

# Loxahatchee River Historical Society Quarterly

2020

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The Loxahatchee River Historical Society (LRHS) is the 501(c)3 non-profit organization that operates Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse & Museum

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Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse with holiday decorations December 2020

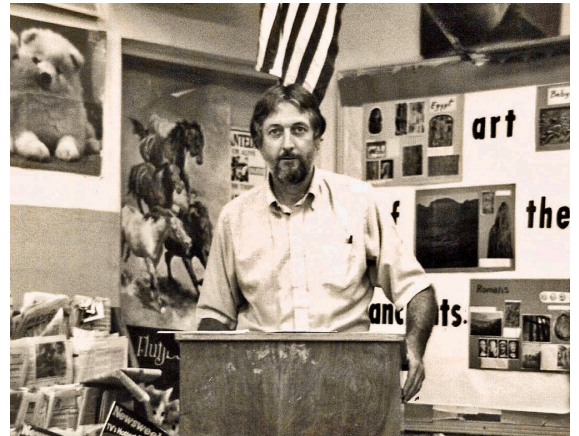
*Celebrating 160 Years*

# Jim & Molly Sparger: A Life of Giving

Among the lives lost in 2020 were those of James Massey “Jim” Sparger and Mary Sue “Molly” Short Sparger, for reasons unrelated to the coronavirus pandemic.

A native of Mount Airy, Jim attended the University of North Carolina on the GI Bill after serving a few years in the US Army. It was at UNC he met his future wife. Jim majored in History, Molly in Sociology. (Jim also earned a Masters degree from Florida Atlantic University in 1969.) After graduation, they lived in Molly’s hometown of Charlotte where she worked for the Mecklenburg County Department of Public Welfare and Jim worked for the US Public Health Service. They married in 1960 and moved to Jupiter in 1962. Jim and Molly raised three children in Florida.

Jim Sparger made a career as an educator. He was a beloved Jupiter High School history teacher for three decades. He was the announcer for the high school football team. He taught arts & crafts and recreation in the summer enrichment program, managed the "Cities in Schools" program to reduce the dropout rate, chaired the Jupiter Cancer Crusade in 1969, and chaperoned social studies field trips to Washington, DC. Sparger also showed his sense of humor at school. He formed and led a school kazoo band, introduced donkey basketball, and enthusiastically participated in the annual Homecoming and Christmas parades. He was fond of dressing up as a clown, a pirate, a sea captain, or whatever other costume engaged his students or tickled his fancy. Jim’s efforts were recognized with Jupiter High School’s Teacher of the Year Award in 1977. As if all this work at Jupiter High School wasn’t enough, he also taught history in Suncoast High School’s adult education program.



Jim Sparger teaching at Jupiter High School  
Courtesy of Eric Bressler



Jim Sparger, Vince Burns, Bob Schindler,  
and Todd Vittum prepare to set off for the  
lighthouse to “relight the light” for the  
150th anniversary in 2010.

Jim retired as a school teacher in 1992, but did not end his role as an educator there. He was an in-classroom volunteer for 20 years at Jupiter Elementary, earning Volunteer of the Year. He was a docent at the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse & Museum for 14 years, primarily as a lighthouse tour guide, and was also a board member for five years. Jim was a historical reenactor as part of the 2010 Lighthouse Sesquicentennial celebration, transporting the “lighthouse inspectors” aboard his boat “Good Golly Mrs. Molly” (named in tribute to his wife).

In 1967, Jim ran for Jupiter Town Council, but lost a three-way race to William Presser (Marie Cross was the other candidate). In 1968, Jim and four friends from the local Methodist church formed The 5-M Company to operate local

# Jim & Molly Sparger

continued

commercial properties. He was active in the Jupiter-Tequesta Chamber of Commerce, becoming the Vice President in 1969 and President in 1970. He proudly wore the mantle of the Chamber's "first hippie president." He led the Chamber's efforts to help Limestone Creek residents improve their community and spoke at the dedication of Jupiter Pre-School.

