

# Historic Architectural Review Commission

## Staff Report Item 1a

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<b>Meeting Date:</b>	November 6, 2014
<b>Applicant:</b>	Critical Concerns Consultants Donna Bosold AICP, Planner
<b>Application Number:</b>	H14-01-361
<b>Address:</b>	#541 White Street- Peary Court
<b>Description of Work:</b>	Major Development Plan – Initial approval of Peary Court typical units (subsequent detailed approval to follow). Approval of site plan for replacement of 160 non-contributing dwelling units and the addition of 48 affordable dwelling units. Approval of project's mass, scale, size, proportion and landscape concepts.
<b>Site Facts:</b>	The parcel of approximately 24.18 acres is zoned as Historic Special Medium Density Residential District (HSMDR). The site is located adjacent to one of the main entrances to the historic district- on the north east side of White Street. The lot bounds two historic district boundaries; on the west White Street and on the south Angela Street. The parcel has a total of 48 buildings all of them housing residential units. The complex was built in 1996. On November 26, 2013 the Commission approved the demolition of the Credit Union building, which was demolished in 2014.
<b>Guidelines Cited in Review:</b>	Additions, Alterations and New Construction (pages 36-38a), specific mass, scale, proportion and site.  Historic Architecture Design Principles (page 52), specific siting, massing, scale and proportion.

### Staff Analysis

On March 10, 2014, a new application for the proposed development was reviewed by the Commission. The Commission voted to postpone the review, and

the applicant agreed to the postponement. On May 7, 2014, a special meeting was cancelled as requested by the applicant, although new plans were submitted for review. This report is for the review of submitted plans dated September 15, 2014.

For clarification, the plans in review, or any previously submitted plans from Zyscovich Architects, have not been reviewed by the Development Review Committee (DRC). Therefore neither the Planning Board nor the Tree Commission have opined on the plans. This is important to state because any revisions or changes requested by any of these regulatory boards or staff recommendations which will have an impact on the structures or site adjacent to the historic district boundaries may require additional review from this HARC Commission. Moreover there has not been any Development Agreement approved or executed by the City Commission. Certainly, and as previously stated, this review will be one of many others this Commission will make regarding this project.

Also staff wants to state for the record that City Commissioners have expressed their opinion on the existing fence, particularly the portion of the fence facing Angela Street. Commissioners stated that the Angela Street fence should stay in place. For the record the City ordered a special purpose survey and title search for Angela Street, between Gonzalez Street and Eisenhower Drive, and the survey concluded that portions of the existing fence is on city's right-of-way. The owners of Peary Court do not concur with the City's finding that portions of the fence on Angela Street are on city's right-of-way.

Several elements have been changed and added since the last plans submitted for review. One of those changes from the last version of plans is that the existing portion of the non-historic fence facing Angela Street will remain intact. Contrarily, the existing portion of the non-historic fence facing White Street will be replaced with low wood picket fences, which is the traditional and appropriate style of fencing in the historic district.

Another change from the previous submitted plans is the orientation of the houses that will be located on the south portion of the site. Although the proposed lots for that area have been reduced from *large parcels* to *medium* and *cottage parcels*, 16 out of the 19 parcels will have houses with their back facades oriented towards Angela Street, making their back yards facing the street. The three cottage parcels proposes houses that will be approximately 15' setback from the edge of the road.

The new plans include new prototypes of one story houses for *cottage* and *medium parcels*. The one story version for a cottage parcel will be 20'-11" from ground, and the new version for the *medium parcel* will be 23'-10" tall.

For the White Street urban façade, the revised plans includes 10 *cottage parcels* and 16 *medium parcels*. The revised plans depict White Street as the only entrance to the entire fenced complex.

As staff has mentioned in the previous staff reports, the site in review is located on the north east boundary of the historic district listed in the National Register

of Historic Places. The 1829 Survey and Plot Map drafted by Whitehead depicts part of today's Peary Court site as a waterfront with a south boundary to land, where Angela Street sits today.



Survey and Plot Map Whitehead

With the construction of the Florida East Coast Railway the northeast coastal shoreline was changed to dry land created by fill in order to accommodate the new train station and all its infrastructure. As a military facility, the Key West U.S. Army Barracks, as it's historically known, was developed for Army soldier's housing. The earliest photo available of the site dates from 1890 with a view of the Cemetery. Historic photos from 1920's clearly depicts no barriers on the south boundary of the property.

