

Lighthouse Keepers Buried in Island Cemetery

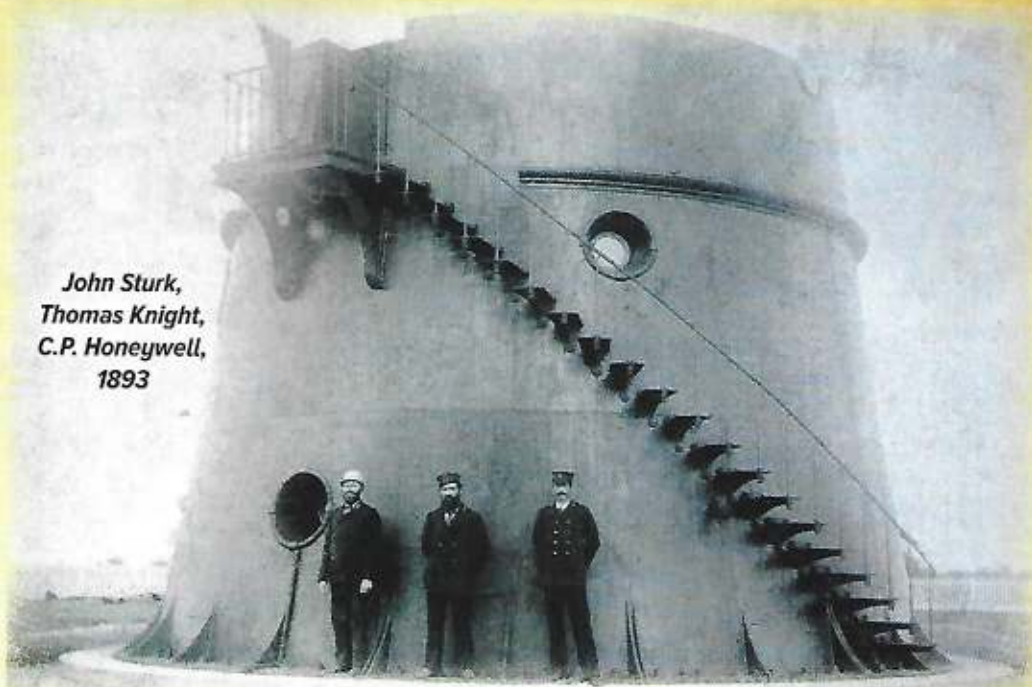
BY DIANA FASANELLA

They were known as “wickies.”

Cape Canaveral Lighthouse keepers trudged up the 176 steps inside the conical, cast-iron tower every day and night during the 19th and 20th centuries to precisely trim the lantern wick that lighted the highly polished 1st Order Fresnel lens. It was the task for which the keepers got their nickname, but only one of many tasks that kept the lighthouse functioning and in good working order.

Due to the close location of the lighthouse to Merritt Island, it is not surprising that four of the “wickies,” who took on the keeper role between 1848 and 1939, found their final resting place at Georgianna Cemetery off Crooked Mile Road. They were recognized recently by the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation whose members placed a memorial Lighthouse Keeper Marker on each of the gravesites.

John Ludwig Sturk, who retired to his Merritt Island home on Horti Point, was just one of the dedicated keepers to maintain the tower and its beacon that intensely warned mariners



*John Sturk,
Thomas Knight,
C.P. Honeywell,
1893*

as far away as 24 nautical miles of impending dangerous sea passages off the barrier island, according to Barbara Moser, Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Museum historian.

Sturk, born in Germany in 1848, immigrated to the U.S. in 1868 and later became a naturalized citizen. He was an experienced lighthouse keeper, having worked at the St. Augustine Lighthouse for several years, before coming to the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse in 1887 to serve as first assistant keeper. He took over as head keeper in 1893

until his retirement in 1904.

Sturk did not sit idly by while serving, Moser said. “In 1891 he began to invest in land, purchasing acreage on Merritt Island and beach property in the area, which became Cocoa Beach.” In addition, he made a large purchase of land on the Indian River near Eau Gallie and purchased land in Titusville. “By the time of his retirement, he was considered a wealthy man.”

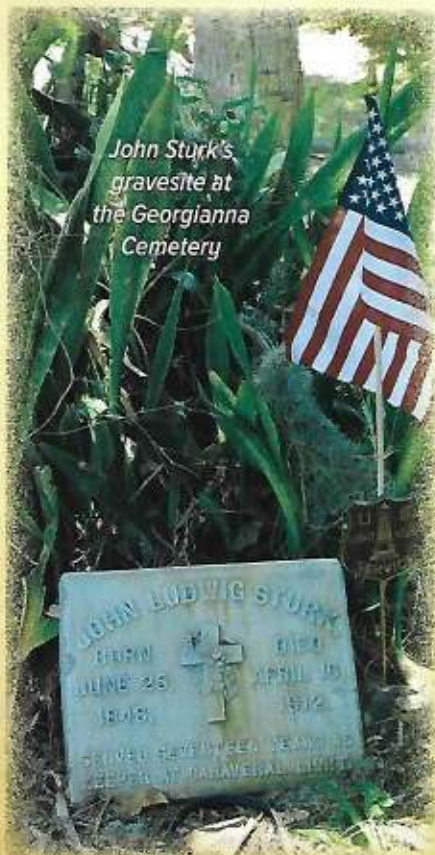
However, Sturk never married and died intestate in 1912 while visiting friends at Georgiana. “His obituary states that there ‘are probably two’ heirs, who were never located,” said Moser, adding, “There does not seem to be any further records concerning the estate in Brevard County.”

