

Coral and Cement: Flagler's Enduring Legacy to Florida

Dennis Knepper, Steven Anthony, James Smailes, Thomas Berkey

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Henry Flagler began a massive construction project aimed at linking Miami, Florida, with the deep water port at Key West and eventually with Cuba and the newly opened Panama Canal. Known as the Overseas Railroad extension of the Florida East Coast Railway, the project cost Flagler more than \$50 million and employed as many as 4,000 men at one time. Fundamental to the realization of Flagler's dream was the construction of 42 concrete bridges to connect the Florida Keys from Key Largo to Key West. In time, the railroad gave way to the automobile and the Overseas Highway was constructed to replace the old railroad. A cargo of hardened cement barrels and shipwreck debris lies on the sea bed at Pickles Reef off Tavernier, Key Largo. MAHS volunteers have been investigating the site to determine its connection with Flagler's enduring legacy to Florida.