

Soldier Key

LAW OFFICES
SHUTTS, SMITH & BOWEN

FRANK B. SHUTTS
WILLIAM P. SMITH
CRATE D. BOWEN

LOUIS F. SNEDIGAR
GROVER C. MCCLURE

MIAMI, FLORIDA

December 30, 1918.

Soldier Key

Mr. Carl G. Fisher,
Miami Beach, City.

My dear Carl:

I have written Mr. Sanford's attorneys at New York today, asking for a price on Soldier Key, and will advise you as soon as I hear from them.

Won't you kindly send me all of your Olin Finney accounts, and I will get right after them.

Yours very truly,

W.P. Smith

WPS/VB

Van



~~504~~

1915-

*charged off by Dobyns
books not here
Van*

January 29 1919

Mr. W. P. Smith,
Care Shutt's, Smith & Bowen,
Miami, Florida.

Dear Will,

I have yours of the 27th. We will be very glad to take over Soldier Key as stated, at a price of \$15,000.

Please give me, as soon as possible, an inventory of the expenses on this key, showing expenditures to this amount.

Yours very truly,

CGF/mrb

LAW OFFICES
SHUTTS, SMITH & BOWEN

FRANK B. SHUTTS
WILLIAM P. SMITH
CRATE D. BOWEN
W. LEONARD FREELAND
LOUIS F. SNEDIGAR

MIAMI, FLORIDA

April 17, 1919.

Soldier Key

Mr. Carl G. Fisher,
Indianapolis, Indiana.

My dear Carl:

Major Sanford has now returned from France, and inasmuch as the expense of moving the household furniture from Soldier Key is not commensurate with its value, he would like to sell this property to you as it stands; that is, the beds, mattresses, dishes, range, tables, chairs, and all property of similar character. He is reserving, of course, his rods, reels, and fishing tackle.

Won't you please, upon receipt of this letter, wire me an offer for it, which offer I shall communicate to him by wire.

The property is of some value to you, because in the event of its removal, it would simply mean that you would have to put in other stuff.

WPS/VB

Sincerely yours,

W.P. Smith

April 26th, 1919.

Mr. Wm. P. Smith,
Shatts, Smith and Bowen,
Miami - Florida.

Dear Will :

I have yours of the 17th : I don't know that there is very much at Soldier Key that we would want. The furniture isn't much good - it is old and rickety. There is a stove there that seems to be of some benefit.

You might see John Levi and see what he wants to buy.

Yours very truly,

GCF:R

LAW OFFICES
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FRANK B. SHUTTS
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CRATE D. BOWEN

LOUIS F. SNEGIGAR
GROVER C. MCCLURE

MIAMI, FLORIDA

April 17, 1919.

Mr. Carl G. Fisher,
Indianapolis, Indiana.

My dear Carl:

I beg to hand you herewith the following papers:

Original license, United States Department of Commerce
to Henry Sanford covering Soldier Key;

Original Assignment, Henry Sanford to you;

Original consent, Department of Commerce of the assignment
of the license to you,

This now concludes the transaction, and everything seems to be
in proper shape.

With kindest regards, I am

WPS/VB

Yours sincerely,

REGISTERED MAIL.

W.P. Smith

Papers given to Van

Soldier Key.

August 5th, 1919.

Mr. John H. Levi,
Miami Beach - Florida.

Dear John :

Regarding Cocolebo : I am sending you a check herewith for an addition thousand dollars - but I would suggest that this labor account at Cocolebo be cut down immediately. We can't continue to have three or four men besides the foreman at Cocolebo. The foreman and one man, it seems to me, can do all that can be done there during the Summer months.

I would suggest also that the men at Soldier Key be instructed to immediately put the 4 x 4's or small timber underneath the dock so that we can again attract the great numbers of fish that have always been there. I mentioned this matter to him last Fall but I don't think a thing has been done - and if we are going to pay this man a salary to stay on the place, we should certainly see that he keeps the place in bang-up shape - or fire him and get somebody else.

Yours very truly,

CGP:R

Soldier Key

April 6th, 1920.

Mr. Cecil G. Fowler,
Fowler National Bank,
Lafayette, Indiana.

Dear Cecil :

I took Krom down the other day and showed him Soldier Key, and asked him what he thot about hooking it up to the Flamingo. Soldier Key stands me about \$19,000 for the lease. You know, I do not own the Key - I just leased it from the Government, which is the way it has been handled for twenty years. The building and improvements have cost about this amount in the past eight or nine years. There is a very fine lot of sea gardens right out in front of Soldier Key, and sometimes about twenty-five thousand fish are underneath the dock - and it would be the ideal place to keep a glass bottomed boat in commission. It might help entertain our guests and be self-supporting.

Regarding yours on the tile floor for the dining-room.: After I get your arguments, it certainly is a knock-out. One of the things that we were most afraid of was the cold appearance of the tile floor and the fact also that we might be upagainst it for tile setters. Floyd is all ready for the wood floor and changing to tile will mean some few changes. I will talk the matter over with him before I definitely decide and will let you know later.

Now, regarding some paintings for the hotel : I am sending you a bunch of pictures to look over, and then return to me, from Jack LaGorce - and certainly pictures of this kind would be very wonderful in this country in a hotel of this kind where there is a great deal of the old and mystic in the air - and I believe we want a bunch of these paintings. In fact, I am crazy about them and have written Jack LaGorce that we would buy some of them.

Business looks better every day. Incidentally, the Bay Shore Company is going like seven bells of hell. All the Mid-Golf is sold out sliok and clean and we are now negotiating with a niece of Carnegie's for a \$75,000 piece of the Bay Shore Ocean frontage.

