

Special Delivery: State Postal History

DON'T YOU LOVE it when you unexpectedly stumble across a wonderful resource? That's what happened to me with the State Postal History Registry. I was pursuing research for a client and found this great website, which includes names, signatures, stamps and more as part of a postal history for each state.

My introduction to the website was via this document, <http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/statepostalhistory/Caswell%20County.pdf>. This is what is called a Postmark Catalog. It alphabetically lists the known post offices in a county, giving details of postmasters, known postmarks, postmaster franks (the signature of the postmaster) and more.

I was curious to know what information and documents they had for North Carolina, and other states. I found a page devoted to a North Carolina Postmark Catalog, http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/statepostalhistory/northcarolina_postmarkcatalog.html. In 1996, the North Carolina Postal History Society published a four-volume set of books titled *Post Offices and Postmasters of North Carolina*. These books documented the post offices and postmasters of 6,915 different post offices in North Carolina from the pre-Revolutionary times to the modern era, and illustrated all known postmarks from these offices used before the 20th century. They are sharing the information from the original catalog as they work to update it with new postmark information from the 19th century, and to add the known postmarks from the 20th century.

As we go to press, about 30 counties have their Postmark Catalog available for download.

All of this is available through the State Postal History Registry

on the website of the National Postal Museum, <http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/statepostalhistory/>. You can also find information on the museum, their exhibits and more there.

On the web page given, scroll down and you'll find a list of states. Click on the state of interest and you'll be taken to a page dedicated to that state. For each state, a coordinator with contact information is provided, along with a link to a document with published state information (essentially a bibliography), a list of related websites (such as the

tion available online. I also checked out an Ohio link and found a page that has images and information about Ohio hand-stamps through 1820. Michigan has presentations on the Postal History of Territorial Detroit (1803-1837) and Territorial Ann Arbor (1824-1837).

Though I have paid attention to information about postmasters during my research (since the earliest ones often became the namesake of the community), I have



rarely ventured further — even though I have handled many 19th century letters, complete with postage stamps. And, I should admit that while in middle school, high school, college and later, I used to collect stamps. Obviously, though I had some appreciation for postage stamps, I hadn't fully understood all that could be learned from philatelic postal history. So, consider exploring the postal history of a state or community — whether it's learning more about stamps and franks as they appear on a family heirloom, or discovering that a great uncle was a postmaster for a few years, or just enjoying a journey through postal history — it's an exploration that will be worth your while.

North Carolina Postmark Catalog), the local Postal History Society, whether there is a periodical or other literature available and sometimes more.

The amount of information available for each state depends on what the volunteer state coordinator (an expert in philatelic postal history) has included, as well as whether there is an active philatelist's society in the state and/or the state archives has available resources. North Carolina, for example, has extensive informa-