



- [WHAT WE DO](#)
- [ABOUT US](#)
- [OUR TEAM](#)
- [CAPABILITIES](#)
- [MEDIA BUYING](#)
- [CLIENT NEWS](#)
- [CONTACT US](#)

Search this website... 

[Home](#) » [NEWS](#) » A big slice of history, by way of Casey Key



- [NEWS](#)

Jun07

Tags

Related Posts

Share This



A big slice of history, by way of Casey Key

By Harold Bubil, Sarasota Herald-Tribune

An unlikely combination of historical footnotes makes a Casey Key property one of the most interesting listings on the market. No lesser names than U.S. Steel, Teddy Roosevelt, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Cassius Clay are indirectly connected to the estate, which was assembled from three lots in the early 1950s. The park-like, 8.8-acre shangri-la has 400 feet of private beachfront and a bayside lagoon, entirely enclosed by the property, that was dug by the owner in the 1950s.

“There is nothing else like it available on Casey Key,” said Bryan Guentner, who has listed the property at \$15.75 million through his RE/MAX Platinum real estate brokerage. It is the No. 2 property in Sarasota County by list price; No. 1 is a \$16.9 million listing farther north on Casey Key Road. Next door, and sharing the private beach, is a \$10 million listing on 1.2 acres (the house is by noted architect Toshiko Mori). A couple hundred yards north is an \$11.9 million listing with three houses on 1.2 acres.

But the charming, 1,700-square-foot house is likely a teardown, as are two small outbuildings.

“I hate to say it, but whoever is going to buy this property most likely is not going to keep the house,” said Guentner.

Built in 1951, according to county records, it has original bathroom fixtures and even a 1950s gas range that could belong in an appliance museum. The walls and ceilings are clad in gorgeous tongue-and-groove cypress boards.

“It is very much an ‘old Florida’ winter estate cottage,” said Guentner. “It has pecky cypress, which was traditional in the 1950s. It is gorgeous, really cool. For people who demolish homes, the pecky cypress is in demand and they will buy that alone.”

The man who built the house, Elbert Gary Sutcliffe, obviously had good taste and apparently hired an architect.

Sutcliffe was accustomed to the finer things in life. His grandfather was Judge Elbert Henry Gary, an expert in corporate law who founded a bank with his uncle, Jesse Wheaton, for whom Wheaton, Illinois, is named. That bank was merged with Bank One Corp. in the 1990s.

Not to be outdone, Judge Gary had his own town, Gary, Indiana, which was established in 1906 as an appealing home for steel workers. That was appropriate, as Judge Gary also founded U.S. Steel, with J.P. Morgan Sr., in 1901. U.S. Steel built the town.

Enter President Theodore Roosevelt, who built his reputation on being a trust-buster as well as a Tampa-based Rough Rider during the Spanish-American War of 1898. Roosevelt pledged to break up corporate monopolies and trusts, but in the case of U.S. Steel, he had a gentlemanly relationship with Judge Gary, even as the government was about to sue the steel giant.

Gary and Roosevelt agreed to a 1904 deal in which Gary would open U.S. Steel’s books to the government and fix any problems the feds might find. This would be done in secret so that Roosevelt would be able to foster the economic growth of corporate America while maintaining his credentials as a trust-buster.

Judge Gary died in 1927, at age 82, a year after he made the cover of Time magazine and a few years after muckraking journalist Ida Tarbell wrote a book about him.

His daughter married a man named Sutcliffe, and their son, Elbert Gary Sutcliffe, born in 1895, grew to be president of First National Bank in Louisville, Ky.

The family home there is said by the owners of the Casey Key property to have inspired F. Scott Fitzgerald in 1925 when he wrote “The Great Gatsby,” said George Sutcliffe.

After the infamous Lindbergh kidnapping in 1932, and amidst a crime wave in Chicago, the Sutcliffes moved to Louisville “to be closer to my grandmother’s relatives,” said George Sutcliffe, who is among four siblings who are selling the Casey Key property. “F. Scott Fitzgerald was a personal friend and references the house in Kentucky in ‘The Great Gatsby.’ ”

Assembling the property

In the early 1950s, Elbert Gary Sutcliffe bought a large lot on Casey Key, even more remote then than now, and soon bought the lot to the south. It took him a year to convince the owner of the lot to the north to sell, said George Sutcliffe.

