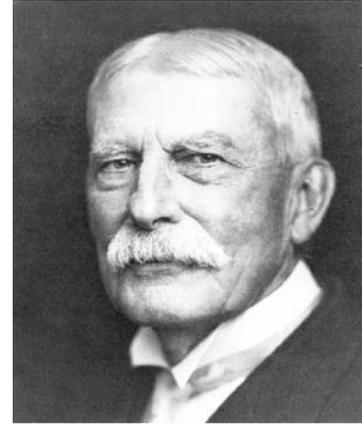


# HISTORY OF THE RAILROAD

By Jerry Wilkinson

## Prologue

Railroads stemmed from early tramways that transported stone, coal and similar mined materials. These early systems were not steam driven, but pulled by animals, usually in combination with gravity. The first steam train in the United States was the "Sourbridge Lion," brought over from England by the Delaware and Hudson Canal and Railroad Company and was in operation in 1829. For a comparison, the Transcontinental Railroad was completed in 1869. On the island of Jamaica, the Jamaica Railway Company built its first complete railroad in 1843.



Henry Morrison Flagler

Henry Morrison Flagler was born in Hopewell, New York on January 2, 1830, the son of a struggling Presbyterian minister. Morrison was the name of his mother's first husband (Hugh Morrison) who had died. Henry left school after the eighth grade to go work for the Harkness family in Ohio. The Harkness family was his mother's second husband's family (David Harkness) and played a helpful role in Henry's life for many years. To begin his new life, he found work on a barge traveling the newly opened Erie Canal to Lake Erie where he traveled overland to the small Harkness store in Republic, Ohio. There he began work with his half-brother, Dan Harkness.

He had arrived almost penniless. Working hard and learning all facets of the mercantile business, he was promoted to manager when Dan moved to a larger store in Bellevue, Ohio, the principal hometown of the Harkness family. After a total of five years, he then moved to Bellevue where he bought out a partner in one of the Harkness operations with money he had saved.

In Bellevue he courted and married his step-uncle's (Lamon Harkness) second daughter, Mary Harkness, November 9, 1853. Henry and Mary had two daughters, Jennie Louise and Carrie. Carrie died at age three.

The company expanded into the grain and distillery businesses, and the latter was sold after making considerable money. One of the grain brokers he shipped grain to was John D. Rockefeller in Cleveland, Ohio.



Henry Flagler with Mary, standing, and Julia Harkness

In 1862, Flagler and Barney York formed a salt producing company that boomed because of demand brought on by the Civil War. He sold his interest in the grain business to his half brother and moved to Saginaw, Michigan. When the Civil War ended in 1865, so did the huge demand for salt. The Flagler and York Salt Company went bankrupt a year later, and Flagler retained a \$50,000 debt.

Instead of returning to Bellevue, the Flagella's moved to Cleveland, Ohio where he re-entered the grain business and renewed his connections with John D. Rockefeller. Handsome profits from the grain business allowed him pay off his debt and to have sufficient money to invest in a new adventure.

His conversations with John Rockefeller mostly involved petroleum and not grain. In 1868 at age 37, he joined with John Rockefeller and Samuel Andrews to form the Rockefeller, Andrews and Flagler Oil Refinery the RAF Refinery.

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### Standard Oil Days

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From this point, everything snowballed for Henry Flagler. In 1870, the Standard Oil Company was formed, with Flagler as a major stockholder. Under Flagler's guidance, Standard Oil began buying out almost all the smaller refineries, and became a monopoly. Later in his life, he was called before Congress for possible violations of anti-trust laws. Also, in 1870, Flagler's first and only son, Harry Harness Flagler, was born. By 1884, Standard Oil moved its headquarters to New York City, and was considered the largest and richest industrial company in the world. Flagler and Rockefeller moved to New York City in 1887, but kept their Cleveland homes.

Meanwhile, Mary had been diagnosed with tuberculosis and her health had been declining. Her doctor recommended she avoid the harsh New York winters and seek a warmer climate during the colder months. Florida was chosen for the winter of 1878 and the Flagler's set out for Jacksonville, Florida.

When Flagler arrived in Jacksonville, Florida, he found



**Henry Flagler - the hunter**

the most backward state on the Atlantic Coast. Key West was Florida's largest populated city of about 10,000; Jacksonville 7,000; St. Augustine 2,300; Tampa 1,000 and Daytona 321. Miami was just a settlement, not yet a city.

In Jacksonville, Henry found few amenities for the vacationer and was quickly bored. It could also have been the almost daily "vacation managing" of the rapidly growing Standard Oil Company. In 1878, lawsuits, civil and criminal lawsuits began along with investigations. After a few weeks Henry, Mary and Harry returned to New York City as Mary would not remain in Florida without Henry. Mary's condition grew steadily worse, and she eventually died in New York at age 48, on May 18, 1881. Young Harry was 10 years old. Henry had his sister, Carrie, move in and help with the care of Harry. Jennie Louse, now married, also made frequent visits.

