

The Incoming Tide

Dedicated to collecting, recording, and preserving the history of Jupiter Island.

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

This is the last newsletter for the 2017/18 season. In this issue we have chosen to highlight the iconic Jupiter Lighthouse. This article was written by Josh Liller the Historian for the Loxahatchee River Historical Society. Josh and Jaime Stuve, the managers of the Lighthouse encourage JIHS members to visit the museum for its annual spring meeting and tour. It's a remarkably beautiful setting under the trees overlooking the Jupiter Inlet and its aqua waters.

As an aside, consider what JI would look like if the Lighthouse was located where the government originally wanted it built (on Ted Hamm's property).

The Island lost a great friend and benefactor with the death of Joanie Madeira. My family and I had known Joanie for the past 70 years, both here and in Long Island. Her philanthropy and friendships were spread far and wide. Bonnie and I sat right behind Joanie in church each Sunday. At these services she referred to me as "Sweet Pea", a peculiar term of endearment given my personality, but then again one's perception is all in the eye of the beholder. God bless you Joanie, may you rest in peace.

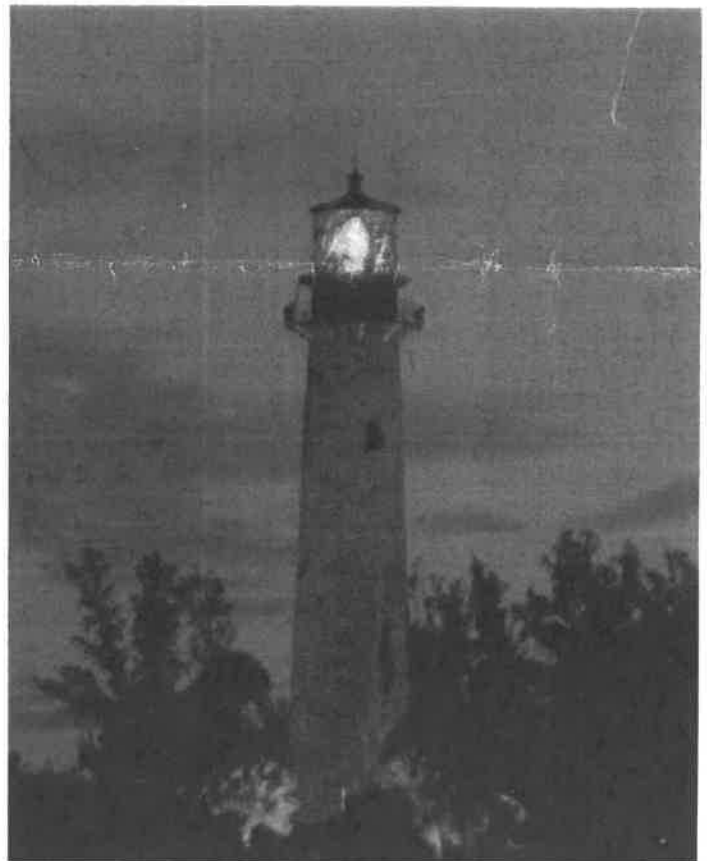
Finally, we thank Philip Ottley for his fine and humorous recollections of the BRIG. Should any of you have stayed there in your youth please submit a vignette which can be included in future issues of the Incoming Tide.

Ogden White, Jr.

JUPITER INLET LIGHTHOUSE:

The Florida Straits have been a vital shipping lane since Europeans arrived in the Americas and it remains so today. The straits are relatively narrow, with less than 100 miles separating the Florida peninsula and Florida Keys on one side and the Bahamas and Cuba on the other. The Gulf Stream flows through the Florida Straits and provides a boost for northbound ships, but southbound vessels tend to stay close to the coast to avoid fighting the current. While doing so they must avoid all the maritime hazards such as reefs, shoals, and storms but must also be alert for the way the Florida coast bends eastward. Jupiter Island is slightly east of Miami and well east of Cape Canaveral.

