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*Promoting Philately in the Sunshine State*



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## Postal Savings System Certificate A Missed Redemption

By Steve Swain

It is difficult when a parent passes away and you, as the executor of the will, must make decisions associated with financial matters such as closing checking and savings accounts, redeeming certificates of deposit and insurance policies, selling personal property, and so on. But this obligation can also sometimes provide a lighter side with the discovery of intriguing items from many years gone by that on first blush appear to potentially have some value. Such was the case when my father recently passed away and I was sorting through items he kept in a lock box in his bedroom.



*Figure 1*  
*Postal Savings System Certificate Issued by Ybor City Station.*

Near the bottom of the box, I saw the Postal Savings System certificate shown in Figure 1. Issued by the Tampa, Florida Post Office (Ybor City Station) on October 28, 1944, the \$1 certificate was to begin accruing interest on November 11, 1944. A quick calculation told me that was 68+ years since my father purchased the certificate. College tuition for his sons or grandsons? Maybe.

On June 25, 1910, an Act of Congress established the Postal Savings System in selected post offices, effective January 1, 1911.<sup>1</sup> The legislation sought to attract deposits of people who had lost confidence in the banking system and to encourage the savings of immigrants accustomed to saving at post offices in their native coun-

*Continued on page 3*

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tries. As expected, bankers first viewed the Postal Savings System as competition. But as deposits began to accumulate, the bankers' support of the Postal Savings System grew since the law establishing the Postal Savings System directed the Post Office Department to redeposit most of the system's money in local banks.

Certificates were issued to depositors as proof of their deposit in the Postal Savings System. Local banks paid 2.5 percent interest on the deposits while the Postal Savings System paid two percent interest per year. The half percent difference in interest was intended to pay for the operation of the system.

By 1929, \$153 million was on deposit. Savings soared to \$1.2 billion during the 1930s and jumped again during World War II, peaking in 1947 at almost \$3.4 billion, with more than four million depositors using 8,141 postal units.

But on April 27, 1966, the Post Office Department stopped accepting deposits to existing accounts and halted interest payments as the yearly anniversary date of the accounts occurred. With unclaimed deposits totaling nearly \$50 million, the Postal Savings System officially ended on July 1, 1967. The funds were placed in trust with the Treasury Department and the Department was instructed in 1971 to transfer the money on deposit -- approximately \$9 million -- to various states and jurisdictions. Most importantly, according to the Postal Savings System Statute of Limitations Act of July 13, 1984 (Public Law 98-359), no redemption of certificates would be allowed more than one year from the date of the enactment, *i.e.*, after July 13, 1985.

I did not discover any other Postal Savings System certificates in my father's belongings. Possibly his purchase of that \$1 certificate was simply done on a whim and he never intended such an investment to be an inheritance for his hoped to be sons and grandsons. But the certificate for me is now a cherished, lighter side remembrance, an opportunity for redemption that I am glad my father missed.



*Figure 2*  
*Postal Savings System depositors, 1946.*

It is interesting to note that at their July 2012 national convention in Minneapolis, the National Association of Letter Carriers adopted a resolution to explore the option of restoring the Postal Savings System. They maintained that by expanding the range of products available at the post office, they will increase the revenue sources. The Association reasoned that with nine million people in the U.S. without any form of banking access and 21 million as customers of cash advance lenders or payday cash checking companies, a new Postal Savings System could generate the revenue necessary to help solve the postal service's financial deficit. What would this new Postal Savings System offer? Basic savings and checking, possibly loans. Time will tell.

#### FOOTNOTE

<sup>1</sup> Website: <https://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/postal-savings-system.pdf>.

# Jacksonville Ship 2 Marking

By Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

The cover shown here is an interesting cover sent from Key West to Columbus, Georgia by private, non-contract ship via Jacksonville. All mail at this time was sent from Key West by ship, often by a U.S. contract mail ship which could require more postage than the rate for a non-contract ship and had only once or twice monthly scheduled service.

As a result, most mail from Key West went by non-contract ship and required a two-cent ship fee in addition to the regular postage rate based on the distance. The cover in Figure 1 was sent by private ship to Jacksonville, supposedly because that would be the quickest route to get the letter into the mails going to Columbus, Georgia. However, it was datelined April 23 and not posted at Jacksonville until May 4, so one wonders if it really went on the fastest route. Jacksonville was not a normal port for mail from Key West to enter the mails. Charleston, South Carolina on the Atlantic was by far the most common port, followed by Apalachicola and St. Marks on the Gulf of Mexico. The fact that a large and almost daily steamboat traffic plied the Apalachicola River, and both contract and non-contract mail went from Apalachicola to Columbus, Georgia on the Apalachicola and Flint rivers, would lead me to question why this cover went via Jacksonville. Perhaps there were no ships leaving Key West for Apalachicola for some time or there was some weather activity in the Gulf.



**Figure 1**  
**“JACKSONVILLE / FLOR. MAY 4 (1847)” red postmark with manuscript unpaid Ship 2 + 10 = 12 rate on cover from Key West to Columbus, Georgia.**



## Photos from the past

At the 1997 Florida Postal History Annual Meeting at the Sarasota National Stamp Exhibition, FPHS charter members Ted Light, Don Thompson, Herb McNeal, Charles Rice, Bill Fox and Gordon McHenry (from left) are shown. These early members were a driving force in establishing our society and contributed articles for our journal and helped with our 1999 Florida Stampless Postal History 1767-1861 book. Unfortunately, they are now all deceased.



# U.S. Postal Notes, series of 1883-84 Florida Issues

By Jack Harwood

One of the more obscure U.S. postal issues is the Postal Note series introduced on September 3, 1883, and discontinued at the end of June 1894. Examples issued in Florida are scarce, with only a dozen recorded survivors. The Postal Note was a type of money order form intended to facilitate the sending of small amounts of money through the mail. It could be issued only in amounts less than \$5.00. A fee of three cents, indicated by the imprinted fee “stamp” on the face of the note, was charged for each note.

The intent was to eliminate the sending of coins or adhesive stamps through the mail. Fractional currency had served that purpose until withdrawn in 1876. But from 1876 until the introduction of the Postal Note, the Money Order system was the only option to send money. Since money orders were cumbersome to use, requiring advice to be sent from the issuing office to the paying office before payment could be made, they were often not an attractive option for sending small amounts.

