

FLORIDA POSTAL HISTORY JOURNAL

VOL. 12, NO. 1

FEBRUARY 2005

Contributing Members – 2005 1

**An 1888 Double Fumigated Cover
Deane R. Briggs, M.D. 2**

**Kissimmee River Steamboat Mail
Zaven M. Seron, M.D. 4**

**Lakeland Florida “Coca Cola” Post Card
Deane R. Briggs, M.D. 23**

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Florida Postal History Society

Deane R. Briggs, M.D., Sec-Tres.

160 E. Lake Howard Dr.

Winter Haven, FL 33881

() 299-1251 FAX () 299-7666 eMail drb@gte.net

I hereby apply for membership in the Florida Postal History Society and enclose \$_____ for annual dues including subscription to The Florida Postal History Journal. I agree to abide by the policies and by-laws of the Society, and understand that said membership may be terminated by the Society in accordance with the by-laws.

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Please print or type:

Name _____ Age: _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Collecting Interests _____

Membership in other philatelic societies (indicate membership #)

Local Stamp Club _____

APS _____ Others _____

DUES: \$10.00 Regular member \$20.00 Contributing member

FLORIDA POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS - 2005

The following members of the Florida Postal History Society have been denoted as "**Contributing Members**" for their additional contribution to the Society. Your additional dues contribution is acknowledged and appreciated and helps underwrite the cost of a third journal issue this year. The continued support of these members keeps our Society financially sound. This enables us to respond to member and non-member inquiries regarding Florida Postal History and furnish complimentary copies of our Journal to those requesting a sample copy. Thanks for the support!!

**Albert Aldham
Hector Arvelo
John Beirne
Deane R. Briggs, M.D.
Conrad L. Bush
Walter S. Clarke
Daniel B. Curtis
James L. Diamond
James P. Doolin
Harry G. Dow
William A. Fox
Alex Hall
William J. Hancock
Todd D. Hause
Ronald R. Harmon
Robert J. Hausin
Richard W. Helbock
Gary G. Hendren
Henry Higgins
William Johnson, D.D.S.
Edward R. Joyce, Jr.
John L. Kimbrough, M.D.
Howard King
Vincent L. Knaus III**

**Alan E. Knight
Alvin L. Krasne, D.D.S.
Theodore Light
David C. Lingard
William Lyons
Millard H. Mack
Gordon McHenry
Herbert P. McNeal
Charles F. Meroni, Jr.
Vernon R. Morris, Jr., M.D.
James Moses
Mike Mullins
Burnham S. Neill
Dr. Everett L. Parker
Kenneth L. Rice
Clifford A. Rivenbark
Mitchell E. Sapp
Niles Schuh
Donald G. Thompson
S. George Trager
Phillip V. Warman
John Watts
Robert B. Whitney
C. Michael Wiedemann**

AN 1888 DOUBLE FUMIGATED COVER

Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

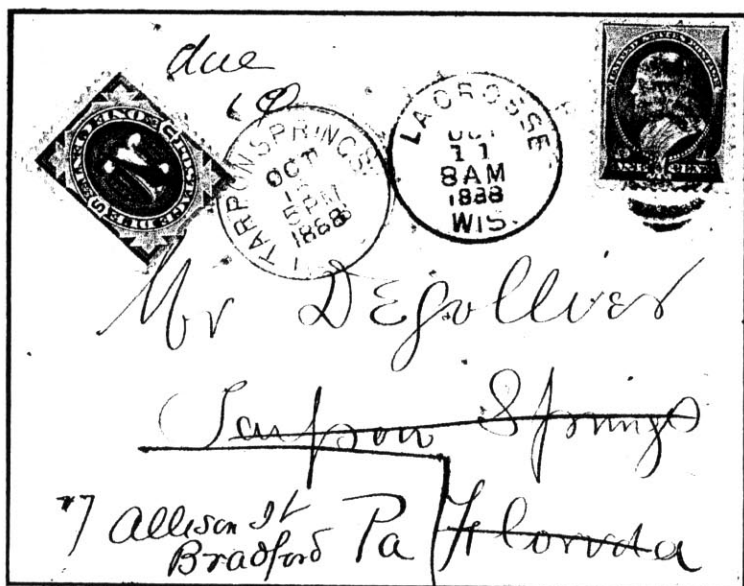


Fig. 1 LACROSSE / WIS. OCT 11 1888 duplex postmarked open "circular" cover, forwarded to Bradford, Pa. with TARPON SPRINGS / OCT 16 1888 postmark. Two diagonal rows of fumigation puncture markings across front.

The above cover is one of those covers which at first glance looks like a nice forwarded cover with a 1c postage due stamp added. That is the way it was described in a recent Ebay auction listing. No mention was made of the puncture marks but as a collector of Florida fumigation covers I was aware of the date of use and the probability that this was a fumigated cover. Since it was an unsealed envelope, I thought it might not need fumigation puncture holes since the envelope was already open with the back flap tucked inside. When I received the cover, obvious fumigation puncture marks were evident. But this is not just another fumigation cover.

A thorough article on Florida fumigated covers was written by Herbert P. McNeal for the first issue of the Florida Postal History

Journal, Vol. 1., No. 1, July 1993, pp. 27-37. Fumigation of all mail to and from Florida was begun on August 13, 1888 at Waycross, Ga., and subsequently on August 20, 1888 at locations at La Villa Junction, near Jacksonville and at Flomaton, Ala. It is apparent that not only mail leaving Florida was fumigated, but mail coming to Florida was as well. Mr. McNeal quotes a letter from General F. E. Spinner of Pablo Beach, written on October 21, 1888 in which he states: "Let a clean letter come here from the pure air of the Green Mountains of Vermont and the cursed fools at the fumigating station seize it, punch it so that it is almost illegible, and then pump an unbearable stink into it."

This cover was likely fumigated before arrival at Tarpon Springs without puncture marks, as it was unsealed. It entered Florida at either Waycross or Flomaton for delivery to the west coast of Florida. At Tarpon Springs, it received a rec'd mark on the reverse, (Fig. 2) and was forwarded to Bradford, Pa. with a "due 1c" rate. It was postmarked with the same Tarpon Springs handstamp on the front (note the same 5pm time in the date slug). From there it was sent via rail to Jacksonville for the mail route north to Pennsylvania. It was at the La Villa Junction fumigation station where the puncture holes and fumigation was performed. The 1c postage due stamp was placed at Bradford, Pa. and partially covers the Tarpon Springs postmark and a couple of the puncture holes.

What makes this cover so unusual is that it is the only known cover from the approximately 20 recorded examples from the Fumigation period of 1888, that is an open circular 1c rated cover. It also is the only cover to have both entered and exited Florida during this period and as such was likely fumigated twice.

