



By Richard Procyk

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## Jupiter Lighthouse—Seafarer 94

The Jupiter Lighthouse, our proud lady of the Inlet with her sweeping tower of red brick, will be open again for a trip to the top during this year's Seafarer '94. During the sixth annual Seafarer Festival, visitors can take the Tower Trip climbing the winding 105 steps of the oldest structure in Palm Beach County.

Although it doesn't stand on a rocky cliff by the edge of the sea, as the northern ladies of the coast, our Lighthouse does stand on a natural hill of shell and marine sand about 41 feet. With submerged reefs and sandbars causing innumerable shipwrecks over the years. Congress in 1853 finally appropriated approximately \$35,000 to erect "a first-order lighthouse," to mark the reef lying off the Jupiter Inlet and act as an aide to navigation.

The Indian war raging across Florida contributed to cost overruns as the final expenditure ran over \$ 60,000 at the time of completion in 1859. Although construction began in 1855 a series of delays -Indian attacks and "Jupiter 'Fever'" ran up the cost during the Third Seminole War.

The Third Seminole War, also called the Billy Bowlegs' War, began in 1855 when a small detachment of army personnel, left Fort Myers to make a reconnaissance of Big Cypress Swamp. Lt. George L. Hartsuff and his men camped within three miles of Billy Bowlegs' Town and the next morning entered the deserted village.

As the soldiers left the village they cut bunches of bananas from plants found near the chickees and destroyed some of Bowlegs', prize fields. Apparently this disrespect to the Chiefs property and fields released the pent-up hostility from previous clashes and thirty Seminoles were soon firing into the soldier's camp the next morning. After killing four soldiers and wounding four others, including Hartsuff, the Seminoles withdrew, but the last Indian War in Florida had begun.

The new lighthouse being built on the Jupiter Inlet did not go unnoticed by the rampaging Indians who were now conducting raids across the state. The Lighthouse workers, most sick from "Jupiter fever" which resulted from the hordes of mosquitoes and sandflies, were now harassed by attacking Indians. These incidents disrupted the work on the Lighthouse which did not resume until 1858. A noticeable line between the old dark brick and new brick was visible until the lighthouse was painted its red color about 1911.

The recent exhibit of the original architectural drawings of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse shown at the Loxahatchee museum offered additional information about the lighthouse, including a history of Lt. George Gordon Meade, lighthouse designer. Meade, an engineer in the U.S. Army Corp of Topographical Engineers, completed his design on December 26, 1854. Nicknamed "old goggle-eyed snapping turtle" for his quick temper, Meade designed eight lighthouses in Florida, but is better known for his victory at Gettysburg during the Civil War.

Meade reviewing an early biography made this remark.... "I must confess I think a little more space might be given to my services prior to the Rebellion. I always thought my services in the construction of lighthouses... were of considerable importance." His original architectural drawings were completed on linen and are in very good condition despite being 139 years old. The drawings indicate that the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse is 105 feet tall.





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The exterior walls taper from 31.5 inches thick at the base to 18 inches at the top. The tower has double walls with space between them to increase oxygen flow to the burning lamp at the top of the tower.

The stairway ascends into the Watch room through a small hatch in the floor. The Watch room is the heart of the lighthouse, as the keepers worked here cleaning the lens and surrounding glass, trimming the lamp wicks, polishing the brass, and winding the turning mechanism weights. The Lighthouse has a first order flashing Fresnel lens, designed by Augustin Fresnel in 1822. The lens resembles a beehive as it is composed of many sections of glass set into a frame work that looks like a single piece. The glass sections are shaped into prisms that refract or bend light toward a powerful magnifying glass in the center of the frame. This glass is called a 'bull's eye' and intensifies the light. The flashing light of the lighthouse use a clockwork mechanism to rotate the lens at specific intervals.

The intervals from a pattern of flasks and each pattern are unique to a particular lighthouse. Mariners can then locate their position at sea by identifying a flash pattern. The light is visible from 18 to 25 miles at sea. Seafarer this year is Sunday, May 22, 1994. Come early and make your reservation to climb the Lighthouse, and join the adventure.