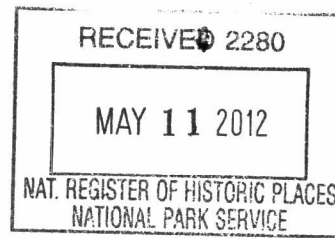


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name African Cemetery at Higgs Beach

other names/site number MO 3445

2. Location

street & number 1001 Atlantic Boulevard n/a ☐ not for publication

city or town Key West ☐ vicinity

state Florida code FL county Monroe code 087 zip code 33040

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☒ nationally ☒ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara C. Mattick / DSHPO 5/4/2012
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet
- ☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ removed from the National Register.
- ☐ other, (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Erin M. Munn 6/26/12

African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Name of Property

Monroe Co., FL
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☐ buildings
☐ district
☒ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

0	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	2	structures
0	1	objects
1	3	total

Name of related multiple property listings

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Funerary: Cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Funerary: Cemetery
Landscape: Park

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

n/a

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation n/a
walls

roof
other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

**AFRICAN CEMETERY AT HIGGS BEACH
KEY WEST, MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA
DESCRIPTION**

SUMMARY

The African Cemetery at Higgs Beach Archaeological Site is the final resting place of 295 Africans that died in 1860 after being brought to Key West by the United States Navy during efforts to eradicate the slave trade. In separate encounters during the spring of 1860, the Navy captured three American ships carrying a total of approximately 1,432 Africans bound for slavery in the Caribbean. The Africans were rescued and brought to Key West to await transit back to Africa. During this nearly three-month waiting period, while arrangements were made for the return voyages, 295 of the Africans perished as a result of the horrendous conditions during their voyage on the slave ships. They were buried in individual coffins at Higgs Beach in unmarked graves. In 1862, the West Martello Tower was constructed just west of the cemetery, necessitating the relocation of many of the graves. Reburials of the relocated remains were made northwest of the West Martello Tower and to the north of the West Martello Tower. The burials to the north are now separated from the original burial site by Atlantic Boulevard; it is likely that some burials exist below the road. The site includes three areas of burials: the original burial site east of the West Martello; and two areas where many bodies were relocated in 1862, a small collection just northwest of the West Martello, and very large concentration north of where Atlantic Boulevard is now located. There are three non-contributing resources: a protective/interpretive concrete slab over original burial site, a fence with piers surrounding the original burial site, and a Florida Historical Marker.

SETTING

The African Cemetery is located at present-day Higgs Beach, 1001 Atlantic Boulevard, in Key West, Monroe County, Florida. Atlantic Boulevard was constructed through the cemetery site in the early 20th century, perhaps c. 1903 or 1912. This original cemetery burials was established in 1860 on what was then a desolate, sandy beach ridge approximately a mile east of where the Africans were cared for in "barracoons," an enclosure or barracks used for temporary confinement of slaves. The term "barracoon" is derived from the Spanish word "barraca," meaning hut.

In 1862, the United States Navy constructed West Martello directly on a portion of the African Cemetery. A Captain Hunt had written a letter on August 31, 1861, to the absentee owners of Tract 27, where the Africans were buried, in an attempt to acquire the property for the military. He wrote: "...it is made very uninviting for bush colonists by the burying grounds where, besides numerous human waifs left stranded on this ocean outpost, some 200 to 300 poor victims of the African Slave Trade, sleep their last sleep in a long and most desolate row of sand graves" (Foster 1974:141). On September 20, 1861, Hunt wrote a letter to the officials in Washington explaining: "There are two minor objections to your site No. 2, which I will indicate. 1st it is the burying grounds where some 300 Africans were buried last year. 2nd the sand from the beach on each side is needed for the cover face, & if taken for tower No. 2 must be replaced by sand from the beach farther East" (Foster 1974:145). Despite his advice, the construction of the tower proceeded.

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For ground clearance and excavation in preparation for the construction of West Martello, African graves on the site were removed and relocated. It is noted that the sight and smell of the dead was revolting to the workers. The bodies were removed prior to construction and reburied at an undocumented location (melfisher.org 2002). William Cornick, an Army surgeon reasoned the dis-interments might be a source of yellow fever. In a letter dated June 20, 1862, he wrote:

Some local conditions no doubt favored its [yellow fever's] spread and added to its virulence, such as a large amount of decaying vegetation resulting from the clearing of land for military purposes, the breaking of ground for gardens, the excavations involved in the construction of fortifications, and during the progress of the last, the opening and removal of about three hundred graves which is said to have occasioned an intolerable odor (Schmidt 1992:255).

While the location of the reburial site is not specified, Corey Malcom (2010) points out that an 1888 medical journal article by A. Stub suggests it was near the original location, as it refers to the lingering odor:

The United States Engineering Department, on the other side of the island, caused the resurrection of the corpses of Africans buried on the south beach two or three years previous, being obliged to use that portion of ground for military purposes. The graves were opened and the bodies transferred to another locality. I have been told that the removal of the corpses caused an almost insupportable stench, which infested the locality for some time. The work was done by laborers, mostly composed of Irish lately imported from Europe (Stub 1889).

Furthermore, an anonymous article from June 1903 notes the discovery of a mass grave:

While digging out rock for use on the streets of Key West, commissioner Fulford's men uncovered a trench containing about 50 skeletons. They were heaped together and many of them were face downward. It is probably that the bodies were those of slaves who died of some contagious disease, as hundreds of African slaves, captured in the gulf, were landed on the beach near this spot and kept until they were sent back to Africa.

INVESTIGATIONS

Archaeologist Corey Malcom began intensively researching the African Cemetery in 2000. The African Cemetery was depicted on an 1861 map drawn by James C. Clapp of the Army Corps of Engineers. By comparing that map with one from 1865 that shows West Martello, and with recent maps, Malcom determined

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the area likely to contain primary burials. In 2002, in order to pinpoint the location of graves without subsurface disturbance, a ground-penetrating radar study was conducted around West Martello. At least nine burials were located in the only area around the Martello that has not been previously disturbed by construction or erosion. The cluster of burials extends over a 5 by 12 meter area, off the northeast side of the Martello, immediately south of the sidewalk (Conyers and Malcom 2002).

Malcom (2010) notes that Jefferson Browne's account from 1912 indicates the re-burial site was near the site of the original burial grounds, shown on William Whitehead's Map as Tract 27.

The disinterment of human bones on the southeast side of the island, where excavations were being made for public improvements a few years ago, gave rise to the impression that a public burying ground [for Key West residents] had once been located in that vicinity. These remains, however, were those of the Africans who were brought to Key West in two [sic] captured slavers in 1860; a number of these died here, and were buried some distance from the barracoon, at the place where the bones were found (Browne 1912:49).

In an interview conducted by Malcom, Key West native Armando Sosa pointed out that he recalls when workers from his neighborhood came upon burials while installing water and sewer service for the World War II-period military barracks on Atlantic Boulevard. Sosa specified that these were on the north side of Atlantic Boulevard across from West Martello and the original African Cemetery (Malcom 2010).

In November 2010, an expanded ground-penetrating radar study was conducted. Readings were obtained from 10 grids in search of burials that could be impacted by re-development of the area and the possible relocation of the adjacent portion of Atlantic Boulevard. Graves were found in the area immediately northwest of West Martello between the bike path and parking area. Sosa's recollections were confirmed by the study that clearly shows the location of burials in the park area just northeast of West Martello, north of the boulevard. These burials may be in a secondary context, re-interred approximately one year after the initial burial (Conyers 2010; Malcom 2010 and Map by William Horn Architect 2010). Conyers explains the radar cannot penetrate asphalt or concrete, and it is likely graves exist below the surface of the bike trail, sidewalk, and Atlantic Boulevard (Conyers 2010).

West Martello originally had a central tower, a casemated counterscarp to the north, and a double tier of casemate batteries on the south which was never completed because, with the development of rapid fire artillery, it was obsolete, and construction was stopped in 1866. Eduardo H. Gato, a cigar manufacturer purchased the property in the early 1890s and the fort was used for housing, stables and a stockade. This fortification was later modified by the Army in 1898, during the Spanish America War, by the addition of two concrete emplacements on the southern casements for light coastal artillery guns. During World War II, an anti-

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aircraft battery was added. Following the war, the property was considered surplus and was sold to Monroe County. The central tower was partially demolished, and over time there has been extensive damage and deterioration of brickwork. It is currently a partial ruin but still serves as headquarters for the Key West Garden Club (Thurston 1976; Malcolm 2002).

In 2001, a State of Florida Historical Marker was erected to commemorate the African Cemetery and to educate the public on the significance of what occurred at the site. The marker was located at the east end of the cluster of burials discovered during the first GPR study, in an area 5 by 12 meters, off the northeast side of the West Martello, immediately south of the sidewalk (Conyers and Malcom 2002). In order to assure protection of the burials from beach erosion and vandalism, a concrete slab was poured over this entire area. This slab was developed into an interpretive memorial. It depicts the continent of Africa, showing the slavers' route to Cuba; the capture of the vessels and their landing in Key West; and finally the route taken by the Africans in their journey to Liberia. This painting is overlaid with incised and painted lines that depict the actual graves below that were discovered with the ground penetrating radar. The slab is bounded by ten educational markers that explore African symbolism and philosophy. On August 21, 2011, the 3rd Annual Community Observance of the Key West African Cemetery was held at the site, hosted by the Monroe County Black Heritage Foundation (Hentz 2011; Malcom 2011; and O'Neal 2011).

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☒ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☒ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Archaeology: Historic -- Non-Aboriginal

Period of Significance

1860

1862

Significant Dates

1860

1862

Significant Person

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

African

Architect/Builder

n/a

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of Repository

Mel Fisher Maritime Society, Key West

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AFRICAN CEMETERY AT HIGGS BEACH
KEY WEST, MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA
SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

The African Cemetery at Higgs Beach Archaeological Site is significant at the local, state, and national levels under **Criterion D** in the area of **Archaeology: Historic --Non-Aboriginal**. This cemetery contains the human remains of some of the last victims of the African slave trade that had been practiced beginning in the 1500s by European nations, South America, and the United States. The compound (barracoons) built at Whitehead Point was built to temporarily house 1,432 rescued Africans from three of the last American-owned slave ships: *Bogata*, *Wildfire*, and *William*. The survivors were held for 85 days before they were taken back to Africa. Buried at this site, in three different areas, are 295 victims who did not survive the wait. The cemetery on Higgs Beach in Key West serves as a somber reminder of a despicable institution that is part of world history. Archaeologist Corey Malcom noted, "this is not a slave cemetery; it's a cemetery of African refugees...I don't know of any comparable sites in the New World" (*Miami Herald*, September 17, 2002). The property has yielded and is likely to yield additional information important in the history of the slave trade and of the African victims' physical traits, diet, and health. The burial sites are eligible under **Criterion Consideration D** because of their exceptional historical significance and the information they may yield about the Africans buried there.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The following material that describes the historic context was written by Corey Malcom, Mel Fisher Museum, copyright 2002 and is reproduced here with permission of the Author. [it has been edited by the State Historic Preservation Office for this nomination.]

African Slavery

Slavery has been known across the world for at least 4,000 years, but to the modern mind, primarily as a result of the Atlantic trade, the institution has been associated with the continent of Africa. Slavery affected Africa both externally and internally. Externally, African peoples were exported as slaves from the continent, in earlier times to the Mediterranean basin and the Arab world, and in later times also throughout the Americas. These people were used primarily as laborers in agriculture, mining, and domestic servitude.

Internally, Africans were used by other Africans as slaves for a variety of reasons. Agriculture, industry and trade required workers for farming, hunting, fishing, portage, mining, weaving, iron working, and salt production, among others uses. Others served in government service as soldiers, bodyguards, musicians, heralds, and interpreters. Many were employed in domestic servitude and worked to maintain the households, palaces and shrines of their owners. Some cultures practiced religions with ceremonies that required human sacrifice, and slaves were most frequently used for this purpose. Others were used as concubines. Unlike those sent out of the continent, slaves in Africa had a better chance of manumission, or at least some degree of assimilation into the ruling society, though there were some cultures that considered slavery to be for life.

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People were taken into slavery, for both markets, through a fairly consistent set of means:

- Warfare - The majority of those sold were captives from numerous wars that occurred across the continent. There is much debate as to whether these wars were fueled by the trade, or simply facilitated it.
- Kidnapping – Bands of outlaw rogues preyed upon unsuspecting people, and simply stole them for the slave markets.
- Tribute – Communities that were the subjects of larger powers sometimes had to deliver a portion of their citizenry as slaves as a “tribute” to their overlords.
- Punishment – People who were found guilty of crimes, witchcraft, or other undesirable activities, were often condemned to slavery.

Glele, King of Dahomey

The African Kingdom of Dahomey was ruled by an absolute monarchy, without interruption, for nearly three centuries. This coastal nation, along the Bight of Benin, was a powerful military state, whose customs and traditions included human sacrifice and an elite corps of female soldiers. Glele ruled from 1858 to 1889, and inherited the throne from his father at the height of Dahomey’s power. He was devout in maintaining the traditions of his ancestors, and successfully avoided colonization by Europeans, though by the end of his reign considerable concessions had been made to these outside forces. The Dahomey capital was inland at Abomey, but the coastal city of Whydah was a key trading port. The export of slaves was a very large part of the Dahomean economy when Glele ruled, and he fully sanctioned its practice. When approached in 1863 by representatives of the English government to halt the trade, he reasoned with them that, “He did not send slaves away in his own ships, but ‘white men’ came to him for them, and was there any harm in his selling? We ought to prevent the ‘white men’ from coming to him: if they did not come he would not sell” (Wilmot, 1863. “Commodore Wilmot to Rear-Admiral Sir B. Walker, January 29, 1863.” In *British and Foreign State Papers, 1863-64, Vol.LIV*. Wm. Ridgeway, London).

