

**Letter from John McGowan, Captain of the Steamship *Philadelphia* to M.O. Roberts of the United States Mail Steamship Company, published in the New York *Herald* July 24, 1852, p.7**

Steamship Philadelphia,

New York, July 19, 1852.

Sir – We left Aspinwall in this ship at 6 P.M., on the 22d ult, with 225 passengers, bound to New York and New Orleans, via Havana. The passengers appeared to be healthy on embarking, except some eight or ten that had been at work on the railroad, and three that had crossed over the isthmus. All of them had the Isthmus fever.

On the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup>, when in sight of Cape Antonio, the land breeze came off, bringing with it a most offensive smell. The atmosphere, at the same time, was in such a state that everyone on board was more or less oppressed with it; and it was with difficulty that steam could be kept up, as the coal would not burn, there being not the least draught, and the engine room, for the time, being so unsufferably hot that the engineers and firemen were almost exhausted. About ten o'clock the cholera broke out on the quarter deck, and in the course of one hour, ten persons were taken down with it, and by 12 o'clock at night, twelve were dead, and sixteen new cases. Notwithstanding every exertion was made by the doctor of the ship, assisted by Dr. Pierce, a passenger, and the whole crew, by rubbing with camphor and brandy, mustard poultices, and all other means used in cholera, the disease still increased, and by eight o'clock on the morning of the 27<sup>th</sup>, the deaths had increased to twenty.

At eleven o'clock, A.M., we entered the port of Havana, and anchored some distance from the coal wharf. When the Health Officer came alongside, I [t]old him correctly our condition and that I wanted one hundred tons of coal, and two thousand gallons of water, to enable me to reach New Orleans. He ordered us to the Quarantine ground, at the upper part of the harbor, where we immediately went and anchored, near the guard ship, according to orders. After anchoring and blowing off steam, the captain of the port came near us in his barge, and ordered us to leave the anchorage immediately, and go outside of the harbor. I replied that I came there according to orders, and had blown off all the steam, and that all the fires were out: consequently, it would take some time before I would be able to move. He then said, that if we did not go at once, the guard ship had her orders, (meaning, I presume, to fire on us). After getting up steam, we weighed anchor, and proceeded outside of the harbor, and made fast to the outer buoy, which is completely out at sea. At half-past three o'clock, P.M., a steam ferry-boat towed us down to two lighters, containing sixty tons of coal, some medicines, and brandy. We immediately hauled thee lighters alongside, and commenced coaling at twenty minutes past six. The captain of the port said he would give us but forty minutes more to take in our coal, and that, at the end of that time, we must leave the buoy. I told him that it was impossible to take in the coal in that time; that I had taken in but about twenty tons, and that I was in want of water. The water-boat, at the same time, was within fifty yards of the ship, and was driven off by his orders. At seven o'clock, precisely, he ordered us to cast off, which

we did, and headed for Key West. The deaths, the same night, had increased to twenty six; among them, Mr. Birdsall, the mail agent.