A Postal Note of the initial issue could be paid only at the Money Order Office written on the face of the note. This created problems in sparsely populated areas of the country, including much of Florida. To be designated a Money Order Office, a post office was required to do at least \$250 in annual business. Of the approximately 45,000 post offices in the United States in 1883, only about 6,000 were Money Order Offices. Thus, rural areas were unable to effectively use Postal Notes. Recognizing some of the difficulties of receiving payment for a Postal Note only at a specific Money Order Office, in late 1884 regulations were changed to allow payment at “Any” Money Order Office. This did not help many of the less populated areas, but it was an improvement over the previous requirement.



**Figure 1**  
*Postal Note Type 1, yellow paper with design in brown.  
The issuing post office was Fort Meade.*

Postal Notes were issued in five different basic designs with two sub-types. Type 1 (**Figure 1**) was issued on yellow paper, with the basic design in brown. The name of the issuing post office (Fort Meade) is imprinted at the top, with the serial number (91) in red to the left of the office name. Each office had its own serial numbers, beginning at “1” and continuing consecutively throughout all design changes. The amount of the Note (35 cents) is handwritten in the space before “cents” and punched out in the three columns at right (“0” Dollars, “3” Dimes, “5” Cents). The Note is payable at the Money Order Office in Orlando (handwritten), and date stamped in the top left circle, “Fort Meade, Fla./28/Jan/1884/M.O.B.” (M.O.B. is an abbreviation for “Money Order Business” and was intended for use only on Postal Notes or Money Order forms, although it is occasionally seen on covers from a few post offices). The reverse bears an ornate design in blue (appearing to be green since the paper is yellow). Only a single Type 1 Postal Note has been recorded from Florida.

The only recorded Type 2 Postal Note from Florida was issued in Starke, December 23, 1884, in the amount of 50

*Continued on page 6*

cents (**Figure 2**). It is serial number 000727, payable in Boston, Massachusetts. Printed on grayish paper, the serial number is red, and the town name is dark blue. The amount of the note is handwritten, “Fifty” Cents, and also punched out in the two vertical columns at the right edge (the left column is “dimes,” which in this case is “5,” and the right column is “cents,” which in this case is “0”). Four “dollar coupons” were originally attached to the left edge of the Note. If the amount desired were \$1 or more, the \$1 coupon was to be left attached to the note. If \$2 or more, both the \$1 and \$2 coupons were kept intact. And so forth, up to \$4. Postmaster A.E. Morgan’s signature appears below “Fifty,” although it appears his wife or another family member may have signed his name, as a second “Morgan” appears below the printed “Postmaster.” In the space at the bottom of the note, the bearer was to sign that money had been received. In this case, C.M. Castle signed the note, but there is no evidence it was actually submitted for payment. Perhaps he signed, anticipating a visit to the post office, and then forgot. Or perhaps he presented the note at a post office other than Boston, and payment was refused. We shall never know.

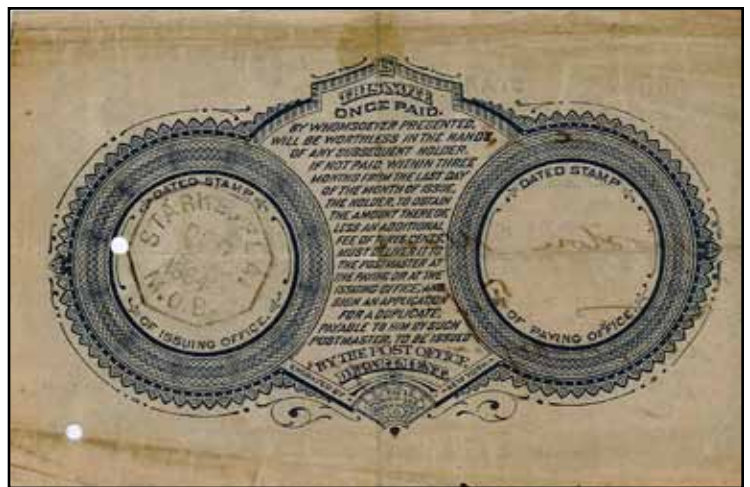
The reverse of the Starke note (**Figure 3**), all in dark blue, and bears two circles. In the left circle, the issuing post office date stamp was applied, reading “Starke, Fla. / Dec / 23 / 1884 / M.O.B.” If the Note had been redeemed (“cashed”), the paying post office date stamp would appear in the right circle. The only recorded Type 2a Postal Note (**Figure 4**) was issued in Tampa, November 25, 1887, and is handstamped “Any Money Order Office” in red on the central line. In the amount of 25 cents, it was not cashed.

Type 3 was identical to Types 2 and 2a, except that “Any Money Order Office” was engraved on the central line. No Florida Type 3 issues are recorded. Types 1, 2, 2a and 3 each have the legend “Engraved by the Homer Lee Bank Note Co. N.Y.” in a small tablet at the bottom center of the note. Types 4 and 4a were produced by the American Bank Note Co. N.Y., and the tablet at bottom center bears that company’s name. Otherwise, they are virtually identical to Types 2 and 3. Type 4 has imprinted “188\_” in the date line, while Type 4a has “189\_”. Once again, no Florida survivors are recorded.



**Figure 2**

*The only recorded Type 2 Postal Note from Florida, issued in Starke on December 23, 1884.*



**Figure 3**

*Reverse side of Starke Postal Note shown in Figure 2. It is dark blue, with two circles.*



**Figure 4**

*The only recorded Type 2a Postal Note was issued in Tampa on November 25, 1887.*



Type 5 was produced by Dunlap & Clarke, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and that name appears in the tablet. Most of the recorded examples issued in Florida are Type 5. **Figure 5** shows an example issued in Lake Como, Florida on June 29, 1894 (one day prior to the June 30 withdrawal of Postal Notes).



**Figure 5**  
*Type 5 Postal Note. This one was issued in Lake Como, Florida on June 29, 1894.*

Postal Notes were not intended to survive. Once cashed, they were to be sent to Post Office Headquarters for accounting and subsequent destruction. However, more than 2,000 surviving examples are recorded from every existing state and a number of territories. The majority of survivors are in the amount of one cent or two cents, probably purchased as souvenirs. The Starke note, in the amount of 50 cents, dated December 23, was perhaps intended as a Christmas present.

So where are the surviving Florida Postal Notes? Perhaps your collection has one or more. Over the past 25 years, the author and several other collectors have compiled and maintained a census of survivors. Can you add to the census? If so, please contact the author so we can include your information.

