

CHAPTER XXI

THE PORT OF JACKSONVILLE

The first aid to navigation at the mouth of the St. Johns River was not with respect to improving the bar, but to mark its location. A lighthouse was erected by the U. S. Government in 1830, but three years later it was taken down, as it became threatened by the sea.^a The location of this first lighthouse at the mouth of the St. Johns was not far from the south jetty, north of the fishing shacks.^b The coastal beach in that vicinity was washed away, but since the jetties were built it is making up again, in the sand field to the left as you approach the south jetty on the beach.

The second lighthouse was built in 1835, about a mile farther up the river, on the south side, directly in front of what is now called the "White Heron Tea Room" on the "Wonderwood" property. This tower likewise became threatened by the wash of the river and by drifting sands, and it was abandoned upon the completion of the present lighthouse at Mayport in 1859.^c The remains of the second tower were visible until a few years ago; the site is now under water.^d

The keepers of the light, from 1830 to 1852 (subsequent records were burned at Washington), were in the order named: William Livingston, Roque Leonardy, John Warren, Henry Maxey, Matthew H. Philips, W. H. Huston, G. C. Acosta, Josiah Fennimore.^e Most of these names are familiar as residents of Jacksonville before the War Between the States. While they were the official keepers, it is said that the actual keeper of the light was an old negro named Peter.^f Peter no doubt witnessed many a stirring scene at the mouth of the river, as some venturesome and impatient mariner attempted to navigate the shallow stretch, and afterward wrote in his log, "Got stuck on St. Johns bar".

The Jacksonville Courier, of August 6, 1835, published this interesting correspondence about St. Johns bar:

Mr. Editor. Sir—Herewith I send you a communication from Capt. Wightman, the head Pilot at the mouth of the River, stating some facts relating to the Bar, the publishing of which, I have no doubt, will be of considerable service to vessels bound to this port. For the gratification