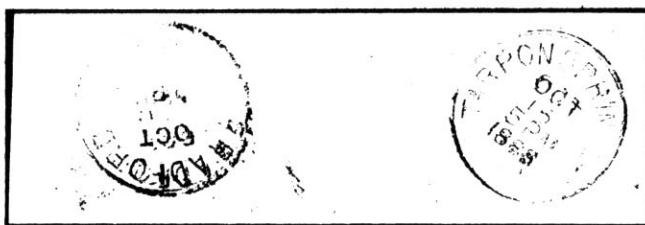
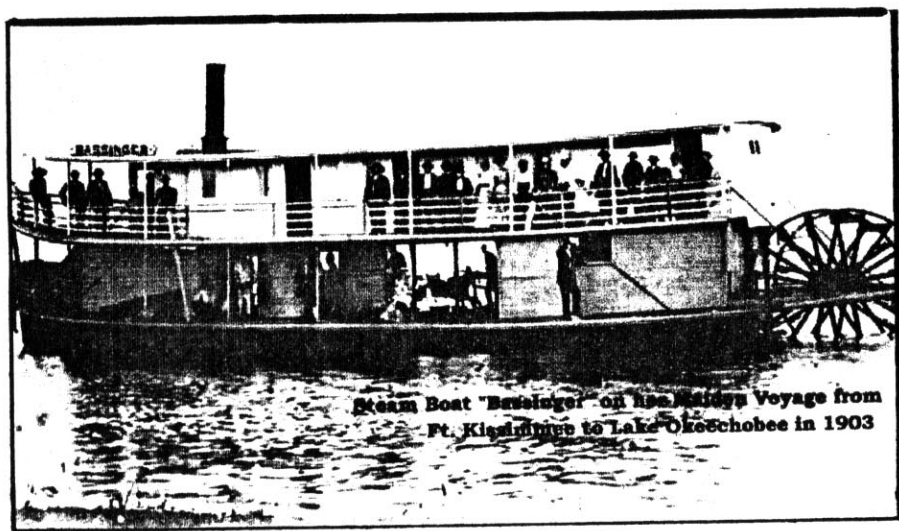


Fig. 2. TARPON SPRINGS OCT 16 1888 5PM rec'd mark.

KISSIMMEE RIVER STEAMBOAT MAIL

Zaven M. Seron, M.D.



**1903 photograph of the Steamboat "Bassinger" on the
Kissimmee River.**

Editors Note:

This article was submitted several years ago by David Phillips as a reprint from an original article that was published in The Florida Philatelist in the Jan -Feb 1979 issue. Dr. Seron is now deceased but was a very careful and thorough researcher. This article is worthy of reproduction to show the quality of Florida Postal History research that existed before our society was established in 1993, and what can be done in the future. I have added several photos and postal history items not in the original article to make it more interesting. Most of the photographs and postal history items in this article were copied from albums and family correspondence I was shown at the Clay Johnson residence on 404 S. Vernon St., Kissimmee, Florida. His

daughter, Elizabeth Steffee, who resided there when I visited in 1997, was nice enough to spend several hours with me and tell me about early steam boating on the Kissimmee River. Captain Johnson's steamboat dock was located on Lake Tohopekaliga in front of his stately two story home. The unsalvaged remains of his steamboat, the "Roseada", captained by his son in law George Steffee, (Elizabeth's late husband), still rest there where it sank in a 1928 hurricane. That marked the end of the family's 40+ year career in Kissimmee River steamboat piloting. Lets hope that this article stimulates some of our members to do some research and publish their findings.

Introductory:

The purpose of this article is to present a preliminary study of the mail service on the Kissimmee River, in Florida, during the last of the 19th Century, and prior to the extension of the railroad to Okeechobee in 1915. In essence, this is the story of the pioneer days of postal service in the hinterlands of Central Florida, at a time when alligators, panther cats and a cantankerous cussin' breed of river men and cattlemen roamed the matted and virgin Everglade country that stretched from Kissimmee to Lake Okeechobee. The information presented has been gleaned from aged survivors of the lusty '90s and a few scanty references, appended.

Historical:

Although the Kissimmee - Lake Okeechobee watershed was explored as early as 1842 by Lieutenant William L. Herndon, and sporadic settlements and cattle ranches had slowly infiltrated this hinterlands, it was not until the late 1870s and 1880s that river transportation began. Records indicate that a Tom Bass was operating small flat-bottomed steamboats to Bassenger, fifteen miles north of Tantie on the Kissimmee River, as early as 1883. It was in that year that President Arthur penetrated to within sixty miles of Bassenger on the steamer "GERTRUDE". (1)

In September 1883 the "BERTHA LEE" was piloted up the

Caloosahatchee River from Fort Myers to Fort Thompson (now Labelle), and after three months and many mishaps, finally landed at the docks in Kissimmee. The pilot was Captain Benjamin Franklin Hall, Jr., river captain from Evansville, Indiana, who brought the "BERTHA LEE" from the North for the Hamilton-Disston Sugar Company of Kissimmee. The "BERTHA LEE" proved to be too large for the river and eventually was returned to Gulf Coast traffic. Captain Hall returned to Kissimmee and began to operate smaller steamboats on the river. He was one of the several river captains on the Kissimmee River between 1883 and 1921. A list of his boats, together with those plying the Kissimmee - Okeechobee - Caloosahatchee watershed, is tabulated below.

Of the other river men operating boats on the Kissimmee, the Gilbert Brothers should be mentioned. The most picturesque, however, was Captain Clay Johnson, (Fig. 1.) who began operating a series of



Fig. 1. Captain Clay Johnson and his wife Lillie in 1900 in front of their home on Lake Tohopekaliga in Kissimmee, Fla.

steamboats contemporaneously with Captain Hall, as early as 1883.

According to the Hannas (2), Captain Johnson was a rollicking version of Mark Twain, a homely, swashbuckling ladies man, with a profanity both novel and eloquent. He hired the very best of available cooks, and prided himself on a cuisine that was the boast of his passengers. His first boat was the "MAMIE LOWN", twin vessel of Captain Hall's "SCHIPMAN". There was much boisterous and friendly rivalry between the two hardy river captains who, with Captain Gilbert, constituted the chief available line of communication between Kissimmee and Okeechobee from 1883-1915.

The area west of Lake Okeechobee, to Fort Myers and the Gulf, was being developed and opened up to settlement, thanks to the enterprise and vision of the Menge Brothers, Fred and Connie, of Fort Myers. (3) Fort Myers had been occupied in 1863 by the Yankees whose purpose was to cut off the Confederate line of communications with Cuba. In 1888, the Menges organized the Menge Brothers Steamboat Line (4) and were soon carrying freight, passengers and mail to newly formed settlements along the Caloosahatchee River as far as Fort Thompson (LaBelle). During the Spanish-American conflict, much of the cattle raised in the region of the Okeechobee watershed was driven across the Caloosahatchee at Olga and shipped from Punta Rassa, the port south of Fort Myers (5), to our troops in Cuba.

