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Fort San Nicholas and the town of St. Nicholas

By Philip Eschbach

The town name “St. Nicholas” was derived from Fort San Nicholas (also seen as “San Nicolas”), which was located on the St. Johns River at the “Cow Ford” – today’s Jacksonville. As early as 1740, the Spanish thought General Oglethorpe of Georgia might try to invade Florida, so they built a block house there to defend against an invasion which never came. During the British Period (1763-1783), nothing was done at the site. It was not until 1783, when British Florida was retro-ceded to Spain, that the new Spanish government built Fort San Nicholas on the south side of the St. Johns River at Cow Ford. The British had previously built the King’s Road from New Smyrna to the Georgia border and it crossed the St. Johns River at Cow Ford, hence the need for a protective fort called San Nicholas. It was needed to guard the area from potential threats to St. Augustine from the north.

In 1794, San Nicholas was fortified but a year later it was attacked by a band of rebels from Georgia, led by Richard Lang, and occupied for several days before they returned to Georgia.

Figure 1 shows a sketch of the fort, circa 1795. In 1802, it was again reinforced by increasing its length and width to more than a hundred feet on a side, and surrounded with a log palisade. In 1811, there was concern the fort could not provide the necessary protection for the river crossing. The ferry was operated by an illiterate 80-year old widow, and only a few men were in the garrison at the fort. Indeed, on March 20, 1812, the fort was captured and destroyed by rebels

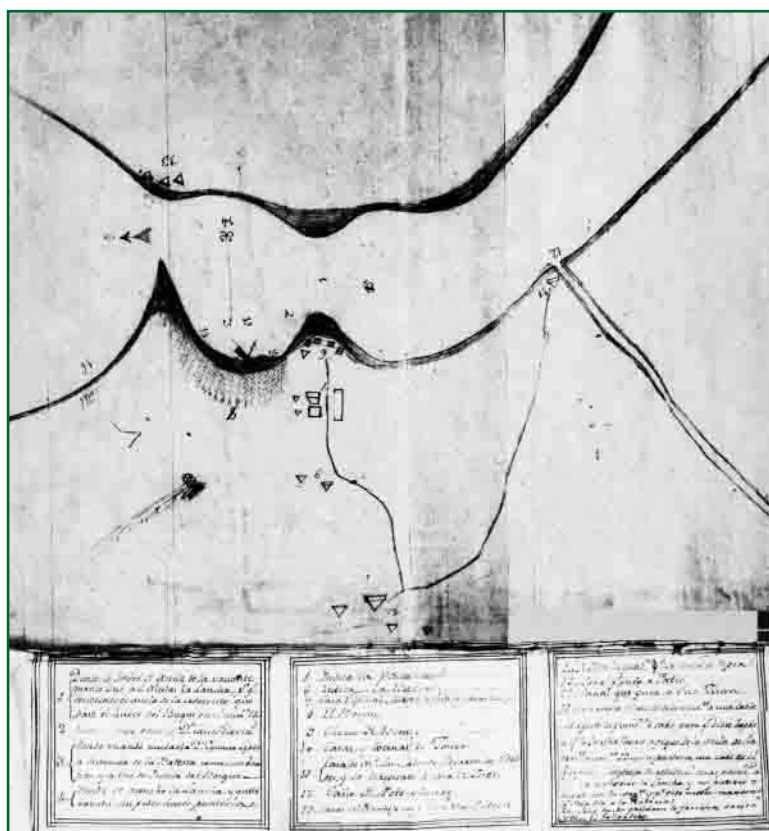


Figure 1

*Hand-drawn 1795 map showing site of Fort San Nicholas.
(Courtesy of Florida Memory, State Library &
Archives of Florida)*

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during the Patriot War in Florida. The “Patriots” were a rebel band of militia formed in Georgia, comprised mainly of Georgians and Floridians who desired to make Florida a U.S. territory with the tacit blessing of President Madison. The whole “Patriot Rebellion” was a failure, ending in 1814.

In 1813, Captain Tomás Llorente was charged with rebuilding and reinforcing the fort yet again, this time with a moat and stockade. **Figure 2** shows Captain Llorente’s 1813 drawing of Fort San Nicholas. Llorente was sent a reinforcement contingent of black soldiers, armed by the Spanish, to help resist any invasion. The Patriots objected to the use of armed former slaves and bitterness ensued. My fourth great grandfather, William Williams, one of the Patriots, sent Llorente a letter on May 6, 1814 (**Figure 3**) at Fort San Nicholas. Earlier in the letter he mentions Mr. Hart several times. It is transcribed as written:

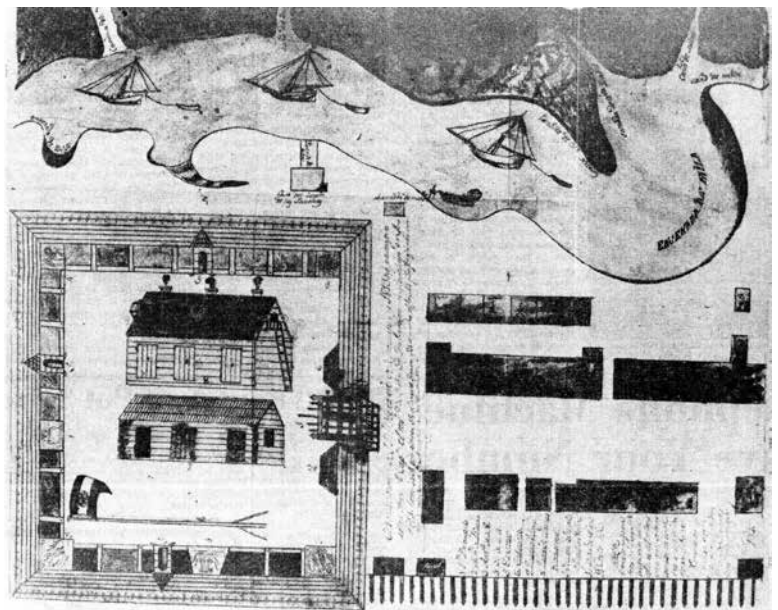


Figure 2

Captain Llorente’s 1813 drawing of Fort San Nicholas on the St. Johns River.

(Courtesy Florida Times Union newspaper.)

I am now at St. Marys but in 6 hours I can be over the River laying behind an old pine log within One Hundred yards of your garrison. & let me tell you old Mr. Comidant (sic), don't you go so far from your garrison to shit – for it lay in my power to shoot you in what part I chose but it was not neither is it my intentions to hurt white people, if it was I could have done it...

I Remain your Exilencys (sic) Most obedient & very Humble

William Williams

Unfortunately, I only have a copy of the original, much longer letter, and excerpted only the pertinent part. Since there was no postal infrastructure in the area, during this time of the Second Spanish Period, it, as well as the next letter, most likely would have been sent by courier. **Figure 4** (next page) records another letter from Wiliba Hodge dated April 20, 1816, which mentions William Williams, his cousin, Lodowick Ashley and Isiah Hart, founder of the town of Jacksonville and its second postmaster. Apparently Tomás Llorente was still the commandant, as mentioned in the prior letter.

