

USS SHARK

# Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal

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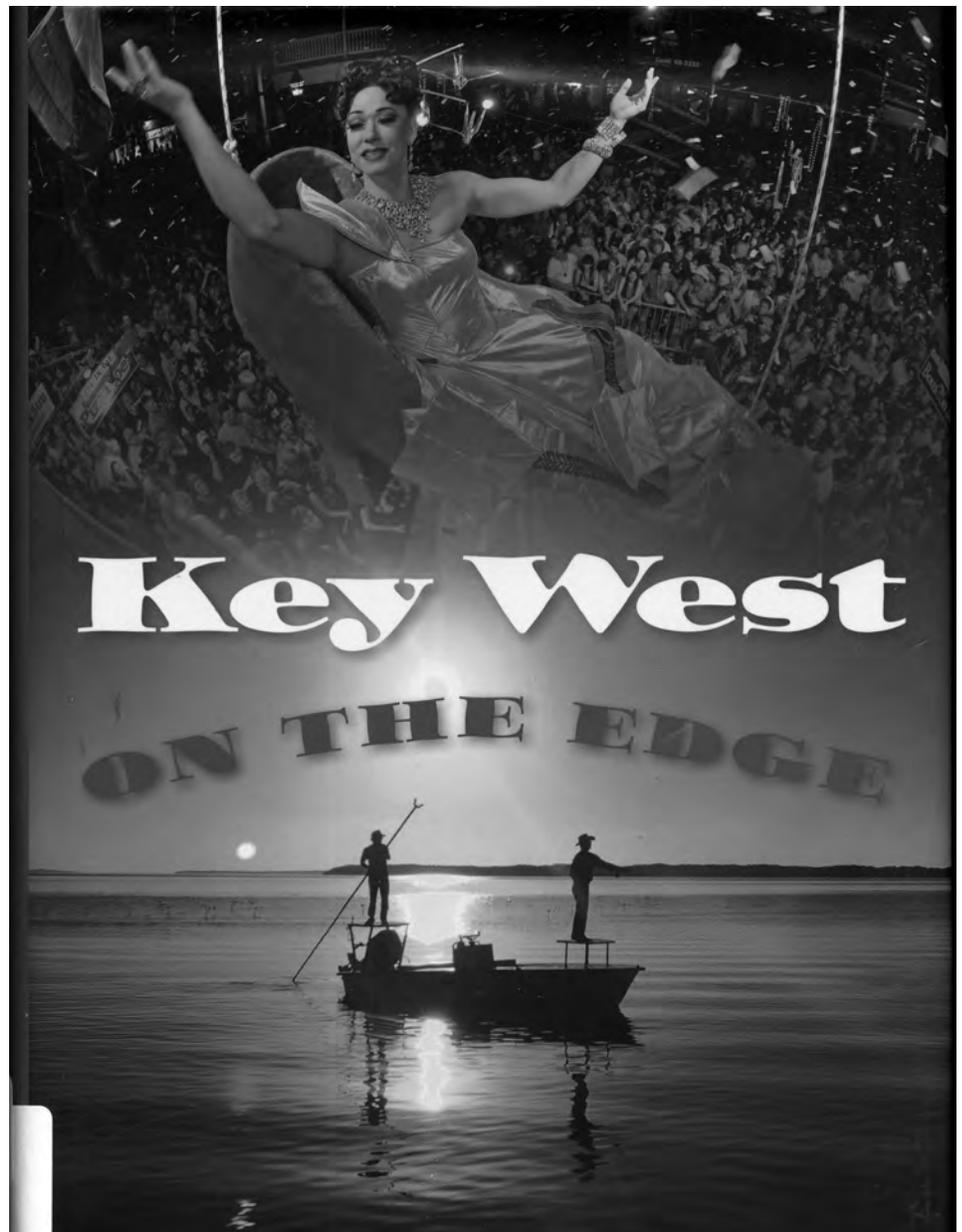
OFFICIAL QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE KEY WEST MARITIME HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Key West On the Edge

By Robert Kerstein

Over its history Key West has been many different things to many different people. Situated on a small island, only two miles wide and four miles long, and bounded by the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, it was once the largest city in Florida; at another time one of the wealthiest cities, per capita, in the United States; and at yet another time, one of the poorest. Blessed with its beautiful setting and tropical climate, Key West has, like many attractive tourist destinations, undergone a mighty struggle over its identity. Buffeted over the years by economic forces and national cultural changes, not to mention the occasional hurricane, Key West has long been one of America's most unique and intriguing places. In 1983, it elected Richard Heyman, the first openly gay mayor in the United States. And in 1989, citizens chose Captain Tony Tarrachino as mayor, who, as described by the Washington Post, "had been a ... gambler, gunrunner, saloonkeeper, fishing boat captain, ladies' man and peerless raconteur."

Historian Charlton Tebeau concluded that during the decades



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*The cover of Key West On the Edge.*

# SocietyNews

## by Tom Hambright

### Key Wester Strikes Gold

The Fall and Winter 2012 issues of the Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal published Mary Haffenreffer's transcription and description of the correspondence between Thomas Ferguson and his wife Rosalinda, written when he sought and struck gold in California, while she and their children suffered poverty in Key West. Colin Ferguson, a descendant, sent the Society the following article from the Daily Alta California newspaper of November 18, 1850.

#### LARGEST YET

Two gentlemen of our acquaintance passed this city a

few days since on their way to New York, with an amount of gold which we believe, to be unequalled in the records of individual successes in mining. They had with them dust to the value of 160,000 dollars, all obtained during the summer from two claims on the Yuba river. These lucky individuals are Messrs. Thomas J. and Daniel H. Ferguson, formerly of Danbury, Conn. They carried their treasure to Benicia upon the mules which brought it from the mountains, and it is probably the heaviest importation that will be made for some time into that grand port of entry. [Daily Alta California, Nov 18, 1850]

### ForgottenSoldiers

The Summer 2013 Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal published an article about the Forgotten Soldiers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment South Carolina Volunteer Regiment. The article begged the question: how many of these men returned to live in Key West? After a search of census records, city directories, Civil War service records, and Federal pension files, I have compiled the following list of probable Black Civil War veterans in Key West.

One record that has not been found is a membership list of the Major B.C. Lincoln Post No. 3 of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) The GAR was the national veteran organization of the Civil War, which was very active in community and political life. The Key West unit is often listed as a Black unit, but the Commander for many years was Dr. J.W.V.R.

Plummer, a White physician. The officials of the organization were often Black. The Key West chapter GAR appears for the last time in the 1911 City Directory.

The following is the list of possible Black Civil War veterans and the record(s) consulted:

Stephney Austin (1880 U.S. Census)

John Bolton (Florida State Census 1885)

Allen Dean (1870 U.S. Census, Pension Files 1861-1934)

Manuel Dean (1870 U.S. Census, Florida State Census 1885, Pension Files 1861-1934)

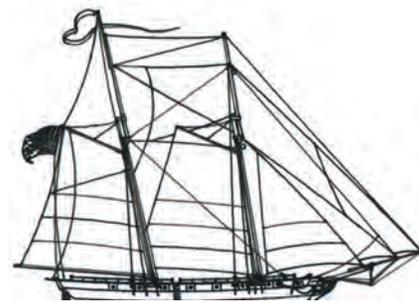
James Frazier (U.S. Census 1880)

Samuel Gabriel (Florida State Census, U.S. Civil War Service Records of Union Colored

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#### New Members

Jan and Donald Allman, Fort Myers, FL.



