



World War II Era “Barracks” Building

The Historic Structure Report submitted by Bender & Associates PA in April 2003 states: “The World War II Barracks building is a significant example of military vernacular architecture, and serves as a lasting legacy to a very important era in Florida’s history. Many thousands of soldiers and airmen were trained and stationed in Florida, and the Naval Reservation on which the Barracks were built played an important part in the war effort.”

The restored “Barracks” building is best known today for being the home of the Loxahatchee River Historical Society’s wonderful waterfront museum. They have done a wonderful job documenting how this building was used during the World War II era and beyond. The Barracks Building was never actually a barracks! It was constructed as quarters for married personnel and their families. But since it is commonly known as the “Barracks Building,” that is what it will be referred to in this article.

The history and significance of the World War II Barracks Building is interwoven with the history of the Jupiter Lighthouse. The property where the “Barracks Building” was constructed has been used by the US government since 1854 when land was reserved for the Jupiter Inlet Light Station. A telegraph station was

erected on the Lighthouse Reservation in 1888, and in 1905 a Naval Wireless Station was established. In 1913, a US Department of Commerce Publication lists the Jupiter Station with a Call sign of NAQ, operated by the U.S. Navy.

In 1929 the Navy took jurisdiction of 8.37 acres including the land where the Barracks Building would be built. Although the Lighthouse was transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard in 1939, the Naval Reservation area where the Barracks Building stands today remained under U.S. Navy jurisdiction.

The Navy’s primary interest in their Jupiter Inlet Reservation was wireless telegraphy, which evolved into radio. As World War II loomed, activity stepped up at the Naval Reservation, and the reservation’s navigation beacons became even more important when war broke out. The Jupiter Radio Direction Finding Station on the Naval Reservation served as one of the many navigation beacons for ships and aircraft. There were many military airfields in Florida due to the ideal weather. The Jupiter area was actually a combat zone with German submarines in the area trying to torpedo ships along the Florida Coast.

Increased personnel on the Reservation necessitated the construction of the Married Personnel Quarters around 1942. The building had six two-bedroom apartments, with brick fireplaces with brick hearths in each unit, and a continuous screen porch along the Loxahatchee River. There were plaster walls and ceilings and wood floors.

After the War, activity subsided and in the mid 1960's the Barracks Building came under Coast Guard control. In 1961 the Coast Guard recommended demolition for planned new Coast Guard housing for a proposed Loran station. Six wood buildings and a bridge-tender's house were demolished, but the Barracks Building remained.

(Information on the history of the building was taken from The Historic Structure Report submitted by & Associates PA to the Town in April 2003.)

In 1968, the Town of Jupiter started negotiations with the Coast Guard to use 22.2 acres, including the Barracks Building, for recreational purposes. This was accomplished by a license agreement from the Coast Guard to the Town in April of 1969. The license was renewed every five years. All during the terms of the consecutive lease agreements by the Town for the Lighthouse Park area and the Barracks Building, the Town made repeated efforts to acquire the property for continued use as a park and community building.

What can the Barracks Building tell us about life in Jupiter in the 1960's and 1970's? It was a much smaller community then. But a list of all Civic Clubs and Organizations in the Jupiter area dated March 23, 1967 shows service organizations that we are all familiar with today.

In May of 1970 tenants of the "Lighthouse Park Building" were:

- the Jupiter Tequesta Jaycees
- the Jupiter Aquatic Institute (Created by Mr. John C. Beakeley the Resource Teacher of Marine Sciences for the Palm Beach County School Board. Later called the Jupiter Marine Science Center.)
- the Pacers senior group
- the Coast Guard Auxiliary

- the Izaak Walton League
- the Jupiter Athletic Association
- the North County Ambulance Squad

Material from The Pacers, Inc. indicated they were a non-profit senior citizens group dedicated to a program for adult community enrichment. In 1974 they said



they had 400 members. They offered to allow their space to be used for other group meetings, and outlined their programs as: bowling, dinner parties, dances, bus trips, cruises, bridge, art classes, etc.

In April of 1971 the Coast Guard Auxiliary became concerned about rubbish and trash around the building as a fire hazard, and did an all day clean-up to improve the property. The Coast Guard officer at Peanut Island installed the organization's officers in December of 1971. The Coast Guard Auxiliary continues today to promote safe boating and assist the Coast Guard.

In 1972 Palm Beach County students requested that the marine environmental science program be changed to the "John Beakley Marine Science Center" after the late Mr. Beakley.

In 1975 the Jupiter-Tequesta Jaycees signed an agreement with the Town to build a bike track, concession stand, and fence in Lighthouse Park.

Correspondence shows that organizations remodeled spaces to their own liking, adding air conditioning units, new floors, paneling, and lights. As they remodeled, they devised their own uses, some of which were not approved by the Town, and sometimes they let other organizations use their space. However, enough of the original finishes remained to determine how each residential apartment was configured in 1942.

Other organizations who asked to use the building over the years were the American Red Cross, Jupiter Gangai-Noon School of Karate, Jupiter-Tequesta Dog Club, and Treasure Coast Divers Club.

The Barracks Building needed repair over the years. The roof was rotting and needed repair at the end of 1970. In March of 1971, the Coast Guard was considering revoking the license for the property. But they changed their mind when a water meter was installed, saying the building could be used for civic organizations again. By the end of the 1970's electrical work was needed. In 1979 Code violations were looked at, and the Town's insurance agent did not feel the building could be brought up to code. It was built for residential apartments, and the wiring, plumbing, and fire exits were not adequate for a public building. As it stood, the insurance agency could not insure the building unless it was a residential building. The Town Attorney also said the building had to be repaired. He suggested eliminating use of the second floor to save on construction costs. The Coast Guard gave permission to repair and renovate for the electrical, fire protection, handicap and safety items needed to bring the building up to local Codes and this was done. The building also needed to be tented for termites! In 1988, the building was damaged by arson, and the repairs totaled around \$25,000 according to a **newspaper article**.



The Barracks Building was finally restored befitting its status as a historic building in Jupiter in 2006.