

# THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY JOURNAL

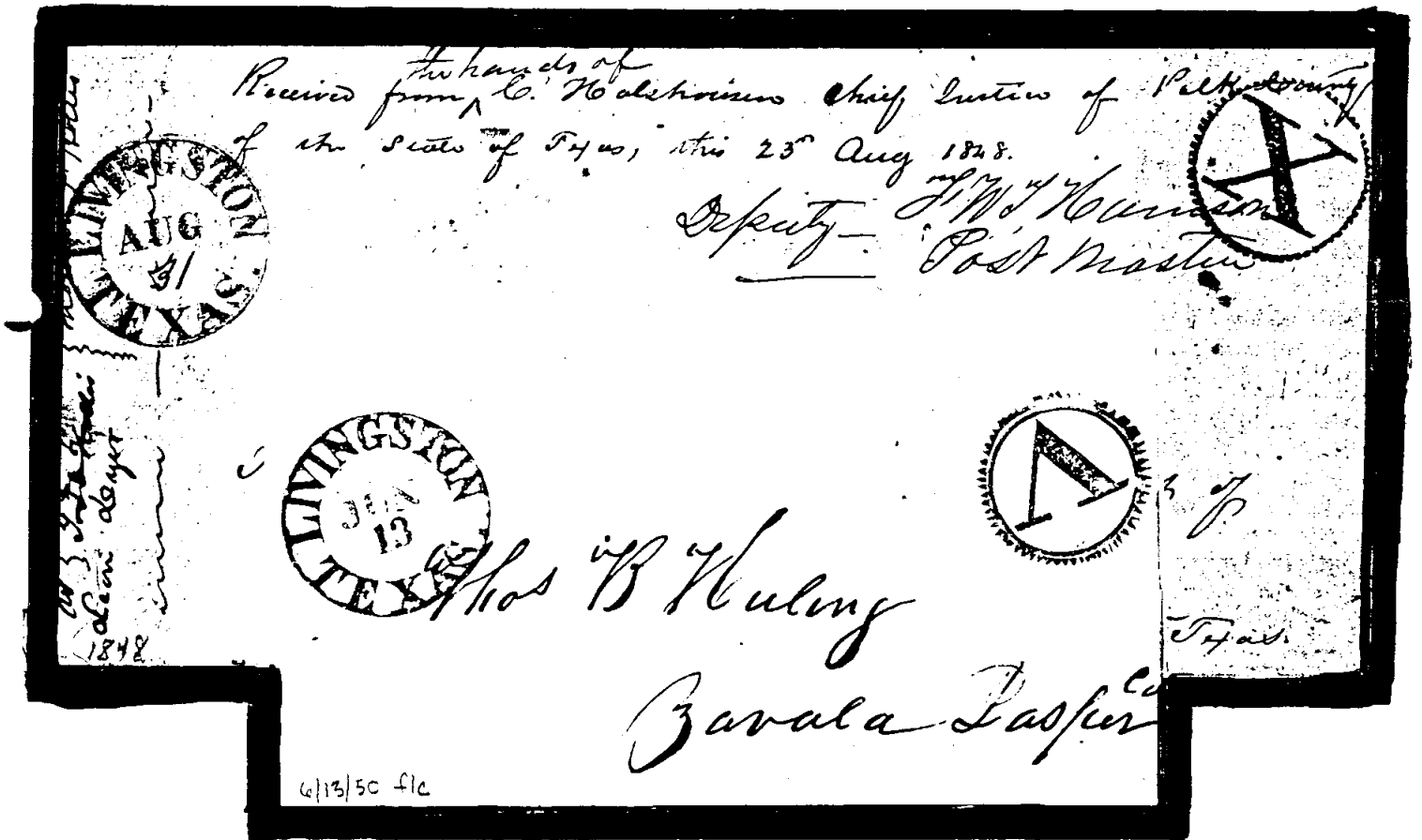


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Illustrated on the front cover are two cancels of Livingston, Texas derived from the same handstamp device. This cancelling device was used from 1848 - 1850, and was 30mm. in diameter, applied in black ink. The postage rates collected upon delivery were also handstamped by devices with encircled Roman numerals.

# THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Dues \$10 per year payable to the Secretary-Treasurer

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Election votes came in on schedule (I think!) and I'm informed that all of the persons running for office were elected by a landslide. So you have all of us in our same posts for 1994 along with our editor, Bill Emery. Thanks to all of you who voted. I know I speak for all of the officers when I say we'll try to keep T.P.H.S. affairs in good shape again this year.

The ILLUSTRATED COVER CONTEST is still on. We need more entries. Few have come to our editor, so if you've put off getting your cover in the mail because of the holidays, you still have a chance to enter. We're extending the contest to allow more persons to get their entry in the mail. Check the December 1993 issue of the Journal for the rules and other contest details.

Should we again have a T.P.H.S. meeting at TEXPEX 94, the state T.P.A. show, or at another show in a different location? The '94 show will again be held in Dallas - the dates are June 10-12. Cogitate a bit and then call me or drop me a note with your thinking. Please do it quickly as it is time again to get scheduled in the show program wherever we decide to hold our meeting.

Hopefully, most of you saw the article in the January 17th edition of Linn's Stamp News reporting that the Walter G. Schmidt collection of Texas postal history has been donated to the University of Texas at Arlington. According to the archival intern who processed the collection, it will be invaluable to any researcher investigating Texas post offices and postmasters from the Spanish era through the 1970's. The Schmidt material is available at the UTA Central Library, 702 College, Arlington, Texas.

A reminder. If you haven't paid your 1994 dues, they are past due. Get your 1994 dues check in the mail to our treasurer, Karl Gebert. That's it for this time.

Good Collectin'

Ed Christman

AN EARLY NEW BRAUNFELS COVER

By William H. P. Emery

While searching through some old covers that might serve as a basis for a short article, I came across one that's been in my accumulation for over twenty years. See Figure 1.

