

Loxahatchee River Historical Society Quarterly

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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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Painting of the USS Oregon at Jupiter Inlet in 1898 by Kathryn Kulish. Commissioned and donated by Paul Gaumer as cover art for [The Race of the Oregon](#).

Tequesta Motels

Although Juno Beach is better known as a motel community, US Highway 1 between the Loxahatchee River and just north of County Line Road had its own collection of small motels which peaked in the 1950s. The term “motor court” was common at the time for a motel, especially those consisting of separate cottages rather than a single building. Shuey’s, covered in the previous issue, is the best known example. Here are the rest. Please let us know if you can share photos or additional details about these businesses.



The only known postcard showing Ocean Sound Villa

Ocean Sound Villa / Aqua Isle Motel

Ocean Sound Service Station, a gas station and small restaurant, opened in the early 1930s on the southwest corner of US 1 and Cemetery Road (now County Line Road). It was accompanied by a few rental cabins sometimes referred to as Ocean Sound Tourist Camp. The business cycled through several owner-operators, including L. E. Van Lanningham and Harry & Evelyn Mechtoldt.

The name changed to Ocean Sound Villa in the early 1940s. Ownership passed through Forrest F. Shontz, Hank and Flo Siefert (1947-1953), and Roland K. Basler (1953-1956).

Alfred and Alberta Staffa purchased the business in 1956, but in 1959 made a major change. The eatery took over the entire service station building and became County Line Restaurant while the cabins were sold off to Lowell and Carole Jarrett.

The Jarretts operated the cabins, renamed Aqua Isle Motel & Apartments, for a decade before selling to William and Pauline Strain. William died in 1989 and a few years later the cabins were demolished to build Tequesta Square office building.

Staffa’s County Line Restaurant later became County Line Pizza. Alfred was the son of Italian immigrants and had grown up in Chicago so the restaurant specialized in Chicago-style thin crust pizza. The Staffas retired from their much-beloved restaurant in 1982. A decade later, the building was demolished to make way for a new gas station (now a Mobil & 7-Eleven). However, County Line Pizza remains in business, now located in Plaza La Mer in Juno Beach.

Edgewater Park

Little is know about a small tourist camp Mark Witham operated around 1940. It was located just north of the county line between US Highway 1 and the Indian River. It was likely put out of business by World War II.

Tequesta Motels... continued

Sauter's

William and Adele Sauter operated a cottage motel from 1948 until 1955. It was variously called Sauter's Motor Court, Sauter's Trailer Court, or Sauter's Motor Lodge. Both owners were very civically active - William with the volunteer fire department and Adele with the woman's club. After selling the hotel, the couple moved to one of the earliest houses built on Pennock Point.

The new owners were a small corporation run by Richard Pond and Richard Hardy of Jupiter Inlet Colony, plus John Zimmerman of Lake Park. Rebranded as Hobe Sound Vacationer (despite being in Tequesta), the motel operated into the 1960s, aimed more at extended stay visitors.



1948 postcard promoting Sauter's Motor Court.
(LRHS Gladwin Family Collection)

Van Gorden Motel / Palm Garden Motel

Archie "Red" and Hazel Van Gorden opened this motel in 1948. They advertised the 12 cottages as "fireproof and soundproof." Archie was a World War II veteran who ran a feed mill and store in Wisconsin before the war. Levi B. Clark lived at the motel during his early years in the area, having moved to Florida for his health. Clark was subsequently elected to two terms as Jupiter's mayor (1956-1960).



1948 postcard showing part of the brand new Van Gorden Motel
(LRHS Gladwin Family Collection)

The Van Gordens retired in 1959 and sold the business to Thomas and Elizabeth Moschera who renamed it the Palm Garden Motel. The Moschera family operated a restaurant and service station nearby in the 1950s. Palm Garden Motel closed around 1970. Sandpointe Bay Condos were built on the site starting in 1980.

