

THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY JOURNAL

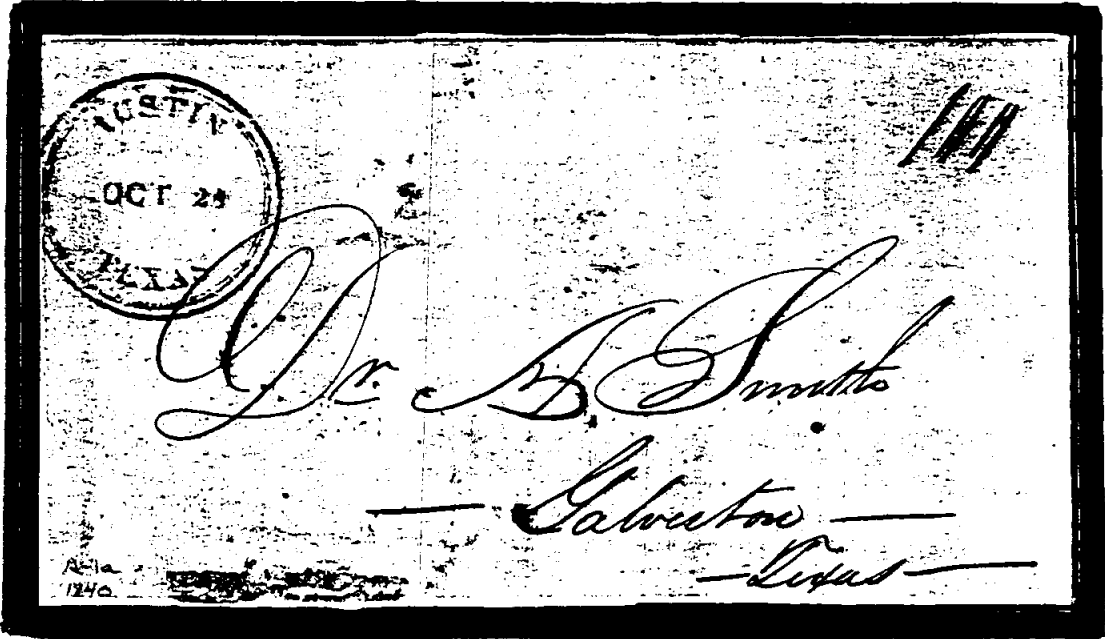


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Illustrated on the front cover is the first postmark of Austin, Texas. It is a black, triple circle, 34mm. in diameter used from October 1840 to September 1842, during the tenure of postmaster A. C. Hyde.

THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Dues \$10 per year payable to Secretary-Treasurer

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PRESIDENT'S PAGE



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I'm pleased to report a new project for the membership of the T.P.H.S. We're going to work on updating the TEXAS section of the Phillips American Stampless Cover Catalogue. This wonderful reference work has not been updated since the 1985 version was published. I'm told there is bound to be a lot of new information available and members have made discoveries which clarify old information and point out a few errors in the 1985 edition.

Jim Stever has volunteered to be the "Clearing House" person for this project. He will evaluate and collate all of the information and work directly with the publishers. Anyone having information on old or new listings should send photocopies of the items along with an explanation and measurements, color, etc. to Jim.

And, hopefully, you'll see a lot of this information, especially new finds, in our Journal. We trust that many of you will let our Editor know much of this information by writing an article about it or sending him the pertinent information.

Jim's address: 44 Camden Place, Corpus Christi, TX. 78412.

Another project. At the first of next year, we are going to update the collecting interests of our membership. John Germann, our vice-Pres., has put together an area of specialization questionnaire which will be sent out with our 1993 dues notice. Please fill it out and send it in so that the membership will know your areas of specialization. The data on your collecting interests will be used to update our next years membership roster.

Another item that is not a new project but a clarification of an old one is our T.P.H.S. auction. Ed Leissner has an article in this issue which updates the background and rules on our semi-annual auctions. He spells out how they will be conducted in the future and sets the stage for our first auction in early 1993. Hopefully this will be the biggest and best event the T.P.H.S. has yet sponsored. Be sure to read it.

Good Collecting

Ed Christman

A GOLIAD SURVIVOR'S LETTER

by R. H. Stever

Just as the name implies, postal history has two basic parts. There is the postal aspect and there is the history aspect. Both are valid reasons for collectors and students to purchase postal history artifacts. Although both aspects of a particular artifact may be equally important, it is usually the case where one is dominant.

