Civil War Covers to
Ralph Gorrell

Largest NC Confederate
Collection Sold

New Sterling - Third Creek
Settlement in Iredell County

Valle Crucis
Watauga County

Affiliate #155 of the American Philatelic

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Recently I was thinking about the origins of the society and decided to look back at the early issues of the our journal to get a better understanding of how the pioneer members envisioned the purpose and direction of the study of North Carolina postal history. The first issue of the journal was published in February 1982, and was then called, "North Carolina Postal History Society Newsletter." It related the story of how on January 17, 1982, 17 state postal historians and collectors met under the leadership of Dr. Harvey Tiles to form a society "for the promotion of, study of and education about North Carolina." A committee was formed to write and propose a constitution and by-laws.

The article reports that there was "considerable discussion" about how to organize the study of North Carolina's postal history. The result was that Jim Harris, Stefan Jaronski and Tony Crumbley were tasked to meet in the near future and develop organizational proposals on how to proceed. This nucleus of founders did indeed set a meeting in March 1982 in Raleigh "to discuss how we should organize ourselves for the grand task."

At the initial meeting, the 17 visionaries also formulated three highly significant goals that have been core features of the society ever since. These were: (1) a newsletter to begin initial communications; (2) a journal to promote study and publication of North Carolina postal history; and (3) a long-term goal of a book on the state's postal history in the style of other groups. An additional goal was set to document and record the state's postmarks and postal archives.

From this modest yet very forward thinking group of postal history enthusiasts 35 years ago, great things emerged. And this was back when personal computers were uncommon, communication was done with desktop telephones, mimeograph machines and real mail, handwritten with stamps and carried to the post office! We now have a financially sound and healthy society with a vibrant membership, an impressive professional journal that has presented a wide variety of well researched studies on many facets of not only postal history itself, but how that history interacted with and influenced historical events. Several important publications also have been written by members, such as one on railroad cancellations, as well as the critical development of the North Carolina postmark catalog, first in a four-volume set and now in a continuously updated on-line catalog, ably updated and revised by Dick Winter.

The society has gone from the 1980s into the digital age with the society website. This excellent tool has a recently updated searchable website, a digital archive of all the past newsletters and journals and a series of useful links. This was all done with the dedication and expertise of society members. The society has clearly adapted to the technology to stay true to and strengthen the original society goals set in 1982. These pioneers should be proud to see the fruits of their very astute planning.

Another important development is that society member Harry Albert has agreed to assume the secretary-treasurer position and this transition has been approved by the board. This gives long serving secretary-treasurer Bill DiPaolo a well deserved break. Bill has provided immeasurable service to the society. Harry will bring extensive professional experience to the position. Harry lives in Raleigh and can be contacted as shown below.

IN THIS ISSUE

Some Civil War Covers Addressed to Ralph Gorrell and His Family

by Maurice M. Bursey

Among many Confederate States cover collections, one often finds covers addressed to Ralph Gorrell, usually in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Ralph Gorrell (Figure 1) was a prominent lawyer in Greensboro. His grandfather, Ralph Gorrell, Jr., had come from County Donegal in Ireland to Boston in 1750, when he was fifteen, and then to Guilford County. Grandfather Ralph was a member of the Halifax Provincial Congresses of April and December 1776.

Our present subject was born in Guilford County on May 12, 1803 (thirteen days after the Louisiana Purchase!). He graduated from Greensboro Academy in 1820 and the University of North Carolina in 1825. In Chapel Hill he met William A. Graham as a fellow student. The two of them were often compared for their uprightness, fairness, and probity; remarkably, both were buried on the same day, Gorrell in Greensboro and Graham in Hillsborough.

Gorrell received his license to practice law in 1827 and began a career of private practice mixed with politics. He was elected to the North Carolina House of Commons in 1834, 1835, and 1854, and to the North Carolina Senate in 1856 and 1858. A Whig, he supported public education and state aid to railroads. He supported the Union until the advent of war led him to vote for secession in the Convention of 1861. During the War, he served as a depositary of the Treasury Department, and he was Guilford County clerk and master in equity, until the position was abolished in 1868, when a new state constitution

was adopted. He was appointed commissioner of the Fayetteville and Western Railroad and, from 1857 to 1863, a director of the North Carolina Railroad. (The latter appointment is ironic, because as a State Senator in 1858, he made an impassioned speech against the development of Company Shops in Alamance County, essentially a wilderness; but then he did represent Guilford County with its more suitable and developed property in Greensboro!) His style was one of honesty, rational speaking, and a lack of demagoguery. He owned a plantation too, but the Civil War impoverished him.

▲ **Figure 1.** Ralph Gorrell as a young man, probably during the period 1825-1835. Reproduced by permission of the Greensboro History Museum.

As a businessman, he was a partner in mercantile stores from 1830 to 1835; in 1851 he became the first president of the Greensboro Mutual Life Insurance and Trust Company. During the fifties he drafted construction contracts for the North Carolina Rail Road among other routine legal affairs. His papers in the Southern Historical Collection are crowded with correspondence from officials of the railroad asking for advice or asking him to attend to some legal matter. Gorrell's colleagues praised his honesty, devotion to principle, ability to keep confidences, industry, and reliability. His most notable legal case was the defense of Daniel Worth on the charge of distributing incendiary, abolitionist literature in 1860. Worth was found guilty, even on two appeals, but Gorrell was able to obtain such reasonable bail for his client that Worth was able to escape to the North rather than go to prison.

Figure 2 shows a cover with an embossed, elliptical corner card: "Thomas Webb/Attorney &/ Counsellor/at Law/ Hillsboro, N.C." The postmark is a double circle datestamp of Hillsboro, Type 4, in blue ink, and dated July 18, 186x. Since the rate is five cents, the year had to be 1861. The numeral "5"

Figure 2. ▲
July 18,1861, envelope from Hillsboro to Ralph Gorrell in Greensboro with embossed, elliptical corner card of fellow attorney & counsellor at Law, Thomas Webb. Letter paid 5 cents Confederate rate.

Figure 4. ▶
Faint Lexington circular datestamp (Type 3) on this cover addressed to Ralph Gorrell in Greensboro. The cover docketing shows the letter was written by R.T. Earnhart, a well-to-do merchant from southern Davidson County. The October date and 5 cents post-age paid indicates this letter was posted in 1861.

◀ **Figure 5.** October 4, 1861, letter from N. D. Woody, farmer and miller at Gilmer's Store (Guilford County) to Ralph Gorrell. Manuscript postmark of Gilmer's Store. Woody fled to Indiana in 1865 but later returned to North Carolina and died in Moore County.

entirely. The postmark of Ashboro on the cover in Figure 3 is the typical Confederate, blue, Type 3 datestamp illustrated in the "North Carolina Postmark Catalog Update," found on the North Carolina Postal History Society website. The blue "PAID" and "10-in-circle" markings are those usually found with this postmark during the Civil War. This Ashboro postmark was used briefly after the Civil War.

