

# Indian Key

By Michael G. Schene\*

## JACOB HOUSMAN

Sometime in the early 1820's a young captain from Staten Island arrived off the Florida keys in a small schooner recently purloined from his father.<sup>1</sup> As the story goes, "the young *Captain* . . . was too much of a sailor to keep to fresh water, and one day took it into his head to make a 'West Indie' trip without asking his father's permission. . . ." The inexperienced captain struck the Florida reef, damaging "... his little craft so much that he was obliged to put into Key West for repairs, during which time he got such an insight into the 'wrecking' business that he concluded to become a wrecker himself."<sup>2</sup>

The new salvor readily grasped that the curious web of relationships among the Key West merchants permitted them to reap most of the profits derived from the salvage business. A former Key Wester charged that the same merchant often functioned in a "quadruple capacity" supposedly representing all interests. This conflict of interests was, of course, impossible to reconcile, and the writer concluded that most merchants pursued their own interests "with most assiduity."<sup>3</sup> Additional income was derived from the drayage, wharfage, and storage fees levied on the cargo once it was landed. The sale of the cargo again presented this small clique with an opportunity to realize a profit. The Key West correspondent for a popular journal (mentioned above)

---

\*Mr. Schene is employed by the Florida Division of Archives, History and Records Management as a research historian. He is indebted to the Division of Archives, History and Records Management; the Division of Recreation and Parks; and the Florida Bicentennial Commission, for the support which he received in compiling the research material for this article.

claimed that he had often witnessed valuable cargoes being auctioned off for a fraction of their actual value. This situation resulted, he concluded, from an absence of competition as well as collusive agreements among the merchants.<sup>4</sup>

Although Captain Housman may have tried to invade this domain, and had been repulsed, it is more likely that he shrewdly grasped the significance of an uncontested monopoly. By eliminating any competition, and as his critics charged, any legal restraints, he could maximize the profits derived from wrecking. An isolated island, strategically located in the keys—it was almost midway between Key Biscayne and Key West, would satisfy his needs. The island had certain other advantages. Situated opposite Alligator Reef, it was also only about thirty-five miles from Carysfort Reef, considered by most mariners to be the most dangerous portion of the reef.<sup>5</sup> The harbor was said to be the equal of any to be found in the keys.<sup>6</sup> Sparsely settled and still public land—with fresh water available at Upper Matecumbe Key—the venturesome captain must have considered the minuscule key an ideal place for his future empire.<sup>7</sup>

When Housman first visited the key, he must have met the island's few inhabitants, which included Joseph Prince and Silas Fletcher—the first white settlers that we can identify. The latter settled on Indian Key in April, 1824, selling goods for the merchant firm of Snyder and Appeleby.<sup>8</sup> Prince was then hired and assisted in the construction of a store and a dwelling. Avis, Fletcher's wife, and their two children (William H. and Abigail) were soon settled in this second structure.<sup>9</sup>

A partnership was formed and their employer's stock was bought in January, 1825. The venture succeeded, although in May, Prince decided to leave and sold his half of the enterprise to Fletcher.<sup>10</sup> The latter then purchased the store from Snyder and Appeleby. In November, 1828, he sold all of his property on the island to Thomas Gibson for \$2,500, and departed the following spring.<sup>11</sup> His former partner returned in January, 1826, opening a competing store.<sup>12</sup> Joining these pioneers were a number of wreckers and turtlers, who had pushed the population over fifty by 1829.<sup>13</sup>

Housman probably settled on Indian Key around 1830, and the following year began a concerted effort to acquire title to the island as well as most of the property on it.<sup>14</sup> Thomas Gibson's real estate was purchased in 1831 for \$5,000. This property included a store and a two-story building, equipped with a billiard table and nine pin alley.<sup>15</sup> The latter was well furnished and used as the island hotel.<sup>16</sup>

The young capitalist prospered as a merchant. His store rapidly acquired a monopoly on the sale of dry goods and other merchandise both on the island and in the immediate vicinity. It was claimed that yearly sales had reached thirty thousand dollars before the end of the thirties.<sup>17</sup> Dr. Benjamin Stobel, a Key West physician, maintained that Housman used the store to gain an “ascendency” over his customers “... which he turn(ed) to some account.” He also charged that these people acted as Housman’s “... agents, or spies, who give him the earliest intelligence of wrecks...” In addition to having their outstanding balance at the store reduced, these spies were to receive a share of the salvage award. Strobel implied that it was through inflated prices, advantageous mistakes in bookkeeping, and usurious interest rates that Housman’s store acquired a lien on the property of these people.<sup>18</sup>

The store also assisted Jacob in acquiring the outstanding property on the island. James Egan, for instance, first appears on the key in the fall of 1830, as the owner of a house situated on Front Street. The following year Egan had to sell the building in order to satisfy a \$324.20 debt that he had incurred at the store.<sup>19</sup> Using lumber and shingles which he obtained from Thomas Gibson and perhaps from Housman, Egan erected another structure which he opened in 1832 as a boardinghouse.<sup>20</sup> His advertisement, which regularly appeared in the Key West newspaper, promised to “... render satisfaction to those who may favor him with their company.” To reassure those traveling on a limited budget and concerned with costs, he added that his terms were moderate.<sup>21</sup> The venture was seemingly not profitable, possibly because of some type of pressure exerted by Housman. Egan finally sold the property to Housman for \$350 in 1835.<sup>22</sup>

Samuel Spencer then opened the Tropical Hotel, which was billed as a resort for invalids. Tourists apparently disagreed and stopped at other spots along the coast. Spencer was finally forced to sell his interest in the hotel to Pardon C. Greene and Fielding A. Browne in 1838 — although he apparently continued to manage the hotel until its destruction in 1840.<sup>23</sup>

With his spiraling profits, Housman continued to acquire property as it became available. In February, 1835, Reason Dukes, a Key West merchant, mortgaged an indefinite piece of property that the indenture described as “... one half of the house, kitchen, and advantages...” If Dukes repaid the mortgage, \$625, plus interest within five years his title to the property would be restored. Dukes may have decided to default on the mortgage and allow Housman to retain these premises, for in May,

1835, he sold to Jacob for \$600 "... one half of the house, kitchen, and advantages ... belonging ... to one half of the Lot #30 ... formerly occupied by Dr. H.L. Waterhouse ..."<sup>24</sup> Late in 1835, Jacob moved to extinguish Joseph Prince's preemption claim by purchasing his "... right, title, and interest to ... Indian Key, including all ... his buildings" at the inflated figure of \$5,000.<sup>25</sup> Other sales were consummated, and within a few years he owned nearly all the property on the island.<sup>26</sup>

Along with his property transactions, Housman began the construction of those facilities that would ensure that wreckers would rendezvous at Indian Key. In 1832, the island had one wharf and probably some building that was used for the storage of wrecked property.<sup>27</sup> He expanded these facilities, financing the construction of two warehouses and two wharves.<sup>28</sup>

To provide the fresh water for everyone connected with the key, Housman had several cisterns fashioned out of the island coral.<sup>29</sup> When area craftsmen proved unequal to the task, a New York marble cutter, James Dutcher, was imported. The latter built one cistern, charging his employer \$4,000.<sup>30</sup> Skilled craftsmen were hired and kept busy repairing disabled vessels and attending to the routine work of the village.<sup>31</sup>

During this time, Housman began the construction of what one visitor called a "large and elegant mansion." The mansion was soon graced by the feminine charms of a "beautiful bride" whom Housman returned with from one of his frequent trips to Charleston.<sup>32</sup> Whether it was his wife's (Elizabeth) interest or part of his master plan to create an island paradise, he imported a "quantity of earth" which he used in fashioning a "fine garden."<sup>33</sup> Streets were laid off and the small key was divided into lots of varying size. The island was a "miniature Eden," Judson said, and Housman, "monarch of all he surveyed."<sup>34</sup> His investment had been sizable and may have been, as alleged, \$144,630.<sup>35</sup>

