

The post office was first established in 1827, when Novi was still known as West Farmington. John Gould, the man who had made the first claim on land in Novi back in 1824, was named postmaster, running the office from his home.

The establishment of the post office in the growing community was the first phase in the breaking away from Farmington's control. The next step came in changing the name of the township. Herein lies the greatest controversy concerning the City of Novi: it is definitely known that the community was once called West Farmington, and that the name was changed in 1830 to Novi. But there the facts end. The exact origin of the unique name remains, to this day, a mystery. There are at least nine different versions as to what the name really means and from where it originated, but as to factual, documented proof of the actual source – there is none to be found.

Colorful stories abound, however, and provide no end of amusement for Novi residents to relate to newcomers. Here, for the first time, are presented all known versions of the disputation:

Among these stories is the most popular – and, seemingly, most logical – that the sixth township (No. VI) in the southwest portion of Oakland County was adapted by merely writing it out as one word: "NOVI".

A similar tale of equal popularity – albeit not as logical – has the town named after Toll Gate No. VI on Grand River (or the old Detroit-Howell) Road. Unfortunately for this theory, though, the toll road was not built for another twenty-two years after the town was already named.

In the meeting to discuss the choice of names in 1830, Mrs. Emery, wife of Dr. John C. Emery, brought up the name "Novi" as a short, easily written and unusual alternative to other suggestions' as "Republic" or "Beulah". Where she came up with the name is not documented, and Latin-learned opponents to the name argued that its definition of "unknown" or "forgotten" made for an undesirable name for a town. Nonetheless, the name received the majority of votes at the meeting, and has endured throughout the years.

To add to the confusion of the name's origin, not only was Mrs. Emery's choice questioned, but Jack Hoffman, in *Northville – The First 100 Years*, argues about who really made that suggestion in the first place:

Mrs. (Ellen) Emery was born June 28, 1825, which means she was just five years old in 1830 and obviously not yet married to Dr. Emery, who in 1830 was just 13 years old. Both are buried in Yerkes Cemetery, having died Dec. 20, 1884 and she on April 10, 1898. All of which clouds the validity of this story of the naming of Novi.

However, a 1982 article from the *Novi Sun-Forum* claims it was an "older Dr. Emery", the father of J.C., who attended the historic meeting. "The elder Dr. Emery was active in the community in pioneer time," according to the article.

Other origin ideas range from Novi being named after a Greek town where, presumably, Mrs. Emery had lived, to a contraction of "Northville", to the Latin name for "new". Even the *New York Times* got into the act, declaring that Novi "stands for the Roman numeral six – the town was the sixth stop on the trail from Detroit to Lansing."

Speculation also includes the supposed date of the meeting that may have lent itself to the name, Nov. 1, as well as the humorous anecdote regarding the blacksmith-preacher whose wife's name whose wife's name was Vivian, or "Vi":

... The blacksmith-preacher was most awfully tight and forever vetoed any spending suggestions from his wife... It was always "No Vi" to anything until his place was referred to by the whole neighborhood as, "down to No Vi's" then as "No Vi's Corners", and then just plain, "Novi".

Finally the latest theory on how the unusual name came about comes from as far away as Yugoslavia. According to this account, the Michigan city was named after the hometown of a woman who came from Yugoslavia in the early 1800's. She was a Moslem girl who broke away from her religious and family ties to marry one of Napoleon's soldiers. Together, they emigrated thousands of miles across land and sea to settle in the wilds of Michigan. Unfortunately, as delightfully romantic as this theory appears, it has yet to be proven conclusively. Research continues on the identities of the elusive couple. Among the stumbling blocks is that the word "Novi" in the Yugoslavian language means "new" and that it could refer to countless towns in that country.