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Fort Reid, Read, or Reed? A Confusing History

By Phil Eschbach

Fort Reid has a long and confusing history. During the second Seminole War in December of 1835, General Jessup ordered Colonel Fanning to Lake Monroe to establish a military post [Figure 1]. The soldiers set up a small breastwork and picketing on the south bank of the lake. The following February, they were attacked by

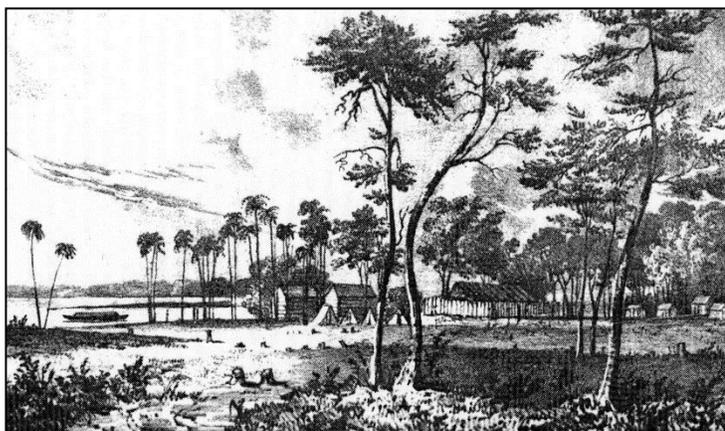


Figure 1. The first military installation on Lake Monroe, 1835.¹

the Seminoles and Captain Mellon was killed in the skirmish. Following military tradition, a fort was established and named by Major Harlee as Fort Mellon after the fallen soldier.

Later in 1840, another military installation, Fort Reid, was established by Colonel William Harney. It was positioned about two miles south of Fort Mellon in what is today Sanford, Florida, on Lake Monroe. It was named after the fourth territorial governor, Robert Raymond Reid [Figure 2].



Figure 2. Governor Robert Raymond Reid.²

Fort Mellon had a cupola tower [Figure 3] so that it could signal Fort Reid, to the south. Fort Mellon was abandoned by the army in 1842, but was re-garrisoned in 1849 and again abandoned later that year for good.

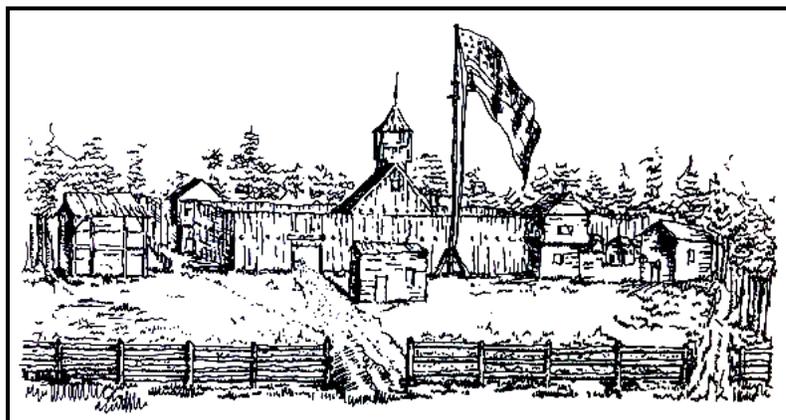


Figure 3. Fort Mellon with cupola tower.³

Continued on page 3

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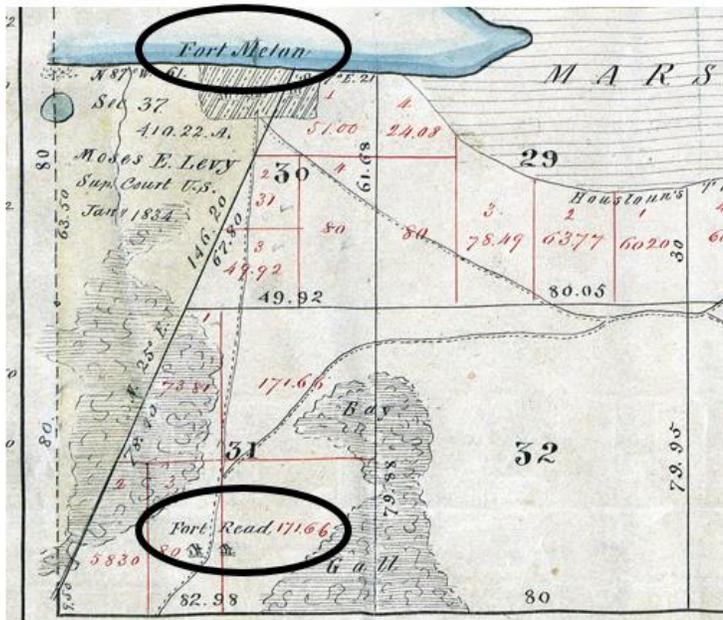
Fort Reid was established on the road that ran from Ft. Mellon south to Ft. Gatlin, a distance of twenty-five miles, with Ft. Maitland positioned midway. It was used as a commissary and soldiers camp during the war. A community was built up around the two forts in the 1840s. There is no known image of Fort Reid.



Figure 4. FORT REID F. circular cancel and smaller four-slice pie killer on a Scott 158, 3-cent Washington. Postmaster used correct, original spelling of the town.

The January 10, (18)76 manuscript date on the cover was presumably applied by the postmaster since there is no date in the postmark. (From the collection of A. Stephen Patrick.)

Figure 5. Undated FORT REID F. circular cancel and killer on a Scott 158, 3-cent Washington, affixed to 3-cent Washington, Scott U84 postal stationery. Addressed to Harry B. Stewart, Jasper, Florida.



Early settlers started calling it Fort Read, some say to commemorate Leigh Read, a popular politician at that time who was killed in a duel in 1842. He had been a colonel in the militia fighting the Seminoles. In 1845, there was a proposal to change the name of then Mosquito County to Leigh Read County (which never happened), thus the name confusion. It even appeared on official land survey plats as Ft. Read⁴ [Figure 6].

Figure 6. Land survey plat with Fort Read name.

More confusion came when an early post office, established on September 12, 1873⁵, used the name Fort Reed and a nearby train station was called Fort Reed as well. The first postmaster of Fort Reed was James MacDonald. The post office was discontinued in favor of Sanford in 1903.



Figure 7. Governor Harrison Reed.⁶

Possibly a coincidence with the name of the post office, Harrison Reed [Figure 7] was the ninth governor of Florida (1868-1873).

