

Provisionals



Found, Right Under Our Nose: The Lost Emory, Virginia Provisional

By Gen. Peter W.W. Powell



Figure 1. Genuine cover with Professor Longley's PAID 5 on the selva of the United States one-cent 1857 stamps. This is the only forwarded Emory provisional and is the February 11, 1862 usage.

It is a failing of human nature that we do not always see what we read. For over 100 years, we have merely noted the letter (Figure 2) to which we refer and just thought it referred to the current Emory, Virginia, provisional without really looking at the time line of the individuals involved. The writer, Postmaster I.C. Fowler of Emory, Va., had a style that is quite antiquated.

Fowler's letter of Oct. 23, 1901, published in the May 1926 edition of *The Southern Philatelist*, says that he was the Post Master of Emory from Nov. 26, 1861. Rick Calhoun has found that Fowler's actual appointment in the Confederate Post Office Appointment Record Book is Aug. 30, 1861. Since former Postmaster Professor Longley was a Union man (he served as U.S. Postmaster before and after the war) it is very probable that Fowler served as acting or assistant postmaster earlier than Aug. 30. It is unclear why Fowler makes such a point of a date that occurred 40 years earlier; it may have been when he finally received confirmation.

Mr. Fowler does not mention that Prof. Longley produced a provisional, one of the most unusual and desirable of all Confederate provisionals, the one with the PAID and 5 in circle stamped on the selva of U.S. one-cent 1857 stamps (Scott No. 24X1, Fig. 1). He treats the whole thought of a postage stamp for use only in the Emory, Va., Post Office as his unique idea.

There are nine examples of the recognized provisional (Scott No. 24X1) perforated on three sides (attributed to Professor Longley); seven are used between June and August 13, 1861, and one undated and one used in February of 1862. There are no known usages between Aug. 13 and Feb. 11.

Mr. Fowler states, "Finding it impossible to make change.....I conceived the idea of making a crude stamp for the Emory office only."

Again, no credit is given to Prof. Longley for his imaginative provisional. I believe that the stamps shown (Figures 3 and 4) are the first attempt by Mr. Fowler as described in his 1901 letter published

My good friend, T. W. Preston, of the King Printing Company, Bristol, Tenn., contributes an interesting chapter to the story of Confederate Locals. But I will quote from his letter: "In looking over some old papers this morning, I found the following affidavit in regard to a local stamp issued at Emory, Va. Mr. D. C. Thomas and myself tried very hard to establish this stamp, but were never able to do so. I thought it might be of interest to you, and I am sending you the paper purely as a matter of information."

I was Post Master at Emory, P. O., Washington County, Va., being the locality of Emory & Henry College, from the 26th day of November, 1861, to the fall of the Southern Confederacy in April, 1865. As such, I was the author, maker, and issuer of the Emory local, war Post Office stamp.

On Tuesday, November 19th, 1861, in obedience to instructions from Mr. Clements, from the P. O. Dep't of the C. S. A., I qualified as Postmaster at Emory. On Friday, Nov. 22nd, I was as such Postmaster commissioned by John H. Reagan, Postmaster-General, which commission is now in my possession. On Tuesday, November 26th, I took possession of the office.

Finding it impossible to make change in the Confederate currency for the postal rate of 5 cents on each letter, I conceived the idea of making a crude stamp for the Emory office only. I immediately carved such a stamp on the end of a piece of poplar wood, making it read "Paid 5 Emory." Of course, I had the usual mailing box in the front door, but parties at untimely hours could not utilize it without some sort of a stamp. These I stamped on an article of pale blue and very thin and unruled letter-paper, which was intended for "foreign correspondence."

Unless provided with the usual coating of mucilage, they would be unavailable, and being a merchant, I was provided with the necessary article for this purpose, and I proceeded to prepare and put on sale quite a number of these postal stamps, binding myself to redeem those unused as soon as the anticipated Confederate stamps should be issued and put on sale. I think that the number sold must have exceeded one thousand.

It should be stated that as a mailing and dating stamp I used an improvised pad made of buckskin and filled with a mixture of Prussian blue and sweet oil. Of course, these stamps became quite a convenience and were sold in such amounts as the exigencies of "change" suggested, generally in lots of 50 cents or \$1.00.

I do not remember the date of the first supply of regular Confederate postage stamps, but the use of these Emory stamps ceased with that date. I had a number of these stamps left over and preserved them till about the year 1877, when, finding no demand for them, and they being curled from the mucilage on them and unsightly, I threw them in the fire. I soon found out my mistake, and from that day to this I have advertised and searched and offered premiums for the lost stamp in any shape, but without success, until it occurred to me that Capt. T. W. Colley, who, during the war, had his home within 150 yards of the Emory postoffice, and who is an antiquarian in the ordinary sense of the term, I got him to go through his heap of old papers. As a result, he has found six of these Emory stamps, which I immediately identified. With the exception of one, none of them have been used on letters, doing duty as postage certificates, but are absolutely genuine all the same.

It will be observed that Mr. Colley has in some way caused them to be adhered to various old papers. This he seems to have done out of his habit of preserving everything in the way of relics. Instance, the first of these that we found was stuck on to a postage receipt for the *Lynchburg Daily Republican*, and written and signed by my clerk and deputy postmaster, W. P. Milnor, whose handwriting no one who ever knew him will question. Another I find on an old John Bell election ticket. Why? Mr. Colley himself does not know, nor is it necessary to inquire, for his word stands as high as any man's, and I immediately and fully identify these tickets as genuine.

But I ought to say here that there *may* yet be found—though the chances are exceedingly doubtful—a genuine Emory stamp that will differ slightly from this one. After using this stamp for some months I carved one in a little better style than this one, though on the same general lines, being a parallelogram and about the same size, and with the tail of the figure 5 turned a little downward at its extremity.

