

Vero Beach

Journey Through Time



Section of Business District, Vero Beach, Fla.
[Bruce Smith Collection - 00058]

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Dodgertown Public Buyout

FBI Comes to Vero Beach

100th Anniversary Pelican Island Refuge

Twin Hurricanes Frances & Jeanne

Hurricane Wilma

Dodgers Play Last Spring Training Game

Old Vero Ice Age Sites

Vero Beach Sports Village Name Change

300th Anniversary Sinking Spanish Fleet

Florida Power & Light to Purchase Municipal Plant

The City's Centennial Begins.



April 25, 1919 Courtesy of Bruce Smith Estate Collection at the Archive Center Indian River County Main Library

The Vero Chamber of Commerce, formerly the Vero Commercial Club, is organized and addresses important local issues, including the bridge campaign and the town incorporation project. April 25, 1919 [Bruce Smith Collection-00094]

VIGOROUS VERO IS NOW A FULL FLEDGED INCORPORATED CITY.

Vero is now incorporated; word was received at Vero Tuesday evening from Representative Whyte that the governor had signed the bill for the incorporation of the city of Vero.

The affairs of the city will now be administered by a board of councilmen, consisting of five members. The present members of the council who were named in the incorporation bill are J. A. Frere, F. C. Gifford, W. J. Maher, C. G. Redstone and O. Roach. The council will elect a mayor, who will be the town's executive officer until the regular election which will be in December next.

The use of Seminole Hall has been tendered to the councilmen for the transaction of their business until they can secure suitable quarters.

The City of Vero is incorporated as a municipality by the Florida legislature. The first five members of the City Council are: (1) Joseph A. Frere. A lumberman who was born in Belgium and spoke Walloon. (2) C. Gifford, son of Henry Gifford, the first settler of Vero. (3) William J. Maher who moved to Vero in 1915 from Illinois and opened the first department store in 1916. (4) Charles G. Redstone who was born in Canada and was in the lumber business when he arrived in 1918. He is the first President of the city council. (5) Ottaway Roach moved to Vero in 1901 and is the first fire chief. The first mayor is Anthony W. Young. [St. Lucie County Tribune, June 13, 1919, p.6]

1919 - 1929



Editor Paul Nisle publishes the first edition of the Vero Press. It merges in 1927 with the Vero Beach Journal and becomes the Vero Beach Press Journal with John Schumann as editor. September 13, 1919
[Indian River Historical Society-3294]



The dedication of the first Vero toll bridge across the Indian River is on Labor Day, 1920. This is the second bridge across the Indian River, the first being at Cocoa. It is a wooden swing bridge that crosses from present-day Royal Palm Pointe to the barrier island. Over 300 automobiles cross the bridge to the ocean on the opening day. September 6, 1920
[Indian River Historical Society-00417]



The Vero Volunteer Fire Department forms as a result of the loss by fire of the entire business block of Vero on November 16, 1919. The fire destroys the Twitchell Building, Maher's Department store, the Toole Barbershop, the Pool Room, and the Victory Restaurant, with the total property loss of \$73,000. Approval of the volunteer fire department takes over a year, and another major fire occurs in October 1921, one month before the fire truck is delivered to the volunteer fire department. July 14, 1921
[Indian River Historical Society-1316-001]

1919 - 1929



The Vero Theatre opens on 14th Avenue. There is room for 850 seats including two boxes on either side and a full-size orchestra pit. The Hunchback of Notre Dame is the first movie shown in the theatre. On October 24-26, 1991, the newly restored Theatre Plaza, site of the old Florida Theatre, is unveiled with apartments upstairs and retail space downstairs. October 20, 1924
[Bruce Smith Collection-00058]



The municipality of the City of Vero is abolished and a new municipality to be known as City of Vero Beach is created, established, and granted a new charter with the approval of Governor John W. Martin. May 19, 1925
[Indian River Historical Society-01058]



Indian River County is created from the northern half of St. Lucie County. Governor John W. Martin approves the legislative bill on May 30, 1925 and language in the bill itself creates and establishes Indian River County thirty days from the Governor's approval. On June 29, 1925 the newly-formed county celebrates with inauguration festivities. William Jennings Bryan speaks at the ceremony and assists with the ribbon cutting. The City of Vero Beach is selected to be the county seat in November of 1925. June 29, 1925
[Antonio (Tony) Young Collection-025]

1919 - 1929



The first mosquito control district in the state is created in conjunction with the formation of Indian River County. The Indian River Mosquito Control District declares in the local newspaper: "Vigorous warfare against Pests in Indian River County." Twenty years later during World War II, DDT is introduced and tested at McKee Jungle Gardens to eradicate those annoying pests. June. 25, 1925

[Florida Memory project ca 1903 Florida East Coast Railway employee controlling for mosquitos-Cape Sable, FL]



Vero Beach Municipal (Light) Plant, newly expanded and upgraded to a 750 HP diesel engine, opens in the summer of 1926. This expansion is necessitated by an increasing need for power in the growing city, documented as early as November 1919. It services 950 patrons and 150 electric cooking and heating stoves. Power is furnished to the ice plant, the Vero Beach Journal and the Vero Beach Press, the water works, the planning mill, laundry, the Novelty Works (a window & doors company), the cement products company, and two packing houses. July 1926

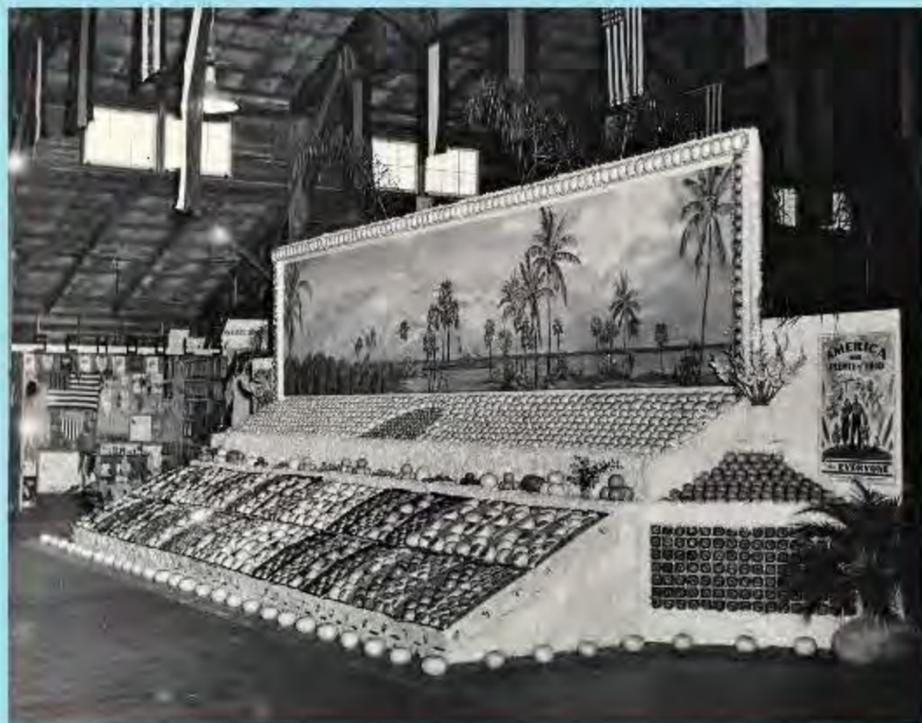
[George Nelson Glass Slide Collection/Indian River Historical Society-GS-011]