In the late '80's and '90's, a settlement was developed on the north shore of Lake Okeechobee. According to the old timers, a much beloved school teacher, affectionately called, "Tantie", indoctrinated the few children of the settlement in the three R's. Until 1909, the village was called Tantie; (Fig. 2) it is now Okeechobee.

Mail Service:

Mail Service in and out of Fort Bassenger prior to the advent of the railroad to Okeechobee in 1915 was both meager and primitive. Incoming mail arrived from the East Coast via a string of Forts

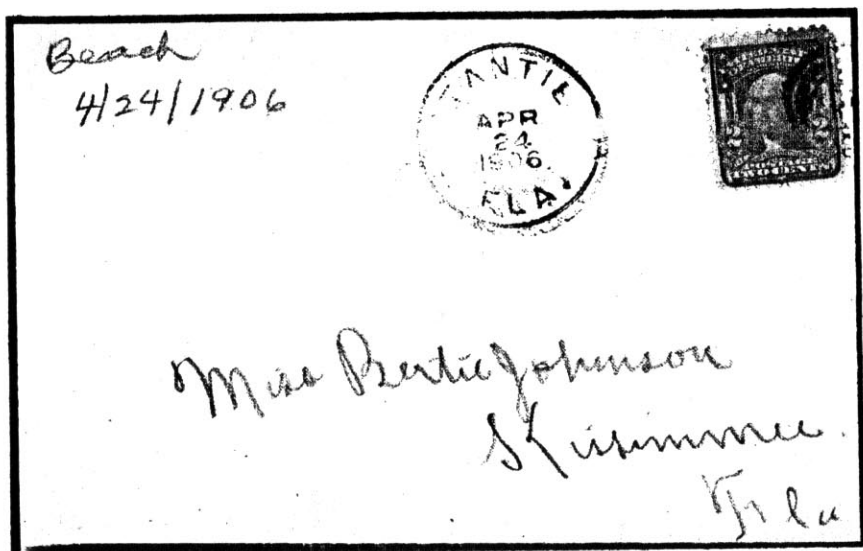


Fig. 2. TANTIE / FLA. APR 24 1906 postmark on letter to Capt. Johnson's daughter in Kissimmee.

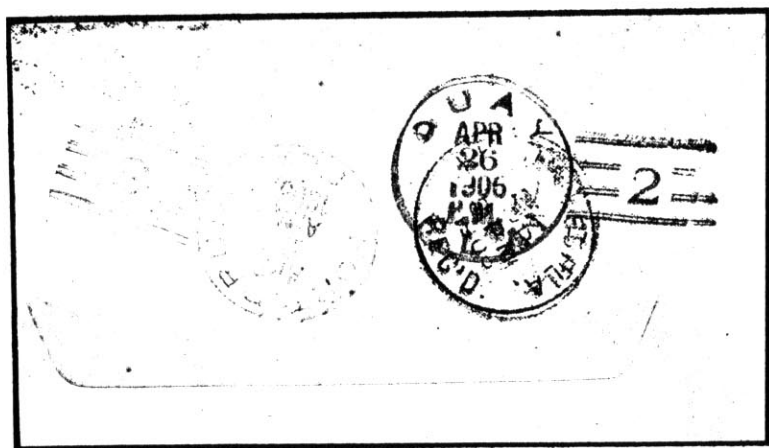


Fig. 3. FORT DRUM / FLA APR 25 1906 and QUAY / FLA APR 26 1908 doane routing marks on reverse of above cover.

from Fort Lauderdale, Fort Pierce and Quay (now Winter Beach),

thence to Fort Drum and Fort Bassenger by post riders. (Fig. 4,5).

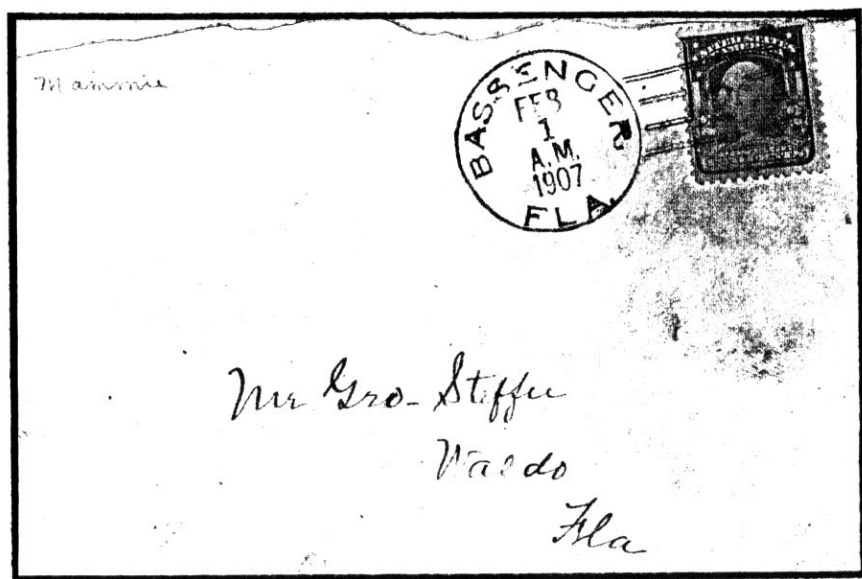


Fig. 4. BASSENGER, FLA. FEB 1 1907 doane postmark on cover from Lillie Johnson to her son-in-law George Steffee.

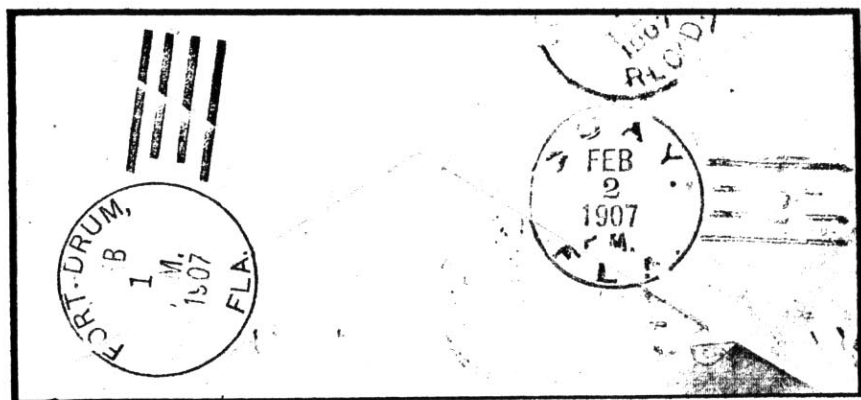


Fig. 5. Reverse of Bassenger cover showing routing marks FORT DRUM / FLA. FEB 1 1907 4-bar and QUAY / FLA. FEB 2 1907 doane type II(2) handstamps. This shows the reverse postal route from Bassenger via Fort Drum and Quay to enter the mails north to Waldo.