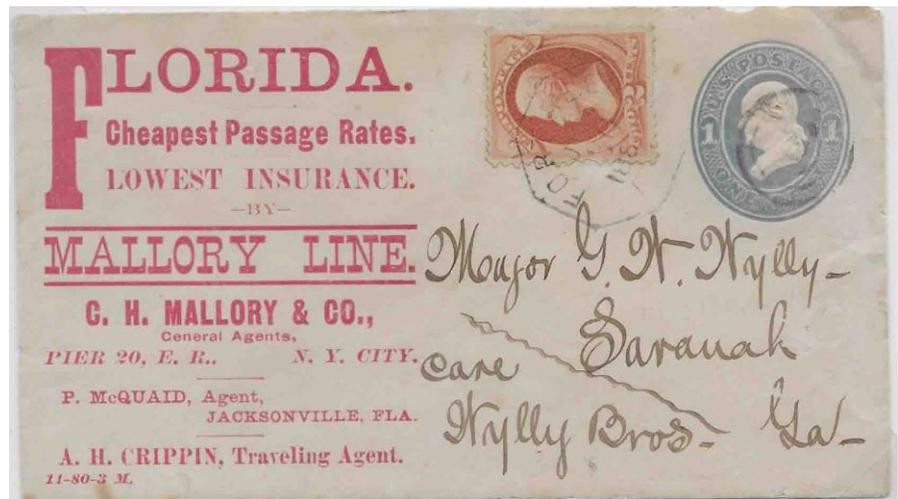


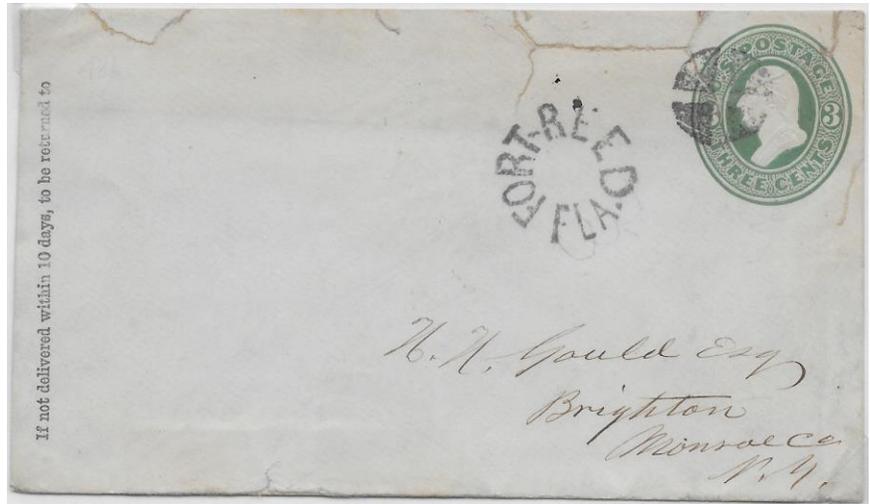
Figure 8. June 30, 1880 light octagonal FORT REED cancel on 2-cent Jackson, Scott 183, affixed to a 1-cent Washington postal stationery, Scott U35. Addressed to Major G. W. Wylly, care of Wylly Bros., Savannah, Ga. This was the year the Sanford-to-Orlando railroad line opened. In 1845, Florida became a state and Orange County was formed with Mellonville, the county seat. (Seminole County wasn't formed until 1913.) Fort Reed/Sanford/Mellonville was the southern terminus of the several steamboat lines serving the St. Johns river. (From the collection of A. Stephen Patrick.)



Figure 9. FORT REED JUN 17 1890 FLA. mailing to Mrs. L.C. Finegan, Knoxville, Tenn. Franked with 2-cent Washingtons, Scott 220, with target and additional postmark cancellations.

Figure 10. Undated FORT REED FLA. circular cancel with a four-slice pie killer on a Scott U45, 3-cent Washington postal stationery. Possibly a U165 green on cream.

Addressed to H.H. Gould Esq., Brighton, Monroe County, N.Y. (From the collection of A. Stephen Patrick.)



A local housing development near the site of the post office and train station was named Fort Reed and surveyors in 1890 had printed it as Fort Reid, with the result that early historians believed these were two different places – Fort Reed and Fort Reid.

To add to the confusion, land owners who purchased and re-sold land in the area had deeds which used any one of the three names – Fort Reid, Fort Read and Fort Reed. Principal land owners in the area were Augustus Vaughn, Henry Crane, Isiah Hart, Algernon Speer, and Nicholas Wassilieff ⁷ [Figure 11].

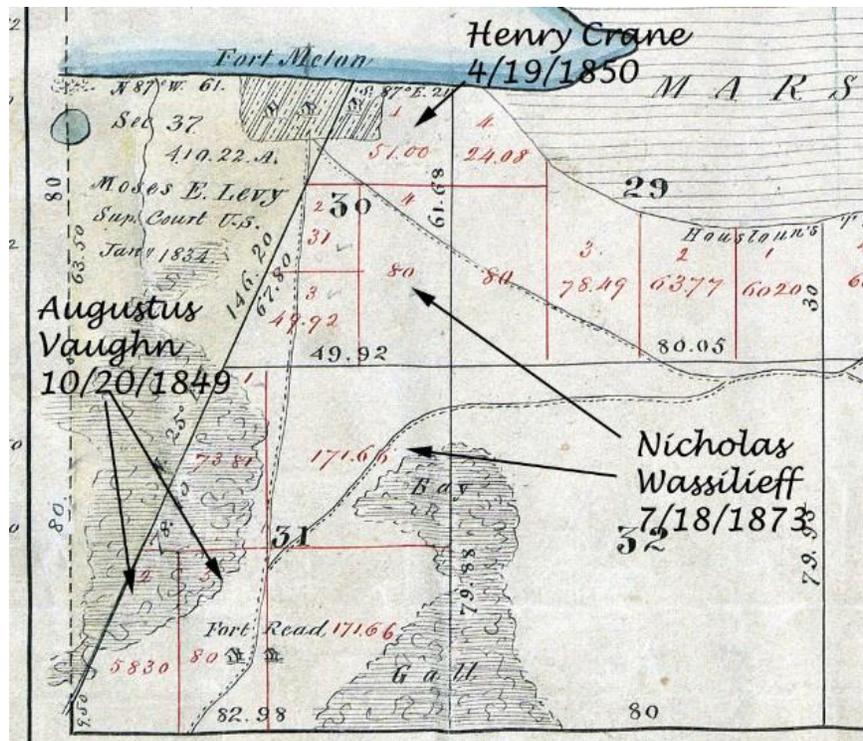


Figure 11. Land map indicating parcels held by principal land owners with Fort Reid, Fort Read and Fort Reed deeds.

Fort Reid's long and confusing history will remain. But on Aug. 19, 1993 at Mellonville Avenue and Forest Drive, an aluminum plaque [Figure 12] with white letters on a dark blue background was erected to replace an older marker at the site of the Fort Reid stockade during the Seminole Indian wars of the mid-1800s. The Seminole County Historical Commission recognizes the spelling as Reid to honor Robert Raymond Reid, the territorial governor in 1841.⁸

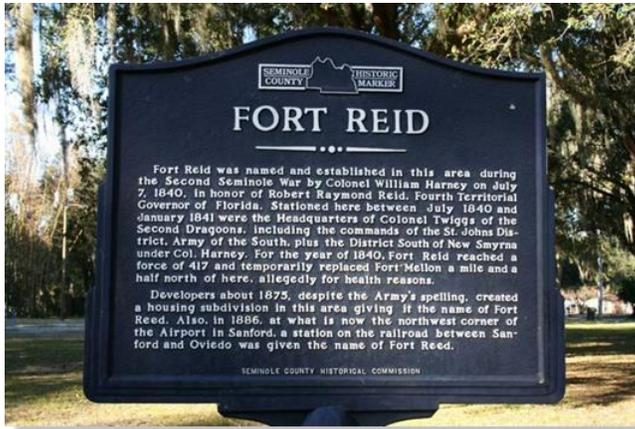


Figure 12. Fort Reid historical marker.

