

# THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY JOURNAL

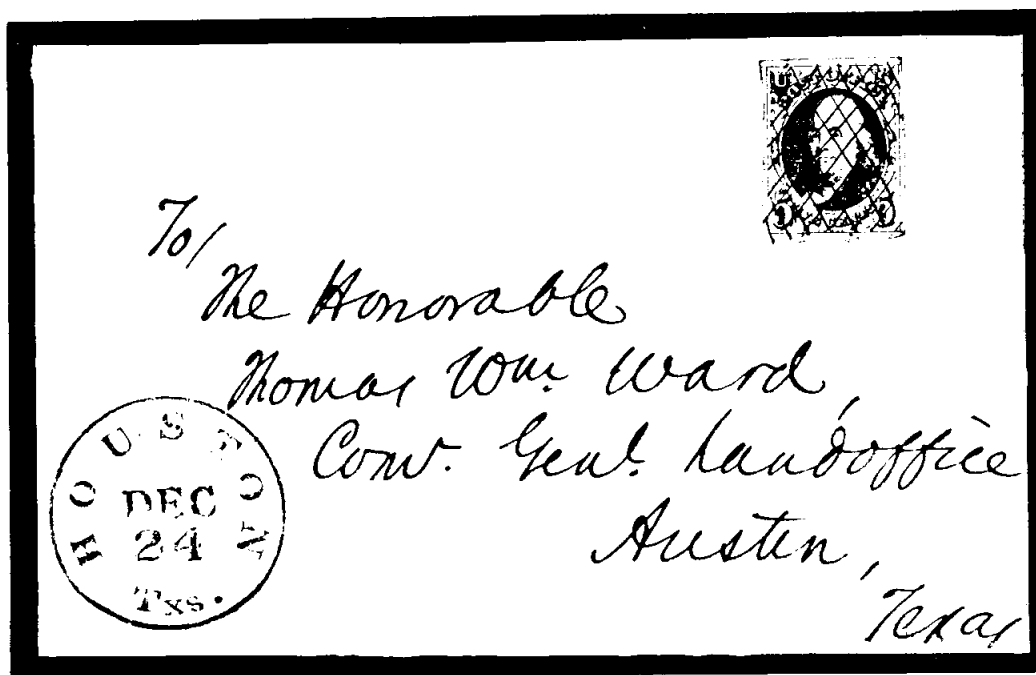


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\* \* \* \*

So you like The Cover pictured on the front of this issue?  
Well, to learn more about it, read David Connally's article "A  
Remarkable Letter" at page 5 of this issue.

# THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Dues \$7 per year, payable to Secretary-Treasurer

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## PRESIDENT'S PAGE



By the time this is released our annual meeting will be history.

Announcement appeared in the last issue regarding nominations for a new slate of officers. If you wish to place someone on the list, you must secure that person's consent and notify the secretary. I had hoped to be able to announce a slate in this issue of the journal proposed by the Nominations Committee, but it is to be read at the annual meeting instead. This will mean that the publication of nominations as well as a ballot for voting will both be in the next copy of your magazine.

Let's get some of our collections written up and exhibited. Bill Emery seems to be the only one getting medals for Texas postal history exhibits.

The field is wide open for Texas postal history articles and some of you have knowledge of portions of it that others would like to know. Favor us with some of your expertise in print!

## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

We have four articles of interest in this issue of The Journal, each of them covering a different area of Texas Postal History. Jim Alexander has (finally) contributed a piece about Comanche Springs and Coke, Texas. David Connally writes about a true Texas rarity -- a U.S. Scott #1 on cover with a Houston, Texas postmark. Jane King Fohn submits an article on a cover which relates to two separate items of interest to the Texas historical -- the Avenue Hotel in Austin and the Texas and Laredo R.P.O. Finally, John R. Mason from The Mobile Post Office Society asks the TPHS membership for help in finding examples of 124 unreported R.P.O. cancels. I think you will find all the articles in this issue quite interesting.

NOTE: I have been contacted by TPHS member Joe H. Crosby, who is interested in preparing a very extensive cumulative index for The TPHS Journal. Before he starts this ambitious project, Joe wants to know if anyone else is already doing this. He would also like any suggestions any of you might have as to the project. Joe Crosby's address is 3707 East 66th Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74136.

As always, I am in need of articles. Please help me out, members. I have just received one article from David Connally for inclusion in the next issue, entitled "Texas - Some Violence in its Postal Past". Sounds interesting!

