

# Wisconsin History in Wisconsin Postal History

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A while back I was going through some covers I had acquired and came across this stampless cover postmarked Racine. I opened the folded letter to see what the message was about. The message started out, "Territory of Wisconsin Racine County. The following is an abstract of votes given at an election held in the several towns in said county on the sixth day of April A.D. 1847 for and against the Constitution of State Government and also on the same day, for and against equal suffrage to colored persons." I was getting excited, but what was this 1847 date, Wisconsin did not become a state until 1848. In addition, the referendum on suffrage for people of color was news to me. I began to look into the election further.

It turns out, there was a referendum on statehood in 1847. At the same time there was a referendum on suffrage for people of color. The 1847 referendum on statehood was voted down, largely due to very restrictive banking rules. The letter shows Racine County voting against statehood with 1,363 votes for and 2,474 votes against. The 1847 referendum on suffrage was voted down statewide, but the letter shows it passed in Racine County with 1,206 votes for and 763 votes against.

The letter is signed and sealed "In testimony whereof I, Thos. E. Parmele Clerk of the Board of Supervisors of said County, W. T. (Wisconsin Territory) have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Supervisory Seal at Racine this 23 day of April A.D. 1847." Then it is signed, "Thos. E. Parmele, Clerk." Note the letter is addressed to: "His Excellency Henry Dodge, Governor, Madison, W. T."



Note olive colored circular date stamp and boxed 5 franking (image 61% of actual size).

Final note, another Constitutional Convention was held in late 1847 and a new Constitution was drafted and agreed upon. That Constitution was approved in another referendum in 1848. Wisconsin became the 30<sup>th</sup> state in the union on May 29, 1848.