FLORIDA
POSTAL HISTORY
JOURNAL

VOL. 12, NO. 2   JULY 2005

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PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Edward R. Joyce, Jr.

It is with great sadness that I notify the membership of the passing of Gordon McHenry. He died shortly after our annual meeting in February and will be remembered as one of the original 10 founding members of our original society in the 1980's. He was most supportive of the idea of restarting our society in 1993 and was a generous contributing member. As a dealer, he always had a table at our annual meeting and had an ample supply of good Florida material for all members. His FPHJ article on Fort Jefferson patriotic covers is a classic and his collection was the most complete one from Fort Jefferson ever assembled. He will be dearly missed.

Our society annual meeting was held on Saturday, February 5, 2005, and unfortunately I was unable to attend my instillation as the newly elected President of our Society. Newly elected Vice President Bill Johnson chaired the meeting of 18 members. Ted Light's talk on Collier County postal history was outstanding. Deane Briggs showed some interesting free franks of David Yulee and an extensive correspondence to him from statehood through the Confederacy.

Our next annual meeting will be held again in conjunction with the Sarasota National Stamp Exhibition on Saturday, February 4, 2006, at 12:00 pm. Please make plans to attend and support our Society.
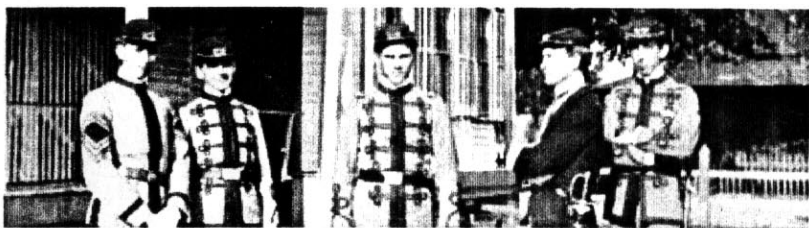
EAST FLORIDA SEMINARY

Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

Fig. 1. East Florida Seminary Cadet standing in front of the Academic Building now known as Epworth Hall, circa 1860.

The Florida legislature passed a bill in 1851 to establish two tax-supported state schools, one in East Florida and the other in West Florida. The locations of these schools would be determined by which counties offered the most land and resources. The East Florida Seminary opened at the site of the Kingsbury Academy in Ocala in 1852. It was originally a fee based school, but became short of funds within a year, and requested full state support. State support was granted by Governor Thomas Brown on January 6, 1853, and the state received title to all the land, buildings and cash resources from the East Florida Seminary.

During the Civil War, all of the faculty and students of military age served in some capacity for the Confederacy. As a result, the school was closed during this period, but history relates that these students and faculty may well have participated with those of the West Florida Seminary in a March 6, 1865 battle at "Natural Bridge" near Woodville and repulsed a Union force whose intent was to capture Tallahassee. As a result, Tallahassee was the only Confederate state capital east of the Mississippi never to have been occupied by Federal Forces.
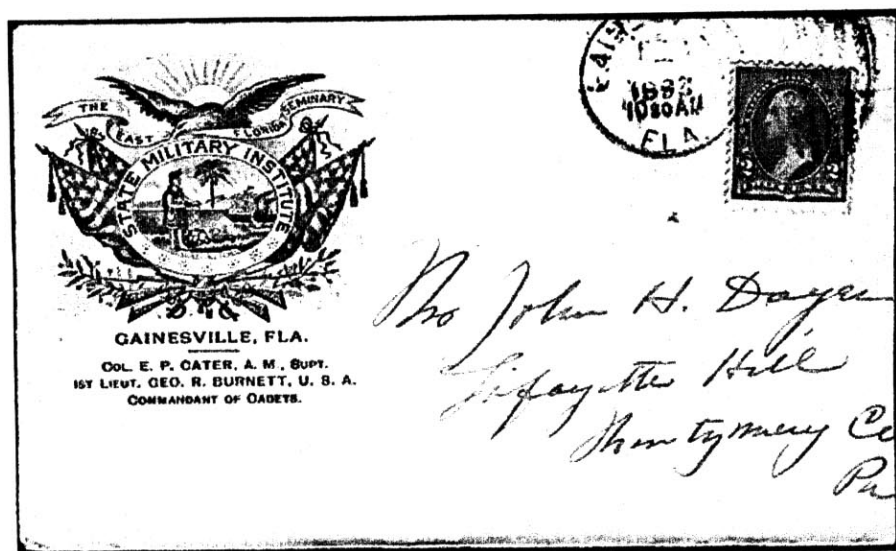

Fig. 2. East Florida Seminary Confederate troops

James Henry Roper, a State Senator from Alachua County, built a private school called the Gainesville Academy on Northeast 1st Street, now site of a Methodist Church. After the Civil War he offered his land and school to the State of Florida in exchange for the relocation of the East Florida Seminary to Gainesville. This offer was accepted in 1866, and one of the original buildings, Epworth Hall, is still in use today and has a marker signifying its importance to Gainesville.