COMANCHE SPRINGS AND COKE P.O., TEXAS

By Jim Alexander

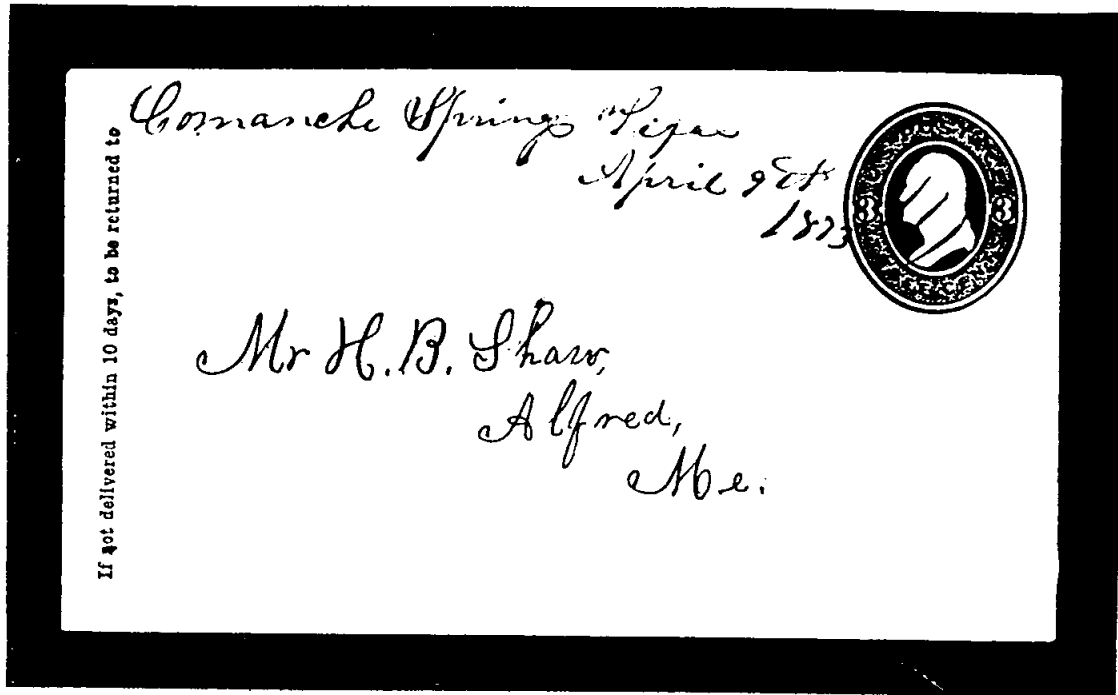


Figure 1

Comanche Springs was a settlement located about twenty-one miles West of Waco in Western McLennan County, Texas. The United States postal records show that the first post office for Comanche Springs opened on May 2, 1872 with John S. Elmore as postmaster and that he served until June 1, 1874. The cover shown in figure 1 is the only Comanche Springs postmark that is known to this writer. Ward McDonald was the next postmaster and he was in charge when the name of the post office was changed to Coke on March 15, 1875 and he held the position only until May 11, 1875. The Coke P.O. then had three short-term postmasters before it was discontinued on February 29, 1876.

The Coke post office was re-established on May 5, 1876 with Henry Hanson postmaster and his term lasted until August 29, 1878. Probably, it is to Mr. Hanson that we owe our thanks for McLennan County's only known (to this date) postmark with the name of the county in the circular date-stamp. This is shown in figure 2. Mr. Hanson was also responsible for the advertising items pictured in figure 3. Only four examples are known of the Coke P.O. postmark and their dates are: JAN 4, 1877; SEP 24, 1877; JAN 10, 1878; and OCT 5, 1880. The post office had four additional postmasters before it was discontinued June 11, 1883.

Apparently, the community was always known as Comanche Springs and only the name of the post office was changed to Coke. This could have been in support of, or due to the popularity of, the then governor Richard Coke who happened to be from Waco.

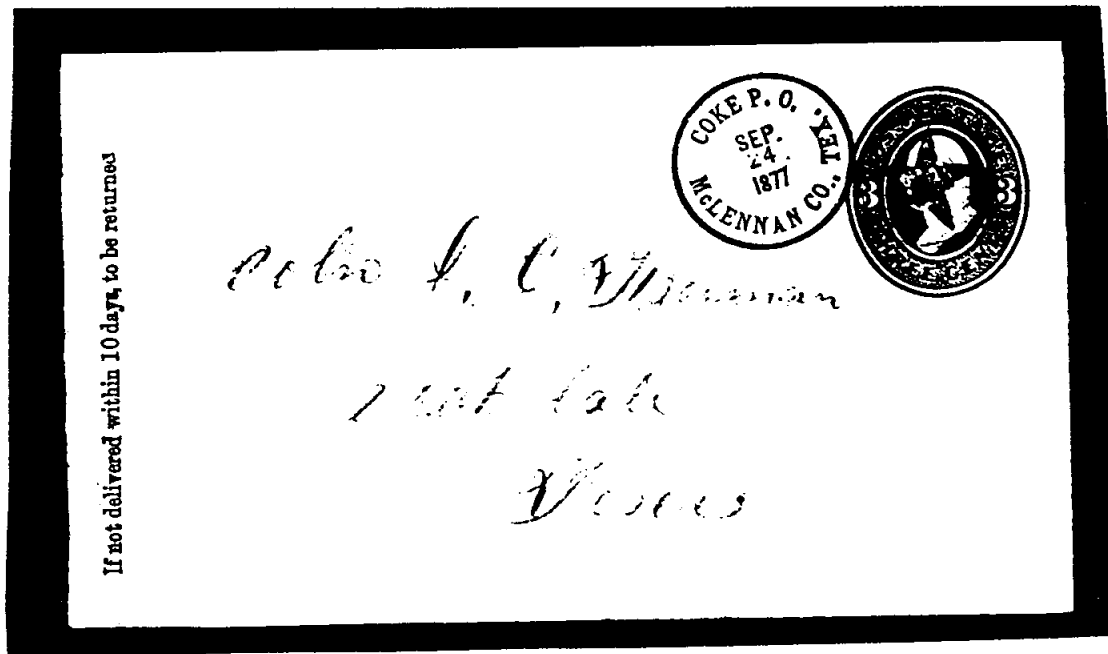


Figure 2

In 1882 the St. Louis Southwestern Railway of Texas crossed the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway about three miles East of Comanche Springs. Soon thereafter most of the community moved to the new town of McGregor at the junction of the railroads. Today, there is little to see at the Comanche Springs location except for a cemetery.