It is virtually impossible to determine the number of people who lived on the island during the thirties. A census of Indian Key conducted in 1838 showed that there were ninety-eight whites, twenty-nine slaves, and fourteen free blacks.<sup>36</sup> William A. Whitehead, a Key West merchant, claimed that a later census taken by Charles Howe, and excluding transient seamen as well as naval personnel showed only forty-seven inhabitants on the island in December, 1838.<sup>37</sup> Whitehead also claimed that he had received a statement from an unknown individual stating that the population of Indian Key included only four families, twenty-one whites and twenty-six blacks.<sup>38</sup>

According to the records of Charles Howe, Indian Key must have been a busy port during the thirties.<sup>39</sup> In 1834, while acting as the deputy collector of customs, he noted that there were 637 arrivals and 623 departures.<sup>40</sup> Whitehead of Key West claimed that this figure was highly inflated and included "... every wrecking vessel or fishing boat, no matter whence coming or whither going, that may chance to make use of the anchorage of Indian Key for a night."<sup>41</sup>

Howe also maintained that during the last nine months of 1834 and the first three months of 1835, seventeen vessels had been wrecked within forty miles of Indian Key. Ten of the vessels had been disabled within fifteen miles of the island.<sup>42</sup> Four wrecking vessels sailed from Indian Key and tried to control all salvage operations in this area of the reef.<sup>43</sup> Housman probably owned them, which further increased his profits.<sup>44</sup>

Housman was, of course, a wrecker himself, as well as employing seamen to man his wrecking vessels, and the continuation of his "empire" probably depended heavily on the profits derived from this pursuit. He had begun patrolling the reef sometime in the early 1820's; his presence, as well as his notoriety, was established in the fall of 1825, through his handling of the French brig *Revenge*. The vessel, bound from Campeche to France with a load of cochineal and logwood, went on the reef about three miles from Caesar's Creek, early in September. After the *Revenge* had bilged and been abandoned by her crew, Housman boarded her and on September 7, transferred to his schooner, *William Henry*, "... eight Ceroons of Cochineal, two boxes of Sugar, and a quantity of Logwood unknown, but supposed to be twelve tons, and a parcel of sails and rigging."<sup>45</sup>

It is not clear whether Housman intended to dispense with legal procedures or clashed with the authorities in Key West over the adjudication of the salvage. Fielding A. Browne, of Key West, however, charged that the former was Housman's aim. Browne, specifically, accused Housman of robbing the *Revenge*, adding that he had "... defied both the civil and military authorities of this place." Browne therefore asked that Captain Brown of the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Florida* pursue Housman to Charleston, where it was said that Housman intended to dispose of his cargo, and recover the French property.<sup>46</sup>

Whatever Housman's intentions might have been, he brought the wrecked property into St. Augustine on September 27. Apparently acting without the authorization of the master or the owner, he declined to use

the admiralty court, and instead, settled his claim through arbitration. The jury awarded him ninety-five percent, which satisfied no one but Housman, and the French consul took the case into the Superior Court, where Judge Joseph L. Smith reduced the award about thirty percent.<sup>47</sup>

The matter was far from settled, however, and Housman responded to Browne's allegations with his own charge that it was the dishonesty of the Key West merchants that had resulted in his "... giving preference to a decision at St. Augustine over one at Key West."<sup>48</sup> It is more than likely that Housman abandoned at this time any plans that he may have had to settle in Key West. After this altercation, his relations with the Key Westers continued to deteriorate, and were certainly partially responsible for his subsequent attempts to free Indian Key from any dependence on Key West.

In 1828, Housman was again the focus of attention as the result of a collusive agreement with the master of the French brig *Vigilant*. Carrying \$32,000 in specie in addition to her regular cargo, the *Vigilant* grounded on the shoals near Key Vacas. With the next high tide the vessel was able to partially free herself, but it was only after the master had accepted the services of two wreckers that she was able to reach deep water and a safe anchorage at Key Vacas. While the *Vigilant* was in the harbor at Key Vacas, Housman arrived in the wrecking sloop *Sarah Isabella* and agreed to pilot her to Key West for seventy-five percent of the vessel, cargo, and specie, "... with an understanding that Housman would return part of the money to the Captain, for himself." Housman subsequently received his exorbitant commission and sailed with the *Vigilant's* captain to Charleston.<sup>49</sup>

In November, 1831, Housman was involved in an imbroglio concerning the arbitration of the brig *Halcyon*. Housman and John R. Western, the other salvor, alleged that the *Halcyon* struck a dangerous part of the reef, and would have bilged had it not been for the exertions of the two crews. Through their efforts they were able to transfer enough cargo to enable the vessel to float off the reef, and somewhat disabled, she was brought into Key West. The two salvors, claiming that they had the master's consent, submitted their claim to two disinterested persons, who awarded them fifty-six and one-fourth of the net value of the brig. Oliver O'Hara representing the *Halcyon's* owners, charged that the vessel's distress had been misrepresented, and while he admitted that she had struck a reef, he asserted that the brig's crew could have freed her without any assistance. He also claimed that the captain of the *Halcyon*

had never agreed to submit the matter to arbitration. To recover his client's property, O'Hara sued the salvors in the Superior Court at Key West; the suit was finally heard by Judge Webb in May, 1832. Webb felt that both sides had misrepresented the facts, although he allowed Housman and Western twenty-five percent on the cargo and vessel.<sup>50</sup>

Partisan feeling exacerbated by Housman's manifest dislike and even disdain for those Key Westers who monopolized the wrecking business on that island diminished his chances of quickly, and without controversy, adjudicating any salvage that he brought into that port. Key Westers were vocal in their opposition and denunciation of Housman. And for the most part, they were responsible for forming contemporary opinion about Housman; an image, however distorted, that has filtered down to us. There is one case, however, for which ample documentation exists, in which Housman was guilty of improper as well as illegal conduct.

On the night of March 14, 1833, the schooner *North Carolina*, bound from Apalachicola to Charleston, and laden with 366 bales of cotton, went ashore at low tide on Pickles Reef, about ninety-five miles from Key West. The following day, the *Hyder Alley*, Joshua B. Smith, master, arrived on the scene and offered assistance which was promptly accepted by Captain George McIntyre, the master of the *North Carolina*. Smith set up a consortship involving Housman and Austin Packer, master of the wrecking sloop *Brilliant*, although neither of these individuals participated in the salvage operation. The *Hyder Alley* then transferred 115 bales of cotton from the *North Carolina*, which lightened the schooner sufficiently, so that she was able to float off the reef and accompany the *Hyder Alley* into Indian Key.

Housman, without informing Captain McIntyre of his own interest in the cargo, persuaded McIntyre to appoint him as his business agent and to submit the salvage award to arbitration at Indian Key, instead of going to Key West. Lemuel Otis and Charles M. Johnson, both residents of Indian Key, were chosen as arbitrators. They appraised the schooner and the cargo at \$8,940 and awarded thirty-five percent of this figure to the salvors. Intriguingly, the cotton had originally sold in Apalachicola at \$36 a bale, although, apparently without damage, it had, according to the arbitrators, a value of only \$20 a bale.

