

Transactions on board. U. S. Schooner Shark. M. C. Perry, Esq^r Commander.

Thompson Island.

During our stay at this Island the Weather has been uniformly fine, the Wind moderate from the Southward, and Eastward, and the Temperature of the Air about 80° -

The subjoined extract of my report to the Honble Sec^y of the Navy, will give a brief description of the Island and a narration of events which occurred, during our short stay.

U. S. Schooner Shark.

Port Rodgers, Thompson Island.

March 28th. 1822.

Sir.

In obedience to your order of the 7th. of Feb^y. I proceeded to this Island for the purpose of carrying into execution your instructions, and in consequence of boisterous Weather on our outward passage by which we lost two of our Stores I was compelled to stop a few hours at Havanna for the object of replacing them, this course was however by no means out of our route, and it fortunately afforded me an opportunity of taking under Convoey five American Vessels, a List of which I herewith enclose.

In regard to the Island in question, I have the Honour to report that after carefully examining its whole extent, sounding the Harbour, and otherwise making such observations as your instructions directed, I have come to the conclusion that it possesses many advantages as a Naval Rendezvous and in consequence have in the name of the U. States, taken formal possession of it, giving it the name of Thompsons Island, and have left Mid^l. Joseph M. Whitehead and one Man to retain possession, untill further assistance can be furnished them, at present their situation is tolerably comfortable, In selecting this name I have not only gratified my own wishes, but have complied with the request of the Proprietors of the Soil present on the occasion of planting the Standard, and whose names are John Warner Esq. U. S. Commercial Agent at Havanna, and Messrs Flemming and Whitehead all American Citizens. The Western end of the Island is the only

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part that can be approached by any thing larger than a Boat, at this extreme the Harbour is formed by a part of Thompsons Islands and several Mangrove and sand Keys many of which are covered at High Water.

The Harbour to which I have given the name of "Port Rodgers" is capacious and sheltered from the prevailing Northerly and Easterly Winds, it is however open from the South to West, which is a matter of but little importance, as the Winds in this part of the World but seldom blow from the South Western quarter, the Depth of Water in the Harbour is from 3 to $5\frac{1}{2}$ Fath^s but Vessels may find safe Anchorage without going into less than 4 Fath^s. The Tides are rapid and their rise and fall about 6 feet, Wood and Water is abundant, the latter not of the best quality, Fish and Game, are to be had in great profusion, and in the course of a year, or two, the Proprietors of the Island will be able to supply Ships, with Fruit and Vegetables. — The Watering place is two Miles from the Anchorage Ground, situated on the South side of the Island, the Well about 100 yards from the Beach, the Landing is at present inconvenient, but will become less so, should the Island be resorted to by our Cruisers, as the Officers will naturally for their own accommodation, add to the facilities of shipping the Water.

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I have already enlarged the Wells, and enclosed one with a Fence, cleared a large Garden Spot, planted Stakes on a Mud Bank that partly obstructs the Channel into the Harbour, and otherwise employed the period of my stay at the Island, in making such improvements as will benefit those who may hereafter visit the Port.

It may well be supposed that on a Coast so peculiarly dangerous as the Florida Keys, the difficulties of navigation must be numerous, requiring on the part of the Navigator, the utmost caution to avoid the innumerable Shoals, Rocks and Sand Banks that surrounds him in every direction, and altho' these dangers are laid down with admirable accuracy by the English Surveyors, yet the Tides and Currents are so rapid, and irregular, that until proper and skillful Pilots are established, it would be imprudent for our large Vessels to cross the Reef, In time of War however, these very dangers will prove of service to our Cruisers, as a knowledge of the Navigation will enable them to pass and re-pass without danger, and the want of such knowledge will prevent the Enemy from reaping the same benefit.

In regard to the advantages of Thompsons Island as a place of Trade, I feel at a loss in forming an opinion, its location is most certainly in its favour, being situated about

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about midway, between Florida and Cuba, the Southern States and Louisiana
which circumstances has induced many to believe, that in the course of time
this Island must become a place of considerable consequence.

Hencefore the Florida Keys have been the resort of Smugglers, New Providence Whalers,
and in fact of a set of desperadoes, who have paid but little regard either to Law or
honesty; the present establishment tho' on a small scale, will I conjecture (with the assis-
tance of the Settlers) be enabled to keep these lawless people from this Island, but I would
suggest the necessity of an early augmentation of force, if it only be for the purpose of enforcing
the Revenue Laws, a Gun Boat would be a force sufficient to answer all the purposes
required.