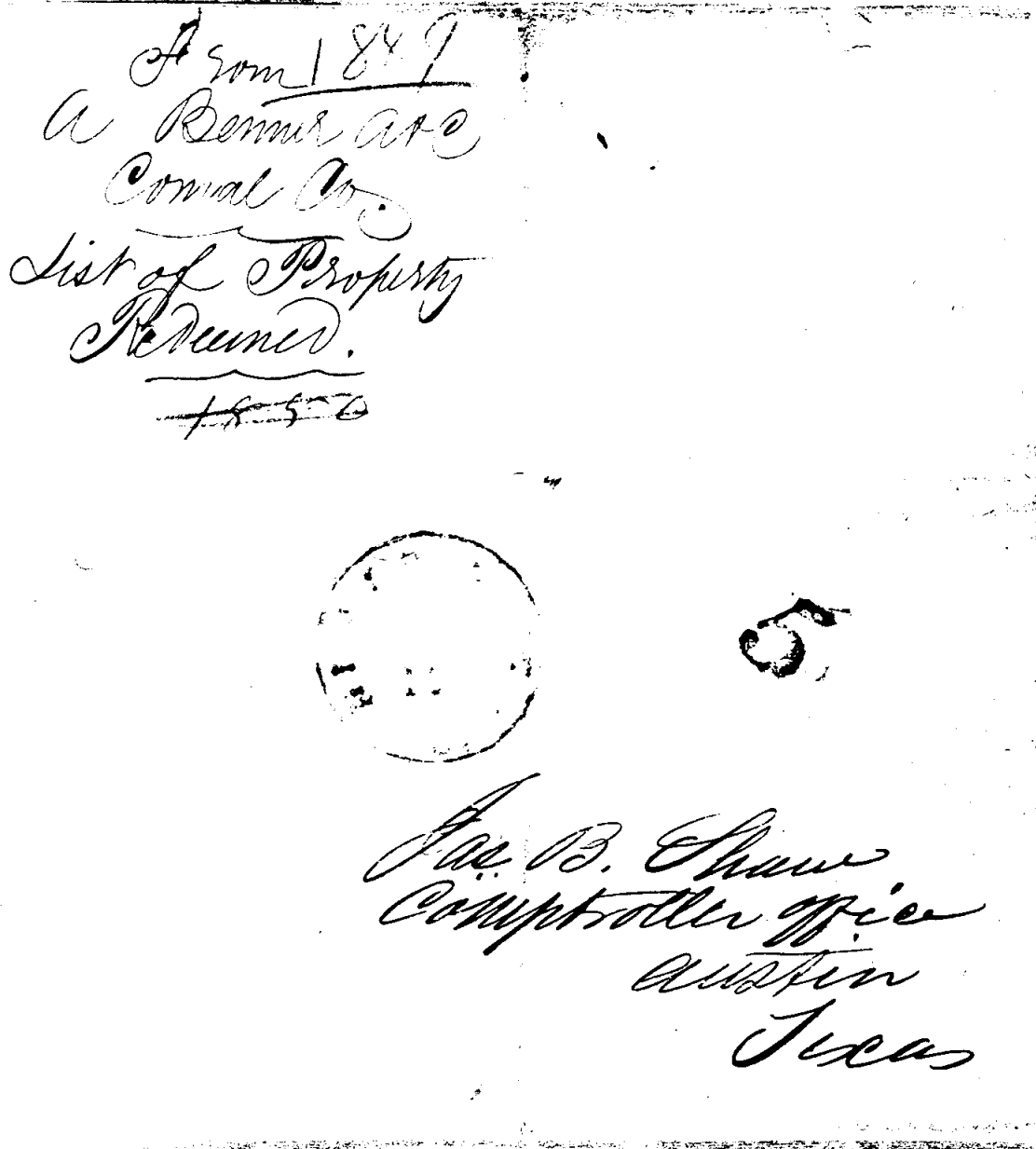


Figure 1

This cover does not have much monetary value and certainly it does not possess any exhibition qualities. The circular date stamp is poorly struck, and there are file folds crossing the front of the cover. However to me, it is a most interesting artifact, that takes me back in time and causes me to reflect on what it must have been like during the settlement of this community. It is my hope that

when the reader finishes this article that they too may see how a cover such as this can become a bond with the past. Both the man who sent the letter and the man who received it were important participants in the development of early Texas.

The cover is struck with a black, 34mm., circular date stamp posted on June 17, 1850. This is some two years earlier than any New Braunfels c.d.s. recorded in the American Stampless Cover Catalog. The postmaster at the time this cover was posted was Carl Wm. Thomae. The post office was located in the Henkel house, a combined hotel, tavern and store, situated on the corner of Castell and Mill Streets. This cover was sent postpaid and the rate was indicated by a printed "5" placed in the upper right corner. This was the 1850 rate on a letter of less than one half ounce, carried under three hundred miles. Brown & Tarbox had the contract for twice weekly service from San Antonio via Austin to Houston so it is presumed that they carried this letter. The route contract number was #6285.

The contents of the folded letter consist of a rendition of state and county taxes to be paid by a number of property owners to Comal County and to the State of Texas. This rendition is written in German by A. Benner, Assessor and Collector of taxes for Comal County in the year 1849.

Gustav Adolph Benner was born in Bergheim, Waldeck, Germany in 1811. He departed Bremen October 22, 1844 on the ship "Leon Tine" with a destination of Galveston, Texas. Early in 1845 he was appointed an officer of the Verein and put in charge of the commissary department. On Good Friday, March 21st that same year he was among the first contingent of settlers, led by Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels to reach the new settlement on the Comal River. A little more than a year later he was also present to witness the arrival of a second wave of German emigrants seeking to reach New Braunfels. The terrible plight witnessed by Benner is described in a lecture written by Friedrich Kapp and published in the New York Daily Tribune of Jan. 20, 1855.

"On the fourteenth of July, 1846 (Hermann) Seele went with A. Benner one of the officers of the Verein, down to the landing-place of the ferry over the Guadalupe at the mouth of the Comal near New Braunfels. Immigrants who had made the terrible journey up from the coast had reached their destination, only to be forced by high water to wait across the river from the town. It was unbearably hot along the river and a foul vapor that oppressed breathing arose from the low lying Comal bottom which had been overflowed, as well as from the river itself, still high and muddy. On the opposite bank, here and there a tent showed through the foliage of cypress, sycamores, and other trees of the primeval forest, and between the trees shimmered protecting shelters fashioned of sheets and tablecloths. Everywhere lay chests and household utensils in the places where they had been unloaded. Washed clothing was hung up to dry on bushes, and grapevines. Fires burned, and in the shadow of the trees men, women, and children were walking, standing or setting."