A cover that had contained correspondence of a client to Mr. Gorrell is illustrated in Figure 4. The black datestamp, though faint, is the Type 3 of Lexington. The black "PAID" and "5" markings are those typical of Lexington during the Civil War period. The month in the datestamp appears to be October, and since the rate is five cents the cover can be dated to October 1861. The cover is docketed, "R. T. Earnhart." This is surely Richard Travis Earnhardt (1823 – 1879), a well-to-do merchant living with his family in the South Division of Davidson County in 1860. He had been Postmaster of the town of Albemarle from 1848 to 1852. For readers who are racing fans, he also seems to have been a first cousin five times

(Type 2) and "PAID" markings also are in blue ink. Thomas Webb (1827-1894) became president of the North Carolina Rail Road in 1861 upon the death of President Charles S. Fisher, who was killed at Manassas on July 21 leading the North Carolina Sixth Regiment.

A letter addressed to Ralph Gorrell with another lawyer's corner card, that of S. S. Jackson of Asheboro, is shown in Figure 3. Samuel Spencer Jackson, Jr., (1832 - 1875) was born in Chatham County., After studies in Chapel Hill he moved to Asheboro to practice law with his father-in-law, Jonathan Worth. When Worth was elected Treasurer of North Carolina in 1860 and moved to Raleigh (he eventually became a post-war governor), Jackson took over his father-in-law's practice

Figure 6. ▶
Envelope from Lenox Castle (Rockingham County) to "R. Gorrell Esqr. Attorney at law, Greensboro," posted on May 30, 186x, with a vertical pair of CSA Type 7 stamps with the Richmond printing. The exact year of posting is not known, but probably is 1863 or 1864.

◀ **Figure 7.** September 27, 186x adversity cover from Jonesville (Yadkin County) to Ralph Gorrell in Greensboro. While circular datestamps existed in Jonesville during the Civil War, a manuscript postmark was used on this cover.

Figure 7a. ▶
Portion of cover folded back to reveal it is made from a lottery advertisement. There is insufficient information to reveal if this was a legal lottery or not.

removed of Dale Earnhardt, the race car driver who died in a racing accident in 2005. (When the family moved around 1774 from Pennsylvania to North Carolina, the surname was spelled Ehrenhardt.)

Another cover from a client appears in Figure 5. The cover is not docketed, but the enclosure has survived. It contains correspondence from N. D. Woody. Newton Dixon Woody (1828 – 1905), a farmer and miller, lived in southern Guilford County during the Civil War. He fled to Indiana in 1865, but eventually returned to North Carolina and died in Moore County. The cover bears the manuscript postmark of Gilmer's Store, which is in Guilford County. The date is October 4, and since the rate was five cents, the year must be 1861; this date is corroborated by the date on the enclosed letter, October 3 (overwritten 4), 1861. There was also a contemporary, Nathan Dixon Woody, who spent some time during the War in Greensboro, but comparison of the writing, especially the signature, confirms the sender as Newton Dixon Woody.

A cover with a manuscript postmark from Lenox Castle dated May 30 to Mr. Gorrell in Greensboro is illustrated in Figure 6.

Lenox Castle is in southeastern Rockingham County. It was a mineral springs resort, frequented by some of the prominent personages of North Carolina. Evidently the property teetered on the brink of financial stability, because the post office was closed and reopened three times between 1830 and 1865. The postmark contains no year. There is a vertical pair of the Richmond printing (Scott No. 7) at the upper right, canceled in pen. These stamps were first sold in August 1862, so that the cover may be dated to 1863 or 1864. Perhaps it was sent to Mr. Gorrell by a guest at the resort for his or her health.

An adversity cover addressed to Ralph Gorrell is shown in Figure 7. The manuscript postmark is that of Jonesville in northwestern Yadkin County. The postmaster there had circular datestamps during the Civil War, but this cover was manually dated. The cover appears to have been made from a lottery advertisement (see Figure 7a) and is dated September 27, with a manuscript Paid/10.

Gorrell married Mary Jennings Chisholm of Richmond County. They had ten children, but seven of them predeceased their parents. One especially painful loss must have been that

of Captain Henry Gorrell, Captain of Company E of the Second North Carolina Regiment, killed at Chickahominy Swamp during one of McClellan's reconnaissances. Among the Gorrell papers in the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, is the telegram of June 24, 1862, reporting his death. It is among various passes that Ralph needed to retrieve Henry's body from Richmond for burial in Greensboro. Ralph and Mary's only grandchildren were the children of Anne Eliza Gorrell and Joseph B. Fariss.

Figure 8 illustrates a letter addressed to another daughter, Mary Euphemia Gorrell (1843 – 1867). The 10 cents postage was paid with a Scott No. 12 stamp. The cover bears a Boonville (Yadkin County) circular datestamp with an illegible date. The marking has not yet been documented in the North Carolina Postmark Update catalog.

A cover addressed to a more distant relative appears in Figure 9. Robert D. Gorrell (1834-1885), a first cousin once removed to Ralph, was a first lieutenant in Company D of the 57th North Carolina Regiment. Along with many others, Robert was captured on November 7, 1863, by Union forces at the Second Battle of Rappahannock Station, near where the Orange & Alexandria Railroad crossed the Rappahannock River in western Virginia. The address on the cover is Johnsons Island, Ohio, where Lieutenant Gorrell was held as a prisoner of war. The enclosure, a letter from his eldest brother, Dr. Lotan W. Gorrell (1823-1877), was signed W. L. Gorrell. It provides him with the name of a firm in Philadelphia to whom he should write to inquire about a shipment of clothes which he had not yet received. This branch of the Gorrell family had

moved to Forsyth County two generations earlier, and indeed the dateline of the letter was Winston, May 24, 1864.

On Ralph Gorrell's death, it was written in *The New North State*, a weekly paper in Greensboro, " … Mr. Gorrell's character has been most admirable, and one to be emulated by all men. He has never been called brilliant, nor did he care to be so considered; but he possessed attributes infinitely preferable, having sound judgment and Christian fortitude … In his death, the community and the State have sustained a great loss, but he has left behind him a shining example." In another weekly Greensboro newspaper, the *Greensboro Patriot*, it was written that "He never had an overweening ambition, and while he was ready to serve the people, he was not always grasping after office. His main purpose was to do right and he never resorted to the acts of the demagogue to secure public position. … He was very effective as a public speaker, his style being solid, logical, and argumentative, without any effort at oratorical display. He was always looked upon by the people as a strictly honest and reliable man. … No one was ever betrayed by Ralph Gorrell." The reader should know that *The New North State* loudly promoted Republican views, and the *Greensboro Patriot*, promoted Democratic views. They agreed on little, but both praised Ralph Gorrell.

