

# FLORIDA POSTAL HISTORY JOURNAL



*Promoting Philately in the Sunshine State*

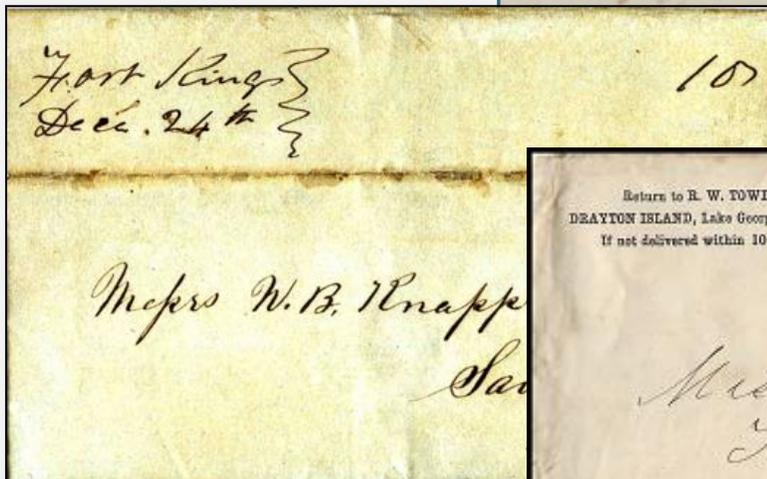
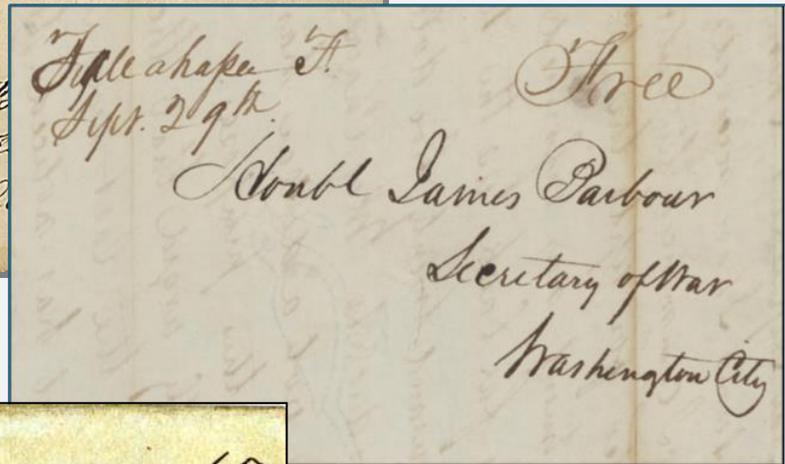
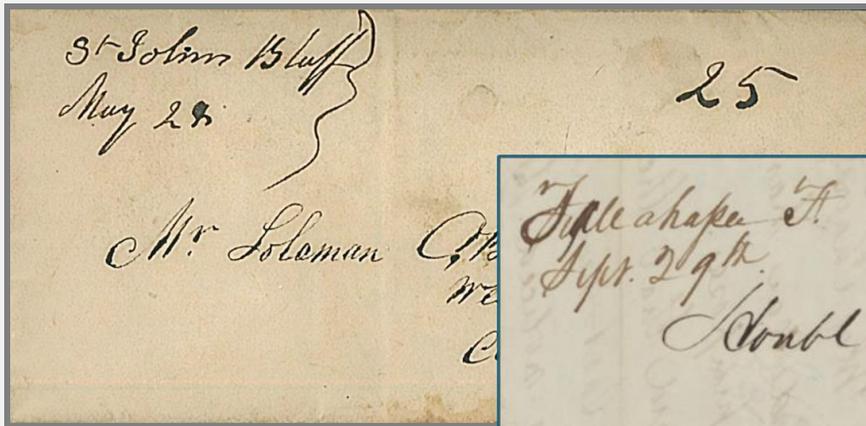


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## Tallahassee, St. Johns, Drayton Island, and Fort King Postal History



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**Congratulations to Deane R. Briggs, M.D. for his award of  
“Exceptional Service and Dedication to the Florida Postal History Society  
From Its Founding in 1992 to the Present”**

**Dr. Briggs (above left) received his award from President Francis Ferguson at the society’s meeting at the Sarasota National Stamp Exhibition, January 17-19, 2025.**



**Congratulations to Thomas M. Lera for his  
“Florida Postal History Society Research Award”**

**Tom Lera (above left) received his award from Treasurer Deane Briggs at the society’s meeting at the Sarasota National Stamp Exhibition, January 17-19, 2025.**

## Three 1826 Tallahassee Postmarks

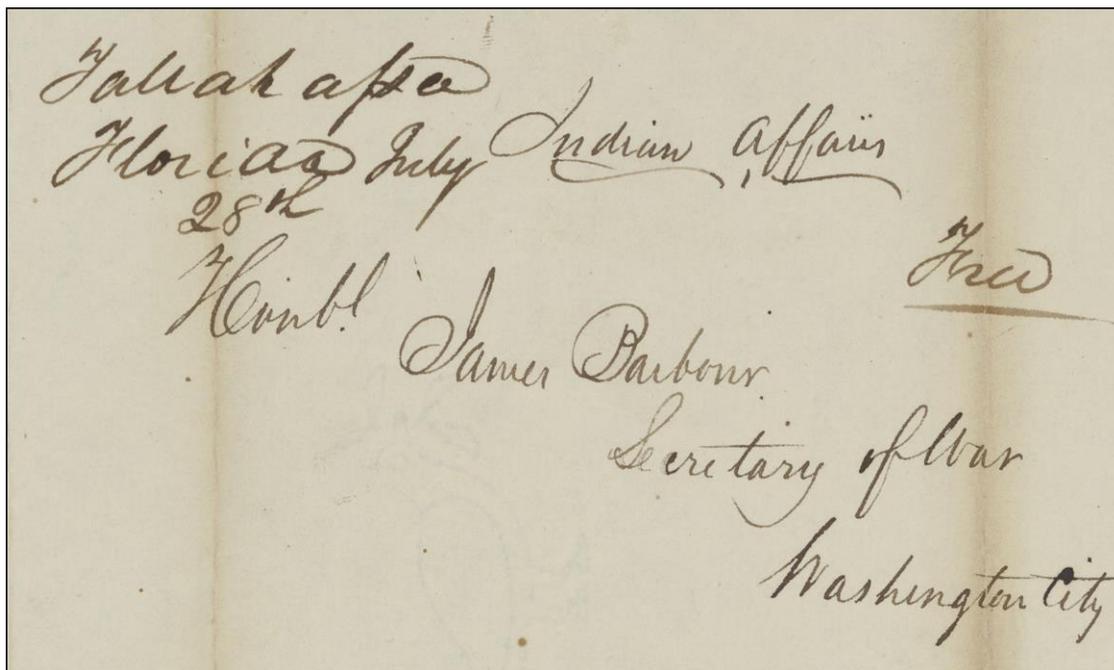
### By Thomas M. Lera

#### Three New Manuscript Postmarks

While searching in the National Archives, Bureau of Indian Affairs records for a document regarding the Seminole Agency, I found five covers addressed to James Barbour, Secretary of War, Washington City, four of which were written by William Duval, and the other by James Gadsden. There are examples of three new types of Tallahassee territorial manuscript postmarks.<sup>1</sup>

Isham G. Searcy, appointed postmaster on March 25, 1836, was responsible for these manuscript postmarks.