Some perspective on the location of Fort Mellon and Fort Reid with respect to current-day Florida is provided in Figure 13 showing an overly of an older land map on a current Sanford street map.⁹ Note the E. 1st Street location of Fort Mellon Park, a popular venue, encircled in red.

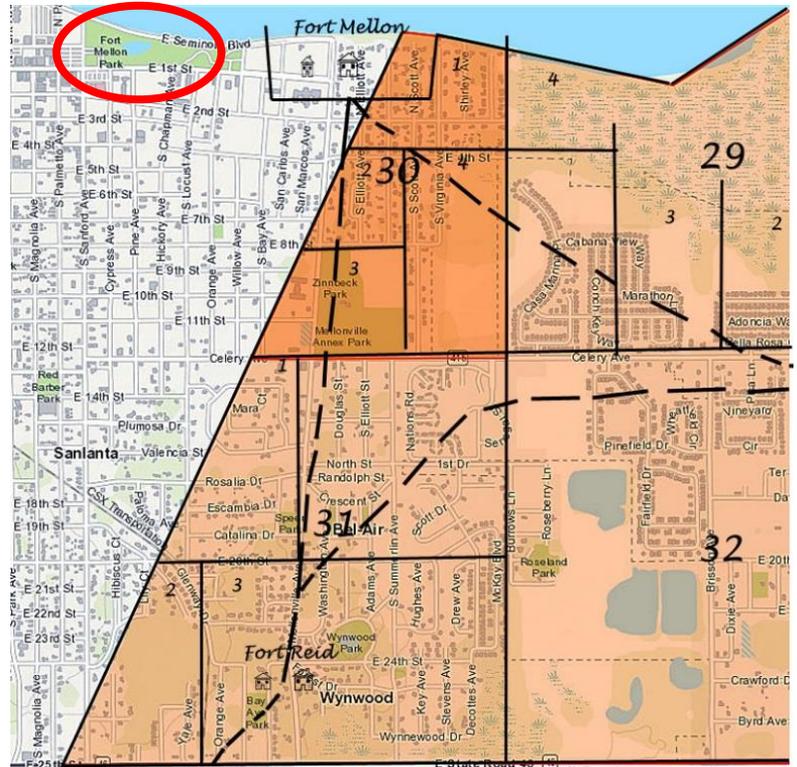


Figure 13. Overly of land map on current Sanford street map.

Endnotes

- ¹ Williams, John Lee, *The Territory of Florida*, New York, A. T. Goodrich, 1837, page 269. (Editor's Note: John Lee Williams is an ancestor of author Phil Eschbach.)
- ² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_R._Reid.
- ³ www.archives.gov.
- ⁴ Dunaway, Stewart, *Seminole Indian War Forts and Camp Locations*, 2017, self-published.
- ⁵ Bradbury, Alford G., Hallock, Story ed., *A Chronology of Florida Post Offices*, 1962, self-published.
- ⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrison_Reid.
- ⁷ Dunaway, op. cit.
- ⁸ www.orlandosentinel.com/news/os-xpm-1993-08-08-9308070460-story.html.
- ⁹ Dunaway, op. cit.

Editor's Note: Several cover images used in this article were provided by Society member A. Stephen Patrick. His great, great grandfather, Wright Patrick, was a postmaster at Jernigan, now known as Orlando, very close to Fort Reid. The Jernigan post office opened in 1850, was closed in 1857, and reopened that year under the name of Orlando in present-day downtown Orlando.

Mule Barometer

By Thomas M. Lera

While working on the Doane research paper with Deane Briggs, I ran across this interesting and amusing 1906 postcard from Biscayne. "THE MULE BAROMETER", with an actual twine tail, gives the DIRECTIONS: "HANG OUTSIDE." (sic: It will not work inside.)

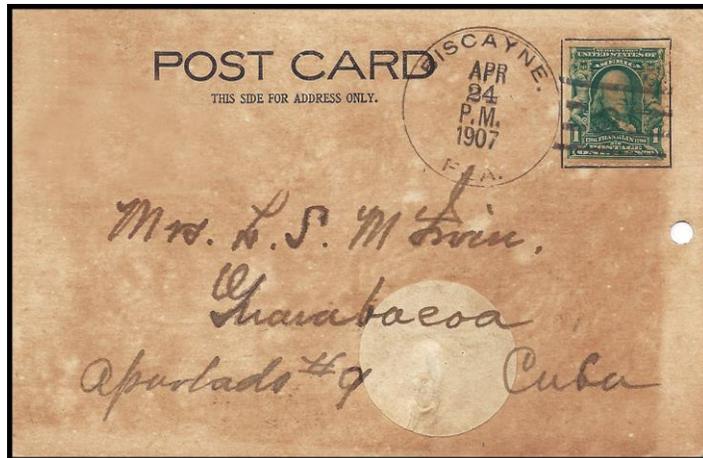


Figure 1. Mule Barometer postcard.

“If tail is dry... FAIR
 If tail is wet... RAIN
 If tail is swinging... WINDY
 If tail is wet and swinging...STORMY
 If tail is frozen...COLD.
 FURTHER INFORMATION UPON REQUEST.”

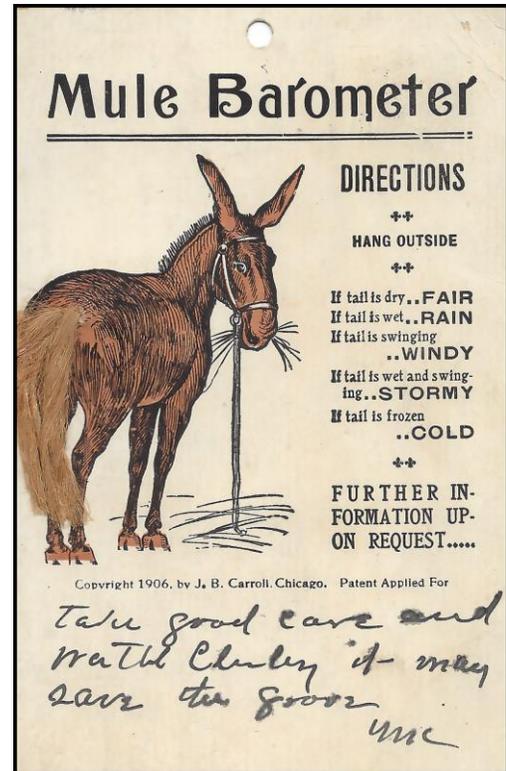


Figure 1, left, shows the Apr 24, 1907, Type 3/2 Doane earliest known usage handstamp on the Mule Barometer Postcard with a 1-cent rate to Cuba. The latest known usage was Dec 23, 1911. The large white circle on the right center is a sticker covering the knot which attaches the mule's tail to the front of the postcard. Figure 1, right, shows the 1906 Mule Barometer design, printed by J. B. Carroll Company of Chicago. (Courtesy of Deane R. Briggs Collection.)

