

# Tequesta:

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## William Adee Whitehead's Reminiscences of Key West

*Edited by* THELMA PETERS

William Adee Whitehead, a young civil engineer, went to Key West from New Jersey in 1828 to be with his brother John, a property owner and merchant in the little island city. With a multiplicity of talents and a lively interest in his surroundings William entered wholeheartedly into the life of the community. In 1829 he was employed to make an official survey of the island, and the following year, still under age, he was appointed collector of customs, a position he held until he moved away from Florida in 1833, at which time he was also serving as mayor. In 1835, to a request for information about Key West from a gentleman in St. Augustine, he responded with a four-thousand-word descriptive, historical, and economic report.<sup>1</sup> His pencil sketches of the town are almost as detailed as photographs and remain the best pictorial record we have of early Key West.<sup>2</sup>

After he left Florida Whitehead engaged in business in New York City and in Newark, New Jersey, and seemingly prospered. But he was more than a business man, he was always something of a scholar. He became a charter member of a historical society in New Jersey and steadily pursued the study and writing of local history. For thirty years he also made meteorological observations which he reported at intervals to a New York news-

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<sup>1</sup> Whitehead's report to the "gentleman in St. Augustine" is given in its entirety in Rembert W. Patrick, editor: "William Adee Whitehead's Description of Key West," *Tequesta*, XII (1952), 61-72.

<sup>2</sup> Two of Whitehead's pencil sketches of Key West are reproduced in Jefferson B. Browne: *Key West The Old and The New*, The Record Company, St. Augustine, 1912.

paper and to the Smithsonian Institution.<sup>3</sup> Though he never returned to Florida he never lost interest in Key West. When his son and his brother John returned from a visit to the island in 1864 he must have enjoyed listening to an account of their experiences. He must have been pleased knowing that his family name of Whitehead, his own given name and the given names of his sisters and brother, Caroline, Margaret, Emma, and Thomas were all perpetuated as street names in Key West.

When the first published history of Key West, *A Sketch of the History of Key West* by Walter C. Maloney, made its appearance in the Fall of 1876 Whitehead immediately acquired a copy. The year that Whitehead left Key West was the year Maloney arrived there. Whether the two men met is not known but they surely corresponded. Whitehead's memories of his youth were stirred by Maloney's *Sketch* and he began to write *his* reminiscences. These were printed serially in a Key West newspaper, *Key of the Gulf*, in 1877. Whitehead had his copy of Maloney rebound so as to include thirty blank pages on which he pasted the clippings of the Reminiscences. This unique personal volume, Maloney and Whitehead in one binding with Whitehead's wispy signature on the fly leaf, eventually became a part of the Mark Boyd Collection and is now owned by the Library of the University of Miami.

Fires, hurricanes, and insects have long ago destroyed most nineteenth century Key West newspapers. It is fortunate Whitehead preserved the clippings. No one else seems to have done so.

Only the first of the Reminiscences has the author's initials. All of them are written in third person and the author refers to himself either as Mr. Whitehead or as the Collector of Customs. That he kept a detailed Journal we know for he quotes from it at length in Reminiscences Eleven and Twelve. The availability of the Journal would account for the clarity and accuracy of the Reminiscences. These are no fuzzy musings of an old man but an intelligent, lively, and often humorous, blending of historical fact and personal anecdote, and are sure to delight Florida historians.

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<sup>3</sup> Browne (above) has a short biographical sketch of Whitehead, page 200, Appendix D. He says that Whitehead presented a fine portrait of himself to the City of Key West shortly before his death, further proof that Whitehead never lost interest in the island city which he had pioneered.

## REMINISCENCES OF KEY WEST

No. 1 (March 31)

Mr. Editor.

On turning over the pages of Mr. Maloney's interesting Historical Sketch of Key West,—particularly interesting to those whose recollections, like those of the writer, extend back to within a few years of its settlement—many circumstances and many men connected with the events he narrates have been brought to mind, that might otherwise never have been awakened from their long repose in memory's treasure-house. As there may be some among your readers to whom additional facts, and further illustrative matter relating to the Island may be acceptable, I will from time to time, with your permission, occupy a portion of your columns with reminiscences having that aim.

It is a difficult matter to the members of an active business community of 12,000 persons, like Key West of the present day, to realize the quietness ordinarily prevailing, or the avocations of the inhabitants when there were only four or five hundred on the island. There were times when the hours hung very heavily upon both young and old, and the absence of the restraining and modifying influences of educated and refined females was much felt in the early years of the settlement. Men, even of the better class, are apt to become regardless of both the outward and the inward elements of *true* manliness when left to themselves, and in those days the want of varied and healthful means of recreation and amusement, to supply the absence of refined society, naturally led to long sittings over "the wine cup" at the dinner table of the only general boarding house—to frequent private carousals—and to almost nightly miscellaneous assemblages, where the sound of the violin regulated the agile steps of the dancers, in houses both of white and colored residents. Yet there were not many given to habitual inebriation and only a few were known as leading avowedly immoral lives. The changes adverted to by Mr. Maloney as consequent upon the arrival of several ladies connected with the Naval, Judicial and Commercial Officers, were effective and gratifying.

The want of varied amusements naturally led to efficiency in the various games of cards, and only those who, like the writer, disliked to excite the ill tempers of their partners by misleads or improper trumping, failed to become experts from practice. So too, was Chess generally played, and so skillfully that much amusement was at one time caused by the arrival of a

young army officer, who prided himself upon his playing well, but who in a short time was convinced that if he wished to be victor in the game, he must go elsewhere, having been beaten by every one with whom he played.

Mr. Maloney draws the attention of his readers to the advantages they enjoy above their predecessors in their postal facilities. It is not to be presumed that the anxiety and longing which the waiting for that *monthly* mail occasioned, can be imagined by the present generation. Although a chance vessel might now and then bring with her a newspaper, yet the regular files, by which alone the continuous history of affairs in the outer world is known, coming only monthly, were welcomed with peculiar pleasure. The Custom-house was a favorite place of resort at such times. The Collector receiving generally several different files, the gentlemen of the bar, merchants and others would gather on his piazza and as they looked over their papers and descanted upon the contents—each interested in a different topic as his taste or profession prompted—the effect was sometimes very ludicrous. One, with an exclamation intended to attract the attention of all the others, would let fall some precious morsel of “foreign news,” to which would chime another “a great fall in Cotton”—a third would announce that “Clara Fisher was playing in New Orleans”—a fourth would insist upon all listening to “an excellent anecdote”—and a fifth enunciate with much emphasis an “important decision of the Supreme Court,” the mixture of politics, news, and extraordinary circumstances creating a miniature Babel. And then, too, the important air with which the mass of mingled intelligence thus accumulated would be promulged, was very amusing, so much self-satisfaction being evinced at having it in their power *once more* to speak of the affairs of the great world of which for a whole month they had been in ignorance. Sometimes an item of general interest would elicit opinions and discussions, in which all of these visitors at the Custom-house would take part. Memory recalls one such occasion, when announcements were read of wonderful improvements in the transmission of the mails between New York and New Orleans. The number of days is not now recollected, but it far exceeded the number now required. Among those present was Captain Bunce, a Baltimorean by birth, an estimable man of many peculiarities, a believer in “total abstinence” and yet of a hilarious disposition, and of a mathematical and scientific turn; who expressed his wonder at some remarks made, indicating that the speaker thought the minimum time had been reached. His face brightened up at his own joke—as it was considered—and he exclaimed, “Why, my dear sir, mark my words, before many years you will see the



mails transported from place to place in almost no time at all. Tubes will be laid in the ground; they will be exhausted of air; the mail bags will be put in at one end, the air will be forced in behind them, and away they will go." A laugh went round at his vivid picture of the imagination, in which he joined, not one of those present entertaining, for a moment, the idea of *such* an improvement. He did not live to see his prognostications verified, but not many years thereafter a petition was presented to Congress—presented it is thought by Senator Mallory from Key West, for an appropriation to test this very mode of transmitting the mails—and in many places tubulated rail-ways and similar modes of transportation are now in operation. The writer has never heard of any suggestion towards such results, antedating that of Captain Bunce in the piazza of the Custom House at Key West. W.A.W.

No. 2 (April 7)

#### DADE COUNTY AND INDIAN KEY

Dade County with its twelve votes in the Presidential contest, is no longer looked after with the interest it was a few months ago, and, as was recently announced in the New York Tribune, "has ceased to be of national importance." There are however some facts in its history interesting to the residents of the mother county—Monroe—which warrants its being referred to somewhat more particularly than the scope of Mr. Maloney's address permitted. They will show that, in connection with its principal settlement, it has before been a somewhat prominent topic of discussion at the National Capital.

