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Southern Express Company

By Deane R. Briggs, M.D.

In the Vol. 13, No. 1, February 2006 issue of the *Florida Postal History Journal*, I wrote an article on Florida Express Usages which discussed the cover in **Figure 1** and the two other covers shown later in this article.¹ The black and white reproduction of this cover did not do justice to the cover. The orange Southern Express Company label and docketing on the cover needed color reproduction. I completely ignored the blue manuscript “27,” the circle around the Paid in pencil manuscript “Quincy 10 Paid,” and the “S.” I did mention the “2/ Paid” express rate as being a two-bits (25 cents) paid express charge. This was in addition to the regular 3-cent postage paid by the postal entire. To date, no one has an explanation of the blue markings or the meaning of the “27.” No other orange Florida Southern Express labels have been recorded to my knowledge.

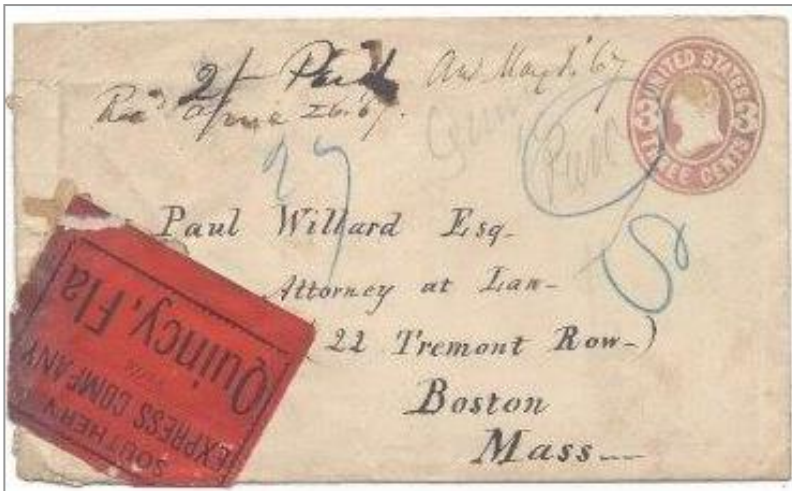


Figure 1. Quincy, Fla Southern Express Company orange label on 3-cent #U59 postal entire with “2/ Paid” express rate on April 1867 cover to Boston.

The Southern Express Company was incorporated as an Augusta, Georgia company on May 1, 1861 with nine Southern stockholders and with Plant as president. Although Confederate President Jefferson Davis made Plant’s company the agent for the Confederacy to collect tariffs and transfer funds, I am unaware of any Florida Confederate covers recorded with Southern Express Company labels or docketed notations.

Henry Plant was born October 27, 1819, the son of a Branford, Connecticut farmer who died of typhus when Plant was only six. His mother remarried and moved to New Haven, Connecticut where Henry was educated at a private school.

The Southern Express Company was organized by Henry Bradley Plant, **Figure 2**, who at the onset of the Civil War purchased the Adams Express Company’s interests in the territory south of the Potomac and Ohio Rivers for \$500,000 in promissory notes.²



Figure 2. Henry Bradley Plant, 1819-1899. From Florida Photographic Collection.

Continued on page 3

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He turned down an education at Yale and became a deck hand and captain's boy on the steamboat *New York* which ran between New Haven and New York City. Plant was in charge of express parcels and developed efficient procedures for handling such expresses. After marrying Ellen Blackstone in 1843, Plant took a position with Beecher and Company, an express company located in New Haven. This company was subsequently purchased by the Adams Express Company and Plant served as an express messenger on the Hartford and New Haven Railroad. After a few years, Plant was placed in charge of the old York office of the company and by 1853 was in charge of the entire Adams Express business of that railroad.

In 1853, Plant's wife Ellen was ordered by her physician to travel to the South for health reasons. After an eight-day journey, the Plants arrived at Jacksonville in March 1853 and spent several months at a private home while Ellen's health improved. During this time, Plant became impressed with Florida as a place for future development.

The next year, Ellen again required a move to the south for health reasons, and Plant obtained the responsibility for all the Adams Express Company interests from Virginia to Florida. Plant successfully organized and greatly extended express services across the southeastern region during this time of rapid growth of the railroads and steamboat travel. With the approach of the Civil War, the directors of the Adams Express Company, fearing confiscation of their Southern properties, held a secret meeting with Plant in Louisville, Kentucky.³ Plant was reported to have said that Adams Express would lose its assets in the South and threatened that if the directors did not sell to him he would organize his own express company. In a follow-up meeting on April 8, 1861 in Plant's Augusta, Georgia office, Adams Express and Plant finalized details of the sale of all the Adams assets in ten southeastern states. No actual money exchanged hands and Plant signed five personal notes for \$100,000 each.

It is unclear how well the Southern Express Company did financially during the Civil War as it soon was criticized by Southern patriots noting Plant's Northern birth and by attacks in the *Montgomery Weekly Confederation* contending that Adams Express owned Southern Express. Criticism of high express charges and slow delivery as the war progressed continued to be published in newspapers across the south. To stem some of the complaints, Southern Express did allow supplies and expresses to soldiers to be sent at no charge.

