THE EXPRESS MAIL of 1836-1839

EMPHASIS on FLORIDA

What are We Going to Learn

- When was it mailed?

- What was the origination point?

- Where was its destination?

- What postage was paid and how much was required?

- Is there anything here which arouses our curiosity?
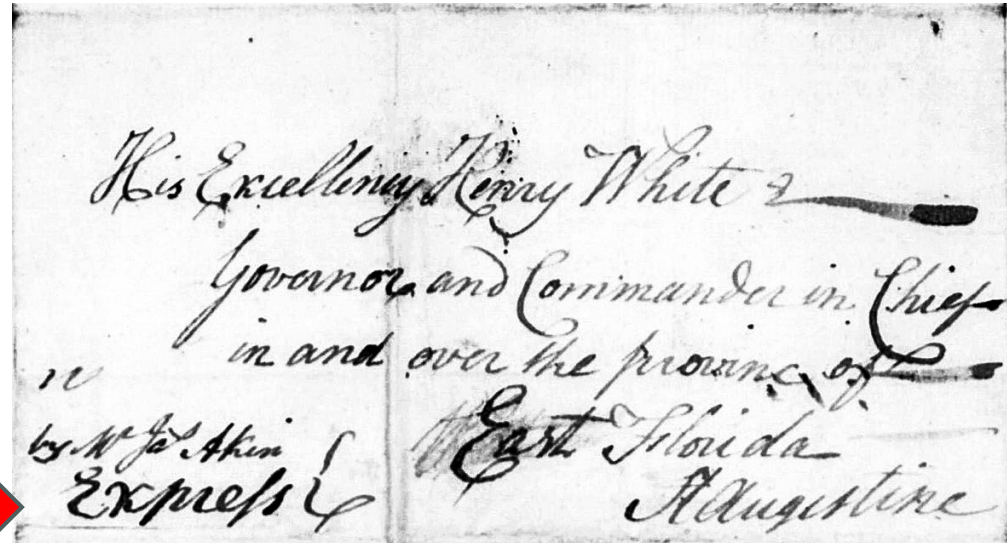
FORERUNNERS - British Colonial Express Mail

Riders on horseback were paid to carry special letters **by Express**.

**1746 Earliest Known
American Express Letter**

1799 Express Letter to Governor
Henry White in East Florida,
St. Augustine carried by W. J. Akins

Military and Favored Civilian Express
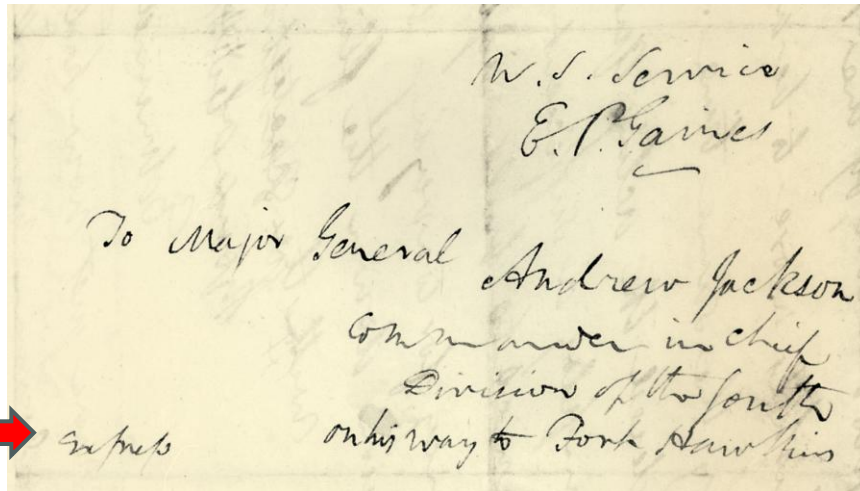## First Seminole War November 21, 1817 - May 24, 1818
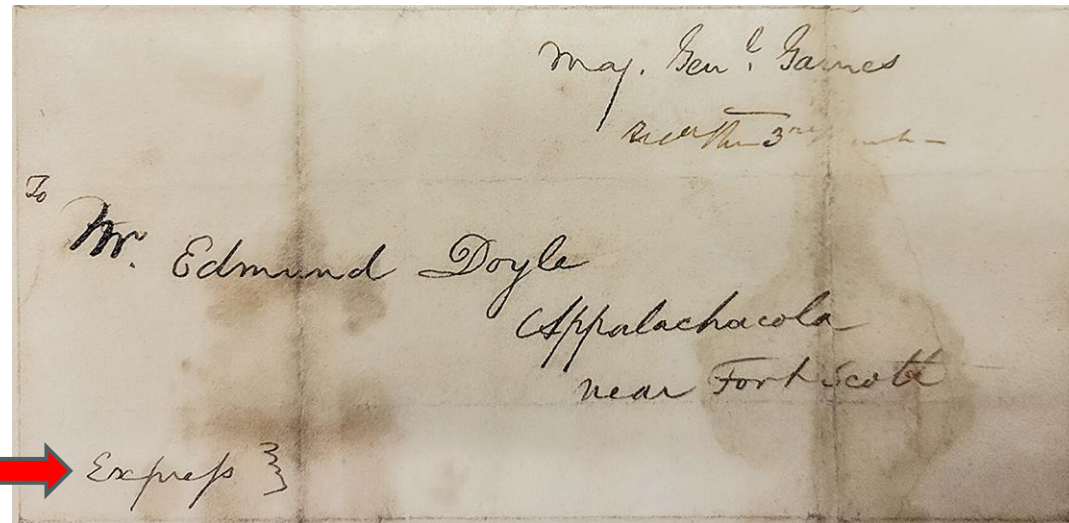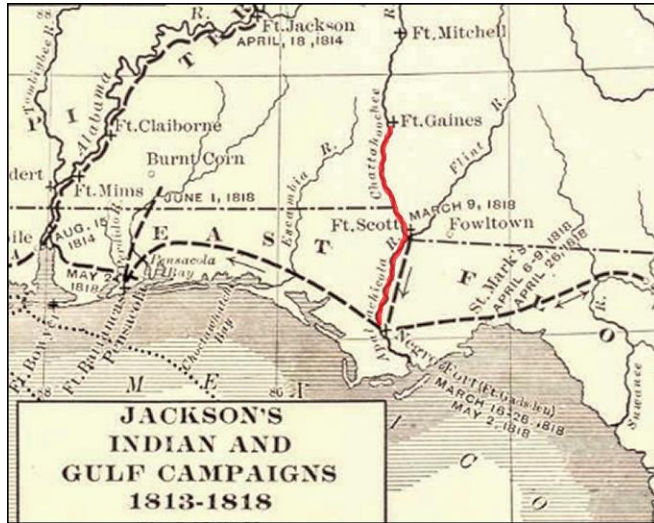
Letter on left from Major General Andrew Jackson, Fort Montgomery carried by William Hambly to Brevet Major General E. P. Gaines at Fort Scott.

Front lower left corner indicates carrier was favored by Jackson, meaning it was treated like "express". The difference was Hambly was not military, but a civilian contractor.
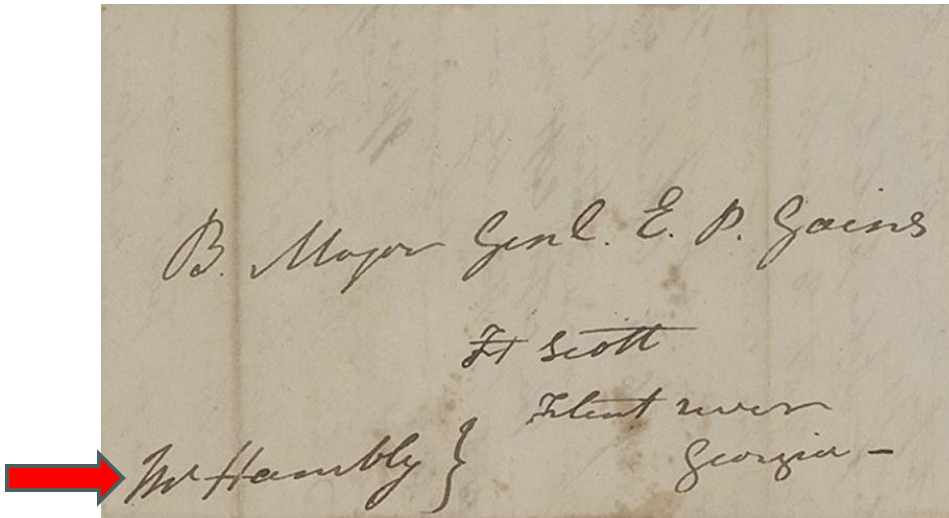
First Seminole War: November 21, 1817 - May 24, 1818
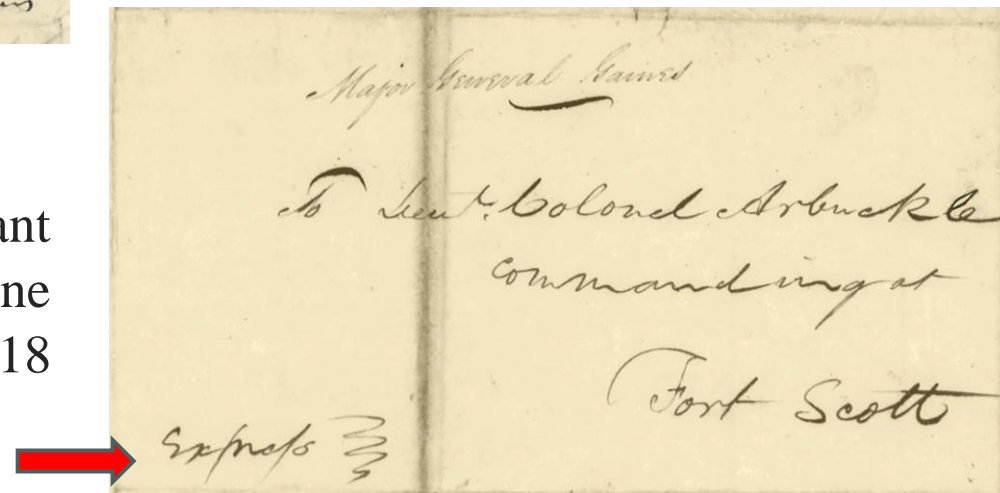

Edmund Gaines to Major General Andrew Jackson, dateline February 1, 1818

Major General Gaines to Lieutenant Colonel Arbuckle, dateline January 12, 1818

Courtesy of Library of Congress (top) and National Archives (bottom)

AMOS KENDALL, POSTMASTER GENERAL

Amos Kendall

In 1836, Kendall felt the need existed for a swifter method of mail transportation.