We arrived at Key West on the morning of the 28th, with the yellow flag flying, showing that we had sickness on board. We were visited by the port physician, Dr. O'Hara, and ordered to anchor at the quarantine ground, below the hospital, which order was immediately obeyed. After ascertaining our condition the doctor left us for the shore. He returned in about an hour, with an order (written upon a small piece of paper without signature), for us to leave the port at once, and anchor in the northwest Passage; stating that water, provisions, &c., would be furnished us at that place in a lighter – otherwise we must immediately go to sea. As the order was without signature, I took no notice of it, but wrote to the Mayor of Key West, detailing our condition and wants. I also wrote to the Collector of the Customs, begging to put the sick into the government hospital, which is a most beautiful, airy, and comfortable building, on the outskirts of the town, and but one patient in it. The collector replied the hospital was for “sick and destitute seamen,” and that he had no authority to admit passengers, and even would not take any of my crew, as he said the Mayor had informed him the vessel was in quarantine – consequently we would not be allowed to land. The Mayor replied that we would be furnished with whatever we wanted, but reiterated the first order – that under no conditions would we be allowed to land within five miles of Key West (just the extent of the island). I then wrote the Mayor, begging to be allowed to land the well passengers, on the new fort, now building, on a reef clear of the Island, and connected by a long wharf, and to put the sick into some out houses, belonging to the government and attached to the fort. In reply he stated that he had no authority over the government property, but that we would not be allowed to land, and that we must leave the harbor at 6 P.M. Finding that I could do no better, I made arrangements to purchase an old hulk for a hospital, 2,000 feet of lumber to build a shed over her, and started for Sand Key, distant nine miles, and situated on the outer edge of the Florida reef. Up to twelve at night the deaths numbered thirty. At early daylight, on the morning of the 29th, we commenced landing the well passengers, and by eight o'clock all (165) were on shore. The Empire City came over from Havana, and anchored near us, about 5:30 A.M. She took on board some mail bags, Mr. Story, and Dr. Gallier, and left about eight o'clock for New York. As soon as the hulk was towed down to us, we went to work with the engineer department and sailors, and built a shed over her. As soon as it was finished, we removed the sick on board, sixteen in number, in charge of Dr. Tennison and three sailors, and anchored her about two hundred yards astern. At the end of this day the deaths numbered thirty-six. Sand Key is about two acres in extent, and has but one house and a shanty on it, used by the workmen erecting the lighthouse now building on the Key. The house would hold about twenty-five persons, and ten might be stowed away in the shanty. I sent on shore sails and awnings to make tents to keep the passengers from the broiling hot sun and hot sand, which the key is covered with; but all I could do for the passengers, their situation was anything but comfortable; besides, there was no fresh water on the Key, which had to be brought from Key West. On the same evening, twenty of the passengers started from Sand Key for Mobile, in the pilot boat Euphemia.

We remained at Sand Key until the seventh of July, the cholera in the meantime having entirely disappeared; but in consequence of the severe exposure on the Key, without comforts or necessaries for the sick, the Isthmus fever took hold of a great many, and the deaths up to the

seventh numbered forty-eight. The same morning we took on board all the well and convalescent, and landed the sick from the hulk on the Key, by permission of the Mayor, and left them in charge of the doctor and his assistants. At two P.M., hove up the anchor and proceeded to Key West, to take in coal, which had arrived for us in the bark Margaret, from Havana. At Key West, I chartered the sloop Mary H. Williams, Captain Smith, for \$1,200, to take forty New Orleans passengers and the mails, and deliver them to New Orleans. The mails I sent in charge of Mr. Peck, the storekeeper.

At Key West many of the well and convalescent passengers got into boarding houses, which, I am satisfied, saved many lives, as nearly all of them were mor or less affected with fever from exposure on Sand Key. The Falcon arrived the morning of the 11th, to take the passengers to New Orleans. As they had nearly all left in the sloop, I sent the treasure on board of her, and some ten or twelve passengers, and she sailed the same day. We took in 200 tons of coal, and left Key West at 4 P.M., the 13th inst. All the engineers, except the chief, Mr. Spencer, had been sick with fever, and at the time we left, there were but two of them unable to do duty. We left nine sick passengers, one assistant engineer, and one fireman at Key West, in the hands of Dr. Jones, the acting port physician, a very estimable, skillful and humane man, who did everything in his power to alleviate the sufferings of the sick; and to his exertions alone may be attributed our release from quarantine at Sand Key. Doctor O'Hara, the regular port physician, visited us five times the first day we arrived at Key West; he did nothing for the sick, but only carried communications from and to the shore, for which a bill was presented me by his agent for \$100. As the city ordinance compelled me to pay \$5 each visit, I paid \$25 very reluctantly. The doctor never visited us after the first day, and left the island for the north, three days after, in the steamer Legare. As I did not want but 200 tons of coal, I left 60 tons on the wharf at Key West, in charge of Mr. A.F. Tift, the agent for the Charleston line of steamers, and subject to your orders. As there was no coal at Key West, I believe it would be of interest to the company to leave it.