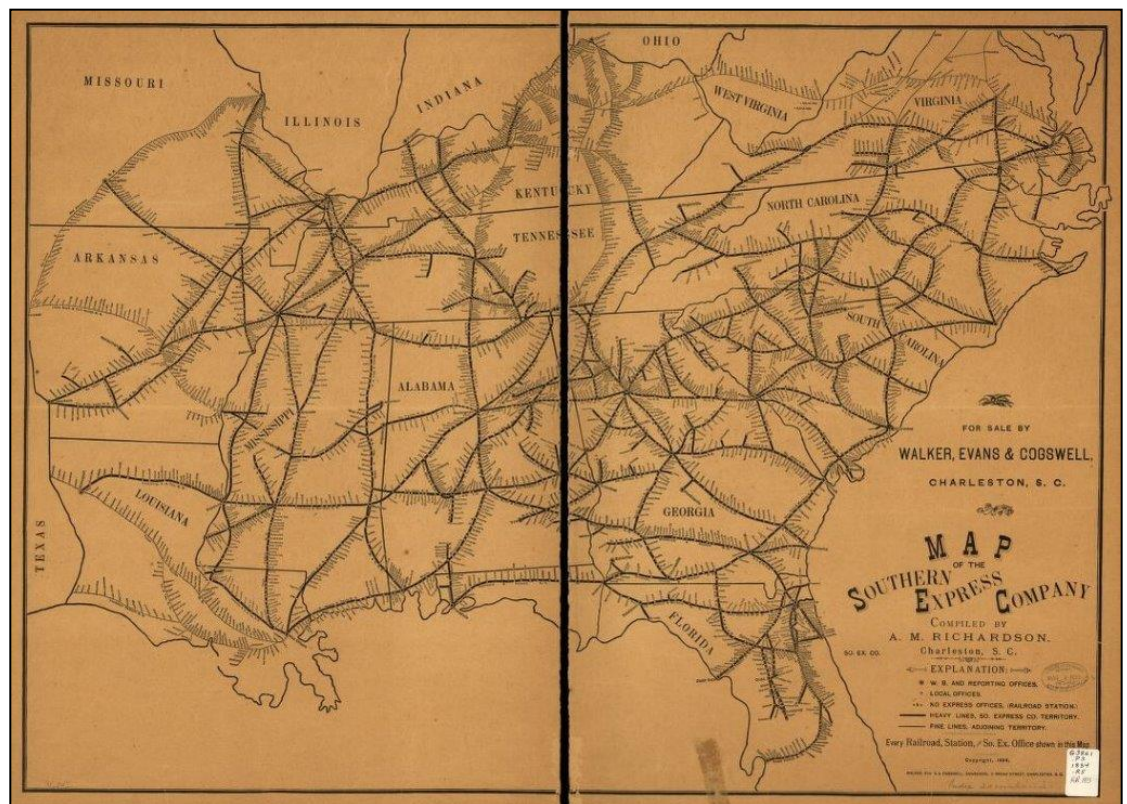
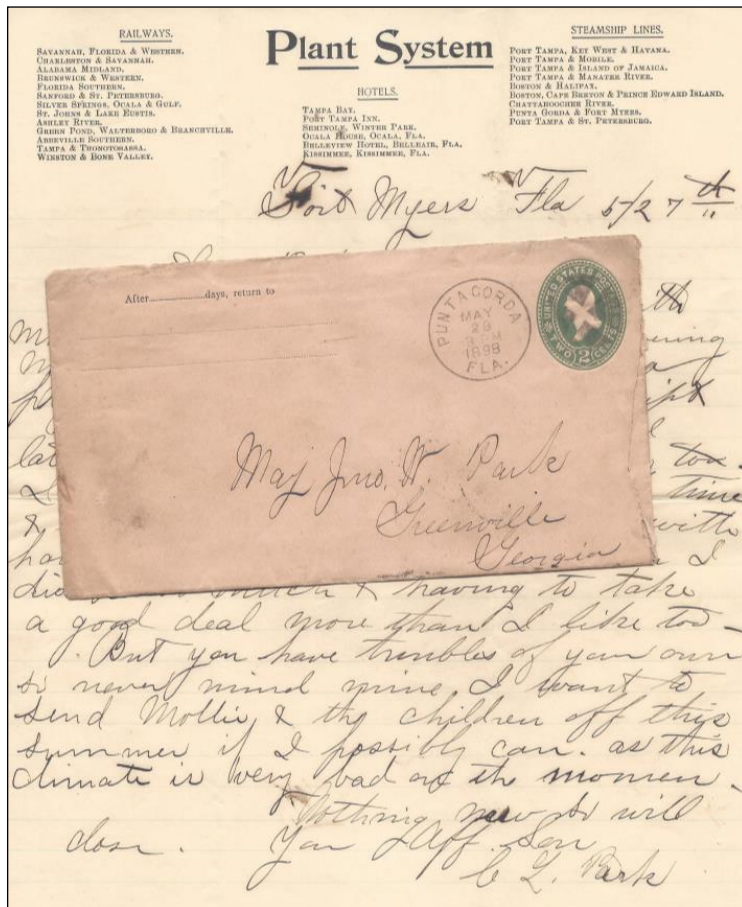


Figure 3. 1884 Walker, Evans & Cogswell map of the Southern Express Company railroad lines. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

In 1863, Plant left his home in Augusta, Georgia claiming his own health reasons, but it may well have been the result of the constant criticism. He obtained a safe passage document from Jefferson Davis' Assistant Secretary of War at the discretion of the Commanding General at Wilmington, North Carolina. In August 1863, he sailed to Bermuda, then to Canada, and eventually arrived in England. During a visit to France, he was informed his Confederate passport was invalid and was issued a French passport declaring him a U.S. citizen residing in Georgia. This allowed him to travel across Europe and later re-enter the United States from Canada, finally to reside in New York. After the war, Plant returned to the South to reclaim his business interests, primarily the Southern Express Company. The railroads in the South were often ruined with many going bankrupt. In 1879 and 1880, Plant bought the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad and the Charleston and Savannah Railroad at foreclosure sales. Over the next twenty years, the Plant System became a railroad empire⁴, **Figure 3**, that included fourteen railroads and 2,100 miles of track, several steamboat lines as well as eight hotels, including the \$3,000,000 Tampa Bay Hotel. At his death on June 23, 1899, Plant left an estate of over \$10,000,000.



The Plant System letter sheet in **Figure 4** lists the Railways, Hotels and Steamship Lines assets of the company at the time this was mailed from Punta Gorda, Florida on May 28, 1898. Listed are thirteen of the fourteen railroads acquired by Plant by the turn of the century. All hotels except the Hotel Punta Gorda and Fort Myers Hotel are listed, the later completed in 1898. Steamship lines are listed including two from Boston to Halifax, Nova Scotia and from Boston to Prince Edward Island. These two were unusually far from the Plant System's main business ventures in Florida, Georgia and Alabama.

Figure 4. May 28, 1898 cover mailed from Punta Gorda, Fla. with Plant System letterhead enclosure.

The cover in **Figure 5** is a very uncommon express usage from Molino, Florida to San Francisco. It was carried by express out of the mails apparently and took nearly four weeks to reach San Francisco. It is likely that regular mail by the USPOD would have been delivered much earlier. Perhaps the enclosure was money or something of value that required use of the private express service.

Figure 5. Molino Fla July 14 1871 SOUTHERN EXPRESS COMPANY "EXPRESS SERVICE." Cover to San Francisco, California. WELLS FARGO CO / SAN FRANCISCO AUG 11 blue oval receiving mark.



The cover in **Figure 6** has an oval Southern Express Co. agent marking for T. T. Stockton. It is dated February 13, 1882 and the cover was posted five days earlier at Jacksonville with a 3-cent banknote stamp. It is unclear why the date on the Agent marking was five days later than the postmark.



Figure 6. SOUTHERN EXPRESS CO., JACKSONVILLE, FLA. T.T. STOCKTON, AGENT/ FEB 19 1882 black oval agent handstamp on Southern Express Company / EXPRESS SERVICE. Cover with 3-cent green banknote stamp cancelled by a JACKSONVILLE/FLA. FEB 14 duplex postmark.

Figure 7 is a receiving receipt for an express package delivered to the Southern Express Company at Waldo, Florida. The sender and agent's names are not clear and the date of May 31, 186x is also not definite. This may well have been a use shortly after the end of the civil war.

Anyone with additional Southern Express Company covers from Florida are encouraged to submit a scan to the author at drb@gte.net.

Figure 7. Receipt for delivery of express package at the Southern Express Company in Waldo, Florida.



Endnotes

¹ Deane R. Briggs, M.D., "Florida Express Usages", *Florida Postal History Journal*, Vol 13, No. 1, Feb 2006, pp. 6-8.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_B_Plant.

³ Dudley S. Johnson, "The Southern Express Company: A Georgia Corporation", *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Volume 56, Number 2, pp. 224-242.

⁴ Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C. 20540-4650, Control Number gm71000842.

Opa-locka, Florida Played a Pivotal Role in the Short History of the U.S. Airship *Macon*

By Christine C. Sanders and Paul Huber

This article concerns the trip of the *USS Macon* to Opa-locka, Florida for her participation in the U.S. Navy's Fleet Maneuvers in the Caribbean in 1934. This trip was memorialized in numerous covers prepared by philatelists and Navy enthusiasts, and selected ones will be used to illustrate this important event in naval history.



The *Macon*. In the 1930s, the *USS Macon* (ZRS-5), **Figure 1**, was a helium-inflated airship in the U.S. Navy's program to develop rigid airships to use as scouting platforms and flying "aircraft carriers."

Figure 1. Elaborately decorated airmail cover by Henry Stinemetts for the first flight of the *Macon* from its new home base at Moffett Field in Sunnyvale, California on October 26, 1933.

