

first contract he was continuously associated with the improvement for 40 years.

Reminiscences of Captain R. G. Ross

In 1880, the depth of water on St. Johns bar at low tide varied between six and eight feet. There were two entrances, one close to the south shore and the other about a mile to the northward. Owing to the shifting nature of the sands, the depth of water varied at different times, and before vessels could enter, the pilots had to sound both channels in order to determine the deeper at that moment. So the most advantageous location for the jetties became a serious problem. Gen. Q. A. Gillmore, who designed the jetties and had general supervision of the work, Maj. J. C. Post, directly in charge, with headquarters at Charleston, and I made a number of visits to the mouth of the river, in conference as to where the jetties should be located. Gen. Gillmore favored locating the south jetty far inland toward Mayport. Maj. Post argued that it would be a great saving in expense, and serve the same purpose, to start it farther toward the mouth of the river. They finally compromised by splitting the difference and beginning on midway ground. I favored Gen. Gillmore's plan and still believe it the better. Considerable discussion arose as to the location of the north jetty, also. The present location was selected as the most feasible one, but Gen. Gillmore was of the opinion that it was too near Fort George Inlet. He said the Inlet would probably give trouble, though in that event it could be closed. The Inlet is still open, and as the General predicted, did, and is now giving more trouble than anticipated. The main trouble now is the continual washing of sand over and through the north jetty, thus feeding up Ward's bank and other places between the jetties, thereby causing the need for more or less dredging all the time.

Lieut. Fisk was sent down to assist Major Post locally, and established his headquarters on Fort George Island. We started the preliminary work on the south jetty December 14, 1880. As a foundation for the stone, a mattress was made of logs 9 inches in diameter at the smaller end, placed close together, spiked, and fastened with binders. On top of this raft a layer of loose brush, one foot in thickness, was placed and fastened down with poles and wire. The width of each mattress varied from 25 to 150 feet, according to the depth of water. The stone came from New York City by vessel, in small loads of not more than 300 tons to the vessel, as they could not come in drawing more than 11 feet. At that time great hills of rock were being cut down in New York to grade new streets, from 50th Street on toward Harlem, preliminary to the boom that followed. The contractors sold us this stone for 25c a ton, f.o.b. vessel. Thus New York City sent us the foundation for making Jacksonville the most prosperous city on the South Atlantic coast. It was impossible to regulate the arrival of the vessels bringing the stone, and usually they came in bunches in a "north-easter". I have known as many as ten to arrive off the bar at one time,