



# FLORIDA POSTAL HISTORY JOURNAL

*Promoting Philately in the Sunshine State*



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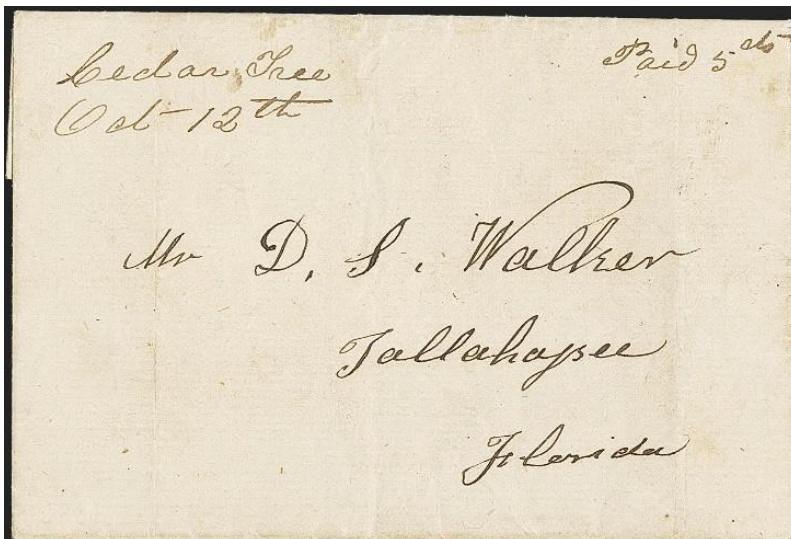
Whole No. 74

## It Got Away

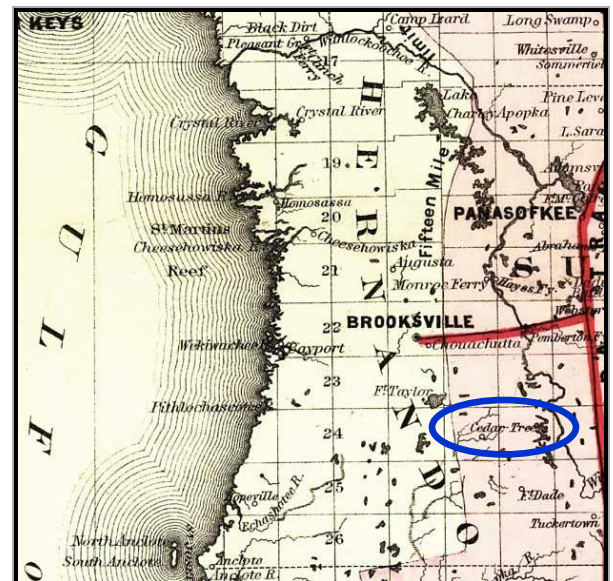
By Jack Malarkey

**I**t often seems our most sought prizes, while just within our reach, might slip away. Love, money, fame – why even that largemouth bass that broke my line caused great disappointment!

Some time ago, it was brought to my attention that a piece of Civil War era postal history, **Figure 1**, was going up for auction. In Pasco County (which was a part of Hernando County until 1887), postal history is scarce. So, when the Cedar Tree piece became available, it caused me great excitement. Where is Cedar tree, and what could I learn about it? I had an old map, **Figure 2**, with Cedar Tree shown south of Brooksville.



**Figure 1. Manuscript postmark with matching “Paid 5cts” on Cedar Tree Oct. 12, 1861 datelined folded letter to Tallahassee Florida.<sup>1</sup>**



**Figure 2. Portion of 1882 Hernando County map showing Cedar Tree south of Brooksville.<sup>2</sup>**

This area was locally known as Pearce’s Mill. But what was milled? No one seems to know. And how many folks resided in the area? No one seems to know. More detailed records may have been destroyed when the Hernando County Courthouse burned in 1877. Records indicate there was a school at Cedar Tree as late as 1885.<sup>3</sup> Some agriculture is also noted: Mills Holloman and wife, and Nathaniel Moody, a former Hernando County Sheriff, farmed near the Cedar Tree Post office.

*Continued on page 3*

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With so few known residents, justification for an additional post office on established mail route 3455 is not known. Cedar Tree opened August 20, 1853 with James M. Bates as the first postmaster followed by Jesse H. Tucker. The Cedar Tree post office was discontinued March 29, 1867 but was reopened October 23, 1867 with David Osborne as postmaster. Following this was postmaster T.J. Strickland, May 24, 1870, then David C. Ryals. The post office was finally closed May 9, of 1871 with the mail being sent to Fort Dade.<sup>4</sup>

For me, this cover would be quite an acquisition and might earn me bragging rights with a local Civil War historian. But, maybe not! So, with the help of my close friend and a very capable and helpful auction house representative, a bid was placed for the suggested maximum amount, plus a bit more for hedging. The catalogue suggested value was \$750 - \$1,000.

While waiting for the much-anticipated auction date, I decided to take a field trip in search of Cedar Tree. I packed up my camera and my limited research. I had everything but a picnic lunch and the exact location.

U.S. POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT.  
CONTRACT OFFICE,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
Oct. 23 1867

Sir:

To enable the Topographer of this Department to determine, with as much accuracy as possible, the relative positions of Post Offices, so that they may be correctly delineated on its maps, the Postmaster General requests you to fill up the spaces and answer the questions below, and return the same, certified by your signature and dated, under cover to this Office.

Respectfully, &c., &c.,

Second Assistant Postmaster General.

To POSTMASTER AT Cedar Tree,  
Hernando Co., Fla.

The (P. O. Dept.) name of my office is Cedar Tree  
Its local name is Cedar Tree  
It is situated in the North West quarter of Section No. 29, in township  
Twenty four (north or south,) Range 20 (east or west,) County  
of Hernando, State of Florida  
The name of the most prominent river near it is Withlacoochee  
The name of the nearest creek is Bee Tree  
This office is 1/4 miles from said river, on the South side of it, and interspersed  
200 yards from said nearest creek on the South side of it.  
The name of the nearest office on route No. 3455 is Fort Taylor, and its  
distance is 3 miles, by the traveled road, in a North West direction from this my office.  
The name of the nearest office on the same route on the other side is Fort Dade  
and its distance is 10 miles in a South East direction from this my office.  
The name of the nearest office off the route is Pine Hills, and its  
distance by the most direct road is 18 miles in a North West direction from this my office.

State, under this, the names of all other offices near your office, in different directions from it, and  
their distances from it by the most direct roads.  
Pine Hills is 25 miles in South West direction from this office

\*If the town, village, or site of the Post Office, be known by another name than that of the Post Office, state that other  
name here, that it may be identified on the map of the State (or Territory.)  
[?] A diagram of the township and sections, (or, when the land is not so divided, a sketch map,) showing the precise  
location of your office, together with the adjoining Post Offices, towns or villages, the roads, railroads, and larger streams or  
creeks, in addition to the above, will be useful and is desired. (A diagram line accompanying this, to be filled up.)

