

DUCK KEY in the FLORIDA KEYS

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An Information Guide to Duck Key in the Florida Keys

Postcards of Indies Inn and Yacht Club on Duck Key by John Stark from 1960s.



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Hotels and motels
Florida Keys
and Key West

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Below you will find a collection of John Stark postcards published in the 1960s together with several images published in the February 3, 1956 issue of the Key West Citizen.



Text : A VILLA AT DUCK KEY. "Jamaica", a beautiful villa at Duck Key, illustrates the English influence of West indian architecture. The soft colour of the villas matched with the aged roof tile roofs imparts the mellowed restfulness of this semitropical island, 95 miles South of Miami.



Villa Jamaica image from February 3, 1956 Key West Citizen

Villa Jamaica was built for Bryan Newkirk associate, Admiral Telfair Knight. Admiral Telfair Knight had previously worked with Bryan Newkirk and George Merrick in the development of Coral Gables. Newkirk and Telfair Knight both owned homes in Coral Gables.

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Admiral Knight of the U.S. Maritime Service was born in 1888 making him the same age as Newkirk. He was a graduate of Sewanee Military Academy and the University of the South. Knight had an interesting career. For a time he was president of Knight Crockery and Furniture Co in Jacksonville, Florida. Following that he practiced law in Jacksonville for eight years. From 1930 to 1934, he was president of the Peacock Motion Picture Co. of Shanghai, China and New York. In 1936, Knight became secretary of the U.S. Maritime Commission. Starting in 1948 he held successively the positions of director of training, chief of bureau, and commandant of the service. In 1944 he received the rank of commodore, and by 1946 he held the rank of rear admiral.



Text: TYPICAL RESIDENCE AT DUCK KEY, FLORIDA. "Trinidad," residence of Bryan W. Newkirk, on Duck Key Island, 95 miles south of Miami in the Florida Keys. This residence typifies the English version of the West Indian architecture. The landscaping includes palm trees, crotons and other semi-tropical flora indigenous to Duck Key and the West Indies.





Text: ENTRANCE TO DUCK KEY. . . is through these imposing gates patterned after old Spanish gates found throughout the Caribbean. Constructed of native coral rock keystone quarried near the area. . . ."



DUCK KEY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
An excellent example of West Indies architecture that predominates on this tropical island 90 miles South of Miami at Tom's Harbor in the Florida Keys. The Administration Building is two stories high with "Captain's Walk" and has an entrance courtyard symbolic of Caribbean island architecture. Floor tiles for its main lobby were imported from Cuba as was most of the French Provincial and Spanish furniture and decorations. There are twin offices in the building, twin apartments with overhanging porches and a beautiful entrance lobby. Duck Key is a residential, motel, apartment and business center development complete with yacht harbor and 9-hole golf course.



Text: DUCK KEY VILLA - French Influence 'St. Pierre', a beautiful two story villa on Duck Key, illustrates the French influence on West Indian architecture. Note the beautiful wrought iron staircase and

decorative scrollwork. The soft colour of the Duck Key villas matched with the aged tile roofs imparts the mellow restfulness of the semi-tropical island 95 miles south of Miami."

Not mentioned in the text of the postcard is the double "open arm" entryway or staircases. The right side of the "open arms" stairway is obscured by trees on the postcard image above. Folklore explains that rounded "open armed" staircases and banisters were configured like open arms to welcome guests. Additionally men were supposed to enter up one stairway and ladies the other, so the proper gentlemen couldn't see the womens' ankles or petticoats. Curved entryways of this type can also be seen in Savannah and Charleston.



Villa St. Pierre image from February 3, 1956 Key West Citizen

Jack Stark

The background information below tells about Jack Stark and provides some context as to his connection with the Indies House and Duck Key.

In 1953, Stark opened a public relations business in Coral Gables. Stark did public relations work on the Indies House for Bryan Newkirk who also had a home in Coral Gables. Stark's company also did PR work for Monkey Jungle, Parrot Jungle and Vizcaya. When President Harry S. Truman visited Vizcaya it was Jck Stark who gave him the tour.

Granddaughter Jenn Stark has confirmed that Jack wrote several children's Eas-y books. Stark also worked for the Miami Herald in the thirties as a feature writer. He was aviation editor and for a time wrote a column called "Wing Over Miami". He also wrote a column called "Anchors in Biscayne Bay."

A book entitled [The Sponge Pirates and Other Stories](#) authored by a Jack Stark in the early 1950s has a chapter entitled "The Sunken Treasure of Plantation Key". The chapter makes mention and describes places in the middle keys. Some place names used will still be recognized while others have changed with time: Valhalla Beach Club, Valhala Beach Motel, Bonefish Bay, Pelican Motel, Greyhound Key, and Art McKee's Treasure Fort in Plantation.

