

NEW ORLEANS 5 CENT PROVISIONAL

Timeline: June 6, 1861 - January 1, 1862

This exhibit examines the printings, plate and use of the 5 cent New Orleans (NOLA) provisional stamp from issuance to receipt of official Confederate stamps. On May 13, 1861 NOLA postmaster Riddell was notified the Confederate Post Office would be assuming control from the U.S. Postal system on June 1st. Mail was required to be prepaid with very few exceptions. Since there were no stamps, and coins for prepayment were rapidly disappearing from circulation, Riddell ordered this first printing 5¢ stamp to be used only in the NOLA Post Office.

Some Special Covers of Interest

- Largest imprint piece known on cover p.3.
- Only 5 Cent Provisional printed both sides Title Page.
- Earliest Known Use "Pd5cts N.O.P.O" p.9.
- Steamboat Mary E. Keene with half-dime removed for payment p.12.
- One of 2 known originating at Ft Jackson p.7.
- Through the lines from Spanish Consulate Washington DC p.6.
- Only Express Mail Use p.5.
- Only known postmarked Shieldsboro, MS & St Joseph LA. Only 4 postmarked at another post office.
- Too many others to list here.

Treatment:

1. The **beginning of each chapter has a centered heading and boxed description of what lies within.** Important items matted on blue paper. Rarity is not always important in the population of Confederate covers. IE: The only provisional NOLA to Birmingham, AL may be rare but not important. **If the cover is mounted in blue, it is not only scarce but important to Confederate postal history.** Text is highlighted in blue additionally for other scarce and important items and details. There are just enough words in this exhibit to tell this complex story in one frame. No additional covers will help display uses and rates. 5 items have been added for this past 3rd entry in the C of C in Nov 2025. The block/6 stamps, an **illustrated** advertising cover, overpaid drop cover, forwarded upon destination and the ECU of the 3rd Printing stamp sent postage due. Other improvements and additions are survey and text related, every page has been revised. There are no common uses shown, finest assemblage by any collector including Skinner.

Importance:

1. NOLA was the **largest city in the Confederacy**, major U.S. port & business center. The postal history from this region inspired a book called "The Great Mail". This is what postmasters from the 1820s - 1850s called mail between Washington DC & NOLA. Mail here was challenged by its geography. **Serviced by rail, post rider and steam boat. This communication was integral for the development of the Southern economy.**

2. Mail in **New Orleans faced blockades of its major mail pathways.** The Federal government after June 1st tried to completely isolate the CSA. **The quantity of mail still existing from NOLA tells a greater story of the postal history of the Confederacy than can be told from any other city.** This population of mail allows the study of different routes, rates and regulations whereas the cover population of other Confederate cities is quite small. Even with this large population, there exist great and thrilling rarities. This exhibit concentrates on showing the unusual and rare while showcasing all types of use.

Philatelic/Subject Knowledge:

1. There are many challenges in exhibiting this topic. The post office in New Orleans was looted upon occupation and the period of time short making records scarce. The **existing population of some of the adhesives, markings and routes number in a simple handful. Others are undiscovered.** This makes it difficult to make assumptions you could have made if larger number of covers and stamps existed. The routes changed from the beginning to the end of this period due to blockades and the constriction of the flow of mail by Union forces. **Few other Confederate cities had as complex a set of routes, markings and rates as did New Orleans.**

2. Mail handling in New Orleans has been surrounded in controversy for decades. Specifically the handling of the mail coming in on the Mississippi River. Much mail was diverted from the post office mail stream to avoid paying postage. Other mail was mis-rated by this office consistently. This exhibit shows examples of a river mail double circle cancel that was clearly used only on river mail. The Confederate Catalog does not list this as such. Kimbrough, Skinner and Siegel all list this cancel as having been used exclusively on this mail. I have conducted a survey and study of over 100 of these cancels and their use and have concluded the same. The question is exactly where this and other river mail cancels were applied. This is a work in progress.

What's Not Here?

- Louisville KY
"Southern Letter
Unpaid" 2 Known.
- 5c Provisional
printed on white
paper. Blue paper
shown in this exhibit.
7 total known both
papers. Not known
on cover.
- "Pd 2" shown in
Confederate catalog
is a fake. P.104 item
A. This cover cannot
be dated and no
such other marking
of it's type has been
seen.