(Signature of Postmaster) David Osborne  
(Date) March 23, 1868

Figure 3. October 23, 1867 Cedar Tree post office application.<sup>5</sup>

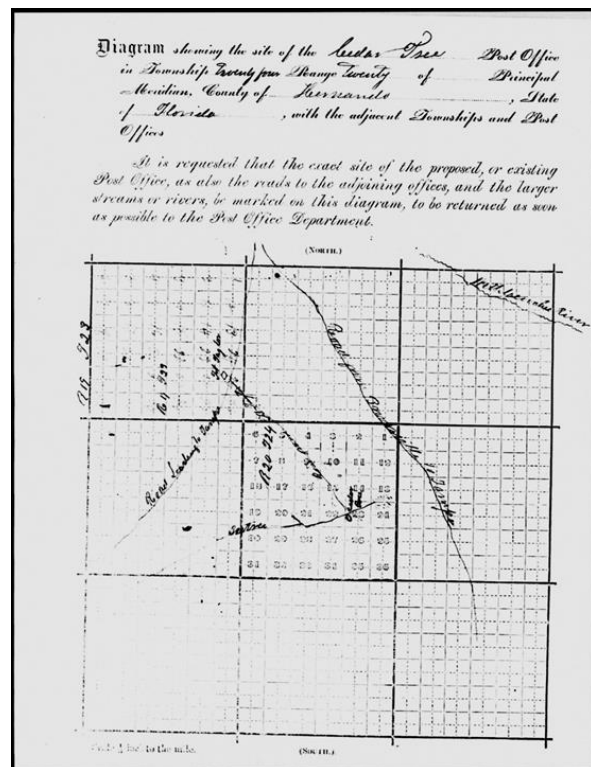


Figure 4. Diagram showing site of Cedar Tree post office.<sup>6</sup>

With only the October 23, 1867 Post Office Department application's legal description and mention of Bee Tree Creek 200 yards south to go by, **Figures 3 and 4**, I compared the legal description to tracts on the Pasco County Property Appraiser's website. I soon located Section 23, township 24, range 20, and the northwest quarter where Cedar Tree Post Office once existed.

Today, there is no trace of a post office. But I found what may have been Bee Tree Creek running beneath the road, into a manmade pond, before continuing southwest. I took a photo where I believe the creek went under the road into a pond and imagined the post office over my left shoulder where today there is only private property and a dense stand of trees visible from the road, **Figure 5**.



**Figure 5. Photo of corresponding area adjacent to Section 23, Township 24, Range 20.<sup>7</sup>**  
**1. Former Cedar Tree site. 2. Where creek goes under road. 3. The pond made from Bee Tree Creek.**

The *Big Day* finally arrived! It was time for the bidding for the Cedar Tree cover to take place. Excitement over the results for this rookie, playing in the big leagues, rose, then fell, as I was outbid. And once again, It Got Away!

### ***Endnotes***

<sup>1</sup> Cedar Tree cover, “Florida In the Civil War”, The Deane R. Briggs, M.D. Collection, Robert A. Siegel, Auction Galleries, Inc., Sale 1153, Tuesday, May 9, 2017 catalogue.

<sup>2</sup> Map of Cedar Tree. Florida Center for Instructional Technology (FCIT), University of South Florida. <https://fcit.usf.edu/florida/maps>.

<sup>3</sup> Hernando County School Board minutes from September 3, 1883 transcribed by Jeff Canon, included by Jeff Miller, History of Hernando County Schools, The History of Hernando County, Florida. [www.fivay.org/herando6e.html](http://www.fivay.org/herando6e.html).

<sup>4</sup> The History of Pasco County, Florida, Post Offices, Jeff Miller, Historian, [www.fivay.org](http://www.fivay.org).

<sup>5</sup> United States Post Office Department application, Jeff Miller, Historian.

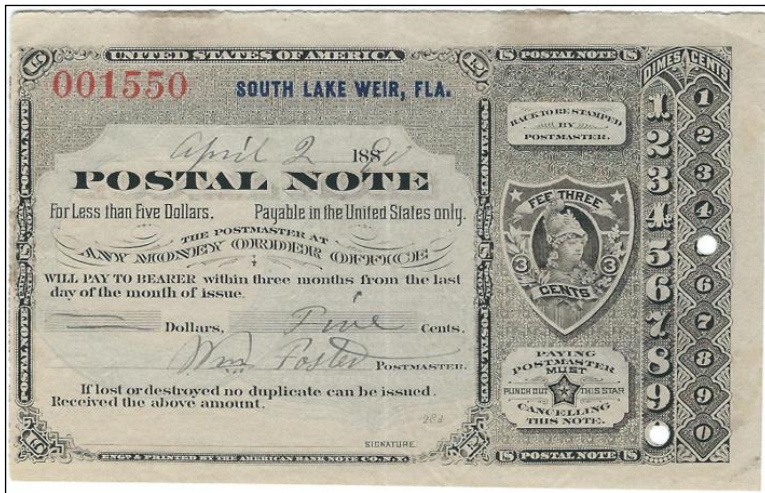
<sup>6</sup> Diagram of physical location October 23, 1867 application for reinstatement.



## South Lake Weir Postal Note

By Jack Harwood

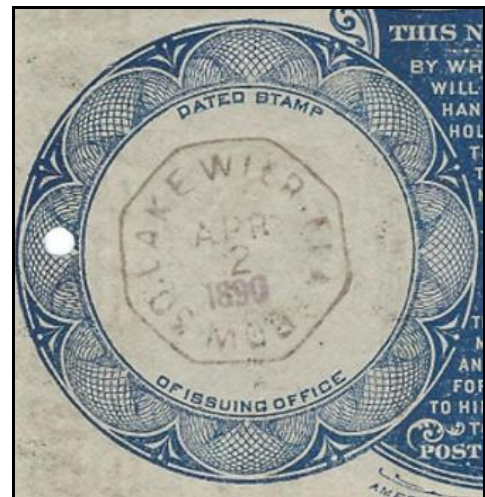
Postal Notes are one of the more obscure postal issues serving as a type of money order form intended to facilitate the sending of small amounts of money through the mail. The intent was to eliminate the sending of coins or adhesive stamps through the mail. Postal notes could be issued only in amounts less than \$5.00. An imprinted fee “stamp” on the face of the note was charged for each note.



My article in the May 2015 issue of this journal (Vol. 22, No. 2) detailed the twelve recorded examples of US Postal Notes of the 1883-1894 series issued in Florida. Recently, a 13<sup>th</sup> example appeared on eBay, *Figure 1*. This example is the first recorded Type 4 from Florida, issued in South Lake Weir on April 2, 1890. The serial number is 001550. The low number indicates that there was minimal demand for Postal Notes at this post office.

*Figure 1. South Lake Weir April 2, 1890 postal note.*

An octagonal date stamp appears on the reverse, *Figure 2*. Note that Lake Weir is misspelled as “Wier.” Additionally, notice the “M.O.B.” at the bottom of the datestamp, indicating “Money Order Branch”. The issue amount was five cents, plus three cents commission. Because the issue amount was small, this item may have been purchased by a collector as a souvenir. Because Postal Notes issued in Florida are scarce, there was considerable interest in the sale. Six bidders participated. With a \$150 starting bid, competition ended at \$2559.09, perhaps startling due to the relatively small number of collectors of Postal Notes.