She was 785 feet long and 155 feet high across the fins, **Figure 2**, and approximately the same size as the aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise*. Commissioned in June of 1933, just two months after the fatal crash of sister airship *USS Akron*, the *Macon* carried a crew of 60 and five fighter planes that could be launched and recovered in flight. Her home station was Moffett Field in Sunnyvale, CA near San Francisco.

Over a series of fleet maneuvers with both the *Akron* and *Macon*, the Navy ultimately realized that these huge, slow moving airships were best employed as out-of-sight scouting platforms that extended the range of the planes they carried.



Figure 2. The *Macon* over New York City, 1933.

Opa-locka. The current western half of the Opa-locka airport was leased by the U.S. Navy in 1932 for a dirigible mooring mast. The *Akron* used this base during its 1933 trip to the Canal Zone. It was also used by the *Graf Zeppelin*. In 1934, the Navy selected this site as home base for the *Macon* during its Caribbean Fleet Maneuvers as alternative sites for mooring did not provide adequate support for the large airship whose tail was at risk of being dunked in the water when moored to temporary masts at sea. Unfortunately, this transcontinental flight from California to Opa-locka involved passage through very difficult territory for an airship like the *Macon*. Narrow, but high, mountain ranges had to be traversed often with great turbulence that threatened the structural integrity of these large airships.

The Trip to Florida. In April of 1934, the Navy was preparing its Fleet exercises - Fleet Problem XV - that were to be held in the Caribbean to determine how quickly the Pacific Fleet could move through the Panama Canal to the Caribbean perimeter of the Antilles. It was decided that the *Macon* would leave the exercises when the Fleet continued on to Panama and travel over land to Florida where it would rejoin the exercises. On April 20, 1934, the *Macon* left home base at Moffett Field, California, **Figure 3**, for Opa-locka, Florida, a 54.5-hour flight.

Figure 3. *Departure of the Macon from its home base at Moffett Field on April 20, 1934. Cachet on airmail cover shows the airship above its hangar at Moffett Field. Tower on tracks leading out from hangar is the mooring mast.*



At 11PM, the *Macon* circled around Phoenix to await daylight on April 21 before entering the mountainous region between Phoenix and Dagoon, Arizona. Despite difficult narrow and high passes, this portion of the trip was transited without incident by 6:00 AM. By 10:50 AM, El Paso, Texas was in sight, **Figure 4**, as were *Macon's* troubles. Around noon April 21, the *Macon* snaked her way through a pass near Van Horn, Texas. Air conditions were extremely violent with the *Macon* rising and falling at 24 to 36 feet per second. This caused multiple areas of damage to the *Macon's* frame with the tail damaged where the fins attached. Temporary repairs made in flight probably saved the airship from crashing in West Texas.



Figure 4. *Cover documenting the passage of the Macon over El Paso, Texas on April 21 and later signed by Admiral Ernest J. King (who had placed the Macon in commission), Commander Alger Dresel (CO of the Macon), and Secretary of the Navy Claude A. Swanson.*

The remainder of the journey was uneventful and on the evening of April 22 the *Macon* was moored at Opa-locka. This arrival was memorialized in many covers, three of which are shown in **Figures 5, 6 and 7**.

Figure 5. *Opa-locka cover for the arrival of the Macon on the evening of April 22. Cachet by David Rosenthal, President of the Miami Philatelic Society.*

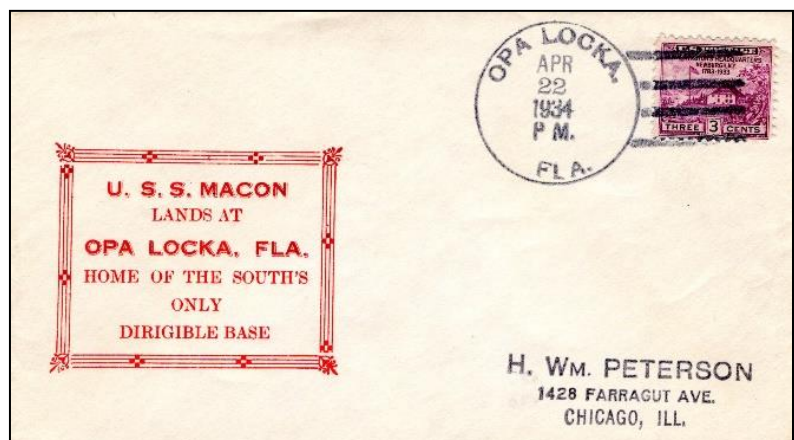




Figure 6. Large ornate Miami cover by R. Dumonte for the arrival of the Macon on April 22.

Figure 7. Airmail cover with Miami Chamber of Commerce cachet for the arrival of the Macon on April 22. Signed by Macon CO Alger Dresel.



Repairs. The *Macon* was scheduled to rejoin the Fleet in the Caribbean on May 5, but the damage suffered on the trip made participation impossible. Thus, a repair crew from Goodyear-Zeppelin, the designer and builder of the *Macon*, was dispatched to Opa-locka to join her crew and undertake more permanent repairs. Many problems were encountered during this time. A storm on April 23 with torrential downpours created problems with the *Macon's* weight, and ballast had to be removed and then added as the *Macon* gained weight with the rain and then lost it as she dried out. Winds would send the *Macon's* tail hurtling around the mooring circle's tracks. The site itself created problems.

In 1934, Opa-locka was located in a swampy waste. The *Macon's* officers and crew were housed in tents. Rains kept everything damp and mosquitoes were thick and ferocious. Neighborhood owls took up residence between the *Macon's* gas cells and outer cover while rattlesnakes were a constant threat. For nine days men worked 16-hour days to complete more permanent repairs to the *Macon* so that she would be ready for her May 5 date to rejoin the Fleet.

May 5 – 7 Exercises. On the morning of May 5, the *Macon* left Opa-locka to join the Fleet in the Caribbean (Figures 8 and 9).

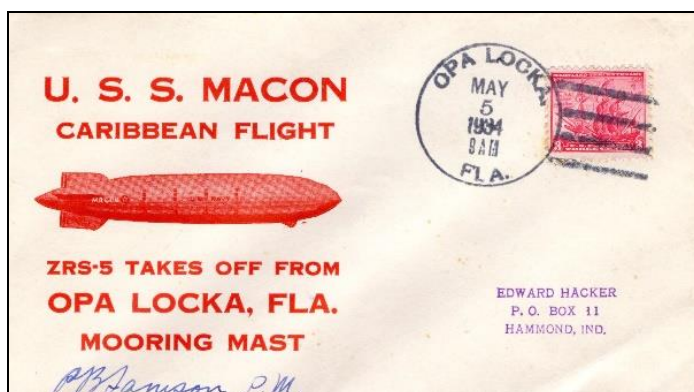


Figure 8. Opa-locka cover signed by Postmaster for the departure of the Macon on May 5 to join the Fleet in the Caribbean.



Figure 9. Airmail cover from Opa-locka for the May 5 departure of the Macon.

En route, the *Macon* passed over Miami (*Figure 10*), Coconut Grove (*Figure 11*), Perrine (*Figure 12*), and Key Largo (*Figure 13*).



Figure 10. Hand-painted cachet on May 5 Miami, Florida cover signed by Executive Officer of the Macon, Lieutenant Commander Bertram J. Rogers.



Figure 11. May 5 cover for passage of the Macon over Coconut Grove, Florida.



Figure 12. May 5 cover for passage of the Macon over Perrine, Florida.



Figure 13. May 5 cover for passage of the Macon Over Key Largo, Florida.