Knapp's article continues, "Seele and Benner were greeted by frantic pleas from a group for aid in dealing with an American teamster who threatened to carry their belongings away with him unless he was paid at once for his services. An almost overloaded wagon, to which the constantly cursing American had hitched his oxen in readiness to drive away, stood at the edge of the bushes. A number of gesticulating immigrants stood helplessly looking on unable to utter a word in English. On a feather bed near the wagon lay an old farmer in a high fever. Not far from him under a bush, the body of a woman lay wrapped in a bedspread. She had died on the journey up from Seguin an hour before. Little children sat huddled close together on the ground and wept bitterly for the dear, dead mother, while their older sister attempted in vain to quiet them and to suppress her sobs."

Adolph Benner was married in 1848 to Louise Mittendorf and from this union derived four children before his death in 1857. He was appointed to be postmaster of New Braunfels December 6, 1851 and carried out the duties of this office in the Benner store located on town lot #39 on East San Antonio Street.

An interesting side light to Benner's tenure as postmaster is that upon Adolph Benner's death, Mrs. Louise Benner was appointed to fill the vacancy. Thus, on May 14, 1857, she became not only the postmaster of New Braunfels but also the first woman postmistress in the State of Texas. Some have even contended that she was the first woman to have served as postmaster anywhere in the United States.

The cover shown in Figure 1 is addressed to James B. Shaw, Comptroller's Office, Austin, Texas. Mr. Shaw was born in Ireland about 1799. He was educated at the University of Dublin, after which he emigrated to the United States. In 1837, he came to Texas to serve in the Texian Army. After only a year, he was made chief clerk in the Treasury Department and in 1839 was elected Comptroller, a position he held until 1859. As chief financial officer of the State of Texas he was sent to Washington, D.C. to collect the five million dollar payment of the federal government resulting from the Compromise of 1850 in which Texas had sold parts of present New Mexico and Colorado.

Shaw is also remembered as the man who in 1853, had a Southern Colonial style house built on 200 acres of land along Shoal Creek in west Austin. This home which was built by Abner H. Cook, architect for the present day Governor's mansion, was named Woodlawn. In 1859 Shaw sold the home and property to Governor Elisha M. Pease who moved into it after his 2nd term as governor and who renamed the estate Enfield.

Shaw died in Galveston in the 1870's.

## POSTAL ARTIFACTS OF THE COPANO BAY AREA

By R.H. Stever

### Foreward

The following article is based to a great extent on the in-depth research of my friend Keith Guthrie whose marvelous book, Texas Forgotten Ports, tells the whole story in great detail of the fascinating people, the towns they founded or supported and the politics of the area during the late Mexican and early Texan days. What follows merely scratches the surface of Keith's history in an attempt to inject a little postal history into the story.

R.H. Stever

In the 1700's the Spanish had eight Missions in Texas, five at Bexar (San Antonio), two at La Bahia (Goliad) and one at Nacogdoches. To supply these missions by land route from northern Mexico was considered to be too long, too arduous and too dangerous. Several early Spanish explorers had sailed into the various bays and inlets along the Texas coast. Obviously the best way to supply the Missions was by ship into one of the bays mapped during these coastal explorations.

The choice was Aranzazu Bay, later known as Copano Bay. Supplies for the Spanish Missions began to be off-loaded at a point on the northwest shore of Copano Bay as early as 1750. In 1785 the Spanish viceroy, Don Jose Galvez, ordered a port community be established to further trade and commerce. The bay was charted that year by Don Jose de Evia and the first Texas port, El Copano, resulted.

El Copano was used by the Spanish, later by the Mexicans and still later by Texans. Located on a fairly deep bay which extended well inland from the gulf coast and protected by the barrier islands and some treacherous reefs, El Copano proved to be a haven for pirates and those engaged in various types of illicit trade. This kind of activity attracted promoters, traders, speculators - all sort of entrepreneur out to make a fast buck - along with a few hardy settlers and visionaries. There was a U.S. post office at El Copano from 1851 to 1867. This writer knows of no covers posted at El Copano although they surely exist. One letter which went to El Copano will be discussed later.

There was a lot of activity in the Copano Bay area in the early days after the Texas revolution, perhaps more here than anywhere else along the entire Texas coast. One potentially lucrative business was land speculation and the Copano Bay area

had many adherents. A common modus operandi was to purchase land certificates which were originally awarded to veterans of the Texas revolution, locate unclaimed land, get it patented and establish ownership. Next step was to plat the property, sell lots and build a town with future growth potential. Figure 1 is a map of the Copano Bay area showing some of the ghost towns laid out by those early promoters.

