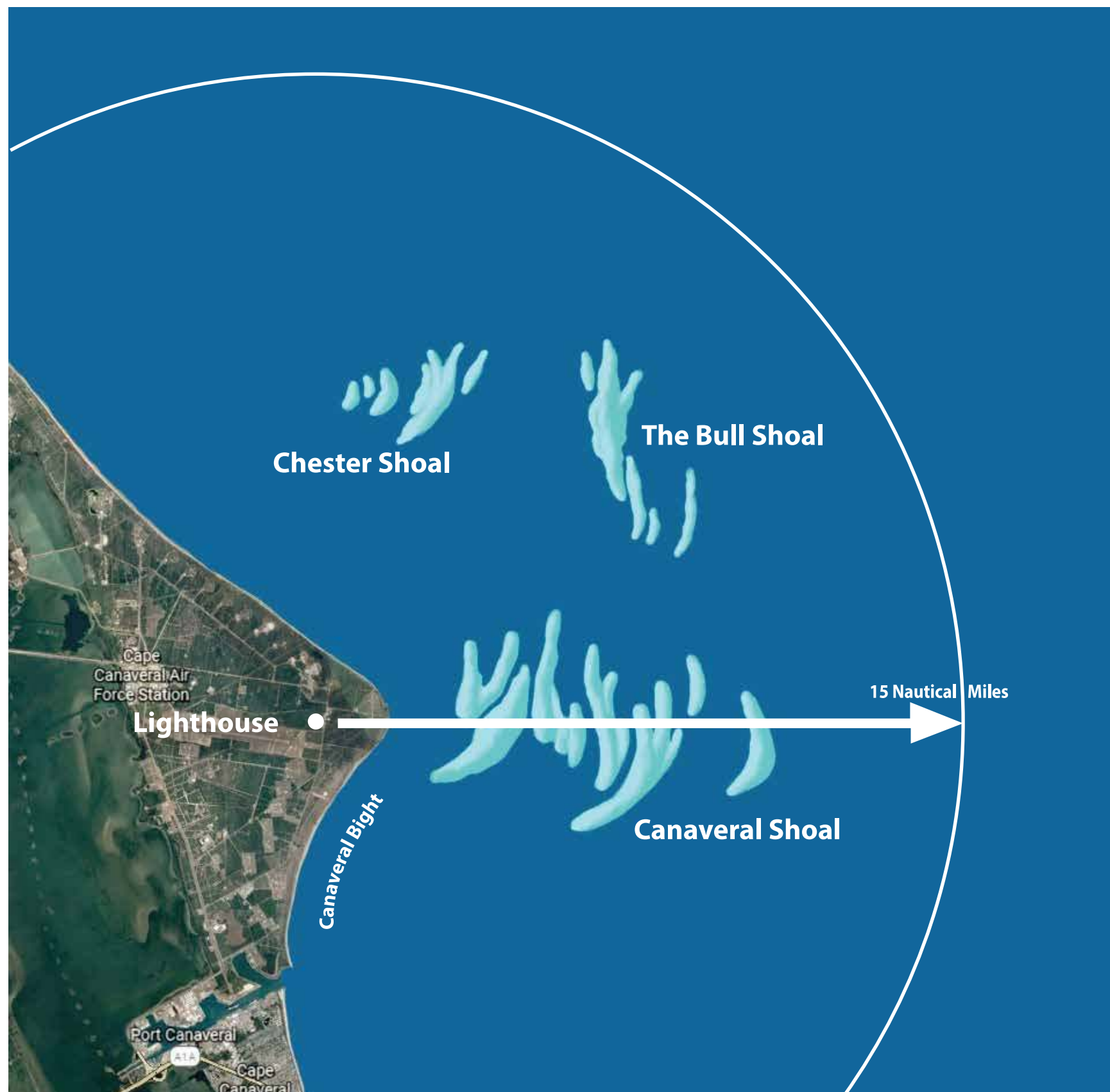


1776-1847

Why Build a Lighthouse Where Nobody Lived?