By 1817, the Spanish had abandoned Fort San Nicholas, and in 1820, the Spanish government rejected a petition by local residents to name the community St. Nicholas. A year later, Florida was ceded to the United States. After the Civil War, the area was still known as St. Nicholas, as shown on a period map from 1874, three years after the post office was officially named St. Nicholas. (**Figure 5**). What eventually became St. Nicholas was formerly the property of Francis Bagley and Reuben Hogans

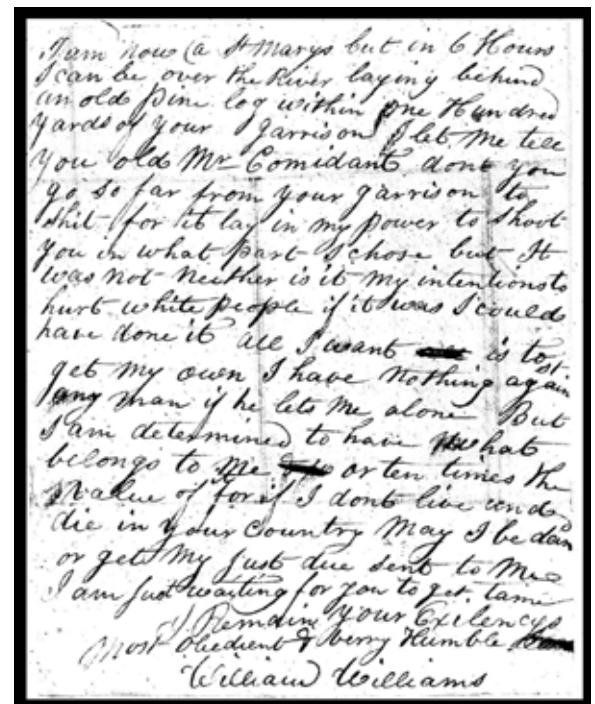


Figure 3

Copy of the last page of the original letter to Captain Llorente from William Williams.
(From the author’s file records)

who had been given land grants by the Spanish in the late 1700s. Bagley had married Hogans' daughter, Anna, who later inherited all 300 acres. The St. Nicholas Post Office was established August 7, 1871 with William D. Ferris as first postmaster. **Figure 6** shows a double-circle 1881 postmark in blue ink with a killer cancelled 3¢ banknote. **Figure 7** shows another type of double-circle postmark, with fancy fleurons on a 1¢ open circular cover from 1887. On May 31, 1908, after 37 years of service, the post office was discontinued with the mail handled by the South Jacksonville Post Office.

An 1898 map shows the close proximity of St. Nicholas and South Jacksonville, both stops on the railroad line to Pablo Beach on the Atlantic coast (**Figure 8**). The two RFD covers post-date the discontinuation of the post office as they were mailed after Feb. 8, 1912 when the 1¢ booklet pane stamps (Scott #405b) were put on sale.

They actually date to 1914, six years after the St. Nicholas Post Office

closed, with mail delivery service at that time handled on RFD Route #5 between St. Nicholas and South Jacksonville (**Figure 9** and **Figure 10**). It is interesting to note that less than 10 towns in Florida have recorded RFD covers, as this mail service was late in coming to Florida and very short lived. (See Deane R. Briggs, M.D., "Early Florida RFD Markings" in *Florida Postal History Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 2, May 2010, pp. 20-23.) In 1917, construction began on a port which uncovered many remnants of the fort, including cannon balls, shards, belt buckles, and military hardware. The fort was situated just west of present day Bishop Kenny High School.

I would like to thank Deane Briggs and Thomas Lera for their review and comments.

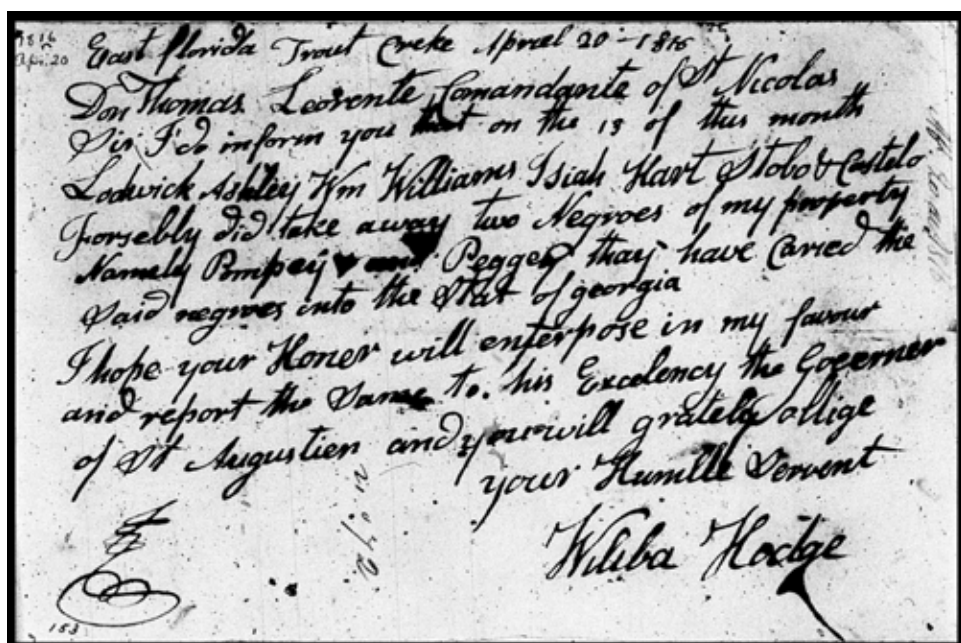


Figure 4

April 20, 1816 letter to the "Comandante of St. Nicolas" which mentions Isiah Hart, founder and second postmaster of Jacksonville.
(Author's file records)



Figure 5

Map from 1874 showing the town as "St. Nicholas" on a bend of the St. Johns River, three years after the establishment of the post office.

(Courtesy of Florida Memory, State Library & Archives of Florida)



Figure 6

ST. NICHOLAS, FLA. DEC 29 1881 double circle blue ink postmark with killer cancelled 3¢ banknote.
(Courtesy Deane R. Briggs, M.D.)



Figure 8

1898 period map showing S(outh) Jacksonville and St. Nicholas (red arrow) on the railroad connecting Jacksonville with Pablo Beach.
(Courtesy of Florida Memory, State Library & Archives of Florida)

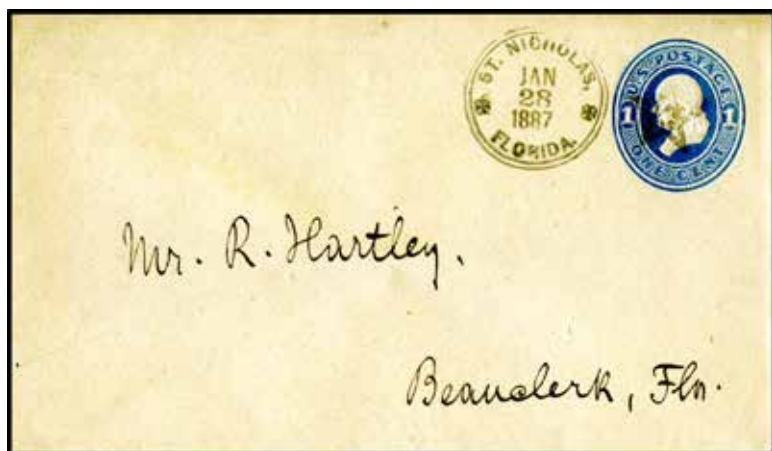


Figure 7

ST. NICHOLAS, JAN 28 1887 *FLORIDA* double circle postmark with "star" killer on 1¢ "open circular" entire.
(Author's collection)

