

FLORIDA REGISTERED COVERS 1845 - 1911

Part III – Florida Registry Exchange Labels 1883-1911

Introduction

Collecting registered mail is an area deserving of more research. I have only touched the surface of what is available in Florida. This is Part III of the five-part census: Part I – Early Statehood Covers 1845-1857, Part II – Florida Towns with Registered Mail 1858-1911, Part IV – Florida Towns with New York and San Francisco Registry Exchange Labels, and Part V – Other Florida Registered Covers with Examiner Markings.

Registry Exchange Labels

In 1882, the Universal Postal Union announced a resolution requiring international registered mail matter bear a label or impression of a stamp with a capital letter "R" in Roman text. The use of these labels by those post offices authorized to handle inbound and outbound foreign registered mail became effective on January 1, 1883, and stayed in effect until January 24, 1911. In the *United States Official Postal Guide* for December 1882, the Post Office Department stated twenty different exchange offices had been designated to handle and record international registered mail at the time of the introduction of the labels.¹

These twenty offices were furnished with a supply of labels, although this did not necessarily mean labels imprinted with the name of the city. The initial printing order of November 21, 1882, included labels for New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, as well as 357 sheets of blank labels. Later, labels were found to have been recorded from fourteen other cities.

The original in-depth study of these registry exchange labels was published by Barbara R. Mueller in her seven-part article “U.S. Registry Labels – A Study of Types and Usages, in the *United States Specialist*.² In those articles she reported “while some of the larger post offices designated as exchange offices were provided with the registry exchange labels with the name of the post office imprinted on the label, most of the smaller exchange offices were supplied with what she described as the **Utility Label**. At these smaller offices, the name of the exchange office was added to the label by the registry clerk, typically with a handstamp, or occasionally in manuscript.”

Mueller’s work was expanded in 2000 by a series of articles by Al Kugel³ in which a new census of all known covers with these labels were described (except those from New York, Boston, and San Francisco, which were believed to be too numerous to record exhaustively). The next significant description of these registry exchange labels appeared with the publication of an article and a classification of label types in the 2011 edition of the **Scott Specialized Catalog of the United States**.⁴ These Scott Catalog numbers identified the labels with a “FX-“ prefix, which will be used in this article. The Scott Catalog listings also assigned different catalog designations and types to labels from each exchange office based on the manner by which the exchange office name was added to the label.

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The original notice in the *United States Official Postal Guide* identified five post offices in Florida which were to serve as an exchange office. All five offices are assumed to have been supplied with the Utility Label described earlier, but no examples have yet been reported from Fernandina, and it is unknown if it ever served as an exchange office. The other Florida exchange offices each used the Utility Label with the name of the post office added in manuscript or by a small magenta handstamp.

See **Table One: Florida Registry Exchange Labels** for details on the covers.

- Fernandina – None recorded.
- Jacksonville – Nine covers recorded 1885 - 1902.
- Key West – Three covers recorded 1896 – 1899.
- Maimi – One cover recorded 1904.
- Tampa – Two covers recorded 1898 - 1901.

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Jacksonville Registry Exchange Labels

Jacksonville has several different types of registry exchange labels. FX-JA2 has a magenta or violet **JACKSONVILLE FLA** or **JACKSONVILLE FLORIDA** (upper case) or **Jacksonville Fla** (lower case) handstamp, and the Type FX-JA3 has **Jax Fl** manuscript. The last type FX-JA4 is a Utility Label with no town name and was identified by the handstamp on the reverse.



Figure 1. **JACKSONVILLE FLORIDA**. Type FX-JA2, with Exchange Label 43 and NY Exchange Label 26020.
(Courtesy of the Nicholas Lombardi Collection.)

Figure 1 shows the violet **JACKSONVILLE FLORIDA** (all caps), Type FX-JA2, with manuscript No. 43 and NY Exchange Label 26020 with a nice London Crown Registry handstamp.