The Middle Passage

The voyage from the African coast to the Americas was, by all accounts, one of the most horrible in all of maritime history. Africans carried on a slave ship were treated as a cargo of livestock, with hundreds of people crowded into the vessel’s hold. During the 6 to 8 weeks they spent at sea, they were given little in the way of

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comfort or reassurance. Their passage across the Atlantic Ocean was dominated by suffering, sickness and fear. A description written from the Congo Coast in 1859 says of the slavers:

...they sail cautiously yet boldly in, anchor, and in two or three hours are filled with negroes, who are carried off to them in canoes. The refractory ones are clapped in irons, or made drunk with rum; and in this stupefied condition they are carried aboard, stowed in a sitting posture, with knees drawn up so closely that they can scarcely breathe, much less move.

Now their sufferings become dreadful – horrible; indeed, human language is incapable of describing, or imagination of sketching even the faint outline of a dimly floating fancy of what their condition is – homesick, seasick, half starved, naked, crying for air, for water, the strong killing the weak or dying in order to make room, the hold becomes a perfect charnel house of death and misery – a misery and anguish only conceivable by those who have endured it.

Despite the drastic and horrific conditions, four out of five Africans on average survived the voyage.

The Law

Although the United States allowed slavery in certain areas until 1863, it had some of the earliest and strictest laws against the international traffic in slaves. In 1794, slave ships were prohibited from outfitting in American ports. In 1800, American citizens, no matter where they were, were prohibited from carrying people for slavery from one foreign country to another, and in 1808 (amended and updated by the Act of 1818) any importation of people for the purpose of slavery into the United States or its territories was outlawed. And in 1820, participation in the slave trade was considered an act of piracy, and punishable by death. Unfortunately, the enforcement of these laws was sporadic and uneven, rendering them ineffective.

American Slave Ships

Many of the ships that sailed from the African coast to Cuba, trading in slaves, were American-built and -owned vessels. Despite such activity being considered an act of piracy by the U.S. Government, and one punishable by death, a variety of factors made it too tempting a venture to pass up.

Beginning in 1852, there was a frenzy of ship construction among the shipyards of New England, based mostly on hopes of cashing in on the rapidly increasing demands of California. Both construction and demand peaked in 1855. As it turns out, this boom was the last hurrah for American sail. Too many ships had been built, and changing times quickly conspired against them. California's markets became saturated – shipping rates fell

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from \$25 per ton in the early 1850s, to \$11 in 1857. Increased domestic manufacturing lessened the need for overseas imports. The ships also began aging, and required more money to be properly maintained. There was a glut of sail in the late 1850s, and ship-owners were eager to make money any way they could.

Increased effectiveness of the British patrols in intercepting slavers, and slowing the trade on the seas did not mean that the taking of prisoners among the African traders was slowed. The resulting abundance of captives for sale along the West African coast meant lower prices. The opposite resulted on the other side of the Atlantic. Cuban sugar prices were reaching all-time highs, and demands for labor increasing. The price being paid for slaves there soared. Otherwise idle American ships could buy low in Africa and sell high in Cuba, making so much money, it was worth any risk of capture.

The U.S. Navy and the Slave Trade

With Great Britain, France, Portugal, Spain, and the United States all having outlawed the Slave Trade by 1820, military efforts were begun by all these nations to enforce the ban. Five U.S. Navy vessels left for patrol along the West African coast in 1820-21 to arrest American slavers, and help to establish settlers at Liberia. With the War of 1812 still fresh, U.S. government officials were adamant about British interference with American shipping. Similarly, Spain and France were sensitive to American seizures of their vessels. With difficult physical conditions along the African Coast, and diplomatic or political resolutions on the right of mutual search, which was essential for any success, U.S. Naval forces were withdrawn in 1824.

With no way of stopping them, vessels flying the U.S. flag were virtually immune from prosecution, and American ships entered a golden period of slave trading. Slavers in the 19th century, therefore, often found protection for the illicit trade by sailing their vessels under the American flag. This unintended haven was the result of a deep-seated distrust of the fledgling United States toward the British, and their policies in Africa. Since the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, Great Britain had been the traditional political rival of the U.S.; as the young nation's productivity began to grow, the British also became an economic rival.

Though all of the former slave trading powers had renounced the trade, and had formed cooperative efforts amongst their navies to intercept and capture slave ships, the U.S. felt the British Navy had too much power to harass American merchantmen. Both nations were interested in developing stronger "legitimate" relations with the nations of Africa. Fearing excessive bullying by Britain, the U.S. refused to allow its ships to be boarded and inspected by vessels of any other nation. This policy, combined with the relatively small effort put forth by the U.S. to patrol the African Coast, made it much safer for slavers to fly the American flag.

Often a game of "Show me yours and I'll show you mine" ensued between the patrol vessels and the slavers. For example, when the U.S. Steamer *Crusader* first encountered the slaver *Bogota*, the following exchange was recorded in the log, "At 1.45 made a Barque to the Eastward, stood for her. At 2.30 hoisted English colors, she

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responded with French – at 2.45 sounded to ahead of the Barque and hoisted American colors – she lowered her flag and did not hoist it again...” The *Bogota* had been tricked, and was forced to “take the 5th” by repudiating all nationality. She was later found to be American-owned, and condemned.

Traffic to both Cuba and Brazil increased. Tensions escalated once again, though, as British cruisers began to “visit” (their distinction) American ships suspected of slaving. After negotiations, the 1842 Webster-Ashburton Treaty called for renewed U.S. patrols along the African coast, and cooperation with the British. In reality the first and foremost objective of the American patrols was to protect U.S. shipping interests.

For the next twenty years, ensuring the ability of U.S. ships to sail unimpeded by others was the main object of the U.S. Navy’s African Squadron (Du Bois, 1896, pp.146-150. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade*, Vol 1, Harvard Historical Series, Longmans, Green and Co., New York). Those officers who were zealous in their efforts to restrict the slave trade found little support in lackadaisical administrations and courts at home. The American effort to patrol the 3,000 miles of African coast was never fully realized as it was conceived. If more than five patrol vessels were on station at any one time, it was rare.

In 1859, under pressure from President Buchanan, the African Squadron began to finally show its ability. This was a response to resurgence in the trade that began in 1857, and a corresponding increase in captures by the British. In 1858, the size of the navy was increased, and four steamers purchased in the expansion were stationed around Cuba in late 1859 – their object to intercept American slave ships. Between 1838 and 1859, only two slavers laden with people were captured by U.S. Naval forces. In 1859 and 1860, seven were seized, resulting in the liberation of nearly 4,300 Africans.

Abraham Lincoln’s election as President put into power a leader even more committed to the end of the slave trade, but the Civil War forced the African and Cuban patrols into other duties. It was hoped that the vigorous criminal prosecution of any slavers who were caught would suffice as a deterrent, but it did not. In 1862, swallowing all national pride, Lincoln, and Secretary of State Seward, quietly forged a treaty with the British, allowing them to search and seize American vessels. This served to dampen an already fading American interest in slaving. The imminent end of slavery in the United States was helping to bring a close to the trade elsewhere. The U.S. Navy no longer had to focus efforts on its eradication.

Prize Money

The motivation to stop slave ships was enhanced for the crews of the Navy cruisers through a reward program. For each slave ship that was captured, condemned and auctioned, the proceeds would be split equally between the government and the capturing vessel’s crew. If Africans were found on board the slaver, the cruiser’s crew would receive \$25.00 per person rescued, and delivered safely to U.S. authorities. The 1st Class officers split

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3/20ths of the prize money, and the other officers and seamen shared smaller divisions in proportion to their respective ranks.

Identifying a Slaver in 1860

Ships engaged in the Slave Trade in the mid-19th century had a chameleon-like character, and aimed, as much as possible to disguise themselves as legitimate merchantmen. Generally, they tried to pass with the claim that they were engaged in the palm oil trade. But, because of the specific needs of their intended cargo, all slavers carried telltale signs of their true intentions. Unless a ship was caught red-handed, with a hold full of people, these indicators are what were looked for by the Navy vessels. It often required a persistent and cunning search before the evidence was uncovered.

The most revealing material carried on a clandestine slaver was an abundance of wood planking. This material was intended for the construction of the "Slave deck," in the hold of the ship. Because lumber was not readily available on the African coast, it had to be carried across the Atlantic. A large number of provisions, water casks, and utensils - much more than needed by the crew, and in anticipation of hundreds of Africans - also aroused suspicion. Other indicators that a ship was a possible slaver were double sets of papers, Spanish or Portuguese sailors, unusually high wages for the crew, and large amounts of cash (especially gold). Cargoes of cotton calico-print cloth, crockery, liquor, knives, cigars, iron bars, and guns or gunpowder also aroused suspicion, as they were popular items in the exchange for slaves. Shackles, because they provided such clear evidence of a vessel's intentions, were rarely carried. Captain William Inman wrote in 1859 to the commanding officers of the anti-slavery squadrons about the character of their prey,

The cunning of the slaver is constantly forming new disguises to elude the detection and escape the consequences of his crimes...I have only in view to impress you with a deep sense of the artful character of the adversaries with whom you will have to deal, and of their reckless disregard of all truth and honor as well as of law and humanity. Nothing but the utmost vigilance and caution will enable you to detect them. I have no doubt your own observation and sagacity will soon discover other contrivances for deceiving and escaping you, and I have as little doubt that you will apply promptly and efficiently the requisite means of defeating all such attempts (Toucey, 1859. Isaac Toucey to Capt. Wm. Inman, Orders of July 6, 1859. No.17 in 36th Congress, 2d Session, House of Representatives, Executive Document No.7, *African Slave Trade*. US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC. 1861).

The Bark *Bogota*

The Bark *Bogota* was built in Honfleur, near the northern French port of Le Havre for J.T. Barbay. The ship was built of White Oak, and held together with copper and iron fasteners. The hull was sheathed with metal as

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an anti-fouling agent and protection against wood-boring marine worms. She had one main deck supported by iron knees, and beams installed below for the quick construction of a second. There was also a shorter half-poop deck at the stern. *Bogota* was registered at 232 tons, and classed "A1 ½". In 1859, the ship was listed as being under the command of a captain named "Masquises."

Sometime around October 1, 1859, *Bogota* left New York, and began a voyage that would take her to the slave-trading port of Whydah in the Kingdom of Dahomey. On May 23, the United States Steamer *Crusader*, on patrol for illegal slavers, intercepted a suspicious vessel in the Old Bahama Channel off the north coast of Cuba. The *Crusader's* log states,

At 1.45 made a Barque to Eastward, stood for her. At 2.30 hoisted English colors, she responded with French – at 2.45 sounded to ahead of Barque 84 87 and hoisted American colors – she lowered her flag and did not hoist it again – Then sent Lt. Duncan on board; the vessel proved to be a "Slaver," without name, papers or flag! – the Captain repudiating all nationality. Took the vessel as a lawful prize, and received the crew onboard, as prisoners.

Bogota was taken into Key West on May 25, 1860, where 411 Africans were taken off and put under the care of U.S. Marshal Moreno. "They are a fine body of men and women, large, healthy, and strong, and evidently were well taken care of on board the vessel," wrote Moreno (Moreno, 1860. F.J. Moreno to Jacob Thompson, June 10. In U.S. Department of the Interior (RG 48): *African Slave Trade and Negro Colonization*, Records of, 1854-1872. M160. Roll 6). The captain of the ship proved to be a Frenchman, and all of the crew either French, Spanish or Portuguese. The supercargo of the *Bogota* told authorities that two-thirds of the slave-trading venture had been financed in New York.

On May 28, a libel was filed against the "Bark Name Unknown" by the United States, and Judge William Marvin condemned the ship on June 11th. At public auction on July 12, *Bogota* was sold to Key West businessman William Pinckney for \$4576.96. Pinckney quickly put the vessel into service, and another Key West businessman, Asa Tift, chartered her on July 17 to carry sugar from Cuba to New York. She sailed under a captain named Gibbs. The voyage was apparently successful, and the *Bogota* had new metal sheathing applied to the hull in September of 1860. In February of 1861, *Bogota* was inspected at Boston and rated "A2 ½," an indication that her past had not been too kind to her.

The People of the *Bogota*

When the *Bogota* arrived at Key West, in addition to 127 women and boys, U.S. Marshal Moreno noted, "There are on board of the Barque almost 280 men of gigantic proportion. Many of them were over six feet in height, and stout in proportion. They are from the Gold coast of Africa and are much more savage than the Congo Negroes." When all were finally ashore, they numbered 411 people total. "They are a fine body of men and

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women, large, healthy and strong, and evidently were well taken care of on board the vessel,” said Moreno. They were described as being from the “Whydah tribe” by John McCalla, the U.S. government representative who sailed with them from Key West to Liberia (McCalla, 1860). *Journal of John Moore McCalla, Jr.* J.M. McCalla Papers, 1785-1917. Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library).

From such bits of information, it is clear these people came from the western coast of Africa near the Bight of Benin. Whydah is a key trading center there, and for centuries was the point of departure for many thousands of slaves. In 1860, Whydah was the second largest city in the Kingdom of Dahomey. Dahomey was chronically at war, and much of its income derived from the sale of enemies captured in battle. Glele, as the dictatorial monarch, would have been responsible for the sale of any people from there.