It was with much surprise to the good people of Key West that they found their county shorn of its full dimensions by the act of the Territorial legislature, in the winter of 1835-6, establishing the County of Dade. It was done at the instance and through the influence of Mr. Jacob Housman, the owner of Indian Key, with ulterior objects in view that were fully developed in following years, calling into exercise many instrumentalities and measures as unscrupulous in action and intent as can well be imagined. No one can call in question the right of any individual to promote his own interests in any way he may think advisable, provided the means adopted are not such as are subversive of morality and good neighborhood, and calculated to produce ill effects upon the community at large. But such was the tendency of

Mr. Housman's plans. Dade County, to him, meant Indian Key and nothing more, for the inhabitants of Key Vacas were well known to be averse to a separation from Monroe County.

The County established, the next step was to create a County Court and to direct the Judge of the Superior Court of the District (possessing Admiralty Jurisdiction) to hold *two terms annually* at Indian Key. A bill to that effect was passed by the same legislature that established the County, the members not being sufficiently enlightened as to the number of qualified jurors available, or the intent of the measures, to object to it. So well convinced however was the State Department, and Congress, of the little necessity for the passage of this act that the repealing power (too seldom employed in those days) was put in requisition, and in June 1836 it was struck from the Territorial Statute Book. The influence previously excited was again brought to bear at the next session of the legislature, and, aided by a recommendation of the Governor in his message to the Council, to pass early whether constitutional or not, leaving it to Congress to repeal them if they were not what they should be, the objectionable measure was re-enacted.

But why so persistent? The act of 2nd March 1835 "relating to wrecks on the coast of Florida" made it obligatory upon all engaged in saving vessels or merchandize, to take the property that might come into their possession to some *Port of Entry* within the jurisdiction of the United States. A Port of Entry at Indian Key was the ultimate aim of the intriguers, and they very naturally conceived that the want of an Admiralty Court would be a total objection to making that island a depot for wrecked property.

Only give them the Court they would *manufacture* jurymen as occasion required. The Court obtained for the time being, memorials were prepared for signatures in all the principal ports from New Orleans to Boston, and even in inland places, asking for Indian Key the privilege of a Port of Entry. The one sent from the Key itself, professed to be from "citizens of Indian Key, shippers, underwriters, masters of vessels and others interested in the commercial and wrecking concerns of the Gulf and Reef of Florida," two hundred and ninety-one in all, the fact that there were only about fifty actual residents on the island of all sizes, ages, conditions and colors, not being alluded to. In these documents the advantages of the island were depicted in glowing colors. "In the important points of depth of water, goodness and security of anchorage"—said the "citizens" of Indian Key—"the

harbor is not excelled by any in this southern country, vessels of the largest class may be brought with ease and perfect safety into the waters of this port" \* \* "when a custom house was asked for on this coast Indian Key was scarcely known. Had its local advantages and certain situation been as well understood as they now are, a port of entry would have been established here rather than at any other port or place on this coast." Subsequently they even went so far as to give the names of two Captains of Revenue Cutters and a Captain of the Navy who were ready to certify to the remarkable depth of water on the reef and in the harbor.

The writer does not recollect what was done under the act of Council relating to the Superior Court, but the County Court was organized by the appointment as Judge of one Thomas Jefferson Smith, from New York, who having been long enough at Key West to impress the people generally with his worthlessness, had betaken himself to Indian Key and become the factotum of its owner. As no success attended the application for the Port of Entry at the session of Congress in 1837-8, renewed and more earnest efforts were made at the ensuing session. Among other characteristic measures this Smith was sent to Washington, and through the possession of some recommendations from Van Buren, Marcy, Butler and other politicians of New York, where he had held at one time the office of Commissioner of Insolvency, he succeeded in getting the management of a newspaper called "The Metropolis," which being an Administration paper gave him for a time some influence and led him to anticipate great success in his employer's cause. His supposed important position did not always prevent his meeting with rebuffs even from his party adherents. Upon the strength of his being Judge of Dade County Court, he had the effrontery to claim admittance to the floor of Congress under the rule according that privilege to Judges of District Courts, but he was soon found out and excluded. While attending to the interests of Housman he, of course, was not neglectful of his own, and Judge Webb being about to resign his office, Smith had the audacity to aspire to the position and to think—to use his own language in a paper in the writer's possession—that the President was "favorably disposed toward him." It is sad to think how much injury an unscrupulous man may do to others when he sets about it. But here I leave the subject for the present.

No. 3 (April 21)

## DADE COUNTY AND INDIAN KEY

Continued.

The success of Thomas Jefferson Smith in convincing the members of the Congress of 1838-9 that Indian Key merited being made the special pet of the government was not as great as his employer expected.

Mr. Whitehead, who had been Collector of the Customs at Key West for nearly eight years, having resigned his commission on the 30th June 1838 and taken up his residence in New York, the good people of the island were anxious that he should go to Washington to protect their interests, and a formal request to that effect was made, but declined. His knowledge of the circumstances and requirements of the District rendered his services essential however, and on the 30th December a remonstrance, prepared by him in behalf of the merchants &c. of Key West, against the proposed Port of Entry was presented in both House and Senate. The object being to refute arguments, not to abuse individuals, the remonstrance referred to no one by name, and in its references to the "one-man power" that suggested the measure and would carry it out, no more was said than was actually necessary to exhibit its anticipated effects.

On the 10th January a petition was presented by Smith in reply to this remonstrance. What little argument it contained was easily answered, as was very soon made manifest, and it abounded in gross personal abuse of Mr. Whitehead. To this Mr. Whitehead submitted in reply a Memorial to both houses, opening with this paragraph—"he would therefore respectfully represent that the character of Thomas Jefferson Smith, being such as where best known, does not entitle him to the notice of gentlemen, he would not present a reply to the personal matters contained in the document referred to [in the preamble] had it not been made public by an order of one or both of your honorable bodies to print and have the same distributed as other public documents usually are. That consideration induces him to pursue the contrary course, and he would respectfully express a hope that your honorable bodies will cause the same publicity to be given to this memorial that was given to the petition of Mr. Smith." Appended to this memorial were letters from Lieut. L. M. Powell, U.S.N. stating that among the signers of the document emanating from Indian Key asking that it might be made a Port of

Entry were all the sailors and marines attached to his vessel—from Capts. Hunter and Coste of the Revenue service, refuting the statements made respecting *their* estimation of the advantages of the harbor—from Capt. Thos. R. Gedney, U.S.N. acknowledging that he had made a mistake in what he had written about the depth of water—from Col. John W. Simonton, showing the falsity of many of Smith's statements—from F. A. Brown and O. O'Hara (addressed to Charles Downing the representative from Florida) giving some sober, powerful reasons why the Port of Entry should not be established—and an extract from South Floridian of the 10th of November which, under the title of "Sneaking Villiany Exposed"—showed the low measures resorted to by Smith to obtain a letter of recommendation for the Judgeship from Key West, he having drafted the letter himself to be signed by one Meegin, addressed to representative Downing, in which that gentleman was told "you will get Dade County if you keep the right side of Smith, and Housman and Baldwin" \* \* "Marvin is not half as popular as Smith &c." So complete was the refutation of Smith's statements, and so thoroughly was his character exposed, that the Memorial when printed was in great demand, so many were there of the officials and others at Washington who had suffered from his abuse in the columns of his paper. For a time the question of Port or no Port was quite a subject of discussion among the frequenters of the Capital.

Smith's effrontery however, was not easily silenced. Calling upon Senator Norvel and exhibiting the recommendations which have been before alluded to, he succeeded in getting that gentleman to withdraw Mr. Whitehead's Memorial, on the grounds that when he presented it, he was not aware of its character, but having ascertained that it contained a very gross attack upon "another gentleman of whose character he entertained a very favorable opinion" he was unwilling that the Senate should "become the medium of calumny upon any man." This action of the Senator, and a letter from a Key West gentleman certifying to the low character of Meegin, (forgetting that the more he degraded Meegin the greater his degradation from having solicited his influence to obtain office) Mr. Smith incorporated in an abusive article, occupying a column of his paper, in which Mr. Whitehead's name appeared in capital letters, but which did not refute an iota of the charges made against him; ending with "I shall now dismiss Whitehead, leaving him in company with his friend Meegin."

Mr. Whitehead, however, was not so easily disposed of. He wrote to Senator Norvel and furnished additional evidence that what he had called "calumny" was in every particular true, requesting that the petition of Smith which had elicited his memorial should also be withdrawn from the files of the Senate and the accusation brought against him on its floor should be as publicly and in the same manner withdrawn. The petition was withdrawn in consequence but the Senator not making the *amende honorable* as requested, Mr. Whitehead had his letter to him published in the National Intelligencer, including a letter from Mr. John P. Baldwin of Key West, (the gentleman who had testified to Meegin's low character), stating that Smith had acknowledged to him that he, Smith, had written the letter for Meegin to sign, the very "calumny" of which he had complained. Shortly after this *denouement* Smith suddenly left Washington and went to Indian Key and Key West, not remaining at the latter place but a few hours as the Floridian announced "on good authority," that he had been called on in Washington to replace a sum of money which had been paid by mistake by one of the Departments "which rendered him the object of too much attention on the island."

