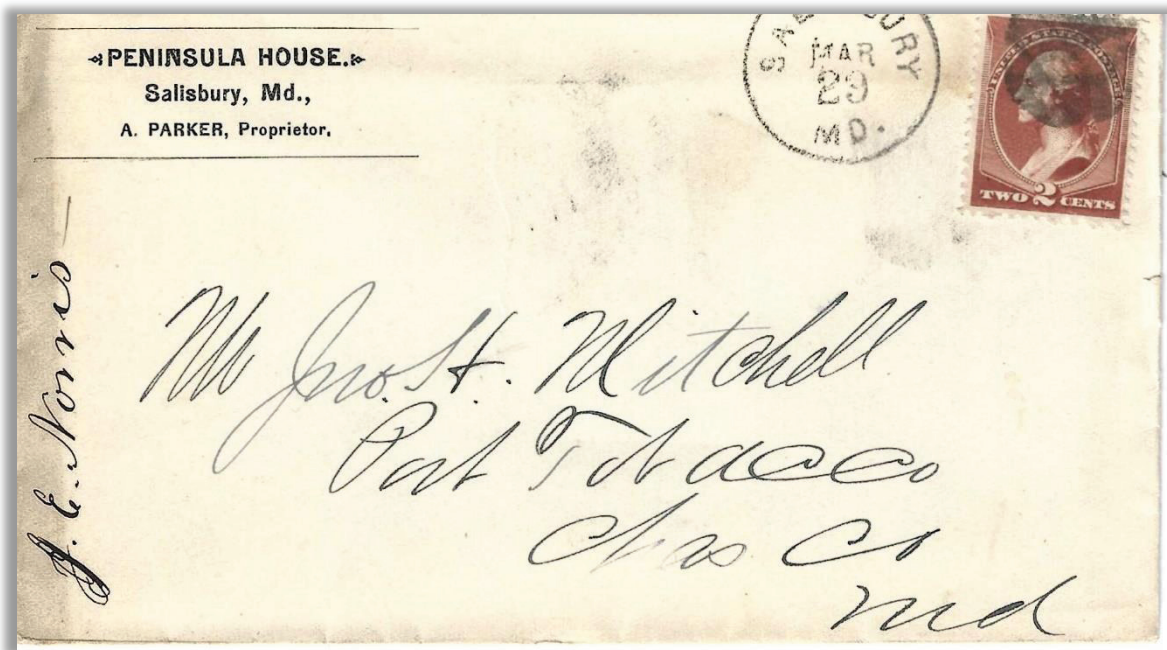


Port Tobacco Maryland 1884

By Tom Reyman

The Chesapeake Bay divides the eastern portion of Maryland into what are termed the Eastern Shore and Western shore of the state. This area has some of the earliest settlements in the United States dating to the 1600's. Some features that made this area so popular was the closeness to the fishing in the Bay and the many inlets that provided shelter for people and boats. The proximity to the Bay enhanced the use of boats to develop commercial shipping locally and to overseas ports.

The subject cover was one that was sent from the town of Salisbury on the Eastern Shore to Port Tobacco on the Western Shore. The year of the mailing is unknown, but the stamp (Scott number 210) was issued on October 1, 1883. The stamp was issued to cover the postage for the new rate of two cents for one-half ounce mailings. Since the letter was sent on March 29, the earliest year date would have been 1884.



The village of Port Tobacco was a seaport with ready access to the Bay and to the Atlantic Ocean. This location helped the village grow rapidly during the 1700's and it became the second largest community in Maryland and became the county seat of Charles County.

In the mid- 1800's, the inlet to the village became shallow because of river silting and the railroad line that was built in the area bypassed the village in 1873. The result was the decline in commercial traffic and, with it, the decline in population. The county seat was moved to a different village in 1895 as the population decreased to fewer than 100 residents.

Residents of Port Tobacco were very much involved with the early years of the country before and after the Revolutionary War. Some notable people from Port Tobacco were John Hanson, the first President of the Continental Congress, and Thomas Stone, a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

During the U.S. Civil War, Port Tobacco was strongly sympathetic to the Confederate cause and several Confederate spies lived in the area.



A = The location of Port Tobacco

B = The location of Salisbury

The sender of the mailing was a merchant, A. Parker, from the town of Salisbury on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Salisbury is situated along the banks of the Wicomico River which aided its growth as a commercial shipping center. During the Civil War Union troops used the town as an operation center to intercept shipments of contraband materials to the Confederate troops in the vicinity.

It is likely that in 1884 when the mailing was sent to Port Tobacco, that the mail travelled by ship from Salisbury.

References:

- *Scott Classic Specialized Catalogue of Stamps and Covers 1840-1940*; 2023 Edition.
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Tobacco_Village_Maryland
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salisbury_Maryland

Tom Reyman is a Nevada Stamp Study Society member whose collecting interests are U.S. FAM covers, general Air Mail covers, Canadian Semi-Official Air Mail stamps and covers, and Cape Breton (Nova Scotia) covers.