The illustration shows a quaint postcard picturing the transfer of mail from the post rider, one Ed McLaughlin, to John Parker, Postmaster at Fort Drum, as late as 1914. (Fig. 6)



Fig. 6. Transfer of mail from post rider, Ed McLaughlin to Fort Drum postmaster, John Parker (original article)

Mail from Fort Myers and the Gulf Coast arrived via the Menge Brothers steamboats to Fort Thompson (LaBelle), thence up the newly dredged Disston Canal and Lake Okeechobee to Tantie, from where it was carried by postman, on foot, to Fort Bassenger. Letters from Bassenger to Kissimmee were usually carried outside of the mails by either Captain Johnson or Captain Hall and deposited in the mails at Kissimmee. (Fig. 7,8)

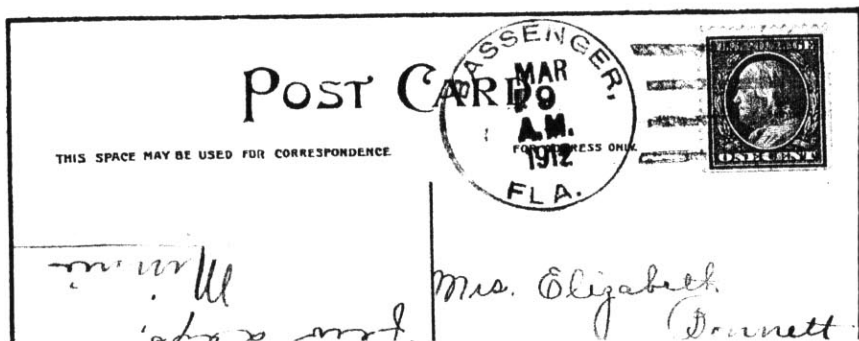


Fig. 7. BASSENGER / FLA. MAR 29 1912 4-bar postmark.

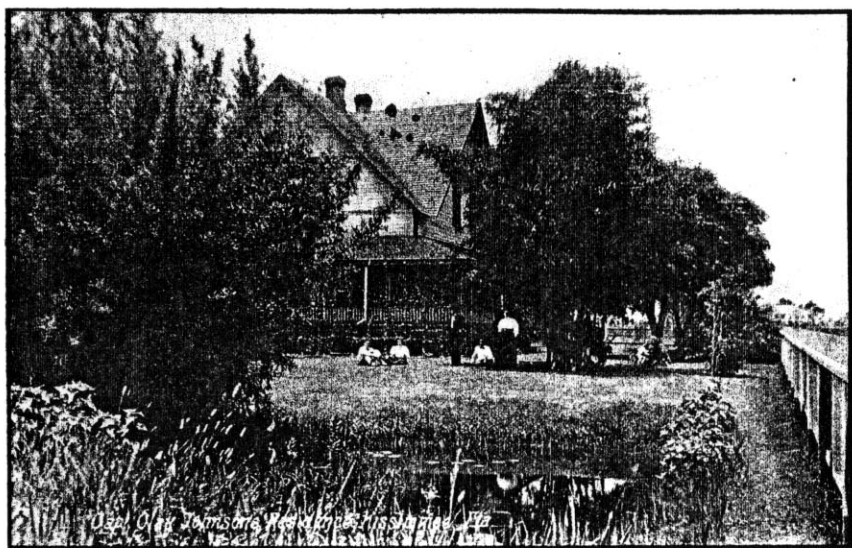


Fig. 8. Reverse of Fig. 7 showing home of Capt. Clay Johnson with he and wife and daughters on lawn.

The most famous of Captain Johnson's wood burning stern wheelers were the "LILLIE" and the "ROSEDA". Trips were made once weekly, with arrivals at Fort Bassenger on Wednesdays and departures on Thursdays. The trip to Kissimmee required two days and a night, at a cost of \$4.50 per head - a lot of money in those days. But the bunks were clean and the food and revelry unsurpassed. More important, there was no other readily available outlet. Freight and supplies were brought into Fort Bassenger out of Kissimmee, the nearest trading area, at 35 cents per hundredweight. The arrival of the steamboats was always a gala and boisterous occasion, and attended with much fanfare and whistle blowing and a virtually 100% turnout of the meager population, eager for letters, gossip and news. There is no record to show that either of the river captains held any mail contracts. (Fig.9)



Dear Bertie,

I am having letters behind.

Fig. 9. Letterhead from Steamer Lillie

This illustration pictures the address side of a postcard written aboard the "ROSEDA" by Captain Clay Johnson, addressed to Miss Etta Swann, Ft. Drum. The postcard was deposited in the mails on arrival at Fort Bassenger, from where it was carried by post rider to Fort Drum. It is postmarked, "BASSENGER / FLA / MAR / 12 / A.M. / 1910". The message reads, "Dear Miss - / Your goods are in the warehouse at Alligator Bluff / Clay Johnson". (Fig. 10)

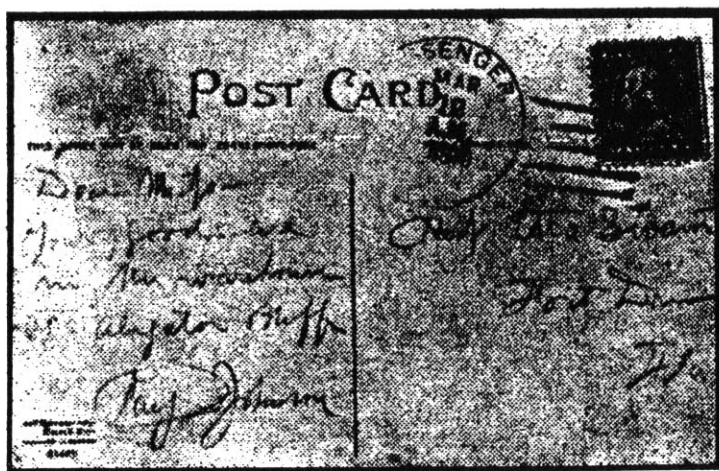


Fig. 10. BASSENGER / FLA. MAR 12 1910 4-bar postmark on postcard to Fort Drum. (original article)

After the settlement of Tantie on the north shore of Lake Okeechobee in the '90's, mail service between there and Fort Bassenger was carried for the most part by foot until 1907.