The 1852 Report of the Light House Board made it clear that the Jupiter area had the greatest need for a lighthouse of any location on the Atlantic or Gulf Coasts. Marine insurance companies were lobbying for a lighthouse and a petition had been unsuccessfully put before Congress. Several Navy officers added their endorsement of a lighthouse here. Lt. David Dixon Porter stated "there is an absolute necessity for a lighthouse at Point Jupiter." Porter



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was a career Navy officer, son of Capt. David Porter (of War of 1812 fame) and a future Civil War admiral. It is unclear exactly what Porter and other officers meant when they referred to "Point Jupiter." The most likely explanation is the southern end of Jupiter Island, but it could also refer to a point near the north end of Jupiter Island that has since been lost to erosion.

Congress authorized a lighthouse for Jupiter in 1853 and the project was assigned to Lt. George G. Meade. At the time Meade was a member of the Army Topographic Engineers assigned to the 4th and 7th Lighthouse Districts. His other projects included the brick giants at Absecon, Barnegat, and Cape May in New Jersey and several iron lighthouses on the Florida Reef. Known in the 1850s for his engineering talents, Meade would rise to fame in the Civil War as the Union general who defeated Robert E. Lee at Gettysburg. In 1854, Meade was ordered to select a site for a lighthouse between Jupiter Inlet and Gilbert's Bar. There is some uncertainty about the exact location of the latter inlet, but most likely this was in the North Jupiter Narrows above Pecks Lake. Placing a lighthouse on Jupiter Island had two main challenges. First, Meade's instructions specified the site for the lighthouse must include at least 40 acres of contiguous dry land. Second, the island was not owned by the federal government, but by heirs of the Gomez Grant.

Meade chose to locate the lighthouse not on Jupiter Island but instead on a parabolic sand dune, then called Jones Hill, on the mainland inside Jupiter Inlet. Meade's report on why he placed the lighthouse there has yet to be found so his reasoning for the location remains speculation. (Future research will attempt to locate a copy in the National Archives or Meade's personal papers.) Jones Hill offers several straightforward advantages in terms of elevation and protection from erosion and storm surges, but he may have simply been unable to find a suitable lot on Jupiter Island that fit his instructions.

Construction of Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse suffered numerous delays. The Third Seminole War broke out when construction was about to commence, postponing the project several years. The Fresnel lens had to be ordered and shipped from France, then it and all other construction supplies had to be shipped from Philadelphia to Florida. With Gilbert's Bar closed and Jupiter Inlet too shallow or closed outright, supplies had to be offloaded near Fort Pierce and barged down the Indian River.

With the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse finally nearing completion in the spring of 1860, the question remained of who its first lighthouse keeper would be. At the time, the Collector of Customs was responsible for appointing lighthouse keepers, but the nearest Collector to Jupiter was located in St. Augustine. The Collector was very slow to make the appointments, probably because he had trouble finding anyone willing to take the job in such a remote location. On June 11, 1860, the frustrated Lighthouse District Inspector in Key West offered his own recommendation: Emanuel Gomez. The Inspector noted that Gomez would be a good choice since he owned property in the area. Emanuel Gomez was none other than the son of Esubio Gomez and thus heir to the Gomez Grant. Emanuel had certainly not forgotten about his Jupiter Island property. In the 1850s, he ran ads in a New Orleans newspaper warning bird guano collectors not to trespass on Jupiter Island. Perhaps the history of Jupiter Island might have turned out differently if Emanuel had been placed in charge of a lighthouse close to his property, but it was not to be. The Collector's belated appointment letter reached the Lighthouse Board only a few days ahead of Gomez's nomination and took precedence. No member of the Gomez family ever served at Jupiter Lighthouse.

