

Introduction

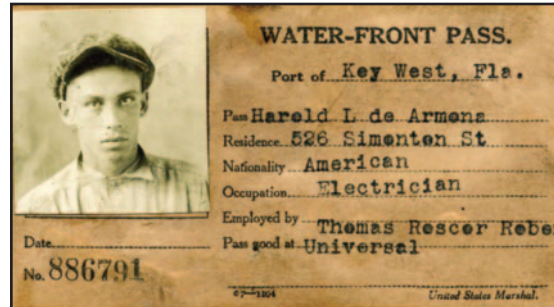
Tennessee Williams once observed that time past has a lovely way of remaining time present in Key West. And that's sort of true. The Old Town streetscape and laid-back attitude remains similar to what it was a century ago. But a lot else has changed. The island that was once a small port and fishing village has morphed into a high-priced and glamorous resort. Its history has also been sanitized during that transition.

By several curious twists of fate, a peek-hole into what Key West was really like a little over a century ago has been preserved in the faces and personal histories of the people pictured in a collection of World War I waterfront security passes now housed at the Key West Library. Each one has a small black-and-white photo of the person approved by the U.S. Navy to access the dock area during wartime, along with their occupation, employer, and home address.

The waterfront passes were created in 1918, which was during a decade of big changes in Key West. Flagler's railroad had arrived a few years earlier, connecting the island to the mainland for the first time. And the Navy had taken over much of the island's economy as World War I ground on.

Pass-holders provided the photos. Some were taken in their Sunday best by a professional photographer. Others were snapshots, probably with one of the Kodak Brownie cameras that were wildly popular at the time.

Photographs were considered a serious affair back then, and the "say cheese" big smile was not common, so many subjects just stood still and stared at the camera, which is perhaps part of the allure of the images. They seem to expose an unguarded view of the person's character.



The passes arrived at the library's history section by a circuitous route, and were almost tossed in the trash twice. First, the Navy decided to dump them during a purge of old records in the 1960s. But luckily, Monroe County commissioner Joe Allen Jr. was a history buff and heard about them. So he "saved" the passes by glueing each one side-by-side on sheets on plywood that he hung on the walls of his office in the County Courthouse on Whitehead Street.

Save #2 came in 2005, when the Courthouse was undergoing a major renovation. Commissioner Allen was long gone, and the passes needed a new home. That's when the library acquired them. But then library volunteers had to unglue each pass, slowly and carefully, from the plywood.

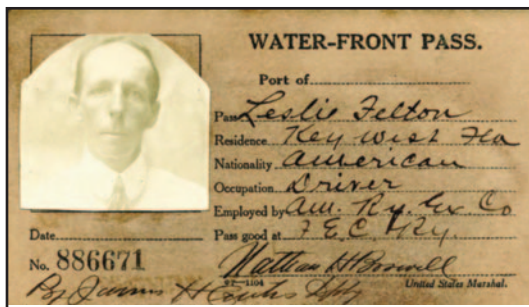
I stumbled onto them online several years ago, after county historian Tom Hambright and his volunteers had digitized and published all of the unglued passes on flickr.com.

Something kept me returning to them, fascinated, to do small pencil sketches and water colors. Then I started delving into their personal histories from public records and newspaper clippings. That's when things got really interesting. It's also when I decided to paint portraits of my favorites among the 581 tiny images and try to penetrate their mysterious presence.

I hope you find their faces and stories as amazing as I have. It's not all wonderful.

-Richard McGarry

Leslie Felton was a driver for American Railway Express Company. He also picked up passengers in his dray wagon when a ship arrived and took them into town. His Conch name was "Killy-The-Horse," supposedly because he only bought older horses and worked them to death pulling his wagon. When kids saw him coming, they would ride their bikes in circles around his wagon hollering "Killy-The-Horse!...Killy-The-Horse!" and he would curse and snap his whip at them.





Directional sign to the original location of Sloppy Joe's bar on Greene Street.