In 1884, Florida's first land grant college opened in Lake City. This Florida Agricultural College eventually moved to Eau Gallie and again back to Lake City. In 1903, it changed its name to University of Florida, but only for a short period of two years. By 1905, there were seven publicly supported schools in Florida. The Buckman Act of 1905 abolished all state supported schools in an effort to
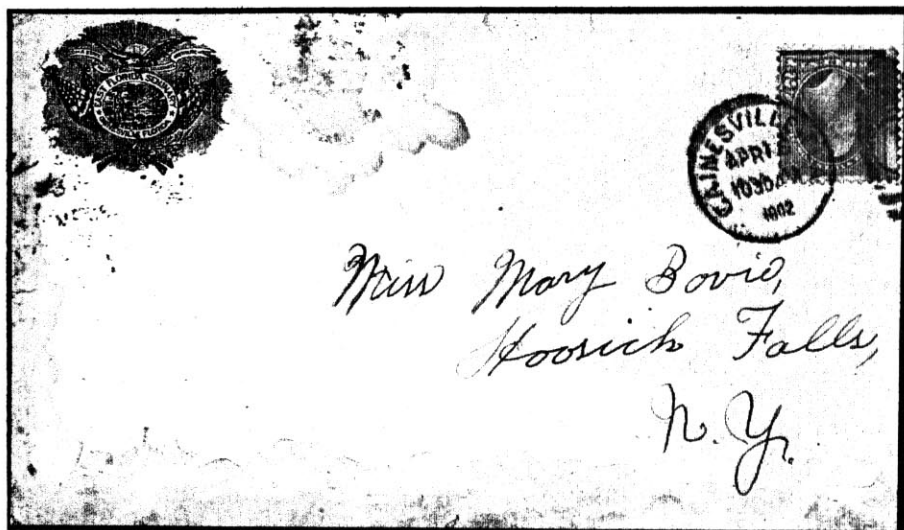
consolidate them into the University of the State of Florida for white males, Florida State University for female white students, and FAMU for African-American students, and a school for the deaf and blind at St. Augustine. The Buckman Act established the University of the State of Florida by combining the East Florida Seminary with the Florida Agricultural College (University of Florida) at Lake City, St. Petersburg Normal and Industrial School, and the South Florida Military College and selected Gainesville as the site. The city of Gainesville also pledged additional land and free water to the University. A total of 102 students were registered for the first classes on September 26, 1906. In 1909, the school name was changed to the University of Florida, and the first women were enrolled in 1947. The enrollment now totals 46,000 students.

Fig. 3. GAINESVILLE / FLA. 1893 duplex postmark cancels 2 cent banknote on State Military Institute corner card.

The cover in Fig. 3. shows a corner card from The East Florida Seminary, Gainesville, Florida, dated 1893. It is interesting to note that it was also called a "State Military Institute". This is the earliest example of such corner card that I am aware of. The cover in Fig. 4.

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shows a later 1902 dated corner card with a much smaller but similar seal but with the writing under the eagle reading, "A State Military and Collegiate Institute". An enlargement of this seal is shown in Fig. 5. These are the only examples of East Florida Seminary corner cards that I am aware of. If other members have additional examples, please send a photocopy for publication.

Fig. 4. GAINESVILLE FLA. APR 15 1902 duplex postmark ties 2 cent banknote to East Florida Seminary corner card.

Fig. 5. Enlargement of corner card.
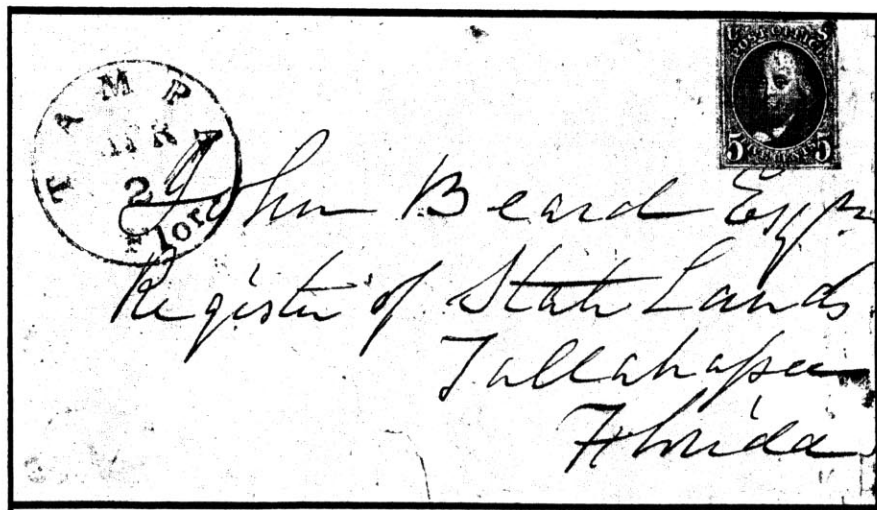
FORT MEADE – A GENERAL TOWN

David C. Lingard

The town of present day Fort Meade had its beginnings as a military fort for the U.S. Army. After the 2nd Seminole Indian War (1835-1842), a string of forts were built across central Florida to separate the white settlers to the north from the Indians in the south. During the winter of 1849, the Army was searching for a route to connect Fort Brooke (Tampa) on the west coast to Fort Pierce on the east coast. Lt. George Gordon Meade (a future Union Civil War General) was put in charge of the project. While traveling along an old Indian trail from Alafia into present day Polk County, he found a good place to cross the Peas Creek (Peace River). This also happened to be a good spot for the new post. Lt. Meade's commanding officer, General David Twiggs, was so happy with the location that he named the new post in honor of Meade. Later, President Abraham Lincoln said of Meade, "he not only was a brave and skillful officer, but a true man."

On December 19, 1849, construction of Fort Meade began. Within one month, 22 officers and 397 enlisted men were stationed at the new fort. By late 1850, a malaria outbreak occurred, and it was decided to move the fort to higher ground one mile to the West. It was left to Major Thomas Jackson (later to be better known as Confederate General "Stonewall Jackson") to dismantle the old fort and move it. Another future Confederate General, Lt. A.P. Hill, was also stationed at Fort Meade during this time. Thus, in a period of only a year, four different Generals would be associated with this small Florida outpost called Fort Meade.

