

FLORIDA POSTAL HISTORY JOURNAL

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May 2011



**The Spanish-American War at Tampa.
See article beginning on page 10.**



Promoting Philately in the Sunshine State



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Florida Postal History Society Officers	2
Milton was an early town in the Florida Panhandle	
<i>by Richard Wonson</i>	4-9
Tampa and the Spanish-American War	
<i>by Douglas S. Files</i>	10-16
The Great Seal of Florida	
<i>by William B. Spaid</i>	17-19
Dr. Briggs retires from medical practice; new society contact information listed	19
St. Augustine possible Express Mail Route	
<i>by Deane R. Briggs, M.D.</i>	20-22
Special cancel for Florida railroad	22
President's Page	
<i>by Alexander Hall</i>	23
Florida Postal History Society Contributing Members	24

Milton was an early town in the Florida Panhandle

By Richard Wonson

The ancestry of Milton is a rather difficult thing to trace. Conceived as it was in a rather illegitimate manner -- its parentage is something of a cloud -- unknown to a degree at least. According to Allen Morris on the 1963-64 edition of *The Florida Handbook*, there is some uncertainty as to how Milton got its final name. "Some say it is a contraction of the earlier Milltown; others that it was Milton Amos, a pioneer and ancestor of the present Amos family; still others that it was John Milton, not the English poet but the Civil War governor of Florida."

Milton had existed as a trading post, a trading center for many years before that time and a risk import-export business was already going on here

when Santa Rosa County was created. Milton's location at the tidewater terminus of an old Indian and trading trail had given it an early importance in the trade of a



The current Milton Post Office on Dogwood Drive.

large frontier region. During the last Spanish regime in Florida, the Spanish had tried to recapture and/or hold this trade for Pensacola, since it was the seat of government of the Spanish Dons, but even then there was a great deal of trade going on through the town. Some of it might be termed in the parlance of today "smuggling." Much chicanery and intrigues were participated in by the governing officials of Pensacola and its licensed trading firm of Panton, Leslie and Company. Even so, a lively and healthy trade went on during these years through Milton, often in those days spoken of as "Scratch Ankle" since many of the surreptitious landings here were at points where the briars came down to the water's edge. It was also

referred to as “Hard Scrabble” since often these landings were made at the bluffs on the basins above town where indeed it was a “hard scrabble” to get from the boat to the top of the bluff.

There was, in addition to its location on the crossing of these two trails and the conjunction with tidewater at this point, some other factors contributing to

the location of Milton. Its location places it almost exact center of one of the finest forested areas of long-leaf yellow pine trees anywhere. Yellow pine and naval stores early became high on the export lists of



The “old” Milton post office on U.S. 90. After a new building was constructed, it sat vacant for many years before becoming a business.

the tidewater town and the needs of the people who work with these woodlands became the commerce flowing the other way.

Geographically, Milton had another set of peculiar local factors: it is located near the center of the base of a right angled triangle (the Gulf Coast), the hypotenuse of which is the Coosa-Alabama River Valley and the altitude of which is the Chattahoochee-Apalachicola River Valley. The triangular area is one of the short rivers and rather frequent navigable bays and bayous. This location and the nearness to plentiful timber made Milton a rather important shipbuilding and repair center. This was in the days of wooden ships and iron men. There were at various times no less than five shipyards and as many sawmills in the immediate vicinity.

In 1840, the Territorial Assembly granted a charter of incorporation to Milton. It is interesting to note how important the Blackwater River was to these old timers. The citizens were very careful to include a margin of