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Post Office Records of The United States of America for McLennan County, Texas. (microfilm).

HENRY HANSON, P. M.

W. L. GIBBS.

# HANSON & GIBBS

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## "COMANCHE SPRINGS"

(COKE POST OFFICE.)

Comanche Springs, is situated in the Western portion of McLennan Co. Tex. in lat. 29 and 33 degrees North from the Equator, and between meridians 17 and 20 degrees West from Washington City, on the Waco, and Gatesville road, and at the Junction of the Belton and Ft. Graham road. For location there is not a finer one in the United States for healthiness of climate or fertility of soil, surrounded by rich rolling Prairies which are being rapidly converted into beautiful farms. It promises at no distant period to be unsurpassed as a business point. At present there is a good business done, and a fine opening for all business men with large or small capital.

Lands are from \$2.50 to \$5.00 per acre, and are well adapted to the culture of all cereals, corn, cotton and wheat &c. It is unsurpassed for Cattle, Horses, and Sheep; Hogs have to be raised in pens. Those who are seeking a location, and land that is both rich and cheap, will find it to their interest to visit this section of country. We have a Union Church, preaching by the Christians, Presbyterians, Baptist, and Methodist. This is indeed the "Paradise for the poor man;" we have good society, good water, salubrious climate, social people and a soil that only requires to be tilled to produce a smile; only 21 miles from market; good Schools and Mail facilities second to none.

Emigrants are welcome; every grade of political and religious feelings are here represented, and every man is allowed the privilege of thinking as his conscience dictates.

We have thousands of acres of land for sale in quantities to suit purchasers, some of them only 1 1-2 miles from this town. A good location for colonies:— Good Springs of water. Immigrants are coming in to enjoy the Beautiful Paradise of the World, where destitution will be felt by them no more. "Know thyself," and your country; and act no longer contrary to your better judgement, but come to the country where you can drink of the beautiful waters of life freely. For further information, address, (enclosing stamp) that you may ensure reply.

(OVER.) HANSON & GIBBS.  
COKE P. O. TEX.

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I have recently introduced a Novelty in the Envelope line, a humorous cut and inscription which has become exceedingly popular, both for business and social correspondence. For business purposes they are especially valuable as their odity never fails to attract attention.

Envelopes, fine White and Colored, with the above cut printed on the corner, by Mail Post-PAID at the following prices:

**26 for 20 cents; 50 for 35 cents; 100 for 65 cts.**  
500 for \$2.25 1000 for \$4.25.

Your name, address, business, etc., printed on each, 25 cents extra, without regard to number ordered.