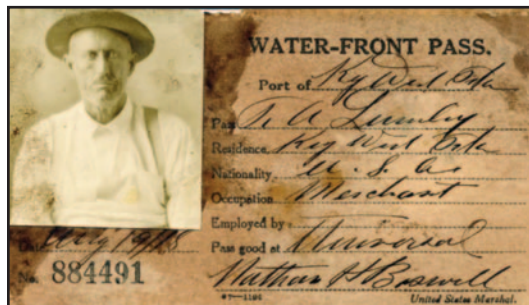
Bernie C. Papy was a newsboy for Edward Phillips, a scrappy 16-year-old with the remnants of a black eye at the time of his waterfront pass. But he later served as the State Representative for Key West in the Florida Legislature for 34 years. And, according to many accounts he was a colorful character, remembered for politicking on the streets of Key West in his familiar straw hat and twirling the cigar in his hand between puffs.

Bernie died at the age of 62, is buried in Key West Cemetery, and one of the bronze busts in the Key West Sculpture Garden commemorates his life.



T.A. (Thomas Alva) Lumley was a butcher and proprietor of Monroe Meat Market, 1001 Division Street (now Truman Ave). He also owned the slaughter pens at the foot of White Street that were used until refrigeration made them obsolete. Cattle arrived by boat in the early morning and were herded down city streets to the pens.

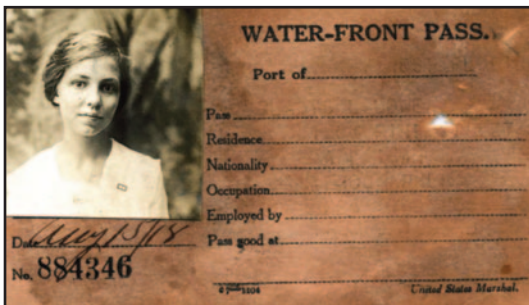
His son Paul ran Lumley's Hardware Store, at the corner of Grinnell and James Streets. In the 1930s the business combined with Roberts Hardware to become Lumley and Roberts, on the corner of Caroline and William Streets, which eventually was run by Theodore Roberts (p. 86).





Milk was delivered to customers directly from the cow, milked in front of their house, before refrigeration came to Key West.

Gladys L. Lowe was a stenographer for the Florida East Coast Railway and 19 years old. She was the daughter of Edward Wilson Lowe, who emigrated to Key West from Green Turtle Cay, Bahamas, and Laura Lillian Roberts. Like many other Conchs, Gladys left Key West during the Great Depression and settled in Charlotte County, Florida. She died there at the age of 81 in 1980.






Peninsular & Occidental (P&O) Steamship Company
Ticket Office, Key West, 1910.

Grover Albury was a foreman for the Florida East Coast Railroad, and lived on Carey Lane. In December of 1930, his 17-year-old son, Overton was lost at sea with two friends that were home for the Christmas holidays. They departed in a sail-rigged dinghy to go fishing on a Saturday morning and expected to be back in time for a movie matinee that afternoon. Many years later Dr. Herman Moore wrote this about Grover in his memoir *Dr. Moore's Key West*: "I recall that Grover walked slowly on Margaret Street and sat in his rocking chair on the front porch. I never recall Grover listening to the radio or reading a newspaper or a book."

