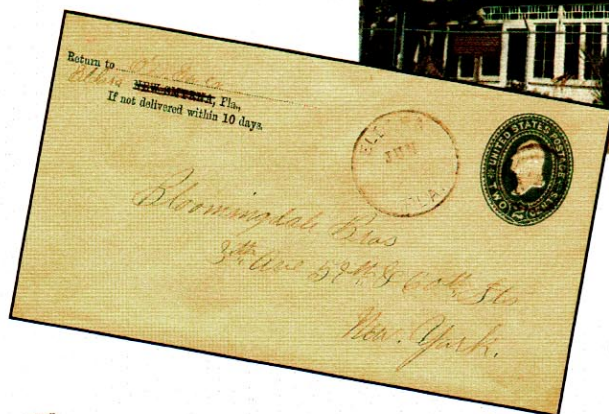
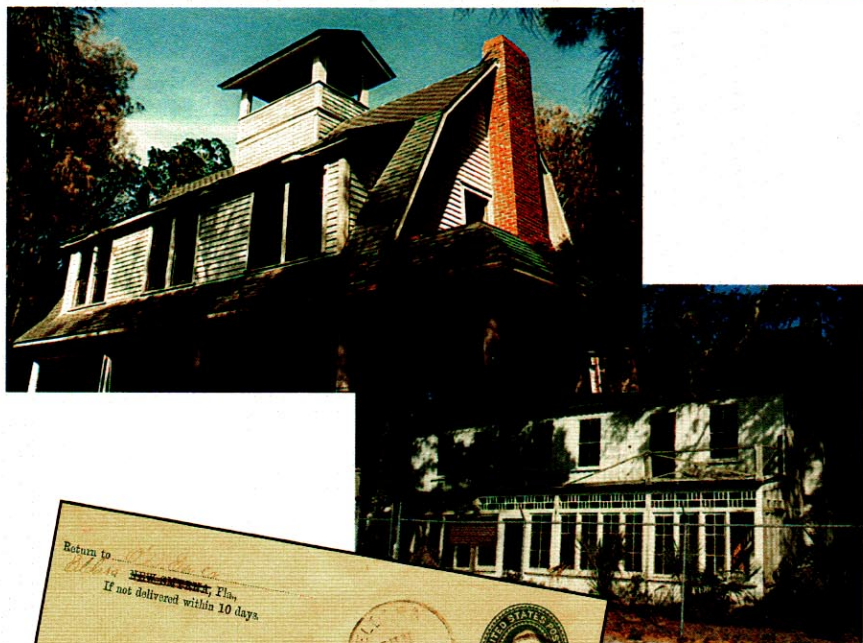


FLORIDA POSTAL HISTORY JOURNAL

Vol. 15, No. 3

October 2008



Eldora:
*a ghost town
among the palms
in Volusia County.*



Promoting Philately in the Sunshine State



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PRESIDENT'S NOTES

By William Johnson, D.D.S.

It is with great sorrow that I announce the passing of two charter members of the Florida Postal History Society. Donald G. Thompson of Hampstead, N.H. and Vero Beach, Florida passed away peacefully on June 26, 2008. In addition to being a past president of the Florida Postal History Society, Don was instrumental in getting our society book *Florida Stampless Postal History 1763-1861* published and contributed an excellent article on the "Patriot's Rebellion" for the book. Many of his personal Florida stampless covers are reproduced in the book. In addition to Florida postal history, Don's collecting interests included stampless postal history from most of the New England states. He will be dearly missed by all who were fortunate enough to have known and worked with him.

William A. Fox, a noted stamp dealer and Florida collector, passed away on June 12, 2008 at his home in Naples, Florida. He and the late William G. Bogg, another Florida collector of note, were always seen together at stamp shows, often with dealer tables side by side. In addition to having some outstanding Florida stampless covers, Bill had some prized Florida Confederates in his collection, including one of the two known Welaka #5 covers and some beautiful Confederate patriotic covers. Some of his better Florida stampless covers will be auctioned later this year by Schuyler Rumsey.

FLOREX -- December 6, 2008

An informal meeting of the Florida Postal History Society will be held on Saturday, December 6, 2008 at the FLOREX show in Orlando at 11:00 a.m. President-Elect Steve Patrick will head up the meeting and members are encouraged to attend and bring items of interest for discussion. This show will be a Champion of Champions show and should have an excellent dealer bourse and exhibits. Florida collectors can always find some nice material from the over 50 dealers present, many of whom are FPHS members.

FPHS Annual Meeting -- February 7, 2009

The Florida Postal History Society will hold its annual meeting at the Sarasota National Stamp Exhibition on Saturday, February 7, 2009 at noon in

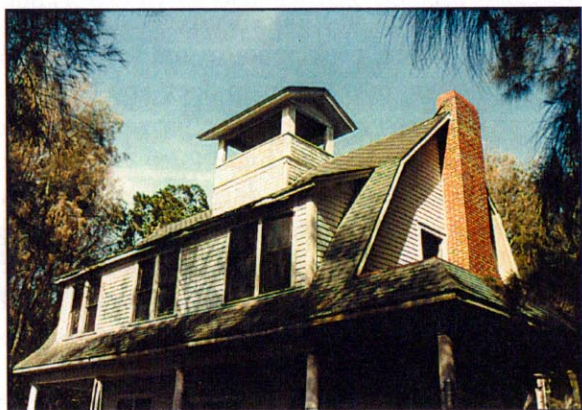
Continued on page 27

Eldora: a ghost town among the palms in Volusia County

By Dr. Everett L. Parker

When the wind sighs softly through the palm trees in Eldora, Florida, it's almost as if the ghosts of bygone eras are remembering the days that once were in this idyllic spot of land near the Kennedy Space Center. Here, on a spit of land between the Atlantic Ocean and Mosquito Lagoon, a thriving town once stood, sporting several businesses, a school and a post office. But it's all gone now -- except for a building or two -- absorbed into the more modern history of the space age.

