

About the North Carolina Postmark Catalog

Introduction

In 1996, the North Carolina Postal History Society published a four-volume set of books titled, *Post Offices and Postmasters of North Carolina, Colonial to USPS*. These carefully prepared books, under the editorial leadership of Vernon Stroupe, documented not only the post offices and postmasters of all the known post offices in North Carolina from the pre-revolutionary times to the advent of the U.S. Postal Service in 1971, but also illustrated postmarks from these offices used before the twentieth century.

Now, a long-term project has been completed to update that catalog with new postmark information from the nineteenth century and to add all the recorded postmarks from the twentieth and twenty first centuries. Since the work on the updated catalog began in 2005 the North Carolina Postal History Society has shared the development of the new catalog, county by county, with the public by making available the postmark data as it was created, rather than wait until the whole catalog was completed. By the fall of 2012, the North Carolina Postal History Society had its own website on which to make the continuing work on the new catalog publicly available. Before that, since the spring of 2006 the completed individual counties were made available through the website of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

Since the new *North Carolina Postmark Catalog* was developed on the basic format of the original catalog, I will provide some introductory comments and features of the new catalog that were retained from the original catalog along with the features of this new catalog.

The 1996 catalog indicated that there were more than 6,900 documented post offices in existence from the early colonial days until the advent of the U.S. Postal Service in 1971. The new postmark catalog has refined the number of post offices in North Carolina to a corrected count of 6,881.

Vernon Stroupe, the principal editor of the original catalog, noted that a few of these post offices:

“...were in existence for only months, while many of them lasted for only a few years. Sometimes different post offices had the same name, although not at the same time. Many were closed and opened again in a new location, and were opened and closed several times, moving into new or different counties. Postmasters were often transient; therefore, the same postmaster will show up in several different post offices at different times.

North Carolina now has 100 counties; there were only 70 in 1800. As new counties were formed, some offices were changed from the old county to new. We have followed the movement of post offices using the year of the county’s establishment as reported in *The Formation of the North Carolina Counties, 1663 - 1943* (see Bibliography) as the effective year for the transfer of postmasters. This is often at variance with official post office records, which usually recorded the change of county only when a new postmaster was appointed. In a few cases where the same postmaster continued in office until that office was discontinued, the official records never recorded the county change. There were a few occasions when a post office closed and re-opened at a different location using the same name. Similarly, a post office name would be changed, but the old name would be used for a different post office in a nearby community. Where identified, these post offices will be labeled (1) and (2), and, the circumstances will be stated, if known.”

The format of the new catalog comes from the original catalog. Each post office is listed alphabetically within a county along with the postmasters of that office. Also shown are the known postmarks of that office. All the data from the original catalog is presented along with the added new information. For each postmark, we provide either the black and white reproduction from the original catalog or a color scan of a new marking made from actual postmarks. Some of the “color scans” are from black and white photocopies since that format was the only information available. Each marking shows a designated type number, the dimensions of the marking, the color of the marking, and the earliest/latest dates of use that we have observed. Each county of the catalog has been made into a Portable Document Format (PDF) file that can be downloaded if desired. The post offices of six of major North Carolina cities with large postmark files have been removed from their appropriate counties and made into separate PDFs. These cities are Asheville, Charlotte, Fayetteville,

Greensboro, Raleigh and Wilmington. You will see that each has a PDF of its own. Their PDF names also show the county in which they have been removed; i.e., Charlotte (Mecklenburg County).

Source Documents

The primary source of postmaster information used in this catalog is microfilm of the *Appointments of the Postmaster General* from the National Archives (see Bibliography). Since the National Archives information ended about 1971, it was supplemented with postmaster appointment information available from the U.S. Postal Service's website, "Postmaster Finder." In the new catalog, for ease of use, the postmasters are listed only in one column on the left. The original catalog used three columns horizontally across the page when there were no postmarks to illustrate. The original catalog used a middle column and a right-hand column to illustrate auxiliary or rate markings and the circular datestamp (cds) postmarks. The original catalog made an effort to tie middle and right-hand column information to specific postmasters. The new catalog does not do that. All the cds data are arranged chronologically as are the postmasters. The auxiliary and rate markings, as well as unusual postage stamp cancellations (or "killers") are just to the left of the cds to which they have been seen used.

With regards to the source information and the movement of post offices, Vernon Stroupe made some additional comments in the original catalog that bear repeating again in this catalog.

"The researcher should be able to find, locate and track all movements through this information herein. It is important to keep in mind that while all of this information has been carefully studied and assembled, the best sources are sometimes in error or produce conflicting information. For example, a clerk making entries into the postal records may be given wrong information as to which county a new post office is to be placed, or he may have been furnished names of two different individuals as postmaster. There are many varied reasons for these errors. Where the reasons for the errors are found, they are explained; where they are an enigma, they are so noted."

Spelling of Names

Multiple sources have been compiled and cross-checked to provide the most accurate and complete information. Any conflicts between sources have either been resolved or the conflict noted. When examining microfilm sometimes different spellings of the same name are observed. This discrepancy may be caused by mis-reading of the handwriting and/or a poor microfilm record. Where this occurs, the common spelling is used or the spelling common to that locality is used.

Postal Markings

The *North Carolina Postmark Catalog* contains 6,512 pages of information on the post offices of North Carolina from colonial times to present day in the twenty-first century. The original catalog had 1,250 printed pages in four volumes. Approximately 4,350 high-quality reproductions of postmarks from before 1900 had been meticulously created life-size by Vernon Stroupe in the original catalog. All were retained in the new catalog. To that number were added almost another 24,000 scans, mostly color scans, of new postmarks made from actual covers. The generic name, "cover," is used by collectors to define all manner of postal history items such as letters, newspaper, wrappers, post card, postal cards, etc. The enormous expansion of marking devices used in the period from 1900 to present time and the quality of modern scanning devices made it much more reasonable to use actual scans of markings for all the additions. Even so there are numerous examples of poor-quality strikes, over- and under-inked postmarks included in the new catalog until the time when a clearer example can be found. Using only scans made at 100 percent actual size provides images to which comparisons may be made for identification. There are quite a few postmark examples that look very much alike, but careful checking of the spacing of various elements of the postmark will inevitably show that markings were made by different devices.

Again, observations from Stroupe's original catalog are of importance and follows:

“Postal historians can tell the era in which a folded letter or envelope was used by examining the rate and supplemental markings, even if no year date is on the correspondence. The most important marking on a letter from the point of view of the collector is the name of the post office. The earliest form was simply a manuscript marking. Manuscript markings are to be found until the 1890s. The other markings are usually a rate and date. Too often the date did not include the year.

Supplemental postal markings contribute to clarifying the dates of their usage. Way markings - meaning that a post rider accepted the letter along his route for deposit at the next post office - were used as early as the colonial period, but without additional payment. In 1792, the rate for this service was an additional 2 cents until abolished in 1863. Drop letter rates, that is, letters posted to an address serviced by the same post office, began in 1794 at 1 cent and were increased to 2 cents in 1861. Some other supplementary markings are Due, Ship, Steam, Express, Advertised and Registered. Supplemental markings make a cover more desirable.

The color of the postal markings is sometimes significant. Black predominates, but red became very popular in the mid-1820s and was used until the end of the Civil War when red became the color for first class stamps. A light red postal marking on a red stamp made it easy for stamps to be re-used, so red became only an occasionally used color. All the colors of the rainbow have been concocted, and the result was usually a messy cancellation since the ink mixture was a colorant mixed with turpentine or other solvent as a base. These markings can be spotted by an oily spread around the edges of the marking. Pittsboro markings of 1840s-1860s show these characteristics and can be found in yellow, orange and red.”

Abbreviations

“The following is a list of abbreviations and conventions as used herein:

ms = manuscript	octds = octagonal datestamp
hs = handstamp	ods = oval datestamp
cds = circular datestamp	sl = straight line handstamp
dcds = double circle datestamp	CSA = Confederate States of America
tcds = triple circle datestamp	POD = U.S. Post Office Department”

Rarity Scale

The original catalog had a scale of six different degrees of rarity for the postmarks. However, no attempt was made to tie the rarity factor with value. As stated in the original catalog:

“Value is a function of condition, publicity, status, provenance and rarity. Many manuscript markings of small post offices are unique to the collecting community, but they have relatively little monetary value. Other markings, such as Postmasters' Provisionals, may number up to two hundred knowns, but have a relatively high value.”

The rarity factor was dropped in the new catalog.

Maps

Each county PDF begins with a title page showing when the county was formed This is followed by an information box stating the number of post offices in that county and from how many of the post offices postmarks are known. Surprisingly, for all 100 counties in North Carolina, the average number of post offices from which postmarks of any type are known, is 58.2 percent. Stated in another way, no postmarks have been recorded in about 42 percent of all North Carolina post offices.

Follow this information box is a map of the state showing the county's location in black. In the case of the large post office cities mentioned earlier as being removed from their respective counties and made into separate PDFs, a red star locator shows where on the North Carolina map that city is located. This map is followed by a detailed post road map extracted from the *North Carolina Post Roads Map of 1911* published by the U.S. Post Office Department. For reasons unknown, this map sometimes includes not only operating post offices, but some offices that had been discontinued at an earlier date. Two counties, Avery and Hoke, were formed in 1911 but were not shown on the 1911 map as separate counties; therefore, the maps illustrated for these two counties have been created using present day boundaries. In the lower left corner of each PDF title page is the date the latest changes were made to this county and by whom.

How the PDFs are Arranged

The original four-volume catalog, *Post Offices and Postmasters of North Carolina, Colonial to USPS*, was laid out in an unusual way because the editors wanted to connect post offices, postmasters and postmarks in a way that related all three elements together. Also, because the volumes were to be published in hardbound formats, the use of all available space was of paramount importance. Consequently, the format was arranged in three columns horizontally. The left-hand column contained information about the postmasters; the center column contained information about supplemental markings; and the right-hand column contained the images and information about the postmarks. Every effort to connect the middle and right-hand columns with specific postmasters was made by using break lines in the center column to orient data to a specific postmaster. Since economy of space was important, this sometimes resulted in confusion about the alignment of data, especially when the same data was applicable to more than one postmaster. For post offices that had no known postal markings, the listing of postmasters was spread out into all three horizontal columns. The new catalog, because it was intended to be published in a digital format, did not have the same space constraints. It more favorably accommodated the massive amounts of new information that were to be published, but made no attempt to tie column information to specific postmasters. The changed format will be illustrated with a few examples taken from the pages of the new catalog and explained.

Busick (Guilford)

Joanna V. Busick	22 May 1876
Discontinued	26 Oct 1876
Mrs. J. V. Busic	4 Aug 1881
Joanna V. Wright	21 May 1883
Joanna V. Cox	13 Dec 1886
Discontinued	14 Jun 1888
Papers to Browns Summit	

Calhoun (Guilford)

George Kirkman	2 Nov 1836
Obed Anthony	18 Jan 1837
Discontinued	27 Apr 1839

In the first example are listed two alphabetically-connected post offices from Guilford County. The gray tone line separates the post offices. On the far left are listed in chronological order the postmasters of each post office and when they were recorded in the *Record of Appointment of Postmasters*. This information was available from The National Archives microfilm records. The starting date of the post office is considered the date of the first postmaster listed. The office was discontinued in that county on the last dates shown. If the post office moved to another county, that date and explanation would show instead of "Discontinued." When a post office

was discontinued, the postal records usually indicated the nearest operating post office to which the mail would be sent, using either “mail to...” or “papers to...,” each having the same meaning. For each post office shown with no recorded postmarks, manuscript or otherwise, the space to the right of the postmaster listing is blank.

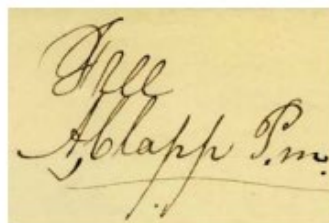
Clapp's

(Guilford)

Abraham Clapp 14 Jan 1829
 Name changed to **Brick Church** 5 Jan 1854



Manuscript
 22 Jul 1844
 13 May 1849



Postmaster frank
 22 Jul 1844
 13 May 1849

In the second example, the post office, Clapp's of Guilford County, had only one postmaster from 1829 to 1854 before the name of the post office changed to Brick Church. By going to the listing for Brick Church, in the same county, you will find a continuation of the postmasters at that location from 1854 to 1905. Under the Clapp's post office entry, the only recorded postmark was a manuscript marking shown by a scan of an actual 1844 postmark. Also shown is an example of the postmaster's free franking by another scan from the same letter as the postmark. As a postmaster, Abraham Clapp was allowed to send his letter free of charge. Each of these scans is accompanied by the dates of other recorded examples, as well as the earliest and latest recorded uses. Color is not marked for black manuscript markings. For postmarks other than manuscript markings, a Type number will be listed as well as the diameter, the ink color of the marking, the diameter in millimeters (mm), and the earliest and latest dates recorded.

Guilford College, name changed from New Garden

(Guilford)

Jesse H. Stanley 21 May 1889
 Lee S. Smith 13 Jul 1893
 Jesse H. Stanley 5 Aug 1897
 Lee S. Smith 29 Apr 1914
 John G. Frazier, Jr. 11 Sep 1922
 John G. Frazier, Sr., Acting 1 Oct 1924
 Robert E. Hodgkin 3 Mar 1925
 Robert S. Doak, Acting 7 Jun 1933
 Robert S. Doak 16 May 1934
 William D. Coble, Acting 17 Aug 1942
 William D. Coble 10 Mar 1943
 Discontinued 30 Jun 1957
 Mail to Greensboro



Type 1
 27 mm Black
 23 Sep 1889
 2 Apr 1895

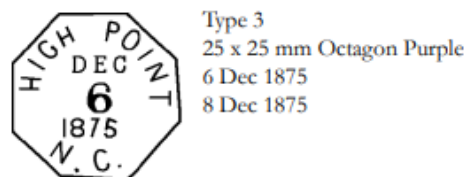


Type 2
 29 mm Black
 15 Sep 1899
 13 Sep 1905

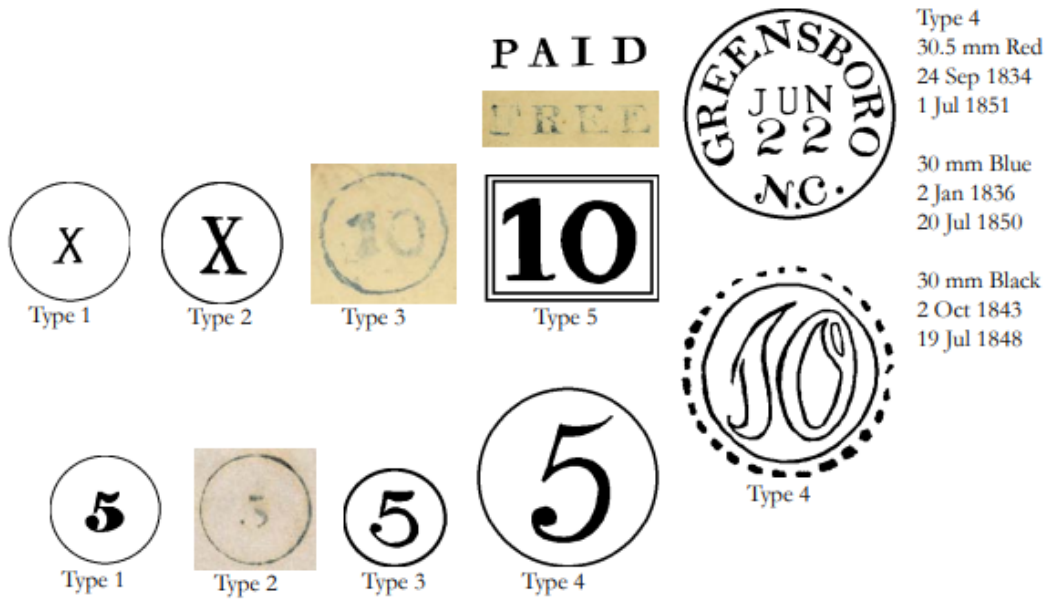
This third example shows the beginning of the listing for the Guilford College post office. The first postmark, Type 1, is a reproduction of the postmark originally illustrated in the four-volume catalog followed by one of a number of different cds listed for Guilford College in the updated catalog. In addition to the markings shown here there were eleven more postmarks, including a Doane postmark, a 4-bar marking, several duplex markings, a couple of machine cancellations, a receiving cds and two Rural Free Delivery (RFD) markings. All of the space to the right of and below the listing of postmasters is used to show the postmarks and other types of markings, so there really isn't the three-column arrangement of the original catalog. Also, there is no attempt to connect these markings to specific postmasters.

High Point (Cont.)

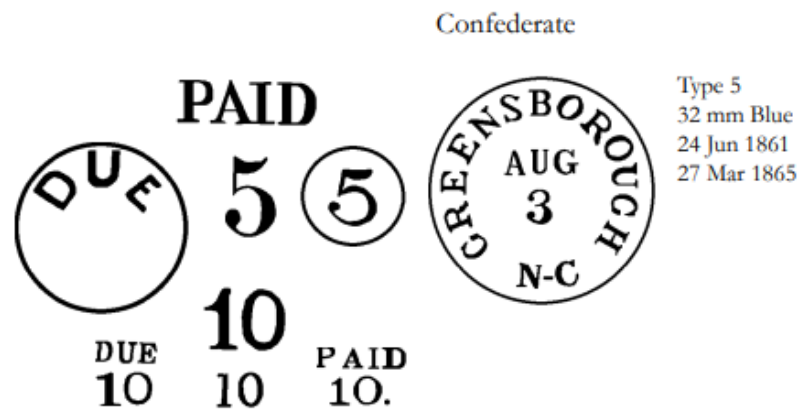
(Guilford)



A fourth example shows the second page of the listing for the High Point post office. The first page of this office has a long listing of postmasters from 1854 to 2022, two manuscript postmarks, the first cds postmark covering the period from August 1855 to October 1866, an auxiliary marking and the first two of a number of cancellations used with the first cds. This excerpt shows three of the chronically-following postmarks, two cds and an octagonal datestamp (octds). Alongside to the left of these markings are reproductions or scans of cancellation handstamps, or “killers,” used to cancel postage stamps used on the covers with this postmark type.



The fifth example shows the top portion of the Greensboro post office's second page. It illustrates the Type 4 postmark, recorded in three different colors, red, blue and black and the recorded dates for those colors. Alongside to the left of this postmark are reproductions (from the first catalog) or scans of rate markings found with this postmark. Each is a different handstamp rate marking along with the PAID and FREE auxiliary handstamps used with the postmark. The period of use for all these markings was 1834 to 1848.



Note: One example of the PAID/10. has no dot after the 10, but it can not be determined if this is a different marking.

Confederate Postmaster Provisional



Used with Type 5
circular datestamp



30.5 mm Red
2 Nov 1861
27 Mar 1865



30.5 mm Red
Over struck with "DUE/10"
1864

Reconstruction



Type 5a
32.5 mm Blue and Black
Variety w/dent in outer rim
between "B" and "O" of
"GREENSBOROUGH"
3 Apr 186x
17 Feb 186x



Type 5
32 mm Blue
16 Sep 1865
17 Feb 1867

32 mm Black
25 Aug 1865
12 Mar 1867

The last example shows the third page of Greensboro postmarks covering the Confederate period. Only one postmark was used during the Confederate period, a cds that had been in use since 1851. Alongside to the left are the rate and auxiliary handstamps used in conjunction with this cds. Next is shown the Postmaster Provisional marking created by the Greensboro postmaster. He was among the relatively small number of postmasters in the Confederacy that prepare their own stamps or hand stamped envelopes to sell to customers because of a shortage or non-existence of postage stamps. In the case of Greensboro, the postmaster re-used a cds first used in 1834 and substitute in the center, where the date previously had been, the handstamp marking PAID/10 or in one case, DUE/10. These markings on an envelope were used as a control marking accompanying the cds in use at the time. At the end of this page is the first of several postmarks used during the reconstruction period after the war was over and the post offices came back on line under the Federal postal system. For convenience we have considered the reconstruction period was from April 1865 to 1880, although actual reconstruction may have continued after those dates. To the left of this postmark is a scan of a variation of the Type 5 postmark that shows a dent in the outer rim and the dates seen. The year "186x" has been used when we were unable to determine the exact year of use.

Bibliography

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In determining the classification criteria of the twentieth century markings, we have used the classification systems that have been published by different twentieth century postal historians. The classification of duplex metal handstamps was published by Richard W. Helbock and Dan Meschter in *La Posta* (May 1987). The Doane and 4-Bar postmark classifications were published by Doug DeRoest in *La Posta* (September 1990). Tony Crumbley, who maintains the Doane database for North Carolina, has provided the latest information on North Carolina Doane cancels. The machine cancellation types have been validated by members of the Machine Cancel Society. This society also has shared with us the current information of North Carolina machine markings from their extensive database of United States machine cancels.

An important part of the new information for this catalog has come from the Postal History Collection at the North Carolina State Archives. Their support of this project has been monumental. In addition, almost all the twentieth century postmark data has come from the Margie Pfund Memorial Postmark Museum and Research Library in Bellevue, Ohio, where is maintained the largest postmark collections found anywhere in the world. Important updates also have come from the massive records maintained by the editor of the previous catalog, Vernon Stroupe, who never stopped collecting information about North Carolina postmarks and graciously shared this data until his untimely death in 2006. Finally, a large number of new markings have come from collectors, such as Tony Crumbley, whose extensive collection of North Carolina postal history is unparalleled.

Our desire is that interested collectors will examine the listed markings against their collections. Where new postmarks are found or revisions to the information provided, such as dates of use, color, etc., we hope will be submitted for consideration to be included in the catalog. Please send your data to:

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5432 Geneva Terrace
Colfax, NC 27235
rfwinter645@gmail.com

If you wish to report new postmarks, please include 300dpi color scans or high-resolution color photocopies of the markings to the address shown, either electronically or by regular mail. Please make certain that the new postmarks show 100 percent of the actual marking size so the data can be incorporated into the catalog. Questions or inquiries can be referred to the address above also.

For more information about the North Carolina Postal History Society, visit our web site at ncpostalhistory.com.

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