

The John DuBois Family of Jupiter: A Florida Prototype, 1887-1981

By Harry A. Kersey, Jr.*

One of the most striking vistas on the east coast of Florida today is the panoramic view from the old DuBois home, perched high atop an ancient Indian shell mound in northern Palm Beach County. To the northwest across the broad Loxahatchee River the stately old Jupiter Lighthouse, which was first lit in 1860, stands sentinel on a high point of land at the confluence of the Loxahatchee and Indian Rivers. The tidal basin thus formed flows swiftly to meet the Atlantic Ocean some three quarters of a mile to the east at the treacherous and beautiful Jupiter inlet. Upstream beyond the town of Jupiter the river also branches into a north and south fork, each of which meanders for miles through stands of native palm and hardwood hammocks. The north fork of the Loxahatchee, in particular, is counted among the significant “wild rivers” remaining in this country. Despite the influx of population which has recently begun to crowd the water’s edge, this picturesque region still retains much of the charm which attracted young Harry DuBois when he first saw it in the 1880’s.¹ Since that time the DuBois family has been an integral part of the Jupiter area’s social history, and in many respects they reflect a life-style typical of many other pioneer families whose fortunes rose or declined in

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This study was made possible in part by a grant from the Council on Humanistic Values for Palm Beach County which is supported by the Chastain Foundation.

successive stages of the state's evolution. Moreover, it has been a family possessed of an unusual sense of its own and the region's cultural history, probably due in great part to the fact that their homestead contained one of the most significant archaeological sites along the southeast coast of Florida: the great shell mound location of the Hobe Indian village where the Quaker merchant Jonathan Dickinson and his party were taken as captives in 1696.²

Harry DuBois, a native of Monmouth County, N.J., was the son of a farmer who could trace his lineage back to two French Huguenot brothers who arrived in America during the 1690's. Harry first came south to Florida at age 16 to work throughout the winter months in the orange groves around Titusville and Merritt Island.³ The natural beauty and lure of the warm climate ultimately led him to relocate permanently in the Jupiter area about 1892. The inhabitants of the little settlement which had grown up around the old lighthouse depended primarily upon farming and fishing as a source of income, and life was slow paced. Then in 1889, through a political quirk, the voters of Dade County opted to move the county seat from Miami to Juno on the north shore of Lake Worth. This move catapulted Jupiter into the role of an economic and transportation center. The steam boats operating on the Indian River could navigate no farther south than the Loxahatchee River, then cargo had to be transported overland and reloaded on the lake steamer and sailboats plying Lake Worth. A hack line operated between the two points after 1885, but it was not sufficient to meet the transportation needs of the area, so in 1890 the Plant System completed a narrow gauge railroad to haul freight and passengers over the seven and one-half miles which separated Jupiter from Juno.⁴ The line was inevitably dubbed the "Celestial Railroad" with its terminals in Jupiter and Juno, and nominal stops at Venus and Mars. The quaint line soon gained national attention for its three colorful miniature engines and rolling stock, as well as personnel who played tunes such as "Dixie" on the train whistle or stopped for impromptu hunting excursions. Another oddity was the lack of a turntable which made it necessary that the train back up the entire way on the Juno to Jupiter leg.

In 1892 business was booming and the town of Jupiter was platted around the area of the railroad docks on the south bank of the Loxahatchee opposite the lighthouse. Two years later H. M. Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway, which had been working its way down the east coast from St. Augustine, bypassed Jupiter to the west laying a track to West Palm Beach. With this, the fortunes of Juno began to decline.

Most of the law and business firms left Juno for the growing new city at the temporary terminus of the railroad which would eventually extend to Miami. When another vote was held in 1899, the county seat would be returned permanently to Miami. Jupiter also suffered an economic reversal when the "Celestial Railroad" ceased operating in 1895, and the Indian River steamers no longer brought freight and passengers to the docks on the Loxahatchee. The community returned to its sleepy existence and became just another stop on the Florida East Coast Railway, the station being located in West Jupiter near the site originally designated as Neptune.⁵ While the DuBois family had no direct involvement with the "Celestial Railroad", many of the other townspeople were adversely impacted by its demise.