A rider on horseback could transport a single pouch of letters much faster between two towns close enough for a horseback ride.

The Great Mail Route: Boston - New York – Philadelphia – Baltimore –Washington – Mobile - New Orleans became the first Express Mail route.

THE EXPRESS MAIL ROUTES OF 1836-1839

Express Mail Background

- The U.S. mails in 1836 were transported between post offices by private contractors, either individuals or companies.

- They bid for contracts offered by the Post Office Department to carry mail over a defined route with specific schedules.

- **Express Mail** was delivery by horseback for light letters not exceeding ½ ounce (exceptions were made). It had special routing, schedules, and different mail contractors than the regular mails, but connected with the rest of the postal network at each stop.

Express Mail Requirements

- Letters were designated **Express Mail** by the sender or postmaster at the town of origin.

- Neither the town of origin nor the town of destination had to be on an Express Mail route.

- **Distance determined the rate**. The charge for the service was triple regular postage for the entire distance carried. 75¢ was the average single charge for over 400 miles, triple the normal 25¢ rate.

- **Free franked letters and any correspondence containing money were prohibited**.

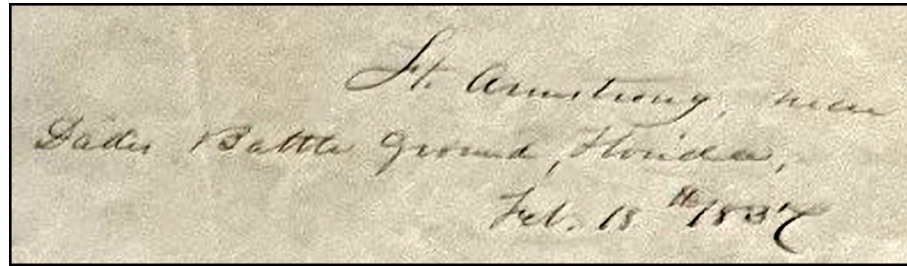# Second Seminole War: December 28, 1837 – August 14, 1842
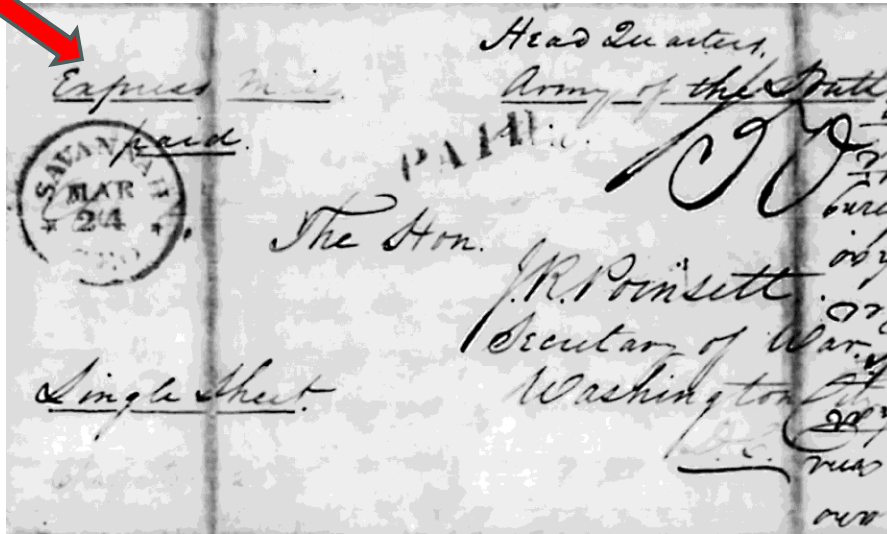
Datelined **Headquarters Army of the South, Camp near Fort Jupiter, March 14, 1838,** from Brevet Major General Thomas Jesup regarding status of the Seminoles.

Datelined **Quarter Masters Office, Ft. Brooke May 31, 1838,** to Lieutenant E. W. Morgan, Acty Asst. Qmaster, Fort Dade, E. Florida, signed by J.B. Brant, Q.M. and endorsed **On Service** and **Special Express** at top.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Rumsey Auctions
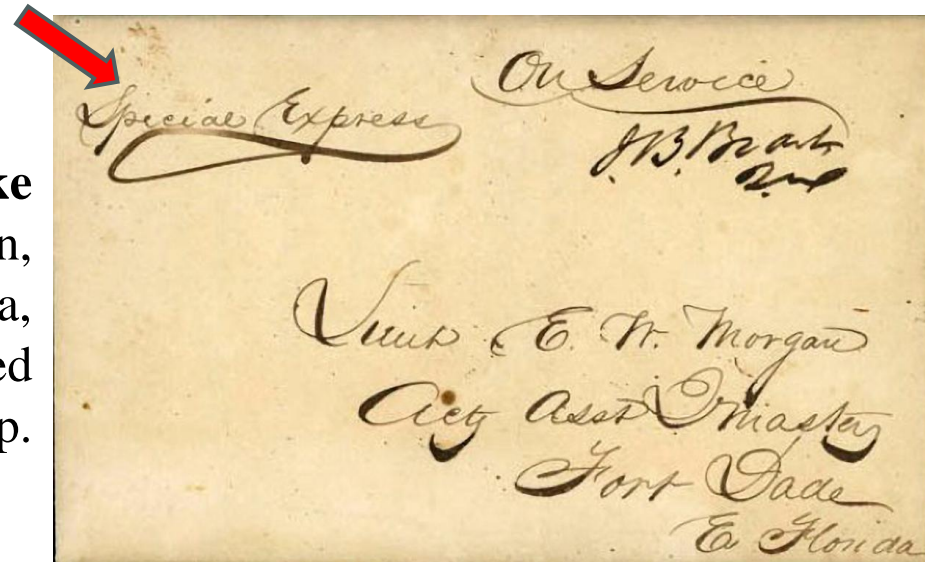
Second Seminole War: December 28, 1837 – August 14, 1842

Dateline : Fort Armstrong near Dade's Battleground Florida, February 18,1837.

Fort Drane was near Flemington in Marion County south of Micanopy.
The letter travelled to St. Augustine to Savannah to Connecticut by local postal routes.

EXPRESS MAIL RATES in 1836

MILEAGE	ORDINARY RATES	EXPRESS MAIL SINGLE	EXPRESS MAIL DOUBLE	EXPRESS MAIL TRIPLE	EXPRESS MAIL QUADRUPLE
Not over 30 miles	6¢				
30 - 80 miles	10¢	30¢			
80 -150 miles	12½¢	37½¢	75¢	$1.12½	
150 - 400 miles	18¾¢	56¼¢	$1.12½	$1.68¾	
Over 400 miles	25¢	75¢	$1.50	$2.25	$3.00

EXPRESS MAIL

SINGLE RATE COVERS

SINGLE RATE COVERS

Baltimore, May 16, 1837, FREE crossed out, rate 30¢ due, to Postmaster Amos Kendall in Washington

November 1, 1837, Express Mail required prepayment

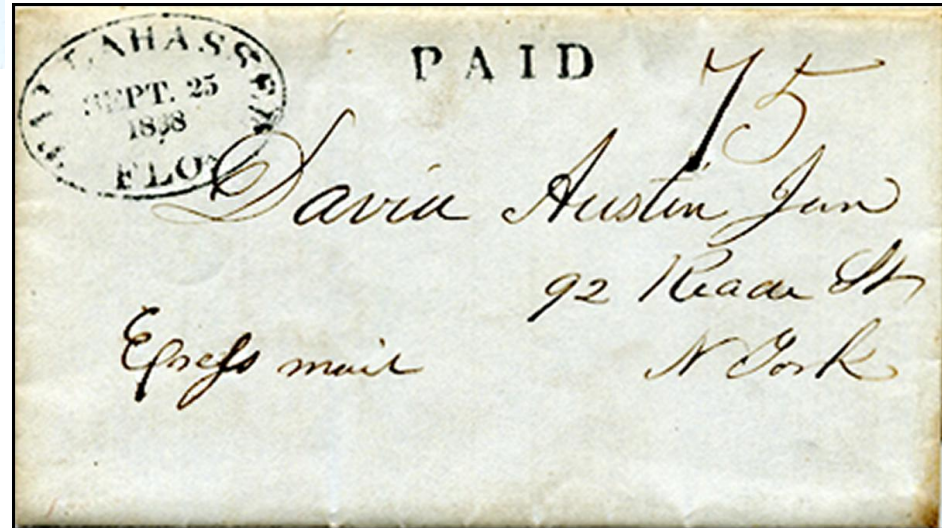Macon, Georgia, Dec. 15, 1837, 37½¢ rate PAID, to Augusta, Geo.

