Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse
A Foothold on the Southeast Florida Frontier

By James D. Snyder

In 1535, when the Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon became the first westerner to sail through Jupiter Inlet, the "restaurant row" on the shore opposite the lighthouse was a line of mounds and middens from Indian villages dating back some 5,000 years before. Although archeologists haven't seriously dug into the lighthouse hill itself, enough artifacts have been accidentally unearthed all around it to make a case that the big dune, with its magnificent view at the confluence of two rivers, was a seasonal trading and religious center for Calusa, Jeaga, Ais and other paleo-Indian tribes.

But by the mid-nineteenth century, the indigenous Indians had long since been wiped out by European-exported diseases or herded onto Spanish ships to work in the sugarcane fields of Cuba. As George Washington began his first term, the first Seminole Indians – a catch-all white man's name for Creeks and escaped slaves – were being pushed into Florida from their native Southern states by European immigrants pressing for more farmland. But by 1845, when Florida became a

When assistant keeper Melville Spencer shot what may be the earliest known photo of Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse (1878?), the waterfront at the foot of the hill had several chickee huts for doing laundry, cleaning fish and accommodating visiting Seminole Indians. Photo courtesy of the Loxahatchee River Historical Society.

state, even the Seminoles had been nearly wiped out or shipped off to western reservations in two expensive wars.

When Florida legislators began carving their new state into counties, the common joke was that there were "more vermin than voters" along the uncharted southeastern coast. So they simply began with Key Biscayne at the southern tip, ran a border line a hundred miles to the north and called it Dade County. Then they let their fingers walk another hundred miles up the map and marked off another county called Brevard. The combined 9,000 square miles made the combined counties as big as Vermont, yet they contained less than 500 souls.

The Jupiter Inlet area contained no one at all because it was part of a 9,077-acre military reservation that housed a Seminole Indian garrison named Fort Jupiter. Civilian settlement was off-limits.

'Wreckers' and builders

So, who would want to build a lighthouse where no one was? Answer: the maritime insurance industry.

Florida had no railroads nor paved roads south of Jacksonville. Virtually all merchant ships – from New Orleans, South America and the Caribbean – sailed around the tip of Florida and drew power from the swift Gulf Stream on their way to ports such as Charleston, New York and Liverpool. It was also the vital supply link between Philadelphia Navy Yard and military bases in Key West that gave young America dominance in the Caribbean.

Sea captains paid special attention to Jupiter because it juts out further into the sea than any place on Florida's east coast. Dangerous reefs abound offshore, which meant that ships sailing south between the Gulf Stream and the shoreline had less room to maneuver. An angry storm or a locked-up propeller could drive a ship helplessly into the jaws of a reef.

And it happened with amazing regularity. On one routine trip to Key West, an inspector with the U. S. Light House Board wrote that at five separate sites south of Jupiter he saw the crews of wrecked ships waiting patiently on shore for rescuers.

Rescuers? There was no Coast Guard. No one lived on the shoreline and the chances of finding fresh water were slim. The survivors' confidence was based on the reasonable expec-

Another early view of the Jupiter Inlet tower taken from the dock. It was probably taken at about the same time as the photo on the previous page. Photo courtesy of the Florida State Archives.

tation that a passing vessel would stop at Key West and alert its busy wrecking fleet.

The term "wrecker" connotes brigands swinging aboard a stricken ship with cutlasses in their teeth. In fact, wreckers were well-financed fishing, sponging and turtling boats that abruptly took on a new identity when someone sounded the "wreck ashore" call. Once the first wrecker reached the distressed ship, protocol called for the captain to take aboard all passengers and make them comfortable. Then he'd invite the rescued captain to his cabin and discuss the intricate rules of wrecking that had already built up under the stern watch of the U. S. District Court for Southern Florida in Key West. Typically, the wrecker would lay claim to 50 percent of the

cargo value, to be determined at auction. Other Key Westers who weren't aboard wreckers got their cuts by way of warehouse fees, a U. S. marshal's cut for guarding the warehouse, the court-appointed attorney, the clerk of the court, and so forth down to the dock hands who hauled cargo from ships to warehouses.

At the tail end of this intricate system were the merchants who bid on the goods that the court sanctioned for public auction. Key West had only a half-dozen merchants and it was uncanny how often only one of them would bid on a given day and how little the merchandise fetched. The result was that a maritime insurance company that had paid out, say $10,000, on a cargo's declared value, and which expected to retrieve perhaps half its

money from auction proceeds, might receive a bank draft for a measly few hundred dollars several weeks later.

After too many such episodes, the insurance lobby got busy in Washington and preached the need for a chain of lighthouses along the Florida coast so that "no captain would ever be without the sight of a light." Congress obliged partly in 1853: it authorized lighthouses at six strategic spots beginning with Egmont Key near Tampa and wrapping around South Florida up to Jupiter Inlet. Congress had just formed the Light House Board in Washington, and the Board now created a new Seventh District to supervise its South Florida lights. In charge was a young lieutenant in the army Bureau of Topographical Engineers.