Haven't heard a word from the Old Turkey since he left. Tell him that the mounted policeman got drunker than hell, stayed drunk for three or four days and finally came in and turned in all his keys - so I guess I will have to ship all the horses back.

Yours very truly,

CGF:R

April 4, 1921.

Coccoloba

Mr. John Oliver InGorce,
National Geographic Magazine,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Jack:

I purchased the lease on Soldier's Key some time ago, thinking that the Coccoloba Club would want the property. I have spent about \$5,000. on the place and it stands me \$16,000. I want to get rid of the property and have an offer from Mr. B. D. Spillman of El Key Hall, Warrentown, Virginia, of \$10,000. which I want to accept and I want to get the deal closed up quickly. The present lease expires soon.

You will do me a favor and help me get hold of \$10,000. if you will send someone of your brilliant assistants down to the Government Department and have this lease extended for five or ten years. I have built a new dock and a caretaker's cottage on the place and have planted some palms, painted the house and otherwise put the property in first class repair and have a caretaker on the property at \$100. a month. I am mailing the lease to you with other particulars.

Expect to close up the deal with Mr. Welsh on your property in just a few days. Jim left here not feeling very well - Haven't heard from him since. Any time you see a letter from me, you will know it is because I need you to help me do something.

Very truly yours,

CFG-E.

April 4, 1921.

Mr. B. D. Spillman,
El Way Hall,
Warrentown, Va.

My dear Mr. Spillman:

Replying to yours of April 1st. The option referred to expired on Soldier Key. In the meantime, since you left, we have a proposition from an association of fishermen, but I would much prefer to see the property pass into your hands, if you want it, and I understand from your letter that the price of \$10,000. is satisfactory, providing you can get a satisfactory lease from the Government. We have some good friends in Washington, and I will take the matter up with one of them - Mr. John Oliver LaGorce of the National Geographic Magazine, and ask him to do what he can to immediately prepare a new lease with the Government, altho I have no doubt whatever but what the Government will be very glad to continue the lease, which has been in existence on the property for so many years.

I have spent considerably money on the property and it is in very good shape. I would like to get the matter closed up as soon as possible as I have immediate use for the funds, and also for the reason that I would not want to miss selling the lease to other buyers here, if for any reason you decided not to take it. I am writing Mr. LaGorce today, asking him to see if he can jury this matter with the Government.

Very truly yours,

CFG-E.

National Geographic Magazine
WASHINGTON, D. C.

April 14, 1921.

Chase

Mr. Carl G. Fisher,
Alton Beach Realty Company,
Miami Beach, Florida.

Dear Carl:

In reply to your letter of April 4th, which did not arrive until the 8th, in connection with the Soldier Key matter, I then found that the Commissioner of Light-houses, Mr. George R. Putnam, was away and that the matter could receive no attention until his return. In the meantime, I received a letter from Mr. Spillman enclosing your letter to him, and then I got in touch with Congressman Moore of Virginia, an intimate friend of Mr. Spillman's, whom he had asked to interest himself in the matter.

I saw Commissioner Putnam to-day and he advised me that they did not take any action in such matters until they had received a report from their district Superintendent, who in this case has headquarters at Key West, and whose name is Demerit — somewhat significant. The Commissioner had received a report from this gentleman which in substance suggested that in renewing any lease of Soldier Key it should be for a period of three years only and that at the expiration of that time it might be either exchanged advantageously for a wharfage property in or near Miami City, which was needed, or could be cleared up by actual sale at auction, which is the only way it can be handled under the law.

The law promulgated by Congress covering all such Government property reads that the maximum period for a lease is five years. Such being the case, there is not much hope of any addition because it is not possible under the existing statute.

We are up against the real red tape of the Government, which sickens the soul, and particularly in this case for the administrator is about as easy to move from the red tape of Governmental operations as it would be to pick up your elephant and walk away with him.

He realizes that you have spent money and is personally favorable to an extension for the full five years, but declares that it is too far in advance of the expiration of the present lease to make that decision. He asked if it would not be a good idea at the expiration of the present lease to put Soldier Key on the market at public auction, and that you could bid it in, but I told him that I was not conversant with your views but thought on the other hand that you were anxious to turn it over to General Spillman.

I talked with Congressman Moore this afternoon and he intimated that he thought he could go over the head of the Commissioner and take the matter up with the Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Hoover, and in the meantime I will try and bring a little pressure to bear on the Commissioner through the Chairman of the Appropriation Committee of the House.

I can see you sitting back in your chair reading this and with your stogy in one corner of the well known mouth and sulphur fumes in the way of language coming out of the other; but, my dear sir and friend, you know what you were up against with Army red tape during the war, and this is a full brother to that animal.

I talked to Joe Frelinghuysen yesterday, and he asked about you at once and said that you must be sure and come North via Washington for he and the President wanted to see you whenever you came to Washington. He also asked when the mounted specimens were coming North, that Harding was looking forward to having them in the White House. (Honest)

I had a letter from Colonel Silva, to whom as I promised I sent the books, telling me that they had received an invitation to take part in the polo tournament here next month, and that there was a possibility of their coming up.

Since you never read the daily papers, it is probable that you didn't see that the Cuban-American telephone cable was formally opened several days ago here in Washington by the President, Secretary Hughes, General Pershing, and several others. The National Press Club and the Pan-American Union had charge of the affair and I was asked to name some of the men who should be called for in Cuba and had pleasure in suggesting Colonel Silva as the military aide to the President to talk to a big military gun here.