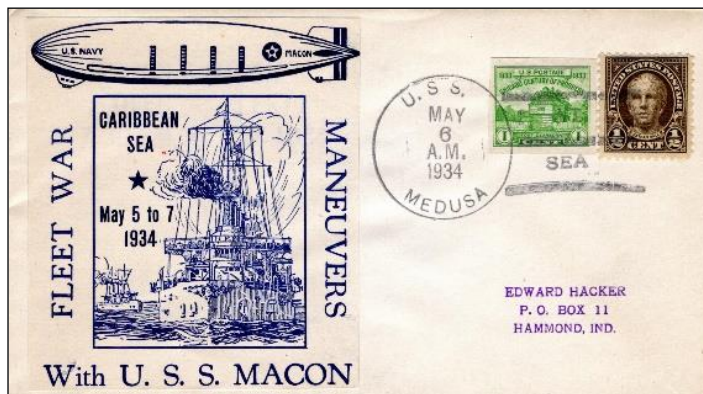


Figure 14. May 6 cover postmarked aboard the USS Medusa at sea with a cachet for the May 5 – 7 Fleet War Maneuvers in the Caribbean.

Around 10:00 AM while *Macon*'s planes were refueling aboard, the airship flew into a nest of Gray forces aircraft. The airship's location was being radioed to the aircraft carrier *USS Lexington* by the Gray forces' planes and they were about to attack from above the airship. The *Macon* was easily "shot down" but not before alerting the Blue Force of the *Lexington*'s position. The *Lexington* was "sunk" by aircraft from the Blue Force's *USS Saratoga* as a result.

On the morning of May 6, the Fleet exercises began (*Figure 14*). The scenario consisted of an enemy Gray fleet that had seized Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The Blue fleet, having transited the Panama Canal, had the task of destroying the Gray fleet and retake the islands. The *Macon* was part of the Blue forces. She was located midway between the Canal Zone and Kingston, Jamaica and was to search to the northeast for the Gray fleet. Bad weather limited visibility on and off for most of the morning. However, one of *Macon*'s planes had spotted some destroyers of the Gray forces.

After being designated as a new airship for the purposes of the exercises, the *Macon* was told to resume operations and find the *Lexington*. Finally, around 1:00 PM, the aircraft carrier was spotted and shadowed for over an hour by the *Macon* relaying reports of its location to the Blue fleet. This allowed a successful attack on the *Lexington*.

The *Macon* then returned to her searching duties and found a large group of Gray forces cruisers and destroyers. Around 7:00 PM, the *Macon* was released from the exercise and began her return to Opa-locka. Her return to base on May 7 is illustrated in covers from the *USS Tillman* (Figure 15), Key Largo (Figure 16), Islamorada (Figure 17), Miami (Figure 18), and Opa-locka (Figure 19).

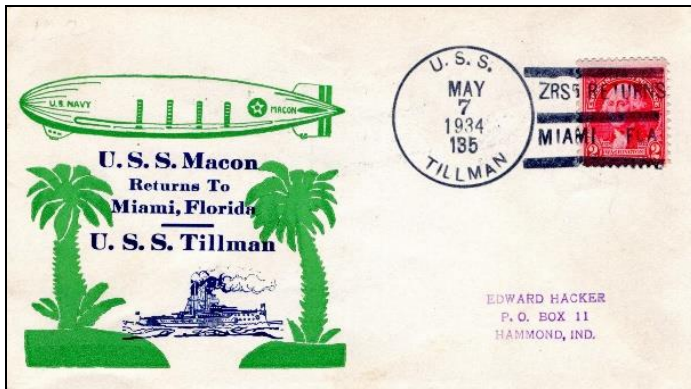


Figure 15. May 7 cover for return trip of the *Macon* to Opa-locka postmarked on the *USS Tillman*.

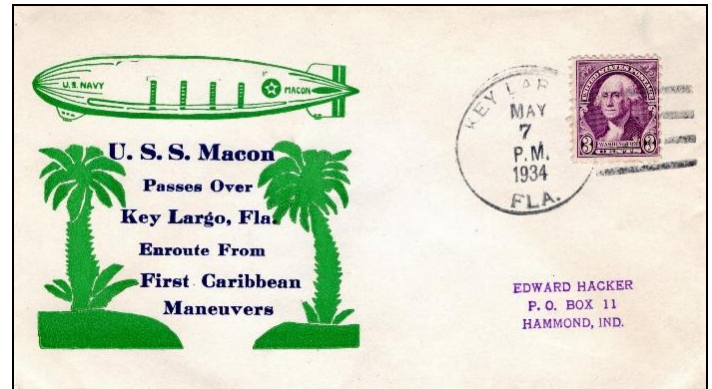


Figure 16. May 7 cover for return trip of the *Macon* to Opa-locka when passing over Key Largo, Florida.

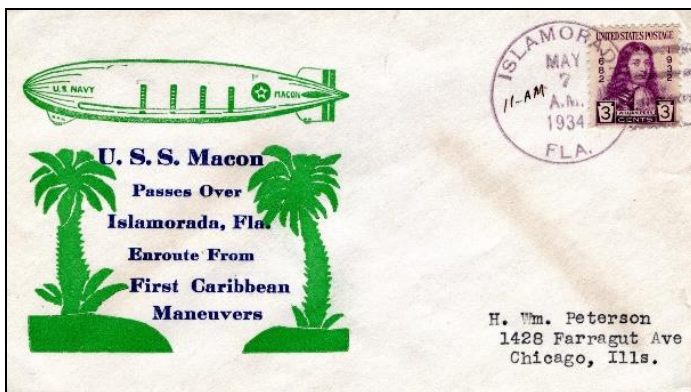


Figure 17. May 7 cover for return trip of the *Macon* to Opa-locka when passing over Islamorada, Florida.



Figure 18. May 7 airmail cover for return trip of the *Macon* to Opa-locka when passing over Miami, Florida.



Figure 19. May 7 cover for arrival of the *Macon* to mooring mast in Opa-locka, Florida.

During the return trip, the number 1 engine burned out a bearing. At Opa-locka, the defective engine was replaced by midnight.

May 11 – 13 Exercises. Early on May 11, the *Macon* left Opa-locka for the last Fleet exercise (*Figure 20*). Her trip over Florida was captured in covers postmarked in Miami (*Figure 21*), Princeton (*Figure 22*), Homestead (*Figure 23*), and Key West (*Figure 24*).

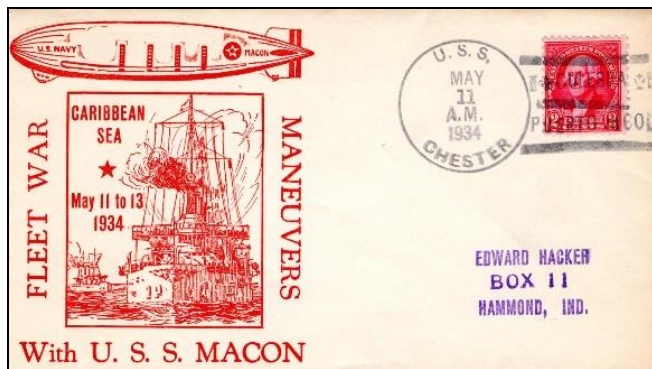


Figure 20. May 11 cover postmarked aboard the USS Chester with a cachet for the May 11 – 13 Fleet War Maneuvers in the Caribbean.



Figure 21. May 11 airmail cover for Macon's second trip to Fleet War Maneuvers as it passed over Miami, Florida.