George Gordon Meade couldn't have been a better choice. Starting with a stint at Fort Brooke in Tampa, this well-connected Philadelphia blueblood had already surveyed much of the Florida coast and had designed lighthouses in the Keys. Meade and his superiors at the Light House Board expected that a brick-laden tender could sail down from Philadelphia, pass through Jupiter Inlet and unload just a few yards from the lighthouse site. With a crew of twenty working around the calendar, they'd have the job done within a year – and for $35,000.

In fact it took almost six years just to get the men and materials in place. President Franklin Pierce had no sooner signed off on the project when the original winding inlet decided to silt up (today's inlet, a man-made straight cut, dates from 1921). For the next several years only the shallowest of sloops could glide over the bar at high tide. For Meade it was back to the drawing board. Because a tender loaded with bricks, iron stairs, cement mixers and the like would draw more than a dozen feet at low tide, it meant anchoring in the much deeper Indian River Inlet 35 miles north. There they'd transfer the materials onto shallow-draft barges and send them "inside" down the wild, mangrove-lined Indian River.
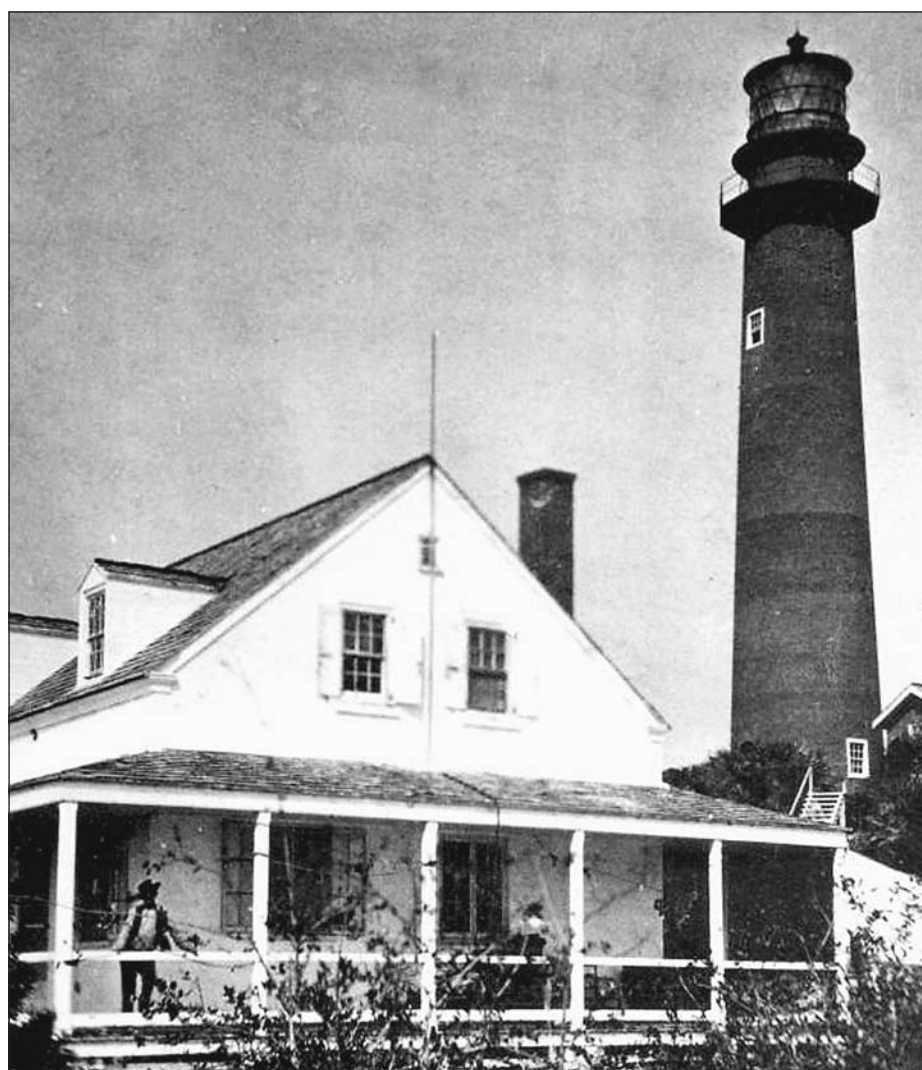
As Meade beseeched the Light House Board for an extra tender, three barges and more money, the bar at Jupiter Inlet was making the Loxahatchee and Indian Rivers stagnant and swollen. The bug population proliferated in gay profusion and army surveyors concluded that any work at Jupiter would have to be in winter. In fact, in the days before people knew that mosquitoes caused malaria, they called it "Jupiter Fever" in South Florida.

In the midst of all this the Seminole Indians rebelled again and what became the Third Seminole War put an embargo on lighthouse construction. In 1836, an earlier generation of Seminoles had burned out the light tower at Key Biscayne and the army knew that unpopulated Jupiter was equally vulnerable.