1930 - 1939



After two years of discussion and construction, the dedication of Vero Beach "Silvertown" Municipal Airport is a two-day event. James Tew, President of the Goodrich Rubber Company and a resident of Riomar, gives the address at the initial ceremony. Mr. Tew helps to make the airport possible through his financial contribution and the airport is named "Silvertown" in his honor. Over 1500 "air mail first flight envelopes" are sent to individuals throughout the United States. March 3 - 4, 1930

[Indian River Historical Society-01226-001 / Pam Cooper]



Indian River Citrus Growers' League is organized. The main purpose of the league is the protection of the reputation of the citrus fruit grown in the area. Delegates from Volusia, Brevard, St. Lucie, Martin and Indian River Counties propose a charter with bylaws to the state. It is reorganized in 1948 and later renamed Indian River Citrus League. January 31, 1931

[Indian River Historical Society-00920]

1930 – 1939



With very little fanfare, McKee Jungle Gardens opens to the public as an 80 acre tropical hammock. At the time, Garden clubs become its biggest visitors. In the first four months the Gardens have over 900 visitors. January 1, 1932 [Indian River Historical Society-01936/ Sexton Family Collection-044]



Mrs. Garnett Radin purchases a former hotel on Old Dixie Highway and 10th Lane. On that site she opens the first Indian River Hospital on "National Hospital Day" and on the anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale. Until 1940, it is a 21-bed private hospital charging \$4.50 per day for a semi-private room and \$5 for a private room. May 23, 1932

[Indian River Historical Society-01543]



Direct airmail service is established at Vero Beach, the smallest city to have such service in the United States. March 1935

[Indian River Historical Society-01216]

1930 – 1939



The Community Building that later, became the Heritage Center, is completed and the first event held there is the Seventh Annual Flower Show sponsored by the Indian River Garden Club. It is used as a Servicemen's Center during World War II. April 10, 1935
[VBNAS-163/VBNAS-214]



A military record is set by the Army Air Force in Vero Beach by the Seventh Provisional Bombardment Group. The Group flies into Vero Beach twenty-six Martin B-10 Bombers on dawn to dusk history-making single-day record flight from the March and Hamilton Air Force Base near Riverside, California. The flight takes 21 hours and 15 minutes to complete and includes three stops. National radio broadcasts announce the progress of the flight. December 1, 1935
[Indian River Historical Society-00216
Indian River Historical Society-00143]



The construction of the Indian River County Courthouse is completed and the County Officials move into the new courthouse. The City of Vero Beach had donated the land on 14th Avenue opposite Pocahontas Park in July 1935 and construction began in April of 1936. The architect is William H. Garns and Son of Vero Beach, with funding through the Public Works Administration. March 1937
[Bruce Smith Collection-00131]

1940 – 1949



The first air-conditioned store in Vero Beach is installed at Coke-Ley Specialty Company owned by John Coke, dealer for Philco-York. Florida Motor Lines and its brand new Zephyr bus offers air-conditioning. The Florida East Coast Railway also offers air-conditioned coaches and excursions to Asheville, North Carolina. In October, the Vero Del Mar Hotel, located on the corner of 14th Avenue and 23rd Street, has a formal opening of its air-conditioned dining rooms. July 1940

[Vero Beach Press Journal-Sept 20, 1940 pg.8A/Bruce Smith Collection-00134]



After the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the Army and Navy began to inspect the Vero Beach Municipal Airport for wartime use. The United States Naval Air Station at Vero Beach, constructed at a cost of \$5,000,000, is formally commissioned with ceremonies and placed in operation on November 24, 1942. January 1942 [VBNAS-50 / VBNAS-56]



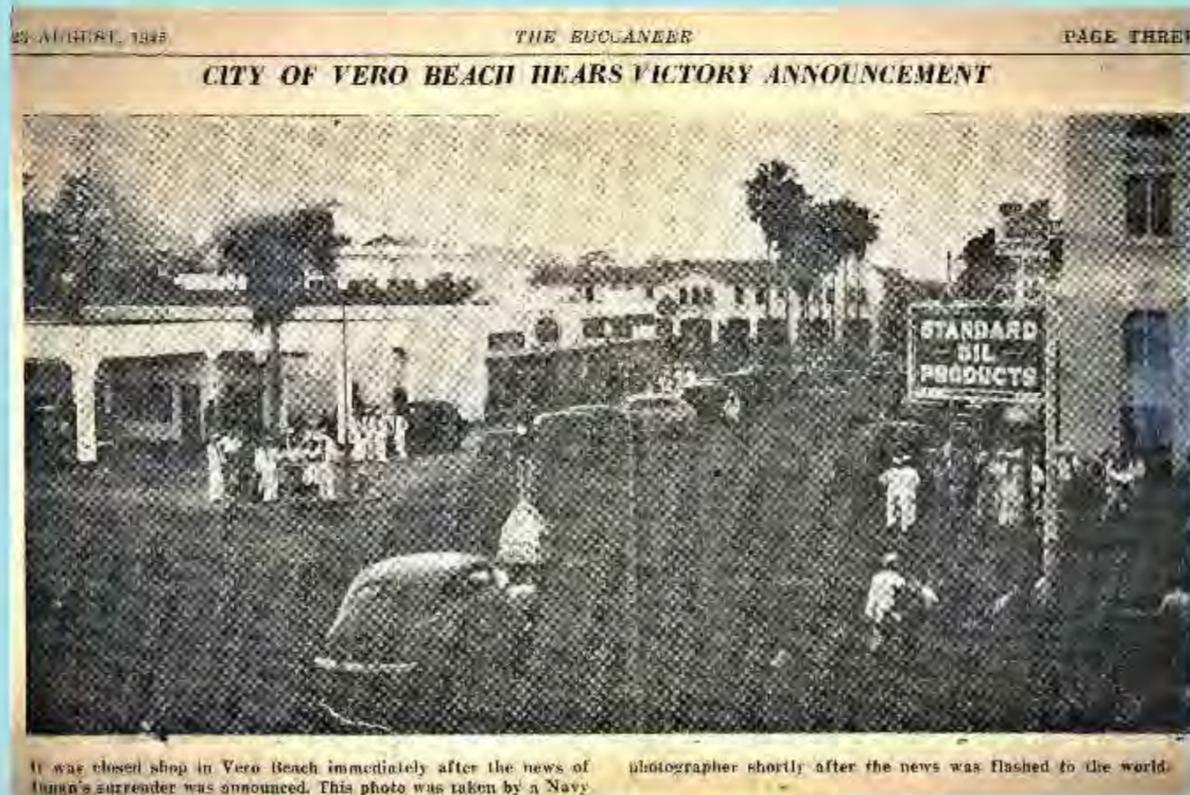
DDT IS IN THE WIND



The Stearman takes off on a test hop before actual spraying commences. The outlets for the spray are those dark vents at the nose of the plane. And if you look real hard, you can see a little of the test spray.