Figure 1 is a red manuscript Tallahassee Florida postmark with manuscript FREE. There are only two of these covers known. The Earliest Known Usage (EKU) was July 28, 1826, and the Latest Known Usage (LKU) was August 18, 1826. Both covers and the letters within were written by William Duval to the Secretary of War, James Barbour, in which he discussed funding for food and supplies for the Florida Indians.



**Figure 1. New Type X - Tallahassee Florida, dated July 28th.**

Figure 2 is a red manuscript Tallahassee Fl postmark with manuscript FREE dated August 11, 1826. This is the only one known. The letter was written by James Gadsden who discussed establishing a military post (fort) with a small force on the southern border of Alachua County to handle relief for the Florida Indians.

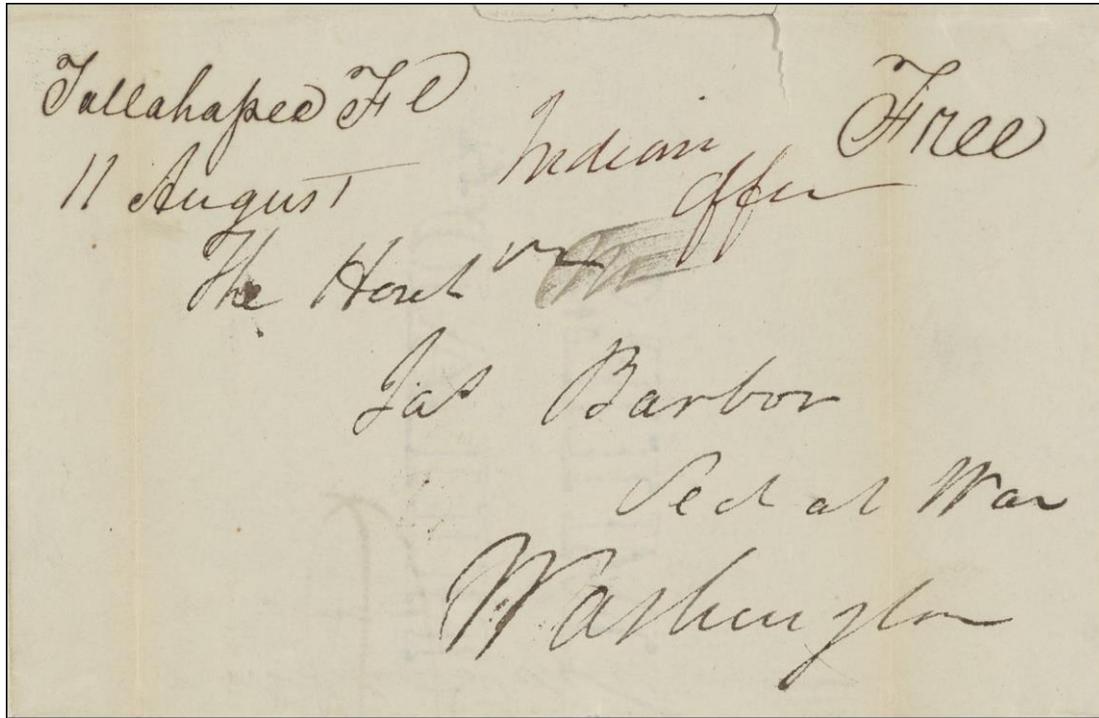


Figure 2. New Type XI – Tallahassee Fl, dated August 11.

Figure 3 is a red manuscript Tallahassee Fl postmark with manuscript FREE. This is one of only two covers known with the EKU dated August 25, 1826, and the LKU dated September 29, 1826. Again, these were written by William Duval to Barbour discussing funding for Indians.

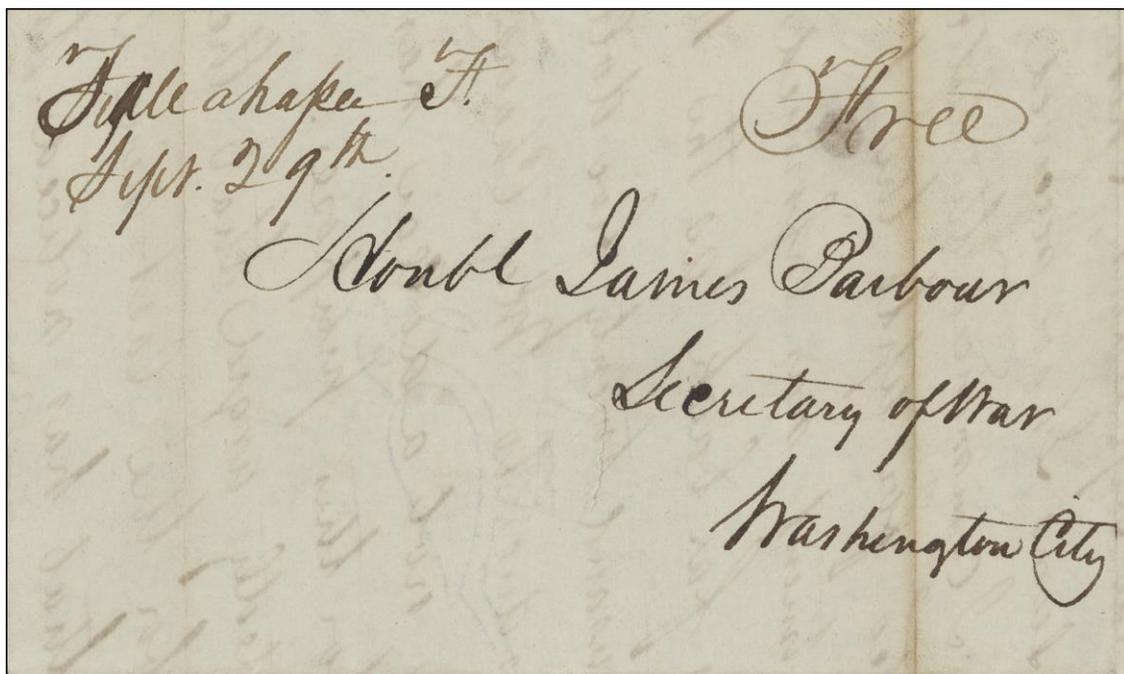


Figure 3. New Type XII – Tallahassee F, dated Sept 29th.