On May 18, Oliver O'Hara, representing the owners, filed suit in the Superior Court at Key West alleging fraud and other misconduct on the part of the salvors. Judge Webb agreed and decreed restitution of the

seventy-two bales still in Housman's possession. In 1838 the Territorial Court of Appeals upheld Judge Webb's decision, whereupon Housman took his case to the United States Supreme Court. The Court, which rendered its decision in 1841, stated that the transactions at Indian Key had been negotiated in bad faith, and the justices unanimously decreed "... that the salvors, by their conduct, have forfeited all claim to compensation, even for the service actually rendered."<sup>51</sup>

Housman's fortunes continued to tumble, and in May, 1836, he was found guilty of embezzling goods taken from the *Ajax*, a large merchantman that had struck on Carysfort Reef, on November 14, 1836. When it became apparent that the vessel could not be floated off the reef, several wreckers, including Housman in the *Sarah Isabella*, began removing the *Ajax's* cargo, an operation that took several days during which the weather was extremely inclement. Captain Heim, master of the *Ajax*, subsequently charged that Housman had stolen the goods taken off his vessel by the *Sarah Isabella*. Judge Webb concurred with Heim and Housman forfeited his share of the salvage.<sup>52</sup> Further illegal conduct resulted in his license being revoked by Webb in 1838.<sup>53</sup>

Housman struggled throughout the thirties to make Indian Key independent of any control from Key West. The creation of Dade County in 1836 was an important step toward eventual total autonomy. His victory was enhanced when Indian Key was designated as the temporary county seat.<sup>54</sup>

The principal settlements in the new county were at Indian Key, Cape Florida, and Key Vacas. To alleviate the discontent of the latter two the location for a permanent county seat was left undecided. Until that decision had been reached, the judge of the Superior Court was to hold one term each at Cape Florida and Indian Key.<sup>55</sup>

To enhance Indian Key's claim to the county seat, Housman constructed a courthouse using his own money.<sup>56</sup> It was, however, the outbreak of the Second Seminole War in 1836, that effectively eliminated any threat to Indian Key's position in the county. Intimidated by the presence of the hostile Indians and frightened by their frequent forays, like the attack on the Cape Florida lighthouse, most residents either moved away or settled temporarily on Indian Key, which was armed and fortified.

Captain Housman's control over affairs in the county was strengthened by the fact that most of the important county officers were also his employees. Thomas Jefferson Smith, his friend and attorney, was



the first county judge.<sup>57</sup> George W. Somarindyck, Housman's chief clerk for several years, was the first clerk of the county court.<sup>58</sup> In 1840, Walter C. Maloney, also a clerk to Housman, succeeded Somarindyck in this position as well as serving as a justice of the peace, and an auctioneer.<sup>59</sup> Lemuel Otis, who was occasionally employed by Housman as an arbitrator, was a justice of the peace from 1836 to 1842 and was elected sheriff in 1840.<sup>60</sup> And even James Dutcher, the New York marble cutter, was a justice of the peace while he was on the island.<sup>61</sup> Other offices were held by residents of the island. William H. Fletcher (the son of Silas Fletcher) and William Whitehead, for instance, were appointed auctioneers in 1836, while Charles Howe served as a notary public.<sup>62</sup> In 1840, William Whitehead, while continuing in his office as an auctioneer, was appointed a justice of the peace, and at the same time, Temple Pent, who intermittently resided on the island, was a justice of the peace.<sup>63</sup>

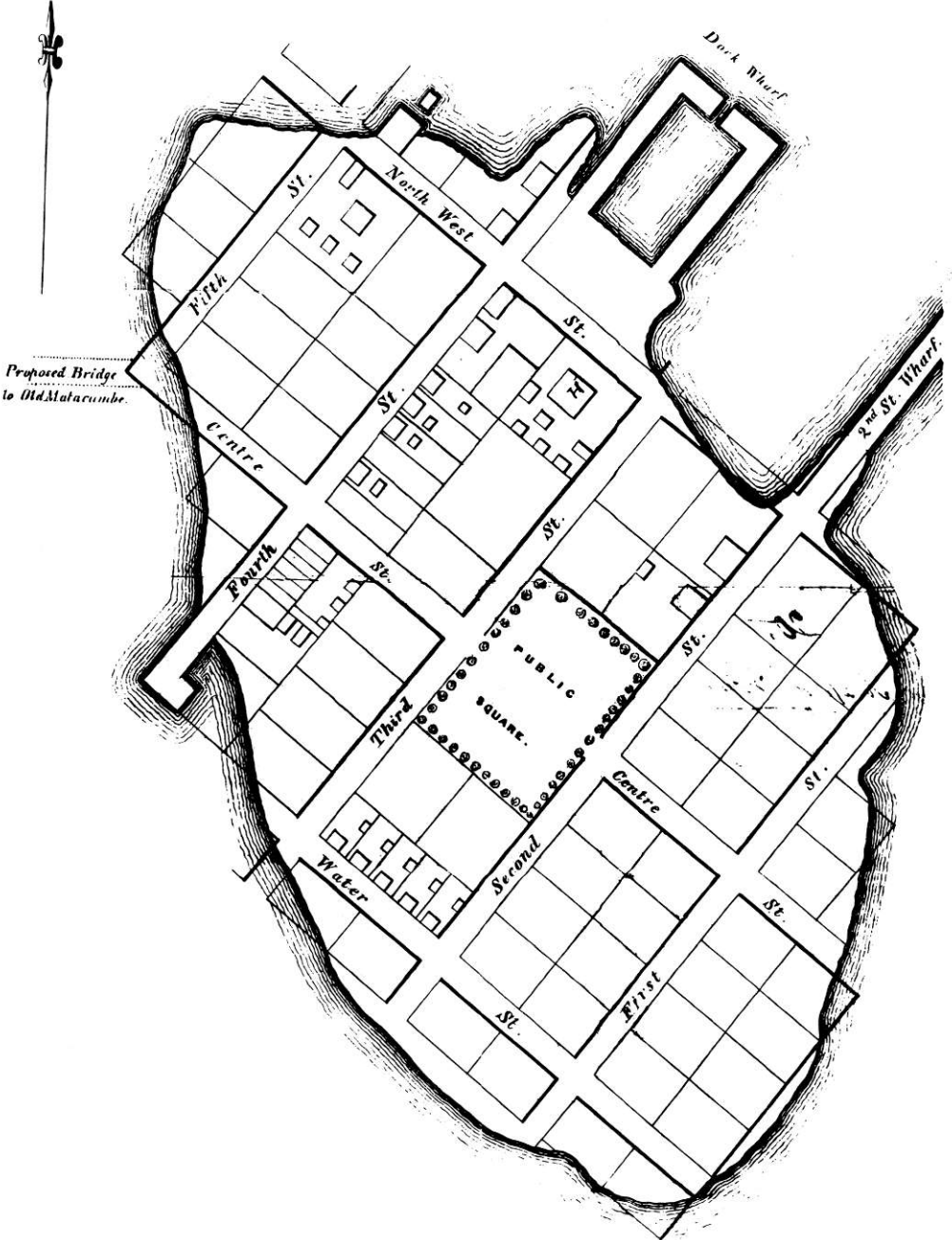
In 1838 and 1839, through his friend Thomas Jefferson Smith, Housman urged Congress to make Indian Key a port of entry.<sup>64</sup> His petitions stressed the difficulty as well as the danger of transporting wrecked property to Key West; while it alleged that a lack of proper facilities and an absence of competition at Key West resulted in further loss to the owners of wrecked property; and since Indian Key possessed the necessary facilities, all concerned with the wrecking business on the Florida reef would benefit by making it a port of entry.<sup>65</sup> The Key West spokesman, William A. Whitehead, claimed that the Smith petition contained incorrect figures, distorted facts, and slanderous statements, all of which had been motivated by factious considerations.<sup>66</sup> In view of the conflicting statements, Congress decided to drop the matter.