With the 8.8 acres assembled, E.G. Sutcliffe dug a large lagoon.

“It is one of three private lagoons in Sarasota County,” said George Sutcliffe. “I like to sit on the dock and watch the fish jump out of the water. While you watch the fish, a variety of birds will come around.”

Ten years after assembling the Casey Key estate, Elbert Gary Sutcliffe became one of 11 prominent Louisville citizens who became financial backers of a young prize fighter named Cassius Clay. “The Louisville Sponsoring Group” was determined to keep Clay — he changed his name to Muhammad Ali in 1964 — from being exploited and bankrupted by the underworld that ruled boxing.

“All we want to do is to see that Cassius winds up rich,” said one of the 11.

In return, the group, which was profiled in a 1963 Sports Illustrated article by Houston Horn, received 50 percent of Clay’s earnings. Clay got rich, all right, but the 11 got richer.

Horn wrote that Sutcliffe claimed to be a “dirt farmer” with a 300-acre spread outside Louisville. The author added: “. . . in the backyard lagoon of his winter home in Osprey on Florida’s west coast near Sarasota he has a motorboat that he keeps tied fast to the dock. ‘I don’t like it, I never use it,’ he says. ‘I got it just so people would hush telling me I ought to have a boat like everyone else in Florida.’ ”

“My grandfather had a picture of Cassius Clay,” said George Sutcliffe, “and it was signed, ‘To the second-most greatest.’ ”

“I grew up around the fight game and wanted to become a fighter,” said Sutcliffe. “But my father said, ‘You don’t want to do that, you will get your face beat in.’ ”

Elbert Gary Sutcliffe also was on the board of directors at Centre College in Danville, Ky., from which he once dropped out; a building there is named for him.

His son was a stockbroker, and his grandson George a race-car driver who participated in endurance races at Sebring and Daytona Beach. In fact, he moved from Louisville to Florida to be closer to the racetracks. But he retired from the sport in the early 1990s, when racing sponsorship money was sucked

up by the increasingly popular NASCAR circuit. He is now an antiques dealer in Naples.

Casey Key has 380 residences, including some of the largest homes in Sarasota County. Expansive Gulf-to-bay properties are not unusual, but Heron's Roost is much larger than its rivals. Both Sutcliffe and Guentner said an elevated guest house could be built on the bay side of the property, "but do you due diligence with the county," the Realtor cautioned. A helicopter pad is another possibility, Sutcliffe said.

The ground elevation where the house stands is a relatively high 15 feet, putting it in an "A" flood zone, said Guentner. "It is just back from the state Coastal Construction Control Line and it does sit behind the county's Gulf Beach Setback Line."

Guentner calls the estate a "private beachfront paradise."

"We use it as a vacation home. It is very pastoral and relaxing," said George Sutcliffe.

"It is unique," said Guentner. "The house sits up, and when you get to the lagoon, it is totally private and sheltered. And it is such a wide piece of property, at 400 feet, that you can do almost anything.

"This is irreplaceable. It is one of a kind. Like having your own park. For someone who likes privacy, you could have a wall in the front and an elevated house with the gulf views, and an elevated guest house in the back with bay views. It would be unbelievable."

George Sutcliffe said, "It is a truly private beach, so you don't have tourists. You have this neat sense of having your own beach.

"Sitting in the air-conditioned lanai, which used to be screened, you can look at the Gulf and watch the sunsets. My mother and grandmother would have their cocktails there and watch the sunset."

As for the sellers' motivation, Guentner said, "They just decided that it is time to move forward, and the market has gotten to the point that they think it would be a good time to sell."

Guentner, who has no other listings on the island, called Casey Key a "specialized market."

A buyer for such a unique and pricey estate "really has to be looking for a certain property . . . that someone just has to have."

Casey Key is "very much in demand, but it is a niche market," said Guentner. "The person who buys on Longboat Key is not the same person who is going to buy on Casey because Casey is different. There are no condominiums."

Recent Posts

- [Local company picked as service center](#)
- [MTech Named Exclusive U.S. Mobile Service Center for Sonim](#)
- [Mobile Device Repair Company Inks Deal with California Business](#)
- [iGeeks iPhone Repair Launches Mobile Franchises](#)
- [For Sale: Southern Charm in Palmetto](#)

Designed by [Elegant Themes](#) | Powered by [Wordpress](#)