

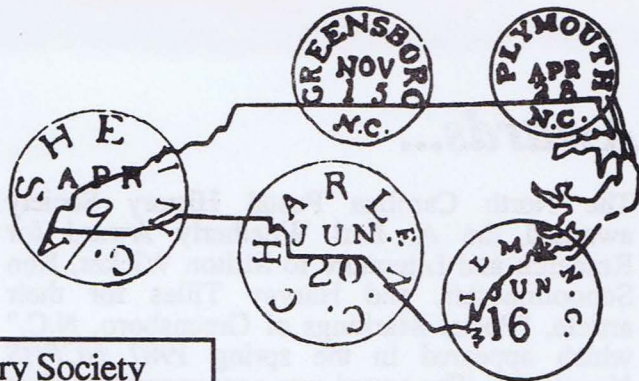
NCPHS Newsletter

The Journal of the North Carolina Postal History Society

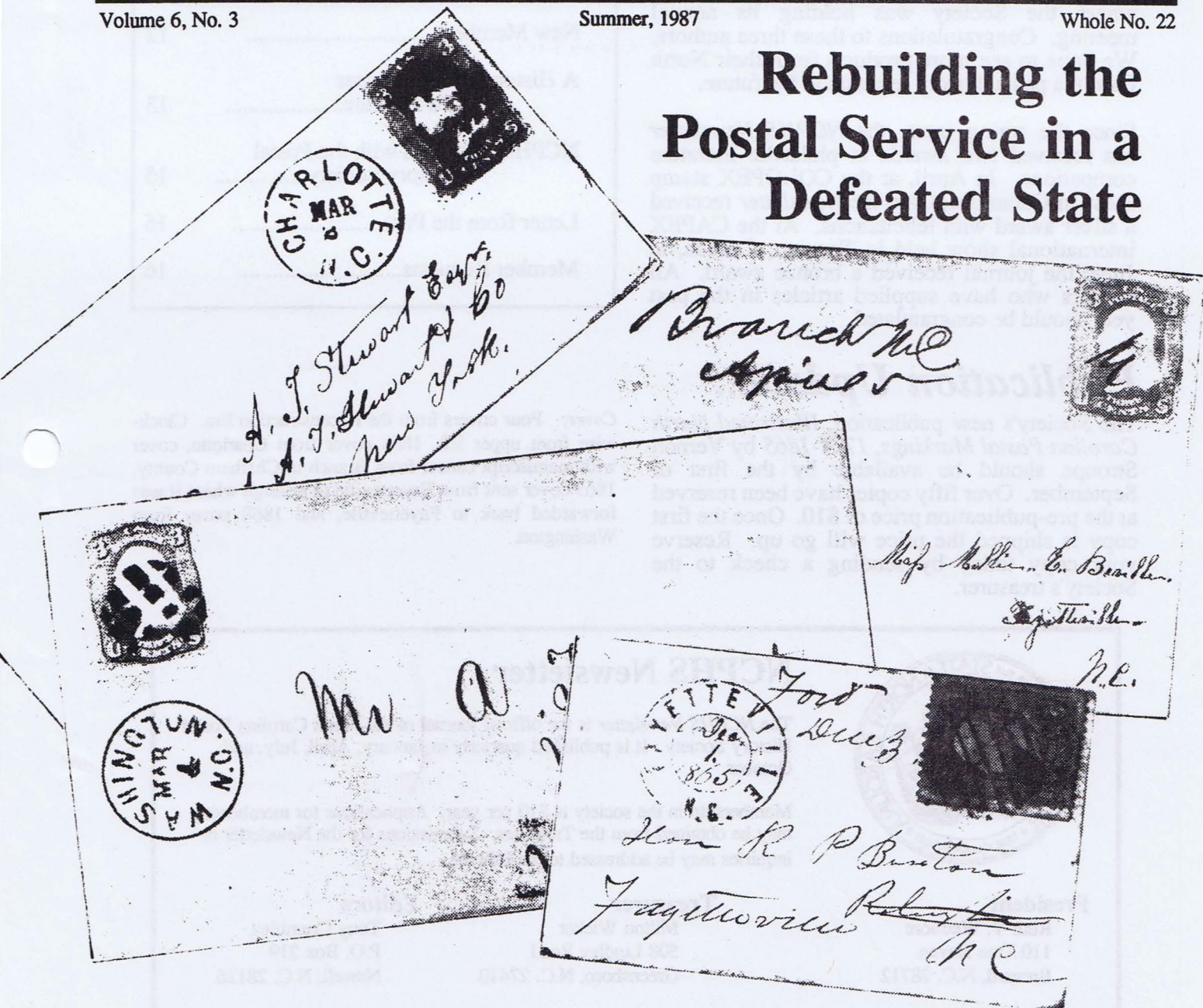
Volume 6, No. 3

Summer, 1987

Whole No. 22



Rebuilding the Postal Service in a Defeated State



Affiliate Number 155 of the American Philatelic Society



Awards...

The North Carolina Postal History Society awarded the A. Earl Weatherly Award for Research and Literature to Milton Wicker, Ken Schoolmeester, and Harvey Tilles for their article, "Postal Markings of Greensboro, N.C." which appeared in the spring 1987 *NCPHS Newsletter*. The award was announced May 2 at the WINPEX stamp show in Winston-Salem, where the Society was holding its annual meeting. Congratulations to these three authors. We hope to see more products from their North Carolina postal history research in the future.

Since the spring issue, the *NCPHS Newsletter* has received two awards in philatelic literature competitions. In April, at the COLOPEX stamp show in Columbus, Ohio the *Newsletter* received a silver award with felicitations. At the CAPEX international show held in Toronto, Canada, in June, the journal received a bronze award. All authors who have supplied articles in the past year should be congratulated.

Publication Update...

The Society's new publication, *Illustrated North Carolina Postal Markings, 1777-1865* by Vernon Stroupe should be available by the first of September. Over fifty copies have been reserved at the pre-publication price of \$10. Once the first copy is shipped the price will go up. Reserve your copy today by sending a check to the Society's treasurer.

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Cover: Four covers from the Reconstruction Era. Clockwise from upper left, 1868 cover from Charlotte, cover with manuscript cancel from Branch in Chatham County, 1865 cover sent from Fayetteville to Raleigh where it was forwarded back to Fayetteville, and 1868 cover from Washington.



NCPHS Newsletter

The *NCPHS Newsletter* is the official journal of the North Carolina Postal History Society. It is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October.

Membership in the society is \$10 per year. Applications for membership may be obtained from the Treasurer. Submissions for the Newsletter or inquiries may be addressed to the Editors.

President

Ruth Y. Wetmore
110 Tree Haven
Brevard, N.C. 28712

Vice-President

William Harter
205 Bayberry Dr.
Salisbury, N.C. 28144

Treasurer

Milton Wicker
508 Lindley Road
Greensboro, N.C. 27410

Secretary

Delmar R. Frazier
602 Pearson Circle
New Bern, N.C. 28560

Editors

Tony Crumbley
P.O. Box 219
Newell, N.C. 28126

Darrell Ertzberger
P.O. Box 16361
Alexandria, Va. 22302

Reopening North Carolina Post Offices, 1865-70

by
Thomas E. Stanton

2109 Alice Ave., Apt. 2, Oxon Hill, MD 20745

The secession of South Carolina in December, 1860 and subsequent formation of the Confederacy in February, 1861 sealed the fate of the U.S. Post Office Department (USPOD) in the southern states. This system continued to operate for a number of months. However, on May 27, Postmaster General Blair issued an order (figure 1) which suspended Union postal services as of the last day of the month.

When the coastal region was occupied by Union forces, three post offices, New Berne, Washington, and Beaufort, were reopened.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,

Washington, May 27, 1861.

ALL POSTAL SERVICE in the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas, will be suspended from and after the 31st instant.

Letters for offices temporarily closed by this order will be forwarded to the Dead Letter Office, except those for Western Virginia, which will be sent to Wheeling.

M. BLAIR,

Postmaster General.

Figure 1. PMG's order that ended southern postal service.