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Editor: Tom Hambright

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(Key West from page 1)

before the Civil War, when the wrecking industry thrived, Key West could be best “understood as a cosmopolitan, even international island of economic, social and cultural activity, unlike any other in Florida and having little contact with it.” By the 1880s, the cigar industry had taken the place of wrecking as the island’s primary industry, drawing thousands of Cuban immigrants to the island. Still, many observers found the island attractive and different. In 1884, the author of a guide to fishing and camping in Florida called it a “quaint and charming city, full of oddities and incongruities.” Four years later, Jacksonville’s Florida Times-Union, wrote that “Nowhere within the boundaries of the United States can be found a place resembling (Key West), with its row of frame-built buildings, its hundreds of cigar factories, its cosmopolitan population, and its thousand and one other peculiarities which claim the attention of the stranger.” A woman visiting Key West in 1886 also emphasized its uniqueness, calling it “an odd and novel place, and the more interesting on that account. There are peculiarities here that strike a stranger very forcibly. Key West is intensely unlike any other place in the Union.”

Even before Key West attracted many tourists, however, the fear that the island would lose its unique flavor was voiced. After Henry Flagler’s Florida East Coast Railway reached the island in 1912, the concern was raised that “The whistle of the locomotive will be heard in the land and another queer corner of the earth will be put on the civilized map.” After Julius Stone, the federal administrator of the Federal Emergency Relief



*Military men in a Duval Street Bar. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.*

Administration (FERA) in Florida initiated a successful effort to attract tourists to the island in 1934, some Conchs, as well as some visitors, including world-renowned poets Wallace Stevens and Robert Frost, criticized changes in the town. Stevens, for example, claimed in 1935 that “Key West is no longer quite the delightful affection it once was.”

Still, neither the railroad, nor the Overseas Highway, which linked Key West to the mainland in 1928, albeit with a 40-mile gap that necessitated the use of car ferries, detracted from many visitors’ fascination with the island city. Writer and inventor George Allan England wrote that Key West is “different from all other cities, filled with beauty and with curious, unique pictures... somewhat a state of mind, unique and unapproachable...save by those who love and understand the tropics.” Ernest Hemingway arrived in Key West in 1928 after spending much of the decade in Paris. He

wrote in a letter to a friend, “It’s the best place I’ve ever been anytime, anywhere, flowers, tamarind trees, guava trees, coconut palms...Got tight last night on absinthe and did knife tricks.”

Even after the growth of tourism in the mid-1930s, others continued to praise Key West. After Martha Gellhorn, who was to become Hemingway’s third wife, arrived on a visit to Key West in 1937, she wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt, “I’m in Key West: to date it’s the best thing I’ve found in America.” And after Tennessee Williams first experienced Key West in 1941, he noted, “This is the most fantastic place that I have been yet in America.”

Key West changed during the war years and post-war decades in ways that many felt enhanced the allure of the island. In his memoir “A Pirate Looks at 50,” Jimmy Buffett recollected the Key West he first observed in the early

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*The Flag of the Conch Republic. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.*

(Key Weest from page 3)

1970s: “Living in Key West in the early seventies was not like living in America. It was a hybrid culture where you were linked to the future by FedEx service...while Cuban coffee and guayabera kept alive the flavor of the ethnic past...There were the drug smugglers... In the early days they used to unload at the dockside in broad daylight, and nobody much cared... The gay community discovered Key West... The Puritans had never made it this far south, thank God... Then there were shrimpers. Talk about a group of individuals with a reputation for bad behavior. They made rock bands look like church choirs. They, too, gathered at the end of the road because their bad behavior was tolerated.” Adding to this mix and diversity were the thousands of military personnel who were

stationed at Boca Chica Air Base, Truman Annex, or Trumbo Point.

By the end of the 1970s, the military’s presence on the island was less significant due to the closing of Truman Annex in 1974. Although shrimp boats still were present in large numbers on the Key West Bight, their numbers were diminished during the 1980s. It was clear to many that tourism would need to be the key driver of Key West’s economy. The organization of the first Fantasy Fest in October 1979 by several gay businesspeople and others was a harbinger of things to come.

The desire to enhance tourism also motivated Key West’s infamous secession from the Union. On April 23, 1982, Mayor Dennis Wardlow proclaimed Key West “The Conch Republic.” He surrendered a few minutes later and asked for \$1 billion in foreign aid from the

United States, but not before the Conch Republic’s Minister of Defense hit a U.S. Navy officer with a loaf of Cuban bread, his version of having “fired a volley.”

Key West initiated the mock secession to protest a U.S. Border Patrol roadblock near Florida City on U.S. Route 1 that had been that ostensibly had been established to search for illegal aliens, but that also searched for drugs in cars driving north on the only road connecting Key West with the mainland. The motivation for the “secession” was that the roadblock was hurting the island’s tourism business. Tourists were unlikely to drive to Key West knowing they would face long delays driving home. The fact that Key Westers chose this strategy to express disdain for the federal action indicated that Key West was not a typical town. Still, although the island’s protest strategy was

unique, the rationale for the protest was one increasingly pursued by many communities - to increase tourism.

During the remainder of the 1980s tourism increased and it continued to do so during the following decade and the early years of the new century. The Tourism Development Council, funded by the “bed” tax on overnight visitors, advertised widely for tourists to “Come as You Are” to an island that was “Close to Perfect – Far From Normal.” As they had always been, tourists continued to be drawn by the weather and water to what some perceived as an American island in the Caribbean. Many were attracted by the buskers, chickens, and the Sunset Celebration. Fantasy Fest and newer festivals, including Hemingway Days and the Key West Songwriters’ Festival, attracted tourists. The island’s heritage also offered reasons for tourists to visit, such as the Harry S. Truman “Little White House,” the Key West Lighthouse & Keepers Quarters Museum, the Hemingway House, and the Key West Museum of Art and History in the Custom House. Writers and those interested in literature were attracted by the Key West Literary Festival and the writers’ workshops associated with Hemingway Days. The island’s gay and lesbian residents sponsored Women’s Week, PrideFest and other activities that added to the town’s tourism draw.

Several sections of Key West transformed to accommodate a new economy based upon tourism and an increasing number of second homes for wealthy out of town investors. The Key West Bight, once home to shrimp boats and other commercial fishing vessels, became the “Historic Seaport,” the new name sanctioned by the city, featuring charter fishing and sightseeing boats that catered to tourists. On Caroline Street, across from the bight, rough-and-tumble



*The shrimp fleet in Key West Bight. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.*

bars gave way to boutiques and mainstream restaurants. Duval Street changed to accommodate tourists’ desires, gaining restaurants, chain stores, T-shirt shops, and art galleries, in place of the neighborhood-based businesses that had long served residents.

Cruise ships represented another significant trend in Key West’s transition to mass tourism. In 1986, 46,000 passengers disembarked in Key West, wandered around for about five or six hours, then returned to their ships. By 2000, the number had increased to almost 665,000 and in 2002 and 2003 more than one million cruise ship passengers arrived at either Mallory Docks, Pier B, which the Hilton Hotel (now the Westin) owned, or at the Outer Mole, which the Navy still owned but leased to Key West to service cruise ships. Indeed, Key West’s volume of cruise ship traffic increased to rank among the highest in the world, with one estimate placing Key West as the

world’s fourth busiest cruise ship port in 2003.