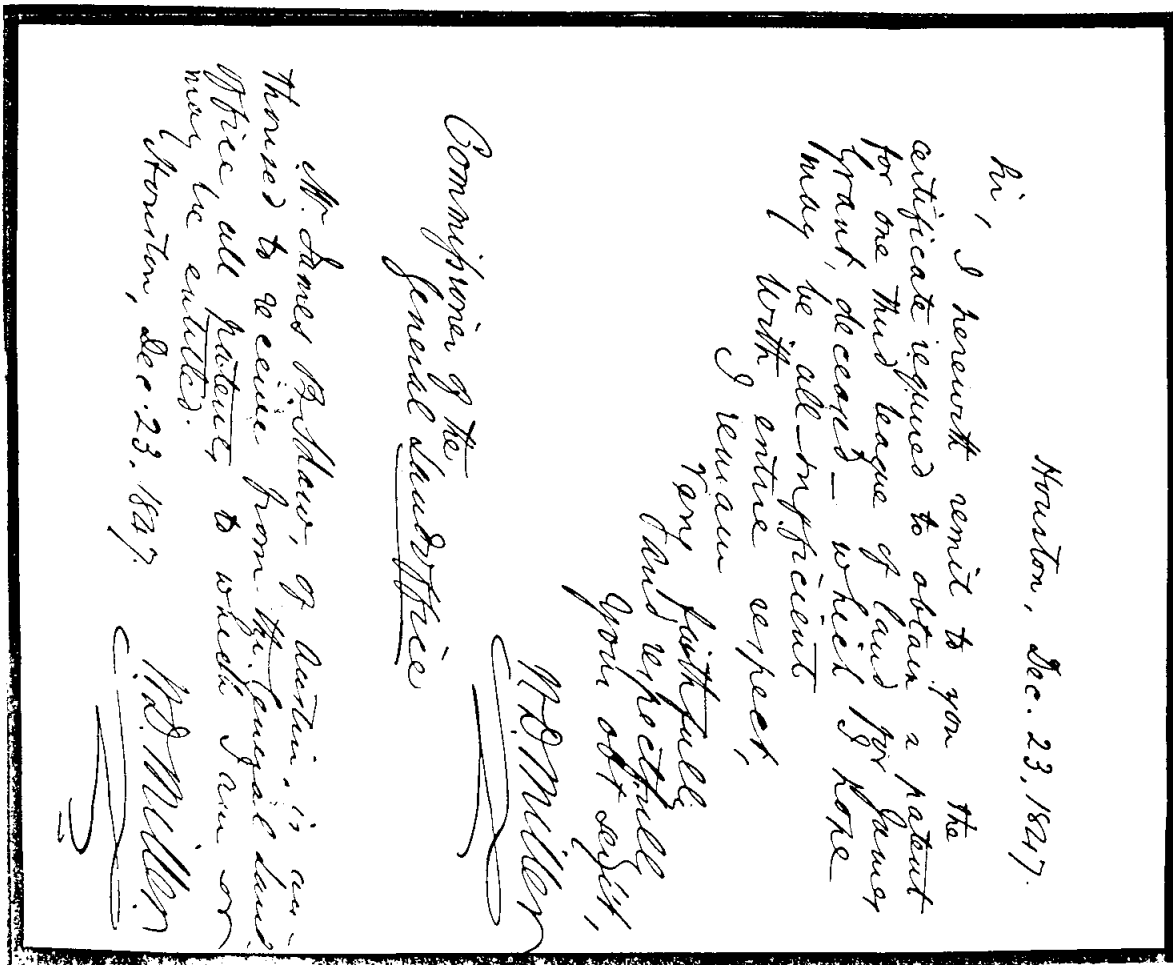
Address all orders to

**Henry Hanson P. M.**  
Coke P. O.  
McLennan Co., Tex.

Agents Wanted.

A REMARKABLE LETTER  
by David Connally

Nonie Green's recent interesting article and analysis (see "Cover Odyssey", TPHS Journal Vol. 11, No. 1) of an 1849 letter to Washington D. Miller prompts this article on another Miller letter: one he wrote, in Houston, on December 23, 1847 and mailed the next day, Christmas Eve, to Austin. The content of this 1847 letter (dealing with Miller's land holdings) is shown below. The handwriting seems to confirm Mrs. Green's analysis that the notation on the reverse of her letter was, indeed, written by Miller. Furthermore, it confirms that the "Registered" notation on her letter is not in Miller's hand, and thus most likely does represent postal notation (rather than office docketing) as Mrs. Green inferred.



The content of Miller's December 23, 1847 letter (shown reduced).

What makes the 1847 Christmas Eve letter from W. D. Miller most interesting, however, is not its content or the handwriting, but rather its cover: the folded letter bears a five cent 1847 stamp (Scott #1). It turns out that Miller's letter is not only the earliest known Texas use of the first USA stamp, it also seems certain to represent one of the very first uses of any stamp in Texas postal history.

This remarkable conclusion is based on information presented by Creighton C. Hart in his article "1847 Covers From Texas" which appeared in the 1976 TPHS Journal. Mr. Hart's records show that the stamps of the first USA issue did not reach the Houston post office until five months after Miller's December 1847 use. In fact, no postal adhesives had been received at any post office in Texas at the time Miller's letter was mailed. Thus the stamp he used could not have been purchased in the state, but rather had to have been carried in, perhaps from New Orleans, New York, or Washington DC - all cities that Miller, in his political travels, occasionally visited (1).

<u>First sent</u>	<u>First Received</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Postmaster</u>	<u>Total Tens</u>	<u>Total Fives</u>
Sept. 7, 1849	Oct. 1, 1849	Brownsville	S. Powers	300	400
Dec. 10, 1847	Jan. 2, 1848	Galveston	R. D. Johnson	3,700	3,500
May 11, 1848	May 24, 1848	Houston	M. K. Shell	1,000	1,600
Aug. 5, 1850	Aug. 30, 1850	Huntsville	J. C. Smith	400	600
Feb. 5, 1851	Feb. 28, 1851	Palestine	A. E. McLure	100	200
Aug. 14, 1849	Sept. 14, 1849	San Antonio	J. Bowen	950	1,300
Feb. 19, 1851	No date	San Augustine	S.W. Blount	100	300

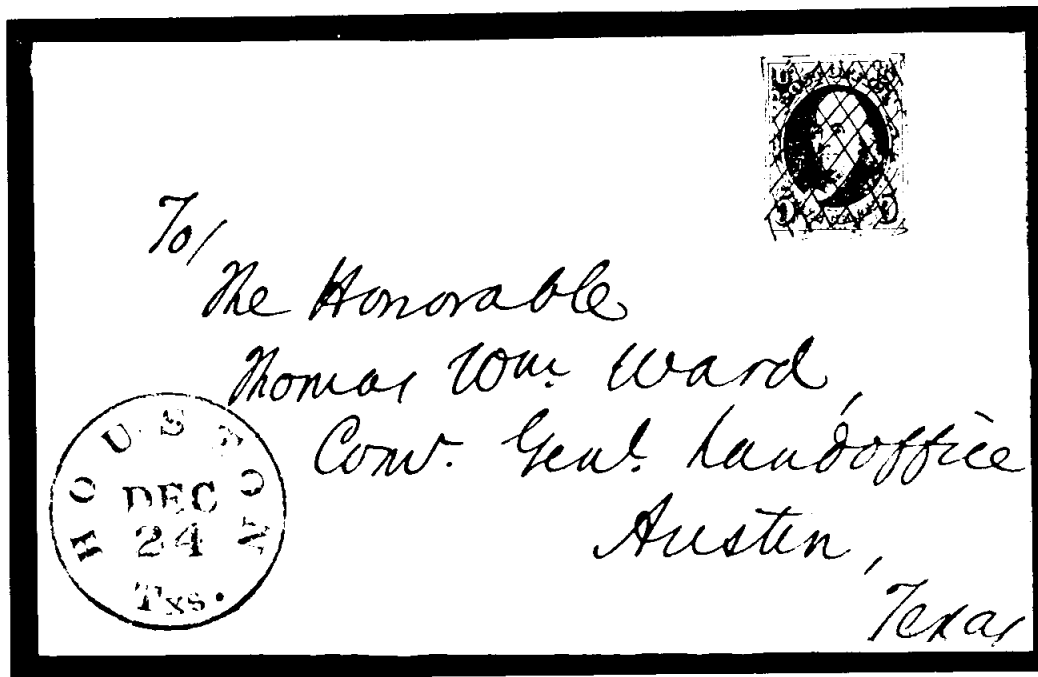
Dates of the first shipments of USA stamps to Texas post offices are shown above. The information is reprinted from Creighton C. Hart's "1847 Covers From Texas". December 1847 predates the arrival of any stamps for sale at post offices in Texas.