I have a telegram now and then from Mrs. Allison and also from Gilman, advising of Jim's condition and improvement, and I hope the old battle-axe will soon be himself again.

If old man Welsh wants to do business with my sandlots he'd better get busy, for I'm not exactly crazy to sell em because I like to look at them and also keep track of how much of my grass and trees your minions swipe between seasons, and anyhow somebody who lives next door may be a little particular who their neighbors are, and I know that I am considered a desirable personage, but am not so sure about the others -- so much tribute I pay to my personal ego.

I think one reason why I was liked was because I am so much like a sky pilot in my daily life and ideas about the hereafter.


I am very much interested in hearing of your Greco-Roman bout with Carl Junior, but I'll give him the first three times at bat with his trunk and then bet on your getting a strangle hold on his tail piece, or appendages thereabouts. I have sent to England for the books and hope to have them within a reasonable time.

If you decide to honor Washington on your way North let me know so I can have newspaper photographers on hand to picture your sieve shoes and little white hat, likewise to have the Ohio Dairy Lunch properly attired and highly perfumed for your use.

I sent you a framed picture several days ago, which I believe will appeal to you. Its description is on the back of it. It is the Cossack's defiance to the Czar and certainly some of those lamblike beings were of your ancestry. This I consider one of the most fascinating personal pictures I have ever seen and I hunted for three years before I could get a copy of it. The original painting was owned by the Czar of Russia and hung in his palace at Petrograd. Study the expressions on those faces and the fascination of that picture will grow on you like your nose.

Remember me to any of the friends who seem solicitous and also remember -- your failings.

Sincerely yours,



L/B

April 18th, 1921.

Mr. John Oliver LaGorce,
Hubbard Memorial Hall,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Jack :

I have yours of the 14th : I know you have done all that you can on the Soldier Key matter. I think that if I could save ten thousand dollars out of the place it would be a good thing to do, as it has been more or less of a nuisance to me. I purchased it at the advice of the other Coccolobo Club members when they were all feeling rather rich and that that Soldier Key should belong to Coccolobo. I will have a young man by the name of Chase, who is working with us, get on the job and get Benoit's assistance.

The sale of your lot has blown up. When Wyaloff finally got down here he didn't have enough money to purchase a house, so he persuaded old man Welsh to sell him his place at a profit of \$1500 to Welsh, but Welsh assumed all of Wyaloff's notes. Then Welsh did not get the \$10,000 from the North that he expected, with which to build the new house and pay you, so he wound up with \$1000 cash as his bank balance, and this he finally traded to us with Wyaloff's lot and some Mortgage Notes, for the Van Deron house, which is across the street from your lots.

In the meantime we have had a nibble on your lots from another prospect at \$12,000, which is our asking price, and if we don't sell them this year at \$12,000, we will sell them next year. Such is the history of a near-sale.

Ann has just returned from two weeks in the North and says that Jim is still in bed but gradually getting stronger and better.

Yours -

CGF:R

SHOREHAM HOTEL
H STREET NORTHWEST AT FIFTEENTH

Washington April 19 '21

Dear Mr Fisher.

After so long waiting Mr Kloss^v & I got an interview today with Mr Putnam and all we could get from him was he had written the local man down there for information and could not decide anything until he heard from him. He promised to let me know as soon as he heard.

He said there was a possibility that they might decide to sell the Key. I am telling you this to put you in guard. If this plan should be adopted I would be handicapped in bidding because I would be obliged to pay you 10000 in addition to the price to the Brit. Not so however with an outside whom bid to the Brit would be his only obligation. If the matter should take this turn I think it would be wise for me not

to bid, but for you to bid we have
you thought sure to be the highest
bid and then convey to me for
10,000 plus what you pay the Govt.
I am mentioning these ideas for
thought. I don't know the selling
plan will be adopted. Will keep
you posted as to anything I learn
promptly.

Very truly yours
B. D. Spencer

I am going ^{home} to Warrenton Va. tonight

C O P Y .

Washington - April 19th, 1921.

Dear Mr. Fisher :

After so long waiting, Mr. Moon and I got an interview today with Mr. Putnam, and all we could get from him was that he had written the local man down there for information and could not decide anything until he heard from him. He promised to let me know as soon as he heard.

He said there was a possibility that they might decide to sell the Key. I am telling you this to put you on guard. If this plan should be adopted, I would be handicapped in building because I would be obliged to pay you \$10,000 in addition to the price to the Government - not so, however, with an outsider whose bid to the Government would be his only obligation. If the matter should take this turn, I think it would be wise for me not to bid but for you to bid what you think sure to be the highest bid and then convey to me for \$10,000 plus what you pay to the Government.

I am mentioning these ideas for that. I don't know that the selling plan will be adopted. Will keep you posted as to anything I learn, promptly.

Very truly yours,

(signed)

E. D. Spilman.

I am going home to Warrenton, Va., tonight.

C O P Y .

Washington - April 19th, 1921.

Dear Mr. Fisher :

After so long waiting, Mr. Moon and I got an interview today with Mr. Putnam, and all we could get from him was that he had written the local man down there for information and could not decide anything until he heard from him. He promised to let me know as soon as he heard.

He said there was a possibility that they might decide to sell the Key. I am telling you this to put you on guard. If this plan should be adopted, I would be handicapped in building because I would be obliged to pay you \$10,000 in addition to the price to the Government - not so, however, with an outsider whose bid to the Government would be his only obligation. If the matter should take this turn, I think it would be wise for me not to bid but for you to bid what you think sure to be the highest bid and then convey to me for \$10,000 plus what you pay to the Government.