The Navy experiments with a new controversial method of eradicating mosquitoes by spraying DDT on a salt march just south of the Vero Bridge. Navy Officials observe that personnel are losing 60 to 70 percent of their productive time either in "slapping mosquitoes or tending to their wounds".

The Stearman PT-17 and the L-4 Piper Cub airplanes are used for spraying. the area sprayed extends from Sebastian Inlet to Fort Pierce Inlet, and area of 10,000 acres. It takes up to 17 flying hours, 2,044 pounds of DDT and 5,110 gallons of diesel oil. March 20, 1945 [The Buccaneer May 3, 1945]



President Harry S. Truman announces the surrender of Imperial Japan, effectively ending World War II. The U.S. Naval Air Station at Vero Beach newspaper, "The Buccaneer", reports the news on August 23, 1945. [Buccaneer MSS-MIS09-001]

1940 - 1949



Ownership of the United States Naval Air Station is transferred back to the City of Vero Beach. August 23, 1947. [Indian River County Historical Society-01087/VBNAS-211]



Mayor Alex MacWilliam designates the island in the Indian River as a Memorial Park to honor local servicemen. A causeway/bridge is completed from the mainland to the island. On May 10, 1964, Memorial Island is formally dedicated to Indian River County's war dead. In 2003, the city renames it Veteran's Memorial Island Sanctuary. July 11, 1947 [Pam Cooper]



Sebastian Inlet re-opens at 11am before a crowd of approximately 200 people. The channel is now 125 feet wide at low tide and approximately 350 feet wide at flood tide. September 28, 1947 [Photo by Florida Histocial Society/Wilson-20369538...1262]

1940 - 1949



City leaders, local business owners, and the Miracle Mile Association begin initial plans to create Vero Beach's "Miracle Mile", an attractive business thoroughfare intended at this time to stretch from McAnsh Park to the Indian River. 1947 - 1948 [Bruce Smith Collection-00245]



The Brooklyn Dodgers play the Montreal Royals at the newly Navy-built Holman Field. The Dodgers remain in Vero Beach for 61 Spring Trainings. That same year, the first integrated Major League Baseball Spring Training site in the south was established in Vero Beach where Hal of Fame infielder Jackie Robinson broke baseball's color line. March 31, 1948

[VBNAS-0181A/VBNAS-0237/Indian River Historical Society-1100]



1950 – 1959

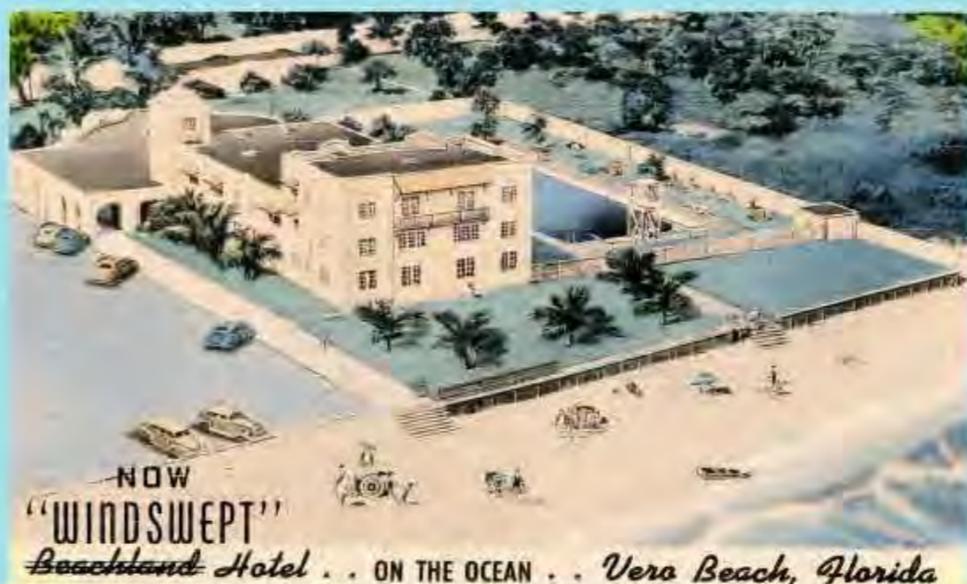


Merrill Barber bridge, built near the original wooden bridge, is dedicated and opened.

February 19, 1951

[Bruce Smith Collection-00308

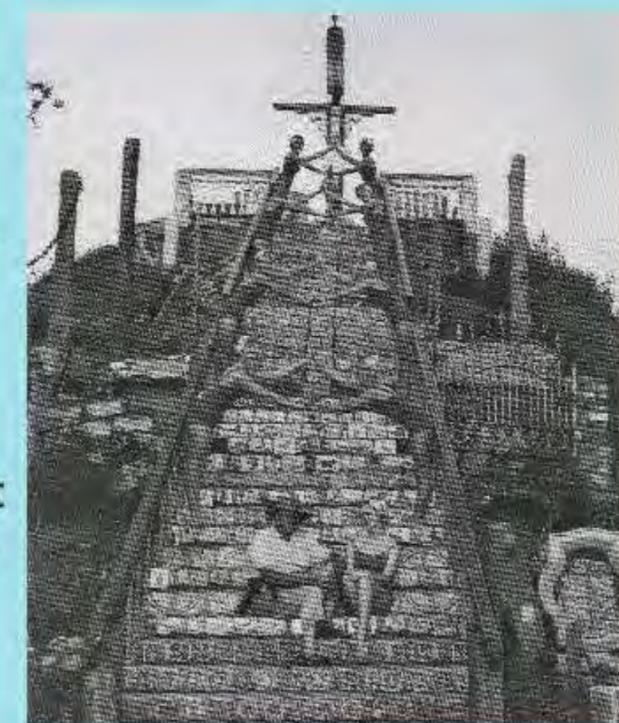
Bruce Smith Collection-00314-001]



The Vero Beach Dolphinettes, a local synchronized swimming group, is founded by Millie Frasier bunnell at its organizational meeting, with its first show held on August 16, 1952 at the Shamrock pool in Ft. Pierce. The Dolphinettes made their home in the pool at the Windswept Hotel in Sexton Plaza until their final show on September 1, 1962. They represented the City of Vero Beach both locally, around the US on television, at theme parks, and in at least one movie. July 15, 1952