The folded letter shown in Figure 1 is just such a case. The historical significance of this letter is what prompted the author to bid on it when it came up at auction several years ago.

The letter was written at Velasco on July 3, 1836 and addressed to Mrs. Sarah Pinchbick at New York (City). According to ter Braake the Texian postal agent in New Orleans, William Bryan, was relieved of his duties by President David G. Burnet and replaced by Thomas Toby on May 24, 1836. Even so, this letter was forwarded by William Bryan at New Orleans on July 18th. Bryan's second term as postal agent did not begin until late in 1838. So the explanation is not exactly clear. Perhaps Toby did not actually handle any Texas mails for a period of time after his appointment and Bryan continued to do so during this interim period. The letter was hand carried to New Orleans through the "Politeness of Cap^t _____ ?" (difficult to interpret the handwriting) and another possible explanation is that this captain knew only of William Bryan as the forwarding agent and took the letter to Bryan.

Because it was hand carried to New Orleans where it was placed in the U.S. mail, there are no Republic of Texas rate markings. The "25" rate represents U.S. postage to New York. A blue New Orleans CDS was applied July 19th.

So much for the postal part of this story. Historically, the writer of this letter, who signed his name "B. Henry Holland", is listed on the roster of Fannin's command at Goliad as Benjamin H. Holland, Captain of artillery. Kathryn Stoner O'Connor, in her book, Presidio La Bahia, names the 342 Texans massacred by order of General Santa Anna on March 27, 1836, the 28 who escaped the massacre and the 17 spared by the Mexicans because of their skills (Drs. Barnard and Field, etc.) or saved through the efforts of Senora Alavez, the "Angel of Goliad". Captain Holland was one of the 28 escapees. He starts the letter thus:

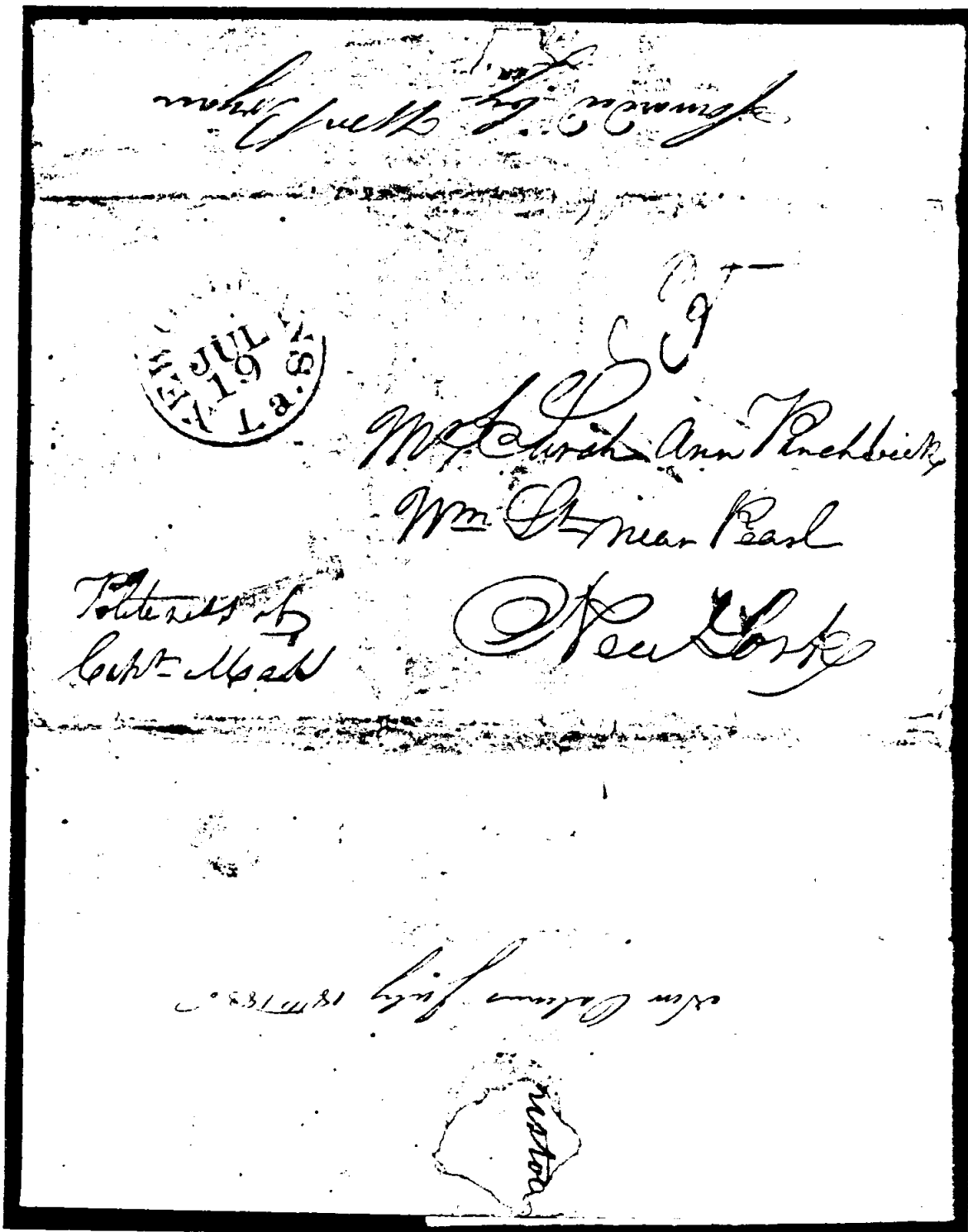


Figure 1. Texas letter originating at Velasco and addressed to New York. Hand carried to New Orleans. Back flaps show handling by agent Wm. Bryan who placed it in U.S. mail on July 18, 1836

Velasco July 3rd 1836

"My dear and only Sister:

"Long the drought has been this period I have anticipated a desire of writing, but the circumstances of my having been reported dead by all of my friends, restrained me from more speedily addressing you.

"Perhaps ere this you have heard of the battle of Goliad, in which I was the only surviving officer, for Fate has once more spared (me) to defend my country. I need not describe to you the horrors of the battle for ere this you have heard my statement no doubt in print, I have since been in the victorious battle of San Jacinto where but a few of our army fell but miriads (sic) of the enemy, and I hope ere this reaches you I shall share another.

"I fear my long neglect has caused a cold feeling on the part of Miss Douglass but if that be the case I am resined (sic) the thought of her charms has been the cause of sustaining me through many hard fought battles and to lose her now would drive me to distraction. Give her my highest sentiments of respect and tell her I can never love another. I trust she'll appreciate my sentiments and be forever blessed. But I should feel happy to hear from you and Mother.

"You must excuse (sic) my writing. I have lost my fore finger. Give my love to Pinchbick and all Engineering friends. Tell Lizzy I will give her that watch next time I see her.

"When you write send by some friends or company bound to Texas. Mr. Swarthout the Colector (sic) of your port will inform you ----. If you find a convenient opportunity send me a good sword and a brace of pistols with holsters.

Farewell
my Dear Sister

Your Affec^t Brother
B. Henry Holland

"P.S. You must get my likeness drawn in full on canvass (sic) but with two epollets (sic) instead of one and when you write direct to Capt Holland formerly of Col. Fannin's artillery."

Holland's reference to his sister having "heard my statement no doubt in print" refers to the fact that his account of the battle of Goliad was printed in the Frankfort, Kentucky Commonwealth on June 1, 1836 and possibly other newspapers prior to this letter. The above referred-to account by Captain Holland has become a semi-official one as there was no other officer of equal rank among the Goliad survivors, and as such it was ordered for publication by ad interim President David Burnet.

Holland's account, corroborated by other survivors, is fairly extensive. It covers the period from March 12 to April 10, 1836 with details of both Texan and Mexican troop movements, the circumstances leading up to the battle, the battle itself, the surrender, the massacre and Holland's own escape. Excerpts are presented herein in order to provide background for the subject letter, namely the Mexican treachery and Holland's escape from the massacre. Beginning on the morning of March 20th:

" . . . it was accordingly decided that we should send a flag of truce to the enemy, and if possible, obtain a treaty, if upon fair and honorable terms; accordingly Capt. F. J. Desanque, the bearer of the express from General Houston, Capt. B. H. Holland, of the artillery and an ensign, were despatched with a flag of truce; the flags met midway between the two armies, and it was decided that the two commanders should meet to decide the matter -- in pursuance of which Col. Fannin was conveyed out and met Gen. Urea (correct spelling Urrea), Governor of Durango, commander of the Mexican forces, and the following treaty was concluded upon, and solemnly ratified; a copy of it in Spanish was retained by Gen. Urea, and one in English by Col. Fannin.

"Seeing the Texian army entirely overpowered by a far superior force, and to avoid the effusion of blood, we surrender ourselves prisoners of war, under the following terms:

"Art. 1st. That we should be received and treated as prisoners of war, according to the usages of civilized nations.