Another reason for delay was George Meade himself. Having finished most of his other lighthouse work in Florida, Meade was anxious to head north where he might be nearer his family in Philadelphia and rise faster in rank than he could battling mosquitoes among the mangroves. By May of 1856 he was gone – on his way to becoming a major general in just seven years and leading 200,000 men against Robert E. Lee in the Battle of Gettysburg.

In days when mail between Florida and Philadelphia took two weeks to deliver, it could take months for a new project engineer to settle in and learn the ropes. Meade's successor, Lieutenant William Franklin Raynolds, had just begun to regain some momentum on the star-crossed Jupiter lighthouse in 1858 when the project was left in the lurch again. Congress appropriated $40,000 for an expedition to chart the Yellowstone River – one that would rival the work of

Lewis and Clark – and the War Department picked Raynolds to head it. So off he went, and would one day be known as the "father" of Yellowstone National Park.

This time the officer at the helm of the Seventh Lighthouse District in Philadelphia was Major Hartman Bache, George Meade's brother-in-law and a veteran lighthouse builder.

In the winter of 1859 a work crew had actually brought some bricks to Jupiter and put up a low wall, but by that fall the whole project was again in jeopardy. For one thing, the "Jupiter account" had only $14,000 remaining of its original $35,000. It didn't even have that much in actual cash because Seventh District engineers had a habit of "borrowing" from one

George G. Meade, engineer and builder of many lighthouses, including Jupiter Inlet.
At right, Meade's plans for Jupiter Inlet.
Both photos courtesy of the Loxahatchee River Historical Society.
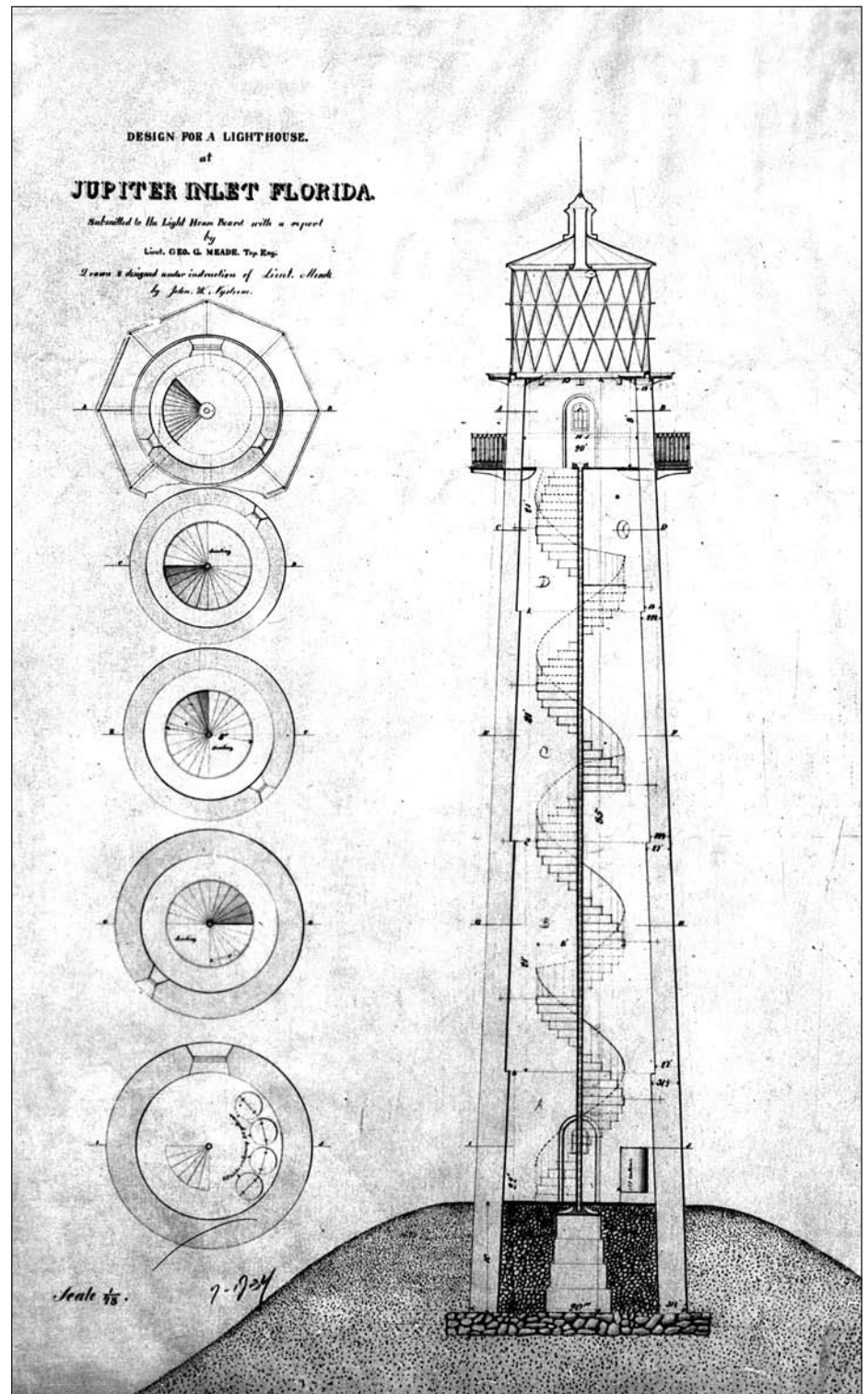
project's coffers to feed another's immediate need – especially when the "temporary" donor was so long delayed.