Text continued on page 7



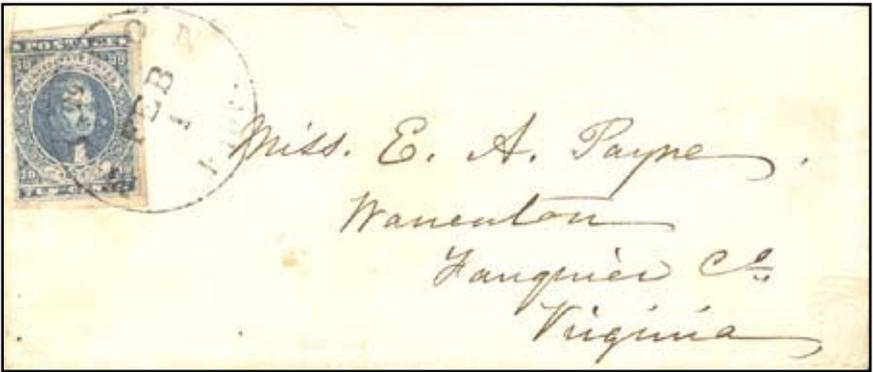
This is an interesting Milton cover dated December 3, 1853 (postmarked December 5). The letter has interesting content regarding the yellow fever and typhoid fever (see page 9). It is addressed to Fort Clark, which is in itself a rare post office with no nonarchival examples recorded.



This is the only known example of the 10 rate handstamp from Milton.

the river bank one chain in width on the east side of the river. Milton at that time was a river town and no more would have considered stopping their town at the river's edge than would a town of today exclude highways passing through. Truly speaking, the river was the highway: not only did the goods of commerce move along the river, but the people also moved along the same waterway.

The 21st county, Santa Rosa, was formally founded in 1842 from parts of Escambia (one of the original counties). It included its present territory as well as one half of what is now Okaloosa County. Milton became the county seat in 1843. One of the first actions of the new town's officials was to make an application for "Port of Entry" status. Florida became



This is the only known Confederate cover from Milton. It appears that despite a fairly large amount of post office business (in the range of \$119-\$378) during pre-Civil War period, there is very little surviving postal history.

a state on March 3, 1845. President John Tyler signed a bill admitting Florida as a slave state, and Iowa as a free state a day before he left office. We should note here that Florida came very near to being admitted as a state with its northern, western, and southern borders as they are now, but with its eastern boundary at the Suwannee River. A bill creating the state as it exists today passed 123-77.

A vigilante committee was formed in Milton on June 24, 1854. This seems to be another of those marked years. Dating back perhaps to the burning of J. Keyser's store in 1850, there seems to have been quite a bit of uneasiness over several months on the arson, illegal entry, mayhem, and even murders that were becoming commonplace. Like many other frontier

communities, there was a demand for some direct action. A “Torrens Rectangular Survey System” (township and range) survey of Florida began in 1832-33, but was not considered nearly complete until 1853. A United States Land Office was established in Milton in 1855.

The year 1848 was likely the greatest boom year in Milton’s history. As we read newspaper accounts of that time, it seems clear now that the people of Milton and Pensacola were fairly certain a railroad would be built to Milton. An article in the April 1, 1848 edition of the *Pensacola Gazette* said, “Milton is the most convenient point for this steamboat navigation from New Orleans.” The article envisioned the terminus of rail traffic of the Fort Gaines, Georgia Railway in Milton. It continued, “It is impossible to calculate the advantage which such cities as Charleston and Savannah on the one hand and New Orleans on the other will derive from this intimate relationship with Milton. Those persons in Pensacola who are so desirous of disposing of their real estate in that city in order to invest on Blackwater are acting hastily. Indeed, it is the general opinion here that property will not fall in the good old Spanish city. Pensacola is a healthy city and a very delightful summer residence, and contiguous as she will be to a larger business community, doubtless many of our businessmen will seek retirement from the hum and din or a large bustling city (Milton) to a quiet little one (Pensacola) during the warm season to enjoy the delights of sea bathing and to drink of the pure springs.” Even at that date, Pensacola was boasting of its pure water!

One who travels over the site of the old roadbed of that proposed railway and allows himself to dream can but wonder what juggling of finance and political chicanery caused it to be abandoned when it was so nearly complete. A note from 1858 shows that Milton was becoming a cotton market for the whole area -- as far away as Geneva, Sparta and Montezuma (now Andalusia) in Alabama, as well as from other places.