However, they primarily served the needs of the military and only secondarily that of the general population. The three remained in service throughout the war and at the end of hostilities formed the small nucleus upon which the USPOD could reconstruct U.S. postal services. On May 29, 1865 President Johnson appointed William W. Holden as provisional governor of the state and further directed the PMG to "proceed to establish post offices and post routes and put into execution the postal laws of the United States within the said state, giving the loyal residents the preference of appointment; but if suitable residents are not found, then to appoint agents, etc., from other states." (Hyman, 1967)

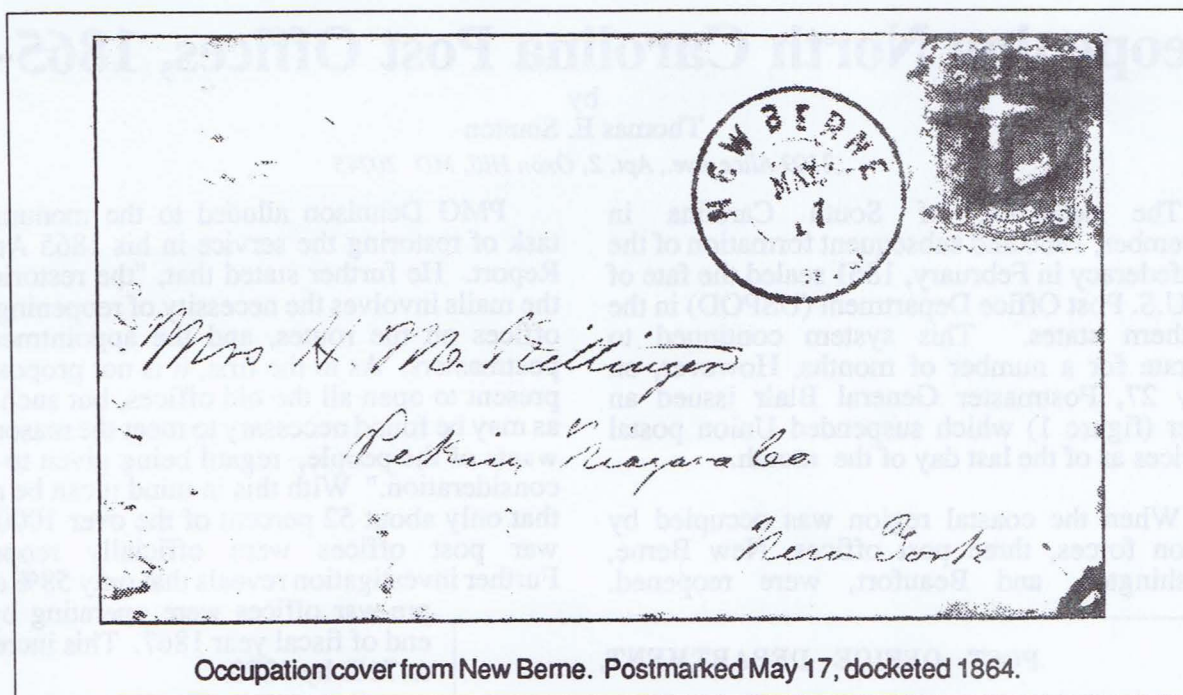
PMG Dennison alluded to the monumental task of restoring the service in his 1865 Annual Report. He further stated that, "the restoring of the mails involves the necessity of reopening post offices on the routes, and the appointment of postmasters. As to the first, it is not proposed at present to open all the old offices, but such only as may be found necessary to meet the reasonable wants of the people, regard being given to local consideration." With this in mind it can be noted that only about 52 percent of the over 1000 pre-war post offices were officially reopened. Further investigation reveals that only 58% of the pre-war offices were operating by the end of fiscal year 1867. This increased to 71% by 1870.

This article is concerned with the activities of PMG Dennison and his agents in reopening and reestablishing the post offices of North Carolina from the cessation of hostilities to the end of fiscal year 1870. At this point in time, it is deemed that the postal service entered a period of normal growth and that reconstruction activity ceased, although the political picture was still in turmoil. Further, this article is an overview of the entire state; the details of specific regions will be addressed in future articles. Also, while a need exists to address the postal routes, particularly the railroad routes, this too is for the future. The author has information on the individual offices and would gladly respond to requests

for specific information; on the other hand, he would greatly appreciate data on the postmasters and the buildings occupied by the post offices.

Occupation Post Offices

The term 'occupation post offices' in the context used here refers to those offices opened by the USPOD in the Confederate States prior to the conclusion of hostilities in 1865. In North Carolina three such offices existed: New Berne, Washington, and Beaufort. These offices were reopened following the Burnside campaign in 1862 which gave the Union control of much of the coastal regions of the state.



Occupation cover from New Berne. Postmarked May 17, docketed 1864.

New Berne, the second largest city in the state, was occupied by Union forces in mid-March of 1862. Initial occupation mail services were provided by steamboats operating on the Neuse River. The early occupation covers were postmarked at a northern post office, Jaronski (1985) illustrates two such missives, both were postmarked on April 8th at Baltimore. When the post office was officially reopened is an enigma. Examining the records in the National Archives, including the appointments of postmasters and the orders of the PMG, one finds that the office was discontinued on July 14 and reestablished the following day, with John Dibble appointed postmaster. However, a cover from New Berne postmarked on April 16 has been known for a number of years and is well chronicled. The question remains as to the status of the office prior to July 1862. The postmarked cover indicates that it was possibly operating prior to the official records' indication. Did James C. Stephenson, the pre-war postmaster, resume his duties shortly after occupation? This would imply that the successive day discontinuance and reestablishment was merely a USPOD ploy to remove him from office. Was the office under the control of a special agent of the USPOD, an event not unlikely during the conflict? Of course, another possibility is that the post office was operated by military personnel, who by chance found the postmarking device upon reentering the office and opted to use it on the mails from New Berne. Any information to resolve this enigma would be greatly appreciated by the author. But in any event, it should be noted that Dibble served as postmaster until June 1865, when he

was replaced by George W. Mason. The New Berne post office regained its pre-war status as a Presidential office in July of 1866.

The second post office to be reopened and the first officially (at least from what has been found in the records) was Beaufort in Carteret County. On June 9, 1862 Joseph J. Davis was appointed postmaster, replacing William L. Porter, who is cited in the PMG orders as having abandoned the position. Porter was the pre-war postmaster, appointed in 1853. Davis remained in office for slightly over 10 years. Graham (1967) reports a September 6, 1862 cover from this office.

The third and last 1862 reopening was at Washington in Beaufort County. Federal forces occupied the city in March 1862 and on June 21, Richard R. Richardson, the pre-war postmaster, a Lincoln administration appointee, resumed his duties. Graham (1967) reports a July 7, 1863 cover from this post office, however, this is more than a year after the reopening. Earlier postmarks should exist. Richardson continued to supervise the post office operations until September 1863 when he was replaced by Mrs. Susan R. Richardson (his wife or some other relative?). In July 1865 the office attained Presidential status and William Eborn assumed the reins.

One postal route has been uncovered that served these North Carolina offices, Route 5294 from Beaufort to New Berne. Initially contracted in June 1862, it was to run daily for a payment of

\$125 per month. In December 1863 this contract was renewed and George W. Taylor is listed as the mail carrier. It is interesting to note that Morehead City is listed as an intermediate point on the route, although its post office was not reopened until September 1865. Eventually this contract was annulled in March 1864. Of course, throughout the occupation period, these offices were served by steamships sailing from northern ports, primarily New York.

One other office, Wilmington, reopened a few weeks before the cessation of hostilities. USPOD special agent R.R. Vassal reopened and took charge of that office in March 1865. In June it became a Presidential post office and William M. Poission was appointed as post-master.

Number of Post Offices Operating

The reopening of May 31, 1861 post offices only tells a partial story of the number of offices that were operating. By the end of fiscal year 1867, the USPOD cleared its books and had, over a period of time, discontinued all the offices that were not planned to be put back into operation. However, a small percentage (slightly less than 5%) of those post offices discontinued were reestablished prior to the end of FY 1867. This percentage increased to about 36% by the end of FY 1870.

On the other side of the ledger, not all the reopened post offices remained in operation

during the period. The USPOD discontinued ten of the over 560 post offices reopened prior to the end of FY 1867; by the end of FY 1870, this number had increased to over 100.

In his 1865 annual report to Congress, PMG Dennison iterated that "in some cases it will be better for new sites [referring to post offices] to be selected, so as to obviate the multiplicity of offices." Such was the case in nearly 100 North Carolina situations where the special agents entrusted with reestablishing the postal service found new locations to be more suitable than the old. These, together with the reestablishment of offices that were discontinued prior to the 1861 cessation of services by the USPOD, more than counterbalanced the discontinuance of reopened offices.

Figure 2 illustrates the number of post offices in operation at the end of each fiscal year from 1864 through 1870. The obvious feature of this diagram is the rapid increase from FY 1865 to FY 1866 when the number of post offices grew from 13 to over 500. After this, the reestablishment of offices gradually leveled off to a more moderate rate and by the end of the period under examination, achieved near normality.