## Type I Manuscript Postmark

Under Territorial Usage in *Florida Postal History 1763-1861* there is the Type I manuscript postmark Tallahassee Fla.<sup>2</sup>

This postmark, one of two known, was first listed in the 1999 David Phillips soft cover book, *Florida Stampless Postal History 1763 - 1861*. Both listed copies are held by a museum or archive. The EKU is dated August 7, 1825, and the LKU dated September 29, 1826.<sup>3</sup>

I have been unable to locate either cover in the National Archives or the Tallahassee State Archives. If anyone has a copy or scan, please email it to me.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> National Archives, Bureau of Indian Affairs, M234 286, Florida Superintendency 1824 – 1853: 1824 – 1826. If you want a color image, you must special order it. Otherwise, you can download the black and white image.

<sup>2</sup> Briggs, Deane R., Francis Ferguson, and Thomas M. Lera, *Florida Postal History 1763-1861*, Second Edition, Florida Postal History Society, Winter Haven, Florida, p. 409.

<sup>3</sup> Briggs, Deane R., *Florida Stampless Postal History 1763-1861*, Florida Postal History Society, David G. Phillips, Publisher, North Miami Florida, p. 276.

## Articles of Distinction Awards

Congratulations are given to the following members for their “best of the best” articles in the 2024 issues of the *Florida Postal History Journal*.

### First Place

"Fort Meade – An Isolated Seminole War Fort"  
Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

### Second Place

"The South Dade Settlement of Cutler, Florida"  
Juan L. Riera and Steve Swain

### Third Place

"Danger in the Florida Frontier"  
Chris Kimball

## Drayton Island

### By Phil Eschbach

Located in the middle of the St. Johns River at the north end of Lake George in Putnam County (Figure 1)<sup>1</sup>, Drayton Island is the only inland town in Florida on an island. It is about 1700 acres, being a mile wide and about 2½ miles long.



**Figure 1. Drayton Island, Putnam County.**

There is evidence that the island was inhabited by early Indians. The first evidence of a European sighting of the island was in 1564. The French had settled and constructed Fort Caroline, near today's Jacksonville on what they called the River of May, now the St. Johns River. The leader, Rene de Laudonniere, took a boat up the river to what is now Lake George and made note of the island which he named Edelano.

The French were driven out by the Spanish who took control of Florida for the next 200 years, when in 1763 it was ceded to the British, becoming the fourteenth British colony.

In 1765 the British Governor appointed William Drayton, (Figure 2)<sup>2</sup> as the Chief Justice of Florida. He was born in 1732 at the Drayton Plantation (Figure 3)<sup>3</sup>, outside of Charleston. In 1768, Drayton began acquiring land around Florida, including the island that became known as Drayton Island.



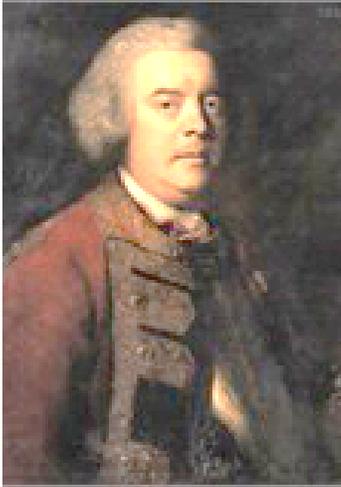
**Figure 2. William Drayton.**  
(December 30, 1776 – May 24, 1846)



**Figure 3. Drayton Plantation.**

But Drayton soon ran afoul of Patrick Tonyn, the British Governor of Florida. Tonyn suspected Drayton was an American revolutionary sympathizer and forced him out. Drayton did not establish a settlement there and may not have even visited it.

During the British period, two important visitors, the Bartrams, John and his son William, stopped on Drayton Island on two trips. They reported that they had not found any people living on the island but found many Indian artifacts. When Florida was re-ceded to the Spanish in 1783, the island remained in limbo.



Drayton died in South Carolina in 1790 in debt. The Spanish governor, Enrique White, took back Drayton's Island and gave 1,500 acres of it, nearly the whole island, as a grant to Charles Sibbald in 1804. He proceeded to start farming it by growing cotton. When Sibbald died in 1811, Zephaniah Kingsley (Figure 4)<sup>4</sup> bought it from Sibbald's widow. At that point, the island was officially surveyed, showing 1,781 acres. The southern tip was called and still is known as Kingsley Point.

Kingsley started citrus groves on the island, but the great freeze of 1835 killed many of the citrus trees. During the Second Seminole War (1835-42), whites were driven off by the Indians who captured the slaves that remained. Kingsley died in 1843, leaving the island to his son, Zephaniah Jr., who continued citrus farming, reportedly sending 40,000 oranges north to St. Augustine in 1844. He died in 1846.

**Figure 4. Zephaniah Kingsley (December 4, 1765 – September 14, 1843).**

In 1851, John C. Calhoun, Jr., son of the famous South Carolina Senator, bought the island for \$3,968. He renamed the island Anzie Island after his wife's first name and built a house there. He died in 1855.

During the Civil War, the island was owned by Major William Rembert. Over the next several years, he sold off parts to several other owners who all tried farming various crops, including coffee, cotton, sugar cane, watermelons, timber and, of course, citrus.

Finally in 1875, Rembert sold a large portion to developer, R.W. Towle, who began sub-dividing and selling ten-acre lots. He built a hotel (Figure 5)<sup>5</sup> in 1876 which burned in 1878. Towle died in 1884, after having sold many lots.