The first settlers to this area probably appeared during 1851, and by late 1854, the fort was abandoned as Indian hostilities had quieted. Mail to and from Fort Meade was carried by a weekly horseback rider to and from Tampa via the Alafia trail. The earliest recorded postal history from this period is a pair of folded letters dated March 30, 1850, from Dr. B. M. Byrne to the Land Office in Tallahassee requesting to purchase 560 acres of land for $240 (less than 50c per
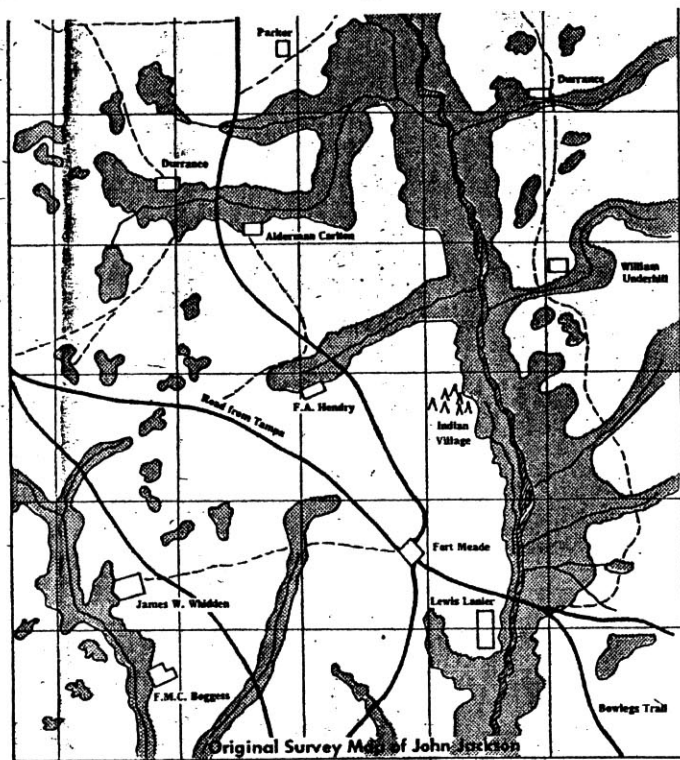
Fig. 1. TAMPA / Flor. APR 2 (1850) red postmark and killer tied U.S. #1 on folded letter to Tallahassee.

Fig. 2. Fort Meade Florida March 30th 1850 dateline.

acre) and additional sections of land at up to $1.00 per acre, with a total purchase of $1380. (Fig. 1,2,) More settlers streamed into the area (Fig. 3) and by 1855, the Hillsborough County Commission

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ordered the opening of a school at the "Fort Meade School House." Fort Meade was still part of Hillsborough County until 1861, when Polk County was formed. The Army reestablished Fort Meade for a short period in 1857, during the 3rd Seminole Indian War (aka "Billy Bowlegs War"). This war ended in May 1858, and by 1860, nearly 400 people lived in the area around Fort Meade. Louis Lanier opened a general store and sawmill and was commissioned as the first postmaster of Fort Meade on March 16, 1860. The town mainly prospered because of its central "ridge" location for the cattle industry.

Fig. 3. 1852 survey map showing location of Fort Meade.

Then came the Civil War. As the only U.S. post office in Polk County at this time, it became a Confederate post office on July 25, 1861, with Louis Lanier continuing as the C.S.A. commissioned postmaster. The U.S. Fort Meade post office was not "officially" closed until March 29, 1867, a date when all post civil war post offices not previously closed, were recorded as closed for federal bookkeeping purposes. On

May 19, 1864, Federal troops who had moved north from Fort Myers reached a nearly deserted Fort Meade and burned the town to the ground. There is no recorded Confederate postal history to or from Fort Meade.

After the war, things slowly began to look up for this devastated town. The cattle business quickly resumed and by 1867, a telegraph line (Int'l. Ocean Telegraph Co.) had been installed through Fort Meade. This line connected New York City to Havana, Cuba. A sawmill, tannery, and gristmill were also opened. The U.S. post office was reestablished on June 2, 1871, with local merchant Julius Rockner as postmaster.