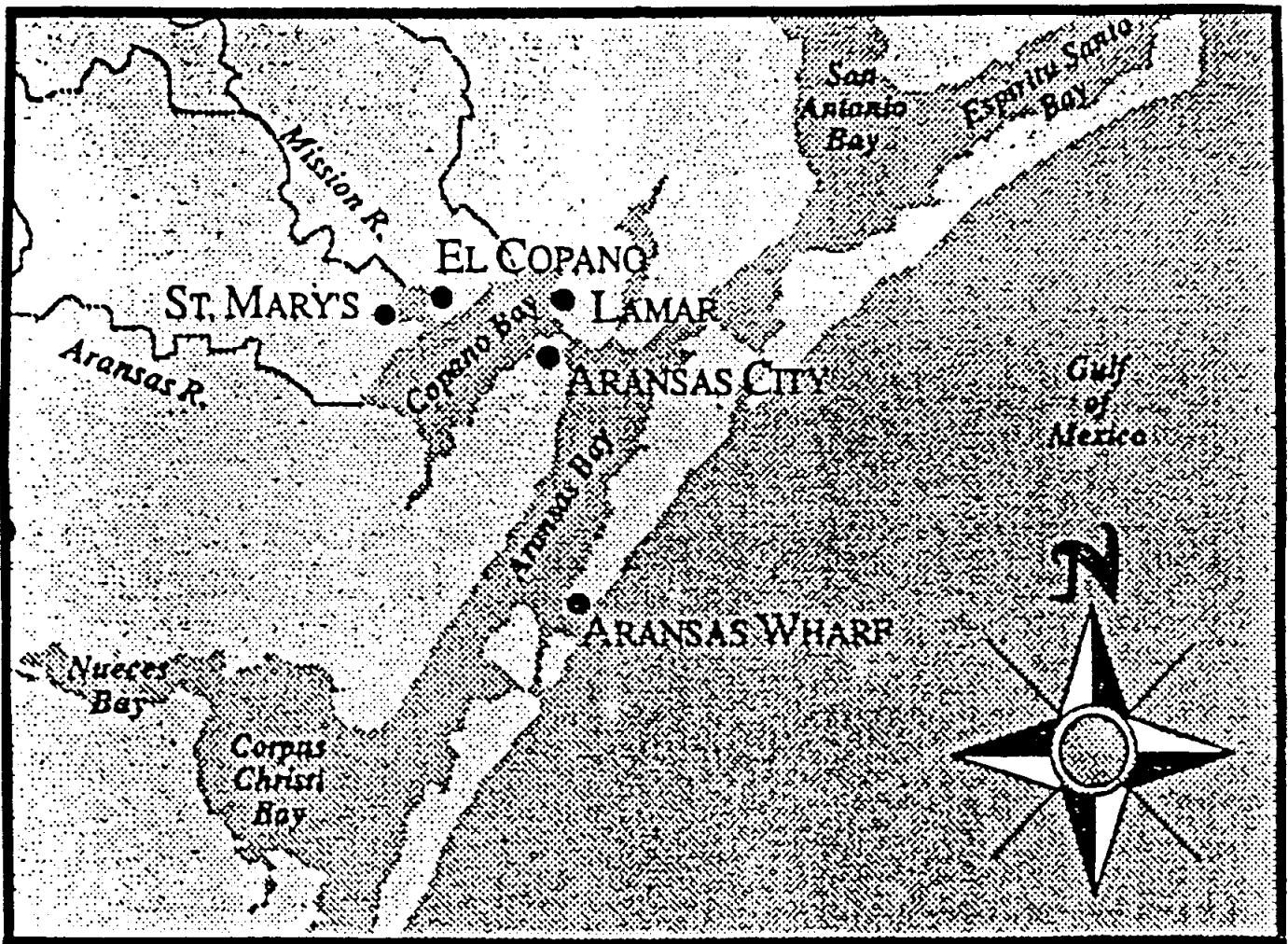


Figure 1. Map showing location of early towns in the Copano and Aransas Bay area. Adapted from Corpus Christi Caller-Times article, May 26, 1992.

Aransas City occupied the site of the old Spanish and Mexican fort at Aranzazu where a garrison was established to try to hold the smuggling traffic to a minimum. Although the town was officially named Aransas City, the location was on Live Oak Point and that was its popular name.



The idea for the town was conceived by Empresario James Power whose home was at Live Oak Point. Aransas City was founded about 1838, incorporated in 1839 and by the early 1850's was a deserted beach. During its heyday most of the area's important people were residents of Aransas City or conducted business there.

Figure 2 shows a Republic vintage cover which is datelined "Live Oak Point, March 24, 1842". This folded letter was put on a coastal steamer and carried to Galveston where it received a blue "SHIP" marking and manuscript "6" paying the Texas ship rate of 6¼¢ to New Orleans. The message inside is an interesting discussion of the different bodies of troops, the generally unsettled conditions in the area and the author's thoughts on the survival of the Republic.

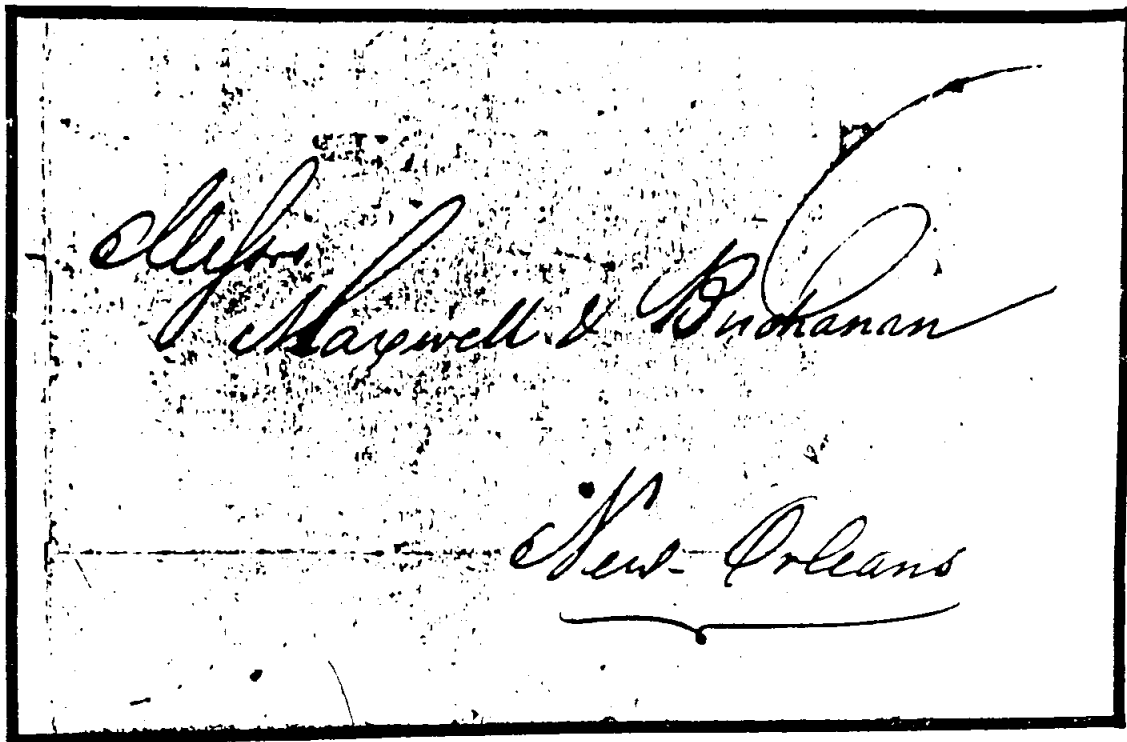


Figure 2. Texas Republic letter written at Live Oak Point (Aransas City) in 1842.

