

= Key Biscayne =

Key Biscayne is an island located in Miami @-@ Dade County , Florida , United States , between the Atlantic Ocean and Biscayne Bay . It is the southernmost of the barrier islands along the Atlantic coast of Florida , and lies south of Miami Beach and southeast of Miami . The key is connected to Miami via the Rickenbacker Causeway , originally built in 1947 .

The northern portion of Key Biscayne is home to Crandon Park , a county park . The middle section of the island consists of the incorporated Village of Key Biscayne . The southern part of the island is now protected as Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park , adjacent to Biscayne National Park , one of the two national parks in Miami @-@ Dade County .

= = Geography = =

Key Biscayne , although named a " key " , is not geologically part of the Florida Keys , but is a barrier island composed of sand eroded from the Appalachian Mountains , carried to the coast by rivers and then moved along the coast from the north by coastal currents . There is no hard bedrock near the surface of the island , only layers of weak " shelly sandstone " to depths of 100 feet (30 m) or more . The coastal transport of sand southward ends at Key Biscayne . In the 1850s Louis Agassiz noted that " [s] outh of Cape Florida no more silicacious sand is to be seen . " (The beaches in the Florida Keys , by contrast , consist primarily of finely pulverized shells .) Geologists believe that the island emerged around 2000 BCE , soon after the sea level stopped rising , as the sand built up to form new barrier islands on the southern Florida coast .

Key Biscayne is elongated in the north @-@ south direction , tapering to a point at each end . It is approximately 5 miles (8 @. @ 0 km) long and 1 to 2 miles (1 @. @ 6 to 3 @. @ 2 km) wide . The northern end of the island is separated from another barrier island , Virginia Key , by Bear Cut . The southern end of the island is Cape Florida . The Cape Florida Channel separates the island from the Safety Valve , an expanse of shallow flats cut by tidal channels that extends southward about 9 miles (14 km) to the Ragged Keys , at the northern end of the Florida Keys . Only Soldier Key , approximately 200 yards (180 m) by 100 yards (91 m) wide , lies between Key Biscayne and the Ragged Keys . The Cape Florida Channel (ten to eleven feet [three to three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half meters] deep in 1849) and Bear Cut (four feet [a little more than one meter] deep in 1849) are the deepest natural channels into Biscayne Bay . They provided the only access for ocean @-@ going vessels to Biscayne Bay until artificial channels were dredged starting early in the 20th century . In 1849 the island had a fine sandy beach on the east side , and mangroves and lagoons on the west side . The average elevation of the island is less than five feet (1 @. @ 5 m) above sea level .

People from Key Biscayne are known as " Key Rats . "

Key Biscayne is located at 25 ° 41 ' 25 " N 80 ° 9 ' 54 " W (25 @. @ 690329 , -80.165118) .

= = History = =

= = = Early history = = =

The first known indigenous inhabitants of Key Biscayne were Tequestas . Shells , bones and artifacts found on the island indicate extensive use of it by the Tequesta . A large community appeared to inhabit the island between 1 @, @ 500 and 2 @, @ 000 years ago . In 1992 Hurricane Andrew scoured much of the vegetation from the southern end of Key Biscayne . An archaeological survey of the exposed ground found evidence of extensive habitation .

Juan Ponce de León charted Key Biscayne on his first mission to the New World in 1513 . He christened the island Santa Marta and claimed it for the Spanish Crown . He reported that he found a fresh water spring on the island . Ponce de León called the bay behind the island (Biscayne Bay) Chequescha , a variant form of Tequesta .

The next European known to have visited the Key Biscayne area was Pedro Menéndez de Avilés . In 1565 his ship took refuge in Biscayne Bay from a storm . Relations were established with the Tequesta , and in 1567 a mission was established on the mainland across the bay from Key Biscayne . The mission was abandoned three years later in 1570 . No other mission was established on the mainland until 1743 , but it was withdrawn a few months later .

Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda related that a sailor from the Bay of Biscay , called the Viscayno or Biscayno , had lived on the lower east coast of Florida for a while after being shipwrecked . A 17th @-@ century map shows Cayo de Biscainhos , the probable origin of Key Biscayne .