Molly worked for the hospital, chamber of commerce, and The 5-M Company. She was an active member of the Jupiter-Tequesta Junior Woman's Club, Jupiter Medical Center Auxiliary, Brownie Girl Scouts, and Loxahatchee Guild. In 1971, she found and rescued Kopy Kat, the Jupiter Courier newspaper's missing mascot. Most of all, Molly is remembered as an outstanding listener, who lent a helpful ear to countless people who needed someone to talk to.

Together Jim and Molly were active supporters and volunteers with Habitat For Humanity and El Sol. They were founding members of the First United Methodist Church of Jupiter-Tequesta. Molly held numerous positions with the church.

Jim was an avid collector of antiques, knickknacks, and other unusual items that he put together in a sprawling and memorable museum at the Sparger River House in Tequesta. It is a collection as memorable and colorful as its collector.



Molly and Jim Sparger volunteering at El Sol.  
(Courtesy of Friends of El Sol)

When I started as a tour docent at Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse & Museum in 2013, Jim Sparger was one of the Wednesday afternoon guides. He and Red Shirar would reminisce about their time working together as Jupiter High School teachers. Jim had been football announcer when Red was the football coach, and this was the subject of some playful teasing. The duo loved to share history with visitors, and it brightened their day to encounter former students who came by to climb the lighthouse. I will always be grateful for their enthusiasm, encouragement, and endorsement.



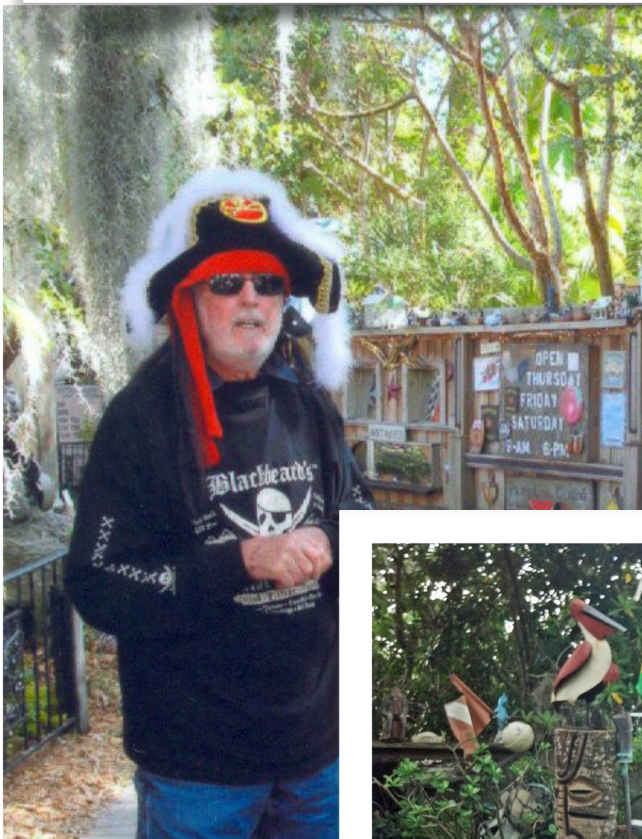
Jim Sparger volunteering at  
Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse  
& Museum in 2010

In my last conversation with Jim, he seemed at peace, despite his obvious grief at Molly's passing. "We've had a good life," he said.

For more than half a century, Jim and Molly Sparger embraced their adopted hometown with big hearts and warm smiles. They saw the local area grow and change so much in their lifetimes, but never stopped giving their time, care, and kindness to make our community a better place. While they held few appointed or elected positions, they led by example all their lives. They will be deeply missed and fondly remembered by all who knew them.