Temporal Distribution of Reopenings

The distribution of the reopenings of North Carolina post offices is distinctly bimodal. An early flurry of reopenings occurred in August through October of 1865 when 28, 62, and 34

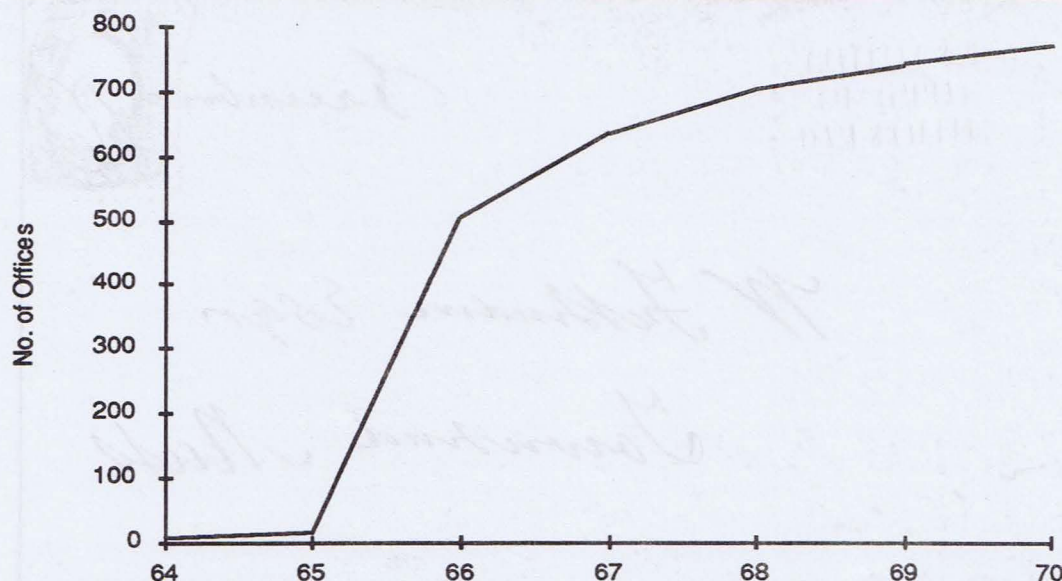


Figure 2. Number of offices operating on June 30th of each year. Includes reopenings, re-establishments, and new offices, less discontinuances.

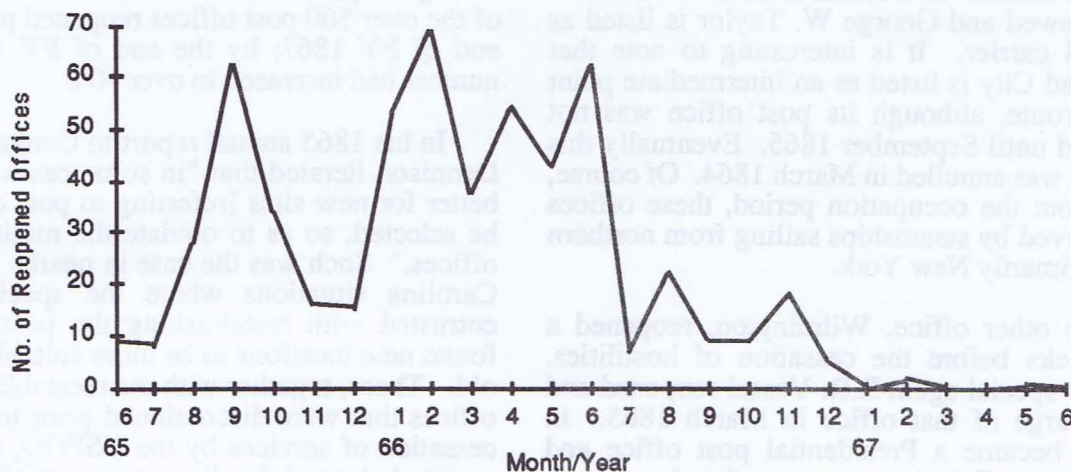


Figure 3. Post Office Reopenings by Month

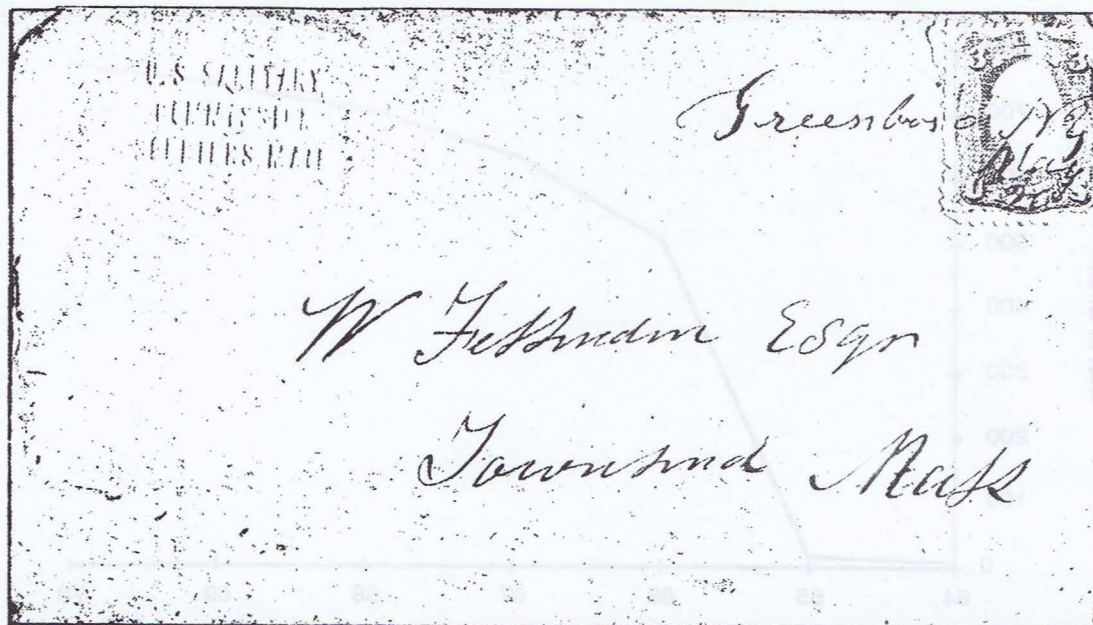
offices received their first post-war postmasters. During this three month period about 22 percent of the total reopenings took place. After a lull in the remaining two months, a broad six month maximum of activity happened. During the period, over 300 post offices were made available to the public. These ranged from a maximum in February of 69 to a minimum the next month of 38. Overall an average of 53 offices were reopened per month during this period. See figure 3.

As will be pointed out in a later section, the larger post offices accounted for almost one-half

of the fall 1865 reopenings. On the other hand, this left the majority of the smaller offices to be reopened in the first half of 1866.

Geographic Distribution of Reopenings

The reopenings by the USPOD were not uniform across the state. Of course, uniformity would not be expected, as the populous and commercial centers required more facilities than the rural and mountainous areas. Two maps illustrate the percent of reopenings and the percent of operating post offices at the end of FY 1870. Note the percentages are based on the



May 20, 1865 Greensboro cover. Office was officially reopened June 23, 1865 when Jonathan D. White was appointed postmaster. This letter must have been handled by the occupation military forces.

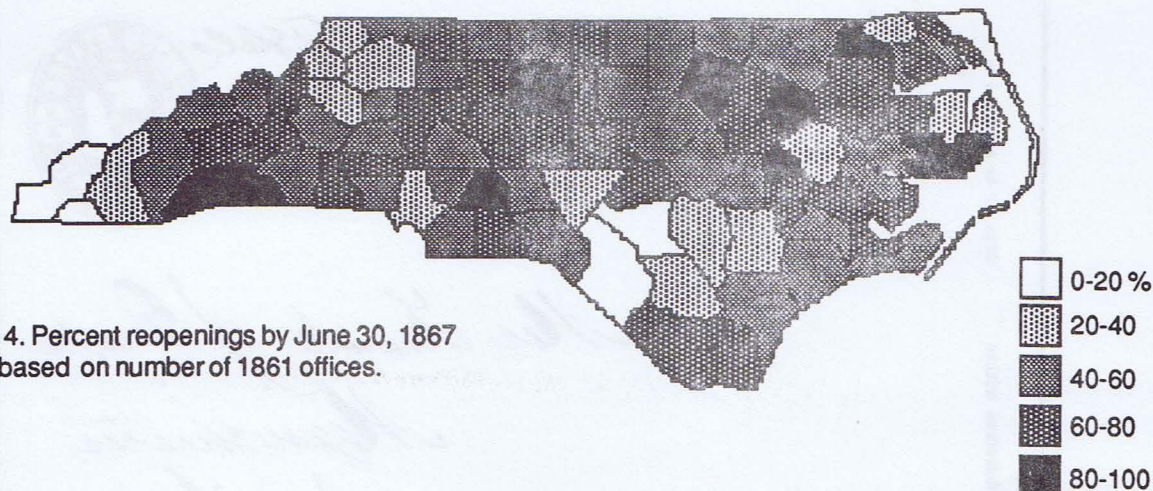


Figure 4. Percent reopenings by June 30, 1867 based on number of 1861 offices.