Tequesta Motels... continued



1959 postcard showing the Palm Garden Motel, shortly after the name and ownership changed. (LRHS Gladwin Family Collection)

Edgewater Beach Motel

Nick Spensieri built a waterfront motel immediately north of County Line Road in 1957. He named it Edgewater Beach Motel after a large resort in his hometown of Chicago. The motel consisted of two buildings, both two-



Edgewater Beach Motel in 1966. (LRHS Drake Collection)

stories and built of concrete blocks: a north building with the guest rooms and a smaller south building with the office and Spensieri's residence.

Spensieri apparently resided there until his death in 1974, although he may have sold the motel in the late 1960s. The motel is thought to have remained in business until the early 1980s.

Both original motel buildings are still standing. The north building is now Gilbane Boatworks, with Black Pearl Marina behind it. The south building is currently InterMarine Boats.

Tequesta Motels... continued

Cologne Motel / Tequesta Palms Inn

Paul Schmitter opened the Cologne Motel in 1957 and operated until his death in 1969. It was subsequently operated by Godfrey and Hilda MacColeman, from Michigan. Around 1990, the motel changed ownership again and became the Tequesta Palms Inn. The building still exists at 220 US Highway 1, tucked between Tequesta Terrace and Keyes Company realty, but may have recently closed.



Cologne Motel in the 1970s. (LRHS Gladwin Family Collection)

Belle River Court

William and Rachael Rudling started wintering in the Jupiter area in 1954. The following year they established a small motor court on the land adjacent to their winter home, naming it after their hometown of Belle River, Ontario, Canada. The motel was located between US 1 and the Intracoastal Waterway a mile north of the county line.

In 1957, the Rudlings sold the motel to Ivan Carter, but retained ownership of their winter home, which remained in the family for decades. William and Rachael's son and grandson (both also named William) were fulltime local residents and co-founded Rudling Pest Control in 1983.



Belle River Court in 1968. (LRHS Gladwin Family Collection)

Jupiter Waterfront Inn

By far the newest hotel in Tequesta opened in the late 1980s as Comfort Intercoastal Inn. It was sold in 1990 and became Jupiter-Tequesta Inn. JMZ Properties, Inc. has owned the business since 1996, operating as Jupiter Waterfront Inn. The 38-room hotel is located a short distance north of County Line Road.

The founder and longtime president of JMZ Properties, John M. Zucharelli III, passed away in 2021. Besides the Waterfront Inn, Zucharelli was a four-term mayor of Jupiter Inlet Colony, owned Palm Beach Motorsports, and was co-proprietor of Nick & Johnny's Osteria in Juno Beach.

Jupiter Farms History: Riverbend Park Citrus Growers

Augustus “Sawgrass” Miller is the first known pioneer in the Jupiter Farms area. Almost nothing is known about him except that purchased property directly from the State of Florida in 1882 and had several citrus groves in the Riverbend Park area in the earliest years of pioneer settlement in the Jupiter area.

Potter, Brelsford, & Lainhart Groves

Starting in 1896, three Palm Beach County pioneers began purchasing land for citrus groves: Dr. Richard B. Potter, Edmund M. Brelsford, and George W. Lainhart. Within a decade, they owned all of what is now Riverbend Park. Richard died in 1909 and Potter Groves passed to his brother, George. Another pioneer, Elisha N. Dimick, co-owned Lainhart Groves until 1913. These men were all residents of West Palm Beach or Palm Beach Island, not Jupiter. George Lainhart and George Potter were also the founders of the Lainhart & Potter hardware store that operated in West Palm Beach for over a century and later had a branch in Jupiter.



The Lainhart and Potter Families, including George Lainhart and George Potter (second and third from left) and Richard Potter (third from right)



Visitors at Lainhart Groves, early 1900s.
(Florida State Archives)

Lainhart Groves is the best known of these groves and the only one of the three to extend north of Indiantown Road. Its fruit won awards at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, MO and at many county fairs. Lainhart Dam was originally constructed to maintain water levels for grove irrigation. In 1923, scenes for the Hollywood silent movie *Fog Bound* were filmed at Lainhart Grove.

The portion of Potter Groves east of the Loxahatchee River was sold to Edmund Brelsford in 1912 and the remainder west of the river to Robert Hull in 1919.

After later selling off their groves, the Lainhart family retained ownership of a cabin just west of Lainhart dam until selling it to South Florida Water Management District in 1985.

