

(b) "Soon they were heading up the low mangrove covered coast past Shark River and, finally, they sighted a sandy beach which Scotty said was Lost Man's Key. When the boys asked why they called by that name, Scotty answered: 'I don't know but I can tell why it ought to be called Found Man's Key'.

"He said that a few months before as the 'Jennie' was sailing past Lost Man's Key a man was seen standing on shore waving a signal flag, and when they went in to investigate they found 4 other men, some of whom were almost dead from hunger, thirst and exposure. The men were taken to Choculuskee and housed in a small shack until strong enough to leave for the North....."(From reference CCXXXV(f).

(c) "This wilderness of islands in the year 1870 contained in its entire length of 82 miles only two known settlements, one at Marco and the other 40 miles to the South so far back among the islands as to be almost inaccessible and called Choculuskee.

"In these pioneer days, a settlement meant a palmetto leafed shack in a small clearing, miles away from any other similar shack or clearing upon another island. Key West, 80 miles from Choculuskee, was the nearest town. It also contained the nearest church, school, store, bar room, horse, cow, or other accessory to the entertainment or comfort of civilized man, and it was also the nearest market for vegetables, sugar cane and bananas raised by these settlers, and shipped there by small coasting schooners." (From reference CCXXXV(f).

(d) "Passing a flat rock covered by gray pelicans and cormorants, they saw due North a pass wide enough to enter, through which the incoming tide was rapidly flowing. Sailing swiftly along with the tide, before the gale, they followed the crooked winding pass for half an hour until coming out into a long sound, they espied on its opposite shore two miles distant, near a small key, an opening apparently the mouth of a creek.

"It was evening now and rapidly growing dark. As they entered the creek, they saw on its eastern shore a palmetto thatched hut with bananas and sugar cane growing nearby in a small clearing. Being anxious to anchor and make everything aboard the schooner secure before night, they decided to keep on up the creek before stopping. The wind now had become a hurricane....."

"During the hurricane, the high salt tidal waters had submerged the clearing to a depth of 3 feet, killing all tender vegetation, and receding, it had left a deposit of several inches of silt. Banana trees, sugar cane were flattened; the palmetto thatched shack wrecked, and scattered by wind and flood; a more desolate, pitiable scene of what had been a home could hardly be imagined. On a low shell mound nearby, the top of which had remained above the flood, huddled like hunted frightened animals were a man and his three girls. As the skipper and George approached, the man arose and turned toward them aggressively, but changed his mien to glad surprise, as falteringly he grasped the outstretched hand of the smiling skipper and stammered: 'Stranger, I -- er -- I shore em glad t' see ya all.' After an embarrassing silence, during which the timid shrinking girls turned away as if inclined to flee to the nearby woods, the man

continued: 'My name is Weeks -- John Weeks, whut might
yo name be?'.

'Mr. Weeks, what is the name of this place and how long
have you lived here?'

'Weeks, stimulated by the liquor, answered readily: 'This
is Choculuskee -- a Seminole Injun name. I kem yer in '62,
what year is this, '69 aint it?'

'Yes. You've been here then 7 years?'

'Seven years is right', answered Weeks, sighing wearily,
as if 70 years would have been more accurate.

'I aint got airy dock, er anyway ter tell what day er
year it is, en I forget'.

'Mr. Weeks, does anybody live near here -- any neighbor?'

'No, I don't know o' anybody else livin' near yere, er
'ithin' 50 miles o' yere.'

'Where did you come from when you came here?'

Weeks hesitating, longingly eyed the aguadiente. After
accepting another drink, his mind and tongue seemed more
active as he fluently continued.

'I kem yere from Alachua County in '62, durin the War.'"
(From reference CCXXXV(f)).

(e) 'I traded the mule and wagon for a sailboat in Cedar Keys
and started down the coast. I kept going till I kem to
this place, and I've been a livin' yere ever since.' Weeks
paused to point to his children who were standing among
the flattened banana trees. 'Lizzie es I told y', es my
stepdatter, my wife bein' a widder woman. Apilony th' nex
gal was born afore I lef' Alachua County. Sa' Jane the
younger was born yere. Her mother died agivin' birth t'
her; thar bein no doctor er nobody 'ith her et th' time
'cept me t' tend t' her.'