This letter went from Jacksonville to New York City for processing. The New York City General Post Office operated the largest registered mail division in the U.S.P.O.D. Its clerks processed the outgoing and incoming U.S. registered mail, and registered mail to and from Europe, Africa, South America and other parts of the world. They recorded the cover in the registry accounting ledger, stamped the back of the cover with their assigned examiner handstamp, and sent the letter to the registry division. There were twenty different alphabetic examiner handstamps utilizing nine different letters “B, C, D, E, H, L, O, S, and U” used between 1884 and 1902. ⁵

The reverse of Figure 5 has two black Jacksonville Fla. Registry handstamps dated Jun 30. 1885, an Examiner’s B 7.3.85 handstamp, and London Registered C.D.O. handstamp dated JY 13. 85. There is also a straightline handstamp RED 13.JUL.85.

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Figure 2. **JACKSONVILLE FLA.** Registry Exchange Label on Japanese Registered Letter.
(Courtesy of Cherrystone Philatelic Auctions, The Alfred F. Kugel Collection, Lot 3041.)

The violet **JACKSONVILLE FLA** (all caps), Type FX-JA2, with manuscript No. 698, used on 2s (sen) postal stationery entire from Yokohama, Japan to Havana, Cuba, was additionally franked with 8s and 10s stamps, and on the left are two Yokohama Exchange Registry Labels, one in Japanese the other English (Figure 2). On the reverse is the date July 5, 1900.

On reverse are handstamps from Yokohama (July 5), San Francisco (August 4), Jacksonville (August 12) and two different Havana arrival handstamps (August 15).⁶

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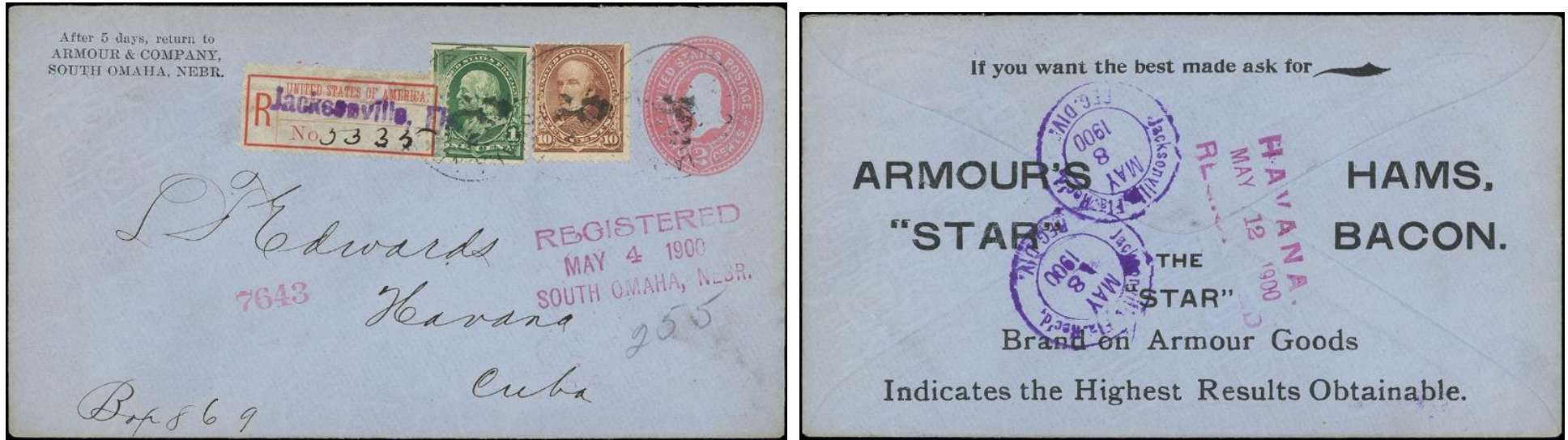


Figure 3. 1900 **Jacksonville, Fla.**, Type FX-JA2, from South Omaha, Nebr., via Jacksonville Fla. to Havana Cuba. (Courtesy of Kewriga Sale 4 Lot 222, ex-Kugel.)