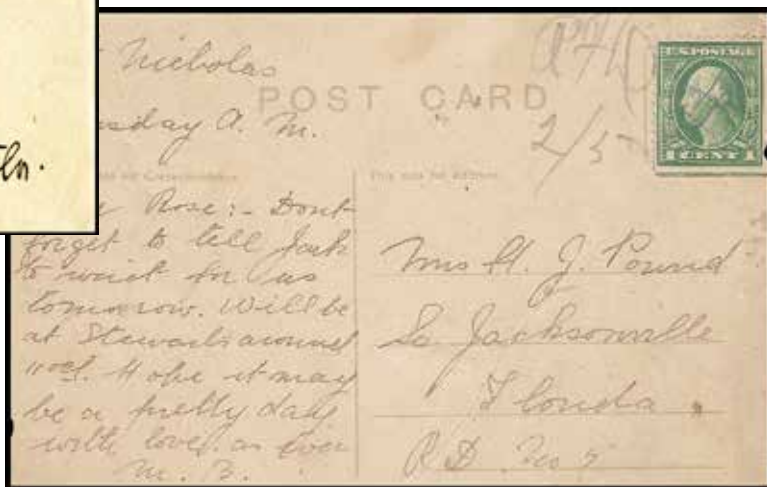


Figure 9

"RFD 2/5" (1914) magenta postmark with pen cancelled Scott #405b on postcard going to "So. Jacksonville" on RFD Route No 5.
(Courtesy, Deane R. Briggs, M.D.)



Figure 10

RFD magenta cancelled Scott #405b on postcard from same correspondence going to So. Jacksonville on the RFD Route (No. 5).
(Courtesy, Deane R. Briggs, M.D.)

Florida's important Civil War battles

Part 2: Natural Bridge

By Thomas Lera and Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

Florida's last significant battle of the Civil War took place near St. Marks at Apalachee Bay when, on March 4, 1865, nine blockade ships and nearly 1,000 Union soldiers and naval forces landed at the St. Marks lighthouse. Their plan was to capture Fort Ward (now San Marcos de Apalache Historic State Park), then to move north to Tallahassee, the state capital, which was the only Confederate state capital east of the Mississippi not captured nor burned by Union forces during the Civil War.¹

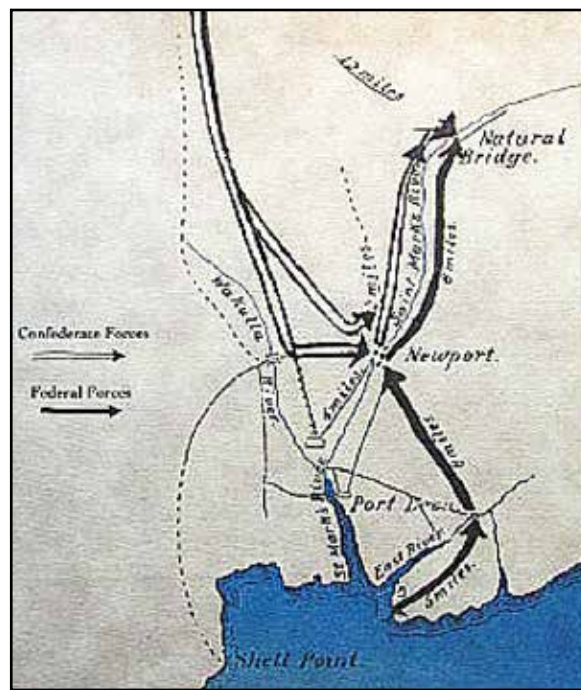
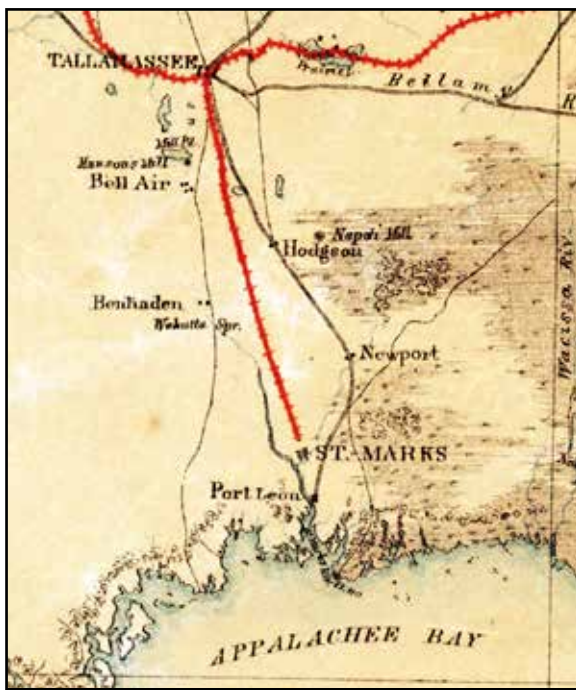


Fort Ward Earthworks
(San Marcos de Apalache Historic State Park)
(Photograph by Thomas Lera.)

St. Marks ("St. Mark" or "Saint Marks"), was established in March 1718 as a small Spanish town on the Gulf of Mexico where Fort San Marco de Apalache and the Spanish mission of Santa Maria de Apalache were built. St. Marks was a major port and supply depot in support of the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), and became the 17th Florida post office. It was also Tallahassee's seaport, connected by a 22-mile (Route No. 3529) and 24-mile post wagon road (Route No. 2462). In 1836, it became the terminus of the first railroad in Florida.

Postal route 2462 went three times a week from Tallahassee to St. Marks, a 24-mile roundtrip. Proposals to carry the mail by horse were to be considered. The mail left Tallahassee every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 7 a.m. and arrived at St. Marks the same day by 10 a.m. The return trip left St. Marks the same days at 4 p.m. and arrived by 7 p.m. at Tallahassee. William Childress's proposal for \$900 with tri-weekly service via Magnolia by covered wagon was accepted March 15, 1839.

Postal route 3529 ran the 22 miles from Tallahassee to St. Marks at 7 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, arriving by noon, with return between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. the same day. Bid proposals to extend to Newport were



Northern Part of Florida. Compiled and Published at the United States Coast Survey Office, A. D. Bache, Superintendent. 1864. Drawn by H. Lindenkohl. 1 inch to 10 miles. ²

invited, and P. A. Stockton's \$430 proposal was accepted April 14, 1851 to include this service *pro rata*. On April 24, 1851, the service to Newport was rescinded. Interestingly, Tallahassee Railroad Company's bid for \$600 using railroad cars was not accepted.

During the Civil War, a Confederate post office existed but no postmaster appointment was recorded. Mail was dispatched by postal route 6556 from St. Marks to Tallahassee at 2:15 p.m. daily, except Sunday, via Hodgson's Distillery, arriving at 3:30 p.m., return daily except Sunday at 10



"ST MARKS FLA Feb 20" postmark with "PAID 10"

(Type C) on cover to Columbia Co. GA.⁴

(Courtesy of the Deane R. Briggs, M.D. Collection)

a.m., arriving at 11:25 a.m. in St. Marks. The distance was 21.75 miles each way. Tallahassee Rail Road Company's bid of \$3,269.44 per annum was accepted and service commenced presumably in June 1861. The route was not advertised in 1862.³

On March 5, 1865, Brigadier General John Newton and 800 Union troops marched to Newport with the intention of crossing the St. Marks River and attacking the town of St. Marks. However, two miles above St. Marks, a bridge had been destroyed by the Confederates, as well as part of the town of Newport, preventing a Union crossing.