I am glad to be able to set this matter at rest before the close of my life. And it may not be violative of the rules of modesty to say here that since the close of the war I have been five years Mayor of the Town (now City) of Bristol, have three times represented this County of Washington in the House of Delegates, of which I was Speaker in 1881 and 1882, and have, since February, 1884, been Clerk of the Circuit and District Courts of the U. S. for the Western District of Virginia, at Abingdon.

(Signed) I. C. FOWLER.

Figure 2.
Postmaster I.C. Fowler's letter of October 23, 1901 as it appeared in the May 1926 issue of *The Southern Philatelist*.

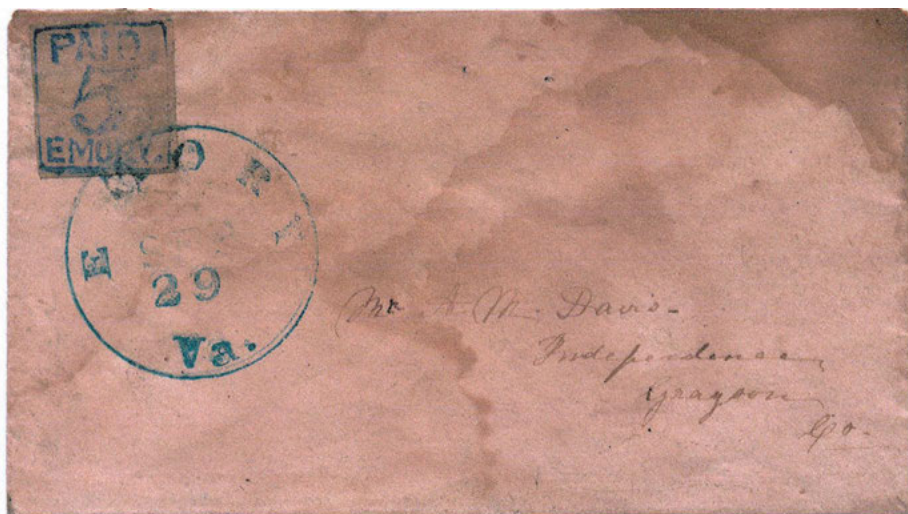


Figure 3. The September 29, 1861, use tied by the cancel and addressed to Mr. A.M. Davis.



Figure 4. The May 3 use on a patriotic—stamp not tied.

in August Dietz's May 1926 *Southern Philatelist*: "I immediately carved such a stamp on a piece of poplar wood, making it read PAID 5 EMORY....these I stamped on an article of pale blue and very thin unruled letter paper intended for foreign correspondence. Unless provided with the usual coating of mucilage they would be unavailable and being a merchant, I was provided with the necessary article for this purpose and I proceeded to put on sale quite a number of these postal stamps..." Mr. Fowler, who wrote very long sentences, was definitely describing an adhesive stamp. The two surviving examples of what I believe are this stamp are shown here. They are dated Sept. 29 and May 3. The earlier would be a month after Mr. Fowler took over and the last would be a holdover and just accepted for late use.

The Sept. 29 cover is addressed to Mr. A. M. Davis at Independence in Grayson County (four of the other provisional covers are addressed to Capt. (or Col.) A.M. Davis. Col. Davis practiced law in Independence. He resigned in October 1861, but was promoted to major in May 1862. The second cover is addressed to Wm. M. Hagey. He is listed as a 3rd Lt. Co. F, part of the 37th Virginia. These two stamps fill not only the timeline but the description of what was made. They are on a thin, pale bluish paper



Figure 5. An old time fake of both a provisional and the cancel which is shown on page 165, *The Dietz Confederate States Catalog*, 1986 edition.

and would appear to be from a wood carving. The cancel matches the known genuine Emory cancel. A transparency of a genuine cancel matches these perfectly. John A. Fox is not known to have made an Emory fake and he did not fake CSA provisionals; except Iuka, Mississippi.

The end of the letter says, "...preserved them until about the year 1877, when finding no further demand for them and they being curled from mucilage on them and unsightly, I threw them in the fire."

Mr. Fowler goes on to say, "...after using this stamp for some months, I carved one in a better style than this one on the same general lines, being a parallelogram and about the same size and with the tail of the figure "5" turned down at its extremity." This quite nicely describes what we refer to today as 24xu1. The word parallelogram, while it describes a square or rectangle, it would more than likely be used to describe something that has unusual parallel lines.

To summarize: there are two listed 5-cent Emory provisionals. Mr. Fowler's letter indicates he created TWO of them (Scott No. 24XU1) and the two adhesives described in this article. We know that Prof. Longley created Scott No. 24X1. We do not know who created Scott No. 24XU2, since this is a 10-cent provisional, it is outside of this article. So we have have three 5-cent Emory provisionals: two adhesive and one handstamped.

There are known counterfeits of the Emory cancel and one is shown here with a counterfeit (24XU2) provisional marking (Figure 5). This is an oldtime fake cancel and is listed in the 1845, 1959, and 1986 editions of the Dietz Catalog. Note the wide mouth of the "V". This is a dangerous fake cancel which usually appears tying stamps to covers.

[Editor's Note: *The author graciously provided excellent full color photocopies of the four covers pictured in this article. We appreciate the assistance of Adobe Photoshop expert, Merritt Engel (also one of the layout artists for the new Confederate States Catalog and Handbook), who enhanced the color clarity to bring back the original colors in these quite obviously important and rare uses.*]

What do you need?

If you're into seriously pursuing the CSA stamps and covers you need for your collection, you should consider placing a Classified Ad in *The Confederate Philatelist*. And by the way, Classified Ads really work! Try one and see. See page 40 in this issue of *The CP* for details.