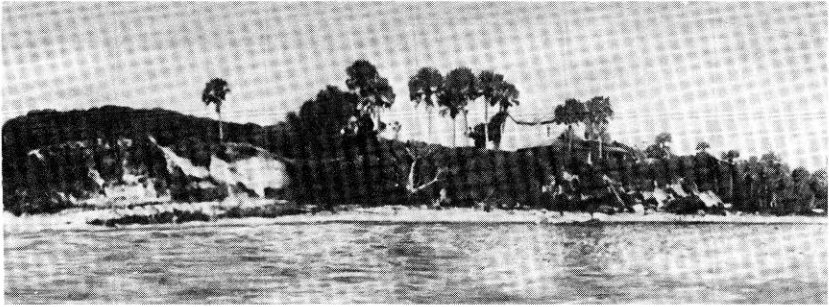
As a young man, Harry DuBois engaged in a variety of occupations and economic ventures to sustain himself. For example, when the Flagler railroad began to build southward from Titusville, he acquired a 40-foot "sharpie" rigged with twin leg o' mutton sails and hauled building materials into the Palm Beach docks. Perhaps the most glamorous position that he held was as a member of the U.S. Life Saving Station crew which operated at Jupiter Inlet from 1886-96.⁶ Under the command of Captain Charles R. Carlin, the station was located on the beach south of the inlet, and its main function was to provide assistance to vessels caught in the tricky seas near Jupiter. The six members of the crew were all powerful swimmers and excellent seamen who knew the vagaries of the local water which could bring disaster to unwary boaters. The Life Saving Station was closed after the extension of the railroad to Miami and the opening of the Intracoastal Waterway made it unnecessary for travelers to venture outside the inlet.

The Life Saving Station always shut down during the summer months, so DuBois of necessity turned to other pursuits. In the 1890's he purchased 18 acres of land known as Stone's Point on the Loxahatchee River. The central feature of this tract was the massive oyster shell mound some twenty feet high and over six hundred feet long. On the level ground he planted numerous orange trees and, later, banana plants. The citrus never thrived due to their proximity to the ocean, since the salt air tended to retard growth. However, the bananas flourished enough to become profitable — DuBois sold them for 1¢ per finger in West Palm Beach, which was a good price for that era. Earlier he had bought twenty acres which was planted in pineapples along the Intracoastal Waterway; there was also a small packing house on the property. The building was later dismantled and moved to the shell mound, and is probably the oldest



The crew of the Life Saving Station at Jupiter about 1895. Harry DuBois is at the right with folded arms.

frame building surviving in Jupiter to this day. The pineapples were packed and shipped north by train; a cider press was also employed to extract the juice which was bottled and sold. It was difficult to raise pineapples on the low land where frost settled and often killed the crown



Earliest known photo of DuBois house atop the shell ridge. About 1896. A second story was added a few years later.

or bloom of the fruit, and lath sheds had to be built to prevent freezing. Even so, the prices for pineapples began a steady decline, due in part to competition from Cuban growers starting around the turn of the century.⁷ It soon became more profitable for DuBois to turn to raising bees for honey. He also began off-shore commercial fishing, catching pompano which could be sold for 25¢ per pound at the Royal Poinciana Hotel in Palm Beach.

In 1898, Harry DuBois married a young teacher, Susan Sanders, and brought his bride to the new home he had built on the shell mound. She was a graduate of a Kansas normal school who had come to Florida the previous summer to join her father and brother at their homestead on Lake Worth. In her memoirs she recounts “There were five men to every woman and school teachers were very scarce. The teacher’s examination for that year had been held before I arrived so they sent me to Titusville to take the examination there. . . . The school house west of Stuart was an 8x12 palmetto shack with no floor and no desk for me but a box to sit on. The children sat on a long backless bench with a continuous slanting board in front to prop their books against. There was a desk and bench down each side of the room and a place for me to walk up and down in the center. When it rained the roof leaked so badly I had to put up my umbrella. I taught children, just beginners to some almost as old as I was, for the princely sum of \$40 per month. My board and washing was \$10 a month.”⁸

The young teacher’s living conditions were not much better, for in the home where she stayed it was necessary to share a bed with a twelve-year-old girl. Only a hanging boat sail separated them from the other members of the family who occupied the single-room dwelling. Luckily, within six months she was transferred to the school in Jupiter

and soon met her future husband. The story is told that they met on a blind date on a dark night, and it was not until they rowed over to the lighthouse and climbed to the top that they got a good look at each other; apparently it was love at first sight. As with succeeding generations, much of their courting took place around the Jupiter Lighthouse and on the beaches, as there was little else to do in those days. Apparently only the first floor of their home on the shell mound was completed prior to the wedding, and a second story was added at a later date. Their first child, John, was born there in 1899, followed by Henry, Anna and Neil. All are still living with their families in the vicinity of Jupiter and West Palm Beach. Nevertheless, it is the family of John Rue DuBois which has remained at the original shell mound homestead over the ensuing decades, and provides the historical linkage between the site and the DuBois name.