"NEWPORT FLA Feb 20" Confederate State usage on U.S. #10 3¢ envelope.⁵

(Courtesy of the Deane R. Briggs, M.D. Collection)

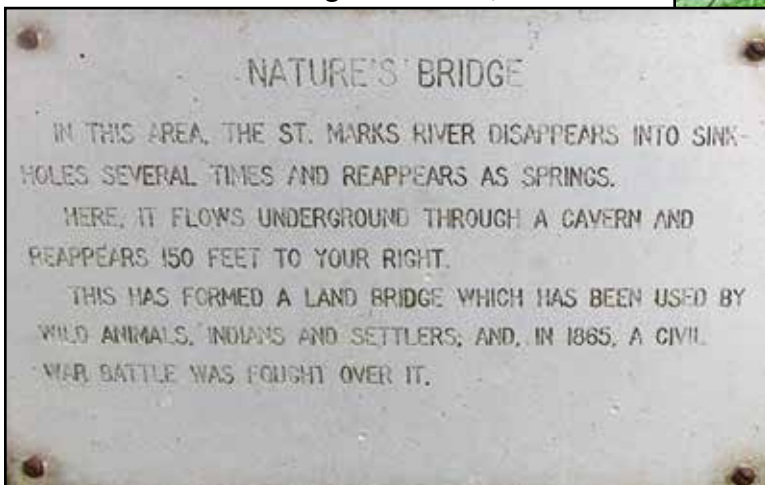


Left: Brigadier General John Newton
 (Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs Division digital ID cwpb.05199)
Right: Confederate Brigadier General William Miller
 (Courtesy of the Florida State Archives & History Museum)

The next day, General Newton and his forces marched to Natural Bridge, where they hoped to cross the river and proceed south to St. Marks and Fort Ward to capture the Confederate artillery,⁶ and then move north to Tallahassee and Thomasville, Georgia to release the Union prisoners. Union commanders, however, did not know that the prison had been evacuated and the prisoners had been moved to Andersonville Prison. They planned to return by the way they came, to re-embark at St. Marks if the Union war vessels succeeded in getting far enough up the river with their heavy guns to protect them. On the morning of March 6, Newton



Natural Bridge and Sinkhole.
 (Photograph by Thomas Lera)



tried to move across the river at Natural Bridge, but was blocked by a Confederate force, hidden in the woods between the swamp and the St. Marks River on the opposite bank.⁷ Commanded by

Brigadier General William Miller, the Confederate troops, composed of soldiers, old men, young cadets from the West Florida Seminary (now Florida State University), and a complement of 25 men from the CSS *Spray*,⁸ met the Union forces at East River Bridge and Natural Bridge. Miller's troops prevented several Union attempts to flank their position.

The right side of the monument reads: "This monument erected under the authority of an act of the legislature of Florida of 1921 as a just tribute to the people of Florida to commemorate the victory of the Battle of Natural Bridge, March 6, 1865, and to keep in cherished memory those brave men and boys who, in the hour of sudden danger, rushed from home, desk and field and from the West Florida Seminary and joining a few disciplined troops by their united valor and patriotism saved their capital from the invaders. Tallahassee being the only capital of the South not captured by the enemy during the War Between the States."

They successfully repelled three major attacks, forcing the Union troops to retreat to the St. Marks Lighthouse on the coast, where the Union flotilla evacuated them.⁹ Union casualties totaled 21 killed, 89 wounded and 38 captured or missing. The Confederates suffered three killed and at least 23 wounded, none being the cadets.

Although the Confederates proclaimed Natural Bridge a great victory, celebration in Tallahassee was short-

lived. Three weeks after the battle, on April 1, 1865, Governor John Milton, despondent by the inevitable collapse of the Confederacy, is alleged to have committed suicide at his Marianna plantation home in Jackson County.



St. Marks Lighthouse.
(Photograph by Thomas Lera)

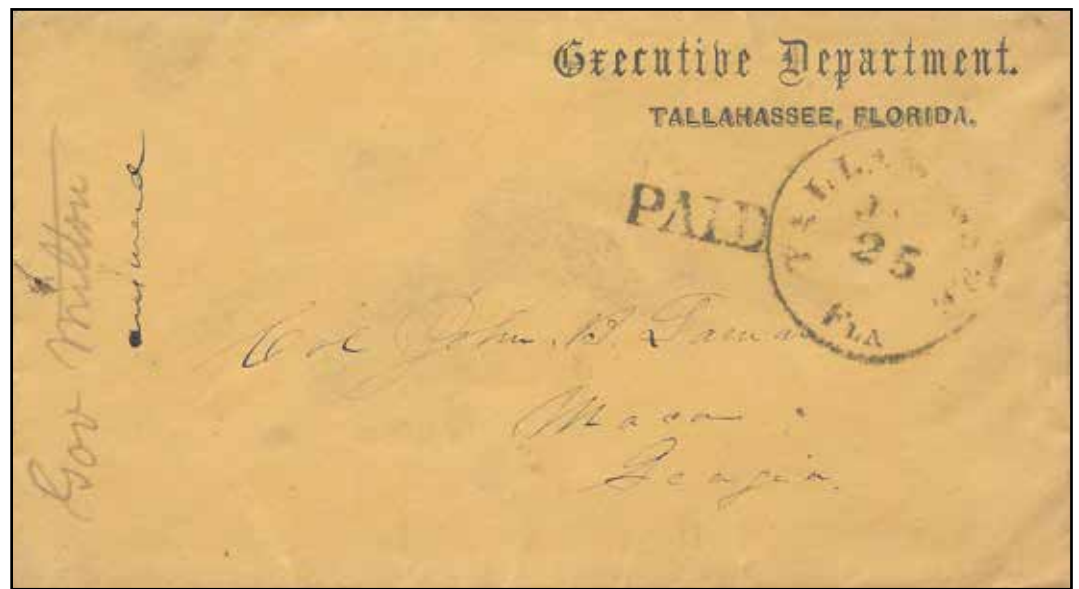


Natural Bridge Monument.
(Photograph by Thomas Lera)

Dale Cox, a Southern historian and author, found in an "Extra" edition of the *West Florida News*, a Marianna newspaper, on April 3, 1865: "A TRAGIC ACCIDENT! Gov. Milton has been killed by the accidental discharge of a gun. The Governor was in his home when he retrieved a shotgun in expectation of an expedition to shoot birds. The gun discharged and the Governor was killed." This explains why the Governor was buried in the cemetery of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Marianna, since in those days, suicide victims were not allowed to be interred on sacred

ground. Governor John Milton rests in sacred ground.¹⁰

On April 9, a week after Milton's death, General Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to General Grant following the Union general's capture of Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia. On May 10, Union Brigadier General Edward M. McCook arrived in Tallahassee to accept Confederate Major General Samuel Jones' surrender of all Confederate forces in Florida. In a formal ceremony held in Tallahassee May 20, 1865, McCook ordered the United States flag to be raised over the Capitol.



***“TALLAHASSEE / FLA May 25” postmark with “Paid 10” Type A without rate on Executive Department, TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA, Type S-FL-02 semi-official imprinted envelope with docketing from Governor Milton.
(Courtesy of the Deane R. Briggs, M.D. Collection)***

FOOTNOTES

¹ Florida's Role in the Civil War: "Supplier of the Confederacy" http://fcit.usf.edu/florida/lessons/cvl_war/cvl_war1.htm. Accessed November 20, 2016.

