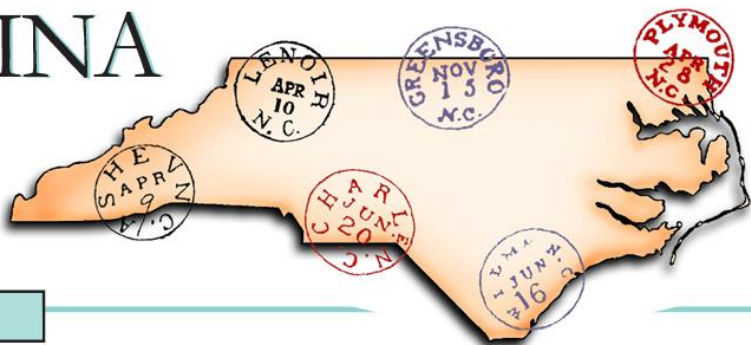


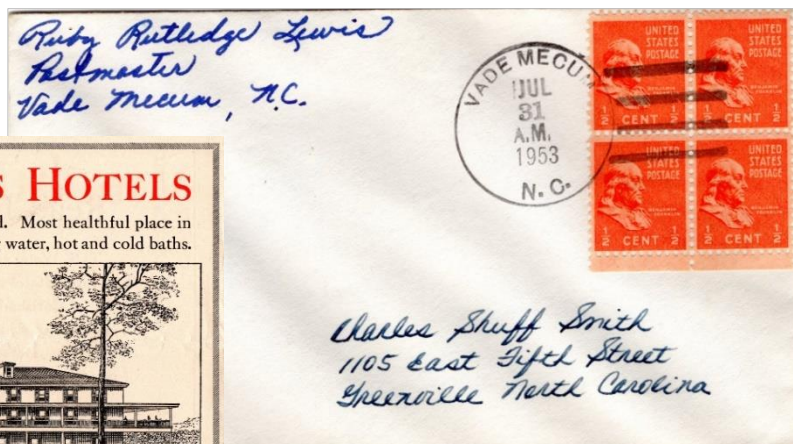
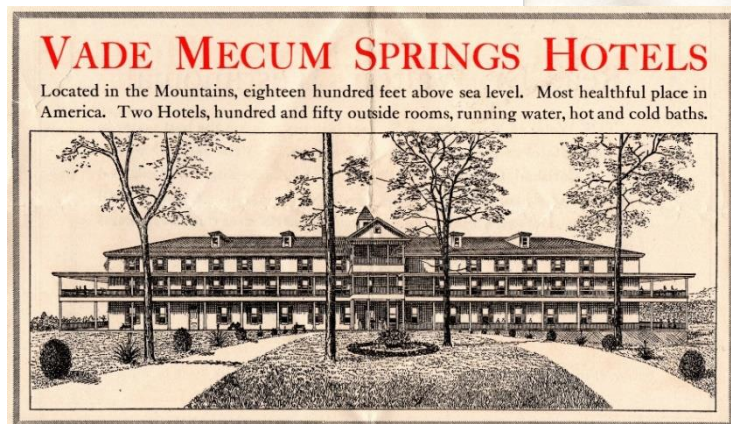
# NORTH CAROLINA POSTAL HISTORIAN

The Journal of North Carolina Postal History

VOLUME 43, NO. 3 SUMMER 2024 WHOLE 167



Announcing: North Carolina Ship Letters 1792 to 1861



Vade Mecum, Stokes County  
A Hotel Post Office

Affiliate #155 of the American Philatelic Society



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**T**he premier annual philatelic event in North Carolina is just around the corner. CHARPEX will be held July 27-28 in Charlotte. The show's location will be the same as in former years. Philatelists will gather in the Worrell Building at 1228 Elizabeth Avenue on the campus of Central Piedmont Community College. We expect 22 dealers to host show tables displaying philatelic treasures for purchase, including stamps, postal history, and postcards. Attendees will be treated to 50 exhibit frames, reflecting a wide range of collecting interests. The show will be open on Saturday (10-6) and Sunday (10-4).

CHARPEX will have the recently released Underground Railroad stamp issue as its theme this year, and the opening ceremony on Saturday at 10:00 am will highlight the stamp and its history.

The annual meeting of the North Carolina Postal History Society will be held at CHARPEX on Saturday at 1:00 pm. Members will consider the nomination of Andrea Edmondson to the Society's Board of Directors, Class of 2027. Winners of two postal history literature awards will also be announced. The annual meeting is an opportunity for members to enjoy camaraderie, renew friendships, conduct business, and learn more about the postal history of the Old North State.

The highlight of every annual Society meeting is a special program presented by one of the members. Ever since I joined the Society, I've been impressed with these superlative programs, and this year's program promises to be another winner! Art Keeter will provide a slideshow and talk featuring his large collection of the 3 cent 1851-1857 issue on postally used North Carolina covers. Don't miss our annual Society meeting and another interesting program on North Carolina postal history.

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The NCPHS Board of Directors will hold its annual meeting at 2:00 pm following the member meeting. The Board will conduct business related to the ongoing life and operation of the Society.

Our members will be interested to learn how the Society figured in a recent H. R. Harmer auction. Tony Crumbley reports that the Spring auction of the Erivan Collection featured a cover postmarked from Tarborough, North Carolina and bearing a cancel of a "Negative Crescent & Stars." The catalog description of this "visually appealing fancy cancel" referred to its earlier publication in two past issues of the "North Carolina Postal Historian." Tony commented that this is the first time he has seen a cataloged cover attributed to the Society's published literature.

The NCPHS continues to add to its substantial body of work with the significant offering in this issue. *North Carolina Ship Letters 1792 to 1861*, by Richard F. Winter, is a monograph that will be read and valued by those with an interest in maritime covers, as well as this state's postal history. This superb monograph attests to Dick's expertise and meticulous research. Read and enjoy!

We express our hearty thanks to Ken Trettin of Rockford, Iowa, who prepared the text of the monograph as a gift to the Society and the wider philatelic community.



## NORTH CAROLINA POSTAL HISTORIAN

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*The North Carolina Postal Historian* 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 \$15 per year. Applications for membership may be obtained from the Secretary/Treasurer. Submissions for the *Postal Historian* or inquiries may be addressed to the editors.

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# North Carolina Ship Letters 1792 to 1861 By Richard F. Winter

The North Carolina Postal History Society is pleased to announce the publication of *North Carolina Ship Letters 1792 to 1861*, by Richard F. Winter.

A ship letter is a mail type with the marking “Ship” or various abbreviated versions of that name. Such mail was carried on vessels not government-owned nor having a contract or subsidy to carry mail. The mail carried was done as a favor by the captain or master of that vessel.

North Carolina ship letters, for the most part, are not common, and in some cases, are quite rare. Winter has kept records of this type of mail from numerous sources for more than twenty-four years.

The current publication is an updated version of a paper presented at the September 2018 gathering of the International Postal History Fellowship in Boston. The paper was later published as the lead article of *The Congress Book 2019*, American Philatelic Congress, Inc.

The image-rich, enhanced version first presents North Carolina geography as it relates to the known ports that handled ship-delivered mail. The location of each port is highlighted on a partial reproduction of an 1839 map produced by the topographer to the Post Office Department.

Next, the domestic rates and ship fees for the period of the paper, 1792 to 1861, are presented. A brief discussion of forwarding agents involved with ship letters follows along with a summary table of the various types of ship markings seen for each port with their identifying features and earliest seen use.

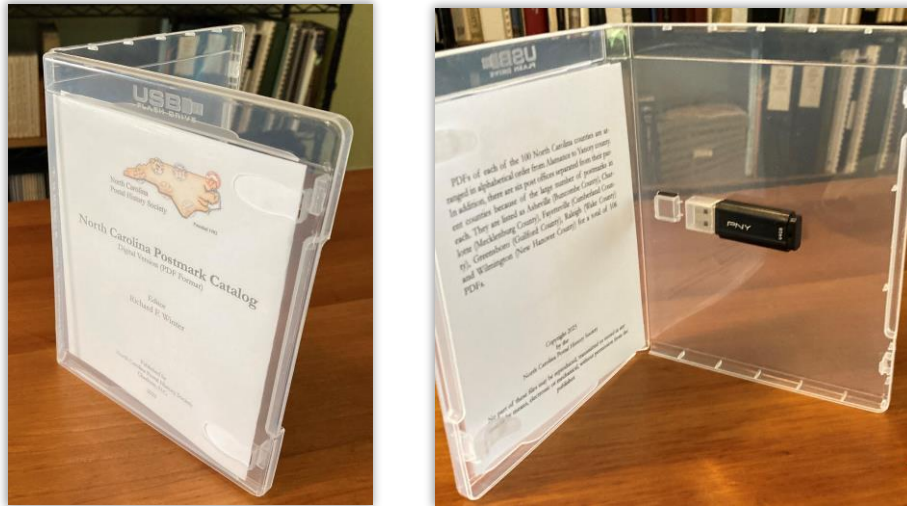
Lastly, in the major portion of the paper, covers from each of the North Carolina ports from which ship letters are known are described, accompanied by high-resolution images of the covers.



Copies of this paper can be purchased for \$20.00 from Tony Crumbley, North Carolina Postal History Society.

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# Digital Version of the North Carolina Postmark Catalog Available for Purchase



The “North Carolina Postmark Catalog,” featured on the Society’s website since 2012, is a monumental achievement. It contains 6,512 pages of information on the post offices from colonial times to present day. The catalog is accessible to Society members and the general public.

By selecting “NC Postmark Catalog” under “Resources” from the website’s top menu, users can benefit from a PDF (portable document format) titled “About the North Carolina Postmark Catalog.” The PDF is located at the top of the listing of North Carolina County PDFs on the right-hand side of the website page. This feature provides an introduction to the Catalog, describes the history of its development, and guides the user in navigating and interpreting the information included in the Catalog.

In addition, “N.C. Post Offices by County,” under the “Resources” tab, is available to users who wish to determine the county location of North Carolina post offices. This is particularly helpful in locating various substation and branch post offices on postmarks where the parent post office town name is not mentioned.

Dick Winter has shepherded the Society’s postmark catalog update project, refining it, and adding new information on an irregular basis for many years. The Society’s Board, recognizing the immense value of the Postmark Catalog and wishing to ensure its permanence, authorized Dick to identify repositories where a digital version of the Catalog could be housed and made available for research.

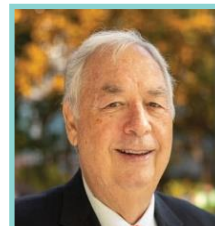
Earlier this year, Dick placed the Postmark Catalog on flash drives, then packaged and distributed them to 32 libraries. These include both major philatelic libraries around the country and a number of North Carolina public libraries. The flash drive package, shown above, can be conveniently placed on any library shelf.

The flash drive package is now available for purchase by Society members (\$20) and non-members (\$25). Send your name, mailing address, and a check made out to:

North Carolina Postal History Society  
Attn: Harry Albert  
105 Gatestone Court  
Cary, NC 27518

Harry will coordinate with Dick Winter to mail you the flash drive package.

## Vade Mecum, Stokes County A Hotel Post Office



by Tony L. Crumbley

On a recent trip to visit Hanging Rock State Park, I noticed a sign that said “Vade Mecum.” That rang a bell as a post office cancel that I had in my collection. Upon reaching the Hanging Rock State Park Visitor Center, I found a picture of a Grand Hotel, Vade Mecum, hanging on the wall. The hotel is now part of the park. The park ranger said the hotel was closed for renovations. Research on the web revealed the Figure 1 photograph of the hotel.

It seems that founder John Sparks kept several wild animals on the property to help attract visitors. Sparks owned a three-railroad-car circus that toured the South in the 1890s. In 1903, Sparks died from an infection from a bite of one of his lions.

On October 26, 1906, John R. P. East was appointed postmaster. He served until April 12, 1917, when James Talley was appointed. Talley would serve until 1937.



▲ **Figure 1.** Image of the second hotel at Vade Mecum built in 1902 as it looks today. (Courtesy of Friends of Sauratown Mountains, <https://sauratownfriends.org>.)



▲ **Figure 2.** John Sparks.

The Sauratown Friends website is for an organization attempting to raise \$10,000,000 to renovate the hotel. It seems the state park has been unable to raise the funds since 2014. An open house was held in 2017 expecting 300-400 people to show up on a cold January day. To their amazement, more than 1,200 visitors toured the hotel that day. However, as of 2024, the hotel is still “under renovation.”

So, what is the history of this hotel? In 1900, John Sparks (Figure 2) came to the area and bought 3,000 acres for preservation. In 1901, the first hotel was built, which no longer stands. On July 3, 1901, Wiley A. Walker was appointed postmaster of Vade Mecum. With no such town of that name, this must have been for the hotel post office. In 1902, the second hotel was built which still stands today.

In 1908, the first hotel caught fire at night and forced guests to flee in their night clothes. The building was a total loss. Later, a gym would be built at the site of this hotel.

In 1909, Vade Mecum filed for bankruptcy and J. Cicero Tise of Winston Salem took over and built a third hotel. This building would burn in 1920.

In 1929, the property was leased to the Episcopal Church of NC and in 1939, the Chapel of Thanks was constructed where the Grand Hotel had stood. The Chapel of Thanks still stands today.

The Episcopal Church managed the inn until 1974 when the Sertoma Club of Winston Salem & Yadkinville leased the property. In 1974, NC State University took over the property for 4-H camps. In 2014, the 4-H programs were terminated, and the facility has sat vacant.



The first postmark to be recorded in our *North Carolina Postmark Catalog* is shown in Figure 3. This Type C/2 4-bar cancel is dated October 16, 1936, while Janes Talley was postmaster.

**Figure 3.** ▶

The first recorded handstamp from Vade Mecum is a 35.5 mm Type C/2 4-bar dated October 16, 1936.

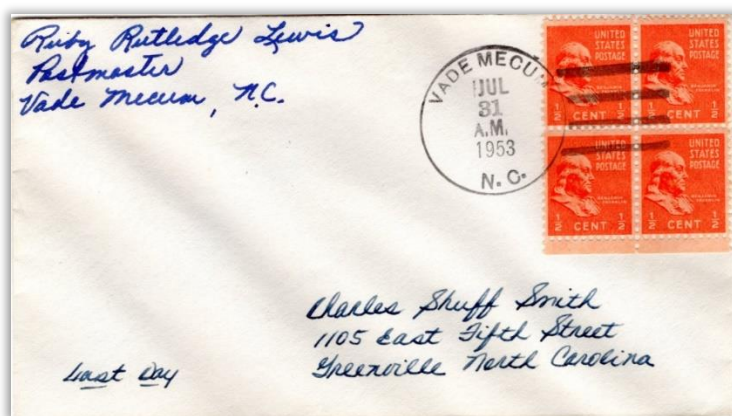


On December 1, 1937, Claxton A. Lewis was appointed acting postmaster and on January 8, 1938, he became postmaster. The handstamp shown in Figure 4 is from Claxton Lewis's time as postmaster. This Type F/1 4-bar cancel was used January 23, 1941.



◀ **Figure 4.** The second handstamp recorded in Vade Mecum is this Type F/1 4-bar cancel dated January 23, 1941.

On July 31, 1953, Postmaster Ruby Lewis would close the post office. Figure 5 is a last day cover posted from the post office. The top left corner is signed by Ruby Rutledge Lewis, the Postmaster.



▲ **Figure 5.** The last handstamp recorded from Vade Mecum is this last day cover with a Type F/1 4-bar cancel. The marking was used by Ruth Lewis from 1950 until it closed in 1953.



The Vade Mecum Springs brochure shown in Figure 6 has thirty-six pages. Every page tells of why the water at Vade Mecum springs is good for you. It seems the Indians had found that it cured many illnesses, including constipation, cancer, syphilis, gout, diabetes, and uric acid. A total of twenty-three illnesses cured by the water were listed on page 8 of the brochure.

◀ **Figure 6.** This thirty-six-page advertising brochure presents the cures that the mineral water at the hotel has in its powers.

In the June, 1989 of the *American Philatelist*, Bill Welch wrote an article about Vade Mecum. In his article, he quoted a fellow APS member, W. Clary Holt, of Burlington, NC. Clary was a collector of Chapel Hill and Company Shop, NC covers. In Volume 17, #4, he wrote an article on the Chapel Hill College covers and paid for the first four color issues of this journal.

In Welch's article, Clary tells the following about his visits to Vade Mecum:

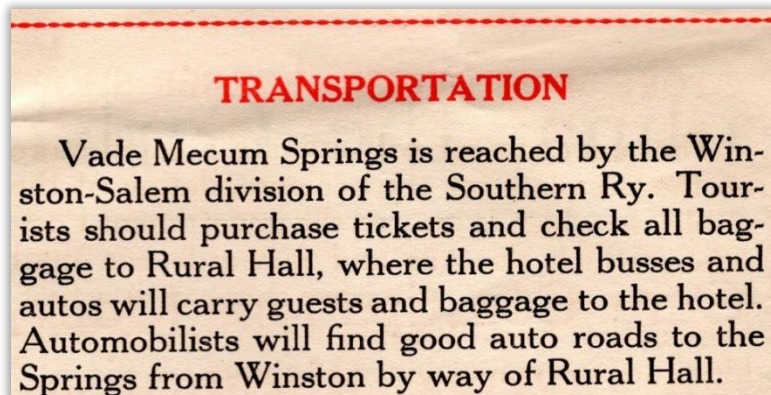
"At the turn of the century, Vade Mecum was well-known in North Carolina for its springs and as a resort. My first contact was as a very young child during the period 1914-1918. In the summer, my father would put my mother and me, and later my brother, on the train in Greensboro, and we would travel to Rural Hall, North Carolina. At that point, we would leave the train, rest in a small hotel, then take a horse and buggy with our bags (usually a steamer trunk) for the final trip to Vade Mecum.

There was a rather large lake with very cold water. My mother had a photograph of me, about age 2, holding a bullfrog almost as large as myself. The advancement of the automobile and paved roads in North Carolina doomed Vade Mecum as a summer resort. It was easy to get to the North Carolina beaches and higher mountains. Also, drinking "spring water" went out of style.

My next experience was through the Episcopal Church. I went there regularly for various conferences. Later our children attended summer camps. In recent years, however, the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina released the property back to its owner, The Tise Foundation, which in turn has leased it or permitted its use by 4-H clubs.

It is a beautiful place close to Hanging Rock State Park, and I regret that my church abandoned it as a camp and conference center. In the 1950's, the "Men of the Church" raised the funds for construction of a chapel built entirely of local rock."

Based on Clary's comments, he would take the train from Greensboro to Rural Hall, NC. All advertisements for the hotel indicate Rural Hall is the place to get off for the hotel, indicating there was no town of Vade Mecum. Figure 7 is a portion of a 1913 flyer for the hotel supporting just that.



◀ **Figure 7.** "Check all baggage to Rural Hall where the hotel busses and autos will carry guests and baggage to the hotel."

Somewhere was the post office. Was it in the hotel or elsewhere? The same 1913 advertising flyer provides the answer seen in Figure 8. The post office was in another free-standing building other than the hotel.

### **STORE—POSTOFFICE—BARBER SHOP**

The management will operate a small store on the premises for the accommodation of the public, in which is located the government Post-office, which receives and forwards one mail each way per day. A barber shop, with a first-class barber from Winston-Salem, will be at the Hotel for the convenience of guests.

▲ **Figure 8.** "The management will operate a small store on the premises for the accommodation of the public, in which is located the Government Post Office."

In 2014, the state of North Carolina transferred 750 acres of land to the North Carolina Park System. This included Vade Mecum and Moores Springs. Moores Springs had a post office as well from 1909 until 1933; however, that is a story for another issue.

### **Resources:**

NCPHS online catalog. Stokes County, Vade Mecum.  
*American Philatelist*, "Vade Mecum Springs," Bill Welch, June 1989.  
<https://sign.moveon.org/petition/preserve-historic-vade-mecum>  
<https://www.savesertoma.org/vade-mecum-history/>  
<https://digital.library.illinoisstate.edu/digital/collection/p15990/coll5/id/8615/>



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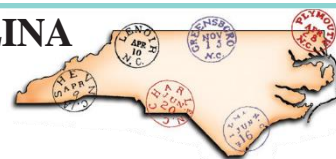
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## NORTH CAROLINA POSTAL HISTORIAN



If you'd like to contribute information or articles to the  
Fall *POSTAL HISTORIAN*, please submit them by  
**August 31**

*North Carolina Postmark Catalog Update*  
All Counties and Six Large Post Offices are available on  
<http://www.ncpostalhistory.com>

Recent inputs require additional changes to the catalog.  
Please check the date on the bottom of the front page  
of each PDF to see if it is current.