Being mostly healthy, grown men, these people were likely captives from recent wars waged by the Dahomey against its neighbors. Incursions by Dahomey against the Yoruba at Ishagga and Abeokutan are recorded in 1859-60, as well as against the Makhi to the north. It is likely that at least some of the people shipped aboard the *Bogota* were captured in these battles.

The Slave Barque *Wildfire*

Construction for the Clipper Bark *Wildfire* began in 1852 at the Simon McKay shipyard at the mouth of the Powow River in Amesbury, Massachusetts. On March 31, 1853, the *Amesbury Villager* reported,

We learn that the new and beautiful clipper ship built at the yard of Mr. McKay, at Amesbury Ferry, will be launched on Wednesday next. As a specimen of skill in shipbuilding, combining speed, beauty of model and elegance of finish, she cannot be excelled by anything yet set afloat on the Merrimac. Such is the confidence of her builders in her sailing qualities that they will challenge the whole fleet of sailing vessels in New England to a trial of speed.

McKay’s confidence apparently was justified. The *Boston Daily Atlas* of July 9, 1853, had this to say:

The clipper barque *Wildfire*, Capt. Mosman, which sailed from this port May 13, arrived at Malta June 8. She passed Gibraltar when 14 days out [a new trans-Atlantic record]; but afterwards encountered a severe Levanter [a strong easterly Mediterranean wind], and had to beat every inch of the way from the Rock to Malta. A letter from her captain says that she is not only an excellent sea boat, but the swiftest vessel he ever saw. Her best day’s work was 306 geographical miles, the wind at times rather light and variable; but with a good whole sail breeze, she can ball 15 knots with ease. Her captain asserts boldly that no vessel in the Mediterranean trade can begin to approach her in speed, and we know from personal inspection that she is well built and beautiful.

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Wildfire was built of oak and fastened with copper and iron fasteners, and had one main deck and a half-poop deck. She was listed at 338.3 tons with the following dimensions – length 128 ft. 4 in. (on deck); breadth 27 ft. 4 in.; depth of hold 10 ft. 6 in. she drew 12 feet of water. Her lower hull was covered with metal sheathing in October of 1858 as protection from wood-boring marine worms.

Wildfire was built for Peter Hargous of New York, and was originally intended for the Mediterranean trade. She was later employed by the Hargous Brothers as a packet-ship, sailing between New York and Vera Cruz. She made her last voyage to Mexico in August of 1859.

On December 13, 1859, *Wildfire* was sold to slave-trader Pierre Lepage Pearce, and was entered into the illegal African trade. She cleared New York on December 16, 1859, with a cargo of calicoes and other cotton goods, headed for St. Thomas, Danish West Indies, under William Stanhope, Master. She was outfitted additionally there, and then sailed for the West coast of Africa.

On March 18, 1860, *Wildfire* left the Congo River with 615 Africans, bound for Cuba. She was sighted by the U.S. Steamer *Mohawk* on April 26 off Paredon Grande on the north side of the island. According to *Mohawk's* log, "At 12:30 boarded an American barque, having onboard a Cargo of slaves. Sent Lieuts. Barbot + Carpenter with Master's Mate Craven and 13 men to take charge of her. Received on board 22 prisoners..." That night one of the prisoners committed suicide by jumping overboard. The following crew of the *Wildfire* were delivered to the U.S. Marshal at Key West:

Jas. Thompson	Charles Lewis
Thomas Murphy	Joseph Titman
Thomas Cruse	Thomas Jones
William Stanhope	Antonio Covas
John Brown	Silvestre Morilla
Oliver Martin	Juan Lopez
George T. Edwards	Juan Fortun
George W. Hutchinson	Manuel Balsemo
George Hunter	Salvador Alvarez
William Johnson	Ignacio Silva

Also delivered to the Marshal were 507 Africans – mostly teenagers, and many very sick from the unhealthy conditions suffered during their voyage. *Wildfire* was refitted at the Congo River with extra decking installed in the hold to accommodate this human cargo. May H. Stacey, of the U.S. Steamer *Crusader*, visited the ship and wrote of the space constructed for the Africans, "A glance on the slave deck was enough to fill the mind with indiscernible horror at the thought of what the poor creatures must have suffered in twenty eight days passage.

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The deck was constructed of rough unplaned planks and raised from the ship's bottom about three feet leaving a space of about four feet in height and extending fore and aft."

By May 5, proceedings against "The American Bark *Wildfire*, her tackle, apparel, furniture, guns and appurtenances, +c." were filed by the United States at the court in Key West. The vessel was condemned by Judge William Marvin on June 7, and ordered to be sold by the U.S. Marshal at public auction. Sometime later that month, or in early July, the sale of the *Wildfire* brought \$6454.38, and after expenses, net proceeds of \$6087.76 were divided equally between the U.S. Treasury and the crew of the *Mohawk*.

Wildfire was purchased by Gomez, Wallis & Co., and they had the hull sheathed with new metal in January of 1861. In February, the ship was inspected at New York, and rated class "A2." What became of the *Wildfire* after this apparent rehabilitation is not known.

The Bark *William*

The American Bark *William* was built in 1847 at Damariscotta, Maine. She was registered at 232 tons, and built of mixed woods with iron fasteners. She had one deck, and drew 12 feet of water. In 1855, metal sheathing was applied to her hull as protection from wood-boring marine worms. *William* was owned by the shipping company of Galwey, Casado & Teller.

On June 2, 1859, *William* was sold to Baltimore resident Thomas W. Williams, and she sailed from New York for Mobile on July 4. On September 25, she left there for Havana, and arrived after a voyage of 4 days. In October, plans were made for a voyage to Africa. She sailed for the Congo River, and there took onboard 744 Africans. She set sail for Cuba on March 10, 1860. Near the Isle of Pines, on May 9, *William* was captured by the U.S. Navy Steamer *Wyandotte* off the south side of Cuba; 570 Africans were found on board. Of a crew of 24, only one, the Captain, was American. His name was Washington Symmes of Philadelphia (at capture he was using the alias William Weston – a combination of his brother's first name, and mother's maiden name). The *Wyandotte's* Fabius Stanly was offered \$25,000 by the crew of the *William* to let the ship go, but he refused the bribe. The *Wyandotte* towed the *William* into Key West on May 12, but 53 Africans died during the relatively short voyage to the island; 513 Africans were delivered to the care of U.S. Marshal Fernando Moreno. Most of these people were children, and had been treated very poorly while on the *William*. Many were very sick, or dying. On May 17, a libel was filed against the *William* by the U.S. Attorney, and Judge William Marvin condemned the vessel and ordered her sale. By June 16 the *William* was auctioned, and sold to Antonio Pelletier for \$4571.96. In a bizarre twist, Key West businessman Asa Tift wrote on August 24, "The *William* was run out of town last night, with a one eyed man who pretended to be the owner, and six men. They took an officer who was on board. One of our pilot boats ran out, and brought her back. She will get her papers and go to Mobile – I think." The man who stole her was David Martin (alias, Lincoln Patten, alias Gilman Dresser, alias George Walker) who had also stolen the infamous slaver *Wanderer* in October of 1859. There appears to

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have been some earlier connection between Martin and the *William*, because when he took *Wanderer* he had her name painted over and replaced with “William.” Martin was arrested in November for his involvement with the *Wanderer*, and imprisoned. The *Wanderer* had arrived at Jekyll Island, Georgia, in 1858 with 409 Africans; it was one of the last slavers to deliver captives to U.S. soil. The vessel was seized by government authorities and condemned, and though many of the venture’s conspirators were tried for slave-trading, none were convicted. In fact, the slaving voyage’s sponsor, Savannah businessman Charles Lamar, had repurchased *Wanderer* from the government and was outfitting it for another voyage, when Martin stole it (Wells, 1967).

After *William* left Key West, she was taken to Havana by Pelletier. This man was no stranger to the slave trade, and had been arrested in December 1858, along with his vessel *Ardennes*, for engaging in an illegal slaving voyage to Africa. Apparently Pelletier’s interest in the trade was not deterred. Notice was sent to U.S. authorities from Havana on September 5, stating that the ship and a crew of Spaniards had just left there, headed first to New Orleans then Mobile. Their intent was to outfit, and then sail from Alabama to Africa on yet another slaving voyage. Instead, in December Pelletier sailed the *William* to Haiti, adopting the new alias “J. Letellier,” and calling the ship “Guillaume Tell.” He went with the intent of luring workers aboard his ship with contracts to collect guano at an offshore island, and then kidnap them and sell them as slaves in Cuba. After receiving a warning at Port-au-Prince to leave the country, he sailed to the north coast to continue his scheme. A crewmember broke away from Pelletier, and confessed the plan to the French and Haitian authorities, who petitioned Pelletier to come ashore. On April 5, 1861, he did, and was placed under arrest. He was later convicted and imprisoned. The *William* was taken, and put under the charge of the Haitian government at Fort Liberté. Then, after such sad events in a long career, the *William* was lost to history.

The People of the *Wildfire* and *William*

The people shipped on both the *Wildfire* and the *William* were put aboard the vessels at the Congo River. The area had been a slave-trading center for centuries, its inhabitants having first dealt with the Portuguese in the early 1500s. By 1860, trading had penetrated well upriver and inland. Slaves were purchased there for the domestic and export markets. It is not clear from where exactly the rescued Africans originated, and most likely they were taken from different areas throughout the Congo basin. As said in a newspaper account of the time, “...the whole number is evidently taken from different tribes living in the interior of Africa, but the greater number are Congos” (Anonymous, 1860). *Harper’s Weekly*, June 2, 1860, vol.4, pp.344-345). Congo (Kongo, Kicongo) culture is Bantu-based, and is the predominant ethnic group along the west-central African coast.

Some of the people from the *Wildfire* stated they came from the coastal city of St. Paul de Loando. Their names – Francisco, Salvador, Constantia, Antonia, Amelia, and Madia –reflect the Portuguese influence on the region. Many of these people had been baptized by Catholic missionaries, and spoke at least some Portuguese. Some of these people claimed to have been slaves in that city, which is not surprising considering that in 1850, of a

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population of 12,565, over 6,000 were slaves. The group exhibited a variety of cultural markers. It was written about the *Wildfire's* people,

The women from [Loando] have cut or shaved the hair off the back part of their head, from a point on the crown to the back part of either ear. It is the fashion of their tribe. None of the other women are thus shorn. Many of the men, women, boys, and girls have filed their front teeth—some by sharpening them to a point, and others by cutting down the two upper front teeth. The persons [from Loando] have their teeth in a natural state. Perhaps fifty in all are tattooed more or less (*Harper's Weekly*, June 2, 1860).

In the mid 19th century, slaves were being brought to the Congo markets from much farther inland than ever before. Bobangi fishermen transported captives from areas to the north and east of the river's Malebo Pool (the cities of Brazzaville and Kinshasa). Far to the southeast, the Chokwe also had an increasing influence in the trade, as profits from their traditional produce of ivory and beeswax enabled them to purchase arms. They began an eventually successful war against the Lunda empire, capturing many people for the slave markets.

Beyond these little bits of information, it is difficult to know exactly where the majority of these captured African people came from.

The Africans' Experience in Key West

A total of 1,432 Africans from the *Bogata*, *Wildfire*, and *William* arrived in Key West. They came with nothing. The 3,000 citizens of the island, led by United States Marshal Fernando J. Moreno, came together and built housing, donated clothing, and provided food and medical attention for them during their stay in the city. The well being of the rescued Africans was Moreno's responsibility. Under his leadership, a three-acre beach front parcel at what was known as Whitehead's Point was set aside for the temporary settlement and enclosed with a 6-foot high fence. The barracoons were located approximately 150 yards from the high water mark and included a 215' by 45' long wooden barracks and a 107' by 25' hospital structure, along with a kitchen and guard's quarters. Fences extending into the water served to screen bathing. With the capture of all three ships, the settlement became temporary housing for 1,432 people (*The New York Times* June 2, 1860; Browne 1912:17).

A Key West paper entitled "The Key of the Gulf", dated May 19, 1860, was the source for the June 2, 1860 article in the *New York Times*. It describes the barracks building as "...divided into nine large rooms, so that the sexes are separated, as well as children from those of larger growth. In these spacious and well ventilated rooms they can eat and sleep, and during the heat of the day repose from a vertical sun. They are fed in squads of ten, seated around a large bucket filled with rice and meat, each one armed with a spoon to feed with. Thirty-gallon

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tubs stand in the centre of each room, and they are permitted to help themselves freely to water. This for the well.”

The *New York Times* article states there were 180 patients in the hospital. “There are afflicted with ophthalmia, some 60—many totally blind; with dysenteric, dropsical and rheumatic” afflictions, as well as diseased lungs. Some 23 have died, principally from those so attenuated and worn out that it was a marvel they lived as long as they did” (*New York Times* June 2, 1860). The *Harper’s Weekly* article, also dated June 2, 1860, states: “We saw on board about six or seven boys and men greatly emaciated, and diseased past recovery, and about a hundred that showed decided evidences of suffering from inanition, exhaustion, and disease. Dysentery was the principal disease.” The Africans arrived in Key West malnourished, undernourished, and without clothing. U.S. Marshall Moreno and Key West citizens brought food and clothing to the temporary settlement. Doctors Whitehurst, Skrine, and Weedon were hired to care for the sick (*Harper’s Weekly* June 2, 1860; Browne 1912:17).

A total of 295 Africans died during their nearly three-month stay in Key West. The United States Government contracted Daniel Davis to build the coffins and bury the 295 African dead at the price of \$5.50 per burial (Daniel Davis, May 1, 1860 and September 11, 1860).