An interesting event occurred in 1882. Apparently the temperance movement was alive and well in Fort Meade. When, however, the post office was "robbed", no one seemed to care much because the stolen money was rumored to buy liquor in order to start a bar. In 1883, the post office was made a money order branch and began to receive daily mail service from Tampa. (Fig. 4)
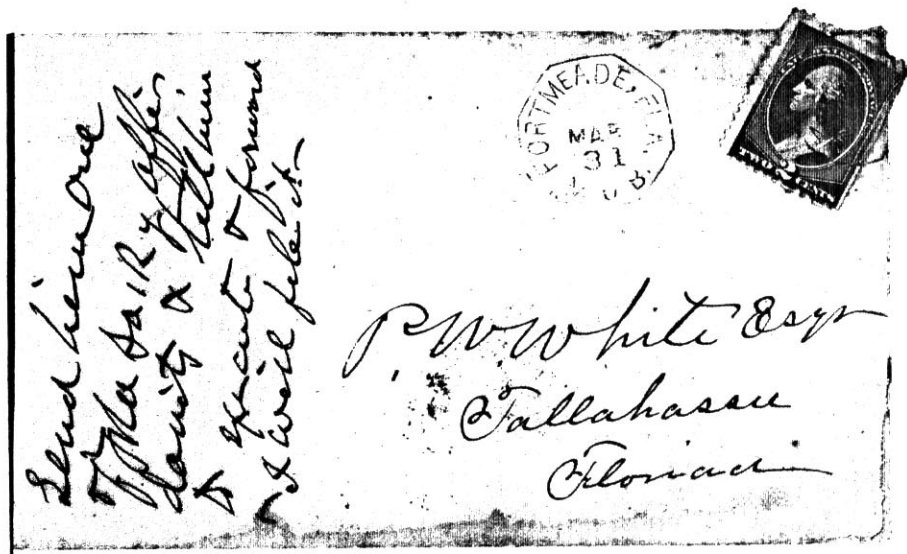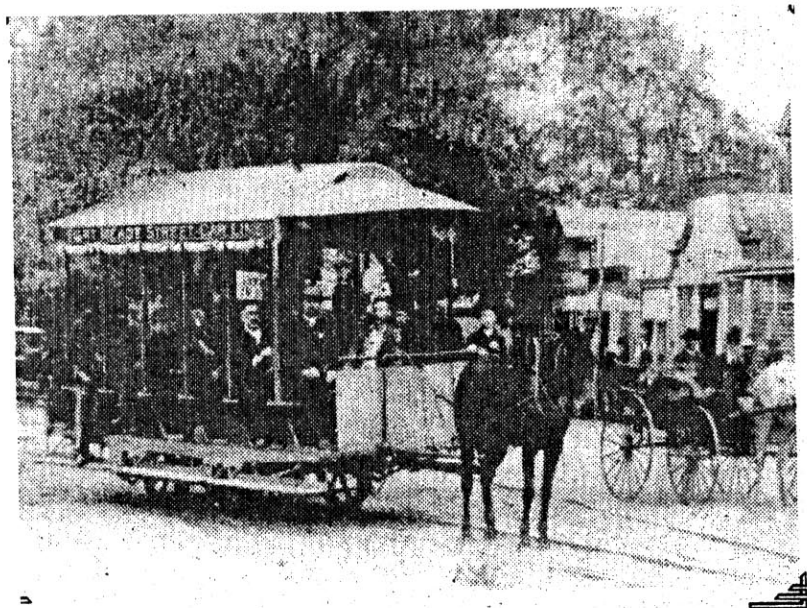

Fig. 4. FORT MEADE, FLA. / MOB 1885 postmark with unusual use of an "ADVERTISED" handstamp as killer on #210.

The Florida Southern Railroad laid a north-south track that was 2 miles to the west of the town of Fort Meade. (That line is still used by CSX today). The reason that it did not go through town is a long "political" story for another day. The railroad sold its first ticket in January 1886. At first the townspeople boycotted the new depot and businesses that opened up nearby. Then the townspeople decided to build a "streetcar" which ran on tracks and was pulled by a mule. The streetcar transported people, mail, and goods from the depot to the original business district two miles to the east. A photograph of the "Fort Meade Street Car Line" is shown in Fig. 5.
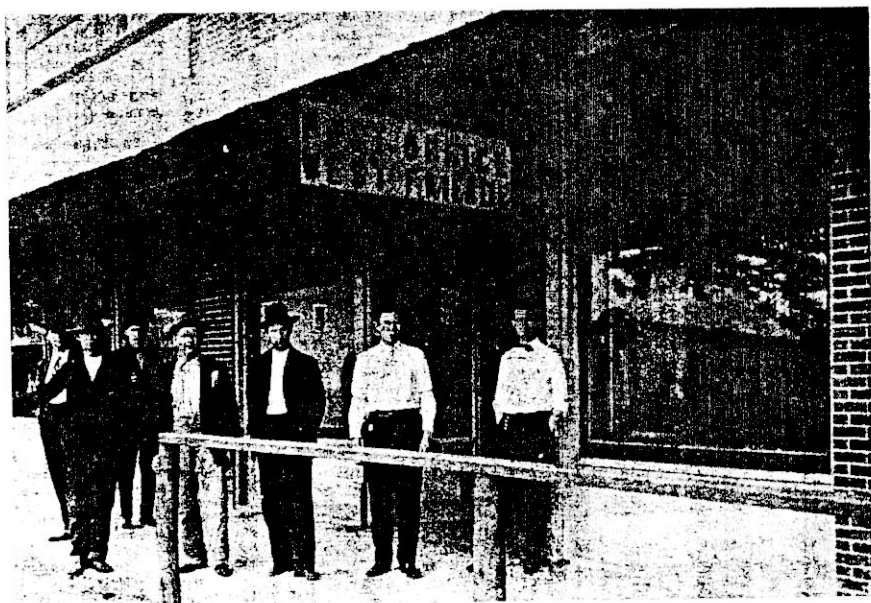

Fig. 5. Fort Meade Street Car Line.

The town of Fort Meade experienced boom and bust. The agriculture industry, especially citrus, grew at a torrid rate. English settlers poured into the area. Hamilton Disston and his agents sold thousands of acres of land, Cuban tobacco growers came and started farms, and then phosphate was found nearby, and the boom was in full force. But then, a devastating freeze occurred during the winter of 1895, which killed almost everything agricultural. That was quickly followed by a severe economic depression. The town quickly slid into near oblivion

and by the 1900 census had barely 250 residents. The only industry that was somewhat stable was phosphate. The town held on, and by the 1910 census, the population had recovered to over 1,100 people. For almost the next 100 years, the phosphate industry was the engine that ran Fort Meade.