He was quite active in the Presbyterian church at many levels He was a ruling elder from 1849 until the end of his life, often a delegate to the Presbytery and the Synod of North Carolina, and once, before the Civil War, to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. His home was a meeting place for ministers, lawyers, and statesmen. General Joseph E.

Figure 8. ▶
Letter addressed to Mary Euphemia Gorrell, daughter of Ralph Gorrell, in Greensboro. The envelope bears a Boonville (Yadkin County) circular datestamp canceling a 10 cent Confederate stamp, Scott No. 12. This postmark is new to the postmark records of the North Carolina Postal History Society.

◀ **Figure 9.** Envelope containing May 24, 1864, Flag of Truce letter to Lieutenant Robert D. Gorrell, a prisioner of war at Johnson' Island, Ohio. He was captured on November 7, 1863, at the second Battle of Rappahannock Station in western Virginia. Lt. R.D. Gorrell was a first cousin to Ralph Gorrell. This letter was enclosed in one that was posted at Winston (Forsyth County) by his eldest brother.

Johnston delivered his final message to his troops from Gorrell's home, surrendering in the spring of 1865. After Gorrell's death on August 14, 1875, the home was purchased by the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad Company for use as their general offices.

I thank Tony Crumbley for providing images of some Gorrell covers; Elise Anderson, archivist, Greensboro History Museum, for providing the image of Gorrell's portrait; and Hilary Kanupp, archivist for the North Carolina Rail Road, for pointing out references to Gorrell in the North Carolina Rail Road's annual reports to stockholders between 1858 and 1870 and useful information concerning Gorrell's positions within the railroad board. Thanks also to Mary Caton Lingold, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, for finding signatures in the Newton Dixon Woody papers. ■

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Request for Postmark Information

Larry Rausch, a member of the US Cancellation Club, has been accumulating data for a listing of United States use of the Wheel of Fortune postmarks. This listing will eventually become an article for their club publication, which is an excellent one. These postmarks were manufactured and sold through the mail by the P.P. Hammond Co. of Aurora, and later, Chicago, Illinois in the 1880s. James M. Cole, in his 1995 book, *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era, 1870 - 1894*, states that these postmarks were used in over 300 U.S. post offices, and that many more post offices undoubtedly exist. It appears that Larry Rausch is attempting to bring the listing up to date from Coles' comments. Below is shown the basic Wheel of Fortune postmark and a listing of known North Carolina post offices that used this marking.

Duplex postmark

Post Office	County
Belvidere	Perquimans
Clinton	Sampson
Dabney	Vance
Danbury	Stokes
Heiligs Mills	Rowan
Little Sugar Loaf	Bladen
New Berne	Craven
Ormondsville	Greene
Petra Mills	Caldwell
Tyner	Chowan
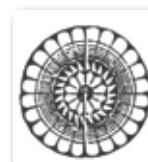
Killer portion that looks like a Wheel of Fortune

If any member has examples from North Carolina post offices not listed here it would be helpful to send the information to Larry Rausch. He can be contacted by email at stonywoods840@gmail.com. Please copy your email to Dick Winter so I can use your input in the *North Carolina Postmark Catalog Update* also. The details of the killer often are not cleanly shown in the postmarks on covers, but if you can recognize one, please let us know.

Largest North Carolina Confederate Cover Collection Sold

by Tony L Crumbley

On March 3, 2017, the Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries sold the Confederate and Union Occupation collection of North Carolina Postal History Society member Maurice Bursey, along with Daniel Warren's material. With more than 1,000 North Carolina Confederate covers in the sale, it is by far the largest sale ever of this material. Maurice began collecting North Carolina Confederate covers in 1967 when he moved here. As you can see from the article that he has in this journal issue, he still maintains an interest in this area.

Of special note from this sale were eleven North Carolina covers used either as an independent state or as a Confederate state using U.S. stamps. The prices of these covers ranged from $160 to $500. This group was represented the most of this type of cover offered for sale at one time, significant because North Carolina was independent only from May 21 until May 27, and then postal operations in Confederate North Carolina ceased on May 31. Figure 1 illustrates a cover from Scuppernong (Washington County) posted on the last day of operation of the Federal postal system in Confederate North Carolina. The cover was addressed to William S. Pettigrew in Raleigh. It was postmarked with a faint circular datestamp of Scuppernong on the left side containing a manuscript date of May 31, and was paid with a 3 cents Red on Buff, Star Die envelope, pen canceled. I should note all prices quoted here do not include the 18% buyer premium or shipping and handling fees.

Of the Provisional Issues in this sale, the Chapel Hill (15XU1) cover, seemed to have drawn the most attention being hammered down at $3,750, close to full catalogue value. This cover is shown in Figure 2, an envelope posted on September 26, 1861, to Miss Kate F. Curtis, St. Mary's School, Raleigh. The bold strike of the Chapel Hill Provisional appears in the upper right corner. A Lenoir Provisional (49X1) went for $2,700 against a catalogue value of $15,000! Two Salem Provisionals (73XU1) went for $375 each against a $2,000 catalogue value. Two Statesville Provisionals (79XU1) catalogued at $2,000 each, were hammered down at $425 each, a good buy since fewer than 19 Statesville Provisionals have been recorded.

One of the highlights of the sale was a Carolina City 5 Paid, a striking Confederate patriotic cover. Illustrated in Figure 3, the 5 Paid circular datestamp of Carolina City (Type 2 postmark) was on a cover of a seven-star patriotic flag with "Southern Rights" banner. Posted on December 9, 1861, it was addressed to Argyle (Cumberland County). This patriotic cover was printed in Wilmington by T.S. Whitaker – of whom little is known and few covers exist. This cover sold for $1,900. The same design used from Wilmington on May 9, 1861, sold for $1,600.

There was a strong listing of Confederate patriotic covers in this sale of which most multi-colored cachets brought strong bids. One surprise was a cover with a 12-star Confederate flag

◄ **Figure 1.** May 31, 1861, cover from Scuppernong (Washington County) addressed to William Pettigrew in Raleigh (Wake County), posted on last day of operation of Federal postal system in Confederate North Carolina.

Figure 2. ►
September 26, 1861, cover from Chapel Hill (Orange County) to St. Mary's School, Raleigh (Wake County), with bold strike of Chapel Hill Provisional (15XU1) in upper right corner.

(F12-2) and a CSA No. 4 stamp tied by a blue grid cancel and matching Raleigh circular datestamp. While it was not a very attractive cover, it was knocked down at $2,100 against an estimate of $500-$750. A red 12-star Confederate Flag and Cannon (CN-1C) mailed from Wilmington was sold for $2,350. Most of the Bonitz covers printed in Goldsboro, of which there were many, sold in the $350 to $425 range, except for one lot with two Continental soldiers and Men of the South Verse (SN-1). This cover was posted from Kinston with two copies of CSA No. 6. The cover was sold for $2,800 against an estimate of $1,000- $1,500.