Key West’s increase in tourism, and especially in cruise ship traffic, made it an object of criticism in a widely publicized analysis of tourist destinations. In March 2004, National Geographic Traveler magazine characterized Key West as a tourist destination gone bad. The magazine’s “destination scorecard” ranked 115 tourist destinations from around the world as “Good,” “Not so Bad,” or “Getting Ugly.” Key West ranked third from the bottom in the “Getting Ugly” group. Key West received a rating of “bad” for both its tourism management and its likely future outlook, and a “warning” for its aesthetics.

Several of Key West’s literary figures wrote critically of changes in the community. Joy Williams, in the 2003 edition of her popular *Travel Guide to Key West and the Florida Keys*, concluded that the island had achieved “the critical mass of a totally tourist-

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*Cuban refugees landing at Truman Annex during the Mariel Boatlift in 1980. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.*

(Key West from page 5)

based economy.” A “business-development oligarchy prevailed” on the island, she continued, regardless of the “promoted carefree image.” Rosalind Brackenberry, another Key West author, observed that in earlier decades the island had displayed the “charm of the unexpected, the irregular, the slightly decrepit, the sun-won ... chickens, eccentric people.” Now, Key West’s atmosphere had changed for a variety of reasons, including rapid development and mass tourism. Greed had led to more tourism, development, and overcrowding, “giving in to the lowest common denominator, ignoring any sense of scale, from cruise ships to the monstrous concrete development out on South Roosevelt.”

However, as had been the case since the 1930s, and even earlier, people’s responses to Key West were mixed. The same week the critique in the *Traveler* appeared, The New York Times travel section praised Key West. The writer heralded the range of activities available to visitors: “A Key West vacation means different things to different people. For some, it’s one long bar crawl. For other, Key West is all about the water: fishing, snorkeling, sailing, jet skiing, parasailing... Then there’s cultural Key West, with an extraordinary collection of Victorian houses and a rich literary history.” In March 2004, the *Island* magazine website also praised Key West, including it among its “Top 10 island picks” in the world, along with such destinations as Tahiti and Martha’s Vineyard. Publications targeting gay tourists also praised

Key West. In December 2003, *Out and About* named Key West as the most desirable winter vacation destination for gays and lesbians.

Whichever of these perspectives is more persuasive, it is clear that the island was moving upscale. This was manifested in the both the cost of housing and in the price and character of new tourist accommodations. Since the 1990s, real estate investment has rivaled tourism promotion and local color as a shaping force of the community. The island increasingly attracted wealthy purchasers of home and condominiums. It had become fashionable and comfortable, rather than bohemian, to move to Key West, if only for a few months of the year. Gentrification had begun in Old Town during the late 1970s, but housing prices soon skyrocketed in virtually every neighborhood.

The U.S. Census recorded that in both 1960 and 1970 the median value of homes in Key West was lower than the median for the State of Florida. From 2005 to 2009, however, the median home value in Key West (\$640,000) rose to three times that of the entire state (\$211,300). Prices dropped during The Great Recession, but they remained relatively high. Key West's culture and amenities encouraged many to purchase seasonal homes in Key West, fueling a rise in home prices. Many, however, including creative younger people attracted to the town's history and ambience, were unable to become residents because of Key West's high costs and limited opportunity for economic mobility. Others left the island, unable to afford the high costs of housing. The poet Richard Wilbur, then a Key West resident, remarked in an interview after winning his second Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1989, "I hope it (Key West) always remains a place where you can live without being rich." Increasingly, however, Wilbur's hope for Key West was dashed.

Tourist accommodations also increased in price. Although these increases did not deter tourists from visiting the island, new luxury accommodations challenged the character of the island in the same manner as did increasing housing values. For example, Atlantic Shores, a hotel on South Street, by the Atlantic Ocean, opened as an inexpensive hotel in the 1950s. It was renovated in the mid-1990s, but still offered relatively inexpensive rooms and catered primarily to gay and lesbian visitors and locals. It included a clothing-optional pool whose sign read, "We don't discriminate against heterosexuals." Atlantic Shores closed in May 2007



*Mayor Richard Heyman with commissioners Virginia Panico and Harry Powell. Photo credit Monroe County Library.*

and was sold to Southernmost Hotels & Resorts, which razed the hotel and constructed new upscale rooms on its site. A drag queen who had performed at Atlantic Shores concluded, "It's the end of an era."

Key West's attributes still offers much that is attractive to those who value a different and unique experience. Many of the city's locally owned guesthouses distinguish themselves by catering to specific groups and interests; some specialize in gay tourism, while others highlight literary and historic themes. The many independent restaurants and entertainment establishments, as well as other aspects of the island city, including its architecture, vegetation, pedestrian friendliness, and balmy winter weather, ensure that tourists experience something out of the ordinary. Few towns boast of thousands of chickens roaming around to the amusement, or frustration, of tourists and residents.

Although Key West is in some ways still unique, its uniqueness

lies within a different context than before the transition to a tourism and vacation-home community. The island has managed to maintain a sense of place. This place, however, is open to a far smaller cross-section of the population than it was in earlier decades. The tensions between mass tourism, outside money, and a local culture that evolves with the influx of newcomers, continues. The island provides a welcome environment for many residents and visitors. Others, however, including past and present residents, both Conchs and transplants, as well as visitors to the island in earlier decades, bemoan the Key West that is gone.

*Robert Kerstein is Professor of Government at the University of Tampa. He wrote this synopsis of his book "Key West on the Edge" for the Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal. The book published by the Universities of Florida Presses won the Florida Historical Society's Tebeau Award for the best Florida history book of 2012.*

# 18th century Map of the Florida Keys

by Corey Malcom

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Heritage Society

In the Archivo General de Las Indias -- a vast repository of documents housed in Seville, Spain, that documents the story of that nation's 400-year colonial system in the Americas -- there is an interesting and significant map of the Florida Keys. The anonymously-created map reveals important information regarding the ill-fated 1733 Nueva España Flota (New Spain, or Mexico, fleet). The fleet had been dashed along the island chain by a hurricane in July of 1733, and the map looks to have been created specifically to illustrate the locations of the wrecks. Though the map is undated, its subject-matter suggests that it was most likely created shortly after the disaster. Significantly, the map also gives an excellent understanding of how the islands were known during the time.

The chart is titled "Parages Donde vajaron los Navios de La Flota Del Año De 1733," which translates to "Places Where the Ships of the Fleet of the Year of 1733 Grounded." This heading is followed by a list of numbered ship names, with each number corresponding to a shipwreck's location along the reefs and keys.

The map has a familiar feel to the modern eye, and the Florida Keys are depicted much as they are understood today. Alongside many of the keys, are the names that were used for them at the time. Drawn along with the islands are representations of many of the shallower reefs that fringe the island chain's Atlantic side, and dashed contour lines depict the

shoal waters near the islands and the approximate seaward edge of the reef line. The map is oriented with north toward the top of the image, as defined by a north-arrow at the upper, left-hand margin. A scale along the same margin provides latitude readings in degrees that are further sub-divided into twenty sections: the 25th and 26th parallels are labelled with general accuracy. These lines intersect with other rhumbs to form a complex, web-like grid across the entire chart. If the primary purpose of the chart was to give the reader a precise idea of where each of the ships of the 1733 fleet was lost within islands and reefs of the Florida Keys, the information provided by the north arrow, rhumb-line grid, and latitude scale would allow a user to identify the approximate bearing and distance between the features depicted on the map.