## Scenes from the Sparger River House





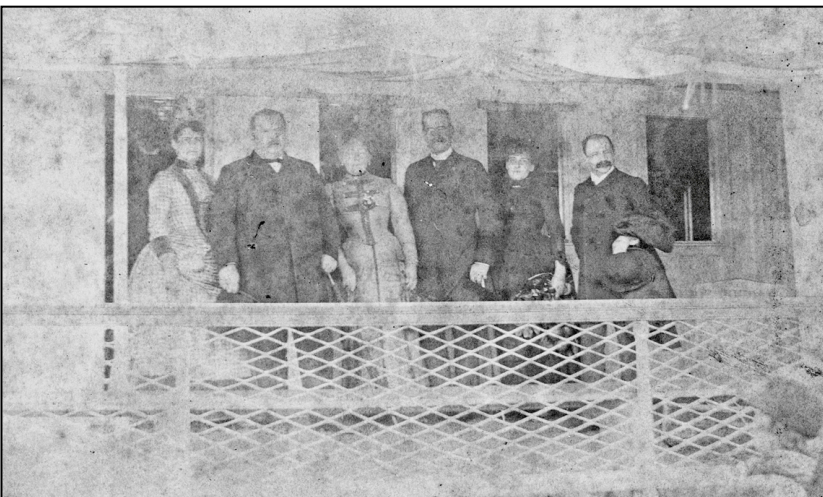
# Grover Cleveland in Southeast Florida

Although Southeast Florida has been a popular tourist destination for more than a century, fewer presidents than you might think have visited the area during or after their presidency. George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton vacationed on Jupiter Island during their presidencies. (Bush's parents owned a home on Jupiter Island.) In Dec 1932, President and Mrs. Herbert Hoover traveled down the Intracoastal Waterway aboard the presidential yacht *USS Sequoia*, passing through Jupiter on their way to Palm Beach. Warren Harding made a similar trip in Jan 1921. William Taft, Calvin Coolidge, and Franklin Roosevelt passed through Jupiter on the FEC Railway to points further south. None of these presidents is known to have actually stopped in Jupiter. Prior to Donald Trump's speech on the grounds of Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse on 8 Sep 2020, only one president (before, during, or after their term) is known to have definitely set foot in Jupiter: Grover Cleveland.



Grover Cleveland, 1888.  
(Library of Congress)

Grover Cleveland served two non-consecutive terms, the only president to do so. He was also the only Democrat president elected between James Buchanan (1856) and Woodrow Wilson (1912). Florida in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was very much a Southern state dominated by the conservative Democrats of that era. As a result, Grover Cleveland's victory in the 1884 presidential election caused much celebration. The front page of the *Florida Star* declared a "Sweeping Victory For Democracy." The newspaper noted that "Capt. Fischer almost exhausted the steam on the [steamboat] *Indian River's* whistle Sunday evening when he arrived at this place and was informed that Cleveland was elected."



Grover Cleveland's party aboard the steamer *Rockledge*, 1888.  
L-R: Frances Folsom Cleveland, Grover Cleveland,  
Flora Payne Whitney, William C. Whitney,  
Juliet Lamont, Daniel Lamont.  
(LRHS Gladwin Family Collection)

Three years into his first term, Cleveland became the first president to visit Florida while in office. President and Mrs. Cleveland traveled to the state on a special train, accompanied by Daniel S. Lamont (Secretary of War), William C. Whitney (Secretary of the Navy), and their spouses. The party arrived at Titusville on 24 Feb 1888, then the only rail connection to the Indian River. There the presidential party boarded the steamboat *Rockledge* and Capt. Richard P. Paddison took them on a special excursion downriver. It was only a daytrip, with lunch at J. M. Lee's Hotel Indian River in Rockledge. Upon

## Grover Cleveland

continued

returning to Titusville, the visit was photographed by Pickens Turner.

Shortly after leaving office a year later, now-ex-President Cleveland returned to Florida including a second visit to the Indian River. He was accompanied by three of his former cabinet members: Thomas F. Bayard (Secretary of State), Donald M. Dickinson (Postmaster General), and William F. Vilas (Secretary of the Interior). Joining them for part of the trip were future Florida railroad tycoon Henry B. Plant and his wife. The group again reached Titusville by train then traveled to Jupiter via the regularly weekly trip of the steamboat *St. Lucie*. At Jupiter they stayed several days aboard the floating hotel *Chattahoochee* and spent much of the visit fishing. Mrs. Plant made the largest catch, landing a 94-lb tarpon. The group returned to Titusville via the next trip of the *St. Lucie*.