John's earliest memories are of playing about the shell mound, or fishing and boating in the Loxahatchee and along the Atlantic beaches. His childhood years were an almost idyllic existence for a young boy in turn-of-the-century Florida. He and his brothers and sister attended the elementary school at Neptune beginning in 1905. The post office at the south end of the railroad bridge retained that name until it was merged with the Jupiter post office in 1908, and Neptune passed into history.⁹ The youngsters who lived along the river were transported there each day on a "school boat" originally operated by C.P. Jackson. This unique craft was a converted lifeboat from the battleship *Maine*, and bore the same name.¹⁰ The DuBois children often had to meet the boat at a point about a half-mile from their home, when the current was too swift near the inlet for the boat to come to their own dock. Nor was the daily trip to school always boring, as the children often fished along the way. John remembers that he caught his first bluefish trolling from the back of the school boat. In 1911, a new school was built in Jupiter with elementary grades housed on the ground floor, and secondary instruction being offered through the 10th grade upstairs. A student wishing to complete high school had to go to West Palm Beach for the remaining two years of schooling. John DuBois completed his work at the Jupiter school, then joined his father in the family enterprises.

One of his first tasks was to supervise the removal of a good portion of the shell mound, which was sold in 1917 as road building material for the town of Lake Park. John took great care to see that any artifacts found in the mound were carefully preserved, and many items were later examined and classified by scientists at the Florida State Museum.¹¹ One

piece of fibre-tempered pottery was dated from the era 500 B.C. In the mound it was found that blackened ash from fires formed layers between the oyster shells, bones of fish and animals, celts, shell tools and sherds of pottery which gave evidence of the people who lived on the boundary of the inlet for centuries before Europeans arrived. The first on-site study of the mound was made in 1896 by a noted archaeologist but the findings were never published. In 1965 a systematic excavation of the greatly attenuated mound was made by archaeologists from Florida Atlantic University, but the site yielded no additional significant material.¹²

The DuBois, father and son, were acknowledged to be expert seamen, and engaged in numerous rescue and salvage missions around the Jupiter Inlet.¹³ There was little profit derived from these ventures, but they did create an extensive family collection of ships' bells, sextants, sounding leads, log books, and similar paraphernalia. This collection represents a historical cross section of the Jupiter maritime tradition which would be valuable to any future museum in the area. The only real money to be made from the sea, however, came from the less glamorous chore of fishing.

For many years John had worked with his father in their commercial fishing operation. Just off Jupiter the Gulf Stream reaches one of its closest points to the Florida shore, bringing benefits of a mild climate and unparalleled fishing. They would set their nets several hundred yards off-shore at night, and the natural drift of the Gulf Stream would sweep them northward and toward the shore line. If they caught just five or six pompano or other expensive fish each evening, that was considered "making wages". John always received 10% of the profit from the catch, which he banked, so he generally had cash to fund other undertakings. For example, after he left school his father suggested that they expand their apiary business, so John moved to the Delray-Boynton area and began buying up hives. He built an 8 x 10 building on cleared land as a collection center, and used an old Model-T open body truck to transport the raw honey for extracting in Jupiter. When World War I started, honey sold for 35¢ a gallon and the bees were soon paid for; in one year the DuBois shipped over 90,000 pounds of honey to northern markets. The honey business was continued until the hurricanes of 1926 and 1928 dispersed most of the bees across the peninsula.¹⁴ Unfortunately, Harry DuBois had developed pernicious anemia and passed away in 1925. He had been his son's mentor and business partner, and left a legacy of independence, initiative and self-reliance which became a family tradition. When most of the family holdings were purchased for a Palm Beach

County Park in 1972, one of the conditions was that the site be named in honor of Harry DuBois' Family.

In the year preceding his father's death, John acquired another partner who was to remain with him for over fifty years: his wife. In 1914, eleven-year-old Bessie Wilson moved to Jupiter with her family from New Jersey. Her father was a wholesale florist who came to raise plants in a warm climate, and he established a fernery on fifty acres at Limestone Creek. Although there were business difficulties and her mother died three years after their arrival, the Wilsons remained, with young Bessie assuming many of the household duties for her family. She soon met the tall DuBois boy while attending the local school, and a romance began which was to last a lifetime. In 1919, John Wilson purchased a car so Bessie could finish high school in West Palm Beach, and she graduated in 1923. On June 23, 1924, Bessie and John DuBois were married. Following their marriage John brought Bessie home to a "honeymoon cottage" which he had built to the west of the shell mound and fronting the river. It was not long before they began to raise a family. A daughter, Susan, was born in 1925, followed by Doris (1926), Louise (1926) and Harry (1929).

Like other youngsters growing up in south Florida early in this century, John and Bessie fondly recall the visits of the colorful Seminole Indians who came to trade with local merchants. They usually arrived in covered wagons drawn by oxen or horses, and traded such items as otter pelts, 'coon skins and alligator hides, as well as livestock. Around 1914 the Indians brought live pigs to the store of Pennington "Pa" Kitching, brother of the famous Indian trader Capt. Walter Kitching of Stuart, and everyone knew they were in town by the raucous squealing. At Frank Bowers' store similar items were traded, and John remembers that the Seminoles came with large tin cans to be filled with lard which they used for cooking. He also confirmed that the Indians bought and paid for one item at a time, which was their pattern of conducting business at other trading centers during this era.¹⁵ Aside from their transactions with the store keepers, the Indians had very little contact with other people in the community — although it was recalled that as late as the 1930's they continued to sell deer meat and huckleberries to the townspeople. In later years a well-known Seminole, Billy Bowlegs III, visited the DuBois home in Jupiter. His portrait, drawn by the famous artist of Indian life in Florida, Jim Hutchinson, is a treasured family memento.