Hull Groves

Robert H. Hull purchased Potter Groves and Brelsford Groves in 1919, followed by Lainhart Groves in 1925. As of 1930, his Jupiter Farms holdings totaled 300 acres, about half of them under cultivation for citrus. Hull also purchased several other groves near Indiantown during the 1920s.

In addition to the groves, Hull owned a packing house on the south side of Indiantown Road that operated under the name Jupiter Packing Company. The packing house was apparently not exclusive to Hull's produce. Hull was the first Jupiter Farms citrus grower to advertise heavily, resulting in the groves and packing house becoming a minor tourist attraction.

Hull Groves suffered extensive physical damage from the two hurricanes in 1928, including the destruction of the packing house. The Red Cross used the site as an aid distribution center for those living west of Jupiter. The packing house was rebuilt by the end of the year.

Robert Hull died in 1931. His sons, Perry and Harry, tried to keep the business going, but struggled due to the Great Depression and two more hurricanes in 1933. Hull's Groves defaulted on its mortgages with the Lainharts in 1934 and Brelsford's in 1936; in both cases the land reverted to the previous owners. The former Potter Groves had been paid off in full and were sold in 1938.



Much of the manual labor in Jupiter Farms was performed by hired African American laborers, as depicted in this 1920s postcard promoting Hull Groves.

Chillingworth Groves

Judge Curtis E. Chillingworth purchased the former Potter Groves from Harry Hull in 1938. Curtis was a circuit court judge, frequent speculator in real estate, and resident of West Palm Beach. He operated the groves as a side business. Chillingworth experimented with growing tropical fruit trees and maintained a hunting cabin on the property. The Chillingworths were close friends of the Lainhart and the Dimick-Reese families.

Judge Chillingworth and his wife Marjorie were infamously kidnapped and murdered in 1955. The perpetrators were hitmen hired by Joseph Peel, a corrupt judge whom Chillingworth intended to disbar. Peel was convicted of masterminding the killings in 1960. For more about the case, see [The Murder Trial of Judge Peel](#) by Jim Bishop or [Grim Justice](#) by Synova Cantrell.

Jansik Groves

Dr. Albin D. Jansik purchased Chillingworth Groves in 1950 and built a cottage there. The cottage burned down in 1952, leaving behind only the stairs and chimney which still stand in western Riverbend Park. Rather than rebuild, Jansik sold his property to the Mensers.

Jansik was a physician who ran the Safety Harbor Sanatorium in Safety Harbor, FL from 1936 to 1945.



Ruins of the Jansik cottage in 2007. (LRHS Jim Schaaf Collection)

Menser Groves / Jupiter Groves

Clarence and Irene Menser purchased Lainhart Groves in early 1944 and the Potter-Chillingworth-Jansik Groves in 1953. Dr. Menser was an NBC executive in New York City until retiring in 1947. The couple moved to their Jupiter Farms property to run the groves together, and also opened the radio station WEAT in West Palm Beach. They sold the radio station in 1949 and Clarence became a professor at Stetson University 1950-1956 before again retiring to his grove.



Palm Beach Post ad from 1956.

In 1958, the Mensers sold their groves and moved to Vero Beach, where they became very involved in civic affairs. Art and Joan Gryb, Irene's brother-in-law and sister, purchased the groves east of the river, which they renamed Jupiter Groves. The Grybs lived there two years before moving to West Palm Beach; Jupiter Groves remained in operation until at least 1967. The South Florida Water Management District later purchased the property to preserve the Loxahatchee River. The Mensers sold the remainder of their property, west of the river, to John and Emma Yount. The Yount property became Riverbend Mobile Home Park in the 1970s, and later the first part of county-owned Riverbend Park.

