Operation of the Ship Island and New Orleans Post Offices Under Postmaster John M. G. Parker - 1862 to 1865

This exhibit examines the postal markings of the Ship Island Union Army Field Post Office and the New Orleans Post Office during the Federal reoccupation used by Postmaster John M.G. Parker from 1862 to 1865.

On March 20, 1862, General Benjamin Butler arrived on Ship Island with his troops among whom was his brother-in-law John M. G. Parker, 1st Lieutenant, 30th Massachusetts Infantry.

Parker had been postmaster of Dracut, Mass. and was appointed postmaster of Ship Island, Miss. by the U.S. POD on February 7, 1862, confirmed February 11, and took office upon his arrival on Ship Island.

Postmaster Parker set up the Ship Island Post Office in an Army field tent, and used a *SHIP ISLAND MISS.* manuscript postmark March 20 – March 26, 1862.

Parker had several assistants and clerks which is the reason different signatures can be seen on the manuscript postmarks. I have identified Parker's on pages 2, 3, 6, & 7.

Between March 25 and April 3, Parker put two additional postmarking devices into use: a straight-line *SHIP ISLAND/MISS* from newspaper type on hand, and a CDS balloon *SHIP ISLAND MISS.* handstamp.

When Federal naval forces landed in New Orleans on May 1, 1862, General Butler ordered Parker to transfer himself to a post near the city. As the Federal Custom House was now reoccupied, Parker moved in and was appointed Acting Postmaster of New Orleans, effectively making him postmaster of two post offices.

Parker used the *SHIP ISLAND MISS.* CDS balloon handstamp transferred from Ship Island in the New Orleans Post Office between May 13 and May 30, 1862. Ship Island Post Office continued to operate for the benefit of the remaining troops using the straight-line and Balloon CDS handstamps. On July 5, 1862 Chaplin Charles E. Blake was appointed Postmaster of Ship Island. The post office was discontinued six weeks later on August 13.

Around June 1, 1862, Parker was appointed Chief Clerk of the New Orleans Post Office by special agent Robert K. Scott, Inspection Office of the Post Office Department. Agent Scott also brought with him a 25mm double-circle CDS *New Orleans LA* handstamp which was placed in service circa June 2. Parker was appointed New Orleans Postmaster February 19, 1863 and served until March 20, 1865 when Robert W. Taliaferro replaced him.

Plan of Exhibit

Ship Island Postmarks	-	**2 – 3, 11**
Straight-line	-	**4 – 8**
Circle Date Stamp	-	**9 – 10, 12**
Letters from Home	-	**13**
New Orleans Postmarks	-	**14 – 16**