



Key West: History of an Island of Dreams

Maureen Ogle

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"Ogle captures this island city in all its quirky charm. Her story breezes along in typical Key West fashion--full of gossip and humor, with the jolt of a good cup of Cuban coffee."--Lee Irby, University of South Florida, St. Petersburg

Parrotheads, Hemingway aficionados, and sun worshipers view Key West as a tropical paradise, and scores of writers have set tales of mystery and romance on the island. The city's real story--told by Maureen Ogle in this lively and engaging illustrated account--is as fabulous as fiction. In the early 1800s, the city's pioneer founders battled Indians, pirates, and deadly disease and created wealth beyond their imaginations. In the two centuries since, Key West has nurtured tragedy and triumph and has stood at the crossroads of American history.

When Florida joined the Confederacy in 1861, Union troops seized control of strategically located Key West and city residents spent four years living under martial law. In the early 1890s, Key West Cubans helped Jose Marti launch the revolution that eventually ended Spain's control of their homeland. A few years later, the battleship *Maine* steamed out of Key West harbor on its last, tragic voyage. At the turn of the century, Henry Flagler astounded the entire country by building a technological marvel, an overseas railroad from mainland Florida to Key West, more than 100 miles long. In the 1920s and 1930s, painters, rumrunners, and writers (including Ernest Hemingway and Robert Frost) discovered Key West. During World War II, the federal government and the military war machine permanently altered the island's landscape. In the second half of the 20th century, bohemians, hippies, gays, and jet-setters began writing a new chapter in Key West's social history.

All of these personalities and events are wrapped in Ogle's unique and candid history of the island, an account that will fascinate past and present citizens of the Conch Republic, history buffs who like a well-told tale, and the millions of tourists from all over the world who love this colorful island city.

Maureen Ogle is retired from the University of South Alabama.

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