In the pre-Republic days the Mexicans maintained a customs-house at El Copano. After the revolution the Texans continued to use the old Mexican facility for the same purpose until Thomas M. Duke, appointed collector of customs by the Congress of the Republic in June 1837, decided the customshouse should be located at Aransas City. Directly across the entrance to Copano Bay from Live Oak Point is another attractive area known as Lookout Point. One of the astute land speculators was Capt. James W. Byrne who realized land certificates could be acquired at very little expense from soldiers or their heirs. Byrne put together a

1428-acre survey on Lookout Peninsula with the help of certain friendly politicians. Byrne had two associates in this project, George Robert Hull (or Hulle) and George Armstrong. They proposed to locate a new town on Lookout Peninsula and Byrne named it after his friend, currently President of the Republic, Mirabeau B. Lamar. Byrne also proposed to move the customhouse to Lamar since its importance would make Lamar the main port.

Lamar and Aransas City became rivals for this political plum. When the matter was brought before the President he naturally opted for his namesake town. The customhouse was moved to Lamar, but actually only for a short time, as the Aransas City people got Congress to return it to its original site. Figure 3 is a hand

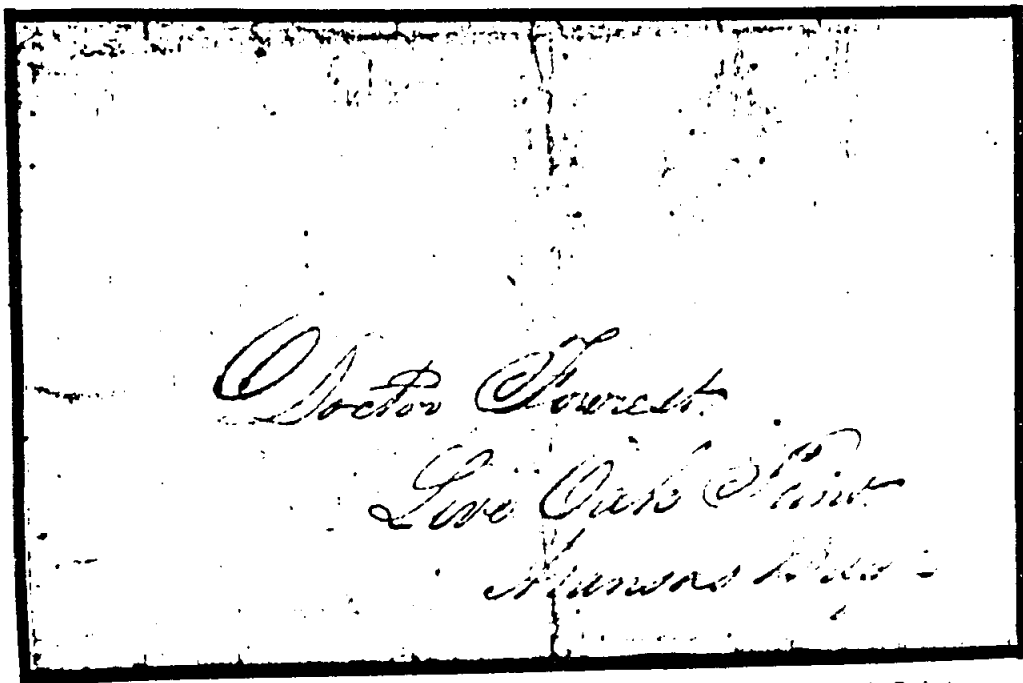


Figure 3. 1838 hand carried letter from Matagorda to Live Oak Point.

carried folded letter addressed to Live Oak Point which illustrates the rivalry between the two towns. The text of the letter reveals it was written by one of Byrnes' partners (Hull) and refers to Byrne and the other partner, George Armstrong, who actually delivered it to a Dr. Forrest. They were trying to entice the doctor to move from Live Oak Point to Lamar. The letter also reveals Mr. Hull, like most of our early pioneers, to be poorly versed in grammar and spelling.

Matagorda 23rd Sept. 1838

Dear Forrest

This will be handed you by Mr. Armstrong a particular friend of mine any assistance or attention you can render him will be esteemed a favor by me. I have conjointly with him and Captain Byrne of the firm of Sloa(?) and Byrne New Orleans purchased the league of land opposite Live Oak Point situated on Look Out where we propose locating a Town to be named the City of Lamar. I proceed tomorrow via Velasco and Houston for New Orleans from whence I proceed to Mobile for Lumber and propose been at the Point the latter end of November or beginning of Decr. Your friend Wheelright will be on and I hope to have you both located with us. I take orders for waggons and oxen to open a communication with St. Antoine and propose putting up an Hotele and Large Stone House. I write this for your guidance as of course a good Lot is as at your service if you think that location will suit as well or better than Live Oak. I am much hurried so excuse this hurried scrolle.

Yours truly

G. R. Hulle

Figure 4 is a folded letter posted at Austin on Nov. 13, 1851 (year date by docketing on back) to James W. Byrne at Lamar. The Austin CDS and "5" due marking are in red. Unfortunately the inner message page is missing. The notation on the reverse refers to an estate with which Byrne apparently had a business interest. Byrne was the postmaster at Lamar when this letter was delivered.

Lamar got a U.S. post office in 1851 which survived until 1918. Actually, of the communities shown on Figure 1, only Lamar is still active. In recent years it has grown considerably and by all rights should have a post office. Figure 5, an 1894 cover, is an example of a Lamar cancel of the late 19th century.

The path for shipping to reach Copano Bay was by entry into Aransas Bay at the Aransas pass between St. Joseph and Mustang Islands. A community called Aransas Wharf (Figure 1) was located at the south tip of St. Joseph Island near the pass. Ocean-going vessels unable to cross the bar into the shallow bays off-loaded their cargoes here for lightering southwest to Corpus Christi or northwest to the Copano Bay communities. Aransas Wharf was also known as Aransas.