**Figure 5. Towle's (sic) Hotel, Drayton Island photographic stereo card.**

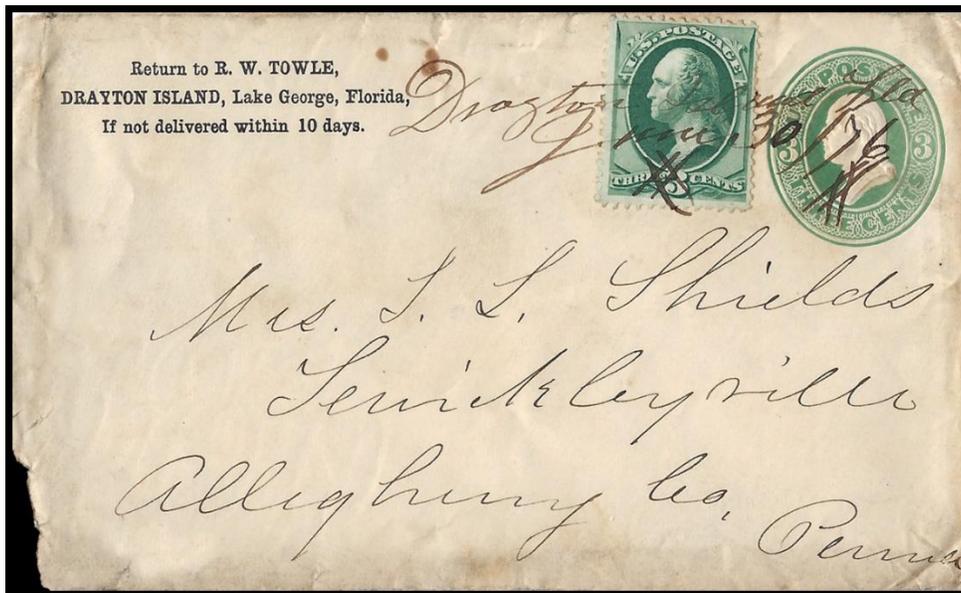


**Figure 6. Steamship Anita.**

Steamships began stopping at Drayton Island in the 1870s on a regular basis. In 1878, the steamships *Water Lily* and the *Anita* (Figure 6)<sup>6</sup> would embark from Palatka at 8 am for Drayton Island and leave there at 2:30 pm for the return for a \$2.00 round trip.

The population had grown to the extent that a post office was opened in 1876 with D.W. Crosby appointed the first postmaster, serving fifty residents. By 1889, there were 150 residents living on the island. There was no bridge to the island, and still isn't, so mail was delivered by ferry from nearby Georgetown on the mainland.

Figure 7 illustrates the earliest known use of a Drayton Island manuscript cancelled cover dated June 30, 1876, probably written by R.W. Towle to the purchaser of a lot.



**Figure 7. Earliest known use of Drayton Island manuscript cancel. (Author's collection)**

Figure 8 (next page) shows a cover with a November 10, 1886, fancy cancel when the postmaster was Daniel Darling. At this time, postal route no. 16,080 was established from Palatka to Drayton Island, paying Beach & Miller to convey the mail six times a week for \$2,000 a year. The post office on the island was discontinued in 1944 in favor of Georgetown, the nearest town on the mainland.

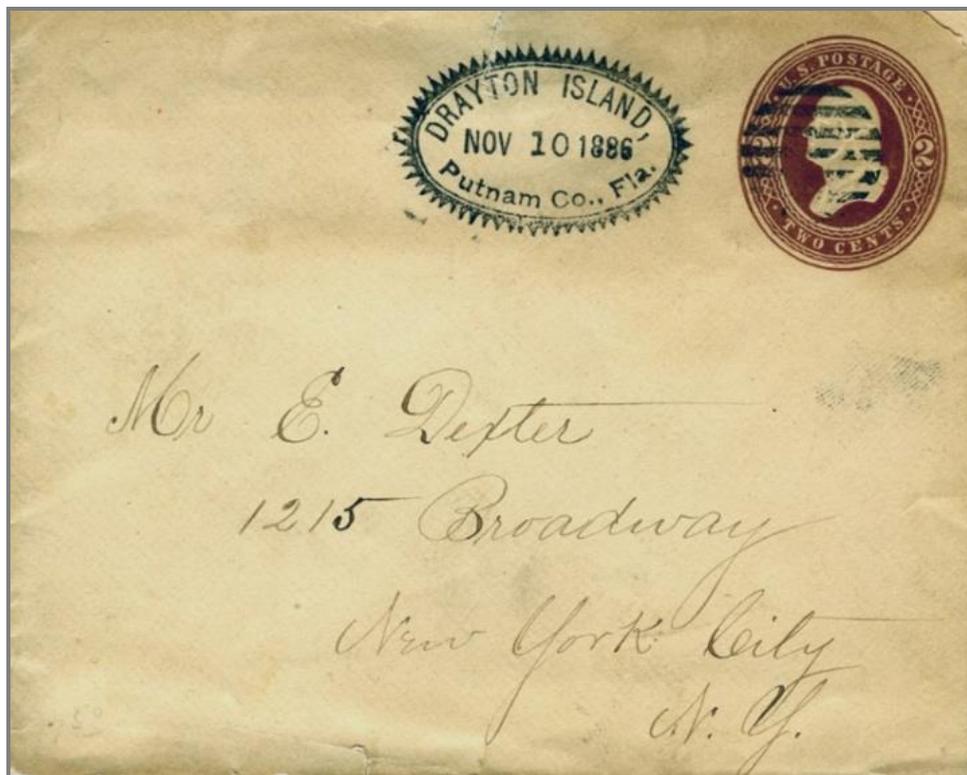


Figure 8. Drayton Island fancy cancel. (Author's collection)

Figure 9 shows a postcard cancelled as an RPO on February 27, 1888, with an abbreviated name "Dray Island" and amazingly arriving two days later in New York on February 29.