I am mentioning these ideas for that. I don't know that the selling plan will be adopted. Will keep you posted as to anything I learn, promptly.

Very truly yours,

(signed) E. D. Spilman.

I am going home to Warrenton, Va., tonight.

April 22nd, 1921.

Mr. B. D. Spilman,
Warrenton, Virginia.

My dear Mr. Spilman :

I have yours of the 19th : I am quite sure you would be much better satisfied to feel that you had a deed to Soldier Key from the Government - and I did not know that the Government would ever consider selling Soldier Key or I would have tried to purchase the Island in the first place for Mr. Gelberling. Mr. Gelberling owns Sands Key, which is about six or eight miles further south and on which he has already spent probably \$200,000.00 - and while Sands Key is considerably larger, having about 25 or 30-acres, I don't consider it as beautiful or comparable to Soldier Key.

Just what some people would pay for Soldier Key is problematical : I haven't any idea who would bid or what the price would run up to - and it is quite doubtful, if the place was purchased by some man as a residence, whether he would want the house which is now on the Island, or would prefer to build a brand new place. On the other hand, I don't think that the Government would consider selling without giving me permission to remove the improvements. These improvements I think are worth, or at least would cost to duplicate, about \$15,000, possibly \$10,000.

I think it would be best for us to try and purchase the Island from the Government at the lowest possible price, and if they would give us a chance to bid for the Island, we could then simply outbid the other buyers in your interests - but if they ask for mailed or sealed bids, the proposition becomes complicated, so the reason that we don't know whether there will be a bid in for the Island at \$10,000 or one for \$15,000 - and there might not be a bid in for more than \$2,000 - and we would not want to bid on the Island and own it at this time as an investment.

So the thing for us to consider very carefully is whether you would prefer to own the Island outright - say if the Island would cost you a purchase price of \$10,000 in addition to the \$10,000 you would pay me - or whether you would prefer to lease it from time to time at \$100 per year. I feel quite confident if the present lease is renewed for five years, if I then dispose of the lease to you, and then if you spend two or three thousand dollars or perhaps a larger sum in improvements on the property, that there will be no trouble in renewing the lease indefinitely as long as you occupy the property. The Government hasn't the slightest possible use for this Island ; it is entirely impractical for light-house purposes, and there being no particular selfish motive by Government Officials, I doubt very much whether any set of Government Officials would recommend the sale of this property, particularly when it is laid into your hands, with the sentimental mood that it would have in your possession.

Mr. B. D. Spillars. 68. April 22nd, 1921.

However, as the City of Miami grows and we have a still greater demand for fine residential sites, I am quite sure that the time will come when the Island will be a very good investment, even if you had to pay the Government \$10,000 to \$15,000 for it.

We have just sold a small Island which will be connected to our property by a small bridge. This Island only has two acres but we got \$25,000 for it and there is not a tree nor a shrub on it - nothing but white sand - and the owner will have to spend \$25,000 for a concrete bulkhead and connecting bridge, for muck and planting. This will make this two-acre Island stand him at least \$50,000, and he must wait several years for his trees to grow. The location of this Island we have just sold or the beauty cannot even be considered with Soldier Key, but it has, of course, the advantage of being tied to the mainland by a road.

At the Thousand Islands, a great many people prefer island homes and a great many beautiful residences are built on some of these very small islands - in fact, some of these islands are hardly large enough to get the house on.

If you will carefully think the matter over and write me just what you would prefer to do, we will try and act accordingly. I believe if you preferred to have the lease renewed, that we could object so strenuously to the sale that we could easily get the lease renewed. On the other hand, if you prefer to buy it, we will go at it from that angle.

Hoping to hear from you in regard to the matter,

Yours very truly,

CGP:R

ELWAY HALL
WARRENTON,
VA.

April 24 '21

Dear Mr Fisher.

I called up Mr Putnam yesterday to ask if he had gotten the information he wanted from his agent in Key West and he replied that he had not. When I saw him he said the agent had recommended that the period of the lease be reduced from five to three years, and that it was the policy of the Dept. to sell properties they had no use for, as I wrote you. This is a wet blanket on the lease question especially as he informed me that a renewal clause would be of no legal value.

As Mr Putnam is very slow I think the best thing to do is to get ^{Mr} Moore to see the Secretary and ask him to sell, and at once, as there is no water on the Key and if the water is not conserved this summer the Key will not be habitable next winter.

If the property is sold Mr Archer Curtis James would possibly

be the most dangerous competitor though Mrs James told Mrs Spilman about a month ago that they had an option on Sardinia Key but had given it up on account of the lease and were then investigating one of the Bogged Keys. If they have closed a deal there it would eliminate them.

If you approve going to the Secretary as suggested above please wire me on receipt of this.

If you consent to buy for me it would be necessary of course, for those for whom I am acting to approve the amount bid. I feel, however, that you are in position to judge closely what is necessary to protect yourself and at the same ^{time} have due regard for my interests.

Very truly Yours

B. D. Spilman

April 25th, 1921.

Mr. B. D. Spilman,
Warrenton, Virginia.

Dear Mr. Spilman :

Yesterday I was talking to Charley Thompson and he said that in connection with your purchase of Soldier Key, you might want to have a light, fast, reliable boat - and it occurred to me that a new boat I have, called the "Humming Bird", might suit you.