Ever since 1886, the business district had been migrating slowly west toward the railroad track. By 1908, a controversy erupted over the location of the post office. It was decided to open another post office in the "new" town of West Fort Meade, which was locally known as "Skippertown". The West Fort Meade post office officially opened on June 26, 1908, with Leslie D. Roberts as its first postmaster. Over the next two years the business movement toward "West Fort Meade" intensified, and by 1910, it was decided to close the original post office in Fort Meade. What really happened was just a name switch.

Fig. 6. West Fort Meade post office circa 1910.

The West Fort Meade post office "officially" closed on December 19, 1910, but in reality just changed its name back to Fort Meade and Roberts continued on as postmaster. Fig. 6 shows a photograph of the

original West Fort Meade post office in 1910. There were three different postmarks from West Fort Meade and all are relatively scarce. They are recorded in Figs. 7,8,9.
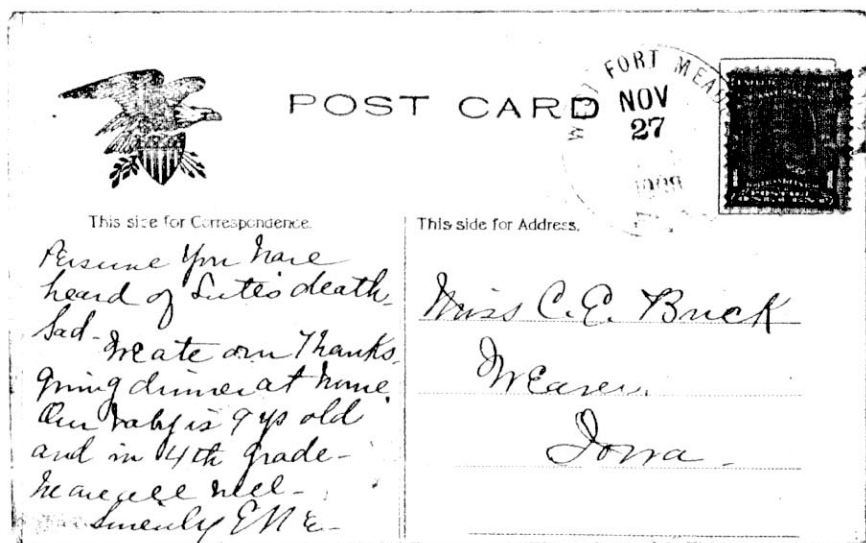

Fig. 7. WEST FORT MEADE 4-bar postmark used in 1908.
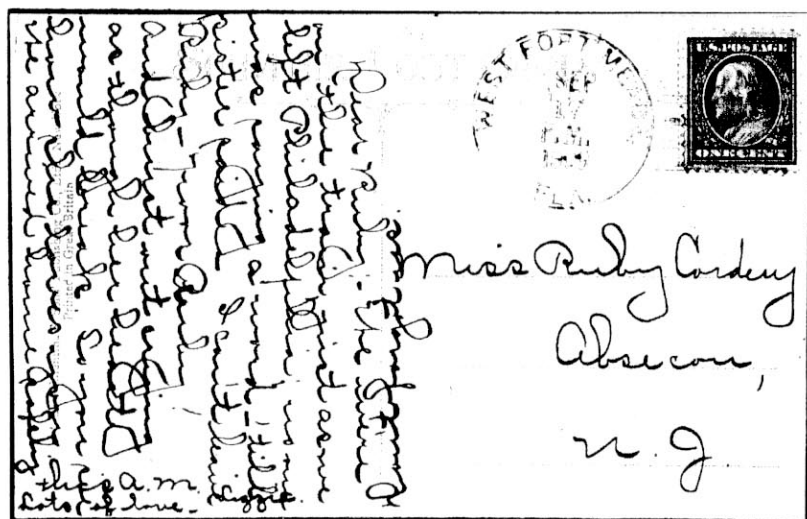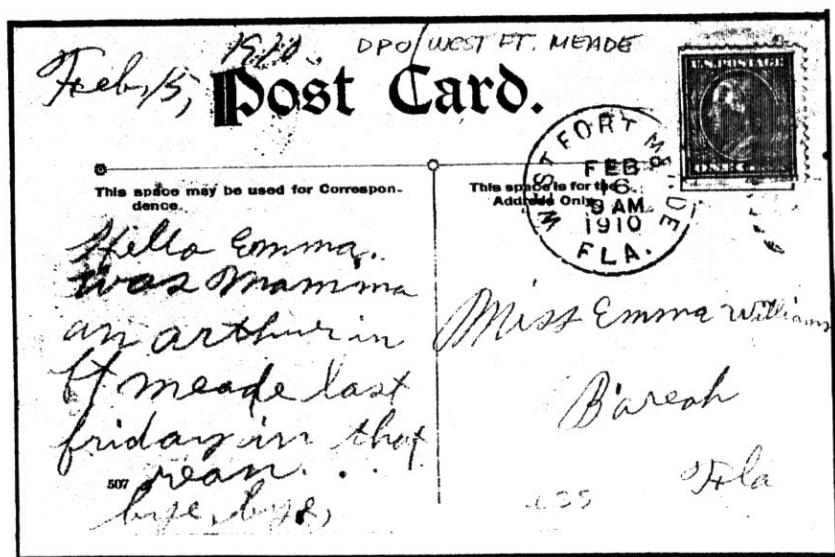

