

Life In A Pioneer Settlement: Miami's Medical Community 1843-1874

by William M. Straight, M.D.

On Saturday, August 8, 1874, George W. Parsons, a twenty-four year old visitor from New York City, then resident in the house that Dr. Robert Fletcher built on the south bank of the Miami River, wrote in his diary:

Ole Dr. Fletcher is here to keep me company for a while & cook. He first arrived in these places [the Miami River community] after it was divided residing here some 30 years ago... Is a queer character — rather profane man though very honorable & very entertaining at times in his description of this country & K. West in former times.... [he] is known all over K. West & has quite a reputation in his way.¹

According to the family Bible, Robert Richard Fletcher was born in Prince George County, Virginia, February 24, 1801. This researcher has found no information on his early life and education. He was a physician according to the statement of his daughter, Rosalie, and according to the 1860 Census of Dade County. A canvass of the current medical schools that existed in early 1800s has failed to show his enrollment. He may have apprenticed himself to a practicing physician and thus earned his title. Although Fletcher signed a number of legal documents which are extant he never signed "Dr." or "M.D.," and I have found no record of him practicing medicine either in Key West or in the Miami River community.²

Fletcher came to Florida in June 1830 and lived in bustling Key West 1830-1843.³ He was active in city politics (City Marshall, 1832) and Monroe County politics (Sheriff, 1832; Auctioneer and

Justice of the Peace, 1841-1842; Clerk of the Monroe County Court, 1842-1843).

On January 14, 1833, Fletcher married Mary Margareta Mabry (August 1, 1806 - January 18, 1892) in Key West.⁴ They had four children, born in Key West: Robert Francis (February 2, 1835 - September 25, 1863); Mary Amanda (July 18, 1837 - May 22, 1889); James Whalton (February 28, 1839 - December 7, 1850); and Barbara Rosalie (September 14, 1841 - May 2, 1927). On the Monroe County Census, 1870, a Robert Charles Fletcher (1866 - March 1, 1912), age 4, is noted as part of Fletcher's household. There is no

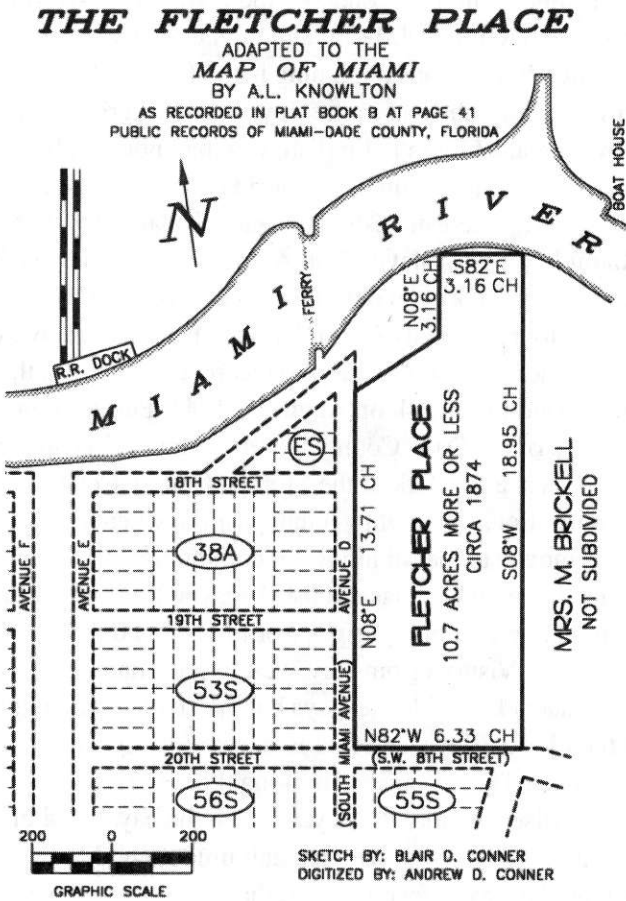


The location of Fletcher's House looking southwest along the south bank of the river from its mouth, ca. 1884. Courtesy of the Historical Association of Southern Florida.

indication of his relation to the family given, but he is listed as "son" on the 1880 census. On the Monroe County Census of 1880, as part of the Fletcher household, is listed Frances G. (March 8, 1873 - May 11, 1963), age 7, a granddaughter. In the Probate file of Barbara Rosalie Fletcher, Frances is listed as Barbara Rosalie's daughter and only heir, although it is thought Barbara Rosalie never married.⁵

In an effort to combat Indian hostilities by luring armed settlers to the frontiers, Congress passed The Armed Occupation Act

on August 4, 1842. This Act offered 160 acres of free land to single young men or heads of families, eighteen years of age or older and capable of bearing arms. In return, they were to live on the land five consecutive years, build a “fit habitation” and clear and fence five acres. Fletcher applied for such a grant at the Indian Hunting Grounds — the most attractive piece of real estate in the area — near the present day Charles Deering Estate. His grant was approved on June 26, 1843, pursuant to his meeting the prescribed conditions, ie,



The Fletcher Place — Courtesy of Mr. Blair D. Conner, P.L.S.

“proving it up.” However, his grant was later annulled, possibly for non-compliance.

The Fletchers moved to the Miami River area in 1843.⁶ Fletcher was not the first person to live on the River in that era, nor the first physician to visit there, but he was the first civilian physician of record to live in the Miami River area.⁷ Indeed, according to application papers for homesteads under the Armed Occupation Act, when Fletcher came, there were at least seven and possibly eleven who were living in this area.⁸

The long, tedious Second Seminole War (1835-1842) ended by Army decree, August 14, 1843, although there were thought to be about three hundred Indians remaining in the Everglades. Settlers who had been waiting out the war in the Keys began filtering back to the Miami River area. William F. English, who had bought all of the privately held land on the southeast Florida mainland from his uncle, Richard Fitzpatrick, re-established his uncle’s plantation on both sides of the Miami River with slave labor. At the same time he platted a town on the south bank and sold lots in “The Village of Miami.”⁹ As Clerk of the Monroe County Court, Dr. Fletcher was keenly aware of these developments, for it was he who recorded the deed in the sale of Fitzpatrick’s land to English on August 7, 1843. Furthermore, the office of Clerk of the Dade County Court at Miami was open and, with his experience as Clerk of the Monroe County Court and his political connections, he might get that position when the seat of Dade County was moved to the Miami River community.¹⁰

Fletcher may have visited the Biscayne Bay / Miami River country on fishing or hunting trips prior to 1843 and thus was familiar with the area. Visitors from Key West to the Miami River sailed up Hawke Channel, outside the Keys but inside the reef, hugging the curve of the Florida Keys, and into Biscayne Bay by way of the Cape Florida Channel. This channel runs along the south and southwestern shore of Key Biscayne into the bay. Once in the bay, by careful navigation a vessel sailed to within a half mile of the Miami River. Here, anchored in seven feet of water, the visitors got into a skiff and rowed across a bar into the river’s mouth.

In 1843 a visitor entering the river, saw on the south bank a white sand beach¹¹ and the “very comfortable house”¹² of Reason

Duke, a onetime keeper of the Cape Florida Lighthouse. Southwest of the clearing in which Duke's house sat, were fields, once cleared but now overgrown. On the north bank the tropical hammock that fringed the river and bay had been thinned to permit a parade ground, and several frame buildings that constituted Fort Dallas, an army fort active in the Second Seminole War. In the foreground a burial mound 25 feet high and 75 feet wide and extending 100 feet in a northern direction jutted from the hammock.¹³ Winding in a north westerly direction the river passed between a tangled fringe of mangroves lining both banks. Through interruptions in these borders appeared, here and there smaller hammocks, the English plantation fields and buildings and beyond them pine barrens. In the fields north of the river, about one and a half miles from the river's mouth, was a mill operated by Colonel English.¹⁴ This may have been a mill for grinding sugar cane, coontie root or both. Sugar was a major crop on the English plantation and coontie grew lushly in the pineland. Parsons notes pulling from the river a big cogwheel "... that was said to belong to English's sugar mill."¹⁵

As the skiff glided up the river, raucous Green Backed Herons, Great Egrets and Snowy Egrets, Great and Little Blue Herons and clucking Moorhens took wing. Further away in the pine barrens the rapid staccato of the Red-bellied Woodpecker and slower thumping cadence of the Pileated Woodpecker pierced the scene. From the river banks sunning alligators slipped quietly into the stream. Through crystal clear water the river's bottom shown as:

great basins as white as marble in which fish are sporting now and then darting into or out of dark grottos. The coral bottom in many places is shaped into caves and cliffs, to which are attached a profusion of aquatic plants of beautiful forms and colors, which wave in the rushing current like banners in the wind.¹⁶

Indeed, the only distraction in this peaceful scene was the hordes of mosquitoes and blue flies whose bites drew blood.

About two and one-half miles from the river's mouth (approximately half way between today's Northwest Seventeenth and Twenty-Second Avenues) the river forked. On the south fork the

brothers, George and Thomas Marshall, had lived since 1828. They were engaged in subsistence farming and growing lush bananas for the Key West market. The north fork, the larger of the two streams, led to the headwaters of navigation, the “Upper Falls.”

At the Upper Falls, three and three quarters miles from the river’s mouth, (a short distance above today’s Northwest Twenty-Seventh Avenue bridge) water spilled over the rocky rim of the Everglades into the riverbed. The “falls” were also a “rapids” where the river bed descended about six feet over a distance of 450 feet. Here the visitor got into the shallow water and pulled his skiff to the crest of the rapids. Once atop the rim, “As far as the eye reached, nothing but a sea of grass was visible sprinkled here & there with small hammocks or islands of a slight elevation with timber & bushes.”¹⁷ On a stream which emptied into the river from the north just below the rapids, the brothers, Thomas Jefferson and George Washington Ferguson, operated both a sawmill and a coontie mill. These brothers became the most successful producers of coontie flour, “arrowroot,” in south Florida, grossing about \$25,000 in one year in the late 1840s.¹⁸

When Doc Fletcher and his family arrived at the River, their first priority was finding lodging. Immediately available were the buildings of Fort Dallas. These had been recently vacated by the soldiers and returned to their owner, Colonel William F. English. Although English was in residence at that time he would allow newcomers to lodge in the empty barracks buildings until they could build their own shelter. Thus the Fletchers likely stayed at the fort until they could arrange other lodging.