SINGLE RATE COVERS

Richmond, Va., Nov 23, 1837,
56¼¢ rate PAID to New York

Tallahassee Flo^A, Sept. 25, 1838,
75¢ rate PAID to New York

SINGLE RATE COVER
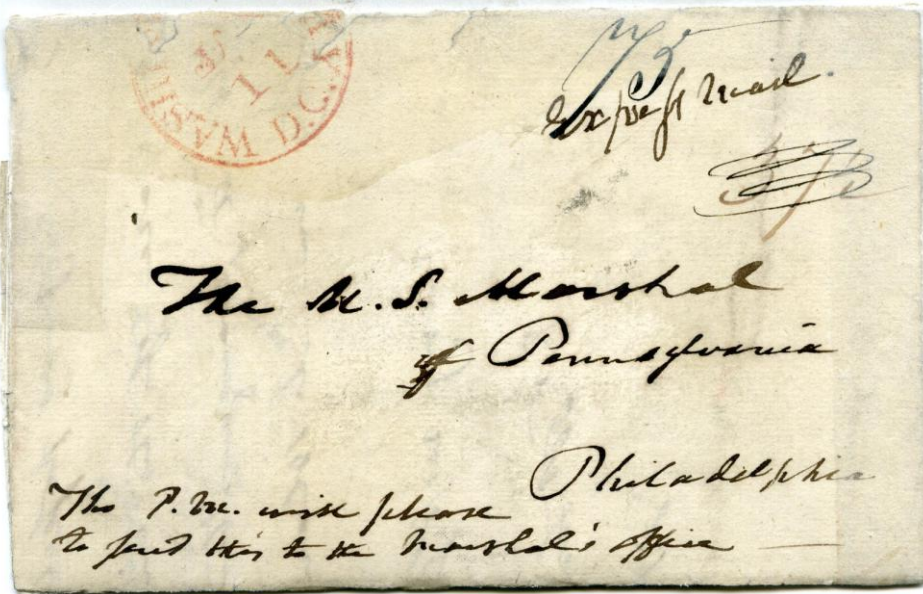
PENS[A] F. (Pensacola Florida), October 3, 1837, PAID, and 75¢ rate, to Postmaster General Amos Kendall in Washington D.C.
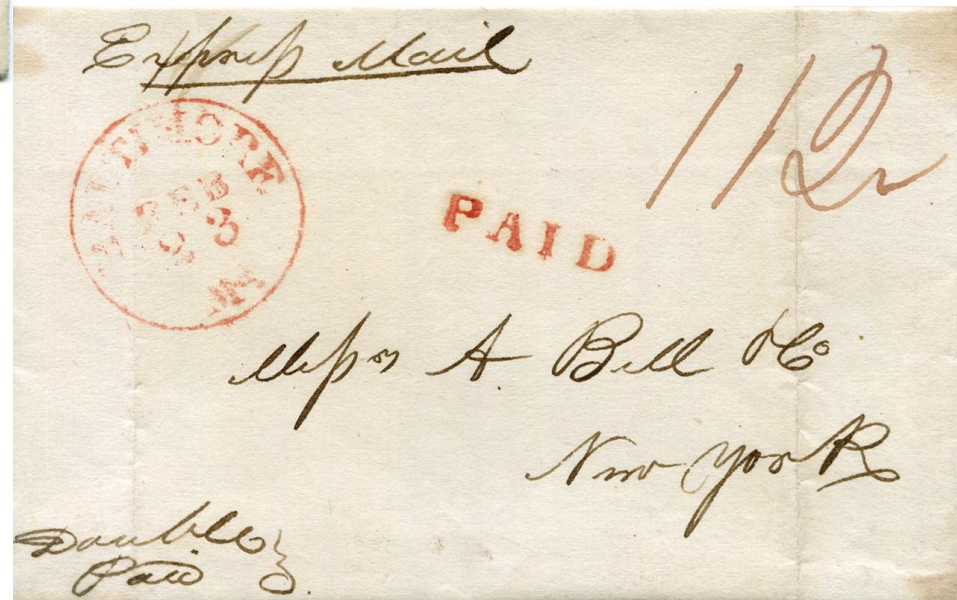
EXPRESS MAIL
DOUBLE RATE COVERS

DOUBLE RATE COVERS

Washington, D.C., JAN. 11, 1837,
Rerated 37½¢ to 75¢ Due

Baltimore, Md., FEB. 23, 1837,
$1.12½ rate PAID to New York

DOUBLE RATE COVER

Pensacola Flor., DEC 3, 1838, $1.50 and PAID
to James K. Pauling, Secretary of the Navy, Washington

Courtesy of National Archives, Department of Navy
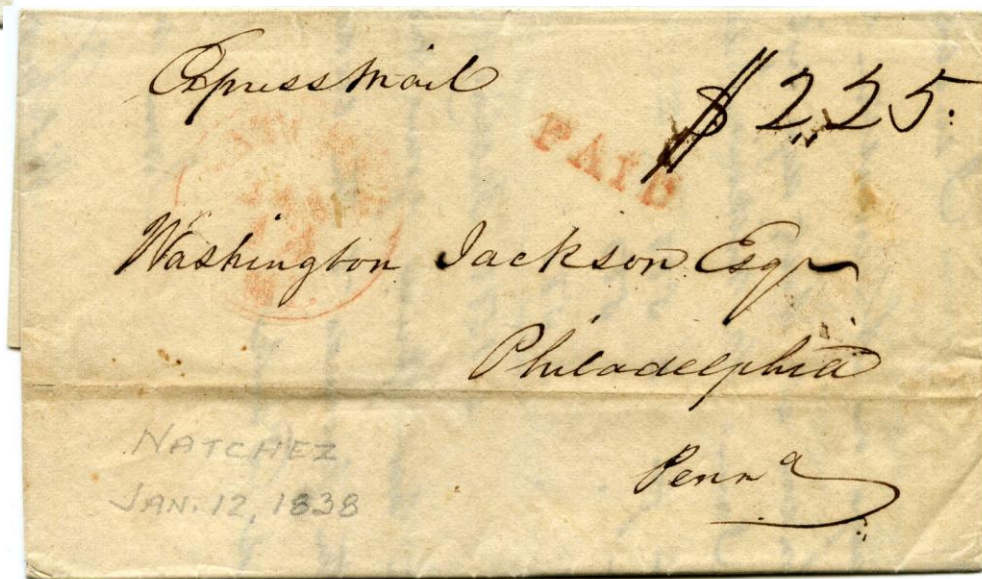
EXPRESS MAIL
TRIPLE RATE COVERS

TRIPLE RATE COVERS

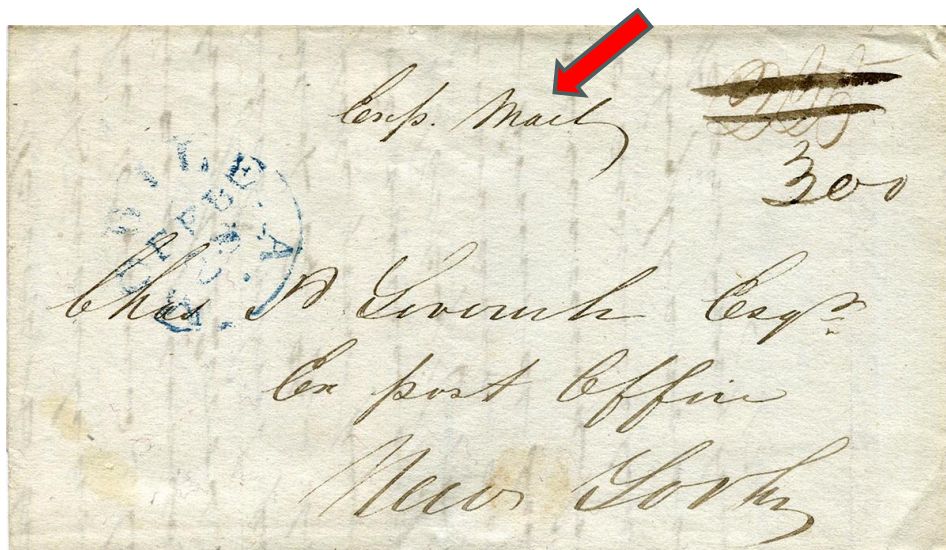New York, N.Y., APR 5, 1837,
Rate $1.68¾ DUE to Richmond, Va.

Natchez, Miss. JAN 12, 1838,
Rate $2.25 **PAID** to Philadelphia

EXPRESS MAIL
QUADRUPLE RATE COVERS

QUADRUPLE RATE COVERS

Mobile, Ala., FEB 28, 1837,
Rerated $2.25 to $3.00 to New York

Mobile, Ala., APR 5, 1837,
$3.00 rate to New York

EXPRESS MAIL HANDSTAMPS

AUGUSTA, Ga.