Reese Groves & Reese Ranch Groves

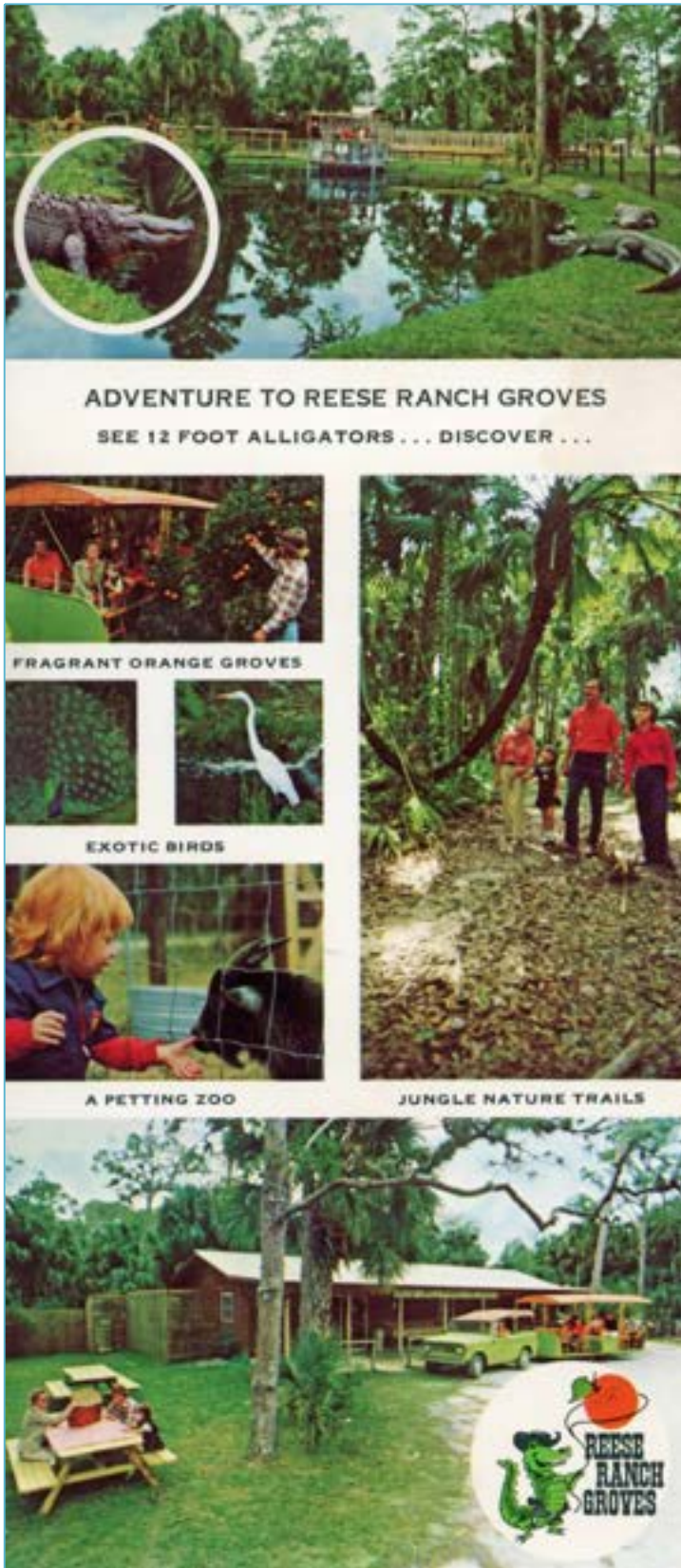
Elisha Dimick, who co-owned Lainhart Groves in the early 1900s, was the grandfather of Claude Dimick Reese Sr. who purchased the former Brelsford Groves in 1937. These groves had fallen into decline after Robert Hull's death, necessitating extensive clearing and replanting. Reese also constructed a north-south causeway that for the first time provided reliably dry access to most of the groves on the property. This is now Reese Trail, the main north-south route through Riverbend Park. The Reese family also used some of their property as a small cattle ranch. The ranch had ditches to drain pasture land, cattle dipping vats to combat ticks, and a corral. The Reese family primarily resided on Palm Beach Island, but kept a second residence at their groves.

In 1975, the business rebranded as Reese Ranch Groves. Although it continued to grow and sell oranges, the site now also catered to tourism with a feed store, petting zoo, alligator farm, and tram tour. The peacocks seen in Riverbend Park until the 2010s were escapees from the petting zoo.

