

The Postal History of Indian Key Fla.

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Abstract

I decided to write this after searching the National Archives where I discovered an 1834 WAY cover with letter from Indian Key, an island in the Florida Keys. My article discusses mail delivery, the schooner which carried the mails, Lt. Timothy Paige, author of the letter to Adjutant General Roger Jones, and a short history about the Seminole attack on Indian Key.

Also, there were some examples of other scarce Indian Keys covers, a discussion on the postmasters and their compensation, and finally two covers from the Indian Key State Park's groundbreaking ceremony on Oct. 14, 1978.

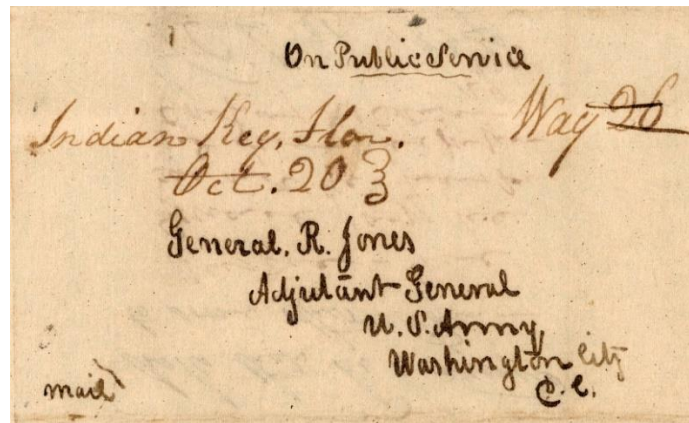
Indian Key Post Office and Mail Delivery

In 1824, Silas Fletcher came to Indian Key, a 12-acre island located halfway between Key West and Cape Florida within the chain of the Florida keys. He built a general store for the partnership of Snyder and Appleby, which was visited by the shipwreck salvagers, fisherman, and the Key West mail boat. Fletcher unofficially collected and delivered mail as a **private post office** and received no financial assistance from the Post Office Department to defray his costs. Transportation costs were to be paid out of the postage collected or made up by the postmaster.

On May 21, 1833, the Indian Key Post Office was formally established.

Indian Key Way Mail Letter from 1st Lt. Timothy Paige

A WAY letter's routing can be determined from the designation and contents of the letter. Since Indian Key is an island, the letter had been picked up by a vessel on the "way" between post offices (Indian Key) and delivered to the next post office (Charleston) reached by the captain. The captain received a handling fee of 1¢ per letter, as noted by the 26 (regular mail was 25). The Charleston postmaster lined out the 26 because "On Public Service" indicated "Free" delivery. He did not line out the "Way" since the captain received 1¢ for his service.



Red manuscript Indian Key Flor. Oct 20, [1834] and Way 26.
(Courtesy of the National Archives)

Also Shown and Discussed

1839 and 1840 covers were shown, as well as a table of the postmasters and their compensation. It is remarkable that from July 1841 to April 1842 the total income from this island post office was \$269. In today's dollars this would be \$10,302.

Finally, I show two covers from the Indian Key State Park ground breaking ceremony.