A purple lower case **Jacksonville Fla.**, Type FX-JA2, Registry Exchange Label with manuscript No. 5335 (Figure 3), tied by "South Omaha, Neb." ovals, magenta "Registered, May 4 1900, South Omaha, Nebr." three-line handstamp to **Havana, Cuba**. The reverse has Armour's advertising text along with matching purple Jacksonville (May 8) transit and magenta Havana (May 12) arrival dates.

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Figure 4. (J)acksonville Fla., Type FX-JA-2, from Minneapolis to Trinidad. Cuba.
(Courtesy of Matthew Bennett International, Sale 280, Lot 2075.)

The Utility Exchange Label was handstamped (J)acksonville Fla. with manuscript No. 1866 (Figure 4), and has a 10¢ orange-brown (Scott 283) stamp and, in lower left, a “Registered Minneapolis, Minn. Oct 23, 1900” double circle date stamp (DCDS). On the reverse are Jacksonville and Trinidad, Cuba backstamps.

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Figure 5. Type FX-JA2 on 1902 letter from Tupelo, MS to Havana, Cuba.
(Courtesy of eBay item number:126501370798.)

This magenta lower case **Jacksonville Fla.** handstamp, Type FX-JA2, Registry Exchange Label and manuscript No. 1593 on legal size envelope was recently posted for sale on eBay (Figure 5). On the reverse is an Oct 9, 1902 “JACKSONVILLE FLA. RECEIVING REG. DIV.” DCDS, and a black straightline handstamp Oct 13, 1902, which may have been applied in Havana.

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Figure 6. 1899 cover with Type FX-JA3, **Jax FL**, to Real Campiña, Cuba.
(Courtesy of Rumsey Auctions, Sale 74 Lot 1553.)

In the upper left corner of Figure 6 is a Joel H. DuBose postmaster magenta handstamp. The Registry Exchange Label shows a manuscript **Jax FL** (Jacksonville, Florida) and manuscript No. 123 on a legal size 10¢ Columbian entire, to Cuba bearing three 1¢ (Scott 285) and four 10¢ Trans-Mississippi stamps (Scott 290), all tied by matching target cancels. The letter originated at Huguenot, Ga. on Jul 10, 1899.

The author does not have any information on the receiving handstamps on the back.

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Figure 7. Type FX-JA4 on 1899 letter from Huguenot, Ga. to Havana, Cuba.
(Courtesy of Cherrystone Philatelic Auctions, The Alfred F. Kugel Collection, Lot 3040.)

Figure 7 Registry Exchange Label has a manuscript No. 960. The **Jacksonville** receiving stamp on the reverse shows the Utility Label was used at Jacksonville but without a post office name added to the label. The cover is a 5¢ Columbian entire with one 8¢ (Scott 289) and two 10¢ (Scott 290) Trans-Mississippi stamps tied by small target cancels postmarked with a Huguenot Ga. Feb 17, 1899 CDS.

The reverse shows receiving backstamps of Jacksonville, Fla. Reg. Div. (Feb 19) and Havana (Feb 22).

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Figure 8. Type FX-JA4 from Huguenot, Ga to Havana, Cuba.
(Courtesy of Kewriga Auctions No. 9.)

Figure 8 shows a blank Utility Exchange Label with no town name and manuscript No. 716 on 4¢ entire to Havana, Cuba with 1¢ and 2¢ Trans-Miss (285, 286), and 4¢ Trans Miss (287) block of four and “Huguenot Ga. Jan 28 1899” CDS. The reverse has a purple “**Jacksonville**, Registry Division, Jan 30 1899” transit CDS and two strikes of a blue Havana (Feb 4) arrival CDS. It is assumed the label originated in Jacksonville.

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Key West Fla. Registry Exchange Labels

Three covers shown below are recorded with a manuscript Key West and Key West Fla, Type FX-KW3 labels.