² Northern Part of Florida. Compiled and published at the United States Coast Survey Office, A. D. Bache, Superintendent. 1864. Drawn by H. Lindenkohl. 1 inch to 10 miles. 19 x 25. Published. Railroad lines and State boundary in red; drainage features in blue. Roads, swamps, lighthouses, forts, towns, and smaller settlements are shown, and scattered comments describe the vegetation. RG 23: Special Maps.

³ Jaronski, Stefan T. "The Postal Routes of Confederate Florida Part 2." *The Confederate Philatelist*, 37:2 (1992) pp. 63-65.

⁴ A Confederate post office was present at St. Marks during the war but no postmaster appointment is recorded. It is not known who cancelled the letter.

⁵ Newport (or New Port) is located on the St. Marks River on a post road connecting Tallahassee and St. Marks. The post office was established on January 18, 1844, as a name change from the one at Port Leon. Newport was the "new port" built two to three miles farther up river after a yellow fever epidemic and a September 13, 1843 hurricane wiped out Port Leon. Mail was likely handled on Confederate Route 6556, St. Marks to Tallahassee with daily service except Sunday. Peter H. Swain was appointed Confederate postmaster on July 25, 1861.

⁶ The fort guarded the confluence of the St. Marks and Wakulla Rivers and the southern terminus of the Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad. This was the first railroad built in Florida.

⁷ <https://churbuck.com/the-reminiscences-of-captain-thomas-chatfield/part-10-the-reminiscences-of-captain-thomas-chatfield/> accessed November 28, 2016.

⁸ De Quesada, A. M., *A history of Florida forts: Florida's Lonely Outposts*, History Press, 2006. The CSS *Spray* was said to be the only Confederate States Navy vessel to operate exclusively in Florida waters.

⁹ <https://www.floridastateparks.org/park/Natural-Bridge>. accessed June 13, 2016.

¹⁰ Dale Cox, Wednesday, April 9, 2014, <http://www.civilwarfl.com/2014/04/floridas-confederate-governor-did-not.html> accessed December 30, 2016.

“Remember the Maine! To hell with Spain!”

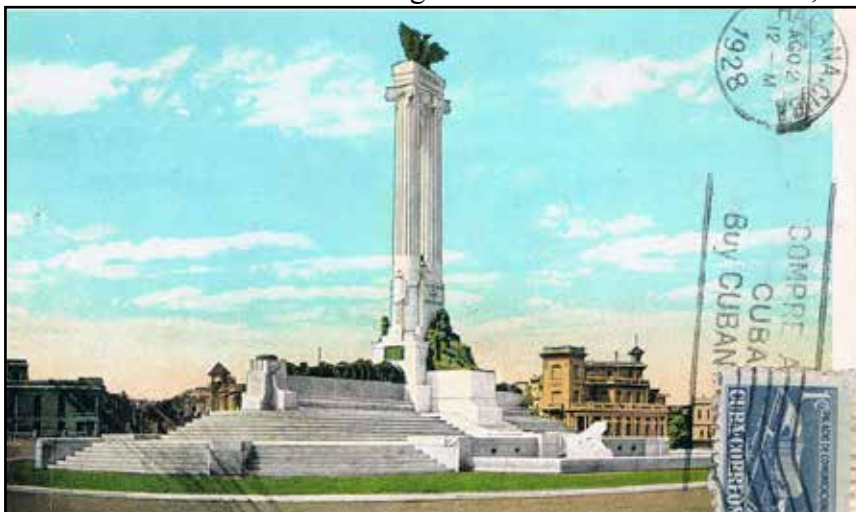
Some historical background and philatelic connections to Florida

By Juan L. Riera

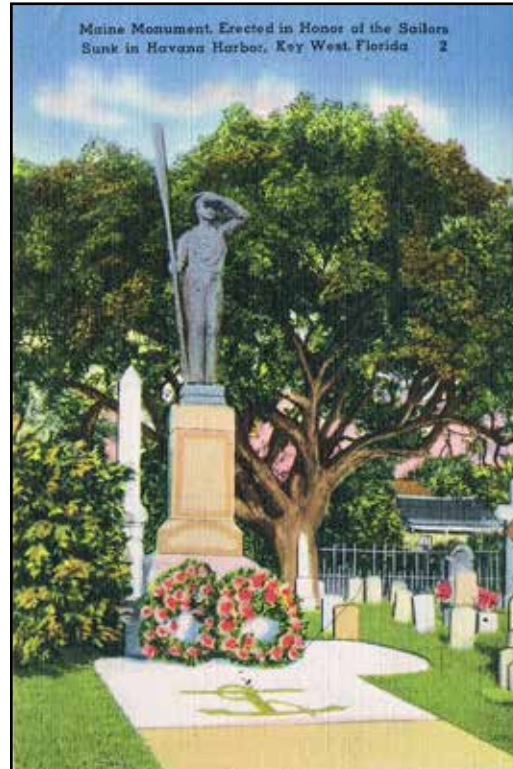
The battleship *Maine* was not exactly a battleship, but it has important connections to Florida.

The *Maine* was an armored cruiser or second class battleship which was ordered by the U.S. Navy on August 3, 1886, launched on November 18, 1889, and commissioned on September 17, 1895. It has been suggested that due to the length of time between the times it was ordered and commissioned, the vessel was outdated or useless. On the night of February 15, 1898, the ship sank in Havana Harbor, Cuba. Although the explosion was not the cause of the Spanish-American War, it was a huge step in that direction. Other factors included “yellow journalism” in which newspapers such as the *New York Journal*, owned by William Randolph Hearst and the *New York World*, owned by Joseph Pulitzer, constantly published articles calling for war against Spain with illustrations and stories of Spanish brutality in Cuba.

The *Maine* was built in response to Brazilian battleship *Riachuelo*, completed in 1883 in Great Britain, and the increase of naval forces in Latin America. *Maine* was built in response to other factors such as periodic scares by the Spanish navy approaching port cities such as St. Augustine or Key West, leading to evacuations due to fear of attack as well as the “*Virginius* Affair.” In October 1873, the *Virginius*, an American flagged ship was



Monument to the USS Maine in Havana, Cuba.



Postcard showing the USS Maine monument in Key West, Florida.

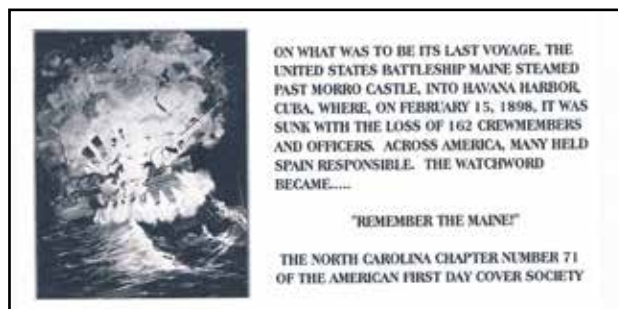
caught by the Spanish running guns to rebels in eastern Cuba. The ship was taken to Santiago de Cuba where Captain Joseph Fry, a resident of Key West with his family, was executed with 52 others. The U.S. government protested and in 1874 the U.S. Navy was sent to Key West for possible war with Spain.