In 1986, Claude Dimmick Reese Jr. sold the entire property to the South Florida Water Management District. Under terms of the sale agreement, tourist operations ended in 1990 but Reese retained a log cabin and one grove as a life estate until his death in 2008.

Sources

Archaeological & Historical Assessment of Riverbend Park
by Robert S. Carr, et al
LRHS Wilson-Hull-daPonte Collection
Palm Beach Post



Reese Ranch Groves postcard

The Race of the Oregon

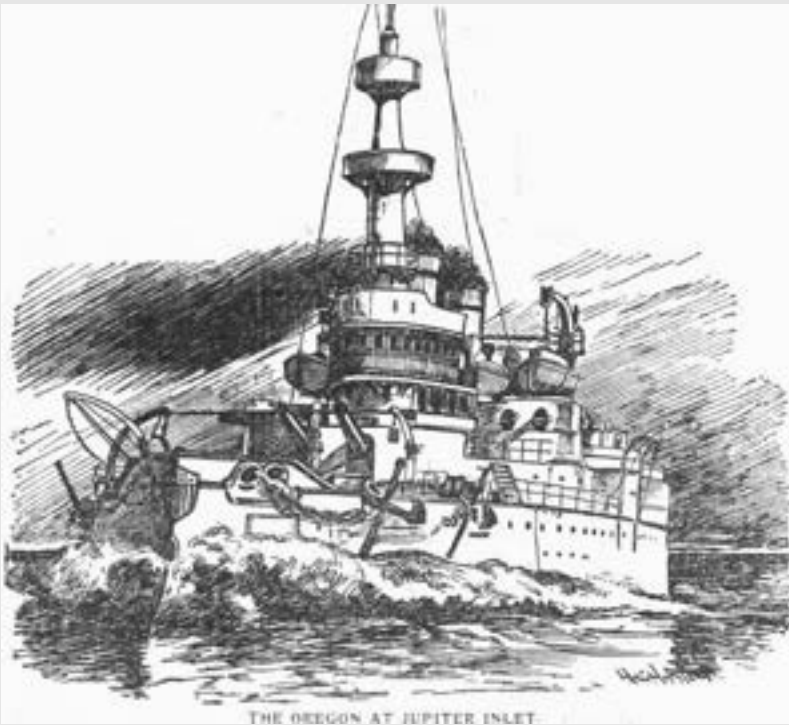


Illustration from the *Indianapolis News*, accompanying a story about *USS Oregon* arriving at Jupiter Inlet

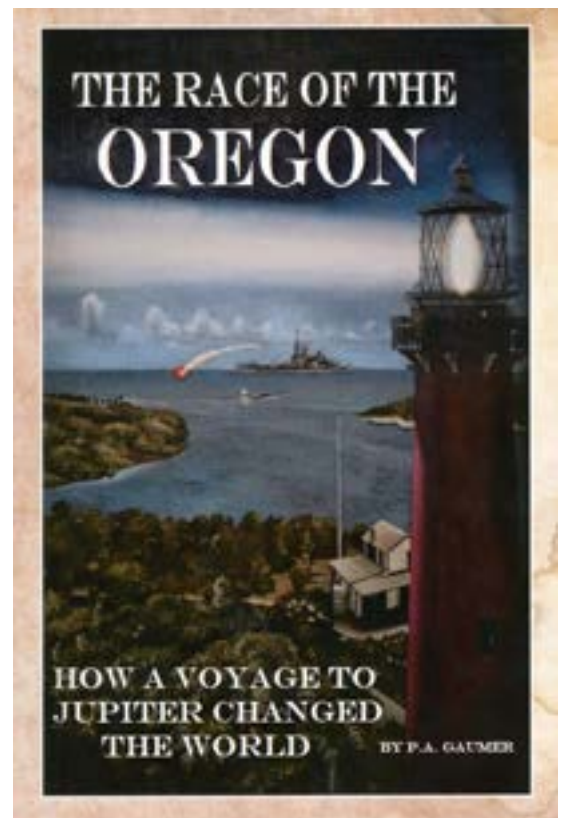
A few hours after sunset on 24 May 1898, an ominous silhouette loomed on the horizon off Jupiter Inlet. The battleship *USS Maine* had exploded three months earlier in Havana, Cuba. The United States had declared war on Spain less a month earlier. Was the vanguard of the Spanish fleet here to blast the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse to bits?