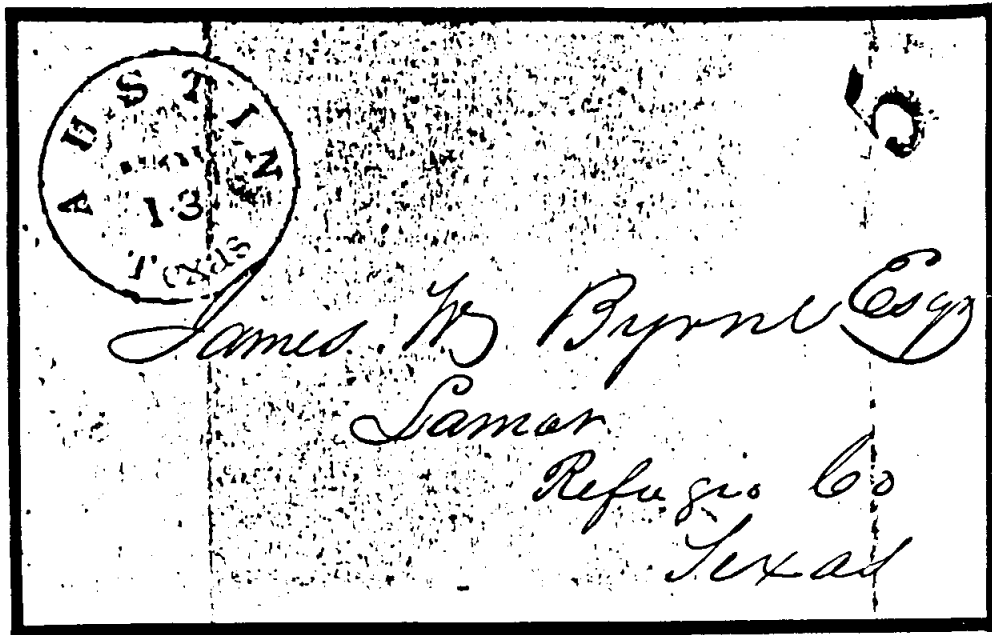


Figure 4. Letter to founder of Lamar, Capt. James W. Byrne, from Austin, Nov. 1851.

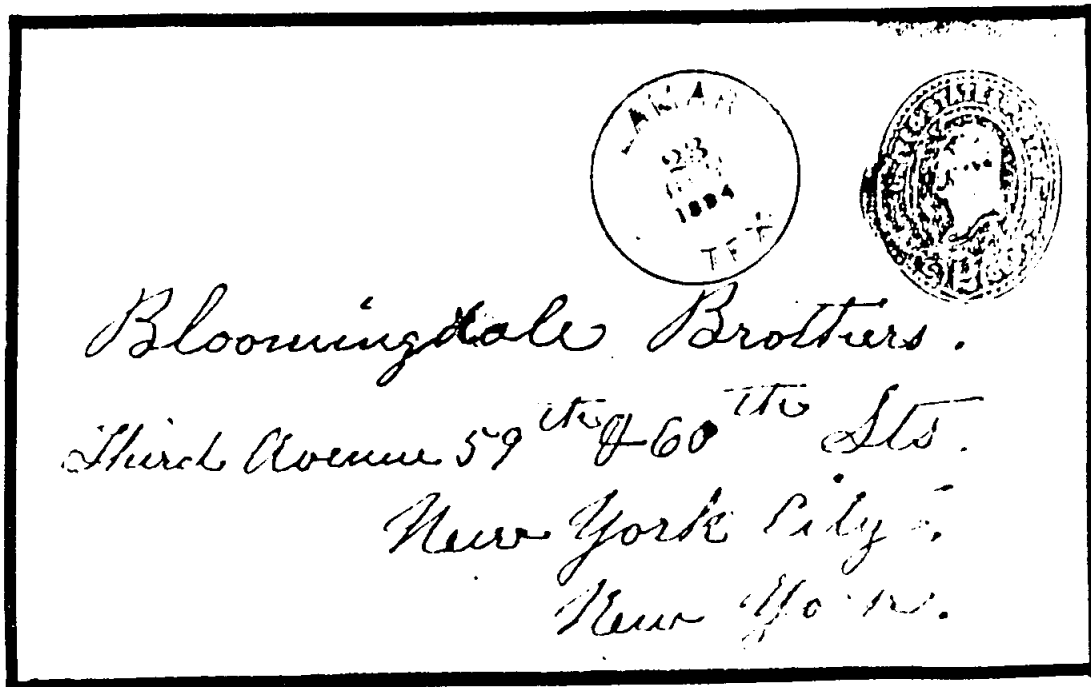


Figure 5. Lamar cancel on 1894 letter to New York.

Aransas had a post office from 1849 to 1866 according to Deaton's Texas Postal History Handbook. Figure 6 is an April, 1852 folded letter posted at Aransas. The townmark and "PAID" handstamp are in red and are handsome strikes. The cover is addressed to Judge (Walter) Lambert whose home was at El Copano. Judge Lambert also served as the first postmaster at El Copano. It is headed "Shell Bank" and mentions St. Joseph Island. The 3-cent single weight postage rate was paid by the sender.

A second Aransas cover, shown in Figure 7, is of late 1850's vintage. The clear handstamp of Figure 6 is now nearly worn out and black ink has been used instead of the earlier red. The cover is franked with a 3-cent stamp of the 1857 issue.