## The 1733 Fleet

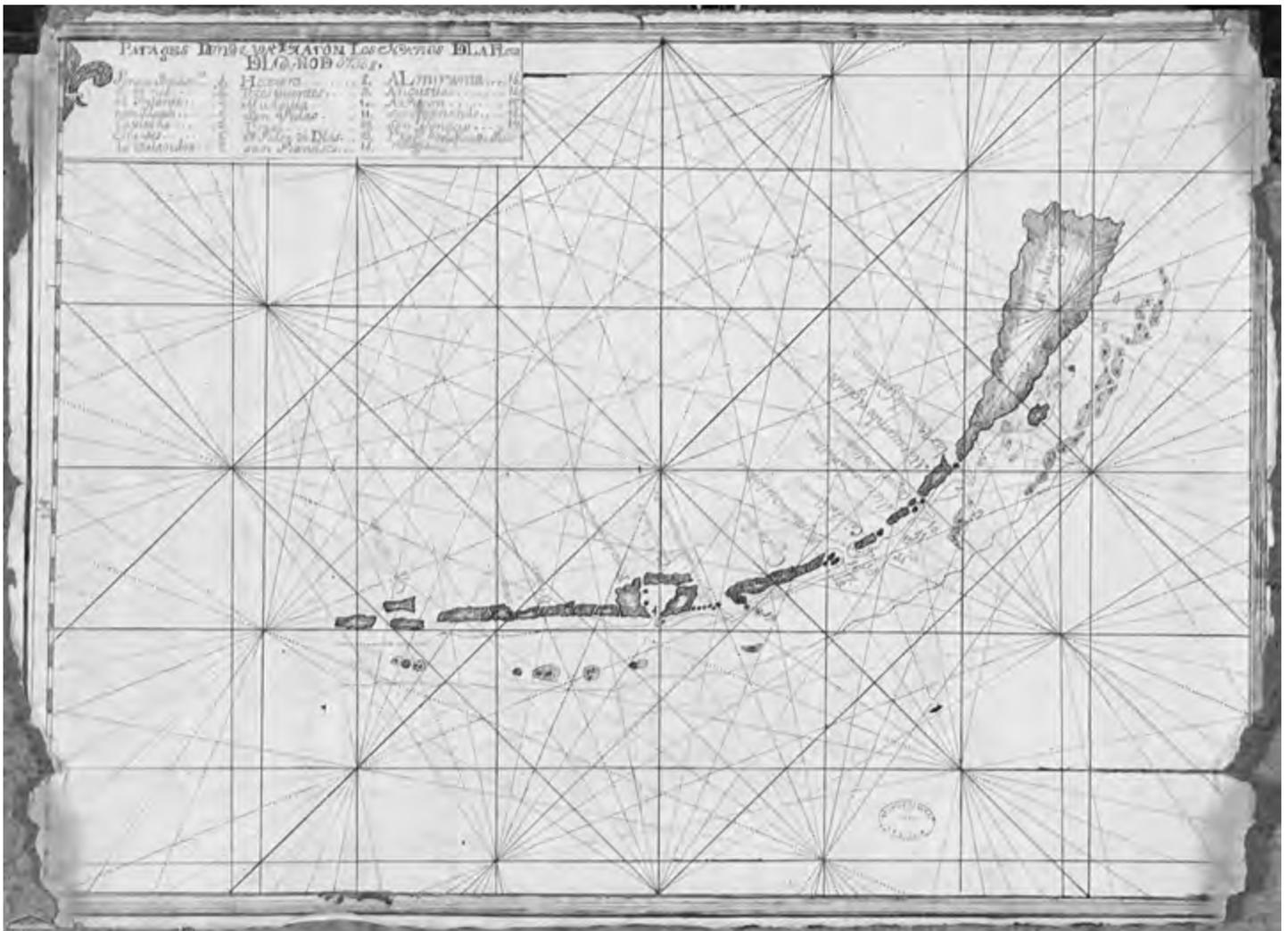
Spain's colonial maritime empire is well-remembered today for its treasure-laden ships sailing through the Caribbean. For centuries, these vessels were organized into convoys that carried the output of American mines and plantations across the Atlantic Ocean to Spain. For a period of over 250 years, at least two large fleets sailed annually -- one for South America (the Tierra Firme galleons), and one for Mexico (the Nueva España Flota). After doing their business in the colonies, these ships would meet with other vessels in Havana and then sail to Spain as a group.

On May 25, 1733 the Nueva España Flota, under the command of Don Rodrigo de Torres, left Vera Cruz, Mexico for a one-month voyage to Havana.<sup>2</sup> The ships were loaded with silver, spices, porcelain

and a wide variety of other commercial cargoes from Asia and the Americas, all intended for the markets and coffers of Spain. After taking on final cargoes, provisions, and passengers, the convoy of 21 ships left Havana on July 13th. The ships sailed northward until they sighted Key West, then adjusted their course to carry them eastward through the Florida Straits. The following evening, they began to experience contrary north winds; experience told Torres and his captains that a hurricane was imminent. By the morning of July 15th, the winds increased and clocked around to the south, and the fleet was soon driven onto the reefs and shoals of the Florida Keys. By the time the storm abated, twenty vessels were wrecked, scattered from present-day Marathon to Key Biscayne.

News of the tragedy quickly reached Havana, and salvage crews were dispatched to offer relief to the victims of the disaster, and, just as importantly, to recover the vast wealth aboard the stricken ships. Along the shoals fronting the Florida Keys, they found almost all of the fleet's ships hard aground and dismasted. Camps were quickly established on some of the nearby Keys, and they served as both refuges for the survivors and command centers for the extensive salvage operations that followed.

Most of the fleet's ships were badly damaged, and only two of them could be refloated and put back into service. Fortunately, most were in shallow enough water that it was relatively easy for salvage teams from Havana to recover their cargoes. A variety of techniques were employed to rescue whatever could be recovered from the



*Parages Donde vajaron los Navios de La Flota Del Año De 1733 Photo credit: Archivo General de Indias, MP-SANTO DOMINGO, 862.*

wrecks, including burning many of them down to the waterline to more easily remove the treasure and other cargoes in their holds and the iron fittings from their hulls. Ultimately, more treasure was recovered from the wrecks than had been registered.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning in the 1930's, many of the shipwreck sites were re-discovered by US treasure hunting operations, and various such groups worked for many decades to recover much of what had been lost or left behind on the sea floor by the Spaniards. Three of the shipwreck sites have never been located. Today, thirteen of the 1733 shipwreck sites are recognized as public historical sites, one is in Biscayne National Park; the other

twelve are found in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. A program called the "1733 Spanish Galleon Trail" has been developed by the State of Florida and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary to encourage interested divers to visit these shipwrecks and learn first-hand about Spain's important colonial-maritime system and the tragedy suffered by these particular ships nearly 300 years ago.<sup>4</sup>

Through a keyed numbering system, the map shows precise locations of each of the grounded ships. The names of the vessels are listed and numbered to correspond with the charted locations. Oftentimes a familiar nickname for a ship is used on the map, instead of

its longer, formal name. The ships are listed on the chart as follows, along with a summary of what is known about each ship's, size, number of crew, and number of guns:<sup>5</sup>

#### The Locations of the 1733 Shipwrecks

1: **Pinque Populonio** –Nuestra Señora del Populo; a crown-owned vessel; don Juan de Egúes, master; Keel of 58 codos<sup>6</sup>; 150 men; 20 guns. A Pinque [Pink] is a smaller, narrow-sterned vessel, with a relatively flat bottom.