Shoals Cause Shipwrecks and Cape Canaveral Has Plenty

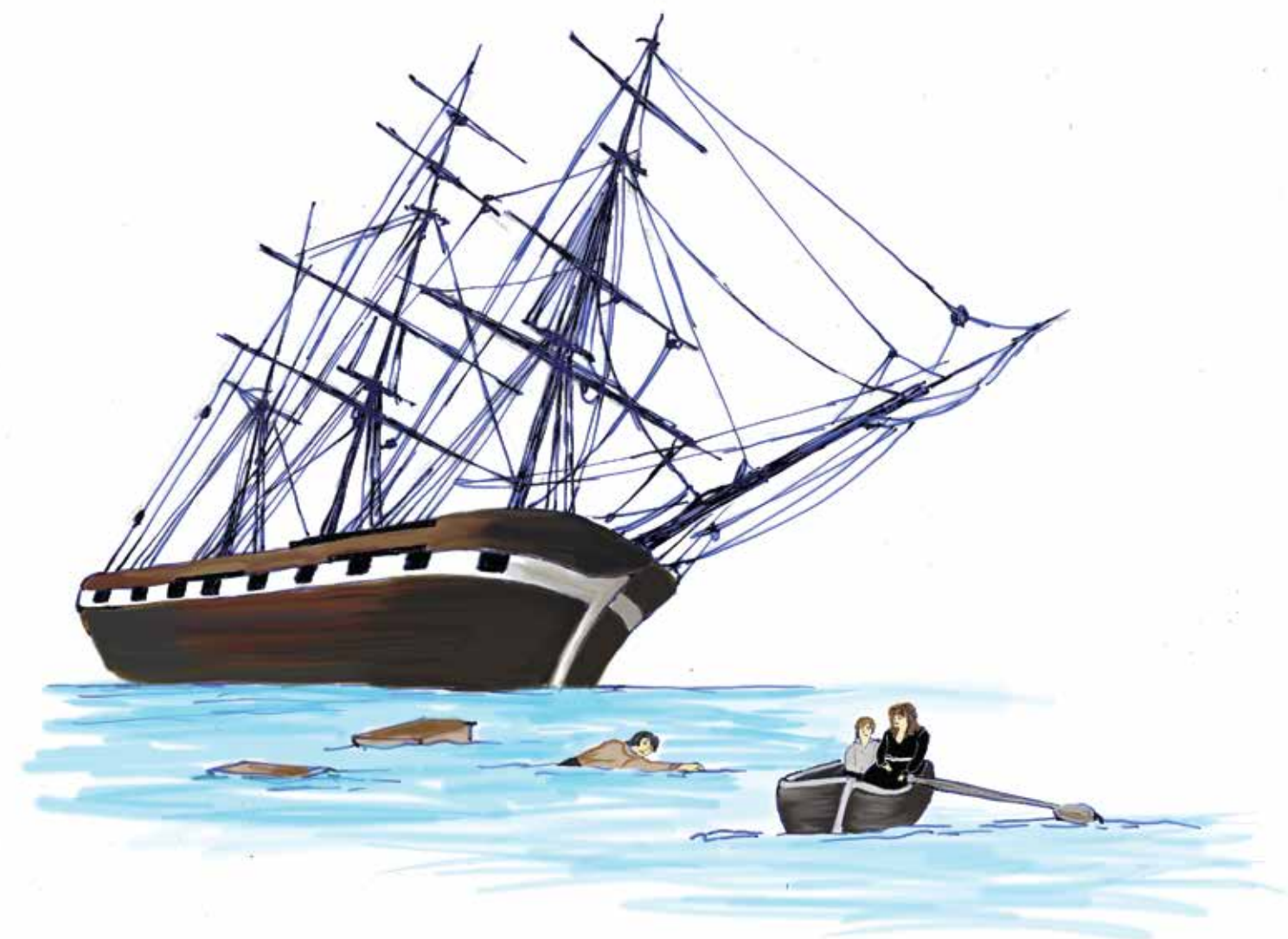


Up to 13 miles offshore lie many dangerous underwater shoals. These are areas where large deposits of sand have collected, making the water very shallow.

Larger ships can run aground or break apart on them, since they can't be seen from ships. Staying far enough offshore to be in deep water, especially at night, was difficult in the centuries before electronic navigation was available.

More Ships = More Shipwrecks = More Loss of Life & \$

Shipping along the Atlantic coast grew significantly in the 60 years following the American Revolution. Cotton, lumber and farm products were soon flowing down the Mississippi River into the Gulf of Mexico, around Key West and up the east coast of Florida on their way to market. Merchants, sea captains, and marine insurance companies could not afford to lose their precious ships, cargos, and crews over a danger that could easily be avoided, if known. Also, the US Navy built a base in Key West in 1823, and supplies needed to arrive safely.



Lighthouses to the Rescue!

It was time to invest in lighthouses. Very few people lived along the coast at this time, but the lighthouses needed to go where dangerous shoals and reefs could not be seen from ships. Congress appropriated \$12,000 for construction of a lighthouse at Cape Canaveral in 1847, following a request made a decade earlier.

The specific site was selected by George Center at the direction of Fifth Auditor of the Treasury, Stephen Pleasonton, who was in charge of US lighthouses at the time. Lighthouses were also built at Ponce Inlet (to the north) in 1835 and Jupiter Inlet (to the south) in 1860.