The *Maine* and her nearly sister ship *Texas* reflected most recent European developments, notably British and Italian naval ships. The *Maine* was 324 feet and four inches long and a maximum draft of

22 feet and six inches. The ship had a crew of 26 officers, 290 sailors, and 39 Marines and suffered 261 fatalities on that fateful February 1898 night. Two officers and 251 sailors and marines were killed by the explosion or drowning, seven that were rescued died shortly thereafter of their injuries, and one officer later died of "cerebral affection" or shock. Of 94 survivors, 16 were uninjured.



Example of first day covers issued in Key West, Florida for USS Maine.



Additional first day covers (top) and insert card for 1998 U.S. stamp honoring the USS Maine.

“Favorita” or “Favoretta”?

A Volusia (Flagler) County ghost town

By Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

I recently purchased this cover (*Figure 1*) on eBay mainly because of the advertising of “Seminole Grove” on the reverse. I have never seen a cover from Favorita and in looking in John Gallagher’s book *Florida Post Offices*¹ I found the post office listed as established on August 17, 1886, originally in Volusia County with George A. Crocker as postmaster. That post office was discontinued on July 15, 1896, with mail handled by the Harwood Post Office.

The post office was re-established as “Favoretta” on March 20, 1911, on the railroad line connecting Palatka with New Smyrna. The county name changed to Flagler when that county was established on April 28, 1917. The Favoretta Post

Office was discontinued on July 31, 1926, with mail handled by the Korona Post Office just to the north on the railroad line. When I searched the internet for information on Favorita, the site “Roadside Thoughts” only had a mention of the town possibly being in Flagler County with no location on a map. Fortunately, the Gal-



Figure 1
“FAVORITA, FLA MAR 29 1893” postmark with killer cancelled 5¢ Columbian, usage to Basel, Switzerland.

Continued on page 14

Historical connections in Florida to USS Maine disaster in Havana

Continued from page 12

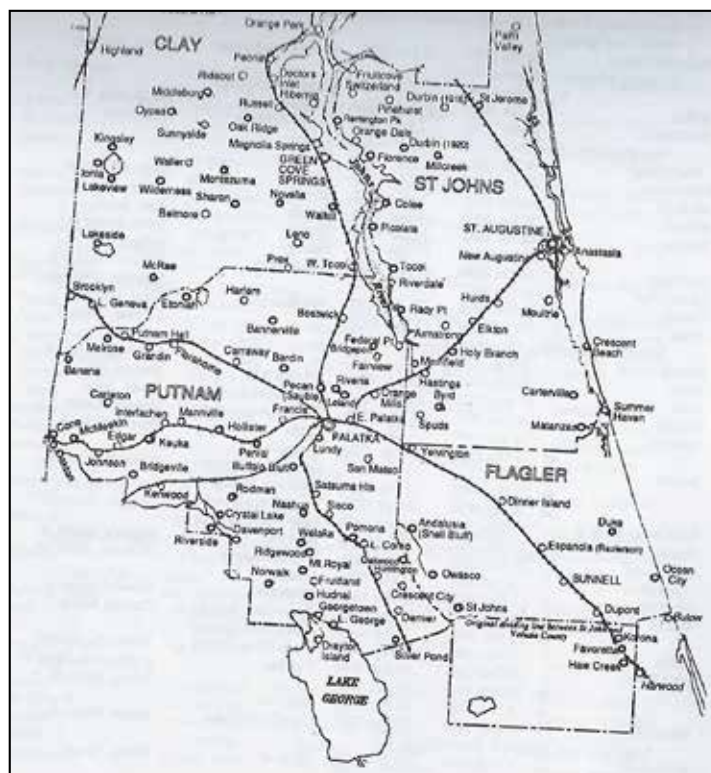
The *Texas* visited Key West and Dry Tortugas in February of 1898 and between May 21 and August 12 of the same year was involved in the Spanish-American War including battle on the fleet of Admiral Cervera on July 3. In January 1898, the *Maine* was sent from Key West, Florida to Havana, with a possible stop in Dry Tortugas for coal. On March 21, 1898, a U.S. naval Court of Inquiry in Key West declared that a naval mine caused the explosion.

In February 1898 sailors were buried in Colon Cemetery in Havana, Cuba. Injured sailors were sent to hospitals in Havana and Key West. Those who died in hospitals were buried in Key West. In December 1899, sailors buried in Havana were disinterred and reburied at Arlington National Cemetery. In 1915 President Woodrow Wilson dedicated the USS *Maine* Mast Memorial, located at Arlington National Cemetery, to those who died. Other monuments include the monument to victims of the *Maine* in Havana, Cuba, and the U.S. Battleship *Maine* Monument in the Key West Cemetery and numerous others.

A cofferdam was built around the wreck, the hull was patched up, and the ship was refloated, towed out to sea and sunk. The remains were scuttled on March 16, 1912, and the *Maine* lies on the seabed 3,600 feet below the surface.

A stamp honoring the *Maine* was released on February 15, 1998, in Key West, Florida.

Figure 2
Flagler County map showing Favoretta between Korona and Harwood (lower right corner).



lagher book has a hand-drawn map showing Favoretta on the rail line between Korona and Harwood in the far southeastern portion of Flagler County (**Figure 2**). I have sent this information to the website and hope it will be updated. Apparently Favoretta is still an unincorporated community on the west side of U.S. 1, southwest of Korona.³

As a part time citrus grower, I collect old citrus labels and early letters relating to the early citrus industry in Florida. The back of the cover is shown in **Figure 3**. It shows a citrus tree with fruit and a fancy oval border with “Seminole Grove: Favorita Florida.” This must have been from an orange grower who shipped fruit. It is doubtful they would ship fruit to Switzerland, but that is certainly possible. This cover dates from before the devastating freeze of 1894 when most of the citrus trees in Florida were frozen and required them to be re-planted. Any reader with information on the “Seminole Grove” is encouraged to send it to the author.

FOOTNOTES

¹ John S. Gallagher, *Florida Post Offices*, The Depot, Lake Grove, OR, 1997, pp. 34, 58, 160.

² Website: <http://roadsidethoughts.com/fl/favorita>.

³ Website: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Favoretta,Florida>.



Figure 3
Cover reverse with blue advertising for “Seminole Grove, Favorita Florida.”

More information on Railroad Post Offices

By Thomas Lera

The third part of the Railroad Post Office study is now posted on the Florida Postal History Society website under the Research Tab. *Florida Waterway Agents and Railway Post Offices* is 48 pages long and includes:

- Definitions
- Florida waterway agent and railway post office routes
- Florida mail messenger service and railway mail service clerks
- Contract listing from the Reports of the Postmaster General
- Officer and contracts for carrying the mails
- Waterway routes, contacts and how the mail was handled from the Second Postmaster General Report and the Supervisor of Operations Report.



Key West, Fl. & Havana, Cuba, 90 miles, Atlantic Ocean, Peninsular & Occidental Steamship Co. (1912-1921). Type I-26-b; KEY WEST & HAVANA R.P.O., 30, black, 1915, 16, Direction, Rarity III.

Port Tampa & Ellenton, Fla., 36 miles. Steamboat, Tampa Bay (1890-1902). Type J-7-b; PT. TAMPA & ELLENTON R.P.O., 29, black, 1901, Rarity V



Another valuable resource is the USPOD Annual Reports of the Postmaster General. Listed are the Florida steamboat routes, miles covered by the route and annual compensation from 1866-1905, using Table C *Steamboat Service as in Operation on the 30th day of June (Year)*. Starting in 1876, the contractor was listed and in 1882 the information was provided in Table D.