"Art. 2d. That the officers should be paroled immediately upon their arrival at La Bahia, and the other prisoners should be sent to Copano, within eight days, there to await shipping to convey them to the United States, so soon as it was practicable to procure it: no more to take up arms against Mexico until exchanged.

"Art. 3d. That all private property should be respected, and officers' swords should be returned on parole or release.

"Art. 4th. That our men should receive every comfort, and be fed as well as their own men. Signed,
Gen. Urea,
Col. Morateas,
Col. Hobzinger.

On the part of the enemy; and on our part, signed
by

Col. Fannin, and
Maj. Wallace.

Holland describes in detail the period of captivity between March 20th and March 27th, the condition of the prisoners, their treatment by their captors, etc. During this period General Urrea marched out of Goliad leaving Col. Portilla in charge. The latter received two letters, one from Santa Anna - el Presidente - and one from General Urrea. Santa Anna ordered the prisoners' execution whereas Urrea ordered preparations for the prisoners' release as agreed at the time of the surrender. Portilla had to make a choice and he apparently thought it prudent to go with el Presidente. The rest is history. Holland's account continues.

"The Mexicans had always said that Santa Anna would be at La Bahia, on the 27th, to release us. Accordingly, on that day, we were ordered to form all the prisoners; we were told that we were going to bring wood and water, and that Santa Anna would be there that day; we were ordered to march all the officers at the head of the file, except Col. Fannin, who lay wounded in the Hospital. As we marched out of the sally port we saw hollow squares formed ready to receive us; we were ordered to file left, and marched into a hollow square of double filed cavalry, on foot, armed with carbines, commonly called scopets (escopetas), and broadswords.

"This square was filled and closed, and the head of the remaining files wheeled off into another square, and so on, until all were strongly guarded in squares: the company of which the writer of this was one, was ordered to forward, and no more was seen of our unfortunate comrades; we marched out on the Bexar road, near the burying ground, and as we were ordered to halt, we heard our companions shrieking in the most agonizing tones, 'Oh, God! Oh, God! Spare us!' and nearly simultaneously a report of musketry. It was then we knew what was to be our fate. The writer of this then observed to Major Wallace, who was his file leader, that it would be best to make a desperate rush -- he

said no, we were too strongly guarded; he (the writer) then appealed to several others, but none would follow; he (the writer) then sprung and struck the soldier on his right a severe blow with his fist; they being at open files, the soldier at the outer file attempted to shoot him, but being too close, was unable; the soldier then turned his gun and struck the writer a severe blow upon the left hand. I then seized hold of the gun and wrenched it from his hand, and instantly started and ran towards the river. A platoon of men (I have been since informed, by two others who made their escape by falling when fired upon among the dead bodies of their comrades) wheeled and fired upon me, but all missed.

"I then had a chain of sentinels to pass at about 300 yards distance; they were about thirty yards apart, three of them closed to intercept my retreat, the central one raised his gun to fire -- I still ran towards him in a serpentine manner in order to prevent his taking aim -- I suddenly stopped -- dropped my piece, fired, and shot the soldier through the head and he fell instantly dead. I ran over his dead body, the other two firing at me but missing, and immediately ran and leaped into the river, and while swimming across was shot at by three horsemen, but reached the opposite banks in safety; and after wandering six days without food in the wilderness, succeeded on the tenth of April in joining General Houston's army, after having been retaken by the enemy once, but succeeded in making my escape in company with a wounded man who had got off from La Bahia, by falling among the dead as before stated. I am happy to state, that six more succeeded in saving their lives and regaining their liberty by the same stratagem. The number of the enemy according to their own account, killed at the battle of Cotello, (Coletto), varies from nine to eleven hundred."

Frank Tolbert's description of the battle of San Jacinto mentions seven survivors of Goliad as being participants. This tallies with Holland's statement that "six more succeeded in saving their lives", the "wounded man" probably not participating, and certainly gives meaning and credence to the "Remember Goliad" cry at San Jacinto.

The author has not researched Holland's life after San Jacinto and has no knowledge of other correspondence he may have written. Whether or not any exists, this poignant letter describing his battles, his strained love affair, his loss of fore finger, his desire for new weapons for future battles and wish for his "likeness drawn in full on canvas" is truly an important item in the Texas historical record.