In enumerating the advantages possessed by this Island, and its contiguous Waters and in recommending it as a situation well calculated for a Naval Repository, I have looked to a period when our Country shall be engaged in a war with some great Maritime State, and when the undisputed possession of the Florida Keys will be a matter of great importance, as it will insure the undisturbed navigation of the North West Side of the Florida Stream (or Gulf of Florida) to our Merchant Vessels and will prove a check on the vast resources of the Island of Cuba;—that indeed if possessed by the enterprising Government of Great Britain.

I may be excused in taking this opportunity of suggesting through you, Sir, to the Honble Secretary of the Treasury the great want of Light Houses, on the Florida Keys—The happy transfer of so fair a portion of Territory to the U. States, has led to the belief that under the enlightened and liberal policy of our Government, the Navigation of the Shores of Florida will be rendered more safe and convenient, numberless are the Vessels and Lives that have been lost on this treacherous Coast, in common with Ship-Wrecks in this Neighbourhood, that there are many Vessels termed Wreckers employed solely for the purpose of rescuing property from destruction, of which they receive a very large share as Salvage, that rapid Current terminated the Gulf Stream, sweeps the Florida Reef with incredible Velocity changing its Course at every variation of the Wind, thereby baffling the skill of the most experienced Navigators and as they are deprived of the common Beacons or necessary in the Navigation of an intricate Coast, so are they exposed to the most imminent dangers, The great number of Vessels that daily pass through the Gulf of Florida, to and from the Ports of New Orleans, Pensacola,

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West-India Company, between Florida and Cuba, the Southern States and Louisiana
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Hencefore the Florida Keys have been the resort of Smugglers, New Providence Traders,
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Mobile, the Ports of Cuba, Jamaica, and Spanish Main, renders the erection of Light Houses, not only an act of Justice, on the part of our Government, but Humanity and a regard to the safety of the lives and fortunes of our Citizens seriously demands so desirable a measure, — I should feel diffident in thus intruding my opinion upon you Sir, were I not fully impressed with the belief that the Subject requires the prompt and serious consideration of our Government.

All present Vessels bound into the Gulf of Mexico and Mexican Sea, are compelled to make the Island of Cuba, for the purpose of shaping a correct course to clear the Dry Tortugas (the Southern extreme of the Florida Reef) by approaching Cuba they expose themselves to the depredations of the numerous pirates, that infest the Neight ourhood of that Island, But if Light Houses were erected on the Florida Keys, Vessels in passing and Re-passing through the Gulf might keep onounding the whole distance, and indeed might find safe navigation inside of the Reef.

As to the number and location of the Light Houses, I should presume there ought to be four, one on each extreme of the Florida Reef, and the other two at intermediate spaces, say one on Cape Florida, another on or near Key Largo, the third on Sand Key, if it be sufficiently stable, and the fourth on the South West Tortugas, — a Light House is also very much wanted on Cape Canaveral.

Remarks Friday March 29th.

Having completed the duties enjoined upon me by the Hon^{ble} Secretary of the Navy, we at 6 A. M. unmoored and made sail out of the River, the Wind from the S^d & E^d, which compelled us to beat out, kept the Cutter ahead sounding

The Course and Soundings as per Subjoined Table

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H.	M.	F.	Courses.	Winds	Temp ^r Air	Sea	L. M. Remarks
1	"	"					Commence with light breezes from
2	"	"					the South ^{ly} & East ^{ly} employed work-
3	3	"	S. S. E.	E. by S.			ing the Schooner over the Reef -
4	5	"	South				The Cutter ahead sounding.
5	6	"					
6	6	"					
7	6	S					
8	6	S					
9	6	S					
10	6	S					All I crossed the Reef. Hove To
11	6	S					and hoisted the Boat in
12	"	"	Lying To up S. S. E. off	S. W. by S.			Made the Pan of Matanzas at
1	1	"	Lying To up S. E. by	S. off. S. by W.			S. S. W. - finds the Current
2	1	"					setting very rapidly to the Eastward.
3	1	"					
4	1	"	Drift S. W. by W.				
5	1	"					
6	1	S					
7	6	"	S. W. W.	S. S. E.			
8	5	6	S. W. W.				
9	6	S					
10	6	S	South				
11	6	"	S. by W.				
12	6	"	S. S. W.				

98, 6 list per Log. Lat 13 22 N Long

On the Sick List 6

Expenditure of Water 1000 Gallons

Remains on Board 450 "

Exp Provisions

Not Inserted in the Log.



*For
=* Roue à Marseille en X^{bre} 1843 -