It seemed that when the Indians traveled they brought everything that they owned with them. They made temporary camps on a spot of

high ground at present day Center Street, near to Kitching's store. At certain times of the year schools of large fish would enter the inlet and become trapped there by shifting sand bars and tides; then the Seminoles appeared in their canoes off the DuBois home on the shell mound, spearing the fish in great numbers. John never discovered how the Seminoles learned the fish were in the inlet, but the Indians always seemed to arrive when they were there. At one time it was possible for a Seminole to pole a canoe all the way from Indiantown to Jupiter using the backwaters of the Loxahatchee River.

By 1926 the federal highway was completed to Miami, and a bridge spanned the Loxahatchee at Jupiter. Almost immediately the DuBois property which was closest to the inlet became accessible to sportsmen, and a fishing camp operation was developed. This was a natural outgrowth of the family's ability to derive a living from the inlet and river environs. Furthermore, it provided the only steady source of income for the young couple during some lean years.

There were times when John, hard pressed to meet the needs of his family, wondered if he had not made a mistake in abandoning the apiary business prematurely. In 1929, to supplement their income from renting boats and selling bait, the DuBois opened a restaurant in a 30 x 40 gray shingled building; it became an immediate success with a well-deserved reputation for fine seafood. The restaurant was a family affair, with Bessie supervising the kitchen and dining room, and the children doing all manner of odd jobs. John personally supplied most of the fish, harvested oysters from the upper Loxahatchee and Hobe Sound, and even dug clams in a little stream which ran through the eastern end of their property. The restaurant remained open until 1942, when the gasoline rationing and blackout restrictions imposed by World War II made it impossible to continue operating.

The 1920's marked the era of Prohibition in the United States, and the Jupiter Inlet was a central point of entry for rum runners operating from the Bahamas. "Often in the night," Bessie wrote, "the sound of a high-powered motor could be heard above the breaking of ground swells as the heavily laden rum boats entered the inlet. The three branches of the Loxahatchee, the inland waterway and the Indian River offered coves and dense cover where the liquor could be concealed or unloaded. One dark and windy night in February, 1925, such a boat loaded with choice liquors, capsized on the bar. The rum runners jumped for their lives. As they swam in the chilly water, the boat unbelievably righted itself, circled them and then ran aground upon the beach south of the inlet. At daybreak

another boat arrived and began to salvage the precious ‘hams’ of liquor, as the burlap sacks holding the bottles were called. When townspeople and fishermen began to arrive the rum runners withdrew. Fishermen hooking into the burlap bags spilled into the surf had a memorable day of sport.”¹⁶

During part of the “Roaring Twenties” John DuBois was the Constable of District One in Palm Beach County. He first assumed the post in 1928 and served more than twenty years. One of his duties entailed working with federal agents sent to stanch the flow of illicit alcohol into the country through the inlet. They also attempted to find and destroy the stills of bootleggers in the woodlands around Jupiter; these duties led to some memorable incidents. One moonlit night dogs were barking and people were sneaking around, and a federal agent came to John for support in apprehending a boat which was coming through. In the dark they became separated, but John waited until the boat came under the bridge then he jumped down onto the bow, pulled his gun and placed the two occupants under arrest. Unfortunately, the boat was continuing on its way down the river and away from the federal agent who was calling out for John. Eventually he got the boat under control, handcuffed the prisoners, and took them over to the Coast Guard station at the lighthouse where a call was placed to Miami for assistance.

Occasionally he accompanied the “prohis”, as the prohibition enforcement officers were called, on forays into the back country to break up stills. In one instance, a still was on the land of Bill Ashley at Fruita, north of Hobe Sound. Ashley was the last surviving brother of John Ashley, head of the notorious gang of bank robbers and rum runners which had terrorized the southeast coast of Florida during the ‘teens and early twenties.¹⁷ Most of the Ashley gang had been killed in a shootout at Sebastian Inlet in 1924; nevertheless, given the family’s known propensity for violence, one did not undertake lightly the destruction of a still within sight of an Ashley house. After chopping up the still and burning the mash boxes, the party drove up to the house where they were greeted cordially by old Bill Ashley, had a drink of water, and left without incident—much to John’s relief. For the most part, the rum running days around Jupiter Inlet were spared the bloodshed that marked the liquor traffic along other parts of the Florida coast.