Weather forecasting has changed little over the last 120 years. Instead of using a mule's tail, they often say "open a window and stick your head outside."

The Biscayne Post Office [see Figure 2 map]¹ first opened on December 12, 1870 with Andrew Price as postmaster. It was discontinued March 12, 1888 with mail going to the Miami Post Office. The post office reopened March 23, 1892, with John N. Peden postmaster.

In 1896, Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway Company reached Biscayne Bay, the largest and most accessible harbor on Florida's east coast, and Miami April 15, 1896. Shortly thereafter, the mail was delivered daily by the railroad.

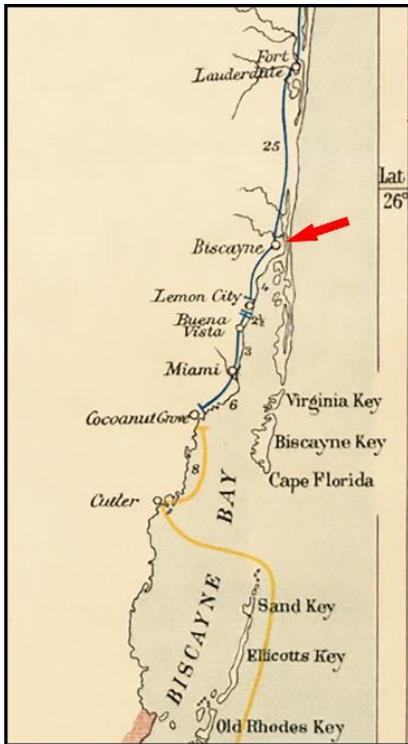


Figure 2. Portion of an 1895 Post Route map of Dade County showing the location of Biscayne. The Blue line indicates three times a week delivery.

Records indicate Fredrick J. Kennedy was postmaster January 23, 1906. It later became a summer post office to handle the influx of tourists, and for example, opened in the spring of 1908 and closed September 23, 1908. This continued for several years until September 30, 1914, when it was again discontinued with mail sent to Arch Creek Post Office.

The Biscayne Post Office again reopened March 6, 1915 with Mary A. Kennedy acting postmaster and Fredrick J. Kennedy taking over as postmaster on October 10, 1915.

On May 31, 1918, the Biscayne Post Office permanently closed with mail going to Little River Post Office.²

Endnotes

¹ Von Haake, A., and United States. Post Office Dept. "Post route map of the State of Florida showing post offices with the intermediate distances and mail routes in operation on the 1st of December 1895." *Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center*, <https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:cj82kk30r> (accessed April 30, 2019).

² The National Archives Microfilm Publication M1131, *Record of Appointment of Postmasters, October 1789 – 1832*, and M841, *Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832 – September 30, 1971 (by county)*. Postmaster's names and dates of appointments are included in records arranged alphabetically by name of post office. The records also include the state in which the post office was located, and the dates of establishment and discontinuance; The digitized daily *U.S. Postal Bulletin* and *U.S. Postal Laws and Regulations* at <http://www.uspostalbulletins.com>.

Editor's Note: The "Mule Barometer" joke (sometimes also called a "Burrometer") has a long history and has appeared in many forms, postcards being a common usage.

A contemporary play on the Mule Barometer gag, shown to the right, is a "weather rock," which, according to Wikipedia, pokes fun at the intricate technology used in modern weather forecasts, typically resulting in less than perfect accuracy. A rock is hung near or on an accompanying sign indicating how to read it.

For example, "If rock is hard to see – it's foggy."



For Distinguished Philatelic Research - Thomas M. Lera -

Congratulations to Florida Postal History Society member Thomas M. Lera, recent recipient of the American Philatelic Society's Luff Award for Distinguished Philatelic Research.



Established in 1940 in memory of APS President John N. Luff (1907-09), the Luff Award is the highest recognition for living collectors awarded by the APS. Awards are presented each year in three categories recognizing vital efforts on behalf of the stamp hobby: for Distinguished Philatelic Research; for Exceptional Contributions to Philately; and for Outstanding Service to the APS.

An APS member since 1987, Tom has assisted more than 50 researchers in their work, resulting in publication of the studies in philatelic journals including *The London Philatelist*, *The U.S. Stamp Specialist*, *The Chronicle of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society*, and *The Collectors Club Philatelist*. Tom published scientific results of the 4-cent blue Columbian color error in *The Collectors Club Philatelist*.

Tom's previous philatelic awards include:

- 2018 – Florida Postal History Society Research Award
- 2016 – Distinguished Philatelic Texan Award
- 2015 – Inducted into the APS Writer's Unit #30 Hall of Fame
- 2012 – Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society of London
- 2009 – Grand Award, "Niter and Mining Bureau" single frame exhibit
- 2003 – Accredited National Philatelic Judge and certified ATA judge
- 2001 – Confederate Stamp Alliance Writer's Award for the best article published

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The Merrick Brothers, Wilson Larkins and Southwest Miami Mail

By Juan L. Riera

George Merrick, Charles Merrick, and Wilson Larkins were all early pioneers in the Miami area. They were involved in agriculture, as was common at the time. They founded communities that have lasted for nearly a century, even though they have not turned out as planned with many ups and downs. And all three men had a significant, but often overlooked, impact on the South Florida postal service beginning in the mid-1920s.

At age 13 in 1899, **George E. Merrick** [*Figure 1*] and his family came to South Florida beginning many years of George's dedicated labor tending the family farm. When George turned 21, his father presented him a check for \$1000 - a substantial amount in 1907 - for his many years of hard labor.

Under extreme pressure from his parents, George proceeded to law school in Manhattan, living with his uncle Denman Fink, in New Jersey. While in the northeast he and his uncle traveled frequently to view new subdivisions and observe new town planning ideas. For George, the opportunities and intrigue of city planning was much more appealing than the law.

After one year of law school, George's father died and George returned to the family farm to manage the business. But George was now equally focused on real estate and land development, investing all that he could in buying more land. He had enough legal training for the paperwork and many new ideas about urban planning. He was responsible for about a dozen subdivisions over the next few years including one for African-Americans and black Bahamians in this period of segregation and won a great deal of respect for a job well done. George did not discriminate as he had worked the fields with African-Americans and Bahamians and had learned a great deal about the South Florida environment from them.