This is a little 35-foot cabin boat, with a 6-cylinder Speedway engine, designed and built by Purdy of Trenton, Michigan. Purdy has built all of my boats for fifteen years and I consider him the finest builder in the United States. I own controlling interest in the Shop which Purdy operates. This particular boat has a toilet, good sized cabin, engine well and completely housed in so the children would be safe in the boat. Practically no noise - and the boat has four water-tight bulcheads and is non-sinkable. It is a splendid fishing boat and a good sea boat.

This boat cost me about \$7000 laid down here - it has only been used on three or four trips, and I will be very glad to sell it to you, if you are interested, at an unusual bargain of \$5500. I have an unusual number of assets of this particular kind that are non-productive at this time, and I want to dispose of a lot of them - and if you are in the market for a good boat, this is a very low price. Our actual factory cost on this boat at Trenton was between \$6300 and \$6400. There isn't a scratch on the boat and it is in beautiful condition, laid away here for the season.

Yours very truly,

CGF:R

Dear Mr Fisher.

ELWAY HALL
WARRENTON,
VA.

May 16 '21

I got word from Washington that the Dept. contemplates advertising for sealed bids for the lease of soldiers Key for 5 years from Jan 31 next. I got an appointment with Mr Houston Asst Secy and saw him Saturday. I told him I thought that method of leasing gave very little consideration to your interests and he agreed with me. He asked if it would help you any to put in the advertisement that you owned the improvements of — value on the Key with the privilege of removing them, and the Key would be sold in the next 5 years and possession given at the expiration of the lease. I told him that might help you some but I didn't think it would ^{attract} bidders. This plan also contemplates all improvements becoming the property of the Government at the end of the next 5 year period. I was asked what value I thought

you would put on the improvements and say
was for you to say, as under this plan I
not be a bidder. Then Mr Houston said "
the first time the matter has been brought to
attention. Suppose you give me a few days
to think it over. I am sympathetic with regard to
both you & Mr Fisher." Thus the matter rests for
the present.

They don't want to sell now because the money
would ^{go} into the treasury, and they are hoping to
get Congress to authorize them to use it for
Light House purposes.

I will write you the result of the next interview.

Very truly Yours

B. D. Spilman

May 28th, 1921.

Mr. E. D. Spillman,
Elway Hall,
Harrington, Virginia.

Dear Mr. Spillman :

I have yours of the 16th ; It is rather odd to think that the Government would not give some consideration to people who have maintained the Island for the past several years at considerable expense to themselves. The improvements on the Island are worth at least \$15,000 - and without a caretaker or somebody to look after these improvements, the Island would go to pieces very rapidly. However, the Government is so much in the habit these days of taking almost everything you have without any consideration that I am becoming accustomed to it.

It would not help much to try to remove the improvements, because they are on an island. You cannot tear up a dock and have much salvage - even tho' the dock cost \$2000 I doubt if you could salvage \$200 ; and you can't tear down a frame house and such things as concrete cisterns, and have much salvage.

I am going to try and turn this matter over to you and Mr. Ledorce to work out whichever way you see fit. Whatever you decide to do will be alright with me.

Yours very truly,

CGF:R

National Geographic Magazine
WASHINGTON, D. C.

June 23, 1921.

Mr. Carl G. Fisher,
Indianapolis,
Indiana.

Dear Carl:

The Soldier Key matter has now come to a point where you will have to get busy if you want action. It seems that General Spilman has expressed himself verbally to the Assistant Secretary of Commerce as not being interested in a mere five-year renewal of the lease, for I am told by the Assistant Secretary himself that Spilman feels that at the end of that time it may be taken out of his hands either through a change of administration or by someone in charge unfriendly to present conditions.

On the other hand, both in writing and by my word of mouth you have said that you preferred a renewal of the lease rather than a sale of the property either by bid or at auction; and there the thing stands.

I sat next to Assistant Secretary Huston at a dinner given by Colonel Lester Jones to the Governor of Alaska, at which party by the way I had Colonel Silva so that he might meet a lot of the big men in politics here, and I found that Claudius N. Huston, who is Hoover's Assistant in the Department of Commerce, is a friend of yours, the President of the Lee Highway, and so on. He says that he certainly wants to favor you in any way he can, but that it is imprudent to put anything in writing because a copy must go in the Government files and a few years from now something may come up that will not look satisfactory in writing; and he therefore told me to convey to you the fact that he should be glad to have you come to Washington and fix this thing up at any time that you care to within a month. He will hold the matter in abeyance for that period.

I am not fooling about this because I don't care a hoot in Hell whether you come to Washington or not, in spite of what I have said to you before, and I make this very plain because I don't want you to think I am merely using this as a subterfuge to get you down here, for as far as I am concerned you can blow in and blow out again without even calling me on the telephone, if you feel that way about it.

The Department is willing to either extend this lease for five years if that's what you want, but which General Spilman states he doesn't want, or they

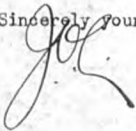
will offer the Key for sale either by sealed bid or at public auction; and he confidentially states that in his opinion he thinks a sealed bid proposition would be very much better, for the Government in that case can throw out all bids if they wish to do so and in that you have the advantage.

It is against the law to make a lease for more than five years; therefore, they can't do it. In selling a piece of property they have one of two choices, either to auction it or to dispose of it by sealed bids, but the sale must be advertised for a specified length of time in the local papers at Miami.

I don't know whether Spilman is trying to double-cross you, probably not, but anyhow he is successfully beclouding the issue here by pulling opposite to you.

I have pulled enough wires to land a Cabinet job on this thing, and it stands just as I have written above; so pay your money and take your choice.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'J. L. B.', written over a faint circular stamp.