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NOTICE

The American Stampless Cover Catalog is currently being revised. If you have any stampless cover markings not listed in the current catalog, send a photocopy and explanation to David G. Phillips Co., Inc., P.O. Box 611388, North Miami, FL. 33261-1388. Time is of the essence as they hope to go to press by year end.

NOW WE KNOW WHY!

By Wm. K. McDaniel

An interesting bit of Texas Postal History trivia was recently unearthed in the archives of the Brazoria County Historical Museum, in Angleton.

From time to time, a post office will close, and, years later, no one is certain just why it ceased to operate.

Such was the case with the office at Hasima, in Brazoria County. James A. Creighton's "Narrative History of Brazoria County" states that the location was "almost on the Matagorda County line".

The first postmaster was Harry Carrico, who took office January 4, 1910. He was followed by Lewis Weeks (Nov. 16, 1910), Wm. J. McMaster (Sept. 20, 1912), John A. Nelson, (Jan. 5, 1914), and Maggie L. Reeves (Apr. 26, 1915). The office was discontinued on June 30, 1916, but reopened on November 26, 1918, with Perry R. Reeves as postmaster. The last postmaster was John H. Donawho, who took over on May 20, 1920. The office was closed permanently on June 30, 1921.

The reason for the first closing is still uncertain, but we now know why the decision to close it permanently was made. The reason is given in the following letter, dated June 8, 1921, from George M. Sutton, Inspector in Charge of the Austin Division of the Post Office Department:

OFFICE: Hasima, Texas

SUBJECT: Appointment of a suitable person as postmaster.

POSTMASTER:

The above subject is now under investigation. Please inform the patrons that a vacancy in the postmastership now exists at your office and that it is necessary that some one or more who can qualify submit their applications for appointment to fill such vacancy. Unless they do so, it will be necessary for me to recommend that the office be discontinued.

Do you know of anyone who is in a position to take the office that will do so? If so, kindly hand them the attached forms with the request that they be properly and fully filled in their own handwriting and forwarded to this office. It is desired to complete the investigation at the earliest date practicable and it is urged therefore that the matter be given prompt attention.

Any communications or other papers bearing on this subject should be mailed to this office.

Inspector in Charge

Austin, Texas

Apparently, John Donawho had indicated that he no longer desired to serve as postmaster at Hasima. An accompanying newspaper article indicates that he went to work as a carrier on Rural Route #1, in Velasco, sometime in 1921. In 1923, he moved to Moran, Texas, where he served as a carrier on Moran Route #1 for 33 years, before retiring in 1957.

Since the office was closed, we can also assume that no qualified person made an application to replace Mr. Donawho.

While not an earthshaking discovery, this gives us an interesting insight into the postal system of yesterday, and adds a little more to our knowledge of Texas Postal History.

@ 1992, Wm. K. McDaniel

A HOME TOWN BOOSTER

By William H. P. Emery

At a recent stamp show in Houston, Texas (HOUPEX - 92) I acquired an advertising cover from San Marcos. Although it is more modern than most of my accumulated covers, it aroused my curiosity, and forms the basis of this short article. See Figure 1.