While these occurrences were transpiring at Washington, Dade County and Indian Key were also subjects of consideration at Tallahassee. On the 25th January 1839 a petition was presented to the Legislative Council, from the inhabitants of Monroe County and the inhabitants of Key Vacas in Dade County, praying 1st. for a repeal of the law establishing Dade County, and 2nd if the repeal was not granted, asking for a repeal of the laws creating a County Court and requiring terms of the Superior Court to be held at Indian Key. The petition was accompanied by affidavits of persons who testified to seeing men confined in the stocks in the warehouse of Mr. Housman for days at a time by his order and fed on bread and water, without any beds, bedding, or mosquito bars. This was referred to a Committee of which Wm. Marvin was chairman and received due attention.

The Committee in due time reported that "It is in vain for these men to appeal to the laws of redress. The suit must be tried in the County of Dade and there, there is no Jury. Their only redress is in their own strong and staunch hearts." They recommend that, inasmuch as Dade County had been recognized by Congress, and had had assigned to it a representative in the Council, the law establishing it should not be repealed, but, "that the Jurisdiction of the County Court of Dade County be taken away, and transferred to the County Court of Monroe County, and the Jurisdiction of the Superior

Court of Monroe, until the number of persons in Dade shall justify the reestablishment of the courts of that County." A bill to that effect was reported and passed on the 19th February, and although Mr. Housman remonstrated against the unfavorable impression made by this action, the Council did not reverse it. On March 16th, 1840, Congress was petitioned by the members of the Bar, and Officers of the Supreme Court for the Southern District, praying for the repeal of the Territorial Act of 1837, reestablishing a term of the Superior Court in the County of Dade, and that the territorial legislature be *prohibited from reestablishing it without the sanction of Congress*. This the writer believes put an end to holding terms of courts at Indian Key.

As to the Port of Entry question Mr. Smith succeeded in having his petition returned to the files of Congress in the session of 1840-41, but as the antidote, in the shape of Mr. Whitehead's documents, were also referred, the Committee on Commerce asked to be discharged from their further consideration a week afterwards, and that is thought to have been the last of the attempts to elevate Dade County and Indian Key in the estimation of Congress. Smith married in Washington in 1840 and died there in 1860 or 1861.

If any of your readers, Mr. Editor, wish to have any confirmation of these statements they are referred to the Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Documents No. 41 of House of Representatives, 25th Congress, 3rd session, Senate Documents 71 and 140 of the same session, and the Washington National Intelligencer of March 12th 1839.

#### No. 4 (April 23)

As the names of the men alluded to in Mr. Maloney's address, who walked the streets of Key West forty and forty-five years ago, meet the eyes of their contemporaries, numerous are the incidents, humorous or otherwise, which come to the mind, clothing the long forgotten figures once more with all their peculiarities. Among others thus summoned from the past, the writer was pleased to recognize Henry S. Waterhouse M.D., Postmaster, Weigher and Gauger and otherwise identified with the business interests of the place who came to the island from Vermont about 1828. Brought from his northern home by ill-health, the figure he presented when brought to memory is in keeping with that fact. A slightly framed individual was he,



with a sallow complexion and cadaverous expression of countenance, having a peculiar mouth considerably modified from its natural expression by a set of false teeth, which he was wont to assure his friends were manufactured from "a tusk of the hippopotamus or sea horse," and so we will consider him seated on the piazza of a small wooden house near to Clinton Place, fronting on Whitehead Street, or within his mosquito-netted door as circumstances required, amusing himself, and—perhaps—the neighborhood with the so-considered melodious notes of his violin: "Robin Adair," "Old Lang Syne," "Hail Columbia" and other airs of the period being made familiar to all; but ready to put the instrument aside at any moment to receive a guest and discuss the news of the last mail, with such an air of sober-mirthfulness that was in admirable keeping with Coombe's delineation of "Dr. Syntax," and which in connection with other peculiarities led to his being known and spoken of by that title.

The writer will not venture any opinion as to his skill as a physician, but he was a man of some reading, had quite a collection of books, larger than any other on the island, and his intelligence combined with his eccentric manners and well developed disposition to look after his own interests made him quite a marked man in the little community.

As days and weeks would roll away at that period of the island's history without any news or novel occurrences, the resources of the inhabitants were often times put to the test for subjects for conversation and amusement. At one time a bulletin board was placed on the Doctor's piazza for the reception of items of wonderful news which the active brains of some would concoct and privately post thereon, sometimes purposely written in such remarkable chirography as would baffle the most skillful readers, excepting that here and there some momentous word or particular reference would be plainly given to arouse curiosity and lead to a more diligent study of the rest. The Doctor was apt to consider all that appeared on the board as truth, and would wonder at the marvelous revelations that sometimes were made; deception being little anticipated and considered by no means proper even in joke. This trait reminds the writer that, on a certain first of April, the Doctor received a note in the heat of the day purporting to come from Judge Webb, who then had rooms in the old Court-house, asking him to come to him and to bring his "pullakins" along, (a common term for *forceps*). The Doctor had never heard the dentist's instrument so called, and putting on his hat walked over to the Custom House to have the purport of the note



explained and immediately started off with forceps in hand to relieve the Judge of his presumed aching tooth. The walk up Whitehead Street in the hot sun was not very pleasant and some comparison could not but be forced upon the Doctor's notice, between his own heated perspiring body and the coolness and composure of the Judge, who, seated in his airy apartment, received him with all courtesy and commenced talking about matters and things in general. Availing himself of the first lull in the conversation, the Doctor enquired how long the Judge's tooth had troubled him, and was astonished to learn that he was not, and had not been a sufferer. "What is the meaning of this note then, Judge?" he asked, exhibiting the one he had received; and it would be difficult to portray the expression of his face when the Judge replied, "It means, Doctor, that this is the first of April." No answer was returned and the Doctor wended his way back to town vowing that he would be careful how he responded to sudden calls again no matter who might be the party requiring his services.

The Doctor felt considerably proud of being the first postmaster and was very attentive to the duties of his office. Two years elapsed before the office was thought of sufficient importance to have regular stamps, but when obtained the Doctor was as much pleased as a child with a new play thing, and wished his friends, no matter whether their letters went by mail or not, to have all their letters stamped. The writer has now in his possession one stamped not only with the date but also with the words "Ship," "Paid" and "Free" constituting his whole assortment.

The Doctor possessed some power at *repartee*, one instance of which is well remembered. In those days there were few entertainments given other than dinners or suppers, at which it was usual for each guest to add to the hilarity of the occasion by either singing a song or telling a story. On one occasion the Doctor had been repeatedly called upon and as often declined, and just as he was comforting himself with the thought that the attention of the company had been effectually drawn into another channel, the young District Attorney Chandler returned to the charge with a demand for "that story" and the Doctor succumbed.

In his peculiar manner emphasizing each point by a ridiculous movement of his right fore-finger from the end of his nose to the table before him he told of a thief who had secreted himself in a church with a view to appropriate some of the valuables within it, and after securing them found that

his only mode of egress was by an open upper window to reach which he must climb up by the bell rope, and on attempting to do so, the bell tolled, arousing the neighborhood and leading to his arrest.

“As they were leading him away,” said the Doctor, taking his finger from his nose and pointing it at the District Attorney, “he turned around and addressed the bell, as I now do you Mr. Chandler, if it had not been for your long tongue and empty head, I would have escaped.” The company who had been wondering at the prosaic character of the story and at a loss to discover wherein its interest lay, were taken entirely by surprise at its close, and its point fairly “brought down the house.”

Finding that the climate agreed with him the Doctor sent to Vermont for his wife and one child, a small boy, but the voyage so disordered the system of Mrs. Waterhouse that she died not long after arrival. Subsequently the Doctor, anticipating a more extensive practice and new openings for business at Indian Key, removed thither taking his boy with him, and both were accidentally drowned while on a fishing excursion some time in 1835.

#### No. 5 (no date)

### INCIDENTS OF THE SEMINOLE WAR

The small detachment of United States troops under Major Dade, which had been stationed at Key West for some time, left towards the close of 1835 for Tampa Bay, and not long after their departure, the startling intelligence was received that with the exception of three, all had fallen in an attack made upon them by the savage foe, on the 28th of December, on their way into the interior. It consisted of eight officers and one hundred and two men. The three men who escaped, although wounded, brought the painful tidings to Tampa, and fifty-three days after the conflict, a detachment of the army found the remains of the killed on the field undisturbed. The eight officers were recognized, and all were buried where they fell.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the island was thrown into a state of great agitation and alarm by this untoward event, brought home to all more closely from the fact that both officers and men had been long enough at Key West to become generally known personally. In accordance with a public notice a general gathering of the townspeople was held in the neigh-

borhood of Clinton place—a motley assemblage reminding one of Falstaff's army—the news that had been received was read, committees appointed, and some measures adopted for the common defence. Additional anxiety was felt from the fact that a family at Indian River had been murdered, (the fact not being then known that it was owing to personal differences), and the Lighthouse and public property at Cape Florida abandoned in consequence. One of the measures adopted for the protection of Key West was the establishment of a night patrol on land, expected to challenge every night-walker, whether friend or foe; and for a time a water patrol likewise, that in one or more boats was expected to circumnavigate the island every night. A realization of the danger that would undoubtedly be incurred by thus watching for a foe that, if in the vicinity would be hidden in the neighboring keys, and possess a decided advantage over the exposed crews, soon led to the abandonment of this precautionary measure.