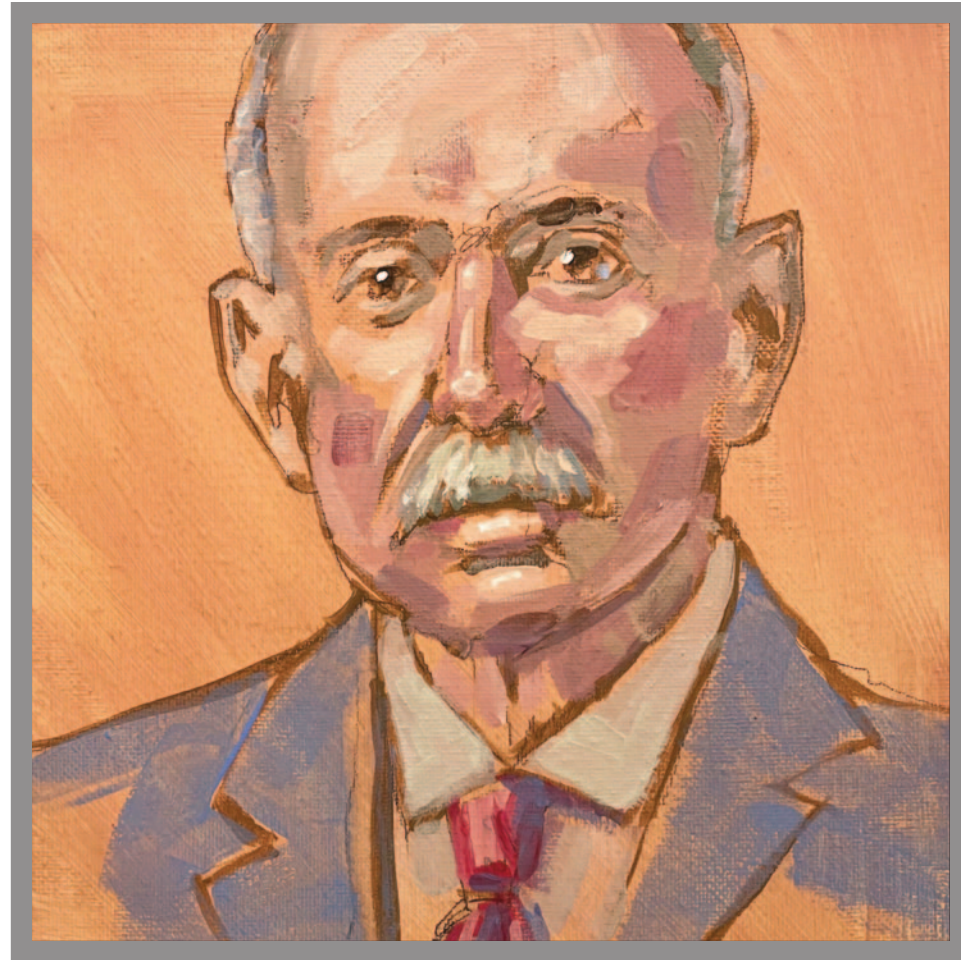
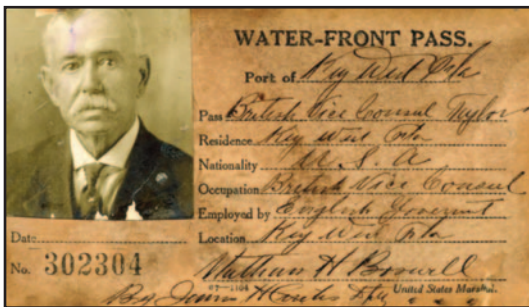


	WATER-FRONT PASS.
	Port of _____
	Pass _____
	Residence _____
	Nationality _____
	Occupation _____
	Employed by _____
Date <i>Aug 1935</i>	Location _____
No. 302427	
	<small>97-1104 United States Marshal.</small>



Boys playing in the street in Old Town in the 1930s.

William J.H. Taylor was the British Vice-Consul for Key West. Although it might seem odd that Great Britain had a consulate on the tiny island of Key West in 1918, it was the largest city in Florida until 1900, and Key West remained in the top 5 until 1930. Also, many British subjects, both white and black, lived in Key West at the time.