The *New York Times* (June 2, 1860) gives us an account of one funeral at the African Cemetery:

Among the Wildfire’s cargo there is a mother, with a babe about six weeks old. She soon became an object of interest among visitors, and in a very short time both mother and child were suitably and comfortably clad. The baby soon sickened and died-- and as we saw the mother bending and weeping, and kissing its inanimate form—wailing in plaintive song, and responded to by numerous mourners around the corpse—we felt that love was beyond all conditions of pride or place, and that many might rejoice and be flattered in their self love, if they would be missed as much as the dead babe was by its mother. It was laid in a handsome coffin, and a procession of seventeen went with it to its last abode. Low chantings and loud wails of grief would break forth, and when at last the spot was reached, they became as silent as the narrow house which would contain all the heart prized so much. The little coffin was placed in the grave, each threw in its handful of earth, and amid the deepest sorrow they returned in silence back.

For eighty-five days the newly liberated refugees found shelter there, but because of the horrific conditions they had suffered aboard the slave ships, many of the Africans were quite ill, and 295 of them died. They were buried in shallow sand graves on the southern shore of the island. Eventually it was decided the survivors would be sent to Liberia, a country on the West African coast established as a home for liberated American slaves.

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Ships were chartered by the United States through the American Colonization Society for yet another voyage across the Atlantic. Three months after they had first arrived, all the Africans left Key West and were on their way to a new life. In route many more perished as they were still sick and in poor condition from the initial voyage. Only 823 of these people were landed in Liberia (Malcom 2008).

What happened after the Africans left Key West

Once the Africans left Key West, Marshall Moreno requested that the U.S. Government retain the compound in case other slavers were captured. By March 1861, the War Department was given permission to demolish it, but is uncertain as to when this occurred (melfisher.org 2002). The barracoons are last known to have been used on January 30, 1863, as the site for Key Westers to gathered and celebrated the Emancipation Proclamation (*New York Times*, Feb.12, 1863, p.2).

In 1862, construction of West Martello and East Martello, known as Fort Taylor Towers No. 1 and No. 2, began in an attempt to further fortify Key West by expanding the capabilities of Fort Zachary Taylor at the onset of the Civil War. West Martello is recorded as Master Site File No. MO233 and is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Thurstion 1976). There is no mention of the African Cemetery in the nomination documents.

Of the slavers brought into Key West, the *Wildfire*, *William*, and *Bogota* were seized under the Acts of 1794 and 1800, and condemned by Judge William Marvin. They were sold at public auction, and the proceeds were split between the U.S. Treasury and the crews of the Navy cruisers who captured them. The Captains and crews were jailed at Key West, but allowed bail – the seamen for \$450, and the Captains, \$1,000. Eventually charges were brought against Phillip Stanhope, and the crew of the *Wildfire*, and Washington Symmes (alias William Weston), Master of the *William*. They were initially indicted under the Act of 1820, but eventually tried under the Acts of 1800 and 1818. The Grand jury found “no true bill” against Stanhope and crew, and a verdict of “not guilty” against Symmes. Despite being caught red-handed, they were freed.

Fernando J. Moreno served as U.S. Marshal for the Southern District of Florida during the Administration of James Buchanan (1857-61), was the person responsible for the Africans during their stay at Key West. He was an active Democrat, and supporter of its southern wing at the outbreak of the Civil War. Although he was a slave-owner, and sympathetic to the Confederacy, he took the oath of allegiance to the Union in 1861. Despite the oath, his family was exiled to Hilton Head by a local Union commander. Moreno had spent many thousands of dollars of his own money to aid the Africans in 1860, but because of his political leanings, the government refused to compensate him for this. He unsuccessfully petitioned for reimbursement for the rest of his life. He was elected Florida State Senator for the 24th district in 1887, and served for one term. For a brief period under

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President Grover Cleveland, in 1888, he again served as U.S. Marshal. Sometime around 1890, Moreno left Key West for Pensacola. He died in New Orleans in 1905.

Conclusion

The remarkable story surrounding the slave ships *Wildfire*, *William*, and *Bogota* speaks to the pivotal nature of the times. Slavery was a leading topic of political discussion, and its polarizing effects were about to tear the United States in two. The confused character of the American, and even global, mindset is expressed in so many ways when looking at the microcosm of events that occurred here in 1860: A few corrupt African kings resisted development of stable industries in favor of quick profit, and continued to sell their rivals to American slave ships, while hastening their own economic demise; The American military was combating the maritime traffic in slaves, while millions were still held in bondage on U.S. soil. As for the African refugees, there was never a question of their plight, or their freedom, yet it was never suggested they stay in the United States. At Key West, men who were slave owners, and soon to be supporters of the Confederacy, devoted many of their personal resources to ensure the welfare of the Africans, and yet some, without irony, employed their own slaves to give them aid. In the courts, only the ships were found guilty of participation in the slave trade, not the crews. And at one point, the U.S. Marshal at Key West had to consider the use of deadly force against a group intending to steal the Africans – nearly bringing Americans to blows with Africans in what could have easily been a catalyst of the U.S. Civil War. And across the Atlantic, the development and support of what was supposed to be an African “paradise” in Liberia was only sowing the seeds of misery.

Despite all the missteps and contradictions, these events helped push forward a significant shift in the social and political mindset from even a few years before. As difficult and messy as abolition might be, slavery, and the support for it, was rapidly collapsing. With the interrupted missions of the *Wildfire*, the *William*, and the *Bogota* – among the last slave ships to touch on American shores – an institution nearly four centuries old was coming to a close.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Other African Cemeteries in the United States

No other African cemeteries in the United States are directly comparable to the African Cemetery at Higgs Beach. The people were Africans, not enslaved Africans in America, nor enslaved or free African Americans. In addition, the cemetery was only active for the approximately three-month period in 1860, when the Africans were held in Key West until they were taken to Liberia. The U. S. Marshall had wood coffins built and hired a grave digger to perform the 295 interments. The initial ground penetrating radar study showed the remaining undisturbed, primary burials were individual interments. In 1862, burials located in the area the Navy selected to construct West Martello Tower were disinterred and reinterred nearby. Although depicted on period maps, the location of the African Cemetery was quickly forgotten. The second ground penetrating radar study located

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these re-burials in the open area on the north side of present-day U.S. 1 (Atlantic Boulevard), mostly in what is now a small dog park. This study shows these secondary burials were unsystematic, shallow interments that include mass graves.

Below is a comparison of the African Cemetery at Higgs Beach with four other American African cemeteries.

African Cemetery No. 2 located on East Seventh Street in Lexington, Kentucky, was active from the 1820s until 1974 and contains approximately 5,000 burials (www.uky.edu/Projects/AfricanCem/brief_history.html). Articles in a May 1889 issue of *The Kentucky Leader* explain that, as a condition to allow the Presbyterian Church to sell their property, the graveyard located there had to be abandoned so the property would be clear for development. Bodies and gravestones were removed and reinterred at African Cemetery No. 2. Remains from older graves were placed in small boxes and buried in a shallow trench about 1 foot apart. Coffin size boxes were used for less decomposed remains (www.uky.edu/Projects/AfricanCem/reference/ref001001.html and [ref001002.html](http://www.uky.edu/Projects/AfricanCem/reference/ref001002.html)).

The African Cemetery in Lower Manhattan was active in the 17th and 18th centuries and contained approximately 20,000 burials. As with the African Cemetery at Higgs Beach, although depicted on historic maps, the cemetery was forgotten over time. Early 19th century fill was placed over the cemetery to enhance development. This fill inadvertently helped protect the burials from the disturbance. During construction of the Foley Square Federal Building in 1991, 419 burials were encountered. These remains were removed for study and eventual re-interment (www.africanburialground.gov).

The Hurricane of 1928 African American Mass Grave, located in West Palm Beach, Florida was the final resting place for 674 African Americans who were the victims of this category 4 storm. It is located in the pauper's cemetery at 25th Street and Tamarind Avenue. The location of the unmarked cemetery was forgotten over time. The City exchanged the property that contained the mass burial for property owned by the Union Missionary Baptist Church at 23rd Street. The City failed to tell the Church about the mass burial, but did have the deed restricted to only church use. The deed restriction was removed in 1985 and the property was sold to Bernard Kolkana in 1987. Kolkana and the public became aware of the burials when community activists hosted a memorial for those interred in the 1928 mass grave. In 1992, the City planned to build affordable housing on a portion of the 8-acre parcel where there were no burials. A backhoe was used to try to determine site limits and human remains were found. In 2000, the City had a ground penetrating radar study completed which showed a 70' X 30' trench. The trench had been impacted on the north end when they extended 25th Street in 1964. At that time the disturbed remains were reinterred at Woodlawn Cemetery. Influenced by public pressure, the City of West Palm Beach purchased the property from Kolkana in 2000 so the site can be preserved and serve as a memorial (Sinks, Piland, and Mattick 2002).

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Africatown Cemetery, located in Mobile County, Alabama, is associated with a settlement established in 1866 by West Africans who were illegally captured and shipped as slaves to Mobile, Alabama. During the summer of 1860, Captain William Foster of the ship *Clotilde* purchased over 100 captured Africans from the King of Dahomey for Timothy Meaher, a Mobile businessman and plantation owner. Over 40 of the Africans were kept by Meaher as slaves until the end of the Civil War. The others were sold off as individuals or in small groups of two or three. It was Meaher's slaves who, as freedmen in 1866, bought land from Meaher and established a community that came to be known as Africatown. There, they largely self-segregated themselves, and maintained their tribal customs and language (Email to Barbara Mattick from Susan Enzweiler, National Register Coordinator, Alabama Historical Commission, Montgomery, Alabama, April 3, 2012). Descendants of the original 100 slaves still live in the Mobile area. Old Plateau Cemetery, established in 1874 and used until 1990, contains remains of the original slaves, including those of the last original slave survivor, who died in 1935 ([Africatown, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africatown](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africatown), accessed 4/2/2012; Mark R. Kent, "Africatown project locates graves of ex-slaves who survived 1859 shipwreck," blog.al.com/live//print.html, accessed 4/2/2012).

Each of the five cemeteries discussed in this nomination is unique. The two in Florida, the African Cemetery at Higgs Beach in Key West and the 1928 African American Mass Grave in West Palm Beach, however, differ from the others in that they were used for a very short time period and for a limited number of burials. In both cases, the cemetery and mass grave were established in response to catastrophic short term events. This contrasts with the African Cemetery No. 2 in Lexington, Kentucky, the African Cemetery in Manhattan, which were active for 100-200 years. Of the five cemeteries, only the Africatown Cemetery remains fully intact, but like the Lexington and Manhattan cemeteries, was used for many decades. The one striking common element of four of the five cemeteries (excluding the Africatown Cemetery) is that each one has a history of disinterment of primary burials so that the properties could be developed either by the government or private entities. Both of the Florida cemeteries have some intact primary burials. Through time, except for Africatown's cemetery, all of these locations faded from public memory and were forgotten. Impact from development has brought each of these cemeteries to light and as the American public has become better stewards of their history, the remaining primary and secondary burials are now protected and memorialized.

Research Questions

The African Cemetery at Key West is not slated to be the subject of any intrusive archaeological excavations for a number of reasons: 1) there are detailed, informative historic accounts describing the plight of the Africans in Key West, 2) many consider the site to be sacred, not to be disturbed, and 3) the site faces no threats from changing land use. As technology improves, however, and computer-based data collection and processing capabilities are increased, tools like non-intrusive, ground penetrating radar will eventually have the capacity to reveal more sub-surface detail, and move beyond being a means for mere location and prospection into one for anthropological research (Conyers, 2010; Conyers & Leckebusch, 2010). There is certainly strong potential for increasingly informative, non-intrusive research to continue at the Key West African Cemetery.

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Although the boundaries of the African Cemetery are defined, the number of burials within them has not been fully determined. Continued remote-sensing surveys would improve an understanding of the number and nature of the burials. As methods of visualizing remote-sensing data are improved, especially in regard to three-dimensional interpretations (see Lin, et al, 2011; Doolittle & Bellantoni, 2010), ability to understand the specifics of the burials will only increase.

The historic accounts attest to the fact the victims buried at Higgs Beach in Key West were from distinct ethnic groups and in different conditions of health. Skeletal remains and DNA could provide information about the age, gender, health, nutrition, descent, and ethnic identity of the buried individuals, as well as insights concerning the physical condition and possibly the cause of death of the victims. The brevity of the event, from the time of the victims' capture in Africa, through their horrific experience of the Middle Passage, until their death within three months of their arrival in Key West, provides a rare opportunity to measure the impact of conditions related to the Atlantic crossing on what is the largest number of such people from any single event known in the United States. The closest identified parallel to the Key West site is the Rupert's Bay cemetery for liberated Africans at the British colony of St. Helena Island in the South Atlantic (Pearson Jeffs, Witkin, & MacQuarrie, 2011). Because the Africans were in Key West for only a few months, were never actually slaves, and were never immersed in American culture, it is highly probable that they retained their tribal customs. Depending on the level of preservation, the burials at Higgs Beach, especially those at their primary locations next to the West Martello, may contain grave goods or other evidence of African burial practices.

The burials may also reflect U.S. national policy regarding victims of the slave trade, including the level of care provided to the refugees by the U.S. government, especially through remains of clothing, evidence of medical treatment, and quality of coffins and/or interment.

In a broader sense, this site and these graves provide opportunities for examination, research, and learning about an event of national significance during a nationally significant period in time that has/had global impact/influence. Research on these graves such as DNA analysis and other biological, archaeological, and cultural based analysis will help link the past to present by enhancing our knowledge of who these Africans were.

By extracting from Antoinette Jackson's ideas about the Kingsley Plantation as an archaeological space (2009), the Africans from these ships, their experiences at Higgs Beach, and their grave sites and material remains at this beach, can help us rethink static, discretely bounded portrayals of the African experience in Florida and the United States in the context of the transatlantic slave trade.