Eldora was perhaps enigmatic of other oceanside settlements in Volusia County in that its houses more closely resembled those of New England with clapboard siding, dormers, and some with a widow's walk at the peak. Several



The "State House" in Eldora, photographed by the author in late 1970s.

houses once dotted the landscape on the three-quarter mile wide stretch of lush, tropical land between the ocean and the mainland. At one time, by most accounts, the population was over 100 people.

In the 1700s, the Spanish arrived along the East Florida coastline, and all of the Eldora area was once a Spanish landgrant. The town of Eldora was officially established by J.H. Watson and others in 1877. They originally came because of a map which showed buried treasure on Pumpkin Point, the name Native Americans gave to the area. Eldora was primarily a homestead when Florida was opened to homesteading in 1885. After an unsuccessful treasure hunt, the settlers realized that the land was ideal for grow-

ing fruit. It was the only spot viable for farming in the entire hammock. Originally Eldora was spelled “El-Dora,” and it was named after two sisters, Ellen and Dora Pitzer. Ellen later married and changed her last name to Watson. Dora Pitzer did not marry.



The Eldora Hotel after the town was purchased by the federal government, photographed by the author in late 1970s.

A majority of the original buildings in Eldora were constructed in the 1880s. There was a hotel, post office, packinghouse and several other residences built in the center of town, near the main dock and boathouse. In the 1890s, Eldora became primarily a winter home for well-to-do people from the North. In 1887, the stately Eldora House (also called the Eldora Hotel) was built. Whether the two-story building was really run as a hotel is questionable, but boats plying the Hillsborough River (as Mosquito Lagoon was known at the time) would tie up at the dock in the evening and likely passengers spent the night in the “hotel.” Legend holds that Thomas Edison and Harvey Firestone of tire fame stayed there, but the guestbook was lost in a fire.

The so-called “State House” was built for a Mr. Degraw of New York between 1893 and 1895. There were actually three buildings on the site: the State House, a residence for the caretaker and another for servants. It was so named because a state attorney and lawyer, Murray Sams, lived there years after the Degraw family and a couple of other subsequent owners had departed.

After World War I, many of the residents of Eldora left. It became what one author called a “sportsman’s paradise” well-known for fishing. A hunting lodge at nearby Castle Windy was constructed and fishing camps sprouted up. Farming continued to be a source of livelihood for those still living in the area. During the Prohibition era, moonshining was well established in Eldora. It was reported that Al Capone had 50 runners and 50 drivers who

Continued on page 7

worked the route between Volusia County and Chicago. Electricity came when a line was laid across the river marsh to Bethune Beach in the 1930s. In 1964, it was reported that six houses and three fishing camps made up the town. In 1975, when the Canaveral National Seashore was established, there were 60 private tracts of land in Eldora. While the former townsite is not within the Kennedy Space Center as such, one can see the tall gantries from there.

By the late 1970s, Eldora was a ghost town. The author learned about the town in exploring old maps while conducting research for his book, *Space Center Ghosts*, which told the story of the numerous settlements once dotting the landscape on what became the Kennedy Space Center and Cape Canaveral. The photographs which accompany this article were taken in the late 1970s when a dirt road connected what once was the town of Eldora with Turtle Mound and New Smyrna Beach. In the decades since, the road has been improved, and Eldora has returned to being a popular fishing area, although only two buildings now remain according to a Canaveral National Seashore web site: the State House and a citrus packinghouse which also housed the post office. That means the Eldora Hotel is gone. At the time I visited, the building was surrounded by chainlink fence with

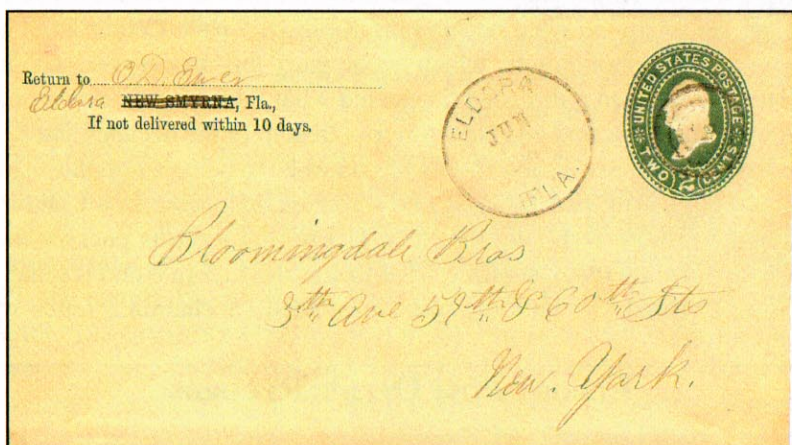
ELDORA POST OFFICE RECORDS

Postmasters	Dates
William P. Shryock	Post office established on November 13, 1882. Mr. Shryock is first postmaster.
Samuel G. Bayless	Became postmaster on August 30, 1887.
Mrs. Mary J. Walker	Became postmaster on April 11, 1888.
Fredrick Lohman	Became postmaster on May 14, 1889.
Andrew J. Cruikshank	Became postmaster on unknown date.
	Post office is closed on April 28, 1890, mail goes to Oak Hill.
John P. Wilkinson	Post office is reopened on March 26, 1894, Mr. Wilkinson named postmaster.
	Post Office is closed on March 19, 1895, mail goes to New Smyrna Beach.
Samuel P. Walsh	Post Office is reopened on August 22, 1898.
	Post Office is permanently closed on July 17, 1899, mail goes to Oak Hill.

federal “No Trespassing” signs posted. Several other houses were still standing, and occupied, at the time. The State House was later renovated and converted to a museum which now tells the story of land speculators who settled in the Mosquito Lagoon area after the Civil War.

The Post Office at Eldora

The post office at Eldora was established on November 13, 1882 with William Shryock named the first postmaster. Originally, two schooners (the *Rover* and the *Kate Cook*) brought mail from St. Augustine and New Smyrna Beach. The mail was supposed to arrive weekly, but there were times it



**An Eldora, Florida cover dated June 18, posted to New York.
From the Deane Briggs, M.D. Collection.**

arrived only monthly. Later, the mail came to Eldora from Oak Hill on a small open barge (called a “lighter” in local parlance) or a sailboat. The post office was built in one of the packinghouses in town center. There were actually two buildings later joined together, and this was also site of the school (which at peak had 15 pupils) and general store.

