

Tuscaloosa During the Civil War

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 Pairs**” were used by most local post offices, including Tuscaloosa, indicating postage had been paid. The rates for that period, as approved by the Provisional Congress, First Session (February 23, 1861) 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 pairs persisted until stamps were received. On July 1, 1862, the rate was increased to 10¢ for a single letter regardless of distance travelled (approved by the First Congress, First Session, April 19, 1862). A total of 13 different general issue stamps were utilized throughout the war.

Purpose and Presentation: The purpose of this one-frame exhibit is 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. For each cover are descriptions of (a) the postmarks, handstamps, and/or stamps, and (b) research on the individuals involved. Thus a particular focus of the exhibit is research on the senders and recipients of these covers, such as information, photographs and other illustrations.

Importance: This is the first known exhibit of Tuscaloosa Civil War postal history.

Plan: The exhibit pages are concerned with the following key features (as shown on the page headers):

Pages 2-3 – Civil War History of Tuscaloosa	Page 10 – #2, Bolling Hall
Page 4 – US #26, Embossed Advert, Fancy	Page 11 – #4, Fancy, Whitfield Family
Page 5 – Paid 5, Searcy family	Page 12 – #6, Hand-drawn Patriotic
Page 6 – Paid 10, Future UA President	Page 13 – #7, Turned, UA President and Captain
Page 7 – Paid 5 & 10, College Advert, UA President	Page 14 – #11, CSA Sargent Records
Page 8 – #1, Fancy, Original Letter	Page 15 – #11, Wallpaper Adversity
Page 9 – #2, Famous UA Professor	Page 16 – #11 & #12, Rucker and Gilliam Families

Note: All covers in this exhibit are original; all cover contents and photographs are high-resolution reproductions. Rare or significant covers are highlighted by a red border.



Alabama Secession Flag 1861



Examples of Tuscaloosa Star Fancy Cancel