

Where did Vero Beach get its name?

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Post Office Application	29 September 1891
Vero Platted by Herman Zeuch	1913-14
Vero Incorporated	10 June 1919
Vero Changed to Vero Beach and incorporated	19 May 1925
Indian River County formed	30 June 1925
Official Flower approved: Hibiscus	17 October 1967

IRC History-VF No. 1041 (LOCATION PAPER.)

Post Office Department,
 OFFICE OF THE FOURTH ASSISTANT POSTMASTER GENERAL,
 APPOINTMENT DIVISION
 WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 19, 1891

Six: Before the Postmaster General decides upon the application for the establishment of a post office at Vero, it will be necessary for you to carefully review the applicant's qualifications, get a neighboring postmaster to certify to the correctness of the address, and return the enclosed paper to the Department, addressed to me. If the site selected for the proposed office is not on any mail route now under contract, only a "Special Office" can be established there, to be supplied with mail from some convenient point on the nearest mail route by contract, in accordance with the provisions of the Regulations of 1883, for which service a sum equal to two-thirds of the amount of the salary of the postmaster at such office will be paid by the Department.

You should inform the contractor, or person performing service for him, of this application, and require him to execute the enclosed certificate as to the practicability of supplying the proposed office with mail, and return the same to the Department.

Very respectfully,
E. J. R. Atchinson
 Fourth Asst. Postmaster General.

To Mr. H. J. Gifford
 care of the Postmaster of Narrows, who will please forward to him.
Vero Beach Indian River County, Fla.
 STATEMENT.

The proposed office to be called New (VERO)

Select a short name for the proposed office, which, when written, will not resemble the name of any other post office in the State.

It will be situated in the 3d quarter of Section 32, Township 32, Range 29, in the County of Indian River, State of Florida.

It will be on or near route 23029, being the route from Sebastian to Sebastian.

It will be 1/2 mile from the route, in which the mail is now carried, 1 times per week.

It will be 1/2 mile from the route, in which the mail is now carried, 1 times per week.

If not on any route, a "Special Office" wanted 1 time per week. To be supplied from Sebastian.

The name of the nearest office to the proposed one, on one side, is Narrows, its distance is 1/2 miles in a South direction from the proposed office.

The name of the nearest office, on the other side, is Sebastian, its distance is 1/2 miles in a North direction from the proposed office.

The name of the other nearest office to the proposed one is Sebastian, its distance by the most direct road is 1/2 miles in a South direction from the proposed office.

The name of the most prominent river near it is Indian River, its distance is 1/2 miles from said river, on the West side of it.

If on the line of or near a railroad, on which side will the office be located; how far from the track; and what is, or will be, the name of the station 1—des.

If it be a village, state the number of inhabitants 1—des.

Also, the population to be supplied by the proposed office 1—des.

A diagram, or sketch from a map, showing the position of the proposed new office, with neighboring river or creek, roads, and other post offices, towns, or villages near it, will be useful, and is therefore desired.

A correct map of the locality might be furnished by the surveyor, but this must be without expense to the Post Office Department.

ALL WHICH I CERTIFY to be correct and true, according to the best of my knowledge and belief, this 24 day of February, 1891, at Sebastian, Fla. Proposed P. M. H. J. Gifford

I certify that I have examined the foregoing statement, and that it is correct and true, to the best of my knowledge and belief. E. J. R. Atchinson
 Postmaster of Narrows

Today, we have a dozen theories on where the name "Vero" came from. Listed below are all twelve and one about arguments with Henry Flagler that some day may prove to be the "real reason" for the name.

1. Vero named after Vera, the wife of Henry Gifford. (Her name was Sarah.) Numerous articles state that Vero was named after the wife of Henry Gifford^{1, 2}. His wife's name was Sarah Jane Woodworth (1842-1894) and she married Henry about 1878 in Orange County, Vermont³. No family members had the given name of "Vero" for five generations (See Gifford Family History located in the vertical file at Main Library.)
2. Named after 2 Italian cities Venice or Verona and due to postal regulations must have only four letters. It was not till 1894 when the post office asked for "shorten" names---not 4 letters. Some printed records⁴ state Sarah Gifford suggested two Italian cities: Venice and Verona. Several books state that the United States Post Office required a four-letter designation to name a town, but as yet this statement has not been proven⁵. Under that guideline, it could be assumed that Sarah shortened Verona to Vero to abide by the postal guidelines⁶. (See excerpt below on Post Office Guidelines of 1894 - NOT 1891.) Because Indian River County had several other towns in the area such as Sebastian, Woodley, and the Narrows, all names that were not four letters, this theory probably is not true. Research of the Woodworth family revealed that some of Sarah's relatives lived in

¹ Morris, A. (1995) Florida Place Names. Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press, Inc., p. 245.
² Smiley, N. (1972) Florida: Land of Images. Miami, FL: E. A. Seemann Publishing, Inc. pp. 76-86.
³ United States. Bureau of the Census. (1880) Orange County, Vermont. National Archives Microfilm T9, Roll #1346.
⁴ Lockwood, C. (1975). Florida's Historic Indian River County. Vero Beach, FL: MediaTronics, Inc. p. 38.
⁵ Thompson, W. C. (1961, April 20) "Pioneer Chit-Chat." The Press Journal. Vero Beach, FL. Page 8.
⁶ Richards, J. N. (1968) Florida's Hibiscus City: Vero Beach. Melbourne, FL: Brevard Graphics, Inc. p. 287.

Be careful to answer the inquiries fully and accurately, or the case will not be acted upon.

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Verona, New York. This part of the theory is speculation and can only add to the mystery. The real mystery is in the word "Vero," which is a Latin word.