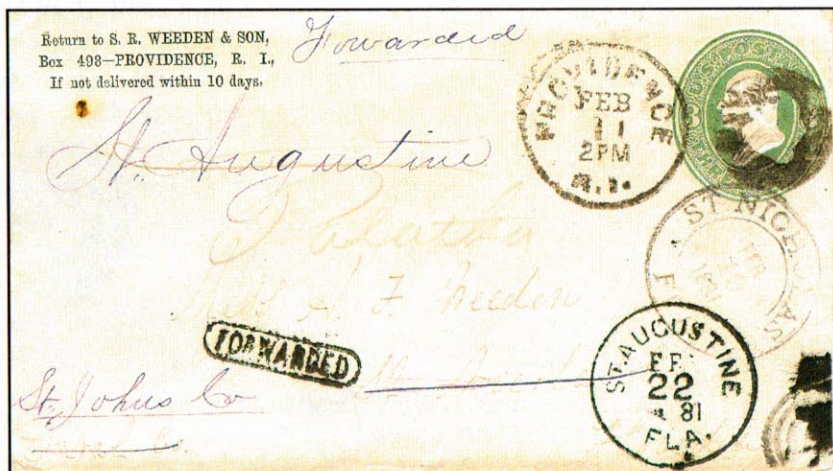
After the “Great Freeze,” the Eldora Post Office was closed on July 31, 1899 when Mr. Shryock moved to New Smyrna Beach.

ENDNOTE

The author would like to learn more about Eldora postal history. Copies of covers, paper ephemera, etc. would be most appreciated.

St. Nicholas Forwarded Cover

By Edward R. Joyce



ST. NICHOLAS / FLA. FEB 19 1881 forwarding postmark on cover from Providence, Rhode Island with additional St. Augustine forwarding postmark and boxed FORWARDED handstamp, final usage to Palatka.

The above cover is a multi-forwarded cover originating at Providence, Rhode Island on February 11, 1881 with usage to St. Nicholas, Florida. The St. Nicholas post office was established 10 years earlier on August 7, 1871 and was located just outside of Jacksonville in Duval County. The recipient, a Miss A.F. Weeden, likely a relative of the sender, must have travelled on to St. Augustine as the cover was forwarded there with a county change to St. Johns County, and a double circle ST. NICHOLAS / FLA FEB 19 1881 postmark applied.

By the time the cover arrived in St. Augustine, Miss Weeden apparently had moved on to Palatka as the cover was again forwarded, this time with a boxed FORWARDED handstamp and a ST. AUGUSTINE / FLA FEB 22 1881 forwarding postmark applied. This cover certainly did a lot of travelling to finally catch up with Miss Weeden, and all for only three cents.

Port Tampa and Port Tampa City

By Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

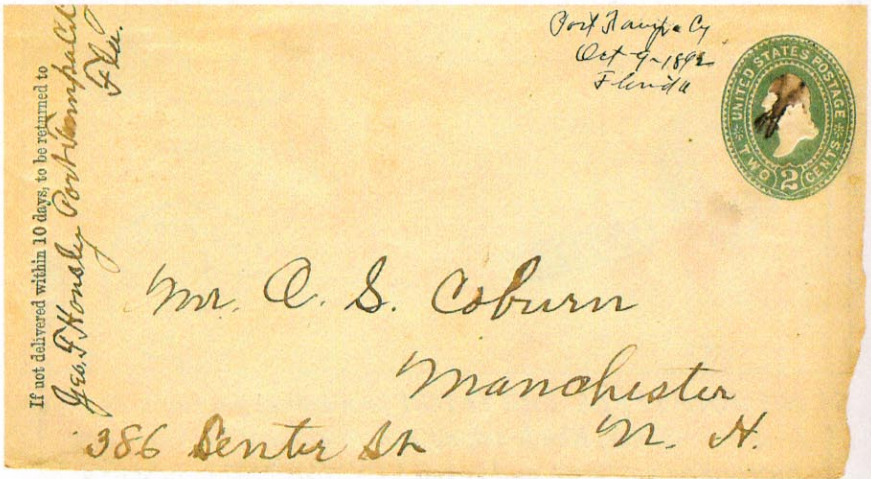


Figure 1
Port Tampa Cy Oct 9 1892 Florida manuscript "Provisional"
postmark with pen cancelled two-cent entire.

The original settlement of Tampa Bay was located near the Seminole War garrison, Fort Brooke. The access to Tampa Bay and the Hillsborough River made it an ideal location for ships to gather commissary supplies for the Seminole War effort and to distribute goods to the more isolated military garrisons located farther inland. A post office was established in then Alachua County on November 24, 1831, and named Tampa Bay with William G. Sanders the first postmaster. The town name and post office was subsequently changed to Tampa on September 13, 1834, with Augustus Steele, the current Tampa Bay postmaster, continuing as postmaster of Tampa. Postmarks with both names Tampa and Tampa Bay are known well into the statehood period. For many years the town of Tampa

was located more or less in its current downtown site.

Port Tampa is a neighborhood located in the southwestern edge of the Interbay Peninsula. The land was an original 1885 purchase by C. W. Prescott and James W. Fitzgerald and was initially known as Black Point. Because it was nine miles closer to the entrance to Tampa and the Gulf of Mexico, Henry B. Plant built a railroad spur line to the end of the peninsula. The spur opened on February 5, 1888. A channel was dredged and freight and passenger stations, railroad yards, a repair shop, a power plant, workers' homes and a pier were soon completed. By June of 1888, the Plant Steamship Company offered passenger and freight service from Port Tampa to Havana on the 1,676 ton *Olivette* and the 884 ton *Mascotte* (Figure 2). Local boats also connected passengers from Port Tampa with St. Petersburg, Egmont Key, and Green Springs.