When there are no heirs, descendants or named beneficiaries, the estate is forfeited to the state, according to Florida Intestate Succession Rules.

Also buried at Georgianna is Edward J. Pretorius, second assistant keeper from 1904 to 1907. He and his wife, Barbara, received a government land grant for land on the eastern shore of the Banana River on the Cape peninsula and established a plant nursery there. They were well-known as collectors of rare plants.



1st Order Fresnel lens



*John Sturk's
gravesite at
the Georgianna
Cemetery*

continued on page 14

continued from page 12

In 1949 when the U.S. Government decided to develop a missile-testing range on the Cape peninsula, the couple was required to move from the area; they then established the Praetorius Sylvan Flower Nursery in Cape Canaveral.

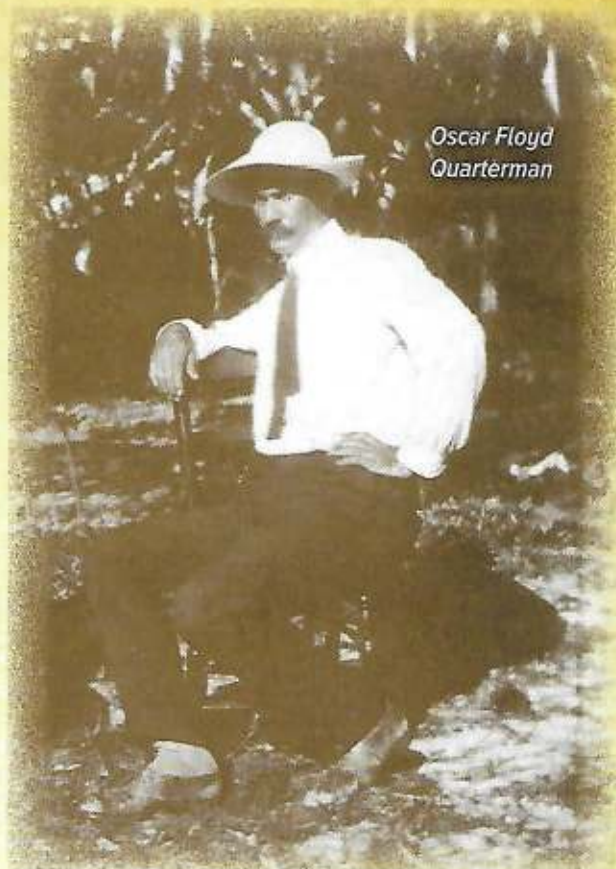
Julius James Jeffords also was honored at his gravesite for his short service as second assistant keeper at Cape Canaveral Lighthouse from 1929 to 1930. Born in 1890 in Titusville, Jeffords moved back and forth from his parents' original home in Beauford, South Carolina, to Cape Canaveral and then on to Camp Wadsworth after being inducted into the military in 1918. He spent the next 22 years in Cape Canaveral doing numerous jobs as a carpenter, bee apiarist and later a truck driver for the government. He was appointed postmaster of the city in 1922.

Jeffords died in 1961 after moving to his sister's home in Coconut Grove in Miami 11 years earlier.

Also buried at Georgianna, Oscar Floyd Quarterman was the last civilian lighthouse keeper at Cape Canaveral from 1909 until 1939. He followed his father, William George Quarterman, in service at the lighthouse as second, first and head keeper for 30 years before the United States Coast Guard took over operations of U.S. lighthouses.

"Subsequent keepers belonged to the United States Coast Guard," Moser said. With automation of the light in 1960, a resident keeper was no longer necessary.

Quarterman died in 1951. 📷



Oscar Floyd Quarterman

321 AUTO & towing

We take care of your vehicle like it's **OURS!**

Family Owned & Operated

FREE ESTIMATES

- Powerstroke, Cummins & Duramax Specialist
- Factory Ford Level Diagnostics
- Suspensions & Transmissions
- Air Conditioning
- Alignments
- Towing and 4X4 Recovery to All of Brevard!

321-978-5452

485 Cone Road, Merritt Island • Shop Hours: Mon/Fri 8 - 5 • brevardauto@gmail.com

Richard Mocerino
Owner
MIHS class of 2007

Colette Mocerino
MIHS class of 2011

Merritt Island Now

YOUR #1 COMMUNITY SOURCE FOR EVERYTHING MERRITT ISLAND • VOLUME 6 • AUGUST • 2022



Lagoon Rejuvenation



RESULTS
ISSUE

www.MerrittIslandNow.com