Well founded fears prevailed that, as the United States forces at Fort King and elsewhere towards the north, were deemed adequate to control the movements of the Indians in that direction, their course would necessarily be directed to the southern shores of the peninsula, and very soon, with the exception of Indian Key, every settlement between Key West and St. Augustine was abandoned.

The Collector of the Port in letters to the War and Navy Departments, drew attention to the urgent necessity of a co-operation of army and navy forces in protecting the lives and property of the inhabitants, particularly of Key West, which had become a place of refuge for all the fugitives. These letters were responded to under the date of the 29th of January, orders being issued by the War Department for the reoccupation of the port, and the transmission in advance of arms and ammunition of which the island was woefully deficient. A letter to Commodore Dallas at Havana, with whom the Collector was personally acquainted, caused him to sail immediately in his Flagship, the Frigate Constellation, and on the 14th of January he was at anchor in the harbor, materially relieving the inhabitants from their alarm.

In a few days a detachment of sailors and marines was sent from the Constellation to re-establish the light at Cape Florida and to render the buildings so secure as to place the keeper in comparative safety. Commodore Dallas remained in the harbor until the 6th of February, when he

sailed for Pensacola, receiving before his departure a letter from a committee of the citizens at large, thanking him for his promptness in coming to their assistance, which he most cordially acknowledged.

It is an interesting fact connected with this visit of the *Constellation* that *Lieutenant* George G. Meade, who was a brother-in-law of Commodore Dallas, was on board, having not long before graduated at West Point, on his way to join the army at Tampa—little dreaming of the future before him and the events that would connect his name so honorably with the war with Mexico, and make it live in history as the General Commander at Gettysburg.

On the arrival of Commodore Dallas at Pensacola, he dispatched the *Warren*, Captain Wm. F. Taylor, and subsequently the *Concord*, Captain Mix, to watch over the safety of the island; and on the 12th of April General Macomb, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, paid it a visit on board a Revenue Cutter, was escorted over the island and made acquainted with its position and necessities, and left the next day for Tampa.

Intelligence however had been received of the withdrawal of the Indians from the southern shores of the peninsula, and confidence was for some time restored.

No. 6

(No date or title)

During the great anxiety which prevailed in the winter of 1835-6, under apprehensions of an attack from the Indians, incidents would occasionally occur which, however serious they seemed at the time, would subsequently, when recalled to mind, afford much amusement. One of these is thus described by a then resident on the island, in a letter which has been preserved.

“About 2 a.m. I was aroused from a sound sleep by a call from ‘the officer of the day at night’ as he styled himself, who stated that two or three of the patrol had ‘heard in the woods the low-distinct-sound-of-a-drum,’ and he consequently thought it his duty to call the gentlemen to headquarters, instead of ascertaining the cause of the alarm himself. However, some allowance should be made for his action, or rather want of action, as it was evident he had taken some quantity of spirits *down* in order to keep his spirits

*up.* 'Very like a whale,' I thought, but like a good militia man I 'buckled on my armor,' took my guns and pistols, kissed my wife, and went forth to combat in all haste."

The writer's experience having been similar, he will complete the account by saying that the improbability of the Indians giving notice of their approach by beating a drum, however "low" the sound produced, was not admitted to be a valid objection to proceeding to solve the mystery. Three or four gentlemen, consequently, started off to the United States Barracks to see whether the only drum that was known to be on the island was in its place. Such was found to be the case, but nevertheless the sound heard *might have been* some signal agreed upon between the Indians and Negroes, and it was therefore advisable that some of the houses of the latter should be visited. The improbability of any co-operation of the Negroes with the enemy was not allowed to have any weight, but the idea was pretty effectually eradicated when their fright was witnessed at being thus aroused from their slumbers by a number of armed men. It was while standing on the premises of Mr. Weaver, whose Negroes were being thus unnecessarily alarmed, that the mysterious "low-distant-sound-of-a-drum" was found to proceed from a dog basking in the moonlight on the top of a cistern, for annoyed by fleas, he would announce it to the world by bringing his knuckles (if hind legs have knuckles) in contact with the cover of the cistern whenever he attempted to get rid of them. The "officer of the day at night" felt much aggrieved at having his attention drawn to the solution of the mysterious sounds he had heard, but no other was discovered. The gentlemen on returning to their homes found their families in great anxiety at their prolonged absence, and one found his wife preparing to take a boat with her children and baggage.

This night patrol continued until the summer rains set in, when it was found much more comfortable to drowse away the hours under cover than in perambulating the streets, and the conclusion was arrived at that there was no impending danger requiring its continuance.

The summer of 1836 passed without any occurrence worthy of special notice, but in September the lighthouse at Cape Florida was attacked by the Indians and destroyed by fire. John Dubose, the keeper, was not at his post at the time, and the man in charge who had sought safety within the lighthouse and barricaded the entrance would undoubtedly have been burnt to

death, when the enemy resorted to firing the stair case, had he not had with him a keg of powder. This he threw into the fire and the consequent explosion arrested the progress of the flames by destroying the steps, leaving him in safety at the top of the lighthouse, out of the reach of the enemy. How long it was before he was rescued the writer does not remember.

This renewal of active aggressive movements may have been prompted by the withdrawal from Key West of a company of the 4th Infantry, under Lieut. Alvord, sent to join the army at Tampa, and also the withdrawal from Indian Key, much to the chagrin of the inhabitants, of the Revenue Cutter Dexter, Capt. Rudolph, which had been stationed there for two or three weeks.

Not long before the burning of the lighthouse at Cape Florida an attack was made upon a small turtling vessel at anchor at Key Largo by about thirty of the enemy, two of the crew wounded and, on the abandonment of the vessel she was set fire to by the Indians.

In the ensuing month, October, in consequence of these and other depredations, the Sloop-of-War *Vandalia* sent an expedition up the coast, destroyed an encampment of Indians on one of the islands, burned their boats, but did not capture any. So near were they, however, to the enemy that some of them were recognized as those who had had frequent intercourse with the whites before the war, and were considered peacefully inclined. There was no doubt entertained that this party had been engaged in committing many outrages along the coast, whither they were drawn by the advantages afforded them in the way of living, by the native arrow-root and the abundance of fish. On the 23rd of November Commodore Dallas returned to the island in a Sloop-of-War, accompanied by a schooner, and was on shore several days with his family—guests of the Collector.

No. 7 (May 16?)

#### THE DESTRUCTION OF INDIAN KEY

The event which caused the greatest excitement along the reef, during the war with the Seminoles was the destruction of Indian Key. The attack was made about half past two o'clock on the morning of Friday, August 7th, 1840, and the writer is pleased to be able to put in print a letter in his

possession written by that worthy and highly respected citizen, Charles Howe, who was Collector of Key West from May 1861 to July 1869. He was at that time Inspector of the Customs at Indian Key. Shortly after the affair he wrote as follows to a friend in New York.

“We were awakened by the awful yells of the savages and the discharge of rifles all over the island, and the breaking of doors and windows. I endeavored for a moment to imagine it was a dream, but it was only for a moment—the danger was too near at hand to admit a doubt of its reality—too startling and appalling to be an illusion of the fancy. The flashes of the rifles, visible through our bedroom windows admonished us of our perilous situation. We sprang from our bed and aroused our two youngest children,, the other three, who had been sleeping in a corner room, came running to our door enquiring what they should do. I could only say to them that the Indians had come to murder us and that they must prepare to die, as we had but a few minutes to live and that they must think of that Saviour who stood ready to receive them. We, of course, supposed that the Indians had already surrounded our house, and for the moment were fully persuaded of the certainty of immediate death if we attempted to open either of our doors, but Special Providence seems to have inspired and directed us from the hands of the monsters.

Mrs. H. with much self-possession and daring bravery, with one child in her arms, was the first to proceed to our back door and open it, and finding the enemy not there, I immediately followed with the other children, and we all ran into our garden among the mulberry trees. From thence we crept round to our back fence, and watching for a moment when there was none near by, I jumped over and pulled off a few palings, and taking one child, Mrs. H. the other, the three elder ones following, we ran for the water and reached it without being discovered. We then waded about 200 yards to one of the sailboats. As we were getting on board they saw us, and came running to the beach and on my wharf, and fired a few shots but without effect. I was soon under sail and out of the reach of rifle balls.