Mail service on the Caloosahatchee River was supplied by the Menge Brothers Steamboat Lines from 1888 - 1916. They operated a mail contract route from 1904 - 1912. Prior to 1904 mail was carried unofficially. From 1904 almost daily trips were made between Fort Myers and LaBelle. (Fig. 11,12)

By 1912, passengers and freight were carried from the Gulf to the Atlantic via Lake Okeechobee and the newly opened North New River Canal, to Fort Lauderdale. The Menges also supplied passenger and mail service to the group of small islands off the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River. Included were the islands of St. James, Captiva, Useppa, Pine, Bokeelia and the Port of Punta

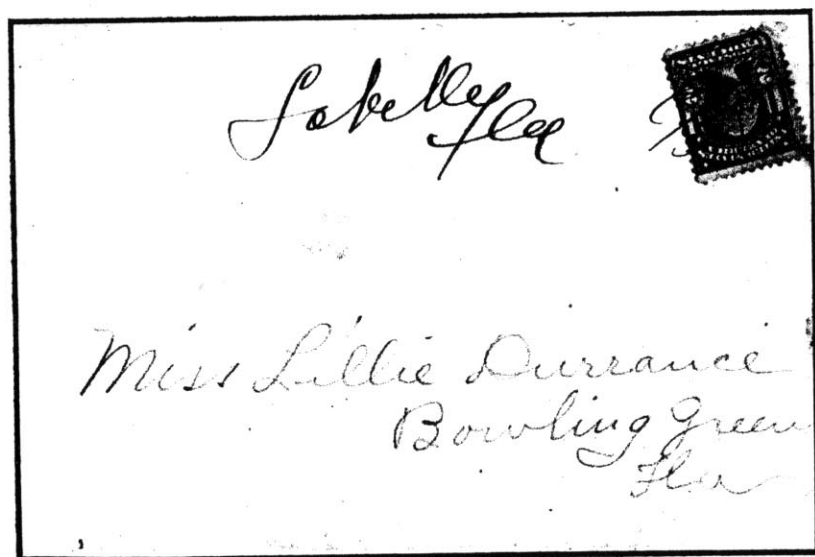


Fig. 10. Labelle Fla manuscript postmark with pen cancelled 6/5 (1909) date on cover likely carried by Menge steamboat mail to Fort Myers for delivery to Bowling Green, Fla.

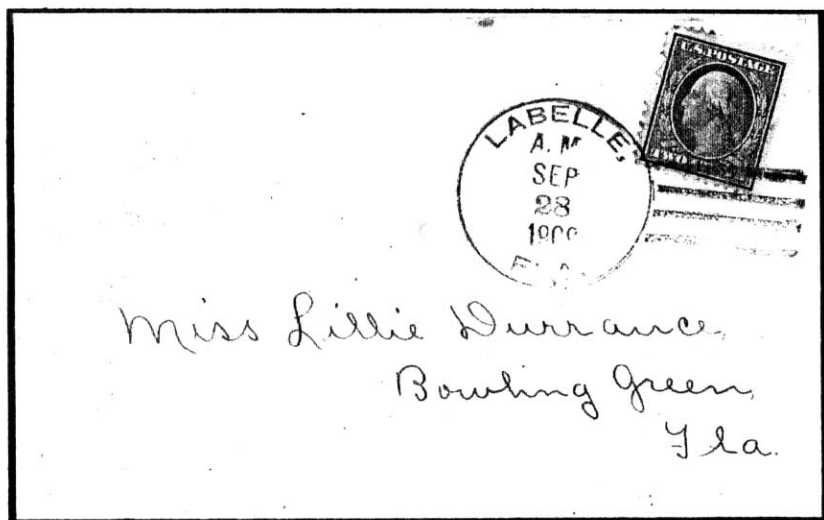


Fig. 11. LABELLE / FLA. SEP 28 1909 4-bar postmark on cover likely carried by Mange steamboat mail to Fort Myers for delivery to Bowling Green, Fla.

Rassa. The inter-island service was shared by the Kinze Brothers who operated a cooperating line of steamboats out of Fort Myers. The most famous of the Menge's boats were the "THOS. A. EDISON" and the "QUEEN OF THE EVERGLADES", both luxury boats used primarily to transport prospects in the early days of the land boom.

The advent of the railroad to Okeechobee in 1915, and better roads, quickly throttled the steamboat traffic on the Kissimmee and the Caloosahatchee, and by 1921 the last of the sternwheelers had ceased operation. With them terminated the nostalgic careers of the River Captains.

From what has been so briefly cited here it is evident that more diligent research should uncover important data of interest to the

student of postal history of our Inland Waterways. This article points up the need for continuing research on this subject, with particular reference to the mail contracts held by the Menge Brothers.

References:

- (1) New York Tribune, April 10, 1883.
- (2) Hannah, Alfred and Kathryn: Lake Okeechobee, Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, 1948.
- (3) St. Cloud (Fla.) News, October 3, 1952.
- (4) Fort Myers (Fla.) Press, February 1, 1950.
- (5) Fort Myers Press, July 14, 1887.

Appendix:

Tabulation of the steamboats plying the Kissimmee River - Lake Okeechobee - Caloosahatchee River watershed, Florida, 1883 - 1921.

A. - KISSIMMEE RIVER - FORT BASSENGER - LAKE OKEECHOBEE ROUTE:

1. Steamboats operated by Captain Clay Johnson, 1883-1921: Mamie Lown (1883), Cincinatti (1890), Roseda I & II, Juanita, Lillie, Osceola.
2. Captain Benjamin Franklin Hall, Jr., for the Hamilton - Disston Sugar Co., 1883-1892: Bertha Lee (1883), an unsuccessful venture; Schipman (1883), Rosalie (1887), Colonist, Arbuckle, Spray, Leader, Astabula, Hamilton Disston, Mary Disston.
3. Captain Hall, for himself, 1892-1921: Mary Belle, Naomi I, II, III.
4. Captain A.S. Gilbert, for the Gilbert Brothers Lines, 1886-?: City of Athens, Bassenger, Tallulah.
5. Captain Tom Bass, 1883: Pilot of the Gertrude, on trip carrying President Arthur.
6. (See B4, below)

B - CALOOSHATCHEE RIVER - LAKE OKEECHOBEE ROUTES 1888 - 1916:

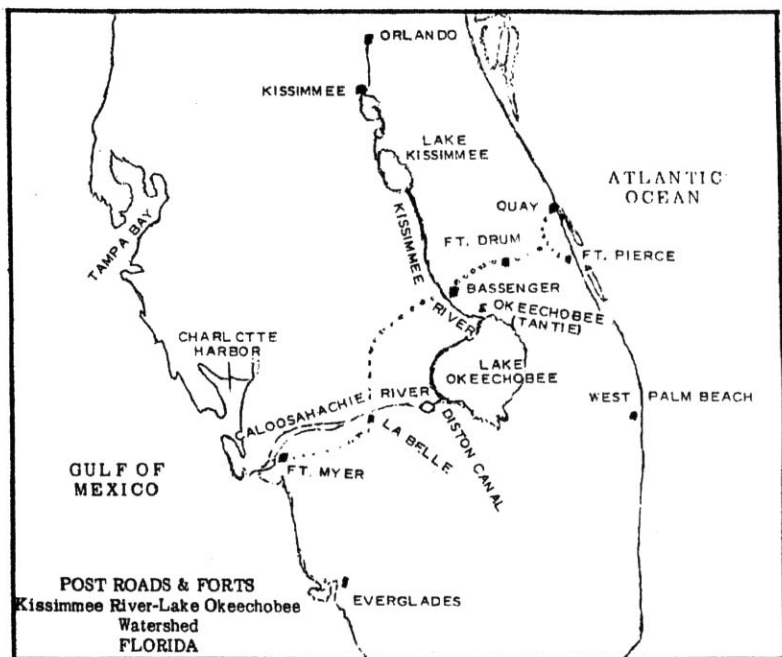
1. Menge Brothers Steamboat Lines, Captains Fred J. and Conrad Menge, 1888-1916; Mail contract, 1904-1912: City of Athens (Captain A.S. Gilbert), Gray Eagle, Ralph Barker, Anah C., Corona, Thos. A. Edison, Nyanza, Ada May, Suwanee, Uneeda, Suzid B., Golpher (Captain M. A. Gonzales), Mamie (Capt. Gonzales).
2. Menge Brothers extension to Ft. Lauderdale, 1912: Queen of the Everglades (via Lake Harbor and North New River Canal), Thos. A. Edison.
3. Pioneer Boat Line, 1917-1921: Mindanao (double decker), Mayflower & Dixie (cabin cruisers). Captain Felix A. Forbes, Freight, passengers and mail from Fort Lauderdale - Lake Okeechobee via North New River Canal.
4. Floridelphia Land Co., 1887: Philadelphia. Fort Myers to Kissimmee.

C. - FORT MYERS - COASTAL ISLANDS, 1888-1928:

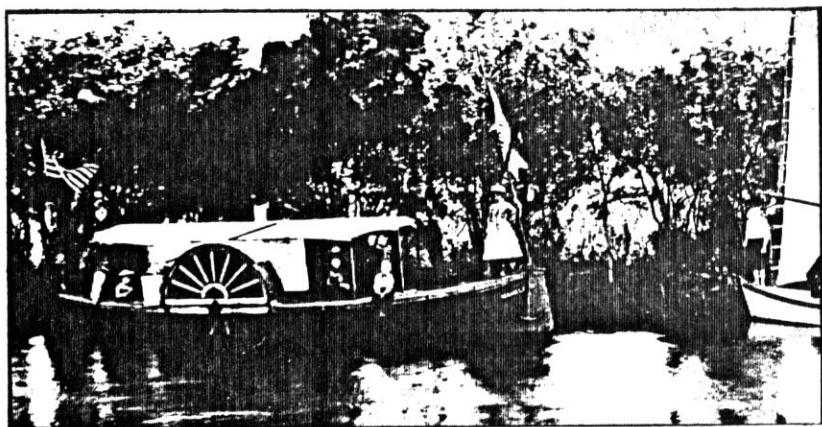
1. Menge Brothers Steamboat Lines, 1888-1916: Carried mail, passengers and freight to and from the small group of islands at mouth of Caloosahatchee River and the Port of Punta Rassa until 1904, at which time an independent line of steamboats began operations. Connecting service between the two lines was maintained until 1916.
2. Kinzie Brothers Steamboat Lines, 1904-1928: Captains Andrew, George and Eric Kinzie operated the following boats, carrying mail, passengers and freight, with a connecting service with the Menge Brothers Lines: Belle of Myers, Success, Gladys, Dixie (also leased for the Fort Lauderdale run to Pioneer Boat Line).



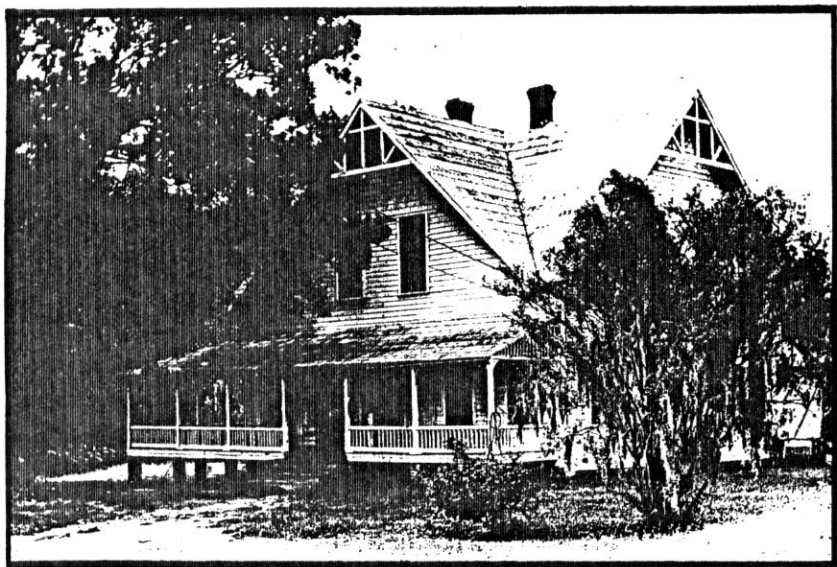
Steamer dock on the Kissimmee River circa 1910.



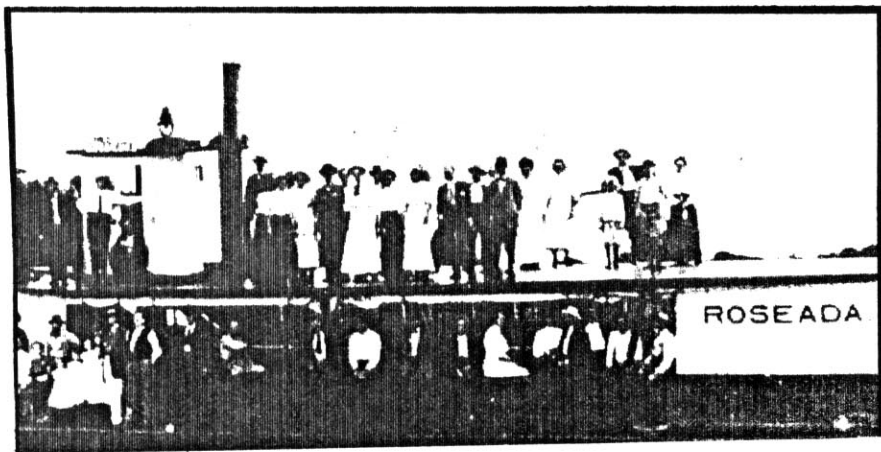
Post Roads & Forts – Kissimmee River-Lake Okeechobee Watershed Florida (original article)



Steamer "Mamie Lown" brought from Mississippi by Clay Johnson in 1883. It burned Naphtha Kerosene. This was Johnson's first steamer for use on the Kissimmee River.