The African Cemetery at Higgs Beach, therefore, is highly significant at the **local, statewide, and national levels under Criterion D** as an archaeological site with the potential to yield significant information about the African victims of the slave trade shortly before the American Civil War. No other such cemetery is known to

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exist in Florida, or perhaps even elsewhere in the United States. Below are specific questions related to the site's potential to yield information:

Site Parameters

- 1) How many graves are within the African Cemetery?
- 2) Through remote sensing, what can be visualized from within the graves?
- 3) Do additional graves exist beneath currently un-surveyed areas of the area (e.g., beneath the roadbed of Atlantic Avenue)?

Burial Practices

- 4) How do the burials at Key West compare to the historical record?
- 5) According to a report in the June 2, 1860 issue of *Harper's Weekly*, some of the Africans were Christians who had been baptized by Portuguese missionaries in Africa. Is there any evidence of Christian or other religious beliefs in the burials?

By all accounts, the Africans arrived naked and without any material goods, but that does not mean they were unable to practice or create material expressions of their cultures once in Key West. Based on this account from the *New York Times* of June 2, 1860, the Africans participated in at least some of the burial events:

Among the Wildfire's cargo there is young mother, with a babe about six weeks old. She soon became an object of interest among visitors, and in a very short time both mother and child were suitably and comfortably clad. The babe soon sickened and died – and as we saw the mother bending and weeping, and kissing its inanimate form – wailing in plaintive song and responded to by numerous mourners around the corpse – we felt that love was beyond all conditions of pride or place, and that many might rejoice and be flattered in their self love, if they would be missed as much as the dead babe was by its mother. It was laid in a handsome coffin, and a procession of seventeen went with it to its last abode. Low chauntings [sic] and loud wails of grief would break forth, and when at last the spot was reached, they became as silent as the narrow house which would contain all the heart prized so much. The little coffin was placed in the grave, each threw in its handful of earth, and amid the deepest sorrow they returned in silence back.

- 6) Do the burials indicate expressions of African cultural origins, values, and practices?

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7) Did the Africans modify the American goods they were given at Key West to reflect the values of their homelands: Were American goods rethought through an African lens? If yes, were any modified goods buried with those who died (e.g., clothes, jewelry, other objects or artworks)?

8) Are there patterns to the items found in the graves?

Skeletal Remains

9) Are the human remains modified according to West African traditions (e.g., teeth filed)?

10) Is their medical treatment reflected in the remains (e.g., medicines; surgeries; repair of broken bones, etc.)?

11) The historical record indicates that most of the captured Africans were teenage boys. Do the burials represent a gender balance consistent with the numbers of Africans rescued, or show a higher level of mortality by gender and age?

12) The historical record reports health issues related to ophthalmia, dysentery, dropsy, rheumatic conditions, and lung disease. Is there evidence of these conditions in the skeletal remains? What other conditions, such as recent trauma of the Middle Passage, are evident?

13) Some victims may have been slaves in Africa. Is there evidence of long-term labor that can be differentiated from the more recent effects of the Middle Passage experience?

14) Does DNA evidence show that any of the victims were related to each other, or identify their specific people groups?

Reflection of U.S. policy

The Key West African Cemetery is much more than a burial ground: its presence is a significant reminder and jumping-off-point for thinking about not only the events of 1860, but also the policies and attitudes in the United States towards slavery and the transatlantic slave trade in general.

15) How do the graves reflect U.S. policy towards Africans liberated from slave ships?

16) Are there remains of clothing to indicate the level of comfort and care the Africans were given by the U.S. government and people of Key West?

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Under contract with the U.S. Government, Key West carpenter Daniel Davis made the coffins and performed the burial for each victim.

17) What sorts of coffins were used?

18) Did the coffins conform to a national governmental standard?

19) Do the secondary burials, performed by the U.S. Army and necessitated by the construction of the West Martello impinging on the original cemetery site, differ from the primary burials? How so?

20) How do any differences reflect a change in policy or attitude toward the Africans?

21) What might those changes have been and why?

Comparisons with African slave or African-descendant burial grounds in the U.S.

The African Cemetery at Higgs Beach could create a unique database of information for comparative data to cemeteries where folks had been immersed in American culture and acculturation (e.g., the African Burial Ground in Manhattan) is a significant anthropological concept that has great importance for understanding race and the formation of racial identity in America. The burials at Key West provide a benchmark for understanding life under the U.S. government system of dealing with African people liberated from slave ships before they became exposed to American culture.

22) How might the burials at Key West compare to other sites, such as those of native Africans, those of slave and freedmen, or those who came to the United States and then lived and were buried here independent of government control?

23) Considering the people buried at Key West were intended for slave labor but never experienced it, can their remains serve as a baseline for comparison with the remains of known slaves in regard to the effects of hard labor? (i.e., they serve as a "pre-labor" data set in understanding how life under slavery affected and shaped the human body.)

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African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Name of Property

Monroe Co., FL
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 6 acres

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	4	2	0	3	6	0	2	7	1	4	9	3	0	
Zone			Easting						Northing							
2																

3																
Zone			Easting						Northing							
4																

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Corey Malcom/Archaeologist & Diane Silvia/Monroe Co. Historic Preservation Planner, Barbara Mattick/DSHPO
organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date April 2012
street & number R.A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street telephone 850-245-6333
city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Monroe County, County Administrator Roman Gastei
street & number 1100 Simonton Street telephone 305-292-4441
city or town Key West state Florida zip code 33040

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

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**AFRICAN CEMETERY AT HIGGS BEACH
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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Verbal Boundary Description

The African Cemetery is located on Higgs Beach on the south coast of Key West. The eastern site boundary is about 125 feet west of the intersection of White Street and Atlantic Boulevard. Atlantic Boulevard, bike paths, and a sidewalk run generally east- west through the cemetery and it is very likely there are still graves below the pavement. The cemetery is bounded by West Martello and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. At present, a picnic area is to the east and then a bandstand. North of Atlantic Boulevard graves were located within the current Small Dog Park. The Large Dog Park bounds the cemetery to the north. Lawrence Conyers (2010) concluded that the absence of graves in the area north of the small dog park may be due to the difficulty of digging graves where bedrock is so close to the surface. See accompanying map entitled Graves on Map.

Boundary Justification

As previously noted, the historic accounts and maps of Key West describe the location and temporary compound where the Africans were held and the location of their cemetery, about a mile to the east (See Topographical Map of the Island of Key West. Capt. E.B. Hunt, Corps of Engineers and James C. Clapp, Draughtsman, Ft. Taylor. September 1861 and the African Cemetery, detail). In addition, the historic descriptions of ground breaking activities for construction of West Martello in 1862 indeed point to this location. Based on the historic record and informant interview, Corey Malcom theorized the relocated burials were near the original cemetery.

The location and limits of the African Cemetery were confirmed archaeologically with ground penetrating radar studies by Lawrence B. Conyers, Geophysical Investigations, Inc. conducted in June 2002 and November 2010 (Conyers L and C. Malcom 2002; Conyers 2010; Map 2010 by William P. Horn Architect, P.A.). Site maps of Higgs Beach by William P. Horn, P. A. 2010 show the existing site plan with graves plotted that were discovered in the ground penetrating radar studies. Site boundaries were drawn to encompass all located graves and paved areas between where graves are likely, but with current technology, cannot be detected with ground penetrating radar.

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				PHOTOS & APPENDICES

PHOTOGRAPHS

- 1 1) African Cemetery at Higgs Beach, 1001 Atlantic Boulevard
 2) Key West, Monroe County, Florida
 3) Diane Silvia, Historic Preservation Officer for Monroe County
 4) July 9, 2011
 5) Monroe County Historic Preservation Office (digitals)
 6) Original cemetery on Higgs Beach, camera facing SW
 7) Photo 1 of 8

Items 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs.

- 2 6) Florida Historical Marker (noncontributing object), camera facing WSW
 7) Photo 2 of 8
- 3 6) Protective/Interpretive slab over original cemetery, showing depiction of ship embarkation sites of captured Africans in Africa. Oblong shapes etched in pavement indicate locations of burials identified by ground penetrating radar. Small piers around the edge provide more interpretation and are counted as part of the noncontributing slab. Camera facing S.
 7) Photo 3 of 8
- 4 6) Protective/Interpretive slab over original cemetery, camera facing S
 7) Photo 4 of 8
- 5 6) Protective/Interpretive slab over original cemetery, with white-fenced dog park (where secondary burials are located across Atlantic Boulevard), camera facing WSW
 7) Photo 5 of 8
- 6 6) View of the West Martello, camera facing S, from Small Dog Park across Atlantic Boulevard
 7) Photo 6 of 8
- 7 6) Large Dog Park, camera facing NE
 7) Photo 7 of 8
- 8 6) Small Dog Park, camera facing NW
 7) Photo 8 of 8

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APPENDIX 1: Supplies for the Africans at Key West

Buckets – 21
Covered Tin Pail – 1
Covered Wood Pail - 1
Iron spoons – 60
Tin Basins – 7
Tin Pans – 21
Saucepan – 3
Baker's Pans – 2
Skimmer – 1
Cook Knife – 1
Coffee Pots – 4
Pitchers – 2
Nutmeg Grater – 1
Tin Spoons – 1206
Wooden Spoons – 1296
Table Spoons – 3
Tin Can – 1
Funnel – 1
Demi-Johns – 3
Corn Mills – 4
Sieve – 1
Tin Dippers – 2
Ladle – 1
Tumblers – 9
Lanterns – 17
Tin Can for Lard Oil – 1
Tin Pans – 240
Wood Pumps – 3
Cords of Wood – 17
Axes – 2
Axe Handles – 3
Corn Brooms – 44
Hickory Brooms – 6
Oil Feeder – 1

Food

Rice – 24,727 lbs. + 6 casks from Havana
Corn Meal – 1656 lbs. + 1 barrel + 1 peck +
18 bushels
Pilot Bread – 18,403 lbs.
Navy Bread – 8026 lbs.
Flour - 13 ½ barrels
Soda Biscuits – 14 lbs.
Potatoes – 21 barrels
Mess Beef – 12 Barrels + 25lbs.
Jerked Beef – 2283 lbs.
Fresh Beef – 1453 ½ lbs.
Bacon – 2033 ¼ lbs.
Bacon Shoulders – 1031 lbs.
Codfish – 3626 lbs.
Split-peas – 24 bushels
Peas – 1 ½ barrels
Cowpeas – 106 bushels
Beans - 6742 ½ lbs.
Lard Oil – 56 gallons
Brown Sugar – 305 lbs.
Crushed Sugar – 320 lbs.
Molasses – 14 gallons
Salt – 14 ½ bushels
Cayenne Pepper – 2 dozen boxes + 23
bottles + 9 cans
Vinegar – 1 barrel + 10 gallons
Limes – 8800
Lemons – 200
Green Peppers
Nutmegs – 24
Pepper – 104 lbs.
Garlic Cloves – ¼ lb.
Tamarinds – 1 bushel

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number Photos & Appendices Page 3

**AFRICAN CEMETERY AT HIGGS BEACH
KEY WEST, MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOS & APPENDICES**

Tubs – 2
Basket – 1
Soap – 174 lbs. + 6 bars
Salt Water Soap – 174 lbs. + 8 bars
Castile Soap – 3 lbs.
Globe Lamps – 6
Balls of Lamp Wick – 8
Lamp Feeder – 1
Matches – 216
Pipes – 4 ½ boxes
Tobacco – 236 lbs.
Snuff – 1 dozen bottles
Oil Can – 1
Marine Clock – 1
Clock – 1
Scissors – 2
Water Casks – 34
Crash – 16 yards
Duck – 4 yards
Shovels – 9
Spade – 1
Rakes – 6
Memorandum Book – 1
Bottle Ink – 1
Manilla – 5 ¼ lbs.
Queen Paper – 1
Paper Tacks – 1
Corks – 144
Cork Screw – 1
Powder – 1 ½ lbs.
Sulphur – 2 lbs.
Hemp Twine – 10 ½ lbs.
Ball Twine - 7
Cotton Twine – 2 ¾ lbs.
Spun Yarn – 3 ½ lbs.
Sail Needles

Black Tea – 24 lbs.
Ice – 725 lbs.
Water – 72,461 gallons
Whiskey – 30 gallons
Cuba Rum – 20 gallons
Brandy – 6 ½ gallons
“Stops” – 1 lb.

Clothing

Blankets – 46 + 492 pair
Spreads – 5
Shirting – 14 pair
Hickory Shirts – 854
Shirts – 373
Check Shirts – 132
Men’s Shirts – 576
Boys Shirts – 24
Blue Flannel Shirt – 1
Chemises and Trimmings – 638
Pants – 108
Boys Pants – 2
Boys Caps – 2
Gunny Cloth – 1299 yards
Cotton – 220 yards
Bleached Cotton – 283 ¾ yards
Calico – 964 yards
Muslin – 20 yards
Red Flannel – 3 yards
Thread – 3 ½ lbs. + 59 spools
Handkerchiefs – 174
Shoes – 2 pair

Hospital

Corn Mattresses – 12
Empty Bags - 25
Sponge – 2 ¼ lbs.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number	Photos & Appendices	Page	4	AFRICAN CEMETERY AT HIGGS BEACH KEY WEST, MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA PHOTOS & APPENDICES
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Razors – 6	Arrowroot – 45 lbs.
Razor Strop – 1	Wine Glasses – 2
Deck Buckets – 1	Chamber Pots – 30
Stop – 1	Castile Soap – 3 lbs.
Faucet – 1	Brandy – 4 ½ gallons
Chain – Two pieces	Medicine Chest – 1
Cowhide – 1	Oil – 1 bottle
“Cusares” – 35 packages	Crushed Sugar – 20 lbs.
Triangles – 3	Flapseed – 2 lbs.
Bell – 1	Claret Wine – 6 bottles
Slack Lime – 2 Barrels	Fowls – 6
Stocks – 1	Demijohn – 1
Bale Hay – 1	Stove – 1
Iron Boilers – 3	Bottles 1 dozen
Stove – 1	

APPENDIX 2: The Africans at Key West - A Time-line

September - November 1859 – The U.S. Navy steamers *Mohawk*, *Crusader*, *Wyandotte*, and *Water Witch* are given orders to patrol the waters surrounding Cuba in order to suppress the slave trade.