On September 15, 1844, Fletcher bought ten acres of land from Colonel English in the name of Mary M. Fletcher. On today’s map, this tract began at a point about 0.2 miles from the mouth of the Miami River on its south bank. It was bounded, more or less:

On the north by the Miami River; on the south by SE 8th Street; on the west by South Miami Avenue; and on the east by a line parallel with and 417 feet, more or less, east of Miami Avenue.¹⁹

On this land, a short distance from the river’s edge, Fletcher constructed a two story frame house mounted five feet above the ground on pine pilings for it was then thought:

in that climate it is necessary to have a clear space between the ground and lower floor of the dwelling house, in order to escape the fevers that emanate from the damp ground below the habitations.²⁰

Another reason for building dwellings on pilings was to avoid flooding. Before Everglades drainage began in 1908, much of the Miami River community flooded when heavy rains filled the Everglades to overflowing. For example, in the late spring and early summer of 1866, water stood waist-deep around William Wagner's house, an eighth of a mile from the river at today's Northwest Eighth Avenue near Eleventh Street.²¹

The frame structure was likely hewn from pine trees in the nearby woods. Milled lumber may have been available in the community,²² but if not, it was shipped by sailing vessel from Key West to provide siding, flooring, shingles, sashes, etc. The doors and windows were closed by solid shutters. "Gauze blinds" in the openings and mosquito nets over the beds kept the mosquitoes and other flying insects at bay. An outhouse in the nearby woods served as toilet facilities.²³

The upper story of this house served as living quarters. The lower story served as a store where Fletcher traded with his neighbors and the Indians. On the side facing the river a covered porch provided a gathering place and a sleeping place when the weather was good and the mosquitoes few.²⁴ At the river's edge was a dock, and a storage shed. This house became the first Dade County Courthouse about March 9, 1844, when Miami became the county seat.²⁵

On April, 1874, George Parsons, who lived in the Fletcher house, described the view from the front steps of the Fletcher house:

as I write here on the front stoop things look quite charming & the prospect is rather enchanting. Several boats hauled up for fear of being stolen under the cocoanut trees & bananas, the yacht I have charge of at the dock and small boat along side, orange trees and C [etc.] the situation of the house almost on the water, and the beautiful sky and water every day all combine to make a picture that is nice charming and interesting.²⁶

According to a U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey map made by F.H. Gerdes in January-February 1849, Fletcher also had a "Mill" at the river's edge.²⁷ Whether this was a sawmill or coontie mill is not noted, but the latter seems more likely. However on another map by Gerdes, (1849-1851) of the same area there is no mention of a mill on Fletcher's property. Another map of the river community as it appeared in September 1849, drawn from memory in 1854 by J.M. Robertson,²⁸ shows Fletcher's mill on the south branch at the fork of the river. In the letter accompanying the map, Robertson states this mill was, "Building in 1852."

As the river was brackish for the first mile upstream and well water was heavily impregnated with lime salts, these sources provided water for bathing and washing clothes. Freshwater for drinking and cooking was found by going more than a mile upstream or from numerous springs, such as the Punch Bowl,²⁹ in Brickell Hammock or from freshwater boils in the bay. These sources of freshwater were often not very ample during the "dry season."³⁰ A cistern was used at the Cape Florida Lighthouse as early as 1861, and cisterns were likely used on the mainland as well.

Cooking was done outside on an open fire or in a palmetto-thatched cook shack. Fire being the scourge of the pioneers, they went to great lengths to keep it away from the living quarters.

The early settlers relied heavily on the ocean, bay and forest for their food. They obtained staples such as coffee, salt, rice and corn in Key West. The abundant coontie root furnished flour for bread and confections, thickening stews, and for other purposes.

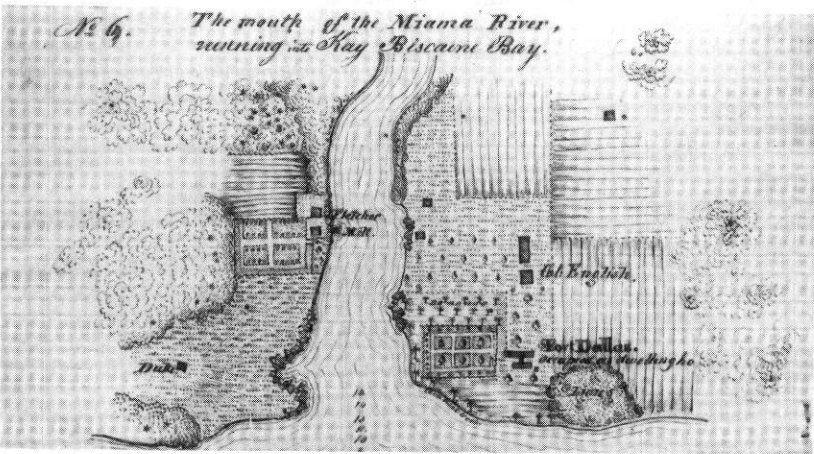
When the Fletchers arrived they brought with them a supply of staple foods. Fruits and vegetables could be purchased from the English plantation and the subsistence farmers along the river. As soon as the family got settled they planted their own kitchen garden. The acreage Fletcher bought, once a thick sub-tropical hammock, had been cleared first by the slaves of Richard Fitzpatrick, a prominent South Carolinian living in Key West, who bought the land in the early 1830's and established a sugar cane plantation. During the Second Seminole War, the land lay fallow, but after the war it was cleared again by the slaves of Colonel English. The soil, built up over the

centuries by hammock humus, was rich, and vegetables such as potatoes and cabbage grew lushly.³¹

In his claim for reparations for the U. S. Army occupation of his plantation during the Second Seminole War, Richard Fitzpatrick, listed his farm products in 1836 as: corn, flint corn, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, plantain, bananas, Bermuda arrowroot, limes, cocoanuts, sugar cane, sugar apple, guava, ducks, fowl, turkey and guinea fowl.³²

The Fletchers likely grew some of the foods mentioned above in their kitchen garden. Dr. Fletcher became locally noted for his agricultural skills, and Rose Wagner Richards, whose family homestead northwest of Fletcher's home, credited him with introducing both mangoes and dates to the area.³³ Ethan V. Blackman, a chronicler of early Miami wrote that Fletcher also grew sapodilla, avocado and orange trees.³⁴

Fletcher's daughter, Rosalie, recalled that her father raised "... 400 head of hogs, hundreds of chickens and also raised many turkeys."³⁵ Indians frequently brought venison, raccoon, possum and other game to trade. Alligator tail was favored by a few of the early settlers, but alligators were chiefly sought for their hides. Turtles and turtle eggs were a chief source of fresh protein during the summer months, and occasionally the settlers ate manatee. Conch meat and



The mouth of the Miami River, 1849. *Miami, The Magic City*, p. 34.
Courtesy of Arva Moore Parks.

chowder and oyster stew were common favorites from the sea. Some of the settlers found cormorant tasty, and quite a few relished curlew (a local name for the White Ibis). Parsons mentions once eating a woodcock (Pileated Woodpecker) and once panther, "... it tasted well, very like veal.³⁶ With a cast net, a boatload of edible fish, such as Spanish mackerel and mullet, could be had from Biscayne Bay in an hour or so. Butter was a rare delicacy and iced beverages were almost nonexistent. Although on one occasion, March 1855, the medical officer at Fort Dallas complained that vegetables were difficult to get,³⁷ food was rarely a problem for the settlers, except during the Civil War when the Union blockade virtually stopped the supply of staples.

When Fletcher arrived at the river, except for the land cleared by Fitzpatrick and English for their plantations, and that cleared by the U. S. Army at Fort Dallas, the area around the mouth of the Miami River was covered with dense tropical hammock and a thick pine barren. The surface of the ground was pocked with jagged holes in the rock containing small caches of sand and humus. Walking on this surface wreaked havoc with footwear. The commander at Fort Dallas complained that, "... a pair of new shoes will not last a man over ten days."³⁸

A footpath/horse trail, long used by the Seminole and Tequesta Indians before them, was the super highway in South Dade County at that time. This trail led from the river's mouth south through the Brickell Hammock and along the bluff, roughly corresponding with today's Brickell Avenue and Bayshore Drive. The trail continued along the bay front, through Coconut Grove, on today's map roughly corresponding to Main Highway, and down Douglas Road to the mouth of the Coral Gables Waterway, which at that time was a shallow, easily fordable creek. From there a trail led to the top of the ridge and went south along today's Old Cutler Road through the Hunting Grounds toward Cutler and beyond.³⁹

There were similar Indian trails along both banks of the Miami River and from the river going north and northwest through the Allapattah prairie to the Everglades.⁴⁰ Another footpath/horse trail was in use June 20, 1874, when one Miami settler walked 17 miles to get mail from the post office at William H. Hunt's house at

Biscayne.⁴¹ Footpaths also ran from farms to neighboring farms as needs dictated.

Horses were used in the Miami River area as early as the late eighteenth century and likely during the Second Seminole War. Their use during the Third Seminole War is well documented. In December 1851, George Ferguson mentions a sorrel mare “that was formerly owned by R. R. Fletcher.”

The first “road” built in the southern end of Dade County, which stretched for more than 100 miles in a north-south direction, was the military road between Fort Dallas and Fort Lauderdale, which was completed in early 1857.⁴² In the 1860s Rose Wagner Richards mentions a wagon road from Fort Dallas to her father’s farm, near Wagner Creek, a portion of which is today’s Seybold Canal, at Northwest Eighth Avenue and the river.⁴³

Travel of any distance was by water. Most families had a skiff, or a Seminole dugout, often rigged with a sail. Several settlers, including Fletcher, had one or more sloops or schooners. Most of these were under 50 feet in length and some were only 10 to 12 feet. Often they were shallow draft vessels equipped with a centerboard and might draw 2 to 3 feet with the centerboard up and 5 to 6 feet with the board down. Most of those that went outside into the ocean were decked and had a small cabin but there are accounts of sailing from Miami to Jupiter Inlet in open vessels of 12 feet length. Cooking and sanitary facilities were not provided on these small vessels other than, perhaps, a night jar.

Steamboats visited Biscayne Bay as early as the 1830s. These shoal draft, flat bottom, side-wheelers were particularly maneuverable in shallow water. Commonly their engines were wood burning. Colonel English made reparation claims for many cords of wood taken off his plantation to fuel U.S. Navy steamers during the Second Seminole War. Later coal burning engines became popular and a coaling station was maintained at Key West. Larger vessels traveling at sea often had both steam and sail as captains, who had grown up with sail, were loath to trust steam alone.