The first known European settlers on Key Biscayne were Pedro Fornells , his family and household . Fornells and his wife Mariana were Minorcan survivors of the New Smyrna colony in northern Florida . Pedro and Mariana had joined other Minorcans in seeking refuge at St. Augustine after leaving New Smyrna . They stayed in the city after the Spanish regained Florida in 1783 . Fornells received a Royal Grant for 175 acres (71 ha) on the southern end of Key Biscayne in 1805 . The grant required Fornells to live on the island and establish cultivation within six months . He moved his household to the island , but after six months , the family returned to St. Augustine , leaving a caretaker Vincent on the island .

= = = Territorial years = = =

Following the First Seminole War and a treaty with Spain , Florida became a U.S. territory in 1821 . Under pressure from US settlers , Seminole and Black Seminoles began to migrate into central and southern Florida . In the early nineteenth century , African @-@ American slaves and Black Seminoles escaped to the Bahamas from Cape Florida , including hundreds in the 1820s , to evade American slavers .

In 1824 Mary Ann Channer Davis , who had moved to St. Augustine with her husband in 1821 , bought the Fornells claim to Key Biscayne from one of the Fornells ' heirs for US \$ 100 . Mary and her husband William Davis , a deputy U.S. Marshal , probably were aware of plans to build a lighthouse on the Florida coast somewhere between St. Augustine and Key West , and knew that Key Biscayne was a likely location for it . Mary and William sold three acres (about one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ quarter hectares) of their newly acquired land at the southern tip of the island (Cape Florida) to the U.S. government for US \$ 225 . The federal government built the Cape Florida lighthouse on that land in 1825 .

During the early 1820s an estimated 300 Black Seminoles found passage from Key Biscayne to Andros Island in the Bahamas on seagoing canoes and Bahamian boats . In 1820 one traveler reported seeing 60 " Indians " , 60 " runaway slaves " , and 27 boats of Bahamian wreckers preparing to leave Cape Florida . Although Key Biscayne was less suitable as a departure point after the lighthouse was built , the Bahamas remained a haven for escaping slaves . In a notorious case in 1844 , Jonathan Walker was caught " within sight of Cape Florida " with seven runaway slaves on his boat . His punishment included having his hand branded with the initials " SS " (for " slave stealer ") . John Greenleaf Whittier 's poem The Branded Hand was inspired by this incident .

The first U.S. citizens to take up permanent residence on Key Biscayne were Captain John Dubose , his wife Margaret and their five children in 1825 , when Dubose became the first keeper for the new Cape Florida Light , a post he held until the lighthouse was burned in 1836 . The family was also accompanied by two former slaves of Margaret 's brother . The Dubose household grew during that time and was reported in 1833 to consist of " eleven whites and several negroes " . During his tenure as lighthouse keeper , Dubose received hundreds of plants and seeds from Dr. Henry Perrine , United States Consul in Campeche , Mexico , which he planted on the island . In 1835 a major hurricane struck the island , damaging the lighthouse and the keeper 's house , and putting the island under three feet of water , which killed almost all the plants that Dr. Perrine had sent from Mexico .

= = = War with the Seminoles = = =

In 1836 , during the Second Seminole War , Seminoles attacked and burned the Cape Florida lighthouse , severely wounding the assistant lighthouse keeper in charge ; his black assistant died of wounds . The lighthouse was not repaired and put back into commission until 1847 .

A military post was established on Key Biscayne in March 1838 . Its first commander was Lt. Col. James Bankhead . The fort was initially known as Fort Dallas or Fort Bankhead , but it was eventually renamed Fort Russell for Captain Samuel L. Russell . He was killed when the Seminoles ambushed two boats on the Miami River in February 1839 . In the summer of 1839 , a total of 143 soldiers and sailors were stationed at Fort Russell . Some of the Seminoles captured during the war were held at Fort Russell until they could be placed on ships to be removed to Indian Territory .

A hospital was established at Fort Russell for U.S. Army , Navy and Marine Corps personnel . In August 1840 , the Army surgeon at the hospital treated 103 patients , including 23 for fever and 26 for dysentery . Dysentery was the leading cause of death at the fort , followed by malaria , tuberculosis , gunshot wounds and alcoholism .

