

## Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse & Museum

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### History

An impressive point of land sits at the junction of the Indian River and Jupiter Inlet and for thousands of years had been a meeting place for ancient Indian tribes. This strategic site did not go unnoticed by army surveyors who in 1849 recommended the Jupiter Inlet area as a suitable place for military defenses. President Franklin Pierce signed the order to set aside a 61 & ½-acre site on the Fort Jupiter Reservation for a lighthouse in 1854. The lighthouse was designed by Lieutenant George Gordon Meade and Lt. William Reynolds, who succeeded him as head of the 4th and 7th Lighthouse Districts, improved the strength with a double wall design. The lighthouse and Oil house construction was accomplished by Captain Edward Yorke, who arrived Dec. 31, 1859 and completed the tower in May 1860. It was lit July 10, 1860. The tower has survived the civil war, hurricanes, earth tremors, and Seminole Indian uprisings.

A Weather Bureau and Signal Station were established on the lighthouse grounds in 1889. Passing ships were signaled during the day by semaphore (flags) and at night by flares. In 1890 the Naval wireless telegraph station was established on the Reservation. But it wasn't until 1925 that it was discovered that a mistake had been made on the original survey; the Lighthouse Reservation actually covered 113.22 acres.

In 1930 the acreage was increased to 121.95 and held the tower, a keeper's house, a radio beacon, power house and several out buildings. The US Navy acquired 8.4 acres of the Reservation from the US Government and by 1936 the Navy was operating a Radio Compass Station at Jupiter as an aid to navigation. The Station broadcasted weather information and monitored distress signals as well as naval ship-to-shore and aircraft frequencies.

It was on July 1, 1939, that all US lighthouses became the responsibility of the US Coast Guard. In the same year, the US Navy established an Intelligence Listening Post at the Naval Radio Station and constructed the barracks building for naval personnel and their families. By July, 1940, The Navy's Radio Detection Finding Station, known as "Station J," came online. This secret installation was designed to intercept German U-boat radio messages and warn Allied ships and help US forces attack enemy vessels. Station J was able to pinpoint the names and locations of the submarines. In May 1943, 30 German submarines were destroyed, and in June another 37. Most had been located by the men of Station J.

January 11, 1972, the Loxahatchee River Historical Society (LRHS) was founded to preserve the area's history and opened the Oil House Museum in June of 1973. Public tours were conducted periodically by permission of the U.S. Coast Guard. On November 15, of the same year, the Lighthouse was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. By 1988 the Society had opened the Florida History Center & Museum in Burt Reynolds Park just across the inlet.

The LRHS entered into an agreement with the US Coast Guard to maintain and insure the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse and to conduct regular public tours to the top of the lighthouse for the

first time in 1994. The LRHS operated a small visitor center in the east end of the last remaining building of Station J, once used as living quarters for the military.

The LRHS, with a grant from the Florida Department of Transportation and in cooperation with the Town of Jupiter and the US Coast Guard, started a major restoration project in 1999 to repair weather damage to the tower. It was completed in April of 2000.

In 2006, in an agreement between the LRHS, Palm Beach County, and Town of Jupiter, the old WWII building in Lighthouse Park was renovated to become the new home of the Loxahatchee River Historical Society. On December 7, 2006, the history museum and society headquarters moved from Burt Reynolds Park to Lighthouse Park to become the **Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse & Museum**. The LRHS also entered into a 30 year lease agreement with the US Coast Guard to maintain and operate a larger portion of the land between the tower and the western fence line of the US Coast Guard property in order to set up outdoor history exhibits. Operations for the lighthouse and history museum are now in one location.

The **Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area (JILONA) Act** was introduced into the Senate by Senator Bill Nelson and co-sponsored by Senator Mel Martinez. It was introduced into the House of Representatives by Congressman Tim Mahoney and co-sponsored by Congressmen Ron Klein and Alcee Hastings. This legislation designates **the lighthouse and 126 surrounding acres** of sensitive habitat as an *Outstanding Natural Area (ONA)* in the Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) National Landscape Conservation System. This site is the first Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) in the Nation east of the Pacific Coast. Only two other ONA's exist: Yaquina Head in Oregon and Piedras Blancas Lighthouse in California. The Congressional Bill was signed by President George W. Bush on May 8, 2008, protecting this site for all Americans in perpetuity, giving it National Monument status.

The **Outstanding Natural Area** is cooperatively managed by the Bureau of Land Management, and local partners: Palm Beach County, Town of Jupiter, Village of Tequesta, Loxahatchee River Historical Society, US Coast Guard and Jupiter High School's Environmental Research & Field Studies Academy. Over the last decade, the group has accomplished a wealth of projects including lighthouse restoration, wetland reconstruction, river slope stabilization following hurricanes Frances and Jeanne, fuel hazard reduction and habitat improvement for endangered species, proving the Jupiter Inlet Working Group a uniquely successful partnership. For its dedication to safeguarding Jupiter Inlet's ecological integrity and cultural heritage, the Jupiter Inlet Working Group was given the prestigious **Cooperative Conservation Award** from the Department of the Interior in April, 2008.

### **Description**

Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse & Museum offers climbing tours of the landmark 1860 lighthouse. The waterfront Museum in the restored WWII building exhibits *Five Thousand Years on the Loxahatchee* and outdoor exhibits include the Oil House, Tindall Pioneer Homestead, Pennock Plantation Bell, Seminole Chickee and Early Native American kiosks. Also available are the museum gift shop, Station J Café snack shop, educational programs for children and adults, sunset tours, weddings, receptions and special events. The Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is part of the 120 acre federally designated, Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area. Check for hours and programs at [www.jupiterlighthouse.org](http://www.jupiterlighthouse.org). Operated by the Loxahatchee River Historical Society a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

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