In 1882, under the Standard Oil Trust, Standard companies were created in many states, With stockholder's approval Flagler became President of Standard Oil Company of New Jersey. In spite of this, Flagler began spending less and less time in the New York offices.

On June 5, 1883, Flagler married one of his first wife's nurses, Id Alice Shourds. He was too busy to honeymoon in the summer, so in the winter they went to Florida, but this time to St. Augustine, Florida. Things appeared to be different now, as Flagler became interested in Florida. He reduced his workload with Standard Oil even more and at age 53 he turned to a new vocation.

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### **A New Home**



**Henry Morrison Flagler**

**Mary Harkness Flagler**



**Henry Flagler's St. Augustine residence "Kirkside"**

In 1885 he began with purchasing a small hotel in St. Augustine, the Sunnyside, and in a long story built two hotels, the Ponce de Leon and the Alcazar, and purchased the third from a competitor, renaming it the Cordova. To make his hotels more accessible, he purchased and rebuilt a short-line railroad company and this is how he entered the railroad business. He also built in St. Augustine several churches, a hospital, waterworks, electric and sewer utilities, and a winter home for the family - the Kirkside.

It was 1885 when he purchased a short-line railroad between Jacksonville and St. Augustine, which was the forerunner of the Florida East Coast Railway (F.E.C Rwy.). He had tried to convince the previous railroad owners to improve the system. They shook their heads "no," and their "no" proved to be a turning point in Flagler's life and Florida's history - Flagler needed appropriate transportation facilities.

On December 1885, Flagler bought controlling stock in the 'Jacksonville, St. Augustine & Halifax River Railway,' made himself president and appointed his own general manager. Soon after he bought half of the newly formed Jacksonville, Tampa and Key West, Railway Co.

To promote better and more transportation in Florida, in 1893, the Florida Legislature passed a new law increasing from 3, 840 to 8,000 acres per mile for all railroad constructed

south of Daytona, Florida. Almost immediately, Flagler created a new company, the 'Jacksonville, St. Augustine, and Indian River Railway Company.' Under the new company, he constructed 117 miles of railway from New Smyrna to Lake Worth completing on November 2, 1893. Major stops were Titusville and Rockledge. Florida's northern East coast had daily rail service to and from the northeastern states.

He started extending his railroad lines to the south, first to Ormond Beach, Florida and then to Palm Beach, Florida in 1893. To support the Flagler System, he purchased existing, or built new railroads. Again he also built schools, hospitals, churches, fire stations, city halls, courthouses and utilities.

In the April 19, 1893 Board of Directors minutes, Flagler resolved to extend the railway from some point on Key Biscayne across the Florida Keys to Key West as well as across the state to Tampa. This is his first official intention to build to Key West - and it never changed. The dye was set for the remainder of Florida's east coast completing each stepping stone per this resolution of April 19, 1893 forward. This is often overlooked justifying each stepping stone southward as incentives presented themselves.

In Palm Beach he opened the world's largest hotel, the Royal Poincinana, in 1894 and the Palm Beach Inn in 1895 - renaming it the Breakers in 1901. He built Alice and himself a huge home in Saint Augustine, Kirkside.

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### **Railroad to Miami**

Following the great Florida freezes of December, 1894 and January and February of 1895, Julia Tuttle, the mother of Miami, contacted Flagler through his vice-presidents, Messrs. Parrott and Ingraham, and advised them that the region south of the New River (Ft. Lauderdale) was untouched by the freezes.

Flagler with his stated quest for Key West had already considered the Key Biscayne area for expansion, but not yet seriously - only one visit. The Model Land Company vice president, James Ingraham, was sent to gather details in Miami. Upon receiving Parrott's, Ingraham's and Tuttle's reports, Mr. Flagler asked to set up a visit to Mrs. Tuttle. After his visit he proposed six items, the first two was he was to be given 100 acres for a hotel and



she could reserve 17 acres of the river and ocean property for her personal use, and he was to receive one half of her Fort Dallas property. This would total about 370 acres. In addition, he was to receive one half of all her holdings between Fort Worth and Cape Sable - these acres are not known by the author, but he does believe this was one reason when he considered to continue his 1893 resolve to build to Key West. First, he surveyed a route to Cape Sable where he owned land.

The William Brickell family owned 640 acres south of the Miami River and gave out right 320 acres to compliment the Tuttle 370 acres on the north side of the Miami River - Key West was becoming closer, but resolving the Dr. Henry Perrine grant had to be resolved.