May 17, 1850	Bluish	Brownsville to New Orleans
Mar. 21, 1851	?	San Augustine to Centre, Texas
May 10, 18-x	Red	Houston to Austin
Dec. 27, 18-x	Red	Houston to Austin

Details concerning the four other recorded Texas uses of the 1847 five cent brown are listed above (again, reprinted from Hart). Hart states that the item postmarked May 10 is a cover front only. An "x" in the list indicates the missing information is definitely not evident; the "?" indicates the missing information (cancel color) might still be supplied if the cover could be examined. The color of the pen cancel on Miller's December 24 letter is brownish black.

Considering its unusually early use, it is interesting to note the stamp's cancellation. Clearly it is not the customary and quickly penned "X" typical of other early USA manuscript cancels, but is instead a very carefully drawn cross hatching consisting of 24 separate lines. The time required to apply such an elaborate cancel would indicate that it is not the mark of someone who was accustomed to processing postal adhesives. In fact it seems very probable that this was among his first. By comparison, a typical Houston letter of this same period shows no manuscript postal marking of any kind, but instead bears a very quickly applied, handstamped numeral indicating the postage paid (see examples on the following pages). This is not to say that whoever cancelled the stamp shown above did not know or perform his job well - the careful technique was obviously very effective. Also, fortunately, the short pen stroke at the lower left managed to barely tie the stamp to the cover just below the bottom margin.



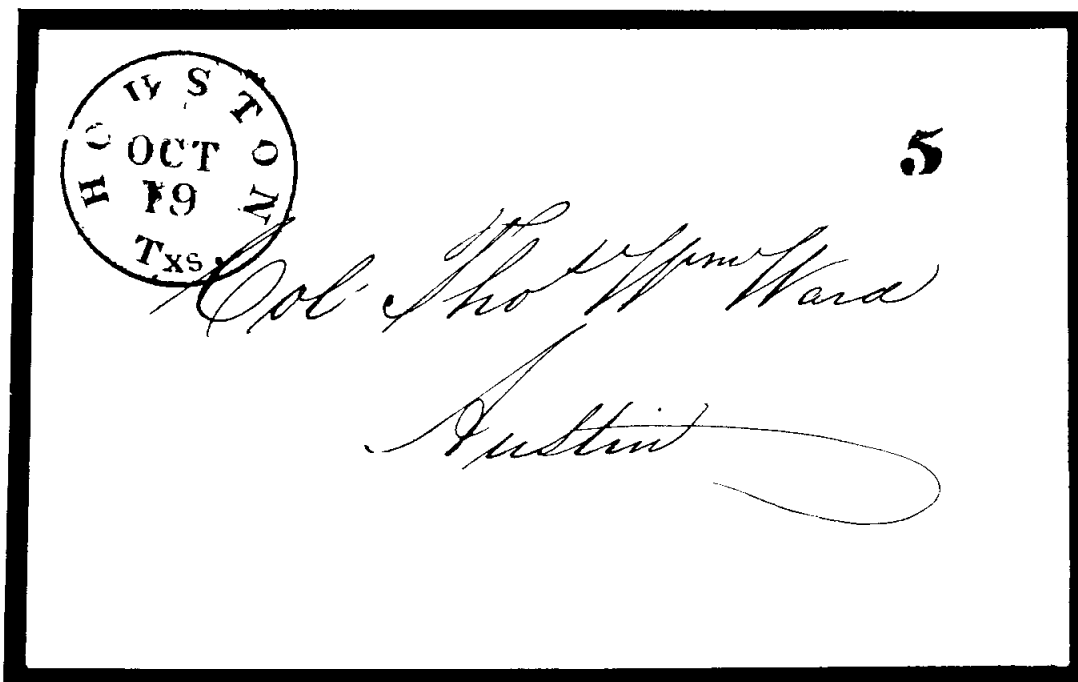
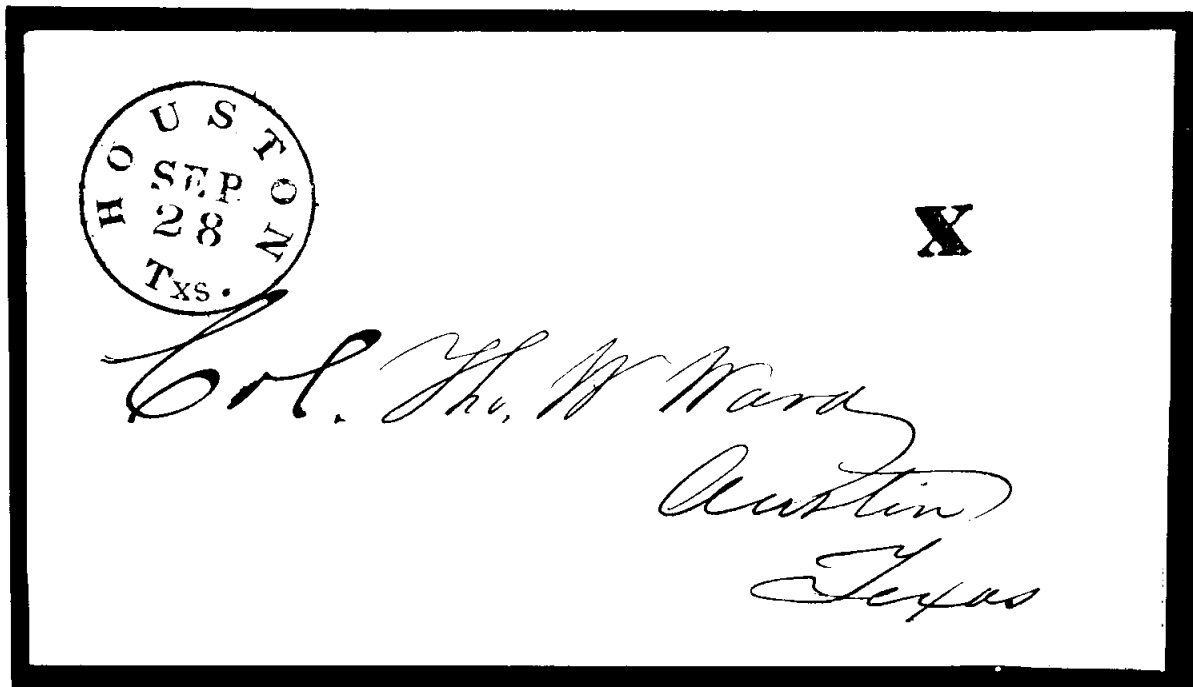