Table C - Steamboat Service as in Operation on the 30th day of June

1871 Table C page 73 as of June 30, 1871

		Trips	Miles	Contract \$	
6414	Pilatka to Jacksonville	2	75	1800	
6416	Pilatka to Mellonville	2	125	3500	
6435	Bainbridge, Ga., to Apalachicola, Fla.	2	201	7000	
6462	Baltimore, Md., to New Orleans, La.	1	701	31000	Twice a month
6467	Key West to Biscayne	1	75	1200	Twice a month
6471	New Troy to Tampa	1	428	8000	
6478	New York to Key West	1	1258	26000	
6500	New Orleans, La., to Key West, Fla	1	888	76000	
			4851	154500	

The references and bibliography is inclusive showing the researcher where to find the data. The report provides a wealth of information on Florida steamboat mail.

The fourth part of the Railroad Post Office study will be Florida Highway Post Offices. This report will be completed in the fall of 2017. If you have any new RPO postmarks or have a question on one in your collection, please send them to information or images to Tom at: RR-FL-MARKS@FPHOnline.com.

ORANGE SPRING(S) POST OFFICE

By Thomas Lera and Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

Orange Springs was established on August 29, 1846 at the northern end of Marion County on the Ocklawaha River, a few miles south of Morrison's Mills (*Figure 1*).¹ The town lay on the post road connecting Pilatka with Micanopy and Tampa. Mail was handled by postal routes #3506 and #3519. John W. Woods was appointed the first postmaster at Orange Springs, serving from August 29, 1846 to June 30, 1852.

Postal route #3506 operated at 1 p.m. Monday and Thursday, from Pilatka to Orange Springs, Orange Lake, Ocala, Camp Izard, Homosassa, Spring Hill on to Tampa by 10 p.m. for a total of 159 miles one way. John Scott's \$3,500 bid was accepted on April 14, 1851, on the condition if he used hacks or stages, the Orange Springs businessman John W. Pearson's bid of \$3,600, also using a two-horse coach, was to be accepted instead.

Postal route #3519 went from Orange Springs at 6 a.m. on Wednesday arriving at Newnansville by 10 p.m., a total of 46 miles, with the return the same hours the next day. John W. Pearson's bid of \$275 was accepted on April 14, 1851.² There are three different types of stampless manuscript postmarks: "Orange Springs," Type I, dated July 29 (1851-1853?); "Orange Springs, FLA" Type II dated August 19, 1851; and "Orange Spring Flo." Type III dated May 5, 1851.

The Orange Springs Methodist Episcopal Church (*Figure 2*), located at SR 315 and Church Street, was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places on December 22, 1988. Also known as Orange Springs Community Church and Cemetery, it was built *circa* 1852 on land donated by John William Pearson (*Figure 3*). The church itself once served as a Confederate hospital, while interestingly, the cemetery inters the remains of both Confederate and Union soldiers. A memorial was erected for Pearson in the cemetery even though his actual remains were never removed to Florida from Savannah, Georgia's Laurel Grove Cemetery.³

John William Pearson (January 19, 1808 - September 30, 1864) was a businessman and Civil War Confederate Captain who established a popular health resort hotel, sawmill, grist mill, furniture shop, and machine shop in Orange Springs, as well as bred herds of cattle and cultivated cotton on numerous tracts of land he owned in the area. During the Civil War, the cotton mill and machine shop were redesigned to manufacture

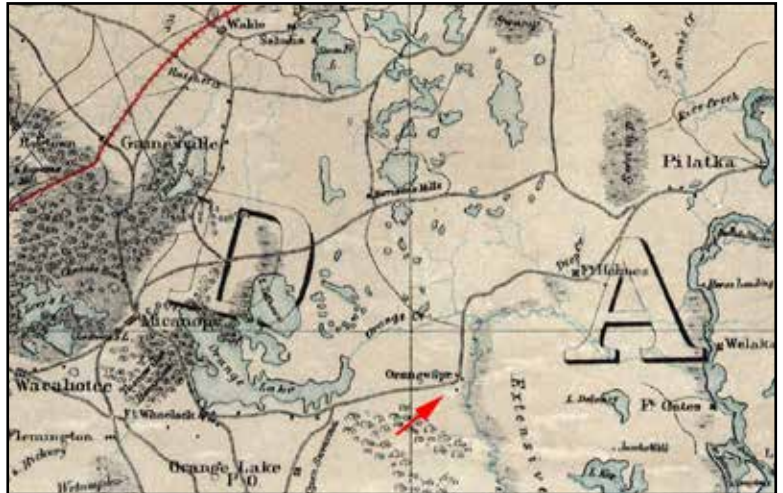


Figure 1
This antiquarian map locates Orange Springs.



Figure 2
Orange Springs Methodist Episcopal Church.

artillery and refurbish firearms for the Confederates.³ In 1861 and 1862, Pearson issued Orange Spring script in 10, 25, 50, and 75 cents, and \$1 and \$2 denominations which could be used in his businesses. Shown in **Figure 4** is an example of the 75 cents script.⁴

During the Civil War, Orange Springs was a central interior hub for transporting supplies from successful blockade runners north to Georgia. Pearson not only organized this depot, but



Figure 3
John William Pearson.

is better known for forming the Oklawaha Rangers named after the Ocklawaha River in Orange Springs.⁵ The Rangers were used in the Civil War throughout North and Central Florida for guerrilla tactics against the Federal troops.

The Orange Spring Post Office remained open during the Civil War, as seen in **Figure 5**. James C. Cameron, named U.S. Postmaster May 16, 1860, received a Confederate postmaster appointment on July 25, 1861.



Figure 4
Orange Spring 75 cent script dated 1862.



Figure 5
Example of Confederate stamp use at Orange Springs.

Mail was dispatched on postal route #6513 (changed to #1505 in 1863) from Waldo to Orange Springs. The schedule was from Waldo on Tuesday and Saturday at 1 p.m., by Morrison's Mills to Orange Springs by 6 p.m. and back the same day between 7 p.m. and midnight, a 40-mile roundtrip. The original contractor of the service, and when it commenced, is not known. On June 16, 1863, the contract for postal route #1505 was awarded to G. A. Lamb of Gainesville for \$250 per annum. Later it seems to have been given to C. A. Robinson, also of Gainesville, for \$125 per annum.

Postal route #6514 went 31 miles from Orange Springs to Flemington, departing on Monday at 8 a.m., arriving by 5 p.m.; returning with the same service



Figure 6
Confederate cover addressed to Davis Bryant.

Tuesday and the same schedule. J. W. Woods from Pilatka was awarded the \$190.83 per annum contract. Service commenced on June 1, 1861, and was discontinued August 19, 1861, when the contract was annulled.