*Figure 1. George Merrick*¹

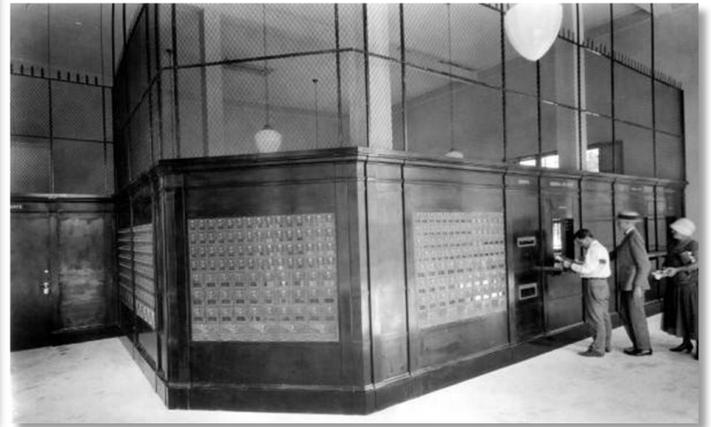
As George accumulated land holdings he began planning his own master suburb intending for it to become part of the city of Miami. Along the way, he became a county commissioner and arranged for major roads to be built through his property. He founded a golf course, country club, public pool, and had plazas, public buildings, and entranceways built into his suburb.

By 1921, he started selling city lots. But by 1924, Merrick came to the realization that Miami would not annex his suburb and in 1925 he incorporated his own city, Coral Gables, The City Beautiful. It was a Mediterranean Riviera in which when you bought a lot, you received the plans of the home you were to build in the Spanish Mediterranean style, restricted down to the color palette from which you were allowed to choose.

Included in the public buildings George built was a beautiful triangular building that contained the U.S. Post Office [*Figures 2 and 3*] and The Bank of Coral Gables, designed by Walter deGarmo. Today, Alhambra Towers occupies the site.



*Figure 2. Entrance to Coral Gables Post Office.*²

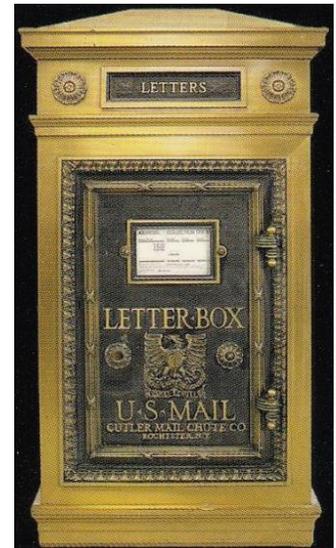


*Figure 3. Coral Gables Post Office lobby.*²

Used in Alhambra Towers, the antique mailbox shown in *Figure 4* is from the 1920 landmark McGraw Hill building in Chicago, at 520 North Michigan Avenue.

The Coral Gables Post Office was “established” on April 25th, 1924 with Rolla Greene as the first postmaster, but never went into operation as the paperwork was rescinded. It was established as the Coral Gables Branch of the Miami Post Office on January 15th, 1925.

George Merrick became quite wealthy during the Florida Land Boom, having a capitalization of about \$11 million in early 1926. But with the land bust, he lost it all and moved to Upper Matecumbe Key to run the Caribee Colony fish camp. After the 1935 hurricane wiped out that section of the keys, he returned to Miami attempting to make a living in real estate and land development.



*Figure 4. Alhambra Towers mailbox.*²

By 1940, George had taken the Civil Service examination and became postmaster of Miami where he improved the efficiency of the office, made preparations for the draft related to World War II, and was generally well liked for his upbeat positive attitude. Unfortunately, due to health issues, he had a massive heart attack and passed on March 26th, 1942.

Historically, there are two original Miami Post Offices. The first was established in “Dallas Co.” which never existed, but surely refers to Fort Dallas that was located at the mouth of the Miami River having been established during the Seminole Indian Wars. This Miami Post Office was in operation from February 18th, 1850, to January 9th, 1870, with Robert Fletcher as the first Postmaster. This post office became the Biscayne Post office on January 10th, 1870, with Charles Baragas as Postmaster. This post office was in operation until May 20th, 1888.

George Merrick would have served at the second Miami Post Office which is still in operation, having opened on September 25, 1877. The first Postmaster there was William Ewan. This was formerly the Miami Post Office that was in operation from September 22, 1874 to September 24, 1877, with William Watkin Hicks as the first Postmaster. I would presume he was postmaster for the three years this post office was in existence.

Charles F. Merrick [Figure 5] (December 21, 1897-March 1967) was George's younger brother. After college and a stint in the Army during WWI, Charles was working in 1922 for his brother as a stonemason on the coral rock façades of the Douglas Entrance and Granada Entrance to Coral Gables, as well as with the columns of city hall. "Doc" Dammers, head land salesman of Coral Gables and the first Mayor, convinced Charles to sell real estate for his brother George and make a "fortune".



Figure 5. Charles Merrick standing beside a painting of his grandfather and at work as a stonemason. ³

Charles made over \$100,000 in real estate. But by 1928 he was financially broke due to the Florida Land Bust and, by 1930, was living with his mother in the Merrick family home. At this point, he was working with his trowel at David Fairchild's place, The Kampong, in Coconut Grove.

Charles went on to be Assistant Postmaster of South Miami for the rest of the Great Depression. In 1941, he moved to California, where he had worked briefly as a young man as a brick layer. In the later 1940s, he returned to Miami and in 1947 married Myrtle Mae Wilson (1889-1974), a widow who was a postal clerk at the South Miami Post Office where they had met many years before. In 1948, Charles did the stonework for the bridge at the University of Miami - founded by older brother George in 1925 - which is considered a marvel by fellow stonemasons. He went on to do all the stonework for the new Burdines Building to great acclaim. By 1961, he was pretty much retired and living in Perrine, an area south of Miami. He died in March 1967, survived by his wife, brother Richard, and two sisters.

The South Miami Post Office where Charles Merrick worked at as Assistant Postmaster, and where his future wife worked at as a clerk, was in operation from July 15, 1926, to October 15, 1943, with James E. Parish as the first Postmaster. It was formerly the Larkins Post Office and later became a branch of the Miami Post office on October 16, 1943, continuing operations as such to this day.

In 1896, **Wilson Alexander Larkins** (1860-1946) landed in the newly founded city of Miami, as the Merrick's would do a couple of years later. With his wife Katie Estelle Birtshaw, their five children, and dairy cows, Larkins headed into the wilderness to start a dairy farm. The next year, he established a post office near what is today Cocoplum Circle, ironically in what is now the City of Coral Gables, founded by George Merrick.

Larkins served as the first Postmaster of this post office for sixteen years. As the Florida East Coast Railroad built the Miami to Homestead Extension, completed in 1906, a depot was established in 1904 and Larkins bought the area around the depot, west of what is now Red Road and south of Sunset Drive. There he established the first grocery and general supply store in the area.

Additionally, the U.S. Government moved the post office to that location, and the surrounding community was named in honor of its postmaster. In March of 1926, qualified voters decided to incorporate the Town of South Miami. Originally six square miles, the town suffered greatly after the 1926 Hurricane and the FEC Railway burning down, leaving them without a depot for many years. In 1927, the town was re-chartered as the City of South Miami. In 1931, there was a movement to abolish the city. In 1933, the boundaries were reduced to just over three square miles. And in 1937, when residents sued to leave, the city the boundaries were further reduced leaving the city with an extremely irregular shape that remains to this day.

