Innerarity Island: Origins of the Name

Based on research by Brian K. Sullivan and James Malcolm

Innerarity Island is home to our small community in the far west of the Florida Panhandle. The name of the island is derived from the last name of one of its early inhabitants, **John Innerarity, Jr,** a native of Aberdeen, Scotland who was granted ownership of the island in 1815 by the Spanish government.

The name "**Innerarity**" is a very old Scottish Family/Place name from the area in Scotland called **Angus**, in what today is known as the **Perthshire** region, near the town of **Forfar**. The name "**Innerarity**" has over time been come to be known by a slightly different spelling and can be found on maps as "**Inverarity**", depending on which era is examined.

The two spellings are slightly different interpretations of an ancient Gaelic word: "*inbhir*" - pronounced "inner" or "inver" in English, meaning "river mouth". "**Arity**" is a very old name for the **River Arity,** which is located in the town of Coupar Angus, and the river is part of a collection of streams today called the **Kerbet Water**, part of the watershed for the mighty River Tay before it flows into the sea.

My friend **Jim Malcolm** is a Scottish folk musician who lives in Perth, near the little village of Inverarity. During a recent visit with me on Innerarity Island, he immediately picked up on the name's similarity to Scottish town "**Inverarity**" and he began to research into the origin of name and its history. He found old spellings of the name on historic maps of Scotland, then drove up to Inverarity village and took photos of the mouth of the River Arity.

The Inver (mouth) of the Arity River in Scotland   **Photo by Jim Malcolm**

The earliest reference he found was a spelling on a map by Timothy Pont, (ca: **1583 -1614**), or **Innerarity,** the official spelling that Florida has adopted for the island. The area is marked with a "K"(for "Kirk", meaning "a church" in Gaelic).

Pont Map ca: 1583-1614   **National Library of Scotland**

An alternate spelling appeared on a subsequent map by Herman Moll (ca: **1745**), shown as "**Inneraritte**". Today the Inverarity area is a parish in its own name.

The name appears on a 1678 map of the same name by Robert Edward as "**Innerarite**."

A 1794 map by cartographer John Anslie shows the earliest designation we found of the area as representing a small region called a parish, with the origin of the name cleanly separated into two words: "**Inver Arity**". Readers will note the spelling of the name changed to include the "v". By this date most of the place names labeled "Inner" had been changed to "Inver".

Over the years, the town's name has been spelled in a variety of ways, depending on the cartographer and their choices when spelling names from the rich Scottish dialect. Some of the spellings that show up through the ages are:

1583-1614:	Pont Map	Innerary
1678	Robert Edward Map	Innerarite
1654	Blaue Atlas	Innerarite
1654	Blaue Atlas	Inerarity
1745	Moll Map	Inneraritte
1794	Ainslie Map	Inver Arity
1825	Thomson Map	Inverarity
1825	Hall Map	Inverarity

Escambia County GIS Division Manager Shannon Pugh noted in an email with a team at University of West Florida that the island has also had many modern spellings, and the western cape of the Island was shown as Inerarity Point since 1941 and labeled as such on Corps of Engineers maps as early as 1921, and on NOAA /Office of the Coast charts since 1897.

The locals spell it "Innerarity" (just as John spelled it), and in 2021 the name and spelling were finally made official by decree and added to the GNIS system as Innerarity Island.