It is worthy of remark, that I have not lost an officer, engineer, fireman, or sailor by the cholera or fever, although all the engineers but the chief, two mates, four sailors, and three firemen have been sick with fever. The sailors handled and buried all that died, yet not one of them took the cholera.

The whole number of deaths from the time of leaving Aspinwall until our arrival at this port, was 55.

Very respectfully yours, &c.

John McGowan, Captain

M.O. Roberts, Esq, Agent United States Mail Steamship Company, New York

**Letter from John McGowan, Captain of the Steamship *Philadelphia*, with a note by Purser E.H. Mitchell, to Walter C. Maloney, Mayor of Key West, published in *The Daily Union* (Washington, DC) July 8, 1852, p.2**

Steamship Philadelphia,

June 30 – 3 p.m.

Sir: Agreeably to your request, I herewith furnish you with a list of the deaths that have occurred on board since entering the port of Key West; also the number now on the sick list, many of whom will die, not having the necessary comforts requisite for the sick. All of them on the Key continue healthy, and I trust by tonight to have all sick on board the old hulk. God knows they will worse on board of her than in this ship. I have been rather indisposed during the night and this morning, but feel much better now. If I need the services of a physician for those on shore, I will make the signal.

Very respectfully, &c.,

John McGowan

To W.B. Maloney, Mayor of Key West.

List of persons who have died on board steamship “Philadelphia” while lying in the port of Key West, Florida:

Died, June 28 – H. Sanders, Bremen, Germany; L. Wilcoxin, Kentucky; Pat Hurly, Cork, Ireland; Mick Mullen, New York.

Died, June 29 – Stephen Moore, New York; James Scott, Indiana; Isaac O’Steen, Mississippi; W.S. Belser, South Carolina; Samuel Johnson, Maine.

Died, June 30 – Daniel Hazelton and H.G. House, New York; Hiram Mendenhall, Indiana; H.C. Dow, Maine.

Total, 13

E.H. Mitchell, Purser

There are 13 yet on the sick list, but only 4 of them with cholera – the rest Chagres fever.

**Letter from Key West Mayor Walter C. Maloney to John McGowan, Captain of the Steamship  
*Philadelphia*, published in the *New York Herald* July 24, 1852, p.7**

Key West, July 3, 1852.

Sir – I feel sincere regret that the hulk furnished for the use of your sick is not in every way as commodious as could be desired: but it was the very best that the town in that respect could furnish. If there is bilge water in the hold, rendering her unpleasant, that, I suppose, might be pumped out.

If the phrase that she is “about equal to the Jersey prison-ship” is intended to represent her condition as infectious, I should suppose that by the use of lime she could be purified, and I am informed that you have a supply of that article. Would it not add to the comfort of the sick to lay her ashore, where she could not roll?

I send you a copy of the quarantine laws now in force. We have but one physician now in town; the port physician has left for the North, and the gentleman who will hand you this has been appointed his successor. Upon his report the Council will be guided as to the further time your quarantine will continue. As it respects your protest for your passengers, “American citizens,” you will be pleased to inform them that they are not constrained to remain at Sand Key, to suffer from “burning sun and heated sand,” but all are at liberty to go on board of your ship, or anywhere else in this wide world where American citizens might go, as far as I am concerned, except landing on the island of Key West. This much is prohibited.

