

***North Carolina Postal Historian* – A Style Guide for Authors**

This style guide is to assist all, whether new or experienced writers, who would like to prepare articles for the *North Carolina Postal Historian*, the quarterly journal of the North Carolina Postal History Society. The focus of our journal is, as the name implies, the postal history of North Carolina. While our primary interest is on new discoveries, insights, or information that sheds new light on old subjects, we are not limited to any specific postal history interests. We have readers who wish to learn more about early North Carolina postal history, Confederate-period postal history and even modern postal history, which we can define as the 20th and 21st Century. Articles on stamps, whether postal or private, as well as covers of all sorts, are just as welcome as are those about the people who also formed an important part of the history. To that end, in addition to providing new information or insight, the ideal article should be enjoyable, well illustrated and easy to read. The journal, however, is not intended to be a forum for news about the society, or a blog for social discussions.

This style guide has been prepared from one used by one of the most successful philatelic editors that I know. It is quite detailed and covers many different aspects, some that we have been using and some new to us. I realize the learning process for our experienced writers as well as that for new authors will take a while to absorb all that is in this guide. There are many very good ideas here, however, and I will have to use them in my editing as will those of you who make contributions. Inevitably, this will make our journal even more enjoyable to read in the future.

Deadlines for authors

The journal is published four times each year, January, April, July and October. Our goal is to mail it during the first week of each of those months. The deadline for submitted articles is the 15th of the month two months before the journal is mailed. That means I must have your input on the 15th of November for a journal mailed in the first week of January; 15 February for the journal mailed in April; 15 May for the journal mailed in July; and 15 August for the journal mailed in October. This allows time for editing as well as layout and pagination work, which can be time-consuming. Submissions in advance of deadlines are encouraged.

Text Preparation

Conventional Microsoft Word text files (xxx.doc or xxx.docx) are preferred, but most other file types can be handled.

Please don't try to do the article layout. Page design is the editor's job. Do not insert graphics, tables, or anything else into your text file. Each of these should be sent as separate files, and appropriately referred to in the text, "Figure 1 shows...", "Table 2 presents...", etc. Avoid embedding anything because it will have to be removed from the text in the layout process. All I need is a note in the text where you think this information would normally appear and I shall try my best to accommodate your wishes.

Tabular data can be handled in Excel spreadsheet format or in Word tables. My strong preference is to receive tabular data in Excel, which readily imports into the InDesign layout software used

to prepare the journal for publishing. If you use a Word table, please don't embed it in the text file.

Stylistic Details (Spelling, Punctuations, Capitalization, etc.)

Spelling. Datestamp is one word. "Circular datestamp" is preferred rather than "CDS." Bank Note stamps were printed by Bank Note companies, who all spelled out Bank Note as two words in their marginal inscriptions, a style that I wish to continue. Transatlantic is one word. Straightline is one word. Canceled and canceling are spelled with one "L," but "cancellation" and "canceller" have two. Travel, traveled, traveling, traveler—always one "L." When there's a British and an American style, I will use American; thus, please use catalog and not catalogue.

Punctuation. Punctuation (usually comma or period) goes within quotes, unless to do so would confuse. In American English, all conventional quotations are set off in double quotation marks; single quotation marks are very rarely used, and then only for highly specific purposes.

Say 1920s and 20s, with no apostrophes. Say 19th century, using numerals and lower case. Say 1:30 p.m.—lower case, with space between 1:30 and p.m.

In a month-day-year date sequence, it's grammatically necessary to set off the year by commas, thus: "The Act of March 3, 1863, specifies that letters..." Since the requisite commas may slow things down, often it is preferable to invert the date, eliminating the commas, thus: "The Act of 3 March 1863 specified that letters..."

Avoid symbols whenever possible. Say 95 percent not "95%." If the name of a railroad includes an "&" continue using it, thus: "Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road." In that case, the formal railroad name also separated "Rail" and "Road."

Exception: I favor currency symbols (\$) and (¢) especially when discussing postal rates and stamp denominations.