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ENDNOTES

This article is extrapolated from the author's original manuscript published in *Permit Patter*, a publication of the Mailer's Postmark Permit Club. For information about that society, contact Secretary Timothy Schnepf by email at timothy@oldoakenbucket.net.

Speaking from a postal history context, Deane R. Briggs, M.D., said of early Milton, "The post office was established April 10, 1840 but there are only archival covers known from the Territorial period. Even in the statehood stampless period, there are only a few known covers."

Following is a transcription of the letter shown on page 6:

Milton Santa Rosa Dec 3, 1853

Father was packing up to move. We started the twenty second and got here the twenty eighth of Nov. I tell you it is a lonesome place now for we can't go to Milton which is fifteen miles for the yellow fever. Nearly every body has had it but a great many has got well. It is not so in Montgomery there has been a great many cases and not more than three or four have got well. They had one case at the Jim Burches before we left and I tell you we were frightened. Tell Mrs. Bailey I am sorry to say that Mr. Burch is dead and Mr. Hall too tho I suppose you have heard of both before now. I don't know what was the matter with Mr. B but Mr. H had the typhoid fever. I am sorry for Mrs. Hall she had just lost her mother and sister Laura and two of her children were lying at the point of death. I never heard of so many deaths in my life.

The photographs of the current and former Milton post office buildings are from the author's collection.

The cover illustrations are from Dr. Briggs' collection.

Tampa and the Spanish-American War

By Douglas S. Files

Prior to the start of the Spanish-American War, Tampa was a small port in western Florida. It was known for its cigar factories and as a warm winter haven for northerners. During the Ten-Year War (1868-1878), Tampa native Captain Joseph Fry of the *S.S. Virginus* was caught by the Spanish carrying 300 Cuban rebels and guns into Cuba to support the island's struggle for independence from Spain. Fry and 53 freedom fighters were executed by a firing squad in 1873, which nearly caused war between Spain and the U.S. Cuba's Third War for Independence began in



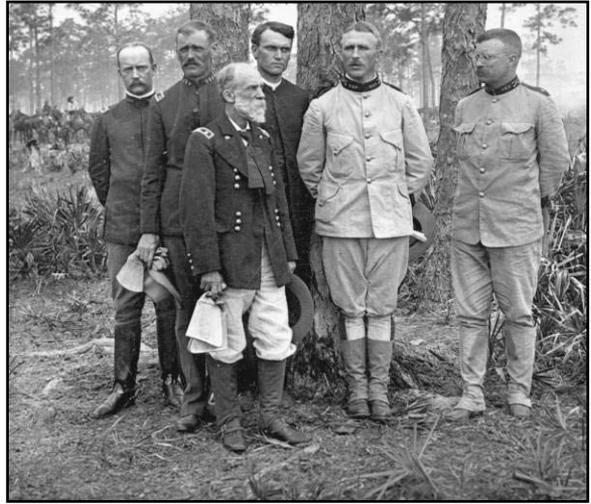
FIGURE 1

TAMPA / FLA. JUL 24 1898 "Involute Flag" machine cancellation on U.S. Flag patriotic cover.

1895. A young Winston Churchill visited Tampa at this time as a British military observer of the war. The Cuban community in West Tampa and Ybor City generally supported the rebels. So did U.S. President William McKinley, although he failed to act strongly in any way. The Spanish minister to the United States characterized McKinley as a weakling in a letter which gained wide publicity.

Theodore Roosevelt and other high ranking officials. Shown, from left, unknown, Allen Capran, Major General Joseph Wheeler, Chaplain Brown, Colonel Leonard Wood, Colonel Theodore Roosevelt.

From the Florida State Library and Archives.
Used with permission.



The foreign policy of the United States had been significantly influenced by Alfred T. Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, which advocated establishing bases in the Caribbean to protect American maritime commerce. When the battleship USS *Maine* exploded in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898 with the loss of 266 lives, the official naval board of inquiry concluded that a Spanish mine had caused the explosion. Modern historians expect that this was not true, but the U.S. was moved to declare war on Spain, and President McKinley ordered the Army and Navy to conquer Cuba.