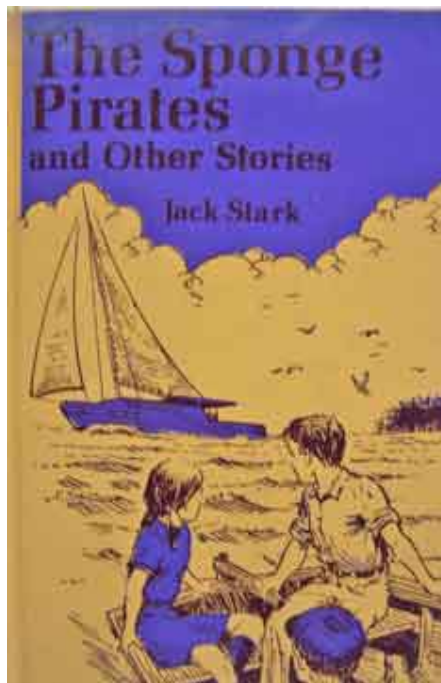
The first edition published (1956) by Hopkins Publications of Miami had 78 pages. In 1956 a limited second edition of 86 pages was also published and sold at Art McKee's Sunken Treasure Fortress in the Florida Keys. The second edition added a page entitled, "Treasure Diver", and included a full page photo of Art Mckee (see reference to Chapter 3 below).

A paperback edition was published by Hurricane House in 1962. Interestingly Hurricane House Publishing out of Coconut Grove was started by Marjory Stoneman Douglas. The earliest publication printed by Hurricane House appears to have been [SPONGE PIRATES AND OTHER FLORIDA KEY STORIES](#) (1962).

Douglas published a number of books with titles such as Bromeliads In Cultivation by Catherine and Robert Wilson, Indian River Florida's Treasure Coast by Walter R. Hellier, Some Kentuckians and Other People by Mary Willis Shuey, Poisonous plants on Guam by P. Souder, "Eve's Daughter" by Hannah Kahn, Plants Poisonous to People in Florida and other Warm Areas by J. F. Morton, Tampa Town, 1824-1886, The Cracker Village With A Latin Accent by Anthony P. Pizzo. Douglas also reprinted her Everglades River of Grass

Another hardback edition of the Sponge Pirates was published by E.A. Seemann Publishing, Miami in 1972.

An image of the cover appears below:



Of particular interest to residents from Duck Key is Stark's description of the island,

"As they drove past Duck Key, they marveled at the rock gates which rose before them, leading to the small wooden bridge crossing to an island shaped like a duck's head. tall palms rose along the causeway, and farther inland they could see the pretty West Indies-style buildings."

Further along in Chapter Three several children experience a diving adventure with McKee. McKee started a public museum exhibiting sunken treasure on Plantation Key at Treasure Harbor. Several years later McKee opened a larger "Sunken Treasure Museum" on the Overseas Highway at Plantation Key. The museum was built to look like a fortress, with ramparts and cannons. Later the museum changed ownership, was expanded and partitioned into stores and presently it functions as a Montessori school.



Sunken Treasure Museum

Image above is from Florida State archives and is part of the Florida Memory Project photo collection.

http://www.floridamemory.com/PhotographicCollection/Collection_page.cfm?PR_ID=30

<http://ibistro.dos.state.fl.us/uhtbin/cgisirsi.exe/QPT7ITWcKs/STA-FLA/20090003/9>

The other Eas-y Book written by Jack Stark published by E. A. Seemann Publishing was entitled Loggerhead. The book was about a boy turtle wrestler from Key West who catches a giant loggerhead turtle to star in the wrestling attraction at the Turtle Pens.

Through granddaughter Jenn Stark we were able contact other family members of Jack Stark and hope we can obtain additional information about his work, interests and involvement with Duck Key and the Florida Keys.

Additional Information on Jack Stark

Jack Stark passes away at his Coral Gables residence in 2004 at the age of 89.

Stark's obituary in the Miami Herald reported that he was born in the Bronx and at age twelve moved to Miami Beach with his parents and siblings. This was just before the 1926 hurricane. As a child Stark fished in the Keys and grew to know the area fairly well. The Miami Herald quoted Stark, ". . . my writing now is an accumulation of all I've learned over the years."

Stark graduated from Miami Beach High and attended Miami University before pursuing writing and other career endeavors.

Stark worked for the Miami Herald from 1935 to 1939 then moved with his wife to New York to work in public relations for Curtis Wright Aviation. Stark also worked for TWA. In 1953 Jack Stark returned to South Florida and bought a home in Coral Gables. It was there that he started a public relations business and did some work for Bryan Newkirk on Indies House.

Before retiring in 1972 Stark was director of public relations for the Dade County Parks Department for 14 years.

After retiring Stark continued to write. Besides the children's books on life in the Florida Keys referred to above, Jack wrote some 30 odd articles for fishing magazines and had another 50 travel articles published. He also had published more than 50 articles dealing with boating, children's stories or other topics.

Several articles by Stark appeared in Update, the predecessor of South Florida History magazine, and published by the Historical Museum of Southern Florida

Sand in My Toes : Sounds of Silence & Home-Spun Cussin' Enlivened Miami Beach,
Vol. 19, no. 1 (Winter 1992)

Sand in My Toes : Killer Hurricane Makes Miami Beach More of a Sand Castle than a
City, by Jack Stark and The 1926 Blow vs. Hurricane Andrew : Perspective from a
Survivor of Both, Vol. 20, no. 3 (Summer 1992) Hurricanes

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