[Bruce Smith Collection-00308/

Indian River County Historical Society-3468-001]



The Brooklyn Dodgers dedicate Holman Stadium. The legendary flier Eddie rickenbacker, President of Eastern Airlines, unveils the plaque. March 11, 1953

[Indian River County Historical Society-01098 & 01096]



Left to right: Eddie Rickenbacker; Bud Holman; Baseball Commissioner "Happy" Chandler; Mrs. Darabelle Holman, 1956

1950 - 1959



Local Highwaymen artist Harold Newton, born in 1934 in Gifford, begins his successful painting career at age 19, showcasing his many artistic works at the local courthouse, banks, hotels, homes and offices. As his artistic career progressed, he became a master of Florida Landscape Art and is widely considered to be the most talented of the Highwaymen artists. 1954 [Highwaymen Trail.com]



The first radio station, WTTB ("Where the Tropics Begin") at 1490 AM, goes on the air from 7am to 10pm. June 7, 1954 [Indian River County Historical Society-00681]



In addition to its Lock haven, PA facility, Piper Aircraft Corporation locates a manufacturing plant in Vero Beach at its current location at the south east corner of the Vero Beach Municiple Airport, currently the Vero Beach Regional Airport. 1957



[Indian River County Historical Society-03190, 03192-001, 03199]

1950-1959



Jaycee Beach Park is dedicated as a new nine-acre City park. Governor LeRoy Collins is the principal speaker at the dedication. March 22, 1958
[Bruce Smith Collection-00327/ Indian River County Historical Society-02084-001]

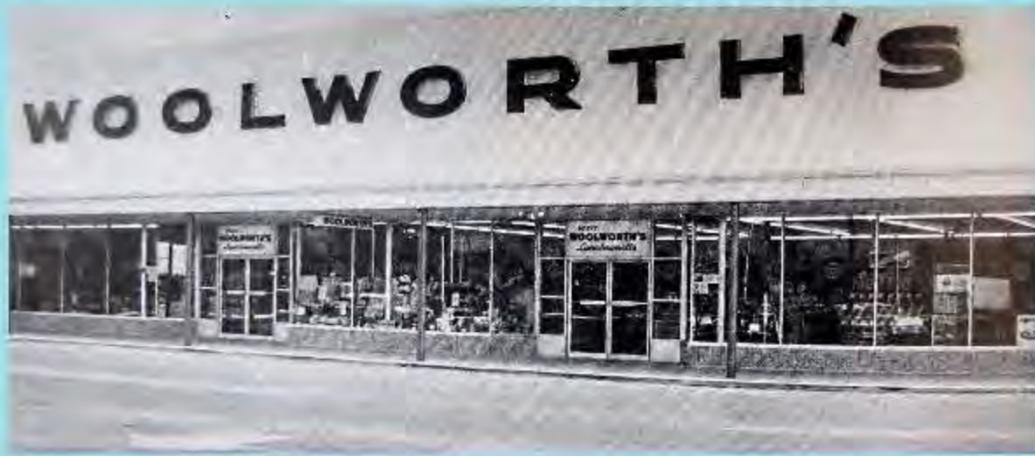


Dedication of Sexton Plaza and Waldo Sexton Day, honoring Waldo Sexton as the Great floridian entrepreneur who built Ocean Grill located in the plaza, and who built many other famous Vero Beach landmarks. November 5, 1958
[Sexton Family Collection-033/Sex-038]



Greyhound Bus Lines opens a station and waiting room in Vero Beach at US Highway 1 and 12th Avenue, between Helseth Motor Companies and Bunky's. January 30, 1959 [Indian River County Historical Society-00708]

1960 - 1969



The City's first shopping center, "Miracle Plaza" opens, boasting 97,919 square feet of floor space.

April 28, 1960

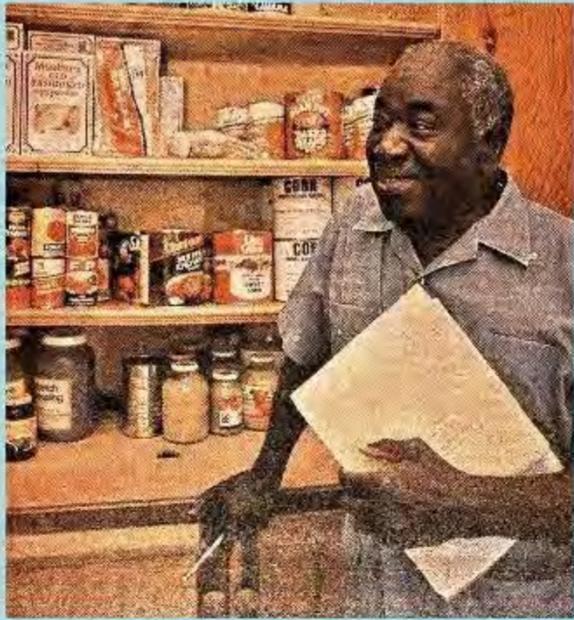
[1961 Arrowhead]



The "Real 8" Treasure Salvagers find their first shipwreck of the 1715 Fleet near Sebastian Inlet, recovering between 3,500 and 4,000 silver coins fused together into two large clumps. January 8, 1961

[McLarty Treasure Museum, Edward Perry]

1960 – 1969



A group of concerned citizens votes to form the Progressive Civic League of Gifford as a civic and community organization working in the best efforts of Gifford. The founders were Leon Young, Mrs. Early B. Evans, Reverend L.E. Green, I.J. Pickney, Victor Hart, Edward Watkins, George York, J. R. Lundy, Verna Green and John mims. J. Ralph Lundy served as President for thirty-one years retiring in 1991.

May 1961

[Vero Beach Press Journal March 4, 1991]

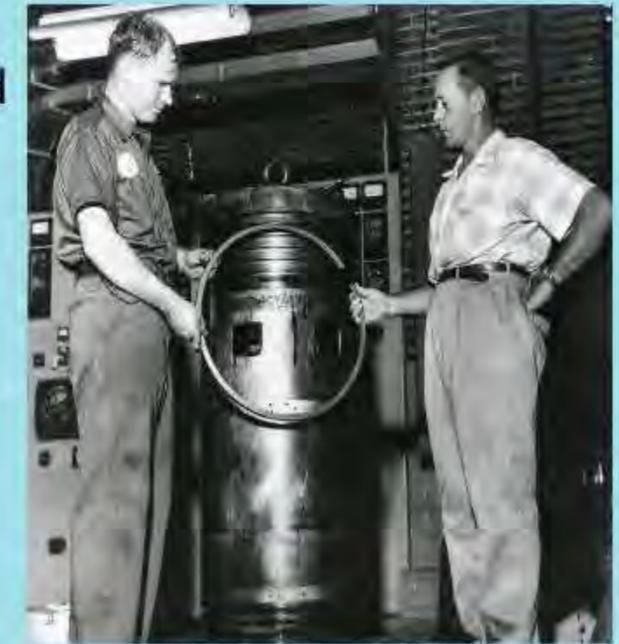


Power is first generated at the new municipally-owned steam plant, built with blue aluminum siding, and located at 17th Street and Indian River Boulevard. The new Vero Beach Municipal Power Plant continues to be supplemented by the old diesel power plant for several decades, used fro high demand and during emergencies.