Vessels drawing 10 feet could enter the bay by way of the Cape Florida channel and travel up to within one-half mile of the river’s mouth. There was a frequently mentioned bar at the mouth of

the river, which Gerdes states could carry 7 feet at high tide.⁴⁴ Another observer states this bar could carry only 4 feet at high tide. Once past the bar and into the first part of the river depths up to 16 feet could be had at high tide.⁴⁵

Traveling about Biscayne Bay, other than the route mentioned above, was chiefly limited to smaller sailing craft or skiffs because of many shallow areas. There are many accounts of these craft being stuck on mud banks while sailing to Jack's Bight [today's Coconut Grove], to the Hunting Grounds [Cutler], to Lemon City or to Biscayne [Miami Shores] up the bay. The trip to Key West could be made "inside" the Keys but it was shallow and treacherous thus usually Hawke Channel, between the Keys and outer reef, was preferred by smaller craft; larger vessels traveled beyond the outer reef.

Residents and visitors agreed that flying insects, mainly mosquitoes and sand flies, made life miserable, especially between May and October each year. When mosquitoes were bad, whenever possible, Fletcher and his neighbors scheduled outdoor activities from well after sunrise to well before sunset. To minimize harboring the pests, they cleared the undergrowth widely around their living and working quarters. They endured heavy clothes tied tightly at the neck, wrists and ankles, even in the dead of summer, regardless of the sweat bath these produced. In addition to these measures their chief reliance was on smudges (often made by burning coconut husks), mosquito nets and gauze covering of doorways and windows. Even the hardy Seminole Indians slept under mosquito bars when they could acquire them.

John Dubose, the first lighthouse keeper at Cape Florida, wrote to his superior in 1830:

it is impossible that any family can reside here from 1 May to 1 October on this Coast, everywhere the Mosquito are very thick and bothersome, but now you can neither eat, drink, or sleep in any peace...Mosquitoes kill the fowls and chickens and they soon kill young pigs [it is impossible] to eat a meal without having a pot of smoke under the table to keep them off.⁴⁶

In those days, mosquito repellents were unknown — even the burning of pyrethrum powders and the use of oil of citronella were years in the future. When the weather permitted, those who had vessels often sailed out and anchored on the reef, where a strong southeast breeze provided respite.

In the months of April and May two other vicious insects wreaked havoc, as described by Brevet Lieutenant Colonel George F. Thompson, who made an inspection tour of South Florida for the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865-1866:

a blue head and a gray fly about the size of a honey bee which attack cattle and horses with great violence and drives them mad. We were told of several cases where horses had been attacked by a swarm of these insects and killed within three hours.⁴⁷

In late 1843, when Dr. Fletcher moved to the Miami River community, Dade County extended from the St. Lucie River on the north to Indian Key on the south. Less than 100 people lived in the southern end of the county. Most of these were young adults and, except for accidents, not likely to need a physician. Therefore, Fletcher had no illusions of sustaining his family from a medical practice. Seeking ways to earn money, he opened a store in his home. The earliest mention of this store is by Rose Richards who states that when she arrived, March 15, 1858, there were two stores, "... one a sutler [at Fort Dallas], owned by Captain Sinclair and one on the south side [of the Miami River] owned by Dr. Fletcher."⁴⁸ Fletcher had a schooner and made trips to Key West to get stock for his store and may have been paid by his neighbors to transport items for them.

As previously mentioned, Fletcher, like most of the early settlers, may have had a coontie mill at his house near the river's mouth as early as 1849. This was clearly the case on the east bank of the south fork of the river, which was, "Building in 1852."⁴⁹ Later, about 1858, Fletcher and George Lewis, who lived on the south bank of the Miami River just west of today's Northwest Twelveth Avenue, built a coontie mill on the Natural Bridge over Arch Creek, in today's North Miami.⁵⁰ That mill operated a year or more but was not sufficiently profitable and was abandoned at the onset of the Civil War.⁵¹

Possibly because of his political connections and his experience as Clerk of the Monroe County Court (1842-1843), Fletcher was appointed Clerk of the Dade County Court in 1844 and served a two year term. Other Dade County political offices that he held were: Justice of the Peace, 1844-1845; Dade County Coroner, 1846; Representative from Dade County to the Florida General Assembly, 1846-1847;⁵² Dade County Auctioneer and Notary Public, 1847; Postmaster at Miami, 1850 and again in 1860;⁵³ and Representative from Dade County to the Florida Constitutional Convention, October 25, 1865.

These offices were all elective, supplied some income and are a testament to the respect that Fletcher's neighbors held for him. He was also elected Dade County Revenue Assessor on July 26, 1845, but declined to serve.

The years 1843-1849 were relatively uneventful for the tiny river settlement. The Indians were friendly and traded with the settlers around the Miami River. The settlers were occupied with everyday problems: tending their farms, setting out fruit groves and supplying their tables with fish and game. With slave labor, Colonel English steadily improved his plantation. In May 1846, George McKay completed a township survey of the public lands making possible, for the first time, legal description of grants, claims and privately owned lands.

On April 30, 1847, the Cape Florida Lighthouse was re-lighted with Reason Duke as Lighthouse Keeper. It had been destroyed by Indian attack, July 23, 1836, at the outset of the Second Seminole War and completely rebuilt from the ground up (1846-1847).⁵⁴

In 1849 English brought skilled artisan slaves from Charleston, S.C., and began building two stone buildings.⁵⁵ One of these, intended for slave quarters, and used during the Third Seminole War as troop quarters and a storehouse,⁵⁶ was moved to Lummus Park (404 Northwest Third Street) in 1925 and is preserved as the last remnant of Fort Dallas.

All was well until July 12, 1849, when four Indians attacked a settlement on the Indian River, killing Mr. Barker, the brother-in-law of the Inspector of Customs there. Several days later the same four

Indians attacked a trading post on Payne's Creek near Charlotte Harbor, killing two men. False news of a general Indian uprising rapidly reached the Miami community, prompting its settlers to flock to the lighthouse seeking protection and transportation to Key West.⁵⁷ Soon after July 30, all those living in the Miami River community, now abandoned their homes and went to Key West, except for the keeper of the Cape Florida Lighthouse, Reason Duke.

There was no general uprising and, after several months, the Indians themselves killed one of the four renegades and delivered the other three to the federal authorities. But settlers throughout the state, always apprehensive about the Indians and eager to have them totally removed, raised such a hue and cry before the miscreants could be apprehended that the federal government felt it necessary to reactivate several army posts. Fort Dallas was one of those occupied - perhaps in response to an urgent letter from Colonel English to Lieutenant D. N. Conch, commanding in Key West. This time the fort was occupied from September 9, 1849, until December 24, 1850.

This, the fourth occupation of Fort Dallas, was relatively uneventful. The returning troops found the "old log houses" and the walls of the two stone buildings which they promptly put in livable condition and to which they added, "two houses on the beach near the mound,"⁵⁸ for officers quarters. The troops were occupied in routine patrols and station keeping. The Seminoles, for their part, successfully avoided the soldiers and made no attacks on the settlers. Soon most of the settlers returned to the river to find their houses and farms curiously unmolested.⁵⁹

The troops at Fort Dallas were remarkably healthy during the sixteen months of this occupation. There were only two cases of fever, an event so uncommon that the surgeon describes one in detail in his Quarterly Report, September 30, 1850. Only one death occurred; that death was attributed to phthisis pulmonalis (pulmonary tuberculosis). One remarkable medical event did happen, — possibly the first use of inhalant anesthesia in Florida.⁶⁰

Dr. Fletcher and family were among those who left, and they probably did not return to the river until after early December 1850. He and his family appear on the Key West census of August 13, 1850; he is listed as a "druggist," perhaps his source of income while

he was away from the river. While the family were on the island they lost their 12 year old son, James Whalton, “from eating berries of the island.”⁶¹

In the summer of 1851, Dr. Charles S. Baron, a practitioner of Knoxville, Tennessee, bought, in his wife’s name, 613 acres, encompassing the Punch Bowl. He established a coontie mill and cleared and began the cultivation of three acres. A letter in the author’s possession, from E. Gwynn, his factor in Key West (June 4, 1853), mentions selling for Dr. Baron: limes, tomatoes, turnips, leeks and comptie. A land official who visited Baron in 1855, adds to this list: potatoes, cabbage, lemons and bananas as produce from his farm.⁶² This land official describes Baron as, “a grand looking man, though his face is somewhat disfigured by his beard.” He describes Mrs. Baron, “... who I found to be a German lady of some beauty, grace and dignity.” Later he expresses sympathy for Mrs. Baron, forced to a life of seclusion living with the doctor, “... who is a hypochondriac, a misanthrope and very whimsical — at least I think so.”⁶³

Dr. Fletcher was appointed Keeper of the Lighthouse at Cape Florida on Key Biscayne, June 24, 1853, at a salary of \$600 per annum. With this position went a well-built, brick keeper’s cottage and ample subsistence delivered quarterly.⁶⁴ Fletcher had served as Lighthouse Keeper at Garden Key, Dry Tortugas, prior to 1836 until sometime after 1838.⁶⁵ He performed well during that tenure and this likely assured his appointment in 1853. But in 1836 he was thirty-five years of age while in 1853 he was fifty-two years old; perhaps these seventeen years had something to do with his subsequent replacement on May 21, 1855.

Fletcher’s days were now structured and demanding. The seventeen lamps with reflectors had to be lighted punctually at sunset and extinguished at sunrise. The Argand-type concentric wicks required trimming every four hours or more often, if necessary. In this procedure special care must be taken to cut the tops of the wicks exactly even, to produce a flame of uniform shape and free of smoky points. Immediately after extinguishing the lamps at sunrise, each lamp was carefully removed from the chandelier, the lamp glasses cleaned, the silvered copper reflectors carefully polished with rouge

and whiting and the copper and brass work cleaned with Tripoli powder. Each lamp required refilling with whale oil. Both the inside and outside of the glass panes in the lantern were kept spotless. The walls, floors and balcony of the light room were scoured and the tower's cast iron stairs, passageways, windows, and doors cleaned from the lightroom to the oil cellar at the base of the tower.

Light-keepers kept regular four-hour watches throughout the night. The first watch began at sunset. No light-keeper was exempted from watch except in case of sickness, and the light-keeper on duty must not leave the light-room, on any pretext except to call his relief.