Aransas actually got its start in late July 1845 when General Zachary Taylor came to South Texas. Troops and military supplies were landed on St. Joseph Island from where they were lightered to the beach at Corpus Christi. Facilities set up here by army quartermaster personnel were used throughout the Mexican War and

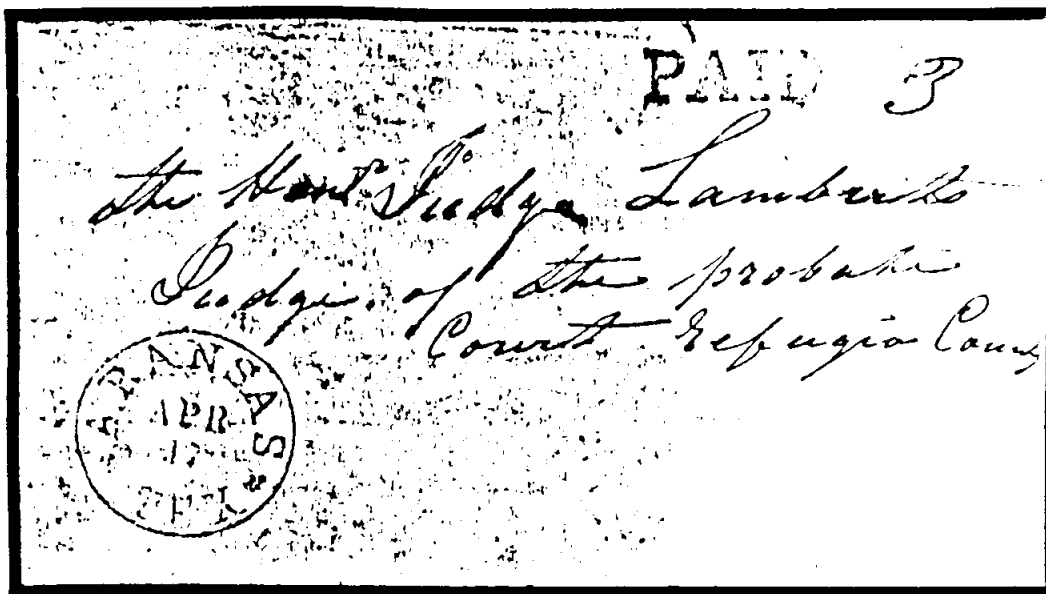


Figure 6. Letter to Judge Lambert, April 1852. He lived at El Copano, making this a possible rare postal history artifact of Texas's first port. The Refugio County court was located at Refugio, however. It isn't known to which place this letter was delivered, his home or his office.

apparently passed to civilian use or a combination civilian and military use after that conflict. The town was originally known as St. Joseph with a post office (Army?) in the period 1847-49 before the name change to Aransas. Aransas met its end in 1862

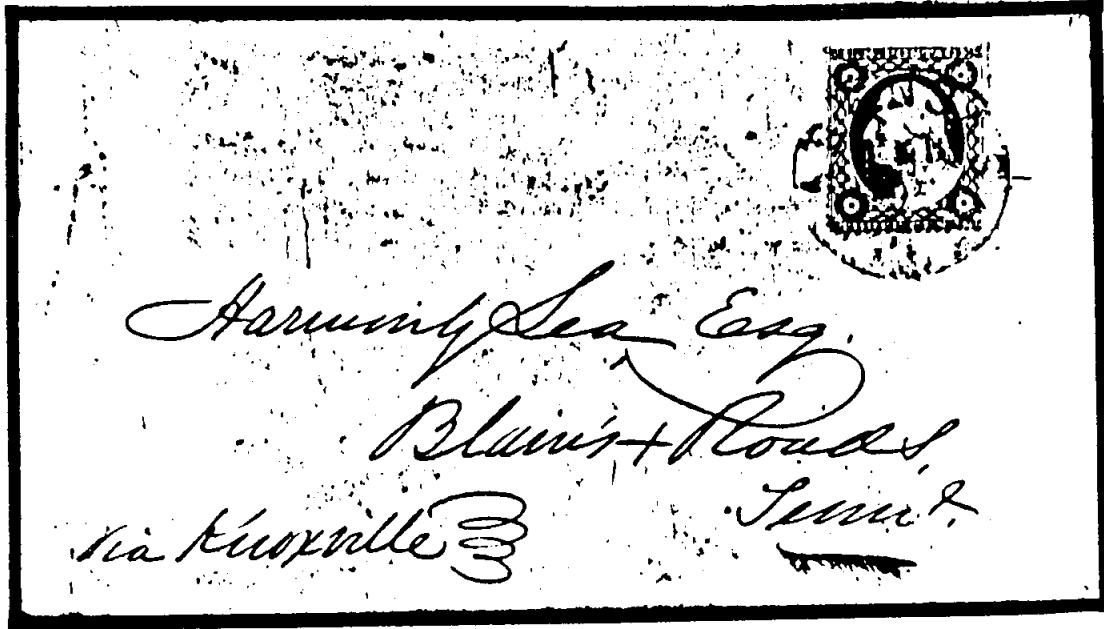


Figure 7. Late 1850's letter from Aransas to Tennessee. Aransas was located near the south tip of St. Joseph Island.

when it was destroyed by Federal troops during the Civil War and never re-built. Its Confederate post office probably ceased to operate at that time. The 1866 closure date in Deaton's reflects a blanket closure order of many southern post offices by the USPOD after the war.

The TPHS Journal of August 1983 (Volume 8, Number 3) has an article by Bill Emery on an early reconstruction cover from Goliad to St. Marys in 1866. That cover is addressed to T.K. Byrne, Esq., no doubt a relative of Capt. James W. Byrne, founder of Lamar. Bill's article gives some interesting background on the men and method used to deliver the mails to the Copano Bay communities.

St. Marys was the last of the "ghost" towns shown in Figure 1 to be established. Probably the most important person involved in St. Mary's founding was Joseph F. Smith, an attorney and expert on Mexican land titles. He, with an associate, conceived a town at th site of present-day Bayside. However, he was shrewd enough to check water depths along the Copano Bay shore and discovered a location two miles northeast to be the most advantageous. He sold lots but gave land free to anyone who would settle at St. Marys. Through Smith's promotions he got warehouses, stores, a wharf which extended well out into the bay so that schooners could tie up, and was able to attract many businessmen and settlers. St. Marys population exceeded 2000, some say it was as much as 6000. It was a bustling community. St. Mary's was the most important lumber importing center in all of Texas. Its post office was established in 1857.

Figure 8 is a cover which originated at St. Marys after the Civil War, probably in the late 1860's. The envelope stamp, U59, is of the 1864-65 issue. The cancel is a 33 mm "balloon" CDS with serified letters. It used a small lower-case "t" set high for an abbreviation of "Saint". Compare this with the 1870's cancel shown in Figure 9. The latter is a smaller 27 mm CDS with plain Roman letters and the word "Saint" spelled out. A still later St. Marys CDS (not shown) is even smaller, 24 mm, with smaller plain Roman letters and the "Saint" again abbreviated.

