

SNOW BIRDS

James A. Waddell (1842-1904) & Edwin Alexander Waddell (1859-1933)

Canadian Snowbirds of today follow a path pioneered 140 years ago by two farm boys from North Elmsley, Township, Lanark County. In the early 1880s the Waddell brothers played a leading role in developing Miami and Key West, Florida, USA, where, today, so many seasonal sun-seekers escape 'the true north strong and freezing'.

James (1842-1904) and Edwin (1860-1933) Waddell were the sons of James Waddell Sr. (1803-1886) and Margaret Caroline Crofts (1823-1885). James Sr.¹ had been born, of Scots stock, in County Armagh², Ireland, and, as a young man, emigrated to St. John, New Brunswick. There he met and married Margaret, who had been born at St. Stephens, New Brunswick. In 1832 they moved to Upper Canada and purchased a farm on the southern outskirts of Perth at North Elmsley Township C-9/L-26.

In addition to farming, James Sr. established himself as a lumber and grain merchant at Perth. He and Margaret were the parents of six children, all born in North Elmsley; James A. (1842-1904), Margaret Jane (1843-1910), John Augustus (1844-1899), Dr. William Harcourt (1849-1923), Elizabeth A. (1855-1934) and Edwin Alexander (1859-1933).



Waddell House. 61 Drummond Street, Perth

In 1876 the Waddell farm was sold and in 1883 James Waddell Sr. completed construction of 'Waddell House' at 61 Drummond Street East, Perth, now a designated property under the Ontario Heritage Act.³ Three years later, however, on September 22, 1885, Margaret died, and James Sr. died only four months after that, on February 9, 1886.

By 1886 sons James, John and Edwin were all living in the United States and William lived in North Augusta, Ontario, but daughters Elizabeth and Margaret would live their lives at Waddell House in Perth.

¹ In completing the death certificate of her brother, William Harcourt Waddell, Elizabeth A. Waddell recorded their father's name as 'Captain' James Waddell. What the rank of 'Captain' signifies is unknown.

² Some sources say County Tyrone.

³ Perth Municipal Bylaw 2537.

James A. Waddell (1842-1904)

Eldest child, James A. Waddell, was born on December 9, 1842. He grew up on the family's North Elmsley Township farm and attended elementary and secondary school at Perth. By the time he was 30 years of age in 1872 he was living in New York City and working as a travelling salesman for a drug company, a position he held for eight years. In these years he seems to have accumulated considerable capital.

Apparently for health reasons, James Waddell moved to Key West, Florida, in January of 1881, and went to work as 'Cashier' (manager) at the John White Bank. White, a local merchant and banker was also the owner of extensive real estate on the island. Just five years later, Waddell purchased White's banking and real estate holdings, including bank capital, mortgages, notes, houses, undeveloped lots, cigar factories, shares in Key West's mule drawn street car line and other business interests. Shortly after he purchased the White assets his younger brother, Edwin Waddell, joined him in 1886 as 'Assistant Cashier' (Assistant Manager) at the bank.

What is now the State of Florida had been transferred from Spain to the United States in 1821 and, in 1822, the island of Key West was purchased by American businessman John W. Simonton. Key West is the westernmost Florida key with a reliable supply of potable water and Simonton was impressed by the potential offered by the island's deep harbor. In 1823 the American Navy based its anti-piracy squadron at the Key West harbor. In the 1830's Key West was the richest city per capita in the United States, with a small population thriving on industries including wrecking/salvaging, fishing, turtling, salt manufacture, sponge harvesting/processing and cigar production. During the American Civil War, while Florida seceded and joined the Confederate States, Key West remained in U.S. Union hands because of the naval base.