The principal light-keeper kept a daily journal detailing such things as the amount of oil burned, the weather, the amount of ships passing the light during the day, shipwrecks (in as much detail as possible) and the precise hours of lighting and extinguishing the lamps in the lantern.⁶⁶

The Cape Florida Light was supposed to be staffed by a Keeper and one Assistant Keeper. However, the extant records do not name an Assistant Keeper when Fletcher took over from Temple Pent (June 24th, 1853), until Fletcher's son, Robert Francis, was appointed, August 26, 1853, at an annual salary of \$350.⁶⁷

The Lighthouse Service regularly inspected stations and at the first inspection (September 26, 1853) after the appointment of Fletcher, the inspector reported the lighthouse, "in bad condition."⁶⁸ On January 17, 1854, James Guthrie, Secretary of the Treasury, recommended Fletcher's dismissal. Nominations for a successor were received but no action taken and recorded in the Letterbook Index until after April 6, 1855, when M. C. Watkins, Inspector of the Cape Florida Lighthouse, reported, "... Keeper unable to attend to duties." On May 8, 1855, John P. Baldwin, Superintendent of Lights for the Seventh District, sent the Lighthouse Board a letter detailing complaints against the Keeper (this letter is no longer extant).⁶⁹ On May 21, 1855, Fletcher was "removed" as Keeper of the Cape Florida Light.⁷⁰ No reason is recorded.

Dr. Charles S. Baron was appointed Keeper, May 21, 1855, to succeed Fletcher. It was during Baron's term, 1855-1859, that the light underwent its last major reconstruction. Masons raised the brick work of the tower twenty feet and it was capped with an iron

watch-room and lantern such that the focal plane of the light was 100' above sea level. A new "illuminating apparatus," consisting of a second-order Fresnel lens and a five concentric wick Argand lamp, was installed.

After the Second Seminole War ended in 1842 the Seminoles received a two and one-half million acre "temporary hunting and planting" reserve situated west and south of Lake Istokpoga and west of a line running from the mouth of the Kissimmee River through the Everglades to Shark River and thence along the coastline to the Peace River.⁷¹ Although the Miami River community was not included within the boundaries of this reserve, the Indians continued their time honored visits to the Hunting Grounds and coontie fields in this area. At first they had little contact with the settlers but as time passed friendly relations developed, and there are no mentions of Indian depredations committed in the area — even during the Indian scare of 1849-1850.

In central and southwest Florida, however, settlers, covetous of the land reserved for the Indians, set up a loud clamor for their complete removal or extermination. Some Indians, ignoring the cooler heads of their tribes, provided some justification for this clamor by stealing and the occasional murder of settlers beyond the reserve limits. Attempts to solve the problems by peaceful negotiations with the heads of the Indian bands made little progress. The situation changed radically when President Franklin Pierce transferred supervision of the eastern Seminoles from the Department of the Interior to the War Department. Now they came under the supervision of Jefferson Davis, the Secretary of War. He took a less conciliatory attitude and ordered the Army to prepare for the use of force if necessary. As part of the preparations, Fort Dallas was reoccupied, January 3, 1855.⁷² Finally, the Third Seminole War began December 20, 1855, when Indians attacked a small reconnaissance party near the Big Cypress Swamp.⁷³

This, the final occupation of Fort Dallas, which lasted until June 10, 1858, brought jobs, money and an average complement of 140 men and six to eight officers. Some of them, enlisted men as well as officers, brought their wives, children and servants. The troops engaged in station keeping activities and frequent patrols along the

coast and into the Everglades. Although the soldiers rarely encountered Indians, they often found signs that Indians were in the area. Once during a social event on the parade ground a woman saw an Indian peering from the nearby hammock but a search turned up nothing.

About three p.m. on January 7, 1856, John Mount arrived at Fort Dallas and reported Indians had attacked Peter Johnson's coontie mill on Biscayne Bay about six miles below the fort, (in today's Coconut Grove) and killed Johnson and a helper, Edward Farrell. Captain B. H. Hill, commanding at the fort, immediately dispatched three barges to round up all the families and detached settlers living in the community to bring them into the fort. He sent a twenty-man detachment to Johnson's mill, which ultimately found the bodies of Johnson and Farrell and buried them. They found one of the two houses vandalized but the other untouched.⁷⁴ An attempt to track the Indians was unsuccessful.

On August 12, 1856, Indians robbed and vandalized the home of George Ferguson (on the south bank of the river just west of today's twelfth avenue), and George Marshall (on the south fork of the Miami River, half way between today's Northwest Seventeenth and Twenty-Second Avenues) Two detachments, totaling ninety men, found fresh trails and camp sites littered with some of Ferguson's possessions but no Indians.⁷⁵

The troop's most useful accomplishment during this occupation was the construction of a road from Fort Dallas to Fort Lauderdale beginning about mid-December 1856. The segment, stretching from Fort Dallas to Arch Creek was built under the command of Captain John M. Brannan, and that of Arch Creek to Fort Lauderdale, under the command of Captain Abner Doubleday, the legendary inventor of baseball. Construction continued through the month of January and into February 1857.⁷⁶

This occupation also brought a boom in the social life of the Miami River folks. Walter S. Graham, Editor of Miami's first newspaper, the *Miami Metropolis*, interviewed old settlers at Key West who recalled delightful times at Fort Dallas:

... others told us of the pleasant picnics, boating parties and dances which occurred at Fort Dallas, particularly in 1855.⁷⁷

Hostilities gradually ceased, and the Third Seminole War came to an end by Army decree on May 8, 1858. Rose Richards, who arrived shortly before the war's termination, recalled:

I came to Miami when I was six. It was March 15, 1858, and the Indians who had been fighting the government troops at Old Fort Dallas had run up a peace flag that day about a quarter of a mile from the fort — ending the Indian Wars hereabouts.

I was standing on the deck of a two mast schooner with my mother and one of my three brothers when we sighted Miami. There were a few huts here, the rude wooden homes of two families, the huts and shacks of the bachelors who made up the bulk of the population, Fort Dallas, two stores and a post office.⁷⁸

When Mrs. Richards arrived in Miami, she recalled, only three other white families lived in or near the settlement: The Fletchers [Robert Richard Fletcher], George Ferguson's family and the Joe Farrells.

When asked if Indians ever caused her family trouble, she said, "Only over friendliness - they became very chummy."

One chilly day I had wrapped the children in coats and blankets and put them on a large bunk inside the house to keep warm. I was tucking the last one in when I was startled by a movement by my side. A Seminole warrior, completely unperturbed was crawling into the bed by the children. My amazement must have provoked an answer because the Indian, apparently surprised that an explanation was required, grumbled, "Pickaninny cold, me cold too," and burrowed under the covers. I let him stay.⁷⁹

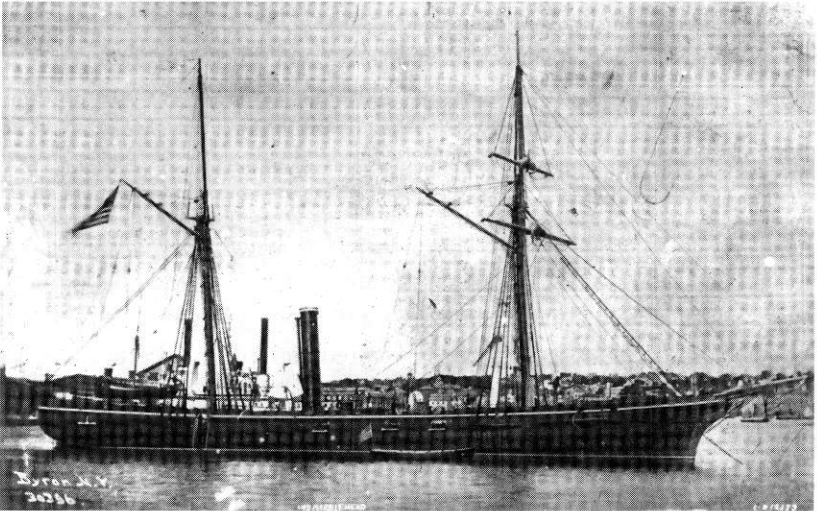
Whiskey caused much discord and occasional tragedy in the Miami River community. One such event occurred on the evening of February 14, 1861. George Marshall, in a drunken rage, shot and killed William Wagner's ten year old son in front of George Lewis' store (on the South bank of the river just west of Twelveth Avenue). The settlers sent for the sheriff, but he was in Key West. On February

23, and before the sheriff arrived, Marshall sold his 160 acres to Dr. Fletcher for \$300 and left the country. He was never heard from again.⁸⁰

Hardly noticed by the residents around the river, war clouds gathered on the national scene. On January 10, 1861, Florida's secession convention met in Tallahassee and voted sixty-two to seven to withdraw from the Union making Florida the third state to join the Confederacy. On April 12th, Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor was fired upon and the Civil War had begun.

Southeast Florida, far from the battlefields of the Civil War, none-the-less, felt the winds of war. At midnight, August 21, three Confederate sympathizers gained access to the Cape Florida Light-house, smashed its lens, and carried off three lamps and burners. The light was not re-lighted until April 15, 1866.⁸¹

The monthly mail boat from Key West ceased to sail. The schooners *William and John* and *Julia Gorden*, owned by Captain Sinclair and used to bring household goods, clothing and staple foods to the community, were seized for debt. Food and necessities became scarce. Settlers who had vessels had to get permission from both Lieutenant Commander Earl English, in command of the Gunboat *Sagamore* blockading the lower coast of Florida and Captain Malloy,



U.S. Gunboats blockaded the southern coasts during the Civil War (note the cutter laying alongside). Courtesy of The Mariner's Museum, Newport News, VA.

the Union Commander in Key West, to travel to the Island City for supplies. They were then permitted to bring back with them only the amount of supplies deemed necessary for one family for a limited period of time. In response, the settlers planted more vegetables: corn, beans, peas, and pumpkins, and cultivated more tropical fruits. Hogs and chickens were in demand. Fish, turtle and wild game made up a large portion of the diet. Flour, when it could be had, sold for \$17 a barrel and pickled pork for \$50 a barrel. Ordinary cotton homespun cost one dollar a yard.

Pine woods gophers (tortoises) were a luxury to be indulged in only on Sundays. Bread was made from yellow coontie and slap jacks or johnnycake from cornmeal ground at George Lewis' mill on the river. Many times the only thing on the table was a dish of coontie scalded in clear water, sometimes even without salt, Rose Richards wrote.

New faces were seen daily: Confederate sympathizers fleeing Key West to join the Army of the Confederate States,⁸² refugees trying to avoid the conflict, deserters of one army or the other and renegades. Some of these occupied the empty quarters of Fort Dallas, but many set up camps far out in the pine woods to avoid people and to engage in the making of pine tar which they sold to blockade runners. Alternately, bands of Union or Confederate soldiers swept through the community looking for deserters, contraband [escaped slaves] and blockade runners. Richards recalled that, fortunately, bands from the two armies never met in the Miami River community.

