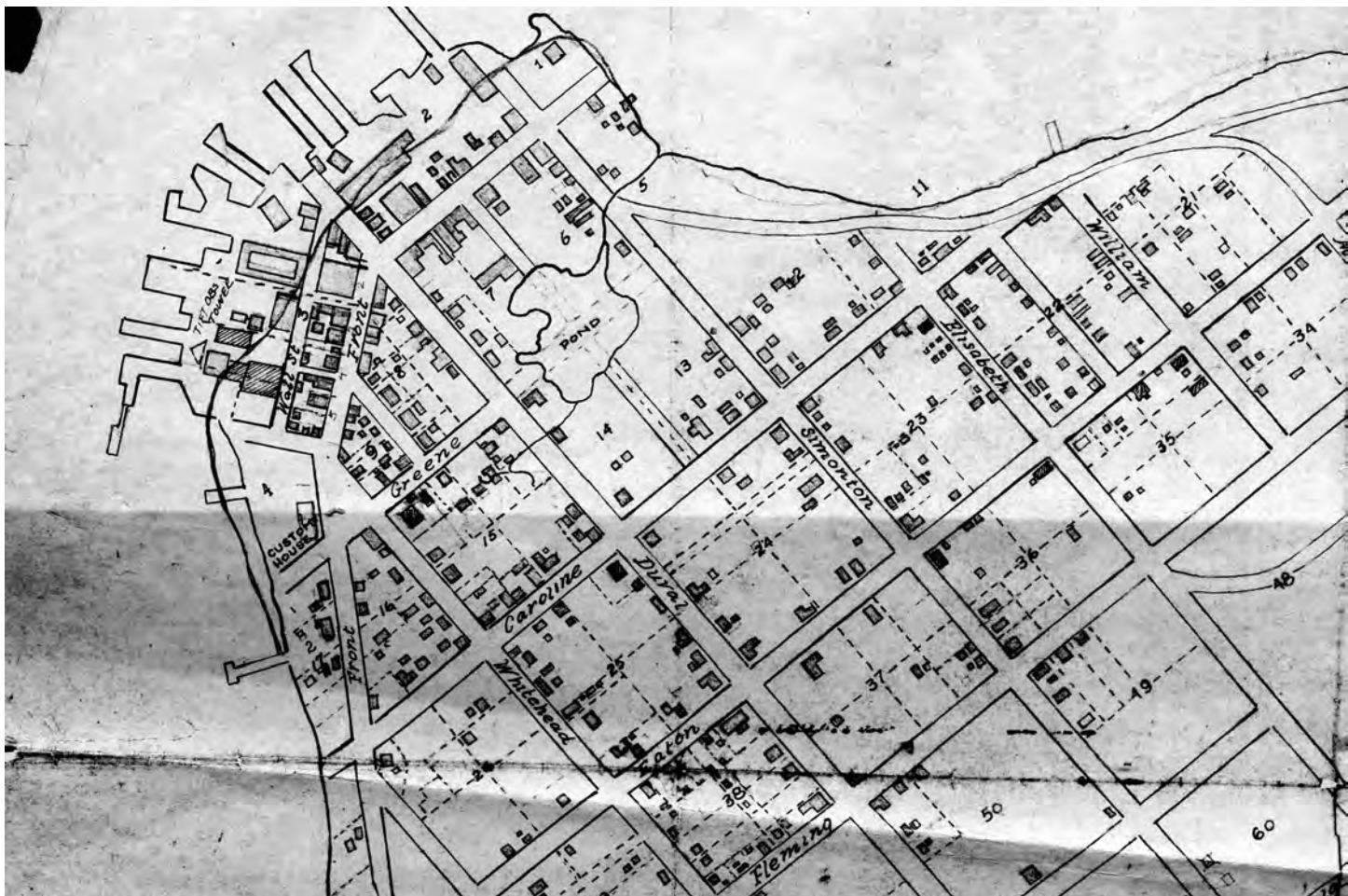
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*Part of the Army Map of 1860 showing the downtown area of Key West. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.*

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