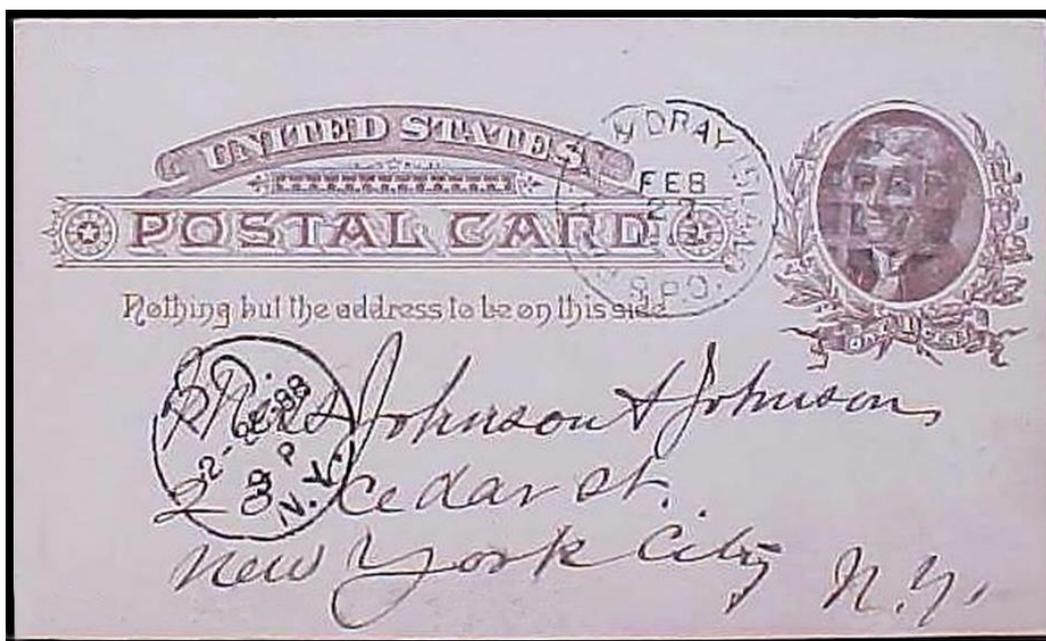
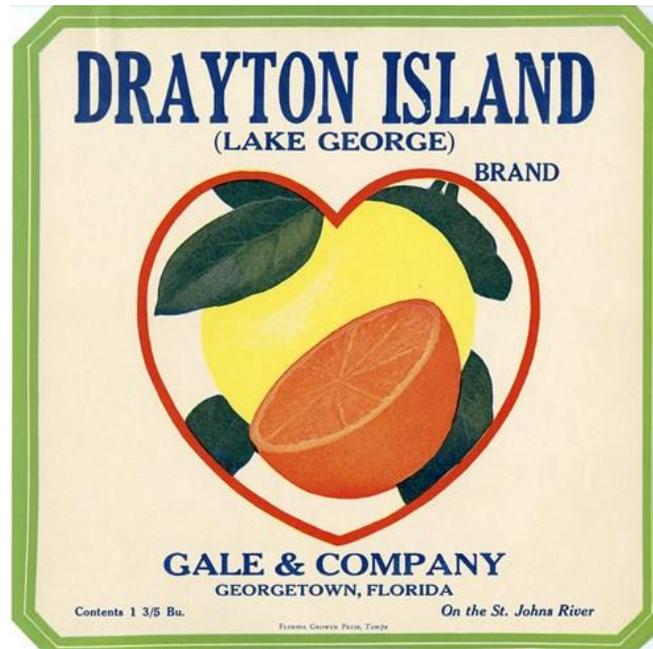


Figure 9. DRAY ISLAND RPO cancel. (Author's collection)

The freezes of 1894-5 destroyed most of the citrus production on the island, but after the turn of the century citrus again became popular. Figure 10<sup>7</sup> shows the label of a prominent grower in 1934.



**Figure 10. Gale & Company label for Drayton Island brand citrus.**

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Drayton+Island>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Drayton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Drayton)

<sup>3</sup> <https://americanaristocracy.com/houses/drayton-hall>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.floridamemory.com>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/53674>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/41004>

<sup>7</sup> University of Florida citrus labels archives.

## Sources

*Drayton Island – An Illustrated History*, Walt Grampp and Kevin McCarthy, 2016.

*The River Flows North: A History of Putnam County, Florida*, Brian Michaels, 1976.

*Steamboating on the St. Johns*, Edward Mueller, 1980.

“Zephaniah Kingsley,” Philip May, *Florida Historical Quarterly*, January 1945.

“William Drayton,” Chales Mowat, *Florida Historical Quarterly*, July 1943.

University of Florida citrus labels archives.

## Literature Competition Awards

Congratulations are bestowed to Society members for awards earned at:

### Sarasota National Stamp Exhibition, January 17-19, 2025.

- Large Gold: **Thomas Lera**, “Postal History of Indian Key, Florida”
- Vermeil: **Juan L. Riera and Steve Swain**, “The South Dade Settlement of Cutler, Florida”
- Large Silver: **Juan L. Riera**, “The Sikorsky s43 Baby Clipper”

### CHICAGOPEX, November 23, 2024

- Gold: **Michael Mahler**, “Cape of Good Hope: Authorized Postal-Fiscal Use of Triangulars and Rectangulars 1864-1868”
- Gold: **Michael Mahler**, “Mary Manny and Acquaintances”

## St. Johns Bluff Postal History

By Thomas M. Lera

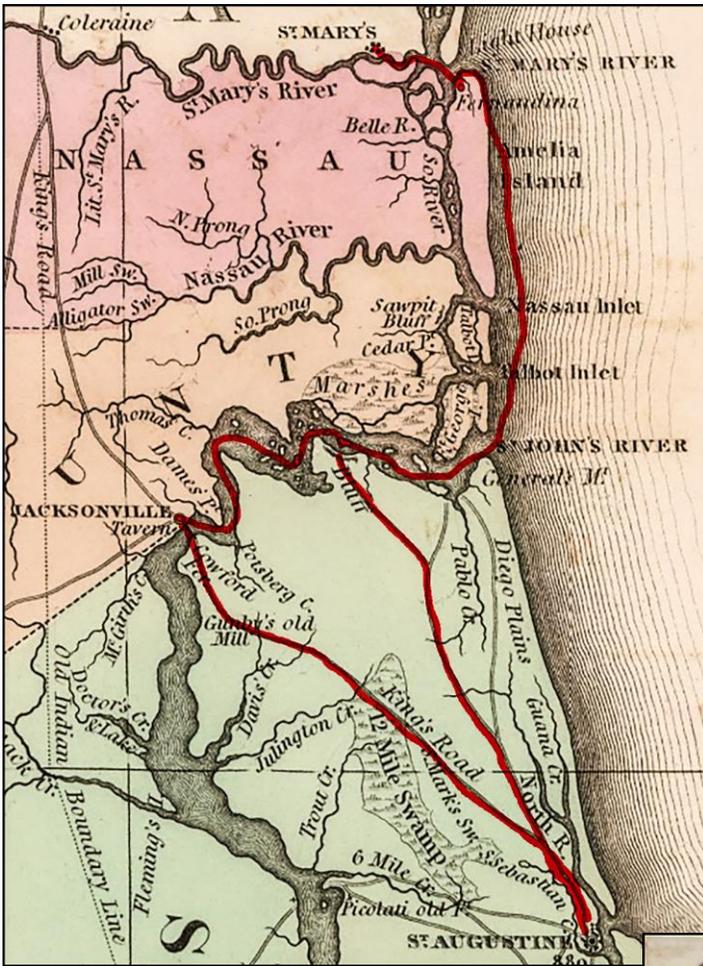
### Introduction

Present day St. Johns Bluff became, in 1564, the location of Fort Caroline, the first French Colony in North America, and one of the first European-established settlements in what today is the continental United States. A year later in 1565 the Spanish succeeded the French and replaced the names of such places as Fort Caroline with San Mateo. The Spanish established a mission named San Juan del Puerto in 1857 on what is present day Fort George Island. During this same time period, the French Rivière du Mai, or the May River, initially called Rio de Corrientes by the Spanish, became known as the Rio San Juan or St. Johns River after the Spanish mission at its mouth.<sup>1</sup>

St. Johns Bluff is 70 feet above the St. Johns River, approximately 5 miles from the mouth of the river and the Atlantic Ocean. Before the railroads were established, travel on Florida’s few sandy roads was slow and difficult. The St. Johns River system was the best route into the territory’s interior.<sup>2</sup>

### St. Johns Bluff Post Office

St. Johns Bluff Post Office was established in St. Johns County January 30, 1828, and existed until January 28, 1846. St. Johns County was later split into St. Johns and Duval Counties.