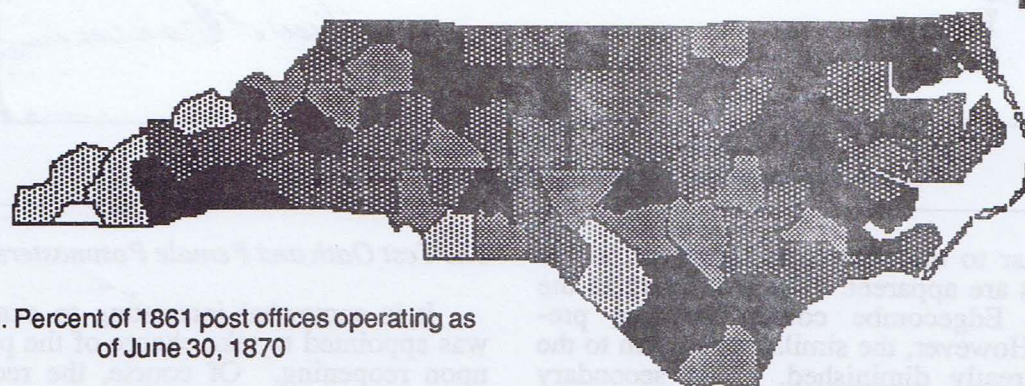


Figure 5. Percent of 1861 post offices operating as of June 30, 1870

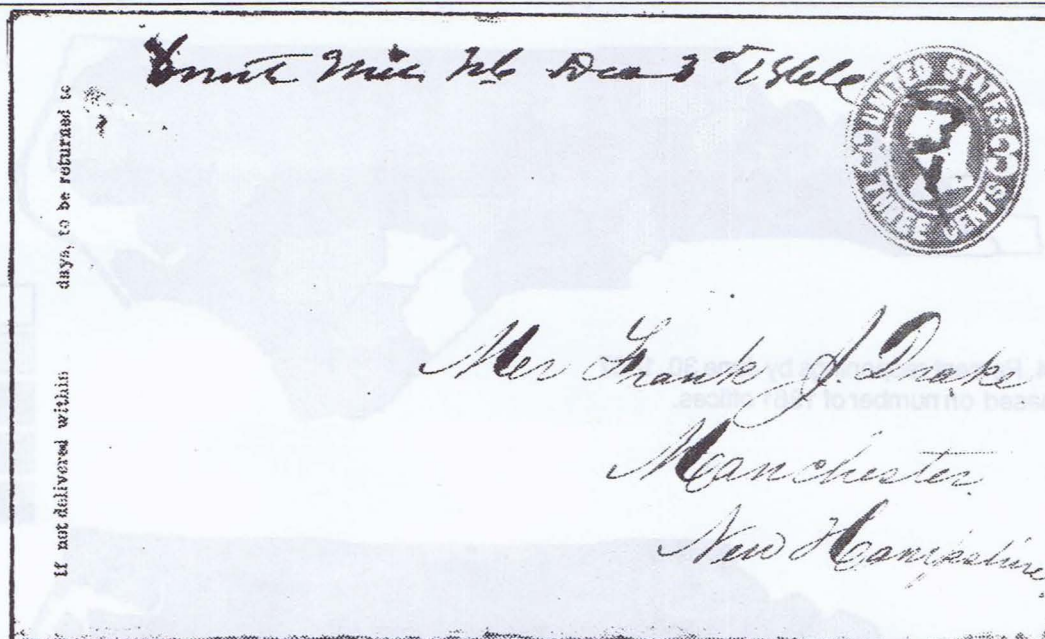
numbers of post offices operating as of May 31, 1861.

The map (figure 4) of the percentage of reopenings shows two major and two minor maxima. The primary maxima appear to be related to the location of the railroads and extend through the major tobacco growing regions. Of course, the location of the railroads was dependent upon the projected availability of passenger and freight traffic; two features which would also influence the POD in reopening their offices. The eastern maximum is centered in Nash, Edgecombe, and Greene counties; the latter had all of its pre-war offices reopened. The large western maximum was located on an axis from Guilford County to Stanly County with a secondary axis running east to west from Wake to Iredell counties. Both of these are oriented along the line of the railroads. Smaller maxima are situated in Henderson and Hyde counties.

An extensive minimum occurs in the south central region of the state. Located in Cumberland and Roberson counties, where only five of 39 pre-war offices were reopened. The mountainous western counties and the Dismal Swamp counties in the northeast contained other minima.

The geographic-temporal distribution of reopening follows the same pattern as the percentage of reopenings with only slight shifts in the location of the extremes. The earliest reopenings occurred in Edgecombe and Wayne counties in the east and in Guilford, Forsyth, and Orange counties in the central region of the state. The latest reopenings were in the southwest, where Cherokee county did not have a post office until August 1866, when the courthouse post office at Murphy was reopened. In the south central portion the late reopenings shifted slightly eastward from the region of low percentages, that is from the Cumberland and Roberson counties to Bladen county.

The last map (figure 5) in this section depicts the number of post offices operating on June 30, 1870, normalized by the number of pre-war offices. These offices include the number directly reopened, augmented by the establishment of new offices and the reestablishment of discontinued offices, but diminished by the discontinuance of reopened offices. This approach is a simplified version as a number of offices went through a series of discontinuances and reestablishments. Again the overall pattern is



Dec. 3, 1866 cover from South Mills in Camden County.
Office reopened Feb. 16, 1866 with Mrs. Henrietta Jacobs as postmaster.

quite similar to the other map, however, a few differences are apparent. The maximum in the region of Edgecombe county remains pre-eminent. However, the similar maximum to the west is greatly diminished. The secondary maximum centered in Henderson county remained dominant. The minimum in the western mountainous region and the Cumberland-Roberson counties remained intact. However, the maximum of operating post offices increased in the Stanly-Anson county regions and in the far south central area, while the Dismal Swamp counties illustrated a marked increase.

The table on page 9 gives a county by county tabulation of these data. Further discussion and enumeration will help to assist individual region analysis.

The Test Oath and Female Postmasters

It is somewhat interesting to examine who was appointed to take charge of the post offices upon reopening. Of course, the required test oath of office, repulsive to many of the inhabitants of the South, limited the population who were either eligible or willing to serve the USPOD. The oath required those taking it to swear that they had never borne arms against the United States and moreover, never abetted those who did. This of course would eliminate many of the southern men. Emotion was still running high during the early years of reconstruction and many refused to take part in any activity which would enhance the cause of the Yankees.

With this in mind, it is not surprising that only 42 pre-war postmasters were reappointed

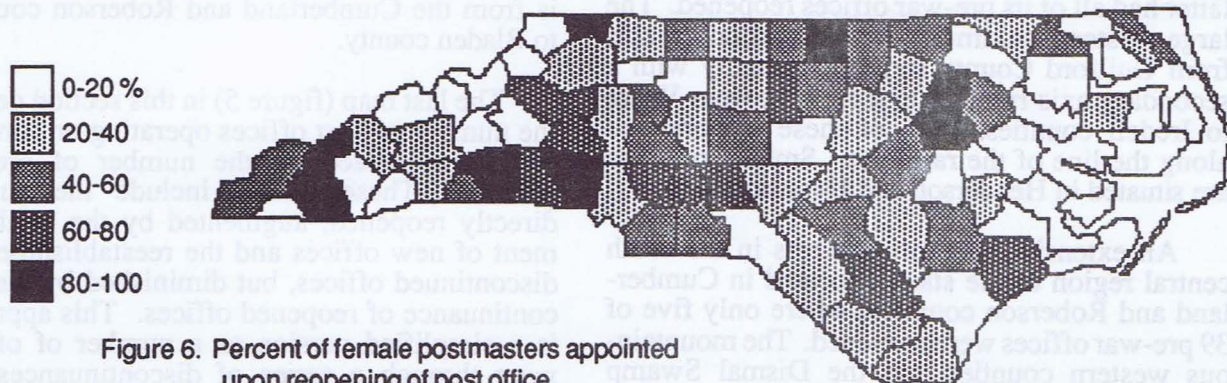


Figure 6. Percent of female postmasters appointed upon reopening of post office.