In November, 1859, Hartman Bache had secured two tenders and was loading them with materials for the winter's trip to Jupiter. Although he'd already told the Board that another $6,000 would be needed to complete the job (total cost would eventually exceed $60,000), he was stunned to get a letter killing the whole thing. The Board said it didn't have enough in its general fund to cover the overrun and wasn't about to ask Congress for a supplemental appropriation.

Bache tried once again: Did the Light House Board realize that the tenders *Delaware* and *Lenox* already had 37,000 bricks aboard and that barrels of beef, flour and other crew provisions were being loaded as he wrote? Did the Board know the bricks would fetch only $2 a hundredweight – if the manufacturer could be persuaded to take them back?

A telegram from Washington the next day reconfirmed the decision. Dutifully and ruefully, Bache followed orders. He sold everything aboard the ships for a measly $600.

Ice breaking and roller coasting

It's now early December. Temperatures in Philadelphia are sinking fast into the teens. Ship planks and canvas are covered with frost at the wharfs. Already the Delaware River shoreline is thick with ice and the channel will soon close. Suddenly Hartman Bache gets another letter from Washington. Special funds have been found for Jupiter, it declares. Can he re-supply the tenders and flee Philadelphia before the ice closes the Delaware River?

Bache, the chagrined but obedient servant, is soon supervising a blur of busy men whose breath turns the air steamy as they haul bricks, wheelbarrows, granite stanchions, iron railings, and the delicate Fresnel lens (a 39-case do-it-yourself assembly kit) aboard the two tenders. Christmas comes and goes. At last on the morning of December 28, the two supply ships hire tugs to tow them into the Delaware on their way to sea.

It's 13 degrees above zero. Edward A. Yorke, in charge of both the *Delaware* and the work party, quickly notes that the ice has nearly joined from both sides of the river. He passes a ship heading for Philadelphia and is told there are already crews of two ice-damaged ships down-

In 1889 the Indian River Steamboat Company built a seven-mile, narrow gauge railroad from Jupiter to Lake Worth. Nicknamed the "Celestial Railroad," it was the last link in a rail and steamboat chain that allowed travel from northern seaboard cities all the way to Palm Beach. Here, when the train backed up to receive people and goods at the steamboat wharf, they had the scenic lighthouse as a backdrop. Photo courtesy of the Loxahatchee River Historical Society.

stream awaiting rescue. No other vessels are sighted going south.

Thud. Thud. Thud. Each bump and scrape means his ships' bows are being hit and slashed by ice. Strips of copper sheathing are already twisted and curled. A major leak could sink the Jupiter project for good. Yorke fixes upon a big bundle of frost-covered white pine on deck. It's intended for the lighthouse keeper's house, but Yorke has a more urgent need. He orders his carpenters to nail some of the white pine boards into a scaffold. The other boards he has cut into two-foot lengths. Then he lowers the scaffold over the bow and puts two men to work hammering the wooden planks into the bow as they sway just over the 40-degree water.

The lighthouse keeper will have to do without his house for the time being, but the Delaware now has a wooden protective shield that lets it plough through the ice. Soon the ships are passing Cape May, New Jersey and the Brandywine Shoal Lighthouse that Hartman Bache himself built a decade before.

Soon the captains will think no more of ice. They're in the open sea and into the teeth of something equally dangerous – a howling northeaster that threatens to burst the straps holding stacks of bricks together and launch 37,000 missiles at the deck cabins. The roller coaster ride flings the ships down to Jupiter Inlet in just five days,

For many years after its construction, the Jupiter Inlet Light Station remained one of the most difficult to provision in the eastern United States. Often, passing tenders would send out cutters with crates of supplies, leaving them on the high-tide mark for the keepers to pick up – a risky business. Photo courtesy of the Loxahatchee River Historical Society.

but the waves are still so large that they can land neither men nor materials on the beach. Instead, they tack across to the Bahamas and wait it out near the lea shore.

A light in the wilderness

After some six years of delay – silt, bugs, bureaucracy, Indians, ice and stormy seas – the first building in today's Palm Beach County went up almost without a hitch. Edward Yorke's first step was to unpack the 39 crates from L. Sautter & Company of Paris and assemble the

lantern on the ground. The reason: he didn't know precisely what diameter to build the double-walled tower until he knew the exact size of the lantern that would perch on top of it. It's well that he did: the salty Atlantic had corroded most of the bolts and they needed either cleaning or replacement.

From there on Yorke showed the same resourcefulness he had at sea. Fifty loads of materials were brought down the Indian River on barges without a man hurt or a brick lost. Progress reports sent to Washington twice a month via passing steamers showed Yorke supervising masons, blacksmiths and carpenters as the tower rose to its 108 feet by mid-May. Yorke would go up into the watchroom and personally calibrate the Fresnel lens.