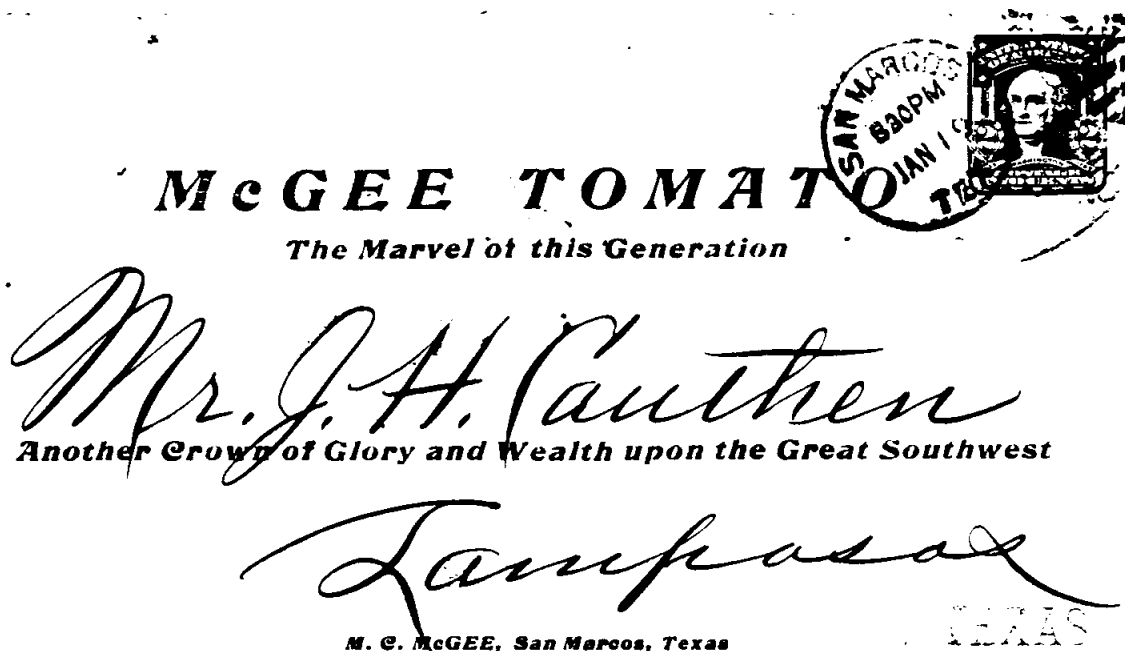


Figure 1

The cover is franked with a Scott #319, two cent stamp, and was cancelled by the 1910 postmaster, John M. Cape. The duplex device used to cancel this cover consisted of a circular 26mm., black postmark. Its killer is an elliptical, 7-bar device with a central numeral "1" surrounded by a ring.

Advertised on the face of the cover in bold face type is the "McGEE TOMATO". In smaller type is Mr. McGee's prophecy for his discovery "The Marvel of this Generation" and "Another Crown of Glory and Wealth upon the Great Southwest". In yet smaller letter type at the base of the envelope is his name, M. C. McGee, San Marcos, Texas. All the type is in red ink upon a manila colored envelope.

Professor McGee is reported extensively in a "Living History" deposition produced by The Institute of Texian Culture from an interview with Marion McGee, a son. A copy of this deposition is in the Tula Townsend Wyatt collection of the San Marcos Public Library.

According to statements from this interview we learn that M. C.

McGee discovered the fruitful "sport" of a locally grown tomato, propagated it, and distributed his discovery free to all who had an interest. Within a few years propagation of the tomato had reached large areas of the southern United States. His distribution of the discovery was aided by advertising covers. He sought to advertise not only his discovery but also his adopted community, making the McGee Tomato and San Marcos Texas household words as far as the United States Post Office Department carried his correspondence.

Professor M. C. McGee was born in Winston County, Mississippi August 13, 1858. He came to Texas in 1887, settling initially in Kyle, where he established a business college. The institution which was designed to further one's education beyond high school was called the Prairie City Business College. Professor McGee ran this school for eighteen months but after it burned for the second time, he moved his operation to San Marcos.

In San Marcos he established a new business college known as the Lone Star Business College. For 33 years he conducted this school, turning out many prominent business leaders for Hays County, and the State of Texas.

Professor M. C. McGee did much to bring San Marcos into prominence. As long as he lived, he continued to praise and boost his home town, and its people.

M. C. McGee died May 12, 1926.

AUCTION SALES

By Ed Leissner

The Society is again preparing a mail sale / auction for its members. All material offered will have a tie-in with the postal history of Texas.

We who conduct the sales have always maintained that our effort was to bring together a buyer and seller for a fair offering for value and price. No give-aways of material were in the best interests of either the consignor or the buyer. Some of the members who have submitted material in the past have indicated what price they thought their lots should bring. As long as their suggestions were reasonable, we have held this to be the minimum acceptable price for a sale to the buyer.

We have been reluctant to put a reserve bid on material. We believe that if we place a reserve on a lot, we should accordingly place a reserve on all lots. The result of this arrangement is a retail mail sale. We will continue to place an estimate on each lot as we have in past auctions. However, if the consignor wishes to place a reserve on a lot, this should be available to him. If the reserve is not met, there will be no sale.

We seek material for our next auction which will be listed in the February 1993 Texas Postal History Journal. We would add that members should be aware that damaged covers, light to "guess what" cancels, etc., do not bring big prices and in many cases do not bring bids. The upcoming sale will feature more photos of material which will give bidders a better idea of the markings which are usually the key to Postal History Items.

For our next auction, we will keep our low costs for both consignor and bidder. The successful bidder will pay 5% over his successful bid. Sellers fees will remain at 5%. And, of course, the sale is only open to members.

We welcome good material and any comments regarding our next sale.

Ed Leissner - Auction Sales Manager
711 Canterbury Hill
San Antonio, TX. 78209

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