I regret to perceive by your note an indication on their part of a wish to induce you to violate the quarantine regulations. The penalty imposed by the ordinance, as you will perceive, would be heavy upon all engaged in such matter; and I will not undertake to say how far the people of this island could be restrained, were such an attempt made to thrust disease upon them. And, in addition to all this, I respectfully call your attention to the first section of the act of Congress passed 25th February, 1799. You will there perceive that collectors and all other revenue officers (of which service, I understand from your official signature, that you hold the commission of lieutenant) are required to duly observe the health laws of the States, and those made in pursuance of the laws thereof, &c.

I truly deplore their condition, but I owe a duty to three thousand inhabitants of this town, to withhold permission for them to land here until sufficient time has elapsed to give hopes that their coming amongst us will not be to our injury. Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W.C. Maloney, Mayor

Lieutenant John McGowan, steamship *Philadelphia*, Sand Key.

**A portion of the diary of James Perry Fyffe, transcribed by E.Gale Pewitt, located in the Lighthouse files of the Florida Keys History Center.**

**Diary of James Perry Fyffe, June 26 to July 23, 1852**

**June 26**

On board the steamer "Philadelphia." The cholera broke out today off Cape San Antonio. Its ravages have been unchecked by any medical science and it is of a malignant kind.

**June 27**

Reached Havana about 10 o'clock. The Captain general came along side and finding it had the plague ordered us into quarantine. The Captain general of Cuba gave us 45 minutes to leave in. We could see the men round a cannon up on Moro Castle looking directly down. Some of the passengers prayed she might fire into us. In that case Uncle Sam would take hold of it. We had hardly anchored when there came an order to our Captain to weigh anchor and to put to sea. We had no coal, however, and after driving us out of the harbor a lighter with coal was sent to us but we could only take a little and so put off for Key West. Note: While the Captain General of Cuba was waiting for us to leave the mouth of the Harbor Captain McGowan outraged at the manner in which he had been treated vowed the curse of God with them and when the ship swung around he had two men heaved over board who had died of cholera.

**June 28**

Key West. Here we are anchored off this port which will not permit us to land. It seems hard but the citizens wish to protect themselves. People lie all about the deck, everywhere and little attention is paid to them. The Dr. I think does not know much about his business.

**[June 29]**

Sand Key. The well passengers amounting to about 170 have been landed on this point, a small barren island devoid of vegetation about one acre and a half in extent. There is a lone frame house used by the government people. A portion of our folks occupy it. The balance are scattered about, some under an awning stretched over the base of the new light house just commenced. The party to which I am attached are under a covered causeway used for landing the material for the "lighthouse."

Another company of about twenty Irishmen occupy alongside. They are just taking coffee and there is a great outcry for cups. I have loaned one of them mine. Some of them are using Conch shells, some plates, any kind of a utensil are in vogue. A lot of them are using wine bottles broken off at the neck to evident danger of lips and tongue from the sharp, jagged glass. Mrs. Nelson came ashore this morning before me. When I came I found them gathering up beautiful shells. They made an appearance of cheerfulness in greeting inquiries as to my health and showing the shells, yet my heart a chilled for the heroic mother bearing up stoutly against the

ills that stared us in the face and the giving wave which she certainly felt would lessen the chances of safety.

### **July 1**

Cool and pleasant this morning. No new cases of cholera on shore since yesterday. The "Old Man" as he was called taken on board is dead. Two or three died on board yesterday. The sick has all been gotten board an old hulk sent down by the people of Key West and they are cleaning the ship. Evening – We have had quite an exciting day of it. First a general search of all the carpet sacks, trunks, bags, etc. for stolen articles. The most of the missing articles are found with two Irishmen. None of my shirts, however, turned up – next came a squall tearing things to pieces and upsetting a small pilot boat which drifted out into the surf. The man on board clinging to the little craft. He got out his anchor which held his little boat from drifting out to sea. His comrades in a little boat attempted to go to his assistance and was blown out to sea in the direction however of "Key West." The situation of these fellows caused a painful excitement for some time. At last the wind lulled a little and a whale boat was rapidly brought round to that side. Ropes made fast to it and the sailors went out and brought the seamen off the capsized boat.