Some locals panicked. Others armed themselves against invasion. A signal flare went up and rowed cutter headed for shore. Soon everyone could breathe a sigh of relief: it was not an enemy vessel, but rather the *USS Oregon*. The U.S. Navy's first battleship built on the Pacific Coast had undertaken a remarkable journey around South America: 66 days and over 14,000 miles from California to Florida.

Local resident Paul Gaumer has long been fascinated by the remarkable journey of the *USS Oregon* during the Spanish-American War. His new book, [The Race of the Oregon: How A Voyage to Jupiter Changed the World](#), chronicles the history of the famous battleship. Gaumer not only shares the tale but puts the event in context, weaving it into a narrative along with the life of Theodore Roosevelt and the around-the-world voyage of Joshua Slocum.

Not only did the *USS Oregon* go on to play an important role in the war, but its long trip helped spur the construction of the Panama Canal. The canal not only became a vital part of international maritime commerce, but it played a vital role in moving warships between the Atlantic and Pacific during World War II. The canal increased ship traffic through the Florida Straits, adding to the importance of Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse and later Loran Stations Hobe Sound and Jupiter.

[The Race of the Oregon](#) is available at the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse & Museum gift shop.



The Coast Signal Service at Jupiter and Palm Beach

The Spanish-American War of 1898 was a brief but important conflict, mostly remembered because it brought Theodore Roosevelt to national fame. An obscure but interesting part of the war was the Navy's Coast Signal Service.

In Oct 1897, the Secretary of the Navy convened a board to develop a plan for a "Coast Signal Service" to be activated in case of a war. The Lighthouse Board and Life Saving Service were both happy "lend assistance fully and unreservedly" by allowing some of their stations to double as Coast Signal Stations. The cooperation of those uniformed civilian federal agencies would be vital, but manpower would mostly come from the state naval militias. Florida had fortuitously formed a naval militia in the summer of 1897 and most other coastal states had similar organizations. Naval militias were predecessors to the Navy Reserve, much as state militias were predecessors to the National Guard.

Planning for the Coast Signal Service occurred just in time. On 15 Feb 1898, the *USS Maine* exploded in the harbor of Havana, Cuba. War with Spain had loomed for years, and now the Navy prepared in earnest. On March 15, Capt. Caspar F. Goodrich, USN, was ordered to produce "a preliminary plan of arrangements for the establishing a coast signal service on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts." Goodrich personally "visited all of the principal cities on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, conferring with the commanding officers of the Naval Militia in each state. He designated the points at which stations were to be located, what gear was to be used, etc." On April 9, Goodrich was ordered to implement his

plan and allocated \$75,000 for that purpose. Orders went out to Naval Militia commanders three days later.

Following the lead of the Lighthouse Service and Lifesaving Service, the Coast Signal Service (CSS) was organized into seven districts. These included the 5th District for the Florida East Coast and 6th District for the Florida West Coast. The CSS established 33 stations on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, almost double the 17 originally envisioned. In the 5th District:

- Mount Cornelia near the mouth of the St. Johns River. It was the highest natural point in Duval County, but had no existing facilities. The Lighthouse Board had unsuccessfully requested funds to build a new lighthouse there.
- Cape Canaveral Lighthouse
- Jupiter Inlet LSS, located where Carlin Park is today, no longer had a crew of paid turfmens, but Charles R. Carlin remained keeper. With plenty of space available and the station building provided barracks space and a covered lookout tower. The CSS built a 90-ft tall wooden signal mast at the station.
- Cape Florida Lighthouse. The light had been inactive for two decades, replaced by the Fowey Rocks Lighthouse offshore. The CSS crew substantially repaired the brick keepers' dwelling which had been gutted by a fire years earlier. A yardarm for signal flags was attached to the side of the lantern.