*Figure 2. Reverse of South Lake Weir April 2, 1890 postal note.*

*Editor's Note: Upon seeing this discovery by Jack Harwood, Dr. Deane Briggs and Tom Lera collaborated to identify post office records and South Lake Weir covers (including the octagonal postmark with “Weir” correctly spelled) that will be presented in a future journal article.*

## The Christmas Florida Post Office: A Philatelic Giant in a Tiny Town

### A Monograph by Christine C. Sanders

Published by the Christmas Philatelic Club for its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, with the sponsorship of several Florida philatelic societies, including the Florida Postal History Society, Christine C. Sanders' 92-page, full-color monograph presenting the history of the Christmas, Florida post office is truly a joy to read.



In her Introduction, Ms. Sanders notes that Christmas philately as a topic encompasses all the major areas of philately: postal history, postal markings, precancels, cachets, Cinderellas, postcards, airmail, patriotics, event covers and first day covers. Her story of the Christmas, Florida post office offers intriguing and enjoyable insight into each of these areas of philately. Some are included within the five chapters and others have been given their own section as an appendix for a more in-depth consideration, complete with hundreds of images. In telling the story of the post office, the monograph also gives the history of the small Florida town and reflects on the history of Christmas philately nationwide.



**Figure 1.** *Juanita Tucker. Christmas, Florida Postmaster for 42 years.*

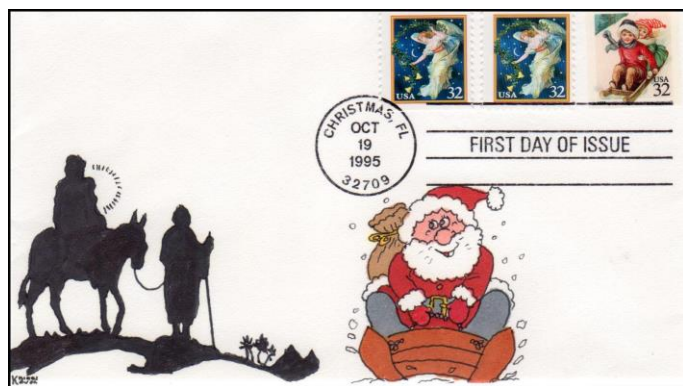
As Ms. Sanders explains, and illustrates, Juanita Tucker's legacy lives on through the little green Christmas tree cachet she placed on thousands of Christmas items passing through her post office annually [Figure 2]. This small green tree cachet was used every year on items postmarked in Christmas, Florida from 1934 until the early 1990s.



**Figure 2.** *Christmas tree cachets.*



During this time, only the text and year associated with this cachet changed. A number of other cachets were designed by Postmaster Tucker herself, and these are detailed in Appendix 4 of the monograph as well as the history of the small green tree Christmas cachet.

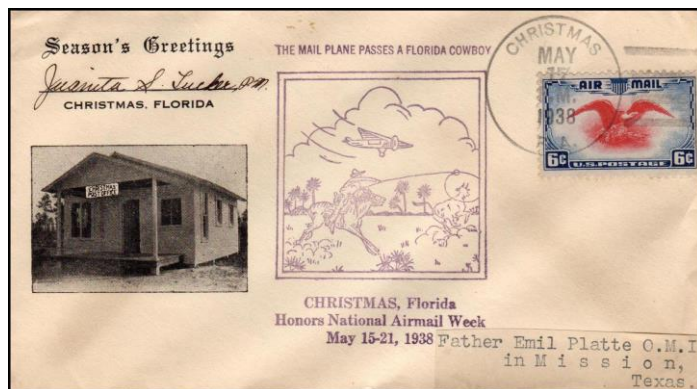


In 1969, Postmaster Tucker accomplished a long-sought goal of having Christmas, Florida named the official first day of issue town for the U.S. Christmas issue Winter Sunday in Norway Maine. The entire town participated in the preparation of the ceremony and celebrations for this issue. Appendix 10 is devoted to the 1969 Christmas issue with images of many first day covers and postcards.

*Figure 3. 1995 First Day Cover, Christmas, Florida.*

In 1995, Christmas, Florida was again named as first day city for the U.S. Christmas issues of The Midnight Angel and Children Sledding [Figure 3]. The unusual story behind the design of these stamps is told in Chapter 5 with extensive first day items shown in Appendix 11.

During her tenure as Postmaster, Juanita Tucker would autograph covers brought to her (or sent to her) for mailing from the Christmas, Florida post office. The left-side cover in Figure 4 is a 1943 patriotic cover created by renowned cachetmaker L.W. Staehle, addressed to himself. The right-side cover commemorates the 1938 National Air Mail Week event with a photo of the Christmas post office and a cachet created by Postmaster Tucker.



*Figure 4. Left: L.W. Staehle patriotic cachet. Right: Postmaster Tucker's cachet for the 1938 Air Mail Week.*

Although extremely important, Christine Sanders' story of the Christmas, Florida post office is much more than a recounting of Juanita Tucker's tireless efforts to promote the holiday and philately. The monograph's broad historical and philatelic scope supported by plentiful, high-quality images is a feast for the eyes and a delight to read.

FPHS members can purchase a copy of Ms. Sanders' outstanding monograph for the special member price of \$13 (includes mailing). Send a check made out to the Christmas Philatelic Club to: Jim Balog, Secretary/Treasurer CPC, P.O. Box 744, Geneva, OH 44041.

*Christine C. Sanders, Ph. D. served on the faculty of Creighton University School of Medicine in Omaha, Nebraska for 28 years where she was involved in medical education and research. Upon retirement, she returned to her home state of Florida and took up art and philately. Christine is currently Editor of The Yule Log, the official journal of the Christmas Philatelic Club (<http://www.christmasphilatelicclub.org/>).*

## Florida Society Annual Business Meeting

The 2020 Annual Business Meeting of the Florida Postal History Society was held February 8 at the Sarasota National Stamp Show and Exhibition. Officers present included President Dr. Vernon Morris, Vice President Juan Riera, Treasurer Dr. Deane Briggs, Secretary Todd Hause, Director-at-Large Stephen Strobel and Past President Francis Ferguson. Twenty members of the society attended the meeting.



Among other agenda items, President Morris reported that the *Florida Postal History 1763-1861* book won a Large Gold award in literature at the August 2019 APS Stampshow in Omaha. The photo here shows Dr. Briggs holding a copy of the book commenting that a limited number remain for sale.

President Morris also recognized member Tom Lera for his APS 2019 Luff Award for distinguished philatelic research. Secretary Hause reported that the 2020 membership was 123 members before the show and that four new members had joined at the show. Dr. Morris noted that he has a number of stampless Florida covers available as a gift for each new member who joins for either a two or three-year membership.

Treasurer Briggs reported that as of January 1, 2020 the society's account balance was \$5,077.80 which included membership renewals and book sales. Past President Ferguson presented Dr. Briggs with two \$50 donations, one each from the Central Florida Stamp Club and Florida Stamp Dealers Association as sponsors of the society's website for 2020.

Given the recent decision for the society to join the Southeast Federation of Stamp Clubs that will provide the society a page on the Federation's website, President Morris recommended the society explore the possibility of reciprocal ads with other stamp clubs in the spirit of publicizing the Florida society.