COLUMBIA, SC

HAYNESVILLE, Al.
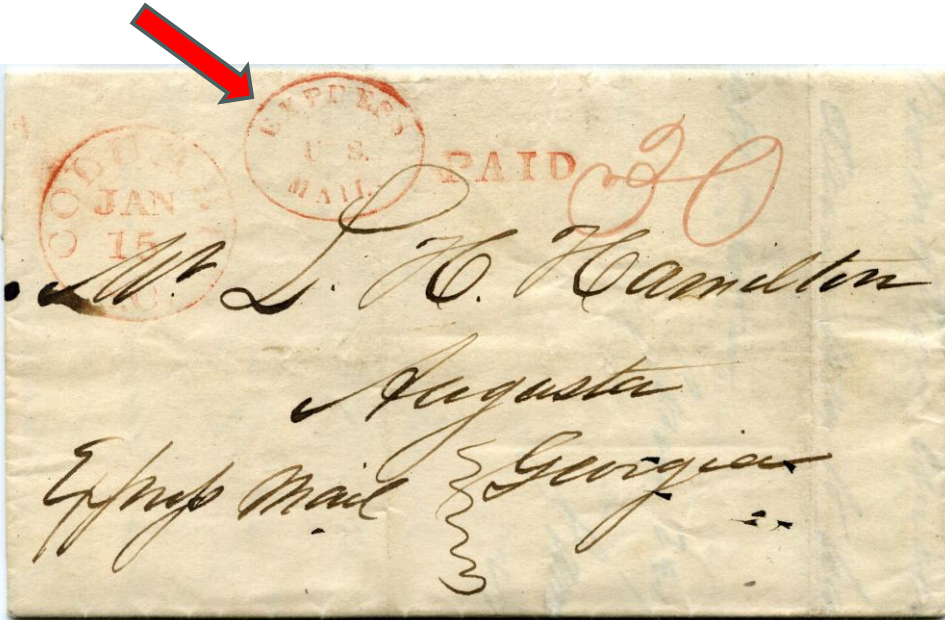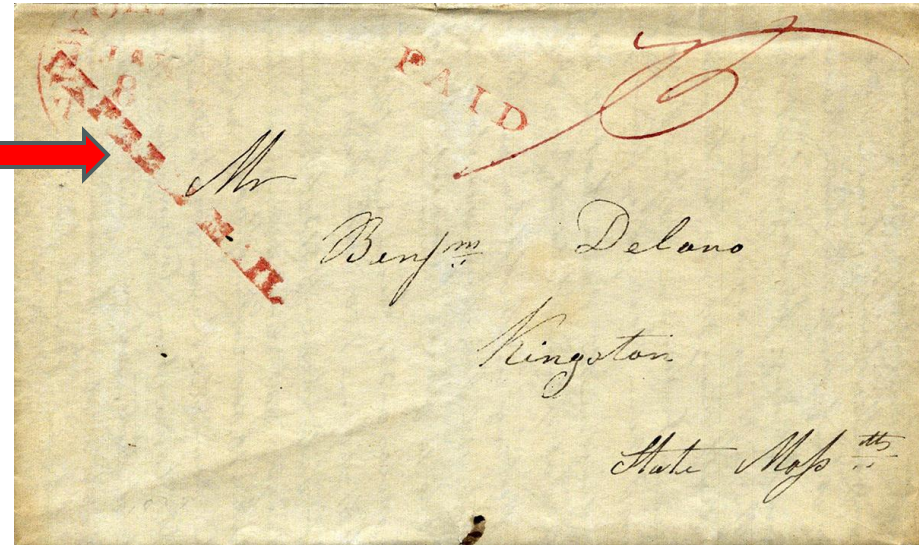
MILLEDGEVILLE, Ga.

NATCHEZ, Ms.

NEW ORLEANS, La.

EXPRESS MAIL HANDSTAMPS

Columbia, SC, JAN 15, 1838,
30¢ rate and PAID to Augusta with
handstamp **U.S. EXPRESS MAIL**

New Orleans, JAN 8, 1838,
75¢ and PAID to Kingston, Mass.
with handstamp **EXPRESS MAIL**

EXPRESS MAIL HANDSTAMP

Haynesville, Ala., 75¢ PAID, 75¢ due, to New York with handstamp
EXPRESS MAIL 75¢

Milledgeville Ga, Sep 7.1838 75¢ and PAID to Petersburg Va. with handstamp **EXPRESS.**

**Due 75¢** for an enclosure which doubled the weight allowance

Florida Express Mail Census

Sent Mail from Florida

APALACHICOLA	TYPE	DATE	NOTES
APALACHICOLA F.Ty.	Type III	JAN 26 (1837)	Manuscript "pr Express Mail" and unpaid 75
APALACHICOLA F.Ty.	Type III	APR 2 (1837)	Manuscript "Express Mail from Augusta" and unpaid 75
APALACHICOLA F.Ty.	Type III	Apr 11 (1837)	Manuscript "Express Mail from Augusta" and unpaid 25 but corrected to reflect the 75 cent Express Mail rate
APALACHICOLA F.Ty.	Type III	DEC 16 (1838)	Manuscript "Express Mail" and PAID 75

PENSACOLA	TYPE	DATE	NOTES
PENSA F.	Type VI	FEB 1 (1837)	Manuscript "Express Mail" and 75
PENSA F.	Type VI b	SEP 25 (1837)	Manuscript "Express Mail" postmark "PAID" crossed out and red 75
PENSA F.	Type VI b	OCT 3 (1837)	Manuscript "Express Mail" postmark "PAID" red 75
PENSA F.	Type VI b	AUG 3 (1838)	Manuscript "Express Mail" crossed out with 75 crossed out to 56¼ and modified to 18¾

ST. AUGUSTINE	TYPE	DATE	NOTES
ST. AUGUSTINE Fl. T.	Type XIV	OCT 12 (1837)	Manuscript "Express Mail" with 25 rerated to 75
ST. AUGUSTINE Fl. T.	Type XIV e	(1837)	Manuscript "Express Mail" with PAID 75

TALLAHASSEE	TYPE	DATE	NOTES
TALLAHASSEE FLOA.	Type VI e	SEPT 25 1838	Manuscript "Express mail" with PAID 75
TALLAHASSEE FLOA.	Type VI e	FEB 1 1839	Manuscript "pr Express mail" with PAID 75 and later charged "Due 75" for an enclosure

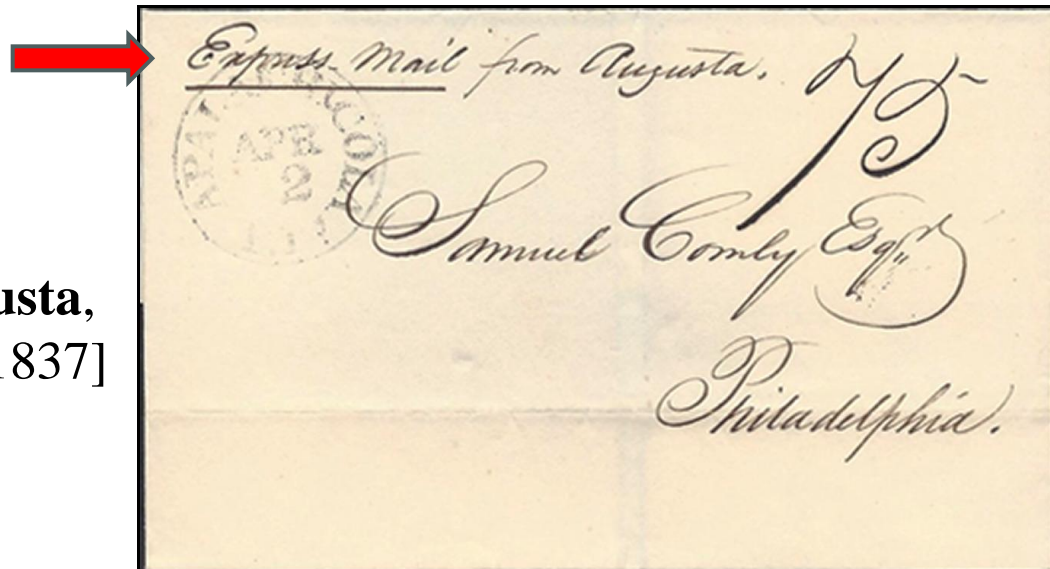| TAMPA	TYPE	DATE	NOTES
TAMPA FA		JUN 5 (1837)	Manuscript "Express Mail" and 75 from *The American Stampless Cover Catalog – Vol 1*, 1985, p. 71.

Source: *Florida Postal History 1763-1861*, page 20

Sent Mail from Apalachicola
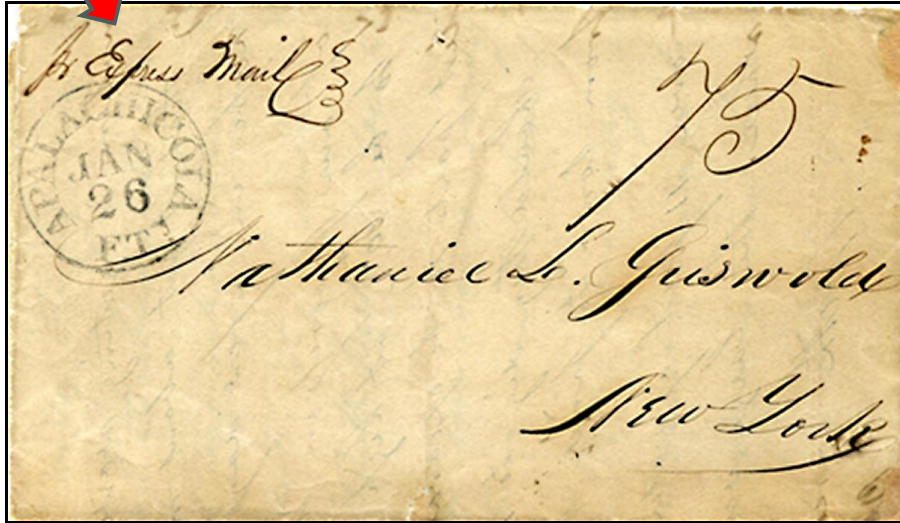
Manuscript **pr Express Mail**
and unpaid 75¢, datelined Jan 26, [1837]