North Carolina Reconstruction Era Post Office Statistics

County	Post Offices as of May 31, 1861	Post Offices Reopened	Earliest Reopening Date	Female Postmasters on Reopening	Post Offices as of June 30, 1870	County	Post Offices as of May 31, 1861	Post Offices Reopened	Earliest Reopening Date	Female Postmasters on Reopening	Post Offices as of June 30, 1870
Alamance	18	12	July 9, 1865	6	14	Johnston	13	7	Sept. 4, 1865	3	10
Alexander	7	4	Sept. 4, 1865	3	6	Jones	4	2	Jan. 10, 1866	-	2
Alleghany	3	1	Mar. 16, 1866	1	4	Lenoir	6	4	Sept. 1, 1865	1	4
Anson	11	7	Aug. 23, 1865	3	16	Lincoln	14	10	Aug. 24, 1865	1	11
Ashe	18	7	Jan. 25, 1866	1	11	McDowell	10	6	Feb. 1, 1866	-	6
Beaufort	10	4	June 21, 1862	-	6	Macon	10	2	June 6, 1866	2	3
Bertie	6	4	Aug. 24, 1865	-	4	Madison	14	7	Nov. 3, 1865	2	5
Bladen	16	5	Mar. 29, 1866	-	16	Martin	4	3	Sept. 4, 1865	-	4
Brunswick	7	5	Oct. 20, 1865	1	4	Mecklenburg	23	8	June 24, 1865	3	11
Buncombe	19	13	Aug. 24, 1865	5	16	Montgomery	15	7	Feb. 13, 1866	5	10
Burke	7	4	Aug. 4, 1865	-	8	Moore	21	7	Aug. 23, 1865	2	11
Cabarrus	12	6	Aug. 29, 1865	4	9	Nash	8	5	Feb. 1, 1866	4	5
Caldwell	12	4	Sept. 21, 1865	3	7	New Hanover	15	8	Mar. 31, 1865	1	12
Camden	3	2	Feb. 16, 1866	1	3	Northampton	12	7	Aug. 24, 1865	2	10
Carteret	9	4	June 9, 1862	-	6	Onslow	14	7	Oct. 20, 1865	5	9
Caswell	12	8	June 24, 1865	4	10	Orange	25	13	June 24, 1865	6	16
Catawba	12	7	Sept. 21, 1865	5	8	Pasquotank	2	1	June 24, 1865	1	2
Chatham	25	15	Aug. 23, 1865	2	17	Perquimans	2	2	Nov. 22, 1865	-	3
Cherokee	15	2	Aug. 1, 1866	1	4	Person	13	7	Oct. 17, 1865	6	10
Chowan	2	1	Oct. 11, 1865	-	2	Pitt	10	3	Sept. 4, 1865	-	8
Cleveland	19	12	Sept. 4, 1865	8	14	Polk	2	2	Sept. 4, 1865	1	2
Columbus	8	5	Jan. 4, 1866	1	8	Randolph	39	25	Sept. 9, 1865	12	27
Craven	5	3	Apr. ?, 1862	-	6	Richmond	15	7	Sept. 21, 1865	1	11
Cumberland	14	2	July 7, 1865	1	6	Robeson	25	3	Sept. 21, 1865	1	6
Currituck	7	1	Nov. 2, 1866	-	5	Rockingham	21	9	Sept. 9, 1865	3	16
Davidson	19	13	Aug. 31, 1865	4	12	Rowan	14	7	July 19, 1865	3	7
Davie	8	6	Sept. 9, 1865	3	7	Rutherford	21	11	Jan. 29, 1866	10	15
Duplin	17	6	Sept. 4, 1865	4	12	Sampson	15	5	Sept. 4, 1865	1	7
Edgecombe	7	6	June 24, 1865	3	8	Stanly	6	5	Oct. 17, 1865	4	6
Forsyth	17	11	June 24, 1865	2	15	Stokes	19	9	Sept. 4, 1865	5	15
Franklin	5	4	Sept. 4, 1865	1	4	Surry	13	9	Sept. 4, 1865	2	11
Gaston	19	9	Sept. 4, 1865	8	12	Tyrrell	3	1	Sept. 19, 1865	-	1
Gates	5	1	Feb. 5, 1866	-	5	Union	22	10	Feb. 1, 1866	5	8
Granville	24	14	Aug. 24, 1865	8	18	Wake	19	11	July 7, 1865	4	15
Greene	5	5	Sept. 21, 1865	-	5	Warren	10	5	Aug. 23, 1865	2	5
Guilford	22	19	June 23, 1865	4	18	Washington	4	3	Sept. 19, 1865	1	4
Halifax	11	5	Aug. 23, 1865	-	9	Watauga	12	3	June, 19, 1866	1	8
Harnett	8	5	Oct. 11, 1865	1	7	Wayne	9	5	June 23, 1865	-	5
Haywood	11	6	Sept. 21, 1854	2	7	Wilkes	22	5	Jan. 8, 1866	1	10
Henderson	17	15	Oct. 17, 1865	3	15	Wilson	2	1	Feb. 3, 1866	1	4
Hertford	6	5	Sept. 21, 1865	2	5	Yadkin	17	8	Nov. 3, 1865	3	14
Hyde	8	7	Apr. 19, 1866	1	6	Yancey	16	7	Jan. 13, 1866	1	9
Iredell	26	19	Sept. 21, 1865	5	18						
Jackson	6	3	Sept. 21, 1865	1	8	Total	1079	564		208	776

after the cessation of hostilities. This was only about seven and one-half percent of the post war appointments. When considering the reestablishment of discontinued offices, the percentage reduces to slightly less than six. With over 500 positions to fill the USPOD naturally turned to the female portion of the work force. Over 200 women were given appointments upon the reopening of post offices. This was just under 37 percent of the total post-war appointments and compares to fewer than one percent prior to the war.

The map (figure 6) illustrates the geographic distribution of female postmasters. While the features are quite similar to the other maps, one difference is quite pronounced: the lack of female postmasters in the coastal regions of Pamlico Sound. One possible reason is that this region was occupied by Union forces in 1862 and remained under their control throughout the war years. Thus, the number of males who could swear that they were loyal to the Union was large, at least percentage-wise.

1861 Postmaster Compensation

As one would expect, the reopening of post offices was directly related to the volume of mail handled by the individual office. To examine this facet, postmaster compensation was recorded from the 1861 *Official Register*. It must be remembered that the Confederate state assumed the postal service on June 1, 1861. Thus, the data represents only eleven months of activity, however, when comparing the individual state offices the factor is unimportant.

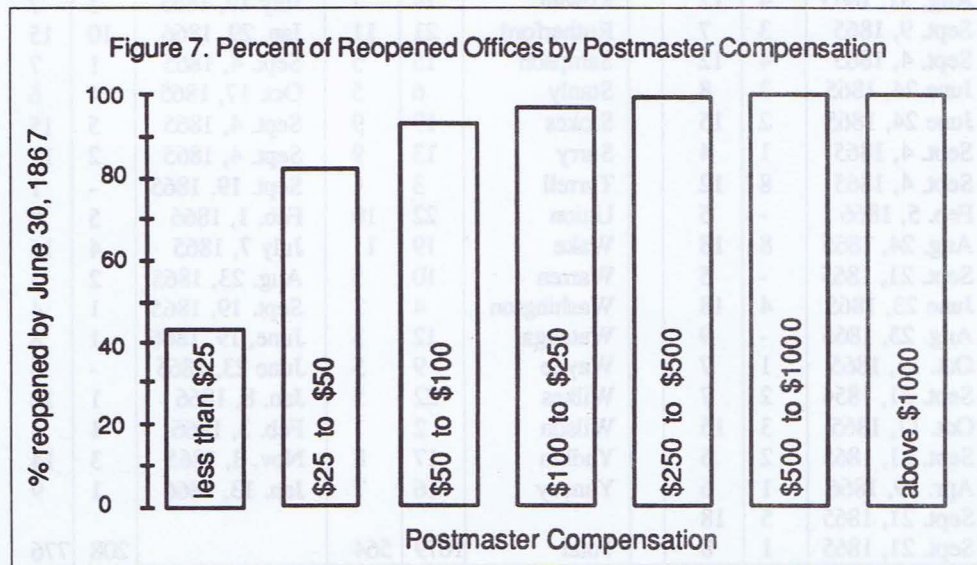
First, consider the distribution of postmaster compensations. Upon summarizing the data, one