On July 4, 1888, Picnic Island was opened as a beach amusement resort. By 1892, two large phosphate elevators were built to enhance shipping for the recently established phosphate industry. A Port Tampa post office was established at the end of the rail line on February 20, 1890, with John Bradley as postmaster. Within a few years, R.P.O mail service was functioning with steamboat connections with Havana (Pt. Tampa & Havanna (*sic*))

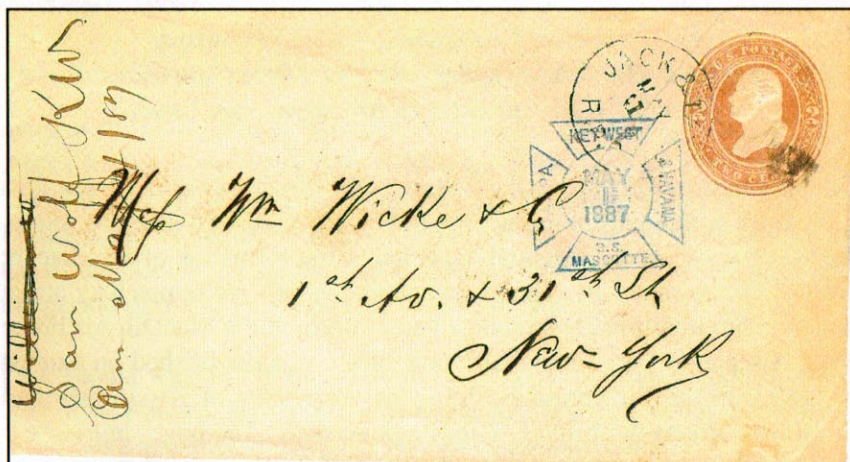


Figure 2

Tampa Key West & Havana S.S. Mascotte May 1 1887. Blue Maltese Cross ship handstamp (Milgram No. 873) used on board the S.S. Mascotte before entering the mails at Tampa and before Port Tampa was opened. Ex Meroni.

R.P.O.) by the Peninsular & Occidental Steamship Co., Key West (Port Tampa & Key West R.P.O.) by the Plant Investment Co. and even the little town of Ellenton near Bradenton (Pt. Tampa & Ellenton R.P.O.) which was delivered by a small local boat. Port Tampa was also the terminus for three other mainland R.P.O. routes, DuPont (Ga.) & Port Tampa R.P.O., Jacksonville & Port Tampa R.P.O., and Waycross (Ga.) & Port Tampa R.P.O.



Figure 3

PT. TAMPA & HAVANNA R.P.O. FEB 11 1899 postmark (unlisted variant of J-2-b) on cover to Brooklyn from Cuba.

This interbay area grew quickly with the construction of an 85 guest Port Tampa Inn built adjacent to the pier and an annex, the 14 guest St. Elmo. Banks, churches and residential areas led to the formation of an adjacent town of Port Tampa City. The exact boundaries of Port Tampa City are in question, but traditionally include all areas north of the MacDill Air Force Base. A separate Port Tampa City post office was established on August 10, 1892, in the Fitzgerald Building on the corner of Kissimmee and Loughman streets, with Ida F. Lane as postmaster. The cover in Figure 1 has a provisional manuscript “Port Tampa Cy” postmark used two months after the establishment of the post office and before a regular cds postmarking device was available and before the use of the magenta double oval “County” Postmark (Figure 7). Note that the manuscript date in the county postmark is in the same hand and ink as the 1892 provisional post-



Figure 4
PORT TAMPA & KEY WEST R.P.O. SEP 1898
postmark (J-2-c) on cover to New Jersey with
Spanish American War patriotic sticker.

mark, probably written by Ida Lane. These very collectible “County” postmarks are known to be used from November 30, 1893 through December 7, 1893, a period of only eight days, with four examples recorded to date. Figure 8 shows the use of a cds postmark from June 29, 1893, before the use of the “County” oval postmark. This cds postmark was also used after the period of use of the “County” oval postmark.

Port Tampa was an important point of embarkation during the Spanish-American War and on March 28, 1898, survivors of the sinking of the battleship *Maine* arrived at Port Tampa on the steamship *Olivette*.

The cover in Figure 9 is from a soldier recovering from wounds to his leg. It was datelined Picnic Island, Port Tampa, Fla., June 19, 1898. The enclosure gives some insight as to care given by the government and mentions a joke regarding Mr. Plant. The post offices of both Port Tampa and Port

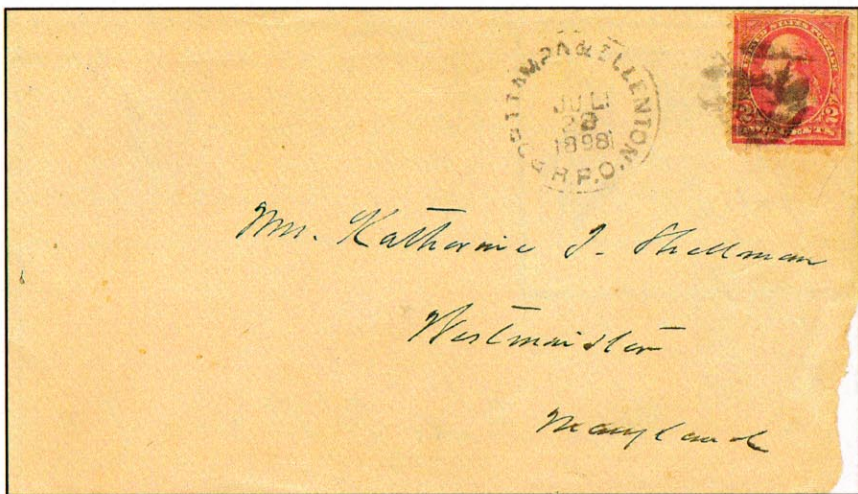


Figure 5
POST TAMPA & ELLENTON R.P.O. JUL 23 1898 postmark (J-7-a)
on cover to Maryland, the listing example.