**Postscript**

Postal Notes of the 1883-1894 series are not listed in the Scott catalog, although they should be. They fit the description of postal stationery, as they are postal paper bearing an imprinted fee stamp, a fee that pays for the safe transport of money between two parties. The International Federation of Philately (FIP) recognizes Postal Notes (known as Postal Orders in some countries) as a sub-category of postal stationery for purposes of exhibition. The *Higgins & Gage Catalog of Worldwide Postal Stationery* lists U.S. Postal Notes of the 1883-1894 series. Scott editors have consistently refused to consider listing them, maintaining that Postal Notes are more numismatic than philatelic. Perhaps they do not consider the imprinted fee stamp a “stamp” because it does not look like a stamp. Or perhaps they do not have enough information to do a proper listing. Regardless, they are not listed. They are, nevertheless, interesting and collectible, and Florida issues are particularly desirable.

For further reading on the subject, *The Congress Book 1997* (Pacific 97 Handbook) article by Peter Martin titled “Postal Notes: The First Issues 1883-1894,” pages 306-332, gives detailed background and statistical information.

Table of Recorded Postal Notes Issued in Florida				
Type	City	Serial Number	Date of Issue	Amount
1	Fort Meade	91	Jan. 28, 1884	35¢
2	Starke	727	Dec. 23, 1884	50¢
2a	Tampa	5311	Nov. 25, 1887	25¢
3			None recorded	
4			None recorded	
4a			None recorded	
5	Jacksonville	65096	June 9, 1894	2¢
5	Jacksonville	65826	June 30, 1894	5¢
5	Key West	15889	Jan. 10, 1894	1¢
5	Key West	15890	Jan. 10, 1894	1¢
5	Lake Como	326	June 29, 1894	5¢
5	Pensacola	30182	May 11, 1894	2¢
5	Tallahassee	14381	May 8, 1894	2¢
5	Weirsdale	345	June 30, 1894	2¢
5	Winter Park	3999	June 15, 1894	1¢

## Registered “Add, Florida” postmark

By Deane R. Briggs, M.D.



Figure 1

Registered “Add, Fla/Nov 4/90” manuscript postmark on cover to Boston.

The cover in *Figure 1* is unusual in that the manuscript postmark incorporates “Registered” in the postmark instead of just writing or handstamping the word somewhere else on the envelope. The town of Add must have been a very small village in northern Hernando County and is noted on period maps from 1890 as being on a road from Brooksville to Homosassa (*Figure 2*). It was located near Lake Lindsey, and it is likely that the present day town of Lake Lindsey is located at the original site of Add.

Addison P. McKeown was commissioned postmaster when the post office was established on October 8, 1884. The post office was discontinued 10 years later on August 15, 1894 with mail handled by the Brooksville post office which was about six miles south of Add. The Add Post Office must have been a Class 5 office, handling limited mail. The fact that the postmaster used a manuscript postmark six years after the post office was established instead of purchasing his own handstamp device attests to this. This is the only cover I have seen from Add.

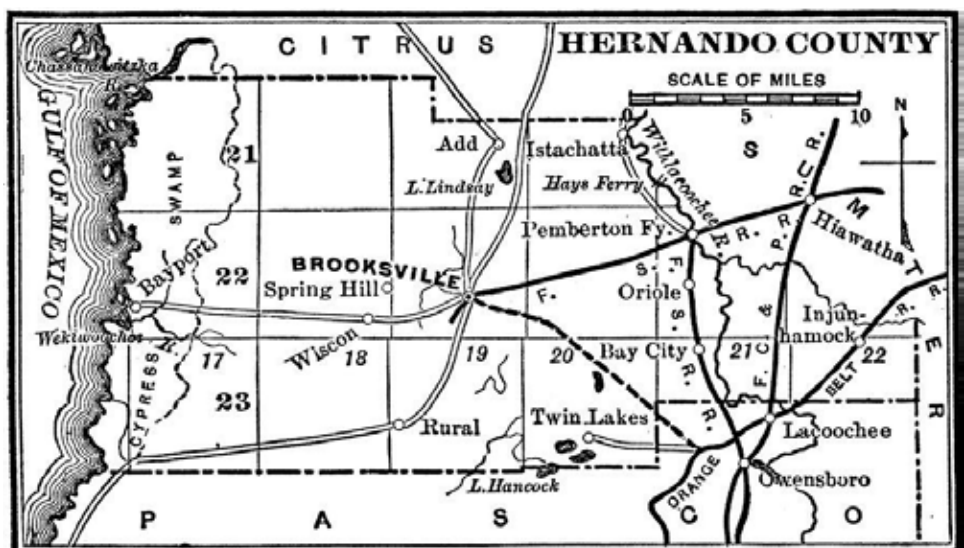


Figure 2

Period map with location of “Add” (upper center), circa 1890.



# Postmasters & Politics

## The Jacksonville Blue Shield Cancel

By Todd D. Hause

On February 7, 1864 the fourth and final Union Occupation of Jacksonville began. It is reported that only 25 families remained in the city as a result of the three prior occupations.<sup>1</sup> The railroad tracks to Jacksonville had been dismantled by the Confederate Army, supplies and materials were short and difficult to receive. From this handful of people, on February 15, 1864, one week after Union forces arrived, E.H. (Edward Harrison) Reed became the 10th postmaster of Jacksonville. The details of his appointment and life prior to this time are yet unknown to the author. The earliest personal record found for him is a copy of his weekly newspaper called the *Jacksonville Herald*, published September 15, 1865, well over a year after his appointment as postmaster. Of interest in this paper is that Norman Bronson, postmaster of Fernandina and J. W. Allen, postmaster of St. Augustine, are listed as agents for it.<sup>2</sup> This appears to be a common practice of the times as postmasters frequently dispersed newspapers and collected subscription funds for them. It has even been noted that postmasters could be held financially responsible for dispersing newspapers to delinquent subscribers and failing to collect the past due funds.

