

Key Vaca, Part II: Modern Phase

By FLORENCE S. BRIGHAM

While some of these changes of ownership were taking place, Key Vaca was being settled again, but this time it was by Bahamians, mainly from Green Turtle Cay, Spanish Wells, New Providence, and Nassau. They had always been fishermen, turtlers, spongers, small farmers on patches of rocky soil, and shipbuilders, but they were poor as all their trading had been through Nassau and Nassau merchants had not paid in "ready money". Circuit Judge Louis Diston Powles explained that their condition could never improve until the "Truck System" was changed — ". . . the best and most honest and energetic of them emigrated."

Dr. Henry Perrine had an "intimate acquaintance" with those Bahamians who began coming to Key Vaca and he found them amiable, generous, and willing workers. He knew them as their physician; he gave them "valuable plants and seeds"; he taught them the monetary value of cultivating new shrubs; and he encouraged them in their efforts to establish educational and religious training for their children. He resented the "speculating monopolists" of Key West calling them "lazy Conks". Dr. Perrine's and Charles Howe's confidence in those Bahamians has stood the test of time; many of their children and grandchildren are on the Keys today and are holding responsible positions.

If the Bahamians themselves introduced the Sea Island cotton of their land to Key Vaca, then they were there as early as 1823 (Perrine). J. J. O'Donnell estimated their arrival in the Keys, as settlers, to be about 1826. About a year and a half after Dr. Perrine arrived on Indian Key, he recorded, on July 4, 1840, that the first settlers on Key Vacas came in 1831 and that they "located under the leases of Mr. Howe. After Mr. Howe sold the Island, they were tenants-at-will" (*Tequesta*, 1951).

This settlement, small at first, continued to grow and by 1834 Key Vaca's inhabitants were sufficiently important to be recognized by the Postmaster of the newly established U. S. Post Office on Indian Key (Dodd, Dr. Dorothy *Tequesta*, 1948, p. 5). Their mail, if directed to that Post Office, would be

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delivered to them promptly. By that time or very shortly thereafter Key Vaca had her own captains, masters, merchants, and civil magistrates. During those twelve years (1832-1844) when the far off wealthy merchant owned the Island, nothing had been done to encourage a permanent community, however, the settlers had built fifty odd dwellings for themselves some of which were made only of palmetto, while others were "comfortable frame buildings of which some have neat palmetto roofs."

For evidence that Bahamians came to Key Vaca for the purpose of farming it was useful to consult their descendants. Mrs. Flora (nee Atcheson) Michaels (Key West), who was eighty-three years old November 28th, 1958, and the youngest of eleven children, by correspondence and by an interview (8-27-57) related that her grandmother, Nancy Baker (Baker, maiden name; Saunders, second husband); her mother, Matilda Saunders, then fifteen years old, and Matilda's brother, left Green Turtle Key to come to Key Vaca to farm. "That is where she met my Dad who came there on an English Tramp ship. Well, a year after, my mother and father (William Atcheson) were married, — they lived in Key West until two sons were born . . . then they all went back to Key Vaca for a time" and in that same letter of February 12, 1957, she wrote, "there were no families to speak of, then, and no school" on Key Vaca.

Mrs. Michaels gave a very different picture than that which has been written of her famous brother, Alfred, born fifteen years before her, and known as Bubba Smart, and the Master Wrecker. With an outward sweep of both arms (we were on the porch) she indicated that he had purchased several lots "right here" and had arranged, so he thought, that certain members of the family would always have land and homes. He loved children though he and his wife (Dora Albury) had none. Mrs. Michaels wished that he had had the benefits of a "fine education". On his tombstone (Key West), having the emblems of the Masonic and Woodmen of the World fraternal organizations, are his birth, December 27, 1860; his death, March 6, 1924, and the motto, "All loved one" (Correct spelling is Atcheson, not Acheson). Mrs. Michaels' grandmother and mother are listed in the U. S. Census of 1850 for Dade County, however, other inhabitants of Green Turtle Key had come to Key Vaca before them.

Mrs. Rosalie Russell (maiden name also Russell) of Islamorada, seventy-three years old August 7, 1858 (likewise charming and interesting), is the daughter of John Henry Russell, born on Key Vaca, February 5, 1852, and of Rosalie (Sawyer) Russell. To be sure of the dates of birth and of the

death on November 23, 1919 of her father, Mrs. Russell consulted the tombstone in a family plot nearby (entirely concealed from the highway). John Henry Russell's father, Richard H. Russell, raised pineapples and vegetables on Key Vaca, and his wife, Mary Ann Russell, born February 11, 1811 in the Bahamas, to keep the panthers away from the garden, would "set guns". Mrs. Rosalie Russell's grandmother "homesteaded this property right here" and her problem there was to keep the bears out of her melon patch.

The Russells must have arrived on Key Vaca about 1838; their names are not found in the 1830 U. S. Census for Monroe County nor in the 1840 lists for either Monroe or Dade Counties, but in the 1850 records for Dade County, their first child born on Florida soil was twelve years old. Since it was said that the Russell family went directly to Key Vaca there might have been a house shortage then and when the 1840 census was taken they were included in other households.

Mr. Clifton Russell, Postmaster at Islamorada, (brother to Mrs. Rosalie Russell) remembered his father saying that he thought then — Key Vaca would be the city of the Keys rather than Key West.

Mr. Charles Albury, Marathon's first known male public school teacher and now Principal of Coral Shores School, Tavernier, knew those farming days on Key Vaca; his great grandmother, Elizabeth (Russell) Pinder (sister to John H. Russell) was living on Indian Key when an old Indian gave warning of the forthcoming attack on the inhabitants there. She lost no time in leaving the Island and went to visit friends on Key Vaca. Had she remained just one more night she might have been killed in that 1840 massacre.

Mrs. Leona (Curry) Gibson, first school teacher on Grassy Key, now retired, recalls the farming activities of her father, John A. Curry, who was born on Key Vaca in 1850 and of her grandmother, Mary Ann Russell, who was also born there in 1830 (Verified by U. S. Census).

Alfred Atcheson (nephew of the master wrecker), son of Elizabeth Ellen Pent; grandson of Anthony Pent, and great grandson of Temple Pent, Sr., remembers the days when his grandfather farmed on Key Vaca, the place where he was born. Anthony is listed in the 1850 U. S. Census (Dade) as being 19 years old; 1860 census (Dade) as 27 years old; and in 1870 (Monroe) as 35 years old. The first entry in the Miscellaneous Record Book A (Dade County) is an account of the marriage license issued on July 4th, 1840, from Indian Key, and of the marriage of Temple Pent, Junior, "at the house of William Pent, Key Vaccas." One of the witnesses to that marriage was

Temple Pent, Sr. By 1860, the total population on Key Vaca consisted of 18 Pents, of whom there were Temple Pent Senior and Junior with their families, Anthony with his wife and daughter; 7 Skeltons and a carpenter, Ernest Baisley. Mrs. Skelton was a Pent. According to several Pent descendants, the farming on Key Vaca consisted of growing vegetables and raising limes, guavas, avocados, sugar apples, sapodillas, and a few pineapples, There appears to be no doubt that the sea-faring Pents cultivated land on that Island.

These and other senior citizens remembered first that those were the happy days when they all knew one another. They spoke of sailing trips as people talk today of motor rides, and instead of winding through traffic they had to "tack in" and "tack out" through "head winds". It was a lot more exciting to race against tides and currents. They knew the Keys and each one had its own landmark, a sight to anticipate. Going to Miami, "the back country" for wild cocoplums and guavas, required days of planning and weather watching. To the women folks these occasions meant picnic parties and treats.

There is little doubt as to Dr. Perrine's opinion of Key West when in 1840 he mentioned the "haughtiest office holder", "inimical population", and "exclusive monopoly" of Key West. Perhaps Jacob Housman, the notoriously dishonest man, had justifiable reasons for wanting to be free of Key West. Other men, especially wreckers, must have felt as he did, otherwise the residents of Key Vaca, Indian Key, and Cape Florida would not have petitioned for a division of Monroe County. The Legislative Council, on January 5, 1836, considered the inhabitants' need of a county seat nearer than Key West and passed the bill. The newly established Dade County of February 4, 1836 had its County Seat on Indian Key and since the dividing line ran through a part of Bahia Honda Key, Key Vaca was in Dade County (Hudson, F. M., *Tequesta*, 1943).

The earliest record found of public elections being held in Dade County dates back to 1836 in which year there were two, one of which was on Key Vaca. The thirteen voters at that October 10th election for a member of the Legislative Council were: F. Long, Wm. Cooley, W. Egan, Temple Pent, Sr., Wm. Butler, Wm. Whitehead, John A. Mott, W. N. Butler, Edw. Baisley, Chas. T. Smith, James Carr, Jas. Pent, and Chas. Weatherford. The Clerk was Alex. P. Scott, and the Inspectors W. Whitehead, Wm. Butler, and Temple Pent. Richard Fitzpatrick was the only candidate.

The names of nine of these voters appear, at least once, in the U. S. Census records either of Monroe or Dade Counties during the years 1830, 1840, 1850. The four names not found in the above mentioned records were: W. Egan, Wm. Butler, W. N. Butler, and James Carr. The surname of Egan appears frequently in the various records but not "W. Egan". The name William Butler appears in Bethel's *The Early Settlers of the Bahamas and Colonists of North America*, 1937 (pp. 100-109). There was a James Carr who served as a petit juror in the "District of West Florida, Jan. term 1823." (*Territorial Papers of the United States*, Vol. XXII, 1956, p. 613n).

Another election was held on Key Vaca, "State of Florida, 16th Senatorial District, Dade County, Key Vacas Precinct . . . on Monday, the 26th day of May, 1845." At this election there were nine voters as follows: John Roberts, Sr., Benjamin Roberts, John Roberts, Jr., Edmund Baisely; Mathew John Pacon (?) (handwriting not clear), Charles T. Smith, J. P. Baldwin, Temple Pent, Sr., and William Mott. The Clerk of the Election was Charles T. Smith. The Inspectors, John Roberts, Charles T. Smith, and Edmund Baisely are "Sworn and Subscribed. . . before me, Temple Pent, J. P.". The results of that election were: Governor; William I. Mosely, 7 votes and R. R. Call, 2 votes. Senator: Temple Pent, 5 votes; Wm. H. Wall, 4 votes. Representative, General Assembly: John P. Baldwin, 9 votes. (R. A. Gray, Secretary of State).

When Dade County was created the three justices of peace appointed by Legislative Council were William Cooley, Lemuel Otis and William Whitehead (Carson F. Sinclair, Supreme Court Library, Tallahassee). Dr. Perrine referred to Temple Pent and William Whitehead as the civil magistrates on Key Vaca and to their interest in the culture of the Manila mulberry trees and Sea Island cotton shrubs. Both of these men earned a place in Florida's history.

A brief resume of Temple Pent's activities and interests reveals that in 1820, he was Commodore Porter's pilot on the reef (Munroe, *Mary Barr Tequesta*, 1943, p. 52); March 7, 1822, he took the Oath of Naturalization, age 28 years, Nassau, N. P., navigator, Head of family (*Territorial Papers of the United States*, 1956); 1823, "respectable pilot" (Vignoles); November 6, 1824, claimed a donation grant of 640 acres near Cape Florida, ". . . was, is, and has been in actual cultivation of the land between 14-15 years." (Spanish Land Grants, Vol. III); May 29, 1830, two witnesses "sworn to" that he inhabited and cultivated land south side Miami River before the cession of Florida (*Deed Record Book A*, p. 239, Monroe County);

August 23, 1830, appointed Branch Pilot by Monroe County Court (*Deed Record Book A*, pp. 236-7, Monroe County); October 10, 1836, inspector at election (State Archives); performed marriages (*Miscellaneous Record Book A*, Dade County); January 7, 1841, took oath of office as Representative, Dade County (*House Journal* 1841, p. 3); and again a Representative for the years 1842 and 1843; 1844, received 2 votes for office of Senator in General Assembly, however, the next year he received 5 out of 9 votes for that office; 1845, Justice of Peace at election; and October 7, 1850, received 7 votes for office of Justice of Peace (there were 7 voters).

When the 1830 U. S. Census was taken Temple Pent's household contained one son and two daughters under 5 years, one son and one daughter between 5-10 years, and one son between 10-15 years. Although all the U. S. Census records and the "Oath of Naturalization" paper indicate that Pent, Sr., known as "Squire Pent" came to Florida from the Bahamas, his granddaughter, great grandchildren, and several other descendants claim he came originally from Scotland. It would seem that Key Vaca might have been proud of its first citizen, Temple Pent.

William Whitehead, the other civil magistrate on Key Vaca, figured prominently in the early history of Key West. There he "laid out the city" and he proposed the need of a school. It was or it seems likely it was he who sponsored the private school established "recently" (1840) on Key Vaca, (Perrine). In Key West, the fees paid by the town officers for non-attendance at meetings were turned over to Mr. Whitehead for Sunday School purposes and after he went to Key Vaca religious instruction was started there. When as Mayor of Key West he insisted that all of its citizens must comply with the laws of their charter, difficulty arose and finally Mr. Whitehead resigned his office and went to Key Vaca.

By 1837, Key Vaca was considered one of the three principal settlements within the new county (Dodd, *Tequesta*, 1948, p. 10). Its residents had become so indignant over the abuses committed in their county by one man against men and over their own helplessness to do anything about it legally, that they decided to petition for the repeal of the law that created their county, or else the repeal of those laws that established its courts. Their defenselessness was due to their laws in that an offender had to be brought to trial in the county in which the offense was committed, and Dade County at times had no jurors.

This petition was signed by sixty-five persons all living on Key Vaca and "constituting a majority of the male inhabitants residing in the County of Dade." Ordinarily a jury could be formed from such a number of residents but many of them were neither householders nor citizens of the United States. Of interest was one of the affidavits submitted with the petition, — that of George Eldridge, who declared that he saw on Indian Key two men from the Sloop *Brilliant* "confined in stocks by order of Captain Housman . . ." In 1835, George Eldridge was the Captain of a Mystic, Connecticut, schooner and the Sloop *Brilliant* was from Groton, Connecticut, near Mystic.

The Legislative Council acted upon that petition by passing a law, effective March 2, 1840, whereby the Clerk of the Superior Court in Dade County or in Monroe County could summon a juror from either of the two counties.