L/B

June 27th, 1921.

Mr. John Oliver LaGorce,
Nat'l Geographic Magazine,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Jack :

I have yours of the 23rd. Regarding the Spilman proposition - I can see where old man Spilman is just right in the matter and certainly somebody should have the place for sale there in order to work fast, therefore, I am writing you under separate cover a letter disposing of Soldier Key. Whether you know it or not, it belongs to you. I have sold the damn thing to you - lease and all, and you can do as you damn please about it. You can have it sold at auction with the understanding that we split 50-50. If you get \$10,000 out of it - after we are thru you get half. All I want to do is get rid of Soldier Key and I want old man Spilman to have it because he is evidently going to spend some money and fix the place up.

If I don't sell the Key and somebody don't do something somewhere, I will do a little auctioning myself on the place. I will auction off the house on it and let the place go to hell because I haven't any money to put in it.

I can't see any possible chance of getting down to Washington during the next month - as much as I want to come - and I really do want to come. I got a bad fall at Dayton. Pony fell on my knee and ankle and I am on crutches and will probably stay on them for three weeks anyhow. There are no bones broken - just a bad wrench.

You see it is impossible for me to figure on coming to Washington for at least two or three weeks.

Write me.

Yours,

CGF:EM

June
28th
1921

Mr. B. D. Spilman,
Elway Hall,
Warrentown, Va.

Dear Mr. Spilman :

I have your letter of June 23rd. I have just written my friend, Jack La Gorce, in Washington, D. C., transferring my interest in Soldier Key to him, so that matters can be handled direct in Washington.

I am laid up with a busted ankle from a fall with a polo pony and cannot get down to Washington to attend to this matter at this time. I don't think it would be necessary to offer more than \$3,000.00 outright for possession of Soldier Key, or, \$1,000.00 per acre. I am going to leave the matter up to Jack La Gorce to do what he can for our interests and if you happen to be in Washington, drop in and see him.

I have no doubt if you offer \$5,000.00 for the Key in a sealed bid, at once, that it will be deeded to you. This will make a very fair deal for us and will give you possession, which you are entitled to.

I am sending your letter on to Jack La Gorce.

Very truly yours,

CGF:EM

Soldier Key

July
8th
1921

Mr. Chas. H. Thompson,
Miami, Florida.

My dear Charlie:

I have your wire of the 7th - I did not answer your wire by telegram because I wanted to write you particulars.

I promised to let Mr. Spilman have Soldier Key and I think he is going to take it.

I have about \$16,000.00 invested in the Key besides the upkeep, however, if your parties really mean business, let them make a bona fide offer and send a certified check and I will write Mr. Spilman and see what he is going to do but I don't want to bother him by asking questions if your parties are only mildly interested.

Tell your parties to talk Turkey and talk it fast, advise me and I will let you hear from me quickly.

Very truly yours,

CGF:EM

July 12, 1921.

General B. D. Spilman,
Elway Farms,
Warrenton, Virginia.

Dear General Spilman:

I have your letter of July 9, and we certainly have much to complain of in this protracted spell of infernal heat.

I did not know but that you came up to Washington possibly once a week on business and, therefore, asked if I might have the pleasure of seeing you on such an occasion, for I certainly did not expect you to make the long, hot journey up here unless you had reason for doing so.

I had a talk with Assistant Secretary Huston this morning and conveyed to him the fact that Mr. Fisher was now agreed with you that the best course to pursue in settling up the Soldier Key matter was to invite sealed bids, and he said that he would proceed along that line.

The Commissioner of Lighthouses, Mr. Putnam, is out of the city for a week or ten days and nothing will be done in the actual advertising of the Key until his return. I asked the Assistant Secretary to please see that a statement concerning Mr. Fisher's improvements and that an adjustment must be made with him was entered in the advertisement, and he said that it would be done as clearly as he could under the existing law regulating such things.

He promised to advise me as soon as arrangements had been completed, and I will secure the necessary blanks for the sealed bids and send you a set. Perhaps it would be well for me to call you on the long distance telephone when that time comes so that we may understand just what is being done.

I think you gathered that the Secretary was very well disposed toward the rights in the case and will do all he can consistent with the regulations to see that no injustice is done, and the advantage of the sealed bid is that they can any or all be thrown out,

General Spilman.

- 2 -

July 12, 1921.

as I understand it. It may be part of the regulations that there must be two or more bids, which facts I shall ascertain and advise you, and it might be well for several of us to bid.

I have always loved Soldier Key; it is such a beautiful little spot, resting like an emerald in a turquoise sea. Its trees and sub-tropical flora have been well selected and cared for and I don't know of a more restful, lovely spot for a winter, not to say all-year-round, home. Its distance from any other key precludes, I should think, the annoyance of mosquitoes, so that with the ever-blowing trade winds to temper the summer heat it could be enjoyed all the year round, if such was the desire.

With cordial good wishes, believe me

Sincerely yours,

L/B

National Geographic Magazine
WASHINGTON, D. C.

July 12, 1921.

Mr. Carl G. Fisher,
Indianapolis,
Indiana.

Dear Carl:

This will acknowledge your letter of June 27 in answer to mine of June 23 in connection with the Spilman-Soldier Key matter.

I had hoped General Spilman would be up this way so that I might discuss it with him, but a letter received this morning advises that he hasn't been very well and does not expect to be in Washington for a while; therefore, I went over and had a talk with Assistant Secretary Huston this morning and told him that I had received advices from you which gave me the authority to agree to the proposition of selling the Key by the Government on the basis of sealed bids.