After World War II, the Army transferred the land to the Navy. This was the time when the name was changed to Peary Court, honoring the memory of Admiral

Robert E. Peary. By that time several frame buildings were relocated from the premises, while the rest were demolished. In June 1950 the Navy started construction of new housing on the site. The structures were two story cbs dwellings. By reviewing historic photos, particularly an aerial view of the Navy complex in the 1960's, as well as two photographs from the Property Appraiser's Records, and a 1970's photograph of the main entrance on White Street, there is evidence that no physical barriers separated the site from the surrounding non-military streets. In 1976 the Navy housing complex was demolished and the green area became a park, with softball and baseball fields. In 1980 the site was used for parking boat trailers during the Mariel Boat lift. The development that sits today on the site, including the fences, was built in 1996.

### **Consistency with Guidelines**

This review is based on the latest plans dated September 15, 2014. The proposed design still maintains three type of parcels; *cottage*, *medium* and *large*, where the buyer of the parcel will choose among the following possibilities;

- *Cottage parcel*-Three models; two of them with 1 alternate and one with two alternates. These models will have between 660 square feet and 900 square feet, with the shortest one 20' -11" and the tallest ones 26'-7" on its highest point.
- *Medium parcel*- Three main models, each with two alternates. The models for the medium parcels will have between 1,600 to 1,800 square feet, with a height range from 23'-8" to 29'- 11".
- *Large parcel*- No large parcels are depicted adjacent to the historic district streets.

Among the 45 parcels that are proposed to be adjacent to White and Angela Streets, 19 will be *cottage parcels* and 26 will be *medium parcels*. For Eisenhower Drive and the corners of Angela Street and Palm Avenue, the new revised plans maintain the same two story multifamily buildings. A water tower is proposed on the north east corner of the lot.

It is staff's opinion that the new site plans proposes a more balanced number of *cottage* and *medium parcels* adjacent to the historic streets. The removal of the *large parcels* along Angela Street, which promoted the larger alternative models has been a positive change in the plans.

At this point of time of plan review, there is an uncertainty of "what model will be built", with no final streetscape that will truly represent how the project will look like. There could be repetition of the same model many times. Furthermore having 16 backyards facing Angela Street raises the question of how the north streetscape will develop in the future; for example, swimming pools that will require solid fences toward Angela Street could very well be the streetscape developed. Those, and many other, questions remain due to the absence of a Development Agreement.



The new proposed plans include two new one story models, which will bring a smaller scale of structures well needed in the stock of proposed schemes. For Angela Street, staff opines that structures facing the historic street should not exceed 23 feet in height, since the majority of existing houses are traditional one and one and a half stories along the opposite side. The plans do not include all necessary elevations (side and back) for analysis of how the street may appear.

The White Street configuration of proposed parcels seems more balanced with the existing streetscape, however the choice of which model should be built will need to be analyzed to make sure that the end product is harmonious with the adjacent historic district's streetscape. Perhaps the Peary Court side could duplicate the percentage of one and two stories structures that exists on White Street west side of the road. Regarding White Street, staff wants to make an observation that the only entrance that the enclosed community will have will be through that street, since the site plans shows the existing Palm Avenue opening to be reduced for exit only.

The new site plan shows that the existing portion of the fence on Angela Street will not be altered, and there is City Attorney's opinion that if something is not included on an application and is not altered on plans, then it is not under review. Historic photos have proven that the military enclave, historically known as the Key West US Army Barracks and then Navy housing at Peary Court, was only completely isolated from the rest of the community, by perimeter fences, during war time and for the last 18 years, only for security. For the majority of the time that it was military land, there were no barriers between communities. Photographs have proven this.

The criteria that guide new construction in historic zones seeks to insure that new construction shall not interfere with essential forms and integrity of the historic properties and their environment. There are many character defining urban elements found in the historic district, one of which is that all buildings have their front facades facing the street. In this new proposal 16, out of 19 parcels, will have houses with backyards facing a historic street. Having back yards facing a street is an atypical streetscape design and is foreign to the traditional historic district streetscape. Moreover having side elevations fronting a street in the historic district, only happens on corner lots, and the site plans do not call for any corners on the north face of Angela Street.

One of the many significant qualities of our historic district is the diversity of structures found on each urban block; the variety of mass, scale, proportions and heights, setbacks of second floors they all create a sense of variety and uniqueness that makes our historic streetscapes so special. The proposed design ethic of developing an isolated community, which is no longer military in use, is contrary to the urban quality of the historic district and to the history of Peary Court.