Postal route #6517 went 52 miles from Silver Spring to Bellamy (a post office on Bellamy Road near Newnansville) via Orange Springs and Morrison's Mills. The contractor, his fee and when the service commenced and was discontinued is not known. Postal route #6522 (changed to #1511 in 1863) went 54 miles from Pilatka to Ocala. The schedule was from Pilatka on Mondays and Fridays

at 1 a.m., arriving at Ocala by Orange Springs and Orange Lake 4 p.m.; returning the same way at 9 a.m. on Tuesdays and Saturdays, arriving at Pilatka by midnight. J. W. Woods from Pilatka was awarded the contract for a fee of \$1,523.01 per annum. It is not known when service commenced. During the spring of 1862 service was suspended on the entire route because of Federal presence near Pilatka, but resumed May 1. The contract was advertised in 1862 and awarded to Woods on July 9, 1863, with the annum fee reduced to \$1,500.⁶

The letter shown in Figure 6 was addressed to Davis H. Bryant at Hart's Road Station, and another letter was sent to Captain Winston Stephens at Camp Finegan near Jacksonville. Hart's Road Station (later renamed Yulee) was a little north of Jacksonville, where the railroad crossed the highway from Jacksonville



**Gravestone for
John W. Pearson,
who died
September 30,
1864.**

to St. Mary's, Georgia. Camp Finegan, the principal Confederate East Florida military post named for the state's highest-ranking officer, Brigadier General Joseph Finegan, was located about seven miles west of Jacksonville, south of the rail line near modern Marietta.

Family correspondence took a circuitous route in delivery as the St. Johns River was patrolled by Union steamboats and Pilatka was occupied by Federal troops. The letters traveled from Pilatka on Confederate Post Route #6522 to Ocala, but were delayed at Orange Springs for two days due to bi-weekly delivery service. From Orange Springs both letters followed Route #6510 to Gainesville, then Route #6502 to Baldwin where one was delivered to Camp Finegan. The other travelled farther for delivery along Route #6505 to Hart's Road Station.

The Orange Spring itself is not open to the public. It is now privately owned by the Orange Springs Specialty Water & Beverage Company which uses water

from the natural flow of the artesian spring to produce their bottled water.

FOOTNOTES

¹ *Northern Part of Florida*. Compiled and published at the United States Coast Survey Office, A. D. Bache, Superintendent. 1864. Drawn by H. Lindenkohl. One inch to 10 miles, 19 x 25. Railroad lines and state boundary in red; drainage features in blue. Roads, swamps, lighthouses, forts, towns, and smaller settlements are shown, and scattered comments describe the vegetation. RG 23: Special Maps. Map cropped to show Orange Springs area.

² Deane R. Briggs, ed., *Florida Stampless Postal History 1763-1861*. (North Miami: David G. Phillips Publishing Co., Inc., 1999), pp. 44, 46, 223.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Springs,_Florida. Accessed October 25, 2016. Zack C. Waters. 1991. "Florida's Confederate Guerrillas: John W. Pearson and the Oklawaha Rangers." *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. LXX, No. 2, pp. 133-149.

⁴ Daniel G. Cassidy, *The Illustrated History of Florida Paper Money*. Jacksonville, Florida, 1980, p.144.

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Springs,_Florida. Accessed October 25, 2016. Gary, Loderhose (2000), "Way Down the Suwannee River: Sketches of Florida During the Civil War." Authors Choice Press. p. 13.

⁶ Stefan T. Jaronski. "The Postal Routes of Confederate Florida." *The Confederate Philatelist*. Vol 37, No. 1. Whole 265. January-February 1992, pp. 28, 29, 30, 32.; Theron Wirenga, editor. 1979. *Official Documents of the Post-office Department of the Confederate States of America*. Holland, Michigan: The Editor, 1979. Two Volumes.

NOTE

Both Orange Spring and Orange Springs, and Pilatka and Palatka are used interchangeably throughout the literature. The pictures of the church and Pearson's Memorial are courtesy of Thomas Lera. The script and the cover images are courtesy of Deane Briggs. Pearson's image is courtesy of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_William_Pearson.

President's Drivel - More Than A Couple of Points

As I write this, it is the dog days of August. All I long for at the moment is an outside temperature that is not in the 90s!

- The bi-monthly newsletter continues to provide a connection to our members that is timely and informative. Material is always gladly accepted for future use. I am in serious need of material for the November-December 2017 issue and beyond. I am now begging.

- The dues renewal process for 2018 will begin with the mailing of dues notices in early November. Please write a check and mail it in a timely manner.

- The MEMBERS ONLY section of the website continues to add items as they come available. This is where you will find current membership rosters. The most current version of the membership information was posted in mid-July. The password to the MEMBERS ONLY section can be obtained by contacting Deane or myself – write it down for future reference.

- Work is continuing on the total overhaul of the 1999 *Florida Stampless Postal History* book. A test print copy of the material has been done and is in the final review process. The page count looks like it will be around 275-280. Final edits should be completed the first or second week of September. The end is in sight!

- Towards the end of August there will be a promotional section of the book posted on the FPHS website for your reading pleasure. I will notify the membership with an email when this occurs.

- For your calendar: FLOREX 2017, December 1, 2 & 3 in Orlando; The Sarasota National Stamp Show and Exposition, February 2, 3 & 4, 2018. The FPHS will hold the annual membership meeting from noon to 1 p.m. on Saturday, February 3. We would like to see the LARGEST gathering of society members ever! Should you have any questions or concerns, contact me. E-mail: ferg@FloridaStampShows.com, or cell: 407-493-0956.

FPHS members do well in Richmond

I was in attendance at the APS Stamp Show 2017 in Richmond, Virginia August 3-6, and entered our *Florida Postal History Journal* in the literature competition. We received a Vermeil which was a good showing as there were only five gold awards presented. Congratulations to FPHS member James P. Mazepa for winning the “Champion of Champions” award with his Colonial Central America exhibit. Member Lester C. Lanphear III, and Phillip J. Stager were also entered in that elite competition.

Also in the literature competition, FPHS members Steven M. Roth and Patricia A. Kaufmann received a Large Vermeil for their book *The Springfield Facsimiles of Confederate Postage Stamps* along with co-author Francis J. Crown. FPHS member Tony Crumbley with Richard Winters won a Large Vermeil for their journal *North Carolina Postal Historian* and fellow FPHS members Steve Swain and Christine Sanders received Silver awards for *Georgia Post Roads* and *Yule Log* respectively. Steve also entered two non-competitive articles published in *La Posta*. Members who exhibited in the show were Dawn Hamman (two exhibits): “Postcards of the Panama Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco 1915” and “Backyard Chickens.” Larry Baum exhibited “Confederate Advertising Covers” and John Walker showed “Confederate Use of Patriotic Covers Etc, During the Civil War.”

Florida Postal History Society members are encouraged to attend the Confederate Stamp Alliance Mid-Year meeting in Tallahassee, Florida December 8-10, 2017. This meeting is open to FPHS members who are not currently CSA members. The registration is \$75 and includes a one year membership in the CSA (\$32 membership) and the bourse, hospitality amenities and a wonderful dinner at the home of FPHS member Alex Hall and his wife Carol. Special hotel rates at \$119 at the event hotel (Homewood Suites) and next door Hampton Inn (\$104) are only available until November 8, so please register and try to attend. This is a great opportunity for FPHS members to get together in North Florida. Please contact Alex Hall for information at pbsphilatelics@mind-spring.com or call 850-402-3057.

-- Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

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Below is a listing of FPHS members who are also stamp dealers. Please support our dealer members when visiting stamp shows, or by mail!

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Thank you so much!**

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The following members of the Florida Postal History Society have been denoted "Contributing Members" for their additional contributions to the society. The support of these members keeps us fiscally sound and enables us to respond to member and non-member inquiries regarding Florida postal history and send sample copies of our *Journal*.

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