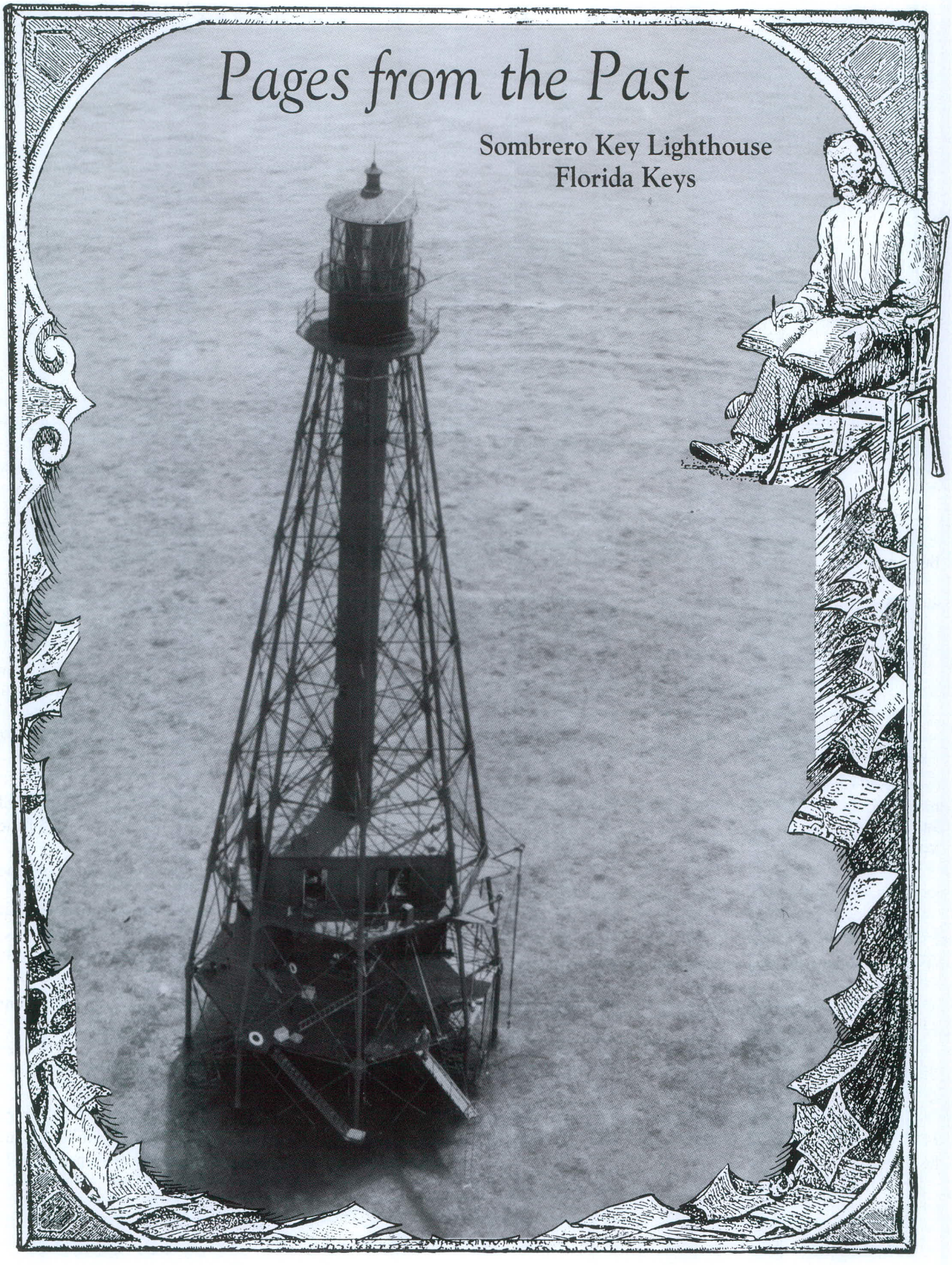
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Pages from the Past

Sombrero Key Lighthouse
Florida Keys



Keeper J. Buckley

August 4, 1874—The Assistant Josiah Butts went with the keeper on board a schooner from Havana loaded with sugar and bound from New Orleans, to buy some sugar from the Captain. While on board the assistant got several drinks of gin, so that he could hardly keep his watch in the light. He growled at me and insulted my wife. The schooner was named the *Therissa of Fieldboronigh*.