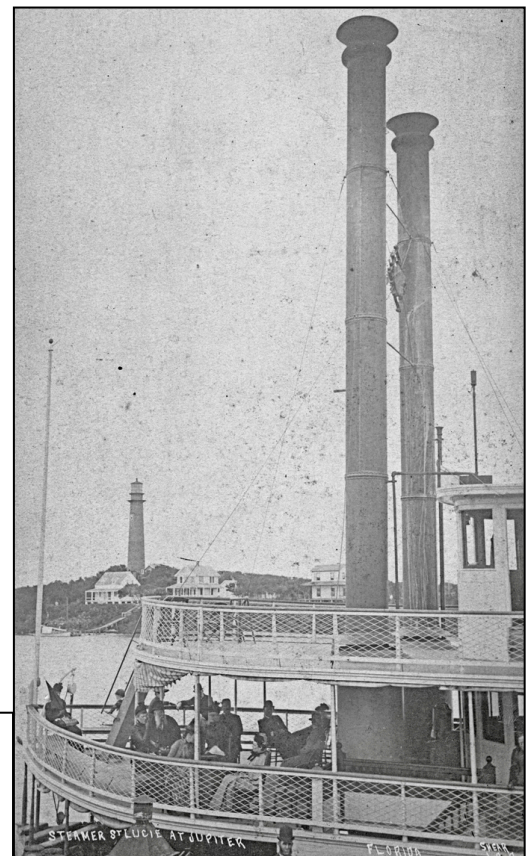
*Don Dickinson*  
Rich 30 1889  
(In Cleveland's Cabinet)  
Don Dickinson Postmaster General Florida  
taken when Cleveland came to Jupiter Florida  
& staid on the steamer Repa-joe kept as hotel  
Chattahoochee  
Charles Spencer  
L. J. Ford

Autograph of Secretary of the Treasury Donald Dickinson collected when he stayed aboard the floating hotel *Chattahoochee* with Grover Cleveland.  
(LRHS Gladwin Family Collection)

Grover Cleveland later made annual winter trips to Florida between 1898 and 1905. The trips mostly brought him to Stuart, where he stayed in the Danforth Hotel. He also visited Jupiter Island and Palm Beach Island where a friend, famous theatre actor Joseph Jefferson, had a winter home. Cleveland and Jefferson fished together shortly before the actor's death.

According to a DuBois family story, Cleveland made at least one further visit to Jupiter: "At that time, the two oldest DuBois boys were babies and their father had a cow to supply fresh milk for the children. One day Harry DuBois had gone to Jupiter in the boat and presently returned running up the hill shouting 'Milk the cow! Grover Cleveland is on the railroad siding at Jupiter and he wants an oyster stew!'" (Assuming the story is accurate, this most likely took place in January 1902.)

The steamer *St. Lucie* at Jupiter around the time of Grover Cleveland's visit.  
(LRHS Gladwin Family Collection)



# An Early Jupiter Christmas at Sawfish Bay

## From the LRHS Bessie Wilson DuBois Collection

*John Thomas Wade (1850-1933) was typical of many 19<sup>th</sup> century residents of the southern half of Florida. Born in Georgia, he spent his life a farmer, mostly in the interior part of the state. He came to what is now Indiantown in the late 1890s, but after a few years moved his growing family down the Old Jupiter-Indiantown Road to Jupiter so his children (three girls and one boy) could attend school. After a few years in Jupiter they permanently settled in Polk County. In 1959, Mary Wade Underhill recounted her childhood experiences in Jupiter to historian Bessie DuBois.*

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Christmas came and it was a truly memorable one for all the children in Jupiter. The celebration was held in a shed on the bank of the canal [Intracoastal Waterway]. The Wades came by mule-drawn wagon, the children all riding happily in the bed of the wagon with mother and father on the seat. It was hard to believe so many people could be assembled from the sparsely settled countryside. Some had walked, but most families had come by boat - from all branches of the Loxahatchee, the Lighthouse, and near the inlet. An acre of people some said.

Their first sight of the tree was pure joy. It was hung with gifts and they were not wrapped. The dolls looked down at their mamas-to-be who gazed yearningly back. The boys looked up at the drums and horns dangleingly tantalizingly.

After a few Christmas carols, Santa arrived. As he called each name the child went forward and received a gift and candy.

Mary recalled that while she had carefully given Mrs. Ziegler the names of her brother and sisters, she had not mentioned her own. One doll seemed to dance and beckon on the tree but she feared it would not be for her. When the gifts were nearly gone, she was trying to swallow a large lump that came from trying to choke back a few tears when Santa finally called: "Mary Wade."

