

Southern Express Company
Mallory Steamship Company Ticket Office
S.W. end of Mallory Square
Key West
Monroe County
Florida

HABS No. FLA-174

HABS,
FLA,
44-KEY,
13-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. FL-174

SOUTHERN EXPRESS COMPANY
(Mallory Steamship Company Ticket Office)

Location: Southwest end of Mallory Square, Key West, Monroe County, Florida.
USGS Key West Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 17.417930.2714920.

Present Owner: City of Key West, Florida, 525 Angela Street, Key West, Florida.

Present Occupant: Old Island Restoration Foundation, Inc.

Present Use: Office and Hospitality House.

Significance: The building was constructed originally on the site of the former office and observation tower of Tift and Company. After the fire of 1886, it was the Southern Express Company's first office at Key West and later served as a ticket office for Mallory Steamship Lines.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1889.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Built on what was known at that time as Tift's Wharf and part of Lot 4, Square 3, it now stands on part of Lot 5, Square 3. A conditional sale of this property was made by Fielding A. Browne and William A. Whitehead to A.C. Tift & Company on June 5, 1837 (Deed Book B, p. 408) and sold by Amos C. Tift to Asa F. Tift, his brother, January 2, 1841 (Deed Book C, p. 125). Asa F. Tift died intestate in 1889. His heirs sold the property to the New York & Texas S.S. Co. of New Jersey in 1901 (Deed Book SS, p. 391, etc.). This company, on November 15, 1906, sold the entire property to the Mallory Steamship Co. (Deed Book W, p. 162). The Mallory Line consolidated with the Clyde Steamship Co. in 1932 (Deed Book G-4, p. 162). Later they became part of the Agwiline which conveyed the property to Gulf Atlantic Transportation Co. on August 8, 1952 (Deed Book G-64, p. City of Key West (Deed Book G-64, p. 274)). In 1961, the City Commission of Key West leased the building to the Old Island Restoration Foundation, Inc.

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Architecturally an enlarged version of what is known locally as a cigar makers cottage, its original floor plan was one large front room and two small rooms in the rear with attic storage area. A full veranda extended across the front. The house was on brick piers.
5. Alterations and additions: After the building was leased to the Old Island Restoration Foundation, Inc., by the City of Key West, it was moved from its original site to its present location and set on a new foundation of concrete piers. Captain O.A. Sandquist, CEC, USN (Ret.) was in charge of moving the building and engineering and placing the new foundation.

A small addition at the right rear side was removed and a small porch built in 1962 to provide a second entrance. New balustrades on the front porch and the replacement of the broken shutters completed the renovation of the exterior.

The plan originally provided three rooms on the main floor. The large front room was divided into two spaces by a high "L" shaped counter. In order to facilitate contemporary functions, the counters were re-arranged across the rear of the room. Parts of the wire grille from the old counter were used on the new counters.

The rear rooms were remodeled to provide an office, a small kitchen and two rest rooms. The mezzanine over part of this section was retained.

The floor of the front room was originally of 9" glazed red tile of poor quality. The two back rooms had concrete tile of random design. In remodeling, new 12" red tiles have been installed throughout.

New wiring and light fixtures were installed. This work was done over a span of five years, from 1961 to 1966. Walter H. Starcke and Daniel Stirrup were in charge of renovations from 1963 to 1966.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Tift's Wharf site where the building is located played a major role in Key West's commercial life and provided complete facilities for ships visiting the port. A weekly schedule was maintained with all the large ports of the East Coast and Gulf, as well as Cuba.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views:

Southern Express Co., Collage copy of building taken from old pamphlet, circa 1914, Monroe County Library Photo Collection. (Quality of photograph is poor.)

Pinder, Don, photographer, photograph circa 1960, Key West Citizen
603 Green Street, Key West, Florida.

2. Bibliography

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Monroe County Courthouse Records and Deed Books, County Clerk's
Office, Key West, Florida.

Monroe Land Title Company Abstract, Lot 4, Square 3, Key West,
Florida.

Sanborn Map of Key West, 1889, Sanborn Map, Co., New York.

b. Secondary and unpublished sources:

Browne, Jefferson B. Key West, The Old and The New, The Record
Co., St. Augustine, Florida, 1912.

3. Interviews:

Moreno, Curry (deceased) son of first manager of Southern Express
Co., 1962.