The sentiment of most of the Miami River settlers was with the South, but not blatantly so, particularly in the presence of strangers or known Unionists. Dr. Fletcher was one of the more outspoken locals and, indeed, his son, Robert Francis, enlisted in the Confederate service (April 25, 1862) as a hospital steward. Left in the hospital to tend Confederate wounded at the battle of Stone's River, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, he was captured and imprisoned at Camp Butler, Illinois, where he died September 25, 1863.⁸³

The most outspoken rebels of the Miami River community were George Lewis⁸⁴ and John Adams. Both of these men ran the Union blockade from Nassau to the Peace Creek, on the lower west coast, or to the Tampa Bay area⁸⁵ Their vessels were shallow draft,

centerboard sailboats that could sail into shallow waters and thus evade the blockading gunboats. They carried cargo such as food, whiskey, tobacco, medicines, cloth and other items for local consumption but rarely guns, powder or lead.⁸⁶ Ultimately, both Lewis and Adams were captured, and sent to Union prisons, (Adams to Governors Island, New York and Lewis to Fort Taylor in Key West); both survived the war. Lewis went to Cozumel on the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico and never returned to South Florida. Adams returned to his land on the south fork of the Miami River where he died in January 1883.⁸⁷

Early in the war the Union established a blockade of southern ports. The U.S. Gunboat *Sagamore*,⁸⁸ with Lieutenant Commander Earl English in command, was on patrol from Indian River to Key West for nine months during 1862 and 1863.⁸⁹ Periodically, she made stops in Biscayne Bay and sent cutters⁹⁰ to Miami and up the Miami River looking for Lewis, Adams and others. The sailors often bought fruit, vegetables, chickens or hogs from the settlers when a supply was available.

Richards records that on one of these sweeps:

Captain English with a number of sailors from the blockade steamer, came to Miami, calling first on Dr. Fletcher and asking him to take the oath of allegiance [to the Union]. Upon his refusal to do so he was told to make up his mind by the time they returned from up the river, where they had some business to attend to. They passed by our house not saying a word to any of us, never having done so before. Soon afterward a big black smoke was seen to arise from where Mr. Lewis' factory had been standing and which could be seen by ourselves and also by the people in Miami. Fear was pictured on our faces, we thinking the time had come when we would be left homeless. Thank goodness we were not disturbed by this party. They returned to Miami and did not have to ask Mr. Fletcher the second time to comply to the request made of him a few hours before by Captain English.⁹¹

This event is also recorded in less detail in the diary of the surgeon aboard the *Sagamore*.⁹²

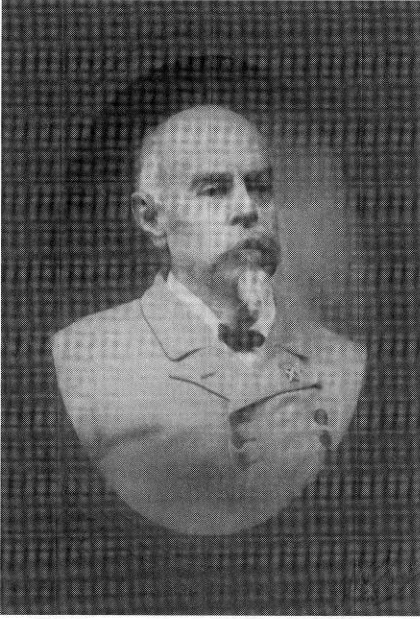
There were also outspoken Unionists among the Miami community during the Civil War - Theodore Bissell and Isiah Hall, for example. Bissell had a homestead on the Miami River above the falls but lived in Key West where he held the position of Deputy Inspector of Customs, which required trips to Miami. Hall served as pilot for the *Sagamore*. Because of anti-Union sentiment, Hall moved his family to Fort Lauderdale and later to Jupiter Inlet, Fort Dallas, and Key West. After the War the Halls lived for several years just south of today's Matheson Hammock on what was once called Hall's Creek.

Lee surrendered at Appomattox, April 12, 1865, but for the Miami River community the war was not quite over. Richards wrote that rumors soon reached the community that President and Mrs. Jefferson Davis were trying to escape through south Florida. Suddenly, "... the pine woods were full of Yankees looking for the President. " Union soldiers captured Davis near Irwinsville, Georgia, May 10, but the Confederate Secretary of War, John Cabell Breckinridge, and party managed to reach Fort Dallas (June 9) in a small sloop. They were met by a villainous group of deserters and renegades whom they managed to deceive as to their identity, and with gold coins, purchase water, food and rum. There followed a harrowing escape as the fugitives were pursued by the renegades down Biscayne Bay, over Featherbed Banks, out through Caesar's Creek and finally to Cardenas, Cuba. ⁹³

With the ending of the war many of the refugees and others living around the river departed for their previous homes and elsewhere.

On October 25, 1865, a federally mandated constitutional convention was convened in Tallahassee to alter the state's Constitution of 1861 and bring it in line with the national constitution. Florida was under martial law, and a federally acceptable constitution was a condition for return to statehood.

Dr. Fletcher was elected to represent Dade County but apparently did not attend the sessions despite free transportation to Tallahassee being furnished by the Union.⁹⁴ This convention, "...annulled the secession ordinance, abolished slavery, declared the inhabitants free without distinction of color, and permitted Negroes to testify



Dr. Jephtha Vining Harris — 1839-1914.
Courtesy of Mr. Fred Kirtland.



William Henry Gleason. *Miami, The Magic City*,
p.41, Courtesy of Arva Moore Parks.

in court cases involving their own race.⁹⁵ It did not give the Negro the vote. This constitution satisfied few Republicans in Congress and Florida was denied admission to the Union.

Soon afterwards Dade County politics began a great metamorphosis with the arrival of two sophisticated Yankees, William Henry Gleason and William Henry Hunt, who were “no common people.” Historian Arva Moore Parks has given a complete account of the machinations of these men.⁹⁶ In brief, claiming they had a lease from the U. S. Government, they moved into the Fort Dallas buildings. Gleason soon became the self-appointed political boss of South Dade County. He had little opposition until Dr. Jephtha Vining Harris bought the Fort Dallas property from Harriet English, its longtime owner.

Harris was “no common person”

either.⁹⁷ He enlisted in the Mississippi and Alabama Cavalry a month after graduation in medicine at the University of Louisiana (March 20, 1861) and found himself at the Battle of Shiloh, Tennessee (April 6-7, 1862). Considering the number of troops engaged and the casualties on both sides, this battle has been rated the bloodiest of the Civil War. In support of a pension claim many years later, Dr. Harris wrote:

I had the pleasure of fighting at the Battle of Shiloh and I never spent a happier day in all my [life]. I actually, as a sharpshooter, killed seventy-six Yankees, all single shots, and amputated legs and arms, at Shiloh Church, all the next day...⁹⁸

Harris was not one to be deceived or intimidated by the likes of Gleason. Having paid \$1,450 to English for the 610 acres known as the Fort Dallas tract, he came to Fort Dallas in January 1870, to find Gleason and Hunt in residence. He had some difficulty evicting them but finally gained full possession in March 1870.⁹⁹ Gleason and Hunt, however, were slow to remove their possessions and nearly a year later, Harris notified Mrs. Hunt that the possessions would be put out on his wharf where they would be exposed to the elements and where she could get them, if she wished. Relations between Harris and the two Yankees continued to fester until Harris challenged Hunt to a duel and threatened to shoot him on sight if he stepped on the Fort Dallas property. Neither Hunt nor Gleason took up the challenge. In April 1874, when Harris happened to meet Gleason on a Key West street, he gave him a sound thrashing with a cowhide strap.

Gleason, always eager to win by fair means or foul, attempted to take advantage of an honest error in the Fort Dallas deed to wrest the land from Harris.¹⁰⁰ Although Harris prevailed, Gleason managed to cloud the deed for several years.¹⁰¹

Meanwhile, Dr. Fletcher was plagued with ill health which, "... required medical attention that could not be had in Miami."¹⁰² On April 14, 1870, he sold his ten acres near the mouth of the Miami River to Charles F. Barager (a.k.a. Barrager) for \$300 and moved to Key West. Curiously, this same year he bought 40 acres adjoining the George Marshall tract from the estate of William H. Wall, his recently

deceased brother-in-law. Perhaps this was to help his sister or it may have been just a wise investment as at that time he owned the Marshall tract.

Dr. Fletcher lived out the remainder of his life in Key West. He visited the Miami River community twice for short periods of time. He was a guest of the William Wagner family during the summer of 1873. From August 8, 1874, to October 13, 1874, he visited George Parsons. Fletcher died in Key West sometime between 1874 and 1880.¹⁰³ Upon Ole Doc Fletcher's departure, the Miami River community was left with just one physician, Dr. Jephtha Vining Harris.

In the summer of 1870, a severe epidemic of yellow fever broke out in Key West, causing the citizens to flee to the Biscayne Bay area. Mr. James M. Dancy, one of a survey party in Miami at that time, wrote, "... the shore here was lined with craft of all sorts and sizes trying to escape from the epidemic..."¹⁰⁴ They brought the epidemic with them and infected a number of residents (the total census of Dade County in July 1870 was eighty-five). There were no deaths but the chief of the survey party was gravely ill. Dancy believed he protected himself by drinking daily quantities of coconut milk.

An event occurred October 21 of that year that nearly resulted in Dr. Harris' death and caused Harris and twenty other male residents of the Miami River community to be brought before the District Court, Southern District of the United States, in Key West, charged with unlawful salvage. This represented over half of the young adult males in the



Horace Philo Porter, M.D. — 1838-1212.
Miami, The Magic City, p. 42. Courtesy
of Arva Moore Parks.

community.¹⁰⁵ Although Harris had served as wreck master and thus in charge of the salvage, he apparently avoided incarceration or a fine whereas three of the other participants were not so fortunate, languishing two months in the Key West jail on grits, black strap molasses and dirty water called coffee, and paying a fine.