December 1961

[Indian River County Historical Society-3232-001]

[Sam Wolfe/Vero Beach Press Journal]



The new library building at 1028 20th Place is dedicated. In February, the public library, housed in the Woman's Club Building since 1916, moved to the new building. The architect deisgned it to look like a row of books. March 25,1962

[ARC-PC-038]

1960 – 1969



Located across the street from the public library, the new City Hall is dedicated. Architect bill Taylor designed it in the style called "mid-century modern" and it was built by William Hensick & Sons. The new City Hall includes a large 112 seat council chamber on the first floor. March 17, 1963

[Indian River County Historical Society-00997]

[Indian River County Historical Society-01002]



On the recommendation of the Indian River Hibiscus Society and by official vote of the Vero Beach City Council, the Hibiscus is named the official flower of Vero Beach. October 17, 1967

[Indian River County Historical Society-02035-002]

[Pam Cooper]



1960 – 1969



The last railway passenger service to Vero Beach ends, having begun prior to the incorporation of the City of Vero Beach.

July 1968

[Indian River County Historical Society-03518-001]



Local business woman Alma Lee Loy was elected the first woman Indian River County Commissioner from 1968 – 1980.

November 1968

[Courtesy of Alma Lee Loy and Vero Beach Magazine]



Gifford High School graduates its last class after the Indian River County School Board adopts a desegregation plan, a direct result of a ten-year fight by Joe Idlette, Jr. to end desegregation in Indian River County public schools. Formerly known as the Gifford School, serving grades 1-12, it first opened on September 17, 1937 with 290 students. June 5, 1969

[Indian River County Historical Society-03331 / Joe Idlette]



1970 - 1979



Interstate-95 from Malabar to State Road 60 is formally dedicated in a ribbon cutting ceremony. The dedication ceremony begins with a motorcade at 3pm from the Vero Theatre taking dignitaries to the Indian River-Brevard Conty Line for the 4pm ceremony. After seven long years of planning and construction, I-95 opens south past Vero Beach on August 1, 1977. October 28, 1970

[Eric Hasert/Vero Beach Press Journal]



After numerous delays, McLarty State Museum formally opens on State Road A1A, two miles south of the Sebastian Inlet. The museum is built on property once used by Spanish Salvors following the sinking of a fleet of treasure-laden Spanish ships during a 1715 hurricane. March 27, 1971

[McLarty Museum, Ed Perry]



Original architect's rendering of Riverside Theatre.

The Vero Beach Community Theatre opens in Riverside Park with its Theatre Guild production of "Camelot". It is renamed Riverside Theatre in 1976. April 1973

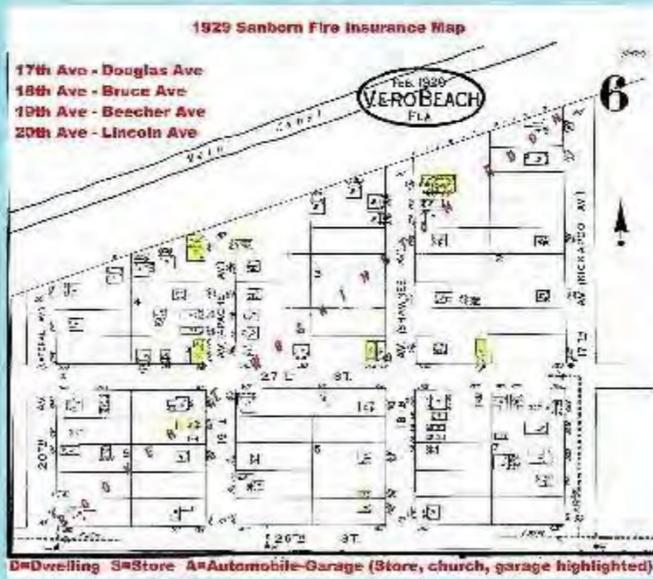
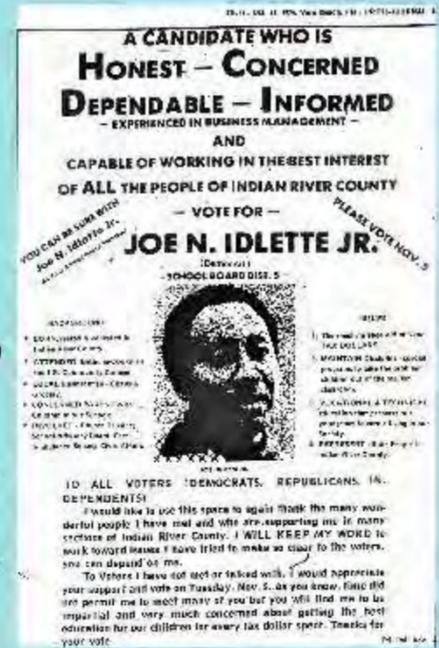
[Riverside Theatre, Oscar Sales]



1970 - 1979



Joe Idlette, Jr. is elected to the Indian River County School Board after achieving his goal of school desegregation in Indian River County in 1969. Joe began his fight for desegregation after his military service in Korea, returning to his hometown to a fresh realization of the unfair and unjust segregation long existing here. The great grandson of slaves and a son of a Georgia sharecropper, Idlette overcame threats against himself and his family to move the civil rights movement forward in his community, serving as a elected school board member for twenty years. The Idlette family was honored as a Pioneer family in 2018; Joe, his wife, Bernice, and their family remain active and influential members of the local community. November 5, 1974 [Joe Idlette]



The Spillway community living in the Booker T. Washington subdivision begins to slowly disappear after the city council adopts the Southern Standard Housing Code, imposing stricter housing codes city-wide. The subdivision was originally platted in 1917 and included over time numerous homes, two churches, several grocery stores, an automobile garage and a liquor store. Black citrus grove workers had lived in the community for decades. October 1975 [Sanborn Fire Insurance Map]



Indian River Community College dedicates a 10 classroom building on a 30-acre tract of land southwest of Vero Beach for a branch college campus. It is named The Mueller Center in honor of Benefactors James and Valeda Mueller. April 7, 1976 [Indian River State College Library Archives]



Snow! First Time In Vero Beach

How Plants Faced Snow Flurries

People are huddled up and staying close to their living rooms wondering these odd days and nights. But that's the atmosphere in Indian River County (and elsewhere) as the first snow falls.

On the 19th of January, the first snow fell in Indian River County. The snow was reported by the weather bureau and the temperature dropped to 32 degrees.