**Figure 1. 1832 map with possible routes for Mail Route 2471.**

Samuel Kingsley, St Johns Bluff postmaster, sent the 1830 election returns at the 6¼¢ rate to D.C. Hart, Jacksonville Sherriff, at the county courthouse. He in turn forwarded it, using the bottom half of the letter sheet, to Governor Duval on July 5<sup>th</sup> [1830], as seen by the Type III JACKSONVILLE FLO circle date handstamp (Figure 2).

A year later, on July 1, 1831, after all of the election returns had been tabulated, they were printed by county and precinct in the *Tallahassee Florida Courier* (Figure 3).<sup>7</sup>

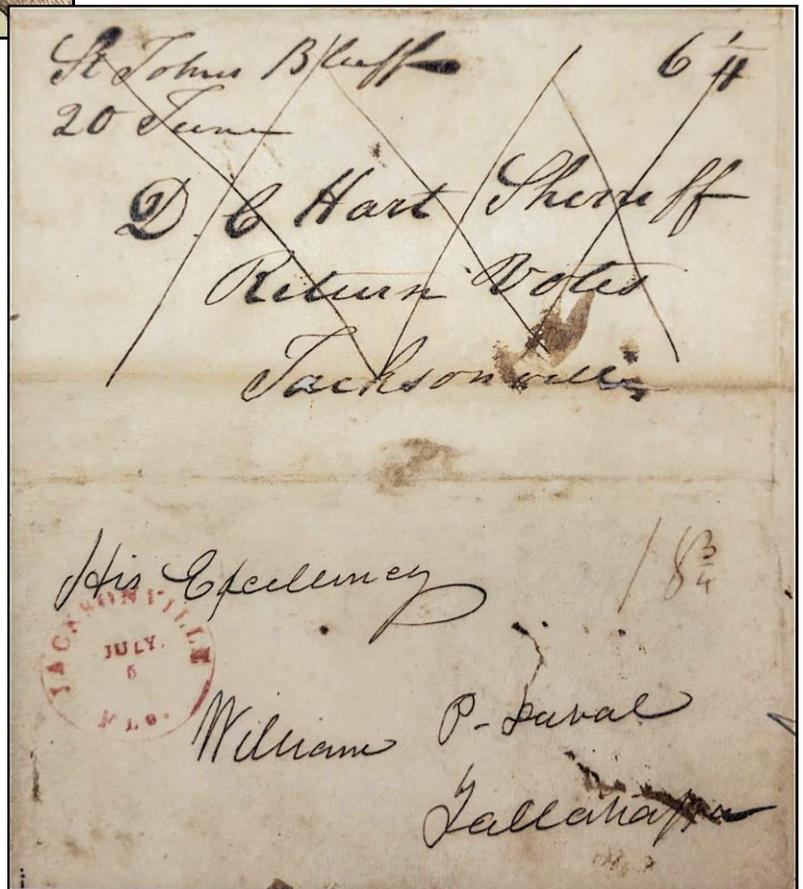
**Figure 2. Type II – St. Johns Bluff 6¼¢ rate to Jacksonville with forwarded rate 18¾¢. (Courtesy of Florida State Archives)**

In the July 23, 1828, *Abstract for Proposals* listed a once every two weeks delivery schedule for Mail Route 153 from St. Johnstown, or Bluff, to St. Augustine; however, no contract was ever awarded.

Mail Route 2471 was advertised on July 1, 1830. It ran 110 miles each way once a week from St. Mary’s Georgia on Saturdays by Fernandina, St. Johns Bluff, and Jacksonville, to St. Augustine where it arrived on Mondays. The return trip left Thursday’s afternoon arriving on Saturday (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> The contract was awarded to Reynolds and Harrison for \$940 a year.<sup>4</sup>

On April 9, 1816, an Act authorized the rate of 6 cents for single page letters traveling 30 miles or less.<sup>5</sup> Letters during the 1816-45 period are found from various parts of the country showing postage of 6¼ cents (Figure 2).

This amount was adopted by some postmasters in response to circulating foreign coinage, some of which consisted of Spanish and Mexican ½-reales, and British 3-pence coins valued at 6¼ cents.<sup>6</sup>



ELECTION RETURNS FOR DELEGATE TO CONGRESS			
[NA:HF, 22 Cong., 1 sess.: Pr. <sup>20</sup> ]			
[July 1, 1831]			
Counties and Precincts	Gadsden	White.	No Poll Books.
Munroe.			
Key West,	70	17	
Mosquito.			
De Peysters,	3	23	No poll book.
St. Johns.			
St. Augustine,	117	89	
E. T. Jencks,	7	00	
Picolata,	0	6	
New Switzerland	0	5	No poll book.
Duval.			
Jacksonville,	18	47	
C. Browards,	2	13	
St. Johns Bluff,	5	36	
T. Wightman's,	1	28	
S. Fairbanks,	10	27	No poll book.
Nassau.			
Kirkland,	11	14	
Higginbotham,	11	12	
Fernandina,	10	16	

Figure 3. Elections Returns as reported in the *Tallahassee Florida Courier*.

### Stolen Election?



Figure 4. Scott 1053 – 1853 Gadsden Purchase.

Florida law stipulated official election returns should be made to the Governor within two months after the elections.<sup>8</sup> Based on incomplete returns, Governor DuVal declared the elections a tie and, on July 2, 1831, proclaimed a new election for the first Monday in October.<sup>9</sup> Apparently, this election was not held.

