

At Home & in the Field

The Quarterly Journal
of
The Society for Women and the Civil War



From the Editor

By now it should be old news that our 2020 conference has been re-branded the “2021” conference and will take place July 23-25 next summer. The venue, speakers, and events remain unchanged. For details and to register online, please see our conference brochure under the “Annual SWCW Conference” tab at our website.

We'll be trying something new in this issue: *serialization*. The article on page three, “If Heart Speaks Not to Heart,” is informative and interesting, but quite lengthy. Since we couldn't have one article monopolize the journal, we decided to spread it out over several issues. As P.T. Barnum said, “Always leave them wanting more.”

Remember, if you want to submit an article, story, or poetry, let us know!

**Do you know who this woman is?
(see page 3)**

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Mission Statement:

The Society for Women and the Civil War is dedicated to recognizing the efforts of women who lived through or participated in the American Civil War and those who research, reenact or otherwise honor these women of the past.

MYSTERY LADIES

July

Marie Brose Tepe Leonard, aka Marie Tepe, aka “French Mary”

Born in France in 1834, Tepe eventually immigrated to the US, marrying Bernhard Tepe, a Philadelphia tailor.

Tepe followed her husband when he enlisted in the 27th Pennsylvania Infantry, where she became a vivandière. Tepe left the unit when her husband and his friends stole \$1,600 from her.

She soon joined Charles H.T. Collis' 114th Pennsylvania Regiment, the *Zouaves d'Afrique*. For her conduct during the Battle of Chancellorsville, Tepe was awarded the Kearny Cross.

After the war, she married a veteran named Richard Leonard. She and Leonard divorced in March 1897, with Tepe citing "general abuse" as the cause.

In 1898, a newspaper reported that Tepe applied for a military pension, yet no documentation can be found reflecting she ever received a pension. She became destitute, developing rheumatism and suffering from an ankle injury incurred during the war. She committed suicide May 24, 1901, by drinking a lethal dose of "Paris Green," a pigment, preservative, and insecticide made of copper and arsenic. Her ankle wound may have been a contributing factor in her suicide.



Sources: www.pacivilwar.com/regiment/114thvivandere.html;
www.army.mil/article/11458/vivandieres_forgotten_women_of_the_civil_war
History of American Women – www.womenhistoryblog.com

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October

Lydia Hamilton Smith

Lydia Hamilton Smith was born on February 14, 1813 in Adams County, Pennsylvania, to an African American mother and an Irish father. She married a free black man named Jacob Smith and bore two sons; but he died in 1852. Soon-to-be Congressman Thaddeus Stevens of Lancaster, who knew Smith and her mother, offered her a position as his housekeeper.

Smith accompanied Stevens on his trips to Washington, D.C. where he included her in social gatherings, addressing her as “Madam” or “Mrs. Smith.”

Lydia Smith’s oldest son William died in 1860 and younger son Isaac enlisted in the 6th U. S. Colored Troops in 1863. After the Battle of Gettysburg, Smith drove a borrowed horse and wagon through Adams County to a field hospital to which she took donations of food and clothing and distributed them among the wounded men, Union and Confederate alike.

Smith worked for Stevens until he died in 1868. He left \$5,000 to her, with which she purchased his house in Lancaster and a large boarding house across from the Willard Hotel in Washington, D.C. She became known as an excellent businesswoman. Lydia Smith died on Valentine’s Day 1884 in Washington, D.C., and is buried in the cemetery of St. Mary’s.

In the 2012 movie *Lincoln*, Lydia Smith has a cameo appearance. In the final scene, Smith, portrayed by S. Epatha Merkerson, and Stevens, portrayed by Tommy Lee Jones, are together in bed as Stevens reads the just-passed 13th Amendment to her. While it was rumored at the time that the two were involved romantically, the rumor is not supported by proof.

Sources:

Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thaddeus_Stevens

Lancaster County Historical Society - www.stevensandsmith.org/

History of American Women – www.womenhistoryblog.com

www.plaintruth.com/the_plain_truth/2009/12/lydia-smith-american-patriot-and-inspiration.html



“If Heart Speaks Not to Heart”

By Ashley Mays

This article originally appeared in *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, September, 2017. It is reprinted with permission of the University of North Carolina Press.