2: **El Aviso** –The advice ship, don Jose de Aramvide, master; Keel of 35 codos; 20 men and 8 guns.

3: **El Ynfante** –El Infante / (Continued on page 10)

(Map from page 9)

Nuestra Señora de Balvaneda, don Pablo Aguirre, master; Keel of 62 codos; 450 men & 60 guns.

4: **San Joseph** –San José y Las Animas; don Xeval Fr. Francisco; Keel of 60 codos; 130 men & 30 guns.

5: **Capitana** –El Rubí, crown-owned; don Juan de Arnaud, master; Keel of 64 codos; 500 men & 64 guns.

6: **Chaves** –Nuestra Señora del Carmen, San Antonio y Las Animas; don Antonio de Chaves, master; Genoese-built; 220 3/8 tons; Keel of 45 codos; 50 men & 18 guns.

7: **La Valandra** – A balandra is a small, single-masted sailing ship. No specifics are given for the vessel and nothing is known of its fate.

8: **Herrera** –Nuestra Señora de Belén y San Antonio; don Luis de Herrera, master; 242 ½ tons; Keel of 53 codos; 70 men & 20 guns.

9: **Tres Puentes** –Nuestra Señora de los Dolores y Santa Isabel; don Antonio Loaliza, master; 296 tons; Keel of 60 codos; 130 men & 30 guns.

10: **Murgia** –Nuestra Señora del Rosario; don Juan de Espeleta, master; Keel of 60 codos; 130 men & 30 guns. Re-floated and saved.

11: **San Pedro** – don Gaspar López, master; Dutch-built; 287 tons; Keel of 56 codos; 125 men; 24 guns.

12: **Teyrri** –San Felipe; don José del Villar, master; 486 tons; Keel of 64 codos; 130 men & 34 guns.

13: **El Poder de Dios** –El Gran Poder de Dios; don Jose Sánchez de Madrid, master; {Keel?} 75 men & 20 guns. Re-floated and saved.

14: **San Francisco** – don Vicente de Iturribarria, master; 264 2/3 tons; Keel of 57 codos; 120 men & 26 guns.

15: **Almiranta** –Nuestra Señora de Balvaneda/El Gallo Indiano;

crown-owned; don Francisco Tomas Aguirre, master; Keel of 60 codos; 450 men & 56 guns.

16: **Angustias** –Nuestra Señora de las Angustias y San Raphael/ El Charanguero Grande (The Large Coastal Trader); English-built; 328 ½ tons; don Francisco Sánchez de Madrid, master; Keel of 60 codos; 130 men & 30 guns.

17: **Arizon** –Nuestra Señora del Rosario y San Vicente Ferrer; don Juan de Arizon; Keel of 57 codos; 125 men & 25 guns. This ship is also listed as El Sueco de Arizon (The Swede of Arizon), perhaps an indication that it was Swedish-built.

18: **San Fernando** –don Juan de Reina, master; Keel of 61 codos; 130 men & 34 guns.

19: **San Ygnacio** –San Ignacio; don Cristóbal Urquijo, master; Keel of 60 codos; 130 men & 30 guns.

20: **Fragta de la florida Sumergida**: Frigate of Florida (St. Augustine) was sunk without a trace in deeper water. No specifics are given for the vessel.

One other ship was also part of the 1733 fleet, but it is not listed - the royal galleon **San Jose**, also known as **El Africa**, don Pablo Huony, master. It too suffered the violence of the storm and came to a halt somewhere in the northernmost reaches of the Keys. Once its sails were re-rigged, the **Africa** took the survivors of the Populo and the Aviso ship onboard, and it safely continued its voyage to Spain. The San Jose/El Africa was the largest ship in the fleet with a Keel of 66 codos, carrying 66 guns and 500 men.

#### The Names of the Florida Keys

Early maps and charts of Florida often depict the Florida Keys, but they regularly labeled them generically as “Los Martires,” or the martyrs, a name given to them by Ponce de Leon in 1513, “because,

seen from a distance, the rocks as they rose to view appeared like men who were suffering”<sup>7</sup>. This map is different, though, in that it is Keys-specific: only the chain of islands is shown, disembodied from the mainland. Along with the detailed drawings of the islands, the map also indicates the names that the Spanish used for them some 300 years ago. Although some of the names of these islands have changed over time, most have not. The depicted place-names are listed below, written exactly as they appear on the drawing, along with an English translation and the names of the islands used today:

A - Cayo de Hueso – “Key of Bone”; today’s Key West.

B - Voca Chica – “Small Mouth”; today’s Boca Chica.

C - Piñero – “Piner”; it is drawn at the locations of today’s Sugarloaf & Cudjoe Keys, which may have been considered part of the Big Pine Key group.

D - Punta de Cagoamas – “Point of Sea Turtles,” or “Point of Canoes”;<sup>8</sup> a point on the north side of Big Pine Key.

E - Vahiahonda – “Deep Bay”; today’s Bahia Honda Key.

F - Cayos chicos de vaihiahonda – “Little Keys of Deep Bay”; today’s Ohio, Missouri, Little Duck and Money Keys.

