



Confederate Provisional Wannabees; Common-Sense Determination

A small disembodied piece of paper with a blue rate handstamp crossed my desk this week as the subject for potential authentication. The submitter wanted to know if it could be a Confederate postmaster's provisional similar to the Oakway or Limestone Springs provisionals.

While not the exact handstamp I was asked to examine, I offer you several similar examples in Figures 1A through 1D. Figure 1A is an encircled 10. Is it a provisional? If so, why? If the Oakway, Limestone Springs, and others are but scraps of paper with rates on them that have been declared genuine provisionals, why not this one?

Let us apply common-sense standards to this task. Spoiler alert: see the end of this article for exact identifications of these markings.

When I say "disembodied," I mean there is no substance with the shown examples upon which to conduct a study. In short, it is not used on a cover that we can research and examine in situ.

Canceling devices of the period were often similar or identical in design, the same marking commonly used by many town postmasters and ordered en masse from a central source. Think Staples or Office Depot. Consequently, a cut-out bit of paper with only a rate could be from any town North or South. Or any date before, during or after the war. That scrap of paper tells us virtually nothing. We need a use on cover to even begin to research it and render an opinion.

Let's look at the case of the Oakway, S.C., 5¢ black (115X1) provisional shown in Figure 2, with a closeup of the stamp shown in Figure 3. This is one of two recorded examples of the Oakway provisional stamp, both on covers to the same addressee.

The Oakway is a circular-cut handstamped adhesive tied by a manuscript "Paid" with a matching "Oakway S.C./Sept. 18, 1861" manuscript postmark used on a cover to James E. Hagood at Pickens Court House, S.C. It is from a well-known correspondence. Receipt docketing on the back indicates J.B. Sanders, the Oakway postmaster, was the sender.



Figure 1A (top left). Clipped slip of paper with blue "10" in circle.



Figure 1B (top right). Clipped slip of paper with red "5" in dotted circle.



Figure 1C (above left). Clipped slip of paper with red "5" rate.



Figure 1D (above right). Clipped slip of paper with "PAID" in oblong box and "5" rate.

Jobbery Sanders was appointed postmaster of Oakway, S.C. in 1858 and continued as the town's Confederate postmaster. Oakway's population in 1861 was only 200, and the volume of mail was too small to warrant a wood or metal canceling device, so postmaster Sanders simply post-marked mail by hand. His primitive handstamped adhesive provisional stamps were probably short-lived and used on a limited basis prior to the arrival of Confederate general issue postage stamps.

The Oakway provisional stamp was discovered as early as 1907, but only since 1975 has it received Scott catalog recognition. Research by the late Daniel T. Gilbert, who owned the other Oakway cover dated Oct. 9, 1861 (ex-Worthington), provided

the historical evidence validating the provisional stamp. Soon after the Worthington-Gilbert cover was certified as genuine by the Philatelic Foundation, a Sept. 18 cover was submitted for certification by the Weill brothers on behalf of the owner, Rev. Paul B. Freeland. The Sept. 18 cover has the tiny blue "W.H.C." handstamped mark of Warren H. Colson, the preeminent dealer of the first half of the 20th century. The cover was in Colson's stock at the time of his death in 1963 and was acquired by the Weills, although its existence was not widely known until 1976.

Gilbert established the authenticity of the Oakway provisional by traveling to South Carolina in 1974 and meeting J.B. Sanders, the postmaster's grandson, who was 95 at the time. Sanders immediately recognized his grandfather's writing and remembered him saying that he made his own stamps before supplies of regular stamps arrived. Gilbert's findings were published in the *Confederate Philatelist* in the September-October

tober 1975 issue. I was the editor at the time (editor from 1970-88). Gilbert's daughters today still remember being dragged to Oakway with their dad who described their trip as a vacation. They weren't laughing about it then, but they do now. This is life with an avid postal historian.

The second Oakway cover was offered as Lot 457 in Robert A. Siegel Sale 795 of the D.K. Collection of Southern Postmasters' Provisionals in 2012, where it sold for \$52,500 plus the buyer premium. It appeared in the November-December 1976 issue of the *Confederate Philatelist*. The cover had a stellar provenance of Ferrary, Freeland, Graves and Birkinbine.