Dr. Briggs reported the voting results for the 2019 Journal Article Awards. Congratulations are extended to:

**1<sup>st</sup> Place: Phil Eschbach: "Fort Reid, Read, or Reed – A Confusing History,"  
September 2019, Vol. 26, No. 3.**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Juan Riera: "Key West Florida – Pioneering Center of Aviation Postal History,"  
Parts 1 and 2, January and May 2019, Vol. 26, Nos. 1 and 2.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Christine C. Sanders: "A Philatelic Snapshot of the Civil War from a Solider at  
Camp Morgan Near Pensacola," January 2019, Vol. 26, No. 1.**



# Royal Poinciana Trees, Florida Tourists and Postal History

By Juan L. Riera

**R**oyal Poinciana trees - *Delonix Regia* - are a common sight in Florida, especially southern Florida. But for a non-native flowering tree, it has had a rather stunning impact on the state. There are songs that celebrate it, festivals and fiestas at which to view and admire the tree, artists who painted Royal Poinciana trees as souvenirs for early tourists to Florida, numerous postcards showcasing the tree and worldwide stamps commemorating the tree's bloom.

The tree was introduced to Cuba from its native Madagascar, and presumably from there into south Florida. A species of flowering plant in the bean family Fabaceae, sub-family Caesal pinioideae, it is noted for its fern-like leaves and flamboyant display of flowers. They reach their peak of bloom during the month of June in south Florida. The colors of their blossoms range from the well-known crimson to shades of orange, yellow, gold, and even white. In many tropical parts of the world it is grown as an ornamental tree and in English it is given the name Royal Poinciana or Flamboyant and occasionally the Peacock tree. It is also one of several trees known as "Flame Tree."



**Figure 1. Left: 1999 Royal Poinciana issue. Right: May 1, 1999 Royal Poinciana first day cover.**

On May 1, 1999, the U.S Postal Service released a set of four 33-cent stamps featuring The Bird of Paradise, Gloriosa Lily, Chinese Hibiscus and the bloom of the Royal Poinciana (Scott 3311), seen in the left-side image in **Figure 1**, upper left.

The set was released in Honolulu, Hawaii. 1,500,000,000 were made using the photogravure printing method and printed by Sennett Security Products. Collecting the Royal Poinciana on cover, including first day covers, is an enjoyable pursuit. The right-side image in **Figure 1** is a first day cover for the Royal Poinciana with a silk cachet created by the Colorano cover company. (Colorano, producer of first day covers featuring silk cachets for 40 years, was sold to Mystic Stamp Co. in Camden, N.Y. effective February 14, 2016.)

Several non-US countries also recognized the Royal Poinciana with commemorative issues. **Figure 2** presents issues from the Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Anguilla and China.



**Figure 2. Royal Poinciana commemorated on non-US stamps.**

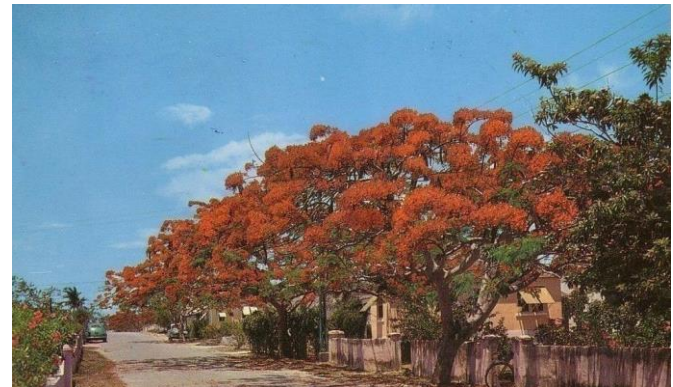
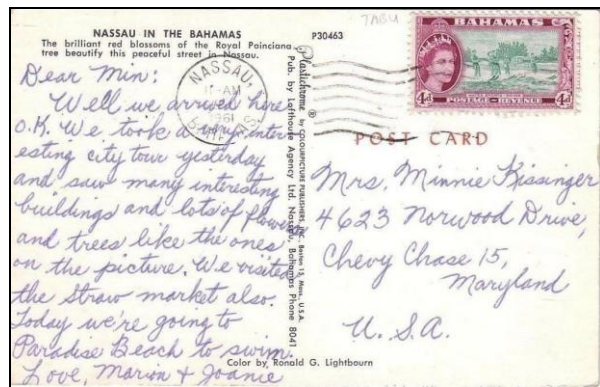


Miami Mayor Robert Williams declared July 20, 1937, to be “Royal Poinciana Day”. In 1938, the first official “Poinciana Festival” took place. For some years, there was an organization that sponsored the festival and then the Committee on Beautification and the Environment took over the sponsorship and changed the name to “Fiesta”.

The most recent Royal Poinciana Fiesta took place from June 8 to June 10 of 2019 [Figure 3], with a lecture, a tea, and trolley tours to view royal Poinciana trees in full bloom.

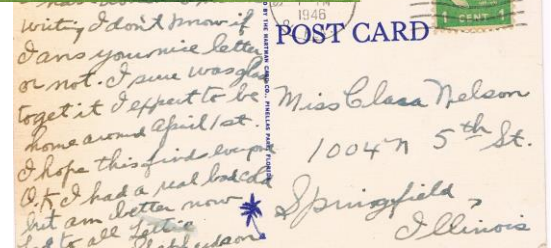
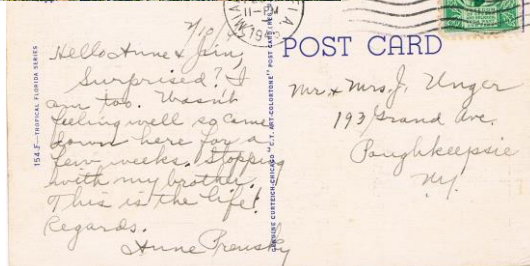
**Figure 3. Event program for the 2019 Royal Poinciana Fiesta.**

Postcards with images of the Royal Poinciana tree are numerous and offer an enjoyable collecting theme with postmarks from many Florida cities and foreign locations. **Figure 4** is a 1961 Nassau, Bahamas card showing a Royal Poinciana tree-lined street in Nassau.



**Figure 4. Nassau, Bahamas 1961 card picturing a Royal Poinciana tree-lined street.**

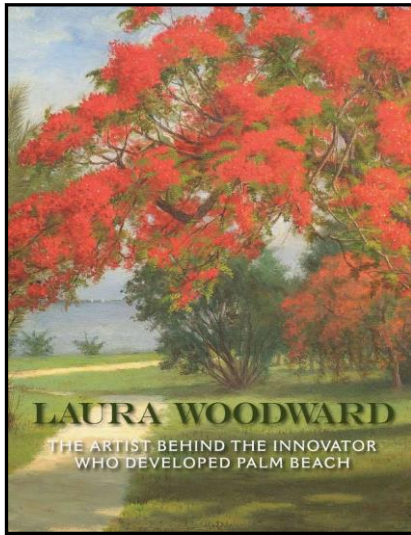
**Figures 5 and 6** are beautiful examples of Royal Poinciana linen postcards produced in the 1940s.



**Figures 5 and 6. Royal Poinciana linen postcards produced and mailed in the 1940s.**



In her 2009 book, *Laura Woodward: The Artist Behind the Innovator Who Developed Palm Beach*, **Figure 7**, Deborah Pollack provides a beautifully illustrated biography of an artist who specialized in the painting of Royal Poinciana trees and in turn had a vast influence on the state of Florida.



In late 1889, Woodward joined Martin Johnson Heade (whom I have previously written an article about showcasing his Magnolia on a blue velvet artwork depicted on a stamp) at Henry Flagler's Ponce de Leon Hotel artists' colony. She sought out exotic plants and flowers, painted watercolor sketches and depicted Seminole Indians in the Everglades.

