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## Natural Bridge, Florida Post Offices

By Thomas M. Lera

### ECONFINA (NATURAL BRIDGE), FLORIDA POST OFFICE (05/29/1855 – 03/29/1867; 06/07/1871 - 07/15/1919)

William Gainer, a surveyor and mathematician, came to the Econfina area in 1824 or 1825 and established his homestead on a large ranch on the west side of Econfina Creek. The Gainer homestead reportedly served as a church, school, and the area “post office” until 1855 when the U.S. post office was established (*Figure 1*).



The village of Econfina was located in Washington County, north of St. Andrews near a creek of the same name. The name derives from the Creek Indian “ekana” (earth) and “feno” (bridge) or in other words, “Natural Bridge”.

Gainer family members served as postmasters between 1884 and 1919 when the post office was discontinued, and mail was then handled by the post office at Bennett. <sup>1</sup>

Econfina Natural Bridge was along Econfina Creek which was created from the discharge of several springs in the area. Because it was primarily a transportation route of the many logging operations who used the creek to float logs in early Florida history, it disappeared around 1830.

*Figure 1. Portion of the 1876 Preliminary post route map of the state of Florida showing the location of Econfina before the postal routes were added. 1876 Florida Post Route Map <sup>2</sup>*

Continued on page 3

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Natural Bridge, Florida Post Offices**  
*by Thomas M. Lera* ..... 1, 3-5

**Woodstock, Florida Cover**  
*by Deane R. Briggs, M.D.* ..... 6-9

**Giant Magnolia on a Blue Velvet Cloth**  
*by Juan L. Riera* ..... 10-12

**Literature Competition Award** ..... 12

**Lipona and Its Postmaster, Achille Murat**  
*by Phil Eschbach* ..... 13-16

**San Carlos Institute – Birthplace of Jose Marti’s Cuban Revolutionary Party**  
*by Juan L. Riera* ..... 16-18

**President’s Drivel – Fall 2018**  
*by Francis Ferguson* ..... 19

**Florida Postal History Society Dealer Members Contact Information** ..... 20

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Figure 2 is a manuscript postmark from 1856.



Figure 2. July 18<sup>th</sup> / [18]56 manuscript postmark with pen cancelled stamp.

<b>POSTMASTERS ECONFINA POST OFFICE WASHINGTON AND BAY COUNTIES FLORIDA</b>	
<u>Postmaster</u>	<u>Date Appointed</u>
Daniel B. Coleman	05/29/1855
Henry Howard	05/14/1856
George Howard	08/27/1857
Discontinued 03/29/1867; Reestablished 06/07/1871	
Ann M. Vickery	06/07/1871
Benjamin B. Brown	11/27/1872
John W. Gaines	12/28/1874
Catherine Evans	11/16/1875
William B. Gaines	02/01/1877
William A. Gaines	03/21/1877
Mrs. Martha J. Porter	12/15/1879
James M. Matthews	01/09/1883
Joshua Mengo	12/31/1883
Mary J. Gainer	02/11/1884
Florida C. Gainer	08/20/1892
Sarah A. Gainer	11/23/1892
Post Office now located in Bay County	
Sarah A. Gainer	07/01 1893
Florida C. Gainer	04/24/1913
Robert L. Gainer	04/04/1919
Discontinued 07/15/1919 with mail to Bennett	