Post Office Policies on Place Names: ⁷

The first official reference to the naming of post offices by the Post Office Department occurred in 1891. On February 18 of that year, Postmaster General Miscellaneous Order 87 alerted the clerks, first those of the Division of Appointment and the Division of Bonds and later those in all branches of the Department, to use the spelling of post office names published in the bulletins of the United States Board on Geographic Names, which in 1906 was given the authority to determine and change place-names.

*On April 14 1892, Postmaster General Miscellaneous Order 48 directed the Fourth Assistant Postmaster General not to establish any post office whose proposed name differed from that of the town or village in which it was to be located. **Whenever possible, the name of the post office was to be the same as that of the local railway station to avoid confusion and delay in the transfer of mail.***

On April 9, 1894 another directive was given. To remove a cause of annoyance to the Department and injury to the Postal Service in the selection of names for newly established post offices, it is hereby ordered that from this date only short names or names of one word will be accepted.

3. Latin word for "Veritas" - adverb Verus or Vero meaning truth, in fact, indeed, to be sure. Sarah Gifford's son, Friend Charles Gifford, depicts his mother as one who loved to study Italy and its literature⁸. She also knew how to speak Latin^{9, 10}. She educated her own children⁶, and in fact, her daughter Nettie May was one of the first school teachers in Indian River County. *Veritas* is the plural form of the Latin word *Verus*. The adverb for *Verus* is *Vero* which means, in truth, really, indeed or in fact¹¹. Since Sarah did know Latin, this theory of her choosing a Latin word is reasonable, if not the most likely. It would have been interesting to understand why she felt Vero was a place for truth.
4. Friends of the family were from Centerville, Michigan. Wife's name was Vera Leinbach. She married Charles Addison and it became Vero because of typographical error and postal regulation.
5. Hurricanes "veered" away from our area, so they called it Vero???
6. The Spanish word¹² Vero means fur-bearing animal like a Martin or Otter. At one time there were numerous otters on the Indian River.
7. Portuguese word "Vero" means warm summer climate.
8. Italian word¹³ "Vero" means "It's incredible but true!"

⁷ Post Office Department Reports of Site Locations, 1837-1950. National Archives and Records Service: Washington D.C. ; Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-September 30, 1971. National Archives and Records Service: Washington D.C. ; Records of the Post Office Department, Record Group 28, Series M841, Reel 20. ; Records of the Post Office Department, Record Group 28, Series M1126, Reel 92.

⁸ Newman, A. P. L. (1953). *Stories of Early Life Along Beautiful Indian River*. Stuart, FL: Stuart Daily News, Inc., p. 11.

⁹ Bloodworth, B. E. and Morris, A. C. (1978) *Places in the Sun: The History and Romance of Florida Place-Names*. Gainesville, FL: The University Presses of Florida. p. 173.

¹⁰ Rohlifing-Lee, S. (1979, November 14). "What's in a name?" The Press Journal. p. 10a.

¹¹ Simpson, D. P. (Ed.) (1968). *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.

¹² *Vox New College Spanish and English Dictionary*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company, 1984.

¹³ Ragazzini, Giuseppe. *Zanichelli New College Italian and English Dictionary*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company, 1990

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9. Named after Florida's first Catholic Archbishop Augustin Verot (pronounced Vero) 1804-1876. He was the first Bishop of St. Augustine from 1870 until his death in 1876. Vero was a part of the Diocese of St. Augustine until 1958.¹⁴
10. Received contact¹⁵ from a Vero family in Warwickshire, England, who are guessing that it might have been named after their family, but have been unable to locate any Vero's in Florida.
11. FLAGLER THEORY¹⁶ - Henry Flagler is known for laying the tracks of the Florida East Coast Railroad. He was often controversial and extremely wealthy. In the early newspapers of 1890's, there were reports and often letters to the editor about the status of the FEC. When the time was getting close for the tracks to be laid down in Indian River County, many people were upset that Flagler was considering putting the tracks on the West side of the river. "Why, all of the fruits and vegetables were being grown on the East side on the islands. How were they going to travel across the river in time to catch the train? After all, no one on the mainland was really selling very much."

The letters to the editor were signed by "Veritas" and "Progress."

This could reinforce theory #3 because all this was happening at the time of the naming of Vero.

12. Another variation of this says that a man named Britt was paid \$13.00 a month to bring mail by rowboat from the old Winter Beach Bridge once a week. According to legend, the name was accredited to him. However, for what reason, it is not known. There was a Britt family on the 1900 Eden, Brevard County Census.

It is important to note that many local history books have been written long after the naming of the town, so much of the information comes from hearsay. The first theory is the power of the written word that has everyone believing that there is a Vero Gifford. The second theory is an unproved fact about the Post Office's requirement of four-letter place names. Sarah's education of her children testifies to her knowledge, and her use of Latin is the most simple of the explanations. The other theories are all speculations presented by different individuals and historians. It is hoped that future generations will find the "truth."

Note:

According to F. Charles Gifford, when the train stopped in Indian River County, Vero was first called "Tie-pile near Milepost 228" (Historical Chronicle, 1975). This probably is an incorrect statement. Flagler directed that a section camp at Gifford be designated as the station in 1894. Vero was designated as a post office in 1891. (Flagler, 1894).

¹⁴ Fax dated May 26, 1998 from Vero Zimmerman to Pam (Hall) Cooper regarding Father Verot.

¹⁵ Email dated May 2, 1998 from Diana Palmer of England to Pam (Hall) Cooper.

¹⁶ "The Flagler Railway." (1894, January 26). The Indian River Advocate. p. 8.