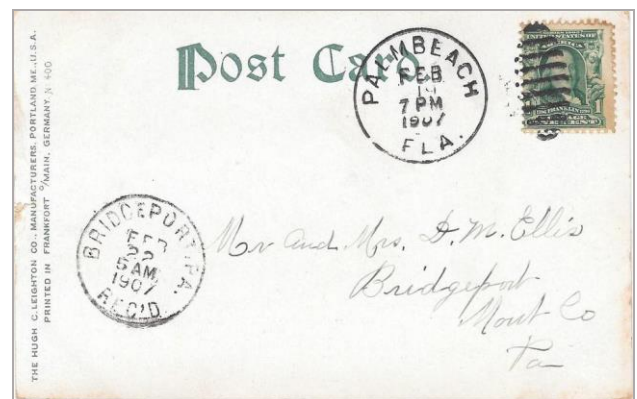
It was during this period in the early 1890s that she discovered Lake Worth, settled there and focused much of her artistic work on Royal Poinciana trees. She eventually convinced Henry Flagler of the beauty of the area and he decided to extend his railroad to the area and develop Palm Beach.

**Figure 7.** Cover of Deborah Polck's "Laura Woodward" book.

An enjoyable postal history collecting theme are postcards for the Royal Poinciana Hotel in Palm Beach, **Figures 8 and 9**. Opened in 1894, it was enlarged twice and doubled in size each time becoming the largest wooden structure in the world, with 1,700 employees and accommodations for 2,000 guests. It closed and was razed during the Great Depression.

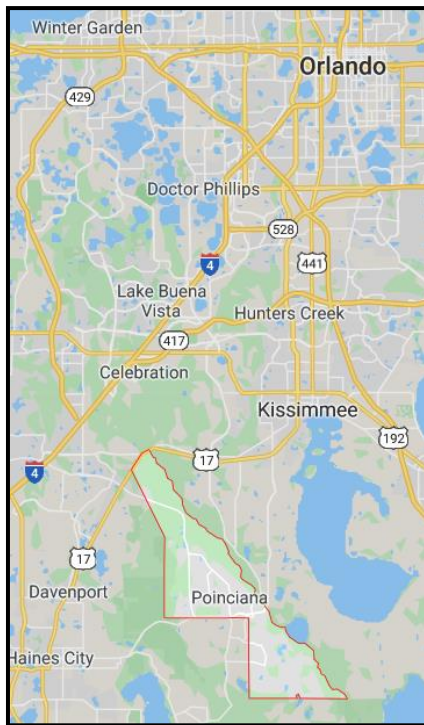


**Figure 8.** Royal Poinciana Hotel and grounds postcard, circa 1900.



**Figure 9.** Royal Poinciana Hotel postcard, February 22, 1907.





**Figure 10. Poinciana CDP.**

Poinciana is a Census Designated Place (CDP) in Osceola and Polk counties, southwest of Kissimmee and about 14 miles east of Haines City [Figure 10]. In the 2010 census, this CDP had a population of 53,193. The Association of Poinciana Villages consists of 9 villages and covers a bit more than the CPD, with the population reaching as high as 83,107 depending on how you define

the area, making the area one of the fastest growing over the last decade.

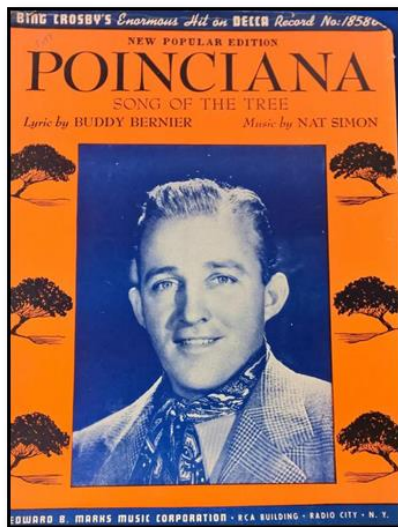
The area covers 35.3 square miles and is in the 34758 and 34759 zip codes.

Since the boundaries of a CDP have no legal status, the Poinciana post office is located at 4774 San Remo Road, Kissimmee, Florida [Figure 11].



**Figure 11. Poinciana post office.**

Lastly, “Poinciana” is a song by Nat Simon with lyrics by Buddy Bernier written in 1936. The song is based on a Cuban folk tune “La Cancion del Arbol,” translated as “The Song of the Tree.” The verses go as follows:



*Poinciana, your branches speak to me of love,  
Pale moon is casting shadows from above.  
Poinciana, somehow I feel the jungle heat,  
Within me there grows a rhythmic savage beat.*

*Love is everywhere, its magic perfume fills the air,  
To and fro you sway, my heart's in time, I've learned to care.  
Poinciana, though skies may turn from blue to gray,  
My love will live forever and a day.*

*Blow...Tropic Wind,  
Sing a song through the trees.  
Trees...sigh to me  
Soon my love...I will see.  
Poinciana...*

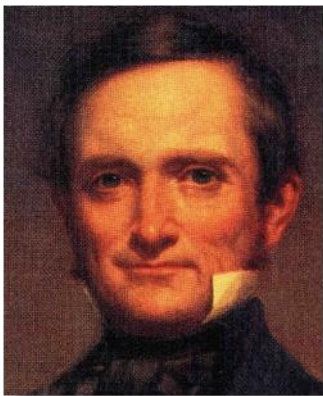
The song was performed by Glenn Miller in the late 1930s with his civilian band and in 1943 with his Army Air Force Band. In 1944, there were three hit versions of this song by Benny Carter and his orchestra, Bing Crosby (recorded October 1, 1943) and David Rose and his orchestra. The song was widely popularized in the 1952 film *Dreamboat* when it was played in the nightclub. The song was again featured in the 1995 film *The Bridges of Madison County* when it was performed by Ahmed Jamal.

The flamboyant Royal Poinciana tropical tree's influence on art, culture, tourism and postal history is a fascinating story indeed.

## George Rainsford Fairbanks

By Phil Eschbach

Lawyer, state senator, multi-linguist, major in the Confederacy and philanthropist, George Rainsford Fairbanks was a true Renaissance man. Born in 1820 in Watertown, NY, he died in Sewanee, TN in 1906. Fairbanks graduated from Union College in New York, read the law and was admitted to the bar in 1842. That year, Fairbanks married Sarah Wright. Fairbanks then accepted a clerkship with Judge Isaac Bronson, newly appointed to the Superior Court of East Florida in St. Augustine, and the couple moved south. Florida became a state in 1845 and in 1846 Fairbanks was elected senator to the state legislature serving four years.



In St. Augustine, he became interested in local history. Already fluent in French, he taught himself Spanish so he could read the old Spanish documents, whereupon he authored the first comprehensive history of Florida up to that time: *The History and Antiquities of the City of St. Augustine, Florida*. In 1856, he founded the Florida Historical Society and served as its Vice President. The following year he was elected mayor of St. Augustine and became a founding trustee of the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee.