Colonel Bankhead was replaced by Lieutenant Colonel William S. Harney in 1839 . Colonel Harney had two earlier encounters with Seminoles , the first a battle in which Chief Arpeika eluded capture , and a second in which Harney escaped in only his shirt and drawers from an early morning attack (the Harney Massacre) on his camp led by Chief Chakaika . In light of these experiences , Harney instituted an intensive training program in swamp and jungle warfare for his men . After Chakaika led the raid on Indian Key in August 1840 , Harney set out into the Everglades after Chakaika , and killed him in his own camp . The war quieted down after that , with active pursuit of the Seminoles ending in 1842 , although some of the Seminoles remained hidden in the Everglades .

While the war against the Seminoles continued , Mary and William Davis made plans to develop a town on Key Biscayne . They had a town plan printed in Philadelphia , Pennsylvania . The island was touted as an ideal destination " for the recovery of the health " . When Indian Key had been named the seat for the newly created Dade County in 1836 , the county provided that the county court would meet annually on Key Biscayne . In late 1839 the United States Postmaster General approved a post office for Key Biscayne . The first two lots of the new town were sold to Lt. Col. Harney for a total of US \$ 1 @, @ 000 . There is no evidence that the post office ever opened ; in 1842 the Postmaster General noted that the appointed postmaster had not completed any of the requirements for opening the post office . No further sales of town lots were made after Harney 's purchase .

A complication arose when Venancio Sanchez of St. Augustine purchased for US \$ 400 a half share in the old Fornells grant from another surviving heir , who lived in Havana . A feud quickly developed between Sanchez and the Davises , with Sanchez demanding a division of the property , and the Davises refusing to acknowledge that Sanchez had any claim to the island . The Davises had hoped that a restored lighthouse would be the centerpiece of their town , but all attempts to repair the lighthouse failed while the war was on . Shortly after the end of the war , the Davises gave up on Key Biscayne and moved to Texas . Their older son Edmund J. Davis eventually was elected as governor there .

= = = Surveys and lighthouses = = =

The numerous ship wrecks that occurred along the southeast coast of Florida from Key Biscayne to the Dry Tortugas was a cause for concern . Between the late 1840s and the late 1850s , more than 500 ships were wrecked on the Florida Reef . The Assistant United States Coast Surveyor reported that in the period from 1845 through 1849 , almost one million (United States) dollars worth of vessels and cargoes were lost on the reef .

In 1849 the United States Board of Engineers conducted a preliminary survey of the coast of Florida . In a report written by Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lee , the Board recommended that Key Biscayne be made a military reservation , and the United States Secretary of War so ordered in March 1849 . Later that year , the United States Army Corps of Topographical Engineers set up a camp with an astronomical / magnetic station to serve as a datum base for a survey of the Florida Keys and the Great Florida Reef .

The triangulation survey was conducted by the U.S. Coast Survey with men detailed from the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy . Approximately forty men were based at Cape Florida working on the survey when Alexander Dallas Bache , Superintendent of the U.S. Coast Survey , went to Key Biscayne in 1855 to take charge of it . The survey eventually covered Key Biscayne , Biscayne Bay , the Florida Keys from south of Key Biscayne to the Marquesas Keys , and Florida Bay from the Keys to Cape Sable . The survey base marker at Cape Florida ended up under water , as the south end of the island eroded . It could be seen at low tide as late as 1913 .

In 1988 the Cape Florida base marker was recovered from under water and installed near the Cape Florida lighthouse . The north base marker for Key Biscayne was discovered in 1970 as workers were clearing land . It was at first mistaken as a gravestone for someone named A. D. Bache .

To learn more about the Great Florida Reef , Alexander Bache invited Louis Agassiz to study it . The U.S. Coast Survey sent Agassiz to Key Biscayne in 1851 . He wrote a detailed report for Bache on the reefs stretching from Key Biscayne to the Marquesas Keys .

In 1846 , US Congress appropriated \$ 23 @, @ 000 to rebuild the Cape Florida lighthouse and work was completed in 1847 . In 1861 , Confederate militants sabotaged the lighthouse so that it could not guide Union sailors during the blockade of Confederate Florida . The lighthouse was repaired and re @-@ lit again in 1866 . In 1878 the Cape Florida Light was replaced by the Fowey Rocks Light , seven miles (11 km) southeast of Cape Florida .