With deep felt thanksgiving, I looked around me and saw my wife and children all safe, although in a deplorable condition—nothing on but our night clothes—the children nearly naked—without water or

provisions, and naturally expecting that everything we possessed in the world would be destroyed or taken from us: but still, even in this condition we felt grateful that we had so wonderfully escaped the barbarous hand of these infuriated savages.

We proceeded to the Transport schooner *Medium* lying in the harbor of Tea-Table Key. We of course knew nothing of the fate of the other inhabitants, but naturally conjectured they were all massacred; but it fortunately proved to be otherwise, and out of about 60 in all, only six were killed and one wounded. Some others were badly burnt and otherwise injured.

The Indians remained on the island until 12 o'clock M. and after completing the work of destruction, by burning every building except my old house, they left it with 34 boats and canoes heavily laden with plunder.

I came back to the island in about half an hour after they left. It was a horrible sight! Poor John Mott, his wife and two children lay lifeless upon the common, most shockingly mangled. Dr. Perrine consumed in my new house—James Sturdy, a lad 12 years of age, brother to Mrs. Elliott Smith, drowned in the cistern of a large warehouse. My house and kitchen, negro houses and carpenter's shop were not set on fire, but plundered of everything of any value to them, such as clothing, bedding, provisions, silver, jewelry, spy-glasses, cooking utensils, sails, awnings, water-kegs, tools, boats, &c.

You can form some idea from this of what our situation was. But that same compassionate Providence which had already so marvelously interposed in our behalf did not leave us long to suffer for those comforts which our situation so much required. Some of my negroes, of whose fate I was ignorant, made their escape with some of Capt. Housman's in a boat to Key West. Immediately on the news reaching there, friends Gordon and Mallory and their amiable wives, whose benevolence and kindness I never can forget, sent us a large trunk full of all kinds of clothing suitable for myself and family, more than I was willing to take for our own immediate wants, and I distributed a part among the other sufferers. Until the arrival of this trunk, which was four or five days, I had only the bare shirt I escaped in, and an old pair of



pantaloons. We fortunately found one window curtain which fell outside of the window as the Indians took it down and was left, that Mrs. H. cut into slips for the younger children. They carried off three of my negroes, one of whom was an invaluable woman, whose loss we much lament. The remains of another, a girl, have since been found in the Bay.

My new house, which was occupied by Dr. Perrine, was the first building burnt. The Dr. was in the cupola, endeavoring to parley with the savages, by telling them, in Spanish, that he was a physician, and that they must spare him, but they turned a deaf ear to his entreaties, and set fire to the garret rooms to prevent his escape. The family was properly restricted to the canal, connected with the bathing room, (which I had constructed expressly to escape with my own family), soon after the commencement of the war. There they remained until the house burned down and were all saved. \* \* \* \* With all my losses and sufferings I have much cause to be thankful. They could have injured me much more. My books, papers, glass-ware, crockery &c. were all saved. Our clock, looking-glasses, and sideboard were not disturbed, only divested of their gauze covering which appeared to have been done with great care." [Mr. Howe makes no allusion to the grounds for this exemption from the entire destruction with which the property of others was visited, but those who knew the man will see in it, in all probability, the result of the kindness and uprightness which had always characterized his dealings with the natives.] "I can truly say that the horrors of that memorable morning will never be erased from my mind, and I doubt if from the memory of our youngest child." \* \*

This letter was written on the 15th of October 1840, when there was a small military force stationed at Indian Key, sufficient it was thought to ward off any further attacks.

No. 8 (May 23?)

#### AFFAIRS OF HONOR(?)

Half a century ago it was much more the custom than in late years to seek *redress* for wrongs, fancied or real, by giving your adversary an opportunity to take your life, by placing yourself before him to be shot at. There was always a lurking hope, it is true, that through superior skill or adroitness you might hit him first, but should you not, you were only illustrating

the folly of "fleeing from the ills we have, to those we know not of." Among these so-called "Affairs of Honor" which interested the inhabitants of Key West at that time was one, the incidents of which might be wrought into a sensational novel with great effect.

Among the young adventurers from the United States who in 1818-9 were led to connect themselves with the revolutionary movements in Colombia, South America, were Charles E. Hawkins and Wm. A. McRea. What part they bore in the struggles of the young Republic, or how long they were residents of it, the writer is uninformed, but, while still in its service, some difficulty arose between them, leading to a contest with swords; and Hawkins carried to his grave a notable scar across one of his cheeks, the result of the encounter. Years passed away. McRea returned to the United States and commenced the practice of the Law; Hawkins entered the Mexican Navy and they met not again until the autumn of 1828 at Key West. Hawkins was awaiting the action of the Superior Court of the Southern District of Florida upon some prize cases in which he was interested, and McRea as United States District Attorney, was in his official capacity necessarily connected with the trial and adjudication. Thus were the two quondam enemies brought again in opposition to each other.

It was of course thought advisable that past differences should no longer be allowed to effect the relations of the parties, and through the mediation of mutual friends a reconciliation was effected. Not only so, but the event was thought worthy of some fitting commendation and in due time a supper was given by Captain Hawkins at Mrs. Mallory's Hotel, at which McRea was the honored guest, and all the gentry on the island were present. The greatest hilarity and good feeling prevailed and the guests separated full of encomiums upon both the host and his entertainment.

Captain Hawkins had been twice married, and had his second wife with him on the island. She was a young thoughtless girl who had seen very little of the world, possessing some literary attainments and personal attractions. It was observed with great surprise by the few who witnessed it, that on the morning after the supper she was taken privately and evidently in great distress and put on board of a vessel about to sail for middle Florida. A few hours elapsed and the mystery received an explanation, which greatly excited the little community. Hawkins as host the evening before was necessarily detained until all his guests had departed, and on reaching his house at a

late hour, his surprise may be imagined on seeing a man leap from the window of his wife's room as he entered it, and to find that that man was McRea, his newly re-acquired friend. All he could do was to salute him with a discharge from his pistol, but without inflicting any personal injury.

Having sent off his wife to her friends, Hawkins' next step to retrieve his honor was to give McRea an opportunity to deprive him of his life also. A challenge was sent and accepted, and on the morning of Monday, February 9th, 1829, the parties met somewhere on the south beach. Captain C. C. Hopner of the Mexican Service acted as friend to Hawkins, and Dr. R. A. Lacy as the friend of McRea. Four shots were exchanged. Hawkins' first ball passed through McRea's overcoat and glanced,—his second went through his pantaloons, near the waistband, bruising his body—the third passed through his hat, and the fourth lodged in his thigh near the body and terminated the contest. Only one shot of McRea's touched his adversary, the third, which slightly grazed Hawkins' wrist.

McRea was moving about again on crutches in the course of a few weeks, but before he made his appearance in public, Hawkins had left the island for Mexico to close up his relations with that republic, and did not return until some time in May, by which time McRea was again in full use of his limb, and in the enjoyment of perfect health. But on Sunday morning, May 24th, as he was walking up Whitehead Street, and had nearly reached the small bridge that there crossed the head of the old Pond, as it passed Caroline Street, he received in his back from a double-barreled gun in the hands of Hawkins, who was secreted in a house on the South side of Whitehead Street, no less than thirty-three shot, and in two hours was a corpse.

In an obituary of him, written at the time by a friend and *apologist*, it said, "It had been intimated to him that he would be attacked, but believing he was contending with an enemy too honorable and brave to avail himself of an assassin's cover, he refused (though urged) to resort to legal means to prevent it; always supposing that he would be able to resist any open assault which he might receive. Thus has he fallen—a sacrifice to his own honorable feelings, and the dastardly act of a coward; but he still lives in the memory of his friends, and in the good feelings of the community."

"That Mr. McRea had faults is admitted. Who has them not? But his faults were of that kind which friendship would only desire to obscure from

the public gaze; they were those alone which sprung from a disposition too ardent and feelings too easily excited, and soon forced aside by such a host of redeeming qualities that all those who best knew him, were always willing to pardon the one in consideration of the strong claims which the others gave to their kindest affections."

He was buried on May 25th and on the 3rd of June his murderer was taken on board of a Revenue Cutter to St. Augustine, there to be incarcerated to abide his trial in November.

Hawkins' second wife, she on whose account the murder was committed, having been divorced from him not long after, he was enabled, while occupying his snug quarters at St. Augustine not only to make the acquaintance, but to woo and win a young lady, a resident of that antiquated city, and to make her the third Mrs. Hawkins. They were married in the prison, and their wedding tour may be presumed to have been limited to a walk in the corridors, or from one to another room of their enforced quarters.

Several months elapsed before Hawkins was transferred to Key West for trial, but when the time arrived, his wife remained behind in St. Augustine. The writer will not attempt to portray the bitterness of the parting. It must be left to be conjectured by these readers. He who was so attractive that even his prison walls could not prevent his influence being felt beyond them, about to be taken from her side, who had submitted even to imprisonment for his sake, and sent to a distant court to be tried for his life was sad indeed! It was a very romantic situation to be placed in certainly. Should he be hung it would, without doubt, be very painful to witness it, and should the Jury—the finding of a Florida jury being, in the opinion of a certain old Judge, one of the things the Almighty might be naturally expected to know nothing about in advance—should the jury acquit him, she could at once reform him. She had better therefore remain in St. Augustine.