George Merrick, Charles Merrick and Wilson Larkins were early pioneers in the Miami area with significant, but often overlooked, impact on the South Florida postal service. Intriguing postal history for sure.

Endnotes

- ¹ <http://the-reyes-report.blogspot.com/2007/09/when-groves-begin-to-bear-george.html>.
- ² <https://www.floridamemory.com>.
- ³ <https://coralgablesmuseum.org/portfolio-item/10237>.

Merrick House Tour, Coral Gables



When: Sunday, October 13, 2019

Where: 907 Coral Way, Coral Gables, FL 33134

What: A tour of the historic home of the Merrick family.

After the tour of the house of about an hour, all those interested will depart on a 10-minute walk to have lunch together.

**Cost: Tour of the house is free.
Lunch is at your own expense.**

**Contact Juan Riera if you plan to attend
and if you are bringing a guest (one per Society member)**

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The Village of Hoey, Florida

By Thomas M. Lera

On February 8, 1905, Fourth Assistant Postmaster General J. L. Bristow notified R.W. Thomas, proposed postmaster of Hoey, and Walter W. Phipps, Gulf City Postmaster, the proposed Hoey Post Office would be a "Special Office" since it was not on a designated mail route. It was one mile east of Gulf City [Figure 1] and would be serviced by boat twice a week. The Hoey Post Office was established May 25, 1905, with Rupert W. Thomas postmaster.¹ Two years later, on November 15, 1907, the post office was discontinued with mail going to the Gulf City Post Office.

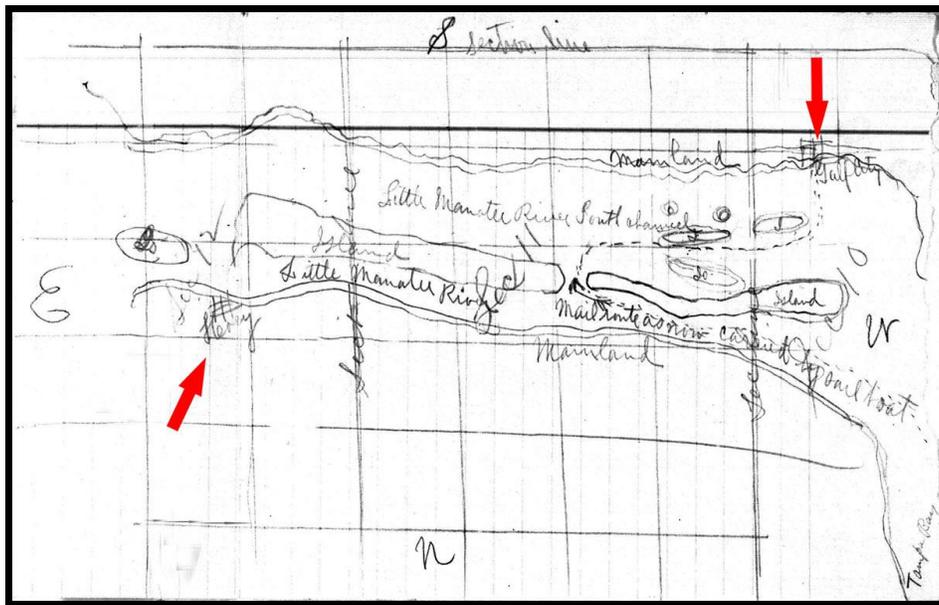


Figure 1. Location of Hoey across the Little Manatee River, from site survey drawn by Rupert W. Thomas February 17, 1905. (Image M1126-092-0247, Hillsboro County, Florida.)

The rare Hoey postmark is the earliest known usage of Doane Type 2/1 [Figure 2].

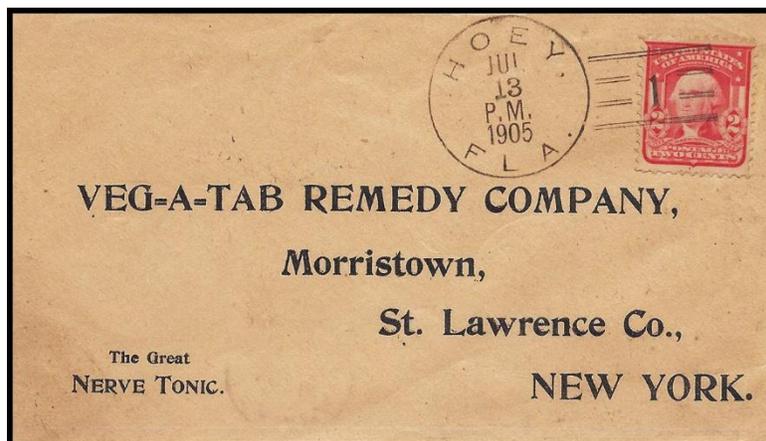


Figure 2. Hoey, Florida Handstamp is a Type 2/1 Doane dated Jul 13, 1905 (EKU). (Courtesy of Deane R. Briggs, M.D. collection.)

If one searches the internet, many of the VEG-A-TAB REMEDY COMPANY commercial envelopes from various states can be found. However, information on the company itself is scant. The back of this envelope reads “A Cure for Constipation, Wonderful Tonic for Nervous Troubles for ladies between forty-five and fifty, Try Them for Livers and Kidneys.”

I discovered Dr. Miller’s Proprietary Tablets were twenty-five cents each, or \$2.00 for a bottle or tin. It is interesting to note VEG-A-TAB stood for VEGETABLES which were ingredients in his tablets.

If you have any information on Hoey or the VEG-A-TAB Remedy Company, please let me know.

Endnotes

¹ National Archives, <https://catalog.archives.gov/>. The Post Office Department, Bureau of the Fourth Assistant Postmaster, Division of Topography. (1942 – 1949); Post Office Department, Office of the Postmaster General, 1792-7/1/1971. Reports of Site Locations, 1837 – 1950, from Records Group 28.

Southeastern Stamp Expo to Recognize Excellence in Exhibiting of Southern Postal History



Southeastern Stamp Expo

and the Southeast Federation of Stamp Clubs

The Southeast Federation of Stamp Clubs is pleased to announce the establishment of a new exhibiting award for the postal history of the Southeastern United States. The award will be offered annually at the Southeastern Stamp Expo, with its first availability in January 2020.