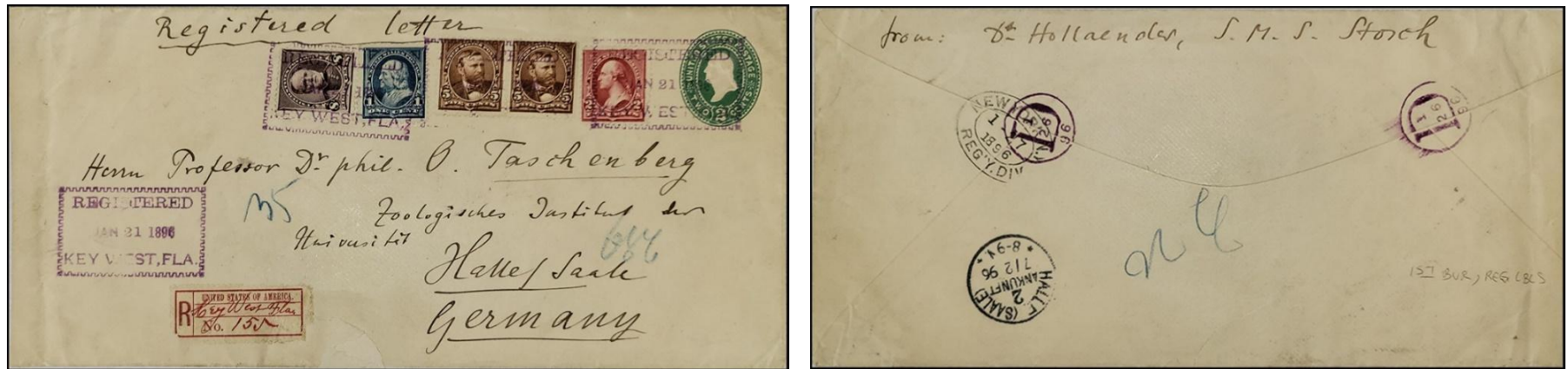


Figure 9. On left, **Key West Fla**, Type FX-KW3, No. 155 on letter sent to Halle/Saale, Germany. On Right, double oval New York Registry Division dated 1.27.1895, and two NY examiner handstamps - Circle D-1.26.96. (Courtesy of the Alfred F. Kugel Collection.)

The Figure 9 markings on the front of the letter above show it was franked with 1¢, 2¢, two 5¢, and an 8¢ First Bureau issues (Scott 264, 267, 270, 272). They were tied by three of four boxed magenta “REGISTERED KEY WEST FLA. Jan. 21, 1896” handstamps on 2¢ entire, and the **Key West Fla.** Registry Exchange Label with manuscript town name and No. 155.

Halle/Saale is located near Leipzig in central Germany along the river Saale. Professor Otto Wilhelm Taschenberg was a German entomologist specializing in the study of *Hymenoptera* (wasps, sawflies, bees, ants) and was a curator at the Zoological Institute in Halle.

Figure 14 shows the letter sent by Dr. Hollaendes was carried on the German warship *S.M.S. Storch*. The examiner processed the letter, as seen by Examiner “D 1.26.96” handstamp. The next day, January 27, the New York Registry Division sent the letter to Germany. The German Halle (Saale) CDS shows the letter arrived 02.07.96.

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Figure 10. Key West Fla., Type FX-KW3, No. 156, on letter sent to Breslau, Germany.
(Courtesy of Kewruga Sale 4 Lot 223, ex-Kugel).

Figure 10 shows another **Key West Fla.** Registry Exchange Label on a cover, with red manuscript town name and No. 156, sent on the German warship *S.M.S. Storch* to Breslau, Germany. It was franked with 1¢, 2¢, and two 10¢ First Bureau issues (Scott 264, 267, 258) tied by two of the three framed magenta “REGISTERED JAN 21, 1896 KEY WEST FLA.” handstamp.

The reverse has a Examiner handstamp circle D-1.26.96, New York Registry Division 1.27.1896 double oval datestamp (DODS), and a Breslau 02.07.96 arrival CDS handstamp.

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Figure 11. Key West, Type FX-KW3, No. 813.
(Courtesy of Rumsey Auctions, Sale 74 Lot 1555.)

Figure 11 above is a **Key West** registry label with manuscript name and No. 813, to Constantinople, Turkey using two 5¢ dark blue (Scott 281) and one 8¢ violet-brown (Scott 272) stamps with a magenta CDS REGISTERED KEY WEST, FLA.. dated Dec 13, 1899, and a New York Registry Exchange Label No. 7132.