Key West, Florida, 1884

On May 15, 1888 James Waddell married May A. Virginia Rose (1858-1895). The *Perth Courier* reported their wedding and honeymoon plans;

... the marriage of our former esteemed townsman James A. Waddell, owner of the John White Bank in Key West, Florida, to Miss May V. Rose of Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, daughter of Rev. Frank B. Rose, Chaplain of the U.S. Navy. Mr. and Mrs. Waddell arrived in Perth on Friday last and will stay about three weeks with their friends here after which they will go to Pembroke, Ottawa, Montreal, the Saguenay and other interesting points in Canada.⁴

⁴ *Perth Courier*, May 25, 1888.

James and May Waddell had one daughter, Vernon Rose Waddell (1889-1955)⁵, but after only seven years of marriage, May Waddell died in 1895.

This loss may have represented the second time James was made a widower, because, when he married May Virginia Rose in 1888, he already had an eight-year-old daughter, Lillian Alberta Waddell. It is more likely, however, that Lillian was illegitimate. She was described by the *Perth Courier*⁶ as the child of James A. Waddell, but, her gravestone in Elmwood Cemetery, enigmatically records only that she was “*the granddaughter of James Waddell*”⁷ (i.e. James Waddell Sr. 1803-1886) while naming no parents or providing a place or date of birth.

Other sources show that Lillian Alberta Waddell was born at Utica, New York, USA, to an American mother, in 1880 or 1881⁸. She is first documented in Perth around 1890, at about the time of James’ marriage to May Virginia Rose, when she would have been about 10-years-old. From that time, and perhaps earlier, she was raised by her unmarried Waddell aunts, Elizabeth and Margaret, and, until her death in 1962, at the age of 82 years, Lillian lived, unmarried, in the home built by James Waddell Sr. on Drummond Street.

With wealthy male relatives, the two generations of Waddell spinsters enjoyed a life of some privilege and ease. For more than 50 years the social news columns of the *Perth Courier* report their frequent and lengthy visits to “*Brooklyn, Newport and watering places in the neighborhood of New York and Philadelphia*”⁹, trips to Europe “*visiting Scotland, England, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and France*”¹⁰, journeys to Alaska, South Africa, and Japan, summers in the Catskills, and winters in Florida or Cuba. They travelled in style and met ‘all the right people’,

*Miss Lillian Waddell of Perth, who is now on an extended visit to England, attended a garden party at Buckingham Palace, and was included in the guests who had the pleasure of shaking hands with her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth.*¹¹

⁵ Married Arthur Edward Bassett (1886-1951).

⁶ *Perth Courier*, October 12, 1892 – “*James Waddell ... in town ... visiting his sisters and daughter*. *Perth Courier*, July 11, 1902 - reports Lillian had spent the “*past year at Key West with her father, Mr. James A Waddell*”

⁷ There may have been some effort to obscure the DOB as the gravestone also records only her DOD, with no DOB or age at death inscribed. Eight other family members memorialized on the same stone are all universally recorded with DOD and age-at-death.

⁸ Info combined from (a) 1891 Canadian census, (b) Ship *Franconia* passenger list, arriving May 15, 1929 San Pedro, California from Yokohama, Japan, “*Lillian A. Waddell, b.c1882, Utica, USA, Country of Residence, Canada*”, (c) Ship *Franconia* passenger list, arriving New York from Durban, South Africa, May 31, 1939, “*Lillian A. Waddell, b.c1882, Utica, USA, Country of Residence, Canada*”.

⁹ *Perth Courier*, September 7, 1894.

¹⁰ *Perth Courier*, September 14, 1900.

¹¹ *Perth Courier*, August 19, 1948. Although an invitation from Buckingham Palace was required for residents of Britain, protocol of the day permitted residents of Commonwealth Countries visiting Britain to attend the Queen’s annual garden party by simply turning up (provided they were properly attired).

The columns of the *Courier* also record a sustained and generous level of philanthropy on the part of the Waddell women of Drummond Street. The Aunts and niece contributed a great deal of personal time and effort to committees, clubs and community activities, as well as consistently giving significant sums of money to such causes as St. Andrews Women's Missionary Society, the Great War Memorial Hospital, the Red Cross, the Children's Aid Society, Perth Museum, etc.

