



Short Circuit Bulletin



Issued JANUARY 1966 by the
TEXAS DIVISION

ELECTRIC RAILROADERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.

206 MILAM BUILDING

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78205

SOUTHERNMOST TROLLEY RIDE IN U.S.A.

By E. JAY QUINBY, Honorary Pres., E. R. A.

The Key West Electric Company was founded in 1898. Acquiring the Mule Car Line of the Key West Street Car Association, the new company ordered seven new four-wheeled 10-bench open trolleys from St. Louis Car Co. to operate over the existing broad-gauge mule car tracks. The new cars began operation over the line in 1899. At night each carried a kerosene headlight and a red oil lantern at the rear. Each was equipped with two G. E. No. 1000 motors, two G. E. controllers and two trolley poles for double wire overhead system, and each used hand brakes.

In 1908, Bascom L. Grooms left his Motorman's job in Savannah and embarked on a Steamer for Havana. During a layover at Key West, he toured the town by trolley, and was recognized by some of his old friends from Savannah, who were trying to keep the line running despite shortage of experienced help. They prevailed upon him to stay a while and assist so he started as Motorman, became Superintendent, and was eventually promoted to President.



BASCOM L. GROOMS,
member, E. R. A.
-From Motorman
to President



KEY WEST TROLLEY
on Duval Street. Jef-
ferson Hotel, with
three-tier porches and
tower in background.
(View looking NW)

Bascom Grooms organized the swanky KWECO CLUB for the bachelor employees. They acquired an attractive Clubhouse near South Beach, where they always donned Tuxedos for dinner. At their dances, they wore full dress, and soon the most attractive girls of Key West found themselves competing for KWECO invitations.

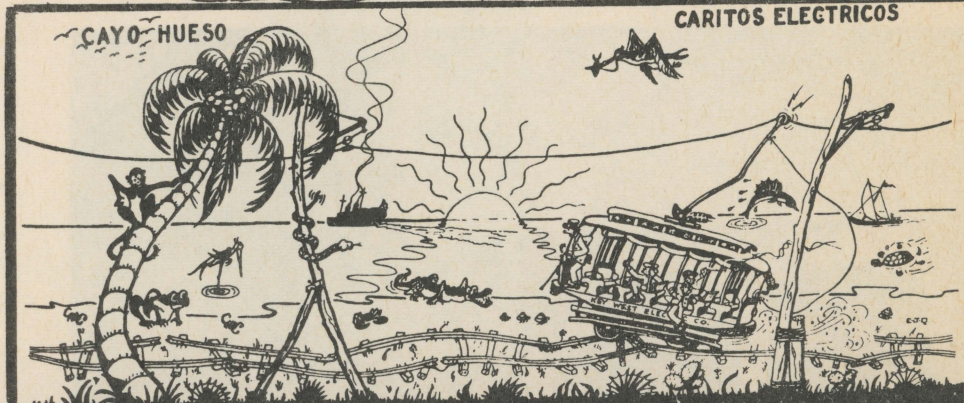
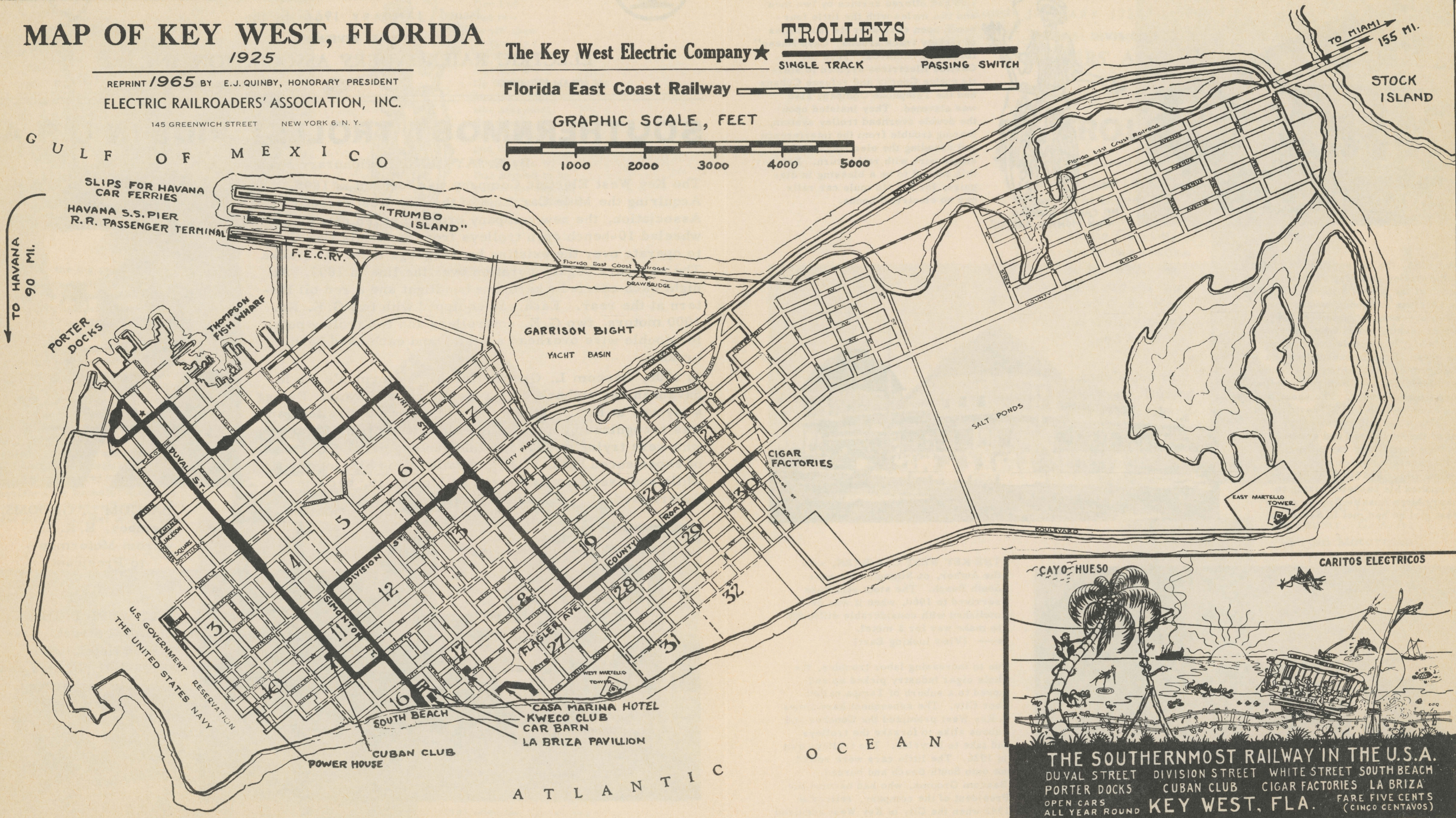
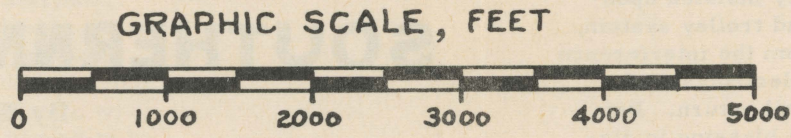
MAP OF KEY WEST, FLORIDA