She went forward, the candles flickering in the night air. Santa reached up the high branches of the tree and took down the last doll, and placed it in her arms, where it was held lovingly all the way home.

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*The identity of Santa is unknown, but since Ida Ziegler collected a list of local children it was probably her husband, Jacob Thomas Ziegler, a former Pennsylvania pastor. The Zieglers later had a home and store in what is now Sawfish Bay Park.*



# Mementos from Jupiter's Christmas Past



Jupiter Inlet Inn  
Du Bois Fishing Park

MENU

CHRISTMAS DINNER-----\$1.00

Fresh Shrimp or Oyster Cocktail  
Celery Olives  
Chicken Soup  
Roast Turkey Cranberry Sauce  
Mashed Potatoes Giblet Gravy  
Peas and Carrots Creamed Cauliflower  
Wellied Fruit Salad  
Hot Biscuit  
Plum Pudding Mince Pie  
Coffee Mints Tea

OUR REGULAR FISH DINNER-----50¢

CHOICE OF; Shrimp or Tomato Juice Cocktail  
or Chicken Soup  
Fried Fish French Fried Potatoes  
Lettuce and Tomato Salad  
Coffee Tea Milk  
Homeade Pie

1930s Christmas menu at Jupiter Inlet Inn.  
Typed by the restaurant's proprietor,  
Bessie Wilson DuBois.



Merry Christmas. OUR HOUSE TO YOUR HOUSE  
The Harveys  
Dick, Kris, Korla + Brad

Christmas card from Lt. Richard Harvey and family to Bessie DuBois. Harvey was commanding officer of the Loran Station Jupiter from 1972 to 1975, which included Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse. One of the station's most popular commanders, he was a critical early supporter of the Loxahatchee River Historical Society. Harvey passed away in 2019.



# Collection Donation Highlights for 2020

The Bessie Wilson DuBois Collection is the cornerstone of our archives. Bessie's granddaughter, Lisa Jefferson, donated some wonderful additional items to that collection. These include a guestbook used at Jupiter Inlet Inn restaurant and later at Bessie's home museum, records of groups that used DuBois Park when it was privately owned, and historic photos of the local area. Also a scrapbook with correspondence that illustrates the many groups that were educated and inspired by the many local history presentation talks Mrs. DuBois gave during her life. Bessie DuBois was a one-woman historical society in her day and the Loxahatchee River Historical Society is proud to continue the important work she started.

Richard E. Roberts continued to expand his collection with us including color slides of Trapper Nelson's camp, aerial photos of the Hobe Sound area in 1940, and archival material related to local environmental issues.

Bob Shanley donated more photographs he took while working for local newspapers, as well as local newspapers and his Boy Scout badges and pins.

Other items:

- Pattie Benedrix: family photo taken at the top of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse in the 1910s
- Norma Conway: photos of John and Bessie DuBois taken when the donor painted their portraits
- Marilyn Dexheimer Lawrence: history books and articles written by the donor
- Frank Lund: hardcover Florida history books
- Estate of George Pyle: collection of local shells
- Bob Schuh: sign from the Smithsonian Institution's Jupiter Satellite Tracking Station
- Camp Murphy letters and postcards
- 19<sup>th</sup> century stereoviews and cabinet cards of the Indian River



Visitors at the gallery deck of Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse in the 1910s. Historic photos of visitors at the top of our lighthouse are very rare. Note the old railing. The people are unidentified, but are probably members of the Potter-Willson family.



From 1957 to 1966, the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory operated a massive Baker-Nunn telescope-camera as part of a network of satellite tracking stations around the world. The station was located in Jonathan Dickinson State Park in converted structures remaining from Camp Murphy. The US Air Force operated the station from 1968 to 1970.

# The Origins of Our Historical Society

## Historical Society Will Form

Jupiter Courier – Nov 5, 1970

The Jupiter-Tequesta area is about to get its first historical society, a movement sponsored by the Junior Woman's Club.

About 30 persons attended a pre-organizational meeting Monday November 2<sup>nd</sup> to talk of the project. Ethel Gravett presided and Bessie DuBois, pioneer resident, was guest speaker.