Figure 22. May 11 cover for Macon's second trip to Fleet War Maneuvers as it passed over Princeton, Florida.

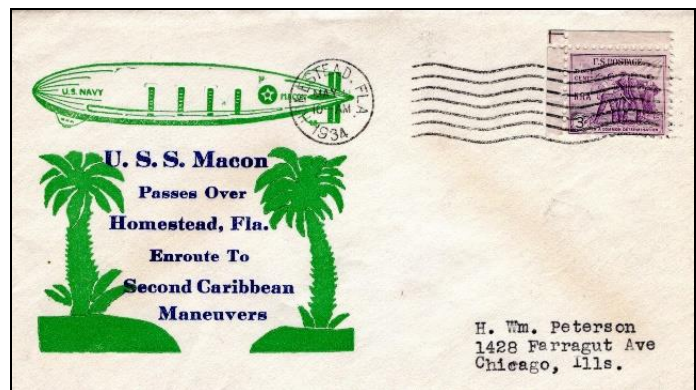


Figure 23. May 11 cover for Macon's second trip to Fleet War Maneuvers as it passed over Homestead, Florida.

The exercise began early May 12 as the *Macon* was circling Cape Rojo, Puerto, Rico. The mission was for the Blue forces to which *Macon* belonged, to destroy the Gray naval forces and isolate them in Puerto Rico. The *Macon* was to provide tactical scouting and try several new procedures.

At 10:50 AM, the *Macon* spotted a large formation of ships and launched her planes. The ships were the Gray advance forces. Instead of shadowing the ships, *Macon's* planes flew in a direction expected to lead them to the

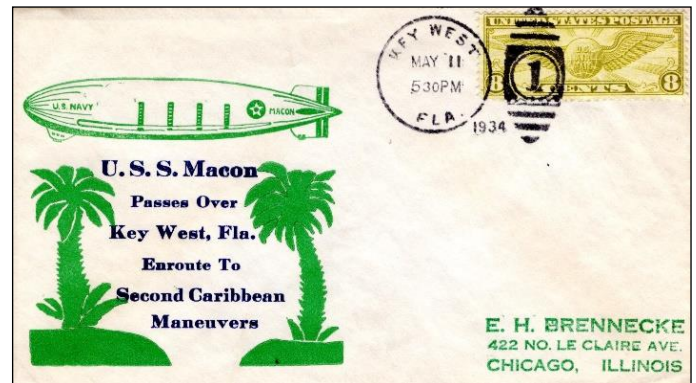


Figure 24. May 11 airmail cover for Macon's second trip to Fleet War Maneuvers as it passed over Key West, Florida.

main body of the Gray main naval force. Failing to accomplish this mission, the planes were to rendezvous back with the *Macon* at Point Figuras, Puerto Rico. When other units spotted the Gray fleet, the *Macon* could not get involved as she had lost communications with her planes due to radio problems and had to continue to the appointed rendezvous location.

Just after noon, the planes were back on board the *Macon* and she returned to Cape Rojo to begin a second search during which the planes were navigated directly from the *Macon* by radio. The *Macon* circled Cape Rojo during this search. This use of the *Macon* as a “stationary” platform to control scouting by her planes was successful as the planes located Gray’s carrier divisions.

After recovering her planes, the *Macon* resumed her usual protocol and flew off to scout by herself. At 3:08 PM, she found Gray’s main body, swung away from contact and made a report of her findings. Fortunately, there were no aircraft carriers in the main body to threaten the *Macon*.

The *Macon* was released from the exercise soon after making her report and returned to Opa-locka. Her second return trip to Opa-locka was captured on covers postmarked on the *USS Tillman* (*Figure 25*), as well as in Miami (*Figure 26*) and Opa-locka (*Figure 27*) where she arrived at 5:45 AM on May 13, Mother’s Day.

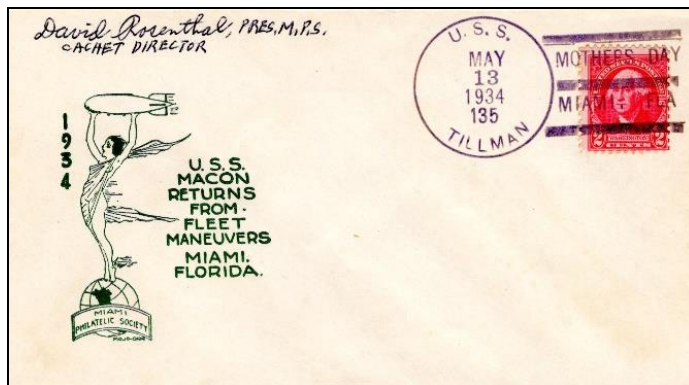


Figure 25. May 13 cover postmarked aboard the USS Tillman for Macon’s final return to Opa-locka, Florida. Signed by David Rosenthal, President of the Miami Philatelic Society.



Figure 26. May 13 airmail cover for Macon’s return to Opa-locka when passing over Miami, Florida.



The information provided to the Navy by these exercises with the *Macon* led to the conclusion that this type of airship should not function as a scout itself, but that her planes must perform the scouting. However, the airship could provide mobility and extend the range of the planes.

Figure 27. May 13 cover for Macon’s return to mooring mast in Opa-locka, Florida.

The Rest of the Story. Early on the morning of May 16, the *Macon* took off from Opa-locka to return to her home base at Moffett Field. A variety of covers depicted this departure (*Figures 28, 29 and 30*).



Figure 28. May 16 airmail cover postmarked in Opa-locka, FL with Miami Chamber of Commerce cachet for the departure of the Macon.



Figure 29. May 16 cover postmarked in Opa-locka, Florida with cachet for the departure of the Macon.



Figure 30. May 16 airmail cover postmarked on the USS Tillman with Miami Philatelic Society cachet for the departure of the Macon.

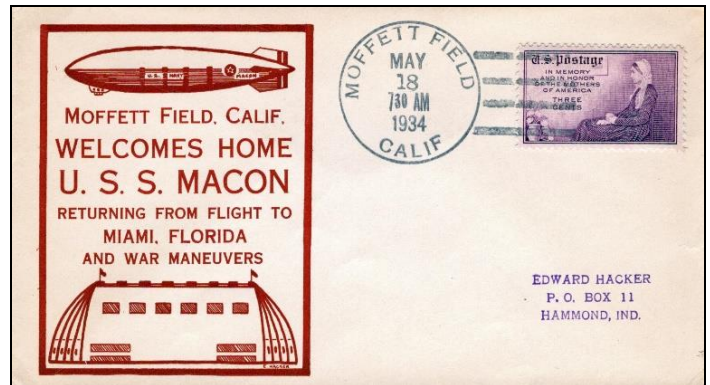


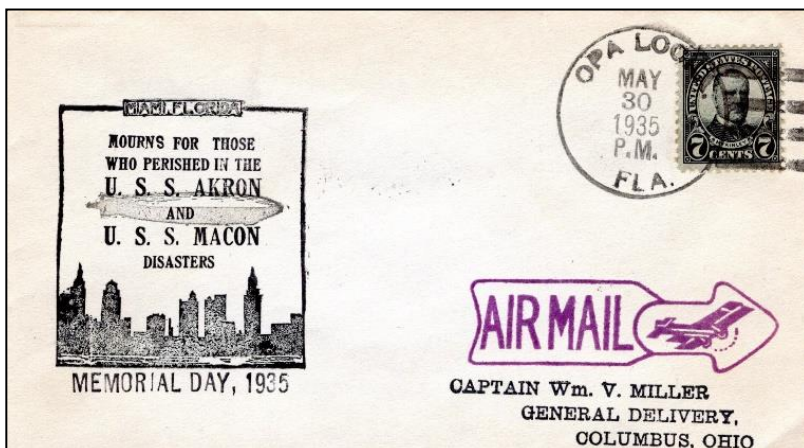
Figure 31. May 18 cover for the arrival of the Macon back at her home base at Moffett Field, California.