Clay Johnson home in 1895.



The "Roseada" with full load of passengers and crew.



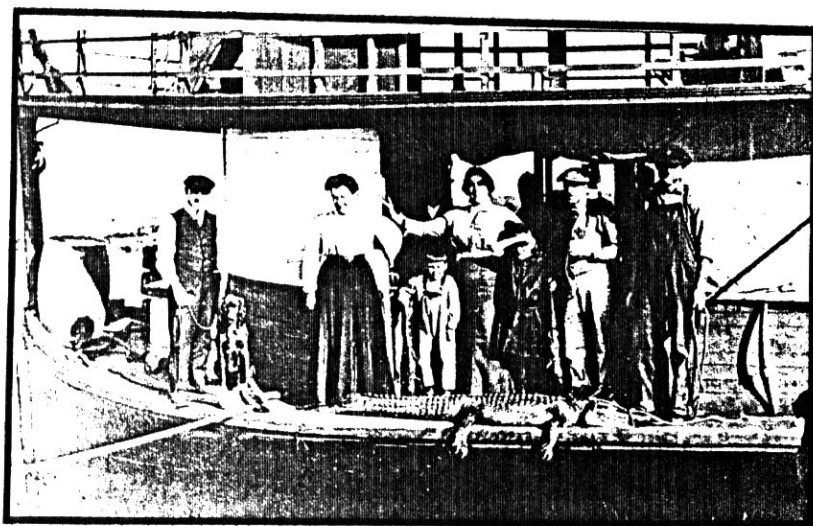
Passenger on board the "Roseada" in Sunday attire.

COUNTERSIGNED BY	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 0 auto; width: 80%;"> EXCHANGE PASS. </div>
	STEAMER ROSEADA.
	
	KISSIMMEE RIVER ROUTE.
	<i>Pass</i>
UNTIL DEC. 31st, 1898, UNLESS OTHERWISE ORDERED.	
<i>No.</i>	
CLAY JOHNSON, MASTER AND OWNER, KISSIMMEE, FLA.	

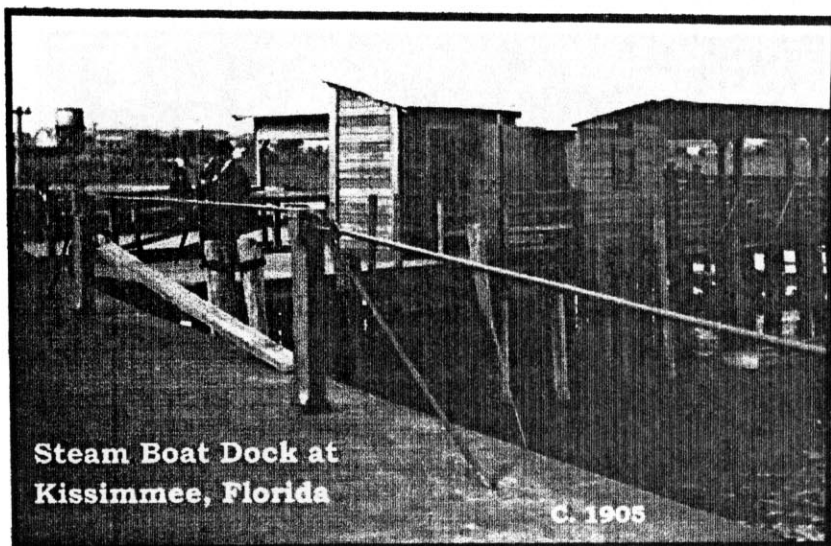
1898 Exchange Pass for the "Steamer Roseada"



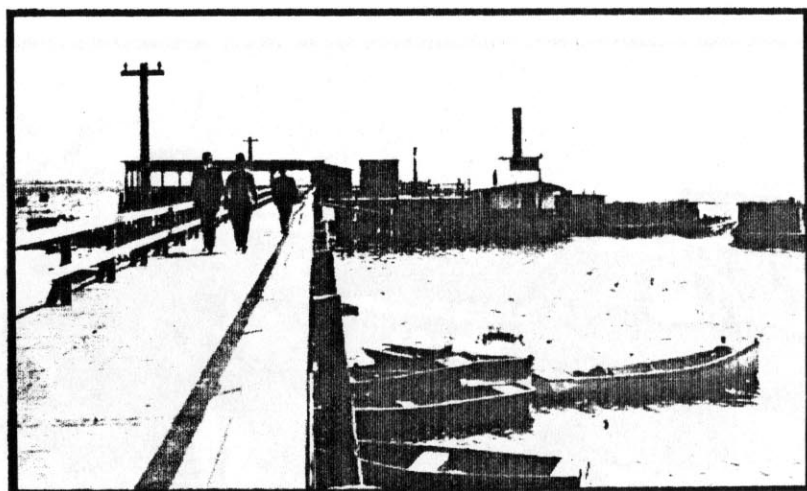
Steamer "Lillie" with Captain Johnson at top in front of pilot house, circa 1907.



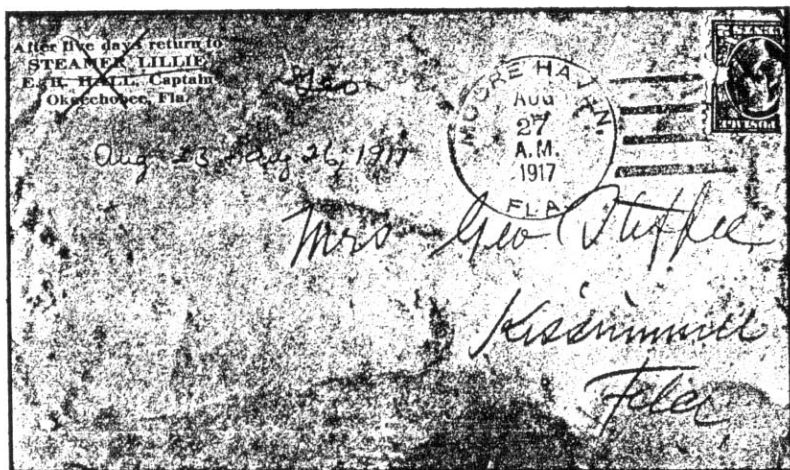
Passengers and "dinner" aboard the "Lillie".