Manuscript **Express Mail from Augusta**,
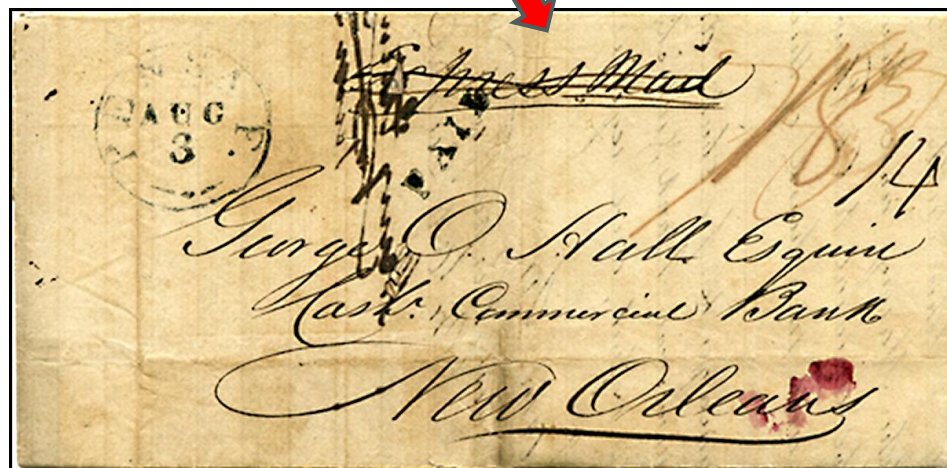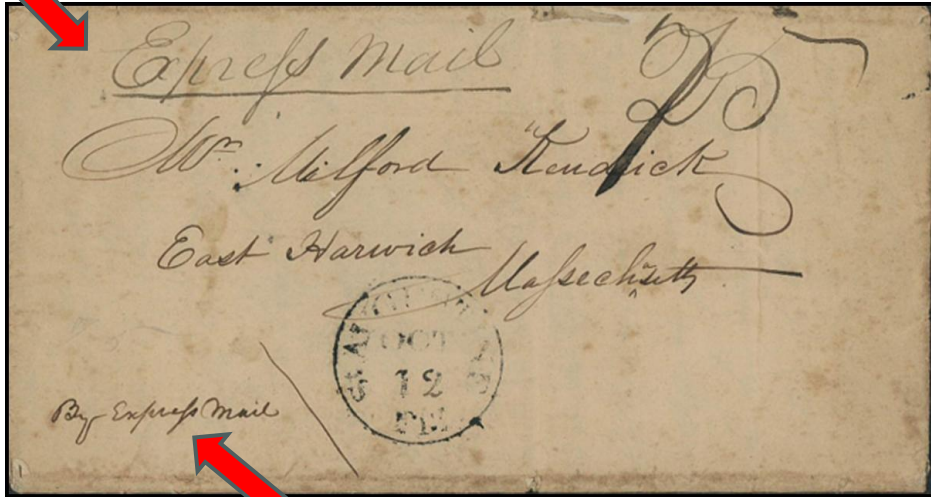and unpaid 75¢, dateline Apr 2, [1837]

Sent Mail from Pensacola

Manuscript **Express Mail**,
PENSA F. Sep 25 [1837] postmark,
PAID crossed out and 75¢ due.

Express Mail crossed out,
PENSA F. Aug 3 [1837] postmark
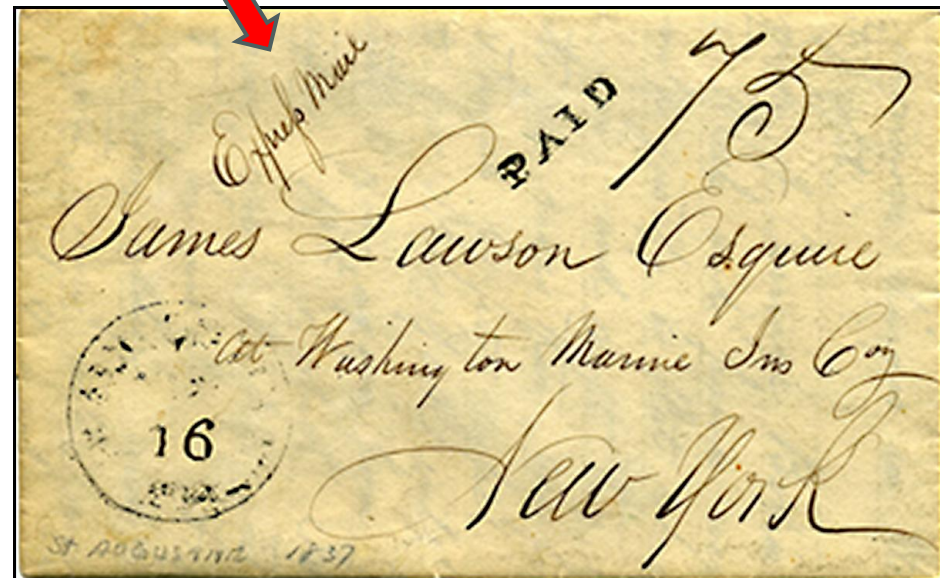75¢ crossed out to 56¼¢ and
modified to 18¾¢.

Sent Mail from St. Augustine

Manuscript **Express Mail**,
St. Augustine Fl.T. Oct 12, [1837]
postmark, with 25¢ rerated to 75¢ due

Manuscript **Express Mail**,
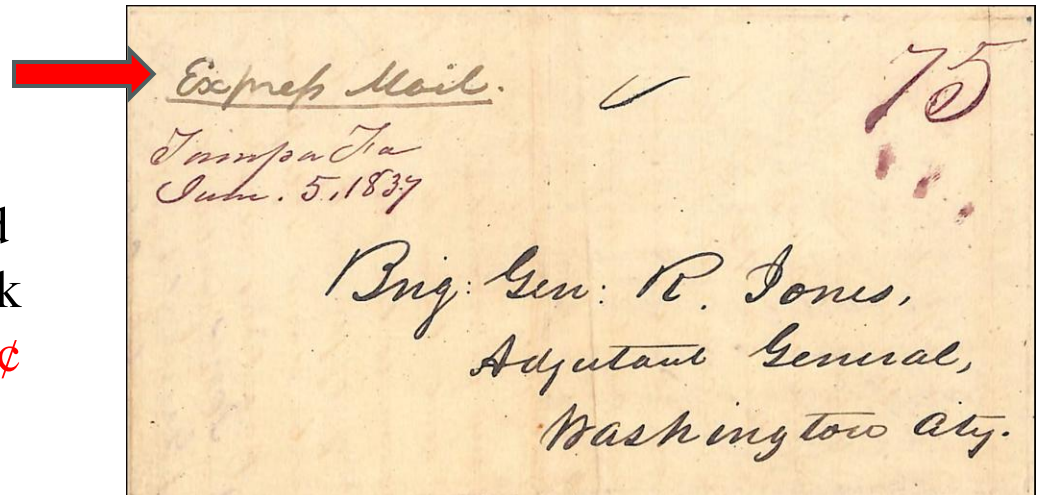St. Augustine Fl. T. postmark, with
PAID 75¢ mailed after November 1, 1837

Sent Mail from Tallahassee and Tampa

Manuscript **pr Express Mail**,
Tallahassee FLO[A] Feb 1, 1839, postmark,
charged additional Due 75¢ for an enclosure

Manuscript **Express Mail** and
Tampa Fa. June 5, 1837, postmark
with unpaid 75¢

Florida Express Mail Census

Received Mail and Non-Florida Postmarked Express Mail Covers with Florida Origin

CITY	DATE	NOTES
NEW YORK	OCT 13 (1838)	Manuscript "Express Mail" with curved PAID 1.50 and St. Mark Florida receiving postmark
SAVANNAH GEO	FEB 16 (1837)	Manuscript "Express Mail, On Service" Red PAID postmark and Red 75 from Fort Oglethorpe
SAVANNAH GEO	OCT 7 (1837)	Manuscript "Express Mail" with "PAID" postmark and manuscript 75 and Head Quarters Army of the South
SAVANNAH GEO	JUL 14 (1838)	Manuscript "Express Mail P.S." with red PAID postmark and 75 from Fort Heileman
CHARLESTON S.C.	NOV 15 (1837)	Manuscript "By Express Mail" with red PAID postmark and 75 datelined St. Augustine

Source: *Florida Postal History 1763-1861*, page 20

Non-Florida Postmarked Express Mail with Florida Origin

Charleston, S.C., Nov. 15, [1837]
with manuscript **By Express Mail,**
Red PAID and 75¢, dateline
St. Augustine Nov. 3, [1837]

**Only MISSENT handstamp
on an Express Mail cover**.

Savannah Geo. July 14, [1838], with **Express Mail P.S.** (Public Service), red PAID and 75¢. Dateline Fort Heileman, E.F. (East Florida Territory) July 9, 1838, to Washington City but MISSENT (in red rectangle) applied at New York, with July 20, [1838] postmark.
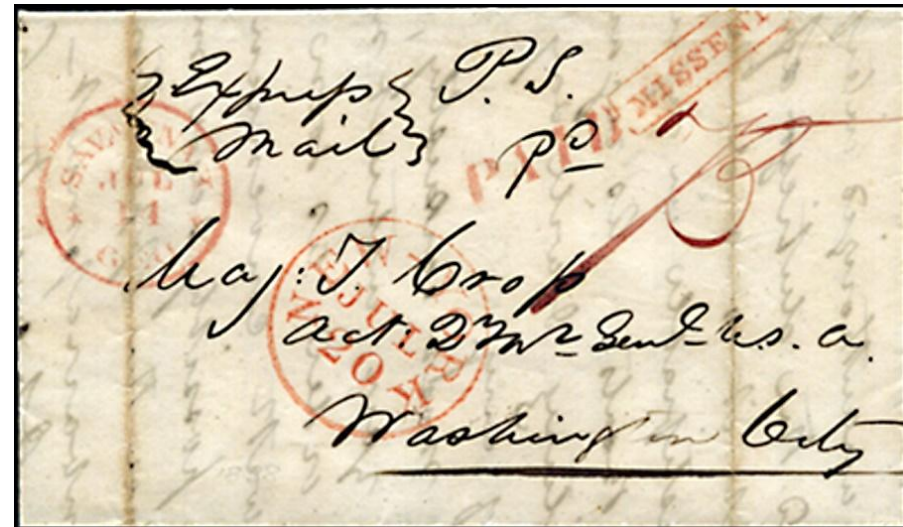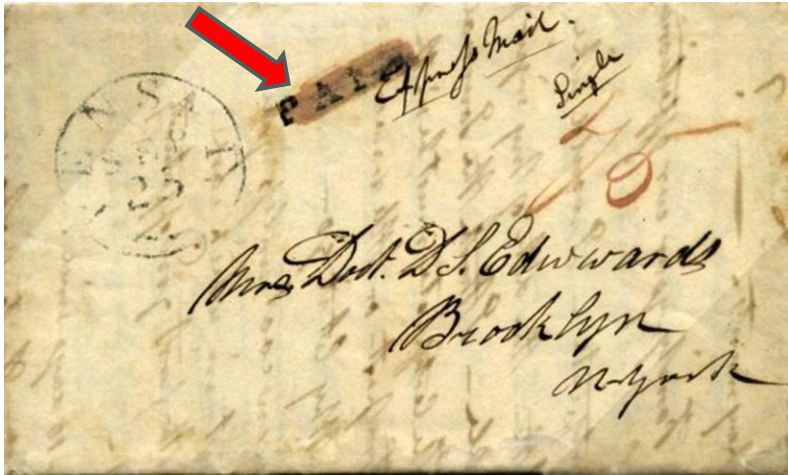
Florida Express Mail Covers
Discovered at the National Archives