A similar-looking adhesive is the Limestone Springs, S.C., 5¢ black on light blue (121X1) shown in Figure 4. It is a circular die-cut single, uncanceled as always. This cover was sold as Lot 279 in the Robert A. Siegel Sale 1073 of the Dr. Ralph Brandon Collection of Confederate Postmasters' Provisionals on June 24, 2014. More recently, it sold as Lot 2258 in Sale 1257 of the John H. Walker Collection of Confederate States on June 9, 2022.

Just a few other similar provisionals are:

- Hillsboro, N.C., 3¢ and 5¢ rated provisionals (Scott 1AX1 and 39X1) with no post office name, just a "PAID" handstamp on a small slip of paper. The 3¢ adhesive was postmarked on cover with a May 27, 1861, date. The rate is understood because 3¢ was the U.S. rate still in effect in the Southern states before the Confederate Post Office Department took over June 1, 1861, when the rate changed to 5¢. The only 5¢-rated example is canceled by the 5¢ rate, as well as the date. Both are used on cover, and both are unique. Figure 5 shows the 3¢ example. The cover was part of a lovely family correspondence offered to Kaufmann Auctions in the 1980s.

- Madison Court House, Fla., 3¢ and 5¢ provisionals (3AX1 and 137XU1). The 3¢ rate is printed in a decorative frame with no post office name, as shown in Figure 6 and a manuscript "Paid in Money" cancel. The 5¢ Madison was typeset (letterpress) and printed directly on envelopes with "PAID 5" printed inside a typeset border. The 5¢ example is unique. This was one of my most interesting research projects and has been the topic of numerous articles and presentations. It was very similar to Dan Gilbert's adventure in that it included personally traveling to Madison,



Figure 5 (left). Hillsboro, N.C., 3¢ provisional (Scott 1AX1) dated by May 27, 1861, double-circle datestamp.

Figure 6 (right). Madison Court House, Fla., 3¢ provisional (Scott 3AX1) with rate printed in decorative frame and no post office name, "Paid in Money" manuscript cancel.

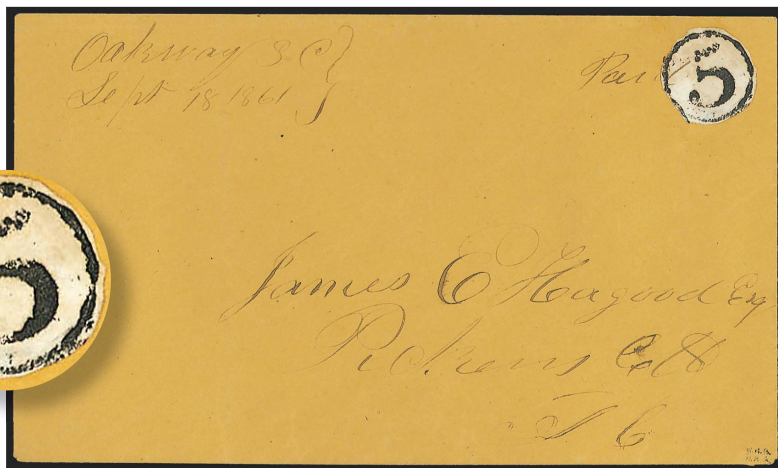


Figure 2 (above). Oakway, S.C., 5¢ black (Scott 115X1) postmaster's provisional used on cover.



Figure 3 (above left). Closeup of Oakway, S.C., 5¢ black provisional, a simple handstamped "5" in a circle. Without the cover, it is nothing but a clipped rate marking of undetermined status.