**Figure 1.** Fairbanks 1858 portrait by George Peter Alexander Healy, a well-known portraitist of the day.

In 1858, his wife died of tuberculosis, leaving him with five children. Two years later, he married his brother-in-law's widow, Susan Wright, who had two children of her own. After the Civil War, Fairbanks joined the new Bishop of Tennessee, Charles Quintard, in re-founding the University, an effort suspended by the war. Fairbanks was instrumental in seeing the university revive and became its treasurer. He built a house in Sewanee known as Rebels Rest, **Figure 2**, where he resided for the summer months for the rest of his life. Rebels Rest remained intact until it burned in 2014 during restoration.



**Figure 2.** A 2005 photo of Rebels Rest.

During the war, Fairbanks joined the Confederacy and was appointed a Major to the Commissary Department of General Braxton Bragg in Atlanta. After the war, he resided in St. Augustine until 1879 when he was persuaded to move to Fernandina by his friend and client David Levy, who had taken on the additional surname of Yulee, to become the editor of the local paper, *Florida Mirror*. Fairbanks was the attorney for Yulee and his father, Moses Levy. Fairbanks was a board member of Levy's Florida Railroad and was named the president of the Florida Fruit Growers Association and the Florida Fruit Exchange. He personally owned property in ten of the counties in northeast Florida (mostly orange groves), managing those as well as the legal affairs of the Levy properties.



After moving to Fernandina, Fairbanks hired New York architect Robert Schuyler to build a house, *Figure 3*, to accommodate his family of wife and seven children. His house was the first building in Fernandina with an elevator and remains today as a B&B.



In the 1870s, Fairbanks owned a large tract of land in Alachua County used for lumber and citrus. Local settlers asked Fairbanks for help in building an Episcopal church there. He donated the land and funds to build All Saints Episcopal Church for the small community who then named the new town Fairbanks in thanks to him. He hired Schuyler again to do the work.

After the 1894-1895 freezes, the citrus industry declined in north Florida. The Fairbanks area's population decreased and the church was moved to Starke, Florida where it remains today. However, around this time Florida became the nation's leader in gum for turpentine production. The turpentine industry thrived in the Fairbanks area where the Mize family maintained a turpentine still that operated as late as 1951. Ellis Mize (1882-1967) operated the still and later donated his property to the University of Florida's Forestry Department.

*Figure 3. Fairbanks house in Fernandina, photo by author.*

Fairbanks' correspondence was considerable and many covers survive today. His life's work spanned the Territorial Period (1821-1845) through statehood, the Civil War and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the covers presented here were produced prior to the Civil War. The archives at The University of the South contain the largest portion of his correspondence written after the Civil War. Fortunately, on many of the covers written to Fairbanks, he wrote the date and sender's name on the back flyleaf which is a significant help if there are no other markings of the dates and names.

Fairbanks had a distinctive handwriting as seen on the covers he wrote to his wife. It is interesting to note that the cover in *Figure 4* was written by Fairbanks to his wife "at Mrs. Gleasons."

*Figure 4. From St. Augustine to his wife in Charleston at Mrs. Gleasons, Type XIV cancel with "paid 3" type C, dated on rear in pencil 1854.*



Some help came from my friend Allston McCrady in Charleston who found that a Mrs. E.P. Gleason ran a boarding house there, the Waverly House, *Figure 5*, which is most certainly where Fairbank's wife was staying. This was an establishment where the "well-heeled" stayed and Mrs. Fairbanks would have been one of those.

*Figure 5. 1853 Charleston Courier advertisement for The Wavery House.*

Advertisement - Charleston Courier - December 17, 1853 - page [2]  
 December 17, 1853 | Charleston Courier | Charleston, South Carolina | Advertisement | Volume U | Issue 16601 | Page [2]

**THE WAVERLY HOUSE,  
 BEND OF KING-ST.,  
 BY  
 MRS. E. P. GLEASON.**

Having been recently enlarged and improved, is now ready for the reception of her friends and the travelling public. Feeling very grateful for past favors, Mrs. Gleason assures the community that she will spare no effort to secure the comfort of those who favor her with their patronage.

16 D 13

CITATION (AGLC STYLE)  
 'Advertisement', Charleston Courier(online), 17 Dec 1853, U (16601) [2] -https://efoweb-newsbank-



**Figure 6** is a Picolata, Florida mailing from Fairbanks to his wife in St. Augustine. **Figure 7** is a December 26 mailing to his wife when Fairbanks was in Tallahassee.



**Figure 6. Fairbanks to his wife in St. Augustine from Picolata, Florida. Type III-B cancel and franked with a Scott Type A10.**



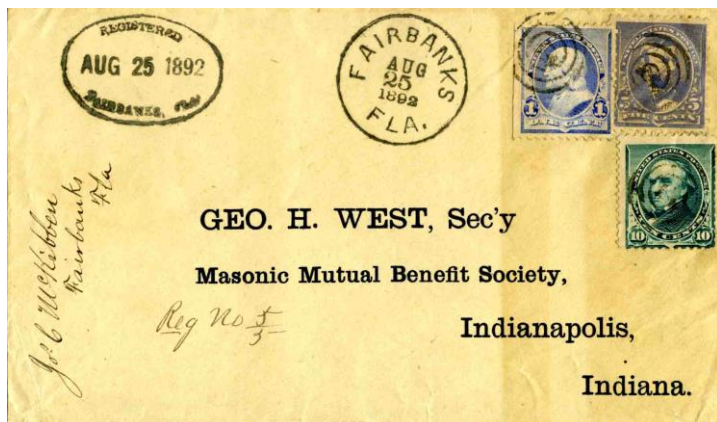
**Figure 7. Fairbanks from Tallahassee to his wife in St. Augustine. Type VII cancel with "5" Type D handstamp.**

The first post office in Fairbanks was opened August 15, 1875 with the first postmaster being Charles Fellows. James Shaw replaced him in 1879 and was followed by Charles Pelton in 1882. On July 14 of that year, he was replaced by the Rev. Alexander Duncan, who was also the priest at the All Saints Episcopal Church that Fairbanks had supported. Duncan's wife, Agnes, took over in October that year and remained till 1889, when Enoch Hall came on February 18. Joseph McKibben and Abraham Hunsicker alternated twice between the years of 1889 and 1895 when Frank Irwin came and lasted all the way to his 1940 retirement. The last postmaster, George Padgett, was installed on March 13, 1940 and lasted to the closure of the office in favor of Gainesville on September 15, 1943.



The following are covers from my collection (previously in the Dr. Deane R. Briggs' collection) showcasing interesting items from the large amount of Fairbanks related mailings. The cover in **Figure 8** could be unique since it was sent to Fairbanks from Fairbanks, Florida.

