



The Houses of Key West

Alex Caemmerer

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Perfect for anyone who loves to look at charming old houses and imagine their histories, this book offers a selection of what are probably the most historically interesting, aesthetically appealing, and photogenic of the nineteenth-century houses in the Key West historic district. It includes full color photos, as well as a variety of charming anecdotes about old Key West gleaned from interviews with descendants of the families who built houses there.

Key West was an industrial town and many of its houses were for workers who had little to spend on housing. The shotgun houses are simple, undecorated houses, many of them built by cigar-makers for their workers. Then, of course, there are the great houses?the Heritage House, the Cosgrove House, the Hemingway House, and the Southernmost House?large and famous houses with unique and proud histories. Then there are the eyebrow houses, shotgun houses, and "Conch Victorians"?many of Key West's houses were built by ship's carpenters, who built strong, tight, shiplike hoes, most working without plans other than memories of vessels and seaport homes from their own past. Widow's walks were borrowed from New England, overhanging eaves (eyebrows) from the West Indies. Builders added details from architectural fads of the time?from Greek Revival columns to Creole trellises.

The final architectural mix, what we see now in Key West's Old Town, can only be called, like the natives themselves, Conch.

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