Tampa railroad owner Henry B. Plant (1819-1899) convinced Secretary of War Russell A. Alger to select Tampa as the embarkation port for troops headed to Cuba. The wealthy Plant's railroad and steamships transported tens of thousands of soldiers, and his Tampa Bay Hotel served as headquarters for the top-ranking Army officers headed to combat, as well as for Red Cross leader Clara Barton and war correspondents such as Stephen Crane (1871-1900). Crane was famous for his bestseller *The Red Badge of Courage*, which had been published in 1895 and went through nine editions in its first year.

Styled after a Moorish palace, the Tampa Bay Hotel had cost Plant \$2.5 million to erect. The primary Army commanders were General Nelson Miles, General William R. Shafter, General "Fightin' Joe" Wheeler, Colonel Leonard Wood and Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt noted that upon their arrival, no one met them and the officers had to buy

their men food with their own money for the first 24 hours. Roosevelt's 1st Volunteer U.S. Cavalry Regiment was nicknamed Teddy's Terrors or Rocky Mountain Rustlers but their other name – the Rough Riders – stuck. Roosevelt was promoted to full colonel only after he arrived in Cuba.

After arriving in the region starting in April, 30,000 enlisted troops camped around Tampa in several areas including: Port Tampa, Desoto Park (also known at Camp Florida), Camp Mitchell (located on the old garrison reservation of Fort Brooke), Camp at Palmetto Beach (later called Camp DeSoto), Camp Rogers (located on the banks of the Hillsboro River), Tampa Heights, West Tampa, Ybor City (the site of the current Homer



*Children in
Jacksonville having
their own parade
during the Spanish-
American War.*

From the Florida State
Library and Archives.
Used with permission.

Hesterly National Guard Armory) and Lakeland. Lakeland – with a population of 1,000 – was chosen to house 9,000 soldiers of the 1st and 10th U.S. Cavalry, the 1st Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, the 2nd Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment and the 71st New York Volunteers, due to good railroad connections and an abundant water supply. The last two units encamped at Camp Massachusetts near Lake Morton not far from where the Lakeland Public Library now stands. The 10th Cavalry, which was largely African-American, balked at Lakeland's Jim Crow laws, but violence was mostly avoided.

Northern soldiers had difficulty acclimating to Florida's heat and humidity. Army hospitals treated numerous cases of heat exhaustion. General Shafter, who weighed nearly 350 pounds, sweltered. Mosquitoes and food shortages also plagued the men. Early summer rains flooded some of the

