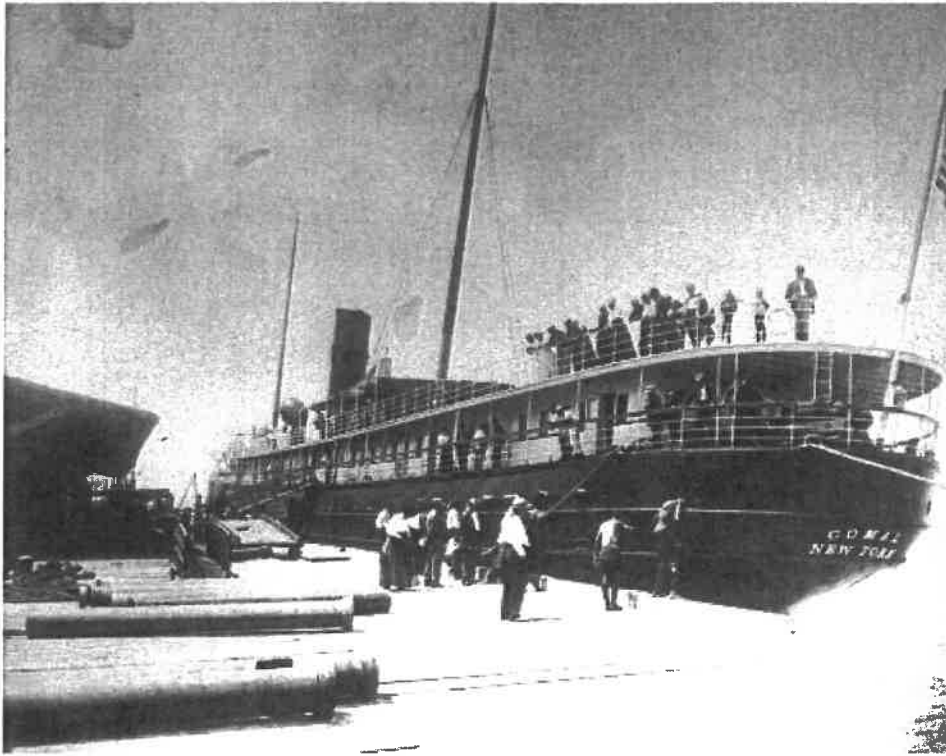


Who Is The 'Mallory' Of Mallory Square? The Answer Is In The Archive



The New York to Texas line steamer Comal at Mallory docks, circa 1900.

In recent years, many Key Westers have questioned the name of city-owned Mallory Square on Key West Harbor. The waterfront is the site of the Sunset Celebration, one of the island's most popular attractions. The city of Key West is currently preparing a major renovation to the area.

Some assumed it was named to honor Stephen Mallory, a prominent Key West resident in the 19th century. He became a U.S. Senator representing Florida and voted for secession from the Union – then became Secretary of the Confederate Navy. He was also an enslaver.

As many cities around the country have removed statues and other monuments to Confederate leaders, some in Key West have called for the city-owned property to be re-

named. Key West in September 2020 re-named the Bayview Park pavilion that was donated by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Stephen Mallory chapter, in 1924. It now bears the city's official motto, One Human Family.

But Mallory Square, it turns out, is not named for Stephen Mallory. Dr. Corey Malcom, lead historian at the Florida Keys History Center of the Monroe County Public Library, recently confirmed that with a 1961 letter from the chairman of the Old Island Restoration Foundation, one of Key West's first historic preservation groups. The letter is in the History Center's collection.

The city of Key West purchased the "Clyde-Mallory Docks" in 1952, but a plan for the area was not realized until 1960, when the OIRF began pushing for a restoration that highlighted the history of the docks. Ultimately, the OIRF took the lead in the transformation to "Mallory Square," which opened in 1961.

"We have by unanimous decision named the area 'Old Mallory Square' in honor of the family of the Clyde Mallory Steamship Line," Reta Sawyer wrote.

The Mallory Steamship Co. was founded by Charles H. Mallory of Mystic, Connecticut. In 1873, Mallory steamers began passenger and freight service to Key West, with the island city serving as the mid-point link in a line that ran between New York City and Galveston. The Mallory company later merged with the Clyde Steamship company but continued to stop at Key West. In the 1930s, the Clyde-Mallory Dock was sold and changed hands multiple times over the next 20 years.

