

Chris Foster

"The Last train to paradise"

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The Last train to Paradise
Words and Music Chris Foster
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What was known as a modern day marvel
A great railroad that crossed over sea
It defied all the whitecaps and the deep coral bed
And linked the whole world to the keys

Who should take on this lofty endeavor?
But a man who they said was obsessed
Who'd made millions of dollars refining crude oil
Now his focus was on reaching Key West

Skeptics and cynics who used pens as their lances
Took cheap shots at him and asked what were the
chances
That the railroad you're building make good on the
quest
Of rolling over the ocean right into Key West?

The Last train to paradise
They'd dubbed Flagler's folly for the use of a knife
Undeterred by their antics Henry went on with life
And drew up the plans for the last train to paradise.

It all started when he first came to Florida
His friends told him that he should retire
You could live off your wealth till the end of your days
But inside Henry still had his fire.

He said this place aint what it could be
With the weather so nice all year round
So I'll buy up the Halifax/ Jacksonville rail
And track it south from town to town.

We'll track over rivers and track over streams
We'll track over farmland and other mans dreams
We'll track it through mangroves and track it through
the fields
And were we can't track we will dredge for the fill

We'll build the last train to paradise
New towns and new hotels where the weather is nice
Right on to Fort Dallas where they suffer no ice
He continued to build the last train to paradise.

When the railroad got as far south as Homestead.
They thought Henry, had then done his best
But in the back of his brain a notion remained
To take the railroad right on to Key West.

Where Deep water awaited the liners
and shipping trades to the canal.
But what stood in his way was the great Biscayne bay
And an inlet that spanned 7 miles.

Faced with the fact that he had to cross ocean
He put all his engineers minds into motion
Devising a plan to extend the great line

By building a sea bridge one arch at a time.

The last train to paradise
Rolled over the ocean against all advice
Almost in defiance he didn't think twice
He had completed the last train to paradise.

Mother nature had dealt him some losses
Hurricanes in 0 6 9 and 10
But his vision stayed strong and he vowed to go on
In the memory of the losses men
After 7 long years to completion
He rolled south in his car 91
He enjoyed every mile with a big eager smile
Because impossible things had been done

And the skeptics and cynics who had used pens as
their lances
Were in awe of the man who had met their advances
Henry answered all questions and passed all the test
When the conductor yelled now arriving key west"

The last train to paradise
Built with muscle and sweat and a vision precise
Unparalleled by what he accomplished in life
A divine inspiration. The Last train to paradise

Artist notes:

This song is meant to showcase the determination of
one man to the fulfillment of his vision to build a
railroad to Key West. Henry Flagler was not only an oil

magnet but a visionary who redefined the face of Florida and made it accessible to all. Very few people are ever taught what an impact he had on Florida's development. Henry's motives to build the railroad began with commerce in mind but one gets the sense while researching the events of the building of the railroad that toward the end of the project it was his personal desire and not a monetary one to see his railroad cross the ocean. One might have the belief he built it as a monument to himself. Others might believe that he had the obsession to prove all of his critics wrong. Either way, it stood as a testament to a man's sheer will and determination to accomplish the impossible. Although the railroad was never a money maker and was destroyed in the labor day hurricane of 1935, it was not the focus of my song. It was not the railroad's peril that was the story, but rather the ingenuity of man and the desire to overcome incredible odds in the face of heavy criticism.

cf@chrisfostermusic.com

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