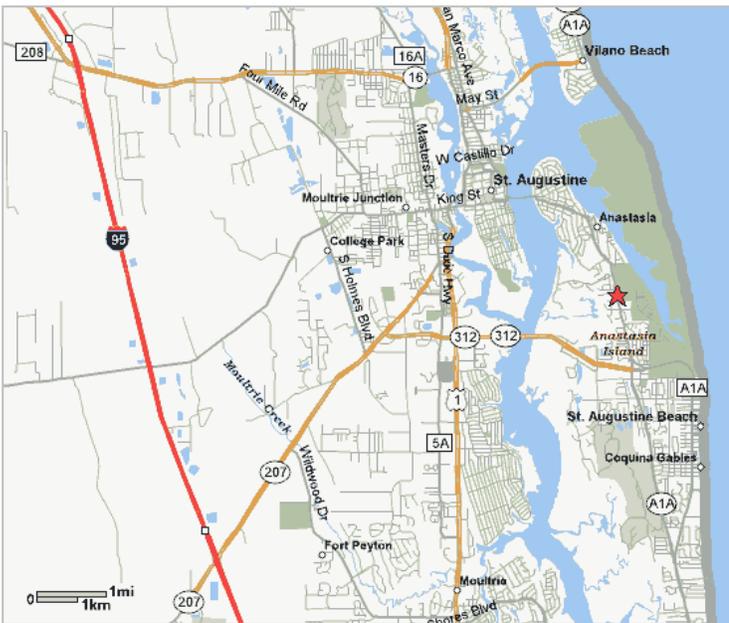
Titled *The Award for Southeastern Postal History*, the award will recognize the best competitive exhibit of Southeastern Postal History at the Expo. Eligible exhibits must be composed primarily of postal history elements from North and South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Florida, Alabama and Mississippi.

The Southeastern Stamp Expo will announce its jury and its call for exhibits by the end of July, 2019. Exhibitors with exhibits of Southeastern Postal History are invited to enter an exhibit and compete for this prestigious award. Exhibiting information will be available online at www.sefsc.org/exhibits.

Anastasia: More Than an Historic Beachfront Community

By Juan L. Riera

Anastasia referred to a community of ill-defined boundaries on Anastasia Island. “Anastasia” is no longer widely used, but was used for the island’s post office until the early 1950s. Anastasia Island is a barrier island that sits east of St. Augustine, Florida, running roughly north-south and having long-standing historic connections to the longest continuously inhabited European city in North America.



The island [Figure 1] is about fourteen miles long and about a mile wide. Its dimensions have been rather stable due to the efforts of the Army Corps of Engineers since WWII. Prior to that, the size and shape of the island, as well as the location of the inlet from the Atlantic, varied due to currents and storms that constantly shifted parts of the sandy island.

Part of the island falls within the city limits of St. Augustine (The Davis Shores and Lighthouse Park neighborhoods) as well as being home to the City of St. Augustine Beach. The area is also home to four unincorporated communities: Coquina Gables, Butler Beach, Crescent Beach and Treasure Beach. With the exception of St. Augustine, which is much larger, these communities vary in population size from a shade under a thousand people to about five thousand.

Figure 1. Anastasia Island.

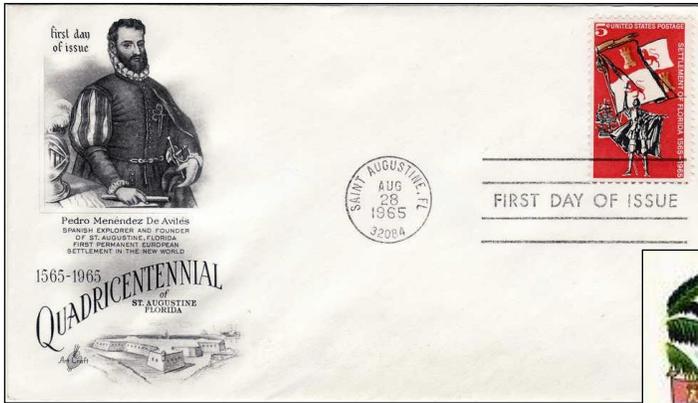
Fort Matanzas [Figure 2], built 1740-1742, and Anastasia State Park also call the island home and are linked to each other and to St. Augustine. Ft. Matanzas encompasses about 100 acres, including Snake Island, on the southern end of the island. Fort Matanzas National Monument is open to the public from 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM every day of the year except Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

The state park is located towards the northern end of the island and consists of about 1,600 acres including extensive beaches and natural habitats. Within the boundaries of the state park are quarries from which the Spanish mined coquina, a type of stone formed from compressed small seashells. Fort Matanzas is built of coquina.



Figure 2. Fort Matanzas.

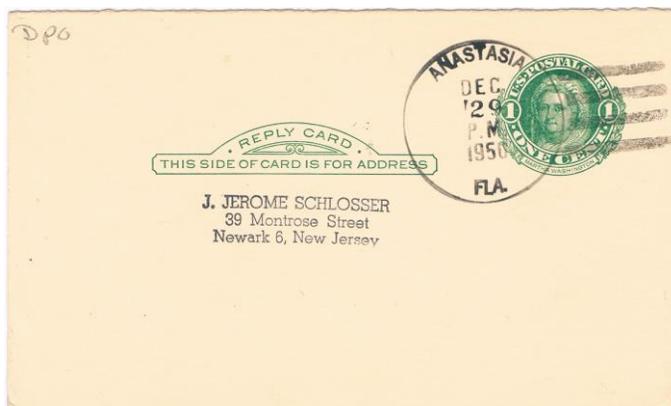
Spanish Admiral Pedro Menendez de Aviles [Figures 3 and 4] founded St. Augustine on the 8th of September 1565. But after a rebellion by Timucuan Indians in 1566, he moved the settlement to Anastasia Island. This was a short-lived relocation as the colonists moved back to the mainland, to the area of present-day downtown St. Augustine, about two miles south of its original location at the Timucuan settlement of Seloy.



Figures 3 and 4. First Day of Issue covers for Scott #1271, 1965 5-cent Pedro Menendez de Aviles and Florida Settlement.



The Anastasia post office [Figures 5 and 6] operated from May 24, 1888 to October 31, 1953, when postal operations were transferred to St. Augustine, presumably on the mainland, not the two municipal neighborhoods on the island. Orangi Howes was the first postmaster for Anastasia. Initially, the mail would have gone by boat to and from the island.



Figures 5 and 6. Anastasia postmarks: DEC 29, 1950 and DEC 21, 1933.

In 1895 “the bridge to Anastasia Island”, or “South Beach Railroad Bridge”, opened. Renovated in 1904, it could accommodate a trolley and charged a toll for transit. Mr. David P. Davis, developer of the Davis Shores neighborhood, was the driving force, both financially and as a promoter, of the bridge over Matanzas Bay, commonly known as the Bridge of Lions.

Construction on this bridge began in 1925 and was completed in 1927, after the mysterious death of David Davis. The bridge allowed the mail to go by motor vehicle, train or trolley at various times to St. Augustine.

St. Augustine has had a post office in continuous operation since July, 20th, 1821, even before the county was established. The first postmaster was Jonathon Beers. Anastasia Island has received two subsequent post offices since the Anastasia Post office closed. The first opened in the 1960s, closed in early 1981, and reestablished in 1983. These two post offices are St. Augustine Beach and St. Augustine Shores.

Pulitzer prize winning author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings (1896-1953) almost assuredly used the Anastasia post office. Rawlings married Charles Rawlings shortly after graduating college in 1918. In 1928 the couple purchased a 72-acre orange grove near Hawthorne, Florida, in the hamlet of Cross Creek. She liked living there, he did not.