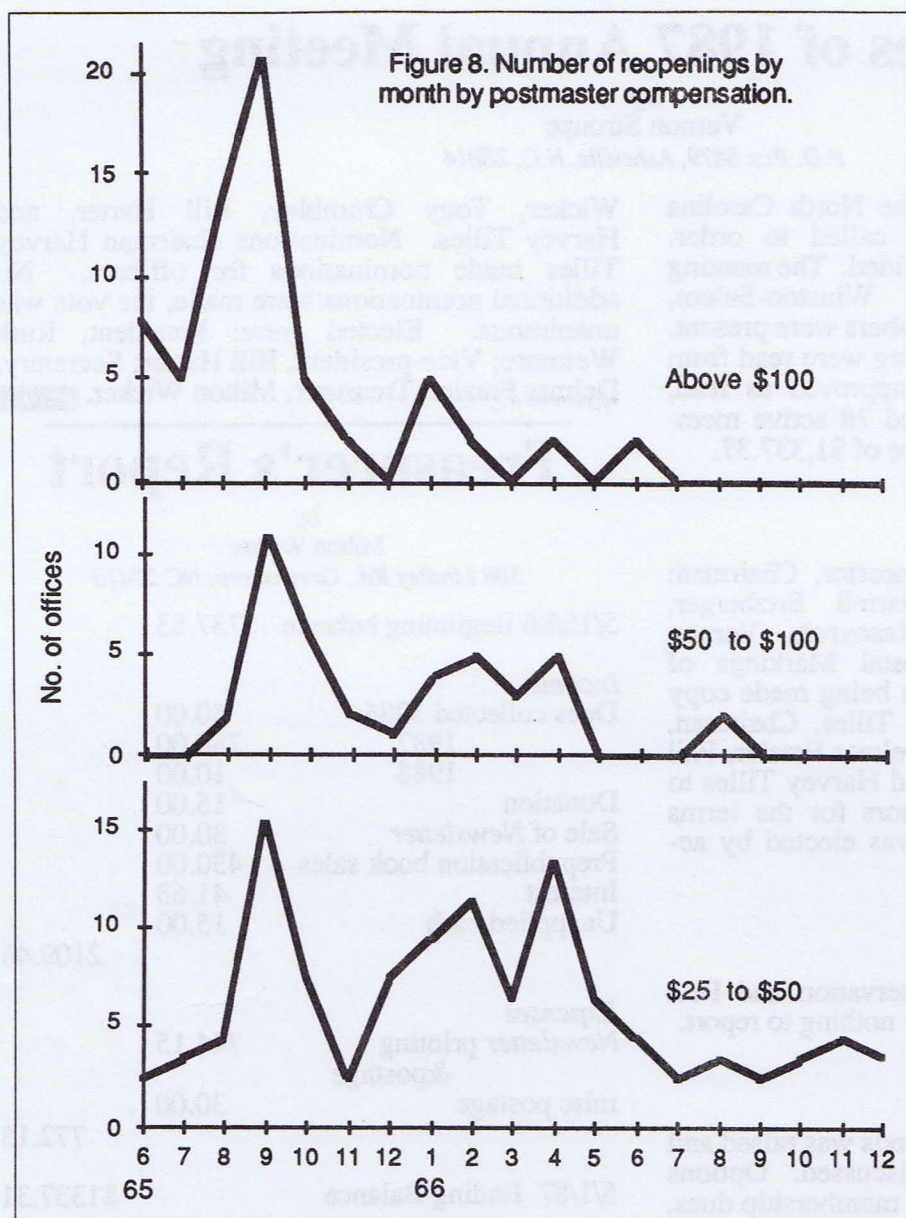
immediately notices the low level of the commissions with 90 percent of all offices being \$50 or less and the great majority of these being less than \$25. On the other end of the scale, only two offices, Fayetteville and Wilmington, had a compensation greater than \$1000, while New Berne approached this level at \$992. Only 12 offices reported a commission greater than \$500. To put this somewhat in perspective, the average postmaster's compensation throughout the United States in 1861 was nearly \$88, while the average for the North Carolina offices (after normalization to a 12 month period) was about \$31.50 or 36 percent of the national norm.

As initially stated, the USPOD reopened the offices with the highest volume of business, in fact only one of nearly 70 post offices with an 1861 compensation of over \$100 was not reopened. This was the Davidson College post office in Mecklenburg county. However, this office, though discontinued in December 1866, was reestablished shortly thereafter in July 1867 and the pre-war postmaster Hansom P. Helper was reappointed. This one omission was undoubtedly because the college itself closed in 1865 and did not reopen until late in 1866 (Lefler & Newsome, 1973, p. 538). Further down the scale, as postmaster compensation lowered, so did the percentage of reopenings, to 86 percent for the \$50 to \$100 range to only 44 percent for those offices whose postmaster compensation was less than \$25. Graphically this is illustrated in figure 7.

Equally impressive is the temporal distribution when broken down in a similar fashion, these are depicted as figure 8. From these one can immediately perceive the transition from early reopenings predominately on the primary

mode in September 1865 to a dual modal distribution as postmaster compensation is reduced. In fact, of the 62 total reopenings in September 1865, 21 offices or over one-third had a postmaster commission greater than \$100. Or taken in another light, of these towns where the compensation was greater than \$100, over 80 percent were reopened prior to January 1, 1866. These statistics





aptly illustrate PMG Dennison's philosophy that resources must be conserved and only those offices required to satisfy the basic wants of the public need to be reinstituted. Of course, it is obvious that the more populous locations fell within these criteria.

Summary

The cessation of hostilities in 1865 created the need to reestablish the postal services in the state. PMG Dennison deemed it expedient to only partially restore the pre-war level of service. As such, only slightly over one-half of the 1861 post offices were reopened by the end of fiscal year 1867. By the end of fiscal year 1870, this figure had reached seventy percent. When comparing reopening with postmaster compen-

sation one sees, as would be expected, that most of the large offices were reestablished and the majority of these in the fall of 1865. Most of the smaller offices had to wait until 1866 to be reopened. Because of the required oath of office, females played an important role in the post-war service.

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b) Record of Appointment of Postmasters

NCPHS

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Minutes of 1987 Annual Meeting

by
Vernon Stroupe

P.O. Box 8879, Asheville, N.C. 28814

The annual meeting of the North Carolina Postal History Society was called to order. President Vernon Stroupe presided. The meeting was held at WINPEX, Winston-Salem, Saturday, May 2. Eleven members were present. Minutes of the previous meeting were read from the *NCPHS Newsletter* and approved as read. Treasurer Milt Wicker reported 78 active members in the society and a balance of \$1,337.37.

Reports of Committees

Tax-status, Ken Schoolmeester, Chairman: not present. **Awards**, Darrell Ertzberger, Chairman: not present. **Research**, Vernon Stroupe, Chairman: The Postal Markings of North Carolina, 1777-1865, is being made copy ready. **Nominating**, Harvey Tilles, Chairman, reported the nominations of Delmar Frazier, Phil Perkinson, Ruth Wetmore, and Harvey Tilles to the NCPHS Board of Directors for the terms ending in 1990. The slate was elected by acclamation.

Old Business

Post Office Records Preservation and Post Office Artifacts Preservation -- nothing to report.

New Business

The need for additional funds was raised and ways of raising the money discussed. Options suggested were an increase in membership dues, creation of special membership categories, advertisements in the *Newsletter*, and auctions. A motion was made by Milt Wicker to create a Sustaining Member category for an annual dues payment of \$25. The motion was seconded and passed. Permission for the editors to accept advertising in the *Newsletter* was previously made, so no further action was necessary.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting of the Board of Directors

The meeting was called to order by President Vernon Stroupe following the 1987 Annual Meeting. Present were Delmar Frazier, Milton

Wicker, Tony Crumbley, Bill Harter, and Harvey Tilles. Nominations chairman Harvey Tilles made nominations for officers. No additional nominations were made, the vote was unanimous. Elected were: President, Ruth Wetmore; Vice-president, Bill Harter; Secretary, Delmar Frazier; Treasurer, Milton Wicker. **NCPHS**

Treasurer's Report

by

Milton Wicker

508 Lindley Rd., Greensboro, NC 27410

5/15/86 Beginning balance \$737.83

Income

Dues collected 1986	50.00
1987	780.00
1988	10.00
Donation	15.00
Sale of <i>Newsletter</i>	30.00
Prepublication book sales	430.00
Interest	41.63
Unapplied cash	15.00

2109.46

Expenses

<i>Newsletter</i> printing	744.15
& postage	
misc postage	30.00

772.15

5/1/87 Ending Balance \$1337.31

New Members

Please welcome these new members:

Albert Korzeniowski
2430 Cottage Place
Greensboro, NC 27408

Jim Scott
2217 Cloister Drive
Charlotte, NC 28211

William W. Watson
8972 111 St. No.
Seminole, FL 33542

A History of the Spencer Post Office

by

William & Marian Harter

205 Bayberry Dr., Salisbury, N.C. 28144

The 54th Post Office in Rowan County was established at Spencer on May 28, 1897. This was 14 months after the town came into existence as the result of the Southern Railway Company building a large repair shop at this site.

Mr. Hugh Smith was the first postmaster. Appointed on May 15, 1897, he served for four years and three months. According to the *U.S. Register*, Smith's first year salary was all of \$2.50 but it had increased to \$417.05 by 1899. At the beginning the post office had a fourth class rating.

The location of the first post office was on the ground floor of a two-story frame building at the corner of Fifth Street and Salisbury Avenue. It was a small space 6 by 8 feet at the front of the store. A few years later this same building housed the Spencer Telephone Exchange on the second floor.