Mr. Flagler also agreed to immediately start a large hotel and build water, electric and sewer public facilities for a new community, a contract was signed, and the railroad reached Miami on April 15, 1896, with the first passenger train operating into the community on the shores of Biscayne Bay on April 22. On July 28, 1896, without every having been a village or a town or an incorporated municipality of any kind, the City of Miami sprang into existence and over the weekend of July 26--July 28, 1896, the FEC Railway and the City celebrated their Centennial in a grand and gala joint event. The Royal Palm Hotel opened January 15, 1897 with 350 rooms, two electric elevators, a swimming pool, and an electric generator for the hotel and the city.

The popular story is that it took a cold winter freeze of 1894/95 and Mrs. Julia B. Tuttle to persuade him to continue to Miami. In reality it was the 8,000 acres granted from the state for each mile of railroad track he built and the gift of about 600 acres by two local families of what was to be downtown Miami that brought Flagler to Fort Dallas on April 16, 1896. Fort Dallas incorporated as Miami in July that same year. Most believe that he also had a vision of proceeding further south.

A note at this time. The Flagler System denoted all of the Flagler entities, e.g. the Florida East Coast Railway (F.E.C. Rwy.) which he created in September 1895, the entire system of hotels, the land holding companies, the Florida East Coast Steamship Company created in 1897, Peninsular & Occidental (P&O) Steam Ship Company (1901) and all other subsidiaries as the Model Land Company. The overseas railroad is correctly titled the Key West Extension, Flagler System.

In 1897, Flagler's second wife Ida Alice, was committed to an insane asylum in New York. Insanity was not grounds for divorce in either New York or Florida. Flagler convinced the Florida Legislature to change its law in 1901 and he married his third wife, Mary Lily Kenan, whom he had known for about eight years. As a wedding present he built the Palm Beach mansion named Whitehall. Florida later repealed this change in the divorce law .

In Miami as in other places, Flagler built an electric company, water company, schools, churches, streets and homes for his workers. In 1899, he purchased three ships to transport people to and from the Bahamas where he owned two more hotels. For his ships to enter the Miami harbor he had to dredge a channel through Biscayne Bay to the docks, but it was not sufficient to be considered a deep water seaport - only nine feet deep. As years passed, the depth of the channel was slowly deepened.

During the Spanish - American War, the federal government used the Tampa seaport and the Henry Plant railway, as Tampa had a deep water seaport. In 1903, the United States signed an agreement to construct the Panama Canal. Flagler envisioned Key West with its natural deep water seaport as the shipping hub for all the ships passing through the

canal, connecting South and Central America, the U. S. and Cuba. His trains would thus provide land deliveries throughout the east coast. As he had been eyeing Key West for some time, these additional motivations could have been the deciding factor for Flagler to push on to Key West.

Strange as it may seem, the editor of the *Key West Gazette* suggested a railroad linking Key West to the mainland as early as 1831. South Florida's first U.S. Senator, Stephen R. Mallory, also from Key West, while in Washington in the 1850s advocated the advantages of a Key West railroad. J. C. Baily while surveying for the International Ocean Telegraph Company in 1866 made a survey route that could be used for a railroad.

Numerous proposals were made on paper, but all lacked financing. *The National Geographical Magazine* in 1896 contained an article even mentioning Key West's hopes centering on Henry Flagler potential. The article "Across the Gulf by Rail to Key West" proposed the screw pile supports used for construction of the lighthouses for bridge supports.

He was temporarily blocked from going southward by the existing approximate 36 square mile Perrine Grant. If you lay a scaled 36 mile square piece of paper on a map of south east Dade County, a south bound railroad must traverse within the boundaries of the Perrine Grant. Flagler kept attorneys assigned to assist the Dr. Henry Perrine heirs for the 36 square mile southeast land claim from Congress. The Flagler attorneys followed to Supreme Court which ruled an appropriate division of lands to the railroad, settlers, and Perrine family members in 1898. With this decision, Flagler now had his right-of-way property when and if he decided to make his move further south.

It was the summer of 1902 when Flagler hired William J. Krome to survey the best route to Key West, which at that time was thought to be across the Everglades, to No Name Key and onward to Key West. They were to conduct, as we would say today, "a feasibility study" to extend the railroad to Key West. To our knowledge, he never asked anyone whether or not it would be financially successful. If you are interested in a lengthy presentation of the Cape Sable Expedition, please [Click Here](#)



Krome spent the remainder of 1902 until May of 1903 surveying across the Everglades to Cape Sable. This route was deemed inadvisable. He then completed the Cutler Extension to Homestead and in early 1904, Krome was sent to survey from Homestead, across northern Key Largo and out into Hawk Channel a route to Turtle Harbor. At Turtle Harbor

there was a finger passage of over 20 feet depth of water which would serve as a deep water seaport for Flagler's steamship lines. On July 6, 1904 the Turtle Harbor route was canceled and a Homestead to Key West route across Cross Key, Bahia Honda to Key West was mandated.