Arrived at Key West, what was to be done with the culprit? There was no prison worthy of his acceptance as a place of residence, and as to finding a qualified and unbiased Jury, that was therefore an impossibility. Under some arrangement therefore, with the details of which the writer is unacquainted, the whole island was allotted to his bounds. In February 1831 his wife arrived to share his *imprisonment*, and, supported by the United States, he was as much a gentleman of leisure as any one on the island. Mrs. H. was

—or thought herself to be—proficient in music, and day and night her piano might be heard discoursing the most elaborate unintelligible compositions to comfort and amuse her “dear Charles.”

At last the legislature intervened. An act was passed, the tenor of which is not recollected, by which Hawkins was discharged from further accountability for the murder of McRea, and left the island with his wife for parts unknown to the writer.

### No. 9

I gave in my last communication an imperfect account of the romance which surrounded a so-called “Affair of Honor” and its subsequent effects. There was another that came off in 1833 less objectionable in its features, as it did not grow out of anything affecting the moral antecedent of the combatants. It involved, however, the death of one of them, and that one the party least to blame.

David C. Pinkham of Kentucky, but last from Pensacola, a lawyer of considerable ability was one of those who came to the island on the establishment of the Superior Court in 1828, bringing his wife with him. He was between thirty-five and forty years of age, and soon after his arrival associated himself in business with a Mr. Macon. On the accession of Mr. Whitehead to the Collectorship of the District in 1830, Mr. Pinkham was so strongly recommended for the position of Deputy that he was appointed, and for nearly two years satisfactorily discharged the duties of the office, being gentlemanly in his deportment and attention to all having business at the Custom-house.

Mr. Pinkham it was who sent the challenge in the case referred to, his opponent being Dr. Benjamin B. Strobel of Charleston, who became a resident of the island some time after Mr. Pinkham’s settlement. He stood well in his profession and was appointed Surgeon to the Military post. As might be expected where the practice in a community of only five or six hundred people was divided among two or three physicians, there was plenty of leisure to loiter away in the counting-rooms and other places of concourse, if inclination prompted, enabling anyone to become familiar, if not identified with, all matters of public or private disputation. This was the disposition of Dr. Strobel.

During the summer of 1832, the Collector being absent, the duties of his office devolved upon Mr. Pinkham, and a number of wrecks being brought in loaded with foreign merchandize entailing processes with which he was not familiar, it was not surprising that matters should not have gone on as smoothly as they would have done under other conditions. On the return of the Collector in the autumn he received a communication from one or two merchants, two subordinate officers of the customs, and Dr. Strobel, complaining of the manner in which they had been treated by Mr. Pinkham, and asking for his dismissal, principally on the ground of his unpopularity. But as their special grievances did not warrant it, and "popularity" in those days not always being in accordance with the more essential qualification, fidelity to the government, he was not dismissed. Dr. Strobel's special grievance was that the Deputy-Collector had struck from the Marine Hospital roll the name of a man whom having been seen walking about the town, he thought well enough to be discharged, without first consulting him, Dr. Strobel being at that time in charge of the Hospital patients.

Although no evil resulted and the man restored to his position on explanation, yet the abuse and irritating conduct of the Doctor—whose complaints were least in consequence if at all—did not cease, and at last so wrought upon Pinkham that nothing would do but he must seek redress by standing up to be shot at, for having had nothing to do with firearms it amounted to little else.

A challenge was sent to Strobel and accepted, and towards the end of March 1833 a duel was fought on the south beach, and Pinkham fell at the first fire with a bullet in his chest. Strobel's friend was the Captain of the Revenue Cutter that cruized between Charleston and Key West, and as his vessel was about to sail for the former place, Strobel found it convenient to embark in her and, if the writer mistakes not, never returned; his family leaving the island to join him shortly afterwards.

Pinkham lingered until the 11th of April,—some hopes being entertained at one time that he would recover—when he died, his *honor* satisfied and his wife left defenceless among strangers. He was buried in the burial-ground then used, and a marble slab subsequently placed over his grave, and his wife was sent to her friends in Kentucky. Thus were two homes broken up through the irritations caused by senseless disputations. "The tongue is an unruly member full of deadly poison."

There was an earlier challenge passed, some time during the winter of 1828-9—the moving cause is not remembered—between Richard Fitzpatrick whose name appears several times in Mr. Maloney’s Address, and Edward Chandler, a young lawyer residing on the island, but although the writer remembers seeing and speaking to the former gentleman, while he was engaged in getting his duelling pistols ready, better councils prevailed, and the meeting did not take place.

The name of Mr. Fitzpatrick recalls the very questionable proceeding of the importation of bloodhounds from Cuba, wherewith to hunt down the Indians during the Seminole War. Mr. F. was the Agent sent by the Territory to procure them. He sailed from St. Marks on the 27th of November 1839, reached Matanzas on the 6th of December and sailed thence about the 13th, stopping at Key West on his homeward trip with thirty-three dogs in charge.

A very telling caricature was got up in New York representing the Agent engaged in drilling his squad of ravenous animals, the picture being too revolting for its subject to be at all ludicrous.

This important re-inforcement for the Territory sailed from Key West on the 24th of December and, after a tempestuous voyage, arrived at St. Marks on the 7th of January 1840, and a few days thereafter reached Tallahassee and was duly inspected by his Excellency Governor Reed, who, in a message to the legislature on the 28th of February, reported, “No occasion has yet occurred for testing the usefulness of the dogs brought from Cuba. It is still believed, however, that they may be used with effect.” It is believed now, however, that that was the last heard of them officially.

Would you like to know, Mr. Editor, what was the expense incurred for this importation? I can give it to you.

Cost of the 33 Blood-hounds in Cuba .....	\$2733.00
Expenses at Matanzas and Key West &c. ....	303.99
Charter of Sloop Marshall to Matanzas and back .....	600.00
Advanced to the 5 Spaniards who came with the dogs ....	136.63
Passports for them .....	26.96
87 lbs. fresh beef for the dogs bought in Tallahassee ....	6.96
“My compensation” said Mr. Fitzpatrick .....	1000.00
	\$5006.83





reef there would be little doubt of his thinking a Wrecker of more intrinsic value than all the Ornithologists in Christendom. Audubon was more than fifty years old when he visited Key West, but was energetic and active. He died in 1851.

In January 1833 a well informed young German by the name of Leitner came to the island. He had been educated at one of the first scholastic institutions of his native land and, although he had been in the country only about one year, spoke English perfectly. Why he should so soon have sought the shores of Florida is not known. His principal pursuits were connected with botany, and he possessed a remarkable talent for preserving plants, their beauty and natural appearance suffering little by the process. He was very enthusiastic and pleased at the idea of being the first botanist to visit this region.

When walking with him, no matter how earnestly engaged in conversation or interested in topics under discussion, his eye was ever quick to perceive every common flower or blade of grass that might enrich his collection, and at once would he bolt away to secure it.

From Key West Mr. Leitner went up the reef, and for several years remained exploring the islands and mainland. So rich and varied were his acquisitions that even the Indian war could not drive him away and with a view, doubtless, to extending his area of research, in January 1838 he joined an expedition against the Indians under Lieutenant Towell and was killed at Jupiter Inlet. What became of his manuscripts and specimens the writer never heard.

In one of these communications mention was made of Dr. Henry Perrine, and of his melancholy end, having been burnt to death by the Indians in his house at Indian Key in August 7th 1840.

Dr. Perrine first became known to the people of Key West in 1835. In May of that year, when holding the position of Consul at Campeche, he shipped to the Collector of the Port, directly from Campeche, a pair of rabbits of peculiar breed, a number of hives of, or rather hollow logs containing stingless bees, and some cactus plants, it being his intention, on return to the United States, to engage in the cultivation and propagation of tropical plants and animals. He was unfortunate with his first experiment; one of

the rabbits died on the voyage and the other fell a victim to an ill-judged attempt to obtain its liberty soon after its arrival. Many of the bees had died or got out of the logs before they reached Key West, but there were a sufficient number left to enable their peculiar characteristics to be tested. That they were stingless was fully demonstrated, but the quality of the honey—probably from the scarcity of flowers and plants that would have afforded them suitable food—was very poor. For the same reason they did not increase in numbers, although taken great care of on the Custom-house premises, and after two or three years they were all dead. The cactus plants were distributed among those gentlemen who had gardens, but it was thought that the island already possessed the species.

Dr. Perrine very properly conceived that success in his plans to introduce many of the plants peculiar to the Isthmus of Darien and of Mexico depended greatly upon their becoming acclimated, as it were, by a *gradual* transfer from the warmer to the cooler regions, and it was the establishment at Key West, or on some other island, of what might be termed an acclimating nursery that led him to entertain the thought of becoming a resident. It was his original intention to bring with him some of the native Indians of Mexico, but he was advised, before doing so, to obtain some expression of opinion from the Legislature of the Territory, by law or otherwise; as the operation of some recent laws against all who did not bear indubitable evidence of having nothing but white blood in their veins, rendered it uncertain what the treatment of the native Indians might be;—and moreover legislation in those days was of a very dubious quality, being “unstable as water.”