March 6, 1860 – The Cuba squadron is given notice of the suspected slaver *William* bound for the island.

April 26, 1860 – *Mohawk* intercepts and seizes the *Wildfire* off Nuevitas with a cargo of 540 Africans

April 30, 1860 – *Mohawk* arrives at Key West with *Wildfire* in tow.

May 1, 1860 – The first African dies at Key West, and is buried there.

May 4, 1860 – After the construction of baracoons and a hospital, 507 Africans are delivered to US Marshal Fernando Moreno.

May 9, 1860 – *Wyandotte* captures the *William* off the Isle of Pines with 570 Africans onboard.

May 12, 1860 – *Wyandotte* arrives at Key West with the *William* and 513 Africans.

May 19, 1860 – President Buchanan addresses Congress regarding the Africans at Key West, and asking for their cooperation in funding transportation of them to Liberia.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number	Photos & Appendices	Page	5	AFRICAN CEMETERY AT HIGGS BEACH KEY WEST, MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA PHOTOS & APPENDICES
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May 22, 1860 – Buchanan sends another message to Congress relating the arrival of the *William*, and the urgency of the situation at Key West.

May 23, 1860 – *Crusader* captures the *Bogota* near Lobos Island on the Bahamas Bank.

May 25, 1860 – *Crusader* brings *Bogota* to Key West with 411 Africans.

May 28, 1860 – A boy is born at Key West to a woman rescued from the *Wildfire*.

May 30, 1860 – A contract is signed between the United States and the American Colonization Society to send the Africans to Liberia.

June 7, 1860 – *Wildfire* is ordered condemned by Judge William Marvin.

June 10, 1860 – Moreno notes that 133 Africans have died.

June 25, 1860 – 222 Africans are dead.

June 30, 1860 - Ship *Castilian*, after arriving at Key West, takes 400 Africans to Cape Mount, Liberia.

July 14, 1860 - Ship *South Shore* takes aboard 385 Africans for Liberia. Two drown before embarkation.

July 19, 1860 – Ship *Star of the Union* takes on 383 Africans, the last group, for Liberia. A total of 295 Africans died while at Key West.

August 26, 1860 – *Castilian* arrives at Cape Mount with 308 Africans.

September 6 – *South Shore* arrives at Gran Bassa with 233 Africans. *Star of the Union* arrives at Sinoe with 320.

December, 1860 – Charges are dropped by the Grand jury against Phillip Stanhope for his participation in the slave trade as Master of the *Wildfire*. Washington Symmes of the *William* is found “Not Guilty.”

March 26, 1861 – Permission is given by Secretary of the Interior Caleb Smith to the Army to tear down the African baracoons at Key West.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number	<u>Photos & Appendices</u>	Page	<u>6</u>	AFRICAN CEMETERY AT HIGGS BEACH KEY WEST, MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA PHOTOS & APPENDICES
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APPENDIX 3: Images from media coverage at the time of the event

The Slave Deck of the Bark “Wildfire,” Brought into Key West on April 30, 1860 – [From a Daguerreotype.]
Harper’s Weekly, June 2, 1860.

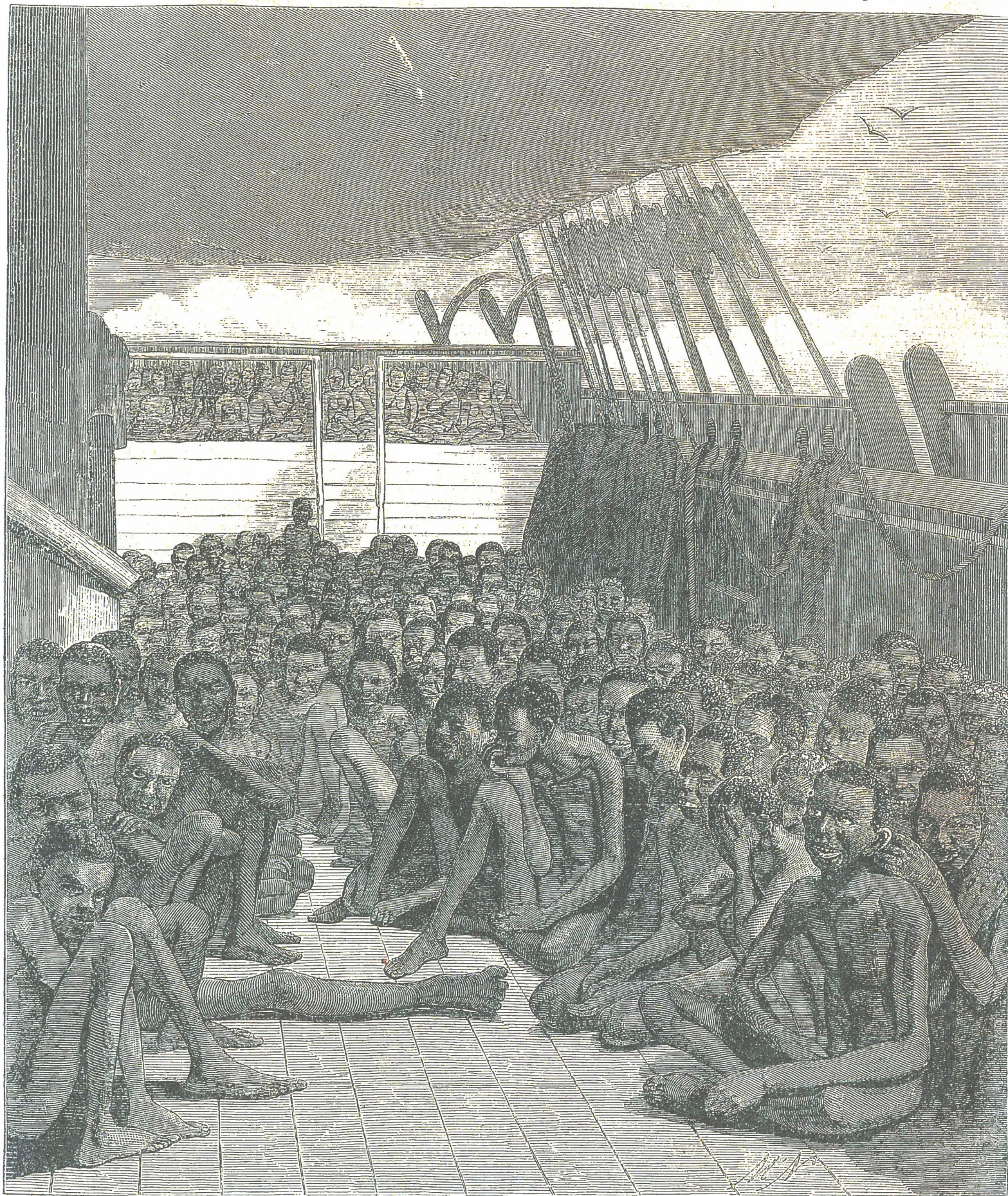
An African. – [From a Daguerreotype.] *Harper’s Weekly*, June 2, 1860.

The Only Baby Among the Africans. – [Daguerreotyped.] *Harper’s Weekly* June 2, 1860.

The Barracoon at Key West, Where the Africans are Confined.—[From a Daguerreotype.] *Harper’s Weekly*,
June 2, 1860.

[Incomplete caption] . . .ties for the Accommodation of the Negroes Captured from Slavers by the United States
Cruise, see Page 65.” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, June 23, 1860.

THE AFRICANS OF THE SLAVE BARK "WILDFIRE."—[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]



THE SLAVE DECK OF THE BARK "WILDFIRE," BROUGHT INTO KEY WEST ON APRIL 30, 1860.—[FROM A DAGUERROTYPÉ.]

African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL

Harper's Weekly, June 2, 1860.



AN AFRICAN.—[FROM A DAGUERRETYPE.]

African Cemetery at Higgs Beach

Key West, Monroe Co., FL

Harper's Weekly, June 2, 1860



THE ONLY BABY AMONG THE AFRICANS.—[DAGUERREOTYPED.]

African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL

Harper's Weekly, June 2, 1860



THE BARRACOOON AT KEY WEST, WHERE THE AFRICANS ARE CONFINED.—[FROM A DAGUERRETYPE.]

African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL

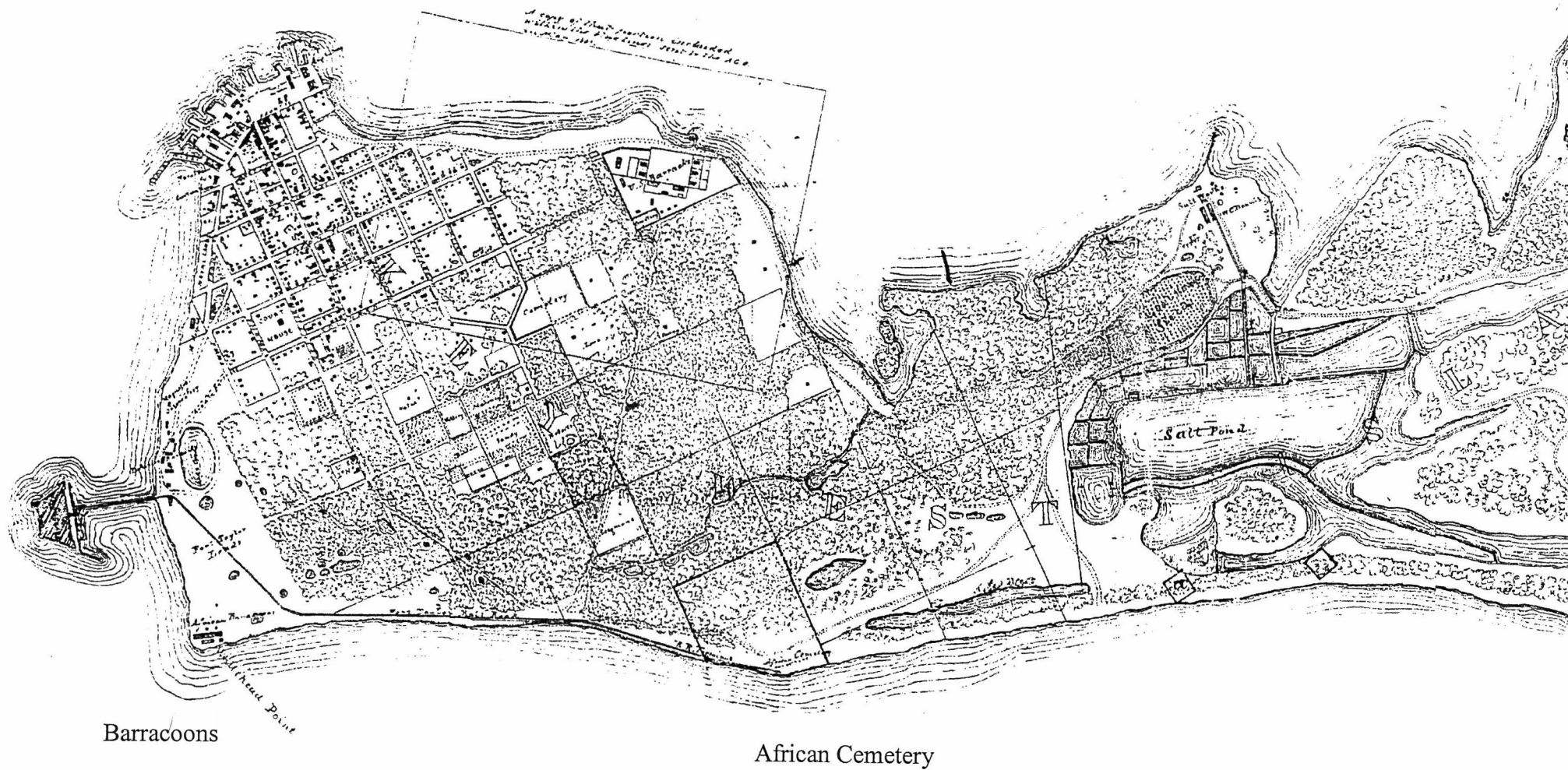
Harper's Weekly, June 2, 1860



TIES FOR THE ACCOMMODATION OF THE NEGROES CAPTURED FROM SLAVERS BY THE UNITED STATES CRUISE
SEE PAGE 65.

African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL

Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper,
June 23, 1860.