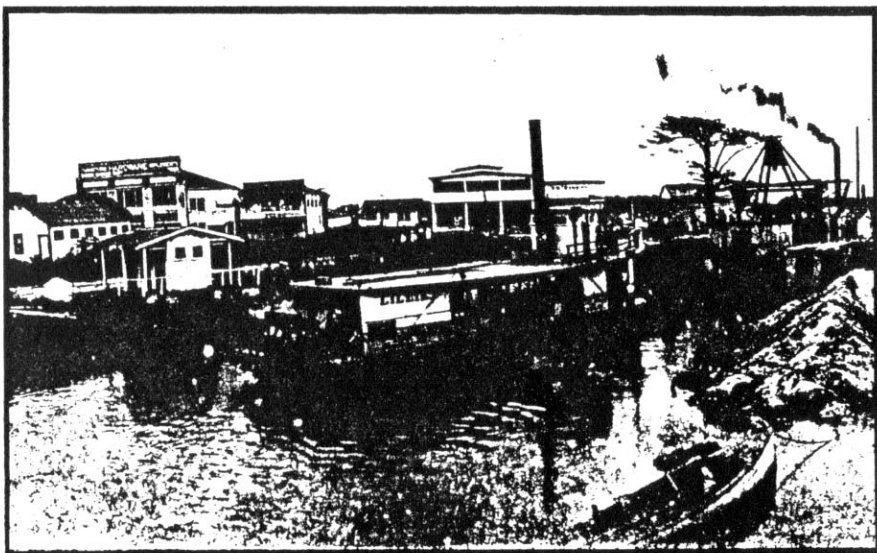
Steam Boat Dock at Kissimmee, Florida 1905



**Public Pier and Steam Boat Dock, Lake Tohopekaliga,
Kissimmee, Fla. With Steamer "Lillie" at dock.**



MOORE HAVEN / FLA. AUG 27 1917 4-bar postmark on cover with Steamer Lillie corner card. Note the captain at this time was George Steffee who was writing his wife at Kissimmee. The prior captain was E. H. Hall, who followed Clay Johnson.



Moore Haven docks in 1920 with "Lillie" moored.

LAKELAND FLORIDA "COCA COLA" POST CARD

Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

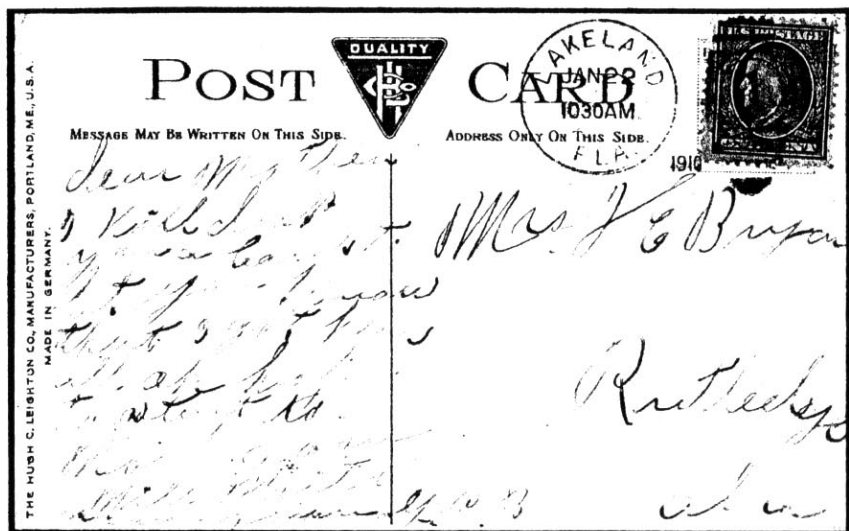


Fig. 1 LAKELAND / FLA. JAN 22 1910 duplex postmark.

The above post card is number 0912 produced in Germany by the Hugh C. Leighton Co. during the 1906-1909 period. It was from a series of post cards representing various Florida scenes. This one is from Lakeland, Fla., showing Kentucky Ave. South (Fig. 2). Since I live in Polk County, Florida and have an office in Lakeland near the present day site reproduced on this card, I bought this at a local post card show. It was not until I looked closely at the building in the middle of the block that I noticed an advertisement for Coca Cola. This must be one of the earliest Coca Cola ads from Florida.

The Coca Cola web page gives a brief history of the company, which began as a soda fountain soft drink in 1886. It was first bottled in 1894 at a small soda fountain shop in Vicksburg, Mississippi, but was not bottled commercially until 1899. By 1909, there were 400 local, family run bottlers across the United States, one of which was located in Lakeland, Florida. Thus, by the time

this postcard was printed, people in Lakeland could already drink this now world famous beverage.



Fig. 2 Lakeland, Fla / Kentucky Ave. South with “Delicious and Refreshing / Coca Cola” advertisement on building.

FLORIDA POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Florida Postal History Society will be held in conjunction with the Sarasota National Stamp Exhibition on Saturday, February 5, 2005, at 12:00pm. Please make plans to come to this meeting, as a new slate of officers will be elected and outgoing President Ted Light will present a talk on Naples, Florida postal history, which should be most informative.

DEALER - MEMBERS

CONRAD L. BUSH

205 Hughes St. N.E.
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548
(850) 243-1638

WILLIAM A. FOX

4 Reef Club
Hilton Head, SC 29926
(843) 681-9455

RICHARD FRAJOLA

P.O. Box 2679
Ranchos De Taos, NM 87557
(505) 751-7607

ROBERT J. HAUSIN

4897 Tamiami Trail East
Naples, FL 34113
(941) 732-7701

RICHARD W. HELBOCK

LA POSTA
33470 Chinook Plaza
Suite 216
Scappoose, OR 97056
(503) 657-5685

HENRY HIGGINS

www.oldfloridapostcards.com
302 S. Irish St.
P.O. Box 1553
Greenville, TN 37744
(423) 636-8361

STAN JAMESON

Empire Company
P.O. Box 264
St. Petersburg, FL 33731
(727) 526-5203

JOHN L. KIMBROOUGH

10140 Wandering Way
Benbrook, TX 76126
(817) 244-2447

GORDON D. McHENRY

1615 Clower Creek Dr., T-177
Sarasota, FL 34231-8923
(941) 966-5563

HERBERT P. McNEAL

520 Lakemont Ave. South
Winter Park, FL 32792
(407) 644-4012

DAVID G. PHILLIPS

P.O. Box 611388
North Miami, FL 33161
(305) 895-0470

JOEL RIND

14 W. 8th Street
Chattanooga, TN 37402
(423) 266-0723

S. GEORGE TRAGER

1090 Kane Concourse, #201
Bay Harbor, FL 33154
(305) 868-4727

PHIL V. WARMAN

Suncoast Stamp Co., Inc.
3231 Gulf Gate Dr. #102
Sarasota, FL 34231
(800) 921-3316

C. MICHAEL WIEDEMANN

Box 6130A
Titusville, FL 32782
(321) 269-3377