

SUNRISES NOT HIGH RISES

SHIPWRECKS, TRAINS AND BRIDGES, OH MY!

THE HISTORY

Of Indian River

PHILOSOPHY

HISTORY
ISSUE

Nº 1

VERO BEACH
FELLSMERE
SEBASTIAN



Indian River County, Florida



FOR PRESS INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

Nina Zapala, Public Relations

*on behalf of Vero Beach, Fellsmere, and Sebastian
in Indian River County, FL*

Email: nina.zapala@evokad.com

Cell: 407.304.6539

Allison McNeal, Director of Tourism

*for Vero Beach, Fellsmere, and Sebastian
in Indian River County, FL*

Email: tourism@visitindianrivercounty.com

Phone: 772.567.3491



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Our Facebook page is a community of like-minded travelers who share a joy of untouched beaches, conservation acres, locally inspired culinary and culture and the best sunrises on the East Coast! Like, Follow, Share and join us on our never-ending journey! @VeroBeachCVB Tag the town you're visiting: #LoveVeroBeach #LoveFellsmere #LoveSebastian



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We are so fortunate to have some of the most picturesque beach landscapes and wildlife in the state of Florida. Share your favorite pins of our area to your boards: Visit VeroBeach, Fellsmere, Sebastian



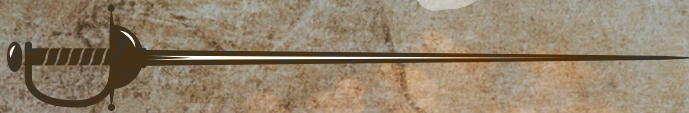
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*Shipwrecks, Trains
and Bridges,
Oh My!*





V

ero Beach and its sister cities of Fellsmere and Sebastian have a rich history steeped in shipwrecks, railroads, and citrus. Shipwrecks are an important adjunct to coral reefs around the world and here in Vero Beach, a few significant sites attract divers and snorkelers from around the world:

1715 – TREASURE FLEET

Queen Jewels was a Spanish treasure fleet returning from the New World to Spain. The fleet left Cuba, on Wednesday July 31 at 2AM, a hurricane ensued and 11 of the 12 ships were lost off the coast of Wabasso Beach, Florida. This wreck has garnered global attention from National Geographic, and has also been celebrated in Hollywood movies; *The Deep*, *Starz*, and *Black Sails*. Additionally, wreck divers from across the globe have come to learn more about these astonishing shipwrecks. In 2015, Queen Jewels, LLC and its founder Brent Bisben discovered \$4.5 million in gold coins off the coast of Florida. Not only are these treasures a monetary windfall, they are a window into world history. The McLarty Treasure Museum now sits on the site of the ships survivors' camp.

1894 – “THE BOILER”

The SS Breconshire Shipwreck, a British steamship 300 feet in length and 37 feet in breadth, was on route from New York to Tampa, Florida to pick up undisclosed cargo. The SS Breconshire hit a reef and today it rests one-quarter of a mile from the [Ocean Grill Restaurant](#).



The History of INDIAN RIVER



In 1893 the development of Henry Flagler's Florida's East Coast Railroad was a seminal moment in Indian River County history ensuring the area for success. The railroad provided citrus growers, fisherman, and vegetable farmers with the fastest shipping possible to northern markets; building a thriving economy. The railroad also ignited growth to Indian River County aka Fellsmere Sebastian and Vero Beach.