They divorced in about 1934. Rawlings wrote three novels about Florida while living in Florida: *South Moon Under* (1933), *Golden Apples* (1935), and *The Yearling* (1938). She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1939 for *The Yearling*, which later became a motion picture and the subject of a commemorative stamp [Figure 7].

Figure 7. Scott #4223, 2008 4-cent Marjorie Rawlings.

In 1941, she married hotelier Norton Baskin, subsequently dividing her time between her farm, their homes in Crescent Beach, on Anastasia Island, and St. Augustine [Figure 8], and running the old Warden Castle that was renovated as a hotel. The Castle was subsequently sold to the Ripley Foundation becoming the first Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum.

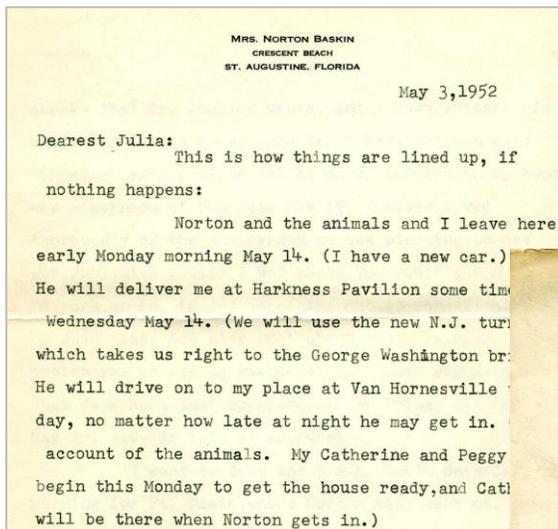
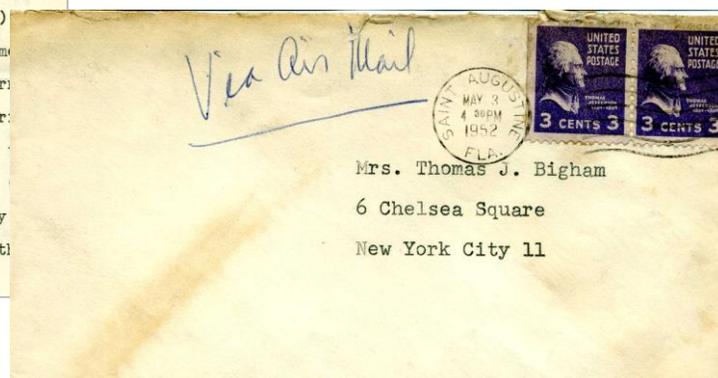


Figure 8. May 3, 1952 St. Augustine correspondence from Mrs. Norton Baskin (formerly Marjorie Rawlings). (Courtesy of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.)

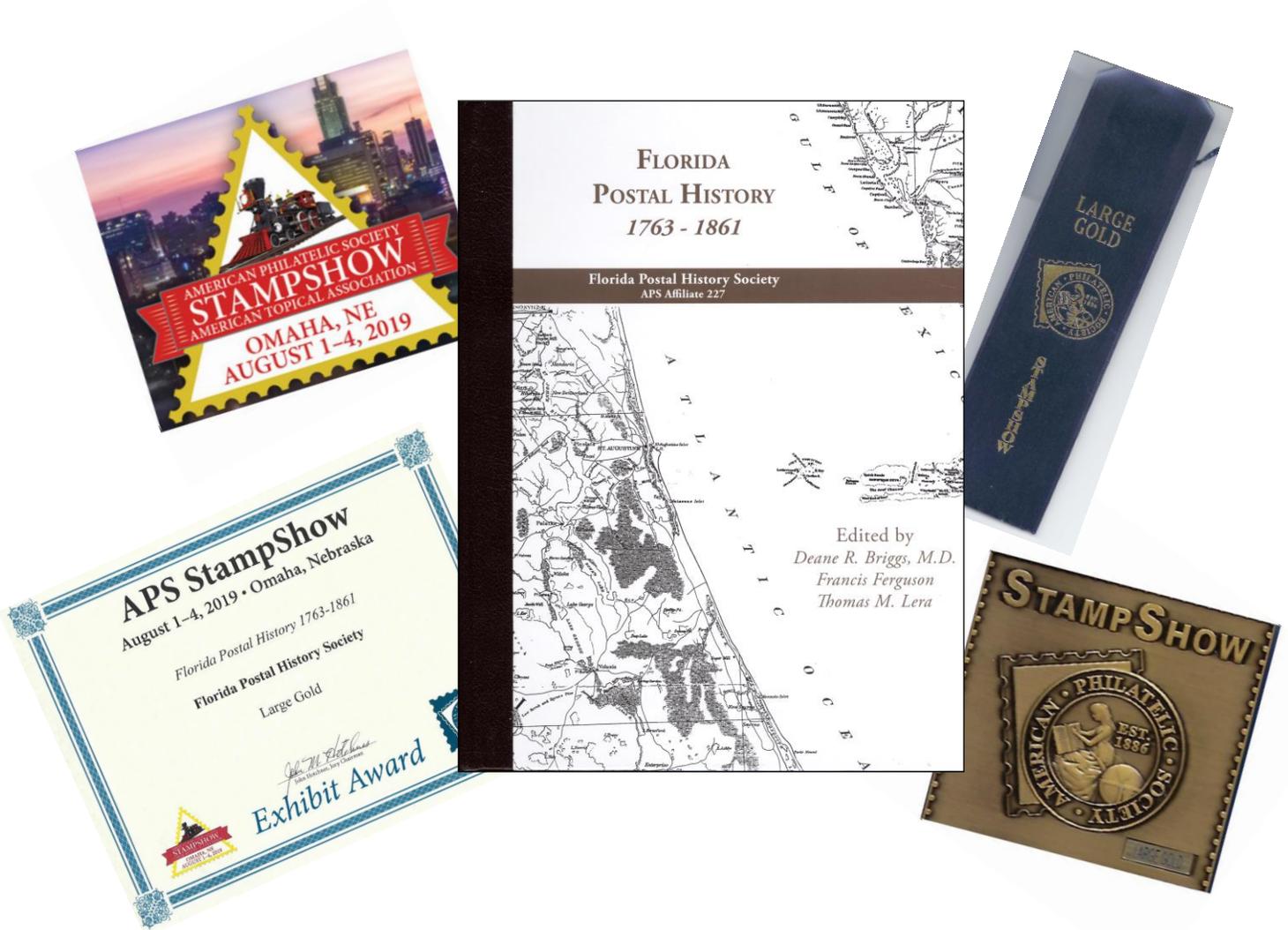


Rawlings was sued in 1943 by former neighbor Zelma Carson for invasion of privacy regarding passages in the book *Cross Creek*, that led Rawlings not to write a book about Florida again. Her final book was *The Sojourner*. Rawlings bought an old farmhouse in Van Hornesville, New York, spending part of every year there until her death in 1953, the same year the Anastasia Post Office closed.

St. Augustine and Anastasia Island have been linked historically for 450 years as a source of building material, as host for the St. Augustine settlement, defense, recreation, and Florida postal history. An interesting history for an island best known for its beachside communities.

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