In 1840, Housman again addressed himself to the United States Congress, asking that they

authorize him to form a settlement on the south coast of Florida, and granting a portion of land to said settlers with the rights to the people of said settlement of *self-government* within the circle of three miles radius from the center thereof, with an exemption from *all control of all officers* and *all laws* of the revenue, naval, and military departments of the Government of the United States.

Congress, much to Housman's chagrin, routinely dismissed his grandiose petition.<sup>67</sup>

Housman's empire had been tottering for several years. His political gambits, with one exception, had all been unsuccessful, while his finan-



Map of Indian Key, 1840.

cial affairs were becoming increasingly desperate. The Indian War, beginning in 1836, deprived him of his trade with the Indians and many of the reef settlers. He must have keenly missed, too, the revenue from wrecking cut off when his license was revoked in 1838. His claim against the government for \$14,418 for the maintenance of a militia company remained unpaid, although he had pressed it since 1836.<sup>68</sup> To ward off total disaster he mortgaged his interest in Indian Key to Smith Mowry, Jr. and Joseph Lawton, both of Charleston, for \$14,283, in March, 1840. The mortgage was to be repaid with ten percent interest and this may have resulted in the \$16,000 that was later claimed to have been the correct figure. In 1843, Lawton and Mowry obtained the property at a sheriff's sale for \$350. They subsequently sold it to Stephen R. Mallory for the same amount.<sup>69</sup>

### HENRY PERRINE

On Christmas day, 1838, Henry Perrine, the noted horticulturist and his family arrived at Indian Key. Dr. Perrine, contrary to the wishes of his friends in the north, who feared for his safety among the hostile Indians, was not to be detained and was irresistibly eager to continue an avocation that had superseded his professional work as a medical doctor. The island, he hoped, would be but a temporary headquarters, and as soon as the Indian War was terminated he expected to transfer his nursery to the mainland where he could continue the cultivation of tropical agricultural plants in earnest. Had he been prescient, he would have remained on the brig *Lucina* and returned with it to his friends and medical practice in the north, thus escaping the cruel death that awaited him two years later.

A descendant of Daniel Perrin, a prominent Huguenot refugee, who arrived in New Jersey in 1665,<sup>70</sup> Henry was born at Cranbury, New Jersey, in 1797. He taught school while still in his teens in Rockhill, New York, and sometime during this period completed his medical education. In September, 1819, he set out his shingle in Ripley, Illinois, where he practiced until his health forced him to move further south. In 1827 his deteriorating health again compelled him to seek a balmy climate, and in 1827, he accepted an appointment as United States Consul at Campeche, Mexico.<sup>71</sup>

Coincident with Perrine's appointment in Mexico, the Federal Government promulgated its second circular urging government officials, especially port collectors, officers of naval and merchant vessels, and consuls, to lend their assistance in securing foreign plants of known or

probably commercial value. Perrine was enthusiastically receptive to the idea, and spent the next nine years bombarding the government with detailed reports on officinal and other economic plants, especially the fiber-producing agaves. His efforts included his repeated and often futile exertions to ship live plants or seeds out of Mexico.<sup>72</sup>

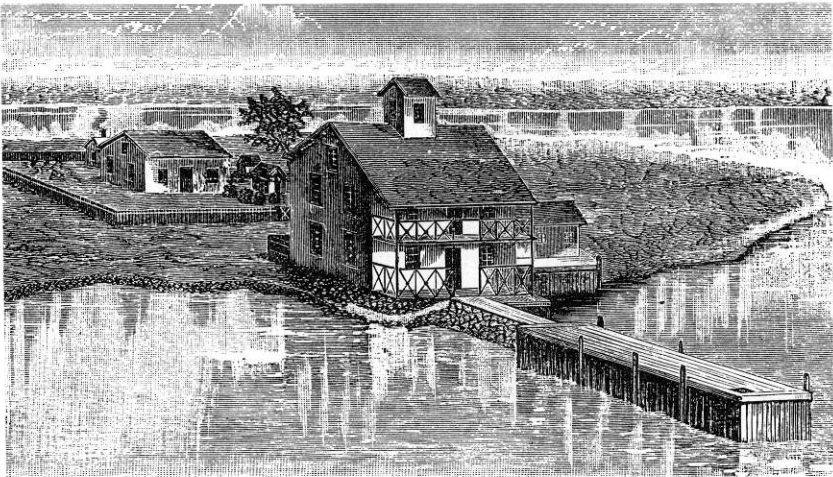
Among those who received his seeds and cuttings were Charles Howe of Indian Key and John Dubose at Key West, and Perrine's interest in the peninsula may have stemmed from his association with these individuals.<sup>73</sup> His interest in Florida became manifest in 1832, when he petitioned the Legislative Council for a charter "incorporating himself and his associates into a company for the cultivation of tropical exotics ... on the southern part of the Peninsula."<sup>74</sup> A bill to achieve this purpose was introduced into the legislature in 1832, but it languished until 1838, when the Territory incorporated the Tropical Plant Company with Henry Perrine, Charles Howe, and James Webb as the chief stockholders.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, the national Congress moved to enact legislation which would provide Perrine with the necessary land to implement his project. On July 7, 1838, after several years of debate, Congress granted 23,040 acres—a township—to Perrine and his associates "to be located in one body six miles square below twenty-six degrees north latitude." The grant was conditional in that the land had to be occupied within two years, and each section had to be occupied by a settler cultivating useful tropical plants.<sup>76</sup>

It was the agaves, especially the *Agave sisalana*, that Perrine wanted to cultivate on his township. This was a fibrous plant that had many uses in Latin America, and Perrine hoped that the agave could be readily substituted for hemp, and he had even developed a process to achieve this transformation, "which he expected to revolutionize the agriculture of the United States and of the world."<sup>77</sup> Hemp, of course, could be readily converted into rope, bagging, yarn, and cordage, all of which were essential to the cotton economy. It was also a potential cash crop, if the Navy could be induced to accept it in lieu of Russian hemp. The agaves, though, were not the only tropical plants that were of interest to Perrine. The demand for vegetable dyes caused him to study certain dye producing plants, such as the logwood, the cochineal cactus, the common indigo of Tabasco, and several others. The inventory of the plants that he intended to cultivate in Florida included tea, coffee, cacao, cassava, bananas, mangoes, and the mamey apple. Spices, medicinal, and other plants were also to be grown on his land.<sup>78</sup>

Perrine had originally intended to immediately begin his work, but the Indian depredations on the mainland forced him to alter his plans, and he settled, for what he hoped would be a brief period, on Indian Key. He had previously sent some plants to Charles Howe, and when he arrived in December, he found they were flourishing. Perrine did not intend to allow the “savages” to completely stifle his plans, and after inspecting the neighboring islands, he decided to locate the preparatory nursery on the adjacent island of Lower Matecumbe Key.<sup>79</sup> His son, Henry E., a young boy at this time, stated that the nursery was located near the sinkhole on this island. It was enervating work, according to the young Perrine, and he was most happy when illness forced him to abandon his share of the labor.<sup>80</sup> After the nursery had been completed, the young Perrine, accompanied by his two sisters, would join Dr. Perrine on his daily inspection of the plants.<sup>81</sup> Outside of occasional interruptions to render necessary medical care, Dr. Perrine continued to care for his plants until his untimely death in August, 1840.

Henry E., although a young boy while he lived on the island, later recounted in vivid detail his first impression.