- **Department of the Navy - 10**

- **Department of Indian Affairs - 7**

- **Department of War – 68**

    o **Written by General Thomas S. Jesup – 61**

Total Express Mail Covers - 85

U.S. Navy Express Mail

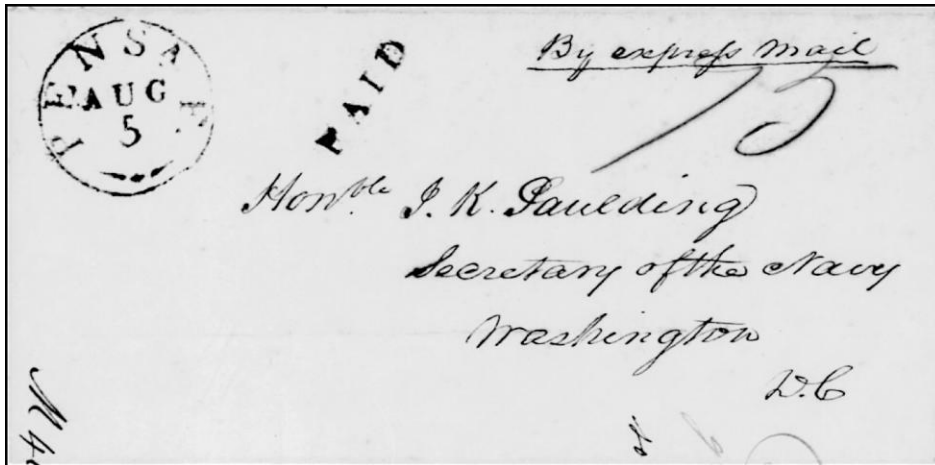Two letters from A.I. Dallas, Fleet Surgeon on *U.S. Frigate Constellation*.

PENSA F. SEP 25, [1837] with Express Mail, PAID crossed out so letter was sent due 75¢ to Brooklyn, NY.

Dateline *U.S. Frigate Constellation* Dec 12, 1837, with PENSA F., Dec 12, [1837] CDS, Express Mail, PAID and 75¢.

Courtesy of James Milgram and the National Archives
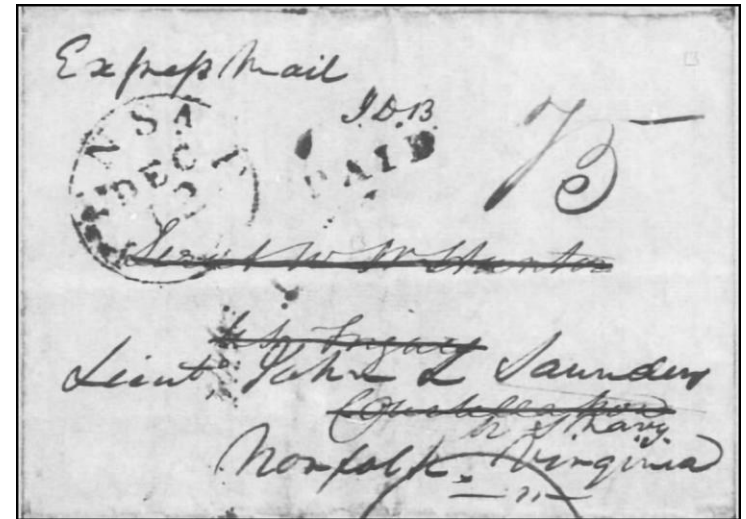
U.S. Navy Express Mail

Dateline *USS Vandalia,* Aug 4, 1838,
with PENSA F. Aug 5, [1838] CDS, by
Express Mail, PAID, 75¢ rate

Dateline *U.S. Schooner Grampus*
March 30, 1838, and PENSA F.
MAR 30, [1838] CDS,
Express Mail, PAID, 75¢ rate

Courtesy of the National Archives
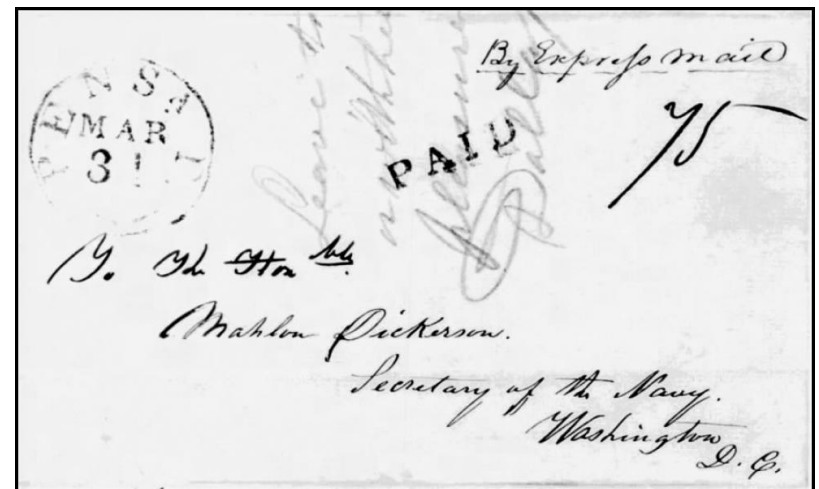
Bureau of Indian Affairs Express Mail Covers
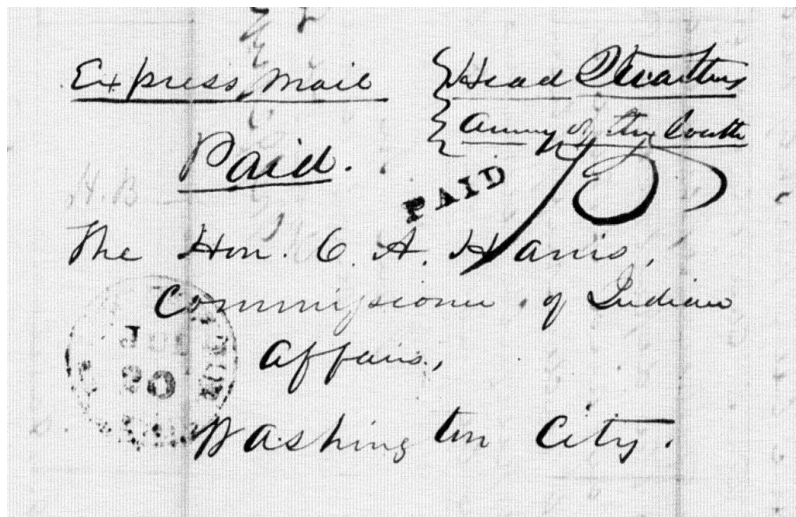
St. Augustine Fl.T., July 20, [1837] to
C. H. Harris, Commissioner of Indian Affairs,
Washington City, **Express Mail, PAID 75¢**

Washington D.C., May 16, [1838], from
C. H. Harris, Commissioner of Indian
Affairs, to St. Louis, Missouri, **Express
Mail, Paid 75¢.**

Letter discussed **Emigration of Indians**

Courtesy of the National Archives
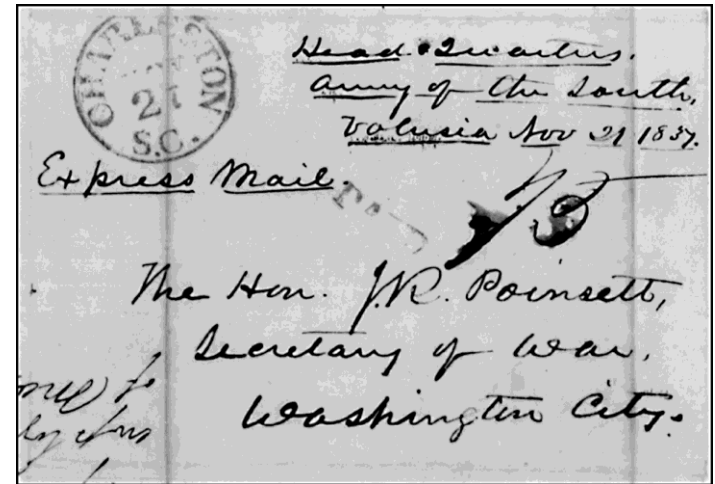
War Department Express Mail Covers
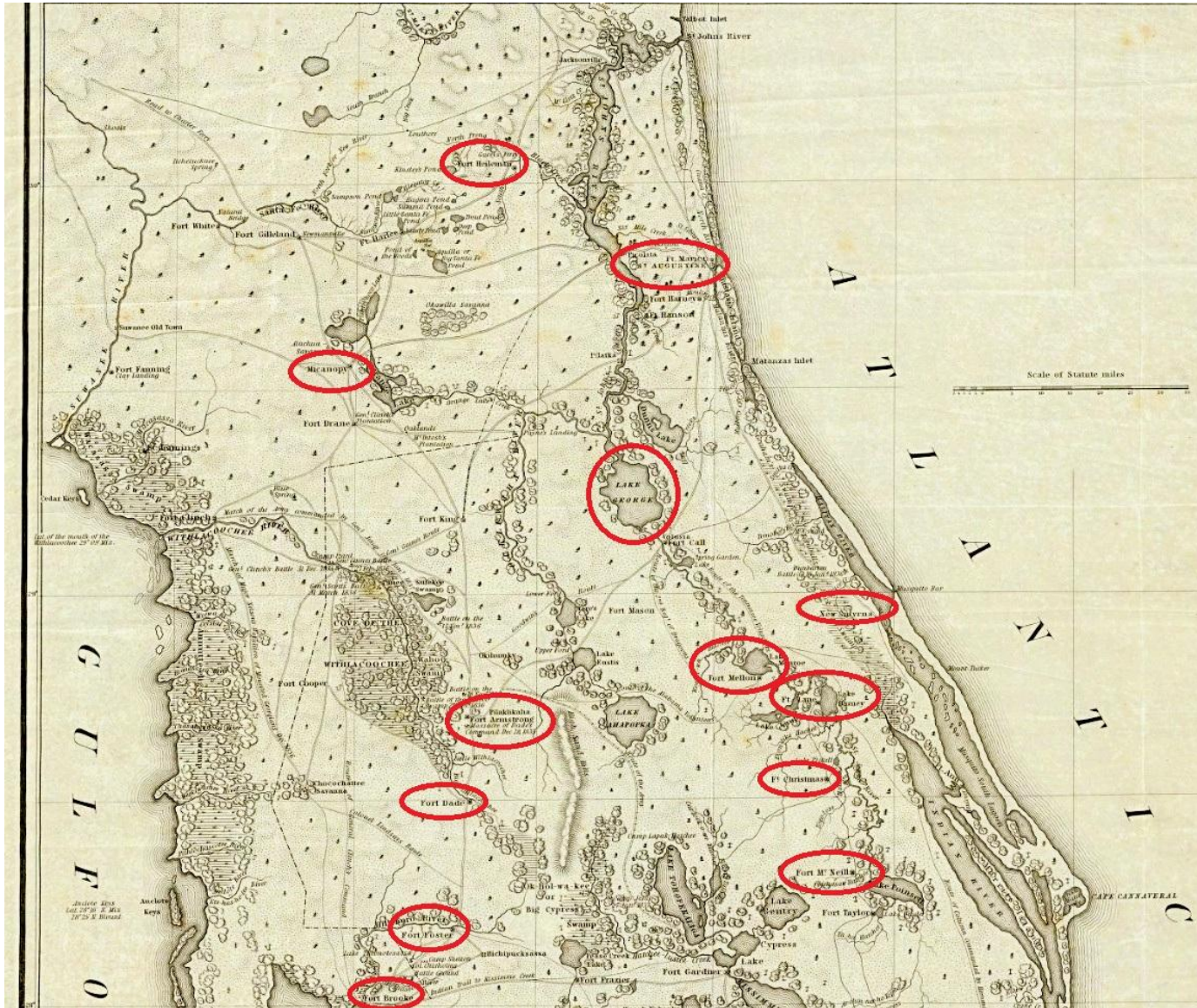
Forts and Towns visited by General Jesup