The reverse shows the New York Registry Division DODS and the registry Examiner's circle D-12.17.99 handstamp. Interesting to note, this letter was mailed at the end of the 19th century and delivered in the beginning of the 20th century.

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Miami Fla. Registry Exchange Label



Figure 12. 1904 cover from New South Wales to Nassau, Bahamas, with **Miami, Fla.** and New York, Registry Exchange Labels. (Courtesy of Kewriga Sale 4 Lot 225, ex-Kugel.)

Figure 12 is a **Miami, Fla.** Registry Exchange Label, Type FX-MA2 purple handstamp and manuscript No. 361, used in conjunction with New York Registry Exchange Label (FX-NY1a) on a 1904 cover from New Angledool, New South Wales to Nassau, Bahamas. It is franked with 5½d postage tied by two “1199” barred ovals, and a large “Oval R” handstamp.

On reverse are transit handstamps: originated Angledool CDS (Feb 5), transits from Sydney NSW (Feb 8), San Francisco (Mar 16), New York Registry Division (Mar 20 & 21), Miami (Mar 24), plus Nassau receiver (Mar 26). This means it was a forty-four day transit time to cross the Pacific Ocean, to New York City, to Nassau, Bahamas, and finally the West Indies.

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Tampa Fla. Registry Exchange Labels



Figure 13. Type FX-TP2 **TAMPA FLA** 1901 cover from Minneapolis to the Custom House, Trinidad Cuba.
(Courtesy of Kewriga Sale 4 Lot 251, ex-Kugel.)

The Utility Registry Exchange Label is Type FX-TP2 with a faint magenta **TAMPA FLA** and manuscript No. 10198 (Figure 13). The cover is franked with 10¢ Type II (283) and purple “Sub Sta. No. 6, Registered, Dec 4 1901, Minneapolis, Minn.” handstamp. The reverse has Havana (Dec 10) and Trinidad (Dec 13) handstamps. Unfortunately, the top flap and left side flap are missing, where the Tampa registry postmark would have been placed.

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Figure 14. Type FX-TP3 **Tampa** on Jun 28, 1898 letter to Cuba.
(Courtesy of the Historical Society of Haddonfield NJ)

Nicholas Lambardi wrote “Ensign J. Fithian Tatem was in the Second Division of the West Battalion of the New Jersey Naval Reserves and was assigned to the *U.S.S. Resolute*. Mrs. Tatem sent this letter (Figure 14) to her husband addressed to him at *U.S.S. Resolute*, Key West, Florida.” on June 28, 1898. However, this registered letter of June 28th took a long journey before reaching him. In fact, it never made it to Key West at all, as evidenced by the absence of a Key West registry backstamp.

“Tatem wrote that the *Resolute* had left Key West on Friday June 17th. Postal officials forwarded the letter to the Navy Department in Washington, D.C., where it was sent to Tampa on September 8th. It remained in Tampa until September 25 when the Registry Exchange Label Type with manuscript **Tampa**, FX-TP3 and No. 10048 was affixed and it was sent on to Havana, Cuba, where it arrived on September 28th.”⁷
The backstamps on the letter are Tampa Fla. Registered Sep. 25, 1898; Washington D.C. Registered Sep. 18, 1898; and Havana Sep. 26, 1898.⁸

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Table 1: Summary of Florida Registry Exchange Labels