Compared to her trip to Florida, her 51-hour return to California was uneventful. The *Macon* was moored at Moffett Field in the early morning of May 18 (Figure 31).

The importance of this trip to Florida in 1934 to the history of the *Macon* did not end on May 16. The damage to three of four fins of the *Macon* that occurred during her trip to Opa-locka was repaired upon her arrival, but no repair to the upper fin was made. This unrepaired fin failed during a storm on February 12, 1935 damaging three aft gas cells that caused loss of a significant amount of helium. Efforts by the crew to mitigate the effects of this loss ultimately led to the *Macon's* crash into the sea near Monterey Bay, California. Unlike the *Akron*, the *Macon* had life jackets and rafts and only 2 of the 83 officers and men were lost at sea.

This event has been memorialized on many covers since 1935. On May 30, 1953, Memorial Day, Opa-locka recognized this tragedy along with the rest of the country (Figure 32).

Figure 32. Memorial Day 1935 airmail cover postmarked in Opa-locka, Florida with cachet for remembrance of the Akron and Macon disasters at sea.



Resources

- Smith, Richard K. *The Airships Akron & Macon, Flying Aircraft Carriers of the United States Navy*. United States Naval Institute, Annapolis, MD, 1965, 228 pages.
- Marshall, M. Ernest. *Rear Admiral Herbert V. Wiley, A Career in Airships and Battleships*. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2019, 322 pages.

Editor's Note

Paul Huber, co-byline for this article, is well known to many members of the Florida society. He is an experienced naval philately resource (Annapolis graduate, Navy career) and is a dealer (Fairwinds) at Florida's FLOREX and Sarasota shows. When Christine Sanders began her research regarding the Macon, she did not hesitate to contact Paul who provided invaluable guidance (and covers). A perfect example of excellent collaboration resulting in an outstanding article.

Hunting for Chipco

By Jack Malarkey, with Pat Malarkey-Stallard

Postal history is a fascinating pursuit. It is finding that elusive postmark from long ago, tracking post office name changes, sniffing out ghost towns, communities and long forgotten places. I don't enjoy hunting much these days, but trolling the internet with a point and a click reminds me of aiming and squeezing the trigger to procure that fine wild game to furnish the evening meal. Trophy hunting was never my sport. And, no, you cannot eat this prey. But you can surely devour the history and an awareness of how our ancestors lived.

In years past, folks moved about almost as much as we do today. For example, we find mail such as that postmarked 1840, Tallahassee, by Elizabeth Dulaney, *Figure 1*, writing all the news to her brother in Marshall, Illinois:

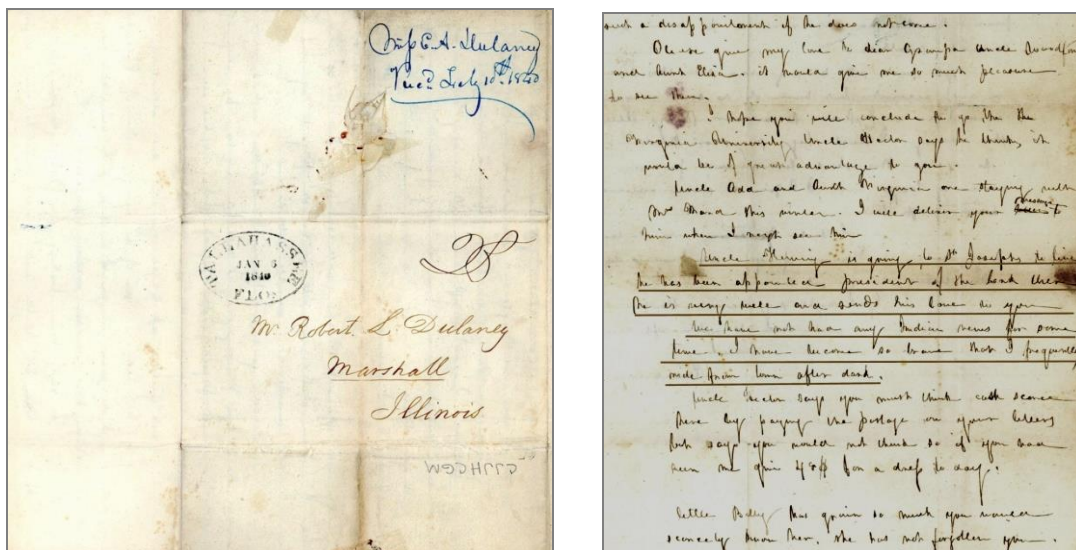


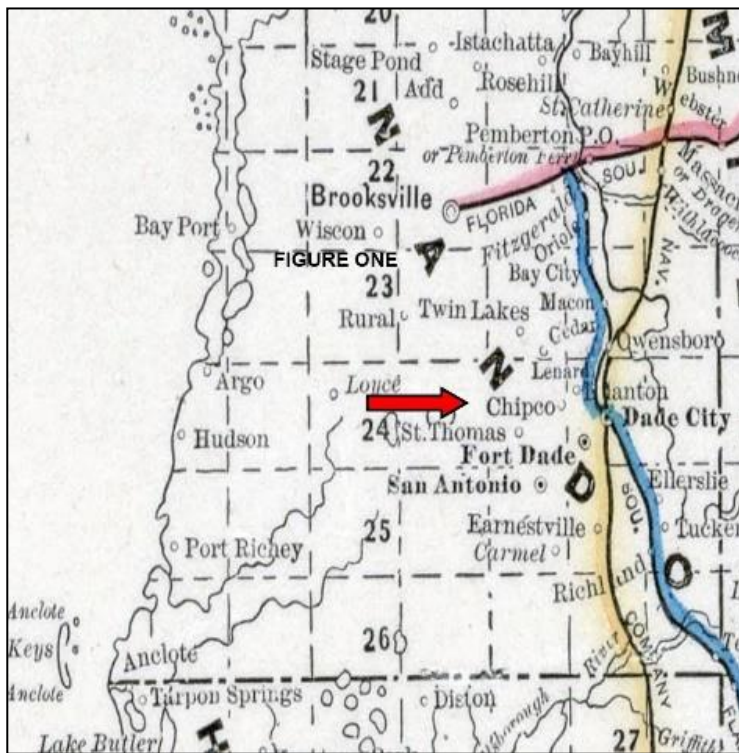
Figure 1. Elizabeth Dulaney - Postmark Tallahassee to Marshall, Illinois 1840.

“Uncle Henry is going to St. Joseph to live. He has been appointed president of the bank there. He is very well and sends his love to you.

We have not had any Indian news for some time, I have become so brave that I frequently ride from town after dark.”