In 1898 , in response to the growing tension with Spain over Cuba , which led to the Spanish ? American War , the Cape Florida lighthouse was briefly made U.S. Signal Station Number Four . It was one of 36 along the U.S. East Coast and Gulf Coast from Maine to Texas . The Signal Stations were established to provide an early warning of any approach of the Spanish fleet .

= = = Biscayne Bay Yacht Club = = =

From 1888 to 1893 , the Cape Florida lighthouse was leased by the United States Secretary of the Treasury for a total of US \$ 1 @. @ 00 (20 cents per annum) to the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club for use as its headquarters . It was listed as the southernmost yacht club in the United States , and the tallest in the world . After the lease expired , the yacht club moved to Coconut Grove , where it continues .

= = = Development = = =

Key Biscayne was first developed for coconut cultivation . The earliest mention of coconuts on Key Biscayne is a Spanish account from 1568 , although the reference may be to cocoplums rather than coconuts . Mature coconut trees were on Cape Florida by the 1830s , likely grown from coconuts sent from Mexico by Henry Perrine to the first lighthouse keeper , John Dubose .

In the 1880s Ezra Asher Osborn and Elnathan T. Field of New Jersey started an enterprise to develop the Florida coast from Key Biscayne to Jupiter by clearing native vegetation , leveling Indian midden mounds and beach dunes , and planting coconuts . Osborn and Field imported 300 @, @ 000 unhusked coconuts from the Caribbean , of which 76 @, @ 000 were planted on Key Biscayne . Most of the shoots from the coconuts on Key Biscayne were eaten by rats and marsh rabbits (*Sylvilagus palustris*) . As a result of their efforts , in 1885 Osborn and Field were allowed to purchase Key Biscayne and other oceanfront land from the Florida Internal Improvement Trust Fund for 70 cents an acre .

Mary Ann Davis , who had bought the Fornells grant on Key Biscayne in 1821 , died in Galveston , Texas in 1885 . Her son Waters Smith Davis began taking steps to assert the family title to the island . In 1887 he purchased the rights of the other Davis heirs and received a new deed in his name . He could not get a clear title , however . Venancio Sanchez still claimed a half share of the Fornells Grant , two of the town lots had been sold to William Harney around 1840 , and Osborne and Field had their deed from the Florida Internal Improvement Fund . Davis received quitclaims from Osborn and Field , and on the Harney lots , but was unable to settle with Sanchez . He finally received a patent from the United States government for his land in 1898 . In 1903 Davis bought the

abandoned Cape Florida lighthouse from the United States Treasury for US \$ 400 .

Davis started a pineapple plantation on Key Biscayne ; six acres (two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half hectares) had been cleared and planted in pineapples in 1893 ? 94 . Davis also directed his caretaker to plant one @-@ half to one acre (two @-@ tenths to four @-@ tenths of a hectare) of bananas . By 1898 , a great variety of tropical fruit trees had been planted on the island . Davis also had a large dwelling built for his use . It was a two @-@ story cottage with five bedrooms and verandas on three sides , raised ten feet above the ground on pilings to protect against storm surges .

In the late 1890s Davis hired Ralph Munroe to oversee his Key Biscayne property . Munroe had begun visiting Biscayne Bay in 1877 . He soon built a home , the Barnacle , on land on the mainland in Coconut Grove that he bought from John Frow , keeper of the Cape Florida Light and Fowey Rocks Light . Munroe engaged in wrecking in the waters around Key Biscayne , built sailboats , worked as a pilot for the Cape Florida Channel and opened a pineapple cannery , to which Davis sent his pineapples . Before mail service to the Miami area improved , Munroe would camp out on Key Biscayne every Tuesday evening so that he could sail out to the edge of the Gulf Stream early Wednesday morning to retrieve a package of newspapers and magazines dropped for him in waterproof pouches by a passing steamship . Munroe was also one of the founding members of the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club .

In 1896 Henry Morrison Flagler brought the Florida East Coast Railway to Miami . Mary Ann and William Davis had dreamed of building a city on Key Biscayne . Now their son Waters was a retired millionaire , and interested only in preserving Key Biscayne as a quiet retreat for his family . For a while Flagler 's arrival did disturb their quiet , as Flagler brought in dredges to deepen the Cape Florida Channel and the approaches to the mouth of the Miami River , muddying the formerly clear waters of Biscayne Bay . Soon , however , a shorter route from the ocean to Miami was dredged through the southern end of what is now Miami Beach , at Government Cut , and the Cape Florida Channel was allowed to return to a natural state .