Perhaps the nicest of all the Patriots was a blue Jefferson Davis Medallion, 10-Star & Verse (JD-1B) with a CSA No. 4 tied by a Wilmington circular datestamp. This cover was estimated to bring $2,000 to $3,000 and was sold for $6,500, an indication of the strong demand for extra fine Confederate Patriotic cov-

ers. Figure 4 illustrates this cover. It was posted on March 17, 1862, and was addressed to Parks Store (Cabarrus County). The blue stamp on a Jefferson Davis patriotic design in blue makes this a striking example of a scarce patriotic cover.

Very few small town North Carolina covers were included in the single lots of the sale. One included in the single lots, however, was the double circle, Dudley datestamp tying two CSA No. 1 stamps shown in Figure 5. The cover was posted on January 31, 186x addressed to Demopolis, Alabama, with a clear second strike of the postmark to the left on the cover. This cover was knocked down for $650 against a high estimate of $500.

Of the general issue stamps on cover that were broken out, only a few brought strong prices. A CSA No. 5, the 10 cent rose stamp, used on a mourning cover brought $900 against a $750 estimate (see Figure 6). This cover was addressed to Petersburg,

Figure 3. ▶
December 9, 1861, striking Confederate patriotic cover with 5 Paid circular datestamp of Carolina City (Type 2 postmark) to Argyle (Cumberland County) on a seven-star flag with "Southern Rights" banner. Cover printed in Wilmington by T.S. Whitaker.

◀ **Figure 4.** March 17, 1862, beautiful example of the scarce blue Jefferson Davis Medallion, 10 Stars and Patriotic verse with a 5 cents blue, lithographed issue stamp from Wilmington to Parks Store (Cabarrus County).

Figure 5. ▶
January 31, 186x cover from Dudley (Wayne County) to Demopolis, Alabama, paid with two single, CSA No.1 stamps canceled with the double circle datestamp of Dudley. An additional, clear strike of the same postmark appears to the left.

Virginia. Also a horizontal pair of CSA No. 7 local printing stamps tied by the fancy Elkin circular datestamp sold for $850 versus a high estimate of $500.

Clearly, the largest number ever offered of North Carolina CSA No. 9 stamps, the "Ten," were included in this sale. Of the four being offered, they ranged from $300 to $1,100. The latter, was an adversity cover from Pleasant Grove (Alamance County) sent to a young lady in Hillsboro (Orange County). It was made from the text of a legal act, and was embellished with blue hearts – quite an unusual cover.

The sale included two North Carolina copies of CSA No.10, the frame line issue. Only ten copies have been recorded to date that were used from this state. The first to sell was a very fine example from Concord that sold for $2,000. The latter posted from Rutherfordton sold for only $1,000, which was quite a bargain for a North Carolina frameline cover.

Perhaps the most outstanding general issue cover was a CSA No. 11 posted from Patterson (Caldwell County) with the Fancy Paid 10 cancellation on the stamp. Though a rather common marking, this cover sold for $2,600, a good example of what extra fine material can do (see Figure 7).

One of the largest sections of the sale was the wall paper covers. More than 68 North Carolina wallpaper covers were included in this sale. I remember an article written by one of the foremost CSA authorities of the time, making the statement that wallpaper covers were rare with "Only about a dozen were known." How wrong was that statement. Currently, our North Carolina Confederate cover records show more than 175

wallpaper covers. There were some strong prices throughout this section – one green and gray floral paper from Hillsboro brought $2,900 against a high estimate of $1,000. A Wilmington cover with a brown and pink paper brought $2,700, against a high estimate of $1,500. In general, the wallpaper covers brought $400-$800 each with six covers netting over $1,000 each.

The Confederate College Cover Section included five North Carolina covers. One of these, a stampless, female college cover, actually was a pre-war cover being described as an 1862 use. The realization of $120, however, reflected that the bidders understood this. Clearly the $1,400 brought by a UNC-Chapel Hill cover, one of the more common designs, indicates the strong following of UNC-Chapel Hill collectors. The other college covers ranged from $400-$600.

One of two known North Carolina Trans-Mississippi covers was also included in this sale. The cover was a small lady's envelope with a strip of four of CSA No. 11c stamps, posted from Patterson to Marshall, Texas. The sale description indicated that there were fewer than 50 east-to-west covers known for this express going westbound. This example netted $2,600.

We have few opportunities in a lifetime to witness such a strong offering of North Carolina Confederate material. I trust each of you, who may have been in North Carolina Confederate covers, found something in this sale for your collection. Now we can only wait for the large lots to be broken down and sold. ■

◄ **Figure 6.** January 15, 1863, mourning cover from Weldon (Halifax County) to Petersburg, Virginia, paid with 10 cents rose, CSA No. 5

Figure 7. ►
September 4, 186x, Patterson (Caldwell County) to Oaks (Rutherford County). Beautiful cover with early shade and impression of a CSA No.11 stamp canceled with the Fancy Woodcut Paid 10 cents in circle of Patterson. Cover described by auctioneer as "Extremely Fine and Remarkably Fresh."

New Sterling
The Third Creek Settlement in Iredell County

by George Slaton

I was still a fairly new collector of postal history when I attended CHARPEX in the summer of 2014. Postal history, of course, presents a wide array of collecting subjects, and though I had narrowed my interests to the small, discontinued post offices of the southeastern United States, I knew that, in order to form a coherent collection, I should limit my interest to two or three states instead of ten or twelve. Another, sometimes conflicting, collecting guideline is "to buy what you like," but that approach can lead to trouble when you soon find yourself with more an accumulation than a collection.

So a kind of compromise was struck when, sorting through the covers in a dealer's box of inventory, I came across an attractive cover bearing a bold circular datestamp from New Sterling, North Carolina. I was not familiar with this post office and so I reached into my briefcase for a quick check of Helbock's *United States Post Offices: The Mid-Atlantic States*. I was pleased to discover that the New Sterling post office operated in Iredell County from 1858-1905. Since Iredell is an adjoining neighbor of my native Mecklenburg, the cover sparked an im-

January 9, 188x registered envelope from New Sterling (Iredell County) to New Market, Va. paid 12 cents with a 2 cent red brown 1883 stamp and a 10 cents brown 1879 stamp, the 10 cents registration fee added to the 2 cents domestic fee.

mediate interest. The cover's rarity factor of "5" signaled that, though not extremely scarce, it was not common either. It was priced a little beyond what I generally pay for a cover of this

description, but the dealer agreed to a discount, so it was soon mine to enjoy. I had just purchased a cover which fit my regional parameters as well as one which, given its moderate scarcity and sharply defined postmark, was one I liked.

Arriving home late that day, I headed for the bookshelf and selected the second of the fine four-volume *Post Offices and Postmasters of North Carolina: Colonial to USPS* published by our own North Carolina Postal History Society in 1996. Though the entry for New Sterling included a list of its postmasters, there were no reproductions of its postmarks. There was simply a note that a manuscript marking from the Civil War period was known, but not available for reproduction. So I turned to our Society's more current online postmark catalog, a massive database which is constantly updated by its editors and must surely be the envy of every postal history society in the United States. There I found a solitary reproduction of a circular date stamp, "NEW STIRLING N.C. 24 JUN 1902" (see Figure 1). The postmark on my cover was significantly different, as it read "NEW STERLING N.C. JAN 9" (see Figure 2). We will address the variation in spelling later in this article. This envelope without contents was addressed to New Market, Virginia. It was paid 12 cents postage at New Sterling (2 cents domestic and 10 cents registration fee) with a 2 cents red brown 1883 stamp and 10 cents brown 1879 stamp. The "Attended to" notation apparently was marked at New Market, where the postmaster noted that the letter was placed in Lock Box 52, which undoubtedly belonged to Henkel & Co. to whom the letter was addressed.

▲ **Figure 1.** The "NEW STIRLING N.C. 24 JUN 1902" postmark pictured in the *North Carolina Postmark Catalog Update*.

This initial research surprised me. Here was a post office which operated for forty-seven years, yet my cover appeared to be only the second one recorded. This was one of my earliest introductions to the scarcity of covers from a large number of small post offices which have operated in North Carolina. I mentioned this sometime later to Dick Winter, co-editor of our Society's *Postal Historian*, and he confirmed this interesting phenomenon. Dick reports that, after completing 93% of the on-line *North Carolina Postmark Catalog Update*,

he has determined that only 57% of North Carolina post offices are represented in surviving covers. "This means," he concludes, "that 43% of post offices in this state have postmarks which have not been seen. In my mind, that is an extraordinarily high number." This scarcity of covers from many small and discontinued post offices is surely one of the fascinating aspects of early postal history, as well as a compelling reason to collect them.

The obscurity of the New Sterling post office is reflected not only in the scarcity of its surviving covers, but in the dearth of information about its history and operation as well. But I have learned that, if you dig deeply enough, you can pull together some bits and pieces from the historical record which enable you to create a picture of the community that the post office served. And the community, after all, is what creates the need for a local postal service and what sustains it. The post office serves as a reflection of the community and the life of its people.

That portion of what, during the Colonial period, was Rowan County and later became Iredell County remained largely unsettled until 1750. But between 1750 and 1775, the area grew rapidly. Waves of Scots and Scots-Irish, primarily from Pennsylvania and Maryland, surged into this frontier wilderness.

In Iredell County, Fourth Creek is roughly paralleled by Third Creek to its south and Fifth Creek to its north. The newly settled neighborhoods clustered around these three creeks were collectively known as the Fourth Creek Settlement. The immediate area around Fourth Creek, however, eventually became present-day Statesville. The expanding neighborhood around Third Creek developed a separate identity and became known as New Stirling.

It's not surprising that Iredell County, though not formally established until 1788, attracted so many emigrants in the years before the American Revolution. Fed by a large creek system and bordered by the Catawba River and the South Fork of the Yadkin River, this is a very fertile country.

Though the earliest settlers around Third Creek were a mix of Scots and Scots-Irish, it was the Scots who gave an enduring name to their community. A long and convincing tradition holds that these Scots families hailed from the town of Stirling

New Post Offices
Have been established at Elk Shoal, Alexander county, and New Sterling. Iredell county, N. C. They are served with a mail from Statesville every Thursday morning.

▲ **Figure 3.** Period newspaper announcement of the establishment of the New Sterling post office. (*Iredell Express*, January 7, 1859).

in central Scotland. New Stirling was a name that recalled their heritage.

It was only natural that, with the passage of time, New Stirling was anglicized to New Sterling. During the second half of the 19th century, both spellings were used. Other variations in spelling were Stearling and Starling. By 1900, the term New Sterling was consistently in use.

What do we know about the inhabitants of the New Sterling community before they established a post office of this name? Outside of court records regarding property, marriages, and the like, we know very little. Traditional Presbyterians organized Concord Presbyterian Church in 1775. The Associate Reformed Presbyterians organized the New Sterling Church sometime before 1790. Both churches continue to be active congregations. But it has proven difficult to find additional information about New Sterling in these early years.

We suspect that at least some of the inhabitants of New Sterling prospered economically. For unlike rural people in similar areas of North Carolina, the residents of New Sterling supported the work of a local silversmith. John McLean (ca. 1755-1829), a native of Scotland, emigrated to New Sterling in 1779 from Cumberland County, North Carolina, where he lived for seven years, perhaps apprenticing himself to a silversmith there. Silversmiths thrived in a number of cities and small towns in early America where wealth was more often concentrated. That McLean, known as "Silversmith John," spent the remainder of his life in New Sterling, indicates there was a steady demand in the surrounding area for his silverware.

New Sterling's post office was established on the eve of the American Civil War. Homer Keever's, *Iredell: Piedmont County,* is the most reliable and utilized history of the county and includes some information on its post offices. Keever writes, "West of Statesville two offices stand out during Back Country days. One was Poplar Grove, where the Island Ford Road crossed the Mountain Road. It was established in 1829, with Thomas Sumter as postmaster. It lasted until 1856, when it was discontinued. Two years later, in 1858, another office was established in the same section, New Stirling."

The newspaper *Iredell Express,* published in nearby Statesville, announced on January 7, 1859, the establishment of the New Sterling post office and noted that it would be "served with a mail from Statesville every Thursday morning" (see Figure 3). Miles, sometimes referred to as Milas, Brady was the first postmaster.

A subsequent local newspaper, the *Statesville Record & Landmark*, published on October 14, 1957, an article taken from the newspaper *Landmark* titled, "Seventy-five years ago: Landmark, October 13, 1882" It reported that the New Sterling post office "was moved from Brady's Cross Roads to the house of Miles Brady, a mile away." There follows, in this brief article, a confusing shuffle between postmasters, Brady, and D. L. Bradford (see Figure 4 on the next page). Each is officially listed as postmaster at various times between 1877 and 1884.
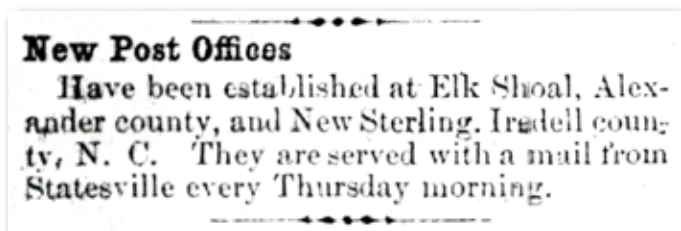
The *Post Route Map of the States of North Carolina and South Carolina in operation on the 1st of June 1901* locates the New Sterling post office on the Island Ford Road which proceeds in a westerly direction from Statesville (see Figure 5). While it is not possible to pinpoint the post office's exact location, it was probably sited near the convergence of present-day New Sterling Road and Island Ford Road, in the area of what is now the community of Sharon. This Island Ford Road should be distinguished from the road of the same name where the earlier Poplar Grove post office was located. The two roads, bearing the same name, approached the Catawba River from different directions and joined to cross it at Island Ford.

Figure 4. ▲
Notice of the New Sterling post office moving in a story from 75 years ago, written in the *Statesville Record & Landmark*, October 14, 1957.

▲ **Figures 5.** A portion of the 1901 *Post Route Map of the States of North Carolina and South Carolina* showing New Stirling underlined in red six miles to the west of Statesville.

One of the best sources of information on North Carolina during the second half of the 19th century is Branson's *North Carolina Business Directory*. It featured a listing of businesses in each North Carolina county and it was updated yearly. (It is noteworthy that Branson organized the county business listings by post office, rather than by township). A comparative look at the New Sterling, Iredell County listings for Branson's 1884 and 1896 editions reveals a changing business economy.

In 1884, the existing businesses in New Sterling reflected a diverse economy. There were ten merchants and tradesmen: five retailing general store merchandise, two in fertilizers, two in lumber, and one in saddles and harnesses. Six manufactories
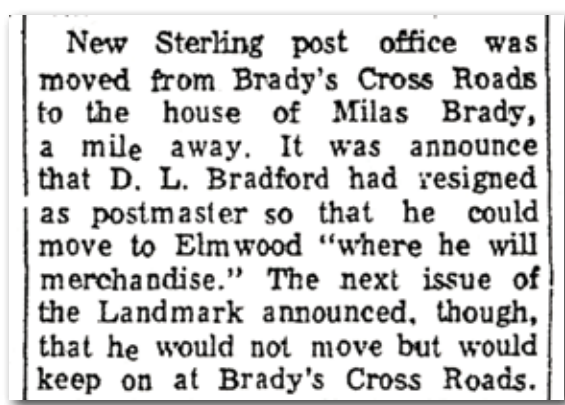
were engaged in iron and wood work, two in building and contracting, and one in broom production. There were four flour and corn businesses and two saw mills in operation. Farmers were abundant with 34 in the community. In addition, there were two churches, two physicians, and the New Sterling Academy.

By 1896, however, the business environment was dramatically different. Manufactories declined in number from six to four, merchants and tradesmen from ten to one, and mills from six to two. The two churches remained, but there was now only one physician in New Sterling, and the academy apparently no longer existed. Yet, the number of farmers significantly increased from 34 to 55! Apparently, New Sterling shifted, in a twelve-year period, heavily in the direction of farming as a mainstay of its economy.

Keever's history of Iredell county notes that the New Sterling post office "was discontinued in 1905 and the mail sent to Eufola." The Eufola post office (1903-1943), located about six miles southeast, was the location of the earlier Rock Cut post office (1859-1903) that opened only a year later than the New Sterling. Perhaps the changes in New Sterling's business economy near the close of the 19th century and Eufola's more favorable location on the railroad combined to enable Eufola to eclipse its neighbor as the new provider of postal service in this western portion of Iredell County.

Apparently, however, within a few years, mail delivery for the New Sterling community shifted once again. In 1956, the *Statesville Record & Landmark* published an early 20th century photograph depicting three mail carriers, posed with their horses and buggies, who operated out of the Stony Point post office (see Figure 6). Copied from newspaper microfilm, the photograph's quality is poor. While not up to the quality of images published in the *North Carolinian Postal Historian,* it was important enough to show in this story. Stony Point, just across the Iredell County
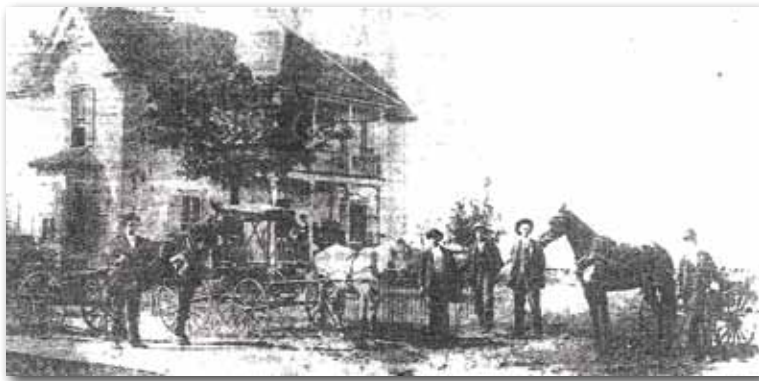
line in Alexander County and about six miles north of the likely location of the former New Sterling post office, was a hub for Rural Free Delivery routes. The photograph's caption identifies Clarence Hedrick as the carrier who served the New Sterling section.

These shifts in mail delivery to Eufola and then to Stony Point, in the early years of the 20th century, spelled an end to New Sterling's forty-two year existence as an Iredell County post office. ■

Author's Note: Mr. Joel Reese, History and Genealogy Librarian at the Iredell County Public Library, rendered invaluable assistance in locating sources and materials for this article.

Editor's Note: While working on this article it was necessary to search for North Carolina maps with the on-line source I have used many times before, only to find that the web address previously used now takes the user into a very complex University of North Carolina website system. Eventually I located the map website used in earlier times, but at a completely different web address. Fortunately, the site previously used was still intact, just at a new location. Since it is important for our readers to have the ability to use these maps, I will pass along the web page address that bring up the North Carolina maps as we have previously used them. The site address is http://web.lib.unc.edu/nc-maps/.

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Unsigned. "Seventy-five years ago: Landmark, October 13, 1882." (*Statesville Record & Landmark*, October 14, 1957).

Valle Crucis – Watauga County's Valley of the Cross

by Tony L Crumbley

On a recent day outing, Renea (my wife) and I had a pleasant experience of visiting three old North Carolina post office sites. Having heard much about the Mast General Store and the history surrounding it, we started out to explore the town of Valle Crucis.

The town of Valle Crucis gets its name from the topography of the land. Two rivers from the surrounding mountain ranges merge in the form of a cross. It is rumored that in the 1700s when land was cheap and rifles were scarce, the first settler traded a rifle and a lamb for 1,000 acres of land in the valley. We know for a fact that the first settler and recorded land owner came in 1779. He was Samuel Hix and his son-in-law was James Holtsclaw. They moved from South Carolina and built a palisade of split logs, sharpened on one end and driven into the ground to surround the maple spring and about an acre of land. They did this to protect themselves from Indians and wild animals.

Hix was escaping from military service. He professed sympathy with England and did not want to join the colonists' battle with England. He stayed here a few years before moving to Banner Elk where he lived during the Revolutionary War.

Due to a number of circumstances and events, the Valle Crucis community became an important part of western North Carolina. The community was a business, educational, cultural and social center of the area. This was mostly driven by the rich river-bottom soil and the rare flatland in this mountain range.

The Valle Crucis Mission School, a religious school established in 1842, brought religious training, education, employment opportunities, new ventures, new ideas, and new people from different parts of the country.

The first postmaster of Valle Crucis was William Thurston, appointed on August 23, 1845, while the community was still in Ashe County. In early 1849 Watauga County was created from portions of Ashe, Caldwell, Wilkes and Yancey Counties. This caused the post office of Valle Crucis to now be in Watauga County. By the time of the new county formation William W. Skiles was postmaster of Valle Crucis.

Two covers posted during the five- and ten-cent rate era from 1845 until 1851 are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. These are the earliest recorded markings from the community. Figure 1 is an envelope without its contents posted in Valle Crucis on August 22, 184x or 185x to General Patterson at Fort Defiance (Caldwell County). It was sent unpaid and marked at Valle Crucis for 5 cents postage due. Figure 2 is a folded letter posted on March 8th at Valle Crucis, without a year stated
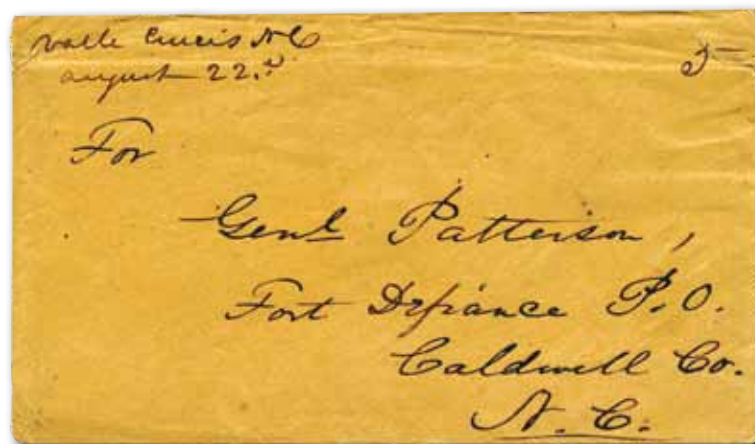
◄ **Figure 1.** August 22, (ca. 1849), envelope with manuscript postmark of Valle Crucis to General Patterson in Fort Defiance (Caldwell County). Cover sent unpaid and marked for 5 cents at destination.

Figure 2. ▶
March 8, (ca. 1849), folded letter (no year date) with manuscript postmark of Valle Crucis to Miss Ellen White in Boston. Cover sent unpaid and marked for 10 cents at destination since it traveled more than 300 miles.

Figure 4. ►
Picture of restored Hard-Taylor house taken in modern times, currently the "Over Yonder Appalachian Kitchen." The house served as the Valle Crucis post office when it was built in 1861.

inside, to Boston, Massachusetts. The letter was marked at Valle Crucis for 10 cents postage due at destination as the distance it had to travel was greater than 300 miles. Each cover most likely was postmarked by Postmaster William W. Skiles, who took office on July 29, 1846, and was postmaster for the next eight years.

Throughout the history of the community, four family names have continued to appear. Baird, Taylor, Mast, and Shull families are considered the founding fathers of the town. In 1854, Joseph Shull was appointed the second postmaster and served as such until April 1857, when Henry Taylor was appointed. Figure 3 shows a manuscript postmark from Valle Crucis while Postmaster Shull was postmaster. The envelope was a Nesbitt 1853 first-issue stamped envelope addressed to Scuppernong (Washington County) and posted on April 20, 1854. The original printing of this issue, which was distributed in June 1853, is characterized by a red circular crest on the back flap with the wording of the printer, "G.F. Nesbitt – N.Y." Since there was great public dissatisfaction with the crest, Nesbitt requested permission on July 7, 1853, to discontinue use of the seal, which was approved by the Post Office Department promptly. As a result all envelopes with the crest had to have been printed before that date.

Postmaster Taylor was responsible for opening what would become the Mast Store. Henry and his wife Emaline Mast Taylor built a new two room house of brick and moved there in 1861 as the Civil War began. Henry continued to be Postmaster through the Civil War operating the post office from his home.

Henry and his wife had four children and expand the house to accommodate this growth. Another floor was added as well as additional rooms. The house eventually totaled 5,000 sq. ft. and became one of the first homes in the area to have indoor plumbing, central heating, and a telephone.

In 1880, Henry Taylor gave the home to his son, Thomas Hardester (Hard) Taylor, who was married to Victoria (Vicki) Baird. Both would serve as Postmasters of the town.

Figure 4 is a photo of the restored house as it stands today. The two original rooms of the brick structure built in 1861 are located on the left side of the building. Today, the restored Hard Taylor home is a restaurant named "Over Yonder Appalachian Kitchen." The foyer of the restaurant has framed on the wall the postmaster appointment of Thomas H. Taylor of 1909.

The house today is on the Federal Register of Historic Properties. The Hard Taylor house played an important role in

the community. The postmaster appointment of Victoria (Vicki) Taylor from 1914 also is framed and hangs on the restaurant's wall. "Aunt Vickie" as she was known served as postmaster for more than 30 years, from 1896 until 1928, when she passed away. Hard Taylor also served as postmaster for two five-year terms while Vickie raised their seven children.

Mary I. Mast was appointed postmaster on June 29, 1869. She introduced the first handstamp used in this post office. The envelope shown in Figure 5 illustrates that handstamp and was posted in October 1869, shortly after she took office. The cover was paid with a 3 cents, ultramarine, 1869-issue stamp, a scarce use of this stamp in North Carolina. The address on the envelope was "To Ev. Luth. Tenn. Syod, New Market, Shenandoah Co., Va, Care of Rev S. Henkel." With a little luck on-line, this address was decoded, and the cover reasonably dated. The envelope was addressed to the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod, Care of Reverend Socrates Henkel. He was the recording secretary for the synod convened for its forty-ninth session in New Market, Shenandoah County, Virginia, on October 15, 1869. Reverend Socrates Henkel was the pastor of the Emmanuel Lutheran Church in New Market from 1859 to 1895. A Lutheran church belonging to this Synod was in Valle Crusis, one of only two Lutheran churches in Watauga County.

Perhaps Valle Crucis is best known for its retail establishments. In 1883, Henry Taylor opened a retail store and moved the post office across the street to the general store. In 1898, W.W. Mast bought into the business and became a partner until 1913 when Mr. Mast became the sole owner. Over the years, his son and grandson would operate the store. Figure 6 is a picture postcard showing the general store (center left) and the Mast

home (center lower) in Valle Crucis dating from 1930s. The home has been used as a hotel and B & B for many years. In early years, the room rate was 25 cents per night and served as an inn for many traveling salesmen.

Advertisement from this time stated that one could find in the store, "Everything from toothpicks to caskets." This would include feed, cloth, groceries, ammo, caskets, nails, and other hardware items. Many of these items are still on display today, including a casket.

The original building, built in 1883, has been listed on the national register of historic places. Major additions were made to the building in 1900, 1916, and 1939. Over the years, the store has served as the post office for the community.

In 1909, just two tenths of a mile down the road, R. L. Lowe opened a competing general store. Ownership of the store changed hands several times until Aubyn Farthing bought the business and the store became known as Farthing's. Aubyn Farthing was appointed acting postmaster of Valle Crucis on April 26, 1928, and postmaster on Nov. 1, 1928. He would serve until June 30, 1963, when the post office became an independent rural station of Boone. This lasted until November 20,1979.

The legend of the two stores is quite interesting. It seems local Democrats shopped at the Mast Store and Republicans shopped at the Farthing store. While Democrats were in office, the post office would be in The Mast Store. Upon political change to Republican, the office would move to the Farthings store.

Today, the Farthing store is an annex to the Mast General Store. Both were purchased by John and Faye Cooper in 1979.

Figure 5. ▶
First handstamp postmark of Valle Crucis used October 1869 on a cover to New Market, Virginia paid with a 3¢ ultramarine 1869-issue stamp, a scarce use in North Carolina.

◀ **Figure 6.** Picture postcard showing the Mast General Store (center left) and the Mast home (center lower) in Valle Crucis dating from 1930s. The home has been used as a hotel and B & B for many years. In early years, the room rate was 25 cents per night and served as an inn for many traveling salemen.

On October 4, 1980, they reopened the post office in the store as a community post office of Boone. It is estimated that a quarter of a million visitors visited the two stores each year. The post office is still a viable postal facility.

On October 15, 1884, the town name was officially changed by the Post Office Department to Valle Cruces. However, Figure 7 shows a cover posted on May 20, 1888, addressed to Winston (Forsyth County). Postmaster Charles D. Taylor, who was appointed on November 17, 1883, served as postmaster until 1892. This is a very unusual cog wheel postmark with a pin wheel cancel recorded between 1888 and 1891. In addition, the embossed envelope is a very scarce variety of the Plimpton Manufacturing Co. and Morgan Envelope Co. issue of 1884-86

(Scott No. U-290).

with the bust of Washington is rounded below the queue.

A postcard of December 28, 1909, from Valle Cruces to Myrtle Point, Oregon, with the new town spelling is illustrated in Figure 8. Thomas H. Taylor was appointed postmaster on March 5, 1909. During his time as postmaster the postcard was canceled with this postmark, a 1906 Type A/1 4-Bar cancel. He served until April 22, 1914, when his wife, Victoria I. Taylor (Vickie) was appointed postmaster.

Figure 9 shows a cover posted when Vickie Taylor was postmaster. It was postmarked on October 27, 1915, with a 1910 Type B 4-Bar handstamp, addressed to Scotland Neck (Halifax County).

◄ **Figure 7.** May 20, 1888, blue envelope from Valle Crucis to Winston (Forsyth County) with a fancy cogwheel postmark with pin wheel killer, used from 1888-1891 under postmaster Charles D. Taylor, who served from 1883 until 1892. The embossed envelope is a very scarce variety of the Plimpton Manufacturing Co. and Morgan Envelope Co. issue of 1884-86.

Figure 8. ►
December 28, 1909, postcard from Valle Cruces to Myrtle Point, Oregon. The new spelling of the town name now appeared on a 1906 Type A/1, 4-Bar handstamp cancel.
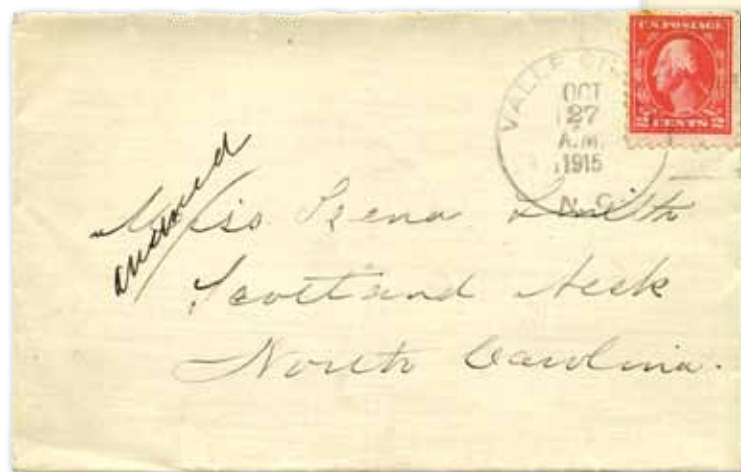
◄ **Figure 9.** October 27, 1915, cover from Valle Cruces to Scotland Neck (Halifax County). Envelope postmarked with a 1910 Type B, 4-Bar handstamp cancel, during the period of Victoria Taylor as postmaster.

On July 1, 1963, the post office once again changed the spelling of the town's name. Figure 10 is a first day use as an independent rural station of Boone. It shows the new postmark spelling of the town's name, Valle Crucis. It is canceled with a 1936 Type F/1 4-Bar handstamp. Since it was not allowed that the circular datestamp cancel the stamps, the marking device was used twice so the killer bars would cancel both the stamp and the indicium.

The last illustration, Figure 11, is a first day cover of the US Postal Service issue posted on July 1, 1971 from Valle Crucis. Two years later in 1973, the Mast family would sell the store, and it would operate only briefly under new ownership until Faye and John Cooper took over in 1979.

Figure 12 is a current photograph of the Valle Crucis post office within the Mast General Store. The window and boxes are the ones that have moved from store to store. Today, the post office is a contract office from the Boone post office. ∎

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Figure 10. ▶
Valle Crucis, 1 July 1963, postal card to Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. This is a First Day cover of the new name of this post office, Valle Crucis, the post office's original name.

◀ **Figure 11.** Valle Crucis, July 1, 1971, unused cover, a First day cover inaugurating the United States Postal Service.

Figure 12. ▶
Valle Crucis, post office as it looks today. Original old brass boxes and clerk window that moved from Mast of Farthing General Store based on the political elections.

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NORTH CAROLINA POSTAL HISTORIAN

If you'd like to contribute information or articles to the Summer *POSTAL HISTORIAN* please submit them by **May 15**

A **red dot** on your mailing label means we have not received your dues.

North Carolina Postmark Catalog Update

The following counties and are now available at

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Alamance through **Washington**

(Check counties from Alamance thru Halifax for updates)

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We would like in the future to be able to send information to members using e-mail, but we lack valid e-mail addresses for many of our members. Please help by sending your e-mail address to Harry Albert, the Secretary-Treasurer at hlalbert78@gmail..com or Tony Crumbley at tcrumbley2@bellsouth.net.