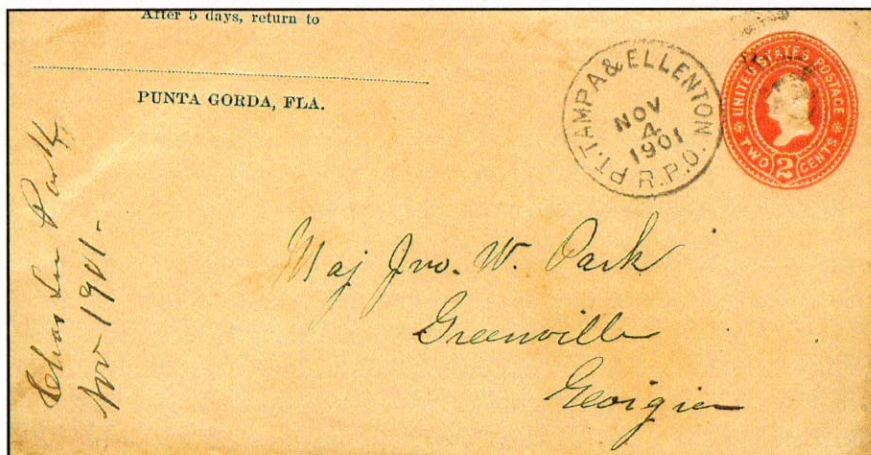


Figure 6
PT. TAMPA & ELLENTON R.P.O. postmark (unlisted example) on
cover to Georgia with enclosure with Plant Steamship Line letterhead.

Tampa City must have been fairly busy offices as both were issued Doane postmarking devices. Figure 10 shows a nice strike of a March 8, 1905 type II (8) Doane postmark from Port Tampa which reflects annual receipts of \$700-\$800. The reverse of this postcard is very important in that it shows

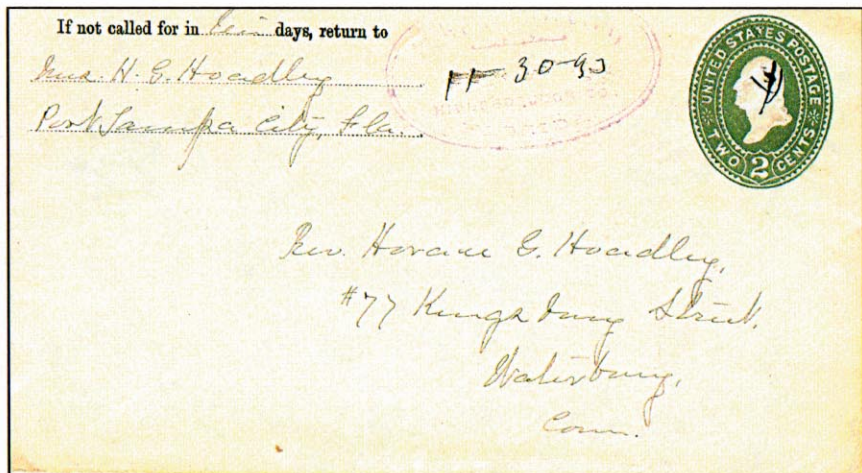


Figure 7
PORT TAMPA CITY, / HILLSBOROUGH CO. / FLORIDA
 magenta double oval County Postmark with pen date 11-30-93.



Figure 8
PORT TAMPA CITY / FLA. JUN 19 1893 cds postmark on
advertising corner card cover.

a picture of the Steamship *Mascotte* but also has a magenta “Ship” hand-stamp marking of “S.S MASCOTTE.” which is unreported by Milgram (Figure 11). The cover in Figure 12 has a Port Tampa City Doane type III (7) 6 Mar 1907 postmark which reflects annual receipts of \$600-\$700.



Figure 9
PORT TAMPA / FLA. JUN 20 1898 postmark on
Spanish-American War patriotic cover.

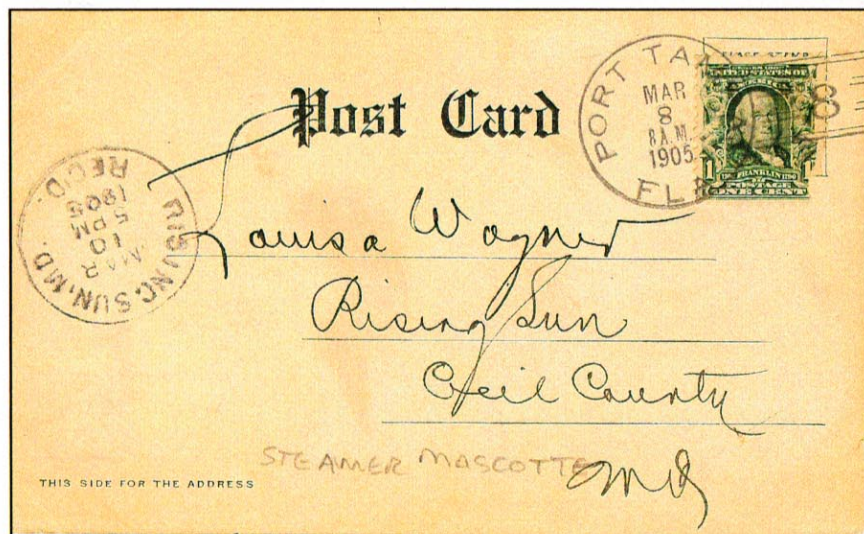


Figure 10
PORT TAMPA / FLA. MAR 8 1905 type II (8) Doane postmark.



Figure 11
 Reverse of postcard in Figure 6 with picture of the steamship Mascotte leaving Havana and with a magenta “Ship” handstamp marking S.S. MASCOTTE.

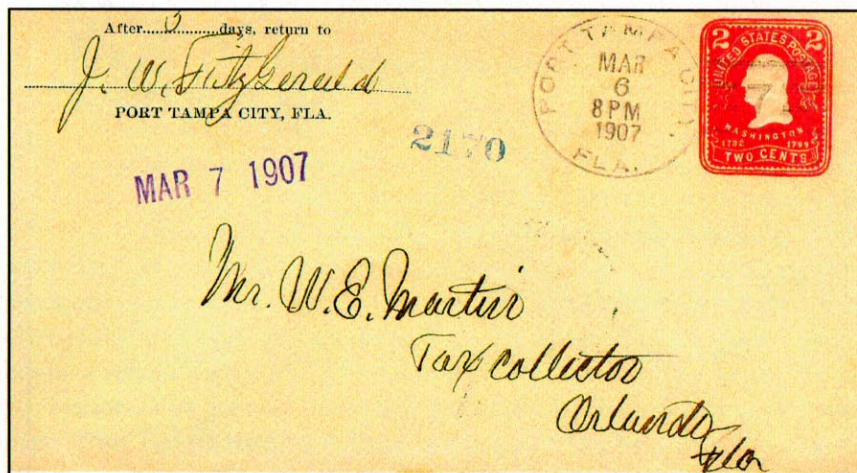


Figure 12
 PORT TAMPA CITY, / FLA. MAR 6 1907 type III (7) Doane postmark on cover from James W. Fitzgerald, who purchased the town site in 1885.