Text continued on page 14

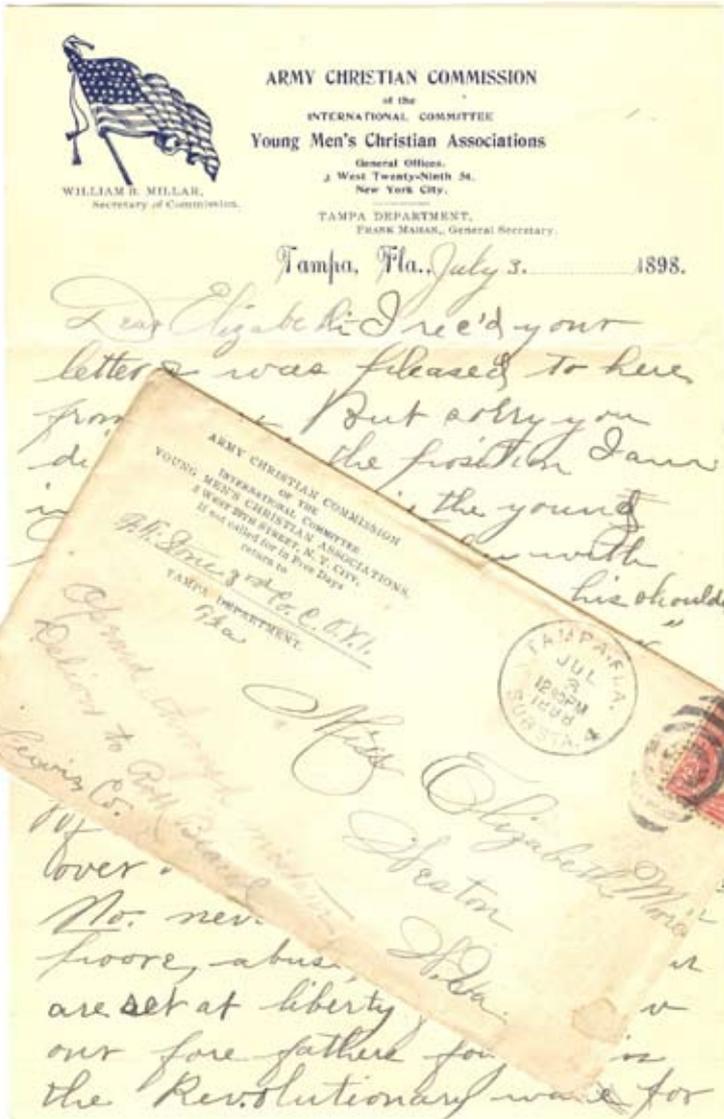


FIGURE 2
TAMPA, FLA. SUB STA. 4 JUL 3 1898 duplex postmark on Army Christian Commission corner card cover.

camps. The 157th Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment's camp was completely inundated and until they were relocated the soldiers slung hammocks from pine trees high off the ground.



FIGURE 3
TAMPA FLA. JUN 28 98 duplex postmark on
“Camp Thomas” patriotic cover.

Shortly after a celebration of Queen Victoria's 79th birthday on May 24, the troops departed Florida on steamships. Sixteen thousand troops boarded ships in Tampa Bay harbor on June 7, but then they remained in the harbor sweating for another week, as rumors floated around that Admiral Cervera's Spanish fleet had broken the American blockade around Cuba. They finally weighed anchor on June 13 and sailed to Cuba. By August 1898 most of the troops billeted near Tampa had departed. The Tampa area had hosted 66,000 troops and 13,000 railroad freight cars. Of the money spent on the war, \$4 million of it was spent in Florida, transforming Roosevelt's "pine covered sand flats at the end of a one-track railroad" into a larger city. In 1961 a marker was erected at the corner of South West Shore and Interbay boulevards, commemorating the embarkation of Spanish-American War troops on the site. A memorial park also stands nearby.

Postal history related to the Spanish-American War in Tampa is limited to soldier's use of only a few months period from May through July 1898. At least three different postmarks are known with the most famous being the "Involute Flag" machine cancel (*Figure 1*) which has known period of use from July 22 – October 10, 1898. According to FPHS member Stan



FIGURE 4
***Tampa Fla. July 17 1898 dateline on
“On to Cuba - Remember The Maine” patriotic letter sheet.***

Jameson, there were only eight examples of this postmark recorded when he last exhibited his machine cancel collection.

A specific Sub-Station 4 postmark (**Figure 2**) is thought to have been used at the Tampa Bay Hotel. A duplex postmark (**Figure 3**) is also recorded on a Spanish-American War patriotic cover. Patriotic covers and letter sheets were widely used and it appears that nearly one half of all covers had some form of patriotic imprint. Figure 4 shows an example of a “Remember The Maine” patriotic letter sheet.

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Henry B. Plant Museum website, reprinted from the Dictionary of American Biography, vol. VII, HYPERLINK “<http://www.plantmuseum.com/Historical-Information/spanish-american-war.html>”<http://www.plantmuseum.com/Historical-Information/spanish-american-war.html>.

Lakeland website, HYPERLINK “http://www.lakelandgov.net/library/speccoll/manuscripts/military/span_hist.%20html”http://www.lakelandgov.net/library/speccoll/manuscripts/military/span_hist.html.



Rough Riders at Tampa, Florida.

From the Florida State Library and Archives. Used with permission.

