



Figure 1: A Jonesboro, T., five-cent dark blue Postmasters' Provisional entire that bears no postmark, as is the case with fully half of the fourteen recorded examples.

The Jonesboro, T. Postmaster's Provisional— As Interesting on the Back as It is on the Front

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

I am a big fan of imparting the provenance of a cover when it is possible. It isn't always. Provenance often is only recorded on prominent covers. This column's focus, Figure 1, is such an item.

The subject cover is a Jonesboro, T., five-cent dark blue entire (Scott 45XU2,¹ CSA Catalog JON-TN-E02²) addressed to, "Mess MM Wagner & Sons, Taylorsville, Johnson Cty, Ten."

It bears no postmark, as is the case with seven of the fourteen listed in the *Crown Illustrated Census of Confederate Postmasters' Provisionals*, a featured resource on the Civil War Philatelic Society website.³ This is census number 013.

The Jonesboro provisional marking is in the form of a seal that features the rate in the center, the name of the postmaster (J.E. Williams), and the name of



Figure 2: A close-up of the earliest of the five-cent paid blue Jonesboro provisionals, thus providing an exceptionally well-defined impression. (Siegel Auction Galleries)

the town surrounding it in a circle. It was impressed on envelopes by handstamping.

Two different colors of ink were used to handstamp the Jonesboro provisional envelopes: black and dark blue. The identification of the black markings is easy, but the dark blue ranges in color from blue to very dark blue. The latter can be misinterpreted as black unless carefully examined in natural light.

A close-up image of Jonesboro census number 005 is shown in Figure 2. This Jonesboro provisional entire was lot 32 in the 2012 sale of the "Peter Sharrer Collection of Confederate Postmasters' Provisionals." It also

boasts a stellar provenance of Emerson, Caspary, Lilly, and Gallagher.

The strike is exceptional because it is the earliest

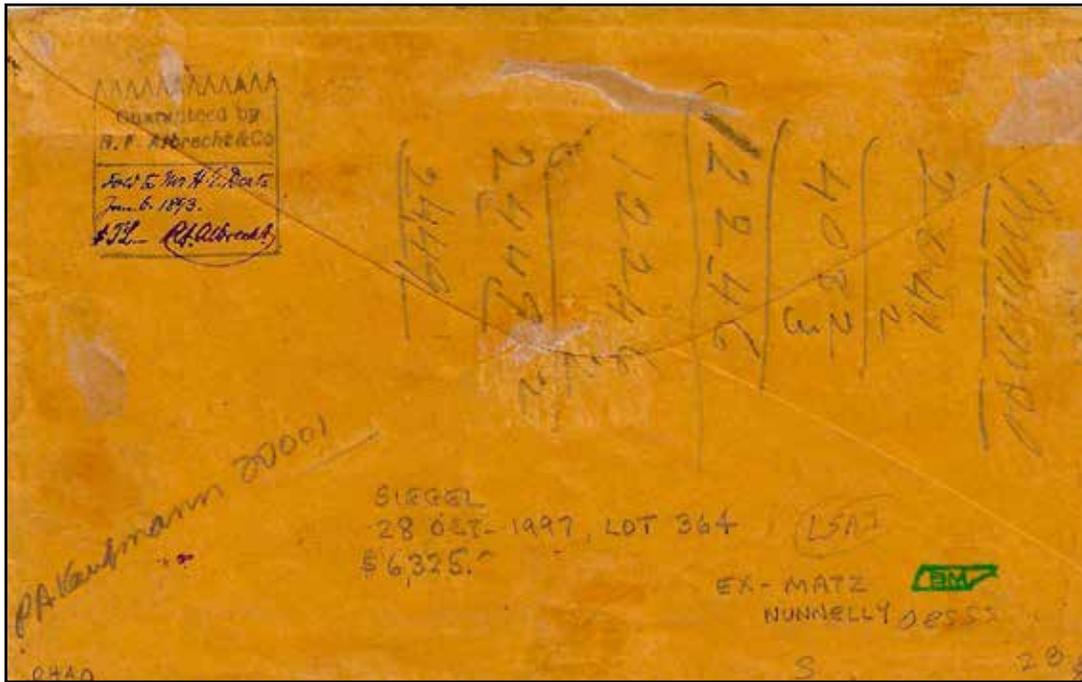


Figure 3: The R.F. Albrecht & Co. guarantee backstamp and signature shows the sale of the Jonesboro provisional entire to Hiram E. Deats on June 6, 1893.

Figure 4 (Below): This is a close-up of the R.F. Albrecht & Co. guarantee backstamp and signature.

of the five-cent blue Jonesboro provisionals when the canceling device was still new. As is the case with all such devices, it wore down after time and the impressions became less well defined.

The Sharrer copy sold for a whopping \$26,000 compared to the Scott catalog value of \$7,000, plus a buyer premium of fifteen percent, yielding a total purchase price of just under \$30,000.

The subject cover back, shown in Figure 3, reveals an equally all-star provenance of ex Hiram E. Deats (per 1893 R.F. Albrecht & Co. guarantee backstamp), Tennessee collector Billy Matz (green backstamp), and Sherrell Nunnelly Sr. (Siegel Auction 795, 1997).