It is not certain, and there are various versions, when the following conversation took place, if it did at all, but the aging Flagler (74 years old) called in his F.E.C. President, Joseph R. Parrott, and reportedly asked him if the railroad extension to Key West could be built. "Yes, I am sure," was the reply. Mr. Flagler in turn said, "Very well then, go ahead. Go to Key West." Supposition has it that since this happened coinciding with the US negotiations to buy the French concession to build the Panama Canal, perhaps the Panama Canal was an influence. We know and have copies of the plans approved in April 1905. The project was announced to the public in the *New York Herald* on June 28, 1905 and the article reprinted in the *Tropical Sun*. What is a fact is that Senator E. C. Crill, of Palatka, pushed through bill number 11, granting certain rights and privileges for a railroad to the F.E.C. Rwy. The act became effective May 3, 1905 and afterwards Flagler publicly announced the extension of the railroad to Key West.

Regardless, this was an epic decision for the 74-year-old Flagler to make. He had practically built the east coast of Florida, had everything in life that any reasonable man could want, yet something pushed him on to new horizons. He did this with his own money, not borrowed money and there were no cutting corners to save money. About two fifths of all his Florida investments were used to complete the Key West Extension.

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### **Building the Railroad to Key West**

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At this point we will focus on Flagler's accomplishments with the Key West Extension in the Keys. For this project he needed an unusual team. For its leader he chose Joseph Carroll Meredith as his chief construction engineer. The 28-year-old William Krome became the assistant construction engineer. I have put together a presentation of the evolution of the Key West Extension - if interested please [Click Here](#)

As this would be an overseas project, Flagler purchased, leased, or built most of the heavy marine equipment in the east. Land had to be donated, purchased, or leased, as Flagler did not receive land grants in the Keys other than water passages - he did own land preciously granted to other railroad companies that he had bought. So many of the transport ships in the Atlantic were employed solely to transport supplies and materials for Flagler that it created a minor shortage for transporting other goods. It was a massive operation.

Using Krome's survey, plans were made to send advance teams ahead to start the more time consuming projects and the overland clearing throughout the Keys. Functional seaports and rail terminals had to be built at Knight's Key and Key West. The large bridges could not be started until huge floating concrete mixers could be constructed. Concrete mixer number 1 was towed out of Miami on June 27, 1906. Work was begun throughout the Keys, not just one huge work force moving southwest from Homestead. Over 130 acres of land was to be dredged/pumped in for the Key West Terminal. The work camps were, however, numbered from north to south from Homestead. Key Largo was camp 1 and Key West was camp 82.

By the spring of 1905, construction teams were dispersed throughout the Keys. From the mainland, in April, two of the ten traveling dredges set out from what would become Florida City across Cross Key to Jewfish Creek. One dredge worked on each side of the right-of-way, piling up fill to form a track rail bed in the center. Rock was transported and spread. Tracks were laid on top of this rock foundation. The Woodall and Everglade stations were built on side tracks located where the vehicle passing lanes of the 18-mile stretch are now, now (2007) being removed for a new 3-lane highway.



**Surveying for the railroad bridges ca. 1906**

This was time consuming work, but not difficult. Jewfish Creek presented them with their first bridging challenge. It had to be a drawbridge to permit boat traffic even in those days also being replaced by a 65-foot fixed span bridge.

The overall goal was Key West; but the intermediate goal was Knight's Key Dock. The immediate task was to lay as much track from Homestead as possible. This allowed Flagler to use his railroad mounted equipment, or "rolling stock," which could carry huge loads, make more trips and deliver directly to the place of need. The water was too shallow for larger transport ships, so they used 150 huge barges to ferry supplies to shore.

The Flagler museum in Palm Beach has a lengthy collection of old newspaper clippings. They almost tell the story, and I will share some of them with you to show the progress. Unfortunately, some articles do not have the newspaper's title, but are dated.

An October 28, 1905 *Miami Metropolis* newspaper clipping provides some indication of work: "The steamer *Biscayne* towed and delivered to the Keys two of the remaining double-decked houseboats [living quarters] recently completed. One of the boats will locate at Planter and the other at Matecumbe Key where camps will be established, both being under the charge of Engineer Rogers."

W. P. Dusenbury was the engineer in charge of work on Key Largo. The Jewfish Creek bridge was not finished when the track arrived; however, difficulty in building a stable causeway across Lake Surprise was a greater concern. The lake was to be filled, not bridged. When fill was dumped in, it sank and disappeared. It appears that it took 15 months to construct a satisfactory fill that would support continuous trains across Lake Surprise.

Labor was a constant problem. The pay was \$1.25 a day with food, lodging and medical care. Along with labor, lack of fresh water and mosquitoes constantly haunted the project. It is said that a total of 40,000 men, but never over 5,000 at any one time, were employed. An average of 4.5 million gallons of fresh water was required each month.