Harris, according to Agnew Welsh, a newspaperman and historian of Miami, was a man, "...of great courage. During his residence here he had occasion in 1872 to visit Enterprise [on the east coast - 200 miles north of Miami] and having no other means of travel made the round trip on foot, his food supply consisting of a quantity of parched corn and some salt."¹⁰⁶

Harris was also "an obliging neighbor," Rose Richards recalled, and this inadvertently resulted in an unpleasant incident. In 1872, Harris, was acting as agent for Anna Beasley, who was then living in Key West. She was the widow of Edmund D. Beasley who had settled on the Coconut Grove in the 1830s, and had applied for a homestead of 160 acres along a mile and a half of the current waterfront.¹⁰⁷ Harris leased the Beasley land to a Union veteran, Dr. Horace P. Porter, who arrived in the community in 1872.¹⁰⁸ Porter discovered the homestead was not proved up and attempted to "jump" Beasley's claim by representing the claim as abandoned. This effort was defeated but aroused animosity among the long-time residents who sided with the Beasley's widow.¹⁰⁹ "All was not bad, however. Porter applied for a post office under the name Cocoanut Grove which was granted and opened January 6, 1873. Porter was the postmaster, and when he left it closed. On August 24, 1884, when Commodore Ralph M. Munroe sought to reestablish a post office in Cocoanut Grove, he reopened the previous one and thus established the current name of this community, later spelled Coconut Grove.

Porter was disappointed at his inability to claim Beasley's improved land and was not willing to undertake the labor to prove up an 80 acre homestead adjacent to Beasley's, which he had applied for and received. Furthermore, his wife and daughters did not find life on the frontier to their liking and returned to New England. Finally, on January 19, 1874, Porter left Cocoanut Grove for good.

While Porter was still in South Florida, he played a role in the second incursion of yellow fever into the community. In the fall of

1873, the bark *Yausberghaus* put in at Key West with yellow fever aboard. Charles F. Barnes of Miami and Dr. Harris, each in his own vessel, were in Key West at the time and not knowing of the yellow fever, visited the *Yausberghaus*. The disease did not spread to the city, but infected Barnes and Harris.¹¹⁰ Barnes returned to Miami on September 18 and died the following day. In September troops from Key West arrived at Miami hoping to escape the epidemic. They established Camp Dallas on the site of Fort Dallas. The troops escaped the disease but it spread to the community and in the subsequent days Barnes' mother took sick and died. Dr. Harris and his three children, and William Wagner, Jr., Andrew Barr and Charles F. Seibold all contracted the disease, but survived. Captain R. S. Vickery, surgeon with the troops, took care of Dr. Harris and his children, as well as Wagner and Barr. Dr. Porter cared for Seibold.

Possibly debilitated by his recent bout with yellow fever and discouraged by the poor results of his farming, Harris decided to sell out and move to Key West. Richards wrote, "... Harris was a good physician, and an obliging neighbor, but unfortunately he was no farmer..."¹¹¹ Harris sold the Fort Dallas Tract to the Biscayne Bay Company for \$6,000 and moved to Key West on December 3, 1873.¹¹²

Yellow jack visited Miami for a third time in the summer of 1874. Fearing yellow fever, which was present in Havana that summer, the troops at Key West were sent aboard the schooner *Matchless* to Miami. They arrived June 16th, and the Fort Dallas property not being available, they set up Camp W. D. Whiting fronting on the bay, south of William Brickell's house and store. On August 8th, yellow fever broke out on the U.S.S. *Ticonderoga* at Key West.¹¹³ On September 5th, on orders from the Admiral at Key West, several yellow fever victims were put ashore at the Camp Whiting hospital from a troop ship traveling north. This unusual action was taken possibly because, at that time, Camp Whiting's medical officer was Dr. Joseph Yates Porter, who was a noted authority on yellow fever. Fortunately yellow fever did not spread to the community from these cases.¹¹⁴

January 1874 saw the arrival of Dr. Richard Bulckley Potter, the fifth physician in the Miami River community. He was the first physician who charged and received a monetary fee for his services.¹¹⁵

He left a practice of medicine he had just begun in Cincinnati to bring his brother, George, a severe asthmatic, to a gentler climate. He staked out a claim for eighty acres at Biscayne and built a cabin (on today's map at 8500 Northeast Tenth Avenue). During his sojourn in the community, 1874-1882, he was the only physician in the area. Although Dr. Potter did practice medicine when he was needed and sometimes collected a fee for it he, like others before him, had to supplement his income. He farmed, made coontie starch, served as Customs Inspector, Deputy U. S. Marshall and Clerk of the County Court, and even dawdled in salvaging shipwrecks to make ends meet. The population was steadily growing, in the Miami River/Biscayne Bay area, but more slowly than up around Lake Worth. George Potter moved first to the area in 1881, and established a 160 acre homestead just south of the heart of present day Palm Beach. Richard remained in the Miami River community hoping to sell his homestead, but when no buyers came forth, he followed his brother to the shores of Lake Worth in May 1882. He bought property on the western shore of the lake, in today's West Palm Beach, and practiced medicine there until his death, July 13, 1909.

Ole Doc Fletcher's colleagues and neighbors seldom had to



Dr. Richard B. Potter — 1845-1909 —
Courtesy of Mrs. Ben Crowell Stewart.

combat serious disease, at least in part due to their small number, isolation and vigorous youth. Undoubtedly accidents occurred, although few are recorded in the extant records. These records tell of children being born in the community, but do not mention midwives or physicians in attendance until Dr. Potter delivered Mary Brickell of her daughter, Maude, April 4, 1874.¹¹⁶ The first mention of surgery by a civilian physician is that of Dr. Harris' operation on a Seminole warrior for an arrow wound in the groin. Medical care by civilian physicians is documented in several instances, and we must presume there

were others, but clearly the time when a doctor could support himself with the practice of medicine had not yet come. Nonetheless, as we have seen, the earliest physicians played important, and sometimes exciting, roles in the Miami River community that a century later has become the Miami-Dade megalopolis.

During the four decades, 1843 to 1883, the population of the Miami River community grew very slowly. Fletcher, his colleagues and his neighbors struggled to survive by farming, fishing, hunting, beach combing, making coontie starch, trading with the Indians, shipping produce to markets in Key West, tending the lighthouse at Cape Florida and performing the few paid government jobs such as Clerk of the Court, Deputy U. S. Marshall and Postmaster. During those years they witnessed two extended occupations of Fort Dallas, the privations of the Union blockade during the Civil War, a self-appointed carpetbag dictator and three incursions of yellow fever into the community. Theirs was a mostly peaceful, sometimes stressful but not uneventful life.

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Endnotes

1. Diary of George W. Parsons (1873-1875). A typescript of a microfilm copy in the P. K. Yonge Library, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, which was obtained by Arva Moore Parks:102. (Here in after cited: "Parsons' Diary.")

2. "Miami Pioneer Recalls Slaughter of Settlers Close to Miami" *Miami Daily News*, 18 October, 1925.

3. Joe Knetsch and Paul S. George, "A Problematical Law: The Armed Occupation Act of 1842 and Its Impact on Southeast Florida," *Tequesta*, 53 (1993), 74.

4. Monroe County Deed Book "B", page 3.

5. Oby J. Bonawit, *Miami Florida Early Families and Records*. (Miami privately printed, 1980): 11. (Hereinafter cited: "Bonawit."); *The Key West Citizen*, 2 May, 1927, citing Rosalie Fletcher's death, states she was the widow of a Mr. Carroll, but no other source verifies this and it seems unlikely.

6. A more precise date of arrival has not been found. In testimony (Monroe County Deed Book I, page 211), Fletcher states he, "...moved there [the Miami River] in 1843." This was likely in the fall of 1843, for Fletcher is noted as the Clerk of the Monroe County Court in August 1843, (See: "Exhibit H. History of the Title of the Egan Grant," Arva Moore Parks archives.)

7. Dr. Benjamin B. Strobel visited the Miami River in September 1829. (Hammond, E.A., "Dr. Strobel Reports on Southeast Florida, 1836," *Tequesta*, 21 [1961], 65-75.)

8. Bonawit, 8-9.

9. This appeared in *The News*, St. Augustine, December 30, 1843. (Agnew Welsh Scrapbook Miami # 17: page 19. Special Collection, Miami-Dade Public Library, 101 West Flagler Street.) When the settlement was first called "Miami" is not certain. The earliest appearance of this name in published print, thus far found, is in *The Acts of the Legislative Council, the General Assembly and the Legislature of the Territory of Florida*, 1844, page 17. . This Act, passed March 9, 1844, established the county seat of Dade County, ". . . at Miami, on the South side of [the] Miami River, where it empties into Biscaino Bay." (See: Hudson, F.M., "Beginnings in Dade County," *Tequesta*, I [July 1943], 13.) (Hereinafter cited: "Hudson:

Beginnings”) The name “Miami” was likely in conversational use well before it appeared in print.

10. Hudson: Beginnings, 13.

11. Dr. Thomas Skaggs Gowin, born in today’s downtown Miami in 1911, told the author he swam in crystal clear water from a beach of fine white sand on the south bank of the Miami River near its mouth, when he was a child.

12. Letter: J.M. Robertson to F.J. Haines, April 18, 1854, National Archives, (Hereinafter: “NA”) Document R-2, Letters Received by the Department of Florida, 1854, Record Group (RG) 393, Records of the U.S. Army Continental Command, Washington, D.C. 20408. (Hereinafter cited: “Robertson to Haines, April 18, 1854.”)

13. The first buildings of Fort Dallas, “three blockhouses,” were erected in February and March 1838. It is likely that during subsequent occupations more frame buildings were added, but the stone buildings, one of which is preserved in Lummus Park as Fort Dallas, were likely started in late 1848 or early 1849, as they are noted on the Gerdes map of early 1849. See: Walter S. Graham, “Some Historical Data,” the *Miami Metropolis*, 20 November, 1896, 7-8. (Hereinafter cited: “Graham: Historical Data.”)

14. The notation “English Mill” appears on a topographical map prepared by F.H. Gerdes, Assistant Surveyor, U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, February 1849. Official and Private Correspondence of F.H. Gerdes, 1849, NA, Washington, D.C., RG. 23. (Hereinafter cited: “Gerdes, Corres.”) On another map of this same area, at the same time and location is the notation, “Coonty Mill.” English produced both sugar and Bermuda arrowroot (coontie), according to his claim for reparations in 1858.

15. Parsons’ Diary, July 18, 1874, 95.

16. “The Cruise of the Leonard,” A.H. Curtiss, Special Correspondent to *The Times Union*, Jacksonville, 12 December, 1884.

17. Gerdes Corres., Feb. 5, 1849.

18. Coontie, coonty, koontie, compty, comptee or compte, as it is variously spelled, is a cycad of the genus *Zamia* that grew plentifully throughout the pinelands of Dade County at that time. Its bulbous root when pulverized, soaked in water and dried gave forth a starchy powder, often spoken of as arrowroot. It was used to make bread and

various confections, and in the nineteenth century, was the chief ingredient of Seminole sofki. (Gearhart, Ernest G. "South Florida's First Industry," *Tequesta* 12 [1952], 55-57 and Burkhardt, Mrs. Henry J., "Starch Making: A Pioneer Florida Industry," *Tequesta* 12 [1952], 47-53.)