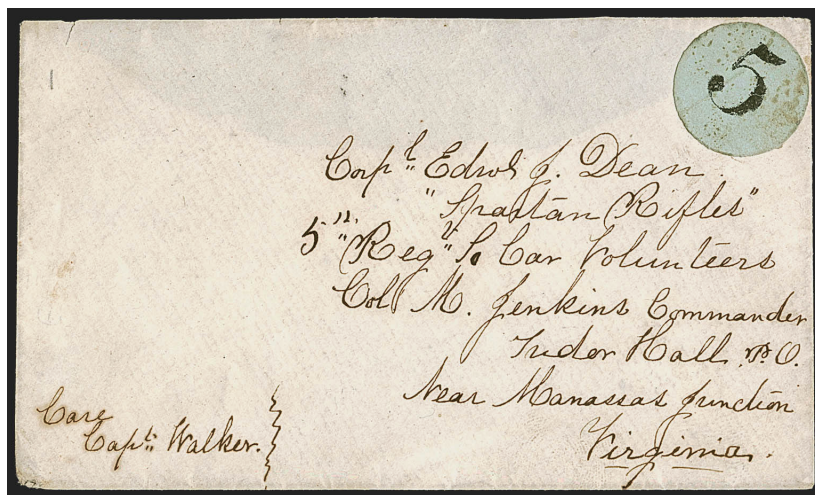


Figure 4. Limestone Springs, S.C., 5¢ black on light blue (Scott 121X1) used on cover from well-known correspondence.

Fla., and talking to the postmaster's direct descendants – a memorable and productive excursion.

- Independence, Texas, 10¢ provisional (41X3) was prepared by handstamping paper with an undated office postmark. Separately, either a large (41X1 – unique) or small "10" marking was handstamped inside the postmark as shown in Figure 7, ex-Casparly, Weatherly, Kilbourne and Brandon. If the provisional had simply been clipped off the cover, there would be no starting point if it was a new purported provisional.

- The Plum Creek, Texas, 10¢ provisional (141X1),



shown in Figure 8, was prepared by writing "10" in ink on white and bluish paper with ruled lines. As needed, each "10" marking was cut from the sheet. They are found in both rectangular and parallelogram format; only two are recorded. We sold the rectangular one in our Feb. 20, 1986, auction of the Beverly Hills Collection at John W. Kaufmann, Inc., as well as the Gems sale on Dec. 1, 1980, where it was originally purchased by Bruce McNall (Beverly Hills).

- The Rutherfordton, N.C., postmaster prepared a better product by handstamping an undated office postmark and separately adding "Paid / 5 cts" in manuscript at the center. These were then cut apart in rough circles to use as adhesive stamps. There is only one recorded example, listed as Scott 72X1, shown in Figure 9. But would we have agreed this was a genuine provisional if we had not had the opportunity to examine the stamp in situ? I suspect not.

When authenticating handstamped provisionals, it is imperative to have access to the original use on cover. Examples off-cover such as the printed Madison provisionals are also a challenge but, in that case, there was much original research to back it up, not the least of which were family records from the postmaster with his handwriting, correspondence from him in the National Archives writing to U.S. Postmaster General Blair defending the adhesives he prepared, and much more.

Common sense varies from person to person because none of us has identical knowledge and experiences. What seems common sense to me may not seem that way to you. We all have five senses, but they are developed differently in each of us. Therefore, we need to take time to understand multiple points of view. I favor the group method of authentication because we all have different contributions to make.

It is important to be open to new possibilities - a new provisional! Yes, it does happen. But it is important to have the tools to reach the proper conclusion which, in this case, means having a use on cover to accurately research.

Identification of rate markings at the beginning of the article: Figure 1A is a blue "PAID 10" marking from an 1862 Petersburg, Va., Confederate stampless cover. Figure 1B is a red "5" in a dotted circle from Chicago in 1847. Figure 1C is a red "5" from an 1850 New London, Ct., stampless cover. Figure 1D is a rare Confederate 5¢ provisional, Scott 87X1, from Unionville, S.C.

Acknowledgements: Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries for use of its database and images. The numbers used throughout this article in parentheses are Scott catalog numbers.