After the destruction of the Dade County seat in 1840, the Act of February 25, 1841 gave the Monroe County Superior Court the power to hear all Dade County cases except those that fell within the authority of the Justice of the Peace. (*F. H. Q.* Oct. 1928, p. 168). It seems that some of Key Vaca's residents wanted more freedom from the laws. One man, William Bethel of Key Vaca, in 1840, wanted the privilege of establishing a settlement free from "all control of all officers and all laws of the revenue, naval and military . . ." (Brevard, 1924, p. 238). William C. Maloney, who had been the Dade County Clerk, gave an appraisal of Key Vaca's residents in his report concerning the November 1843 election, — "not more than one in ten at the nearest settlement [Key Vaca] is competent to canvas the votes. . . ."

After Key Vaca was sold in 1844 at public auction, the Island would soon be held for a period of over thirty-two years as a military reservation. The Commissioner of the General Land Office wrote, on September 12, 1845, to the Secretary of the Treasury that the "War Department has requested that all the Islands, Keys, and Banks comprising the Group called the Dry Tortugas with the other Islands, or Keys on the Florida Coast embraced within the red lines on the enclosed diagram, may be reserved from sale or entry of any kind, till a survey, which has been ordered shall have been made, with a view of determining their military relations and properties; I have therefore the honor to request, that the enclosed diagram may be laid before the President, and his order obtained for the reservation of all those Islands, or Keys which are now the property of the United States." The red line was

drawn over the open water gap separating "The Vacas or Cows" from "Viper K." President James K. Polk endorsed the Commissioner's letter with the statement:

"Let the lands described in the enclosed communication from the Commissioner of the General Land Office be reserved from Sale as requested by the War Department

17th Sept. 1845."

On September 19, 1845, the Secretary of the Treasury returned the Commissioner's letter of the 12th with the President's approval.

The claim that Key Vaca was the property of the United States, written a little more than fifteen years after the Ferreira Grant had been confirmed by Congress, was the beginning of a nearly fifty year struggle by the owners to prove their right of title.

Whether there was any connection between the War Department's request for reserving that section of Florida and blockading activities of the Bahamians and Cubans as well as the rising sentiment concerning slavery and slave traffic was not definitely determined.

The following year, in 1846, at least one ship was built on Key Vaca, the record of which was somehow saved from the fires and hurricanes that destroyed so many of the early records. W. C. Maloney, in his *Historical Sketch of Key West* (1876, p. 79) recorded two such ships:

"1840 Schooner *Lavina* (Key Vaccas), 13 tons

1841 Schooner *Jane Ann* (Key Vaccas, 9 tons"

The General Services Administration, East Point, Georgia, located a record of the vessel *Jane Ann* as follows: Official No. 12926, Schooner, Gross tonnage 10, Net tonnage 10, Length 37.3, Breadth 13.5, Depth 4.8, Built 1846 at Key Vaccas, Florida; Home port (Where permanent document issues) Key West, Florida. The first official record that was located and indicating the use of this vessel was the relicensing by the ". . . order of Flag Officer, Wm. Marvin, Comdg the Blockading Squadron, dated June 13, 1861 . . ." Although a license had been issued to the owners, "Benj. Roberts and John Roberts" on the 17th of May, 1861, it had to be renewed the following month at which time the *Jane Ann* was reported as a "17 8/95" tonnage vessel.

During those prewar years, Key Vaca must have been a busy place with all its coastal activities, farming, shipbuilding and other construction. "Thousands of dollars were expended" and "several years of supervision in making

improvements . . . in planting and building but during the war all was lost again." (Letters, Horatio Crain).

After the Civil War was ended the boundary lines between Dade and Monroe Counties became an issue. Precisely why the residents of both counties wanted it changed was not found, however, the bill for a change was passed without controversy. It was approved by the Governor on December 8, 1866. "The Act does not give an effective date, and the Florida Constitution in effect at the time did not provide when acts should become effective when passed by the Legislature and no effective date was provided in the Act. So we may assume that it became effective on December 8, 1866." (Carson F. Sinclair, Supreme Court Library, Tallahassee, Florida). Anyway, the new boundary line separated Cayo Largo from Old Roads Key, thereby, returning Key Vaca to Monroe County where it has since remained.

The U. S. Census following the Acts of 1866 shows a complete depopulation of Key Vaca. The Pents were on Bamboo Key, many of the Roberts, Currys, Saunders, Sawyers, Pinders, Bethels, and Russells were on either Indian Key, Matecumbe, or other Keys in the vicinity. An explanation for this seeming complete evacuation was not found.

The plat of Township 66 South Range 33 East, prepared by Deputy Surveyor Charles F. Smith, on February 18th, 19th, and 20th of 1873, and approved June 30, 1874, by the U. S. Surveyor General, depicts a settlement on the northeastern end, Atlantic side, named Conchtown, in which there were fifteen houses. Mr. Neff states, "I have seen the old foundations overgrown with jungle."

A few years later, on April 24, 1878, Key Vaca was relinquished as a military reservation by the War Department and the next year, the U. S. Government began disposing of a part of its land.

In 1884, James Henshall, author, sportsman, yachtsman, naturalist and physician, found several brothers named Watkins with their families on "Key Vaccas". They were "Conchs" and they had "quite a large clearing" where they raised tomatoes, and vegetables for Key West and for the northern markets. The "soil is thin and very rocky but rich and produced well." He found, just east of the Watkins' settlement, a "fine spring of excellent water pouring out of the sharp and jagged rocks", beautiful land shells, and a rich variety of botanical specimens (*Camping and Cruising in Florida*, 1884, pp. 185-6).

A map in Charles L. Norton's, *A Handbook of Florida* (1895, 3rd Ed. opp. p. 64), also places a Conch Town on the northeastern end but on the

bay side. In 1906, when the railroad construction forces arrived on Key Vaca they found several families living in this "town". (Corliss). One of the families was the Rigbys. Mr. Rigby who had lived there "twenty odd years" was described by a ship-mate as a Bahamian negro, a fine man, who could "turn to" in any job aboard a ship. By trade he was a ship carpenter but he made a better living for his twenty children by making charcoal and raising tomatoes, "The best tomatoes in the world!"

Evidently the actual holders of the title to the Ferreira Grant had not the slightest inkling that their property had for years been claimed by the U. S. Government and had no knowledge of the parceling out of their land until it had already been done. Before Key Vaca was even released by the War Department the owners had complied with the Act of Congress entitled an "Act for the adjustment of private land claims in the States of Florida and Missouri and for other purposes approved June 22, 1860, revived by Act of Congress of March 2, 1867" and the U. S. Land Office in Gainesville had submitted to the Washington Office, in 1875, at least two reports on the Ferreira claim. In 1885, Horatio Crane informed the Commissioner of the General Land Office in Washington, D. C., ". . . only to find that at last the State of Florida has sold a portion of this grant at \$1.00 per acre claiming that the same had been patented to the State by the United States." Then Mr. Crain asked, "Will the Commissioners please explain how these Keys became State selection?" In the *Tract Book*, page 23, there is a record of 127.98 acres being sold for \$10.00 (National Archives).

During the 1870's, 1880's and most of the 1890's there was a veritable criss-cross correspondence by the heirs of Charles Howe and by several attorneys with the State Land Agent, with the Register and Receiver, in Gainesville, Florida, and with the U. S. General Land Office in Washington, D. C.; then, there were letters between State and Federal authorities and others passed from one Federal Department to another, — all concerning the ownership of the original Ferreira Grant.

In one letter Horatio Crain told the Commissioner of the General Land Office in Washington, that ". . . for a period after the war, the records of the Spanish Grants in the Public Archives of Florida were in . . . a state of confusion . . ." That could not have been the only place of confusion. In a letter to him, on August 10, 1886, Horatio Crain stated he had been informed "there is no record in our office" of the Grant by the Spanish Governor Kindelan to Francisco Ferreira. At one time, the Commissioner even doubted that the Ferreira Grant had ever been confirmed.

In Key West, a petition was filed by the Howe heirs on June 5, 1890, for partition of the "Vaccas Key". William Patton and M. C. Mordecai had died and the Howe heirs wanted to know which sections of the land were theirs. The three commissioners who were appointed by the Court to determine the partition decided a division could not be made without prejudice; after due notice, the Vacas Keys (except Duck Key) were sold "at public outcry to the highest bidder for cash" at the "Court House door in Key West. Horatio Crain's offer of \$500.00 was the highest bid and therefore on February 16, 1891, a "Commissioners' Deed" was issued to him (Plat of Key Vaccas . . . Nos. 30, 42).

Some time later, an attorney sent to the Commissioner of the General Land Office in Washington this comment: "If it is true that the Government has patented portions of the Keys to the State and the rest of it through the Gainesville Land Office to purchasers and settlers and that the land has never been segregated from the public domain except in this way, the suit in partition would be of little consequence as there was no land to be partitioned."

Of all the correspondence perhaps the most decisive letter was that written on July 19, 1898, in the form of a report, by R. L. Scanlett, U. S. Surveyor General, in Tallahassee, Florida. He had been instructed to take the proper procedure towards consummating the claim of Francisco Ferreira to Key Vacas and four islands adjacent. Mr. Scanlett enclosed copies of the various legal documents showing what action had been taken on Ferreira's petition; he explained the sections of different Acts effecting the claim and he described the difficulties of determining which islands were intended to be included in the Grant; and apparently he settled the issue that had been raised concerning "a Key Vaccas . . . situated about one and three fourth miles north of the city of St. Augustine." A photograph of a British Chart of the Florida Keys by Gauld which had been submitted by Horatio Crain, showed Key Vaccas as a range of Keys, Knights Key to Duck Key. The "Report of the U. S. Coast Survey for 1851, shows Key Vaccas to embrace a number of islands . . ." For further proof that Key Vaccas constituted a number of Keys, Crain produced a book, *Sailing Directions for Capt. Romans' Gulf and Windward Pilot*, published in 1806 and "containing full instructions for sailing through the Gulf of Florida . . . also the additions of Captains W. G. De Brahm, Bishop, Hester, Braddock, Archibald Dalzel Esq., George Gauld Esq., Lieut. Woodriff, and other experienced navigators."

Mr. Scanlett quoted from the above book, "The west end of Key Vaccas according to the sailing directions is situated about five miles north of 'Cayo

Sombrero' which would make Knights Key the western extremity." On page 20, Section 6, Key Vaccas is discussed as follows: "Cayo Vaccas or rather the thick range of islands that go by that name, extend about N. E. by E. for the space of five leagues, the easternmost of which islands is called Duck Key."

There were certain natural objects located on "Key Vaccas" which would confirm the claim that the Key embraced a number of islands. On page 21, Section 7, the following description is given: "At Bahia Honda there is very good fresh water to be got in the same manner; and on the south side of Cayo Vaccas about eight miles from the west end, there are likewise fresh water wells on the east side of a narrow opening with a sand beach on the east side of it. These are the only places among the Keys (at least as far as we know) where fresh water is to be got by wells: but there are several fresh water Swamps and natural reservoirs among the rocks, particularly a large one on the north side of Cayo Vaccas about six miles from the west end; where the water never fails."

Mr. Scanlett said that it was evident that this Key "included much more territory than is embraced by the single key designated Key Vaccas by the U. S. Survey." At the end of his letter was this all important statement: "I have decided that the Francisco Ferreira Grant embraces a number of islands or Keys situated in Township 66 South, Range 32 East; Township 66 South, Range 33 East; Township 65 south, Range 34 East, beginning with Knights Key on the west and ending with Duck Key on the east, embracing an area of 4,135.05 acres." (Doc. 72564, 8 pp., National Archives.)

Precisely one month from the day Mr. Scanlett wrote his report, the United States Land Office in Gainesville, Florida, sent a letter each to Lewis W. Pierce and to William Barnett of Key West. Pierce was instructed to reconvey to the United States certain land that had been patented to him on April 10, 1886. Barnett was advised that his homestead entry of November 12, 1896, was to be cancelled. On August 24, 1898, the State Land Agent would "take steps to have grantees of the State reconvey all lands disposed of by the State, lying within the limits of said grant." On December 17, 1898, the Commissioner of the General Land Office in Washington instructed the bookkeeper to note on the tract book certain cancellations "for conflict with the . . . claim of Francisco Ferreira." On March 23, 1899, the Florida Commissioner of Agriculture told the Gainesville Land Office: "The State does not intend to contest the issuing of the patent to the lands lying within the Francisco Ferreira Grant." Then came the important announcement that

the private land claim of Francisco Ferreira was patented on May 16, 1899, which patent was signed by President William McKinley.

Whether or not the State of Florida ever reconveyed the lands embraced within the Ferreira Grant to the United States, the Commissioner of the General Land Office in Washington, D. C., advised certain Miami attorneys on August 11, 1926: "While there is correspondence filed with the case showing that a full reconveyance from the State was contemplated, the records do not show that a reconveyance was made and no further action has been taken with reference to the State's title."

Horatio Crain died the following March 3rd, after the patent was issued. However, Key Vaca appears to have remained in the Crain family until 1911, in which year with the exception of a few lots, it became the property of Julius Leslie Wood. After his death on June 29, 1925, Key Vaca began to be partitioned into smaller parcels of land and as of December 1956, the county deputy tax assessor estimated there were about 3500 parcels of land on the island.

Since about 1900 sharp contrasts are seen in man's activity on that "most beautiful little island", Key Vaca.

In the early 1900's while Location Engineer, William J. Krome, with his assistants, was seeking and studying the most desirable route for Henry M. Flagler's rails to reach Key West, there were other men, on the Keys, searching and learning. Just as the railroad magnate had a keen interest in Cuba, so Henry A. Pilsbry, Sc. D., had a vital interest in Cuba's wildlife. However, these two groups of men, one composed of engineers, and the other of scientists and naturalists had one interest in common, Key Vaca. J. T. Van Campen, Advertising Manager, Florida East Coast Railway Company, St. Augustine, Florida, advised, "In going through our material I can find no definite statement as to why Key Vaca, or Marathon, was chosen as construction headquarters. I presume it may have been because of its more or less central location, and the fact that it was large enough to accommodate the necessary buildings and equipment. Chief Engineer Meredith no doubt made the selection." M. E. Phillips, Editor of the *Journal of The Academy of Natural Sciences* of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, after discussing the question with other Academy men who for many years had collected on Key Vaca, replied, "I do not know of any reason why that particular key should have been especially favored by the naturalists as a collecting place. Many of them have been visited over a long period of years by many scientists in

search of interesting material, as they offer rather unique ecological conditions for the continent of North America". The deep channels mentioned by Mr. Neff were undoubtedly given serious consideration by Mr. Flagler's engineers, whereas the scientists and naturalists thought the strong currents passing Cape Sable may have accounted for the presence of certain species of wildlife found on that island.