Photograph circa 1890. Peary Court cemetery.  
Monroe County Library



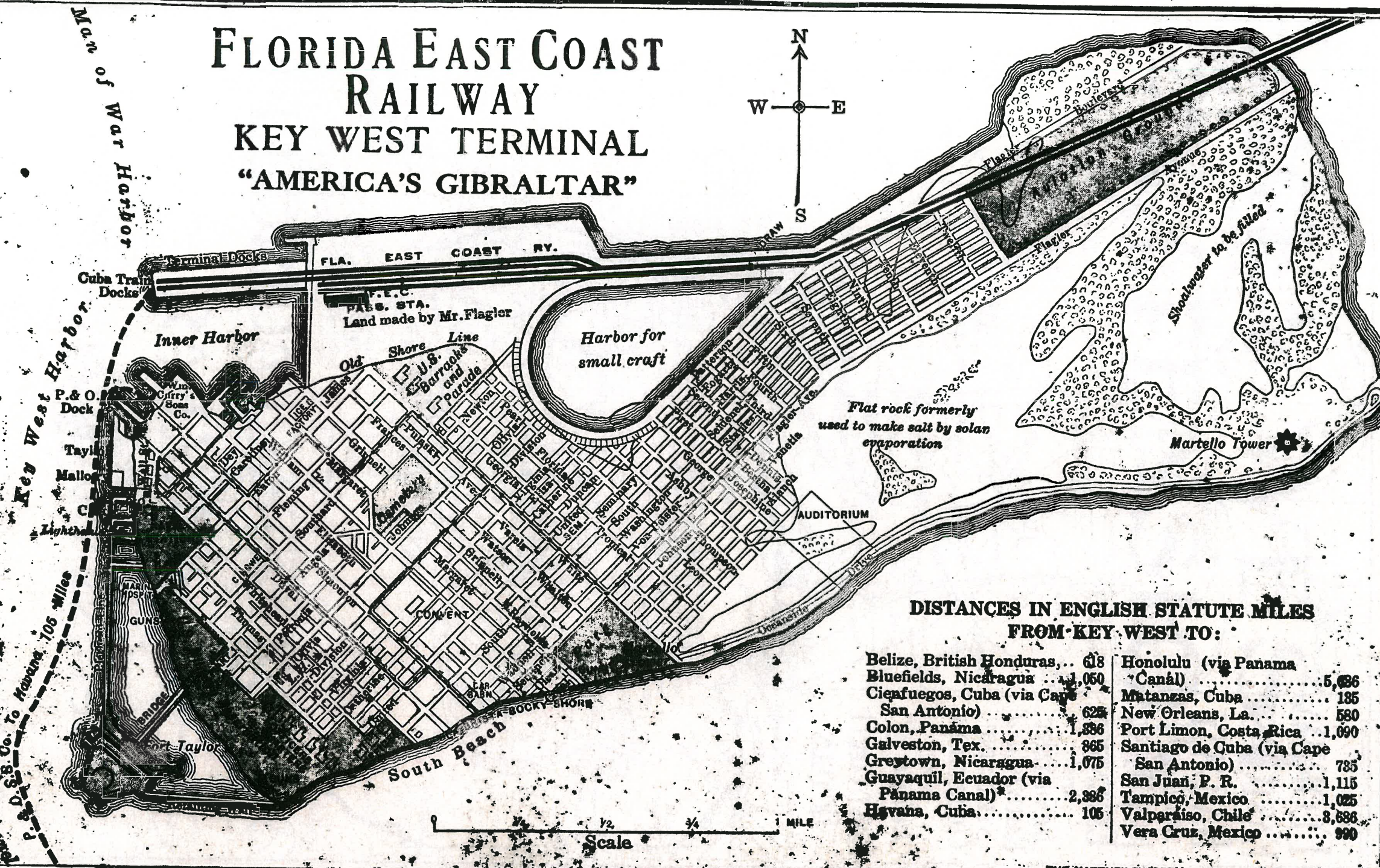
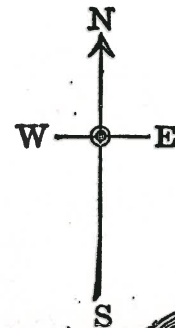