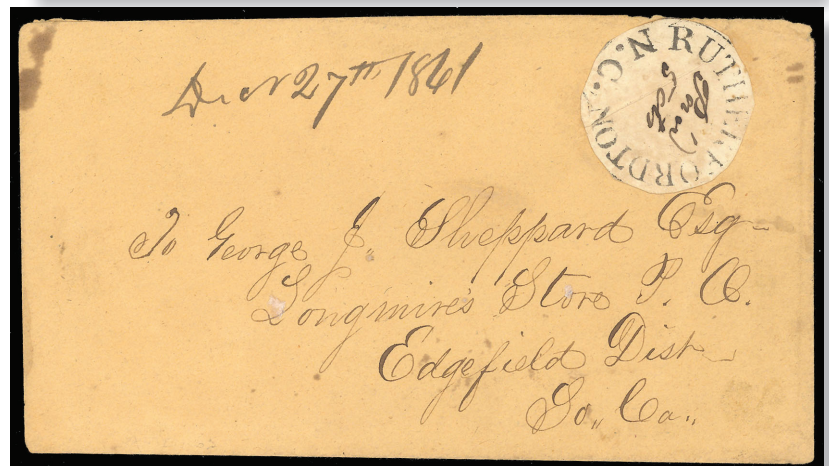
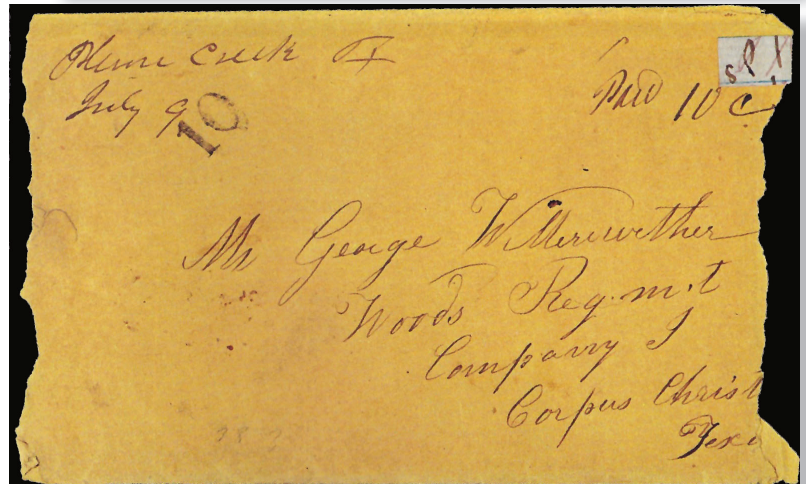
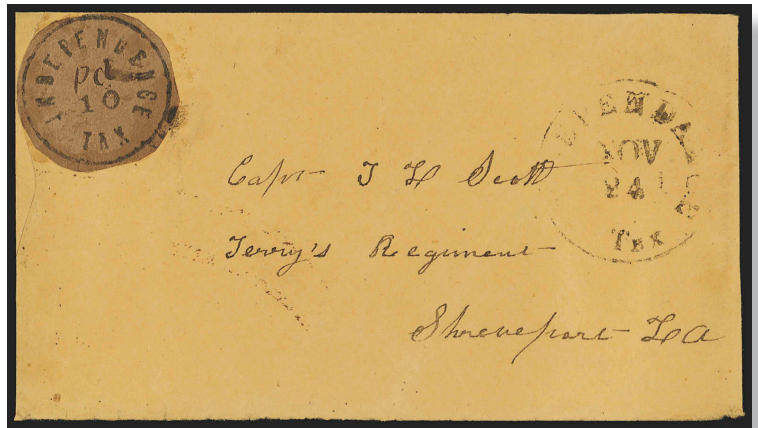


Figure 7 (top). Independence, Texas, 10¢ provisional (Scott 41X1) used on cover.

Figure 8 (center). Plum Creek, Texas, 10¢ provisional (Scott 141X1), prepared by writing the rate in ink on paper with ruled lines and cutting out the slips of paper as needed.

Figure 9 (above). Rutherfordton, N.C., 5¢ provisional (Scott 72X1) is an undated office postmark with separately added "Paid / 5 cts" at the center. Would this have stood a chance at authentication if it was clipped from the cover?

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Patricia A. (Trish) Kaufmann was first introduced to Confederate postal history in 1965. She became actively involved in organized philately in 1969, became a dealer in 1973 and today specializes solely in Confederate stamps and postal history. She enjoys hearing from readers and may be reached at [trishkauf@comcast.net](mailto:trishkauf@comcast.net).