In the 1880s, James Armour, head keeper of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse, took up farming on a portion of the south end of Jupiter Island. The Florida Star newspaper reported in 1884 that "in the rich hammock about 4 miles from the lighthouse, Mr. Armour is starting a cocoanut and banana grove." No evidence has been found to indicate Armour actually owned the land there. He may have been cultivating some of the fruit trees left behind by earlier residents (the mysterious Padre Torrey and/or the Grenville Plantation). Armour had come to the Indian River in the 1850s. He was caught up in the Civil War, being conscripted into the Confederate Army, but deserted to be a boat pilot for the Union Navy. He recovered the lamps, oil, and supplies from the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse that had been hidden away along the Indian River by Confederate sympathizers. Armour became an assistant lighthouse keeper in 1866 then head keeper in 1869. He served a remarkable 40 years as keeper, retiring in 1906.

Armour did get clear ownership in 1886 to an area on Jupiter Island near where the Jupiter Island Club is today. There he built a four-bedroom house dubbed Poinciana. Armour and his family lived primarily in a government-built keepers' house at the light station,

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but would use his Jupiter Island home for short vacations, parties, and as a guest home. The house was also the location of the first Hobe Sound post office, established in 1891 with Almeda Armour (James' wife) as postmaster. In May 1891, Armour hosted a grand party in honor of the Jupiter Life Saving Station's surfmen. The Life Saving Station, located where Carlin Park is today, had a crew to assist vessels in distress but only for 9 months of the year. The Tropical Sun newspaper reported the party lasted all night.

In April 1892, Capt. T. B. Allen was staying in Armour's home when he accidentally burned it down. T. B. Allen is a mysterious character and probably did not live in the area very long. He is sometimes confused with Dwight A. Allen, an assistant keeper at the

lighthouse. Dwight Allen was a colorful character who was known to perform acrobatic stunts on the lighthouse roof, but was dismissed in 1890 due to charges brought against him by the observer at the Jupiter Weather Bureau, which was operated by the Army Signal Corps. The burned house was rebuilt and later mortgaged by Capt. Armour around 1903 to help fund a business venture by his son-in-law, Eugene Theodore "Cap" Knight. Cap Knight squandered the money and Armour lost the house when he was unable to make the required payments. Edwin Bellows bought the home, selling it to B. G. Dawes in 1928. It became known as the Dawes House and was sold to Capt. and Mrs. Leonard Kirby after Mr. and Mrs. Dawes passed away in the 1950s.

*by Josh Liller, Historian & Collections Manager,
Loxahatchee River Historical Society*

THE BRIG, *continued*

elderly member, running endless clothing parts up the Tangerine flag pole, switching golf course green flags, liquid soap in the golf course ball washers, and so on.

Sometimes we pushed Mrs. Reed, the headmistress, too far. The writer was awoken by the Club Manager at 6.30 am for having an unpaid guest in my room for the second night in a row and informed us to appear that morning at 9:00 am, harp, coat and tie, at Mrs. Reed's office for disciplinary action. The fear of the impending "office hours" far exceeded any possible reprimand. The visit was like a boarding school discipline from a school master. I had violated Mrs. Reed's trust and that was unacceptable, so my friend and I had to write letters of apology. No dandelions pulling for me, but I was on a serious short leash that year.

I visited "The Brig" for four seasons and then my mother wised up and rented one of the Bassett Houses with another mother and only one child to better monitor my going-ons.

Still, I ran out of gas on US1 at 4:00 am with a girl that evening and hitchhiked back to Bridge on an orange fruit delivery truck and walked onto Jupiter Island at 6:00 am. That year, I passed my mother three times in the morning, she was coming down the stairs for breakfast and I was going up the stairs for bed!

"The Brig" passed on in memories, and while the structure remains intact today, the graduates of "The Brig" retain our unique memories of those days, freelancing all day, riding bikes, tennis clinics, golf lessons, beaching, swimming out to the outer sand bar, dances, bingo, nightly first run movies, sitting with that special girl for the night, three huge endless meals a day, all you can eat on the plan (at fourteen years old, good luck, my mother used to say that I had eaten my daily food ration by breakfast, so the other two meals were on the Reed's.)

These were special, glorious visits to Jupiter Island by overnight train from NYC. Incredible memories. The good old days. "The Brig".

Philip G. Ottley, Graduate

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