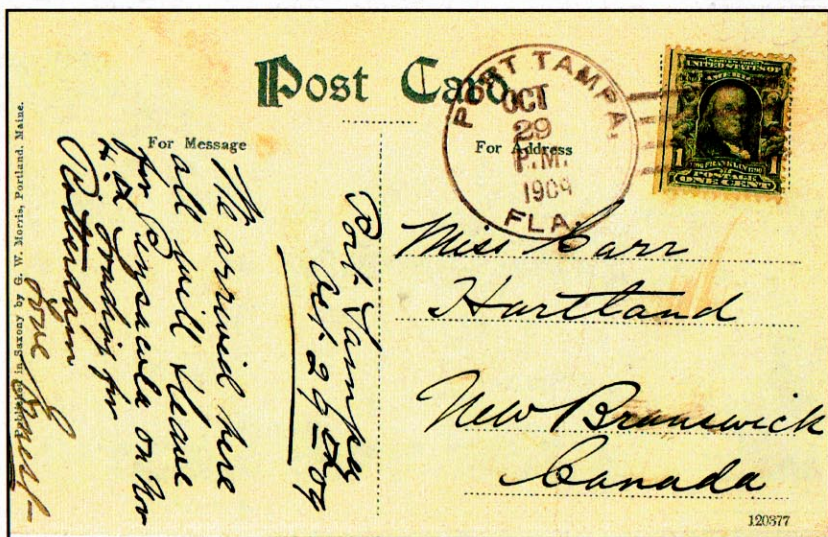


Figure 13
PORT TAMPA / FLA. OCT 29 1909 4-bar A postmark on postcard to New Brunswick, Canada.



Figure 14
PORT TAMPA / FLA. JAN 7 1913 4-bar B postmark on postcard to Maryland.

Following the use of the Doane postmarking devices, 4-bar and duplex handstamp devices were used. The examples in Figures 13 and 14 show 4-bar A and 4-bar B postmarks used at Port Tampa. The example in Figure 15 shows a duplex postmark used at Port Tampa City following discontinuation of the use of the Doane postmark in 1908.

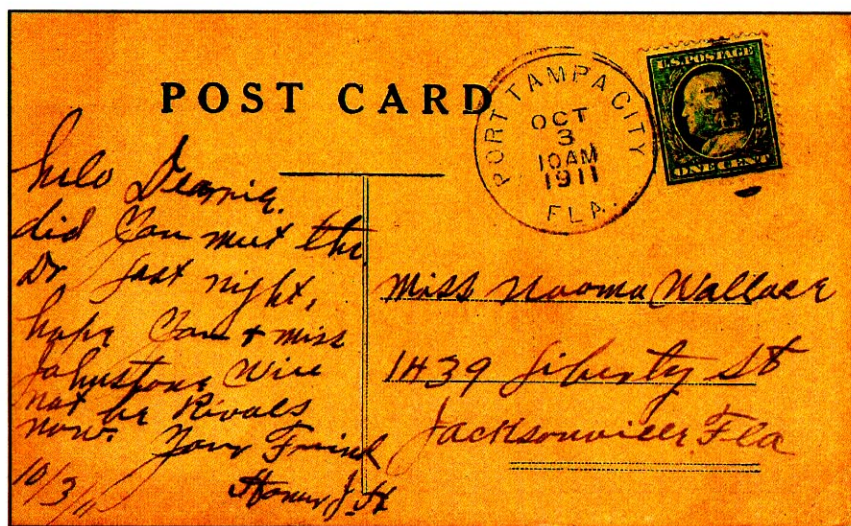


Figure 15
PORT TAMPA CITY / FLA. OCT 3 1911 duplex postmark on
postcard to Jacksonville.

By the middle of the 20th Century, the Port Tampa City area began a decline as the warehouses were dismantled and the phosphate elevators were torn down. The Port Tampa post office was closed on November 15, 1954, with mail handled by the Port Tampa City post office. This town was subsequently annexed into Tampa and the Port Tampa City post office was changed to a station of Tampa on May 25, 1962. The area has recently begun a rehabilitation and a Port Tampa Historical Trail has been laid out for visitors. For persons interested in further information there is a web page "Port Tampa Historical Trail" copyright 1999, by Steve Rajtar and a *Guide to Historic Tampa* which can be obtained from him at 1614 Bimini Dr., Orlando, FL 32806. Other information can be found in the book *A History of the City of Port Tampa 1888-1961* by the Port Tampa City Woman's Club, 1972.

Pensacola Registered Cover to Italy

By Deane R. Briggs, M.D.



Figure 1

Pensacola “boxed Registered” magenta postmark ties 15 cent small banknote (Scott #227) on cover to Roma (Rome), Italy.

The cover in Figure 1 is an unusual usage of the 15 cent small banknote stamp (Scott #227) and four single two-cent small banknotes (Scott #220) on a two-cent entire to pay the rate to Italy for a “registered cover.” The boxed postmark is dated April 14, 1892. The reverse is an overall advertisement for “The Red Snapper,” Warren & Co., Pensacola, Florida (Figure 2 on opposite page). A “Roma” (Rome) receiving mark dated April 29, 1892 is present along with a wax seal. Small banknote usage of the 15 cent #227 is not common, and especially so from Florida with a magenta cancellation.