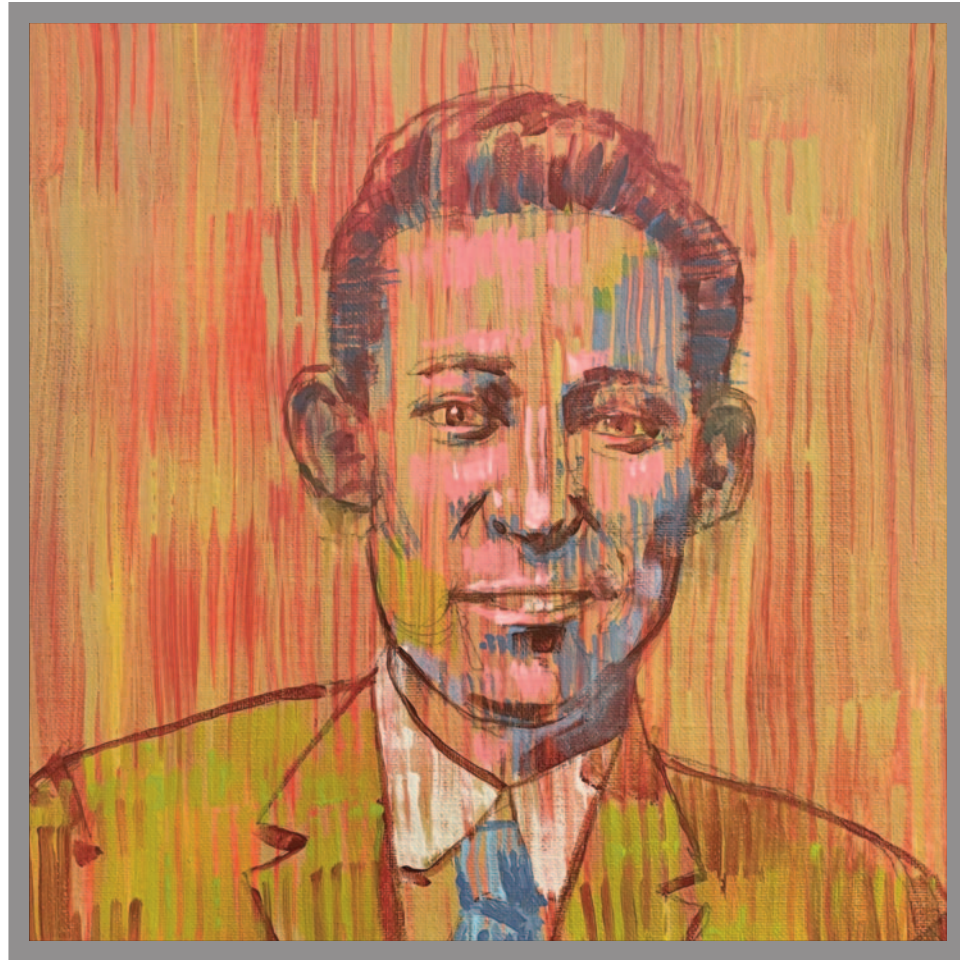
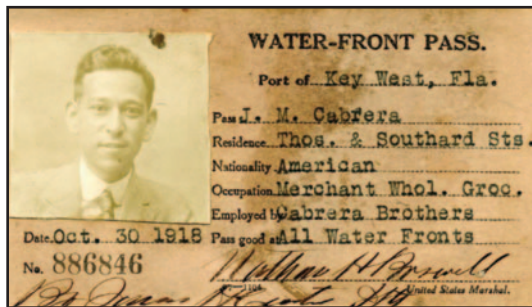


The 500 block of Duval Street, circa 1910

Joe M. Cabrera worked for his family's Cabrera Brothers Wholesale Grocers, 24 years old, and lived at the corner of Thomas and Southard Streets.

He was later elected to the Key West City Council in the 1930s and held a victory party at the Cuban Club on Duval Street, served in the U.S. Army Transport Service during World War 2, and became the Miller High Life Beer distributor for Key West in the 1950s.

Joe died in 1964 at the age of 70 and is buried in the Key West Cemetery.





The original Cuban Club at 1108 Duval Street.
It was destroyed by fire in 1983 and rebuilt.