### **July 2**

The people have just been whipping on the Irishmen for stealing the carpets sack. 39 lashes. They are at the moment trying another young man for stealing a pair of boots. Last night the boy caught four fine large turtles. Turtle soup and turtle steak today are quite plenty.

### **July 3**

Nothing of interest today. The weather is extremely warm. Our people are all taking the fever. Some have heavy chills.

### **July 4**

We are tantalized each day with the assurance that on tomorrow we shall get off. The surgeon of the Ships doctor is of very little force. He neither seems to make any exertion toward getting the proper medicine nor do I think he understands its proper administering after it is procured. One thing is certain. He was of no earthly use in cholera.

### **July 5**

We are in low spirits about getting off and the fever is on the increase rapidly today. We had a visit from the mayor and a physician from Key West. They went around and after examining us concluded we were a far healthier looking than they had expected to see having the fever which they do not seem to regard much. It is only the cholera they fear. The mayor says he thinks tomorrow we may hear a favorable report from Key West – Yes, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow. Had a chill today followed by a fever. Felt very low spirited indeed but try to compromise the ills round me by thinking of the many poor fellows launched over between

here and Cape San Antonio. Twenty passengers have chartered a small pilot boat and steered for Mobile, fare \$60 a piece.

### **July 6**

Sick again today. Word has come down from the mayor that on tomorrow we may land at Key West. Oh, yes!! Tomorrow, tomorrow again while here we lie in the sand, a burning sun by day, cold chilly breeze at night. Cold chills and a burning fever. No medicine, no proper food, no comforts of any kind and that tantalizing tomorrow.

### **July 7**

Well, tomorrow has come at last and after paying 50 cents for the privilege of coming off on the first boat here I am again on the ill starred Philadelphia. Those very low are sent from the old hulk where the sick have been kept out to Sand Key or Purgatory as our men call it. Oh, heaven, what a fate for a sick man. Our steamer we find has been painted up anew, thoroughly washed inside, smoked, and entirely renovated. In the afternoon we hoist the sail or steam rather and ran up to Key West and were soon domiciled in the home of that good old lady Mrs. Captain Walker. Names of those I have learned are Mrs. Nelson and daughter Curily, Stove, Donahu an old senator from Georgia, Parker, a sick man nearly scared to death, Abel, a brother.

### **July 8**

Feel very weak but walked around the town which contains about two thousand souls. Very little business down here besides wrecking. A great many slaves, most of whom were brought here by Mr. Wolton [Whalton?] from Florida before he was shot by the Indians as his son tells me.

### **July 9**

Walked out toward the U.S. Hospital. Was warned by an Irishman to beware of the poison tree. It looks a little like a china tree. Mrs. Nelson had a heavy chill today. Both her and her daughter are sick now. The N.O. passengers got off last night on a little schooner supplied by the Captain to take them and the mail over there. Poor fellows what ugly faces they made on getting off the fine large S. Ship onto a little lottery sailor.

Coal has arrived from Havana and our steamer is coaling. We began to talk already of getting off tomorrow!

### **July 11**

Steamer Falcon. Course unlooked for. Underway to New Orleans.

More on the C.O. Steamer Falcon. It seems as though I can hardly realize it. The Falcon was sent on the reception at New York of our disaster for the purpose of carrying our mail and passengers on to New Orleans. Farewell, Key West, with your mournful memories and you, Sand



Key, as we pass your low sandy shore. How much misery and suffering is connected with our short acquaintances? Poor Ole Mother Walker. Your furs and parade come from a kind heart. Key West is a long, low island, population 2,000, productions tropical.

**July 12**

Sick today. Had a chill and fever. The doctor gave me some pills.

**July 13**

Very sick. Had nothing to eat for 24 hours.

**July 20**

Have got nearly well and preparing to go home with Sister Hannah. Am anxious to be at home once more after the dangers of the sea.