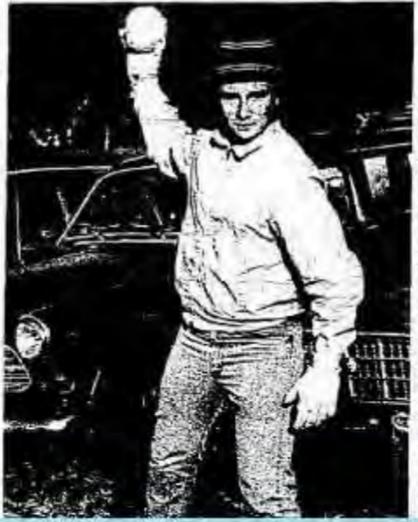
"We were close to the danger zone in the Indian River area," Charles Scripps, of Florida Citrus, Inc., commented, and said, "We'll have to wait and see tonight, though. We hope there's no damage."

Even though there were flurries, last night's strong winds kept trees from forming ice trees.

If temperatures remain under 32 degrees from now to six hours — four hours for citrus and especially from now to six hours for winter-damaged citrus — damage will occur.

Generally, citrus in this area has not been damaged. Reports from the central Florida citrus belt are not so good. There, some reports are that fruit has frozen to flowers. Once the core of citrus is frozen, growers have 10 to 12 days to get their groves to trucks, otherwise fruit will spoil.

Richard Black, of D-5-E Sales, Incorporated, agreed it's too early to know if Indian River citrus has been harmed. He is still several days after extremes



By Jim Rankin
Indian River Citrusians can now state in the record-breaking winter for they're experiencing the biggest blizzards of the year. Snow in Indian River County for the first time happened on Wednesday.

Reports of advancing temperatures throughout most of the United States, causing hardship and energy shortages, has been followed with interest and concern. "The ladies, people make up to unbelievable reports of snow. 'I didn't believe it when I first heard it!' was the cry heard over and over."

Snow flurries began at 4:20 a.m. in Indian River County and continued, by 2 a.m., there was no doubt in anyone's mind that it was snow. Richard Rankin, chief engineer and morning manager of WTTB said.

WTTB remained on the air all night, tonight, non-commercial, in cooperation with Florida Citrus Mutual in an effort to give weather reports to citrus growers in the area. Snowing within a 200-mile radius of Boynton Beach was given at 12-minute intervals, as well as on local reports. "That's every time we opened our mouth to give the temperature for Vero Beach."

Initially, the temperature of the airport was 32 degrees, but the station registered 22 degrees at one point, as did other areas within the county.

Arnold & Sons, Jackson said law enforcement officials began patrolling streets of the community in Richwood, especially on bridges where moisture, wind-blown and freezing, causing extreme hazards to motorists.

"Flurries began to ring off the bank at the station, with wind gusts coming in from the north around 8 a.m. 'Snow' started on to fall as it was blowing. It was especially heavy around 8 a.m. when everyone was beginning to get up and work."

A lifeguard in Malabar who's been in the area since 1911 told Jackson the kids never remember snow in this area. It was a very interesting remark, that's for sure."

Miss Charlotte Lockwood, Indian River County Historical Society, who has been in the area off and on since 1918, said she's never heard from anyone that it snowed in Indian River County. "I have done a lot of research and I never heard that before. I

was here for a long time, it must have been in the 40s, but we don't know."

Robert Ward, another minister for the Press-Journal, could not believe it's the first time we ever had snow as far as we can find out. He estimated that temperatures were in the 30s through early Tuesday evening when it ceased, otherwise that precipitation might well have been more.

More Snow Pictures
Pages 2A And 3A

Flurries and melting layers of white snow have been sighted in all sections of Indian River County, from the beach to just northwest. A few two-wheeled scooters blew into the highway east by Vista Harbor during last night's wind storm.

When Art Moore, assistant editor of the Press-Journal, went out to feed his horses in the barn at 6 a.m. Wednesday, it was dark. It was also very cold and very windy, and there was something else, a mysterious feeling about it. The air had a texture of its own, not there most of Vero Beach, he reported.

When he lit the barn light and started to feed the horses, he noticed that the horse seemed the floor had been mysteriously white with snow on its feet. At first he thought they might be grass or pollen, but then it dawned on him, they were flecks of snow. It was actually snowing in Vero Beach, where the flurries began.

The snow, he noticed on closer examination, was in the form of tiny, flaky spheres, not the flat crystals he was used to during snowfalls up north. The spheres were flaky enough that they could not be mistaken for hailstones, though; they were undoubtedly snow.

Walter Hunter, 20-year-old Delabourne road, said it was the first time he's ever seen snow in the part of Florida in his life. He now lives on Delab (2 in Fellsmere). When he went out to his work on the truck and found so much as two inches of snow in banks in the back of the truck, his comment was, "Well, damn, look here!"

Snow falls in Indian River County for the first time in recorded history. Flurries begin at 4am and by 6am law enforcement officials are warning drivers of icy conditions. WTTB radio station receives over 500 calls to tell them "it was snowing" January 19, 1977 [Vero Beach Press Journal January 19, 1977 p. 1]



Patients are transferred from the "old hospital" on 25th Street to Indian River Memorial Hospital's new 216-bed facility on 36th Street. July 29, 1978 [Indian River County Historical Society-1551] [Indian River County Historical Society-1550]





A COMMON SIGHT — Storm Paredis stayed busy Tuesday, tearing limbs from a 40-foot avocado tree that was uprooted and fell on 125 Rockridge home roof on Monday. The trunk of the huge tree was held above the rooftop by the large circle of earth holding its roots. Just clearing away the excruciations on the ground is going to take some time, the Paredis said. (Press-Journal - Karen E. Davis)

Unwelcome David Blows Into County

Hurricane David made its coastal ramp through a well-prepared Indian River County Monday, killing nobody and causing headwinds for those who awoke in the estimated property losses of more than \$5 million.

Although the storm, spyrille winds that peaked at an estimated 90 mph an hour, caused only a few injuries, it left the area without electrical power, was responsible for more than 1,000 people evacuating the beach area and dumped debris on roads and property throughout the county.

Vero Beach utility crews had been working since Sunday night. They were scheduled to cut Tuesday night and return to work Wednesday morning. Crews in Vero Beach, each of that of a nearby opened million dollar home shop. Power line cuts were widespread, and a few shops in the area were closed, including the hotel located on one other area.

It was noted if hurricane damage in the county exceeded \$1 million, Indian River County Sheriff's Department Captain Doyle Shroud said, "I can take you out and in five minutes take just more than \$1 million in damages."

Despite the serious damage, county officials and others believe that residents had prepared for the worst. Indian River County Civil Defense Director Lee Nunez said he received and the cooperation from the public and the organization and operation of the beach evacuation was "well-planned and well-superior" by the people involved.

There were some that people were bringing themselves for the hurricane. Batteries, Coleman fans and masking tape sales were up in stores throughout the county.