Along with his duties as postmaster, Reed continued to publish his newspaper. In October 1865, Reed and his new partner, Hodgson, renamed the paper *The Florida Times*. The tone of the paper became more aligned with the “Radical Republican” faction of the Republican Party who after the war controlled the U.S. Congressional “Joint Committee on Reconstruction.” In Congress the most influential Radical Republicans were Senator Charles Sumner and House Representative Thaddeus Stevens. After the election of 1866, the Radical Republicans had full control of the Congress, began to set their sights on President Andrew Johnson and nearly succeeded in their efforts to impeach him.<sup>3</sup>

*Figure 1*  
**JACKSONVILLE / Blue Shield**  
**Cancel. On Scott #94, 1861**  
**three-cent design, “F” grill**  
**stamp with the Jacksonville blue**  
**shield cancel.**



Edward H. Reed’s articles and editorials regularly attracted the attention of other Florida newspaper editors and readers. Some of these resulted in an ongoing banter between him, these papers and their readers. During this period, Harrison Reed was appointed Special Agent for the Post Office assigned to Florida under the Johnson Administration. His notices from the Post Office Department were published in *The Florida Times* and other area newspapers. Harrison Reed, who later became the ninth governor of Florida, occasionally wrote letters to the editors along with his notices. The similarity of name and political conviction between these two men at times led to them being confused with each other in newspaper editorials.

In conjunction with the prominent topic of Reconstruction, the issue of “The Oath” as prescribed by the Acts of July 2, 1862 and March 3, 1863, requiring uniform loyalty to the government during the rebellion as the condition of holding office and for the conveying of the mails,<sup>4</sup> continued to be a source of ongoing debate between area newspapers and Union officials. The former felt that The Oath was the main reason for the slow or lack of restoration of postal service in many areas of the state and who also believed it was inhibiting Florida’s ability to reconstruct. In March or April 1866, *The Florida Times* became the property of W. H. Christy. The tone of

*Continued on page 10*

the paper changed but Postmaster Reed continued to publish post office hours, unclaimed letter lists and other postal notifications in *The Florida Times*, as did Special Agent Harrison Reed. In July 1866, Special Agent Harrison Reed published a list of approximately 60 postmaster appointments for offices that had been reopened in Florida.

As was law at the time, postmasters of a certain class post office were appointed by nomination from the president of the United States. These nominations were sent through his secretary to the Senate where they were read and referred to the Committee on Post-Offices and Post-Roads. The Committee would then report to the Senate negatively or favorably on the nomination. If favorably, the Senate would advise and consent to the nomination. The date of Senate consent is generally recorded as the postmaster's appointment date. During the late 1860s, five post offices in Florida were considered "presidential." These were Tallahassee, Pensacola, Jacksonville, Key West and Fernandina. A number of nominations for "Deputy Postmaster," the official title for a postmaster since he was considered to be a deputy for the Postmaster General, were made by Presidents Lincoln, Johnson and Grant for these five post offices during the 1865 to 1869 period, with all being confirmed by the Senate. The earliest nomination for Edward H. Reed as Deputy Postmaster of Jacksonville was made by President Lincoln on March 10, 1865 due to "the office having become Presidential."<sup>5</sup> His nomination received Senate consent on March 11.

Since 1865 Florida had been under what was termed as Radical Reconstruction (*i.e.*, military rule). In early 1868,

Florida enacted a new state constitution and in June 1868, Harrison Reed was elected governor by the people. He assumed office on June 8, 1868; however, it was not until July 4, 1868 that the federal commander of Florida recognized the constitution and the election as valid, giving Reed control of the state.<sup>6</sup> Edward H. Reed continued as Jacksonville's postmaster, being re-confirmed through the Johnson administration. As the 1868 presidential election, the first since the great conflict, drew near, he most likely was keenly aware that with a new administration would come new changes for Florida's Presidential Post Offices.

Reed had seen Jacksonville suffer through the years of occupation and reconstruction. He regularly had difficulty publishing his newspaper for lack of paper and other supplies. He questioned the motives of the railroad and others in not establishing regular transportation to Jacksonville to supply lumber and other needed materials when large supplies were known to exist in neighboring counties or being transported through the state. By all accounts, Edward H. Reed appears to have been an intelligent, ambitious, enterprising man who recognized that keeping his position as postmaster offered him an opportunity to do and achieve more. The fact that his former post office superior, Harrison Reed, was now governor, must have given him great hope. By late summer as the political jousting between the Democrats and the Radical Republicans escalated toward the election, it appears a new postmark began showing up in Jacksonville, a blue Union shield. Shown in *Figure 2*, both stamps are Scott #94, the 1861 three-cent design, "F" grill issues. The advertising piece shows a partial Jacksonville blue 24 mm,



*Figure 2*

**JACKSONVILLE / Blue Shield on Pieces.**

***Both stamps are Scott #94, 1861 three-cent design, "F" grill issues. The advertising piece shows a partial Jacksonville blue 24mm small date cds with the month ending in "N" and the day ending in "2."***

small date, CDS with the month ending in (N) and the day ending in (2). The author has knowledge of at least six examples of the Jacksonville Union shield cancels. I have three, Dr. Deane Briggs has two, and then there is the one referenced by Skinner-Eno as PS-SD 447, which I have not seen on the stamp.

All three that I have are on the Scott #94, 1861 three-cent design, "F" grill issue. The earliest known use for this stamp is listed as March 21, 1868. The one example I have with a partial Jacksonville circle date cancel would have been struck in either June 1868 or possibly January or June 1869, because of the visible (N) from the month portion of the cancel. The two that Dr. Briggs has are on cover (*Figure 3*) and the stamp information and strike dates have yet to be confirmed. My best guess from the scan he sent me is that they are from early 1869. One appears to have a manuscript notation of February 2, 1869. Note the manuscript date on the upper cover. My theory is that the Jacksonville, blue Union shield cancel was only used from late 1868 until early 1869 and was a political statement by Postmaster Reed, symbolizing his allegiance to the Union and support for Grant in the election.



**Figure 3**  
**JACKSONVILLE / Blue Shield on cover.**

It's worth noting just how this all worked out for Postmaster Reed. As a soldier, Ulysses S. Grant was at times seen as an enforcer of the Radical Republican agenda, particularly when it came to matters of the Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction. After entering office as president, some felt that he further aligned himself with the Radical Republicans. On April 2, 1869 Grant transmitted through his secretary the nomination of Edward H. Reed as Deputy Postmaster of Jacksonville. On April 7, Grant withdrew Reed's nomination along with the nominations of three other postmasters from other states.<sup>8</sup> During the month of April, President Grant replaced the incumbent postmasters in four of the five Presidential post offices in Florida.

