

FLORIDA



“Official Business”
State Departmental Offices
Illustrated Covers
1860 - 1920

Compiled by Mike Ludeman



Hosted in the Stamp Smarter Library

https://stampsmarter.org/learning/Home_Learning.html

Florida: “Official Business” Illustrated Covers and Corner Cards

INTRODUCTION

Although the use of an envelope to securely enclose a letter sent through the mails has been around for many centuries, it was not until the 1840s when several events occurred that brought them into widespread use in the United States. The first was the invention of machines which could mass produce the envelopes inexpensively, and the second was the change in the way the United States Post Office Department calculated the way it charged for the postage to carry a letter through the mails. The early rates were based on the number of pieces of paper that made up the letter, and since the envelope was considered a separate sheet, the rate would automatically be doubled for a letter sent in an envelope. This changed with the Postal Act of March 3, 1845, when rates were changed to consider weight rather than the number of sheets comprising the mail piece. This law became effective on July 1, 1845.

By the early 1860s, several state governments had begun to create decorative envelopes with an all-over background design for use in their “Official Business” correspondence. The typical design included some representation of the official state seal in the upper left corner, together with the name of the individual department either as part of the design with the seal or in the background of the entire envelope. As these covers were often printed in bright colors, they no doubt readily caught the attention of their recipients.

The compiler of this monograph has been a collector of these illustrated all-over “Official Business” envelopes prepared for the state of Texas for several years. These styles of covers were used both by departments of the state government, located in Austin, Texas, as well at the seats of many county governments across the state. Those used by the state offices began in the early 1870s, and their use by these offices had declined by the beginning of the 20th century. Illustrated covers used at the county level began by the late 1870s, and some counties continued to use these into the 1920s and 1930s.

While recently compiling the two monographs based on the collection of the Texas covers, there appeared on eBay a large group (about 250) of related envelopes from several dozen other states. Fascinated to see such a large selection of these envelopes at one time, the idea to create a series of monographs for the other states was formed. The cover set on eBay was “harvested”, and eBay and other sources were examined to locate additional envelopes which were also preserved.

A second stimulus for this series of monographs was a thread posted on the Stamp Community Family stamp collecting forum in April 2021, which found can be found at https://www.stampcommunity.org/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=76574&whichpage=1&

in which the original poster asked whether there was any form of reference for these types of covers. Since I had access to images for several hundred of these types of envelopes, and had already been working on the construction of a monograph for my Texas materials, I decided to expand that effort and create similar (but very preliminary) monographs for each of the various states for which I had at least one example.

Florida: “Official Business” Illustrated Covers and Corner Cards

The original monographs were intended to focus only on those envelopes with full all-over designs in the background, but as I began to examine and organize the covers in my Texas collections, I discovered that I had a number of equally “interesting” envelopes which had been also used by these departmental offices in parallel with and subsequent to the appearance of these all-over illustrated covers, and it was decided to also include a representative sample of these, first to present some of the alternate designs used, but also to help identify the timeframe when the all-over illustrated covers were phased out.

These alternate designs can be roughly grouped in the following categories: (a) envelopes with an illustration of the state capitol building or county courthouse, (b) envelopes with an illustration of the state or county seal, (c) envelopes with an ornate corner card, and (d) those envelopes with a standard corner card with the department name. The envelopes mentioned in categories (a) and (b) were further encountered with and without the additional return address information found in a typical corner card. The original scope was expanded to include most envelopes encountered of the first three categories, and because of the larger quantity of the fourth category, these were included only when the envelope might be useful to show the timing of the transition of the other styles of covers to the plain standard design. Obviously, not all combinations were necessarily prepared for all states.

The monographs which have been prepared in this series were not intended to be complete, such as one might expect in a more formal handbook or catalog, but have been prepared to present an introduction to a representative sample of the style of envelopes that were used, and perhaps educate the collecting community as to the possibilities that exist in collecting them. These have been hosted on the Stamp Smarter website through the courtesy of Don Denman. These are not intended to be an active project of the original compiler, but they can be made available to other collectors who would be interested in taking responsibility to add new materials to them.

Although these all-over illustrated “Official Business” departmental covers for Texas were compiled into separate monographs for the state and county office covers, I elected to combine these groups into a single monograph for the other states. These monographs will generally have two sections. Part 1 will include the state departmental offices located at the capitol, while part 2 will include those from county departmental offices, and in a few instances, a Part 3 may be included to present examples of these all-over illustrated covers used by various city departmental offices located within the state. This latter class of covers is limited primarily to the larger cities.

The state departmental covers have been organized into an approximate alphabetical order based on the department name. These department names were not always consistent, and therefore, were usually grouped by what the compiler believed was the most obvious choice. Within covers from a specific department, they were then grouped in chronological order to the extent possible.

Unfortunately, most letters sent prior to 1890 did not have the year date present in the date stamp, and in the absence of sender or addressee docketing, an “educated” guess was made based on the postage stamp present. The most common departmental names encountered including the following (not a complete list): Adjutant General’s Office, Attorney General’s Office, Department of Agriculture, various Courts: Civil, Criminal, Appeals, Comptroller’s Office, Department of Education (also called Public Instruction), General Assembly, General Land Office, State Library, House of Representatives, Legislature, Senate, Department of State, Supreme Court, and Treasurer’s Office.