Over the centuries, the Jupiter Inlet had been closed numerous times due to natural causes, a condition reported in many historical accounts. As early as 1775, the Dutch cartographer Bernard Romans visited the inlet while it was sealed, and many military men who fre-

mented the region during the Second Seminole War (1835-42) provided graphic descriptions of the silted up entrance being forced open by natural pressure of the river, only to be closed up again due to adverse winds and tides. Moreover, the mouth of the inlet also seems to have changed periodically for, according to Bessie DuBois, "In early days the inlet was several hundred yards south of the present location. The map of the Fort Jupiter Reservation dated 1855 shows the inlet in this position. The present location of the inlet was fixed when by a special act of the Florida Legislature, a Jupiter Inlet District was formed in 1921. In 1921 land values were very low and only a few hundred people lived in the newly formed district. The deepening of the Inland Waterway north and south of the inlet relieved much of the pressure that in olden days had burst the inlet open in times of fall floods. Funds for dredging were not always available. There were sad times when the inlet was closed."¹⁸

John DuBois was first elected to membership on the Jupiter Inlet Commission in 1936. There were three members and they made \$2 per meeting up to a maximum of \$100 annually. The other two members elected themselves secretary and treasurer respectively, and John became the odd vote more often than not. Although keeping the inlet open was a vital concern to all interests in the region, the commission often made political decisions to placate the tax payers and land owners of the district.

The financial problems of the Inlet District became particularly acute during the Depression years. As Bessie DuBois described the situation, "The 1930's were a period of great frustration for the men who served as inlet commissioners. One of these, John R. DuBois, served for twenty of the leanest years. There were times during the depression when the Inlet District barely had money to pay the interest on bonds. There was no money for maintenance or improvements. Appeals to Washington brought a concerned response from Congresswoman Ruth Bryan Owen who visited the inlet several times and did all in her power to secure government aid without success. . . . Several surveys have been made but the sad conclusion was that the benefits did not justify the expense. Since 1921 when the Jupiter Inlet was formed the northern part of the District, Hobe Sound, had been made into part of Martin County. Although two thirds of the area drained by Jupiter Inlet District was in Martin County, the tax paying citizens did not want to be taxed for an inlet in Palm Beach County so they withdrew from the district in 1945. For many years the sand dredged from the inlet had been pumped on the north side of the inlet filling in what had been a marshy area. In 1954 this large tract of

wilderness fronting on the ocean and river was purchased by developer Charles Martyn. It became the Jupiter Inlet Beach Colony, an area of beautiful homes. In 1956 Mr. Martyn developed Tequesta farther up the Loxahatchee.”¹⁹

The dredging of the inlet also contributed to the expansion of the DuBois holdings, although on a minor scale by comparison to the development of the north shore of the inlet. Those members who had consistently ordered the fill dumped on the north shore found that this was no longer possible after the land was sold and the profit made. Only then did they turn to the DuBois family for permission to dump the fill on their shore line. This was not without its complications, however, as an overzealous dredge operator blocked the access from the DuBois marina to deep water. After prolonged negotiations the channel was reopened but even then the family had to bear part of the cost. Moreover, they also had to purchase the newly created land from the Florida Internal Improvement Fund. Eventually the fill from the dredging added some eight acres to the DuBois waterfront properties.

Like other Floridians during the Great Depression, the DuBois found themselves in severe financial straits. Although their home and property were secure, there was little hard cash available in the community. To generate additional income John took a job in 1936 as a guard at the estate of Harold G. Vanderbilt in Manalapan. His \$60 per month salary was helpful in keeping the restaurant open, but he felt that he was wearing out his Ford automobile making the daily trip. When Vanderbilt refused his request for a salary raise, John resigned the position and turned it over to his sister's husband.

Another source of income for the DuBois family during this era was renting out the old family home to wealthy winter visitors in the Jupiter area. Perhaps the most memorable family to lease the house was that of a Yale professor emeritus, Dr. Charles M. Andrews and his wife Evangeline, who first came in the winter of 1935. The Andrews soon became enthralled with the old Indian mound site as the result of a unique gift. “They,” according to Mrs. DuBois, “were visited by one of Dr. Andrews' former students, Mr. Louis Capron of West Palm Beach. He brought, as a gift to the Andrews, one of the old copies of the Jonathan Dickinson Journal. When Dr. and Mrs. Andrews learned that they were indeed living on the very site of Dickinson's captivity, they became completely fascinated and engrossed in the Journal. The next seven years were spent in exhaustive research, editing and preparing the Dickinson Journal which was published in 1945 by Mrs. Andrews who shared in the labor, and of course by Yale University Press. Dr. Andrews, alas, did not

live to see this, his last book, in print. He left his legacy to Florida and Jupiter Inlet, a record of the aboriginal Indians of this lower coast of Florida, their customs and appearance. He researched that memorable journey with all the skill of a dedicated historian. Due to this book, the nearby state park has been named Jonathan Dickinson Park.”²⁰