The world knows of the never-before-done engineering accomplishments that were planned and replanned, after 1909, on Key Vaca. Newspapers kept the public informed of the problems and progress of the railroad and bridge construction; magazines, monographs, whole chapters and even entire books have been written about the Keys' railroad, but because of less publicity, fewer people know of the same devotion of men to the study of the plant and animal kingdoms who concentrated much of their efforts on this same island. The cost in dollars and cents cannot be compared with that of the railroad, nevertheless, exploration of Key Vaca's wildlife was expensive.

In the huge volume of the *Journal of The Academy of Natural Sciences* of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, (p. 445), published March 21, 1912, in the commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the academy, is the mention that about midway of Key Vaca, J. S. Raybon (1904) found eleven living *Liguus*. He was not a professional conchologist, but was "the captain of a small steamer, which apparently was for hire." He knew the waters of southern Florida. In 1904, he was employed by Clarence Bloomfield Moore, "a naturalist of some wealth, who was a member of this Academy and published many papers in our journals . . . his main interest was in archaeology — and especially in the excavation of the mounds of the early mound builders. Raybon helped collect natural history specimens on these trips.

"Henry Fowler and Stewardson Brown also collected shells on the keys. These were all Academy men, and in fact, Fowler is now head of our fish department and H. Pilsbry, about the best known conchologist in the world, is still head of our shell department" (Letter, May 3, 1957, M. E. Phillips, Editor). Mr. Fowler and Dr. Pilsbry remembered collecting on Key Vaca.

Charles Torrey Simpson, who had collected on Key Vaca in the early 1900's with the Academy men, expressed great concern over the fate of the *Liguus*. "The doom of our beautiful arboreal snails is undoubtedly sealed for everywhere in our region they are rapidly being destroyed by man. The building of the railroad over the Keys has hastened their destruction and the

lovely *Liguus* once so abundant — now almost extinct.” (*In Lower Florida Wilds*, 1920, p. 335.)

Over fifty years ago, Charles T. Simpson and Dr. Henry Augustine Pilsbry studied on Key Vaca. In *A Study of the Variation and Zoography of Liguus in Florida* (p. 429), Dr. Pilsbry concluded, “The Floridian forms of *Liguus* are in part identical with those of Cuba, in part different from any Cuban races, though obviously of the Cuban *Liguus fasciatus* type.” Twelve years ago he recorded in *Land Mollusca of North America*, (Vol. II, Part I, p. 49): “Key Vaca and Grassy Key, western keys of the middle group, have a *Liguus* fauna almost identical with that of the keys east and west. . . . There is a strong southward current past Cape Sable and it seems possible that a tree well stocked with *Liguus* could have drifted across the bay and made a landing on Key Vaca. . . . The possibility that Indians carried mainland shells to Key Vaca is to be considered.” Although the railroad has gone, Simpson’s “lovely *Liguus*” are still on Key Vaca. On September 20th, 1957, John B. Williams (Miami realtor) and Mrs. Williams, in an hour or two, found on Key Vaca twelve beautiful *Liguus* on the Gulf side, near the airstrip.

Just as the Flagler railroad on the Keys had its earlier advocates, the naturalists and scientists had theirs and curiously enough, the years of their forerunners were not far apart. “As far back as 1831, at the very dawn of the railway era in America . . . an enterprising editor of the Key West Gazette was suggesting a railroad linking the town with the mainland of Florida” (Corliss, *Tequesta*, 1953). The next year, John James Audubon was probing the Keys. Since he was stationed for a while at Indian Key where a boat and pilot were placed at his disposal and when Charles Howe was vitally interested in Key Vaca, it can be imagined that Audubon studied and collected on the latter island.

Seven years before Audubon’s arrival in the Keys, T. R. Peale spent the winter in Florida. On February 5, 1825, he stopped at “Key Tavernier”, on the next day, at “Ad Nights Key near Key Vacas”. From there he went to Key West but on March 2nd he landed on one of the islands near “Bayou Honda” [Bahia Honda] to hunt and “found a few good shells”. As of March 12, 1912, Peale’s manuscript Journal was in the possession of S. N. Rhoads (*Commemorative Journal of Natural Sciences*, p 462).

In 1835, the need of a railroad over the Keys was discussed. For six months up to April of that year, Rev. Alva Bennett (Troy, New York), rector at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Key West, collected plants, however, no con-

clusive proof was found showing which of the Keys he explored. Three years later, Dr. John Loomis Blodgett (1809-1853) began a fifteen year period of studying and collecting from Key West up the mainland. He sent his specimens from Key West to Dr. Torrey, New York for identification and naming. Unfortunately, Dr. Blodgett did not indicate the exact locations of his specimens. (*Tequesta*, 1953, "John Loomis Blodgett (1809-1853)" by R. Bruce Ledin.) John Torrey and Asa Gray in *Flora of North America* (Vol. I p. XII) mentioned receiving plants collected by Blodgett but again without designation of location other than Key West (Letter, December 17, 1956, Joseph Monachino, The New York Botanical Garden).

In the 1850's Senator Stephen R. Mallory's interest in having a railroad was matched by that of the Academy men; and in 1883 when John B. Gordon started to build a railroad, Henry Hemphill collected on Key Vaca, ". . . The group of keys comprising Duck, Grassy, Crawl, Fat Deer, Vaca and their satellites . . . where only *Liguus crenatus* dwells. . . . It is somewhat remarkable that the prevalent races of *Liguus* upon these south central keys are related to those of Middle Cape Sable instead of to the races of the keys on either side."

Not all the trips to the Keys by naturalists were privately sponsored. The U. S. Department of the Interior, in 1880, detailed Professor A. H. Curtis "to obtain a complete collection of Southern woods." Captain Andrew P. Canova was his guide along the Keys. Mr. Corliss said the first regularly scheduled boat line between Marathon and Key West was operated by Captain "Tony" Canova.

The same year (1884) that the physician, Dr. James Henshall, was on "Key Vaccas," Dr. F. W. True was there for the purpose of studying the mammal fauna (U. S. National Museum, *Bulletin* 205). In December 1934, and during January and February of 1935, Gerrit S. Miller, Jr., Curator, Division of Mammals, U. S. National Museum, found "no less than five mammals . . . have never been found elsewhere. . . . Type Locality, Marathon, Key Vaca, Monroe County, Florida. Range, Key Vaca and doubtless closely adjoining keys of Key Vaca group. . . ."

In the reptile family even today on Key Vaca, are found the green snake, black snake, water moccasins and spotted moccasins. As late as 1936, William A. Parrish, saw a panther. He recalled, "It nearly scared me to death." On July 30, 1957, Mrs. Otto Bethel of Key West, now in her 83rd year (a lively little lady) remembered many details associated with her husband's hunting trips to Key Vaca. Mrs. Thomas E. Reedy (Coral Gables) formerly

of Key West and in her 79th year remembered the time when her husband would go every week-end to Key Vaca. He usually had a pack of six to eight dogs with him but finding it difficult to transport them back and forth in his boat, he boarded them on a nearby key with a family named Kyle.

Mrs. Tripp (Naranja) formerly Mrs. Robert Kyle, helped to care for those dogs. She described Key Vaca as once being a popular place for deer hunters. Nearby there used to be wild doves "by the millions" and her children delighted in finding their eggs and enjoyed eating them. The flavor, was but a bit stronger than hens' eggs. Many senior citizens along the Keys recalled with smiles their night "hunts" for the opossum and the large numbers of racoons and swamp rabbits on Key Vaca.

Since the history of the Key West Extension Railroad has been written many times and is readily available, it will not be detailed here, however, little attention seems to have been given to the social life on Key Vaca during those construction days. Early Marathon has been described as "bustled, screamed, slammed, banged, and shrieked."

Between January 1906, and January 1909, there appears to have been little, if any, community family life on the island since the officers and skilled workmen and their families had not yet established homes there. On Islamorada, William J. Krome had seventeen acres which he divided into lots, each one selling for seven hundred and fifty dollars, "now selling for \$15,000 each". (Interview, January 25, 1956, Divisional Engineer, Ernest J. Cotton). In January of 1906, crews of men were clearing land for camps and for the roadway. One camp, number ten, was located on the bay shore north of the present Sue M. Moore School. This camp consisted of unpainted dormitories, mess halls, and canvas tents. Camp number one was near Pull-and-be-Damned Creek.

The first construction men located on Key Vaca were Resident Engineers W. C. Taylor and Edwin R. Davis who were in charge of forces at Camp Ten and Resident Engineer Kerdolff in charge at Camp One, with their respective assistants.

For two years (1905-1907), Henry M. Flagler and his engineers seriously considered the development of a great deep water harbor at Key Vaca. Engineers surveyed and took extensive soundings. Maps and plans were prepared to show what would be required to dredge such a harbor, including one or more channels leading to the open sea (Weekly Progress Reports of the Constructing Engineer to the President of the Florida East Coast Rail-

road and correspondence of J. C. Meredith, Constructing Engineer 1904-1909, reviewed by Carlton J. Corliss).

By 1907 (October 26th), a telegraph line over Key Vaca was under construction and by the week ending November 23rd, the first locomotive moved on the island. The first telephone wires to cross Key Vaca were strung in April, 1908. This same year on January 22nd, Key Vaca was joined by rail to the Florida mainland and on the 5th of the following month, the first passenger train ran down the Keys to Knights Key Dock. (Carlton J. Corliss, *Historical Notes on the Key Vaca Area and Marathon*, pp. 3, 9, 10, 12, 13).

The first time-table (No. 76) showing Marathon as a station gives this information, "Train 82 is operated, Knights Key Dock to Miami on Tuesdays and Fridays to connect with incoming ship from Havana and Key West . . . Train 83 is operated Miami to Knights Key Dock on Sundays and Wednesdays to connect with outgoing ship for Key West and Havana" and "No. 76 . . . Passenger Train Service Extended To Knights Key, Florida. Commencing February 5th, 1908, connections made at Miami by Trains 99 and 98 with trains 83 and 82 operating between Miami and Knights Key Dock, the Northern terminus of the P. & O. S.S. Co.'s Key West and Havana Lines." After the train left Miami the 30th station was Marathon, however, all stations except Homestead, Jewfish, Quarry and Long Key, were Flag Stations where trains stopped only on signal or to let off passengers. A hotel boat was "located at Knights Key Dock in February, 1908, to accommodate passengers of the railroad and the Peninsular & Occidental Steamship Company and other persons".

The Key Vaca "Y" Tail Track Dock built by the railroad men between 1907 and 1908 was the main transfer point between the railroad and the steamboat and the barge fleet. Construction materials, fresh water, provisions, and supplies of all kinds, labor forces, and even the first locomotives and cars to reach Key West passed over this dock.

Beginning with the year 1909 Marathon took on the form of a more normal community in that families with their children arrived and lived in private homes. Available services included a merchandizing store, a U. S. Post Office, a schoolhouse where classes, devotional services, and social gatherings were held, a telephone service, an electric light system, emergency hospital, Marathon Athletic Club and that year a Justice of the Peace was appointed. Other buildings were erected as the need arose, such as mess halls, a power house, a pumping station and storerooms.

Living on Key Vaca was far from dull. Mothers tended their new babies, families had clam bakes (clams were brought in especially for the occasion), picnics and a variety of parties. Children had their birthday celebrations. There was always a "Granny" (midwife) on the Island to help care for babies and new mothers. Mrs. E. R. Lowe's own mother (Emma Louise Curry) was a "Granny", a respected title. Other expectant mothers went to hospitals either in Key West or on the mainland.

In 1909, Miss Effie Knowles, (Miami) attorney, was Marathon's first public school teacher. This can be stated with certainty since Marathon had neither school children nor a school-place in 1908, in which year Marathon's place-name was first officially recognized. Miss Knowles described the schoolhouse as a one room frame building and like the residences it was "constructed quickly". School opening with twelve pupils including Krome one, Coe three, and Cotton one, represented all the elementary grades to and including the first year of high school. The school session was four months. Miss Knowles estimated the population of Marathon at that time to be about 100.

The school teachers who followed Miss Knowles were: Miss Leith Bush (Mrs. Paul Reuther) (1910-1911), Miss Victoria Pastorini (1911-1912), and Miss Gloriana Gardner, (Mrs. Bayly) (1912-1913). There were no rooms or apartments for rent and no restaurants so each teacher had to live with an already established family.

Miss Leith Bush was said to have lived with a Langford family, probably the Divisional Engineer, R. L. Langford, who succeeded Edwin R. Davis at Camp 10.

Miss Pastorini (Key West), resided with Mrs. Hugh Cameron and her two sons and she remembered having seventeen pupils in the first eight grades, and that her salary was \$40.00 a month. Two impressions of that period remain with her: one, that all buildings painted were of "Flagler yellow" and the other, "the thrills, excitement and high tension" on the day when Henry Flagler rode on his train from Miami to Key West. School was closed that day! Her brother, a retired post office employe commented that it was the general practice in Key West to send beginning teachers there. Mrs. Bayly lodged in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Leach and their daughter Margaret. "There were 17 children, representing 7 grades, all in a one room schoolhouse, with no desks, not even a blackboard, and only benches for the children to sit on. The men salvaged an old screen door frame and tacked a piece of black oil cloth on it and I found some scraps of white chalk. . . .

The schoolhouse we used is a far cry to the modern schoolhouse there today." Later, in her letter of February 10th, 1957, Mrs. Bayly added "My grandmother, Mrs. John Henry Gardner, who was Elizabeth Roberts, daughter of Joseph Roberts was born on Key Vaca or went there to live as a very little girl." Joseph Roberts' name appears in the first Dade County U. S. Census (1840). At that time Key Vaca was in Dade County.

Marathon's first school teacher referred to the "quickly constructed" houses. Edmund Crittendon who is now in his 84th year came to Florida sixty-four years ago and in 1912, he bought a house in Marathon for \$125, "No two pieces of lumber in that house were the same in kind or shape. . . . The train passed my house less than two feet from it." He built on a kitchen and a bath room, the first one, he believes, in Marathon. There were no families on Boot Key where he worked nor on Key Vaca other than those connected with the railroad.

Divisional Engineer, James E. Cotton was often called "Dr. Cotton" because of his skill in rendering first aid. He described the emergency hospital as having three cots and equipment and materials for treating minor injuries. All cases of a serious nature were taken to hospitals in Key West, Homestead or Miami. One male nurse in attendance at the emergency hospital was Mr. Edward Raymond Lowe, then known as "Doc". His widow, Mrs. Alice Louise (O'Rourke) Lowe, popularly known as "Ellie", now in her 72nd year and a native of Key West stated he had served as an orderly between 1901-1904 in the U. S. Army Hospital in Key West and he worked a year in a drug store there under Dr. Maloney. He was the first Justice of Peace at Marathon. From childhood, Mrs. Lowe had heard the story that a "Masked Knight Prince from England" lived on Knights Key, hence the name. John Lee Williams, in or before 1837 saw on Knights Key a "good house and a cleared field that appears to great advantage from the water" (*Territory of Florida* p37). References have been found to "The Rocks" in Marathon. Mrs. Lowe explained that was a rocky place near the present Marathon Shores and where liquor was smuggled in and women of doubtful reputation came in there too.