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We all forget, and that's okay, but this will be the last issue
of the Florida Postal History Journal you will receive
unless you renew today!
Send your renewal to Dr. Briggs before you forget it!**



The Great Seal of Florida

By William B. Spaid



FIGURE 1

Great Seal of the State of Florida on semi-official legal cover with strip of three Scott #94 grilled 3¢ red stamps with Tallahassee Mar 29 postmark and Gainesville Mar 31 routing postmark, usage to Perry, Fla.

After the Civil War and during Reconstruction, the State of Florida adopted a new Constitution which directed “The Legislature shall, at the first session, adopt a seal for the state, and such seal shall be the size of an American silver dollar, but said seal shall not again be changed after its adoption by the Legislature.” On August 6, 1868, the Legislature passed a Joint Resolution and sent it to Governor Harrison Reed. This resolution specified “That a Seal of the size of the American silver dollar, having in the center thereof a view of the sun’s rays over a high land in the distance, a cocoa tree, a steamboat on water, and an Indian female scattering flowers in the foreground, encircled by the words, ‘Great Seal of the State of Florida: In God We Trust,’ be and the same is hereby adopted as the Great Seal of the State of Florida.”¹

The cover in Figure 1 incorporates the central component of the Great Seal in an oval form and the words “State of Florida.” This cover appears to be the first of its kind to use the State Seal on semi-official envelopes. The use

of the three-cent red grilled stamps, Scott #94 (Type F and not Type E as noted) and the blue Gainesville postmark, places this usage to 1869.

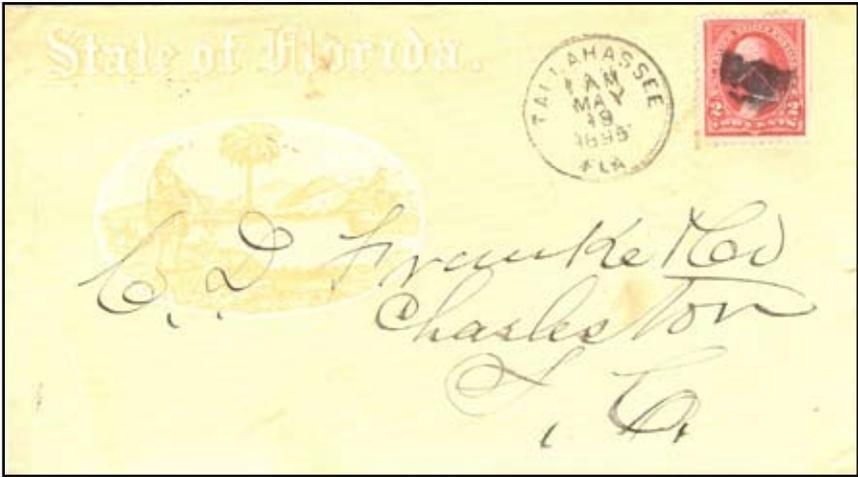


FIGURE 2

Variation of the Great Seal of the State of Florida on semi-official cover with Tallahassee May 19, 1895 postmark, usage to Charleston, S.C.

The cover in Figure 2 is an 1895 postmarked example of another semi-official cover incorporating the State Seal. The design is similar, but different in many aspects. The steamship is different with smokestacks in front of the side-wheel, the Indian is of greater stature, the mountains have vegetation on the surface, and the foreground and area behind the Indian are different. Throughout the years several subtle changes have been made to the Great Seal despite the wording in the State Constitution that the “seal shall not again be changed after its adoption.” In 1970 the Legislature made one change in the official description changing “cocoa tree” to “Sabal palmetto palm” since that tree had been designated as the



FIGURE 3

Current Great Seal of the State of Florida

State Tree in 1953.

The last revision to the State Seal took place in 1985 when Secretary of State George Firestone presented a revised Great Seal to the Governor and Cabinet (see **Figure 3**). The current seal has a Seminole Indian woman rather than a Western Plains Indian, and her headdress was removed since only males wore headdresses and her dress was lengthened. The mountains were removed since they are not found in Florida, and the steamboat was again revised.² With all of these changes, one wonders what the original 1868 Great Seal actually looked like, but it most likely was close to the example in Figure 1.