Dr. and Mrs. Andrews returned to Jupiter each winter through 1941, after which travel problems attendant to World War II made the trip impossible. The DuBois’ remember them as people of charm and culture, and wealth — they always brought their own chauffeur and housekeeper. They also entertained many famous and interesting visitors, such as the noted historian Samuel Eliot Morison of Harvard. The Andrews also spent a large sum of money in refurbishing the home on the shell mound, especially by having the fireplaces constructed with native stone provided by John DuBois. On George Washington’s Birthday, which was also his own, Dr. Andrews hosted a birthday party replete with cake and balloons for the children of the DuBois family. Although Dr. Andrews passed away in 1943, his wife remained in touch with the DuBois until her death and their children still occasionally visit Jupiter.

The era of World War II brought dramatic changes to the Jupiter area which found itself in the middle of the war effort. In one sense the military build-up provided employment opportunities for local people, but there was also overcrowding, food and gasoline shortages, as well as blackout regulations to contend with. Over 10,000 army personnel were brought into Camp Murphy, a few miles north of Jupiter, while the Coast Guard Station at Jupiter Lighthouse was expanded and fortified as a radar/communications center. Due to the disruption of his normal occupation, John was employed by the civil engineering department at Camp Murphy for five years; for the first time in his life he had to apply for a social security card in order to work for someone else.

Through the early years of the war the conflict was brought home with dramatic impact as German U-Boats were sinking allied shipping within sight of Jupiter Inlet. During a two-day span in 1942, two tankers were torpedoed and the community was involved in rescue operations. On February 21, the petroleum tanker *Republic* traveling in ballast, went down off Hobe Sound with a loss of five lives. The explosions rocked the shore-front community breaking windows and china, but the residents aided the captain and surviving crewmen ashore. The following day, the fully loaded tanker *W.D. Anderson* went up in a sheet of flame seven miles off the inlet. Thirty-five crew members perished in the sinking of the largest ship to be lost along that stretch of the Florida coast.

During the remainder of 1942 another six ships would go down in

the vicinity of Jupiter Inlet, and there seemed to be little that could be done to prevent the attacks. As Bessie DuBois later described the situation, "After the first ships were torpedoed, persons driving along the ocean highway sometimes reported sighting submarines on the surface. Excited telephone calls to Morrison Field in West Palm Beach had to be relayed to Washington. By the time permission had been granted to send a plane, the submarine would have submerged. At first the planes were not equipped to sink submarines, and there was little they could do. Pleasure yachts patrolled the ship lanes rescuing survivors of the torpedoed vessels. One captain boasted that he would ram a submarine if the opportunity offered, but when one day a 200-foot submarine arose before him, he became completely unnerved. Many deeds of heroism were performed by these volunteers. At first our peacetime navy was fighting battles on every front, and for a time it seemed the Nazis had things their own way. But presently the tide turned, and blimps sailed slowly over the clear water tracking the submarines below. One submarine crew was captured and landed at Jupiter Inlet, where a Marine guard put them aboard a train for a Kentucky prisoner-of-war camp."²¹ By 1943, the development of convoy tactics had virtually eliminated U-boat attacks close to the Florida coast and the war moved away from the Jupiter Inlet.²² The DuBois' remember standing on the porch of the house on the shell mound near the war's end and seeing the lines of ghostly gray ships of the convoys stretching away to the horizon.

One happier result of the war years was that a young Marine stationed at the Jupiter Lighthouse facility, Charles Kindt, fell in love with the oldest DuBois daughter, Susan. The two were married following his discharge from the military in 1946. The Kindts maintain a home next to her parents, and one of their sons operates the marina facility adjacent to DuBois Park. In fact, there is what amounts to a DuBois family compound on the west side of DuBois Road which forms the entrance to the park. The marina site is in that portion of the original Harry DuBois purchase which was not included in the park proper.

With the end of the war, a normalcy returned to the Jupiter region—with the obvious exception that the population was growing; many former G.I.'s who had been stationed there returned to settle in an equable climate. The DuBois fishing camp benefited from this population growth in Palm Beach County. An accomplished handyman, John soon expanded the operation into a private recreational park and beach facility, adding covered picnic pavilions and bath facilities along the shoreline to the east of the bait house and marina. It soon became one of the most

popular spots in the north end of the county for young and old alike. John also enjoyed a reputation for having the best recipe for smoked fish, and drew customers from miles around. He was a master with a casting net, and improvised special fish smokers fashioned from discarded refrigerator boxes. He was an ultimate entrepreneur, and dabbled in all sorts of money-making ventures as had his father before him — although none produced any great wealth until the land was sold.