On April 19, Grant again sent his nomination for Jacksonville Deputy Postmaster to the Senate. Again he nominated Edward H. Reed. Reed received Senate consent on April 21, 1869.<sup>9</sup> He was the only presidential nominated postmaster in Florida to retain his position in the new administration. He served until July 26, 1871 and

*Continued on page 12*



became one of the founders of The Great Southern Railway along with Governor Harrison Reed.

There are still many questions to be answered in this story of Edward H. Reed and the Jacksonville blue Union shield cancel, but it is conceivable that considering the time frame of use, the events of the day, the political climate and the political views of the Jacksonville postmaster, a symbolic statement of support for the Union and its Republican Presidential candidate was devised. Perhaps even to celebrate Grant's victory.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Deane R. Briggs, "Jacksonville, Florida During the Civil War," *Florida Postal History Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (September 1995), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> George A. Smathers Libraries, Internet website: <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00050171/00001>.

<sup>3</sup> Internet website: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radical\\_Republican](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radical_Republican).

<sup>4</sup> *Annual Report of the Postmaster General of the United States for Fiscal Year 1865*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> 39th Congress, *U.S. Senate Executive Journal*, Internet website: [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llej&fileName=014/llej014.db&recNum=286&itemLink=D?hlaw:2:/temp/~ammem\\_590W::%230140287&linkText=1](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llej&fileName=014/llej014.db&recNum=286&itemLink=D?hlaw:2:/temp/~ammem_590W::%230140287&linkText=1).

<sup>6</sup> Internet website: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrison\\_Reed\\_\(politician\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrison_Reed_(politician)).

<sup>7</sup> Hubert C. Skinner and Amos Eno, *U.S. Cancellations 1845-1869*. (State College, Pennsylvania: American Philatelic Society, 1980), p. 205.

<sup>8</sup> 41st Congress, *U.S. Senate Executive Journal*, Internet website: [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llej&fileName=019/llej019.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/hlaw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(ej0191\)\):%230190001&linkText=1](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llej&fileName=019/llej019.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(ej0191)):%230190001&linkText=1).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

**Have**  
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# *Astor, Florida: a quiet little tourist site on the St. Johns River*

By Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

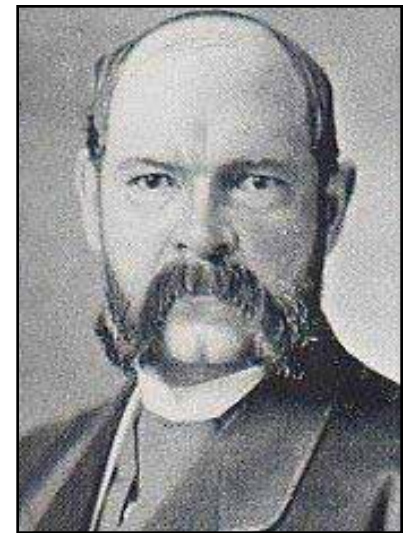
The town of Astor, Florida is currently a quiet little tourist site on the St. Johns River with a population of only 2,000 in 1987. Its history is a familiar story of boom to bust for many small towns in Florida. During the latter part of the 19th century, it was a flourishing tourist mecca with steamboats arriving with northerners planning to stay at the Astor House or to connect with a three-foot wide narrow gauge train to go inland to other Lake County towns such as Sellers Lake, Summit, Altoona, Umatilla, Fort Mason, Eustis and Lane Park. An early settler was J.G. Cade, who arrived in 1884 at the age of 11 with his parents from Kentucky. He related that "Astor was so crowded that it was impossible to find lodging for that night. It took the incoming boat several hours to unload and reload for its return trip."<sup>1</sup>

Astor is located on the western bank of the St. Johns River, across from the town of Volusia. It was a prime location on a bend of the river and a French Huguenot colony was established at the site in 1562 only to be destroyed by a Spanish attack in 1566. It was the site of a Timucua Indian settlement when Don Pedro Menendez explored the St. Johns River in 1596. His diary relates, "We found the third village of the savages on the West Bank, halfway between a very big lake (Lake George) and a smaller one farther upstream (Lake Dexter) on a likable spot in the shade of formidable trees." In 1763, during the British Period, James Spalding and Roger Keisell established two trading posts on the St. Johns River. The "upper store" was located at Astor, the "lower store" south of present day Palatka. Spalding chose the Astor site since it was the crossing of three Indian trails and was the site for launching their canoes for fishing or hunting parties.

The botanist John Bartram and his son visited the site in 1765 to study the flora and fauna of the St. Johns area. They stayed several weeks at Spalding's "Upper Store" and Bartram devoted 72 pages describing the area in his book *Travels*. He noted "this blessed land where the gods have amassed into one heap all the flowering plants, birds, fish and other wildlife of two continents in order to turn the rushing streams, the silent lake shores and the awe-abiding woodlands of this mysterious land into a true Garden of Eden." Bartram is also credited with making the first sighting of a royal palm tree in North America.

In 1769, British Governor of Florida James Grant promised Spalding to make a town out of his "upper store" but never finalized the plans. In 1774, Indians ransacked the store but agreed to pay for the damages when Spalding threatened closure. By 1776 Spalding was in business with William Panton, Thomas Forbes and John Leslie who became the biggest Indian traders in both East Florida and the Pensacola area. The firm became John Forbes & Company in 1804.

In 1819, Moses E. Levy was granted and purchased huge tracts of land in Florida from the Spanish crown which eventually totaled over 80,000 acres. He established two plantations, one near present day Gainesville and the