Weeks stopped speaking and a pensive cast veiled his care worn face as he turned his eyes -- oh so sadly, so lovingly -- to a distant corner of the clearing where, under a lime tree, a sunken mound adorned by seashells was barely visible.

"After a hallowed silence, Mr. Allen asked: 'You don't have many visitors, do you Mr. Weeks?'

"No, not many. Nicholas Santini, er his brother, Dolphus stop with their schooner once in a while on thar way from Charlotte Harbor t' Key West. They take my bananas an' sugar cane er whatever I hev ready t' ship t' Key West, an' bring me back flour an' bacon. Th' Santinis hev allers treated me squar an' hones'. Thar's one man though thet's treated me mean, an' thet I'd shore like t' meet. He kem here a year er so ago an' took all th' stuff I hed, bananas, sugar cane an' punkins, saying he'd be right back from Key West with a lot o' grub fer me, an' I aint laid eyes on th' damn scoundrel sence; an' I've hed t' live on things were thet a nigger wouldn't eat up th' kentry. His name is Joselyn -- Captain Joselyn, an' he runs a big green painted sloop. Mr. Allen did y' ever hear tell of a man in Key West by that name?'

"Yes, I've seen Joselyn in Key West. He has a bad name,

and is under bond now to appear there before the United States court charged with smuggling. They say he has killed several men, was once a pirate, is very rich, and has a hiding place like a pirate's lair among the Ten Thousand Islands where he hides the loot he steals from wrecked vessels along the Florida reef. Joselyn is so mean that no sailor who has sailed with him once, if he comes back alive, will ever ship with him again.'" (From reference CCXXXV(f)).

f) "During George's absence, his father and Weeks went on an exploring trip in the latter's skiff up the creek. Along the banks of each bend of the creek for a mile or more, they found a dense jungle growth on rich soil called 'hammock land'. Mr. Allen was so favorably impressed by this land, upon which many kinds of tropical fruits and vegetables could be raised, that he decided to establish a home on the banks of the creek about a half mile above Weeks' clearing." (From reference CCXXXV(f)).

g) "At another time, they anchored long enough at Pelican Key to gather several messes of clams and then passing close to the beach of Pavilion Key, they headed down the coast. That evening while passing a distant long sandy beach inshore, marked at intervals by scarlet objects on the waterline, George looked in wonder and then asked: 'Scotty, what are those red things on the beach off there?'

"Flamingoes, George. They are on Lost Man's Key. So many flamingoes are being killed by hunters from Key West that there won't be any around here soon -- nor pink curlews either.'" (From reference CCXXXV(f)).

Source of images above:

"The Copeland Papers"

Naples Public Library on Microfilm

Research notes by D. Graham Copeland from the 1940's.

Digitized and made available by Vera Christine Kirkland via her blog

(<http://www.naplesnative.com/CopelandPapers.htm>) where she notes: "A little background about "The Copeland Papers". I found this information on microfilm at the public library in Naples, Florida while I was doing some genealogy research. The actual records are much larger than I have here, and go into the very early history of Florida. I wanted to copy what I thought would be helpful to me, but the stories were so fascinating that I just kept copying. There is quite a bit of information about many families who lived in the Collier County area during the late 1800's, early 1900's. The information is compiled from books, newspaper articles, county records and family histories written by some of the earliest residents of Collier County. At the time, I really had no idea who compiled this information. I knew that Charlton Tebeau, who wrote many books about Florida, has a series of books that are part of "The Copeland Studies in Florida History". I had also read that one of the counties earliest settlers, David Graham Copeland, wrote an unpublished history of early Collier County which Mr. Tebeau used as the basis for his book "Florida's Last Frontier, The History of Collier County". In the early 1970's, my aunt Gloria Durfey while researching Cape Romano and the artesian well that is located there, wrote to Mr. Tebeau and in his answer he told her about the Copeland Papers and that he had donated the research notes to the Historical Society and that is how they found their way to the library. The Copeland Papers, are part of his research notes. If you are interested in the early history of Collier County, or lucky enough to be part of one of the families mentioned in these papers, you will be amazed at the information found here. And who knows...you might be able to solve a few family mysteries. I know I did!"