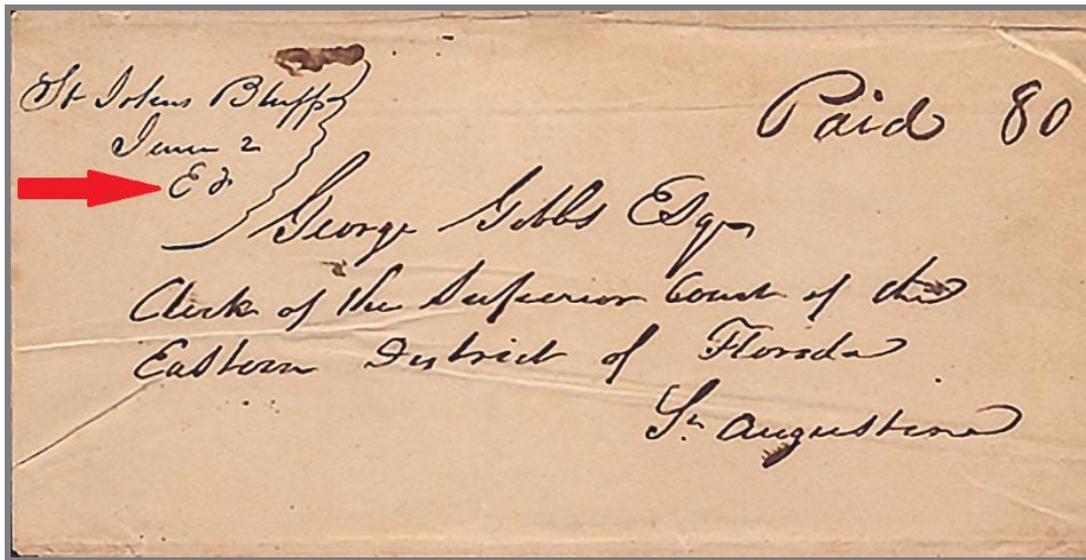
Gadsden wrote to DuVal, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1832, expressing a belief that there had been irregularities in the election and enclosed documents to support his claim, even though he had conceded the contest to White on June 11, 1831.

Subsequently, he was appointed United States Minister to Mexico and negotiated on December 30, 1853, the Gadsden Purchase of a 29,640-square-mile region of present-day southern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico.

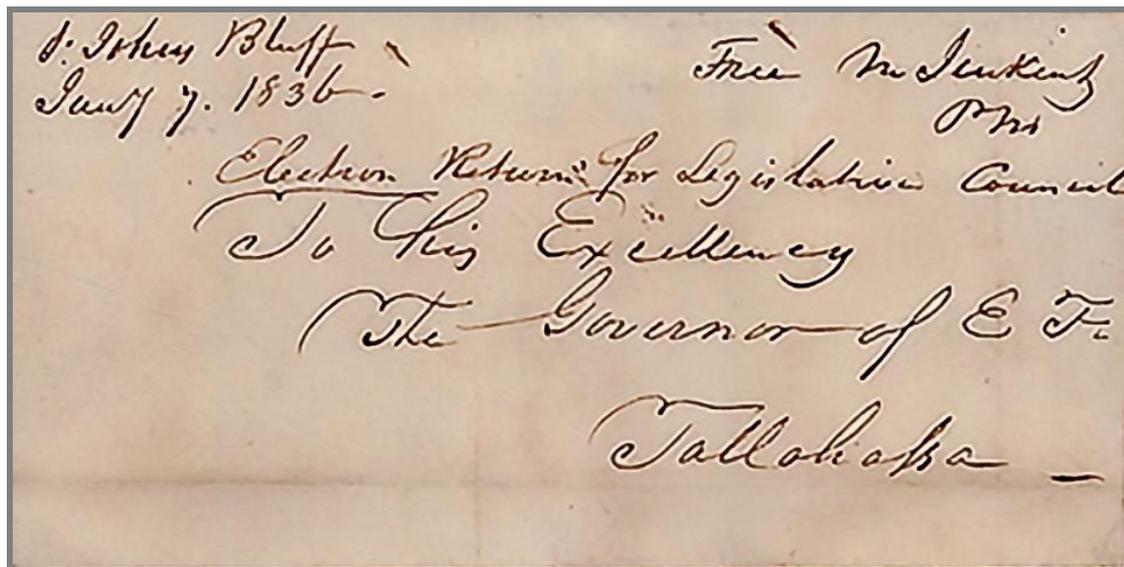
In 1953, the Post Office Department issued a stamp recognizing the 100-year Anniversary of the Gadsden Purchase with the area clearly outlined (Figure 4).

**Other Postmark Examples**

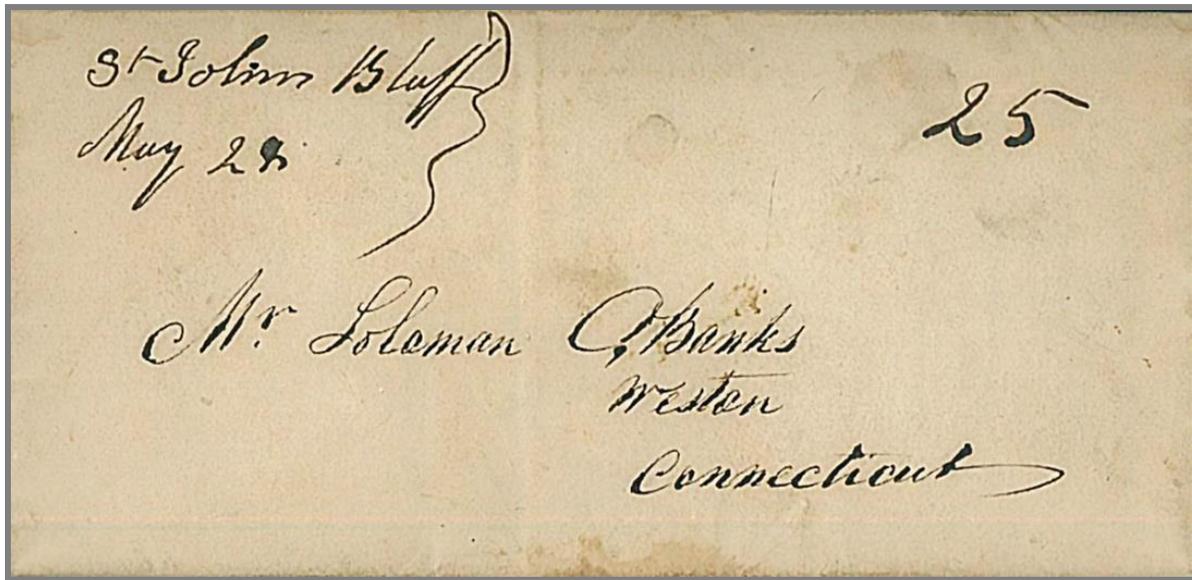
Figures 5 - 7 below show two types of postmarks on covers from St. Johns Bluff. The Territorial Table shows the different types of St. Johns Bluff postmarks.<sup>10</sup>



**Figure 5. Type I – St. Johns Bluff EF with arrow pointing to the EF [East Florida].**  
(Courtesy of Florida Postal History Society)



**Figure 6. Type II – St. Johns Bluff with PM Mathew Jenkins' signature in upper left corner.**  
(Courtesy of Florida Postal History Society)



**Figure 7. Type II – St. Johns Bluff, May 29 [1830]  
(ex. Dr. William Johnson, Siegel Sale 2191 Lot 107)**

Territorial Usage					
I	St Johns Bluff EF	06.02.1828	black	ms. rates	1 known
II	St. Johns Bluff	05.29.1830 / 1.07.1836	black	ms. rates	3 known +1*

## Summary

I have shown the only known 6¼¢ cover from St. Johns Bluff and discussed other known covers. If you have any additional St. Johns Bluff covers, please send me a scan so I can add it to our database.