**July 23**

On board the Steamer Winfield Scott. (On the way up the Mississippi River and home to Georgetown, Ohio.)

**End**

**Letter from Lewis A. Middleton, Editor of the Panama Star to the editors of the Mobile Herald, published in the New Orleans Weekly Delta July 18, 1852, p.2.**

Pilot Boat Euphemia, Bay Mobile, July 1, 1852.

Editors of Mobile Herald: Through the telegraph you have doubtless, ere this, learned that the United States Mail steamship Philadelphia, Capt. John McGowan, from Aspinwall, Navy Bay, in New Granada, bound to New Orleans via Havana, with mails and passengers from California, has put into Key West in distress, having the cholera on board, and being too short of coal to reach her destination. Having been a passenger on board the infected ship, I deem it a matter of duty I owe to the friends of the two hundred and fifty passengers, and the officers and crews, to spread before them and the public, at the earliest moment, a minute of events of which I am personally cognizant.

We sailed from Aspinwall with the above-named number of passengers, all being from California, with the exception of myself and three or four others from Panama, at about 6 o'clock on the evening of Tuesday, June 22. The night and all of the next day we experienced very boisterous weather. During the second night out, several of the steerage passengers – persons who had been at work on the railroad – were taken suddenly sick, and in twelve hours we buried three. During Thursday night another one suddenly died, and was buried on Friday morning by sunrise. By nine o'clock of Friday, some fifteen or more persons were taken sick in different parts of the ship, and a panic broke out among all the passengers. Every half hour several names were added tot the sick list, and in every watch several bodies were consigned to the deep. I will not attempt to describe the state of feeling which prevailed on board the ship during that awful night. But as the sun rose on Saturday morning, and the southern point of the island of Cuba loomed up, a new hope and energy instantly prevailed – with the expectation that the next day's dawn would find the vessel entering the harbor of Havana, where we expected – vain expectation! – the ship would be put in quarantine, her passengers sent ashore on some unoccupied spot, the healthy separated from the sick, and such other measures adopted as circumstances required.

About 11 o'clock on Sunday morning we entered the harbor, without a pilot – that functionary, upon being informed of the state of affairs, declining to come on board, but at the same time forbidding us to anchor until the will of the local authorities was made known. Before entering, we had buried eighteen persons, on some occasions, two bodies being lashed together. The health boat, with several officials, came alongside after a while, and we were ordered up to the quarantine ground, which we had some difficulty in reaching, owing to the large number of vessels lying in our way, among which we had to navigate. Casting anchor, with the yellow flag flying at our foremast, and several dead bodies on board, at about 12 o'clock M. the fires in the furnaces were put out, and the steam blown off. After one o'clock, the health boat was again seen approaching us, and when sufficiently near, the Captain of the Port, who was in her – a brute, whom it would be slander to call a man – issued the order to Captain McGowan to get underweigh with his steamer, and proceed to the anchorage outside the harbor, where supplies would be sent to us. At once the spirits of all on board drooped low – because none could see where the infection was to end, or how they were to escape an attack of the cholera – and all knowing that, once attacked, recovery was hopeless. Moreover, the authorities ordering us under the guns of the Moro Castle, gave us only until 7 o'clock to take in coal, water, and other supplies. With only a limited crew, originally – and several of these having died – Capt. McGowan proceeded to raise steam and get in

position as soon as possible, which he succeeded in doing at about 3 o'clock P.M. – leaving us only four hours to take in supplies. As many volunteers as could be advantageously employed, went to work with a hearty good will, to get in as much coal as possible; but, with all their labor, we only got on board about twenty tons, out of one hundred, which was necessary to carry us to New Orleans. Other supplies, such as medicines, brandy, &c., of which we had become exhausted, were supplied by the agent of the Philadelphia, who brought them off in his own boat, and watched by the Captain of the Port, in his barge.