The Coast Guard Signal Service... continued

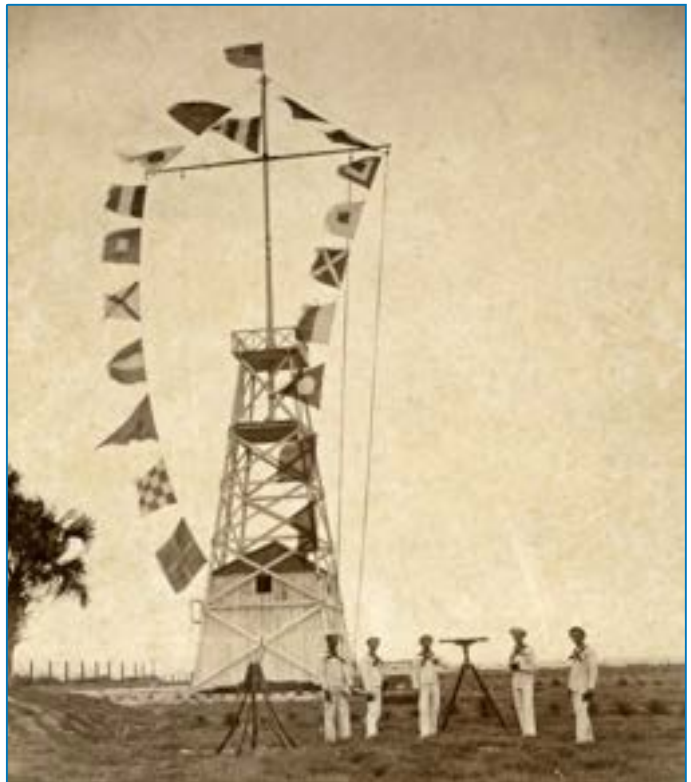
A particular challenge for the Florida stations was that none were connected to telegraph lines. Jupiter was at least located on the mainland, about two miles on foot from a Western Union office. Poles were still standing from a previous telegraph line to the station so it seemed like reestablishing a direct communication line would be easy. However, a telephone line was not in operation until the end of May. The delay was caused by the telephone equipment being accidentally delivered to Juniper, in rural central Florida, instead of Jupiter.

Cape Canaveral was extremely remote at the time. To reach the nearest telegraph, a courier rode a bicycle 15 miles then took a hired motor launch across the Indian River to Cocoa. Cape Florida required a boat trip across Biscayne Bay to Miami.

The CSS crews communicated with passing ships using semaphore flags in International Code only. However, they were trained to read Navy Code flags so that they could receive coded confidential messages and forward them, still encoded, to Washington via telegraph. They were of course expected to report any suspicious vessels. Equipping the stations with spyglasses, binoculars, and signaling equipment proved a slower process than establishing the stations. Most of the equipment was purchased by the federal government in New York and shipped to the stations via district headquarters.

When the USS Oregon arrived off Jupiter Inlet, the vessel failed to communicate with the Coast Signal Station and instead sent a landing party to the Weather Bureau Station. The reason for this was simple: the battleship had left California before the activation of the Coast Signal Service and thus had

no idea a Coast Signal Station existed at Jupiter. The Oregon also “showed no lights” and made no attempt to communicate with the shore via light signals. Thus the CSS crew failed to realize the vessel anchored offshore was a warship or that it had any signal lights aboard. They waited until morning when they could communicate with semaphore.



The only known photo of the Coastal Signal Service at Palm Beach Island. There are no known photos when the station was active at Jupiter. (Courtesy of the Bradford-Eppes Family Collection, FSU Special Collections)

In June, the Coast Signal Service moved the Jupiter station to Palm Beach Island near the Palm Beach Inn (Breakers Hotel). The East Coast Hotel Company provided use of the grounds and a small nearby house at no cost, along with a connection to the hotel's telegraph line.

The Coast Guard Signal Service... continued

The U.S. Navy's decisive defeat of the Spanish fleet off Santiago, Cuba on July 3 effectively ended any need to continue the Coast Signal Service. The Palm Beach crew was discharged August 12. Per prior agreement, the station's lookout tower and signal mast were turned over to the hotel company.