James Waddell was still enjoying a lengthy honeymoon at Philadelphia in October 1888, when he learned that, without having even been a candidate, he had been elected Mayor of Key West, Munro County, Florida.

On 9th October last [1888], while Hon. James A Waddell was visiting Philadelphia, he received a telegram informing him he had been elected Mayor of Key West and insisting that he should qualify at once before a judicial officer of Florida who was well known to be in that city. For this intelligence he was entirely unprepared and was taken wholly by surprise as he had never 'dabbled' in politics and none but personal friends ever knew of his political opinions.

As the Mayor of Key West Mr. Waddell has given entirely satisfactory performance and even those who differ with him politically can find no cause for complaint against him".¹²

The same 'Trade Edition' of the *Key West Equater-Democrat*, reported that Waddell "added largely ... by purchase" to the real estate interests he bought from John White in 1886 and, by 1899, had become "the largest owner of Florida real estate to be found on the island".

Waddell also had holdings on the southern Florida mainland where he and his brother Edwin owned a cattle ranch and what was, at one point, the largest coconut plantation in world. In the late 1880s the Waddell brothers bought 1,120 acres of property at Middle Cape on Cape Sable and planted 8,000 coconut palms. The plantation, accessible only by boat, produced copra¹³ and coconut meat into the early 20th century but, "in 1935 a hurricane damaged the plantation and ... the area was returned to its natural state by 1960 when hurricane Donna cleared the land of all but two coconut trees"¹⁴. The property is today part of Everglades National Park.

Five years after James Waddell first arrived on Key West, a massive fire swept the city on April 1, 1886, destroying 18 cigar and other factories, 614 houses, government buildings, wharfs and other property. Within a few years, however, the city was doing better than ever. For a banker and developer with cash to loan, and the resources to purchase and develop property, reconstruction presented many profitable opportunities, as alluded to by a social note in the *Perth Courier*,

¹² Key West, Florida *Equater-Democrat, Trade Edition*, April 10, 1899.

¹³ Dried coconut kernels from which oil is extracted.

¹⁴ *Man In The Everglades*, by Charlton Tebeau (1968) ISBN 0-87024-073-0.

*Mr. John [James] A. Waddell, proprietor of the John White Bank, Key West, Florida, was in town over Sunday, visiting his sisters and daughter. Mr. Waddell is in unusually good health, and both he and the city of Key West are recovering steadily from the effects of the disastrous fire there a few years ago.*¹⁵

In 1889, Waddell profited further from opportunities offered when the Florida Legislature granted a new charter expanding Key West's city boundaries to include the entire island. Only partly due to the boundary change, the city's population almost doubled between 1880 (9,890) and 1890 (18,080). By 1889, Key West was the largest and wealthiest city in Florida.

That same year the Key West Merchants' Protective Association was organized with James Waddell as its first president. The organization was short-lived however, as its primary purpose had been to seek protection for established Key West merchants from Jewish peddler competition. They succeeded in having the city charter amended to establish an annual license tax of \$1,000 on each peddler¹⁶, and shortly dissolved the Association. After serving the 1888-1889 Mayor's term, Waddell was re-elected as Mayor for another term in 1895-1897.

Perth, Ontario, native James A. Waddell died, aged 62 years, on November 11, 1904, at Key West, Florida. He was buried in West Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

On the south side of Key West, Waddell Avenue, between Reynolds Street and Vernon Avenue, near Higgs Beach, is named for James A. Waddell.

Edwin Alexander Waddell (1859-1933)

Born August 13, 1859, Edwin Waddell also grew up on the North Elmsley Township farm and attended elementary and secondary school at Perth. In 1877, at age 18, he went to the United States and joined the firm of John A. Waddell & Company, "*a wholesale butter, cheese and egg house*"¹⁷, operated by his elder brother at Brooklyn, New York. Edwin worked as a grocery wholesaler for nine years, invested in the enterprise and became a partner.¹⁸

John Waddell (1844-1899) married Jessie Allan (1851-1913), daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Allan of Perth, in 1875 and operated John A. Waddell & Company until his death in 1899.