Washington D. Miller's 1847 Christmas Eve letter. The address reads: "To The Honorable Thomas William Ward, Commissioner of the General Land Office, Austin, Texas". The Houston datestamp is black.

There is a single vertical file fold through the center of the letter affecting neither the stamp nor the Houston cds. The color of the stamp itself is a dark, black brown. This shade, according to Brookman, is one of the rarest of the 1847 printing (2). The stamp has four clear margins, with that at the bottom being so irregular it appears, at first glance, that the stamp might have been torn from the remainder of the sheet. However closer inspection reveals this lower edge to be a very smooth, beveled cut, as if sliced or "sawn" by a sharp knife held at an angle.

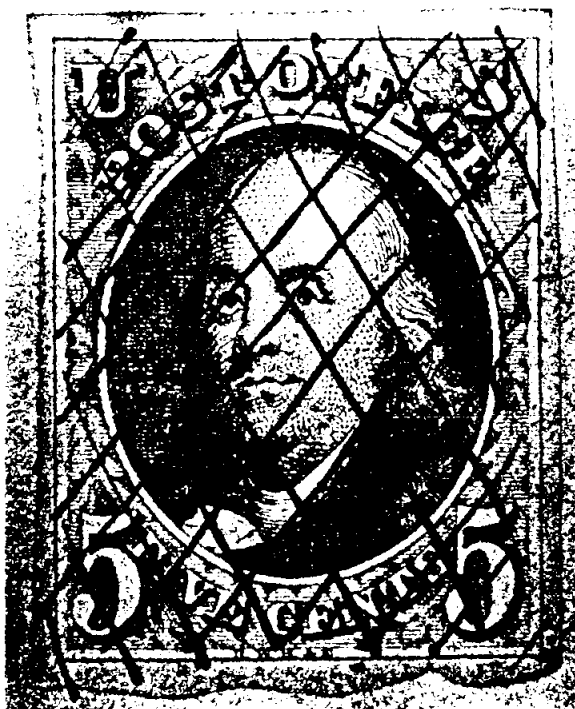
Two additional 1847 letters showing Houston postal markings typical of the latter part of that year are shown on the following page. The markings are in black. Although not used prior to August of 1847, this HOUSTON Txs. circular date stamp was used thereafter until at least 1853 (3). (Until its introduction in the Autumn of 1847, the Houston post office had continued applying the same circular date stamp used during the last years of the Republic of Texas). Both letters are from J. Shackelford & Co., and contain lists and invoices for goods shipped, by stage, from Houston to Thomas William Ward in Austin. Ward had served as a Colonel in the Texas Army during Texas' 1835-6 battle for independence from Mexico; Thus the address "Col."

A final interesting fact concerning the man whose letter bears what surely has to be one of the first stamps used in Texas is that his name appears in Scott's USA Specialized Catalogue. W. D. Miller is listed as having served (under John H. Reagan, another Texan) as Chief Clerk of the Confederate Post Office Department. This seems a curious coincidence. Perhaps the same interest that prompted Miller to bring and use the first USA postal issue to his home state also led, later, to his service as postal official of the Confederacy. For



more information on Miller, see Nonie Green's "A Cover Odyssey", referenced above. For more information concerning Thomas William Ward, the recipient of Miller's letter, and also for information concerning the provenance of the letter (and of the two shown opposite), see A Letter From the "Great Babylon of the United States" to the Republic of Texas Bearing New York Post Master's Provisionals: TPHS Journal, March 1986.

Thanks to Charles Deaton for providing me a copy of Creighton Hart's article from the 1976 TPHS Journal. Also, thanks to Jahn Barwis for the photograph of the stamp on Miller's letter, shown enlarged below.