Capitalization. When in doubt, don't capitalize. But, say India paper, Figure 3, Plate 1 Early and Position 19. Lower case when the discussion is general: "Many positions in various plates have no distinguishing characteristics, but Position 6 from Plate 2 is identifiable." Names of stamps and stamp series are also capitalized: Officials, Presidentials, Columbians, Postage Dues, Star Dies, etc. Iconic postmarks get similar treatment: Kicking Mule, Running Chicken, Woman in Bonnet. The specific government entity known as the Post Office Department is capitalized. The local post office is not. Member of Congress, U.S. Congress, Congressman, always with caps.

Abbreviations. Spell out the state name completely or abbreviate it following the Associated Press stylebook, thus: Ala. Ariz. Ark. Calif. Colo. Conn. Del. Fla. Ga. Ill. Kan. Ky. La. Md. Mass. Mich. Minn. Mo. Mont. Neb. Nev. N.H. N.J. N.M. N.Y. N.C. N.D. Okla. Ore. Pa. R.I. S.C. S.D. Tenn. Vt. Va. Wash. W.Va. Wis. In AP style eight states are never abbreviated: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah. I don't care whether you spell out state names or abbreviate them per AP style, so long as you are consistent throughout your article.

Two-letter USPS state abbreviations are used ONLY in full postal addresses that include ZIP codes.

Never abbreviate United States when it's used as a noun. Use of "U.S." as an adjective is acceptable but not mandatory. Use periods and no space when an individual uses initials instead of a first name ("A.C. Nielson" not "A. C. Nielson.") This format assures that in typesetting the initials are set on the same line.

For ship names say USS *Constitution* or HMS *Frolic* or steamship *Robert Fulton*.

Font selection. Never use underscoring or colored type, and avoid using italics (or exclamation points!) for emphasis. Italicize book titles, magazine titles and vessel names.

Measurement and numerals. In the first reference spell out 22½ millimeters, thereafter say 22½ mm (abbreviated with no period, no space between numeral and fraction, and one space between the number and mm). For measurements use 45x55 mm. Ordinarily, spell out numbers one through ten, then use numerals for 11 on up. This rule is flexible according to context; use common sense. Never begin a sentence with a numeral. Spell it out or rewrite. Thus, instead of "1851 is a logical starting point..." say "The year 1851 is a logical starting point...."

Powerpoint paraphernalia. We publish prose in full sentences. Please avoid bulletpoints or other non-verbal symbols employed in album-page write-ups or Powerpoint presentations.

Presentation. Philatelists sometimes say "usage" when they mean "use." These two words are not synonyms. "Usage" implies use over an extended period of time. "Use" connotes shorter, even momentary, duration. You can discuss usage of the 1851 stamps in the transatlantic mails, but a stamp on a cover shows a use of the stamp, never a usage. Other pseudo-scholarly pitfalls: Don't say "issue" when you mean stamp. "Issue" can refer to a stamp series ("the 1861 issue") but not to an individual stamp within the series. And, unless it's absolutely necessary for clarity, do not use the word "adhesive" as a synonym for "stamp."

Postmark vs. cancellation. A postmark can be any postal marking. A cancellation is a postal marking used to cancel a stamp.

Provenance. Citing the ownership provenance of items illustrated and discussed in our journal is in most cases diversionary. Provenance is appropriate for an auction catalog description, but not for our articles.

Rate versus Fee. Postal rates are based on weight, fees are not. Throughout the 19th century, the registry fee was added to the postal rate. The drop-letter charge was a fee until July 1, 1863. After that it was a rate, charged on the basis of weight.

Scott numbers. *Scott's Stamp Catalog* numbers are generally not used in our articles. Refer to a stamp by describing its denomination, year and color, thus: "The cover was paid with a 3-cents 1851 dull red stamp..."

Spacing. Don't hit the spacebar twice after you complete a sentence. Double spacebar after a period is a typewriter legacy not operative in the internet age. Otherwise, before I import your copy into our pagination software, I must delete each of those extra spaces manually, a tedious and time-consuming process.