Photograph circa 1918. US Army Barracks  
on the back. Monroe County Library



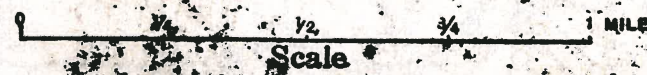


# FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY KEY WEST TERMINAL "AMERICA'S GIBRALTAR"



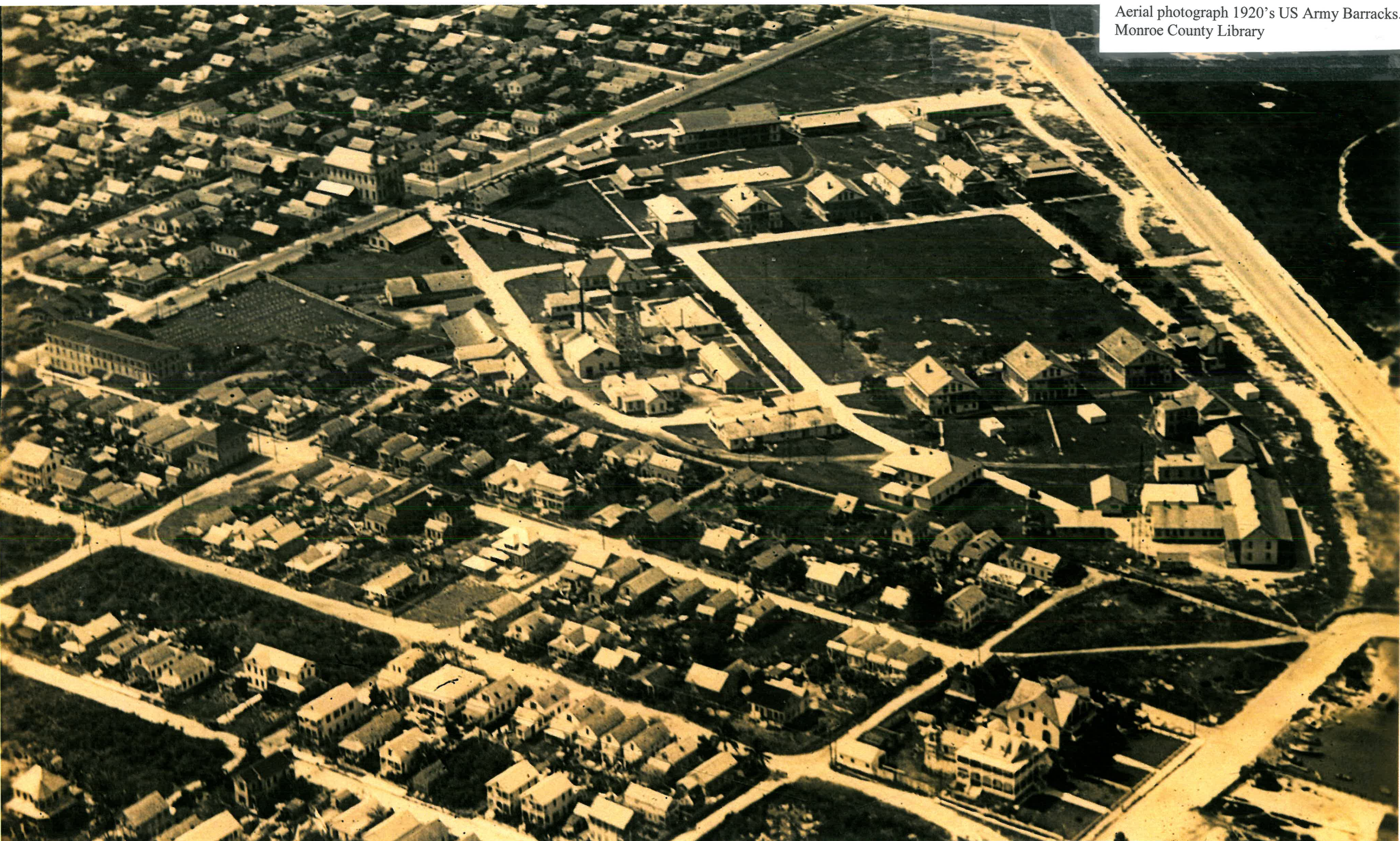
## DISTANCES IN ENGLISH STATUTE MILES FROM KEY WEST TO:

Belize, British Honduras,...	618	Honolulu (via Panama Canal) .....	5,686
Bluefields, Nicaragua .....	1,050	Matanzas, Cuba .....	185
Cienfuegos, Cuba (via Cape San Antonio) .....	625	New Orleans, La. ....	580
Colon, Panama .....	1,386	Port Limon, Costa Rica ..	1,090
Galveston, Tex. ....	865	Santiago de Cuba (via Cape San Antonio) .....	735
Greytown, Nicaragua .....	1,075	San Juan, P. R. ....	1,115
Guayaquil, Ecuador (via Panama Canal)* .....	2,386	Tampico, Mexico .....	1,025
Havana, Cuba .....	105	Valparaiso, Chile .....	3,686
		Vera Cruz, Mexico .....	990



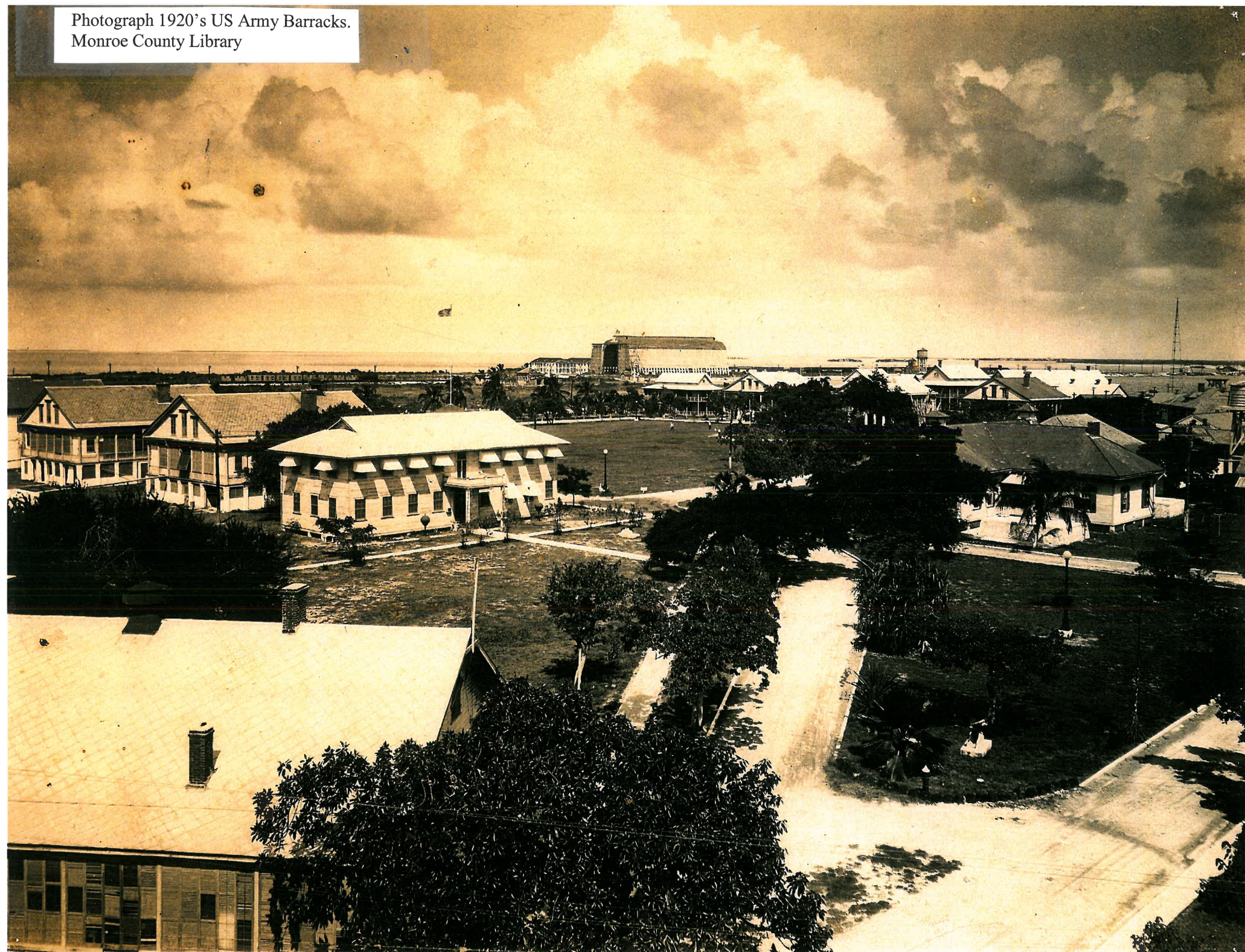


Aerial photograph 1920's US Army Barracks.  
Monroe County Library





Photograph 1920's US Army Barracks.  
Monroe County Library



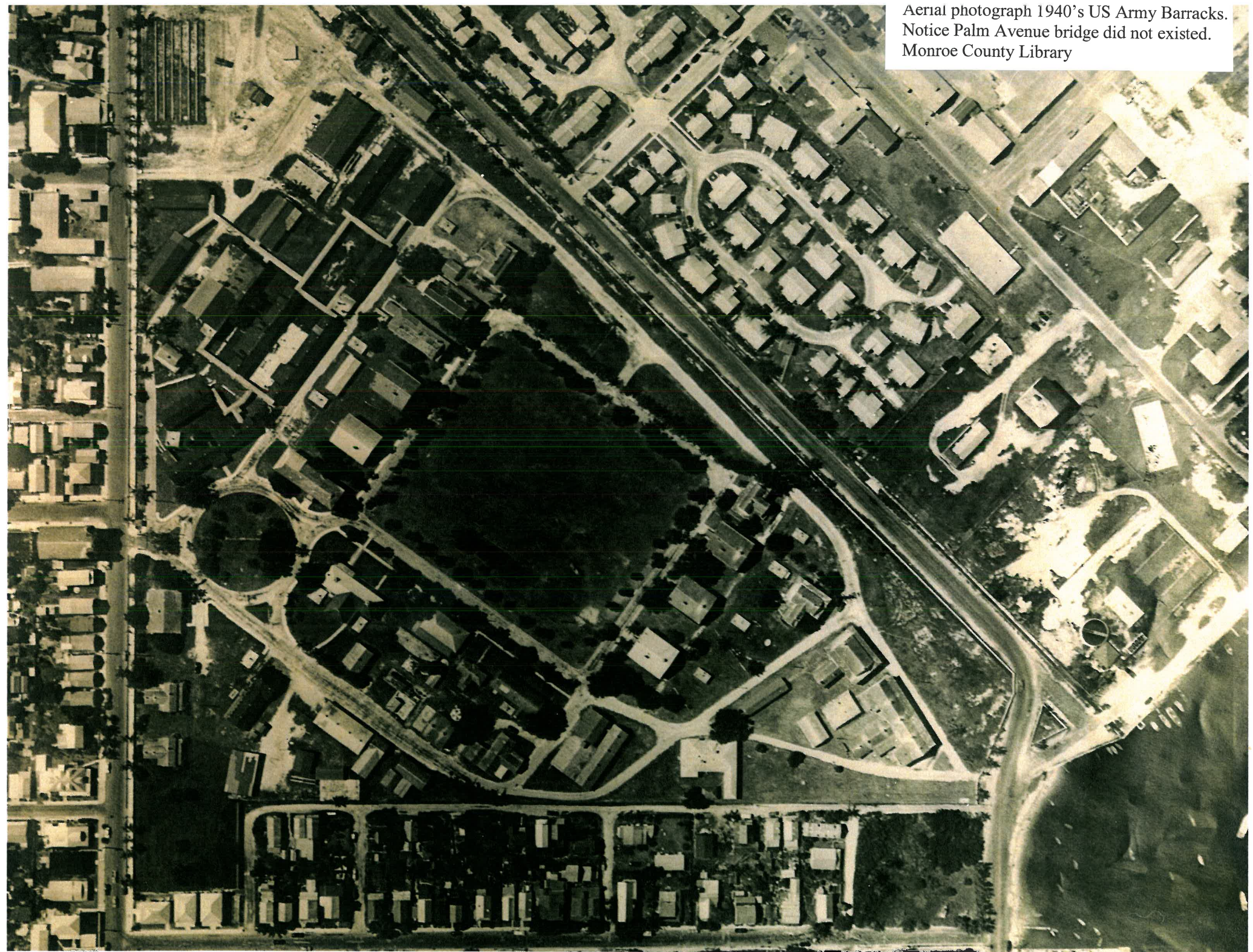


US Army Barracks ca. 1921 from the corner  
of Eisenhower Drive and Angela Street.  
Monroe County Library





Aerial photograph 1940's US Army Barracks.  
Notice Palm Avenue bridge did not exist.  
Monroe County Library