Town	Label #	Date	From	To	FX#	Cover #	Where Found
Jacksonville	4845	1900	Queensland	Cuba	JA2	JA-1	Rumsey Sale 14, Lot 1400
Jacksonville	1866	10/23/1900	Minneapolis, MI	Cuba	JA2	JA-2	Bennett Sale 280, Lot 2075
Jacksonville	43	6/30/1885	Jacksonville	London, England	JA2	JA-3	Nicholas Lombardi Collection
Jacksonville	5335	5/4/1900	So. Omaha, NB	Havana, Cuba	JA2	JA-4	Kewriga Sale 4 Lot 222
Jacksonville	698	8/12/1900	Japan	Cuba	JA2	JA-5	Bennett Sale 352, Lot 194
Jacksonville	960	2/19/1899	Huguenot, GA	Cuba	JA4	JA-6	Bennett Sale 352, Lot 195
Jacksonville	716	1/28/1899	Huguenot, GA	Havana, Cuba	JA4	JA-7	Kewriga Sale #9, Lot 466
Jacksonville	123	7/15/1899	Huguenot, GA	Havana, Cuba	JA3	JA-8	Rumsey Sale 74, Lot 1553
Jacksonville	1593	10/7/1902	Tupelo, MS	Havana, Cuba	JA2	JA-9	eBay item 126501370798
Key West	813	1899	Key West, FL	Turkey	KW3	KW-1	Rumsey Sale 74, Lot 1555
Key West	156	1/21/1896	Key West, FL	Germany	KW3	KW-2	Kewriga Sale 4 Lot 223
Key West	155	1/21/1896	Key West, FL	Germany	KW3	KW-3	Al Kugel Collection
Miami	361	3/24/1904	New So. Wales	Nassau, Bahamas	MA2	MA-1	Kewriga Sale 4 Lot 225
Tampa	10048	06/28/1898	Haddonfield, NJ	Forwarded to Cuba	TP3	TP-1	Historical Society of Haddonfield, NJ
Tampa	10198	12/10/1901	Minneapolis, MI	Cuba	TP2	TP-2	Kewriga Sale 4 Lot 251

*Yellow indicates cover is not shown.

Conclusions:

For questions about the markings on a registered cover, I recommend contacting the **Registered Mail Study Group** at <https://www.usstamps.org/committees/registered-mail-study-group/>.

If you have a Florida registered cover between 1845 to 1911 for our census which is found on our website www.fphsonline.com, please send me a scan (tlera4178@gmail.com)

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Prepared by Thomas Lera May 1, 2026 ©

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As a note, WorthPoint partners with a diverse group of auction houses and online marketplaces www.worthpoint.com and Kewriga auctions can be accessed at <https://www.kewrigaauctions.com/auctions/sale/4> .

¹ Barbara R. Mueller, “Registry Labels: Their Postal and Philatelic Significance” *The Congress Book 1957*, pp. 65-80. Regulations and Directives Concerning Registry Labels are discussed on pages 66-67.

² Barbara R. Mueller, 1973, “U.S. Registry Labels – A Study of Types and Usages,” *The United States Specialist*, Vol. 44 (8): 372. Ms. Mueller’s seven articles were published in *The United States Specialist* on her study of U.S. Registry Labels – A Study of Types and Usages

³ Alfred F. Kugel, “Update on U.S. Registry Labels for International Mail,” *The Collectors Club Philatelist*, Vol. 79, No. 5 (September/October, 2000), pp. 277-280; November/December 2000, pp. 295-298.

⁴ *Scott Specialized Catalog of the United States*, 2011. Scott Pub Inc Co., 89th edition, pp. 366-369 “The United States Registry Exchange Labels of 1883 – 1911” by Nicholas A. Lombardi.

⁵ Russell and Evelyn Ryle, 2009. *Registered U.S.A. – The Handling of Valuable First-Class Mail by the U.S.P.O. Rates, Markings, Delivery Restrictions, and Processing Procedures*, Ryle Publications, Ellettsville Indiana: p. 81. Accessed May 20, 2004 https://stampsmarter.org/features/NYReg_Book.html.

⁶ Registry Exchange Label cover descriptions are taken from the various auction catalogues.

⁷ Nicholas Lombardi, 2012, “Tampa Registry Exchange Label Discovered,” *The United States Specialist*, Vol. 83(1): 7-9.

⁸ The cover, Images Recto (front), verso (reverse), is courtesy of Patricia Lennon Archives Center, Historical Society of Haddonfield. It is in the Moore, Tatem, and Brigham Family Papers (Box 5), and is the Registered Letter from Tampa Florida to Ensign J. Fithian Tatem, Accession or Call number: 1985-002, Box 5.