Florida: “Official Business” Illustrated Covers and Corner Cards

The second section, Part 2, included covers from departments and officials in the county governments. However, due to the limited scope of the search for covers, not all the states in this monograph series had examples of these county offices represented. The organization of this section was in alphabetical order by county, then by county office, and finally by date. When present, these generally included the following departments: Assessor or Tax Assessor or Tax Collector, Comptroller’s Office, County and District Clerk, Justice of the Peace, Sheriff, and County Treasurer, although others are possible as well.

The representation of these covers found in the several dozen monographs in this series is quite diverse. A few states: Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas, are represented by a significant number of examples, while others, particularly those found in the southern and western states, have only few examples recorded at the present time. This should not be interpreted as an absence or scarcity of envelopes from those states, but more of an artifact of the manner in which the data was collected by the compiler. Additionally, many states have no or very few examples of covers reported from the county offices, and the same consideration applies. Texas has by far the largest number of these county office covers, which may be an artifact of the compilers having collected these for many years, but it also appears that several printing/publishing firms had aggressive marketing efforts to sell these types of covers at the county government level in Texas.

Each envelope will have a header section like the one shown here.

ID:	State:	County:	City:
Dates:		Color:	Size:
Office:			
Notes:			
Printer:			
Source:			

The fields are generally self-explanatory, but some comments are in order.

- a.) The “**ID:**” field is reserved for future use should it become practical to assign some form of classification to the different types of covers.
- b.) The “**Dates:**” field will generally be limited to the year of use, and when two identical covers are known from different years, a range may be provided. The exact dates for covers used prior to 1890 are often missing from postal markings found on the envelopes, and they are then estimated based on the stamp used.
- c.) The “**Size:**” field will be provided in inches, i.e., 6.25” x 3.75”, when the actual cover can be examined, but when acquired from other sources, will often be noted as “Small”, “Regular” (appears to be the 6.25” x 3.75” size), or “Large” (equivalent to our current legal size No. 10 envelopes).
- d.) The “**Color:**” field will be approximate, as many colors seen online are not truly representative.
- e.) The “**Office:**” field will include the name of the departmental office as it appears on the envelope. As the departmental name may change over time, covers with alternative departmental names will generally be included following the earliest version of the department name.

Florida: “Official Business” Illustrated Covers and Corner Cards

- f.) The “**Notes:**” field will include any unique information about the cover and also about the printer’s imprint, when present. If not mentioned, there was no imprint, or the reverse of the cover was not available.
- g.) The “**Source:**” field will identify the source of the cover, generally either as “Author’s collection”, or an eBay seller’s listing.

Only the front of the covers will be included in the illustrations shown unless there is some significant postal history element on the reverse. When the cover included contents related to the purpose of the cover and office, the contents, or at least the illustrated part of the letterhead is also shown.

Each of these monographs for the different states will be made available to the collecting community in the Library section of the Stamp Smarter website, at the link shown on the cover page of each monograph.

The compiler is open to suggestions as to other data that might be collected and included in these monographs. Examples of covers not shown, or those used with different dates are also requested. As similar projects are underway for this type of illustrated envelopes used in other states, contributions from any state will be welcome. It is requested that the submitted covers should be scanned at 300dpi and in the JPG format when possible.

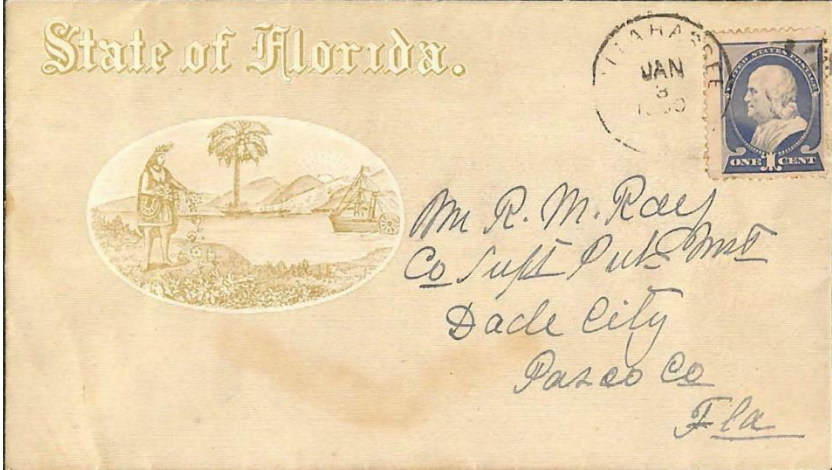
Any collector interested in becoming the sponsor (and maintainer) for the monograph for their state is invited to contact the compiler at the address below. These monographs are maintained in Microsoft Word, and a copy of the original file will be made available on request.

Mike Ludeman

mike@ludeman.net

May 2021

Florida: "Official Business" Illustrated Covers and Corner Cards

ID:	State: Florida	County: Leon	City: Tallahassee
Dates: ~1880s	Color: gold	Size: Regular	
Office: Generic envelope, no Department identified.			
Notes:			
Source: Image courtesy of eBay seller stambyboy, May 2021.			
			

Part 2

FLORIDA

County Offices “Official Business” Envelopes

Arranged by County

No envelopes identified

Part 3

FLORIDA

City Offices “Official Business” Envelopes

Arranged by County and City

No envelopes identified