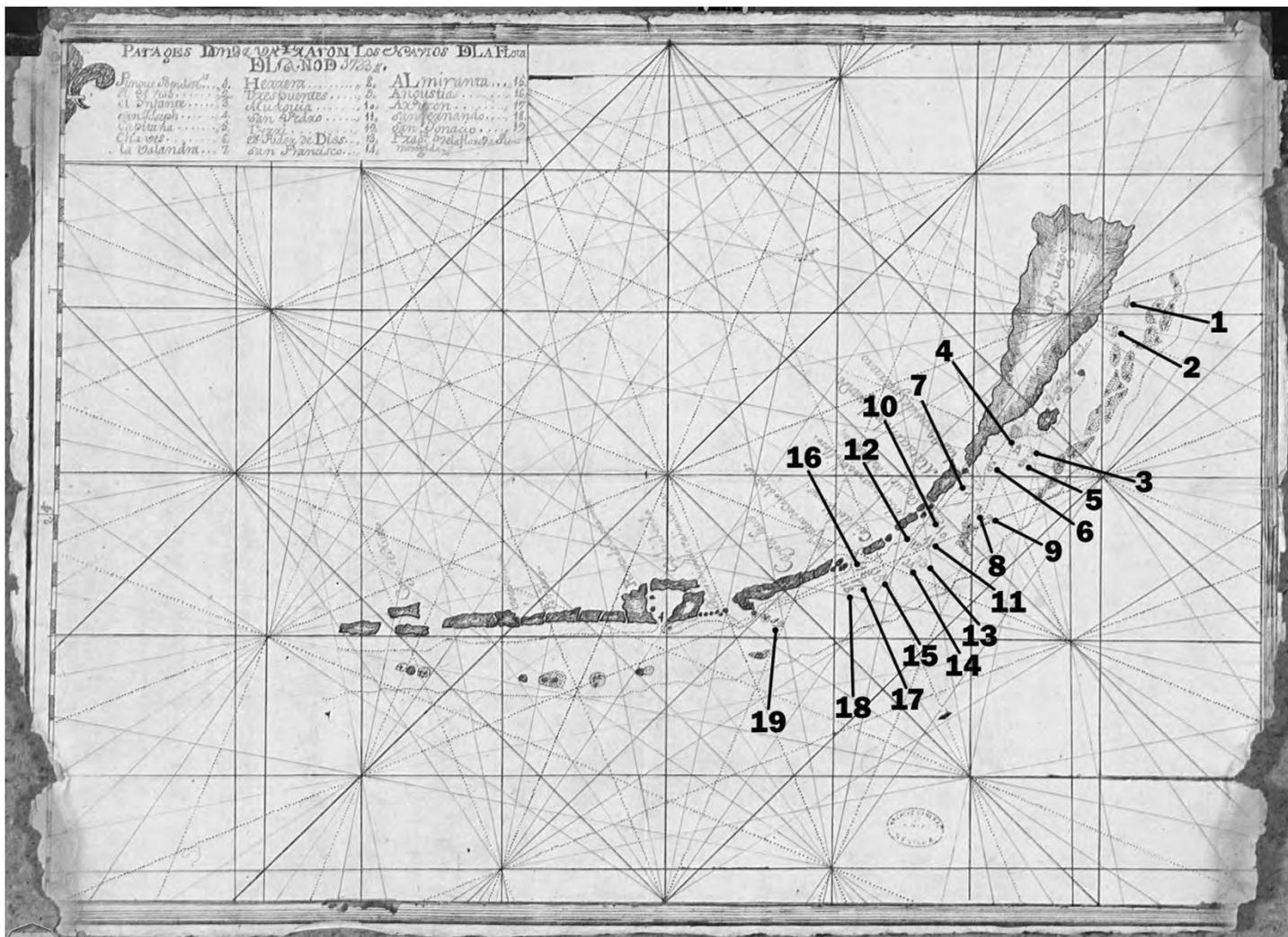
G - Cayo de vacas – “Key of Cows” today’s Key Vaca, site of the city of Marathon.

H - Hijuelos de Caio de vacas – “Little children of the Key of Cows”; today’s Key Colony, Crawl, Fat Deer, and Deer Keys.

I - Caio de Viboras – “Key of Vipers;” today’s Long Key.

J - Matacumbe el Mozo – “Matecumbe the Younger”; today’s Lower Matecumbe Key.

K - Cayuelo de Matanza – “Islet of Slaughter”; today’s Indian Key



*The Locations of the 1733 Shipwrecks. Photo credit: the Author.*

L – Matacumbe el grande – “Matecumbe the Greater”; today’s Upper Matecumbe Key.

M – Las vocas de Guerrero – “The Warrior’s Mouths”; the channels between Upper Matecumbe, Wilson, Windley, and Plantation Keys.

N – Cayo de la parida – “Key of the new mother.” Bernard Romans noted that the Spanish called the Soldier Keys in Biscayne Bay “La Parida y su Iguela,” (The new mother and her little daughter).<sup>9</sup> The key shown on this map appears to be a representation of today’s Rodriguez Key, probably reflecting confusion between the two places.

O – Cayo Largo – “Long Key”; today’s Key Largo.

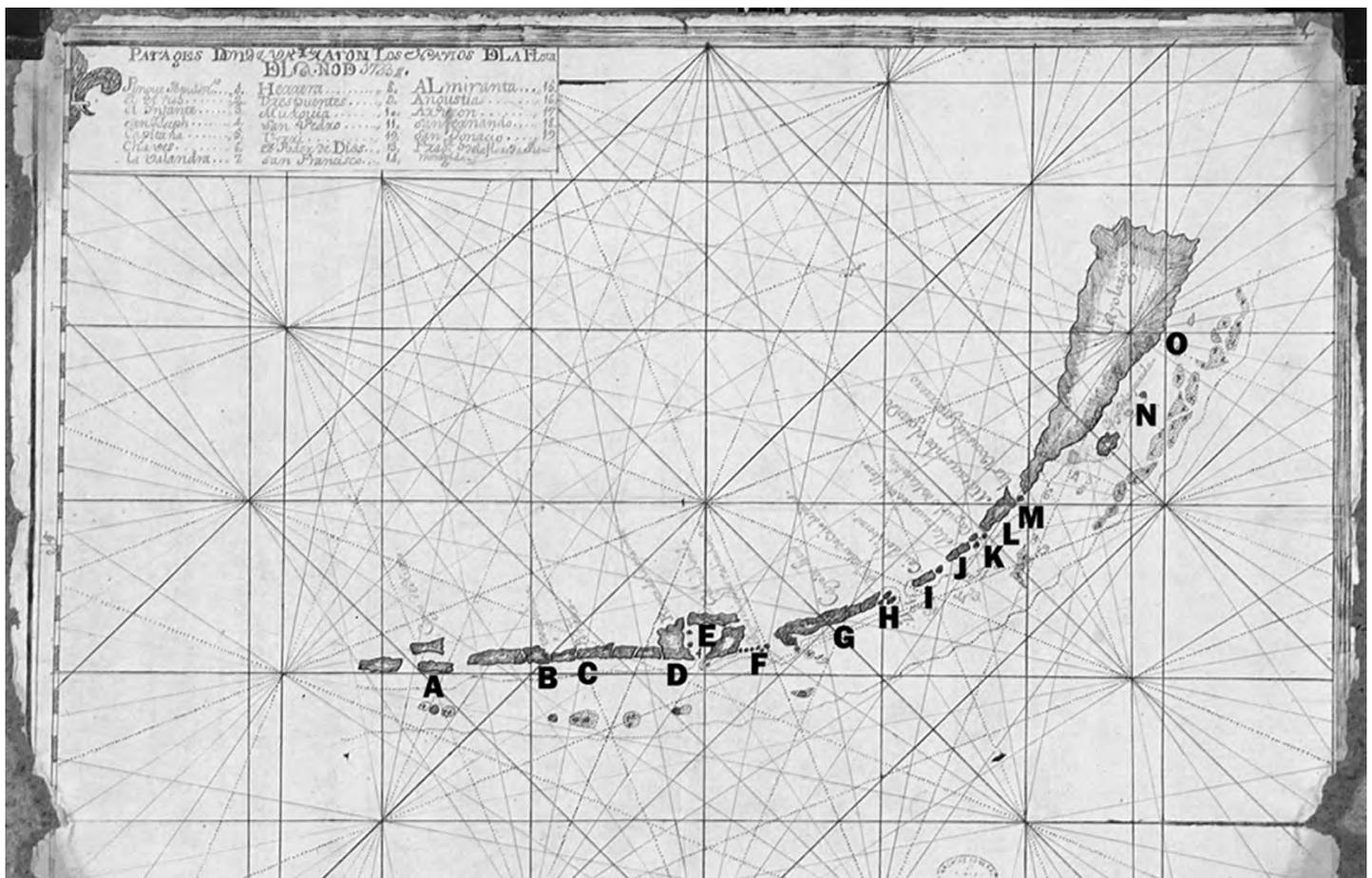
Though they are not listed by name, the map also depicts the

most prominent reefs that fringe the islands on the southern side. By comparing the reefs drawn on the Spanish map to modern charts, we can deduce that they are Sand Key, Eastern and Western Dry Rocks, the Sambos, American Shoal, Looe Key, Sombrero Key, Alligator Reef, and the long complex of reefs running from Molasses Reef to Carysfort Reef to Turtle Rocks.