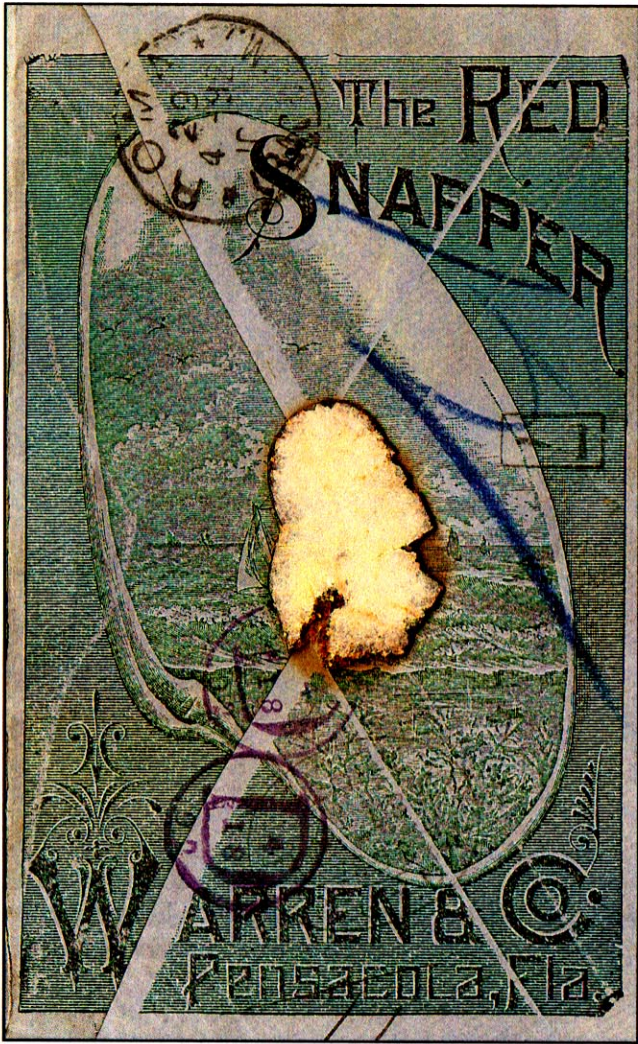


Figure 2
Overall reverse advertisement for "The Red Snapper," Warren & Co.,
Pensacola, Florida.

Fancy Florida Cancellations

By Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

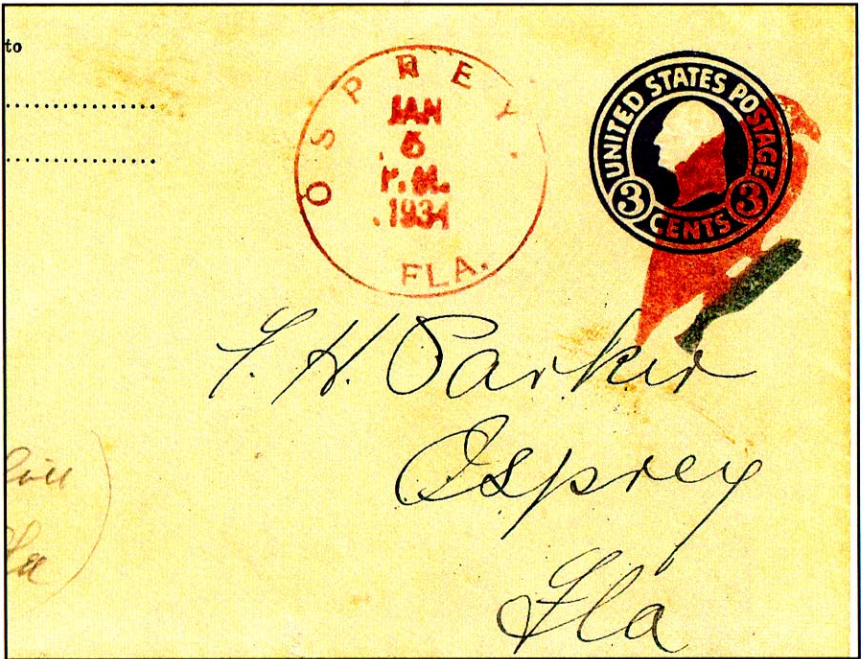


Figure 1

*OSPREY / FLA JAN 5 1934 red cds postmark with red and green fancy
"Osprey holding fish" woodcut handstamped cancellation.*

The cover in Figure 1 has a most unusual multicolor cancellation made from a handcarved woodblock. It shows an osprey holding a fish. The cover is endorsed by the Osprey postmaster, J.M. Hamlin and sent to Osprey, Florida.

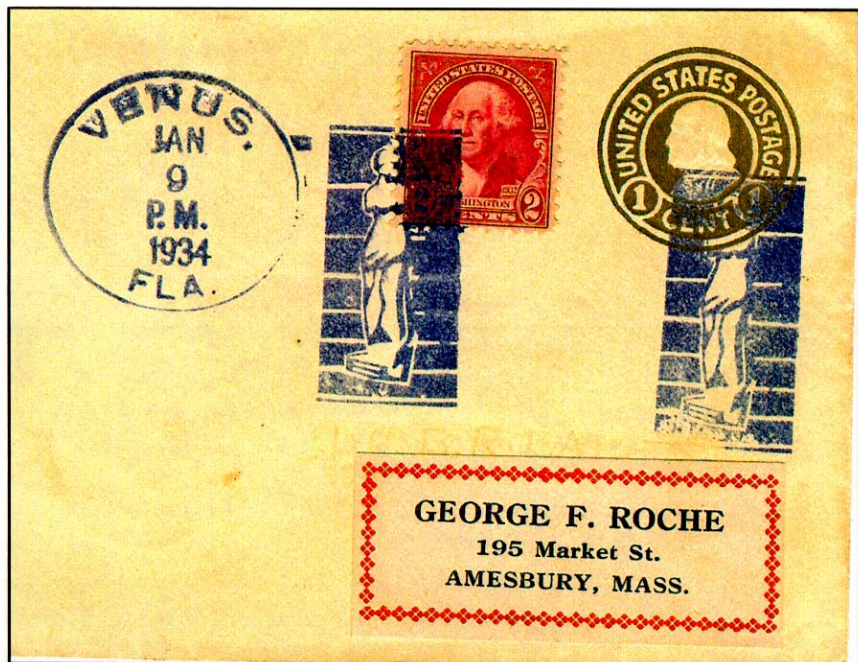


Figure 2
**VENUS, / FLA. JAN 9 1934 blue cds postmark with pair of blue
 "Venus D'Milo" woodcut handstamped cancellations.**

The cover in Figure 2 (above) has an equally unusual cancellation made from a handcarved woodblock representing the Venus D'Milo. It appears that a 4-bar handstamp device had the bars cut off, leaving only the cds portion with the woodblock handstamps used separately to cancel the entire and stamp. The reverse has a standard VENUS/ FLA. JAN 10 1934 duplex postmark.