Selected Bibliography

- Kaufman, Crown,
Palazolo,
"Confederate States
of America", 2012.
- Skinner, Hubert ,
"Notes on the New
Orleans Postmaster
Provisionals" 1978
Congress Book.
- Skinner, Hubert,
"New Orleans Post
Office in the Civil
War Period", 1980
Congress Book.
- Leonard Huber,
Clarence Wagner,
"The Great Mail".
American Philatelic
Society 1949.

Research/Personal Study:

1. I have been studying Confederate postal history for 17 years and surveying every NOLA adhesive and marking from January 26, 1861 to occupation. Surveys translate in the exhibit as "known". Surveys are important to show dates of printings of the provisionals and their relative scarcity. Materials from the library in NOLA, Library of Congress and Historic New Orleans Collection are resources. The following websites are among those used: PF, Siegel, Rumsey, HR Harmer, SAN and Bennett. The Confederate Philatelist has articles about NOLA in the confederacy & surveys. The more challenging routes of the covers in this exhibit were extensively researched and presented within. **Every page has been updated and the St Joseph LA use of the 1st Printing added since the last C of C.**

Rarity:

1. **Numbers of covers are noted for each provisional stamp occurring in short numbers as well as for markings known & displayed in the exhibit. All known uses of the provisionals are displayed in this exhibit. More than 1 frame would show redundant use.** The vast majority of existing provisional covers are simple 1 stamp covers to destinations under 500 miles.

2. There are **many categories of service that are quite scarce (less than 10) or unique that have been in private hands for decades.** These have been acquired slowly as this is a very popular and highly collected city within the Confederacy. New Orleans material helps to tell many other stories besides that of this city. Waterway, express company, blockade mail, outside the mails and provisional collectors all compete for the few covers available.

Condition:

1. There are few examples of a great deal of the categories shown in this exhibit. **All efforts have been made to show the finest available example known.** Confederate covers are notoriously found in poor condition. The imprint cover on p.3 is the only one known.

Exhibit Order & Plan Notes

Introduction to the shades & printings, description of plate, followed by rates, use in no particular order & finally an epilogue with the transition to the 1st Confederate stamp issue used in NOLA. Printings & shades shown in representative quantity with the usage section.

Printings/Plate: Only the first printing of the 5c provisional was announced and only in the local newspaper. No records exist from Riddell or printer about the provisional. Our understanding of the order of release of known shades of paper and ink is based on surveys of existing stamps and covers. It has previously been stated the Ochre and Chocolate Brown (de-listed) shades are part of the 1st printing. No reasoning has been published but these inks are printed on the first printing paper and is why they have been categorized as such. They were clearly runs of their own accord of completely and dramatically different ink composition. Since I have not published studies and findings on these shades as separate printings, I have included them in the 1st printing subsection. Since there are only 2 Chocolate Brown covers known, it is currently impossible to determine its order in the printing sequence. **Scan of only known sheet shown in lieu of a line drawing usually seen done by exhibitors to present information to viewers. This scan is much clearer than presenting a representation.**

Plating: It is estimated that only 90% of provisionals can be successfully plated. The ochre and the chocolate brown have never been successfully plated. The quality of the stereotype process and inking makes it impossible to plate these shades. The printing of the others varies widely and can make it impossible to determine their positions. It's not possible to plate every stamp in this exhibit.

Epilogue: The Confederate stamps were not received in New Orleans until November, 1861. The provisionals were **used into March of 1862.** These dates coupled with the increased constriction of the postal system due to blockades and disruption of mail routes make finding the use of Confederate stamps difficult. No records exist from Riddell nor are there newspaper accounts of the provisionals being halted from sale at the NOLA post office.

New Orleans 5 Cent Provisional

1861 - 1862

This exhibit examines the three printings, rates and use of the 5 cent New Orleans, Louisiana, (NOLA) provisional stamp from issuance to transition to Confederate stamps. Confederate letter postage rates (table below) took effect June 1, 1861 until July 1, 1862 (after occupation). Only the ratings of covers over 5¢ are described in the interest of space and redundancy. 64% of all known covers rate with a single provisional stamp use.

On May 13, 1861 NOLA postmaster John L. Riddell was notified the Confederate States would be assuming postal administration from the United States on June 1st. Confederate mail, with few exceptions, was required to be prepaid. Since there were no

Confederate stamps and coins for prepayment of postal rates were rapidly disappearing, Riddell ordered the printing of a 5 cent stamp and fractional currency with which the post office could use to make change.