The district inspector officially lit Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse on July 10, 1860. By that time the *Lenox* had long since returned to Philadelphia with half the work crew. As for Yorke, a letter from an assistant engineer of the Seventh District to the Light House Board reported the arrival of the *Delaware* and remaining crew at Philadelphia on May 22. He discharged the twenty-man crew the next day after they'd stored the work tools at the Scrimshaw & Sons warehouse by the Navy Yard.

And with that, Edward A. Yorke walked off into obscurity. It's maddening that so far, the man who did everything but lay each brick on an amazingly durable building – and all in less than five months – left not one other trace of himself anywhere, including the National Archives in Washington DC.

Playing tag in the dark

Newspaper stories that appear on the lighthouse during this or that anniversary invariably report that the old beacon, as if Jupiter had its own Eternal Flame, has beamed nightly without fail since its inception. The fact is that the light was out often in the early years simply

Another early view of the Jupiter Inlet tower. Note the radio tower to the right. Undated photo courtesy ofLoxahatchee River Historical Society.

Helping to offset their scanty, sporadic supplies, keepers at Jupiter Inlet enjoyed world-class fishing and hunting. By the late 1870s parties like these shark hunters would regularly camp on the lighthouse beach and lay out their day's bounty. The visits became so regular that keeper James Armour and assistant Melville Spencer became partners in selling adventurers souvenir photos of their exploits. Photo courtesy of the Loxahatchee River Historical Society.
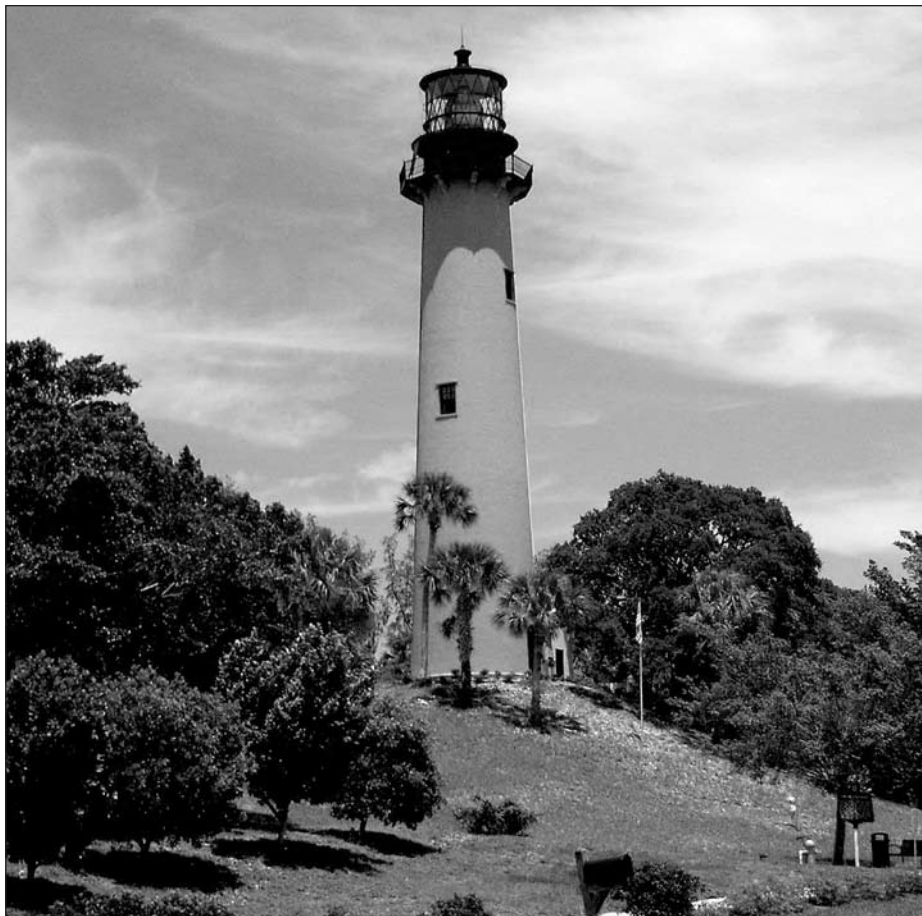
because Jupiter was so difficult to supply with oil. With sand still heaped across the inlet, supply ships had to do the same as Yorke & Co. – anchor 35 miles north, off Indian River Inlet, and bob at sea for about ten days while one of the leftover barges brought six months' worth of oil and other staples down the untamed Indian River. If they could get away with it, tenders just dropped crates at the high tide mark on Jupiter Beach and signaled the three lighthouse keepers to hustle out there before they washed away.

