

Florida Registered Mail

Part I –Early Statehood Covers 1845-1857

Introduction

James W. Milgram M.D. wrote in his 1999 book, *United States Registered Mail 1845-1870*, “The 1845 Postal Laws and Regulations stated: “No reported loss will be investigated by an agent, unless satisfactory evidence is produced, either by the certificate of the postmaster, or some other individual that the money or other thing was deposited in the post office.

“The senders of valuable mail needed proof of the name of the post office where the letter was placed, the date, postage paid, route, name of the addressee mailed to, and a description of the contents. All of this was placed in a register at the mailing post office and a receipt was issued to the sender” (Figure 1).¹

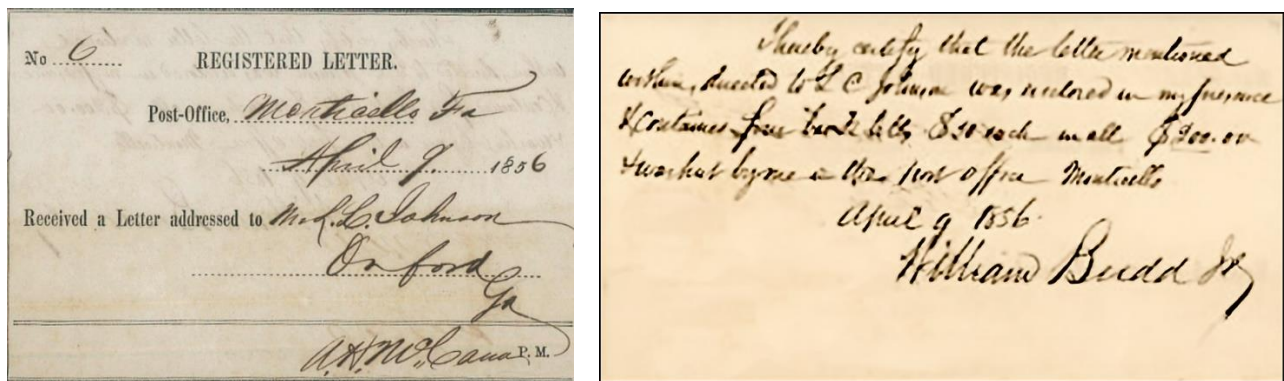


Figure 1. Monticello Postmaster receipt to William Budd Jr. recording his registered letter.

From November 1, 1845 until official registration began on July 1, 1855, an unofficial system of registration was seen in post offices, beginning in Philadelphia (Figure 2). There was no charge for this service nor were there often any markings. Between 1845-1855, addressed to Philadelphia incoming mail containing money or other valuable items was handstamped on the front by the Philadelphia Post Office with the letter "R".



Figure 2. Earliest known dated postmark on a registered cover: Black PENSACOLA Flor. OCT 29 (1845), Type VII, with large Philadelphia blue “R”.



Figure 3. Registered ALLIGATOR FLA, Type VII, with inverted month FEB 27 on 3¢ 1853 entire.

The Type VII, ALLIGATOR FLA CDS on a 3¢ 1853 entire (Figure 3) is an example of a “registered” manuscript.

