

THE MAIL POUCH ...

Regarding Patricia Kaufmann's article, "Dialogue on Censuses and Provenance, Case Illustration: Madison, Florida" in the First Quarter 2020 *Confederate Philatelist* (pp. 12-29).

The censuses that are currently on the CSA website are not focused on provenance. Their main purpose is to provide illustrated censuses. Only images can portray what a stamp or cover looks like and provide the means to differentiate covers bearing the same date. The fact that a book, article or document may mention a cover as being from a certain collection does not mean it can be identified without an image. There are cases where two covers bear both the same postmark date and address. Further, the censuses illustrate – in one place – all the provisionals from one town or of one type. This is extremely useful to anyone doing research.

A second purpose is to provide the necessary information in the form of references, so that anyone can replicate a census or use the census as a departure point for further research. All provenances included in the censuses reflect only the ownership of an item as gleaned from the references.

The provenances are limited for two reasons: First, for many provisionals there is very limited information available; second, information beyond that found in auction catalogs, articles and books is not normally publicly available. Consequently, the inclusion of such information would defeat the purpose of providing sources to allow replication of the census.

— Francis J. Crown, Jr.
via email

The author responds

Regarding Frank Crown's letter to the editor about my "Dialogue on Censuses and Provenance, Case Illustration: Madison, Florida" in the First Quarter 2020 *Confederate Philatelist*.

Censuses and provenance are not the same thing, although they have overlapping components.

As stated in my article, requiring images for a census is both desirable and necessary, and is especially critical for larger cities.

But I also believe that there should be exceptions to the rule for provenance when, for example, fewer than 10 items are recorded and they are both easily identified and well documented from discovery to the present day. Provenance is where Frank and I differ, not census.

The fatal flaw, in my opinion, is the rigidity of the provenance requirements. Currently, the CSA website census (with provenance) includes only information found in name auction catalogs, articles and books. The mandate is that it must be accompanied by a photo.

Provenance is an important part of any census data. In my opinion, provenance needs to take into account all factors. Many significant philatelic items change hands privately. To me, it is unthinkable not to attribute provenance because an item does not appear in a name auction catalog.

The Madison provisionals were recorded in 19th-century articles, but sometimes without illustrations. Thus, their provenance was not counted online, even when beginning with luminaries such as John Walter Scott who discovered the first Madison provisional – the only one with the "CNETS" error – which was illustrated in this article but still not counted.

The descriptions in many articles are very detailed and identity unmistakable, yet their full provenance was not counted. In some cases, the Madison provenance is noted online as beginning in the 21st century, only a few years ago. Yet the information has been publicly available in articles for a century and a half, albeit not always with illustrations.

Why would we not accept a solely written description of the unique Madison "CNETS" error when there is only one known?

— Patricia A. Kaufmann