

EXHIBIT SYNOPSIS

Tuscaloosa During the Civil War

Purpose of Exhibit:

To provide an overview of the postal history of Tuscaloosa (AL) during the Civil War period. The exhibit begins with the history of Tuscaloosa around this timeframe. The remainder of the exhibit includes covers with a wide variety of featured characteristics. Substantial original research was conducted to illustrate this important time period of Tuscaloosa's history.

Philatelic Importance:

This is the first known philatelic exhibit of Tuscaloosa during the Civil War period.

Background:

Alabama seceded from the Union on January 11, 1861 and was admitted to the Confederate States of America (CSA) on February 4, 1861. Thus it was an independent state for 24 days ("Independent State Usage"). The period between admittance to the CSA and the end of the use of US stamps on May 31, 1861 is known as the "US Used in the CSA" period. For the state of Alabama, this consisted of 117 days. On June 1, 1861, the Confederate States took over their post offices, as US postage in those states was demonetized. However, there were no CSA stamps yet. As a result "Handstamp Paid's" were used by most local post offices, including Tuscaloosa, indicating postage had been paid. The rates for that period were as follows: 5¢ per half-ounce under 500 miles, 10¢ cents per half-ounce over 500 miles, and 2¢ for drop letters and circulars. It wasn't until October 16, 1861 that CSA "General Issue Stamps" became available, although handstamp paid's persisted until stamps were received. On July 1, 1862, the rate was increased to 10¢ for a single letter regardless of distance travelled. A total of 13 different general issue stamps were utilized throughout the war.

Challenge Factor:

The major challenge of this exhibit was finding Tuscaloosa postmarked covers that yielded sufficient research. Specifically research on each cover was conducted on (1) the historical background of Tuscaloosa during the Civil War era, as well as (2) information on the senders, recipients, and their families. Covers were sought after with these two specific goals in mind.

What is Presented:

Fifteen different covers with Tuscaloosa postmarks are shown, as well as the results uncovered through extensive research. The exhibit includes such items as photographs, fancy cancels, CSA records, a map, illustrations, University of Alabama Presidents and Professors, Confederate soldiers, famous Alabama families, insides of a turned cover and an wallpaper adversity cover, advertising covers, an original letter, and a hand-drawn patriotic cover.

Organization:

Covers are displayed beginning with a pre-war Tuscaloosa star fancy cancel, several handstamp paid, and then numerically through the general issue stamps. For each cover, details are provided on Tuscaloosa postmarks, handstamps or stamps, as well as the results of the research.

Material Highlights:

- 1 – Advertising covers, both embossed commercial and all-over illuminated from the University of Alabama.
- 2 – Confederate casualty of family who are direct ancestors of my daughter's best friend.
- 3 – The Civil War President of the University of Alabama as well as a future President.
- 4 – Letters and CSA official records of Confederate soldiers.
- 5 – Cover and information on a famous University of Alabama Professor, who has a building named after him.
- 6 – Tombstones of several cover individuals.
- 7 – Covers from numerous soldiers who, after the war, went on to state and national political office.
- 8 – The complete insides of both a turned letter and a wallpaper adversity cover.
- 9 – A rare hand-drawn Patriotic cover.

References:

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