



Schooner Western Union

PRESERVATION SOCIETY & MARITIME MUSEUM



OFFICIAL FLAGSHIP OF FLORIDA & THE CITY OF KEY WEST



Key West Bight Management District
Board of Directors
Old City Hall
510 Greene Street
Key West, FL 33040

June 10, 2015
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Dear Board Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to tell you about the schooner *Western Union*, the Flagship of the State of Florida and the City of Key West.

The *Schooner Western Union Preservation Society & Museum* (SWUPS) is a Florida 501(c) (3) not-for profit-organization FEI # 20-5958968.

SWUPS is charged with preserving and operating the State of Florida and City of Key West Flagship. We are an all-volunteer organization with no paid staff (outside of a Capt. and crew during sailing operations.)

Launched in April 1939, the 76-yr. old schooner was the last of the iconic coasting schooners built and launched in Key West. The schooner maintained the Western Union Telegraph Company undersea cables that linked Florida's coastal cities to the Caribbean island nations', Central & South America and the Gulf states. In doing so, the schooner greatly contributed to Florida's economic growth.

In 2012, the Florida House and Senate voted unanimously to designate the historic schooner the official *Flagship of the State of Florida*. The Governor signed the legislation and on July 1, 2012 the schooner *Western Union* became a state treasure. The schooner is now listed high on the state Capitol rotunda wall as the State Flagship.

The City of Key West passed a resolution in 1997 naming the schooner *Western Union* as the Flagship of the City of Key West.

In 1984, The U.S. Department of Interior placed the schooner on the "*National Register of Historic Places*".

Historic Tours of America donated the *Western Union* to SWUPS in 2007, debt free. A fund raising project began to perform a first time major restoration of the 70-yr. old wooden schooner.

The Monroe County Tourist Development Council provided a \$405,000 award and the Historic Florida Keys Foundation a \$300,000 grant. A number of grass roots Monroe county residents and businesses contributed \$239,949 in (tax declared) donations ranging from \$1 to \$25,000.

In 2010 a temporary shipyard was constructed at the Truman Waterfront and the first phase of a two-part major restoration project of the schooner was underway using professional shipwrights whose experience included work on the USS Constitution.

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The Schooner Western Union Preservation Society is a 501(c)(3) not-for profit-organization FEI # 20-5958968. A COPY OF OUR OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE FLORIDA DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING (800) 435-7352. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT BY THE STATE.

Florida's Historic Sailing Maritime Museum

The first phase of the restoration was a \$1 million project. The second and final phase of the restoration was to be another \$1 million.

Passing a United States Coast Guard (USCG) certification process, the schooner was re-launched into service April 2011. A launching ceremony was held in the Key West Bight and then a fleet of Key West vessels with water cannons sailed with the schooner out of the harbor.

The USCG certification expired in 2013 and the second-phase of the major restoration must be completed before the schooner can be brought back into service. More importantly – so the schooner can be saved for future Key West generations and visitors to enjoy.

A well-known shipyard in Tarpon Springs was purchased by investors (MarPro of St. Petersburg, FL) who invested in renovating and expanding the yard's capabilities to work on wooden ships larger than the *Western Union*. MarPro desires to be the yard to restore the State of Florida & Key West Flagship and has offered generous terms and pricing within a \$750,000 budget

SWUPS had the senior MarPro, Tarpon Springs shipwright come to Key West for two-days in the past month to access the schooner. The schooner *Western Union*'s respected sea Captain of over 20-yrs., Lenn Verreau, has sailed the schooner to the Tarpon Yard for repairs over the years and highly recommends the facility.

The Captain will be in the Tarpon Boat Yard for the restoration process and will be SWUPS on-site point of contact for the MarPro shipwrights.

The Historic Grant Program administered by the Florida Department of State will provide a two to one (2 to 1) match of restoration funds up to a \$500,000 grant total.

The state grant program will accept a funding Letter of Commitment from the Key West Bight Board / City of Key West as an acceptable match for the state (2 to 1) Historic Grant Award.

A *Letter of Commitment* in the amount of *two-hundred and fifty thousand dollars* (\$250,000) from the KWBB will enable SWUPS to be applicable to receive a *five hundred thousand dollar grant* (\$500,000) from the state of Florida.

SWUPS has been in communication during the past two years with the SOF Grant Program and two-months ago the program administrator reached out and encouraged SWUPS to apply for funding. The Historic Grant Application must be received in Tallahassee by June 30, 2015.

The SOF \$500,000 grant and the matching \$250,000 KWBB funds are administrated under SOF strict spending management protocol that include a planned work program, inspections and documentation controls similar to that of the Monroe County TDC award that SWUPS adhered to in the first phase of the two-part renovation.

SWUPS \$405,000 TDC Award was processed during the first renovation through the county offices without issue and was properly tracked and controlled within the strict county financial award protocols and guidelines.

All work must also be inspected and approved by the United States Coast Guard.

SWUPS appreciates this opportunity to partner with the Key West Bight Board to complete the restoration of the historic schooner i as the *Centerpiece of the Historic Bight*.

Let's keep her in the Bight...

On behalf of the SWUPS BOD, William M. Barry, Past Chair & President