

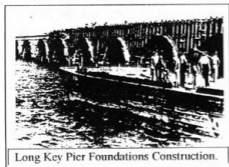


PINELLAS

RIDGELY FAMILY: PINELLAS PIONEERS. by "Charlie" J Grandmaison

Vincent Niles Ridgely was born on 22 March 1861 in Paris, Illinois. He is the son of Vincent and Adelaide Ridgely. Vincent Sr was born in September 1825 in Maryland. Adelaide is from Illinois and was born there in December 1836. Vincent and Adelaide were married in Paris Illinois in 1855.

Vincent Niles Ridgely attended Knox College at Galesburg, Illinois, and entered the Illinois National Guard after graduation. When Vincent Niles Ridgely moved to Florida in 1903, he organized the first Florida State Militia. He was appointed Captain, and was assisted by Major Cramer B Potter and Captain Horace Williams. He also became the first state commissioned Harbormaster for St Petersburg. He was later employed by the Florida East Coast Railway and assigned as superintendent of foundations for the overseas railroad to Key West.



Long Key Pier Foundations Construction.



Florida East Coast Railway Quarterboat #5

Vincent N Ridgely was supervising the construction of piers for the Long Key viaduct. It was the second longest span on the overseas railroad. There are 222 arches in this 5.7-mile long bridge. He barely escaped with his life when a major hurricane struck the Florida Keys in 1906. The hurricane struck in full force on 18 October 1906. A barge with a frame house built onto it broke loose from its mooring. It was the living quarters for 175 construction workers. A high wave smashed the quarterboat into pieces. More than 100 persons were lost and drowned. Passing ships in the next few days, were able to rescue about 72 survivors who were found floating on pieces of the quarterboat. Some survivors were brought to Key West, and others to various ports along the East Coast. Some survivors were taken as far away as England. Perhaps because the captains of those ships did not want to reverse their course and go back to US ports!

Vincent N Ridgely survived the 1906 hurricane and went on to supervise railroad construction for the Ferricarilde in Cuba. He also surveyed for a railroad to cross the Amazon Valley into Peru. In this project he was commissioned as a Captain in the army of Brazil! He returned home

to St Petersburg in 1912 and became very active as an officer of the Elks Lodge between 1916 and 1931. Vincent N Ridgely died in February 1940, having been a resident of St Petersburg for over 40 years.

Vincent had a brother who was also a resident of St Petersburg. Roy Ridgely is listed in the 1908 City Directory as owner of the Eureka Stone and Paving Company.

Vincent was married to Lenore Grover. They had one son, Raymond G Ridgely. Raymond was later to become the Manager of the Pinellas Water Company and was the City Manager of St. Petersburg in 1943 - 1944. Raymond married Eelje S. (---). She was born in Mexico in 1896, and came to St Petersburg in 1921. Raymond died in St Petersburg on 21 June 1957. Eelje died in Baltimore, Maryland on 17 March 1884. Raymond and Eelje had three sons: Joseph V Ridgely, George S Ridgely, and Raymond Ridgely.

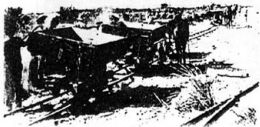
Portions of this article came from the following sources:

Key Guide, by G B Stevenson, 1970.

The Railroad That Went To Sea, by Rod Bethel, 1987.

Pinellas Pioneers Microfilms, Largo Library, pages R566 to R572.

These are copies of the original photographs of Fingler's Florida East Coast extension to Key West, Florida



Henry Flagler began surveys for the overseas railroad in 1902 and the first train reached Key West in 1912.

The Labor Day hurricane of 1935 created high storm surge tides that wrecked most stretches of the railroad tracks.

The rails were not rebuilt! The railroad bridges and the railbed are now the automobile highway to the Florida Keys.

For more information about the Overseas Railway and the Ridgely Family, you should visit the resources at the Largo Library and the Heritage Park Library.

Cemetery Records - We continue in this issue a listing of burials from cemetery publications of the Pinellas Genealogy Society. Beginning on page 62 is a listing of burials in the Anona Pioneer Cemetery, Serenity Gardens, Largo.

Alexandria Funeral Home - On page 72 we continue our listing of records of Book 3 of this funeral home. These records were extracted and compiled by Linda Carpenter. The original records are stored at the Druid Chapel of the Rhodes Funeral Home in Clearwater. Some data elements are not listed. For more information on an individual, contact Bob Raup, editor.