In 1814, Ehco Emathla Chopco, known as Chief Chipco, a Seminole leader and uncle of Chief Tallahassee, migrated south from Alabama to Florida with others of his tribe eluding General Jackson’s military and seeking sanctuary amid the Spaniards. Historically nomadic, Chipco’s tribe was always on the move, avoiding death, or capture and export to reservations in the west.¹

There were two known Chipco post offices in Florida named for the famous chief. The first was located in Brevard County, established August 24, 1880 with Frank Smith, the first settler in the area, as the postmaster. The post office was discontinued October 3, 1881 with mail sent to Melbourne.² That post office was re-established May 8, 1884 as Micco because by that time a second Chipco post office had been established, this time in Pasco County. Micco (or Nehe Mathis Micco) was another well-known Indian Chief³ who had migrated from Alabama to Florida with the Chipco party.⁴



When I interviewed a local well-known centenarian who grew up in Pasco County, he assured me there had been Indian camps in the area west of Dade City, **Figure 2**. The Chipco post office there was almost certainly named for the wily Chief Chipco described as stately, charismatic and cunning.

The Chipco post office in Pasco, at SE one-fourth of S13 - T24s - R 20e, was established July 16, 1883 with Columbus C. Gant as the first postmaster. Three other postmaster appointments followed, **Figure 3**, with Columbus and Mary Gant being two of those. The post office was discontinued February 28, 1900.⁵

Columbus C. Gant	Postmaster	07/16/1883
Harry K. Bankston	Postmaster	04/09/1884
Columbus C. Gant	Postmaster	11/19/1884
Mary L. Gant	Postmaster	02/04/1897

Figure 2. Vintage Florida map, courtesy of Jeff Miller.

Figure 3. Chipco Postmasters.

Though involved in both major and minor wartime battles, Chief Chipco escaped capture from the military and bounty seekers by becoming known as a friend of the white man.⁶ Historic markers include the location of one of Chief Chipco’s encampments, a village on an island in Lake Hamilton, near Lake Wales, **Figure 4**, and the Pasco County marker, west of Dade City, **Figure 5**.



Figure 4: Chipco Historic Marker, Lake Hamilton, Polk County, Florida.

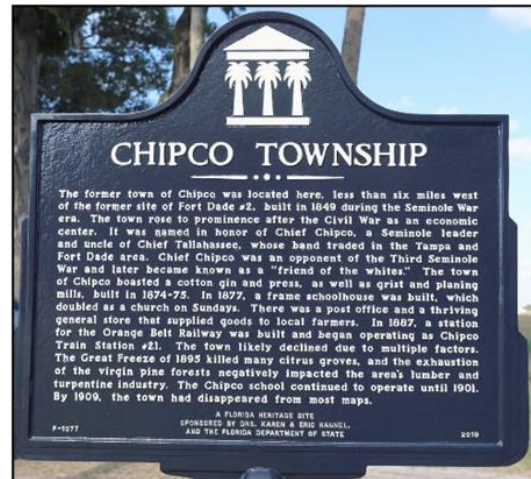


Figure 5: Chipco Historic Marker, west of Dade City, Pasco County, Florida.

While internet hunting does not provide a meal, it yields lasting trophies such as the two Chipco postmarks from Pasco County, **Figure 6**, and a Micco postmark from Brevard County, where the first Chipco Post Office once stood, **Figure 7**.



Figure 6. Chipco Postmarks, Pasco County, Jack Malarkey collection.

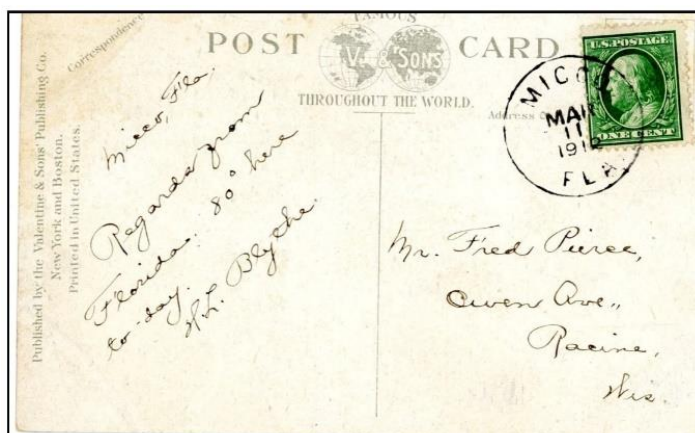


Figure 7. Micco Postmark, Brevard County, Jack Malarkey collection.

As reported in *The Bartow Informant*⁷, Chief Chipco died October 16, 1881:

"This noted Seminole warrior, as near as can be learned, was a little over one hundred years of age, and had, up to a few months back, been able to engage in the hunts and annual festivities of his tribe, but has at last had to succumb to old age."

All traces of both Chipco post offices are gone as well. But my internet hunting trophies and the history of these events will live on, with no dishes left for me to wash. *Bon Appetit!*

Endnotes

¹ <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~crackerbarrel/Chipco4.html>

² *Florida Post Offices*, John S. Gallagher, The Depot, Lake Grove Oregon, 1997. Library of Congress Catalogue Number 97-065782, ISBN: 0-943645-40-9.

³ *Florida, a Guide to the Southernmost State*, compiled and written by the Federal Writer's Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida. American Guide Series, Sponsored by the State of Florida Department of Public Instruction, Oxford University Press, New York, Copyright, State of Florida Department of Public Instruction, 1939. Eighth Printing.

⁴ *Pioneer Florida*, D.B. McKay, The Tampa Tribune, July 15, 1956, 15 D.

⁵ "History of Pasco County, Florida Post Offices", http://www.fivay.org/post_offices.html.

⁶ Lake Hamilton Historic Marker.

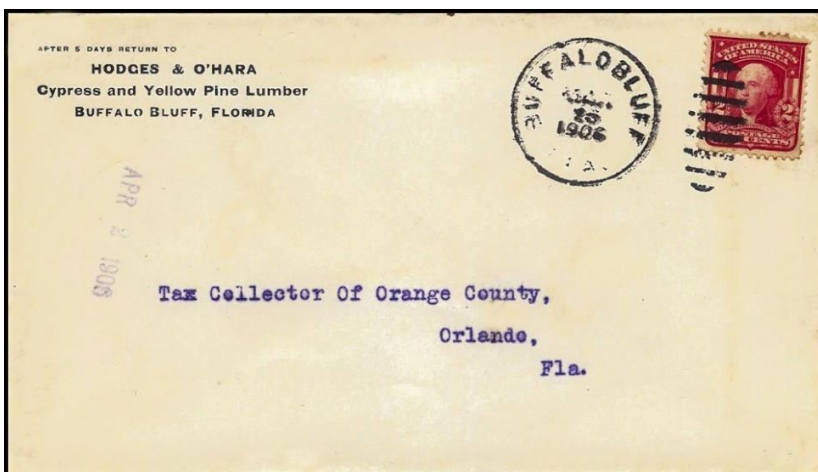
⁷ *The Bartow Informant*, November 12, 1881.

Buffalo Bluff, Florida 1869 - 1908

By Thomas Lera

Buffalo Bluff was a small railroad town in Putnam County on the west bank of the St. Johns River with a population of 200 in 1885. It also had a lumber mill and turpentine company. The Jacksonville, Tampa & Key West Railway was chartered in 1881 with a planned route from Jacksonville to Tampa and then on to Charlotte Harbor where steamships would embark for Key West. Construction began in Jacksonville in March of 1883 and the line was completed to Palatka one year later. South of Palatka, the line acquired the Palatka & Indian River Railway right of way south, which included a long drawbridge that crossed the St. Johns River at Buffalo Bluff five miles south of Palatka. With the opening of this portion of the railroad, the time required for the journey between Jacksonville and Sanford was reduced to four and one-half hours, instead of 12 to 24 hours.

