



By Jupiter History Committee

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Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse

Oldest Structure in the County: Conceived in 1851, the Jupiter Lighthouse was constructed in stages over the next eight years. The tower is constructed of brick. As the 107 year-old picture at left shows, the natural brick color created a banding effect that showed the stages of construction as the work started and stopped due to delivery problems and the Third Seminole War (1856-58).



The Jupiter Inlet, formed at the point where the Loxahatchee River flows into the Atlantic Ocean, is the only natural inlet on the East Coast of Florida is formed. In 1852 the Florida Lighthouse Board recommended that a lighthouse be built near Jupiter Inlet due to the dangerous offshore shoal that claimed many shipwrecks over the years.

The chosen site was part of the Fort Jupiter reservation that was established during the First Seminole War in 1836. Major George G. Meade, later to become the Union General who defeated General Robert E. Lee at the Battle of Gettysburg, designed the tower.

The Early Years

The lighthouse at Jupiter was first illuminated on July 10, 1860. The light, a fixed white light varied by a brighter white flash every 90 seconds, was a product of the state-of-the-art first order Fresnel lens made by the Henry Lepante Company of Paris.

The final cost was \$60,859.98, a substantial amount over the original \$35,000 budget approved by Congress in 1853. An Early Casualty of War The light was soon to become an early casualty of the Civil War. It is rumored that the assistant lighthouse keeper participated in a plot to remove and hide key components of the lens for the duration of the War at War's end, the parts were returned and the Light returned to service on June 28, 1866.



Paint it Red

Over the years the humidity and sea air discolored the brick and it was painted red around 1910. The Light was converted to electricity in 1928. Local lore says that the electricity failed during the massive 1928 hurricane and the keeper re-installed the old mineral oil lamps and turned the light by hand.