= = = Coconut plantation and would @-@ be resort = = =

In 1902 William John Matheson , who had made his fortune in the aniline dye business , visited Biscayne Bay on his yacht . He soon built a winter home in Coconut Grove overlooking the bay . In 1908 Matheson began buying up the property on Key Biscayne north of the Davis holdings , all the way to Bear Cut , over 1 @,@ 700 (about 690 hectares) acres . Matheson created a plantation community , employing 42 workers by 1915 , and 60 later . It included housing for the workers and their families , packing houses , docks , a school , a big barn , windmills , and 15 miles (24 km) of (unpaved) roads . The plantation had 36 @,@ 000 coconut trees , and a variety of other tropical fruits . In 1921 Matheson introduced the Malay Dwarf coconut to the United States . This is now the most common variety of coconut found in Florida , after lethal yellowing killed off most of the Jamaican Tall coconut trees and many other varieties . The Matheson coconut plantation was at least twice as large as any other in the United States . By 1933 , the world price for coconut products had dropped to about two @-@ fifths of its 1925 level , and the plantation stopped shipping .

Waters Davis decided to sell his Key Biscayne property in 1913 (he died the following year) . He appointed Ralph Munroe to act as his broker . Although Matheson bid on the property , Munroe arranged a sale , for US \$ 20 @,@ 000 , to James Deering , the International Harvester heir and owner of Vizcaya in Miami . In 1914 Deering decided to develop his new land on the island as a tropical resort . He felt that Cape Florida 's " future lies in making sales for homes . " To prepare , the land was cleared , with marshes and mangroves were filled in . Jetties were built on the ocean side , in the belief that they would protect the beaches from erosion . They have been found to aggravate erosion .

Waters Davis stipulated in his sale to Deering that the Cape Florida lighthouse be restored . Deering wrote to the U.S. government seeking specifications and guidelines for the lighthouse . Government officials were taken aback by the request , wondering how a federal lighthouse could

have passed into private hands . An Act of Congress and two Executive Orders , in 1847 and 1897 , had reserved the island for the federal lighthouse and for military purposes . Patient legal work eventually convinced the U.S. Congress and President Woodrow Wilson to agree to recognize Matheson 's and Deering 's ownership of Key Biscayne .

In 1920 the heirs of Venancio Sanchez filed a lawsuit against James Deering , claiming an undivided half interest in his Cape Florida property . This brought development of the resort on Cape Florida to a halt . After many legal battles , the suit was finally decided in Deering 's favor by the United States Supreme Court in 1926 . The decision came too late for Deering ; he had died the previous year .

= = = 1920s to 1950s = = =

In February 1926 William Matheson entered into an agreement with D. P. Davis (a land developer , not related to Waters Davis) to develop and re @-@ sell the northern half of Key Biscayne , including all of what is now Crandon Park and about half the present Village of Key Biscayne . Davis had experience with turning submerged or partially submerged land into prime real estate , having created the Davis Islands in Tampa and Davis Shores near St. Augustine . Later in 1926 , the City of Coral Gables incorporated with Key Biscayne , which was included in its boundaries . There were dreams of a bridge to the island , making Key Biscayne the seaside resort for Coral Gables , as Miami Beach had become for Miami .

Obstacles to the project arose . In March 1926 the U.S. government auctioned off some lots on Key Biscayne that had been retained when the rest of the island was transferred to the State of Florida . The Mathesons wanted to have clear title to all of their land , and determined to outbid other interested parties for it . They ended up paying US \$ 58 @,@ 055 for a total of 6 @.@ 84 acres (2 @.@ 77 ha) of land , a record price per acre for the auction of U.S. government land up to that date . On September 18 , 1926 , the Great Miami Hurricane crossed over Key Biscayne on its way to Miami . Although no lives were lost on the island , most of the buildings were destroyed or badly damaged . Many of the plantings were lost , including half of the coconut trees . The Mathesons rushed to restore their plantation , replanting and buying new equipment to replace what was lost . They soon had 30 @,@ 000 coconut trees replanted on 900 acres (364 ha) . D. P. Davis could not meet his contract ; he declared bankruptcy and disappeared en route to Europe by ship .