### Conclusion

Over 200 years after the Florida Keys were first encountered by Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon in 1513, a chart was made of the island chain by an unknown cartographer, apparently to document the tragic loss of the Spanish treasure fleet of 1733. This map clearly lists the places

where each of the fleet’s ships was wrecked, illustrating the magnitude and situation of the loss, perhaps to guide salvage efforts to the wreck sites. But this centuries-old map not only outlines the tragic disaster suffered by the treasure fleet, it also gives us a look into how these islands were known and understood in the early part of the 18th century. Though they were never permanently settled by the Spanish, and at the time were occupied by a population of Native Americans, the Florida Keys look to have been thoroughly explored and were well-understood within the Spanish colonial system. The islands were certainly known from a distance to mariners, because they served as a waypoint for  
(Continued on page 12)



The Names of the Florida Keys. Photo credit: the Author.

(Map from page 11)

ships exiting the Caribbean while catching a ride on the Gulfstream current, and it was well-understood that reefs and shoals fronted the Keys and were hazards to be avoided. But, as this map makes clear, early explorers had come in close to shore and the islands themselves had been thoroughly surveyed and documented, with names for them either appropriated or created. Much of our modern-day conception of the Florida Keys is rooted in the Spanish colonial period, and the geography of Florida's southernmost island chain has been well understood for a very long time.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Sobel, D. (1995). *Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time*, Walker & Company, New York.

<sup>2</sup>Don Francisco de Vara y Valdez

to Señor don Joseph Patino, n.d.; *Archivo General de Las Indias, Archivo General de las Indias Indiferente* 1987, translated by Jack Haskins. In Robert J. Benson, ed. (2002). *The Capitana Project: Final Excavation Report*, at

[http://www.maritimearchaeology.org/Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.maritimearchaeology.org/Final_Report.pdf).

<sup>3</sup>Smith, Roger C. (1988). "Treasure Ships of the Spanish Main," in *Ships and Shipwrecks of the Americas*, George F. Bass, editor. Thames and Hudson, New York.

<sup>4</sup>Florida Underwater Archaeology Team (2005). *1733 Spanish Galleon Trail: Explore the Spanish Plate Fleet Disaster of 1733*. Florida Division of Historical Resources Bureau of Archaeological Research, Tallahassee. Also available at <http://www.flheritage.com/archaeology/underwater/galleontrail/>

<sup>5</sup>Much of the information about the ships comes from a lengthy newspaper account - Anonymous (1733). "Extract of a Letter from

the Havanna, Aug. 19, N.S." *London Daily Post*, October 26, p.1.

<sup>6</sup>The *codo real* was 565mm, or 22 inches long, according to Carla Rahn Phillips (1986), *Six Galleons for the King of Spain*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

<sup>7</sup>T. Frederick Davis (ed.), "Ponce de Leon's First Voyage and Discovery of Florida." *The Florida Historical Society Quarterly* 14:1 (July, 1935).

<sup>8</sup>De Lorenzo, Jose (1864), *Diccionario Marítimo Español*, Madrid, p.113. "Caguama = Bote muy pequeño semejante al chinchorro (a very small boat similar to the hammock)".

<sup>9</sup>Romans, B. (1776). *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida*, New York, p. 297.

Corey Malcom is director of Archaeology for the Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Society and President of the Key West Maritime Historical Society.

(Soldiers from page 2)

Troops)

Booker Glover (Florida Marriages 1837-1974, Pension Files 1861-1934)

Fulton McGuire (Florida State Census 1885, Pension Files 1861-1934)

David B. Mathews (1880 U.S. Census)

John Mathews (1880 U.S. Census)

Samuel Mathews (1880 U.S. Census)

Dennis McGee (1910 U.S. Census, U. S. Civil War Service Records of Union Colored Troops, G.A.R. City Directory )

Benjamin Murray (1879 U.S. Census)

Jonas Murray (1880 U.S. Census)

James A. Robert (G.A.R. City Directory)

Clinton Shavers (1880 U.S. Census, U.S. Civil War Service records of Union Colored Troops }

Frank Shavers (1900 U.S. Census, U.S. Civil War Service records of Union Colored Troops, G.A.R City Directory)

Henry Shavers (1910 U.S. Census, U.S. Civil War Service Records of Union Colored Troops, Pension Index 1861-1917)

Peter Shavers (1880 U.S. Census, U.S. Civil War Service Records of Union Colored Troops)

York Shavers (1880 U.S. Census, U.S. Civil War Service Records of Union Colored Troops)

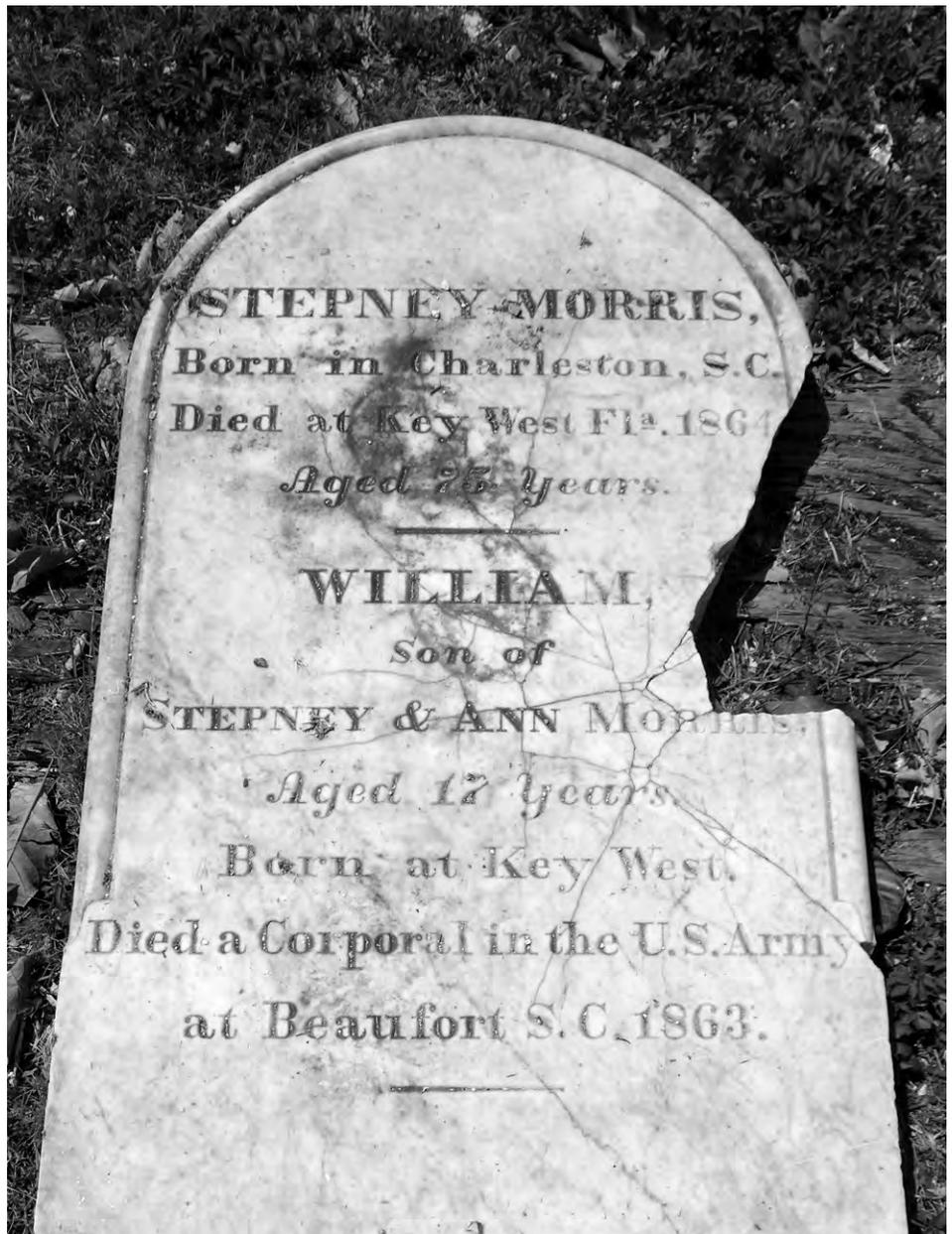
Joseph Stevens (1889 U.S. Census)