Oct. 8, 1874—Went to Key West with my family and F. De Coury. De Coury had left oil leaking from the drum, it filled the overflow bucket and leaked two gallons on the floor. When I accused him of it he quit. This is the first chance to visit Key West since I relieved as keep, bad weather has kept us at the light.

Oct. 28—The new Assistant McDexter went to Key West for his family. He left here at 7 o'clock a.m. in Lighthouse boat. I took the first watch and called Asst. Butts at twelve midnight to relieve the watch, I went to bed. I awoke at half past four and went to look at the light, and it was very dim. I went up to see what was the matter. Asst. Butts was laying in the chair in the watch room asleep, his stool on the trap door to prevent me taking him by surprise for when I opened the door the stool fell over making a racket which awakened him. Besides he left the oil carrier on the stairs with two gallons of oil in it hoping I would fall over it. I would have had a good fall only the moon was shining through the window and I saw it. I did not want to light a lamp. I have found him asleep on several occasions before but over looked it. Now I find he makes a regular habit of sleeping on watch and I run a great risk of getting reported myself by some passing vessel for a bad light. To save myself I have to make this report. Buckley.

Nov. 4—Butts went to Key West and got drunk and came back to the station with two stone jugs of whiskey. He argued with me and quit. Asst. Dexter took him ashore and returned with new Asst. Cassidy.

Nov. 18—Cassidy went to Key West and returned smashing up the boat. One time before when he went for provisions he capsized the boat on the return trip losing most everything.

Jan. 24, 1876—Thomas Cassidy left this station for good after kicking up a row with me because I would not let him go to Key West with the engineer's men. There were lots of things to fix up and his services were needed to put things in order at this light station. He finally concluded that he would leave here and demanded his time for services rendered.

Oct. 18—At 8 o'clock p.m. a hurricane commenced from the eastward and gradually increased during the night and all day of the 19th. At four o'clock p.m. it commenced to shift round towards the south blowing as hard as anything and making the place shake very bad. The seas commenced to rise under the platform, the wind blowing in squalls with rain so thick that we could hardly see the top of the tower. The seas washed over the platform and washed some of the planks with the work bench overboard and broke the iron steps and landing. The building was flooded from top to bottom, not a dry spot except in the center of the lantern and that barely allowed a light. Broke three chimneys that night.

Jan 27, 1877—C.W. Ridlen when spoken to about the cleaning of his glass kicked up a row with me and accused me of trying to run him out of the Lighthouse Service and swore he would have satisfaction if he could.

Mar. 13—I asked Mr. Ridlon to scrub the watch room, it being his work as 2nd Assistant, he cursed and said only a damned nigger baby white washes and hurried to his room and began to play on the flute and said he was ready for anything and did not go up at the time of me writing this at half past one p.m.

[In May of 1877 Ridlon is replaced by McDowell]

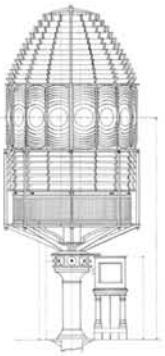
July 22—George McDowell returned from Key West at 12:30 p.m., boat in bad condition, very dirty and oar lock lost. Absent 22 days 17½ hours.

Aug. 12—McDowell and Mr. Bethel had a row. When I came down at ten o'clock and called my relief, Mr. Bethel, he told me that McDowell had a row with him and said that I am a son of a bitch if I don't kill somebody or get killed myself yet before I leave Sombrero.

Aug. 22—The Lighthouse Tender Laurel passed this light station at 3 p.m. She was hardly out of sight of this light before McDowell wanted the boat to go to Key West, which I refused he having been to Key West twice this quarter. Then he told me he would do no more duty while he remains here. This was spoken in the presence of Mr. Bethel, while we were at supper.

Aug. 25—McDowell quits.

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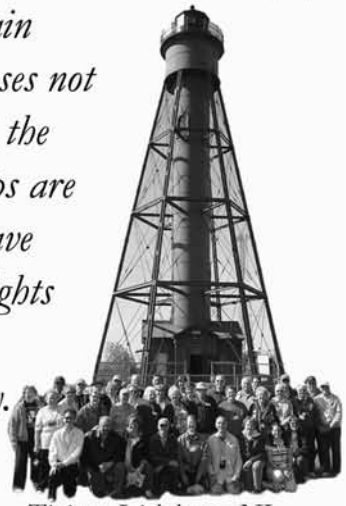
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