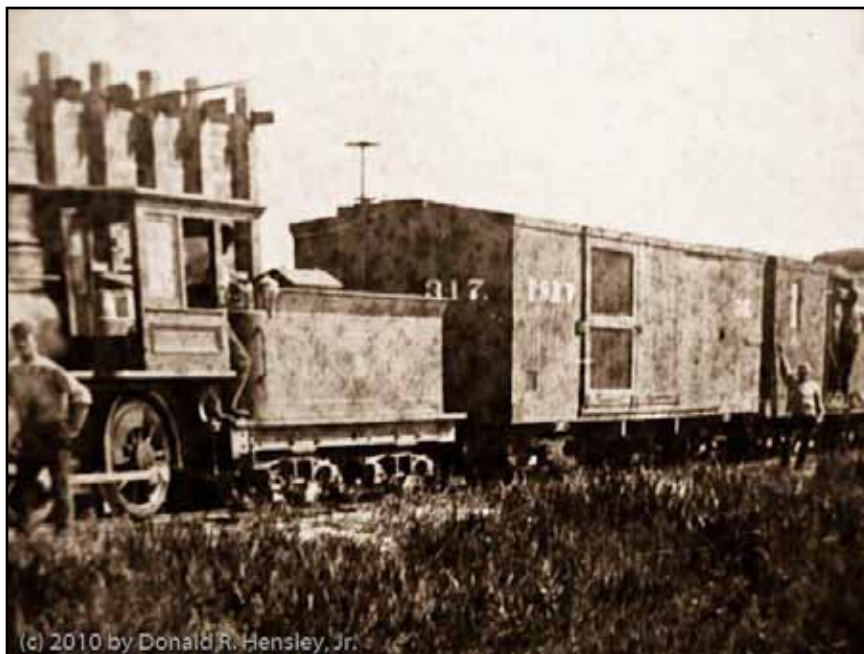


**Figure 1**  
*William Backhouse Astor, Jr.*  
(1829-1892).

*Continued on page 14*

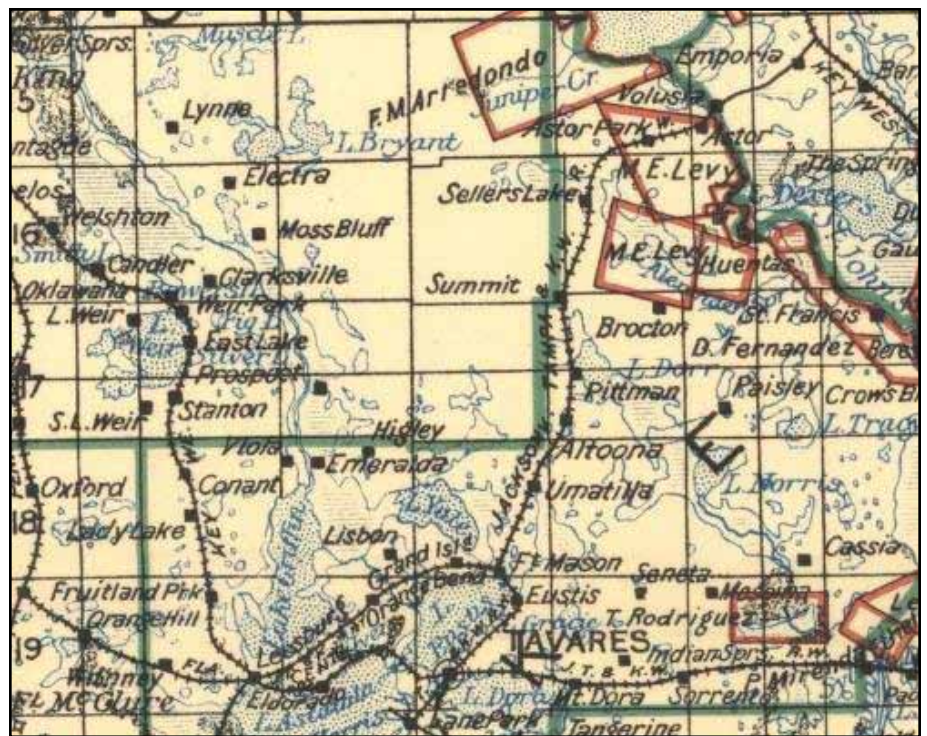
other called Hope Hill on the St. Johns River. He built his plantation home on a hill which is currently Astor Park. He raised oranges and indigo until the mansion was burned by Indians.

William B. Astor, Jr., the grandson of the famed New York John Jacob Astor family, was less interested in the family financial business and more time in yachting, breeding race horses and in Florida land development.<sup>2</sup> He spent his winters in Jacksonville aboard his yacht *Ambassadors*, at the time the largest private yacht in the world. The summers were spent riding horseback at his estate, Ferncliff, on the Hudson River. His horse "Vagrant" won the 1876 running of the Kentucky Derby. In 1874, he purchased 12,905.93 acres from the Levy estate with partners William S. Boyd and Richard McLaughlin. This property was laid out into 20 acre lots surrounding a downtown square with roads on all sides. He named the town Manhattan and donated land for a schoolhouse and free cemetery. In 1878 the Astor House was completed which later housed a post office and Clyde Line steamship agency office. Manhattan became a booming town when Astor built the St. Johns & Lake Eustis Railway which ran from the Astor Landing on the St. Johns River to connect with towns in the "Great Lakes Region" of Florida which included Lakes Eustis, Dora, Harris and Griffin (*Figure 2*).



*Figure 3*

*St. Johns & Lake Eustis Railway, which ran from Astor Landing on the St. Johns River to connect with interior towns.*



*Figure 2*

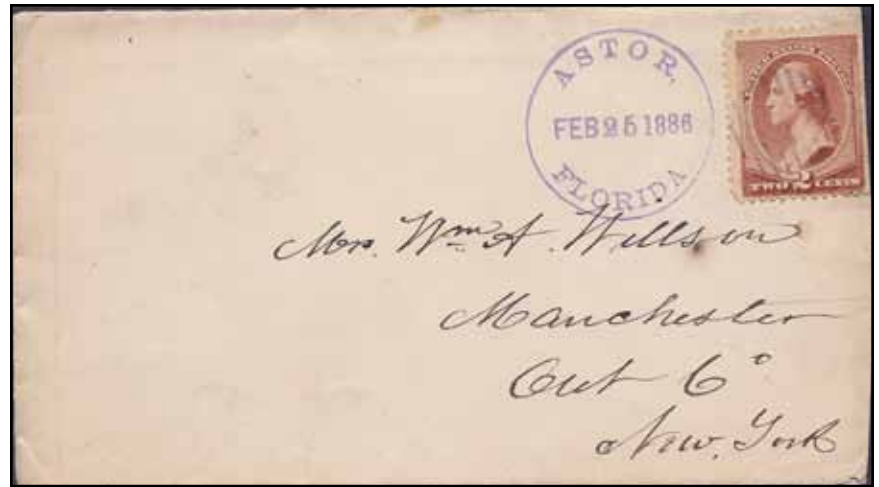
*An 1893 map showing narrow gauge rail line from Astor to Astor Park and connecting with lake towns to the south.*

This was a three foot wide narrow gauge railway which changed ownership several times as the line was extended to include other towns (*Figure 3*).