These covers represent the heyday of St. Marys, those years after the Civil War and prior to the great hurricanes of 1875 and 1886 which leveled Indianola, El Copano and St. Marys. This bustling community suffered another hard blow later when the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad bypassed the area. The growth of Rockport and Corpus Christi further doomed the Copano Bay communities.

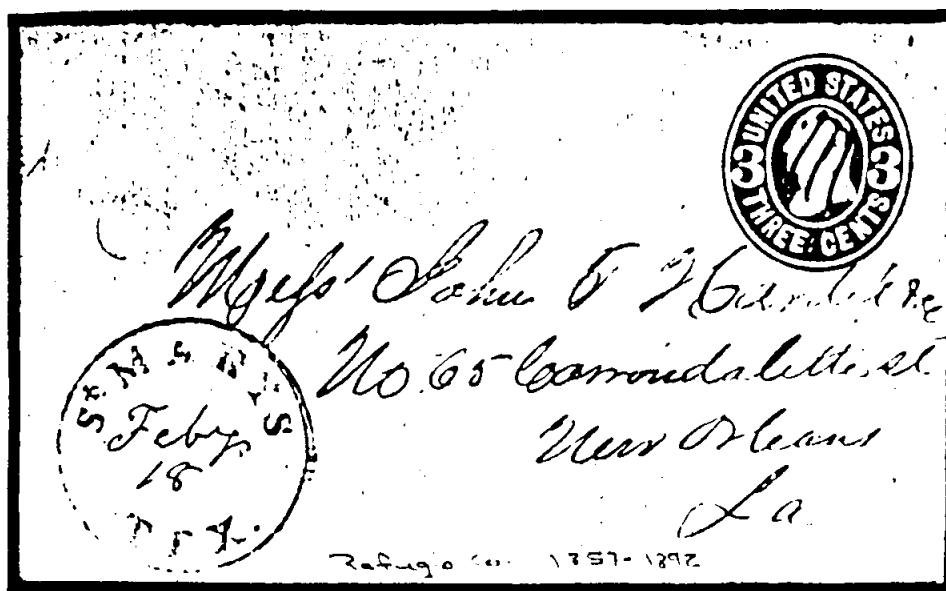


Figure 8. Early St. Marys balloon cancel, late 1860's.

And now, with the exception of Lamar, they are all gone with few vestiges of their earlier activity and those intrepid early settlers. A typical and nostalgic example is the sign along the Bayside-Refugio road pointing to the St. Marys cemetery. It's all that remains.

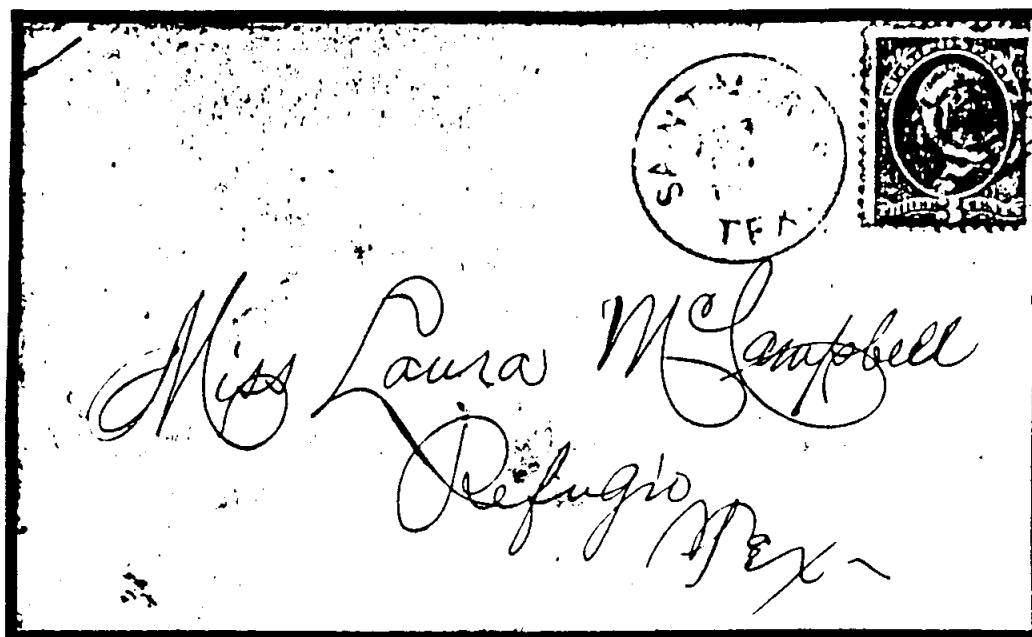


Figure 9. St. Marys cancel of the 1870's.

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AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF TEXAS POST OFFICES

TEXAS POST OFFICES UNDER FIVE FLAGS

By; Walter G. Schmidt  
The Collectors' Club of Chicago  
1029 North Dearborn  
Chicago, Illinois 60610

This book is bound in an attractive red hardback cover with 263 slick-quality pages. The text includes an introduction of historical events along with illustrations of Texas covers of historical interest. A listing of Texas post offices from A to Z, along with the appropriate county, date established, date discontinued, or present status, along with the first post master's name is included. This information uses some 290 pages in its presentation. All of the post offices in each county are noted. In the case of Bexar County (my county), some sixty-eight offices are listed. The offices existing under the various political jurisdictions are then listed.

A very interesting chart showing the development of counties from the early districts is shown. A group of maps illustrates the outline of the original districts with the present counties shown within the district outline.

This is a nice addition to the library of Texas postal history. The material is well organized and reflects considerable research and dedication.

Noticeably missing in the cover chapter were Spanish and Mexican postmarks. Also, the material in the tabulation of post offices has been listed by Jim Wheat in his study, as well as Deaton in his publication.

In all, this is something the Texas collector would use for reference. No price for the volume is listed, but the publisher will probably be able to supply the price. It is my understanding that three hundred copies were printed and some two hundred have already been sold.

Edgar L. Leissner