AFRICAN CEMETERY AT HIGGS BEACH
Key West, Monroe County, Florida

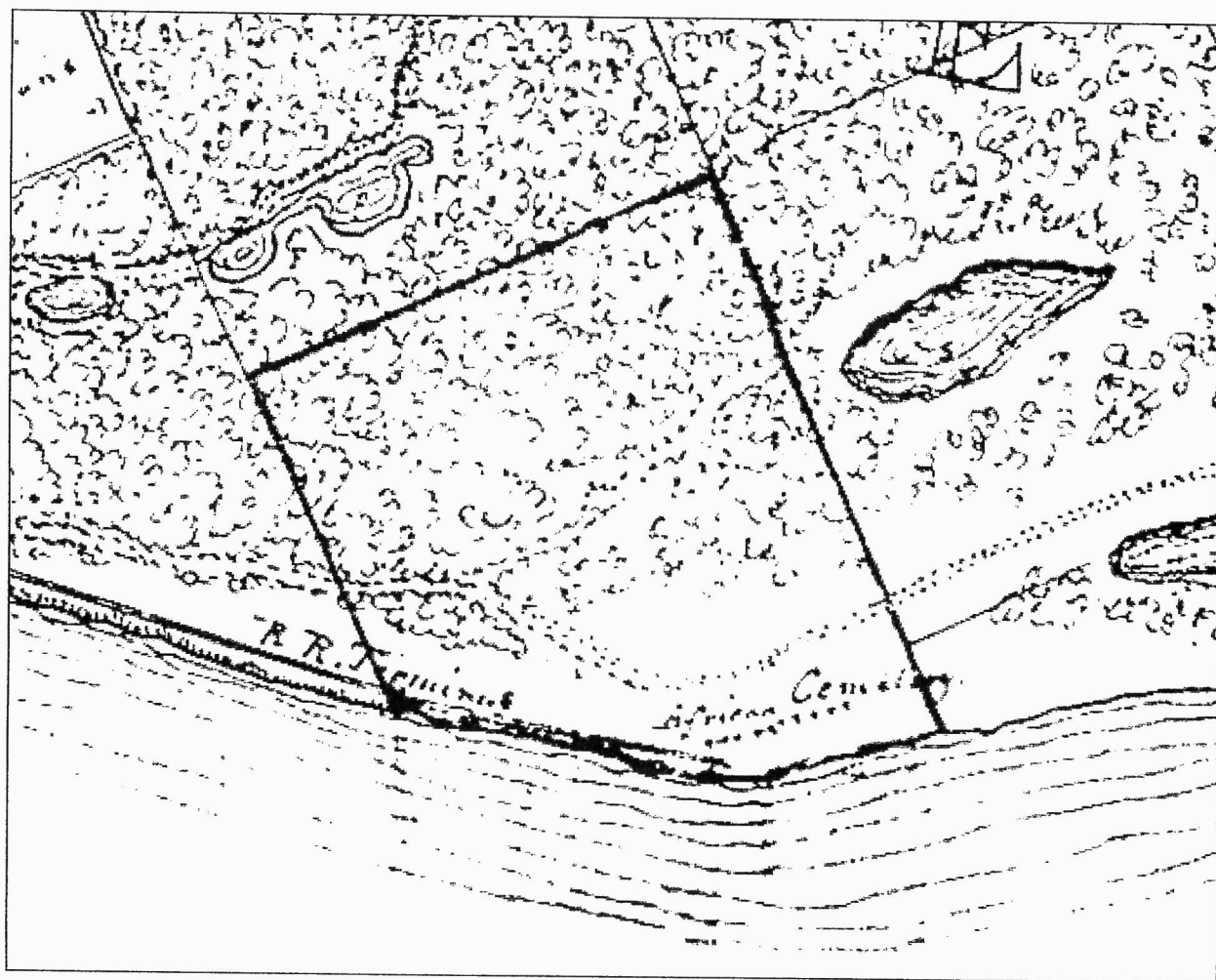
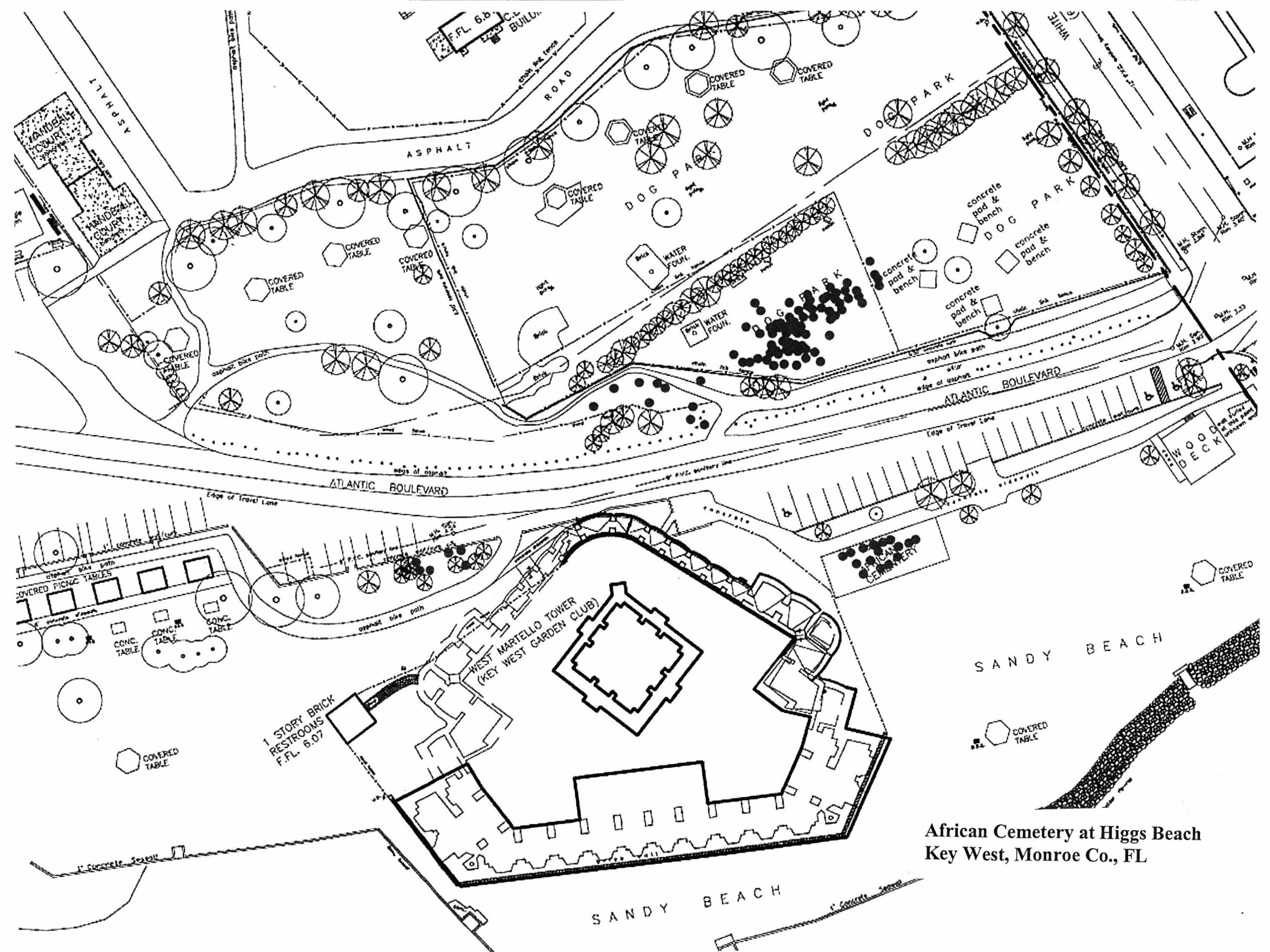
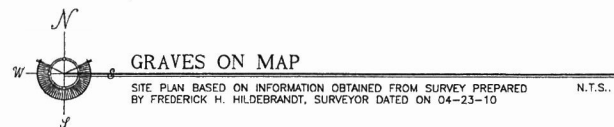
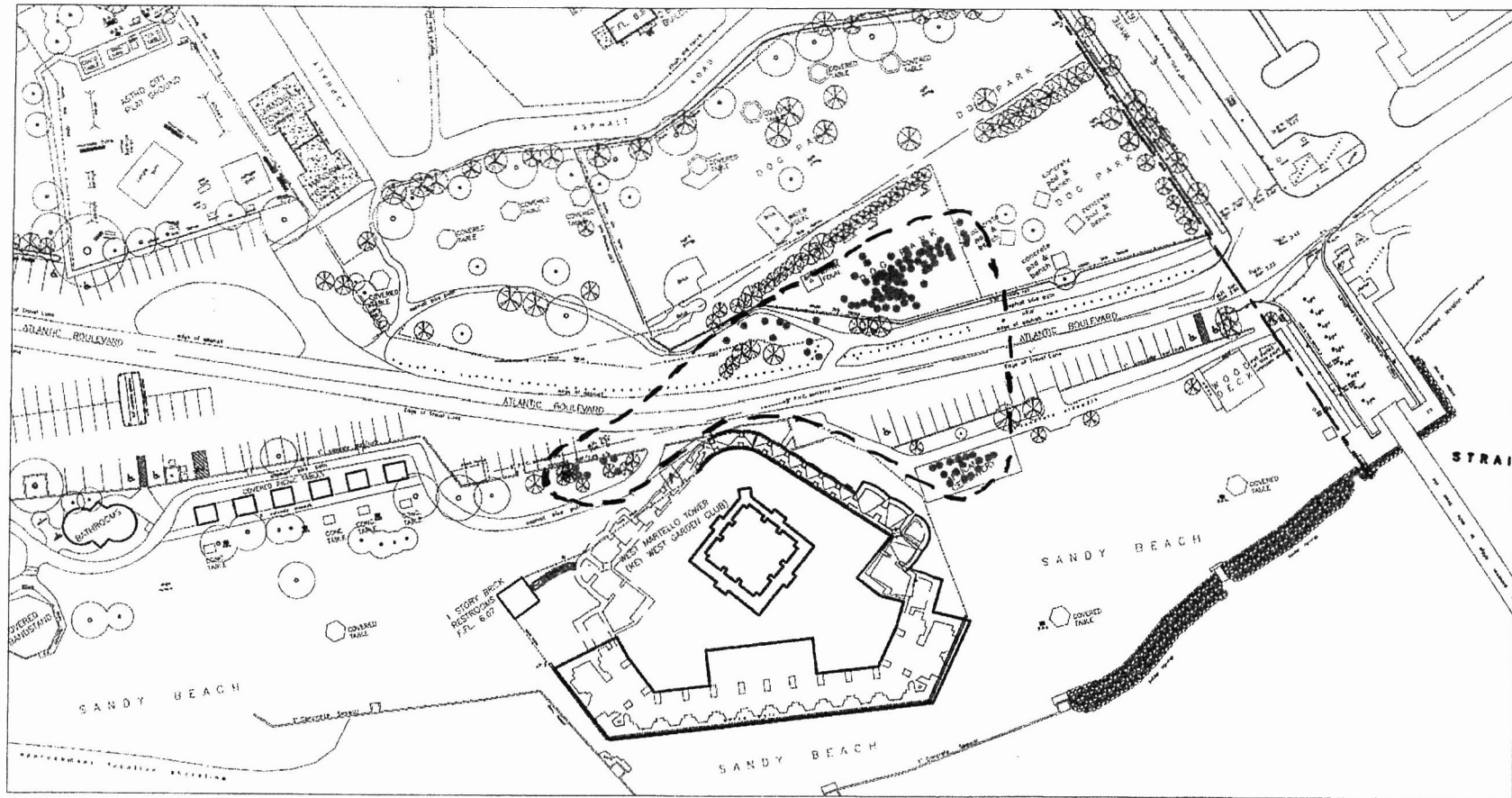


Figure 4. The African Cemetery, 1861. Detail from *Topographical Map of the Island of Key West*. Capt. E.B. Hunt, Corps of Engineers, and James C. Clapp, Draughtsman, Ft. Taylor. September, 1861.

**African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL**



**African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL**



African Cemetery at Higgs Beach Key West, Monroe Co., FL

CLARENCE HIGGS BEACH - MASTER PLAN
KEY WEST, FLORIDA

WILLIAM P. HORN
ARCHITECT, P.A.

915 EATON ST
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FLORIDA
33549

TEL. (305) 256-9322
FAX (305) 256-1033

LICENSE NO.
AA 56858

HIGGS BEACH
KEY WEST, FL.

LANDWISE

MITCHELL PLANNING & DESIGN

INNOVATIVE ENGINEERING
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TRAFFIC TECH ENGINEERING

ISLAND SURVEYING INC.