After some examination of localities Dr. Perrine went to Washington with the view of obtaining some governmental privileges in consequence of his projected improvements on the public lands, with what success the writer cannot state. He soon identified himself with Indian Key interests, and being in Washington 1837, used what influence he had in trying to have it made a Port of Entry—which project as we know, failed to meet the approval of Congress.

Dr. Perrine returned to Indian Key in 1839, bringing his family with him and lost his life, as we have seen, on the 7th of August 1840. His family returned to the North and not until the last year was any member of it in Florida. The writer is informed that some months ago a son of his visited this part of the State looking after some grant of land which his father had secured during his life time.

No. 11 (June 16, 1877)

## CHARLOTTE HARBOR FORTY-SEVEN YEARS AGO

Reference is made in Mr. Maloney's Address (page 5) to an old resident at Charlotte's Harbor, alluded to by Mr. Whitehead, the Collector of the Customs, in the papers deposited by him for preservation in the Clerk's Office. I am enabled to give some extracts from a journal kept by that gentleman during the trip which enabled him to make the acquaintance of this old settler, which furnishes some information respecting the condition of the settlements at Charlotte's Harbor at that time, now nearly half a century ago, which may prove interesting to some of the present day.

A few words of explanation may be serviceable. In the winter of 1831-2 an act passed the Territorial Legislative Council, imposing a heavy tax upon the foreigners engaged in fishing at Charlotte's Harbor—why the harbor was so named the writer does not know. By whom this act was drawn and introduced is not remembered, but the ultimate object of it was undoubtedly, to drive the Spaniards from that locality, and it is presumed that some smart individual thought "it would pay" to dispossess the old settlers and fall heir to their business. For some years about twenty vessels (fishing smacks) owned in Connecticut had been employed in this vicinity, principally during the autumn and winter, fishing for the Havana market, taking home with them annually, as a result of their sales, about twenty-five thousand dollars. They carried the *live* fish only to market, the Spaniards carried only *salted* fish and were located in a different quarter, consequently the interests of the two bodies of men did not come in collision at all.

Mr. Whitehead's Journal reads as follows:

"November 22nd 1831. Left Key West in the Revenue Cutter Marion on a cruize, intending to visit the Spanish fisheries on the western shore of the Peninsula, for the purpose of reporting to the Government the condition of the people residing there, and the propriety of allowing them to continue their business. \* \* \* 24th. The lookout at the mast-head discovered the land and the entrance to the harbor about 10 A.M., but the wind was light, and what little there was being ahead, we were obliged to drop our anchor for the night.

"25th. Until 12 o'clock the Lieutenants were busily engaged in sounding the bar, and having ascertained the deepest water we entered

the harbor and anchored a mile or two within. In the afternoon the Capt. and myself took a boat and pulled for one of the fisheries about seven miles distant. On landing we were received with a grand chorus from five dogs, which we interpreted as a welcome, for they immediately left us to enjoy the comforts of the place by ourselves. Not a living soul was to be seen (save the dogs—and it is doubted that they had souls) but the absence of canoes and nets accounted also for the absence of inhabitants. Their dwellings were all of palmetto and most of them of tolerable size—about fifteen feet square. They reminded me of Ichobod Crane's Schoolhouse, to enter which every facility was afforded, but which it was impossible to get out of. Such being the nature of the fastnings of their doors I took the liberty of "prying" into one of them. A few stakes driven into the ground with cross pieces for their bars—a small loft for corn—a hanging shelf with one or two pieces of crockery, and two or three stools, composed the furniture, and no house that I saw, at any of the other of the Fisheries, contained more, while many of them had less.

"Perambulating about the houses we came to one where there was a figure of *an angel* which might have been only the figure head of some vessel—but knowing the religion of the people and giving them the credit of attending to some of the rites it enjoins, we could no less than suppose it was here they performed their orisons. We learned afterward that there were nearly thirty men, half Spaniards and half Indian, who congregated here; how many women we did not ascertain. Leaving *our cards* at the door of the chief fisherman we returned to the vessel.

"While riding at anchor in the bay, which is a very extensive one, extending far into the land towards the east, while an extensive sound, filled with many islands connects it with *Carlos Harbor* towards the south, no signs of civilization near, I could not but be struck with the aspect of repose worn by every thing, as if nature's domain had never before been invaded in that quarter. \* \* \* At five the next morning I started in one of the boats with the Second Lieutenant and four men on a cruise to the southward. We arrived at the first Fishery in time to procure breakfast. This was the establishment of *Caldez*, the patriarch of the whole, consisting of fifteen dwellings and one or two storehouses, with a population of somewhat more than twenty men. The number of

females or squaws (and they were all of the Indian race at all the settlements) we could not learn, but we supposed there were some six or eight, and many children of both sexes in "the dress that Nature gave them" were running about, the color of their skins betraying the mixed blood of the Spaniard and the Indian.

"To the old man *Caldez*—who was about seventy years of age and a *resident* forty-seven years upon the island—I was well known, and every arrangement that their circumstances would admit of, was made to add to our comfort and entertainment. A bag formed of some coarse material was laid out for our table-cloth, on which was deposited a large dish of cold fish, some bread, cold potatoes and onions, which, with some coffee, made in a hurry, formed our breakfast. *Caldez* took upon himself the duties of butler and waiter, inspecting with all imaginable care the two plates and the cups and saucers placed before us, removing *with his fingers* any spot indicating a less degree of cleanliness than was presented by the rest of the article. The knife drawn from his belt, which very probably had, but a few minutes previously, been employed in slaying some noble fish, was carefully wiped against his hunting shirt before it was presented for our acceptance, but as for forks, there were none to be had. Our appetites however were keen, and we found no difficulty in making an excellent meal of the viands set before us. \* \* \* We did not reach the next fishery, at least thirty-five miles from where we left our vessel, until about sun-down. A hot sun, rendered doubly oppressive from the want of wind, made our voyage any thing but agreeable, and I was not sorry, therefore, when we placed our feet on solid ground again with a prospect before us of a comfortable supper. We here found the forks that had been missing at *Caldez's* but alas! the knives were now gone. Necessity, however, is the mother of invention and we soon found means to dispose of our provender without them.

"We here found about a dozen buildings with a population of about fifty: men women and children. The head fisherman received us very hospitably and gave up his own cot for the night to accommodate us. We sat however quite late in the porch of his house, he giving me, through my companion who spoke Spanish, some account of their business, but when we did retire the humble character of our quarters did not prevent our enjoying a refreshing sleep, and we arose the next

morning before daylight, much invigorated and recovered from the effects of our scorching day before. We continued on our way after partaking of our coffee which was in readiness for us. \* \* \*

No. 12

CHARLOTTE HARBOR FORTY-SEVEN YEARS AGO

(Continued)

I continue the extracts from Mr. Whitehead's Journal of his visit to the harbor in 1831.

"The last fishery, to which we now directed our course, was distant about five miles, lying a mile or two up a very romantic river, whose borders presented a succession of the richest verdure. We did not find the head fisherman at home, so our stay was short, merely giving me time to make the inquiries I thought necessary as to the number of inhabitants, the number of buildings &c. We turned back and wafted by a pleasant breeze we glided through the narrow passes and among the many islands of the sound, with far greater celerity than had marked our progress the day before.

"The establishment of our friend Caldez hove in sight early in the afternoon, and on landing we found a repast prepared for us, which was a second edition of our breakfast the day before. While our boat was filling with limes, fish, clams &c. heaped upon us by our well-meaning entertainers, I wandered back into the island a short distance, and was surprised to find that quite a considerable mound I was ascending was composed entirely of oyster shells, and on my return noticed it to Caldez, who then stated that a tradition had come down to him from the former inhabitants of the island, that a number of Indians had resided on the various islands in this vicinity some hundred and fifty years ago, whose only food were the fish and wild animals they caught, the hunting of which, with an occasional war with the natives of the mainland, being their only occupation; and that it was thought these mounds of shells had been raised while they inhabited the islands, although at present, there were no beds of oysters in the immediate vicinity."

The writer would here remark *en passant* that during the first years of the settlement on Key West, there was a mound ten or twelve feet high, and of considerable circumference, composed in a great degree of shells, about half way between the Custom House and Whitehead's Point, which was opened about 1833 in the presence of the Commander of some Man-of-war here at the time, and the Collector of the Customs, but nothing was found save stones and shells, although the excavation was made to extend below the surface of the surrounding ground. In 1824-5 one mound was discovered which contained many bones, pieces of gold &c.—at least that was the story told subsequently, and which led to making the excavation above referred to.—Bones were sometimes found when digging foundations and in 1826-7 an almost entire skeleton of gigantic size was turned up.