Even though the residents had no minister, religious services were held in the schoolhouse, usually by a "Christian man." Resident Engineer, W. R. Hawkins, often led the services. "During the building of the East Coast Railroad to Key West, clergy from Saint Paul's, Key West, made occasional visits to Key Vaca and conducted services for the workers at the construction camp at Knights Key. In addition, these priests ministered to several Bahamian

negro churchmen then in residence here." (Letter, February 12, 1957, the Rev'd Fr. Whitney Church, Saint Columba's Mission, Marathon).

Mr. and Mrs. "Doc" Lowe found part of a kitchen hidden about midway on Key Vaca, close to the water on the Atlantic side where they "picked up shards of obviously very old pottery having designs, a grinding stone about eight inches long, shaped something like a loaf of bread and a shell knife." These items were lost in the 1935 hurricane.

W. R. Hawkins kept a diary from the day he was employed by the Florida East Coast Railway until he left in 1912, a period of five years. That unpublished diary, consisting of several "books", provides clear pictures of the trials, horrors, amusements, fun, and congeniality on Key Vaca. One of the biggest evils was liquor, as it hindered progress of work, caused fist-quarrels, and even brought about near and actual violent deaths. There were instances of fatal injuries and tragic losses of life by falling cement blocks, by explosions, and by drowning.

There were also many amusing situations during those railroad days. William A. Glass (Coral Gables), an Illinois State University man, was one of the resident engineers on Key Vaca (1908-1917). After relating how the labor was recruited, he gave an account of 150 laborers arriving unexpectedly. No quarters were ready, a hurricane was approaching, so in a hurry, they were "put up in the cement shed". The laborers were poorly dressed except for new shoes and tall hats. As the wind blew harder and harder, first one, then two or three, soon five or six, until finally about seventy-five new tall hats flew out of the cement shed and out to sea. [A social worker then in New York knew of a man there who supplied new shoes and tall hats as a morale-booster to the down-and-out men.]

Under date of April 12, 1910, Mr. Hawkins wrote in his diary, "Most of the Marathon force went to little doings at McClure's tonight . . . one man who is not much of a singer volunteered to sing a vocal solo", and on the 13th, "This afternoon Corliss at Oaks' instigation got up a phonograph record which was a travesty on the singing done by the volunteer last night. It was pretty clever . . . the victim . . . stood it pretty well."

There are instances galore in the diary of the good-natured jokes being played upon one another. Other kinds of fun were dances, card parties, indoor and outdoor games, picnics, swimming, walking, picture taking, and studying Spanish.

Shortly before the 1910 hurricane, this entry occurs: "Cockroaches are uneasy tonight, a 'Conch' sign of windy weather."

On October 17, 1910, the French Liner *Louisiane* was stranded on the Sombrero Reef four miles from Key Vaca. Mr. Hawkins counted thirty-two boats around it and on the 24th of the same month, recorded "Wreck *Louisiane* has been turned over to Bub Smart. He has taken a contract not as wrecking master in the usual way, but in some way more advantageous to the ship owners."

Of interest was the reaffirmation that sugar cane was grown on Key Vaca. Bahamian descendants along the Keys had mentioned it. Under date of October 15, 1911, Hawkins wrote, "Sugar cane raised on Key Vaca. Richardson bo't 3 stalks from negro who raised it."

On Christmas Day of 1911, Prof. Charles Schuchert of Yale University arrived at Marathon. He was "interested in natural history." On the same day the newspaperman, Mr. Chapin, was there. On the 27th, "Jimmy Hare, noted war correspondent and photographer, *Collier Magazine*, here for a few days getting pictures." A little over three weeks later Hawkins entered: "*Colliers* for January 20, 1912 has in it the pictures that J. A. Hare took and an article by John Maurer Rockwell which is about as accurate as could be expected and he has only a little rot about square-jawed bronze men." In 1912, on May 1st: "V. E. Lakinsky, C. E., Deputy of the Imperial Institute of Engineers, of ways of communication, St. Petersburg, Russia, came to Marathon last night. A Russian between 25-30 years. Has been examining engineering works for his government . . ."

The village of Marathon during the railroading days was concentrated in an area between the main railway line and the Gulf. Standing on the Gulf shore, back of the present Highway Patrol Station, and facing the main line of the railroad, a board walk ("Broadway") extended to the railroad, at the end of which, nearest the Gulf waters, was another board walk running parallel to the railroad. At the junction of "Broadway" and the parallel walk were the executive offices and official quarters. Well to the left of "Broadway" was a row of houses on either side of a boardwalk running parallel to "Broadway", except that the end extending toward the railroad stopped before reaching it. The last building on the left of that "residential street" was the schoolhouse. The hospital was to the left of "Broadway", near the walk parallel to the railroad. It is still there and is occupied. To the right of "Broadway" and nearly opposite the Hospital ("Court House") was the building used as a store and post-office. Between this store and slightly to the right of the official headquarters was the mess hall and farther still to the right of "Broadway" were several storage buildings, close to the

"Y" track, the tail of which reached out to the Gulf waters where the Marathon Dock was built. In the center of the "V" part of the "Y" track, joining the railroad, were the water tank, tool house, and repair shop. To the right of the "Y" track were the recruits' camps, Spanish camp, and another camp. The Marathon Hotel was to the right of and about midway of the tail part of the "Y" track. The boardwalk passing the official quarters branched off, one prong curved somewhat in the direction of the railroad to be joined to the residential "street"; the other prong reached out to a swimming dock. Close to the "V" of the forked boardwalk was the tennis court and to the left of that was a building. If this house had had a mailbox, the names on it would have been: McClure, Krome, McMullen, Corliss. Between the tennis court and the above "residence" was a boardwalk leading out to a launch dock. Opposite the mess hall was a boardwalk leading to another launch dock, the site of the Chief Engineer's Quarterboat and office as well as the Athletic club (Outline drawn by Mr. Corliss).

The residential area began to show signs of "thinning out" by the fall of 1912, and by the following year there was no school. In an unpublished letter of July 31, 1914, written in Marathon, the Constructing Engineer, William J. Krome, mentioned "the approaching early completion of our work . . ." By April 14, 1920, Mr. Krome informed Mr. Corliss, "We still maintain headquarters at Marathon but that place is very much on the 'Deserted Village' order. No families live there and the old 'residential section' has largely returned to jungle . . . I spend one or two days a week at Marathon." The machine shop at Boot Key was still open but Mr. Ring, "with a force of about a dozen men wonders from day to day when we will finally close up." In Marathon at this time there were two men in the auditor's office, one in Mr. Krome's, and there were the station agent, the pumpman, and the section foreman. "The road is doing an immense business with Cuba and the two ferries [Key West] are so much overtaxed that we are building a third, probably to be followed very shortly by a fourth." (W. J. Krome). What that railroad meant to William J. Krome perhaps can be best told as follows: "Homestead, October 2, 1929, . . . Physicians believed immediate cause of death was shock upon hearing the damage caused by the hurricane winds [September 28, 1929] to the Overseas railway". (Miami Daily News)

Just as quickly as Key Vaca, the headquarters of an engineering project costing millions of dollars, had the spotlight of the world focussed upon it and had famous people coming to its shores, equally as suddenly the island dropped into oblivion.

In the 20th century, apparently the first white man, not connected with the Florida East Coast Railway to settle with his family in Marathon with the intention of remaining there was William A. Parrish. It would be utterly impossible to write even the sketchiest history of Marathon without mentioning him. He was born on October 28, 1885 at Fruitland, Putnam County, Florida, to Ezekiel William Jackson Parrish of Lowndes County, Georgia, and Georgella Margaret (Allen) Parrish of South Carolina. He had one younger (by two years) brother, Dr. T. E. Parrish, who died in 1955, in Marathon.

At the age of twenty-two, Mr. Parrish and Mary Eveline Sparkman (daughter of Tampa's first mayor) were married at Tampa and when they established their home at Marathon, in February, 1927, their family consisted of five daughters and one son.

The Parrishes came to the Keys in 1920, locating first on Craig Key where he operated a fish house. In 1925 when real estate was "booming" they moved back to the mainland, but the next year property values slumped. "In the fall of 1927, I built a fishhouse on Boot Key Harbor being in partnership with the Miami Fish and Ice Company which J. G. Crosland headed, shipping my fish by express and in car load lots to different parts of the country. At first, I had a commissary in the fishhouse but in the fall of 1928, I built a grocery store up near the railroad station [Marathon] and leased it out for the season. The site of this store is where the Patrol Station now stands. In 1929, with the assistance of Bernie Papy [State Representative] I got Mr. A. E. Woodburn to take over the store. He later became postmaster and has been a resident of Marathon since that time." (Letter, April 10, 1957, William A. Parrish)

Arthur E. Woodburn, originally from Vermont, and now in his 81st year, recalled, "There were not over three or four families here when I came: Parrish, Gibson, Hamilton, and possibly another family. There were times when Allan Parrish and I were the only white men on the island." (Interview December 28, 1955). There was a negro section called Addley Town. Mr. Woodburn owned the general store and had the post office from 1930-1946 "possibly to 1948". He was the first to have electric lights (home generator).

On returning to the Keys to engage in the wholesale fish business, Mr. Parrish told his partner that Marathon was the best place for getting fish. Exactly thirty years later, Leon Kenney, founder and owner of the Pinellas Seafood Company, and known as the "Seafood King", gave his reason for locating at Marathon, "Best production area in Florida . . . during the

months from November through January. Quality of fish is better in Marathon than any other port in Florida." (Letter, January 10, 1957)

At first, Mr. Parrish and his partner leased the Marathon property from the railroad with the exception of the station and the homes of the railroad employees. At that time, the population of Marathon including children, was about thirty. Not until 1931 did Mr. Parrish own property on Key Vaca.

In a letter to Mr. Corliss March 7, 1952, he wrote, "For 12 years I lived in the Gibbons' residence [near tennis court] after reroofing, reflooring, and repairing same. Also repaired the Krome residence and used that . . . The Marathon Hotel had burned, also the Taylor houses, Spanish Club, etc. Docks on the front were gone . . . The Marathon Chamber of Commerce is now located where the wide tracks reached the docks. We had two water tanks instead of one in between the "Y" tracks. On one arm of the "Y" the Navy now has a pumping station. West of that comes the public school."

One of the first things needed in this community, thought Mr. Parrish, was a school teacher, so, in 1928 a school was opened. The first teacher for this community, Miss Tessie Kyle, (now Mrs. Kurt Frentzel, Public Health Nurse, New York), daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kyle, (who cared for Mr. Reedy's hunting dogs), had "less than ten pupils with at least one in each of the first eight grades." To ensure her comfort, the Parrishes invited her to live in their home. Nearly thirty years later, Mrs. Frentzel recalls their every consideration and that, "almost none of the land was really cleared except for a very little around the homes. Of course, no roads, only the railroad track and if we wanted to visit a near island, we either 'walked the ties' or went by small row boats with outboard motors. We had a passenger train and a freight train go by from Key West in the morning and the same from the north in the afternoon. We could not 'go to the corner' for a newspaper, and knowing this, the train conductor often would toss us newspapers that passengers had discarded. Instead of paths to walk on between the homes and the school we had 'a walk' made of cut railroad ties and boards. This helped the often bare-foot children to keep the sand spurs from their feet, — but at times, when in a hurry, ended with splinters . . .

"The homes were from crude to very plain, . . . all wooden. Outdoor toilets, — with a Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward catalogue. We had crude showers but no bath rooms.

"Our recreation was swimming, fishing, picnics, reading, and bridge playing. We also had one tennis court, — Victrola records for dancing.

"Our school was a really small wooden house that had been the first Post Office in Marathon . . . no electric lights . . . had the old fashioned oil lamps.

"It probably seems like a very dull life to young people now . . . we had many pleasant hours . . . all ages . . . together."

Following Miss Kyle in 1929, was Charles C. Albury, the present Principal of Coral Shores School, Tavernier, Florida. For a schoolhouse, he had an abandoned railroad construction building, the rear of which was partitioned off, making a small room where he slept. The hurricane winds of September, 1929, toppled the rear end of the school building but he continued to hold classes there. He refused, however, to sleep in the little rear room that was slanting downward so steeply, so he lived with the Parrishes. "Rats got into the desks and the children would let out yells when they scurried out." To call the children to school he would hit a triangular iron piece with an iron bar, even the children living on houseboats heard the call. It was four or five months before the "Board of Education got around to repairing the schoolhouse."

Mr. Albury described Marathon then as a "ghost town", having been virtually deserted, since the construction crews moved out. A few families remained or moved in, and he thought there might have been in all twenty-five families, three of which took turns as pumpers of water. Mr. Albury's salary was sixty-five dollars a month but since there was no high school and no way of transporting the children to one, the Board of Education offered him fifteen dollars a month for each high school pupil he taught. He had five such students and ten in the elementary grades.

"At first we had board walks for streets. Along the side of one was a trestle out to the creek and on which people pumped themselves along on a hand car. Later, roadways were made." As for recreation, "Lots of it!" There were two motor vehicles on the island, one owned by Mr. Parrish, and the other, a truck by Mr. Woodburn who would "toot" at each house to pick up the children and adults to go for a "swim" at approximately where the Sombrero Hotel (now Buccaneer Lodge) stood. When parties were held in the schoolhouse, everyone brought his gas or oil lantern for light. Everyone was included in practically everything. Wives, mothers, and daughters danced and they entered into the fun at candy-pulls, picnics, card games, fishing, and just get-togethers. The men went on night "hunts" for racoons. The island was covered with beautiful morning glories everywhere. "Those

years were among the happiest of my life." (Interview March 17, 1956, Charles C. Albury).

In 1931, Mrs. Sue Marvin Moore, now in her 80's, followed Mr. Albury. She opened school with twenty-five children in grades one through ten and representing "five or six families." Soon she had only fifteen pupils as some of the fishermen families moved away. Mrs. Moore told this writer that she taught in almost every type of improvised building during the years between 1931 and 1946. At one time she had twenty-seven pupils in all the elementary grades and with almost no teaching aids. For eight summers, she took courses of study at the University of Miami, "To get ready for the children."