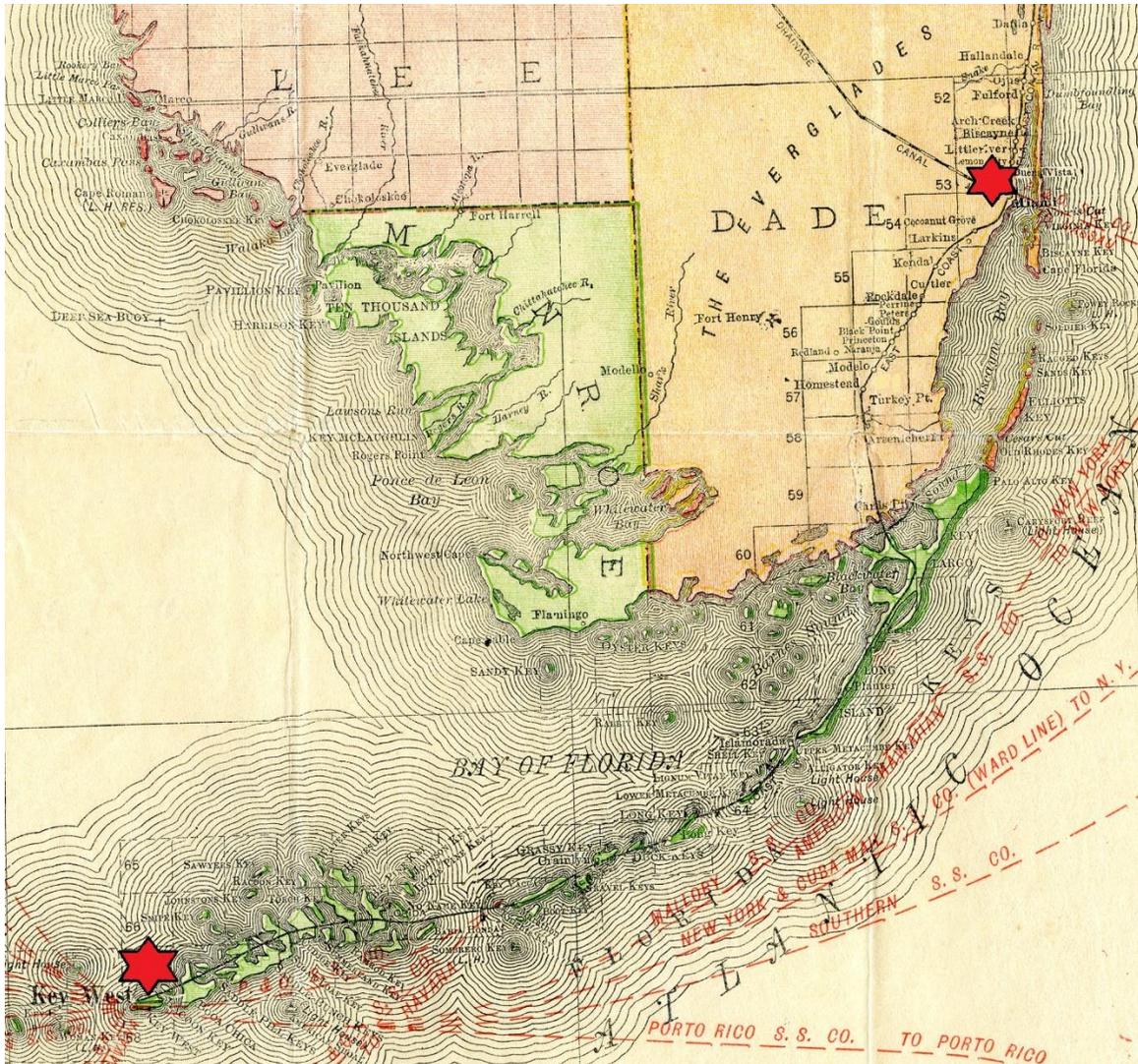
In 1886, Edwin left New York and joined his brother James (1842-1904) at Key West, Florida. James had just purchased the John White Bank and Edwin went to work with him as 'Assistant Cashier' (Assistant Manager). In 1889 the Key West *Equater-Democrat* described Edwin Waddell as "*the affable and accommodating assistant cashier of the John White Bank and junior member of the large hardware establishment of J. W. Johnson & Co. of this city*". In addition to purchasing the partnership in J. W. Johnson & Company, Edwin also partnered with his brother in a cattle ranch, and invested in an orange grove at Arcadia, both on the Florida mainland.