We saw on the distant horizon the top of palm which appeared at first as though floating in the air, there seeming to be a space between the sea and the feathery fronds of the palms. . . . Soon the tops of houses could be seen, and then the whole island of Indian Key in all its beauty greeted our eager



Dr. Perrine's house and the wharf.

eyes. ... A large warehouse three stories in height, and crowned with a lofty cupola, was the most prominent object. A short distance beyond, stood the two-story mansion of Captain Houseman, the proprietor of nearly all the island and of the various cottages, about forty buildings in all, none of them of pretentious architecture, but nearly all having either the graceful palm trees, or others of a tropical or semi-tropical nature near their doors. Three large wharves stretched out from the north-eastern side of the island; beyond these was a small neck of land, upon which stood a carpenter's shop and a blacksmith shop. About a hundred feet beyond, stood a two-and-a-half story house with a cupola upon it. ... Right opposite this house, which was to be our home, stood the low one-story house and negro dwellings. ... On the southwestern side of the island, another wharf stretched out of deep water. The side of the island towards the gulf consisted of jagged coral rock, while on the opposite side was a sandy beach.<sup>82</sup>

### MASSACRE AT INDIAN KEY

The outbreak of the Second Seminole War late in December, 1835, was an unwelcome development for all the residents of the keys, and forced most of them to move away or, for those who lived in what would soon be Dade County, temporarily settle on Indian Key.<sup>83</sup> While the mass exodus from the islands and the inflation of Indian Key's population magnified Housman's political power it did not resurrect his faltering financial affairs. Rather, whatever additional business Housman was able to transact with the new immigrants was more than offset by the elimination of his trade with the Indians as well as the disappearance of his extensive transactions with the residents of the northern keys. He was also burdened with the responsibility, which included an economic liability, of providing for the defense of the island, as he suspected that the Indians would consider his well-stocked store a prime target.

The island was rapidly transformed into an armed camp. Dirt embankments were hastily constructed at selected points around the island, and a half dozen six- and twelve-pound cannons were mounted at strategic locations.<sup>84</sup> Housman also required that all able-bodied men, both white and slave, pledge their willingness to defend the island. Acting on his own, he organized about forty of them into Company B, 10th Florida Militia. He provided them with arms and ammunition and advanced them pay and subsistence at the regular army rate. As expected, he was elected the commanding captain and served in

this capacity until the company was disbanded some eighteen months later.<sup>85</sup>

Housman and the inhabitants also sought to attract a contingent of United States military forces to the island. Captain Rudolph of the revenue cutter *Dexter* intermittently used Indian Key as his home base during 1836 and 1837.<sup>86</sup> While the inhabitants were grateful for this protection their real interest was in seeing that a substantial force was permanently attached to the island. In June, 1837, they petitioned the Secretary of the Treasury to provide the necessary forces, stating that

the peculiar Situation of Indian Key renders it liable to incursions from these hostile savages more than any other location on the coast; the temptation too is considerable inasmuch as a large store is kept on the key which is at all times filled with provisions and munitions of war for the use of the inhabitants and wreckers engaged on the coast, and these facts are well known to the Indians, they having previous to the breaking out of hostilities been in the habit of trading at this store.

Military forces would also relieve them of the economic burden of defending themselves which they claimed had already cost them upwards of \$9000.<sup>87</sup>

In March of the following year the government responded to the petition by permanently stationing the *Dexter* at Indian Key. After the withdrawal of the *Dexter* a few months later, Lieutenant John T. McLaughlin of the U.S. Schooner *Wave* was attached to the island. Additionally, elements of the Florida Squadron first under the command of Commander Isaac Mayo and then Lt. McLaughlin, rendezvoused at Indian Key, and served as an added deterrent to an Indian attack. In the spring of 1840, however, Lt. McLaughlin transferred his command to the nearby island of Tea Table Key.<sup>88</sup> This information was quickly relayed to the Indians who obviously began to make plans for a concerted attack on the island.

Sometime in the early morning of August 7, 1840, James Glass, a carpenter in Housman's employ, was apparently unable to sleep and was meandering around the island in search of some ducks, when he suddenly discovered a band of Indians. He immediately awakened his neighbor, George F. Beiglet, and together they started for Captain Housman's dwelling to alert him and the rest of the inhabitants. While they were on their way, the Indians discovered them and immediately commenced firing. In the confusion Glass and Beiglet escaped.

The firing, of course, aroused the entire island, and they all scattered pell-mell across the key. Some scurried out of their dwellings and made a desperate charge for the nearest water, others hid themselves in cisterns, under wharves, and in warehouses. Lemuel Otis, who was sleeping in the upstairs of Housman's store, was wounded but managed to reach the south beach and float off in one of the canoes. James Glass secreted himself under the 2nd Street wharf while his companion, George Beiglet, hid in the cistern under the large warehouse. Charles Howe and his family were able to safely reach the water and sail away in one of his boats.

Others were not as fortunate. Captain John Mott, his wife and their two children, and his mother-in-law were all brutally slain by the Indians. James Sturdy, a young black boy, was scalded to death when the building over the cistern in which he was hiding burned. The most famous victim of the massacre, however, was Dr. Henry Perrine. When he had safely hidden his family in the turtle crawl under their house, he tried to reason with the Indians, but when this failed he sought to barricade himself in one of the rooms. "One wild shriek, a rifle shot," apprised his saddened family of his death.

Housman's mansion was one of the first points stormed by the Indians, and he and his wife barely had enough time to jump out of their bedroom window before the Indians burst into the dwelling. The two stealthily made their way to the south end of the island where Housman secured a boat from the "Boat Pond," and without detection, they made their way to Tea Table Key.<sup>89</sup>

On arriving, Housman discovered to his chagrin that the effective garrison had been reduced to five men, the rest were either aboard the *Wave* which had departed several days earlier or in the hospital located on Tea Table Key. The commanding officer, Midshipman Francis K. Murray, finally succeeded in organizing a small force to repel the Indians. And around seven o'clock that morning this contingent departed for the island in two barges, each of which was armed with a four-pound swivel gun. As they approached the island they fell under a heavy fire from the shore, the Indians using effectively one of the six-pounders that had originally been mounted for the defense of the island. The barges returned the fire and in the process the four-pounders recoiled overboard. Lacking adequate fire power, Murray was forced to abandon the attack and return to Tea Table Key.<sup>90</sup> The Indians gleefully returned to their pillaging and looting, and before they left the island that afternoon,



they set fire to the buildings and wharves. They departed in thirty-four boats, "heavily loaded with plunder," and Lt. McLaughlin estimated, from the number of departing craft, that they could not have been less than one hundred and thirty-four persons.<sup>91</sup> The island, in less than one day, had been reduced to rubble.

## THE DECLINE OF INDIAN KEY

Housman had been trying for some time to persuade Lt. McLaughlin to use Indian Key as the headquarters for the Florida Squadron. Four days after the destruction of the island, McLaughlin finally agreed to Housman's proposition, and the young lieutenant contracted — for an unspecified sum of money — with Housman "for the cession of the whole key to the United States, except a small portion of it, for his store and dwelling." McLaughlin stated that he was induced to transfer his base from Tea Table Key to Indian Key because of the fresh water and facilities to be found at the latter location. A station on Indian Key would also relieve him of the necessity of dividing his small force, as after the attack he had apparently found it expedient to station some elements of his command on the island.<sup>92</sup>

Housman, meanwhile, remained in the area until October (1840). At that time, according to Charles Howe, he "cleared out for good — took everything he had left, to Key West . . . to sell at Auction — his Negroes (*sic*) — Boats — vessels . . . he is a good deal in debt. . ."<sup>93</sup> After liquidating his few possessions, he apparently secured a position on a wrecking vessel, and was killed shortly thereafter "while attempting to go on board a wrecked vessel in a heavy seaway; being crushed between his boat and the side of the vessel."<sup>94</sup> It was an ironic, and perhaps appropriate, demise for this legendary character. According to E.Z.C. Judson, the law repudiated Housman's wife after his death. The careful research of a later historian has confirmed Judson's story.<sup>95</sup>

Charles Howe and his family, along with Henry Goodyear, who operated "a small store, or Grog Shop, on the wharf," were apparently the only residents who returned to the key after the August massacre.<sup>96</sup> They were soon joined, however, by the Florida Squadron, or as it was more commonly known, the "Mosquito Fleet," in all about six hundred men.<sup>97</sup>

McLaughlin rapidly set about providing quarters for his command, which included two companies of marines under the command of Lt.

