

AN ADDITION TO THE MADISON, FLA., PROVISIONAL FILES

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The advantage of forever being identified with a specific research project is that it often pays dividends by way of further information coming to light. I have been researching the postmasters' provisionals of Madison Court House, Fla., off and on for decades.

Just when I thought everything had been said about this topic, a new bit of information recently came along.

I recently received an email from Jim Leonardo, who passed along the following newspaper article he found when he was cleaning house. Knowing my keen interest in the topic, he thought I might like to add it to my Madison provisional files. He was certainly right. I am happy to share it in our journal for the benefit of future researchers. This is where the search feature for our journal on our society website can come into play for future students – those who avail themselves of that valuable tool.

Memphis Daily Appeal, March 16, 1861

SOUTHERN POSTAGE STAMPS – We saw a letter from Florida this morning on which was one of the new southern postage stamps. The letter on which this stamp was placed was marked as paid, and came through as a distributed letter from Savannah. The postmaster could not recognize [sic] it, and ordered the regular postage to be collected on it when delivered. It will, therefore, go among the unchanged [sic] letters, and three cents will be due on it when it is called for.

The postmaster will write to the department immediately to know if these postage stamps can be acknowledged. *Norfolk Day Book*

While neither the Norfolk nor Memphis newspapers specifically mentioned Madison, the Madison 3¢ 1861 provisional is the only recorded adhesive produced during that earliest period before Confederate general-issue stamps were offered to the public.

It is not surprising that the editors simply identify them as “new southern postage stamps,” because the Madison provisionals have only the 3¢ denomination within a decorative border, with no town name on the stamps, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Madison Court House, Fla., 3¢ gold on bluish (Scott 3AX1) with manuscript cancel (P)aid in (Money) applied by Madison Postmaster Samuel Perry, one of only five recorded off-cover examples.

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Those newspaper editors may have incorrectly assumed the stamps were issued by the Confederate States Post Office Department (CSAPOD), which had been newly established. The CSAPOD was formed Feb. 21, 1861; Postmaster General John H. Reagan was appointed March 6, 1861.

The only other recorded adhesive during that general period was the 3¢ Hillsboro, N.C., postmaster's provisional, of which there is only one recorded use. The Hillsboro is dated roughly two and a half months later – May 27, 1861 – well after the subject newspapers were published. And, more importantly, North Carolina did not secede until May 20, 1861, so the subject provisional would not have been from Hillsboro. Unless there is another unrecorded 3¢ 1861 adhesive provisional (we live in hope), the stamp subjects in the newspapers were from Madison, Fla.

In my two original articles on these rare provisionals, I quoted the *New York Herald*, which early in 1861 had announced: “*The PostMaster at Madison Fla has offered P Office Stamps contrary to Law.*” In the National Archives, I found the original letter that Madison postmaster Samuel J.B. Perry wrote to U.S. Postmaster General Montgomery Blair on March 8, 1861, refuting these charges.

As a result of the original *Herald* article, a postal inspector was sent from Washington to interview Perry, who apparently explained himself to the inspector's satisfaction. A March 1861 issue of the *Fayetteville North Carolina Observer* indicated, however, that he was severely lectured by the third assistant postmaster general.

It is hard to say how many newspapers made note of such occurrences in the months leading up to the takeover by the Confederate States Post Office Department on June 1, 1861. I would bet there are at least several more.

If you are an avid researcher and happen to see another similar news item in any 1861 paper, North or South, I would be most interested in hearing about it. I may be reached by email at trishkauf@comcast.net.

James F. Taff

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