FOOTNOTES

1 “The Florida State Seal,” Internet web site <http://www.flheritage.com/facts/symbols/seals.cfm>.

2 “The Great Seal of Florida” Internet web site http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/seals/fl_seal.htm.

Dr. Briggs retires from medical practice; new society contact information listed!

Deane R. Briggs has retired from his 42 year medical practice and as a result, the Florida Postal History Society address must change.

Please note the new address and phone numbers.

All delinquent dues and any articles or correspondence should be directed to him at:

Florida Postal History Society

Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

2000 N. Lake Eloise Drive

Winter Haven, FL 33884

Phone: (863) 324-7183 (home)

(863) 221-4710 (cell)

St. Augustine possible Express Mail Route

By Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

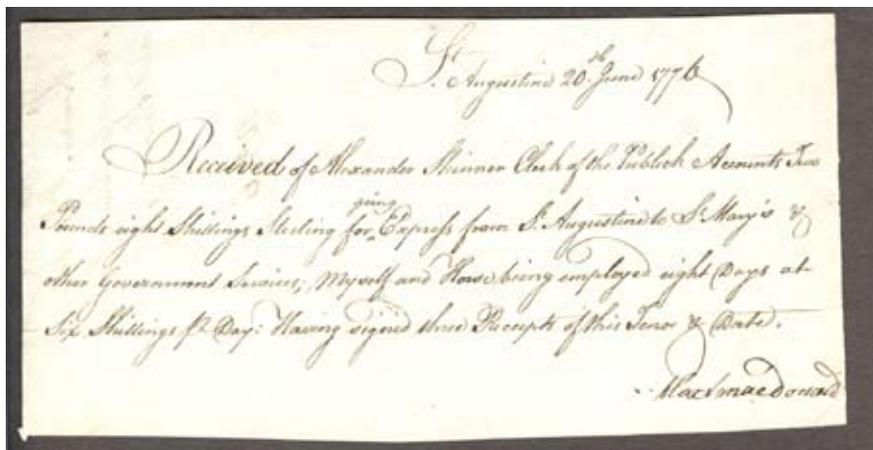


FIGURE 1

Payment receipt for Express service from St. Augustine to St. Mary's (Georgia), dated June 20, 1776.

Records relating to the postal service in British period East Florida (1763-1784) are not well documented, but there is some information available regarding a form of mail service. Obviously, mail was sent from and delivered to St. Augustine because several covers survive with St. Augustine datelines or addressed to St. Augustine. The Risvold sale last year had a couple of British period St. Augustine covers, most notably one addressed to Mrs. Dolly Barrie, mailed by her husband, a surgeon stationed in St. Vincent. That particular cover traveled by a lengthy route via Kingstown, Jamaica, to Pensacola, and on to Charles Town, S.C. before being carried by land to St. Augustine.

The British had a well organized system for mail using various packets. According to the *American Stampless Cover Catalog*, the Falmouth-West

Indies packet extended their sailings to include Pensacola, St. Augustine, and Charles Town in 1764. It is unclear whether St. Augustine was in fact a port of call. In 1772, a feeder route from Jamaica went to Vera Cruz, Tampico, and Pensacola in the Gulf and Savannah, Charles Town, and New York along the Atlantic. There was no packet service which included St. Augustine. The Colonial mail routes in the American colonies were also well established and went to Charles Town, S.C and Savannah, Ga. In 1768, British Florida Governor Grant instituted a monthly mail route between St. Augustine and Charles Town. From a November 14, 1774, journal entry by the Surveyor of the North American Post Roads, Hugh Finlay, we know that: “One Mackenfuss rides between Charles Town and St. Augustine in East Florida: after the arrival of the packet boats in Charles Town he sets out with the Mail for Savannah, Sunbury & St. Augustine and returns. This trip he takes twelve times in the year. On one of those trips he fell sick, and employed a man to ride for him, this man came to the office drunk, he delivered about 50 loose letters to Mr. Thompson” It appears that Mr. Thompson must have been a postmaster or someone authorized to receive mail at either Charles Town or St. Augustine. From another reference in the *American Stampless Cover Catalog*, it also appears that at some time prior to 1781, a John Haley was Deputy Postmaster at St. Augustine.