¹⁵ *Perth Courier*, October 12, 1892.

¹⁶ Reportedly the Jews quit peddling and open stores.

¹⁷ *Miami & Dade County, Florida, Its Settlement, Progress & Achievement*, by E. V. Blackman, President of the Dade County Historical Society (1921), ISBN 978 384 968 1609,

¹⁸ It is possible that brother James Waddell (1842-1904) also worked for a time at John A. Waddell & Company.



Southern Florida and the Keys

When his brother James Waddell made a visit home to Perth in early 1888 the local newspaper commented;

*We are glad to know that Mr. James A. Waddell, cashier of the John White bank, Key West, Florida, has regained his health of former days, a cruise among the Florida Keys and the balmy seas of that favoured zone, having greatly assisted this.*¹⁹

¹⁹ *Perth Courier*, February 17, 1888.

E. A. WADDELL REAL ESTATE and INSURANCE
 General Information Bureau. Estates Managed. Rents Collected
 Offices: KEY WEST MIAMI 354 Greenwich St., NEW YORK

Although based in Miami, Edwin Waddell's business interests reached from Key West to New York and beyond.²⁰

In addition to helping James “regain his health”, the yachting expedition in question would have a major impact on the future of southern Florida. James was accompanied by his brother Edwin on that health-restoring 1888 cruise and, as they were sailing from Key West to Palm Beach to visit a friend, a torn sail forced them ashore for repairs. When they landed on the banks of the Miami River, Edwin,

... became so impressed with the natural advantages of the locality that he even then insisted on predicting the founding of the city and later returned to take his part in the work of development.²¹

By 1894 Edwin was back on the Miami River bank, the second person to settle on the townsite of what is now the City of Miami. He started buying land and was,

.... one of a little group of prominent men know as ‘The Hungry Six’, who, when they heard a dog howl, said to themselves with a knowing nod, “that’s breakfast tomorrow”. This shows in some degree the limitation of diet in those early days, hash having been the principal article of food.²²



Edwin Waddell's poured concrete house

He opened the first real estate office in Miami, located at 239 12th Street (later renamed Flagler Street)²³ and, from 1896, lived in the Hotel Miami until he built a home, the first poured concrete house in the city (on the southwest corner of NE Second Street and NE Third Avenue).

The first train arrived at Miami in 1896 and the newly-laid track lay along the end of 120 acres of Edwin's recently purchased property in North Miami; his future was cast, and fortune made.

²⁰ Advertisement in Key West City Directory, 1911-1912.

²¹ *Miami & Dade County, Florida, Its Settlement, Progress & Achievement*, by E. V. Blackman, President of the Dade County Historical Society (1921), ISBN 978 384 968 1609.

²² Ibid.

²³ Later moved to 105 NE Second Street in the 1920s, across the street from the Gesu Catholic Church.

Edwin Waddell worked primarily in real estate for the remainder of his life, trading in property and building residential and commercial buildings ...