1779 Pensacola letter to London

By Deane R. Briggs, M.D.



Partial folded letters docketed Pensacola April 9 and May 10, 1779 sent by private ship to Deal, England with DEAL/ SHIP LTR handstamp and 10 pence due rate for delivery to London.

The above folded letter is a portion of 12 pages of letters from Samuel Fontenell to a London merchant, Benjamin Adams. It deals with property and transactions. Samuel Fontenell had purchased 1,000 acres in West Florida in 1775 as part of a consortium with David Hodge, William Wilton and John Crozer for £150. Fontenell was apparently in Pensacola, perhaps checking on his property. The reverse is docketed "Rec'd 26 July" and answered November 2, 1779 and has a London "24/Jy" receiving Bishop's mark. This relates to a 10-week delivery time. This is one of the earliest postally rated covers from Pensacola.

Well-known Christmas postmaster dies

By Dr. Everett L. Parker

For many people, Christmas just wouldn't be quite the same without a visit to the Christmas Post Office and applying the special cachet to their outgoing holiday greeting cards. And while the tradition may continue, a major part of that annual trek is now diminished by the passing of the lady who was a local icon, Juanita Tucker.

If you haven't heard about it, we can confirm that yes, Virginia, there really is a Christmas. Well, at least there is a Christmas, Florida. Florida may not see much snow, but the small post office near the historical Fort Christmas sees plenty of activity prior to the holidays. People come from miles around to have their Christmas cards and holiday mail postmarked at this historic site. The original community was called Fort Christmas, named for the time of year the fort was built in 1837. The "fort" was dropped when the first post office opened in 1892, and as they say, the rest is history.



Traditional Christmas tree cachet design.

Christmas is located about 20 miles east of Orlando along State Road 50, a road traveled by those heading to Titusville on the Space Coast. The small, but modern, post office is on the south side of the road just east of the green "Christmas" sign that marks the entrance to the town. It is decorated for the holidays year-round with a holiday wreath on the outside and a Christmas tree in the lobby. In the summertime, it is a quiet place, but prior to the holidays, it bustles with activity. People line up for the opportunity to mail their holiday cards and letters with the unique postmark.

Located just a few miles north of the main highway is Fort Christmas Historical Park. A replica of the original fort, built in 1837 during the Seminole Indian War, anchors the 25-acre park that also features a traditional

Continued on page 26

Florida “Cracker” house, seven pioneer homes, a sugar cane mill and historical farming equipment. Visitors to the replica Cracker log house Visitor Center will uncover a wealth of historical information and a gift shop. The historical park also includes several picnic pavilions (including a large one that is covered and screened), restroom facilities, a unique themed children’s playground, a baseball diamond, tennis, volleyball and basketball courts.

Christmas, Florida



**Peace on Earth
Good Will
toward Men**

*Modern dove
cachet.*

As you can imagine, it isn’t difficult to find surprises in a community where it is Christmas all year round — from the large Christmas tree perched at the corner of one intersection to Santa’s reindeer and sleigh atop a building in a RV park, it is easy to see that residents are all too willing to capitalize on the town’s name.

The story is told that Juanita Tucker, a lifelong resident of Christmas, came up with the idea of offering a special cachet for outgoing holiday mail soon after becoming postmaster, a position she held for 42 years. The author recalls visiting the “old” post office building during several holiday seasons in the 1960s and standing in line to apply the now-famous green Christmas tree cachet design. Several of the rubber handstamps, accompanied by green inkpads, were located on the service counters in the small post office.

Untold thousands of greeting cards were sent to the Christmas Post Office over the decades, and Mrs. Tucker and her seasonal helpers would dutifully apply the cachet to each and every one. Not once in the several times I visited with the diminutive Mrs. Tucker during the holiday rush did she appear unnerved or rushed, always seeming to enjoy every minute of what appeared to be chaos going on around her.

Mrs. Tucker had retired from her position as postmaster, but nevertheless kept active in town affairs in this small town in far eastern Orange County, not far from the Brevard County line. Several members of her family, including a son, Cecil A. Tucker II, and at least one grandchild still reside in the “hometown.”

One thing is for certain, Christmas will be a bit different now.

Yalaha straight-line cancel

By Deane R. Briggs, M.D.



YALAHA, FLA. FEB 1, 1932 magenta 4-bar postmark with an additional four straight-line cancellations.

The above cover is unusual in many regards. The use of a pair of “imperforate” Scott #575 with the unusual straight-line cancellations in addition to the magenta non-standard 4-bar postmark is of interest. The beautifully hand-drawn ink insect and bird and the fancy script address completes this nice cover. The straight-line cancels are all in different positions and angles and do not appear to be pre-cancellations.

President's Notes _____ *Continued from page 4*

Sarasota. Steve Patrick will take over as President. This venue has always been well attended and members are encouraged to attend.

David G. Phillips, the first editor of *The Florida Postal History Journal* and long time dealer and publisher, has announced his retirement. He greatly assisted our society by publishing our book *Florida Stampless Postal History 1763-1861*. He is in the process of disposing of some of his Florida material and members interested in some of the late Larry Resnick material may contact him.

FLORIDA POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS - 2008

The following members of the Florida Postal History Society have been denoted as “**Contributing Members**” for their additional contribution to the Society. The support of these members keeps our Society fiscally sound and enables us to respond to member and non-member inquiries regarding Florida postal history and send sample copies of our *Journal*.

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