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(1)

Miller mentions having been in New York (with Albert Sydney Johnson) in an 1846 letter to Ward which accompanied this find. Essentially all travel from Texas to the East Coast during this period was via New Orleans. This letter also makes indirect reference to Washington DC.

(2)

Brookman, Lester G. - THE UNITED STATES POSTAGE STAMP OF THE 19th CENTURY, Volume One, p35; H.L. Linquist Company, 1966.

(3)

Phillips, David G., et al - AMERICAN STAMPLESS COVER CATALOG, Volume One, p344; David G. Phillips Publishing Company, 1985

THE AVENUE HOTEL AND TEX & LAREDO R.P.O.

By Jane King Fohn

Splendor is suggested by this 1894 corner card--the Avenue Hotel was the pride of Austin! In the fall of 1850, Texas' little capitol city rejoiced the opening of this select place for society affairs, and a temporary dwelling for notables.

Swen Magnus Swenson built this 100-room hostelry on the southeast corner of Congress Avenue and Eighth Street. Architecture was in the Mexican manner all rooms opened on a square court which was beautified by tropical plants and a fig that attained third-floor height.

**Avenue Hotel.**

Austin, Texas.

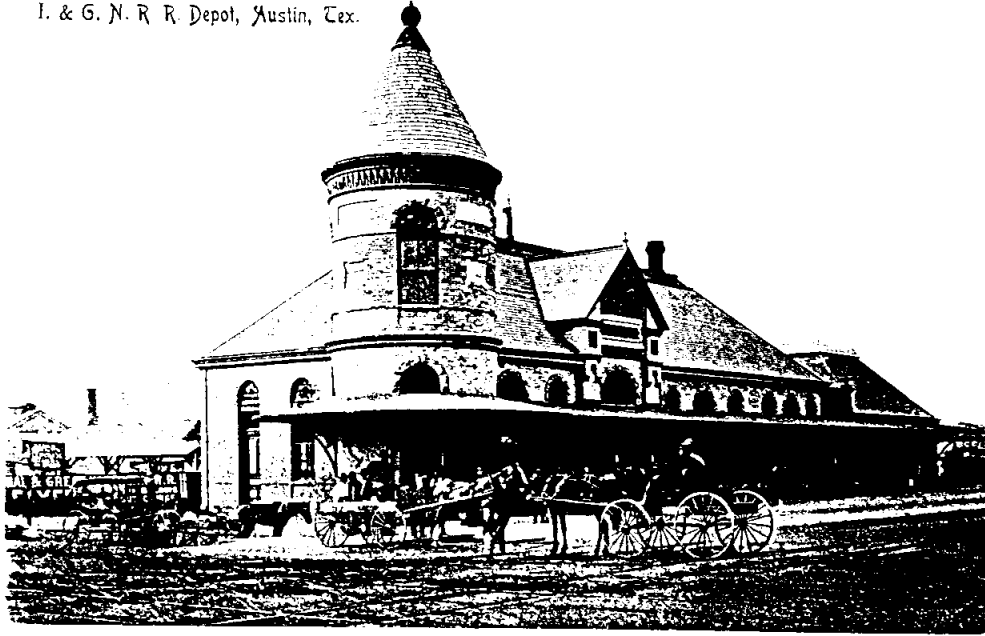


*Mrs Gust Jacobson  
San Antonio  
#519 Buena Vista St. Tex*

Austin activities centered at the Avenue Hotel for many years. Lawmakers assembled and the destiny of Texas was planned. Here, in the Civil War era, Sam Houston cast his vote against secession from the United States. Every type of gentry stayed at the Avenue, Texans searched for friends in the lobby, and football fans made merry after Texas victories.

Hotel happenings were not always of quality. It's walls had reverberated with pistol shots, and the floors had been spattered with blood. A night bartender kissed his wife good-bye; and threatened to draw a sharp-edged razor across his throat only to be thwarted by friends. Drunken cowboys slept off their nocturnal carousing.

I. & G. N. R. R. Depot, Austin, Tex.



Drummers and actors quartered at the Avenue. In May 1867, a celebrated tightrope walker amazed a crowd by walking from the top of the Hotel across Congress to the top of Rust's Brick Building.

In June 1894, a guest at the Avenue Hotel posted a letter to San Antonio. The letter began it's journey from the International-Great Northern Railroad Depot 5 blocks from the Hotel at Congress and Third Street.

John R. Mason, an officer in the Mobile Post Office Society, has supplied the R.P.O. data for this cover. Information about the TEXARKANA & LAREDO R.P.O. had eluded me.

The TEXARKANA (Tex) & LAREDO R.P.O. was a joint effort of the Texas & Pacific Railroad, and the International-Great Northern Railroad. The northern portion of the line was operated by the Texas & Pacific Railroad: the southern portion by the International-Great Northern Railroad. In 1879, both lines were acquired by the Missouri Pacific Railroad.

Texas & Pacific and International-Great Northern lines were constructed during the 1870s. The final extension to Laredo was completed at the end of 1881. Through R.P.O. service was begun in the early 1880s as the TEXARKANA & LAREDO R.P.O. The earliest R.P.O. cancelation that Mr. Mason has seen for this route is 1887.

About 1890, the route was divided. The Northern Division (N.D.) extended from Texarkana to San Antonio-- the Southern Division (S.D.) from San Antonio to Laredo. This arrangement lasted until the end of 1904, when a number of Texas R.P.O.s were realigned.