Col. T.T. Sloan, as well as building an adequate hospital, and completing the necessary repair work on the cisterns. In all he constructed twelve buildings which included a private residence for himself and his family, a hospital, which John Hastings, an assistant surgeon at Indian Key, disparagingly referred to as "literally nothing of a hospital," several frame dwellings which were used as barracks, a workshop, several boat-sheds, and an unknown number of storehouses.<sup>98</sup> His total expenditures amounted to \$343,937.<sup>99</sup>

George Center became the island's principal merchant and did a brisk and profitable business importing the lumber, hardware items, and medicine needed by the Mosquito Fleet. In the two years that the command occupied the island, Center transacted over \$50,000 in business. Oliver O'Hara, the Key West merchant, Wall and Pinkney, also from Key West, and the ubiquitous Henry Goodyear, as well as others, all traded with the Navy.<sup>100</sup> At the end of the war in 1842 McLaughlin and his command were transferred to other stations, leaving Indian Key to the few turtlers and wreckers who were still in the area.

The end of the Second Seminole War did not eliminate the possibility of future Indian depredations in the keys, many prospective settlers concluded, and few of them were willing to gamble on their chances of survival anywhere in the new county. In 1843, Walter C. Maloney, the only official still conducting county business, reported that Indian Key was totally deserted. And until recently, he added, the county had been completely abandoned. As a result of Maloney's report the territory decided to relocate the county seat, and the small settlement at Miami was selected as the new capital.<sup>101</sup>

Six years after this incident there were still not over one hundred settlers within all of Dade County, and perhaps as few as four or five people living on Indian Key.<sup>102</sup> As the Indian threat receded additional settlers were attracted to the island and by 1860 there were probably several families and at least ten or fifteen settlers on Indian Key.<sup>103</sup> These individuals included William H. Bethel, inspector of customs, and his family, John Curry and his family, Errand Bell and his wife, and William Mott. Undoubtedly they were involved in wrecking and interspersed this occupation with fishing and turtling.<sup>104</sup>

Perhaps as a deterrent to smugglers or to maintain order in the upper keys, the government sent troops to Indian Key in 1869. Two companies of the 3rd Artillery, commanded by Captain E.R. Warner, were stationed on the island during August and September. If their arrival had been due

to a crisis, it must have subsided, for they abandoned the post at the end of their second month.<sup>105</sup>

Probably due to economic conditions in the Bahamas, a number of Bahamians were attracted to the Florida Keys, and by 1870 they had swelled Indian Key's population to forty-seven, which even included a Methodist preacher.<sup>106</sup> Unlike their ancestors these Bahamians derived their livelihood from the soil, and out of the island's entire population, only one individual indicated that he made his living from the sea.<sup>107</sup> The Pinder family, which included about half of the island's population, assiduously cultivated every inch of available soil within the immediate vicinity of Indian Key, and by 1885, the four branches of the family were cultivating hundreds of banana trees and harvesting a crop that sold for \$8,500.<sup>108</sup> They may have also been the family that regularly sold water to passing vessels.<sup>109</sup> The island probably continued to be inhabited after this time by a small number of people, although we know nothing about them or the island. In the present century the island has been an occasional refuge for mariners, fishermen, and hermits. It has, however, been largely uninhabited.

## NOTES

1. In 1822, a Charleston newspaper listed the port departure of a sloop, the *William Henry*, under the command of Captain Housman. This is the first reference we have to Housman in southern waters and it is not known whether his visit to Charleston was part of his first trip to the keys. *Charleston Courier*, July 27, 1822.

2. E.Z.C. Judson, "Sketches of the Florida War—Number IV—Indian Key—its Rise, Progress, and Destruction," *Western Literary Journal and Monthly Review in Pensacola Gazette*, March 29, 1845; Fred E. Pond, *Life and Adventures of "Ned Buntline"* (New York: n.p., 1919), p. 24. Housman was a descendant of a Dutch family that had settled on Staten Island (N.Y.) in the early 1700's. Elmer G. VanName, *The Housman (Huysman)-Simonson Family of Staten Island, N.Y.* (Haddonfield, N.J.: published privately, 1955), *passim*.

3. "Wrecks, Wrecking, Wreckers, and Wreckees on the Florida Reef," *Hunt's Merchants Magazine* 6 (April 1842): 349.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 351-352.

5. U.S., Congress, House Committee on Commerce, *Building Light-Houses, Light-Boats, Beacons, &c.*, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1838-39, H. Doc. 158, I.W.P. Lewis to S. Pleasonton, March 5, 1838, p. 15.

6. U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Commerce, *Memorial of William A. Whitehead in answer to the petition of Thomas J. Smith, in favor of making Indian Key a port of entry*, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1838-39, S. Doc. 140, N.L. Coste to William A. Whitehead, January 2, 1839, p. 8. Coste was commander of the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Campbell*.

7. Bernard Romans, *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* (1795; reprint ed., New Orleans, La.: Pelican Publishing Co., 1961), p. 252.

8. Statement of Silas Fletcher in support of his preemption claim to Indian Key, Monroe County Deed Book B, p. 168, Monroe County Courthouse, Key West, Florida. All Monroe County Deed Books are located at the Monroe County Courthouse, Key West, Florida.

9. Ibid. Statement of Avis Fletcher in support of her husband's preemption claim to Indian Key, Monroe County Deed Book B, p. 170. Statement of Abigail Talbert . . . , Monroe County Deed Book B, p. 167, and statement of William H. Fletcher . . . , Monroe County Deed Book B, p. 171.

10. Statement of Silas Fletcher . . . , Monroe County Deed Book B, pp. 168-169.

11. Ibid.

12. Statement of Pardon C. Greene in support of Joseph Prince's preemption claim to Indian Key, Monroe County Deed Book A, p. 488.

13. Indian Key Poll Book, May 4, 1829, Records of the Secretary of State, on file at the Division of Archives, History, and Records Management, Tallahassee, Florida. In this period wrecking was not the only enterprise in which the key inhabitants were involved. Fishing and turtling were important sources of revenue. Many wrecking trips involved fishing with a constant search for a disabled vessel.

14. E.Z.C. Judson in *Pensacola Gazette*, March 29, 1845.

15. Monroe County Deed Book A, p. 352. The purchase also represented his initial thrust to obtain Fletcher's preemption right. Indian Key, unlike many of the other keys, was not part of the Spanish land grant properties, and as such, immediately became part of the public domain belonging to the Federal Government. Congress, in 1818, began debating legislation that was subsequently (1830) enacted into law establishing the preemption right on all public lands. Benjamin H. Hibbard, *A History of the Public Land Policies* (New York: Peter Smith, 1939), pp. 151-153. It was this right that Fletcher and his family tried to establish by their sworn statements found in the Monroe County Deed Books. As the land was not surveyed until the 1870's, it was never put up for sale while Housman remained on the island. The government later denied his claim to the island, arguing that he was "a mere tenant at sufferance of the United States." U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Claims, *Representatives of Jacob Housman*, 30th Cong., 1st sess., 1847-48, H. Rept. 798, Summary statement of the Committee on Claims, July 25, 1848, p. 2.