**Figure 8. To Fairbanks' wife in Fernandina from Fairbanks, FL franked with Scot 182, 183. No date. Probably after 1880 when they moved to Fernandina.**



**Figure 9. Fairbanks, FL cancel, 1892, with Scott 219, 223 and 226. Rare registered mark.**



**Figure 10. June 11, 1880 Fairbanks postmark.**



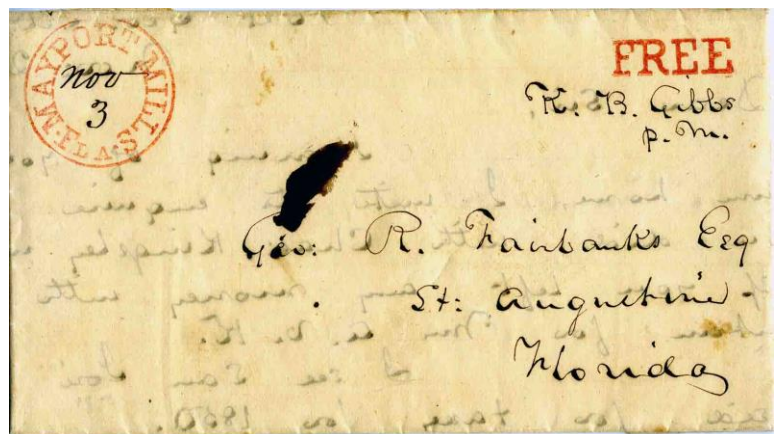
An intriguing Fairbanks cover is shown in **Figure 11** (front and reverse). It is an 1850 folded letter from William Frink who had his own post office on the Little St. Marys River in Nassau County. Note the manuscript postmark of Blounts Ferry in Columbia County on the Suwanee River.



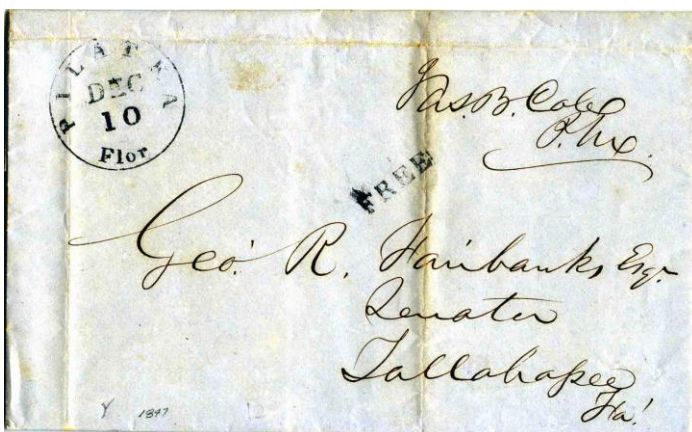
**Figure 11.** Folded letter to Fairbanks from William Frink, Postmaster, Little St. Mary River.



**Figure 12.** Folded letter to Fairbanks in St. Augustine from Micanopy but forwarded to NY, 1852. Type VI B – deleted when paid at St. Augustine.



**Figure 13.** Folded letter to Fairbanks from Mayport Mills. Free franking, Type Ia, 1850. Earlier of 2 known.



**Figure 14** Folded letter to Fairbanks from Pilatka, 1847, Type II with "FREE" Type a. Earliest of 3 known.



**Figure 15.** To Fairbanks from Jacksonville with Scott 11, Type V. "5" Type A. Re-use of stamp disallowed.



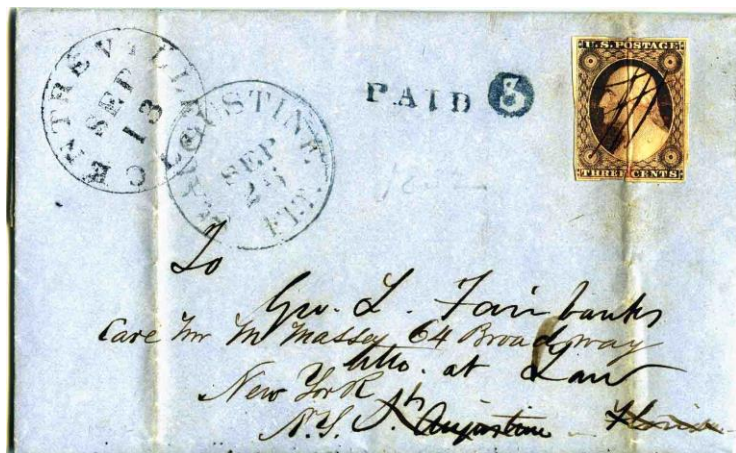


Figure 16. Folded letter to Fairbanks in St. Augustine from Centerville, LA, but forwarded to New York, 1852. Franked with Scott 11, Type XIV, Type B, blue negative "3", Type e "PAID". 3-5 examples known.

### References

- George R. Fairbanks, *Fernandina's Renaissance Man* by Gray Edenfield, Amelia Island Museum of History. Published online by Florida History Network.
- *Sewanee Review*, Vol. 14, No. 4 – "George Rainsford Fairbanks" by William Porcher BuBose, 1906.
- *George Rainsford Fairbanks – A Man of Many Facets* by Arthur Joseph Lynch. Published by Shambles Press, Los Altos, CA 1999.
- *History of the University of the South* by George R. Fairbanks. Published by H&WB Drew Co., Jacksonville, FL 1905.
- "Appointments of US Postmasters, 1832-1971," National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

## The Steamer Florida

By Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

The covers in **Figures 1** and **2** are examples of only a few covers I have seen that have a Steamer Florida docketing. **Figure 1** is addressed to David S. Walker, Esq, Register of State Lands at Tallahassee, Florida. Additional docketing, "Postmaster will please have delivered immediately" at lower left, implies an urgent need, perhaps a land homestead request before someone else acquired it. It is noted on the left "Flor. 16<sup>th</sup> entered by R Campbell."

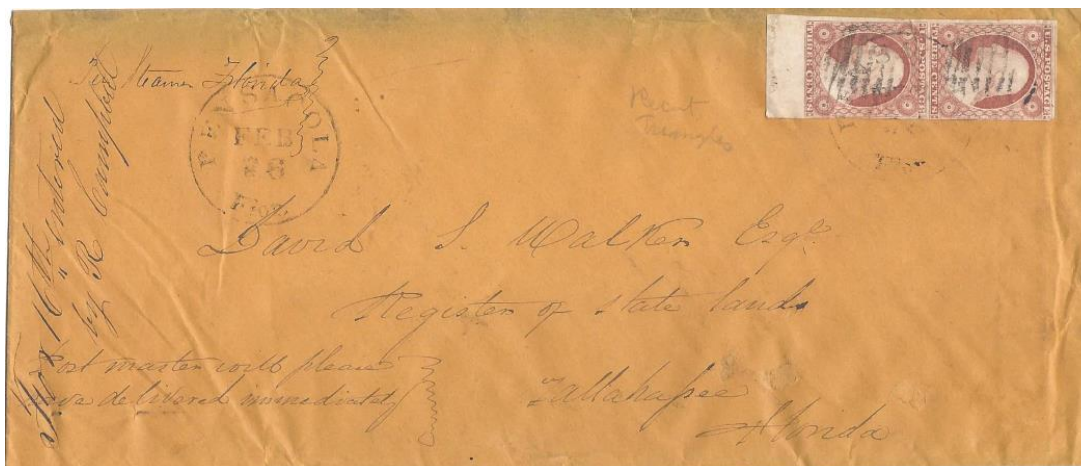


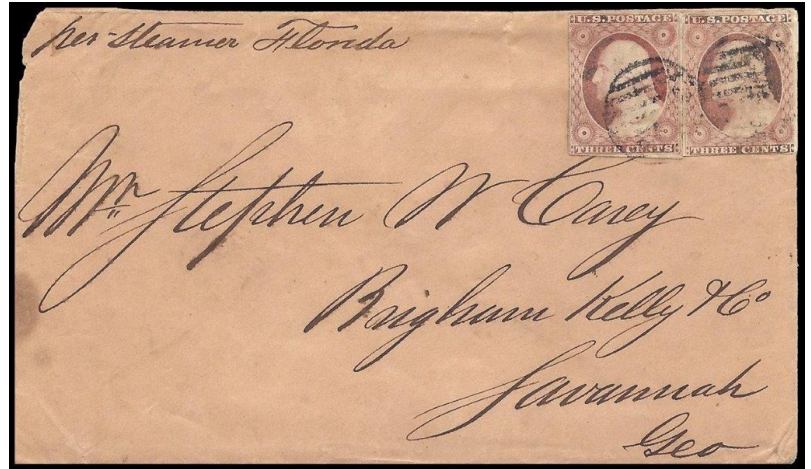
Figure. 1. Margin pair of Scott 11 tied with PENSACOLA/Flor. FEB 26 postmark on legal cover docketed "Per Steamer Florida."