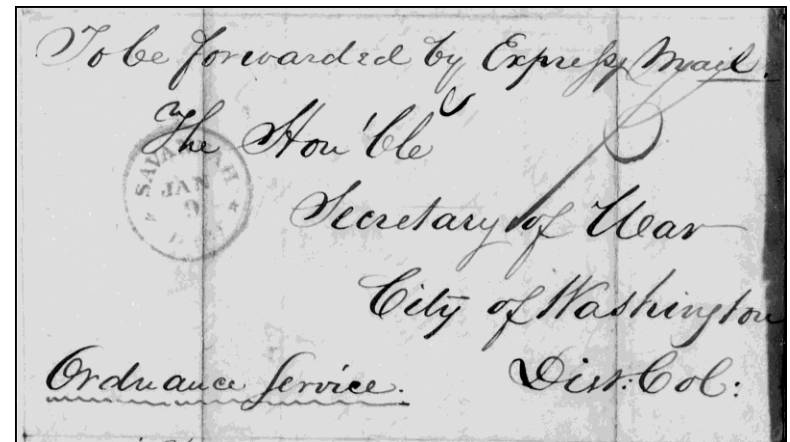# War Department Express Mail Covers
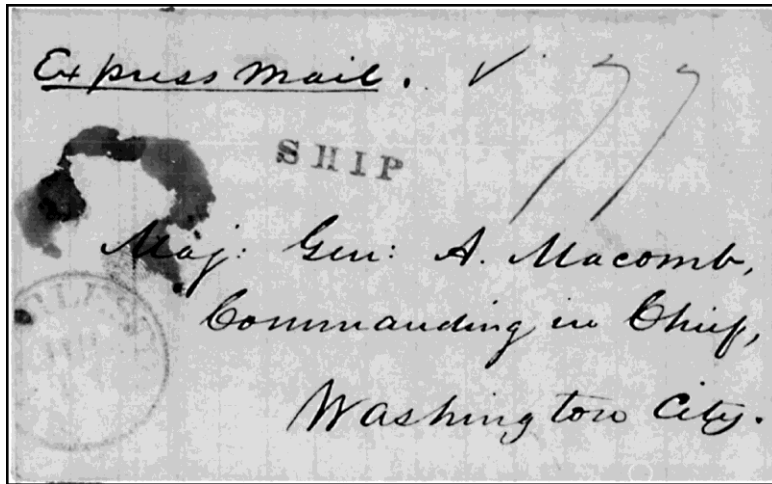
Dateline St. Augustine July 11, [1837]
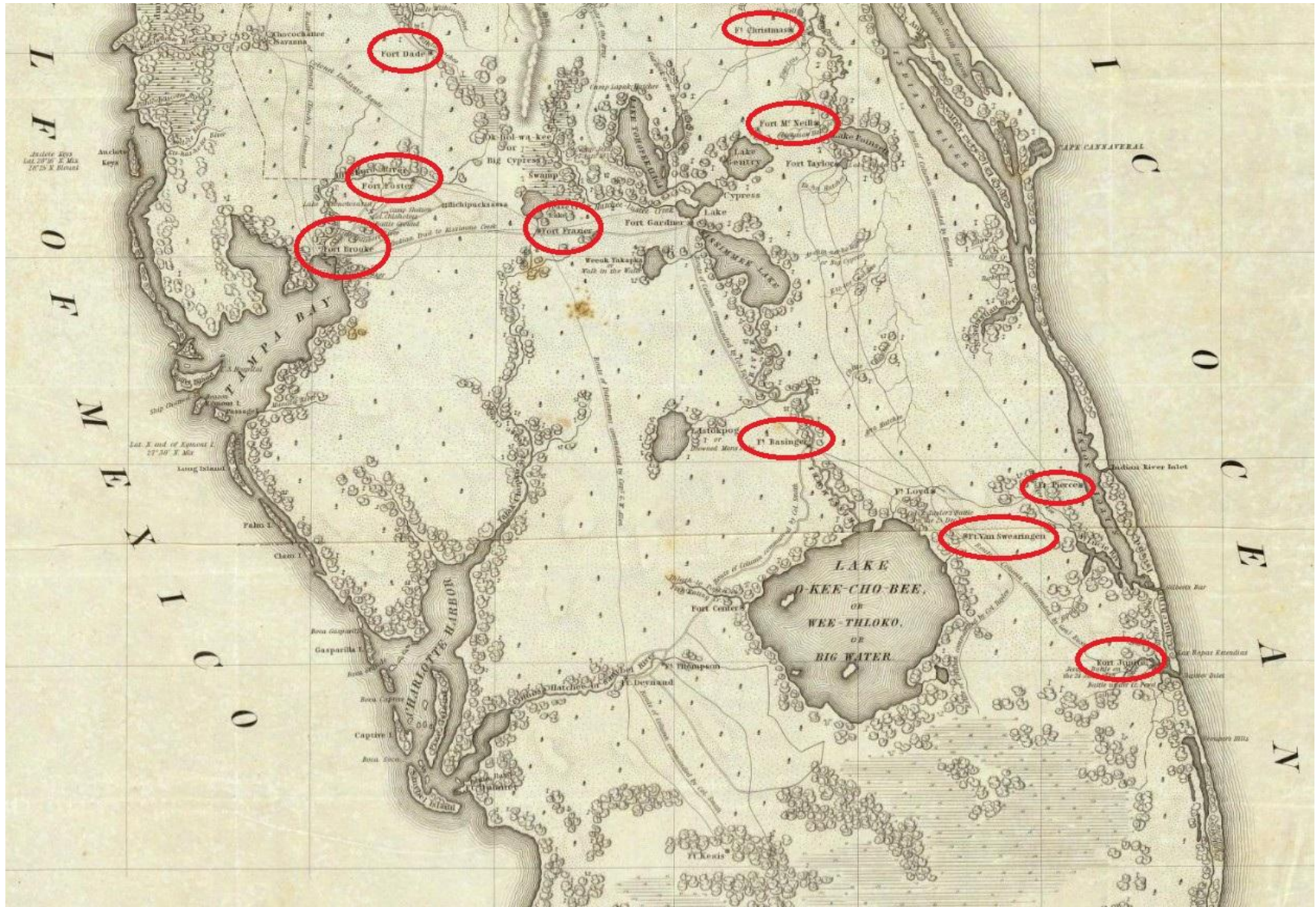