An unidentified clipping dated June 27, 1906: "Concrete Mixer No. 1 was hauled out from the north end of the (Miami) terminal dock, and towed to its destination in the Keys by the steamer *Columbia*. This is an indication that the arch and bridgework is soon to begin. Mixer No. 2 is about ready [for delivery]."

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By Jerry Wilkinson



Jewfish Creek Bridge under construction February, 1907

## Work Train to the Keys

(At the end of this page are four links that will take you pages of specific photos of work and equipment being in use building the Key West Extension - JW)

1. We learn that progress was being made from an October 29, 1906 *Florida*

*Times-Union* newspaper clipping:

"Some weeks ago engine No. 10, intended for use in construction work on the Keys, arrived from St.

Augustine.

This morning the same engine and several box and flat cars were sent down the line to Homestead, then south 17 miles on newly constructed track to the coast of Jewfish Creek. At that place they were loaded onto barges and ferried across the stream [Jewfish Creek and Lake Surprise] to Key Largo. Engineer Goethe had the honor to pull the first train of cars on the Florida Keys." Evidently, the bridge was not completed in October 1906. Another article the next day related that there were 27 miles of track on which to operate on Key Largo.



**Henry Flagler - rear center - with staff and guests inspecting work at Key Largo - 1906**

An article dated February 10, 1907 stated: "The first train crossed from the

mainland to Key Largo (last Friday) with Henry Flagler and a party of friends aboard." It appears that the Jewfish Bridge and the Lake Surprise causeway were finally operable.

A month later we are further advised by the following March 12, 1907 article: "The greatest center of activity is centered at Long Key and the lower end of Upper Matecumbe Key, though there is building and construction at other points with trains now running to Tavernier and Snake Creek. . . ." Remember, they started from Homestead in May, 1905, so this has taken about two years.

Work was proceeding more or less on schedule but for a few exceptions like Lake Surprise and the 1906 hurricane. Tavernier Creek was almost filled except for a short bridge. Snake Creek also had just a short bridge, and Wilson's Key Channel (Whale Harbor) was completely filled across. The original plan was to build a causeway with ramparts all the way to Key West, but the federal government did not allow a



**L>R= James Ingraham, Joseph Parrott, Henry Flagler & V. Y. Porter on Windleys Island - 1906**

complete dam between the ocean and the gulf.

Going back in time, by October 1906, work was in progress to construct the Long Key bridge. This was actually a viaduct, as it is completely interconnected, 2.15 miles

long and required 180 fifty-foot and 42 thirty-five-foot arches. European portland cement was used in all the underwater concrete work when building the arches for all the viaducts. A wooden cofferdam was set in place, the mud pumped out and 24 wood pilings driven into the coral rock. The European Alsen portland cement mixed with sand and gravel was pumped in up to the low tide level. The pilings were sawed off and another level poured in up to the high tide line. The remainder of the arch was built on this base using U.S. portland cement.

A large work camp was built on Long Key almost from the beginning, as this bridge was known to be a massive task. After the railroad was finished, this camp was turned into the Long Key Fishing Club, with author Zane Grey as its first president, in 1917. This was also where the crews encountered their first hurricane. It wrought great destruction to everything in its path.

On the evening of October 17, 1906, the weather started to close in. By morning the railroad had suffered a staggering setback, but young Meredith straightened his shoulders and said, "No man has any business connected with this work who can't stand grief." One hundred and thirty men were known to have perished. On *houseboat number four*, which broke its moorings, only 83 of the 161 survived. The *St. Lucie* with about went aground near Elliott Key and a reported 26 more were drowned. In total about 130 F.E.C. related personnel lost their lives in the 1906 Hurricane. The Flagler team learned to respect the hurricane season and not be caught off guard again. There were no hurricanes in 1907 and 1908, however they were prepared.

A major setback was experience in July 1907 when the War Department operating from instructions of the Navy at Key West shut down all dredging for the proposed 174 acre rail terminal at Key West. Flagler owned precious little Key West land was to add an attached 174 acres known as Trumbo Island. Flagler curtailed Key West construction and by October 1907, the



Two steamships and two trains at Knight's Key Dock ca. 1909

total F.E.C. work force was scaled back to about 2,500 workers. The rest of 1907 and all of 1908 were lost for Key West Construction. Much of the work force taken from the Lower Keys were put to work speeding up the completion of Knight's Key Dock.