Augustus Swicover (1880 U.S. Census)

John Thomas (1880 U.S. Census)

Henry Vickers (Florida State Census 1885)

Charles Williams (1880 U.S. Census)



*The tombstone of Stepney Morris in the Key West City Cemetery. Photo Credit: Corey Malcom.*

The men with pension files, service records and G.A.R. office holders are almost certainly veterans. The others, gathered only from census records, are best guesses, using age and place of birth.

When searching history surprises are often found. During the research on this article Corey Malcom found the tombstone of William Morris, aged 17, died Corporal in the U.S. Army at Beaufort, SC in 1863. Morris was not found in the records used the "Forgotten Soldiers." The

search goes on.

Note

The 2nd South Carolina was involved in operations in defenses of Charleston until January 29, 1864. It moved to Jacksonville on February 5–7. While in Florida, the regiment was disbanded and subsequently reorganized as the 34th Infantry Regiment, U.S. Colored Troops on February 8, 1864. They were mustered out of the army on February 28, 1866.

# Navy Boom-Town Days

by John Viele

In early 1948, I reported aboard the submarine USS *Cubera* (SS 347) at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard. She was just completing conversion from a WWII Fleet-type boat to a Guppy (Greater Underwater Propulsion Program). With doubled battery capacity and a streamlined superstructure, we could reach 18 knots submerged. We also had a snorkel which allowed us to run two main engines and recharge the batteries while submerged at periscope depth. Saying goodbye to the shipyard, we set course for our new homeport, Key West.

My first glimpse of Key West was through the periscope. As we drew closer to the island and I saw the crystal-clear, blue-green waters and the waving palm trees, I knew I had made the right choice when I selected a Key West-based sub as my first choice upon graduation from Submarine School. Most Navy couples loved it, but some couldn't wait for orders transferring them elsewhere. In those days there were no shopping malls (still aren't), no TV, and Sears Roebuck was a catalog store.

With water deep enough for a sub to dive only seven miles from the island, the Navy had selected Key West to be its major anti-submarine training base on the East Coast. There were two submarine squadrons, each with their own submarine tender; a submarine rescue vessel; a surface ship anti-submarine development detachment with destroyers and destroyer escorts; anti-submarine aircraft (fixed-wing, helos, and blimps); the Fleet Sonar School; the Underwater Weapons School; and



*Cast of the USS Funship with the author on the right. Photo credit: the Author.*

numerous other commands which I can't remember, all involved in anti-submarine development and training. The total Navy population, including dependents, was about 17,000. We outnumbered the civilians! In the evening, Duval Street was a sea of white hats flowing from one bar to the next, replaced today by red-faced tourists marching from one T-shirt shop to another.

It was almost a base regulation that junior officers and their wives or dates attend the Fort Taylor Officers Club (on the southern shore a few hundred yards west of the Southernmost Point) for dining and dancing on Saturday nights. At the large U-shaped bar you could get a drink for 25 cents. The big dance floor, under the stars, was surrounded by many dining tables, sheltered under the roof. Facing the water was a long pier, a beach, picnic tables, and a tennis court.

If you didn't go to the club on Saturday night, you risked getting a rude awakening when the revelers returned in the wee hours to the married junior officer quarters at Rest Beach. Another thing you might miss was the chance to rub elbows with the president's daughter, Margaret Truman, and her Secret Service escorts when she

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came to dance to the Latin beat of the small orchestra. It was directed by the high school's music teacher who wrote many popular local tunes like "In Old Key West", "Bahama Mama," "and "Hot Bollos" (Cuban hush puppies).

Every so often, a local command would provide some entertainment at the club. I was attached to the Submarine Squadron Twelve staff, when the captain of our tender, the **Bushnell**, wrote a musical show, "USS *Funfish*" telling how great it was to be a crew member on one of Squadron Twelve's submarines. Wives acted as steward mates dressed in white hats and white stewards' jackets which stopped well above their knees. The show got rave reviews

President Truman didn't want a lot of ceremony when he came to relax at the Little White House, but some senior officers were determined that he was going to get it anyway. I remember standing on deck in dress whites with the crew manning the rail (rail? on a submarine?) For two hours on the chance that the President might look down and see us as he flew overhead to land at Boca Chica six miles away,

The President used to walk along the waterfront past the submarine piers on his way to take a morning swim at a little beach close by Ft. Taylor. It certainly wasn't his idea, but base orders were that everyone was to be in the uniform of the day at that time. You can bet that on the boats (submarines), except for the gangway watch, there was not a soul topside when he passed. He must have thought that submariners were like moles -- afraid of the light of day.

Another fun thing about duty in Key West in those days was the chance to enjoy a cheap weekend fling in Havana, During the week's

operations, our sub would gradually move south, until by Friday afternoon, we were practically at the mouth of Havana Harbor. The girls would fly over on Aerovias Q, the Cuban airline, for \$12 and meet us at a hotel. The captain and the executive officer might stay at the up-scale Hotel Nacional, but we junior officers found the price at Los Ambos Mundos, where the staff brought you a glass of hot milk in the morning, much more suited to our pocket books.

Late mornings and afternoons were spent shopping with free daiquiris in hand or sampling the wares at the rum factories – free of course. Then it was siesta time. After a dinner of arroz con pollo (chicken and yellow rice) at a local restaurant, it was off to Havana's famous nightclubs, the Copacabana or the Sans Souci. The floor shows with gorgeous girls in brief costumes were spectacular, and as long as you were buying drinks, no charge. Finally, back downtown to dance the rest of the night away at a native nightspot while downing too many Anjeo y Aguas (delicious aged rum and water).

Today, the subs are gone, Havana is out of bounds, and the Fort Taylor officers club is gone. Has the fellowship which once prevailed among the families of naval officers stationed at Key West also vanished?

*John Viele has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Key West Maritime Historical Society of the Florida Keys for the past 20 years. He is the author of three books on the history of the Keys published by Pineapple Press of Sarasota: "The Florida Keys – A History of the Pioneers," "The Florida Keys, Vol. 2 – True Stories of the Perilous Straits," and "The Florida Keys, Vol. 3 – The Wreckers."*

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