By 1901, because of the growing population and an increasing number of businesses, the volume of mail increased to the extent that much larger quarters were needed. But since no other place was available, an annex

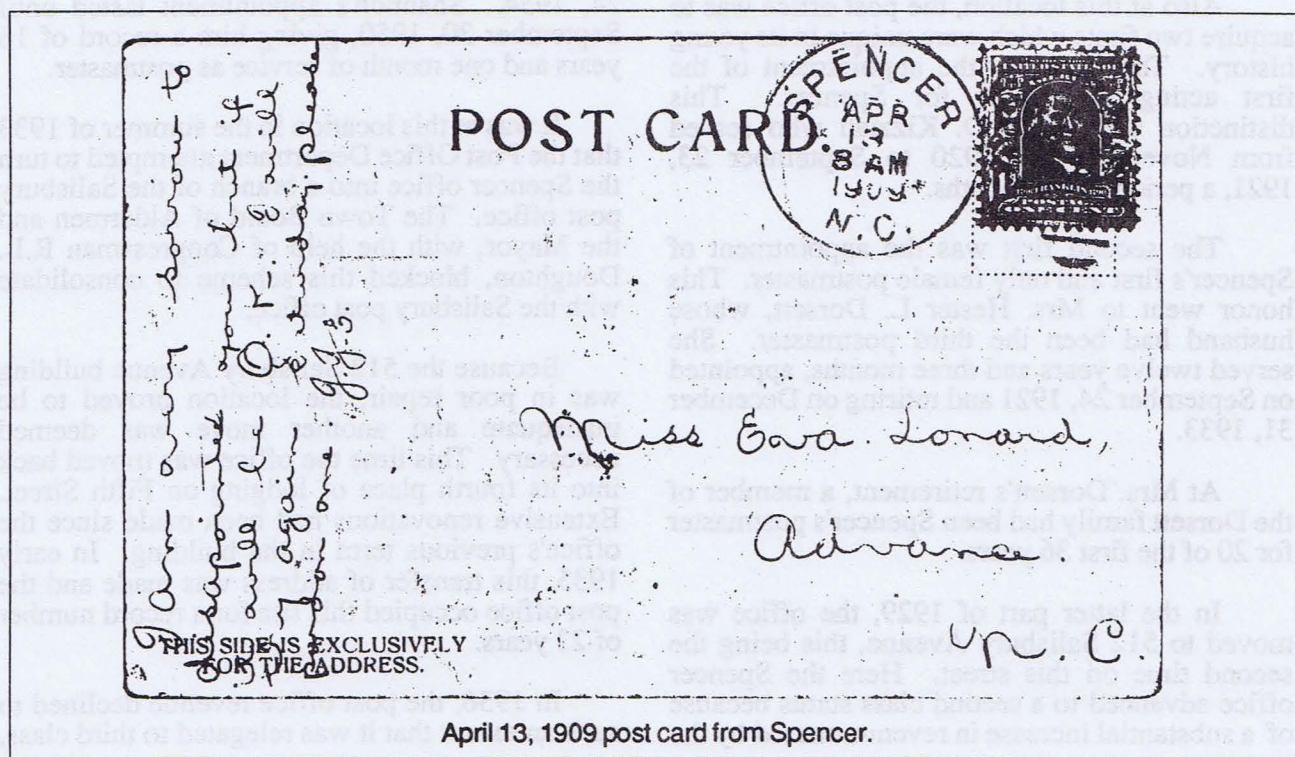
was built at the rear of the store. Its address was 101 Fifth Street.

J. Lee Armstrong was postmaster at this second site. He was appointed August 30, 1901. After ten months at this second location, it was evident that the place was too small, and in 1902, for the third time in five years, the post office was moved to 104 Fourth Street at the back of the Spencer Mercantile Building. The office was to stay here for eleven years.

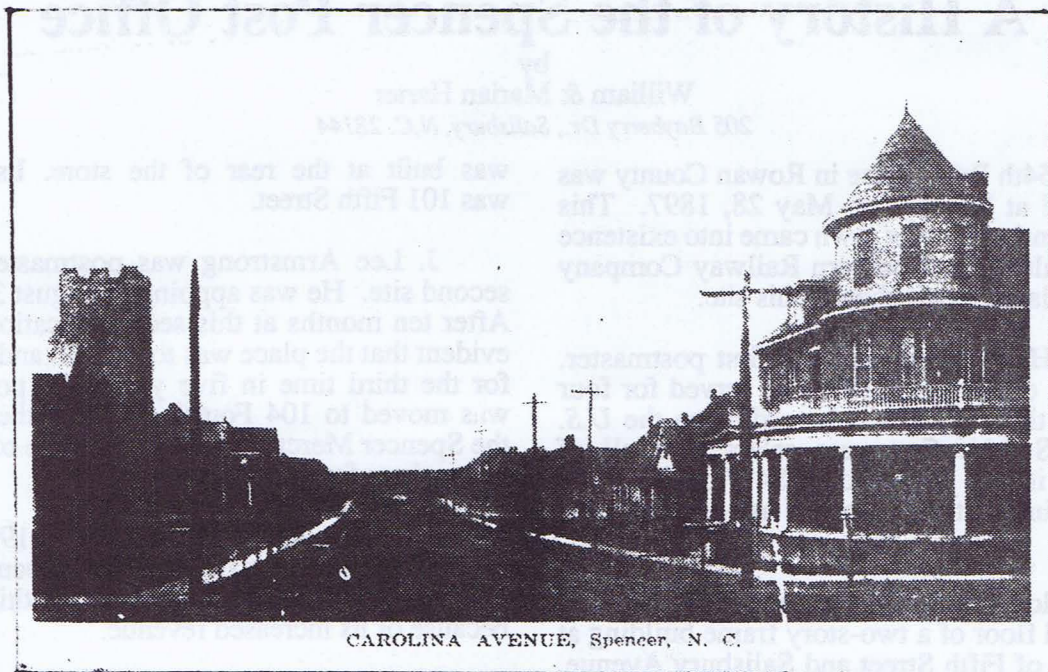
At this new address on April 1, 1905 under a Presidential classification, the Spencer post office advanced from fourth to third class because of its increased revenue.

The postmasters here were J.D. Dorsett from July 9, 1905 to April 22, 1911 and J. Rufus Dorsett from April 23, 1911 to April 14, 1913.

Spencer kept growing both in population and new enterprises. The post office needed more space to serve the public adequately. In the latter part of 1913, the office was moved to 105 Fifth Street where it was to stay for sixteen years



April 13, 1909 post card from Spencer.



CAROLINA AVENUE, Spencer, N. C.

Postcard view of Carolina Avenue in Spencer about 1915.

and six months, setting a record for staying in one place.

W.D. Pethel was the first postmaster at this site which was the second location on Fifth Street. His term was from April 15, 1913 to November 23, 1920.

Also at this location, the post office was to acquire two firsts which were unique in its young history. The first was the appointment of the first acting postmaster for Spencer. This distinction went to W.D. Kizziah who served from November 24, 1920 to September 23, 1921, a period of ten months.

The second first was the appointment of Spencer's first and only female postmaster. This honor went to Mrs. Hester L. Dorsett, whose husband had been the third postmaster. She served twelve years and three months, appointed on September 24, 1921 and retiring on December 31, 1933.

At Mrs. Dorsett's retirement, a member of the Dorsett family had been Spencer's postmaster for 20 of the first 36 years.

In the latter part of 1929, the office was moved to 512 Salisbury Avenue, this being the second time on this street. Here the Spencer office advanced to a second class status because of a substantial increase in revenue caused by the

large number of packages mailed by the Stanback Headache Powder Company.

The postmasters here were Hester L. Dorsett, Acting Postmaster E.M. Patterson, Jr., who served from January 1, 1934 to July 23, 1934 -- a period of seven months. Patterson in turn, was followed by W.H. Shannon on July 24, 1934. Shannon's appointment lasted until September 30, 1950, giving him a record of 16 years and one month of service as postmaster.

It was at this location in the summer of 1933 that the Post Office Department attempted to turn the Spencer office into a branch of the Salisbury post office. The Town Board of Aldermen and the Mayor, with the help of Congressman R.L. Doughton, blocked this scheme to consolidate with the Salisbury post office.

Because the 512 Salisbury Avenue building was in poor repair, the location proved to be inadequate and another move was deemed necessary. This time the office was moved back into its fourth place of lodging on Fifth Street. Extensive renovations had been made since the office's previous term in the building. In early 1935, this transfer of address was made and the post office occupied this site for a record number of 23 years.

In 1936, the post office revenue declined to such an extent that it was relegated to third class,

the first time of a reversal in classification. However, five years later, the office regained its second class status which it has held ever since.

While Mr. Shannon was postmaster, another important first occurred that has been a great help to the citizens of the community, especially the elderly. City delivery service was inaugurated on Monday, July 16, 1945. It provided the delivery of mail to the door by mail carriers. The initial two carriers were Guy A. Miller and E.R. Radke. This service is still offered to the public and is handled by the same number of carriers.

At the end of Mr. Shannon's record term, he was followed by Spencer's third Acting Postmaster, C.C. Holt, who served from October 1, 1950 until September 30, 1951. The next postmaster was Robert L. Harrison who received his appointment on October 12, 1951. He was to be postmaster at Spencer longer than any of his predecessors, a record-breaking 22 years and seven months.