Source noted in the Copeland Papers (i.e., where Mr. Copeland states that he found the information):

The only reference notes that this researcher has been able to locate regarding these paragraphs is a note by Mr. Copeland stating, "From Reference CCXXXV(f)," but no key has been located to explain what CCXXXV(f) represents. There are quotation marks, so Mr. Copeland is either re-publishing something he found written somewhere else, or he is quoting an interview. If any other researcher has knowledge of the details of this source, please contact me.

Of Note:

At one point during the interview or story, the author notes that it is 1870. At another point, when talking to John Weeks, it is noted that it is 1869. A review of the hurricane activity during 1869 and 1870 confirms that this trip and discussion must have occurred after "Hurricane Nine" a.k.a "Second Key West Hurricane of 1870" which hit the Florida mainland near Chokoloskee on October 20, 1870. No other storm system made landfall in Chokoloskee in 1869 or 1870. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1870_Atlantic_hurricane_season#Hurricane_Nine and a negative search of the 1869 hurricanes). John Weeks notes that he arrived in 1862 but has no concept of the current day or year. He feels that 7 years in Chokoloskee is about right. For him to have been there 8 years instead of 7 years would not be inconceivable.

As of the time of this writing, no likely candidates for this John Weeks have been located on the 1850 or 1860 Federal Census. He has, however, been located on tax lists for Hillsborough County intermittently from the 1840's through at least 1858. He married in Hillsborough County in 1852 to Deborah Tanner, but they divorced by 1856 (corroborating evidence in Hillsborough County Tax Lists and John J Weeks Pension Application).

This photo depicts, “Palmetto thatched hut houses” and water can be seen in the background:



Palmetto thatched hut houses. 1870 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/25793>>, accessed 1 May 2024.

This researcher believes this would be very similar to the palmetto hut inhabited by John Weeks near the mouth of the Chokoloskee Bay.

His stepdaughter Lizzie was the daughter of Sarah Mercer and Jacob Raulerson. Sarah Mercer Raulerson was not a “widdier woman” (i.e., “widow”) as noted by John Weeks. Jacob Raulerson was alive and well when Sarah Mercer Raulerson left Hillsborough County with her daughters and John Weeks and traveled to Alachua County. Jacob Raulerson survived the war and went on to live through the mid-1880s and even remarried. As of the time of this writing, this researcher has found no divorce record for Jacob and Sarah Raulerson nor has a marriage record for John Weeks and Sarah Raulerson been located. It is likely that they were never officially married as she was likely never officially divorced from Jacob Raulerson. John and Sarah moved down to this primitive area and called themselves husband and wife and no one would have thought to question them. This appears to be confirmed through negative evidence as his marriage to Sarah Mercer Raulerson was not included as part of his pension application, however his marriage and divorce to Deborah Tanner was included, as well as his marriage to Lizzie Raulerson.

John Weeks specifically mentions a working relationship with the Santini brothers. This further corroborates that the John Weeks who was baptized by a catholic priest J.L. Hugon and sponsored by Phillip and Mary Frances Santini is the same John Weeks as referred in this story within the Copeland Papers.

A review of the 1870 Federal Census of Monroe County reveals the locales of many of the folks noted in this story. William S Allen was the census enumerator:

Page No. 1 Inquiries numbered 7, 16, and 17 are not to be asked in respect to infants. Inquiries numbered 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20 are to be answered (if at all) merely by an affirmative mark, as follows.

SCHEDULE I.—Inhabitants in that portion of the County of Monroe, State of Florida lying Northward & Eastward of Cape Roman, enumerated by me on the 1st day of June, 1870. 379

Post Office: Key West, Florida Wm S Allen, Ass't Marshal.