The town name changed from Manhattan to Astor when the post office was established on December 22, 1884.<sup>3</sup> William H. Bryan was the initial postmaster (*Figure 4*). The town of Astor catered to not only the wealthy friends of William Astor who built winter cottages there, but also to those of lesser means who built permanent homes seeking good health. By 1890 there were two general stores and several hotels. The enclosure in the cover in *Figure 4* tells his wife of the 70 degree weather, boating on Lake George and family members regaining health and has two dried flowers which he included for her.



William Astor became fascinated with Florida grapefruit and had visions of an expanded market of the fruit to New York. At the time there was limited availability of grapefruit in the north. He liked grapefruit so well he added it to the breakfast tables of the local Astor House as well as the New York Astoria (later the Waldorf-Astoria). He planted orchards and built shipping piers and wharfs on the St. Johns River but died of an aneurism on April 25, 1892 and never lived to see his venture grow into full production.



**Figure 4**  
**“ASTOR, FLORIDA. FEB 25 1888” magenta postmark with grid cancelled two-cent banknote on cover to New York.**

A small lake just west of Astor was named Lake Schermerhorn in 1875 after William Astor’s wife Caroline Schermerhorn Astor. Caroline was a New York socialite and

spent most of her time in New York or Newport, hosting events for the elite. A small community developed on the shores of Lake Schermerhorn which was named Astor Park. A post office was also established there on September 22, 1890 with John W. Caldwell as postmaster (**Figure 5**).



**Figure 5**  
**“ASTOR PARK / FLA. NOV 10” postmark with killer cancelling banknotes on ST. JOHNS & LAKE EUSTIS RY. corner card cover to Summit, a town farther down the line.**

in Florida which had been the major income producing crop for small farmers in the area. Two full sized railroad lines expanded in Florida with the Plant system down the center of the state and the Flagler system along the east coast. Steamboat traffic on the St. Johns River declined as faster, more reliable train service became available. Astor became isolated. In 1925 the Railroad Hotel burned as did the Astor Hotel in 1928. Following the narrow gauge railway liquidation in 1931, the commercial downtown disappeared leaving Astor with nothing more than a shell of its old self.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> “Astor Florida History” <http://www.astorflorida.com/history.htm>

<sup>2</sup> “William Backhouse Astor Jr.” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Backhouse\\_Astor\\_Jr.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Backhouse_Astor_Jr.)

<sup>3</sup> John S. Gallagher, Florida Post Offices, 1997, p. 93.

John Jacob Astor IV inherited the property following William Astor’s death and when he died on April 15, 1912 on the *Titanic*, the land became the property of William Vincent Astor. He had no interest in it and sold it to the Duluth Land Company in 1916, which marketed it to Finnish immigrants in Minnesota. Martin Hendrickson, a real estate broker for the Duluth Land Company, built the Manhattan Hotel, later called the Railroad Hotel.

Many things contributed to the decline of Astor to a near ghost town status. The 1894-95 freeze destroyed almost all citrus

# What was the story of Raymond, Florida?

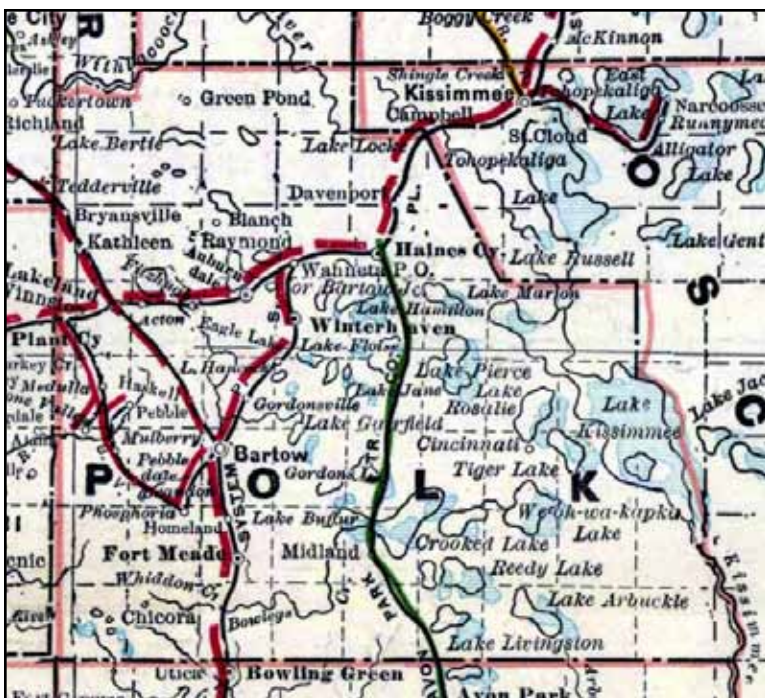
By Phillip Fettig

Nobody is ever going to mistake me for an educated student of Florida postal history! However, one of the things I enjoy about stamp dealing is the amount of material that I get to look at and own, at least for a short time. I tend to throw things that interest me off to the side to research later. I believe there is a place for those of us who do not have the knowledge or time to pursue difficult, but significant, items from Florida's postal history. I consider the items shown here to be the first steps in developing my interest and knowledge of our past while opening up other possible areas of collecting.



**Figure 1**

*Cover postmarked "Raymond, Fla." and dated January 31, 1893, addressed to Auburndale (Polk County).*



*Undated map showing Raymond at left center, east of Kathleen and northwest of Winter Haven.*

A purchase in Lakeland, Florida included 13 envelopes addressed to a "Miss Cox." What attracted my attention was the postmark on many of them was from Raymond, Florida. The first is dated January 31, 1893, (**Figure 1**) addressed to her at Auburndale, Florida, which is located in Polk County. The remaining 12 are dated until January 30, 1894 (**Figure 2**) and are postmarked in Auburndale as well as Raymond. Miss Cox also resided in three locations in Georgia. The printed return indicates that Raymond is located in Polk County. According to John S. Gallagher in his book *Florida Post Offices* (1997), Raymond began service on May 12, 1890 and was discontinued on September 30, 1902, with the Auburndale office then handling the mail service. The first postmaster of record was Rosalie Daly.

In addition, the location of Raymond can be found on the map shown with this article. The major employer appears to have been the Raymond



# Ona Redux

By Francis Ferguson

If you have been reading the *Journal* for a number of years, you may recall that I have a special love for very small town Florida postal history. Ona is a town I have written about before, and it is one of my favorites.