19. Blair D. Conner, , P.L.S., retired Chief Surveyor of the Dade County Public Works Department. At the author's request, Mr. Conner extensively researched the location of the Fletcher place in the deed and plat books of Dade County. This location is principally based on a description found in Deed Book A, page 51, and verified by a deed in Deed Book 12, page 461, that gives as reference "The Fletcher Place."

20. "Campaigning in the Everglades," Colonel Loomis L. Langdon, *Miami Metropolis*, 21 April, 1899, 3.

21. Margot Ammidown, *The Wagner Family: Homesteading in Miami's Pioneer Era 1855-1896*, (Miami: Privately printed, 1981), 85.

22. Thomas F. Russell, "Fifty Years Ago, An Article Written About Biscayne Bay in 1843," *The Tropical Sun*, Juno, Florida, 28 July, 1892.

23. Unable to find a detailed description of Fletcher's house, the author has relied on descriptions of similar construction at Fort Dallas at that time and from the narrative in Parsons' Diary. Parsons lived in the house that Fletcher built from November 1873 to May 1875.

24. Parsons' Diary, January 19, 1874, 22.

25. This is the date the Legislative Council of the Florida Territory passed an act, "That the County Site for the county of Dade shall hereafter be at Miami, on the South side of [the] Miami River, where it empties into Bescaino Bay." (Hudson: Beginnings, 14.). Presumably, shortly thereafter the actual transfer took place and Fletcher's house became the Dade County Courthouse. From 1836 until 1843, the seat of Dade County was located at Indian Key.

26. Parsons' Diary, April 1, 1874, 60.

27. Arva Moore Parks, *Miami, The Magic City Centennial Press*, 1991, 34. (Hereinafter cited: "Parks: Miami.")

28. Robertson to Haines, April 18, 1854.

29. Also known as the "Devil's Punchbowl." (See: *Notes on the*

Coast of the United States by A.D. Bache, Superintendent, U.S. Coastal Survey, No. 45, NA, Washington DC, August 1861.)

30. A. D. Bache, "Notes on the Coast of the United States. . ." (See endnote above)

31. Wright Langley and Arva Moore Parks, "Diary of an Unidentified Land Official, 1855," *Tequesta* 43 (1983), 20. (Hereinafter cited: "Langley and Parks: Diary of an Unidentified Land Official.")

32. Report of the Court of Claims, No. 175, 35th Congress, 1st Session, Richard Fitzpatrick vs. The United States, May 14, 1858, 3.

33. Mrs. A.C. [Rose Wagner] Richards, "Reminiscences of the Early Days of Miami," *The Miami News*, a series of articles beginning October 1, 1903. Richards came to the Miami River community as a six year old child on March 15, 1858, and is undoubtedly the single most reliable source for the history of this area in that era. (Hereinafter cited: "Richard's Reminiscences," with page numbering referring to a typescript made available by Arva Moore Parks.)

34. E.V. Blackman, *Miami and Dade Florida, Its Settlement, Progress and Achievement*, (Washington, Victor Rainbolt, 1921), 16.

35. Marie L. Cappick, "Recollections of Early Days in Miami and Dade County," *Key West Citizen*, 1 September, 1924. (Hereinafter cited: Cappick: "Recollections.")

36. Parsons' Diary, February 29, 1874, 166.

37. P.A. Quinan, Quarterly Sick & Wounded Report, Fort Dallas, March 31, 1855, RG 94, Records of the Adjutant Generals Office, 1780s to 1917, National Archives.

38. J.C. Dimick to F.N. Page, September 15, 1857, NA, RG 393.

39. This route is pieced together from interviews with Charles A. Richards in July 1968. Richards was born on the Miami River in 1887 and lived on today's Sunset Drive and, after 1891, on Cutler Road. Interviews with other early residents of Coconut Grove corroborate this route.

40. Parsons' Diary, February 24, 1875, 184.

41. Parsons' Diary, June 20, 1874, 86. The Miami post office had been in one of the stone buildings of Fort Dallas until June 10, 1870, with W.H. Hunt as postmaster. Dr. J.V. Harris bought the Fort Dallas property, November 30, 1869, and Hunt moved to his homestead, in Biscayne today's, Miami Shores, taking the Miami post office with

him and changing the name to the Biscayne post office — Miami had no post office until September 22, 1874, when it was reopened in Fort Dallas as the “Maama” post office. (See: Bradbury, A.G. and E. S. Hallock. *A Chronology of Florida Post Offices Handbook #2*, Florida Federation of Stamp Clubs, 1962, 53.)

42. “Abner Doubleday and the Third Seminole War,” Ed. by David Ramsey, *Florida Historical Quarterly*, LVIX (January 1981), 323, fit. 17.

43. Richards’ Reminiscences, 67-68.

44. Gerdes, Corres., January 30, 1849.

45. Robertson to Haines, April 18, 1854.

46. Neil E. Hurley, *An Illustrated History of Cape Florida Lighthouse*, (Camino, California, Historic Lighthouse Publishers, 1989), 13-14.

47. “A Tour of Florida, 1865-1866,” by Brevet Lieutenant Colonel George F. Thompson, Letters sent to Commander O.O. Howard, Headquarters of the Freedmen’s Bureau, NA, RG 109, M 732, R 27, 44.

48. Richards’ Reminiscences, 5.

49. Robertson to Haines, April 18, 1854.

50. Thelma Peters, *Biscayne Country, 1870-1926*, (Miami, Banyan Books, 1981), 168-169.

51. Richards Reminiscences, 55; Thelma Peters, *Biscayne Country*, loc. cit.

52. Fletcher arrived at this session nine days late but took an active part by serving on committees, introducing three bills (two relating to Dade County) and voting on measures before the House. (See: *A Journal of the Proceedings of the House of Representatives of the Second General Assembly of the State of Florida, at its First Session Begun and Held in the City of Tallahassee, on Monday, 23d November, 1846*. [Tallahassee: “Southern Journal” Office, 1846]) The author is indebted to Dr. Joe Knetsch, who researched this matter at the author’s request.

53. H.M. Pickett, K. L. Rice and Henry M. Spelman, III, *Florida Postal History and Postal Markings During the Stampless Period*, Florida Federation of Stamp Clubs, Handbook # 1, Palm Beach

Stamp Club, 1957, 28. Also see: Bradbury & Hallock, endnote #41 above. Pickett, et al in the first reference above states Robert [R] Fletcher was postmaster in 1950, but Agnew Welsh states George W. Ferguson was Postmaster at that time and that the post office was at his store on the River just west of today's NW 12th Avenue. (See: Welsh Scrapbook, Miami, # 17, pages 14 & 15.)

54. Joan Gill Blank, *Key Biscayne: A History of Miami's Tropical Island and the Cape Florida Lighthouse*, (Sarasota, FL, Pineapple Press, 1996), 31 and 59-60.

55. Graham: Historical Data, 7-8. Graham gives 1849 as the date English began the stone buildings, but see endnote 13, above.

56. Report: 1st Lieut. Lewis O. Morris to Major Genl. T.S. Jesup, July 1, 1855. Records of the Quartermaster General, NA, R.G. 92, Washington, D.C.

57. James W. Covington, "The Indian Scare of 1849," *Tequesta* 31 (1961), 53-63. (Hereinafter cited: "Covington, Indian Scare.")

58. Robertson to Haines, April 18, 1854.

59. Covington, Indian Scare, 61.

60. W. M. Straight, "Fort Dallas, a Most Salubrious Post," *Journal of the Florida Medical Association*, 69 (August 1982), 710-711.

61. Records of Betty Bruce, Key West Historian, in possession of her daughter, Linda Carter, Key West, FL.

62. Charles Samuel Swartout Baron (a.k.a. Charles F. Barron) was probably born in Virginia in 1803. He married Mary Wilhelmina Ziglar (1809-1875), April 22, 1830; they had no children. Prior to coming to the Miami River community he practiced in Knoxville, Tennessee. He lived at the Punch Bowl property much of the time between 1851 and 1861. After leaving the river, he practiced medicine many years in Key West. He was an active member of the Key West Medical Society, its President (1878), and an "honorary" member of the Florida Medical Association (1875-1888). He served as Surgeon at the U.S. Naval Hospital (1872-1875) and U.S. Commissioner. He was appointed Judge of the Probate Court of Monroe County in February 1871 and served until his death, November 8, 1888. He was an active member of the Dade Lodge No. 14 of the Free and Accepted Masons (1873-1888).

63. Langley and Parks, "Diary of an Unidentified Land Official," 19-20.

64. "Registers of Lighthouse Keepers, 1845-1912, Microfilm Publication, M 1373, Roll 3, NA, Washington, D.C.

65. Thomas W. Taylor, Florida's Territorial Lighthouses, 1824-1845, (Allandale, Florida, T. W. Taylor, 1995), 115.

66. "Instructions for Light-Keepers of the United States. Stations With Two or More Keepers." Washington city (sic), Treasury Department, October 14, 1852.

67. Robert Francis Fletcher served as Assistant Keeper at the Cape Florida light under his father and for a time, his father's successor, Dr. Baron, until he resigned after 1855. On March 31, 1859, he was appointed Assistant Keeper under his grandmother, who was Keeper of the Key West Lighthouse at Whitehead spit. Apparently he served there until shortly before he enlisted in the Confederate States Army.

68. Card Index to Lighthouse Correspondence, RG. 26, NA, Washington. This Index to letters received and sent by the lighthouse service is briefly annotated for each bit of correspondence. In 1921, a fire in the Department of the Treasury destroyed almost all of the indexed Letterbooks for the period under study, but the index survived. (Hereinafter cited: "Index to Lighthouse Correspondence.")

69. Index to Lighthouse Correspondence, April 6, and May 8, 1855.

70. On the "Registers of Lighthouse Keepers, 1845-1912," (see endnote # 63 for full reference), p. 117, there is a notation by Fletcher's name, "removed January 17, 1855." However, on all other lists of Keepers the date of removal is May 21, 1855, which is the date of his successor's appointment.

71. James W. Covington, *The Billy Bowlegs War 1855-1858*. (Chuluota, Florida, The Mickler House Publishers, 1982), 2-3. (Hereinafter cited: "Covington: Billy Bowlegs War.")