Writing about the CSS just a year after the war, F. B. Anderson observed: "The country is now in a position to establish and maintain an excellent coast signal service without the expenditure of much more money than is already provided by law." Although events rendered the Coast Signal Service unnecessary, it was a useful test of where to locate stations and cooperation between light stations, lifesaving stations, and weather stations.

The Superintendent of the Coast Signal Service concluded that the organization had "accomplished all that was expected, and went out of existence with a good name. Its success was due the zeal, energy, and good judgment of the assistants and enlisted men of the Naval Militia, who manned the stations." The Superintendent recommended that, in the next war, every lifesaving station and coastal weather bureau station should become a coastal signal station. Lighthouses were only needed by the CSS to fill gaps in the network of lifesaving and weather stations. The Superintendent also recommend 14 permanent coast signal stations at key locations from Maine to the Florida Keys, "...for the reason that these points have been found to be important for observation." In Florida, permanent stations were recommended at Palm Beach Island, Fowey Rocks Lighthouse, and Sand Key Lighthouse. Although the Coast Signal Service was permanently discontinued and never reactivated, these recommendations

probably did influence some future federal government decisions, including the expansion of the Jupiter Weather Bureau building a few years later, and the establishment of a Weather Bureau Station on Sand Key.

In World War I, Navy signalmen were assigned to major lighthouses and other key observation points on the Atlantic Coast, including the Jupiter Weather Bureau Station. During World War II, with the Coast Guard having absorbed the Lighthouse Service and Lifesaving Service, nearly every coastal lighthouse and lifeboat station served as a lookout post. The Coast Guard Beach Patrol provided further shoreline security with patrols and watchtowers. It was the logical evolution of the Coast Signal Service of 1898.

Florida Naval Militia known to have served at the Jupiter or Palm Beach stations (not all at the same time):

Edmund T. Atkinson, Lovick P. Pinkston, F. R. Edmonds, David Jenkins, Edward B. Eppes, John H. Smalls, Harry A. Luce. All were from North Florida.

Sources:

Coast Signal Service correspondence in National Archives Southeast Annex, RG 24 Entry 438 and "The Coast Signal System" by F. B. Anderson in the U.S. Naval Institute's Proceedings magazine (Dec 1899 - Vol. 25 No. 4).

Keepers' Update

Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse & Museum is open Tuesday-Sunday. Admission is sold each day 10AM-4PM and the Gift Shop is open until 5PM. Daily access is now through the former PX gate on the east side of the parking lot.

The lighthouse remains open for climbing during the US 1 bridge project, but the Fresnel lens is currently inactive and protected against vibration risk. It will be active again once it is safe to do so.

The **historic World War II Navy housing building on the waterfront is closed until further notice** also due to the US 1 bridge project. Lighthouse Park, operated by the Town of Jupiter, remains open normally.

Monthly Kids' Programs: Lighthouse Explorers Club program is on the second Saturday of the month, for elementary and middle school children. Lighthouse Storytime, for preschool-age children, takes place on third Saturdays. Lighthouse Homeschool Mornings are the first Thursday of each month, resuming September 7. Please RSVP for these events on our website.

Specialty Guided Tours: In addition to our general tours at 12 PM and 2 PM, we now offer weekly specialty tours at 1 PM. Tuesdays: Native Plants. Wednesdays: Military History. Thursdays: Native Americans (beginning September 28). Fridays: Lighthouse Keepers. General and specialty guided tours are free with daily admission.

National Public Lands Day: Help keep the ONA outstanding! The Bureau of Land Management is organizing volunteer cleanups, trail maintenance, and native plantings on Saturday September 23 starting at 8 AM. Volunteers should meet by the lighthouse Gift Shop & Admissions - not the ONA trailheads. Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse & Museum will offer specialty guided tours. ONA site partners will have information booths and activities on site.

Sunrise Tours: See the sun rise over the Atlantic Ocean from the top of Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse! Tours held on select Saturdays and Sundays: October 21, 22, 28, and 29. Registration available now through our website and Gift Shop.

Save the Date: Our annual Rendezvous at the Light fundraiser will be held Saturday, November 18, 2023.

A big thank you to our summer interns who helped during the hot summer! And thank you to our non-seasonal volunteers who also braved the heat, and in many cases picked up extra shifts.

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