That vs. which. Use “that” with restrictive clauses and “which” with non-restrictive clauses: “The cover that was in my desk drawer, which I purchased from Siegel in 1994, was stolen while I was on vacation.”

Annotation (Footnotes, Endnotes, Bibliography)

The purpose of annotation in our journal is to cite reference sources, not to make points of amplification or clarification. This is an important distinction that is not well understood. Sometimes contributors attempt to use footnotes/endnotes for amplification or clarification. I would like to discourage this. Either the information is necessary, in which case it should be written into the text, or it's unnecessary, in which case it should be left out altogether.

Generally, we don't use footnotes (placed at the bottom of each page) or endnotes (placed at the conclusion of the article). But if necessary, we will use only endnotes. Given our page format and our desire to have lots of visuals, footnotes can cause all manner of layout problems. And since the purpose of annotation in the journal is to provide reference information only, there's no compelling need for the note to appear on the page where the mention occurs.

Endnotes are certainly not necessary for every article. If the information can be easily written into the text (rather than presented as an endnote), that's the preferred route, because it avoids making the reader lose his place to consult a reference at the end of the article. The fundamental purpose of annotation is to provide scholarly support to an otherwise disputable assertion, or to present a source that readers might not be familiar with. Again, endnotes are not necessary for every article, but if you feel they are appropriate to a specific article, here are some style guidelines to follow:

Per the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the proper elements of a footnote/endnote are: "author (or editor, compiler, or translator standing in place of the author), title (and usually subtitle), and date of publication. For books, the place and publisher are also given; for articles, the journal name, volume or whole number, year of publication and page number(s). For online works, retrieval information and date of access are included."

The title of an article is in quotes, and the title of a publication in which it appears is italicized, thus:

Charles F. Hall, “The Postal History of Camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base,” *North Carolina Postal Historian* 133, pg. 5. Note that it is not necessary to include volume information when citing the *North Carolina Postal Historian*. The whole number of the journal issue is sufficient and much shorter. You can include a parenthetical year date if you feel the year information is important.

If the reference is to a stand-alone publication (usually a book or pamphlet), the title gets italicized, thus:

John Gilchrist Barnett, *North Carolina as a Civil War Battleground* (Raleigh, N.C.: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1980), pg. 32.

Here are some endnote examples, based on use in another scholarly journal's material:

1. Walter Hubbard and Richard F. Winter, *North Atlantic Mail Sailings, 1840-75* (Canton, Ohio: U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Inc., 1988), pg. 225.
2. *Ibid.*, pg. 236.
3. Robert G. Stone, "Ship Letters from St. Pierre," *The Collectors Club Philatelist*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (May 1975), pg. 145.
4. Hubbard and Winter, *op. cit.*, pg. 146.
5. Richard Frajola and Floyd Risvold, "Deconstructing the Jackass Mail Route," *Chronicle* 220 (2008), pp. 275–82.
6. U.S. Regulars Archive, "History of the 3rd U.S. Artillery," www.usregulars.com/usartillery/3us_art.html (last viewed November 17, 2008).

"*Ibid.*" (*ibidem*) refers to a single work cited in the note immediately preceding. "*Op. cit.*" (*opera citato*) is used with the author's last name and in place of a previously cited title. Italicization is necessary because these abbreviations are foreign words.

Here are some sample newspaper references:

1. *New York Times*, April 20, 1843.
2. Editorial, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 4, 1850.
3. Obituary of Roger Smith, *Boston Globe*, May 8, 1920.

Bibliography. A bibliography is not necessary for our journal articles; however, I like to include a references listing at the end of an article to highlight those sources used by the author that might be helpful to the readers. We often learn more by seeking some of the sources used by the author, whether they are articles, books, or on-line sources. If you want to include such a listing with your article, here are some guidelines.

Elements of our Sources or Reference listing: Same as footnotes, but arranged slightly differently. Citations are listed in alphabetical order by the author's last name and include all sources (books, articles, dissertations, papers, etc.). If no author or editor is given, use the title or a keyword most likely to be sought.

Examples of Sources or Reference listings from our recent journals:

"Battle of New Bern (1864)." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_New_Bern_\(1864\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_New_Bern_(1864)) (accessed 7 May 2016).