As I explained before, this gives the Secretary the option of throwing all bids out if he so elects, and I believe there must be two or more bids. I'll send you a set of whatever kind of blanks they use, if they have any, when the time comes to enter the bid.

Enclosed is a copy of a letter written to General Spilman which explains that the proceedings must await the return of the Commissioner of Lighthouses, who is expected back in about a week, before the actual advertisement of the sale appears.

Certainly, it is hot in Washington, and likewise all over the East; and by the daily papers it doesn't look as if Indianapolis was in the middle of the Arctic Ocean like an iceberg.

Sincerely yours,



L/B

P. S. Why do you keep chattering like a gray ape about 50-50. Are you trying to tell me that old wheeze regarding one horse and one rabbit! I decline to be a horse, even if it does rhyme

C. G. F.

- 2 -

July 12, 1921.

with my name, and you can kiss the Book I am no rabbit. How often must I tell you the difference between asking me to help out a little and hiring me!

I suppose being an honest Christian gentleman I should sympathize with you over your story of a polo pony rolling on your leg, but knowing you as well as I do, most likely it was caused by a fall as you were rattling down some fire-escape with your clothes in your teeth, so the best that you get from me is a gentle ha ha.

J.O.L.

L/B
Enclosure.

July
14th
1921

Mr. John Oliver La Gorce,
Nat'l Geographic Magazine,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Jack:

I have yours of the 12th. I will pass over everything you have to say to me and just refer to your letter to General Spilman. I don't know why you should hop on this old man and advise him to live at Soldier Key the year round and particularly - the consolation of the fact that on account of the isolation, no mosquitoes would bother him. I don't know just what your alibi would be when I tell you that I have seen mosquitoes at Soldier Key that could carry away a horse.

Why take advantage of poor old man Spilman and talk to him about mosquitoes? Everything nice you said to him was ruined when you got on the subject of mosquitoes.

I anticipated your letter of the 12th and beat you to it in taking Gilbert in on the deal and as far as I am concerned YOU can go to Hell. Besides that - you write nice letters to some other people who, I am presuming you are trying to hook up for life members and I cannot understand why you can't drop me some of these nice letters.

Yours,

CGF:EM

WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

ELWAY HALL

WARRENTON,

VA.

July 19 21

Dear Mr Fisher.

I have a letter from Mr. La Sore saying the Dept of Commerce was going to sell Soldier Key and in a week or ten days, on the return to the City of Mr Putnam, Chief of Division for light houses, sealed bids would be advertised for.

I wrote Mr La Sore and asked him to try to get Mr Hester to put in the advertisement a statement saying. Mr Carl Fisher, the present occupant; owns improvements on the Island costing — and the successful bidder will have to arrange with Mr Fisher for the improvements.

Now I am somewhat at a loss to know what to bid whether it would be better for you to put in the high bid + for me to put in a lower one or the reverse.

Two or more bids are required and I am afraid
bids by you, Mr La Bore & myself would be con-
sidered by them as one bid. I suppose however
there will be other bidders and if not, the might be
satisfied technically with ours.

I would be glad to have your judgment on these
points, especially the amount to bid, before
I recommend it to my children as having
a reasonable chance of securing the property.
I was very sorry to hear of your accident &
hope you are making a rapid recovery. Polo
has been very fashionable here this summer.
Twenty five or thirty young men in the County
are then about it.

Very Truly Yours
B. D. Spilman

July
25th
1921

Mr. B. D. Spillman,
Elway Hall,
Warrenton, Va.

Dear Mr. Spillman:

I have your letter of the 21st - if the government insists on the purchaser of Soldiers Key repaying me for my investment in this property, there will be no bidders except ourselves. I think this would be the case - I doubt if anybody would want to pay \$15,000 for the improvements besides paying for the island. If you are willing to pay \$5,000 for the outright purchase of the island, I think that had better be my bid and you can put in a bid for \$4,000 with the understanding with the government that you will pay for the improvements.

I have authorized Mr. La Gorce as my Attorney to put in a bid for me and to act for me entirely since he is going to be in Washington and I have several important engagements here in the West that might keep me from getting down to Washington to attend to this business.

If you can secure the island for a total of \$15,000, I think you have a splendid purchase not only on account of sentimental reasons but as an investment. If, after you receive this letter, you will drop a note to Mr. La Gorce and tell him to put in a bid for me and if cash must accompany the bid, I will immediately mail him a check for \$5,000.

Very truly yours,

GCP:EM

ELWAY HALL
WARRENTON,
VA.

July 31 '21

Dear Mr Fisher.

I enclosed your letter to Mr La Sarge and told him to bid 6000. for you. I had already named 5000. to Mr Houston as an upset price and think my bid should not be less than that. I explained to Mr La Sarge that the statement in the advertisement, "the successful bidder will have to agree with Mr Fisher for the improvements" would not mean that he would have to purchase the improvements unless he wants them and that in my case I want them and would pay you for them the price agreed on.

Could you have some one down there put up new gutters and down spouts and connect them with the cistern under the house? In case I obtain the property I will pay for the gutters. The Government is so slow I am afraid the rainy season will pass before matters are settled and the Island be

without sufficient water this winter.
Hoping you have quite recovered from your
injury I am

My truly Yours

B.D. Spilman

ELWAY HALL

WARRENTON,
VA.

Dec 29 '21

Mr Carl Fisher
Miami Beach Fla.

Dear Mr Fisher.