72. Covington: Billy Bowlegs War, 26-27.

73. Covington: Billy Bowlegs War, 2.

74. Capt. B.H. Hill to Lieut. S.M. Vincent, January 8, 1856. Washington, HA, R.G. 393, Florida, 1850-1858. Johnson's mill was likely near the bay, east of Douglas Road and just below the intersection of Main Highway and Douglas Road in Coconut Grove.

75. Memoirs of Reconnaissance. Compiled by Major Francis N. Page. Washington, NA, Department of Florida, War Department,

R.G. 393, Records of the United States Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920.

76. Parks, Miami, 36-37; U.S. Army Post Returns for Fort Dallas, Florida, The Months of December 1856 and January and February 1857.

77. "Old Settlers of Key West," *The Miami Metropolis*, March 19, 1897.

78. "Oldest Resident Gives Saga of Early History of Miami," *The Miami Daily News*, ca. March 1933. (Hereinafter cited: Saga, *Miami Daily News*, March 1933.)

79. Saga, *Miami Daily News*, March 1933.

80. Richards, *Reminiscences*, 39.

81. Dorothy Dodd, "Volunteers Report Destruction of Lighthouse" *Tequesta* XIV (1954), 67-70.

82. "Civil War Diary of Robert Watson," Transcript in the possession of the Chickamauga Chattanooga National Military Park, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, Entry dated, November 27, 1861.

83. Robert F. Fletcher's Confederate Service Record, Co. Regiment Florida Infantry, NA, Washington, D.C.

84. Staubach, Colonel James C., "Miami the Civil War, 1861-1865," *Tequesta*, LIII: (1993), 46-51, and passim.

85. Richard's, *Reminiscences*, 43, 4647.

86. George E. Buker, *Blockaders, Refugees & Contrabands, Civil War on Florida's Gulf Coast, 1861-1865*, (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1993), 36-41.

87. Richards' *Reminiscences*. 46-47.

88. *The Sagamore* was a wooden hull, screw gunboat, 158' over all, 28' beam and 12' depth in the hold. She had one stack and two schooner-rigged masts. She was coal fired and armed with one 20 pdr., two 24 pdrs. and one 12 pdr. Total complement, 114. [Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Vol. VI, (Washington, GPO, 1976), 227.]

89. Illustrated is the U.S. Gunboat *Marblehead*, sistership of the *Sagamore*, with a cutter alongside.

90. Cutters were ship's boats with square sterns, 24-32 feet in length, propelled by 814 oars and, when appropriate, a sail.

91. Richard's *Reminiscences*, 47.

92. Walter Keeler Scofield Papers, #437, July 18, 1863. The

original is in the Manuscripts and Archives Collection of Yale University. Copies of the pages used in this paper are in the Florida Collection of the Miami-Dade Public Library.

93. John Taylor Wood, "Escape of General Breckinridge." Published in: *Famous Adventures and Prison Escapes of the Civil War*, (New York; Century, 1893).

94. *Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of Florida Begun and Held at the Capital of the State at Tallahassee, Wednesday, October 25, 1865, Tallahassee*, (Office of the Floridian. Printed by Dyke and Sparhawk, (1865). Fletcher's name appears in the list of duly elected county representatives but not in the lists of those sworn in, those signing the Constitution, or elsewhere in the document.

95. Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877*, (Gainesville, University Presses of Florida, 1974), 44.

96. Arva Moore Parks, "Miami in 1876," *Tequesta* XXXV (1975), 101-111.

97. Harris was born in the Abbeville District of South Carolina, May 28, 1839. At age seven, he moved with his parents to Columbus, Mississippi. He graduated from the University of Mississippi with high honors in 1859 and he earned his medical degree from the University of Louisiana on March 20, 1861. He enlisted in the Confederate States Army as a private in April 1861. After the battle of Shiloh, April 6-7, 1862, he was commissioned Assistant Surgeon. On January 7, 1864, he transferred to the Confederate States Navy and was stationed at Mobile, Alabama, and attached to the Confederate States steamer *Nashville* until the end of the Civil War. He resumed with his wife, Mary Perkins Harris, to Columbus where he managed a cotton plantation and begot two sons, J. Vining (1865-1936) and Lewis A. (1869-). Later, in 1873, Harris and his wife had a daughter, Martha Watkins (1873-1955).

Seeking a healthier climate, he bought the Fort Dallas Tract (November 30, 1869) and took up residence (March 1870). He farmed about ten acres with subsistence crops and sisal hemp, built a road from the river to the bay, and operated a small store at Fort Dallas. He became a favorite of the Seminoles when he successfully treated three for typhoid fever and on another occasion successfully operated on a warrior with an accidental arrow wound in the groin.

They made him an honorary member of the tribe. When the false alarm of an Indian uprising was carried to the Miami River community in the summer of 1873, the settlers scurried to Fort Dallas, believing Harris could protect them.

After returning to Key West (December 1873), he entered into the practice of medicine and surgery. He continued his practice until 1909 except for a period (October 1889-February 1891) when he was living on his sisal plantation near Fort Myers. A note signed by Betty Bruce, Key West historian, in the Harris file of the Monroe County Library at Key West states that he was the first doctor to operate for appendicitis in Key West and that the patients of his first three such operations survived. In 1875 he served as Health Officer at Key West. He was an active member of the Key West Medical Society and a member of the Florida Medical Association (1892-1911). He was a staunch Democrat and served in the State House in 1877. Appalled at the custom, then in practice, of the "good old boys" selecting candidates for the State Senate and House seats, he succeeded in getting a Constitutional amendment requiring Primary Elections, thus allowing all voters to decide the slates. He served as Superintendent of Public Instruction (1877), Chairman of the School Board (for many years) and Collector of Customs at Key West (1885-1889).

Until his death, Harris was an active member of the United Confederate Veterans and received a pension from the State of Florida, \$100 per annum, beginning October 16, 1907. He died of uremia, November 21, 1914, aged 75 years and is buried in the Key West Cemetery. The Harris High School bears his name in honor of the years of service as Chairman of the Monroe County School Board. A bronze bust of his likeness is in the Key West Historic Memorial Sculpture Garden in Mallory Square recognizing his many contributions to the development of Key West.

98. J.V. Harris to A. A. Croom, Comptroller, Tallahassee, FL. Quoted from a letter in support of Harris' Civil War Pension Claim. It is not dated but his claim was submitted July 15, 1907.

99. Arva Moore Parks, *Where the River Found the Bay: Historical Study of the Granada Site, Miami Florida*, Florida Division of Archives, History and Records Management, 1978, 113.

100. Parks, "Miami 1876," 108.

101. Parsons' Diary, May 3, 1874, 72.

102. Cappick "Recollections."

103. An exhaustive search by Tom Hambright, Floridiana Librarian of the Monroe County Public Library, has failed to disclose death or cemetery records on Dr. Fletcher, although it is believed he died and was buried in Key West. His name appears on the Key West census of 1870 but not on that of 1880. No probate records have been found.

104. Welsh, Agnew, "Odd Incidents of Early Days Worth Telling," *Miami Daily News*, 26 July, 1925.

105. Arva Moore Parks, "The Wreck of The Three Sisters," *Tequesta* (1971), 19-28.

106. Agnew Welsh, "First a Tent, Then a Cabin, Now Miami the Magic City," *Miami Daily News*, 1925. See a clipping in the Agnew Welsh Scrapbook Miami #17, 10,11,12. This appears to be based on interviews of Adam C. Richards by Welsh.

107. On today's map (According to Arva Moore Parks, "Ned Beasley and Coconut Grove," *Update*, June 1977, 8), on the north, the Beasley homestead extended west along Grand Avenue from Southwest Twenty-Seventh Avenue to McDonald Street, then south to St. Gauden's Court and was bounded on the southeast by Biscayne Bay.

108. Horace Philo Porter was born in Ellington, Connecticut, February 6, 1838. He attended the National Medical College, Washington, D.C., 1858-1859. He "... took his last year..." at Yale College of Medicine, graduating in July 1861, according to "The Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale University Deceased during the year ending June 1, 1911." He married Smith Blakeslee and had three daughters. On September 17, 1861, he enlisted as Assistant Surgeon in the 7th Regiment of the Connecticut Volunteer Infantry. He served honorably at several posts and, on the request of the Governor of Connecticut was promoted to Surgeon of the 10th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, May 1, 1864. After serving as Surgeon-in-Charge of several Union hospitals he received an honorable discharge on November 5, 1864. After the war, his widow seeking a pension, stated he lived in Connecticut, Ohio, Michigan, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri and Texas. She makes no mention of Florida. Before coming to south Florida he practiced medicine in Ohio and Michigan and after leaving Florida, he practiced for varying periods in Kansas and Texas. In 1888, while living in Kansas, he applied for an army service pension. The examining

physician, Samuel Murdock MD, after describing typical physical findings of alcoholic cirrhosis of the liver stated:

...he says (and I believe truthfully) there is a marked susceptibility to the influences of alcoholic stimulants [and] ... that prolonged malarial poisoning [and] sunstroke ... and the vicissitudes of camp life over three years, during the late war, stand preeminently in a causative relation to his present ailments. [See an affidavit of Dr. Samuel Murdock about Porter's health, May 8, 1888, in the files of Mrs. Arva Moore Parks]

Dr. Porter was granted \$17 per month for the following disabilities: chronic diarrhea, sunstroke and slight paraplegia. Later, in an application to increase his pension, claiming service connected "chronic diarrhea and hemorrhoids," he stated:

There is a marked inability to make those physical, mental and social adjustments that a professional man must make to succeed and which necessarily requires a frequent change of location to enable him to make a living [in] practice.

Porter died at his home in Butler, Missouri on December 12, 1912.

109. Parks, Miami, 43; also Arva Moore Parks, "Coconut Grove Before the Railroad," *Update*, December 1975 and Arva Moore Parks, "The Commodore," *Update*, June 1977.

110. *Cochran, Jerome, Sketches of Yellow Fever on the Gulf Coast of Florida*, (Privately Printed, Montgomery, Alabama, 1881), 13.

111. Richards, *Reminiscences*, 89.

112. Parsons Diary, December 3, 1873, 11.

113. Penrose, Thomas X., "Yellow Fever On Board the U.S.S. Ticonderoga, at Key West, Fla., August 1874," *US. Navy Sanitary and Medical Reports, 1873-1874, Vol. III, 471-478*.

114. Parsons Diary, September 5, 1874, 109.

115. William M. Straight, "The Frontier Physician of Dade County," *Journal of the Florida Medical Association* 52: (July 1965), 479-485.

116. Parsons' Diary, April 4, 1874.

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