### **Rail Service to the Upper and Middle Keys**

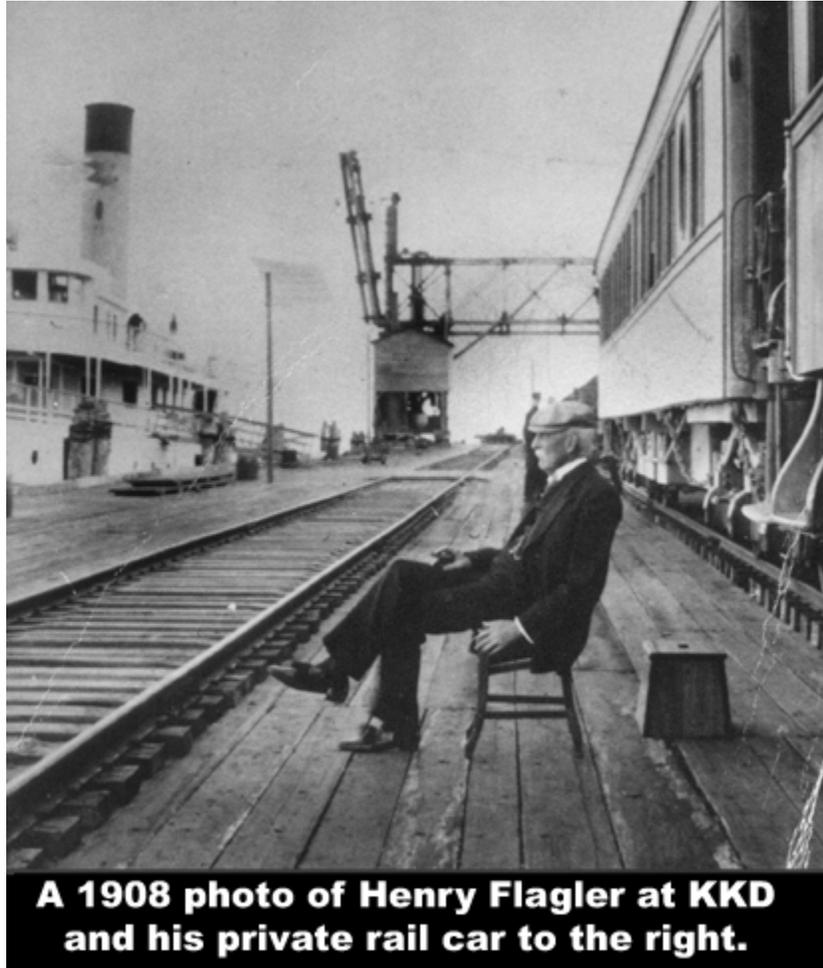
The first train to reach Knight's Key Dock (Marathon) by rail did so on January 20, 1908 at 1:30 Saturday afternoon. By February 5, 1908, official twice-a-day daily schedule was in effect. The following day travelers boarded a Flagler Peninsular & Occidental steamship bound for Havana. A seaport city had been built south of Knight's Key, complete with a railroad station capable of handling two complete trains, docks for two small steam ships, hotel boat, customs and post office (April 13, 1907). Therefore, the Upper Keys had daily scheduled train service in early 1908. Flagler had support for his steamship lines and all appeared well.

What was to be known as Marathon became the general headquarters for the remaining construction. It was supplied by rail, as it was located at the beginning of the remaining construction to Key West. The starting point was the Seven Mile Bridge. This did not detract from the construction of the huge terminal at Key West. There, crews were busy reclaiming 134 acres from the ocean and preparing to build a 1,700-foot pier, 134 feet wide. Track and bridgework was being performed north across Stock Island to Bahia Honda whose depth required another difficult bridge.

Work was intentionally delayed on the Seven-Mile Bridge following a decision by the U.S. Navy to stop Flagler from dredging the needed 174 acres for the rail terminal at Key West. Many F.E.C. offices were closed, workers transferred to work north of Key West and much of the floating construction equipment was taken to storage in the Miami River. Very little work was done in the Lower Keys in 1808, and when the objection to the dredging was resolved serious

construction started on the Seven-Mile-Bridge in early 1909. It required three years to complete.

What we call the Seven Mile Bridge was actually composed of the Knight's Key, Pigeon Key, Moser Channel, Pacet Channel bridges. The total length was 35,815 feet long and consisted of 335 steel girder 80-foot spans, 9,000 feet of concrete arch viaduct, and a 253-foot swing truss drawbridge span. The steel truss bridge portion rested on 546 concrete piers set securely into bedrock, and was installed by the Terry and Tench Company of New York. The Pigeon Key portion was originally scheduled to be a filled causeway. This was canceled. The Pacet Channel portion was of the concrete arch viaduct type, as the water was shallower. The overall bridge was sometimes referred to as the Flagler Viaduct. At that time it was not known as the Seven Mile Bridge, a name coined later.



**A 1908 photo of Henry Flagler at KKD and his private rail car to the right.**

Many bridges remained to be built. However, the major bridge was the Bahia Honda that can still be seen on the oceanside of U.S. 1. It was 5,055 feet in length and consisted of 27 through-truss spans and 9 deck plate girder spans. Thirteen spans were 128 feet, 13 spans were 186 feet and one was 247 feet. The deepest water at any point along the Key West Extension was encountered here -24 feet and even deeper- and had to be penetrated to anchor the piers. It is the only camelback-type bridge used in the project. Later, when modified for vehicle traffic, the roadway was welded to the top of the camelback spans and a curb and guardrail were provided. The modification is still in evidence today.