Dateline Volusia Nov. 21, [1837]
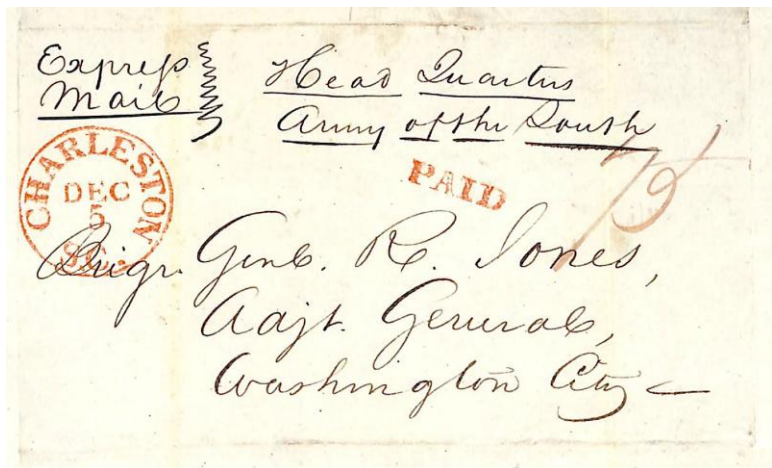
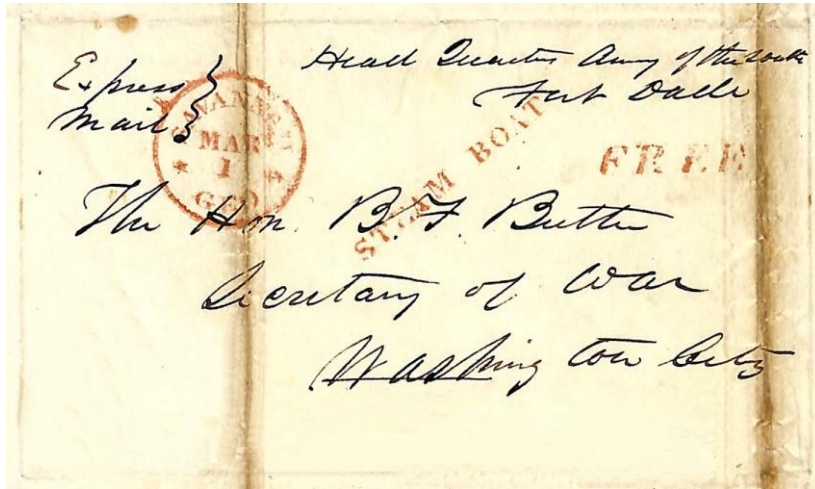Dateline Fort Mellon Nov. 28, [1837]

Dateline Garry's Ferry Jan 3, [1837]

War Department Express Mail Covers
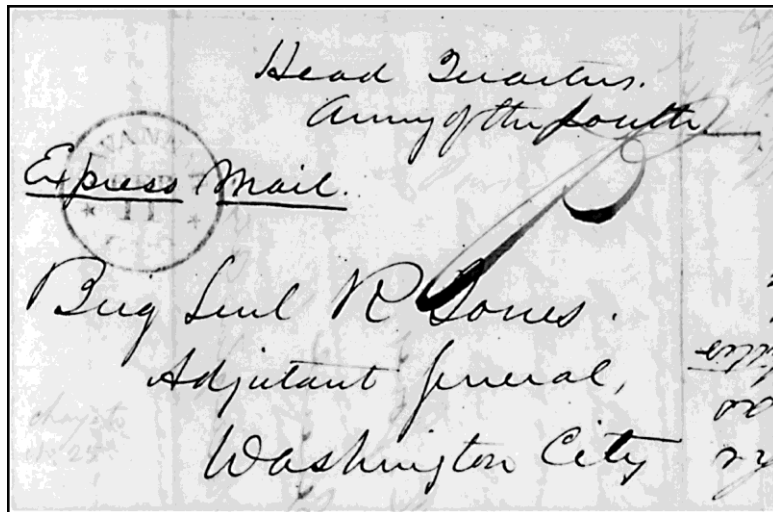

Forts and Towns visited by General Jesup
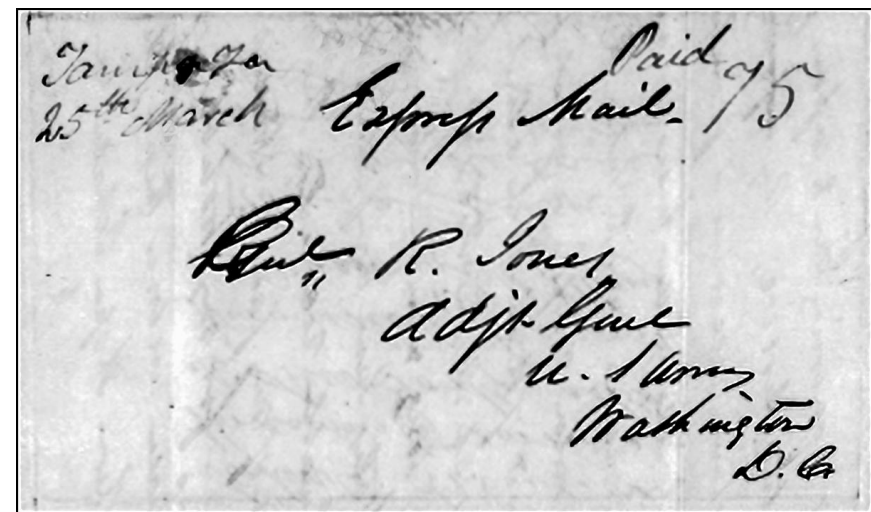
War Department Express Mail Covers

Dateline Fort Dade Feb 22, [1837], STEAMBOAT and FREE

Only known Florida cover to Benjamin Butler, Secretary of War.

Not An Express Mail Cover

Dateline Fort Pierce Jan 17 [1838]

Dateline Tampa March 25, [1838]

SHIP HANDSTAMPS TRANSATLANTIC

New Orleans, La., APR 7,1837,
pr Express Mail, Rate **77¢ SHIP**,
from Havana to New York.

This includes the 2¢ Ship Rate

New Orleans, La., APR 18,1837,
**pr Express Mail**, Rate **$3.02**, **SHIP**,
from Cuba to New York

Quadruple Rate over 400 miles

DECLINE OF THE EXPRESS MAIL

- **In 1836, a horse express was the swiftest method for transportation of land mail on most routes.**

- **As the railroad network increased in size, the regular mail service had reduced times for transmission of letters, so the advantage of Express Mail service became too expensive to maintain.**

Discontinuance of Express Mail service began in 1838 for certain routes and ended on all routes by July 1839.
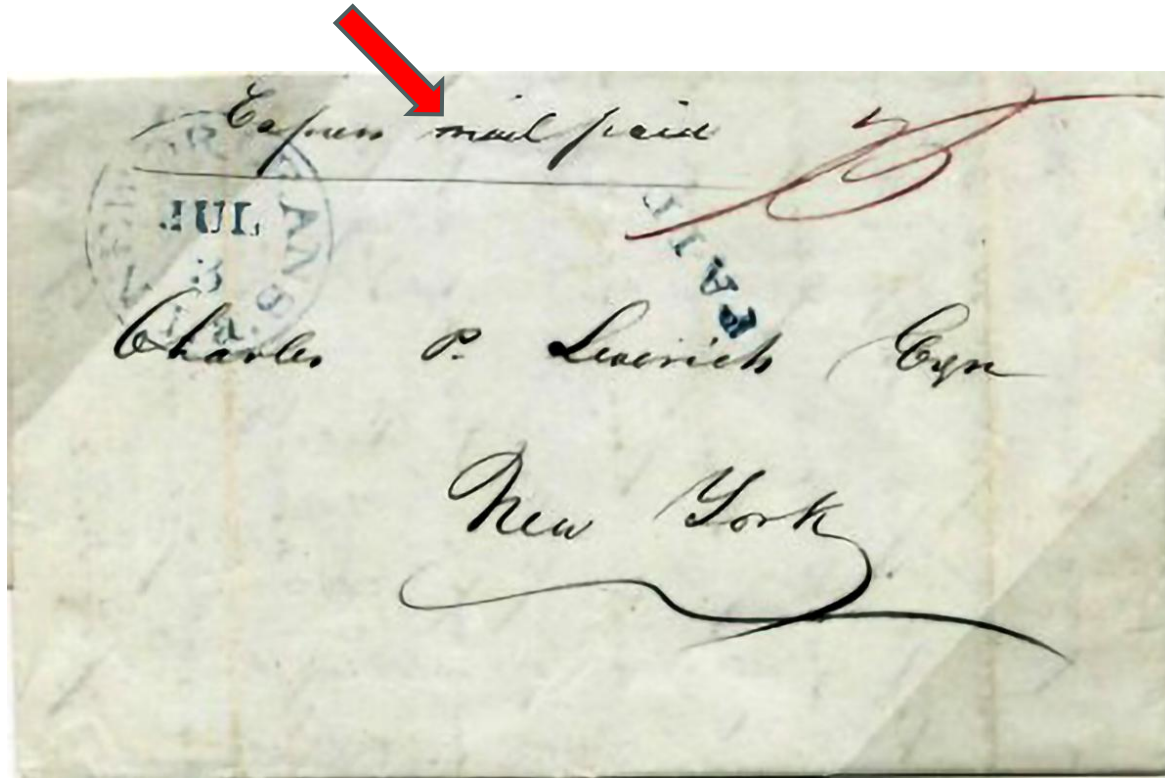
NEW ORLEANS La. JUL 3 (1839), Express Mail, blue PAID and 75¢ to New York. This may be the latest known use of the Express Mail.

The receiving New York mark on the back of the envelope shows it took 10 days to reach New York. It is questionable as to what the sender got for his money.

Express Mail Service was revived in 1983

1836 - regular mail 25¢ rate is $8.37; express 75¢ rate in today's dollars is $25.92.

Express Mail Rates Continue to Rise

EXPRESS MAIL WAS FASTER: 1835 - 1837

SUMMARY – FLORIDA EXPRESS MAIL
1836 - 1839

James Milgram's Article in *Florida Postal History 1763-1861* - 18

National Archives - 85

> Department of the Navy - 10

> Department of Indian Affairs - 7

> Department of War - 68

Total Florida Express Mail Covers - 103

REFERENCES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"War Department Express Mail From Florida, 1837-1838," Thomas Lera and James W. Milgram, *The Chronicle*. 2024, Vol. 76 (2): 115-124.

The Government Express Mail Of 1836-39: Updated Town Listing Including New Covers Found In The National Archives." Thomas Lera and James W. Milgram, *The Chronicle*. 2025, Vol. 77(3):220 - 240.

Thomas Lera, "Military Mail Carried by Express Riders," *The American Philatelist*, 2024, Vol. 138(2): 24-28.

Briggs, Deane R., Francis Ferguson, and Thomas M. Lera, *Florida Postal History 1763-1861, 2022 Second Edition*, Florida Postal History Society, Winter Haven, Florida, p. 20.

What is different in this picture?

Thank you

Questions??