Whalton, Stephen M., (deceased) former employee of Southern Express
Co., and son of the manager of Tift & Co., 1962.

Prepared by: Betty M. Bruce
Old Island Restoration
Foundation, Inc.
Project Historian
HABS Key West Project
July 1967

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This structure is a well preserved example of a small wood-frame 19th century commercial building; its form derived from a local housing type known as the cigar maker's cottage.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent, with minor modifications of the original.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: A 30' 4" x 44' 4" one-and-a-half story building, with three bays across the front.
2. Foundations: Modern concrete piers with wood lattices at the interstices.
3. Wall construction: Horizontal lapped wood siding, 4 1/2" exposed, painted gray on wood framing, 2" x 4" at 25" on center.
4. Structural system: Wood frame; roof trusses, 2" x 6" at 23" on center.
5. Porches: Wood porch extends across north elevation, four wood 6" square columns, chamfered edges, capitals are in an exaggerated classic motif of stepped moldings, wood balustrade; floor of 2 1/2" wood strips; 1" pipe railing on steps; porch at southwest corner added 1962.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: North entrance: Two inswinging, two-panel doors, upper panel glazed, transom sash of two panes fixed; classic pediment, molded trim at jambs.

South and southwest entrances: Five-panel outswinging wood doors, fixed lighted transoms one and two panes; hood over south door.
 - b. Windows and shutters: First floor windows four-over-four light double hung sash, 2'-10" x 7'-0", simple molding, classic molded pediment north elevation only; operating louvered shutters on north elevation, fixed shutters elsewhere; attic windows, four-over-four-light double hung sash, window trim painted red; louvered shutters painted dark green.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, terne plate covering.
 - b. Cornices, eaves: Boxed eaves, classic cornice with enclosed gutter.
 - c. Other: Roof hatches or "scuttles", one at each slope, are pivot hinged at the top to provide attic ventilation.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan:

- S
- a. First floor: Full width main room at north entrance, divided into public and private spaces by counter partition; south portion originally divided into two spaces; southwest space divided by modern partitions (mezzanine accessible by ladder).
 - b. Attic space: Unfinished.
- 2. Stairway: Stairway to attic: "L" shaped, closed string stairway in corner with window, 19 risers 9 1/2" high; average tread 10 1/2"; partition railing of 3" vertical beaded board and molded rail; upper run enclosed; closet under turning.
 - 3. Flooring: 1' square modern red cement "Cuban" tile in all interior spaces, 1/2" gray mortar joints (added 1962).
 - 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Ceiling of 4" wood boards painted green white and modern white gypsum board. Walls are vertical car siding painted green white; 2'-10" wainscot of 3" beaded vertical boards; molded cornice; gypsum wall board on modern partitions.
 - 5. Doorways and doors: Four-panel doors with two-panel operating transoms above, simple molded trim; modern finish doors and double two louvered-panel doors 1962 addition.
 - 6. Notable hardware: Metal frame and wire screen with crockets above counter between public and private spaces; metal flagpole brackets and lanyard guide in north gable.
 - 7. Lighting: Two chandeliers, each composed of six kerosene lamps adapted to electricity in north room, two-light hanging globe fixtures in offices; fixtures 1962 additions.

- D. Site: The building faces north on the Mallory Square situated between the end of the square and a U.S. Coast Guard slip. Two cable storage tanks are to the west.

Prepared by: F. Blair Reeves, AIA
Supervisory Architect
HABS Key West Project
June 1967

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared in 1967 during a summer project jointly sponsored by the Old Island Restoration Foundation, Inc. of Key West, and the Historic American Buildings Survey. Twenty-two structures were recorded, ranging from commercial structures, residences and hospitals to a convent, a lighthouse, and the Memorial to the Victims of the Disaster of the U.S. Battleship Maine.

The project was under the direction of F. Blair Reeves, AIA, Associate Professor, Department of Architecture, University of Florida. Measured drawings were prepared by student architects John D. Davenport and John F. Grimm of Texas A. and M. University, and John O. Crosby of the University of Florida. Mrs. Betty M. Bruce of the Old Island Restoration Foundation, Inc., and Professor Reeves were responsible for the historical and architectural data. They were assisted by members of the Foundation. J. Franks Brooks, Photographer, of Key West, supplied the photographs.