Barnett, John Gilchrist. *North Carolina as a Civil War Battleground, 1861-1865*. (Raleigh, N.C.: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Fifth Printing, 1980).

“North Carolina Postmark Catalog Update.”

http://www.ncpostalhistory.com/project_postmark_catalog.aspx (accessed 7 May 2016).

Stroupe, et. al. ed. *Post Offices and Postmasters of North Carolina, Colonial to USPS*. 4 vols. (Newell, N.C.: North Carolina Postal History Society, 1996).

Internet citations. While the best practice is to avoid on-line citation if a hard-copy reference can be cited instead, the Internet is a powerful research tool, but it is not yet a completely reliable information source. Its evanescent nature does not provide the enduring reviewability of print.

According to a 2014 Harvard Law School study, “more than 70 percent of the URLs in the Harvard Law Review and other journals, and more than 50 percent of URLs in U.S. Supreme Court opinions, do not link to the originally-cited information.” A study conducted at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in 2014 searched almost four million scholarly scientific articles published between 1997 and 2012. It found that 20 percent of the links provided were useless. The cited pages no longer exist (this is called “link rot”) or the cited page had been moved or changed (“content drift”).

Nevertheless, if an author wishes to cite an internet citation, and feels there is potential value to the reader to see this citation, then he must provide the full URL (locating the specific reference quoted, not just the home page under which the citation is buried) along with information revealing the date on which this specific page was last viewed. Here’s an example:

“Battle of New Bern (1864).” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_New_Bern_\(1864\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_New_Bern_(1864)) (accessed 7 May 2016).

The ongoing tension between on-line information and good bibliographic practice has three principal sources: (1) The specific URL reference, essential to proper citation, is sometimes so lengthy and so cryptic that it’s hard to read, difficult to copy and greatly subject to transcription error; (2) a URL reference may be so lengthy as to require a hyphenated line break when presented in a print publication, which unless the hyphen is carefully removed will make the citation inaccessible; and (3) unlike reference books, websites and their content change frequently (thus the “last viewed” requirement).

A non-profit group called the Internet Archive (archive.org) stores websites as they exist at different points in time. But this activity, while commendable, is incomplete. The archive is very far from comprehensive. Only when (or if) such storage becomes universal will the Internet replace the printed page as a red-check source of verifiable information. Until then, sound research practice suggests we should avoid internet citation wherever possible.

Visuals

Technical requirements for images. Scans are strongly preferred. If you don't have a scanner, you should buy one and learn how to use it. They are quite inexpensive and will produce perfectly acceptable results. Remember, all digits are alike and a flat-bed scanner has no lenses.

Printing professionals affirm that even the cheapest scanners nowadays provide quality output. If you still need assistance, let me know and I will try to provide scanning assistance.

Image format. JPEG images will work, but quality will be diminished because JPEG images may degrade every time they are opened. This isn't a serious problem, however, unless they are opened many times. **For best results I prefer full (life-sized) TIFF images with final image size 300 DPI or better. I will convert any scans received to TIFF images for publishing. Stamps should be scanned against a black background, covers on a white one.** With covers, make sure the background color is very different from the envelope color—to make it easy for me to remove the background in Photoshop if necessary. Don't crop into the cover image to square it up or eliminate nicks. Since some scanners will crop in an automatic mode, make sure when you scan that there is sufficient background around all sides of the cover you select; in other words, don't use this automatic feature if you have it. Cover images cropped razor sharp look unnatural. I prefer realism in our journal, and that includes showing covers with dinged edges and blunted corners.

Often cover images are submitted with collector or dealer notations on them in pencil, or worse, ink. This is not how the cover looked when it went through the mail and should not be how we illustrate it. Unless you have an objection and an explanation on why this notation is important to the image, I will digitally remove the pencil notations from the scan when I prepare the article for publishing. An example of an exception might be an expert authentication signature on the cover or a stamp's plating notation made by a former collector or dealer. In these cases, an explanation of this signature or notation should be made in the text.