Individuals numbered in the order of enumeration.		The name of every person whose place of abode on the first day of June, 1870, was in this family.				DESCRIPTION.		VALUE OF REAL ESTATE OWNED.		PLACE OF BIRTH, naming State or Territory of U. S., or the Country, if of foreign birth.		PARENTAGE.		MARRIAGE.		EDUCATION.		CONSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS.	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
		<u>On Summabel Island</u>																	
1	1	<u>Allen Wm S.</u>	47	M	W	Ass't Marshal, farmer	500		Conn										
		<u>Geo W.</u>	16	M	W	farm laborer			Fla										
		<u>2nd June</u>																	
		<u>On Pine Key Charlotte Harbor</u>																	
2	2	<u>Green Henry</u>	60	M	W	Farmer	1000		Rhode Island										
		<u>Sam John S.</u>	46	M	W	farm laborer			New York										
		<u>3d June</u>																	
		<u>On Cape Ascuta Charlotte Harbor</u>																	
3	3	<u>Santini Felipe</u>	66	M	W	Farmer	200		Italy	1	1								
		<u>Mary</u>	50	F	W	keeping house			France	1	1								
4	4	<u>Santini Adolphus</u>	30	M	W	Farmer	300		Louisiana	1	1								
		<u>Gene</u>	26	F	W	keeping house			Georgia										
		<u>Mary</u>	7 1/2	F	W				Fla										
5	5	<u>Santini Nicolas</u>	27	M	W	Farmer	200		"	1	1								
		<u>Terinda</u>	21	F	W	keeping house			"	1	1								
		<u>Angela</u>	15	F	W	"			"	1	1								
		<u>4th June</u>																	
		<u>On Guiseppe Island Charlotte Harbor</u>																	
6	6	<u>Mendez Santos</u>	30	M	W	Farmer	150		Spain	1	1								
		<u>Virgilio Frank</u>	30 1/2	M	W	seaman			Italy	1	1								
		<u>5th June At Santa Rosa</u>																	
7	7	<u>Shultz George</u>	23	M	W	Telegraph Operator			New Jersey										
		<u>Clark Thomas S.</u>	21	M	W	"			New York										
		<u>Kies Carl</u>	27	M	W	"			Penn										
		<u>Ledwith William</u>	35	M	W	Telegraph Supervisor	150		Ohio										
		<u>Page Albert</u>	30	M	W	Cook			Fla		1								
		<u>9th June</u>																	
		<u>At Cape Chena Charlotte Harbor</u>																	
8	8	<u>Gonzalez John</u>	42	M	W	seaman			Nicaragua	1	1								
9	9	<u>Sanchez Joseph S.</u>	40	M	W	seaman	250		So Carolina										
		<u>11th June At Fort Myers</u>																	
10	10	<u>Garzaez Maund</u>	47	M	W	seaman	1000		Spain	1	1								
		<u>Ercina</u>	42	F	W	keeping house			Sahama Islands	1	1								
		<u>Maund</u>	7	M	W				Fla	1	1								
		<u>Mary</u>	6	F	W				"	1	1								
		<u>Alvina</u>	4	F	W				"	1	1								
		<u>Odaka</u>	3	F	W				"	1	1								
		<u>Johnem Frederick</u>	3	M	W	seaman			Sahama Islands	1	1								
		<u>Miller Daniel</u>	67	M	W	Teacher			So Carolina										
No. of dwellings, <u>10</u>		No. of white females, <u>9</u>		No. of males, foreign born, <u>6</u>				No. of insans, <u>16</u>		17		1		277					
" " families, <u>10</u>		" " colored males, <u>2</u>		" " females, " " <u>2</u>				2770											
" " white males, <u>20</u>		" " females, <u>9</u>		" " blind, <u>0</u>															

"United States Census, 1870," database with images, FamilySearch (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-64V3-V93?cc=1438024&wc=KL1V-SP8%3A518676601%2C518876101%2C519086901 : 8 June 2019), Florida > Monroe > Northward and eastward of Cape Roman > image 1 of 4; citing NARA microfilm publication M593 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

Conclusions:

John Weeks lived on a creek in a palmetto hut on the Chokoloskee Bay around 1870. He lived there with his stepdaughter Lizzie Raulerson and his daughters (and Lizzie's half-sisters), Appilony and Sarah Jane Weeks. Their mother (Sarah Mercer Raulerson) died giving birth to Sarah Jane and was buried there on the homestead. Appilony was born in Alachua County and Sarah Jane was born in Chokoloskee Bay.