History of Indian River Timeline

- **1876** – February 28 birthed the first house of refuge in Florida: Bethel Creek House of Refuge, as a safe haven for those who were shipwrecked during World War II.
- **1887** – Captain Frank Forster became the first postmaster in 1887. He also established the 110-acre preserve, which contains one of the largest remaining maritime hammocks on Orchid Island.
- **1889** – L.C. Moore built the Ercildoune Hotel attracting President Grover Cleveland.
- **1900s** – Sembler, Smith and Judah families pioneered commercial fishing.
- **1903** – March 14, Pelican Island was established as the nation's first national wildlife refuge by none-other than Theodore Roosevelt, to save one of the last brown pelican rookeries on the East Coast. A statue of Paul Kroegel, the first warden of the refuge overlooks Indian River Lagoon.
- **1903** – The home of the train station which now houses the Indian River County Historical Society, dedicated to restoration and preservation of the County's history.
- **1909** – April 4, a wooden bridge was built replacing the earlier ferry.
- **1910** – Fellsmere Farm is founded, heavy rains devastated the city, and today it's a rural playground for outdoor adventurers.
- **1911** – Fellsmere was incorporated in 1911 as part of St. Lucie County.
- **1912** – Indian River Citrus Farm is founded and becomes one of the most prominent citrus farms in the world, and remains so today.
- **1915** – June 19, the day that Mrs. Zena M. Dreier cast a ballot in Fellsmere, FL. She was the first woman to vote in Florida, as well as the first to vote south of the Mason-Dixon Line.
- **1915** – Famed architect, Frederick Homer Trimble began his career in the U.S., building the Fellsmere School. Trimble went on to build over 150 buildings in South Florida and was responsible for the first buildings at Florida Southern College in Lakeland.
- **1915** – Fellsmere establishes a library which remains open today but with limited hours.
- **1915/1916** – Old Vero Man Site, a set of fossilized human bones are found in Vero Beach. Studies show the Vero human bones are from the Pleistocene era, and are the largest collection of human remains from that era found in North America. In 2014, excavation of the area began in partnership with Mercyhurst Archaeological Institute. Onsite tours are available.
- **1915** – Fellsmere has a railroad, an electric company, two hotels and women can vote, a Florida first.
- **1917** – The Strand movie theater is established.
- **1918** – Hallstrom House, a farmhouse documenting and depicting the olden days and ways in southern Indian River County.
- **1919** – The first bridge to connect Orchard Island to the mainland was built.
- **1919** – The first tourism slogan emerges; Vero, Where the Tropics Begin
- **1919** – The Vero Press, the first newspaper, was established.
- **1919** – U.S. Constitutional amendment granted suffrage to women, with Fellsmere leading the way, 'Fellsmere Way' to equal suffrage.
- **1920s** – Indian River Country Citrus - growers across the state of Florida began describing their fruit as Indian River.
- **1920s** – Historic Jungle Trial is built to support citrus growers.
- **1920s** – Avant-garde poet settles in Vero Beach. Today her 'cracker' style house remains a reminder of the past and a more environmentally sensitive way of life.
- **1924** – Fellsmere dedicates the Methodist Episcopal Church.
- **1924** – The Ashley Gang - outlaws, robbers, and bootleggers. The gang was killed on the south end of the wooden bridge.
- **1925** – May, with a vote of 23 to 9, Indian River County was born and named Vero the county seat.
- **1926** – The Vero Beach Yacht Club was established.
- **1927** – Sebastian Area Historical Museum was established.
- **1930** – The Federal Trade Commission issues a 'cease and desist' order prohibiting the use of the term Indian River on citrus not grown in the Indian River Citrus District which stretched 200 miles from Daytona Beach to West Palm Beach, Florida.
- **1931** – The Indian River Citrus League was organized. You can visit the Indian River Citrus Museum to learn more about the citrus industry.
- **1932** – McKee Jungle Gardens opened and became one of the state's most popular tourist attractions until the mid-50s when I-95 opened passage to Central Florida's theme parks. Today, McKee Botanical Gardens is on the National Register of Historic Places, and has been endorsed by The Garden Conservancy, a project of National significance.
- **1935** – The Sexton family, a prominent Vero Beach family and active community member, were involved in the McKee Jungle Gardens plus they were on the forefront of a variety of industries that would impact the area: real-estate, dairy, and citrus. In 1937, the family opened the two-story Driftwood Inn, which is now listed on the National Register of Historical Places.
- **1942** – The Navy commandeered the municipal airport and purchased 1,500 additional acres to establish a Naval Air Station. In 1947 after the war ended, the government closed the Naval Air Station and returned the airport to the municipality.
- **1948** – The Brooklyn Dodgers select Vero Beach as their spring training site.
- **1957** – Piper Aircraft (Research and Development) opens; the company is fully established in Vero Beach by 1967.
- **1958** – The Vero Beach Theatre Guild holds its first production.
- **1962** – The development of the AIA bridge to Sebastian Inlet; the bridge opened in 1965.
- **1962** – Under the direction of John F. Kennedy the National Navy UDT-Seal Museum opens, dedicated to preserving Navy Seal history.
- **1964** – Veteran's Memorial Island Sanctuary dedication.
- **1966 -67** – The first season for the Vero Beach Concert Association.
- **1968** – A new slogan is introduced; "Florida's Hibiscus City" and today these colorful flowering shrubs and trees still dominate the landscape.
- **1970s** – McKee Botanical Garden pre- I-95 was the largest attraction in Florida and today is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and boasts the largest collection of water lilies on the East Coast.
- **1986** – The Center for the Arts opens on January 31.
- **1988** – The Developmental Learning Center opens.
- **1990** – The Sebastian Library opens.
- **2015** – The Audubon Community Center opens.

—Philosophy—





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nlike the rest of Florida where urban sprawl has been rampant during the last half of the 20th century, Vero Beach, aka Indian River County, adopted the development philosophy of re-use rather than demolish. This has allowed the city planners to incorporate organized growth, plenty of green spaces, and citywide preservation.

Today, this forethought has assisted the County in becoming one of the state's top eco-destinations with over 100,000 acres of conservation lands. Not only is eco-tourism prolific, but there is a local pride which has built a community of spirit minded-entrepreneurs, an award-winning brew house, farm-to-table restaurants and local artists that imbue the culture and their appreciation of the destination.