When I received the blank form for bids on Soldiers
Ray I wrote Mr LaSarge but did not hear from him for
some time owing to his absence. I now have a letter from
him and we are agreed that in view of a certain
clause in reference to interested bidders, ^{as you advised me} wishes he as
I should bid and that you should. He advises me that
he has written you to that effect. Please advise me should
if that is satisfactory. I have ^{at your disposal} made financial arrangements
to take it off your hands promptly, if you are the successful
bidder.

Very truly Yours
B.D. Spilman

January 4th, 1932.

Mr. B. D. Spilman,
Elway Hall,
Warrenton, Virginia.

Dear Mr. Spilman :

Replying to yours of the 29th : We have sent in a bid of \$6100 on Soldier Key, which I believe will buy it. When other people consider that they will have to pay for the improvements, it would run the cost up to about \$12,000 or \$15,000 possibly to outsiders, and I am in doubts as to whether we will have others bidding. It would be, of course, too bad to lose the place - but I believe it is a chance we had better take, unless you notify me otherwise.

Our bid has already been mailed, with a check enclosed for 10% deposit.

Yours very truly,

CGF:R

MARTENS & SINCLAIR

REAL ESTATE

MIAMI, FLA.

April 20, 1922.

Mr. Carl G. Fisher,
Miami Beach, Fla.

Dear Sir:

At a recent meeting of the Biscayne Bay Lodge, free and accepted masons, it was decided to hold a picnic Sunday, April 30th. As a member of the committee on arrangements, I am writing to ask your permission to hold this picnic at Soldier Key.

We understood that Soldier Key had been purchased by Mr. J. E. Junkin, but Mr. Junkin informs us that while the deal has been made, all the papers have not been passed and he did not feel that he had the right to grant the permission and suggested that we get in touch with you. We would appreciate very much if you would grant this request.

Respectfully yours,

Com

By *P. M. Martens*

Phone 4816

April
Twenty-second
1922.

Soldier Key

Mr. P. A. Martens,
Miami, Fla.

My dear Sir:

Replying to yours of the 20th.
I am sorry that we will not be able to accommodate
you. Our building crew has orders to remove all
the buildings on Soldier Key. They start on this
job Tuesday morning.

If all the buildings on Soldier
Key have been removed before the 30th, there is
no reason why Mr. Junkin could not grant you
permission to have the picnic on that date, and
so far as I am concerned you are perfectly welcome
to the place.

Very truly yours,

CARL G. FISHER

GCF:LEC

BEACH CONSTRUCTION COMPANY
1730 PURDY AVENUE
MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA

Soldier Key

May 17, 1922

Mr. C. G. Fisher,
727 North Capitol Ave.,
Indianapolis, Ind.

Dear Mr. Fisher:

Attached are four pictures of Soldier Key taken after we had removed all of the buildings and dock. We have the material at the Flamingo and have realized quite a little 2" lumber and some 1".

Yours very truly,

BEACH CONSTRUCTION CO.

C. B. Floyd
Vice-President

CBF:B

EDITORS: The Commissioner of Lighthouses,
Department of Commerce, writes, "The Bureau
will be glad to have you thus disseminate the
information (regarding the sale of Soldier
Key) in any manner practicable."

SHIP SERVICE,
Albee Building,
Washington, D. C.

NOT TO BE RELEASED UNTIL SUNDAY, JANUARY 15.

SOLDIER KEY TO BE SOLD

BEAUTIFUL, HISTORIC LITTLE ISLAND OFF
THE COAST OF MIAMI, FLORIDA, WILL
BE KNOCKED DOWN TO HIGHEST
BIDDER.

Uncle Sam is the Auctioneer.

Soldier Key is for sale. The picturesque little palm fringed
dot of green in the blue waters off Miami, Florida, will be knocked
down to the highest bidder at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, January 16.

Soldier Key has a history. It has had only two or three owners
since the caravels of Christopher Columbus sailed in the not far dis-
tant waters. It used to belong to Spain. It is right in the sea paths
of the old Spanish main and reeks with tales and traditions of pirates
and adventure.

It is one of the most beautiful spots so near the American shores.
The yachtsman or fisherman from Miami in a few minutes' sail brings
up the flowing fronds of the cocoanut palms which shade its snow white
beaches. While not a regular stop on any marine schedule, it is a
favorite destination for the pleasure bound yachtsman or Miami resorter.
The Vanderbilts, the Whitneys and the Astors on their yachts have all
stopped by.

Soldier Key has served the United States well. In the early seven-
ties, when the rays of the old Spanish light on Cape Florida, which did
well enough for the old galleons of Spain but which fell far too short
for the speedy merchantman became obsolete, the government decided to
mark the dangerous reef with a more powerful light built far out in
the ocean. The vicinity is the graveyard of scores of ships and
men. In 1876, the now famous Foley Light was set up at the Philad

Page 2.

centennial exposition as an evidence of government progress. Then it was taken down, stone by stone, each one marked and all placed aboard ships and carried to Soldier Key, the base of operations for the building of the light. Fowey Light, manned by three trusted keepers, two of whom are on duty at all times, now flashes its warning far out over the sapphire waters of the gulf stream to ships that pass in the night.

It's always June on Soldier Key. Rarely does the thermometer climb far into the eighties and it never reaches frost. Seventy-five degrees, as the doctor orders, is its mean temperature, the weather bureau says. It is bathed by the waters of the warm gulf stream and fanned by the strange yet never tiring trade winds.

It is only eleven miles from America's most popular winter playground, Miami.

It is understood a prominent American expects to purchase it as a site for a winter home.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX