

One of our great American Specialties

Here is a subject philatelists have been enthralled with for over 100 years.



The Confederate Post

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

Unused Norfolk, Virginia 5¢ Postmaster Provisional Resurfaces

An utterly pristine example 5¢ Norfolk, Virginia, Postmaster Provisional—truly a major discovery in the field of Confederate State America philately.



Those of you new to the study of Confederates may wonder what creates the big price difference between handstamped paid and handstamped provisionals. On the face, these look like simple stampless covers.

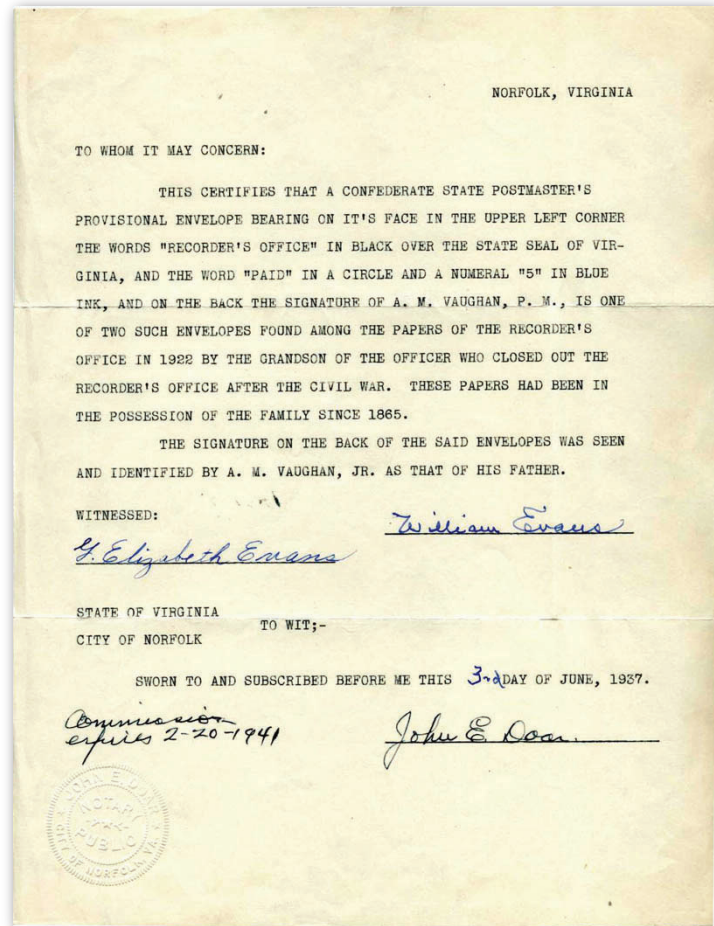
Fundamentally, the difference is that a provisional is defined as a stamp that was prepared by the postmaster in advance of use (not officially issued by the Post Office Department). It could be taken out of the post office in unused condition and stored for future use or purchased and used before it ever left the post office. If an adhesive, it could be applied by the postal patron at home, on the road, or at the post office itself. Provisional handstamped envelopes are the same except that the “stamp” is pre-applied to blank envelopes for future use.

On the other hand, the “handstamped paid” use is a throwback to earlier forms of postal use when there were no stamps. A postal

patron paid in cash for the transport of a letter and paid only when the letter was taken to the post office. The postal clerk would then apply evidence that the postage had been paid by writing or by a handstamp on the envelope. This latter type of “handstamped paid” cover is similar to a modern cover on which the postal clerk has applied a meter strip after the postal patron has paid the proper amount in cash in person at the counter of the post office.

So how does one tell the difference between a common handstamped paid and a far rarer handstamped provisional? With provisional adhesives, it is obvious. With handstamped provisionals, it is not nearly as simple. There may well be uses currently identified as common handstamped paid that are, in fact, provisionals. Control markings on such envelopes are the most common

The June 3, 1937 notarized statement affirming that the Norfolk Postmaster Provisional shown at left is one of two such envelopes found among the papers of the Recorder's Office in 1922 by the grandson of the officer who closed out the Recorder's Office after the Civil War. It declares that the papers had been in the possession of the family since 1865. This and the envelope had not been seen as the prior owner had died in the 1950s—it only recently resurfaced.



means to help identify provisionals. Control markings on the back or front could either be handstamped or in the form of a postmaster signature or postmaster initials. These were used by postmasters as internal control to recognize the prepaid status of the envelope. Unused examples such as the illustrated Norfolk, Virginia 5¢ provisional in Figure 1 are a perfect example of this.

This is an exceptionally novel copy of an unused provisional in that it bears the State Seal of Virginia with the imprint "Recorder's Office." With it came the June 3, 1937 notarized statement affirming that it is one of two such envelopes found among the papers of the Recorder's Office in 1922 by the grandson of the officer who closed out the Recorder's Office after the Civil War. It declares that the papers had been in the possession of the family since 1865. The signature on the back flap of the envelopes was seen and identified by A.W. Vaughan, Jr., the son of the Confederate Norfolk, Virginia postmaster.

This unused Norfolk, Virginia provisional apparently went back into "deep cover" for near sixty years, as the prior owner died in the early 1950s. A check of the "Crown Survey" of Confederate Postmaster Provisionals – actually a compilation of three postmaster provisional surveys, only showed one unused Norfolk provisional. From the illustrated affidavit, we know that there were at least two. With the creation of the recent Subject Index to *The Confederate Philatelist* on CD by the Confederate Stamp Alliance, it was easy to find yet more information on the subject.

Daniel C. Warren mentions the subject cover as the first of the Norfolk provisionals reported that he could find. In the June 1922 *Scott's Monthly Journal*, William Evans describes finding eighteen unused envelopes among the papers of the father-in-law of a Norfolk lady. Her inquisitive son saved one from being consumed

by the flames and took it to Evans for an opinion. It was the Registry Office envelope. In January 1928, Evans' discussed the same cover again in *The Southern Philatelist* Volume 4, No. 3: page 56 and mentioned that two of them were in his possession. Warren thus records two used and two unused Norfolk 5¢ covers and one used 10¢ cover.

Samuel Augustus Mathews Vaughan (February 13, 1819 - August 10, 1887) was first appointed U.S. postmaster in September 1855 and continued as Confederate postmaster after secession even continuing his duties under Federal occupation until April 1863.

An Ancestry.com genealogy search shows that Frank Vaughan wrote in his memoir that his brother Augustus was the next oldest child, 16 years old at his father's death, a bound apprentice to Capt. Drummond in Norfolk. "Gus", as he was called, was then learning the trade of a tanner.

Frank Vaughan was one of Elizabeth City, North Carolina's most notable citizens. He was an attorney, as well as an imaginative inventor who held over a dozen patents and the author of works of both fiction and nonfiction. He also wrote, "In August 1848, my brother Augustus procured for me a clerkship in the Norfolk Post Office at \$20 per month. Dr. Galt was then postmaster and my brother Augustus was chief of six clerks. I filled the place left vacant by Alexander Galt, a son of the doctor, and continued in it until August 1849, when my brother William was appointed in my place." It appears the Norfolk post office was a Vaughan family affair.

For information about the Confederate Stamp Alliance, contact Trish Kaufmann, 10194 N. Old State Road, Lincoln DE 19960, trishkauf@comcast.net or see the CSA website at www.csalliance.org. ☒