## Acknowledgements

The assistance of the Florida State Archives and Sandra Fitzgerald is greatly appreciated.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Bonnie G. McEwan, Bonnie G., Ed. The Spanish Missions of La Florida. University Press of Florida, 1993: 98, 330.

<sup>2</sup> The King's And Pablo Roads, Florida's First Highways, A Narrative History Of Their Construction And Routes In St. Johns County. Prepared For St. Johns County Growth Management Services By Paul L. Weaver, MA.

<sup>3</sup> Map of Florida. 1833. H.S. Tanner. American Atlas. Published by H.S. Tanner, Philadelphia. Accessed 02.19.2024. <https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~35612~1201161:Florida-?>

<sup>4</sup> Carter, Clarence Edwin, comp. and ed., The Territorial Papers of the United States. Vol. 24 - Florida Territory 1828-1834 (Washington G.P.O., 1934-1975), pg. 43, 429. Contract was listed in House Document 117, 21 Congress, 2nd sessions, p. 14.

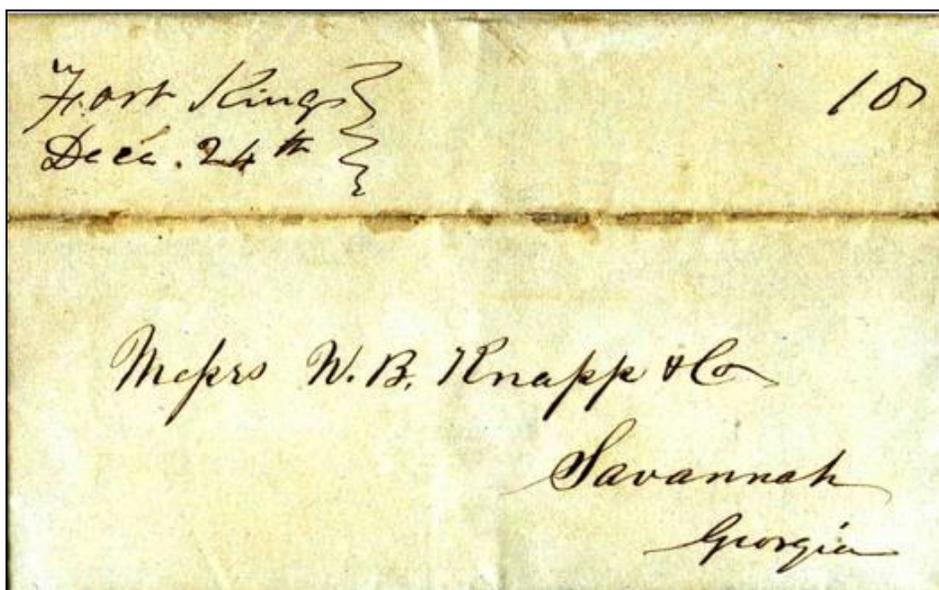


On December 28, 1835, at Ft. King, Osceola and his men attacked General Wiley Thompson and the camp commander Lt. Constantine Smith who were taking a casual walk outside the fort. They were killed and scalped. On the same day, Major Francis Dade was leading 110 troops on the trail to Ft. King when another group of Osceola's men ambushed Dade's troops. All were slaughtered except for one survivor. Historians usually note this date as the beginning of the Second Seminole War, even though prior skirmishes had occurred between settlers and Indians.

In 1836, Ft. King was attacked by the Indians and destroyed by fire. It was re-built much larger by 1837 and in 1839, General Zachary Taylor made it his headquarters for his tenure as overall commander of the war effort. Osceola had been captured on October 26, 1837, west of St. Augustine near Fort Peyton under a flag of truce by my ancestor, General Josef Hernandez, under orders from his superior General Jessup. On May 18, 1839, Major General Alexander Macomb was sent from Washington to attend another treaty, called the Treaty of Ft. King. But it didn't hold either. But on August 14, 1842, near Ft. King, the last band of Indians who had so far successfully evaded capture were finally taken, thus ending the war.

Florida became a state in 1845, and the area was divided into several new counties. Ft. King, with a population of 1,475, became the county seat in the new Marion County named after Revolutionary War hero Francis Marion. By 1847 the Ft. King post office was the largest in Florida by postal receipts, but only a few covers are known. On February 5, 1846, the town name was officially changed to Ocala by vote. My ancestor John Lee Williams had written a book in 1837 on the early history of Florida in which he mentioned that early Spaniards had noted a place they called Ocala in central Florida near where Fort King existed. Someone had evidently read his book and proposed the name. It was sometimes spelled Ocola.

Figure 2 shows a rare Type 1 manuscript cover from the statehood period. It was written by Josiah Paine to W.B. Knapp & Co. in Savannah.



**Figure 2. December 24, 1846. From Josiah Paine, Fort King, to W.B. Knapp & Co., Savannah, Georgia.**

In March of 1846, the town was platted, and lots were sold. Josiah Paine had come from Maine and purchased an entire block facing the central square for \$67.25 where he erected Ocala's first boarding house called the Ocala House. In 1848 he had acquired another lot on the other side of the square for a general store. The W.B. Knapp & Co. was listed as a saddler, which was located at 4 & 5 Market Street, Savannah.

The letter (Figure 3) to the Knapp company is a note to the supplier in Savannah, settling his account and promising more business. What is interesting is that Paine notes "Ocala" in his letter of December 1846, but postmaster William Roberts is still cancelling letters as Fort King, even though it had been officially changed back in February to Ocala.

Ocala Fla Dec 24<sup>th</sup> 1846

Mrs W. B. Knapp & Co  
Gent

Enclosed please find  
left hand end of \$50 Treasury Note & Bank  
Bills in all one hundred Dollars which  
you will please acknowledge receipt of  
& I will send the other halves to be cred-  
ited on my note due you. The balance I  
am due you I will forward as soon as  
I can. money comes in slow & I have  
been buying Cotton & paying out cash in  
part & have not yet got any quince  
& ready for market, I hope soon to be  
collecting considerable on my last years  
crop & hope to be able to settle during the win-  
ter & spring with all my friends in your city  
I am extremely sorry I have not been able  
to settle with you before or even at this time  
& feel grateful for your indulgence & must  
ask a continuance of your kindness for a time  
longer, I beg you to feel no apprehension  
for the safety of what I am due, for every  
dollar will be paid to you all if not  
at prompt at you or myself could wish  
write by first mail and address  
to Fort King  
Yours Obt Servt  
Josiah Paine

Figure 3. Contents of letter to W.B. Knapp & Co.

### Sources

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