The women agreed to select a committee to nominate a slate of officers to be voted on. The club will be open to the public.

Mrs. DuBois noted that this is the oldest historical area in the county and said she feels a society should have been organized long ago.

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## Historical Society Elects

Jupiter Courier – January 14, 1971

An organization meeting of the Jupiter-Tequesta historical society was held at the Lighthouse Gallery on Monday January 11 to elect officers and a board of directors, and to approve the by-laws.

The following officers were elected: Dr. John R. Ray, DVM, President; Mr. Bud Harvey, Vice President; Mrs. Ellen Clark, Secretary; Mr. John M. Kern Jr., Treasurer. The board of directors that were elected are Mrs. Bessie DuBois, Mrs. Anna Minear, Mrs. Ethel Gravett, Mr. Harry P. Jackson Sr., Mrs. Jeannie Thomas, Mrs. Vivienne Read, Mrs. Jacquelyn Kinsey, Mrs. Jane Deason Jenkins, Mr. William S. Wood, Dr. William Dugger, and Mr. Lloyd O. Minear

56 adults and 14 children who joined the society by Monday are charter members.

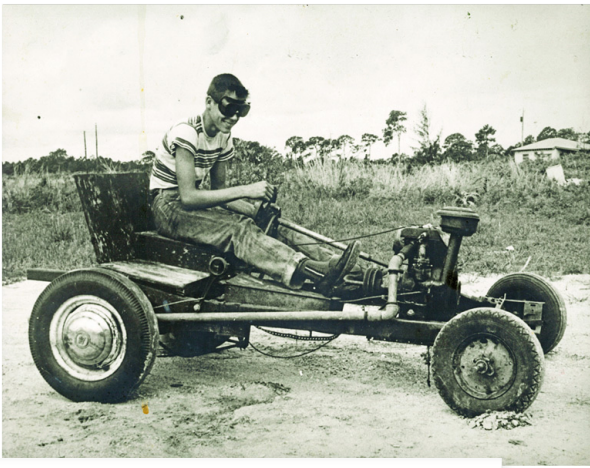
*The next meeting was held March 1, 1971 at which time the historical society's first official name was chosen: the Loxahatchee Historical Society, suggested by Lloyd O. Minear. LHS incorporated as a non-profit organization on January 27, 1972 and that is the date LRHS celebrates as its official birthday.*

*Ethel Gravett and Bill Wood are still involved with the Loxahatchee River Historical Society in 2020.*

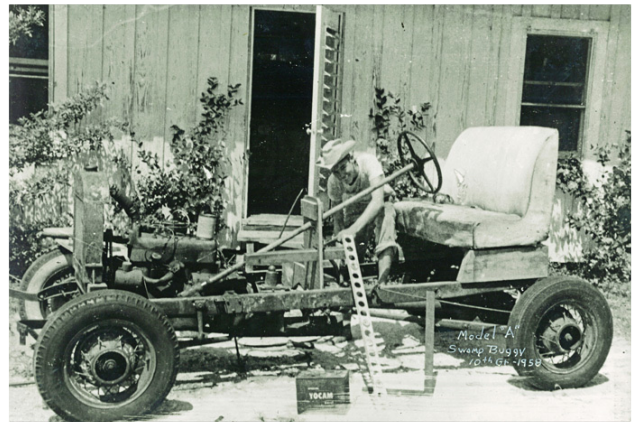


# In Memory of Skip Gladwin (1942 - 2020)

We were saddened to learn of the passing of R. F. "Skip" Gladwin III a few days before Christmas. He was a longtime supporter, former board member, and kind-hearted man. Skip and Rosalyn Gladwin were recipients of the 2019 LRHS Outstanding Stewardship Award. You can learn more about the Gladwins and their award in the [first issue of this newsletter](#). An [obituary written by his family](#) is online. We are honored that the family asked for donations in Skip's memory to our historical society, specifically to help with the preservation, cataloging, and exhibition of the Gladwin Family Collection. Here are a few photos from that collection to remember a life well lived.



One of Skip's hobbies as a youth was building all-terrain buggies from old stripped-down car chassis. Is it any wonder he earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering?