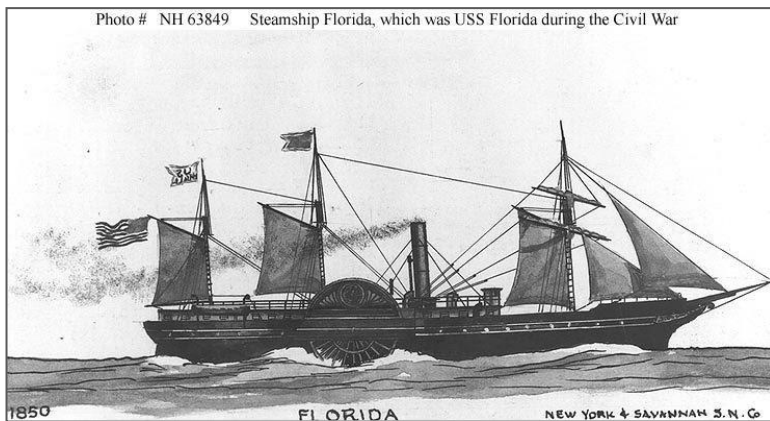
David Walker<sup>1</sup> was a colorful Florida politician who was a Leon and Wakulla County senator from 1845 until elected to the Florida House of Representatives by Leon County in 1848. In 1849 until 1854, he served as Register of Public Lands placing the above cover in the 1852-1854 period. He became a Florida Supreme Court Justice in 1859, and after the Civil War became the 8<sup>th</sup> Florida Governor (1866-1868).

The interesting feature in the **Figure 1** cover is the Pensacola point of entry of the mail from an unknown origination if carried to Pensacola on the *Florida*. For this cover to reach Tallahassee as quickly as possible by regular postal routes, it would require the use of mail routes from Pensacola to Bainbridge, GA. (Route 3541, an irregular twice weekly schedule), and then to Tallahassee (Route 3534, a Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday schedule). It must have been common for mail using land routes between these two towns to take up to a week!!!! Could this cover instead be from Pensacola where the postmaster placed it in a sealed mail bag and placed it on the *Florida* for the fastest delivery to the next port of call, likely St. Marks? There, mail for Tallahassee would be transferred and carried on Route 3529, Monday, Wednesday and Friday service over the Tallahassee Railroad, taking just 5 hours to go the 22 miles.

The cover in **Figure 2** has no postmark and may have entered the mail when delivered at Savannah. It also could have been carried on the Steamer Florida from another port of call but has no SHIP marking or 2c ship fee.



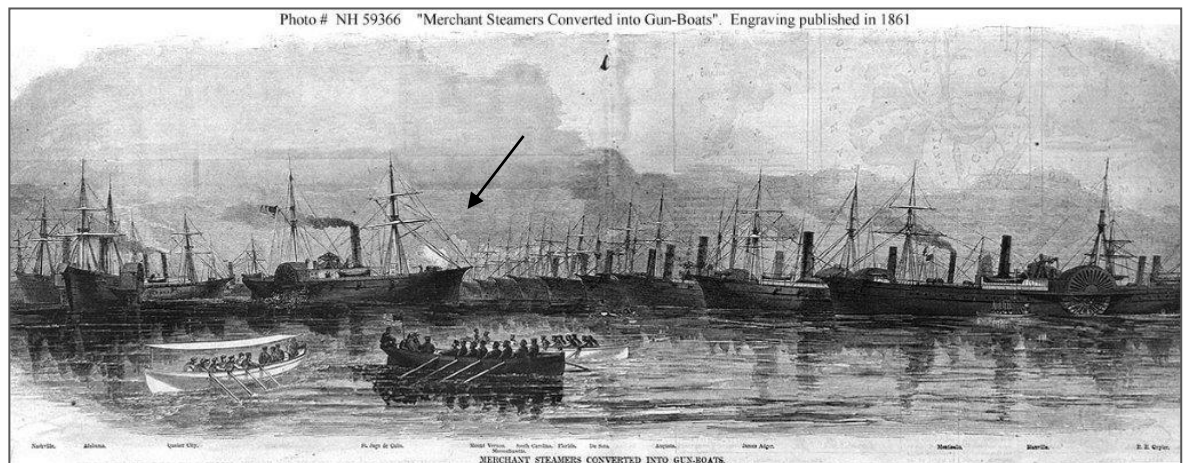
**Figure 2.** Pair of Scott 11 killer tied to cover with docketing “Steamer Florida” addressed to Savannah, Ga.



The *Florida*, **Figure 3**, was a 1261-ton wooden side-wheel steamship built in New York in 1850.<sup>2</sup> The 1948 watercolor by Erik Heyl, **Figure 3**, is the best reproduction of this vessel and is a U.S. Naval Historical Center Photograph. It initially serviced commercial interests along the Atlantic coast, but obviously by the early to mid-1850's must also have serviced the Gulf of Mexico.

**Figure 3.** The Steamship Florida (1850) watercolor by Erik Heyl.

**Figure 4.** “Merchant Steamers Converted into Gun-boats.” Thirteen acquired by the U.S. Navy between April and August 1861, Florida being the middle one in the distance.



At the outbreak of the Civil War, the U.S. Navy purchased many commercial steamers for use in the Atlantic and Gulf blockades. The *Florida* was purchased by the Navy in August 1861 and converted into a cruiser [Figure 4].<sup>3</sup> She was commissioned the *U.S.S. Florida* in October 1861 and participated in the capture of Port Royal, S.C. in November 1861 and other areas in northern Florida and Georgia in March 1862. The engraving from Harper's Weekly, July-December 1861 page 712, Figure 5, gives a contemporary reproduction of the *U.S.S. Florida* sketched by an officer on board. It is the smaller ship between the larger *Wabash* and the *Augusta*.



**Figure 5. “Portion of the Naval Expedition, as it appeared on the night of October 16 sailing to Hampton Roads.”**

During March 1865, *Florida* was used to carry supplies down the Atlantic coast and into the Gulf of Mexico. She also transported Confederate prisoners from New Orleans to New York and after the war served in the Gulf and West Indies. She was decommissioned in April 1867 and sold in December 1868, operating as the merchant steamer *Delphine*, and as a Haitian warship *Republique*. She was eventually disposed of in the mid-1870s.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_S.\\_Walker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_S._Walker).

<sup>2</sup> <https://ibiblio.org/hyperwar/OnlineLibrary/photo/sh-usn/usnsh-f/florida2.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> “Harper’s Weekly”, July-December 1861 volume, U.S. Naval Historic Center Photograph #NH 59366.

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