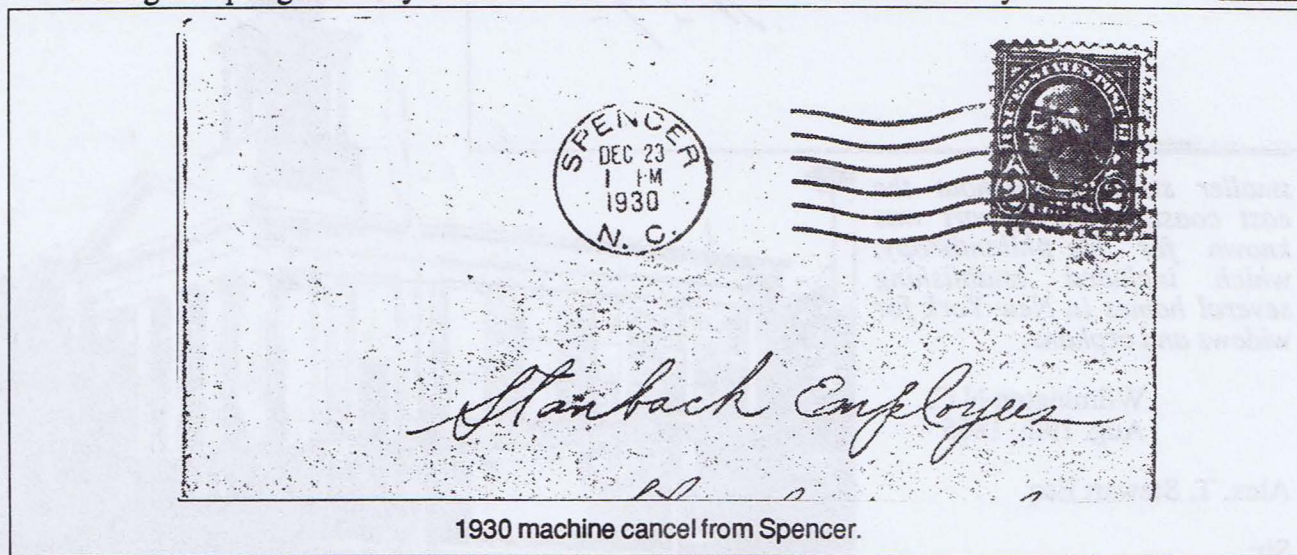
During the spring and early summer of 1958

while Mr. Harrison was postmaster, private capital had erected a modern type building at 110 Fourth Street that was to become the seventh home for the post office since 1897. The building is 40 feet wide and 60 feet long, with central heating, air conditioning, and good lighting. Its size and conditions are far superior to any of the previous locations. The dedication ceremonies were held on Sunday, September 21, 1958 with Congressman Hugh Q. Alexander being the chief speaker. This is the second time the office has been located on Fourth Street.

Mr. Harrison was postmaster at the new place until May 24, 1974 when he was promoted by the U.S. Postal Service to the position of Sectional Center Director for Field Operations in the Charlotte Sectional Center.

Mr. Charlie Ritchie, an employee of the Salisbury post office detailed to the Spencer office as Officer in Charge on January 5, 1974 remained in that position until August 31, 1974 when he became Spencer's ninth fulltime postmaster and the first postmaster who was not a citizen of the community.

NCPHS



1930 machine cancel from Spencer.

NCPHS Affiliates with Postal History Society

The North Carolina Postal History Society has become an affiliate of the Postal History Society. This continues our national acceptance and recognition of the society's important work in the field of North Carolina postal history.

This affiliate status allows NCPHS members the right to enter any Postal History Society exhibit and be eligible for the Postal

History Society's awards. It also means more outside coverage of our activities. A regular column in the *Postal History Journal* published by the Postal History Society is "American Postal History in Other Journals." This column will regularly review the *NCPHS Newsletter*.

Membership information for the Postal History Society is available from Diane Boehrt, P.O. Box 61774, Virginia Beach, VA 23462.

Letter from the Past

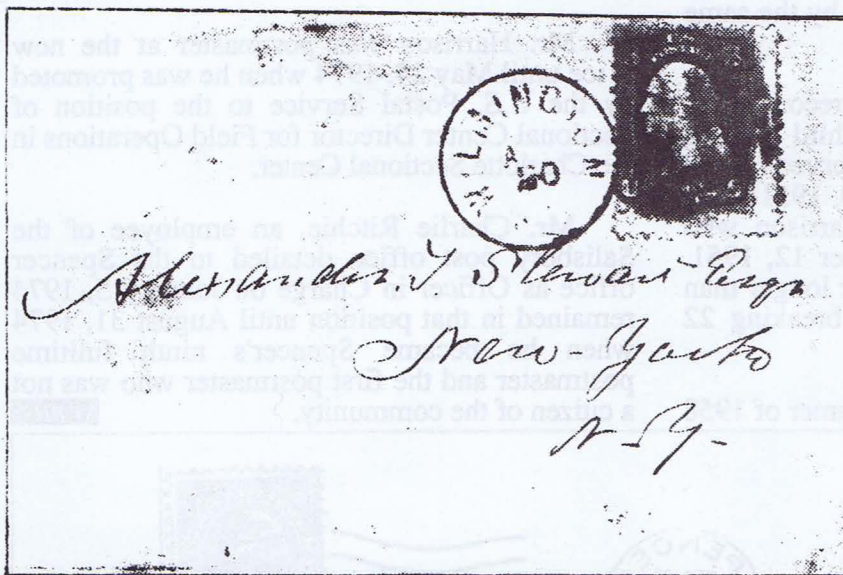
Hard Times in Wilmington

This month's Letter from the Past dates from the Reconstruction era. It is from a minister in Wilmington asking for help from Alexander T. Stewart, a wealthy New Yorker who made his fortune in dry goods. He owned a large store in New York City and sold goods wholesale to

helpless wife and four little children in a land of desolation. I am a Methodist Minister & now in charge of "Front Street" Methodist Church in this city. My congregation is greatly scattered & my members have need to support themselves. I am ardently attached to the work of the ministry, but in my reduced condition must instead turn my attention to secular pursuits or ask help of others. I deeply regret the necessity which impels me to this course.

Sir, will you loan me \$1000 for twelve months, without interest, or make me a donation? If you will help me in this time of need, I shall be under lasting obligation.

Very respectfully
your obt servt,
L.S. Burkhead
Wilmington, N.C.



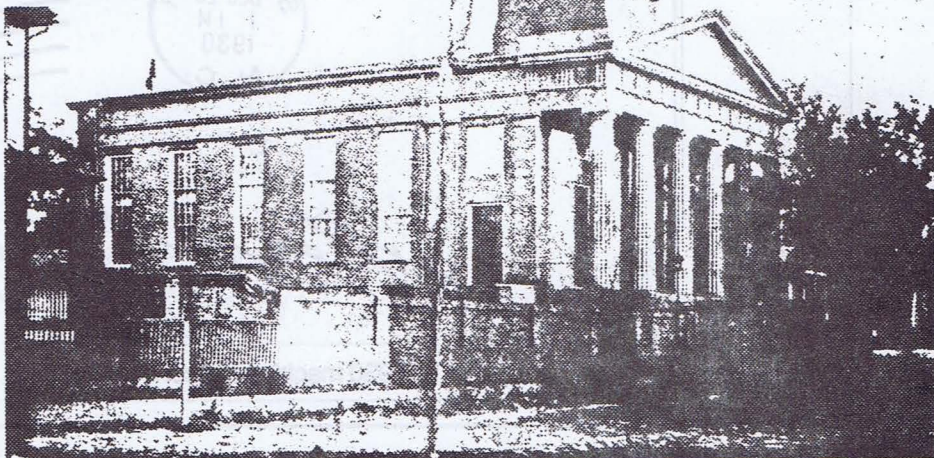
smaller stores throughout the east coast. Mr. Stewart was known for his philanthropy, which included establishing several homes in New York for widows and orphans.

Wilmington N.C.
Aug. 19th, 1865

Alex. T. Stewart Esq.

Sir:

By this cruel war I have been striped of several thousand dollars & am now left with a



Front Street Methodist Church. This building burned in 1886.

Member Requests

Researcher seeking information, covers, and photocopies of covers for use in preparing article on the Smithville / Southport N.C. post office. L.C. Johnson, PO Box 10161, Southport, NC 28461.

Photocopies of covers from Guilford County desired for future article. Milton Wicker, 508 Lindley Rd., Greensboro, NC 27410

Reservations are solicited for reprints of *North Carolina Troops, 1861-65: A Roster*. For more information, write Historical Publications Section, Division of Archives & History, 109 E. Jones St., Raleigh, NC 27611