Returning to Mr. Whitehead's Journal; after giving Caldez's account of the war of extermination between the different tribes, culminating in the fierce battle alluded to on page 5 of Mr. Maloney's Address, it proceeds:

“Seventeen canoes are reported to have been launched upon the boisterous waves of the Gulf, and only the individuals they contained, of their whole race, were saved from annihilation, as an overruling Providence wafted them across to the Cuba shore; where, old Caldez asserted, some of their descendants are yet to be seen. I had heard part of this tradition before, but never in so connected a form as related by our *old* entertainer. It certainly bears the aspect of truth.

“We reached the Cutter about sundown of the 27th, somewhat fatigued, but (as to myself) gratified with our jaunt. Wherever we landed we were hospitably received and entertained, and I have understood that it is generally the case, but if they did overrate their hospitable feelings rather more than usual towards us, I can very well account for it, from their entertaining a suspicion that my visit had some connection with the relations that were to exist in the future between them and the government. It is certainly the policy of every nation to preserve its fisheries for its own citizens, but here there was no intrusion upon the established rights of any one. No American had ever established himself near these, while some of the Spaniards employed had been residents long before the cession of the Territory to the United States, and old Caldez himself had visited the island he now inhabits, *before* the “Declaration of Independence” was promul-

gated. He and others of them would have become citizens long since had any one taken the trouble to explain to them the necessary advantages.

“On the 28th we weighed our anchor and the next morning found ourselves again at Key West, where on the 30th we sailed for Havana, some changes wished for by their merchants in the commercial regulations of that port, rendering it advisable that I should see the Intendant. I had that honor accorded to me after being there a day or two, and returned to Key West on the 7th December.”

The information obtained by Mr. Whitehead was made the basis of communication to the Secretary of the Treasury and the Delegate from Florida, Joseph M. White, which being laid before Congress, led to a withholding of the approval by that body the Act which has been referred to, imposing a tax upon these Spaniards. It was shown that in the course of three years they had paid nearly \$5000 into the Treasury for duties, besides the amount expended at Key West for salt and other necessaries—that the whole male population numbered about one hundred and twenty, half of which number probably were Indians; the number of Indian women was about thirty, and there were from fifty to one hundred children—that they had some of the Florida Indians among them, and that their settlements might draw others beyond the Indian boundaries were the only circumstances that seemed to militate against the privileges they were enjoying. To prevent any smuggling, in 1833 an Inspector of the Customs was appointed to reside at Charlotte Harbor; the first one being Dr. Henry B. Crews, who was killed in the spring of 1836, a victim, it was thought at first, to the hostile Indians, but afterward with greater probability to his own harsh treatment and improper conduct manifested towards one in his employ.

#### No. 13

#### WRECKING FIFTY YEARS AGO (JULY 7, 1877)

Judge Marvin in his admirable treatise on “Wrecks and Salvage,” published in 1858, briefly refers to the laws regulating wrecking on the Florida Coast prior to the establishment of a Court at Key West having Admiralty Jurisdiction, which did not take place until 1828 ;and notices the passage of an Act of Congress in 1825, which prohibited the carrying of any wrecked



goods found on the coast to any foreign port and requiring all such goods to be taken to some port of entry of the United States. Under the present systematic, well devised mode of transacting the varied business complications which wrecking creates, it is difficult to realize the state of things existing just after the settlement of the island. The territory was ceded by Spain to the United States in 1821, and—as will be seen in Mr. Maloney's able and interesting historical Address—Key West was made a Port of Entry in 1822. Previous thereto the Bahama wrecking vessels had uninterrupted range along the whole coast, and whatever vessels or goods came into their possession were taken to Nassau. The first steps towards regulating the business were, of course, not favorable to their further enjoyment of these privileges. In 1822 two New Providence wrecking vessels were seized, because they had on board some negroes who were slaves, their introduction into our limits being construed into a violation of the laws, then operative, respecting the slave-trade, but so long as their crews were composed of free negroes or whites, there was no law prohibiting their cruising on the coast. In July of the following year, however, July 1823, the Legislative Council of the Territory passed an Act, requiring the Salvors of any wrecked property to bring it to Key West, where, if an agreement as to compensation could not be made between them and the Captain or Supercargo of the vessel distressed, a report had to be made to a Justice of the Peace or Judge of the County who summoned a Jury of five men to decide what salvage should be paid; two of whom were to be chosen by the salvors, two by the Captain or Supercargo, and one by the Judge or Justice, who also directed the sale of the goods &c. Under the provisions of this Act vessels from the Bahamas could wreck and turtle on the coast, first reporting at Key West on their arrival and regularly clearing thence on their return. They could not, however, export turtle, although allowed to sell them at Key West.

Some idea may be formed of the crude manner in which officers were appointed and laws administered in those days from some facts that have come down to us. Early in 1824 the Rev. Charles Felch arrived from Tallahassee clothed with authority from Gov. Duval to *select* proper individuals to fill certain offices in Monroe County, he being furnished with *blank* commissions, and authorized to confer them upon the persons he might appoint and administer to them the oaths of office.

Among other appointments made was that of Griffith M. Roberts to the office of Sheriff, but as he was not a citizen, the same functionary—what he

was called does not appear—granted him a temporary certificate of naturalization, which some months thereafter Mr. Roberts was endeavoring, through the District Judge at St. Augustine, to exchange for one of a more formal character. Subsequently John Whitehead, as Judge of the County Court, was authorized to make appointments, both civil and military, blanks being sent to him “to fill up with the names of suitable persons,” but the population had increased by little in numbers, as he reported to the Governor, it would “not afford a sufficient number of capable men, and even if it could a Court could not be organized from the difficulties which would attend the getting of a Jury.” His position as Judge was a nominal one, only serviceable by enabling him to take depositions and in expediting the settlement of questions of salvages. These questions were frequently more complicated than they otherwise would have been by the semi-martial law that Commodore Porter and his officers were wont from time to time to consider in force, much to the annoyance of those engaged in mercantile operations—personal preferences leading them sometimes to interfere with the execution of certain duties except by particular persons. The Act itself (of 1823) under which the wrecking business was conducted, was of doubtful force, and in 1825 a decision was made in Charleston which called in question the legality of some of its provisions and threw so much doubt over all of them, that salvors felt reluctant to act under it and purchasers were equally averse to investing their money in goods which might be wrested from them in any port to which they might be shipped. Consequently, in October of that year Richard Fitzpatrick was sent to Tallahassee to consult with the Territorial Authorities and the Legislative Council as to the remedies to be applied. The importance of the wrecking business to the Territory at that time will be seen when it is stated that *three per cent* on all sales was collected for the territorial treasury, and that the gross amount of sales in 1825 exceed \$290,000. Whether any immediate benefit resulted from Mr. Fitzpatrick’s embassy, the writer does not remember—but that same year Congress passed the Act referred to by Mr. Marvin, prohibiting the carrying of any wrecked goods to a foreign port, and in 1828 the Superior Court with its admiralty jurisdiction laid the foundation of the present condition of things.

In one of these reminiscences, mention was made of the jovial entertainments which were among the features of social enjoyment in the early days of the settlement, and at which songs and stories were made the vehicles of wit and mirthfulness; and I am tempted to introduce to the present generation one of the songs with which Mrs. Mallory’s dining-room often re-

sounded forty-five years ago not from any special merit it possesses but simply as a relic of olden time. I copy it as it was sung by the German who composed it.

### THE FLORIDA WRECKER'S SONG

Air — "The Garden Gate."

Come all good people von and all,  
 Come listen to my song,  
 A few remarks I have to make—  
 They'll not detain you long—

About our vessels stout and good  
 As ever yet were built of wood,  
 Sailing when de breakers roar—  
 De breakers of Florida shore.

Key Tavernier's our rendesvous,  
 At anchor dere we lie,  
 Ve see de vessels in de Gulf  
 Unfearing pass us by.

De night come on, ve drink and sing  
 Vile de current sets de vessels in,—  
 Midst de rocks vere de breakers roar  
 De breakers of Florida shore.

Ven morning dawn ve run away  
 And every sail we set,  
 And if de vind it should prove light,  
 Vy den de sails ve vet;

To gain her first each eager strives,  
 To save de goods and peoples lives—  
 Midst de rocks vere de breakers roar  
 Ve wreckers of Florida shore.

*T E Q U E S T A*

Alongside got, ve find she's bilged,  
Ve know vell vat to do,  
Save all de cargo dat ve can,  
De sails and rigging too.

Den to Key West ve quickly go  
And soon our salvage ve do know,  
Dere every ding is fairly sold  
And de money down to us is told.

Den von veeks cruise on shore ve take  
Before ve sail again,  
And drink success to sailor lads  
Who're ploughing on de main.

Den if you're passing by dis vay,  
And on de reef should chance to stray,  
Ve'll velcome you once more on shore  
Midst de rocks vere de breakers roar.