Sawyer went on to make a prescient observation:

"Needless to say when the dock and fishing pier are finished it will certainly be an attraction to the tourists."

Malcom said there had been “suggestive evidence” that the name of the site came from the steamship company, but that was not fully satisfactory.

“Finding the definitive answer buried in a 60-year-old letter changes everything,” Malcom said. “Many thanks to the earlier History Center historians who saw the OIRF records were an important part of our community’s story and archived them.”

The Florida Keys History Center at the Monroe County Public Library is the most comprehensive archive about the history of the island chain. The collection includes rare documents and images, including an **online photo collection** that has been viewed more than 40 million times. You can contact the center by visiting 700 Fleming St., calling 305-809-5261 or by emailing **history@monroecounty-fl.gov**. More information is available on the website: **<https://keyslibraries.org/florida-history/>**

All images from the Monroe County Public Library,
Florida Keys History Center

**The New York to Texas line steamer Comal at
Mallory Docks, circa 1900. Gift City Electric Co.**

Stephen R. Mallory

**Sept. 26, 1961 letter from Old Island Restoration
Foundation chairman Reta F. Sawyer.**

POSTED DECEMBER 19TH, 2022

September 26, 1961

Mrs. Marjorie Candee Houck

Hotel Piccadilly

New York, N. Y.

Dear Marjorie:

Jim Sumpter has just given me your letter to him, in which you are asking about news here in Key West. He has answered the first part of your letter, and turned the rest of the answers over to me.

As to your question about the restoration of the Mallory Docks, I am happy to say that the work has progressed exceedingly well on the Community Center, the Waterfront Playhouse and Hospitality House. At the present time plans are for a formal dedication of the first civically restored area in Key West on the opening day of Old Island Days, February 15, 1962.

We have by unanimous decision named the area "Old Mallory Square" in honor of the family of the Clyde Mallory Steamship Lines. These are the same Mallorys, incidentally, who have been responsible for the restoration in Mystic, Connecticut.

The dock also will be completed by then, and even now the view that has been opened up to the Ocean and the Gulf is rewarding. Needless to say, when the dock and fishing pier are finished it will certainly be an attraction to the tourists.

As to the cruise ship docking next winter, so far we have nothing concrete on that. I understand that first you have to provide proper docking space, and the cruise ship will then follow.

As to your question about Old Island Restoration Foundation, we are already in the process of getting up our schedule of events for Old Island Days, beginning February 15th and continuing through March 15th, 1962. The highlight of these events will be the dedication of the Old Mallory Square, and the Flagler celebration, commemorating the first train, with Mr. Flagler himself aboard, arriving in Key West fifty years ago. This will be a joint event sponsored by the Foundation and the Chamber of Commerce. One of the most interesting things planned for this celebration will be the Old-Timers' Reunion reception, attended by all of the people who were there at the time the first train came in.

Mrs. Marjorie Candee Houck

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September 26, 1961

Of course, we have our old house and garden tours completely scheduled, and the main feature will be the opening of the Audubon House gardens to the public.

The Flower Show has also been scheduled for March 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th. We have also scheduled a play by the Key West Players (in their new Waterfront Playhouse), Tennessee Williams' "Summer and Smoke". Plans are being made also for the first time to have in our new Community Center a native arts and crafts show.

There will of course be many other things, but these are the definite things that I thought you might like to know about.

I do hope this information has reached you in time. I am a little late in answering this, due to the fact that I have been out of town.

With very much appreciation to you and the New York Times for your interest and cooperation, and with kindest personal regards to you and the Reverend, I remain

Sincerely yours,

RETA F. SAWYER, Chairman
Old Island Restoration Foundation.

RFS/mam
Air Mail Special

P. S. I have just learned that a retired Navy Captain and his wife have started a Friday and Saturday night Night Club Tour in Key West, encompassing about five clubs, and featuring entertainment of the Spanish and Cuban variety. The tour has been quite successful, and will of course continue to improve as the season goes on. of the most interesting sight. RFS
Florida's Canyon recreation, called by all of the people who have seen it the time the first train came on.