Skip was cadet commander of the Stuart Civil Air Patrol squadron and even earned an appointment to the Air Force Academy in 1961. Although he attended the University of Florida instead and eyesight prevented him from becoming a pilot, he did get a chance to experience flight from the back seat of an Air Force jet in 1961.



Skip will be fondly remembered by all that knew him for his warm heart, strong integrity, keen mind, and big smile.

# Step Up For The Light

As an online fundraiser we invited people to virtually adopt one of the 105 stairs in the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse for a year. Each supporter received a certificate, a limited edition lighthouse photo by Captain Kimo numbered to match their step, and recognition on our website and in our “Keeping The Light at Jupiter Inlet” exhibit in the Keeper’s Workshop. No plaque will be placed on the historic stairs themselves.

The staircase inside the lighthouse is made of iron and uses George Meade’s original design. The wedge-shaped stairs spiral around a central iron column which is formed by a part of each stair. The stairs are grated to allow air and light to pass through them. Each stair has a nine-inch rise (a typical staircase has a six-inch rise).

Steps 25, 50, and 75 are landings. Each covers a quarter of the interior area, but are otherwise of the same design as the regular stairs.

Stair 92 has a Plexiglas-covered hole in it. This hole was deliberately cut in the stair, probably in 1866, to allow the weight that turned the lighthouse’s Fresnel lens to descend twice as far before being wound up again. The weight was removed after electric motors were installed in 1928. The Plexiglas was added in 2000 to preserve the stair’s history and is safe to step on while climbing.



Of the 105 stairs, 100 are the same stairs originally installed in 1860. The other 5 are replicas made in 2000 to replace damaged stairs. In the 1920s, the aforementioned weight broke loose and cracked stairs near the second and third landings. The replica stairs have an asterisk-shaped mark on the central column.

The last three stairs (103, 104, and 105) are of a different design than all the others, without the grating. These stairs may have been improvised on site during the lighthouse construction in 1860. The central column is wider at the top to better support the weight of the heavy Fresnel lens, requiring the adjacent stairs to be different too.



# Keeper's Update

As of January, the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse & Museum is now open 10 AM to 5 PM Wednesday through Friday (last admission 4 PM), and 10 AM to 2 PM (last admission 1 PM) on Saturday and Sunday. Masks are required for all visitors. Check [www.jupiterlighthouse.org](http://www.jupiterlighthouse.org) for the latest details.

As has been our tradition for many years, the gallery deck railing of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse was decorated with lights and red ribbons for the holidays (see cover photo).

Our main museum reopened on December 26. Keep an eye out for new items on display in several of the museum cases. Museum reopening had been delayed due to a piledriving test related to the US 1 bridge project. The historic artifacts were temporarily removed to ensure their safety during that test.

Amanda Dixon, our Program Director for the last four years, has accepted a new position with the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum. We thank Amanda for all her efforts and dedication, especially her great work with our kids programs. We wish her a bright future with her new lighthouse.

Visit our online Gift Shop for mailed items or easy pickup, including the beautiful new edition of Five Thousand Years on the Loxahatchee: <https://jupiterlighthousestore.square.site/>

This has been an especially challenging year for our historical society and community. Although we weren't able to celebrate the lighthouse's 160th birthday in every way that we hoped, we are still proud of what we have accomplished this year despite the pandemic, and before it started. Major programs included Family Adventure Day in January and the Lighthouse Luminary Luncheon in early March, with special guests from the National Weather Service. We produced two educational videos about Charlie Pierce, with award-winning author Harvey Oyer III. The annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival became an online event. Lighthouse Storytime successfully transitioned into an online program as well. This quarterly newsletter, planned and launched before the pandemic, has been another way we can share local history with the public. You can support the lighthouse and historical society by giving the gift of history at any time with [engraved bricks](#) in our Pathway To History and [memberships](#).

A big thank you to all our members, donors, volunteers, and other supporters in 2020. We look forward to keeping the light shining brightly in 2021 and beyond!

Stay connected with us through your social media outlet of choice:

<https://www.facebook.com/jupiterinletlighthousemuseum/>

[https://www.instagram.com/jupiter\\_lighthouse/](https://www.instagram.com/jupiter_lighthouse/)

<https://twitter.com/JupiterLH>

## Newsletter Credits

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