The workers at the Buffalo Bluff mill worked hard in the forests for barely subsistence wages and realized no gain at all. State and county convicts were leased to lumber and turpentine companies and found themselves in perpetual peonage debt, which was compulsory or involuntary servitude because of a debt, real or claimed. The companies felt their well-being depended upon it and considered it a reasonable way to deal with black workers.



In Jacksonville, on December 10, 1906, F.J. O'Hara, mill operator, *Figure 1*, R.L. Arant, a deputy sheriff and S.S. Schwartz, superintendent, stood trial for conspiracy to commit peonage. After fourteen days of testimony, the jury debated for seventeen minutes on Christmas Eve and returned a verdict of not guilty.

O'Hara was again tried on January 2, 1907. After twenty-two days of testimony from more than fifty witnesses, it took the jury just twelve

Figure 1. Hodges & O'Hara cover from Buffalo Bluff with duplex handstamp Mar 25, 1906.

minutes to return a not-guilty verdict. (*Florida Times-Union*, Jan. 25, 1907, p. 12). If you want to learn more, read Pete Daniel's *The Shadow of Slavery: Peonage in the South, 1901-1969*.

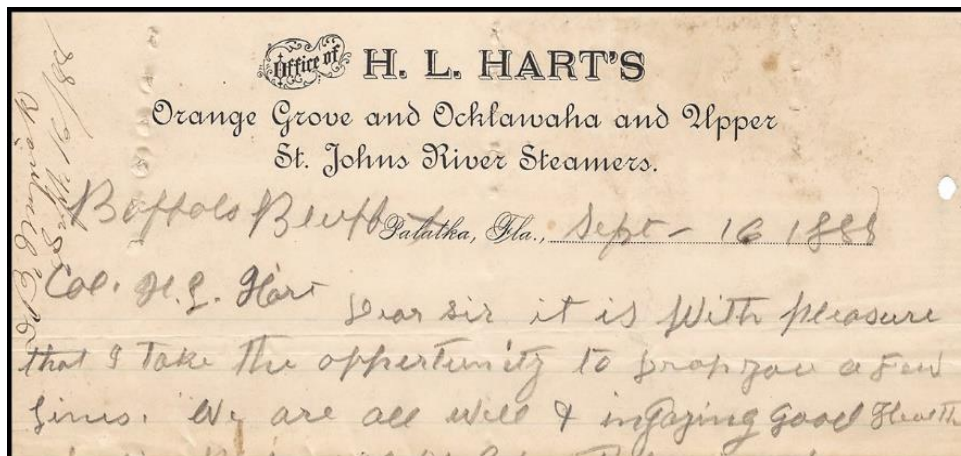
Buffalo Bluff was also the location of H.L. Hart's Orange Groves, **Figure 2**, with over 3,000 trees of Florida oranges, mandarins and tangerines.

Figure 2. Entrance to Colonel Hart's orange groves on the St. John's River, Palatka in 1870. (Florida Memory Image # N029053).



A letter from D. B. Myrick, Buffalo Bluff, Sept. 16, 1888, **Figure 3**, said:

"Col. H. Hart, Dear Sir. It is with great pleasure that I take the opportunity to drop you a few lines. We are all well and enjoying good weather. I had a brief week off. Everything is going on all right. The oranges are splitting very much also a good many draping. We are having any quantity of rain. You may have some idea of how much rain when I tell you that the ditches are running into the river at both ends, for the first time in three years.



Although the oranges are splitting and draping more than usual, the trees now show that for the last three years they have needed water worst of anything else.

"Yellow fever still getting worse in Jacksonville but have not reach Palatka yet. Nothing more at the present.

"Your obedient servant, D. B. Myrick"

Figure 3. H. L. Hart letterhead.

You will note from the **Figure 4** image the letter was sent to Jacksonville and was fumigated at La Villa Junction before being delivered to H. L. Hart.

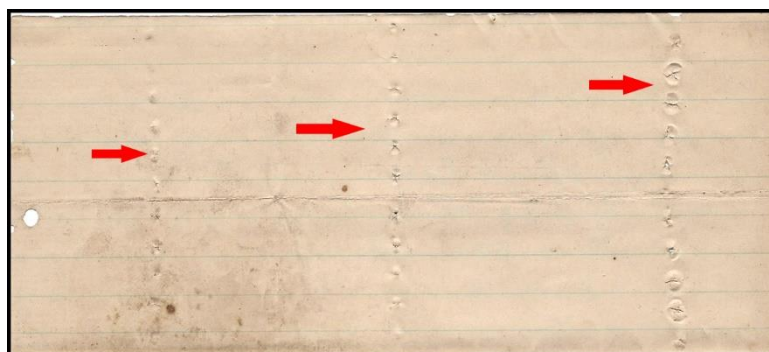


Figure 4. The red arrows on the back of the letter show the fumigation paddle holes.

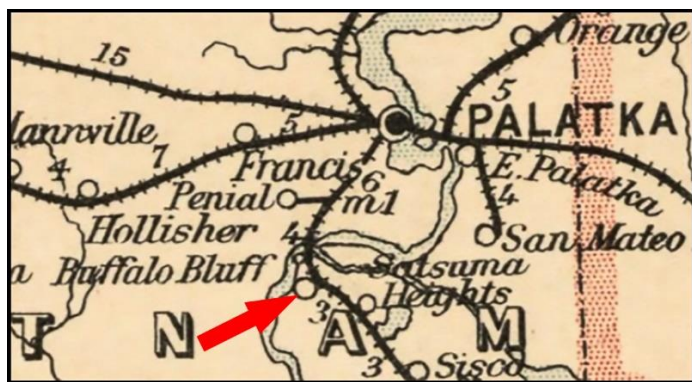


Figure 5. Buffalo Bluff location by railroad.¹

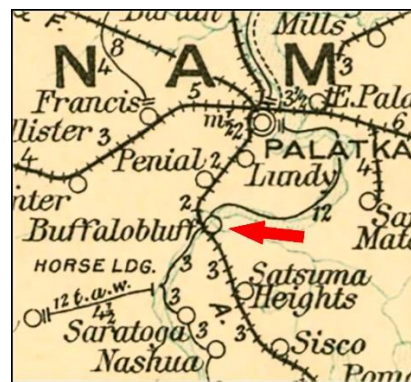


Figure 6. Town name changed to Buffalobluff.²

In 1882, Buffalo Bluff was located by the Palatka & Indian River Railroad, **Figure 5**. **Figure 6** shows the town name was changed to Buffalobluff March 20, 1895. Earlier, on April 14, 1887, the post office moved beside the Jacksonville, Tampa and Key West Railroad station, which, in 1902, became the Atlantic Coast Line.



Figure 7. Buffalo Bluff Circle Date handstamp February 10, 1888.

The post office closed on February 15, 1908, with mail going three miles south to Satsuma Heights.

I thank Deane Briggs for the 1906 Hodges & O'Hara cover with the Buffalobluff handstamp image and Todd Hirn for his comments.

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 28, 2020).

² Von Haake, A., and United States Post Office Dept. Post route map of the state of Florida showing post offices with intermediate distances on mail routes in operation on the 1st of December 1903. *Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center*, <https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:cj82km51q> (accessed April 28, 2020).

Postmaster Appointment

Charles H. Butler	09/29/1869
Clement B. White	12/31/1873
Louis A. McGraw	04/04/1879
Clement B. White	12/31/1873

Discontinued 7/9/1878, Reestablished 3/16/1879.

B.F. McGraw	07/18/1881
Louis A. McGraw	03/06/1882
Charles Groh	04/14/1887
Hiram W. Chalfinch	03/20/1895

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