If the image is to be enlarged for publication, then the resolution must be appropriately higher. Blow-ups of fly-speck detail should be scanned at much higher resolution: 1,200 dpi is not too large. High-resolution images are often too data-intensive to be transmitted as email attachments (that's why they print so well). In such cases, use Dropbox or burn the images onto a disk and send them to me via postal mail.

Before scanning a stamp or cover, remove it from its album page and from any transparent mounting or pochette. The item to be scanned should rest directly on the scanner bed. After scanning, don't crop the image too closely. Let me do that.

Scans plucked from Internet websites are typically 72 DPI, way below our minimum standard. I would rather run no images at all, than publish grainy, low-resolution internet-sourced images that print unattractively and thus diminish the overall quality of reproduction that makes our journal special.

If an inferior image is absolutely critical to a point an author is making, then yes, I can run it reluctantly, so long as it is explained specifically in each instance what we're doing and why--so that the reader is clearly informed that we are aware of the likelihood of inferior reproduction, but have decided to accept it anyway as the lesser of evils. (IE: "The image in Figure X, created from a scan downloaded from the Internet, is not up to our standards, but it's the best image currently available..."). The quest for quality images is a crucial component of the research process. An article that lacks quality images has not been adequately researched.

Color. Our current printer contract does not provide for press proofs. That's one way our Society has been able to afford quality color printing and still keep our dues low. Without proofs, there's no way to do post-plate color corrections. Where necessary, I correct color up front as best I can, using Photoshop during the layout process. This basically involves making the images accurate and pleasing to view. If the image shows an object whose colors readers are familiar with (a 10¢ green 1861 stamp, for instance), I try to assure that the printed result will accurately depict the familiar color.

Authors who send me their materials well in advance of deadlines are usually rewarded with page proofs in PDF form. The resolution in these PDFs is low (for email transmission), but I have found that the color they depict is a fairly accurate representation of what will ultimately appear in the printed journal. If upon inspecting the PDF page proofs I send you, you encounter individual items whose color is inaccurate, by all means point this out to me and I'll try to make appropriate correction. No guarantees, but I'll certainly try.

Captions. Please provide photo captions separately, not embedded into your text. This can be done with a separate file or at the end of your text file. Number captions Figure 1, Figure 2 etc. and provide detail in the caption that will help explain what's in the picture. "Figure 1," by itself, is not an acceptable caption. Make sure that the file names of the scans you provide correlate to your Figure numbers.

Marriage of visuals and text. This is where philatelic writers frequently stumble. Simply stated, the visuals must support the text and the text must explain the visuals. The easiest way to accomplish this is for the author to have the visuals in front of him when he sits down to write his article. Then he can write about the visuals. "Figure 1 shows..." etc.

The function of captioning. The primary purpose of a caption is to identify what's in the photo and to tie it to the accompanying text. Anything unusual in a photo or anything that's likely to catch the eye of the casual page-turner, must be identified or explained, *even if it's not germane to the substance of the text*. Such explanatory identification is consistent with our educational mission. It sparks interest in the material illustrated and perhaps will induce the casual browser to read more. In addition, either individually or collectively, captions can help support the accompanying story.

Every image that we publish must be identified and explained, both in the text and in the accompanying caption. The caption and text material need not be identical, but it's a well-established convention in print journalism that new information should never be introduced in a caption. The caption repeats (though not necessarily in the same words) information contained in the text. The reason for this is simple: Captions often require adjustment in the page-layout process to accommodate the illustration or to fit available space. If the caption contains important information that's not repeated in the text, this information might get lost in layout.

Frequently the exigencies of page layout prevent a visual from being placed in precisely the location the author might desire it. Identifying it by name in the text ("Figure 1 shows...", "Table 2 presents ..." etc.) permits make-up flexibility and helps the reader to locate the visual

when he reads about it. In page make-up, I will always strive to place visuals close to their first mention in the text, and wherever possible, I will make sure that the visual and its text reference appear on the same spread. Ideally, authors should provide sufficient text to support such placement.

Dick Winter
Editor
15 September 2016