The Florida Land Boom was over . There was no bridge built and no development on Key Biscayne for the next two decades . William Matheson died in 1930 , leaving the island to his children . In 1939 , the U.S. Navy approved a proposal to develop Virginia Key as an air base and sea port . There was talk of putting an air base on the north end of Key Biscayne .

In 1940 William Matheson 's heirs donated 808 @.@ 8 acres (327 @.@ 3 ha) of land (including two miles (3 @.@ 2 km) of beach on the Atlantic Ocean) on the northern end of Key Biscayne to Dade County to be used as a public park (later named Crandon Park) . The county commissioner who negotiated the gift , Charles H. Crandon , had offered to have the county build a causeway to Key Biscayne in exchange for the land donation . As planning for the air and sea complex on Virginia Key was proceeding , construction on a causeway to Virginia Key started in 1941 .

The Attack on Pearl Harbor and the entry of the United States into World War II stopped all work on the causeway and the development of Virginia Key . After the war , Crandon pushed on with the development project . He got financier Ed Ball to buy six million (U.S.) dollars worth of bonds financing construction of the causeway . The causeway was named for Eddie Rickenbacker , World War I flying ace , and founder and president of the Miami @-@ based Eastern Air Lines . Starting in 1951 , the Mackle Construction Company offered new homes on the island for US \$ 9 @,@ 540 , with just US \$ 500 down . A U.S. Post Office contract branch was opened , the Community Church started holding services , and the Key Biscayne Elementary School opened in 1952 .

= = = Cape Florida becomes a state park = = =

In 1948 José Manuel Áleman , who had fled Cuba in the wake of scandals surrounding his service

as education minister under Ramón Grau San Martín , bought the Cape Florida property from the Deering estate . His offer to donate the lighthouse and ten acres (four hectares) of land around it to the National Park Service was not accepted .

In 1950 the Dade County Planning Board announced a plan to build a highway connecting Key Biscayne with the Overseas Highway on Key Largo . The project envisioned bridges connecting artificial islands , to be built on the Safety Valve and existing small keys to Elliott Key and on to Key Largo . Áleman was expected to donate the right @-@ of @-@ way for a road running down the middle of the island to the first bridge at Cape Florida . With the prospect of a major highway passing through his property , Áleman rushed to prepare it for development : he had it completely cleared , leveled and filled in . A seawall was constructed along the western (Biscayne Bay) side of the Cape Florida property .

Áleman died in 1951 , and the County soon backed down from its road and bridge plan . His widow , Elena Santeiro Garcia , added to her Cape Florida property by buying an ocean @-@ to @-@ bay strip that had been part of the Matheson property . It included a canal dug by William Matheson in the 1920s , extending from the bay across most of the island . The land north of the canal was developed as part of the present @-@ day Village of Key Biscayne . Garcia sold the Cape Florida property in 1957 for US \$ 9 @. @ 5 million , but the buyer defaulted and died the next year . Garcia sold the property again , for US \$ 13 million . Development started on a model community ' of luxury homes and resort properties . By 1962 the new developers were in financial trouble , and the property reverted again to Garcia in 1963 .

Dade County began considering purchase of 50 acres (200 @, @ 000 m2) around the Cape Florida lighthouse for a park in 1964 . Bill Baggs , editor of The Miami News , campaigned for all the Cape Florida property to be preserved in a park . U.S. Interior Secretary Stewart Udall inspected the property and recommended that it be preserved , although not with Federal funds . In 1966 Baggs brokered a deal between Elena Santeiro Garcia and the state of Florida , in which Florida bought the property for US \$ 8 @. @ 5 million , of which US \$ 2 @. @ 3 million came from the U.S. government . This land was named the Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park , and opened January 1 , 1967 . In 2004 a sign was installed to commemorate the site as part of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Trail , for the Black Seminoles who escaped to the Bahamas .

= = = = Demographic = = = =

Key Biscayne is a small , intimate community . The majority of families that live there have known each other for generations . The kids that grew up on the island are known as Key Rats .