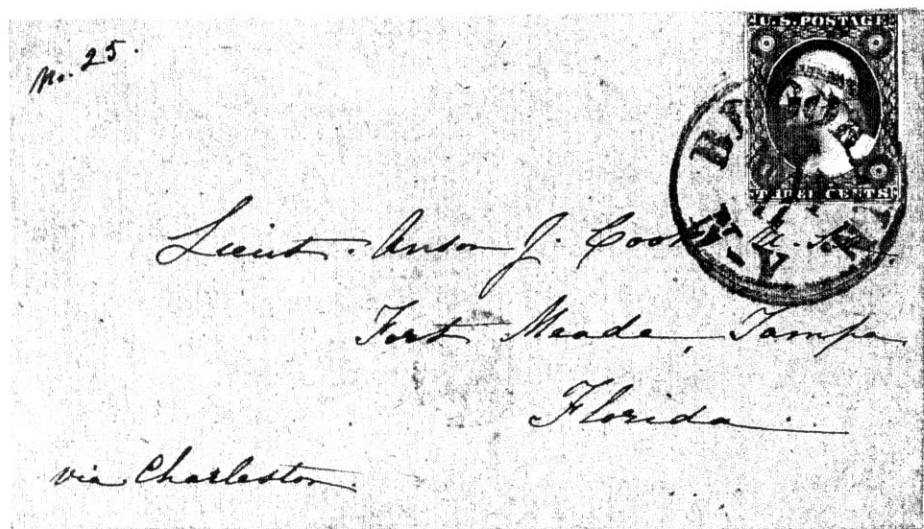**Fig. 8. WEST FORT MEADE 4-bar postmark used in 1909.**

Fig. 9. WEST FORT MEADE duplex postmark used in 1910.

In 1914 a peculiar event took place. It was reported that the people of Fort Meade had resorted to a vote and "chose" S. Edwin Booth to be their postmaster. At the time Leslie Roberts was still postmaster. Apparently the Post Office Department did not agree with the locals, because Roberts continued to serve until February 4, 1915, when Francis B. Swearingen became the new postmaster.
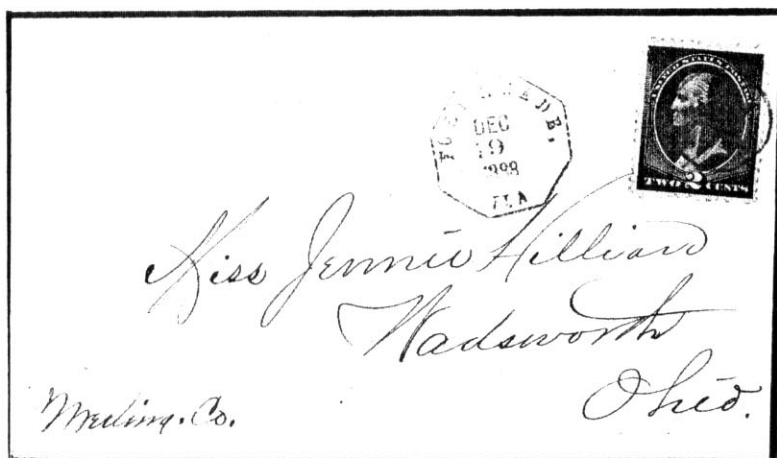
Fort Meade is a beautiful, quiet, little town on the banks of the Peace River. It is a town steeped in early Florida history. My wife, Sandra is from Fort Meade and one day we will go back to live there.

Figures 10-13 show additional Fort Meade examples. The examples reproduced in Figures 1,2,4,7,8,10,and 11 are from the collection of Deane R. Briggs. His assistance with this article is appreciated.

Editors Note: This is another nice article by FPHS member David Lingard. He is currently doing graduate work in Indiana but still finds time to help with our journal articles. I will be happy to help other members with articles on small Florida towns.

Fig. 10 1853 cover addressed to Lieut. Cook at Fort Meade during the 2ⁿᵈ Seminole Indian War with Tampa in the address to note the closest town where mail could be picked up by weekly courier.

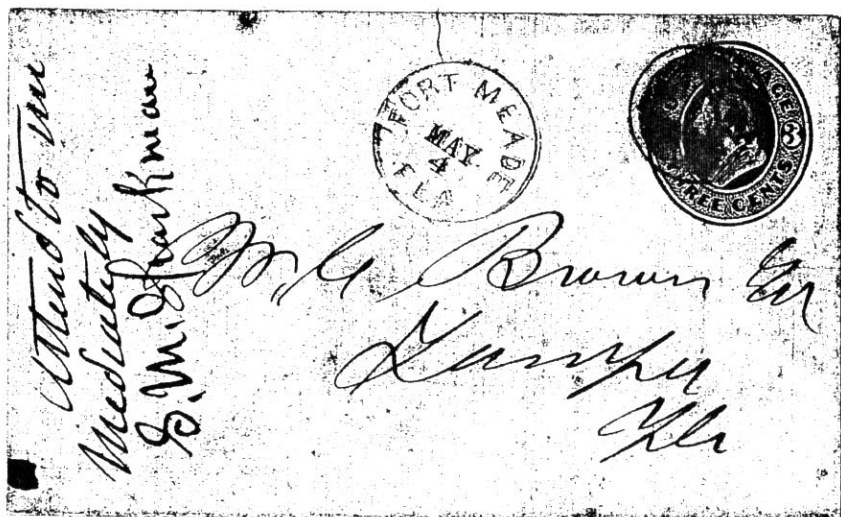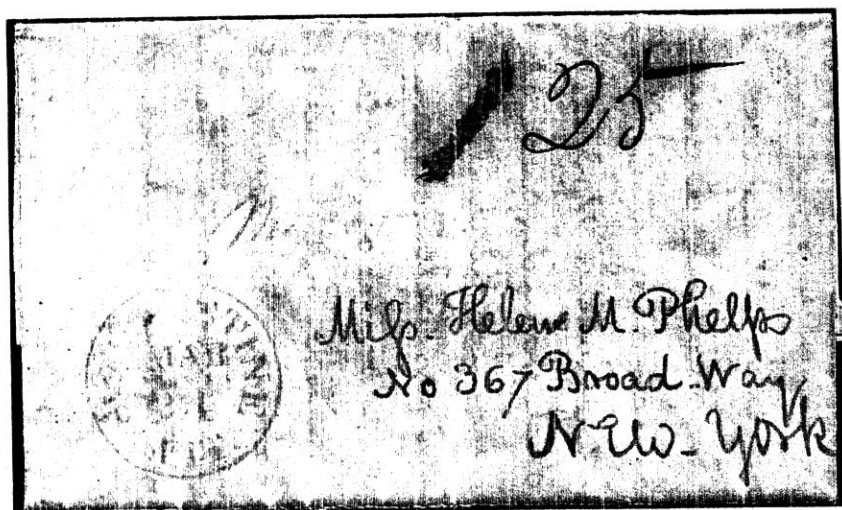**Fig. 11. FORT MEADE 1888 octagon postmark with star killer.**