Despite his business ventures John maintained his association with many colorful local characters, such as the reclusive “Trapper Nelson” who maintained a camp up the Loxahatchee River. Nelson was a rugged individualist who survived pretty much off the land, maintained a small zoo for visitors and occasionally sold some animal furs he had trapped. When the “Trapper” died under mysterious circumstances in 1968, it was John DuBois who discovered his body at the camp, so to this day he still questions the official verdict that the death was a suicide. The case still holds a fascination for the local press which periodically recounts the “Trapper Nelson” story, embellishing it with an aura of mystery.

By the 1950's the DuBois children had all completed school, married, and moved away to pursue their own lives. This left Bessie DuBois with an opportunity to return to one of her old loves: The gathering and writing of local history. Since her childhood she had doted on tales of the Jupiter Inlet region and the people who settled there over the centuries. Being married into one of the pioneer families had only heightened this interest. Therefore it must have been a disappointment when, in 1946, the old DuBois home on the shell mound was sold to the Leo Vickers family of Ocean City, N.J.²³ Susan Sanders DuBois had vacated the house in 1925, the year following her husband's death, and moved to West Palm Beach to be with her aged father; she would remain there until her own death in 1977 at 101 years of age. After her departure the home was leased to a succession of tenants, many of whom occupied it seasonally. John and Bessie maintained the property and forwarded the rental monies to his mother, but they were never in a financial position to make a bid on the house — nor had they really considered that it could possibly pass out of the family. For still unexplained reasons Mrs. DuBois decided to sell the house and a limited right-of-way to the Vickers family, while John purchased the remainder of the property.

When Palm Beach county passed a \$50 million bond issue for the purchase of waterfront park lands in 1970, it was necessary to acquire both Vickers and DuBois holdings to form a county park. For a long period of time before the county provided a live-in caretaker the house

remained unoccupied and was vandalized extensively, but through the efforts of the Loxahatchee Historical Society it has been restored and is now open to the public on weekends. In 1979, the shell mound site was nominated to be placed on the National Register of Historical Places based upon historical documentation provided by Bessie DuBois and the local historical society.²⁴ This may have been her most significant act in the preservation of local history, although she was equally active in having the Jupiter Lighthouse placed on the National Register. As an officer of both the Palm Beach Historical Society and a Director of the Florida Historical Society, she came to know and work with most of the leading historians and preservationists in Florida. Her own specific contributions to the literature on Florida are found in two booklets: *Shipwrecks in the Vicinity of Jupiter Inlet* (1975), and *A History of Juno Beach and Juno, Florida* (1978), both privately published. In addition, she had four articles appear in *Tequesta*, the annual journal of the Historical Association of Southern Florida. These were "Jupiter Lighthouse" (1960), "The Wreck of the Victor" (1963), "Jupiter Inlet" (1968), and "Two South Florida Lighthouse Keepers" (1963). *The Florida Anthropologist* carried her report "Celt and Pendant from Jupiter Inlet Mound" in 1957, and a mimeographed study "Early Martin County Post Offices" was issued in 1962. A brief series of historical sketches were carried in *Gateway, The Magazine of the Port of Palm Beach* (1978-80). Her publications were supplemented by innumerable speeches to civic clubs, school groups, and various local historical societies throughout south Florida. By their own estimate, John and Bessie had given their slide presentation over 125 times, until declining health forced them to curtail that activity. Nevertheless, both remain loyal attenders at the annual meetings of the Florida Historical Society. By the late 1970's Bessie DuBois was acknowledged as one of the most significant non-professional historians active in South Florida.

John and Bessie DuBois now live quietly at their home across from the park and are frequently visited by students and reporters seeking information on the history of the Jupiter Inlet. Indeed, their Florida room is a veritable museum of artifacts covering a broad cross-section of the region's history. The family has been the subject of numerous newspaper accounts, and was recently featured in an interview broadcast on Channel 2 public television in Miami. Although hampered by failing eyesight, Bessie Wilson DuBois is busily collecting information for her latest work—a history of the pioneers who settled on the Loxahatchee River. John, a spry octogenarian, is active in the efforts of the Loxahatchee Historical



Bessie and John DuBois at their home on DuBois Road, Jupiter.

Society to secure a suitable historical museum for the Jupiter area, preferably in DuBois Park. Such a facility, he believes, would provide an appropriate setting which would induce other pioneer families to donate their collections for public display. Despite the numerous political and financial obstacles which stand in the way of this goal, the DuBois' agree that the Jupiter area is unique and deserving of its own historical identity. "They don't realize, though" Bessie argues, "that Palm Beach County History begins right here. . . . What was here in 1853, 1860? In 1870 there were two settlers down on Lake Worth. . . . Even a lot of the older families in this county like the Spencers and the Pierces, a number of those people began as assistant keepers over at the lighthouse. They got a good chance to look around from the top of the lighthouse, and they eventually took up homesteads and became pioneer residents of the county."²⁵

The history of Palm Beach County and southeast Florida is richer today because young Harry DuBois, too, ascended the lighthouse, shared that vision, and chose to remain forever on the Loxahatchee.