At a little after 6, the steamship Empire City, from New Orleans, hove in sight – when this same Captain of the Port, who had a fleet of guard-boats hovering around us, like so many evil spirits – commanded Captain McGowan to leave his anchors in *forty minutes*. Continuing to work at the coal-barges up to the latest moment, we cast off from the buoy, and started for Key West – the Empire City having got within a mile or two of us, but which we were not allowed to wait for and communicate with.

In recounting the “business” transactions of the day, I have not had time to tell you that under the disheartening condition of things, several more of our passengers were taken down, and some of them died. During Sunday night we buried eight – making in all twenty-six since Wednesday night!

In quitting the inhospitable Island of Cuba, you may feel assured that many earnest and heartfelt curses were vented upon the heads of those who refused not only to receive us, but even denied us time to take in sufficient supplies to carry us to New Orleans. But, as we got fairly under way for Key West, the disappointment in the past was replaced by hope in the future, and all hands looked forward with cheerfulness to the morrow – when we would be in one of our own ports, and where we all felt sure of receiving kind treatment.

About 10 o'clock on Monday morning we cast anchor off the town, with the yellow flag flying, which brought off the health officer. After investigating for himself, and learning full particulars from our Captain and Surgeon, he returned on shore, and in due course of time word was sent off, notifying us not to land a souls, or have any communication whatever with the Island of Key West!!

Had the guns of the Moro Castle poured their deadly missiles into our ship while we were lying off Havana, Messrs. Editors, our horror, our astonishment and our disappointment could not have been greater than to receive such treatment as this from the citizens of Key West. Our decks and cabins were literally strewn with the dead and dying – the working force of the vessel was materially lessened, by deaths among the waiters, cooks, firemen, and sailors. Captain McGowan and the surgeon of the vessel, Dr. ----, as well as Dr. W.L.L. Pierce, a passenger physician, who, from the first outbreak of the disease had volunteered his services, and had worked without intermission, and with a zeal I cannot find language sufficiently strong to praise – were all nearly worn out, when the inhuman order – I can call it by no other name – of the authorities of Key West was communicated to us, backed as it was, by the suggestion that we might go down and discharge our passengers on Sand Key, a desolate Island about nine miles from the town, without as much of vegetation upon it as one sprig of grass! The Doctor, however, communicated the information that there was an old hulk of a brig lying at the wharf which could, if *bought or chartered*, be filled up with such supplies as Captain McGowan might order, and would be towed down to us at Sand Key.

Before I proceed any further, let me inform you that at Key West, there is a government *Marine* Hospital, into which the Collector of the port, a man named Douglass, refused to admit even the *sailors* and others belonging to the ship! When it is considered that Government collects a monthly tax from every sailor under our flag, for the support of these Marine Hospitals, the case seems particularly hard, when these very sailors, when sick, are not allowed to benefit of that for which they pay when they are well. Moreover, on the Southernmost point of Key West Island, a mile from the corporate limits, there is a government fort and twenty or thirty comfortable buildings – but even these we were denied the privilege of occupying. I leave it to yourself and readers to imagine in what an elevated esteem the passengers of the Philadelphia hold the citizens of Key West, and the government officials stationed there.