Bill Bradford, director of the Vero Beach Marine, said that boat owners had moved their vessels to mangrove island areas.

The evacuation of the beaches began at 8 p.m. Sunday. A station from Monday, Civil Defense officials advised to a reinforcement officials withdrew from the beach area at about 8 p.m. Tuesday. Citizens began evacuating in parking lots west of the Parker Bridge, and the evacuation of the beach area had "average numbers" remaining. The evacuation of the beach area and return home.

At about 8 a.m. Tuesday, Vero Beach policemen began admitting guests, some of whom were inmates, across the bridge, but he notes that the beach area had "average numbers" remaining. The evacuation of the beach area and return home.

Public schools were closed Tuesday and will be closed today because of sewage problems and power outages at some schools.

See 'Unwelcome,' Pg. 4A

On Labor Day, Hurricane David rips through Indian River County with 90 mile per hour winds, causing \$5 million in damage.

September 3, 1979

[Vero Beach Press Journal September 5, 1979 p.1]



Two years after the groundbreaking on October 20, 1977, the 17th Street Bridge is dedicated and opens to traffic. It is renamed the Alma Lee Loy Bridge on May 12, 2012 at a ceremony held at the base of the bridge.

December 19, 1979

[Alma Lee Loy and Vero Beach Magazine]

1980 – 1989



Mayor Dorothy Cain



Mayor Caroline Ginn



Mayor Sandra L. Bowden



Mayor Mary Beth McDonald



Mayor Pilar Turner



Mayor Laura Moss

Dorothy Cain is elected the first woman mayor of the City of Vero Beach, serving as mayor from November 18, 1980 – December 2, 1980 and from March 9, 1983 – March 13, 1984. In total, between 1919 and 2017, six women were elected mayor by their fellow councilmembers. Other women mayors who served the city, and their mayoral terms are:

Caroline Ginn (March 9, 1994 – March 14, 1995); Sandra Bowden (March 16, 2000 – March 13, 2001 and March 12, 2003 – March 9, 2004); Mary Beth McDonald (March 9, 2005 – March 19, 2006); Pilar Turner (November 14, 2011 – November 12, 2012); and Laura Moss (November 21, 2016 – November 20, 2017)

November 18, 1980 [City of Vero Beach]



Vero Beach High School football team, nicknamed the "Lil Rascals", wins the 1981 Class 4A Football Florida State Championship.

December 18, 1981 [Arrowhead 1981]



Voters approve a \$4.7 million bond to buy beachfront property. It enables Indian River County to buy four parcels, adding another half-mile of public beach located two miles south of Sebastian Inlet. November 2, 1982

[Pam Cooper]

1980 – 1989



The Thanksgiving weekend storm brings pounding rains and 70 miles per hour winds, causing an estimated \$3.4 million in damages along the 1.5 stretch of beach including the Humiston Park and Conn Beach boardwalks. Part of the Sexton Park parking lot caves into the sea and the Ocean Grill collapses as its floor gives way. November 23–24, 1984 [Indian River County Historical Society–01997, 02004, and 02008]



The Florida Theatre, formerly known as Vero Theatre and later named the Theatre Plaza, closes as a movie theater after 61 years. The final movie shown is "Desperately Seeking Susan". June 20, 1985 [BRA-01-011 / Pam Cooper]



After forming in 1958, the Vero Beach Theatre Guild leaves Riverside Theatre and moves to its new location at 2020 San Juan Avenue, formerly the Central Assembly of God Church building. The first show opens December 5, 1985, with a romantic comedy called "John Loves Mary". June 1985 [Indian River County Historical Society–4429-003]

1980 - 1989



After six years of preparation, work, and a successful capital campaign for the new center for the Arts building in Riverside Park, The Alliance for the Arts and the Vero Beach Art Club hold the grand opening of the \$2 million Center for the Arts. In June 2002, The Center for the Arts is re-named the Vero Beach Museum of Art.

February 1, 1986

[Courtesy of the Vero Beach Museum of Art 2002 & 2016 Buildings and aerial view]



Officials dedicate the restored Florida East Coast Railway Station after moving the building to City property located at 2336 14th Avenue, the first site selected for the station sixty years earlier.

The Indian River County Historical Society bought the railway station for \$1.00

1987

{Indian River County Historical Society-03528-001}

[Pam Cooper]



1980 - 1989



Prince Charles plays at Windsor Polo and Beach Club. More than 4,000 spectators cheer him on while raising funds for the Friends of Conservation, a charity aiding the African wildlife. \$25,000 is also raised for the Environmental Learning Center.

February 18, 1989

[Gail Daman, BG Polo and Equestrian]



The Christmas Day freeze occurs as temperatures plunge into the mid-twenties.

The effects of the freeze on the local citrus industry are felt into the 1990's.

December 25, 1989

[Daily Mail UK]

1990 – 1999



The new \$4.8 million Indian River Main Library opens at 1600 21st Street, just west of the Vero Beach Woman's Club Building, site of the first library.

February 4, 1991

[Pam Cooper]



Members of Vero Heritage, Inc. organize an open house and fish fry fundraiser at the Heritage Center. A group led by Millie Bunnell fought successfully to save and restore the old Community Center/Physical Arts Center, now known as the Heritage Center, located in Pocahontas Park. July 1992

[Bruce Smith Family Collection-00095]

[Pam Cooper]



The first courthouse opened in 1937 with PWA Funds. Construction begins on the \$21 million courthouse and parking garage complex, with dedication scheduled for October 15, 1994 and with the opening scheduled for November 28, 1994.

November 1992

[Pam Cooper]

1990 - 1999



The \$5.3 million State Road 60 Twin Pairs project is finished, with 20th Street now a one-way road going west and 19th Place a one-way road going east.

1993

[Phillip J. Matson Indian River County MPO]



Walt Disney Company officials announce that Disney will build Disney's Vero Beach Resort in Wabasso on 71 acres at State Road A1A and County Road 510. The Resort is completed in fall of 1995 with Disney holding a two-day "Open Mouse" to introduce the facility to the community. March 30, 1993

[Disney's Vero Beach Resort]



The Indian River County Board of County Commissions awards a \$1.76 million contract to American Coastal Engineering to install a Prefabricated Erosion Prevention Reef (PEP Reef). The 3,000 foot-long concrete PEP Reef is installed on August 16, 1996, placed between Humiston Park and the Village Spires. September 21, 1993

[Pam Cooper]



The City of Vero Beach begins its six-month-long Diamond Jubilee celebration of the 75th year anniversary of its incorporation. The initial four-hour celebration is held in Pocahontas Park with a ceremony, birthday cake, food vendors selling food at 1919 prices, music and dance entertainment, pioneer settlers providing first hand anecdotes in the Heritage Center, and a historic video. The celebration continues with special events held on the fourth of July, and during the Labor Day, Veterans Day, and Christmas Parade. June 10, 1994

[Indian River County Historical Society-03648]



Replacing the old draw bridge, the Merrill Barber Bridge opens as a new four lane high rise concrete bridge, built at a cost of \$24.5 million. February 18, 1995

[Pam Cooper/Scullybob/https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/]



Opening set for youth center
IHC History-VI



Gifford Youth Achievement Center ("GYAC") opens as an education/recreation facility in a Progressive Civic League of Gifford and community-wide effort to increase academic achievement to assist in student graduation for at-risk students living in the Gifford, Sebastian, Vero Beach, and Wabasso areas of Indian River County. The GYAC also provides programs and activities for adults and senior citizens. They continue to expand, incorporating classrooms, computer labs, a library operated by the County, an in-door gym, playground, and lies adjacent to Gifford Park, The Community Center and Gifford Aquatic Pool.