In 1935, because of the hurricane, she was moved to Big Pine Key where she taught for three years. Mr. Neff recalled there were two children of school age on Key Vaca then and that they might not be "held back" in their studies, Mrs. Moore took them to Big Pine to live with her. Those two pupils were, "a Parrish girl and my son." On returning to Marathon (1938), "The old seat of learning was located fourteen miles south [Summerland Key] in a discarded Civilian Conservation Corps camp building." The December 16th 1945 issue of *The Miami Herald* has, "Pupils had to get up at 7 A.M. to reach school on time and rarely got home before 5 P.M." The *Minutes* of the Marathon Chamber of Commerce during this period are replete with the determination of Mr. Parrish as head of a committee in getting a new schoolhouse. Meanwhile, "About 20 of the able-bodied members drove a fleet of trucks down the highway, dismantled the schoolhouse in sections and rebuilt it right in town." In this, Mrs. Moore continued to teach until the new school which bears her name, was completed in November, 1946." "Miz Sue" as she was known, taught the first year in the new school, then retired in June of 1947.

A. B. Galbraith, a retired structural engineer and a resident of Marathon, has given, in a series of eight articles titled "Earlier Marathon" (*The Florida Keys Keynoter*, December 15, 1955 through February 2, 1956), vivid descriptions of "conditions and happenings in Marathon during its transition from strictly a commercial fishing village to a popular tourist spot." In 1933, he found the Upper Keys "desolate beyond description." The pavement was terrible and the road was practically a tunnel through the brush. To him, it was, inconceivable that there could be anything to see but even more desolation on the Keys below Lower Matecumbe so he "jolted" back to Miami.

Several changes had taken place along the chain of islands before his next visit in January 1938, when he first saw "unimpressive" Marathon. Of

interest are the statements that in June 1928 when the Florida Greyhound bus first operated between Miami and Key West there was one long ferry run between Lower Matecumbe Key and No Name Key at which point another bus picked up the passengers and transported them to Key West. "On account of the ferry schedule . . . it was impossible for a passenger to make the round trip between Miami and Key West in one day.

"In 1930, the Monroe County Commissioners secured a second ferry, after which we had two short ferry runs instead of one long ferry trip . . ." Those two short ferry connections were between Lower Matecumbe and "the northern landing point on Key Vaca" [Grassy Key] and from Marathon to No Name Key. "The first time the public could use our bus service and make a round trip between Miami and Key West in the same day" was in 1938 in which year "we inaugurated four scheduled trips in each direction . . . today we have ten round trip schedules between the two cities." (Letter, September 9, 1957, T. B. O'Steen, Director Public Relations, Florida Greyhound Lines)

Clifford G. Hicks, Secretary, Overseas Road and Toll Bridge District, explained that due to Key West's expansion of business and other interests, transportation facilities were entirely inadequate. Ten years after the Florida East Coast Railroad was completed (1912), Monroe County began building a highway from Key West to Florida Mainland. Between 1922 and 1928, the county had spent over \$4,000,000 on the road. Due to insufficient funds, "two watergaps in the 40 mile area between Lower Matecumbe Key and No Name Key" had to be bridged by ferries. This condition continued until 1935 when sections of the railroad were destroyed by a tropical hurricane.

"In 1933, the Florida Legislature created the Overseas Road and Toll Bridge District with the authority to construct and operate a toll highway and bridges over this 40 miles watergap, thereby providing for a continuous motor road from Key West to the Mainland." After the 1935 hurricane, the railroad's right of way with existing bridges was acquired for \$640,000. At a cost of \$3,600,000, "the Overseas Road and Toll Bridge District converted the Florida East Coast Railway right-of-way with its eleven concrete bridges into a modern paved automobile highway for a distance of 41 miles, extending from Lower Matecumbe to Big Pine Key and joining at these points with the highway built by Monroe County and known as the Overseas Highway, thereby eliminating the watergap previously requiring a ferry service." This particular section was opened for traffic on March 28, 1937 (*Literary Florida*, March 1947, p. 34, 35). Tolls were collected between January of 1938 and

April of 1954 (Interview August 14, 1958, Clifford G. Hicks). As sufficient funds had been collected to pay off the bonded indebtedness on the Overseas Highway the State Road Department took over the entire Overseas Highway and made it toll free (*The Marathon Story*, published by the Marathon Chamber of Commerce, 1958, p 33).

When Mr. Galbraith saw Marathon for the first time in January 1938, "the new bridges were opened" but the highway was still the "old road" which kept getting "no better fast." There were no fishing tackle stores and only a restaurant, a 25 foot structure with the southwest corner partitioned off for the owner's bedroom. Mrs. Lulu Hall, widow of Jodie Jackson Hall, and a member of the History Panel held in Marathon on June 29, 1957, stated that they opened this restaurant on New Year's Day of 1938. The year before they purchased one hundred acres, partly highway, for \$250. Some years later for another hundred acres they paid \$30,000. Those "pre-war, pre-water, pre-electricity days" posed a few "minor" problems. Ice was ordered from Key West where it was weighed and by the time it arrived by boat it had dwindled to about half the original size. Ocean water was used for bathing, and washing dishes. Women did their laundry by the seashore. Charley Toppino trucked drinking water from Homestead and the Halls paid two and a half to three cents a gallon. In early 1940, after a long period of rainless days, Mr. Galbraith recalled that Charley Toppino parceled it out at the rate of twenty gallons for a dollar. Candles or oil lamps furnished light. A native of Lowndes, Georgia, Jodie Hall came to Miami in 1912. Twenty-five years later, a friend "insisted upon him coming to Marathon" at which time there were no over night accommodations, so the Halls stayed at the Parrish home. He built Marathon's first Fishing Camp. Mr. Galbraith described it thus: "a flat roof shed divided into two rooms, each about eight feet square and each equipped with a bed, chair and a bowl and pitcher on a corner shelf — the price was \$1.00 per night per room." Today, Hall's Camp with its modern pier, 27 cabins, swimming pool and other features, is one of Marathon's attractive spots. Mr. Galbraith believes that Hall's third structure (in 1938) bearing in large letters "the legend 'Rest Rooms'" did much to make the tourists coming down over the new bridges conscious of Marathon.

The Woodburns also had two cabins in 1938, one of which was near their general store (site of present Highway Patrol Station) and the other "was about 100 yards north where the old road now enters the back yard of the pumping station." Mr. Galbraith described the "cabin" nearest the store

this way, “. . . so help me, a framework enclosed with packing crate lumber. When Bessie [Mrs. Woodburn] showed it to us, we could see stars twinkling through the roof.” In the case of rain, “Quite nonchalantly Bessie said ‘Just pull the bed over.’” The other cabin he thought was the bridge contractor’s storage shed.

Gene Sands had a barroom but when his place became the first Greyhound Bus stop he sold sandwiches. In the spring of 1938, Hall’s restaurant and Sand’s place, if Mr. Galbraith remembers correctly, were the only permanent buildings facing the highway. Mr. and Mrs. C. R. White had their ‘drug store’ (now Marathon Sundry Store) under construction. Incidentally Mrs. Dana White, widow of C. P. White, originated the community-wide Christmas Party idea for the local children, during the war. At first the party was for everybody. After the war, it was for children only, one night for the white children and another for the negro children. Now the party is a community project with all organizations participating, and with the increase of population, the age level of the children has been lowered. There were “strung along the highway at odd intervals a great many unpainted temporary shacks, large and small, that had to do in one way or another, with construction of the bridges.”

By the following winter (1938-1939) most of the shacks were gone as were other evidences of the bridge construction period. During that and the next year or two, private dwellings were under construction, among them A. E. Woodburn’s present home, Sue M. Moore’s home, and William A. Parrish’s near the bay (now a part of the Davis Motel). Ray O. BuShea (now Fire Marshall) built the “Roundhouse, a restaurant, “Bill” Thompson established his yacht dock, Chester Tingler started his boat yard (now Marathon Boat Works), “Jimmy” Galatt (now deceased) built the Flamingo restaurant and bar, Hall had new cabins, and Charley Toppino constructed a two story building, the Overseas Lodge.

News had spread of the delightful climate and of the incredible fishing. Tourists and fishermen began to come in increasing numbers and many remained. More eating places, bars, and cabins were appearing and Marathon was becoming a popular vacationland. These activities came practically to an end after the Pearl Harbor event in December 1941. Gasoline rationing affected the tourist business and the food rationing emphasized the importance of Marathon’s fish industry. Most able bodied people had in some way become connected with the government. Instead of fishermen on the bridges,

there were camouflaged machine guns. Without Coast Guard permits no one was allowed on or near the docks or in boats.

Mr. Galbraith stated that "Marathon had one of the early civilian airplane spotting units. The watch tower was . . . on top of the elevated water tank back of the 'drug store' . . . each month a new infantry regiment, boot-camped in the north, came to Pigeon Key for brief 'tropical' conditioning for the South Pacific. They came and went in convoys of 100 or more vehicles strung along the highway for more than a mile, . . . the sights along the highway were indescribable . . ."

Marathon's economy had undergone a radical change, however, it was benefited greatly by the expansion of the Navy's establishments in Key West. "The water bill was drafted in 1937 at the time the Overseas Highway was opened to the public. There was little thought of actually getting the money for a water line but the loan was finally made by the government in 1942.

"Engineers at that time recommended a 40-inch pipeline. The Navy felt a 12-inch line sufficient. A compromise brought through an 18-inch water supply line.' Rep. Bernie C. Papy then told his Marathon audience that the Navy "guessed that the line would be good until 1975. I felt by 1950 we would need more water." (*Keynoter* June 5, 1958.)

The Florida Keys Aqueduct Commission, a public agency, created by the State of Florida, in 1941, for the purpose of supplying potable water to the Federal Agencies and the civilian population of Monroe County, contracted with the U. S. Navy to participate in the building of a fresh water line from Florida City to Key West. The commission paid one third of the cost of construction, of the major repairs, and of the operation. The entire cost of building the line was approximately \$6,000,000.00, including the pumping stations and wells at Florida City. The water pipe line, made of steel, is laid under the ground, on top of the ground, under water, over water, and attached to some of the bridges on the Overseas Highway. Its length is one hundred and twenty-five miles. This line was completed in the latter part of the year of 1942. Key West began to receive their first continuous supply of fresh water in December of that year. The report, received September 2, 1958, from the Florida Keys Aqueduct Commission, Key West, through the Marathon office, goes on to say, "Flowing wells were drilled at Florida City, these wells flow into a basin and the water is then lifted by centrifugal pumps and discharged into the line leading to Key West. The pumps work at a pressure of 235 lbs. per square inch, forcing the water through the line. It takes approximately one week for water to reach Key West after leaving Florida

City . . . In Key West and the upper Keys there are approximately 9,251 water meters installed."

A second report (same date) says, "The first water meter in Marathon, Florida (Vaca Key), was installed by the Florida Keys Aqueduct Commission the first week of January, 1953. Up to date, there are now at least 1,211 meters; but from this number, many of them service duplex units, more than one family in some cases . . ."

The water line construction crews helped to prop Marathon's declining tourist trade. Since that time critical water shortages have necessitated additional booster pumps and storage tanks at different locations along route, including Marathon. It is reported that water shortage in the Keys is again critical (*Keynoter* June 26, 1958). A service office of the Florida Keys Aqueduct Commission has been opened in Marathon (*Keynoter*, February 6, 1958).

In 1943-1944, with the heavy trucking of troops, supplies and ammunition, the County-built-road with its wooden trestles was considered unsafe, so the State Road Department of Florida with the financial assistance of the Federal Bureau of Public Roads [now identified as the Public Roads Administration], built or completed the present modern highway into Key West. It followed the Florida East Coast Railway's right-of-way from Florida City, converting the railroad's concrete bridges for automobile traffic and thereby entirely eliminating all wooden bridges. The building of this "Main Street" throughout the length of Key Vaca and the other Keys bolstered Marathon's war time economy and contributed much to its phenomenal growth. As with the initial piped water supply, the two lane highway is now considered inadequate. Four-laning of the Overseas Highway is in evidence on the Florida mainland approach.

A third service, power and light, was also made available to Marathon during the war period. In 1937, a small power plant started operation at Matecumbe which served thirty-seven consumers. Three years later, with the help of the Rural Electrification Administration, the Florida Keys Electric Cooperative Association Incorporated was organized. "This Cooperative is locally owned and operated, it pays all State and County taxes, it is operated under State and Florida Laws, and it was organized because electric power was not available elsewhere." The original plan was for the line to extend from North Key Largo to Key West but war conditions necessitated dividing the project into three sections, the middle one being seven miles on Key Vaca. In 1942 the Cooperative purchased the generating plant at Taver-

nier from the Florida Power and Light Company. In 1943, it built its own generating plant at Tavernier and the east section of the project was energized with a total of two hundred and ten consumers. In July, 1943, Key Vaca, was energized with a mobile generating plant which served forty-two consumers. This separate operation continued until the building of the line between the two sections in 1946. In October, 1948, two "650 H.P. K.W. Diesel Generating plants" were hurriedly put into action. In August 1951, the Cooperative purchased two more engines and generators and by August of the following year application was made to and was approved by the Rural Electrification for funds to construct a generating plant in Marathon. It was hoped at the Tavernier Headquarters of the Florida Keys Cooperative Association that one of the generators could be in operation for the 1954-1955 season as ". . . we are again up to capacity . . . our consumers having increased from 743 in 1948 with a generation of 1,335,612 KWH to 1,739 consumers with a total generation of 6,321,130 KWH in 1952." (*Homestead News*, December 2, 1954). Those engines were completed and set in motion on August 2, 1954.

Charles Griffin, Plant Superintendent and Chief Engineer at the "No. 2 Plant, Marathon" stated on August 14, 1958, "We are now completing installation of a 3,000 KW generator . . . expect to install another 3,000 unit in 1959."

Undoubtedly, the fourth factor in Marathon's rapid development was the anti-mosquito control program. Every senior citizen this writer consulted placed the highway, the water supply, and the electric service as of the greatest importance. Throughout the *Minutes* of the earlier meetings of the Marathon Chamber of Commerce are references to pest control, such as, "October 7, 1948, the Chamber paid \$158.29 to the Overseas Road and Toll Bridge District for pest control. May 4, 1949, \$175.00 paid for a G. I. Dodge Ambulance to be used as a Mosquito Spray Truck. February 19, 1952, \$400 in payment for Chamber's truck and spray machine from the Anti-Mosquito Board.", and finally, "August 2, 1951, Vote carried to turn over funds and equipment to the Mosquito Control Board of Monroe County for use in the Marathon area." The Marathon Chamber of Commerce had instituted other community-wide services that were later taken over by Monroe County.