To make a long story short, we again raised steam and proceeded to the Key, off which we anchored about nine o'clock at night. No measures were taken to land passengers there, in the hope that the steamer Empire City, Capt. Leeds, would be over the next morning from Havana, and would take from our vessel one hundred and fifty passengers, ticketed for New York from Havana by that vessel. It may well stagger belief, when I inform you that Capt. Leeds refused to receive his passengers from the Philadelphia, or do anything for our relief! – except to smuggle on board Mr. Story and his traveling physician, a Dr. Gallaher or Gallagher, who, in all the sickness and distress on board, never gave one moment of his time or talent – if he has any – to the relief of the sick and dying around him. Mr. Story is, I believe, a heavy stockholder in the steamship line, and came on board the Philadelphia at Aspinwall, in quite a low state of health. While Captain Leeds refused to receive on board his vessel men, who, physically, were worth twenty such as Story and Gallagher – the first, really sick, and the other so chicken-hearted as nearly to be frightened to death – his conduct caused great indignation among our passengers, and when, within half an hour, he weighed anchor and proceeded on his way to New York, leaving us to die like so many sheep huddled together, the boldest hearts quailed under the prospect before us. Could either of you, Messrs. Editors, have been of Philadelphia's passengers, and survived, I am quite sure that you would, for a long time to come, dedicate a portion of your time and talents to a publication of these facts, with such comments as the conduct of Captain Leeds and Mr. Story deserve. We, who were interested, contend that if Captain Leeds could receive on board his vessel one really sick man, who was only received because he was a stockholder, (Mr. Story,) and another man calling himself a Doctor, who was half dead with fright, he had no right whatever to deny those of us who were neither frightened nor sick, a passage which we had paid for, on his vessel to New York. I trust the traveling public will bear this case in mind, and in their way to and from California, via the Isthmus of Panama, to avoid the ships of George Law's United States Mail Steam Ship Line, as they would so many ships of pestilence and famine. I speak from experience.

But I am making my communication too long. To take a review of the whole matter, you will perceive that we were turned away from a foreign port – Havana – with scarcely any supplies, when we made a straight course for the only one of our own ports which we could reach. While I have no particular excuse to offer for the conduct of the Habaneros – who look upon us Americans with any but friendly feelings – yet their conduct bears no comparison in humanity to that of the Key West people, and Captain Leeds, of the steamship Empire City, running as he was in connection with another steamer of the same line. I for one shall do my utmost to keep his conduct in this affair before the traveling public,

and trust that in short time public opinion – and want of patronage – will force him from the responsible position he is so incapable of properly filling.

After Capt. Leeds sailed, Capt. McGowan set about getting his passengers on shore, and provisions and water to supply them, about 9 o'clock in the morning, the propellor Wm. Penn passed nearby us, bound to New Orleans, but the captain refused to receive any of us, and passed on. It seemed that we were Ishmaelites in one sense of the word, - as we were cast off by all of creation – our own countrymen as well as foreigners – and were left to die or provide for ourselves as best we might. I can only say, that I sincerely trust that none of my own countrymen who had a voice, or who were instrumental in ostracizing us from their ships and harbors may ever be placed in so fearful and distressing a position as were all on board the steamship Philadelphia, from the 24th to the 29th of June – in which time, of 250 souls on board we buried 42, and left 19 sick.

To close communication – although I could write columns of interesting facts upon the subject – I will state that I chartered the pilot schooner Euphemia at a heavy expense to bring a party of twenty to this place. Capt. Cary had only laid in supplies for the accommodation of twelve but was prevailed upon to take on board the original party. In coming to this harbor on Monday night, – after a week's voyage – our vessel grounded, and so remained for a couple of hours, when she floated again, and came along up towards the city, when in Choctaw Pass she grounded again, - this being Captain Cary's first visit to this port. The steamer Oregon, on her way yesterday to New Orleans, stopped and took off all her passengers, with the exception of another and myself. When we got into this port, we had only wood enough to cook another meal! The trip on the Euphemia was fully as pleasant as could have been expected – and Capt. Cary and his mate Mr. Summer – as, in fact, all connected with the vessel – did all in their power to make the time pass as lightly as possible. Captain McGowan, Purser Mitchell, and the Doctor, whose name I cannot remember, as well as all the officers and stewards, did their duty most faithfully, and labored untiringly in their different departments for the relief of the sick and well on board the ill-fated Philadelphia. And I am glad to report, that, up to the moment of my departure from Sand Key, every officer of the vessel was in good health and spirits.

I am, your obedient servant,

Lewis A. Middleton,

Editor, Panama Star