FIGURE 2
1772 cover addressed to Mrs. Dolly Barrie
in St. Augustine (ex Risvold).

Grant instituted a monthly mail route between St. Augustine and Charles Town. From a November 14, 1774, journal entry by the Surveyor of the North American Post Roads, Hugh Finlay, we know that: “One Mackenfuss rides between Charles Town and St. Augustine in East Florida: after the arrival of the packet boats in Charles Town he sets out with the Mail for Savannah, Sunbury & St. Augustine and returns. This trip he takes twelve times in the year. On one of those trips he fell sick, and employed a man to ride for him, this man came to the office drunk, he delivered about 50 loose letters to Mr. Thompson” It appears that Mr. Thompson must have been a postmaster or someone authorized to receive mail at either Charles Town or St. Augustine. From another reference in the *American Stampless Cover Catalog*, it also appears that at some time prior to 1781, a John Haley was Deputy Postmaster at St. Augustine.

With this background, the receipt in Figure 1 offers some insight into a possible unofficial mail route. It shows that a Alexander MacDonald was paid by the Clerk of Publick(sic) Accounts Two Pounds eight Shillings



FIGURE 3

St. Augustine Express Mail cover, ex. Thompson.

Sterling for “going Express from St. Augustine to St. Mary’s (Ga.) and other Government Services, myself and horse being employed eight days at Six Shillings p.Day”.

It is very likely that included in the express service were postal letters that were carried on horseback. It is also of interest that in the recent sale of Don Thompson’s stampless Florida collection, the only known example of an Express Mail cover from St. Augustine was auctioned (**Figure 3**). We now have another documentation of Express (mail) service from St. Augustine, albeit unofficial, that pre-dates the Thompson cover by 60 years!

Special cancel for Florida railroad

Three post offices in Levy County celebrated the 150th anniversary of



the completion of the Florida Railroad with a special cancel (shown at left). The March 19 postmarks in Bronson, Cedar Key and Otter Creek all share a common design showing a train. Track for the completed line ran 155.5 miles from Fer-

nandina to Cedar Key. The route was in use for 71 years. Information is available on-line at www.levycountyrailroaddays.com.

President's Page

Alexander Hall

The 19th Annual Meeting of the Florida Postal History Society was held on Saturday, February 5, 2011 at the Sarasota National Stamp Exhibition. The meeting was well attended with some new members joining in discussions. Outgoing President Steven Patrick passed the gavel to incoming President Alex Hall, who presided well. Alex even had a couple of items for a drawing, one of which Dan Curtis won and another won in spirited bidding by ex-President Patrick. The election of officers for 2011-2013 was approved with Alex Hall as President; Todd Hirn as Vice President; Deane Briggs as Secretary-Treasurer.

The Treasurer's report reflected a balance of over \$5,000 in the treasury, but that figure included some 2011 two-year prepaid dues. *Journal* articles are sorely needed.

A lengthy discussion was held regarding our Internet web site, and Francis Ferguson has agreed to be our new webmaster. He has already changed the site completely and has included most of the back issues of our journal as scanned pdf files. Please check out this new site and if you are a new member, enjoy looking at some of our early journal issues. The site is <http://www.FPHOnline.com>. Please also note the new society address and phone number (see elsewhere).

Francis also volunteered to help with the update of our society book, *Florida Stampless Postal History 1763-1861*, which will be digitally published to cut down on upfront printing costs. Work should begin later this year and hopefully be completed by 2012. *The American Stampless Cover Catalog* is being updated as well and our editor, Deane Briggs, is revising the Florida section. Our society journal, *The Florida Postal History Journal*, will continue to be published in color three issues per year with Everett Parker doing an excellent publishing job as well as doing most of the editorial work. Our next meeting is scheduled for Saturday, December 3, 2011 at FLOREX in Orlando. Members should try to attend as it is a well received show with a very large dealer bourse.

FLORIDA POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS - 2010

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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