For the 8000 x 1000 foot paved runway airstrip in Marathon, two hundred and eighty acres of land were purchased at seventy dollars an acre from Maitland Adams and Norberg Thompson of Key West (Interview W. A. Parrish, August 28, 1958). Edward N. Belcher, Jr., President, Belcher Oil Company (Miami), stated in a letter dated September 2, 1958, ". . . Belcher

Oil Company was the prime contractor, and constructed for the Civil Aeronautics Association, the flight strip at Marathon, Florida, in 1942 and 1943. The contract was approximately \$350,000.00 and the entire construction area was a mangrove swamp and had to be filled to its present elevation by using borrow pits that are still in the vicinity.

"We also were the original prime contractors of the Boca Chica Airbase, which was built in a mangrove swamp too by using the same methods to achieve its present elevation." A man in Marathon who worked on the construction said the project was started in the fall of 1942 and it was completed in the spring of 1943. F. M. Fitzgerald, Airport Engineer, Civil Aeronautics Administration, U. S. Department of Commerce, wrote in his letter of August 11, 1958, "I have had occasion to investigate the legal position of the Marathon flight strip, and have found that during the early part of World War II, the flight strip and the land it occupies was supplied by the Florida State Road Department for the U. S. Bureau of Public Roads, now identified as the Public Roads Administration.

"While the cost of the land and the construction thereon was reimbursed to the State of Florida by the Public Lands Administration, and title is in the State, some control of the strip has been retained by the Public Roads Administration. Monroe County had approached the State Road Board and requested that the property be transferred to Monroe County in order that it could be operated and maintained as a public airport. To my knowledge, this has not been done." However, on August 13, 1958, *The Key West Citizen* had an article titled, "County Will Get Marathon Airport Title." Airport Consultant, Harold A. Wilde, reported, "that the Civil Aeronautics Administration had indicated a willingness to relinquish any federal claim to the ownership of the airport if title were obtained by the county. Wilde was instructed to proceed with the acquisition of title."

Harry D. Copland, Manager, Aviation Department, Florida Development Commission, wrote on August 19, 1958, "The Marathon Airport has been leased to National Airlines." A copy of that lease, dated November 15, 1957, is filed in the office of the Marathon Chamber of Commerce. Some of the provisions of that lease include the payment of one dollar a year for ten years, maintenance of the landing strip, obedience of all CAA regulations regarding operation of flight strip, approval by the U. S. Navy for contemplated construction of any kind on the airstrip, and the right of the U. S. Navy to reenter in case of emergency. David C. Kelly, District Airport Manager, International Airport Branch, Civil Aeronautics Administration gave

this information, "The airport [Marathon] was constructed by the United States Bureau of Public Roads and the Florida State Road Department. . . . It is our understanding that the State of Florida still owns the airport and that it is leased to National Airlines."

The original purpose of this flight strip was for war time training of bombers usually coming out of Homestead. Since the war, private planes, pleasure aircraft, and participants in the All Women's International Air Race have landed there. After the war, Mr. Parrish sold 26,000 yards of sand for reconditioning this air strip.

Prior to 1942, Mr. Parrish saw the need of an air landing area in Marathon and had collected pledges of \$224,000 toward the cost of one. He had secured the approval of the County Board for an air strip but not from the State Comptroller.

George Leister remembered that small airplanes landed on Key Vaca years before there was any talk of having an air strip. Born January 25, 1881, in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, he came to Miami in 1909 and worked as a commercial fisherman until 1920 when he went to Craig Key. He built the first fish house there for a man named "Cassel" and he was there when Mr. Parrish arrived. In 1926, Mr. Parrish sent him "on to Marathon to look around. . . . There was nothing here but a few old railroad frame houses, which were later rented from the railroad for twelve dollars a year so the occupants could not claim squatters' rights. Right here were all mangrove swamps." We were standing by the old Parrish fish house, near the Marathon Boat Works, on Parrish Avenue, at the end of which are the famed shrimp docks. Both sides of that Avenue are now lined with homes and trailers and opposite the shrimp docks are two restaurants and Capt. Elmer Capo's canal site home at the back of which are his charter cabin cruisers. Captain Capo has served as guide to several United States Presidents and to foreign royalty. When he first came to Marathon, he lived on his boat.

Of particular interest was Mr. Leister's knowledge of the old farming area where fertile land could be and was ploughed. It consisted of "about two or three miles on the ocean side of Key Vaca, southwest of Vaca Cut." He remembered, "In the early days, Parrish raised big and delicious tomatoes on one end of that area and small airplanes landed there, too." To his knowledge, that was the only place on the island where farming could have been carried on (Interview, August 28, 1958). Other senior citizens agreed as to the location of the farming area.

Prior to 1950, telephones in Marathon were on a toll system basis coming out of Key West where they were established in 1883. In 1950, Marathon had its first dial system with eighty-five telephones but three years later, the number had increased to three hundred and seventy-five. By August of 1956, \$66,000 worth of outside cable facilities were extended and over \$21,000 were spent for an additional 5,000,000 feet of wire to the existing outside wire facilities. "Due to be completed in November is an additional 12,000,000 feet of outside wiring which will cost in excess of \$45,000. . . . A total of five hundred and eighty-four new telephones have been added in Marathon during the last five years," (*Keynoter*, August 30, 1956).

A Highway Patrol Station was built in Marathon in 1951, by the Overseas Road and Toll District, through a grant by the Federal Housing Administration. The land was donated by Brooks Bateman, now a Marathon resident. Mr. Bateman followed B. M. Duncan as manager of the Toll District.

Much credit for Marathon's first new school building is due to the persistent efforts and watchful eyes of the Marathon Chamber of Commerce. It appears that a sum of money had been allocated for the purpose but was needed elsewhere and so used. Five Chamber members, on February 8, 1945, attended a Monroe County School Board meeting. On the following March 1st, Chamber President, Ray O. BuShea, suggested that the Marathon Chamber of Commerce be represented at each School Board meeting. He appointed a committee the head of which was William A. Parrish, Chairman, Monroe County Commission. At a Chamber meeting on April 5, 1945, he reported, ". . . If we will be patient, we will have the \$11,333.00." In the May 10th, 1946 issue of *The Key West Citizen*, is the statement that Marathon will have a new two-room school at cost of \$20,000. The following June 12th newspaper announced, "Vincent Cremata, Key West, awarded contract for construction of a new school building at Marathon. Bid \$23,000." In January 1956, this school had fifteen teachers and in February 1957, twelve classrooms.

At the June 29th, 1957 History Panel Forum, Gerald J. Guthrie, Principal of the Marathon school system, stated, ". . . the thirty-nine pupils of ten years ago had grown to four hundred and ninety for the 1957 school term." Several special services have been made available for those children needing individual attention.

The new modern Marathon High School, built at an estimated cost of \$388,000, on a site donated by Stanley Switlik, industrialist, and accommodating two hundred and fifty students, opened its doors to the seventh through

the twelfth grade students, in September 1957. The school building, located on State Road 931, about one mile from the U.S. 1 Route, had hardly settled on its foundation before an expansion program got under way. Besides the administration building, the plant consists of a cafetorium (cafeteria and auditorium combined), a home economics department, a science laboratory, a health clinic, a commercial room, a library, a teachers' lounge and there are utility rooms and eleven classrooms. There is enough land for athletic fields. Aside from the regular academic courses, the school has a Diversified Cooperative Training program that is open to the juniors and seniors. It is designed to bridge the gap between school and employment. Qualified students enrolled in that course receive laboratory credit as well as a training wage for the work done in local business establishments. There, also, Adult Education Courses are held and the Marathon Community Concerts are heard.

In January, 1958, a Charter was presented to the Marathon Key Club, the first civic organization formed within the school system for young men, a local Kiwanis Club project. Twenty-eight high school girls, in February, 1958, formed the Future Career Girls' Club. Their sponsor is Marathon's Business-Professional Women's Club.

A new San Pablo Catholic School, located at Vaca Cut, opened this fall (1958) for an estimated two hundred children from the first to the eighth grades. Transportation has been arranged for the children of Big Pine, Marathon, and the Upper Keys.

On August 28, 1958, Mr. Guthrie estimated there would be about four hundred pupils enrolled in the elementary and the high school, exclusive of the parochial school.

The Grace Jones Elementary School in Marathon Beach Subdivision opened its doors in May, 1956, with twenty children. As of February, 1957, the school enrollment was thirty-two (Letter, February 12, 1957, Lillian Tingler).

The Marathon Beach Subdivision began as a settlement in 1939, with about "ten to fourteen families". Harry and Grace Jones were among the first families to settle there. Mrs. Jones explained that in 1953, there were ten children of school age but there was no school. During that year, she applied on two different occasions for a school but the applications were rejected. She then appealed to the State Board of Education and was referred back to the County Board. "Anyway, we got the school in 1956." The December 1st, 1955 issue of the *Keynoter* reported that M. E. Bennet Construction Company of Key West, was awarded the contract for building the

Grace Jones Elementary School for Negroes, in Marathon, at a cost of \$17,656.45. Mrs. Jones stated, "We had a school here about fourteen years ago but it lasted only three or four years, no children anymore." In 1955, she took a door to door census at which time there were about two hundred adults and sixty children.

In the *Keynoter* of August 23rd, 1956, William A. Parrish was named as the donor of the property for the colored St. Paul's A.M.E. Church "who not only recognized the need of the church, but did something about it."

Marathon's Sue M. Moore Elementary School and High School have benefited greatly from the services and leadership of Mrs. Lillian Tingler. She and her husband, Chester, purchased property in Marathon in 1939 and settled there in 1940. She described Marathon of 1940 (population about 400) as being "a wide open frontier town . . . nobody really worried too much about their children growing up or about school." She showed off her first baby in Deeny's Bar. "We had thirteen bars and restaurants and no church nor a substantial school . . . children who wanted to further their schooling were farmed out to relatives in communities where there were high schools."

In the *Key West Citizen* of August 30, 1947, is an article under the caption *Except For Marathon Every School In Monroe County Is Ready To Start Teaching Tuesday*. Opening of the school for Marathon's fifty odd children depended upon "whether . . . the teachers selected for the school have gotten their Florida State certificates to teach." Evidently they had not for the Superintendent of Schools in Monroe County asked Mrs. Tingler for her help. She made two appeals: one, through *The Miami Herald* (Jack Kofoed's column), and the other, through a broadcast over WIOD by news commentator, the Rambler (Tom Q. Smith), for help. The response was almost immediate. Mrs. Eva McKenny was the first teacher to respond but she was soon followed by Mr. and Mrs. Gerald J. Guthrie. These three teachers have remained in Marathon's school system.

That same year (1947), Mrs. Tingler and Mrs. Charles Clark (known locally as Scotty) organized Marathon's first Parent Teacher Association. At the same time, Mrs. Tingler began working toward a Marathon Public Library and which became a reality when she opened its doors on March 19, 1956, with four hundred and fifty books. Her goal is a library building, meanwhile, the public library occupies a section of the high school library.

Mrs. Tingler, also the first president of the new high school PTA, was the first person in Monroe County to earn four bars on her PTA's president's

pin. Besides her PTA work, she has served on the Monroe County Board of Public Instruction and on the Board to build the first church in Marathon where she is now Superintendent of Sunday School, teacher, and an active member of the church's Women's Society. She was one of the founding members of the Little Theatre group and is chairman for seven Girl Scout Troops and of the Legion Auxiliary Child Welfare program. For five years, Mrs. Tingler directed the local March of Dimes campaign. Currently, she is president of the Keys' first Community Concert Association. In recognition of her civic work, the American Legion honored her as the Outstanding Citizen in Marathon in 1954-1955.

Many years ago, Mr. Parrish had collected and donated books with the view of establishing a library, however, they were given to the school. For Marathon's growth and welfare, no detail was too small and no project too large to receive his devoted attention. An item in the *Keynoter* of August 23, 1956, has this statement, "Parrish has been in on the beginning of practically everything that was for the advancement of Marathon." A partial listing of his activities would include: one of the founders and first and three times president of the Marathon Chamber of Commerce with continued service usually in an official capacity, first real estate broker (Marathon), first to build and to establish a fish business (in the twentieth century), first to build a general merchandising store in the 1900's (excluding the temporary one built by the railroad), first and subsequent president of the Florida Keys Board of Realtors (established 1951), one of the charter members of the Marathon Community Church, and one of the founders and first president of the Marathon State Bank.

At the June 29th, 1957, History Panel Forum, Harry Snow, Sr., who came to Marathon originally as a railroad man, told his audience that Charlie Clark . . . was the first man "to charter fish" from the Key. In *Historical Notes on the Key Vaca Area and Marathon*, Carlton J. Corliss recorded, "First commercial fisherman located at Marathon . . . after the construction forces arrived, was Captain McCrary who lived with his family in a house on the water's edge, immediately south and east of the Tail Track Dock. The house was demolished in the hurricane of 1909."

Marathon's first church, the Community Church, began on February 18, 1945, as a Sunday School, under the guidance of Rev. D. E. Weist, pastor of both the Tavernier and the Islamorada Methodist Churches. He planned the original part of the present church which stands on a site donated by Harold A. Clark. The church was established in December 1949, with Rev. O. C.

Driskell as its first pastor. Construction of Sunday School rooms was begun on April 14, 1951.

In June 1951, the second minister, George Marker, came to the church. Two years later, he was followed by Rev. R. M. Stockton under whose service many improvements were made. Further improvements such as the completion of the recreational hall, air conditioning and the organization of a youth choir have been accomplished under the fourth and present minister, Rev. Robert W. Wenner who came to the church in 1956.

Other churches followed some of which also held their first services in the Chamber of Commerce Building.

In the *Marathon Times* (Vol. 1, No. 1, undated), the contributor wrote, "In February 1951, their new chapel [Catholic Church] was completed on a lovely corner lot in the Woodburn Subdivision. This lot was donated by Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Woodburn . . . adjoining lot has now been purchased to allow for future growth of the church. Father Egana drives up from Key West and holds mass in the new Chapel each Sunday . . . An Altar and Rosary Society was recently formed." In a letter of February 2, 1957, Rev. James Connaughton of the San Pablo Catholic Church wrote, "It was founded in 1952 with ten parishioners. Present building occupied in 1955. At present we have approximately four hundred and fifty parishioners." This church has a Catholic Youth Organization.