The spring of 1909 dealt another serious blow with the death of Joseph Meredith on April 20, 1909. Flagler was fortunate in having William Krome available and willing to respond. Krome was semi-retired at his home and grove in Homestead and taking a much needed rest.

### **Another Hurricane**

The year of 1909 was not over yet. Another serious hurricane struck head-on into the Flagler viaduct (Seven Mile Bridge) area. As previously mentioned, the tugboat Sybil was sunk with the loss of 12 lives including a timekeeper at Marathon. Almost all the dredges, pile drivers, concrete mixers and other equipment were either sunk or badly damaged.

A train that had departed Miami on Monday morning waited out the hurricane at the Quarry Station (Windley Key), but was stranded for three days because of a washout between the Jewfish and Everglades stations. The crew and passengers returned to Miami a little tired, but none the worse, thanks to a Pullman car well stocked with food.

The following *Miami News-Record* article appeared March 31, 1910: "The Key West Citizen of Monday in reporting a Key Largo fire says, 'The fire started the latter part of the last week from an engine, number 11, of the F.E.C. Everything being dry, the flames spread quickly and are now out of control. Practically all of the fruit trees and crops between Jewfish Creek and Newport are either burned or in danger of being destroyed. It is reported that the farm of Allen E. Curry is completely burned off, the building included. Captain Watkins of the schooner New Venice, stated that there is no possible way to control the flames which seem to have spread to nearly all points in the northern section of the island and are working to the north as well as to the south.'" This incident paved the way for the replacement of coal by oil as fuel for locomotives used in the Keys. Engine number 11 is thought to be one of the original 1892 coal burners, as were numbers 10 and 12. These engines were limited to construction use.

On June 27, 1910, engine numbers 10 and 12 were barged to and unloaded on Stock Island for construction use. Later on September 16, numbers 10 and 12 steamed into Key West and were the first locomotives ever to enter from the outside. (During the construction of Fort Taylor in Key West, a small railroad had been built to service the two Martello towers.)

### **Yet Another Hurricane**

The hurricane of 1910 claimed only two lives, but was considered the strongest of all up to then. It did considerable damage, as one might expect, to the project. The winds lasted 30 hours and struck the Lower Keys. The engineers considered the center span of the Bahia Honda Bridge the worst damaged. The foundation was displaced, which required a shipload of material to re-construct. The West Summerland Key loading dock and work camp were also severely damaged.

Work continued all along the remaining project and train service to Knight's Key dock performed well. Mr. Flagler, however, was getting old, and his associates wanted him to realize his dream to ride his private rail car to Key West. Early in 1911, they asked Krome if he could complete the track by the Boss's next birthday, January 2, 1912. Krome replied that, without any storms, or large, unforeseen delays, he could get the job done.

### **Flagler Take His Train to Key West**

Flagler's 82nd birthday celebration was postponed a few weeks. At 10:43 in the morning of January 22, 1912, engine number 201 safely delivered the 82-year-old Henry Flagler in his private rail car to Key West for three days of celebration. After being welcomed by Mayor J. N. Fogarty, it is said that tears streamed down the nearly blind old man's face as he said, "I can hear the children, but I cannot see them." In a brief speech he said, "Now I can die happy. My dream is fulfilled." As a time reference, the S.S. "*Titanic*" sank in the North Atlantic two and a half months later. Along with the train service came mail, telegraph and telephone service.

An example of the rail service was an ad in the *Key Largo Breeze* newspaper dated December 15, 1926 listed the following railroad time schedule:

Havana Special South 3:06 a.m.  
Dixie Limited South 11:19 a.m.  
Havana Special North 11:01 p.m.  
Dixie Limited North 4:10 p.m.  
No rates were given.

A year ahead of schedule, the uncompleted Key West terminal was not ready to accept the freight/car ferries for service to Havana. It was 1915 before the train car-ferry operation began scheduled trips to and from Havana. Also, in the Upper Keys the Channel 2 and 5 bridges were still wooden trestle bridges which had to be built of concrete while daily trains passed in the shadows of the concrete



workers. The Key West Extension was not fully completed until 1916.

Work continued on completing the railway system to its final form, only to have to be modified by innovations. Henry Flagler had realized his dream and slipped quietly from this world at his ocean cottage 'Nautalis' on May 20, 1913, in Palm Beach, Florida. His body was sent to St. Augustine on May 23 where he was laid to rest along side of his his first wife Mary Harkness in the Memorial Presbyterian Church mausoleum built for his daughter Jennie Louise. His pallbearers were mostly his Florida associates. John D. Rockefeller did not attend the funeral.