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Fig. 12 FORT MEADE 1880's postmark with negative star killer.

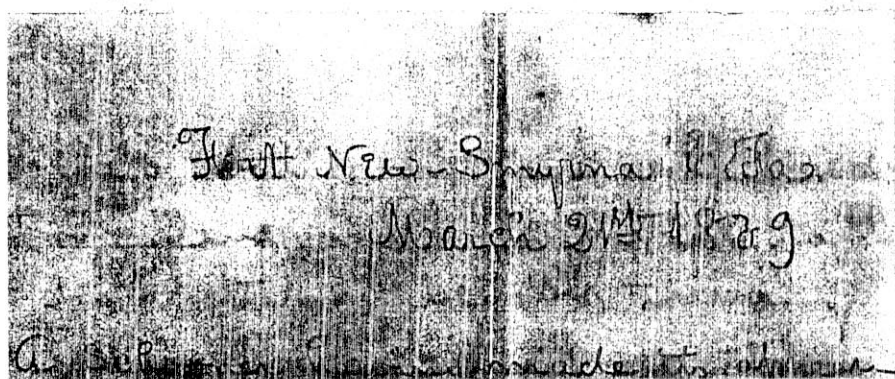**Fig. 13 Fort Meade 1890's postmarks with unusual killers.**

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FORT NEW SMYRNA – 1839 LETTER

Todd Hirn

Fig. 1. St. AUGUSTINE / Fl.T. MAR 24 red postmark and black ms. (unpaid) 25 rate on 1839 cover to New York.

Seminole Indian War forts were established in many isolated locations in Florida during each of the three periods of hostilities. Each fort was garrisoned with military personnel and often a doctor. A sutler often was present to supply non commissary goods. The function of these forts and outposts was to help the government effort to relocate the Indians and also to protect the nearby civilians and settlers in the area. Each fort was located on or near a post road and mail was carried by military courier to the nearest town with a post office. A listing of all the known Florida military forts and the post offices which serviced them are recorded in **Florida Stampless Postal History 1763-1861.** The cover recorded above is typical of Florida "fort" mail. The postmark is a common St. Augustine handstamp and no mention of the location of the letter origin is recorded. The dateline does, however, document the fort, and in this case is the first recorded example from Fort New-Smyrna, East Florida. (Fig. 2.)

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Fig. 2. Fort New-Smyrna E. Fa. March 21st 1839 dateline

Fort New Smyrna was built between February and April 1836, at the present location of the northwest corner of Riverside Drive and Andrews Street in New Smyrna. It was also called Fort Mosquito and Fort Hernandez. It was abandoned on October 26, 1853. There is no visible evidence of remains of the walls or buildings, but occasional artifacts are uncovered from the yards of homes now occupying the site.

The letter enclosure has many items of interest which will be recorded as follows:

"A schooner having made its appearance on the bar last night, I have resolved the first thing this morning to answer your letter of the 11th of Feby. The schooner brings, perhaps a thousand bushels of good corn from St. Augustine, and it is to take back six or seven hundred of bad corn, which was worthless when brought here - - and when this bad corn shall be sold in St. Augustine, it will have cost the government probably a thousand or fifteen hundred dollars." "We enjoy the mornings in different ways – the Captn mounts a horse and rides in a circuit around the fort, the doctor waits till the sun is well up and the earth aired, and I generally take a gun and stroll out. I hear the turkeys gobble and see them sometimes, and occasionally a deer bounds away from my path. I should shoot them now and then I believe, did I not wait to enjoy the sight. The other morning I heard the gobbling of a turkey, and I followed it in order to shoot him. He was on a tree in the edge of a hammock. I approached to a firing distance when he flew, and I was secretly pleased to see him elude me. The Captn however, followed him up and shot him – he was a