The Marathon Church of Christ (nondenominational) began meeting in 1953 and now occupies its own building. In 1956, a combination residence and classroom building was erected for Pastor James McDonald and for church activities (*Marathon Story*, 1958, p. 39, *Keynoter*, June 7, 1956, May 30, 1957). Rev. James Gunn of Tallahassee began his ministry at the Church of Christ in May of 1957. On January 1, 1955, "This Baptist Church was started . . . with about four members. It was and still is sponsored by the First Baptist Church of Key West. We hope it can become a full church of its own in another year or so. We have about seventy-five members in our congregation now. We held services for the first year and three months in the Chamber of Commerce Building here in Marathon, and then moved into our own building . . ." (Letter, January 31, 1957, Pastor G. Zahler).

Rev. Charles R. Whittington, Vicar, conducted the Martin Luther Mission services in the Chamber of Commerce Building (*Keynoter*, January 30, May 1, 1958), however, on September 7, 1958, Rev. Albert Dede began to hold the Lutheran Church service.

Saint Colomba's Mission, founded by The Rev'd Fr. Whitney Church on October 9, 1955, became an Organized Mission of the Diocese of South Florida on November 30th of the same year. In the beginning, Father Church had no "ready made congregation", no sponsorship by an existing church, in fact, not even a church building, only enough funds (\$300) to get settled, a rented vicarage, some prayer books, and hymnals and his clerical vestments. On November 1, 1957, Rev. Fletcher Pinckney Wood assumed the duties of this church as Father Church was called to the St. Paul's Church in Key West.

Christian Scientists began holding services in Marathon on January 5, 1958, at the Chamber of Commerce Building, however, they had been meeting for a year in private homes in Marathon and in Marathon Shores (*Keynoter*, December 31, 1957).

Jehovah's Witnesses, "Until their Kingdom Hall here can be built", meet at the home of Capt. James Ribble, in Marathon. Local presiding minister is Eugene D. Rosam, Sr. (*Keynoter*, February 13, 1958).

In the Marathon Beach Subdivision, a third church is under construction. Upon completion, it will replace the earlier built St. Paul's A. M. E. Church. The second one is the Baptist Church (Interview, August 28, 1958, Grace Jones).

The first organization to be formed in Marathon, after the railroad forces vacated, had its beginning in 1937, when as Mr. Parrish described it, "A handful of us met at the store." This handful of men was organized in September, 1939, as the Marathon Chamber of Commerce. During World War II, it suspended activity for more important tasks but in October, 1944, the Chamber of Commerce was reorganized, and on September 14, 1945, incorporated. On December 16, 1945, *The Miami Herald* carried the headline, *The Biggest Little Chamber of Commerce In the World*. That year, Marathon's census count was three hundred and eighteen and the Chamber's membership was eighty-five.

At first, the Chamber met wherever it was convenient, usually in the old schoolhouse. In the meeting of March 20, 1945, Mr. Parrish reported to the members that the Charles Saunders' place could be purchased for a Community House and Chamber of Commerce Building for \$6,750.00. Already the Chamber had \$4,700.00 earmarked for a "home". The house and the land on which it stood were purchased. That building was used as "a Chamber of Commerce, movie house, church, Sunday School, dance hall, fishermen's union headquarters, school board meeting place, election precinct, medical clinic, and the scene of an occasional bingo game.

On June 12, 1945, the poet and newspaperman, Stephen Cochran Singleton, described Marathon, the Chamber of Commerce's activities, and the Chamber's building in the *Key West Citizen*. "Key dwellers have learned the secret of resourcefulness . . . seems . . . all the business houses in Marathon are in the business of supplying something to eat and drink . . . get dizzy as Director Charles Forsyth . . . explains how with \$5.00 annual dues . . . a building account, a bingo account, and a membership account . . . there is a comfortable bank balance in each . . . Chamber of Commerce Building is large and airy and spotlessly clean . . . Outstanding feature . . . is the seating capacity of 100 . . . well designed and constructed pews and the way they came into being. The membership turned to with a couple of power saws and built them in a day and a half . . . It is saturated with perspiration."

The civic center of the community is the new Chamber of Commerce building started on the gulf shore in the winter of 1949. There is a smaller information center on the highway, just south of the State Highway Patrol Station.

The Marathon Chamber of Commerce often served as a kind of voluntary governing body, discussing the community's needs and problems, and taking action on them and paying for services rendered to the town. A few illustrations taken from their *Minutes* state, "May 3, 1945 Motion carried to buy piano for Sunday School. The price to be kept under \$200. Mr. Zetterower appointed to see about the piano. August 22, 1946, Parrish, Hicks, Andrews appointed a committee to see Commandant of the Naval Station, Key West . . . if we might have permission to use the pumping station at Marathon . . . for those who have no other refuge from wind and high water . . . The same committee will also meet with Red Cross Disaster Committee. July 3, 1947, First Aid Building . . . door and locks on. October 7, 1948, Paid \$4.30 to Marathon Sundry Store for gas for Fire Truck." Nearly every meeting was filled with discussions and business transactions concerning their community's welfare.

Records show that the idea of incorporating Marathon had been under discussion, at various times, since 1945. In the Chamber's *Minutes* of September 8, 1949, Mr. Parrish said, "Due to our increased population, Marathon should now incorporate." In August 1950, a committee was appointed to get information from similar size towns regarding their experiences as incorporated areas. By April of 1951, Judge Albury was engaged to draw a proposed Bill of Incorporation. He pointed out that it would be necessary

to name a Mayor Commissioner and four other City Commissioners. William A. Parrish was chosen as the Mayor Commissioner and George M. Goodson, Jodie J. Hall, Deane N. Brigham, and A. E. Woodburn as the four City Commissioners. The Bill failed by thirty-one votes (*Keynoter*, May 12, 1955). Since then, the pros and cons of incorporating Marathon have been argued.

Eleven years ago, the Chamber of Commerce instituted a publicity program, a part of which was a brochure (4 x 9) consisting of six pages (exclusive of advertising). On the inside of the cover appears, "Not a traffic light in the place. Plenty of open peaceful spaces . . ." Each of the 1957 and 1958 brochures (5½ x 8½) entitled *The Marathon Story* contains a total of eighty pages. With each year, the directory of the Chamber members, included in the brochure, contains an increasing number of names of new businesses and services.

On November 10, 1956, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, consisting of young men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five received its Charter. Jaycee Wives, described as Marathon's "first independent woman's club", was organized on February 23, 1957, for the purpose of helping the Jaycees "as well as performing civic functions of its own." (*Keynoter*, February 28, 1957). They presented a gift of twenty-five dollars to the Jaycees for their building fund. One of their projects was the sponsoring of the History Panel Forum of June 29th, 1957.

The Marathon Volunteer Fire Department, organized in 1952, was chartered by the State of Florida on April 22, 1953. Work began on the firehouse June 7, 1952. In the *Minutes* of the Chamber of Commerce are these records: "October 6, 1949, Mr. Hungate, a capable Fire Chief since his appointment October 9, 1947, asked to be relieved. March 5, 1952, Don Brassington had resigned as Fire Chief . . . successor considered. March 31, 1952 Mr. BuShea was installed as Fire Chief. May 1, 1952 Fire truck in running order."

In an interview with Ray O. BuShea (August 28, 1958), who came to Key Vaca in 1938, he stated he was the first Fire Chief to have a corps of trained firemen (volunteers) and fire fighting equipment. Mr. BuShea (now in his 80's) has been acclaimed for his dedicated service and for his active interest in district, state, and national fire organizational work. In 1957, forty-nine drill sessions and meetings were attended by seven hundred and seventy-three men. Eleven of his volunteers completed the Florida Fire College class. He has shown movies in the school system and has given fire demonstrations before the summer school children of the Catholic Church.

The nine volunteers of 1953 increased to twenty-four in 1957, however, a total of eighty-three volunteers has served in the Fire Department. Always he stressed the importance of prevention, of fire fighting equipment, and of trained men to use it.

Marathon's Volunteer Ambulance corps, organized, chartered and in operation in 1953, under the name of Marathon Volunteer Ambulance and Rescue Corps, now has about fifteen active members who are on call "around the clock". The first and the second ambulance brought to Marathon were purchased by the Marathon Lions Club. This same service organization contributed substantially toward a third ambulance and donated the resuscitator (Letter, August 9, 1958, Earl L. Therkindson).

Marathon Memorial Post 154 of the American Legion, chartered April 1, 1946, has received national recognition for its work with the youth of Marathon. On October 24, 1955, this Post presented a site (150 x 100) for a building to the Marathon Youth Center Organization. The Post's Hall, on U. S. 1, was built on land donated through the efforts of Mr. Parrish (*Keynote*, June 28, 1958, June 27, 1957, March 20, July 17, 1958). The American Legion Auxiliary Unit 154 founded the Marathon Youth Center which is presided over by Mrs. Ruth Ivins.

The Marathon Power Squadron was presented its Charter on June 16, 1956, by Commander John O. Manning, A.P., head of all United States Power Squadrons in Florida (District No. 8). The history of this organization dates back to 1912, when pleasure boat owners in Boston (Massachusetts) felt a "pressing need of some sort of education". That group became known as the Power Squadron of the Boston Yacht Club. About two years later (February 2, 1914), the United States Power Squadron was founded in New York City. Although there is no military connection with the United States Government, officials of the Navy, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marine sit on the Governing Board of the U.S.P.S. The courses cover such subjects as boat safety, boat afloat, seamanship, rules for equipment, piloting (elementary and advanced), weather, and "a certain amount of navigation . . . to understand charts, tides, and coastwise navigation." Lamps, the Ladies Auxiliary of the Marathon Power Squadron, founded in November 1957, with seventeen ladies, is Marathon's only woman's boating organization.

The Marathon Yacht Club began to take form between April and July of 1951. In the April 3rd, 1951 *Minutes* of the Chamber of Commerce is recorded, "Motion carried that the Marathon Yacht Club, if and when formed . . ." On July 31, 1951, they read, "Resolution that the Marathon

Yacht Club, since it has promoted a greater interest and understanding of sailing in Marathon, particularly amongst the youth, that the Yacht Club be allowed to use the Chamber of Commerce docks, the land lying between the docks and the road for their activities . . ." This Club, incorporated and chartered on October 10, 1951, had its own Club House in July 1955.

The Marathon Lions Club, the first service club organized for Marathon, was presented its Charter on March 23rd, 1951. It was organized with forty members and was sponsored by the Key West Lions Club.

The Marathon Kiwanis Club, chartered in June 1957, works for Marathon's youth.

The first record found of Marathon's Masonic Lodge No. 323 was in the first issue of *The Florida Keys Keynoter* (February 19, 1953). The article, with the headline *Wants to Form Masonic Lodge*, instructed the residents who were interested to communicate with O. R. Carrero, tax consultant, in the Keynoter Building. The September 1st, 1955 issue has, "Permission has been granted by the Grand Lodge of Florida for the constitution of a Masonic Lodge at Marathon." This lodge received its Charter in April 1957 with John P. Goggin, C. E., Ph.D., as the first Worshipful Master.

An Order of the Eastern Star was organized January 10, 1958, "at the request of John P. Goggin". At this writing, plans are under way for the instituting of the new chapter in October (1958).

Marathon's Business-Professional Women's Club of about one hundred and seven charter members received its Charter at an installation banquet held on May 11, 1957. This club has the distinction of being the largest charter club in Florida.

Welcome Wagon, Incorporated, is represented in Marathon. In 1957, Mrs. Holly Sawyer, one of Florida's Welcome Wagon's five thousand hostesses, received training for that position in Orlando.

Boy Scout, Cub Scout, and Girl Scout activities were organized in Marathon at the time the Community Church had its first minister. Rev. O. C. Driskel directed the boys' groups and Mrs. C. G. Bailey, the girls'.

The Marathon Garden Club was formed at a meeting on November 1, 1955, at the Chamber of Commerce Building. The nucleus of this club was a committee appointed by the Chamber Members for Beautification Month.

The Marathon Board of Realtors is one of the more recently organized groups in Marathon. A few months after it was chartered (February 4, 1958),

its members adopted a plan of charging the same rates of commission in the sale of properties, from Conch Key to Boca Chica, the area of the Board's jurisdiction. This standard commission schedule not only protects the interests of the property owner and the buyer, but it also assures "more price uniformity in the real estate market" in that area. All its charter members ("Bill" Ackerman, Romer L. Baucum, William B. Bradley, vice-president, Naomi Crandall, Charles L. Cray, president, Alsina Forrest, William A. Parrish, Alan G. Schmidt, Tommie L. Sigler, secretary-treasurer, Earl R. Sycks, J. P. Welling, R. D. Zetterower) were formerly members of the Florida Keys Board of Realtors, which until this year, held jurisdiction over all the Keys, exclusive of Key West. "The phenomenal growth of this organization over the past six years and the preponderance of Realtors in the Marathon vicinity brought about the creation of the new board in the interests of better serving and policing the respective areas." Another "first" in the Marathon area, besides the uniform commission rate, was an agreement that no member of that board may accept a net listing. The Marathon Board is studying the advisability of establishing a multiple listing service whereby property for sale by one Realtor would be available to all Realtors. (William B. Bradley, *Keynoter*, April 24, July 24, 1958). Mr. Bradley is a graduate of Harvard University and is the Real Estate Editor of the local weekly newspaper.

A fine example of team work including no less than forty-one businesses and organizations and twenty-two individuals was the planning and erecting of the Ground Observer Corps Tower located between the highway and the flight strip. "A part of the national and civic defense program, the tower covers the 'blind' spot in the nation's radar network." At the dedication (September 14, 1957), H. O. Williams, coordinator of the Ground Observer Corps (Marathon), Sgt. Charles Czinki, coordinator from the Miami Filter Center, and Brig. Gen. Edward N. Backus, Commander, 35th Air Division, Dobbins AFB, Marietta, Georgia, were the guest speakers. Air Force and Navy dignitaries were present. "Ironically, Mr. and Mrs. Jerry McCurry, local school teachers, stood the first watch during the opening of the tower, and the last one as it was placed on standby." Marathon had one of the early civilian airplane spotting units during the winter following the Pearl Harbor attack. That watch tower was a crow's nest on top of the elevated water tank back of the "drug store" (*Keynoter*, January 26, 1956, September 12, 26, December 12, 1957).

The September 4th, 1958 issue of Marathon's weekly newspaper carried in bold type, "Disaster Shelters Are Designated; What To Do Should Storm

Strike". Instructions were given as to the uses of the shelters, necessary provisions, and medical care. "Disaster teams will work out of Marathon State Bank, which was designated the clearing house for all work connected with recuperation after the storm has passed. Harry Spyker, Marathon disaster chairman, stated that the residents will be warned by a sound truck when to "take shelter". A two hundred bed portable hospital can be flown in.