In August 1861 the light went out for five years – and not for lack of oil. Civil War had erupted and part of Abraham Lincoln's "Anaconda Plan" (a three-way squeeze on the Confederate states) was to block major ports with gunboats so that rebel sloops full of cotton and turpentine couldn't dart out of major inlets like Charleston and Wilmington and trade in the Bahamas for guns and uniforms. The more successful the gunboats became in stopping them, the further the rebel sloops traveled down Intracoastal waters in search

Two views of present-day Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse. In recent years, the tower has been painted a brick red, replacing the previous bright red. Both photos courtesy of the Shanklins.

of unguarded inlets. It was the Confederate Navy's pet peeve that lighthouses, supposedly doing their mission to keep the seas safe for all vessels, often shined their beams on escaping rebel ships, lighting up targets for grateful gunboats. And so, a number of ad hoc patriots in rebel states took it upon themselves to ambush lighthouse keepers and either shoot out the lights or kidnap enough parts to render them useless.

In the afternoon of August 11, 1861, keeper Joseph Papy was tending his garden behind the Jupiter Lighthouse when he saw a sloop with four men round the bend in the Indian River and glide toward his dock. Papy was immediately apprehensive because one of the men was Augustus Lang, his assistant keeper until a few days ago when he walked off the job in a huff. Like everyone else in Florida, Lang was an ardent secessionist, who had insisted that it was Papy's patriotic duty to douse the light – or

else! Truth be known, Papy himself was a Confederate at heart, but his paycheck came from the Union navy base in Key West. Besides, he'd received no orders to darken the light.

"Or else!" came in the form of three other rebel zealots that Lang had recruited up the Indian River. With pistols stuck in their breeches and gun belts slung over their shoulders, they looked like Mexican banditos, and Papy readily accepted their invitation to climb aboard his little sloop and head for Key West as fast as he could. As soon as Papy's boat crossed the bar at Jupiter Inlet, the men scampered up the tower and made off with enough wicks and clockwork to extinguish Jupiter Light for five years.

All it did was accentuate the activity that now swirled around the darkened tower. When the gunboat – usually the 600-ton *Sagamore* – was patrolling outside the inlet, it would send a ten-man cutter rowing inside to see what cotton-laden rebel sloops might be lurking in the Indian River. But men tire and provisions expire, all of which would send the 200-foot *Sagamore* back to Key West periodically. And as soon as the cat was out of sight, the mice would play. A parade of rebel sloops would establish a temporary depot of cotton bales at the tower base and weary sailors would bunk in the abandoned keeper's house and drink whiskey on the front porch, all while a guard atop the tower scanned the horizon for a sign of the gunboat's return.

During 1861-1865, Union gunboats captured no less than 58 Confederate ships between Jupiter and Indian River Inlets, many of them inside what is now the Indian River segment of the Intracoastal Waterway. Interestingly enough, hardly any ever sank, which is a clue to how the cat and mouse game was played. Yes, the Southerners had every reason to stay afloat because their cargo was worthless if it didn't reach Nassau. But the Yankees had an equal incentive to capture ships intact. When a U. S. Navy crew took a rebel craft, it was towed to Key West and auctioned off pretty much according to the same rules that governed the wrecking business. Navy crews shared in the auction proceeds, and a sunken cargo benefited only Davy Jones. Just as English navy captains took leaves of absence so they could run the blockade to Nassau and reap huge profits, Union Navy captains could double and triple their military pay if they were lucky enough to skipper a gunboat at one of the busy inlets.

Florida itself had been under-armed and impoverished almost from the day the war began in 1861, and by 1864 the Jupiter-Nassau run had been reduced to a few tattered tubs trying to limp two or three bales across to a town that already knew the game was up. One of the gunboat cutters had found the Jupiter Lighthouse "apparatus" buried in one of the kidnapper's backyard up the Indian River, and by 1866 the light was shining again.

Jupiter discovered

But even after the war, Jupiter remained a wilderness. Lake Worth, for example, the 22-mile long inland waterway that is now cheek to jowl with condominiums and country clubs, was totally uninhabited. Absolutely no one except for intrepid explorers, hunters, and teams collecting exotic specimens for universities dared venture into the Indian River watershed that began in central Florida. When hunters published articles in adventure magazines, their stories read like expeditions to darkest Africa as they described sailing down the river with guns blazing at alligators, dolphins, egrets, manatees and anything else that raised its head above the waterline.

Amidst all this lived just three Jupiter Lighthouse keeper families sharing a square Victorian home really built for just two. Their logs and letters indicate they had the best hunting and fishing on earth – 300 lb. groupers, panthers and bears shot from atop the tower, eggs from giant loggerhead turtles – but these were just recompense for the scanty supplies dropped on the beach by Lighthouse Service tenders twice a year.