NOLA was the largest city in the Confederacy, major U.S. port & business center. Serviced by rail, post rider and steam boat, this communication was integral for the development of the Southern economy. The Federal government tried to completely isolate the Confederacy and NOLA faced blockades of its major mail pathways. The quantity of mail still existing from NOLA tells a greater story of the postal history of the Confederacy than can be told from any other city during the war.

Letter Postage Rates	
Not more than 500 miles*	5¢
More than 500 miles*	10¢
*Per 1/2 ounce	

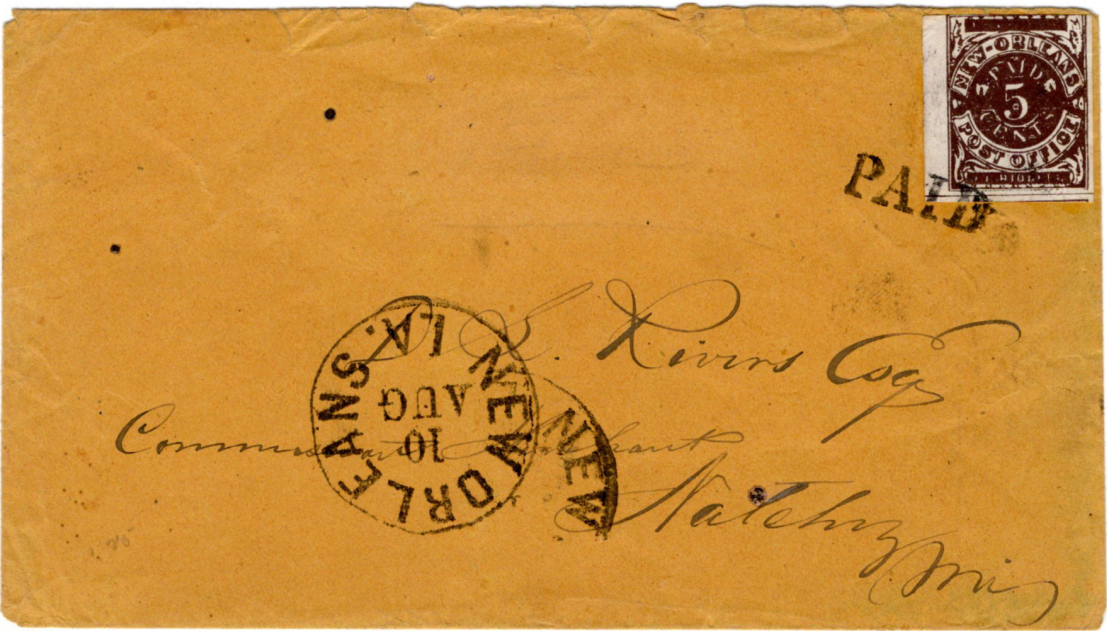
5 Cent Provisional Printings

Printings have been designated in 3 major groups based on paper color, ink and the chronology of their appearance on cover. There is no official record of release for printings after the first printing on June 6th. It is not known why the colors of ink or paper were changed. It is most certainly due to shortages of supplies in the Confederacy from across the lines. Of the Confederate provisional adhesives, only Marion, Virginia is known used earlier than NOLA.

Printing		Ink and Paper Colors	Quantity on Cover	Dates Used
1st		Brown on white paper	133	6/12/61 - 9/04/61
1st		Chocolate brown on white paper*	2	7/07/61 - 8/10/61
1st		Ochre on white paper (c) (Unknown unused)	22	6/18/61 - 10/7/61
2nd		Red brown on bluish paper	240	8/17/61 - 2/03/62
3rd		Yellow brown on off white paper	27	12/03/61 - 1/1/62

*No known off-cover stamps exist for display in table above. Example shown right.

Chocolate Brown on White Paper - 1st Printing



Left: NOLA Aug 10, 1861 to Natchez, Mississippi.

Only two known of this shade on cover.

Order of exhibit:

- 5 Cent Provisional Printings
- Printing Varieties
- 5c Plate & Inscription
- New Orleans Provisional Uses
- Epilogue: Confederate Issues Arrive

Key

- Additional relevant information is displayed in *Italics*.
- Significant & important items mounted on **blue paper**, significant & important descriptions **in blue text**.
- Items with certificates are noted with a red **(c)**.