Without question, the cover ~~was~~ carried on the R.P.O. car on Train No. 1 from Austin to San Antonio. It was properly canceled "TEX & LAREDO R.P.O. N.D. JUN 21 1894 TR 1." The R.P.O. had been operating for a number of years, so it was not a first trip of the R.P.O. It could be the first trip of a newly scheduled express "Name" train, with the train designated by the railroad as "Train No.1" for operating purposes..

Through the years the Avenue Hotel operated a few blocks from the depot. Managers came and went. Each successive operator announced "New Management, Thoroughly Remodeled and Renovated." Finally in 1924, the Avenue Hotel was razed to make room for a modern building.

#### References:

"'A First Class Hotel;' Then It Rained." American Statesman, 25 July 1970.

Austin Daily Statesman, 7 July 1918.

"Austin's History Enriched By The 'Avenue'." American-Statesman, 11 June 1950, Commodore Perry Hotel Section.

"Avenue Hotel, A Landmark." Circa 1918.

Barkley, Mary Starr. History of Travis County and Austin: 1839-1899. Austin Printing Co., 1981), p. 49.

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"Memories Stirred As Building Goes." Austin American, 10 June 1957.

Webb, Walter Prescott. The Handbook of Texas. (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1952), v. 2, p. 217.

## THE MISSING RPO CANCELS

John R. Mason

The Mobile Post Office Society came up against a Texas problem. Charlie Towie has made a computer listing of all R.P.O. routes listed in the P.O.D. records of which he has traced and recorded usage of over 6,500. Unfortunately, there are many unrecorded cancels and therefore unavailable for tracing. Of all the states, Texas has more than any other state, 124 unreported R.P.O.'s (Arizona has but five). I know that some of these must exist, probably buried in collections of Texas covers. From the last list, we did uncover six. Now we are searching for the 124 missing cancels. Perhaps the members of the TPHS could help us fill in some of the blanks. The following is a list of the missing cancels. If any of you have any of these, contact: John R. Mason, 5707 Linden-shire Lane, Dallas, Texas 75230.

### Texas RPO Routes That Have No Postmarks Recorded

Abilene & Ballinger	Honeygrove & Dallas	San Antonio & Beeville
Ashland & Winnsboro	Houston & Eagles Pass Jct.	San Antonio & Campbellton
Baxter Springs & Denison	Houston & Freeport	San Antonio & Crystal City
Beeville & Falfurrias	Houston & Llano	San Antonio & Gardendale
Benjamin & Sweetwater	Houston & Moscow	Sapulpa & Denison
Boonsferry & Beaumont	Houston, Cuero & San Antonio	Sealy & Wharton
Bremond & Cisco	Jacksboro & Seymour	Sedalia & Denison City
Bridgeport & Jacksboro	Jasper & Beaumont	Shreveport & Dallas
Brownwood & Brady	Jefferson & Greenville	Shreveport & Marshall
Byers & Seymour	Kansas City & Bowie	Sinton & Brownsville
Chillicothe & Fort Worth	Kiowa & Panhandle	Skedee & Kingfisher
Clarendon & Fort Worth	Kirbyville & Beaumont	Skidmore & Edinburg
Cleburne & Mexia	Kirbyville & Galveston	Skidmore & McAllen
Commerce & Fort Worth	Lexington & Yoakum	Stephensville & Hamilton
Conroe & Navasota	Lockhart & Shiner	Sweetwater & Toyah
Conroe & Somerville	Lometa & Brady	Taylor & Fayetteville
Corpus Christi & Brownsville	Lometa & Eden	Teague & Houston
Corsicana & Gatesville	Longview & Center	Temple & Ballinger
Dallas & Athens	Lufkin & Houston	Temple & Brownwood
Dallas & Cleburne	Madisonville & Navasota	Texarkana & Fort Worth
Dallas & Jacksonville	Mangum & Wichita Falls	Texarkana & Houston
Dallas & Kemp	Marble Falls & Austin	Texarkana & McGregor
Dallas & Weatherford	Mineola & McKinney	Texarkana, Whitesboro & Fort Worth
Denison & Troup	Mineral Wells & Seymour	Toyah & El Paso
Denison City & Houston	Mt. Pleasant & Tyler	Truscott & Sweetwater
Denison City & Mineola	Nacogdoches & Beaumont	Tyler & Alto
Denison City & Palestine	Nacogdoches & Houston	Vermilionville & Orange
Denison City & Taylor	Newton & Gainesville	Vernon & Fort Worth
Denison City, Troup & Houston	Okeene & Vernon	Waco & Gatesville
Denton & Dallas	Orange & Houston	Waco & Houston
Florence & Gainesville	Pecos & Toyahvale	Waco & Stephenville
Fort Scott & Denison City	Pleasanton & Carrizo Springs	Wallis Station & San Antonio
Fort Worth & Comanche	Quincy & Denison City	Wellington & Panhandle
Fort Worth & Dublin	Refugio & Brownsville	Whitesboro & Dallas
Fort Worth & Guide	Roberts & Ennis	Wichita & Chillicothe
Galveston & Shreveport	Roberts & Guide	Wichita & Miami
Greenville & Dallas	Robstown & Brownville	Wichita & Washburn
Greenville & Ennis	Rockingham & Beaumont	Wichita Falls & Fort Worth
Hallettsville & Kennedy	Roganville & Beaumont	Wichita Falls & Frederick
Hannibal & Denison City	Roganville & Houston	Wichita Falls & Ranger
Herington & Dalhart	Rosenberg & Victoria	
Herington & El Paso	San Angelo & Big Lake	