In fact, there probably was a tacit understanding among Seventh Lighthouse District supervisors that the keepers at Jupiter Inlet were more or less entitled to whatever they could scavenge from the sea. After all, lighthouse keepers were federal employees and were expected to act as de facto agents of shippers and insurance companies in preserving any cargo that washed up from stricken ships until the proper authorities could retrieve it. But at Jupiter Inlet a keeper could argue that perishables would rot and staples succumb to mildew and mold in short order. So why not let three needy families put it to good use? Thus, a keeper's life was constantly enlivened by serendipitous discoveries on the beach: ten barrels of butter (they were buried under a shady tree), a 50-gallon cask of exquisite French cognac, a crate containing fifty finely-tailored men's suits, and so on.
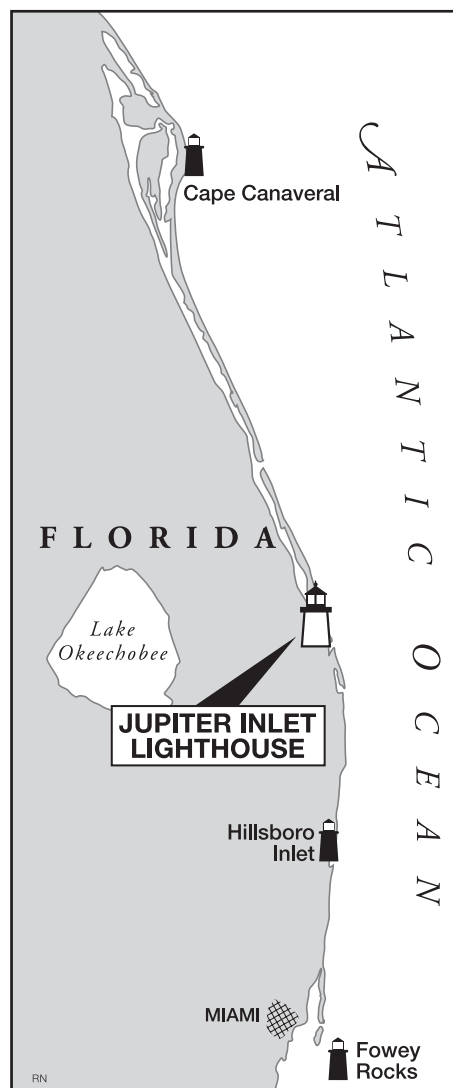
Only when things went too far was the tacit agreement put to a test. In 1872, James Armour was well into his 42-year tenure as Jupiter's premiere lighthouse keeper when the merchant ship *Victor*, bound from New York to Trinidad with some $200,000 worth of consumer goods (more like $10 million today) smacked into the reefs just off Jupiter Beach. A few months later the Light House Board in Washington had a letter from a local maritime insurance agent accusing Armour of "plundering" the *Victor* and selling the cargo up the Indian River in Titusville. A thousand miles away in Washington, the Board could only shrug its shoulders and rule that the circumstances were simply too fuzzy to deprive Armour of his position. After all, who else could they get to serve in the most forlorn post on the entire east coast?

In the years that followed, James Armour, salaried at $850 a year, always seemed to have enough cash to buy forty-plus acres at a time and build houses from the Indian River to Lake Worth. But he also became known as the "go-to" man for any explorer who needed a keel repaired or the pioneer farmer who needed to borrow a plough. And under this man, who probably deserves to be called the "father of Jupiter" more than anyone, the lighthouse soon became a magnet for settlement and commerce.

Harper's Weekly, The New Century and other trendy magazines enticed northerners with stories about the "Garden of Eden" that could melt their winter blahs and as yachts wended their way down the Indian River, they stopped at the lighthouse. Soon a U. S. Life Saving Station would be built not far from the lighthouse, then a Western Union outpost and a U. S. Weather Bureau station right on its grounds.

By the late 1880s paddlewheel steamers from no less than 25 steamboat companies were plying the 140-mile Indian River trip between Titusville and Jupiter. In 1890 the Indian River Steamboat Company built a short-line railroad linking the St. Johns River with Titusville and another one at the southern steamboat terminus that connected Jupiter with Lake Worth and the emerging winter spa that would soon be named Palm Beach. At last, affluent Bostonians and New Yorkers could ride a combination of rail cars and riverboats all the way to Palm Beach and expect white glove service in the bargain. And by 1895 those who wanted today's equivalent of jet service could hurtle themselves all the way down to Miami on Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway in just three days.

At war again

In 1939 the lighthouse, like all others, became part of the U. S. Coast Guard, but it would also play a dramatic role in World War II. Reason: in the late 1930s a secret navy radio installation sprouted on the hundred-acre lighthouse campus. It was immediately sealed off from the

Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse as it is today. Photo courtesy of the Florida State Archives.

Close view of the Jupiter Inlet lantern. Photo courtesy of Bobbie Ranney.

Coast Guard base by a high fence and guarded heavily. All locals knew was that the outpost was called Station J.

Inside the fenced enclosure a hundred or so skilled radio operators and code breakers were using sophisticated listening equipment on German U-Boats plying the Atlantic Ocean. If only they could have done something to save shipping off the Florida coast. Even before war was officially declared, a steady parade of oil tankers and Merchant Marine ships were making their way from New Orleans and around the tip of Florida on a mission to supply what remained of unconquered Northern Europe. A radio operator in Jupiter could pinpoint a submarine's location and alert a tanker captain that he was probably about to be torpedoed, but it did little good because the U.S. military had no destroyers or dive bombers in the whole area.