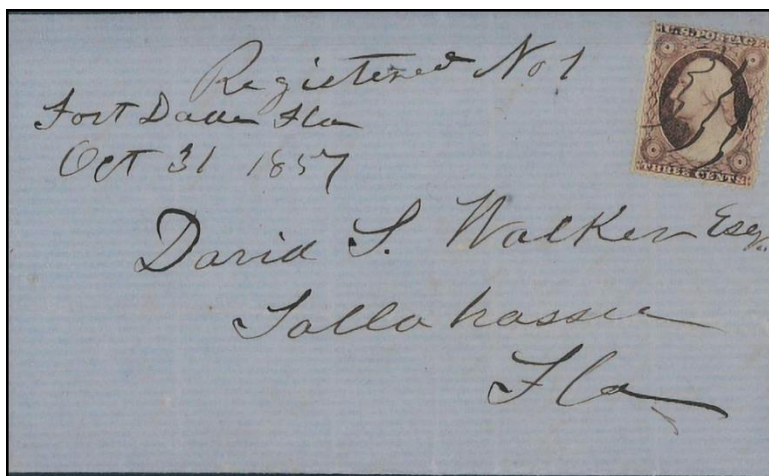


Figure 4. Fort Dade Fla Registered No. 1, Oct. 31, 1857 with 3¢ (Scott 26) stamp.

On July 1, 1855, the Post Office Department was authorized to register letters, were required by law must be marked as such on the front of the cover or envelope (Figure 4), numbered at the mailing office, and listed in a special ledger.²

The Act of 1855, Session 2, Chapter 173, Section 3 stated: “That for the greater security of valuable letters posted for transmission in the mails of the United States, the Postmaster-General be, and hereby-is, authorized to establish a uniform plan for the registration of such letters on application of parties posting the same, and to require the prepayment of the postage, as well as a **registration fee of five cents** on every such letter or packet, to be accounted for by postmasters receiving the same in such manner as the Postmaster-

General shall direct: *Provided, however,* That such registration shall not be compulsory; and it shall not render the Post-Office Department or its revenue liable for the loss of such letters or packets, or the contents thereof.”³

In 1857, the first marking was authorized for registered mail matter. Section 386, Chap. 36, of the 1857 P. L. & R. stated, "Where a letter has been received, registered, and receipted for, as directed in Section 2, it is to be marked on its upper left hand corner with the number corresponding to it on the receipt book." The first officially required use of the word "Registered" came in 1867.⁴

Conclusion:

Collecting registered mail is an area deserving of more research. I have only touched the surface of what is available in Florida. This is a five-part census with 187 different towns, several with different types, shown.

- Part I – Early Statehood Covers 1845-1857 (3 covers, 4 pp),
- Part II – Florida Towns with Registered Mail 1858–1911 (210 covers, 53 pages),
- Part III – Florida Registry Exchange Labels 1883–1911 (14 covers, 18 pages),
- Part IV – Florida Towns with New York and San Francisco Registry Exchange Labels (25 covers, 14 pp),
- Part V – Other Florida Registered Covers with Examiner Markings (32 covers, 19 pp).

The decades after 1857 saw more registered covers as more post offices were established. Russell and Evelyn Ryle’s book *Registered U.S.A. – The Handling of Valuable First-Class Mail by the U.S.P.O. Rates, Markings, Delivery Restrictions, and Processing Procedures* would be a good starting point to review the types of handstamps that were available.

For questions about the markings on a registered cover, I recommend contacting the **Registered Mail Study Group** at <https://www.usstamps.org/committees/registered-mail-study-group/>.

If you have a Florida registered cover between 1845 to 1911 for the census found on our website www.fphsonline.com, please send me a scan, tlera4178@gmail.com. If you want to see a scan of the back of any cover in these documents, send me an email.

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As a note, WorthPoint partners with a diverse group of auction houses and online marketplaces www.worthpoint.com and Kewriga auctions can be accessed at www.kewrigaauctions.com/auctions/sale/4.

¹ Milgram, James W., M.D. *United States Registered Mail 1845-1870*, David G. Phillips Publishing Co., North Miami, Florida, 1999.

² Milgram, James W., “Unofficial Registration of Mail in the U.S.:1845-1855,” *Chronicle* 221 (2009), 9-24.

³ Thirty-Third Congress. Sess. II. Ch. 173. Approved, March 3, 1855. Page 642. Accessed May 20, 2024, <https://www.rfrajola.com/Resources/1855Act.pdf>.

⁴ Barbara R. Mueller, 1959, “Registry Markings of 1851-1860,” *The Chronicle* Vol. 12 (1): 2 -6.