A couple of years ago, I came into a group of covers that are part of the “Lillie Durrance” correspondence, with covers that are all post-marked at Ona in the years from 1902-1910. Thank you is extended to fellow FPHS and Central Florida Stamp Club member, A. Stephen Patrick for allowing me to acquire this correspondence from him. To get a more detailed history of Ona, reference the article published in the *Journal* of May 2009 (Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 16-20).



**Figure 1**

*Cover postmarked in Ona, Florida on February 15, 1908.*

The cover shown (**Figure 1**) on the front shows a mostly complete circular date cancel strike of Ona, “Feb 15, 1908, A.M.” (no time specified). The back shows a partial Bowling Green, “Feb 15 at 10am REC'D” circular cancel (**Figure 2, next page**) and a mostly unreadable partial circular cancel from Wauchula (**Figure 3**).

*Continued on page 18*

## **The story of Raymond, Florida**

*Continued from previous page*

Lumber Co. and the Raymond Railroad Co., Inc., with headquarters at Raymond. The location would have been a few miles north of Auburndale and slightly south of Haines City. The incorporators of the two companies were Cyrus Raymond, Peter M. Osborn, W. C. Edmiston, Herschel P. Walker, and G. Bert Raymond. These five names should show up in postal history from this area.

If anyone can provide more information on Raymond and its postal history, please contact the editor!



**Figure 2**

*Cover postmarked “Raymond, Fla.” and dated January 30, 1894, (a year later than Figure 1) and addressed to Georgia.*



The enclosed letter reads as follows. Translation is as the words appear.

Ona, Florida February 14, 1908

Dear Lillie:

I guess that you think I have for-gotten but I sure haven't. "O" Lill -- Mr. Love Tharps is "teaching" a singing school down here we are sure haveing a fine old time.

We had a bad accident down here yesterday. Porter Bryant got his leg broke a tree fell on him. He was hauling when it fell on him, it killed the horse dead.

Bessie said that you had not answered her letter yet.

Are you still going to school? We had a letter from Morris the other day, he said that he was getting along just fine.

Say Lill have those girls made up with us yet "ha" "ha." Dident they cut a shine?

How was the ride Lill? I never will for get it.

Is Alice still going to school? Tell her "Hello" for me.

Did Mr. Groom get off to Central America? Has Mr. T----- married yet? I told Bessie about it she was sure surprised. We had to stay in Wauchula all day the day we came home.

I guess I better get ready for the sing.

Mammsee said "hello" to Ola & your Mammsee & all the rest.

So I must close as ever your Coz Lorene Durrance.

P.S. Tell all the girls "Hello" for me, L.D.

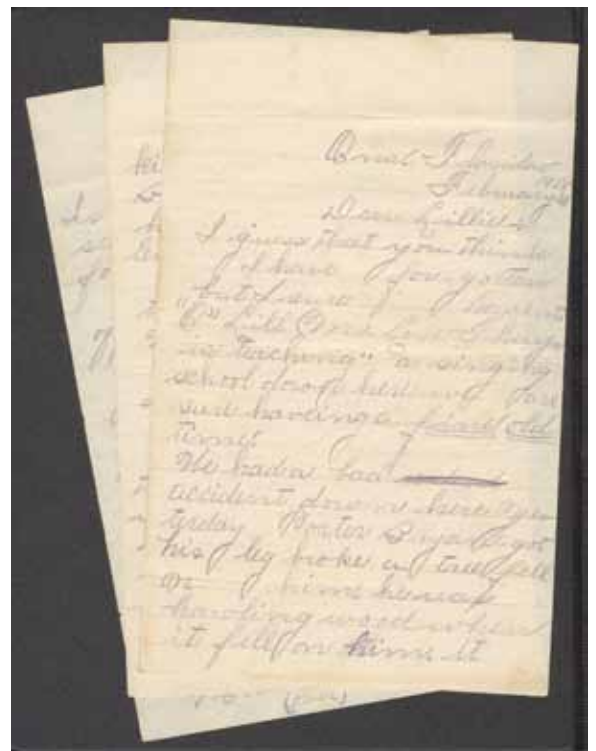
The three page letter is shown below right in **Figure 4**.



**Figure 2**  
**Partial Bowling Green cds from reverse side of cover shown in Figure 1.**



**Figure 3**  
**Wauchula cds from reverse side of cover shown in Figure 1.**



**Figure 4**  
**The three page letter transcribed above and shown in Figure 1.**

# President's Drivel - A Crossroads

By Francis Ferguson

*FPHS President*

So why does this article have a picture of a Dodo bird? Read to the end. Change is never easy – or sometimes welcomed. The FPHS is at a crossroads. We are faced with major issues that have to be addressed sooner than later.

Deane Briggs has been the major contributor of articles to the *Journal*. For example, since the January 2013 *Journal*, out of the seven issues through January of 2015, Deane has submitted more than half of the articles five times. While this fills content in the *Journal*, it fails to engage the membership and also results in a lack of diversity of material. We simply have to ask for more participation from the membership in submitting articles for publication.

Make it easier on the writer to submit articles -- we should encourage shorter one or two page articles that do not require so much time and effort to complete. While five and six page articles chock full of images are interesting to read, and show a great deal of effort, not everyone has that amount of time to devote to an article.

The possibility does exist of reducing the number of pages in the *Journal*. If we can't fill an issue with diverse articles then that is the result. Participation of more writers will prevent this from occurring and will have the added benefit of adding more diversity to the *Journal* content.

At some point in the future, the position of Secretary/Treasurer that Deane has so well filled for many years will come open. In addition, Everett Parker, who has been the man doing the tough job of putting the *Journal* together and doing the mailing, may step into retirement. While neither one of these people have expressed any immediate interest in hanging it all up, the simple truth is, who is going to fill these key and vital positions in the FPHS? We need options.

These four key issues are of grave importance to the membership of the FPHS, and will have to be addressed

to assure the continued good health and efficient workings of the society. If anyone out there has any suggestions please communicate them.

In a related issue, Deane and I have been working on the update to the *Florida Stampless Cover* book. It is a colossal project with a tremendous amount of data that has to be entered and checked. The extensive help of one of our members, Raymond Bartlett, has been exceedingly crucial in getting this project on track. Ray handled the manipulation and conversion of nearly 350 town data sets into a format that will be used for the update. I simply can't thank him enough for his efforts.

In conclusion, the society simply must address these concerns sooner than later to ensure its continuity. The membership must get involved. I do not want to see this group go the way of the Dodo bird!



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----

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