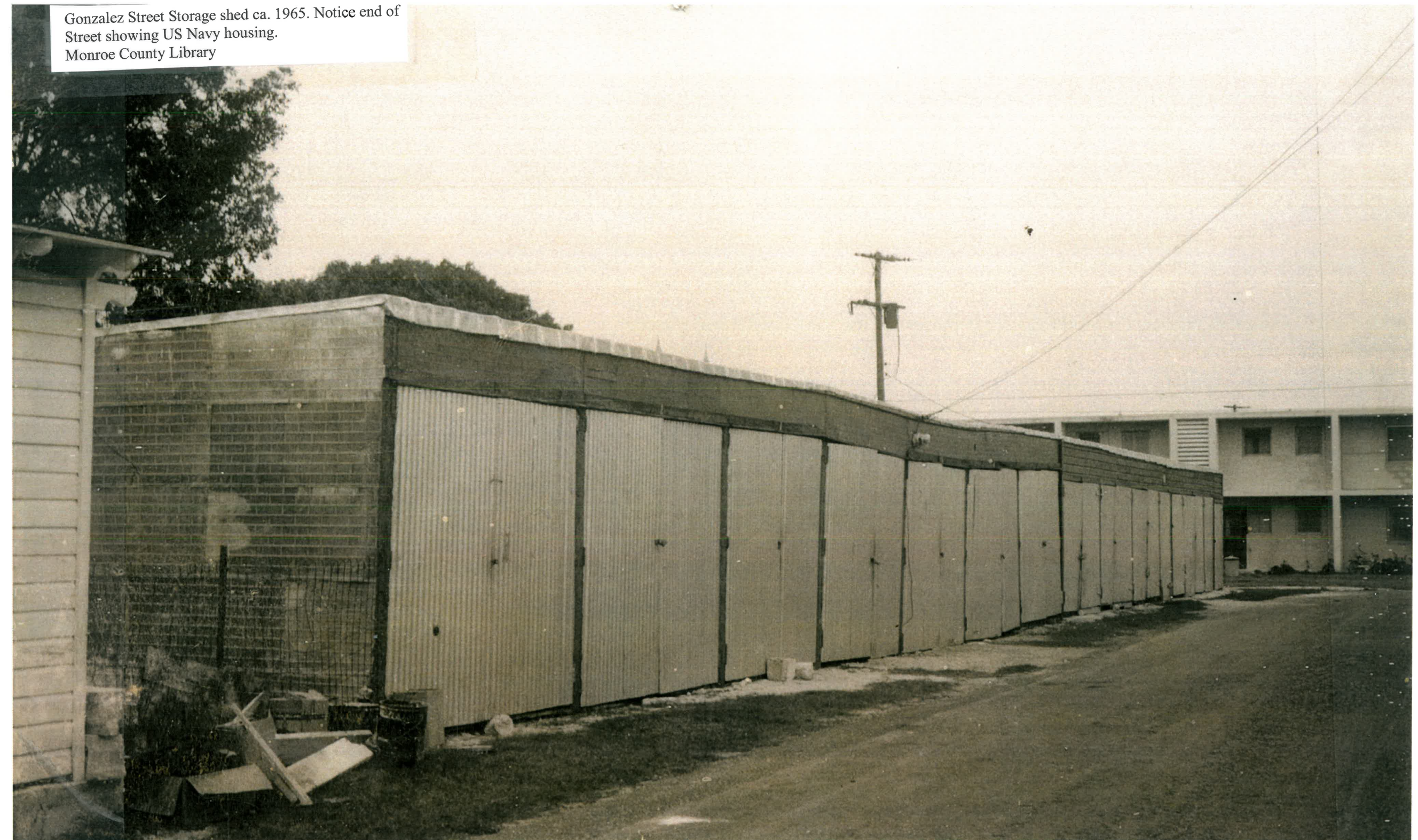


Moose Lodge Corner of Angela Street and  
Eisenhower Drive. Notice right side of photo.  
Photograph circa 1965. Monroe County Library





Gonzalez Street Storage shed ca. 1965. Notice end of  
Street showing US Navy housing.  
Monroe County Library







Aerial photograph 1960's US Navy Peary Court.  
Monroe County Library



Photograph circa 1971. Main entrance on  
White Street. US Navy Peary Court.  
Monroe County Library





Photograph from 1980 during Mariel Boat lift.  
Monroe County Library







Aerial photograph ca. 1980's US Navy Peary Court.  
Monroe County Library





The other end of  
ANGELA STREET.