When Miami began to assume proportions and the start was really made, Waddell was among the foremost who talked, wrote, dreamed and advocated Miami on all sides, and in this work, he never ceased. He sent out thousands of dollars worth of literature pertaining to Miami and is as aggressive and loyal as any citizen within the city. He came to Miami to live and die, and there has never been a time when Miami needed him that he did not come forward and give assistance and advice. He is not only one of Miami's first businessmen, one of her first settlers and one of her best advocates, but also one of her best citizens. He has never had a hand in anything, business or private, that does not do him honor.²⁴

Edwin Waddell was naturalized an American citizen in 1897. On January 24, 1900, he married Dorothea 'Dolly' Huntress Watts (b.1869), of Salem, Suffolk County, Massachusetts. They were the parents of one daughter, Mary W. Dorothy (b.1902)²⁵.



Edwin A. Waddell, with wife Dorothea Huntress Watts, daughter Mary Dorothy, and sisters Margaret Jane and Elizabeth A. The photograph appears to have been taken at the Waddell house on Drummond Street in Perth in about 1912.²⁶

²⁴ *Miami & Dade County Florida, Its Settlement Progress & Achievement*, by E. V. Blackman (1921).

²⁵ Married a man named Doyle.

²⁶ Photo courtesy of Bethany Prevatt.

Today, many of the property developments with which Waddell was involved have been replaced by more recent buildings, but at least one survives. The Waddell Building at Miami Avenue and Flagler Street, built in 1914 in an architectural style called 'Vernacular Commercial', is a two-story building combining retail space on the ground floor and accommodation above. The second story was occupied by 'The Waddell Apartments' until 1930, then by the Neal Hotel until 1941, by the Rice Hotel until the 1950s, and then again by apartments.

Bank of Bay Biscayne
has moved to
Temporary Quarters
in the
Waddell Building
1110 Avenue D
while improvements are being made in the
Bank Building.

Waddell Apartments
Ave. D bet. 11th and 12th Sts.
Most central location in Miami. Convenient to everything.
Large airy, well furnished apartments of two rooms with kitchen and
private bath. Furnished for housekeeping. Large lobby and veran-
das. Best accommodations in the city for the money. Janitor service.
Low rates for the season.
JAS. H. JOHNSON'S SONS.



Waddell Building, Miami Avenue and Flagler Street, Miami, Dade County, Florida

Waddell had a policy of only selling property that had the potential to be improved. He maintained his integrity in real estate sales even during the frantic 1925 real estate boom. This boom was a time when 'binder boys' were quickly flipping lots that most likely were under water. Many of the buyers purchased the lots without ever seeing them. Waddell had no interest in participating in the practice of flipping lots.²⁷

Edwin Waddell was also the founding partner and Vice President of First National Bank of Miami, started in 1902.

From the day of its opening the bank was successful ... it operated as First National Bank until it changed its name to South East Bank in 1969 and continued to operate until liquidated by the FDIC in 1991²⁸.

He was also a Director of the Miami Savings Bank and a stockholder in the Bank of Bay Biscayne.

In 1909, Albert W. Gilchrist, who, in his capacity as State Governor was also Commander in Chief of the Florida National Guard, appointed Edwin Waddell as his Miami Aide de Camp²⁹ at the rank of Colonel. For the remainder of his life, he would be known as 'Colonel' Edwin Waddell.

'Colonel' Edwin A. Waddell "... died July 27, 1933, at New York. From the day he moved to Miami Waddell often said that he had come here to 'live and die'. Contrary to his expectations, Waddell ended up dying in Murray Hill Hospital in New York after battling illness. He was 74 years of age."³⁰ He was buried in Woodland Park North Cemetery, Miami, Dade County, Florida.

Today's 15th Street in Miami, from west of the railroad tracks to Biscayne boulevard, was named Waddell Street prior to the streets being renamed in 1920.

- Ron W. Shaw (2017)

²⁷ *Miami Pioneer E. A. Waddell & The Waddell Building*, by Casey Picket (2015), Miami History Blog.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Waddell was one of 10 such Aides de Camp ranked as Colonel.

³⁰ *Miami Pioneer E. A. Waddell & The Waddell Building*, by Casey Picket (2015), Miami History Blog.