February 15, 1998 [Gifford Youth Achievement Center/VBP] Feb 11, 1998/Lou Misselhorn, Florida Today]



Press Journal Thursday, December 30, 1999, A3

City power plant officials: 'We are Y2K ready'

Many of the computer clocks at the Vero Beach Municipal Power Plant have been running ahead for months, manually set to the year 2000, without showing a problem, City Hall spokeswoman Mary Beth McDonald said Wednesday.

Vero Beach officials say they don't expect the "Y2K bug" to cause any problems at electric service come midnight Friday, but they are planning to avoid by just to 1999.

Many of the computer clocks at the Vero Beach Municipal Power Plant have been running ahead for months, manually set to the year 2000, without showing a problem, City Hall spokeswoman

Mary Beth McDonald said Wednesday.

"We don't say 'computer.' The word we use is 'buggy.' We are Y2K ready," McDonald said. "We've spent two years getting ready for the Y2K bug."

She said city computers have been upgraded to read four-digit year displays such as "99" for years, prompting industry experts to warn that "00" could be misinterpreted as "100" and cause off-putting behaviors that depend on the year.

But the stroke of midnight, when the year 1999 yields to 2000, will show if the city anticipated all the possible problems correctly.

McDonald and Mike Stefan, manager of support services at the power plant, will be on hand to address any computer problems that may arise, McDonald said.

In addition, Power Resources Director Pete Lindberg has scheduled an extra mechanic and electric engineer for the night shift, McDonald said.

At least five private businesses in the Vero Beach area have planned for millennium New Year's Eve parties with extended hours to 3 a.m. Saturday, she said. McDonald said they won't strain the system.

If an excessive power load does trip the city system, she said, Vero Beach still is tied into a network of other power-producing municipalities across Florida and can call on that resource for help.

"But this is going to be such a non-event," McDonald said. "The city of Vero Beach is not doing anything special. We're not planning any fireworks or anything. I think our people are basically going to stay at home with their families."

While some people may be stocking water, flashlights and canned goods at home, she said, the city hasn't encouraged any of that — as it typically would before a hurricane.

Prudent preparations for Y2K

Medical: Evaluate all of the health needs in your family and ask your doctor or pharmacist for an extra month's supply of prescription medicines. Buy extra over-the-counter medicines.

The Cassandra Project also recommends getting copies of all medical and dental records, including X-rays.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends that people requiring any type of life support that also electricity report with their local emergency management office.

Money: Have enough cash to take care of basic needs for a week in case ATMs and debit card machines cannot process transactions.

Heat: If you have a fireplace or wood-burning stove, check to make sure it is working properly before use. Have extra blankets and warm clothing. If using a generator, keep fuel stored safely in appropriate containers.

Communications: Use a battery-operated radio and extra batteries. Should the electricity go out, many modern telephones that require power won't work. Make sure at least one plain-old-telephone plug-in is available.

Food: Stockpile a week's worth of non-perishable food. Remember to have a non-electric can opener.

Prepackaged emergency food supplies: available from various vendors.

If the electricity goes off, first use foods from the refrigerator. Then use foods from the freezer. A well-insulated freezer can keep foods safe to eat for about three days. When the refrigerator is empty, use unperishable foods.

Should there be problems with electrical or natural gas service, you may need an alternative means of preparing meals. Prepack camp stoves are an option, but not must be stored safely.

Water: Allow one gallon per person per day for drinking and cooking.

City of Vero Beach officials report that they are Y2K ready as at the stroke of midnight December 31, 1999 turns to January 1, 2000. Citizens are urged to be Y2K ready. Y2K refers to the millennium computer bug involving the formatting and storage of calendar data for dates beginning in the year 2000.

December 30, 1999
[Vero Beach Press Journal Dec 3, 1999]



City of Vero Beach and Indian River County officials agree to terms of a public buyout and leaseback of Dodgertown to persuade the Dodgers to stay in Vero Beach instead of moving its spring training operations to Arizona.

August 29, 2001

[Historic Dodgertown]



The day after the September 11th terrorist bombing of the twin towers in New York City, FBI agents come to Vero Beach looking for a former flight student suspected of taking part in the plot.

September 12, 2001

[Vero Beach Press Journal September 13, 2001 p.1]



The 100th anniversary of the creation of Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, the first federal wildlife refuge in the United States, set aside by President Theodore Roosevelt, is celebrated. The Secretary of the Interior, Gail Norton, leads the commemoration of the milestone in Sebastian, Florida with a series of events from March 13 through March 16, 2003.

March 14, 2003

[Pam Cooper]

2000 - 2019

Hurricane activity in the Atlantic



Twin hurricanes Frances, a category 4 hurricane, and Jeanne, a Category 3 hurricane, hit near Stuart, Florida just three weeks and two miles apart. The caused massive destruction, weeks of power outages, and months of construction during a very active 2004 Atlantic hurricane season.
September 5, 2004 & September 25, 2004
[Peggy Lyon]



Hurricane Wilma makes landfall in southwest, Florida, then travels quickly between 25 and 30 miles per hour across the state as a Category 3 hurricane, exiting near Jupiter.
October 24, 2005
[Tyler Treadway TCPalm]



Los Angeles Dodgers play their last spring training game at Holman Stadium as the Dodgers lose to the Houston Astros. After 60 years in Vero Beach, the team moves to Arizona. In May of 2009, Minor League Baseball (MiLB) agrees to operate the Dodgertown site as "Vero Beach Sports Village", reopening year-round with teams, tournaments and sports education. March 17, 2008
[Historic Dodgertown]





The Florida Public Service Commission approves Florida Power & Light's acquisition of the Vero Beach municipal electric system. The anticipated closing date for the sale is October 1, 2018

June 5, 2018

[Indian River Press Journal June 6, 2018 p.1]



The City of Vero Beach celebrates its centennial anniversary of its incorporation, June 10, 1919.

October 2018 - October 2019

[City of Vero Beach/ Seal by Hans Saltzwedel (1983)]

Some of the photos in this slideshow will also be placed in the Gallery Photos on the "Media" page of this website.