NOTES

1. The greatest part of this article is based on a set of oral history interviews conducted with Mr. and Mrs. John R. DuBois at their home in Jupiter, Florida. The dates of the taped interviews were July 18, August 15, and September 12, 1980. These interviews were supplemented by access to the DuBois family papers and photograph collection.

2. *Jonathan Dickinson's Journal, God's Protective Providence, Being the Narrative of a Journey from Port Royal in Jamaica to Philadelphia between August 23, 1696 and April 1, 1697*, eds. Evangeline Walker Andrews and Charles McLean Andrews (New Haven, 1961), pp. 10-17, Map 1. Charles M. Andrews, "The Florida Indians in the Seventeenth Century," *Tequesta*, III (1943), 39-41.

3. Harry DuBois to Anna D. and John DuBois, 17 November, 4, 11, 18 December 1887; 8, 22, 29 January, 5, 9, 10, 19, 26 February, 4, 11 March 1888, DuBois Family Papers, Jupiter, Florida. These letters provide significant insights into the Florida citrus industry during the 1880's, and were utilized by Dr. Jerry Weeks in his paper "Eldorado, Indian River Style" presented to the Florida Historical Society on May 11, 1973, at Port St. Lucie, Florida.

4. Nathan D. Shappee, "The Celestial Railroad to Juno," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* XXX (April, 1962), 329-49. Bessie Wilson DuBois, "The Celestial Railroad," *Gateway, The Magazine of the Port of Palm Beach*, Vol. 2., No. 4. (May/June, 1977), 10-11, 22.

5. Dora Doster Utz, "Life on the Loxahatchee," *Tequesta*, XXXLI (1977), 47-50.

6. Bessie Wilson DuBois, *Shipwrecks in the Vicinity of Jupiter Inlet* (Privately printed, 1975), 11-12. Bessie Wilson DuBois, "Jupiter Inlet," *Tequesta*, XXVIII (1968), 29-30.

7. Mary Collar Linehan, *Early Lantana, Her Neighbors, and More* (St. Petersburg, 1980), 25. George E. Pozzetta and Harry A. Kersey, Jr., "Yamato Colony: A Japanese Presence in South Florida," *Tequesta*, XXXVI (1976), 68-70.

8. Susan Sanders DuBois, "Pioneer Teacher Tells of Hardships in Early Days at 'Leesville', Here," *The Stuart News*, January 9, 1964, 5J.

9. Alfred G. Bradbury and E. Story Hallock, *A Chronology of Florida Post Offices* (Florida Federation of Stamp Clubs, (1962), 18.

10. *History of Martin County*, comp. Janet Hutchinson, ed. Emeline K. Paige (Martin County Historical Society, 1975), p. 178. Bessie Wilson DuBois, "Children Went to School on the Jungle Waterways in the Early Days; No Roads and No School Buses," *The Stuart News*, January 9, 1964, 1J.

11. Bessie Wilson DuBois, "Celt and Pendant from Jupiter Inlet Mound," *The Florida Anthropologist*, X (November, 1957), 15-16.

12. DuBois, "Jupiter Inlet," 20-21.

13. DuBois, *Shipwrecks*, 16-17.

14. Newspaper clipping headlined "Jupiter News," no name, no date. DuBois Family Clipping Book, Jupiter, Florida.

15. The Seminole trading pattern at Kitching's store in Stuart and Bowers' store in Jupiter is detailed in Harry A. Kersey, Jr., *Pelts, Plumes and Hides: White Traders Among the Seminole Indians, 1870-1930* (Gainesville, 1975), 87-96.

16. DuBois, "Jupiter Inlet," 32.

17. Hix C. Stuart, *The Notorious Ashley Gang* (Privately printed, 1928).

18. DuBois, "Jupiter Inlet," 20.

19. *Ibid.*, 34.

20. *Ibid.*, 24.

21. DuBois, *Shipwrecks*, 26.

22. Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People* (New York, 1965), 1004-06, 1019-20.

23. DuBois, "Celt and Pendant," 15.

24. *Jupiter Inlet Midden I* site is not currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination was approved by the Florida Review Committee in 1979, and forwarded to the keeper of the National Register. After a time the nomination was returned with a request for further information. The Florida Division of Archives, History and Records Management is the state agency which must research the matter further and resubmit the nomination. At the time of this writing (1981) the National Register program is temporarily closed. Thus, the historic marker placed in DuBois Park which notes that the midden site is listed on the National Register was placed there prematurely. For further information see: Carl McMurray to John Dance, March 3, 1981.

25. Interview with Mr. and Mrs. John DuBois, Jupiter, Florida, September 12, 1980.