patriarch, weighing nearly sixteen pounds. He was an interesting bird, not only in his noble self, but from associations. His ancestors were originally Turks, and now he was found in the forests of Florida, and slain, without one to record his history, which would embrace much of that of the human race. It would be pleasant to learn whether his forefathers came in an English or a Spanish ship, whether they had handed down any stories of the Yemassees – of King Payne and of the oranges, especially whether they were actually transplanted from the old world. The sutler hunts too, and when he returns, he relates all that happened. He strives to infuse into the mind of his hearer how everything occurred, as tho he were present to see it, and not having a great command of language, he resorts to much gesture.—the doctor says that it were impossible for him to consummate a falsehood, for if he should attempt it, he would make a gesture to show to the contrary. - - - I have not received the knickerbocker which you sent me. Lil also sent me a paper, which has not come to hand. I wish however that you would have the goodness to continue sending them till I write again. There is something wrong I fear in the mails."
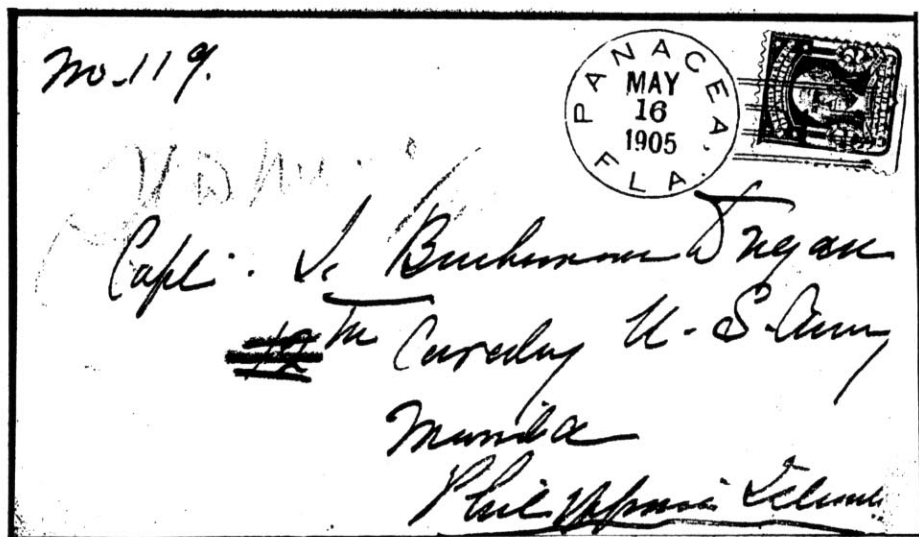
The Yamassees (or Yamasees) fought against the Creeks and English in southeastern South Carolina during the Yamasee War (1715-17). Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, most of the Yamasee women and children fled to St. Augusting to join their Spanish allies. After the English victory, the remaining tribal members escaped south to join their families in Florida.

King Payne was a Seminole chief who succeeded Cowkeeper as chief of the Alachua Seminoles. He was wounded on September 27, 1812 in a battle against Colonel Daniel Newnan and his force of 117 Georgia volunteers, raised to destroy Indian towns throughout Florida. Payne was surprised by Newnan's forces while on his way to St. Augustine to trade with the Spanish. He died shortly thereafter.

PANACEA, FLA. DOANE – A NEW LISTING

Richard F. Bergmann

PANACEA / FLA. MAY 16 1905 type II(1) Doane postmark on cover to Manila, Philippines Islands.
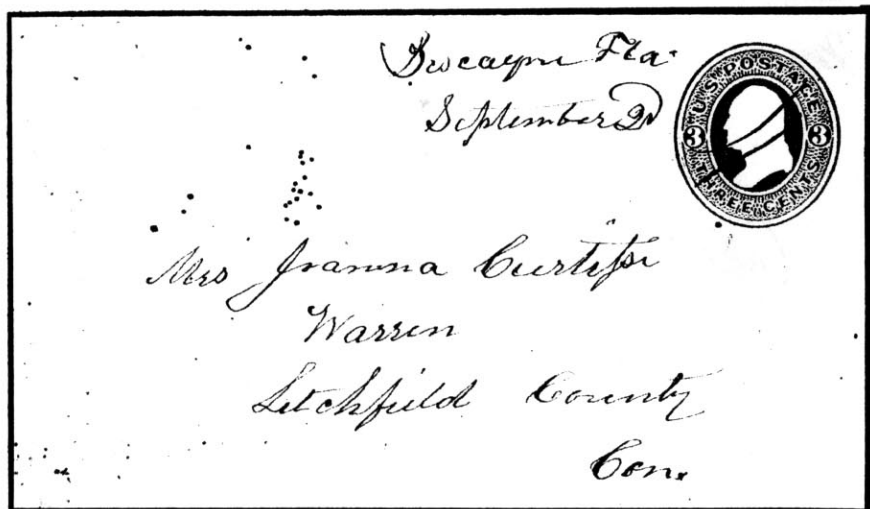
The above cover is a new Florida Doane listing from a small panhandle town. What is interesting is the usage to the Philippines and the use of a SOPCHOPPY / FLA Doane as a routing mark on the reverse. Note the 8 week transit time for arrival in Manila.

SOPCHOPPY / FLA. MAY 16 1905 type II(1) doane transit mark.

BISCAYNE – EARLIEST KNOWN USAGE

Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

**Biscayne Fla. September 2d manuscript postmark on U-160
postal entire circa 1874.**

The above cover represents the earliest known usage of a Biscayne,
Florida postmark and one of the earliest for all of South Florida. It
was one of the key Florida covers in the Bruce Ball Collection. The
Biscayne post office was established on 10 June 1870, as a name
change when the Miami post office was discontinued. The Miami post
office was re-established four years later as Maama, and was changed
back to Miami on 25 September 1877. Thus, the Biscayne post office
handled all of the mail for Dade County during the early 1870's.
There was only one other post office established in Dade County
during the 1870's, Cocoanut Grove, which existed from 6 January
1873 until 3 February 1874. A few additional post offices were
established or re-established during the population growth of South
Florida in the late1880's, but there is little surviving postal history
from any of these towns until the 1890's.