1925

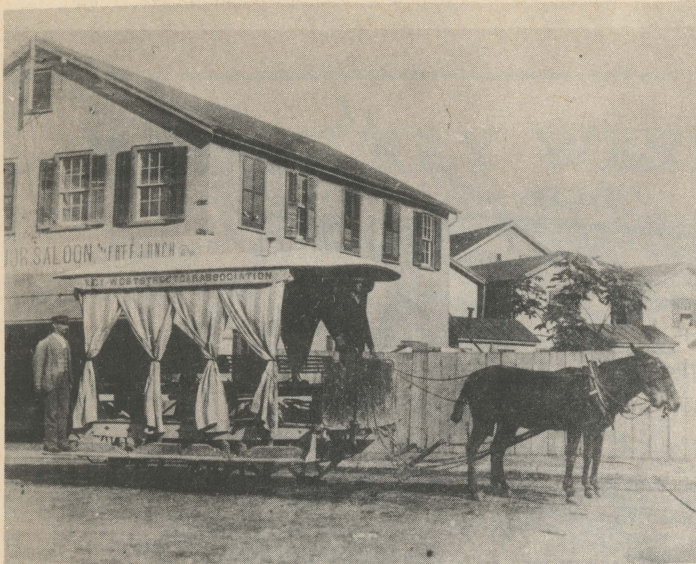
REPRINT 1965 BY E.J. QUINBY, HONORARY PRESIDENT
ELECTRIC RAILROADERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.
145 GREENWICH STREET NEW YORK 6, N. Y.

The Key West Electric Company ★ **TROLLEYS**
SINGLE TRACK PASSING SWITCH

Florida East Coast Railway



THE SOUTHERMOST RAILWAY IN THE U.S.A.
DUVAL STREET DIVISION STREET WHITE STREET SOUTH BEACH
PORTER DOCKS CUBAN CLUB CIGAR FACTORIES LA BRIZA
OPEN CARS FARE FIVE CENTS
ALL YEAR ROUND **KEY WEST, FLA.** (CINCO CENTAVOS)



RAPID TRANSIT,- BY MULES .
The Key West Street Car Association had offered service by two men and two mules with the little four-bench open cars over its four miles of rickety track around "Cayo Hueso" for Cinco Centavos. Then the Caritos Electricos arrived to startle native Conchs and refugee Cubans and the Telephone Company also was alarmed. They insisted upon the double overhead trolley system, fearing trouble from the interference and dreading the electrolysis of a single wire with rail return. But this proved to be a blessing in disguise, for the old mule car rails had no electrical bonds.

LA BRISA, the big pavilion, was built by the trolley company on South Beach at the foot of Simonton Street. Its spacious ballroom, swept by ocean breezes, attracted trolley riders seeking relief from the tropical heat. In a cupola overlooking the ocean, Superintendent Grooms managed the line, which he extended out Flagler Avenue to the new Seidenberg Cigar Factory. The sheet iron car barn he built in 1909 lasted only to 1910, when a hurricane roared out of the Caribbean and smashed it. He then built a new car barn of solid concrete, which survived the trolley line. In 1913, Grooms relinquished his bachelor status to marry Miss Rosalie Boyer, a Key West girl he had met in Savannah.



THE KEY WEST CAR BARN, with the Author, on Simonton St. near South Beach. The stout structure survived to 1960, when it was demolished with considerable difficulty to make way for a motel.
← (View looking East)

Due to increasing labor troubles, the whole cigar industry picked up and moved to a suburb of Tampa called Ybor City. The subsequent hard times in Key West prompted the Conches and Cubans alike to forsake the trolleys and take to bicycles. The trolleys quit in 1926. The little cars were rolled out onto South Beach and burned. Bascom Grooms, who had become the President of the company, retired in 1943 when the City of Key West acquired the electric company. Hale and hearty at age 90, he still resides at 723 Washington Street near the old KWECO Club.