WILLIAM P. HORN
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SEAL

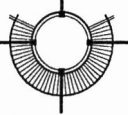
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06-22-10

REVISIONS

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NUMBER
1004



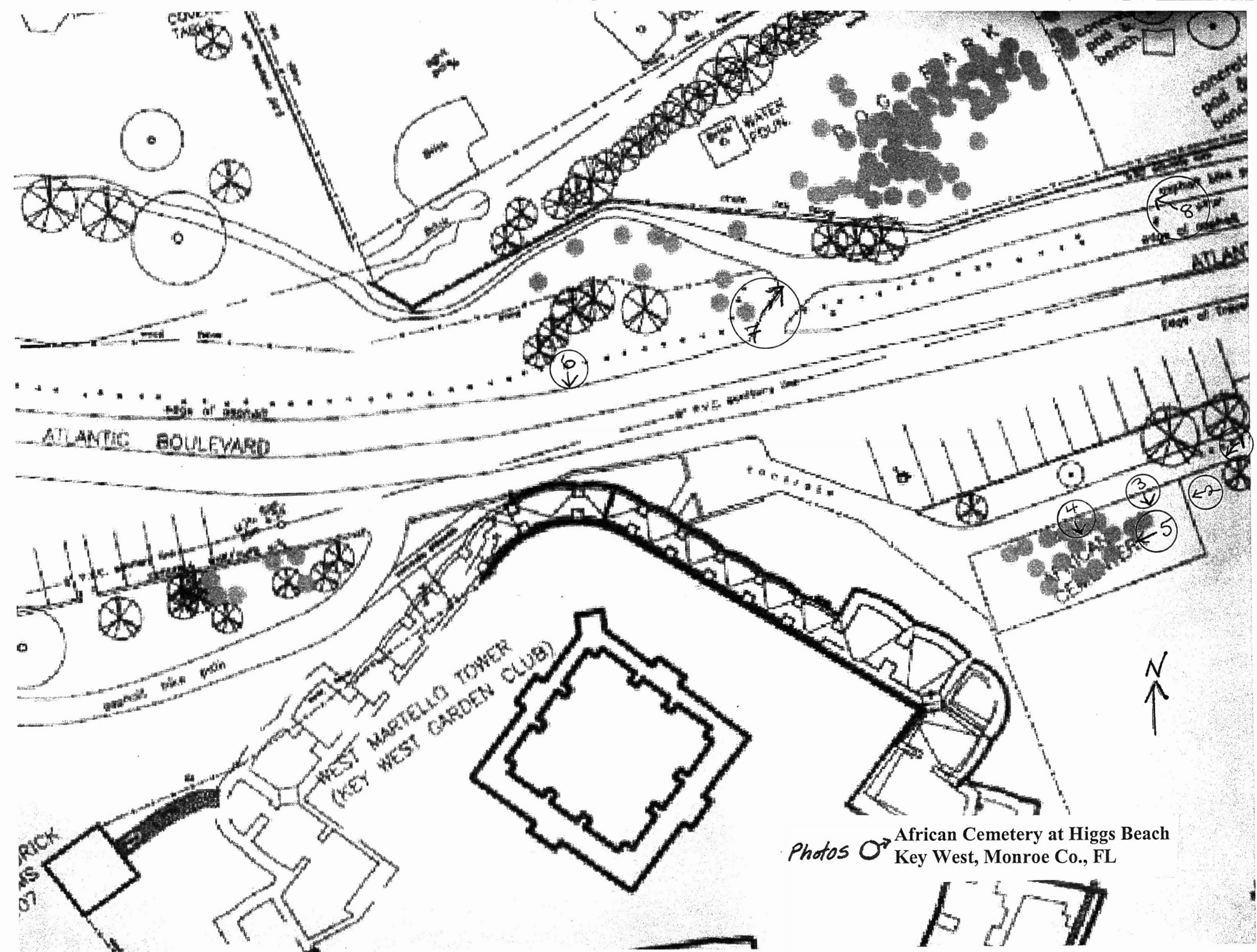


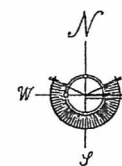
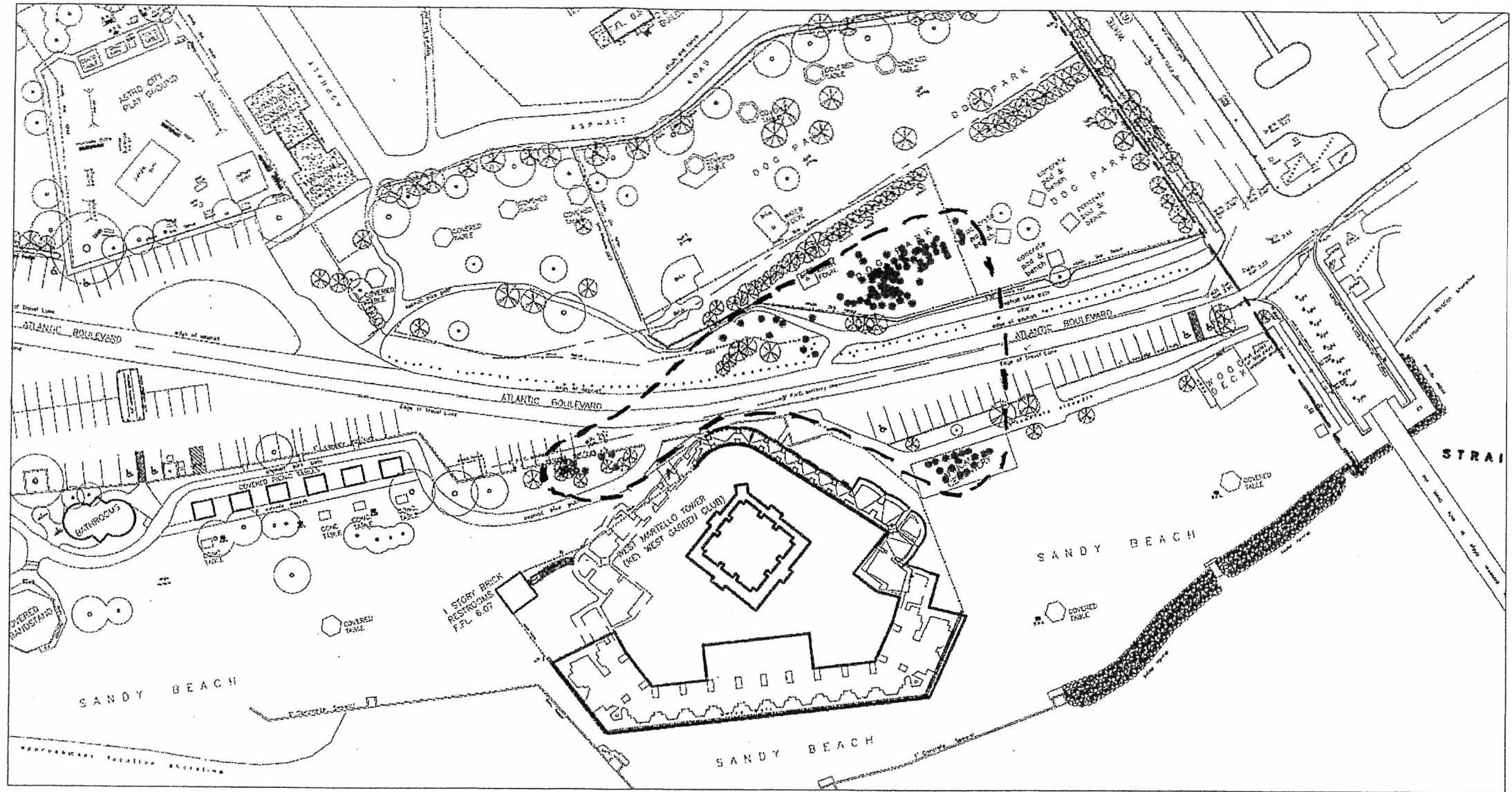
Google earth

feet 300
meters 100



African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL





GRAVES ON MAP

SITE PLAN BASED ON INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM SURVEY PREPARED
BY FREDERICK H. HILDEBRANDT, SURVEYOR DATED ON 04-23-10

N.T.S.

African Cemetery at Higgs Beach Key West, Monroe Co., FL

CLARENCE HIGGS BEACH - MASTER PLAN

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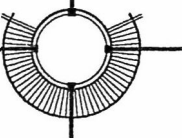
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: FLORIDA, Monroe

DATE RECEIVED: 5/11/12 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 6/11/12
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/26/12 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/27/12
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 12000362

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 6/26/12 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA D

REVIEWER Subert DISCIPLINE

TELEPHONE DATE 6/26/12

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



African Cemetery at Higgs Beach

Key West, Monroe Co., FL

1058



AFRICAN CEMETERY AT HIGGS BEACH

Near this site lie the remains of 294 African men, women and children who died in Key West in 1860. In the summer of that year the U.S. Navy rescued 1,432 Africans from three American-owned ships engaged in the illegal slave trade. Ships bound for Cuba were intercepted by the U.S. Navy, who brought the freed Africans to Key West where they were provided with clothing, shelter and medical treatment. They had spent weeks in unsanitary and inhumane conditions aboard the slave ships. The U.S. steamships *Mohawk*, *Wyandott* and *Crusader* rescued these individuals from the *Wildfire*, where 507 were rescued; the *William*, where 513 were rescued; and the *Bogota*, where 417 survived. In all, 294 Africans succumbed at Key West to various diseases caused by conditions of their confinement. They were buried in unmarked graves on the present day Higgs Beach where West Martello Tower now stands. By August, more than 1,000 survivors left for Liberia, West Africa, a country founded for former American slaves, where the U.S. government supported them for a time. Hundreds died on the ships before reaching Liberia. Thus, the survivors were returned to their native land, Africa, but not to their original homes on that continent.

A FLORIDA HERITAGE LANDMARK
SPONSORED BY OLD ISLAND RESTORATION FOUNDATION AND
THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

F-432

2001

African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL

258



African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL

3 of 8



African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL

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African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL
5 of 8



African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL

4 of 8



African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL

17 of 8

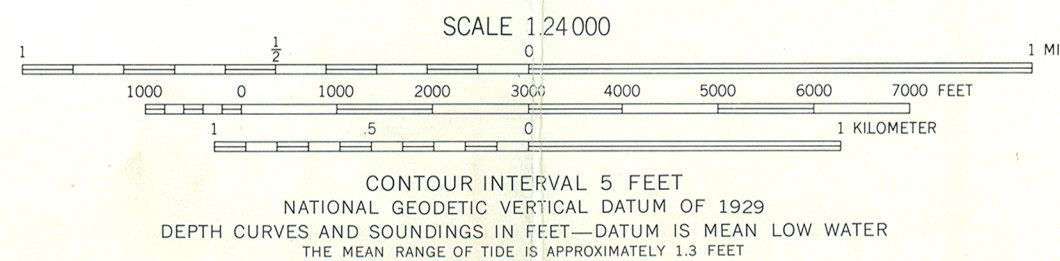
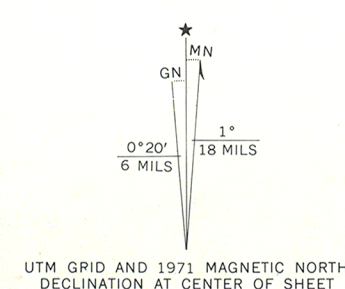


African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL

8 of 8



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Orthophotomap prepared from aerial photograph taken
April 4, 1970. Topography by planetable surveys 1971
Supersedes Army Map Service map dated 1943
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 576 (1971) and
584 (1970). This information is not intended for navigational purposes
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Florida coordinate
system, east zone (transverse Mercator)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 17, shown in blue. 1927 North American datum
Where omitted, land lines have not been established
or are not shown because of insufficient data
Only landmark buildings indicated in urban area



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, hard surface ——— Light-duty road, hard or improved surface ———
Secondary highway, hard surface ——— Unimproved road ———
Trails ———
Interstate Route ——— U.S. Route ——— State Route ———

KEY WEST, FLA.
N2430—W8145/7.5

1971

AMS 4633 III SE—SERIES W847

African Cemetery at Higgs Beach
Key West, Monroe Co., FL
17 420360 27149300



RECEIVED 2280

MAY 11 2012

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

RICK SCOTT
Governor

KEN DETZNER
Secretary of State

May 4, 2012

Ms. Carol Shull, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
Department of Interior
1201 Eye Street, N.W., 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed are the nomination and additional materials for the

African Cemetery at Higgs Beach, Key West, Monroe County, Florida

We believe this site might be worthy of National Historic Landmark designation, and would appreciate your comments as to whether designation should be pursued.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (850) 245-6364 if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

Barbara E. Mattick

Barbara E. Mattick, Ph.D.
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
for Survey & Registration

Enclosures

DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

R. A. Gray Building • 500 South Bronough Street • Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250
Telephone: 850.245.6300 • Facsimile: 850.245.6436 • www.flheritage.com
Commemorating 500 years of Florida history www.fla500.com





Alexandra Lord/WASO/NPS

07/10/2012 08:58 AM

To Barbara.Mattick@DOS.MyFlorida.com

cc Erika Seibert/WASO/NPS@NPS

bcc

Subject African Cemetery, Higgs Beach (Key West, Florida)

Dear Dr. Mattick:

Thank you for the excellent National Register nomination for the African Cemetery at Higgs Beach in Key West, Florida, and for your request in that cover document transmitting the nomination to us for our comments about the possibility of pursuing National Historic Landmark designation of the site.

Listed in the National Register on June 26, 2012 at the national level of significance, the property is the site of the final resting place of 295 Africans that died in 1860 after being brought to Key West by the United States Navy during efforts to eradicate the slave trade. The cemetery contains the remains of some of the last victims of the African slave trade. In many ways the property is unique. The people buried here were Africans. They were not enslaved Africans in America, nor enslaved or free African Americans. The property has the ability to answer questions about the physical site itself (where graves are located, what is the extent), African burial practices, U.S. policy with regard to the treatment of those alive and the dead, and osteological data that can provide significant information about the health of the victims. Nevertheless, we do not feel the site would meet National Historic Landmark Criterion 6 at this time. The burials at the cemetery have been relocated at least three times. The construction of the West Martello Tower, the Atlantic Boulevard, and military barracks during World War II all had detrimental effects on the human remains. Additionally, the barracoons have not been physically located. The graves that have been located and appear to be intact have not been ground truthed. As such, we do not know enough about the remaining graves' integrity or the barracoons to suggest the pursuit of an NHL at this time. If, in the future, more archeological work is done to determine the location of the barracoons, to verify the integrity of the graves that have not been disturbed, and to discuss more fully the extent of the disturbance to other human remains, we would reconsider the possibility of pursuing an NHL nomination.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact Erika Martin Seibert of the NHL staff at (202) 354-2217 or at erika_seibert@nps.gov

Sincerely,

Alexandra M. Lord, PhD
Branch Chief
National Historic Landmarks Program
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street NW
Washington DC 20240
Phone: 202-354-6906
Email: alexandra_lord@nps.gov