The cover was also a featured item in the collection of Alfred H. Caspary (H.R. Harmer Auction 989, 1956) and, more recently, the collection of the late German billionaire Erivan Haub that is being slowly disseminated by the Haub family through H.R. Harmer.

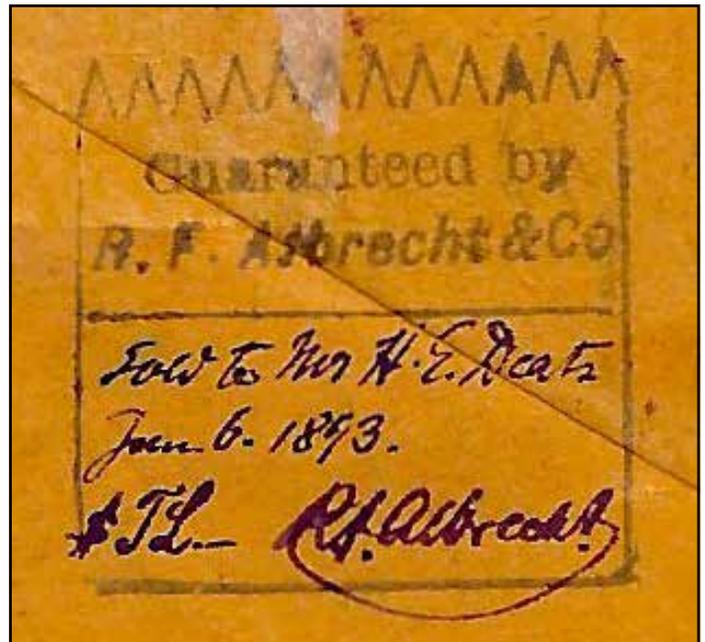
The census013 cover is featured on the “Provenance and Owner Markings”⁴ page on my website under R.F. Albrecht & Co.

As I explain in my opening remarks on that page, provenance is a record of ownership from its earliest existence, in legal parlance, a chain of custody. It helps establish pedigree and authenticity.

Knowing who owned an item and being able to track it via auction catalogs or articles is helpful not only in establishing lineage, but in determining whether an item has been altered, forged, or restored to a greater or lesser degree. In the age of technology, this is becoming ever easier.

R.F. Albrecht & Co

The R.F. Albrecht & Co. guarantee backstamp and signature shows the Jonesboro provisional entire was



sold to Hiram E. Deats on June 6, 1893. A close-up of the marking is shown in Figure 4.

R.F. Albrecht & Co. was a respected early stamp dealer and auctioneer located at 90 Nassau Street, New York, during the 1890s and turn of the century. The company handled top-of-the-line philatelic material, as well as entry-level stamps. Their clients included the top collectors of the day.

Albrecht stamp catalogs for the years 1892, 1895 and 1896 may be found on the Civil War Philatelic Society website under “Resources,” courtesy of the Crawford Library⁵ at the Royal Philatelic Society London, where they are also available.

Albrecht auction sales 1-29 were held during 1892-95.

Hiram Deats

Hiram Edmund Deats (1870-1963) was an internationally known giant among philatelists. As a youth, Deats started collecting postage stamps of the United States and the Confederate States of America, eventually creating one of the finest collections of his era.

Deats was founding member #36 of the American Philatelic Association (now the American Philatelic Society), joining in 1886 at the age of sixteen.

For the next two decades he served the association in various capacities, including president (1904-1905). He was founding member #5 of the Confederate Stamp Alliance (now the Civil War Philatelic Society) in 1935, which membership number was converted to #17 when the Alliance inexplicably alphabetized the membership roll.

Deats amassed one of the finest libraries of philatelic literature in the United States, rivaling that of John Kerr Tiffany, and that abroad of James Lindsay, 26th Earl of Crawford.

In 1952, Deats donated his library to the Free Library of Philadelphia. He signed the RPSL Roll of Distinguished Philatelists in 1933, globally the highest honor in the philatelic world.

There is also a tiny set of what appear to be fancy initials at the bottom right on the back of the Jonesboro cover that I have been unable to identify, nor has anyone else I have consulted.

Given the rarity of the items on which these initials are found, they likely belong to an important collector of bygone years. They may be European, but that is sheerly speculation. If you recognize these initials, I would greatly appreciate hearing from you so I can

properly attribute them. I continue to add and correct markings on the provenance page with credit given to those who have aided in the quest.

I find that this is one of the most visited pages on my website by Confederate and United States collectors alike.

Endnotes

- 1 Jay Bigalke, James E. Kloetzel, et al, Editors, *Scott U.S. Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* (Sidney, Ohio, Amos Media Company, 2021)
- 2 Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History* (Sumter, S.C.: Confederate Stamp Alliance, 2012)
- 3 Crown Illustrated Census of Confederate Postmasters' Provisionals, Civil War Philatelic Society, <https://www.civilwarphilatelicsociety.org/resources/confederate-censuses/crown-illustrated-censuses/> (Accessed March 5, 2022)
- 4 Provenance and Owner Markings, <https://www.trishkaufmann.com/provenance> (Accessed March 5, 2022)
- 5 R.F. Albrecht auction catalogs, Crawford Library, Royal Philatelic Society London, https://www.rpsl.org.uk/gplstatic/BL_CrawfordDocs/016667968.pdf (Accessed March 5, 2022)

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