Flagler had invested about one third of Florida's total evaluation. In total his hotel chain housed about 40,000 guests. The entire Atlantic sea coast of Florida was opened by Henry Morrison Flagler.

### Epilogue

Flagler had continuously provided his son, Harry, with sufficient financial resources. At his death Flagler did not bequeath a significant of estate to his son. Harry received 5,000 shares of Standard Oil stock where his three granddaughters received 8,000 each. Harry had given about two years to his father's business, but declined in favor of a career in the music circles. Harry never met Mary Lily. By 1894 the father-son relationship had deteriorated and Harry went to Columbia University. He graduated in 1897 and was an influence in the New York City musical scene to the extent of assisting in the planning of the Philharmonic Society in 1903. One of Harry's daughters, Jean Flagler Mathews, acquired and restored Whitehall as a memorial to her grandfather, Henry Morrison Flagler. It was opened as a museum on February 6, 1960. Harry died of an heart attack in 1952.

Surviving spouse, Mary Lily, married Robert Bingham on November 16, 1916 who had signed a prenuptial agreement disavowing himself of his new wife's estate. Mary Lily added Bingham to her will with a handwritten change on June 17, 1917 giving him \$5 million. Mary Lily died suddenly on following July 27 of an "acute heart disturbance" less than a year after the marriage. Her family had her body exhumed for an autopsy however the results were never made known.

Robert Bingham received his \$5 million but Mary Lily left most of her estate to her brother, William, and her sisters, Jessie and Sarah, with a sizable portion including the houses to her niece, Louise Wise. The F.E.C. Railway was willed to the brother and sisters who kept ownership until bankruptcy in the 1930s. Ed Ball of Dupont estate slowly gained the controlling interest.



Mary Lilly and Henry Flagler arriving at Key West 1-22-1912

Ida Alice Flagler lived in a private sanitarium in Central Valley, New York in good physical health and was well taken care of until the age of 82. She died on July 10, 1930 worth \$13 million.

After the 1920 Florida Land Boom, Carl Fisher, the developer of Miami Beach, in the 1930s constructed a 110-foot memorial in Biscayne Bay between Venetian and MacArthur causeways to honor Florida's pioneer Henry Morrison Flagler. Miami-Dade county voters recently approved \$1M to restore the monument and landscaping.

Flagler biographers estimate that he spent a total of \$50 million on all of his Florida developments. This would equate to about one third of the total Florida evaluation. Two-fifths of his expenditures were for the Key West Extension. It is estimated that it would cost \$640 million to build the Railroad That Went to Sea today, 2002.



**The Flagler Memorial in  
Biscayne Bay, Miami Florida**

The railroad served the Keys well, but without Flagler at its helm it declared bankruptcy in 1932. In 1935, a sudden change of the predicted path of an approaching hurricane threatened hundreds of WW-I veterans in three work camps in the Upper Keys. A veteran's work program had sent them to build bridges across two highway water gaps to replace the existing automobile ferries. They were told a train would be sent if evacuation was deemed necessary.

After their late lunch on September 2, 1935, Miami workmen began bringing locomotive number 447 up to full steam capacity. Other crews hustled about preparing train cars for the unplanned holiday weekend trip. Locomotive, Old 447, and 10 cars departed for the Keys at about 4:30 P.M. One had to be repaired. After various delays it arrived at the Islamorada depot just before a 17 to 19 foot tidal surge at about 8:20 P.M.

Only the locomotive and its oil tender were left standing. Hundreds of souls lost their lives and 40 miles of railroad were washed out; however, all the concrete and steel bridges stood firmly in place. All who were aboard the train survived. This is discussed in more detail in the web page on the Florida Keys Memorial (Hurricane Monument).

Bankrupt and now severely damaged, the railroad was washed up in the Keys, no pun intended. Its right-of-way was sold to the state for \$640,000 to be modified as a vehicle highway. Construction of the first continuous overseas highway to Key West was completed in 1938. This is discussed in more detail in the web page on the Overseas Highway.

Unlike old generals, the old Flagler bridges do not appear to be fading away. The three principle bridges are the Long Key Bridge, the Knight's Key (Seven Mile) Bridge and the Bahia Honda Bridge. They are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Reportedly, Mr. Flagler told an associate that he believed that his fortune was given to him, "To help his fellow men to help themselves and that he wanted to see if a plain American could succeed there where the Spanish, French and English had not."

-----End-----

Credits and recommended readings:

Florida's Flagler, Sidney Walter Flagler  
Henry Flagler, The Astonishing Life and Times of the Visionary Robber Baron Who Founded Florida, Davis Leon Chandler  
Flagler, Rockefeller Partner and Florida Baron, Edward N. Akin  
A collecton of William J. Krome letters, diaries, newspaper clippings etc. are at some Keys librariies, and Florida museums.