In the first five months of 1942 U-Boats sank 111 Allied ships off the coast of Florida, with a death toll of 889 crew and passengers. The lighthouse operated with a lone 60-watt bulb and cars rode with shades on their front lights for fear of illuminating coastal targets. Jupiter Inlet was deliberately allowed to silt up, and Marines on horseback patrolled the beach in search of subs and saboteurs. Jupiter at the time was a town of barely 400 souls and most of the able-bodied men were off to war. So when people heard the unmistakable Burp! of a torpedo slamming into a ship's hull and saw the usual burst of flame that followed, women and children were soon shoving off the beach in motorboats into oily, flaming waters to search for survivors.

Naturally, the lighthouse served more as a submarine lookout tower than navigational aid. Judy Wehage remembers well. Her grandfather, Charles Seabrook, was commander of the Coast Guard base, and one of her special treats on muggy summer nights was to climb up the 105-steps to the gallery with her sleeping bag and spend the night on the floor, bathed in ocean breezes, as her grandfather tended his watch. But in May of 1943 no less than seven Allied ships were hit just off Jupiter. Wehage still vividly recalls hearing the torpedoes hit, the telephone ringing, and her grandfather scrambling down the tower to form a rescue crew.

By early 1943 Civil Air Patrol planes would fly just above the beach to spot U-Boats and alert a squadron of dive bombers based at today's Palm Beach International Airport. The "War of the South Atlantic" soon subsided, but Jupiter natives who date back to the war years are full of stories of personal crisis and heroism.
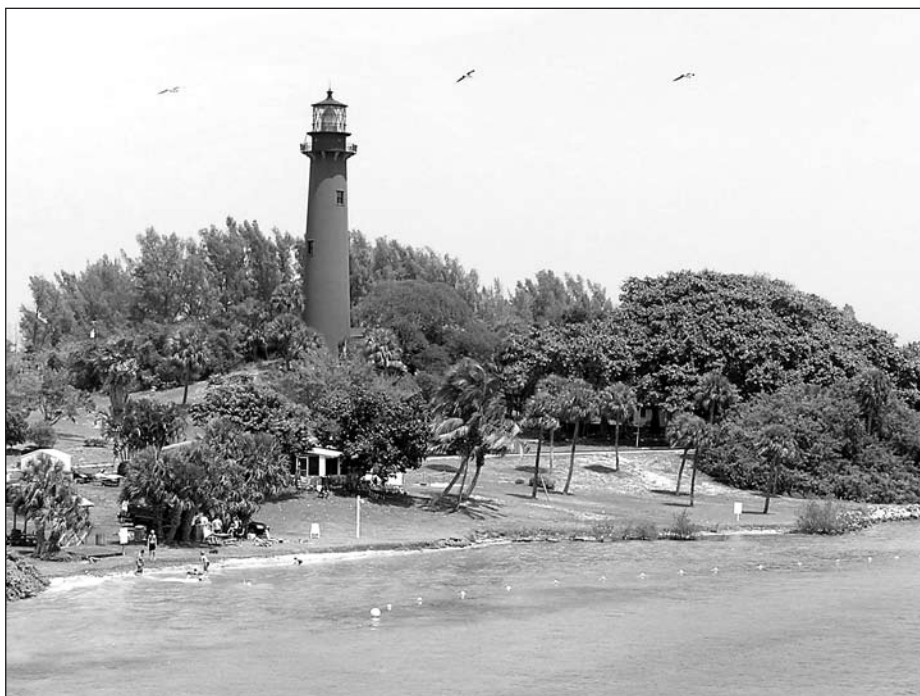
Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse as seen from across the inlet. Photo courtesy of the Loxahatchee River Historical Society.

The lighthouse today

Today the one-time Coast Guard station is inactive, but still used for married personnel who work at other bases in south Florida. The lighthouse, however, is still an active aid to navigation. The 1,000-watt lamp is triggered by a photocell each evening and the lens still rotates with the help of a half-horsepower motor.

Palm Beach county's oldest landmark remains the center of historical interest. For the past twelve years the Loxahatchee River Historical Society has been the light's busy operations manager, sponsoring its full restoration in 2000 and now hosting some 35,000 visitors a year from all over the world. That number is expected to rise sharply when the Town of Jupiter finishes its $1.2 million restoration of the last remaining Station J building on the grounds. What was once a large barracks building for married navy radio personnel will serve as the Historical Society's consolidated headquarters, museum and visitor center. It should be ready for visitors late this year.

Meanwhile, research goes on to learn more about the people who built the lighthouse and served as its first keepers. For example, Edward A. Yorke, the man who brought the materials from Philadelphia and supervised the construction, remains a mystery man except for the well-organized, articulate status reports he sent during the construction period. Given the efficient job he did and its durability, one can only assume he had considerable experience on prior lighthouse projects – most likely in the Seventh District in Florida or the Fourth (Chesapeake Bay) and the Fifth (New Jersey). If anyone reading this has a clue, please contact the author. We'd like to give Edward Yorke the credit he deserves!