Prior to 1953, medical care for the people in Marathon was practically impossible unless they traveled eighty-five miles in one direction or forty-five miles in another. It was stated that doctors in Key West and in Homestead would not come to them. In December, 1952, Donald MacDonald, Naturepath Physician, born November 28, 1917, in Glasgow, Scotland, trained in Chicago, traveled from Hollywood, Florida, to Marathon where he remained three or four days a week, depending on the need of his services. He continued this practice until the spring (March or April) of 1953, when he settled there.

The first permanent medical doctor to establish a full time practice in Marathon was Elmer John Eisenbarth. Dr. Eisenbarth liked the idea of being "on a semi-tropical island", but he came to Marathon in December, 1953, primarily because a medical service was needed there. He understood that in 1950 or 1951, one or two "M.D.'s" came to Marathon one day a week for about two or three months in the winter. He also thought that Marathon would "probably have a hospital within three to five years". Dr. Eisenbarth's Marathon Medical Center began operation in December of 1953.

In October, 1957, Marathon had a second medical clinic, equipped with two beds for minor surgery, established by Dr. Lloyd Damsey, surgeon and radiologist. The first dentist to establish an office in Marathon was Dr. Alvah C. Fennell of Miami. He opened his office in March of 1953. Dr. James J. McCormack, D.O. (Doctor of osteopathic medicine and surgery), father of ten children, practices during week ends in Marathon. The Marathon Health Council was officially formed on the evening of December 16, 1955, for the purpose of coordinating existing health projects in the community. In 1957, a Marathon Unit of the Woman's Corps of the Cancer Institute at Miami was organized to help in the fight to control cancer through research, training, and early diagnosis.

The need of a hospital in the Middle Keys was recognized by August of 1953, and possibly earlier. At that time, pledges in money, labor, and construction amounted to several thousands of dollars toward the goal of \$125,000. "A charter of incorporation is being drawn up this week by attorney, Ralph E. Cunningham . . . It will be called the Florida Keys Hospital

Association.” (*Keynoter*, August 27, September 3, 1953). Since that time, progress has been made in that the Marathon Hospital Association (present name) has been granted a Charter and a ninety-nine year lease on three and one half acres of county property, in Marathon. A Ladies Auxiliary of the Marathon Hospital has been organized with Mrs. Maude Spence as its director. A Monroe County Health Substation was opened in Marathon in the fall of 1955. Marathon was the first town in Monroe County to make available Salk Vaccine shots for adults (*Keynoter*, February 14, 1957). Marathon’s first resident attorney was Ralph E. Cunningham, Jr. who came in 1952. He has just been elected to represent Monroe County in the lower house of the State Legislature, another measure of the growing importance of Marathon.

Marathon was chosen as Monroe County’s site for a testing device to determine “the amount of radio-active fall out”. The Community Air Pollution program was a part of the National Air Sampling Network. The non-urban air sampling station was erected atop Marathon High School. George Stevenson, county sanitarian, said, “The Marathon area was selected because little or no industrial fumes exist” there (*Keynoter*, August 29, 1957).

Typical of modern day rapid and large scale developments, and reminiscent of the gigantic operations of the brief railroad building era, are the activities of Felix Sadowski. After a fifteen year business career in Detroit, he came to Pensacola, Florida where he built the Paradise Beach Hotel. After a return to Detroit for a time he came to Miami in 1946 and was engaged in some building operations.

In 1951 he discovered Key Vaca.

In 1951 he had bought sixteen acres of mangrove swamps “near the fishing village of Marathon” as the site for his retirement home and the strip of land (40 acres) between them and the highway to assure a right-of-way. To raise the tidal flats to highway level, he blasted out canals sixty feet wide and twelve feet below sea level for fill between the canals. Thus, he had a Venice-like development and he had created expensive waterfront lots. He was in business on the Keys (Herndon Boonton, *Coronet*, November, 1954).

Three million dollars have been spent on developments on or adjacent to Key Vaca. They enriched the areas they included and the areas bordering them. Sadowski named his developments: South Marathon Shores, Marathon Shores, Little Venice, Big Venice, Sadowski Subdivision, North Marathon Shores, Key Colony and Key Colony Beach. Key Colony has become famous for its luxury and particularly for its \$150,000 Olympic size pool which juts

out over the Atlantic Ocean. The hundred and thirty unit Key Colony Motel was purchased by the Texas Hotel chain and is now known as the Jack Tar Motel.

Key Colony Beach, near Key Vaca, began with two purchases, one, a hundred acres of sand spit and mangrove from Edward Neff, and the other, surrounding bay bottom from the State. Today, it consists of a sixty and a forty unit motel, a thirty-eight unit cabana club, a seventy-five unit cooperative apartment, three swimming pools, a restaurant, fifteen private residences, and a one hundred eighty foot ocean pier leading out to eighteen feet deep water on which are provisions for armchair fishing. For safe ocean bathing, a steel fencing down to bedrock keeps out sea plants and sea animals.

In January, 1958, Sadowski's plans included two thousand retirement homes, a convention hall, an eight story, one hundred fifty room hotel, and an eleven hundred foot fishing pier. Six months later, on June 1st, the Convention Hall, City of Key Colony Beach, was dedicated to the "O.W.A.A." (Outdoor Writers' Association of America). Thirty-six states and six foreign countries were represented at their twenty-ninth International Convention. The Key Vaca area has, within the past year, been the chosen site for other conventions and meetings.

Stanley Switlik, parachute manufacturer, is said to be one of Key Vaca's most extensive developers. He is in the process of transforming a hundred and fifty acres of mangrove swamp and bay bottom into a yacht club and golf course "in one of the most unusual engineering jobs ever undertaken on the Florida Keys". This project, begun three years ago, includes an eighteen hole championship golf course, a tennis court, a swimming pool, a yacht basin, a club house, and related activities. The golf course is laid out into two separate halves, each containing nine holes. Between its halves lies the clubhouse area. The total length of the golf course is 6,292 yards and a seventy-one par. Artificial lakes, one of about five acres in one half of the golf course, and three small lakes totaling the same acreage, in the other half, will help maintain grass. This subdivision will emerge as Sombrero Yacht and Golf Club (*Keynoter*, April 3, 1958)

Floyd W. Davis, one time owner of Miami's present Twentieth Street Airport, came to Miami in 1920 and to Marathon in 1949. He developed the Davis Docks and Hotel into one of the landmarks of the Florida Keys. It is said that "the major portion of the charter fishing fleet works from the massive port."

In 1950, Mr. and Mrs. Chester Tingler donated a four hundred foot strip of beach to Monroe County for public use provided that a public road be built from the Overseas Highway to the beach. The State feeder road was begun in 1951. On October 28, 1954, a Beach Committee made recommendations for the development of the park. They included a pool, picnic tables, benches, shelters, a parking area concession, a building with public toilets, and shower facilities, and landscaping (Chamber of Commerce *Minutes*, November 4, 1954). William B. Bradley reported in his *Keynoter* column of August 21, 1958. "A 650 foot seawall and sidewalk are being constructed along the water frontage of the county beach on State Road 931 . . . after the completion of this work, the beach will be improved and two cabana buildings will be erected."

Land clearing on and around Key Vaca has produced evidences of earlier inhabitants. Dr. Henry Field, noted archaeologist, described the Indian canoe that was discovered on the site of the new Marathon High School as, "hewn from a huge cypress log . . . nineteen and a half feet long, thirty-four inches wide, and eighteen inches deep." (President's News Letter, The Historical Association of Southern Florida, Vol. IV, No. 1, February, 1956). Dr. Field was quoted as saying, "It's a magnificent specimen . . . probably cut in the Everglades . . . could well have been the property of the Caloosa Indians." (*Miami Herald*, February 4, 1956). Wood samples were sent to Yale University for analysis and possible dating.

Near the canoe was found an old pottery jug, believed to be of Indian origin (Letter, March 7, 1956, Mrs. Francis V. (Mary) Crane). Pictures of the canoe and the jug appear in *Key West Citizen*, February 3, 1956. Mrs. Crane hoped, ". . . it [canoe] may eventually find an . . . exhibition place in a local Museum for Indian Artifacts that Mr. Crane and I hope . . . to build." The Museum of the Crane Foundation, located on U. S. 1, nearly opposite State Road 931, is nearing completion.

Marathon is steadily getting bigger in every direction. Not only is the line of one story offices, stores, shops, motels, restaurants, and service stations, with a scattering of two-story structures, getting longer on both sides of the highway, but more lateral streets, reaching to the Gulf or to the ocean waters, are appearing in greater numbers, each having a community-like appearance. Trailer parks are becoming larger and more numerous.

This is a sharp contrast to Carlton J. Corliss' description of Marathon during railroad days. ". . . the town of Marathon, including the head-



MARATHON IN 1958
Courtesy of Charles H. Anderson

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quarters of construction of the railroad, offices, storerooms, residences, and all other installations occupied the area between the main line of the railroad and the Bay of Florida . . .”

Marathon has other interests than fishing, land clearing and building homes. The Little Theater, in the early 1950's "has laid out a rather extravagant program for itself . . . and in true Marathon fashion will carry it out." (*Marathon Times*, Vol. No. 1). That program included instruction in the various phases of dramatics. In their plays, local residents were the actors. The Little Theater, in June, 1957, discussed the need of erecting a building large enough to store props and to house a stage for rehearsals.

In the early spring of 1953, Herbert Wood and his son of Islamorada purchased a site for a five hundred seat, air-conditioned moving picture house. The Marathon Theatre was in operation that year. The December 5th, 1957 issue of the weekly newspaper announced that Mrs. Jean Wood, president of United Theaters, Inc., with partner, George C. Hoover, had the required building permits to build a seven hundred car drive-in theatre. It would be modern with wireless speakers and it would have a cafeteria style concession.

Betsy Ann Evers opened her School of Dance and Nursery, in Marathon, in 1955. In January, 1956, a School of Art opened under "the able instruction of Syd and Sandra Browne".

A new service for Marathon was established in 1957, when Mrs. John E. Shepherd opened a tutoring school for the benefit of visiting children in grades one through eight.

On August 29, 1957, the School of Charm was opened by Beverly de Beausset, a radio, theatre and television artist, for children five years and up. The training includes dramatics, modeling, poise, and diction.

Evening Adult Education classes, which began in September, 1957, make it possible for those who wish to complete their high school credits for a diploma to do so. New classes can be developed when fifteen adults express interest in a course.

Marathon's weekly newspaper, *The Florida Keys Keynoter*, was founded by Edgar F. Seney, Jr., and his wife, Patricia, on February 19, 1953. By April of that year, a second class mailing permit was issued to the paper by the United States Postmaster General. That placed the weekly as an official second class publication, the same classification as most newspapers and magazines. Seney won the Nieman Fellowship Award to Harvard University,

for the best Editorial in the State. To take advantage of the award, Seney sold his newspaper on August 1, 1955, to Nicholas P. Mitchell who, in turn, preferred teaching in a college, therefore, he sold out to *The Miami Herald* (October 1, 1956). Under the editorship and management of Charles H. Deal (born, April 20, 1930, Hickory, North Carolina), the *Keynoter* was destined to receive further distinction as well as increased circulation. On November 16, 1957, in Clearwater, Florida, "*The Florida Keys Keynoter* was recognized . . . as the fourth top weekly newspaper in journalistic excellence in the State, by the Florida Press Association . . . In addition to running fourth among seventy competing newspapers, the *Keynoter* won second place honors for journalistic excellence in best topography and make-up in the 2,000 to 3,000 circulation group." Topping the entire state was the *Winter Park Herald*. *The Hollywood Sun-Tatler* was second, and *Plant City Courier*, third.

A statistical accounting of the development of Marathon on Key Vaca, reveals the changes that have taken place since its "New Era" began:

"Original Acreage	— U.S. Survey	1,463.82	acres
Acreage remaining	— not Sub'd	252.	Parcels
Subdivided		2,733.	Parcels"

(Letter, September 2, 1958, Tax Assessor, Monroe County).

"In the area of Marathon . . . assessed property values increased from \$1,791,000 in 1950 to \$8,871,000 in 1957. For the same period, Marathon's population has increased at an estimated 25.2% . . . Its 1957 permanent population of 3,646 . . ." (William B. Bradley, *Keynoter*, June 26, 1958).

"William A. Parrish . . . recalled his first election here [Marathon] in 1929. There were just eight registered voters at that time."

Marathon Post Office receipts:

"1948	\$ 4,424.40
1957	\$51,091.61"

Enrollment in Sue M. Moore Elementary School (Marathon):

"1947	39
1957	490"

"The first water meter in Marathon, Florida (Key Vaca), was installed by the Florida Keys Aqueduct Commission the first week of January, 1953. Up to date, [September 1, 1958] there now are at least 1,211 meters; but from this number, many of them service duplex units, more than one family

in some cases . . .” (Letter, September 1, 1958, Florida Aqueduct Commission, Key West). William B. Bradley (*Keynoter*, September 4, 1958) reported, “Water meters 480 (1953), 1,092 (1957) [Marathon]”.

As for electricity consumers, the records at Plant No. 2 [Marathon] show: “1950, 247 consumers (Tollgate to Seven Mile Bridge), 1958, 1,430 consumers for Marathon only,” however, Charles Griffin, Plant Superintendent, advised that the number of users fluctuates daily, people move in and out for short periods of time. The number of electricity consumers, during the summer of 1958, is “approximately 1,500.”

The number of telephones established in Marathon, in 1950, was eighty-five. As of July 31, 1958, there were 1,154 telephones in Marathon (Interview, August 13, 1958, Wayne Freeman, Southern Bell Telephone Company, Miami).

Charles H. Deal, editor and manager of the *Florida Keys Keynoter*, Marathon, estimated its first circulation as “probably under five hundred”. On August 14, 1958, the circulation was “approximately twenty-five hundred. The newspaper is sent to forty states and to six foreign countries.”

Of significance, are the people who have chosen and are still choosing the once far away and isolated island as their preferred place of business, residence and recreation. They were successful people in their former positions of employment and some of them have built beautiful and costly homes. Many of them held high places in such fields as education, engineering, law, and industry. Recently, John P. Goggin made this off hand remark, “I believe that we as a group here on Key Vaca have the highest I.Q. for a place of its size, — anywhere.”

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This history of Key Vaca began three years ago as a class assignment in history by Mrs. Erma C. Holland at West Miami Junior High School. The writer is indebted to more than one hundred fifty persons and institutions for assistance in locating and making available information and materials. Many, but not by any means all of them, are mentioned in the citations throughout the paper. All of them should feel a proprietary interest in the result for without their assistance and encouragement the paper would not have been written.

FLORENCE STORRS BRIGHAM