16. Dr. Benjamin Strobel in the *Charleston Mercury*, July 4, 1833. Strobel left his native Charleston, where he was a physician, in 1829. While on his way to Key West, he stopped at Indian Key (1829). He resided at Key West from this time until 1832, when he returned to Charleston. His impressions of the keys were serialized in the *Charleston Mercury* and later in the *Charleston Courier*. E.A. Hammond, ed., "Sketches of the Florida Keys, 1829-1833," *Tequesta*, 29 (1969): 73, 74, 77.

17. U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Commerce, *Petition of Thomas J. Smith in reply to the remonstrances of William A. Whitehead against the establishment of a port of entry at Indian Key*, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1838-39, S. Doc. 71, *Petition of the Citizens of Indian Key*, August 31, 1836, p. 9.

18. Dr. Benjamin Strobel in *Charleston Mercury*, July 4, 1833.

19. Monroe County Deed Book A, pp. 266, 352.

20. Ibid., 266-267.

21. *Key West Gazette*, April 25, 1832.

22. Monroe County Deed Book B, p. 174.

23. *Key West Enquirer*, October 10, 1835; Monroe County Deed Book B, pp. 505-506.

24. Monroe County Deed Book B, pp. 175-176, 221. Dr. Henry W. Waterhouse served as the island's physician and postmaster. He died in a boating accident in January, 1835. *Key West Enquirer*, January 24, 1835.

25. Monroe County Deed Book B, p. 248.

26. U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee of Claims, *Report of the Committee on the Memorial of Jacob Housman*, August 8, 1846, 29th Cong., 1st sess., 1845-46, Record Group 46, Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives Building.

27. Petition of Thomas J. Smith, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1838-39, S. Doc. 71, Petition of the citizens of Indian Key, August 31, 1836, p. 8.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

29. Representatives of Jacob Housman, 30th Cong., 1st sess., 1847-48, H. Rept. 798, Summary Statement of the Committee on Claims, July 25, 1848, p. 1.

30. U.S., Congress, Senate, Military Affairs Committee, *Petition of Abraham P. Housman, Administrator of Jacob Housman, deceased, Praying the reimbursement of advances made for the Public Service during the Florida War*, presented April 20, 1846, 29th Cong., 1st sess., 1845-46, Record Group 46, Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives Building (hereafter cited as U.S. Senate Files, 29th Cong., 1st sess.).

31. Henry E. Perrine, *A True Story of Some Eventful Years in Grandpa's Life* (Buffalo, N.Y.: E.H. Hutchinson Press, 1885), hand drawn map of Indian Key ca. 1840.

32. E.Z.C. Judson in the *Pensacola Gazette*, March 29, 1845.

33. Dr. Benjamin Strobel in *Charleston Mercury*, July 4, 1833.

34. "Map of Indian Key, South Florida, 1840," Florida Historical Society Map and Photograph Collection, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida; E.Z.C. Judson in the *Pensacola Gazette*, March 29, 1845.

35. *Report of Committee on Memorial of Jacob Housman*, 29th Cong., 1st sess., 1845-46, Record Group 46.

36. *Petition of Thomas J. Smith*, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1838-39, S. Doc. 71, Census of Indian Key, March, 1838, p. 12.

37. *Memorial of William A. Whitehead*, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1839-39, S. Doc. 140, Statement of William A. Whitehead, January 19, 1839, p. 2.

38. U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Commerce, *Document in relation to the establishment of a port of entry at Indian Key*, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1838-39, S. Doc. 26, William A. Whitehead to the Committee on Commerce, December, 1838, p. 1.

39. A New Englander from Massachusetts, Howe apparently settled on the island in 1832 when he was appointed inspector of customs, a post he held until 1842. In April, 1835, he purchased several structures from Housman for \$580. In May of the following year he bought from Housman for an additional \$580, the land on which this property was built. He also owned several of the neighboring keys, including Key Vacas, Long Point Key, Grassy Key, Duck Key, and Knight Key. Following Dr. Waterhouse's death in 1835, Howe became the postmaster for the island, a position he held until March. Earl Johnson, "Earl Johnson's Notes on Howe's family history." Typescript undated, Monroe County Public Library, Key West, Florida; Department of State, *Register of All Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval in the Service of the United States* (Washington, 1833), p. 59; *idem*, *Register*, 1843, p. 111; Monroe County Deed Book B, pp. 278, 279-280; Monroe County Deed Book A, p. 100.

40. *Petition of Thomas J. Smith*, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1838-39, S. Doc. 71, Statement of Charles Howe, June 8, 1835, p. 8.

41. *Memorial of William A. Whitehead*, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1838-39, S. Doc. 140, Statement of William A. Whitehead, January 19, 1839, p. 6.

42. *Petition of Thomas J. Smith*, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1838-39, S. Doc. 71, Statement of Charles Howe, June 8, 1835, p. 8.

43. These vessels were the schooner *John Denison*, D. Cold, master; the sloop *Sarah Isabella*, T. Eldridge, master; the sloop *Thistle*, S. Sanderson, master; the schooner *Fair American*, J. Staurtiell, master. *Key West Enquirer*, December 26, 1835.

44. Charles Nordhoff, "Wrecking on the Florida Keys," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 18(April 1859); 585.

45. *St. Augustine East Florida Herald*, October 4, 1825.

46. *Ibid.*, November 8, 1825.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Pensacola Gazette*, August 12, 1828.

50. *Key West Gazette*, November 30, 1831, May 23, 1832.

51. *Housman v. The Cargo of the Schooner North Carolina*, 15 Peters 40; Dorothy Dodd, "Jacob Housman of Indian Key," *Tequesta*, 8(1948): 17, quoting *O'Hara v. Schooner North Carolina*, and *Housman*, Florida Supreme Court File no. 0793, and File no. 0793, and *Housman v. Cargo of Schooner North Carolina 0794*. The Supreme Court no longer has the records of these cases.

52. Dorothy Dodd, "The Wrecking Business on the Florida Reef, 1822-1860," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 22(April 1944): 191, quoting from *Housman v. Ship Ajax*, Florida Supreme Court File no. 0865. The Supreme Court no longer has the records of this case.

53. Nordhoff, "Wrecking on the Florida Keys," pp. 583, 585. Such revocation barred him from any further salvage operations. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, vol. 4, p. 132.

54. Florida (Territory), *Acts and Resolutions of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida*, 1836, p. 19.

55. *Ibid.*

56. U.S. Senate Files, 29th Cong., 1st sess.

57. *Petition of Thomas J. Smith*, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1838/39, S. Doc. 71, Thomas Jefferson Smith to the U.S. Congress, January 10, 1839, p. 1.

58. Florida (Territory), *Acts*, 1837, p. 6.

59. Governor Robert Reid to the Senate of the Legislative Council, Executive Nominations for Territorial Appointments, February 17, 1840, *Territorial Papers of the United States, Florida*, Vols. 22-26, ed. Clarence Carter (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1956-1962), 26: 63-64 (hereafter cited as *TP*).

60. *Ibid.*

61. U.S. Senate Files, 29th Cong., 1st sess.

62. Tallahassee *Floridian*, March 5, 1836.

63. Reid to Legislative Council, *TP*, 26: 63-64.

64. The federal wrecking act of 1825 required that wrecked property be entered at a port of entry. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, Vol. 4, pp. 132-133.

65. *Petition of Thomas J. Smith*, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1839-39, S. Doc. 71, Smith to the U.S. Congress, January 10, 1839, pp. 1-4.

66. *Memorial of William A. Whitehead*, 25th Cong., 3rd sess., 1838-39, S. Doc. 140, Statement of William A. Whitehead, January 19, 1839, p. 6.

67. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on the Public Lands, *Reefers of Florida, Housman and Bethel—Montgomery Railroad Co.—David R. Mitchell—Legislature of Florida, Land for Seat of Justice*, 26th Cong., 1st sess., 1839-40, H. Rept. 593, Report of the Committee on the Public Lands, June 19, 1840, p. 1.

68. U.S. Senate Files, 29th Cong., 1st sess.

69. *Ibid.*; Monroe County Deed Book C, p. 370.

70. Howland Delano Perrine, *Daniel Perrin "The Huguenot" and His Descendants in America of the Surnames Perrine, Perine, Prine* (n.p., 1910), p. 23.

71. Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography*, 22 vols. (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1934), 14: 480.

72. U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Agriculture, *Report on the memorial of Dr. Henry Perrine, praying for a grant of land to encourage the introduction and promote the cultivation of tropical plants in the United States*, 25th Cong., 2nd sess., 1837-38, S. Doc. 300, Summary Report of Committee on Agriculture, March 12, 1838, pp. 1-3; idem, *Report on the memorial of Dr. Henry Perrine*, 25th Cong., 2nd sess., 1837-38, S. Doc. 300, Henry Perrine to Committee on Agriculture, January 4, 1838, pp. 3-5; idem, House, Committee on Agriculture, *Memorial of Dr. Henry Perrine, late consul at Campeche, asking for a grant of land in the southern extremity of East Florida, for the encouragement of the growth of new and important agricultural products, exotic vegetables*, 25th Cong., 2nd sess., 1837-38, H. Rept. 564, Summary Report of the Committee on Agriculture, February 17, 1838, pp. 1-99.

73. *Memorial of Dr. Henry Perrine*, 25th Cong., 2nd sess., 1837-38, H. Rept. 564, Extracts from Letters of Charles Howe and John Dubose, pp. 59-60.

74. James D. Westcott to the Legislative Council, January 3, 1832, *Journal of the Florida Legislative Council*, 1832, p. 6.

76. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, vol. 5, p. 302. This was a singular honor granted to few individuals, and was reserved for meritorious service. Among others who received grants of land were General Lafayette and Baron Steuben, both heroes of the Revolutionary War.

77. Nelson Klose, "Dr. Henry Perrine, Tropical Plant Enthusiast," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 27 (October 1948): 195. Klose's article is based on extensive research done on Perrine in conjunction with his doctoral dissertation: "Foreign Plant Introduction by the Federal Government: A Study in American Agriculture History" (The University of Texas, 1947). Also, see his monograph: *America's Crop Heritage: The History of Foreign Plant Introduction by the Federal Government* (Ames: Iowa State College Press, 1950).

78. Klose, "Dr. Perrine," p. 196.

79. "Progress of Dr. Perrine's Scheme of Introducing Tropical Plants," *Farmers' Register*, 7 (1839): 40, 41. This periodical received several notices from Perrine before his death in the fall of 1840 requesting that "seeds, cuttings, bulbs, &c. of useful plants" be sent to the "tropical nursery."

80. Perrine, *Some Eventful Years*, p. 46.

81. Hester Perrine Walker, "Incidents in the Life of Hester Perrine Walker," typed manuscript prepared 1885 (?), on file at The Florida Historical Society Library, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida, p. 20.

82. Perrine, *Some Eventful Years*, pp. 31-32.

83. Petition to Congress by Inhabitants of Monroe County, March 1, 1836, *TP*, 25:247.

84. *Niles' Weekly Register*, 49 (January 30, 1836): 370, quoting from *Key West Enquirer*, January 2 & 14, 1836.

85. U.S. Senate Files, 29th Cong., 1st sess. His claim of \$14,418 was never paid on the grounds that the company had never been legally mustered into the service of the United States.

86. *Key West Enquirer*, June 18, 1836; *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 3: 255, quoting from *Key West Enquirer*, September 17, 1836; *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 3: 27 (quoting from *Pensacola Gazette*, June 25, 1836), 202, 203.

87. Petition to the Secretary of the Treasury by Inhabitants of Indian Key and Vicinity, June, 1837, *TP*, 25: 406.

88. *Representatives of Jacob Housman*, 30th Cong., 1st sess., 1847-48, H. Rept. 798, Statement of Certain Residents of South Florida, undated, pp. 3-4.

89. Walker, "Incidents," pp. 27-51; *Charleston Courier*, August 29, 1840.

90. John T. McLaughlin to the Secretary of the Navy, August 11, 1840, *TP*, 26:194.

91. *Ibid.*

92. John T. McLaughlin to the Secretary of the Navy, August 11, 1840, *TP*, 26:193. U.S., Department of the Navy, "Proceedings of General Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry," Court Martial No. 982 of 1841, *Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Navy)*, M-273, Record Group 125, National Archives Building. This is an exhaustive record of the affairs of the Florida Squadron, focusing on the expenditures of Lt. McLaughlin.

93. Charles Howe, "A Letter from Indian Key," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 20 (October 1941):197.

94. *Pensacola Gazette*, March 29, 1848. Housman was buried on the island, supposedly on the east side. His gravestone, which has since been broken up and removed from the island, has the following inscription:

"Here Lieth the body of Capt. Jacob Housman,  
formerly of Staten Island, State of New York,  
Proprietor of the island, who died by accident  
May 1st, 1841, aged 41 years 11 months.

To his friends he was sincere, to his  
enemies he was kind, to all men faithful.

This monument is erected by his disconsolate  
though affectionate wife, Elizabeth Ann  
Housman.

Sic Transit Gloria Mundi."

R.C. Holder, "Along the Florida Reef," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 42 (February 1871):363.

95. *Pensacola Gazette*, March 29, 1845; Dodd, "Jacob Housman of Indian Key," p. 18.

96. Howe, "A Letter from Indian Key," p. 198.

97. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Public Expenditures, *Lieutenant John T. McLaughlin*, 28th Cong., 2nd sess., 1844-45, H. Rept. 163, Summary Statement of the Committee on Public Expenditures, February 25, 1845, p. 2.

98. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Public Expenditures, *The Late Florida Squadron—Expenditures, &c.*, 28th Cong., 1st sess., 1843-44, H. Rept. 582, Summary Statement of the Committee on Public Expenditures, June 14, 1844, p. 6, Answers to Interrogatories posed by Committee on Public Expenditures to Dr. John Hastings, June 10, 1844, p. 89, Miscellaneous Vouchers, 13-86, passim.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

100. *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 16-46, 83-86.

101. F.M. Hudson, "Beginnings in Dade County," *Tequesta* 1 (1943):12-13, quoting from a report from W.C. Maloney to the governor of the territory, document in the Florida State Library; Florida (Territory), *Acts*, 1844, p. 17.

102. U.S. Census, 1850, Population Schedules, Florida, Dade County, Roll 58, Sheet 84, p. 168.

103. U.S. Census, 1860, Population Schedules, Florida, Dade County, Roll 106, Sheet 238, p. 476.

104. *Ibid.*

105. Post Returns for the months of August and September, 1869, submitted by Captain E.R. Warner, U.S. Army Command returns from United States Military Posts, 1800-1916, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, National Archives Microfilm M617, Roll 1516.



106. U.S. Census, 1870, Population Schedules, Florida, Monroe County, Roll 132, Sheet 376, p. 753. In 1866 the state had changed the boundary lines and Indian Key was included in the land within Monroe County.

107. *Ibid.*

108. *Ibid.*; Florida, Department of State, Schedule of the Florida State Census of 1885, Monroe County, Agriculture, Roll 9, pp. 1-3.

109. John F. Reiger, ed., "Sailing in South Florida Waters in the Early 1880's," *Tequesta*, 31 (1971):61. James A. Henshall, the author of the article, visited Indian Key in the 1880's and apparently found little to comment upon.