Submitted by Jim Knights

On May 6, 1863, Leila Habersham strolled through her wealthy family's well-tended garden in Savannah, Georgia, chatting with a friend. A shout from the nearby house shattered the calm. Running home, Leila discovered terrible news—her husband was dead. Confederate lieutenant Frederic Habersham had been struck in the head by a shell fragment at the Battle of Chancellorsville and was killed instantly. For the next few weeks, Leila went through the motions of mourning in a daze; even the funeral seemed but a blur. As the shock began to wear off, she clung to one particular form of comfort: the flood of letters that poured in over the ensuing weeks. The funeral service and black crepe might have been more visible signs of mourning, yet Leila selected these letters as representative of her own loss, each one saved, reread, and pasted with the others as the highlight of her memorial to Fred—a memoir.¹

The letters Leila Habersham saved were primarily condolence letters, a highly stylized form of writing intended to comfort the recently bereaved. This article will examine changes in both literary form and message of condolence letters written to Confederate widows immediately after their husbands died during the American Civil War. Popular in the rising postal culture of the antebellum era, particularly among the well-to-do, condolence letter writing relied on sentimental rhetoric and religious arguments to sympathize with the bereaved and promote spiritual growth. Yet some of the letters within Leila's memoir hinted at an evolution in condolence letter format. As the American Civil War tore loved ones apart, white southerners of all backgrounds participated in condolence letter correspondence and adapted the format to the needs of war.² Nurses, soldiers and other witnesses at the front wrote to express sympathy but also to communicate with brevity the practical details of deaths that occurred far from home.

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Notification letters, as this article terms the new format, took on a different tone and duty and therefore also developed a different approach to grief, one that emphasized the memory of the dead.

As deaths increased over the course of the war, notification letters overtook the condolence letter format through sheer volume, though condolence letters remained popular among upper-class white families on the home front.

Why were these letters so important to widows like Leila Habersham? Certainly the intimate writings quantified the community's love for Fred and Leila, both within the meaning of the words and in the sheer number of letters. Each letter assured Leila of her place within her network of loving family and friends even without her marriage. Yet they also took on another significance: while acknowledging Leila's past love and present tragedy, they provided her a roadmap for the future. Public mourning rituals prescribed widows' outward behavior, but these private letters allowed friends and family to articulate clearly how white southern society expected widows like Leila to *feel* about their losses.

An interplay between compassion and coercion permeated the carefully written—and carefully read—pages. On the one hand, the intimate and private conversation permitted great freedom of expression to both writer and reader that allowed two individuals to explore the depths of compassion in a time of crisis. Authors could open their hearts and freely express the depths of their grief and their expectations for grieving without fear of public embarrassment. On the other hand, the intimacy and privacy inherent in letter writing also lent coercive power to the instructions the writers offered on how to grieve and interpret loss. Writers were often close family and friends to whom readers, especially widows, might turn for future financial or social support, so widows had vested interests in complying with these recommendations.

Historians have examined condolence letters both as impeccable examples of epistolary writing and as one source among many revealing the experience of war. In many ways, they epitomized the mid-nineteenth-century cultural movement to view letters as an important avenue to maintain personal connections and to share authentic emotional experiences. Condolence letters not only communicated sympathy but also connected distant peoples and functioned as a touchstone for memory.³

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Arguably, no other type of letter more eloquently illustrates the sense of loss and tragedy that befell many Americans North and South. For instance, Drew Gilpin Faust illustrates in *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* that condolence letter writing enabled Americans to recreate their ideal of a Good Death by communicating the details of the deathbed scene.⁴

Yet Faust and many other scholars who have examined condolence letters tend to generalize from the letters rather than examining tensions within the writing format itself.⁵ The role of condolence letters in attempting to regulate feelings, particularly those surrounding grief, has also remained largely unexplored. As a result, scholars have missed important tensions within the changing cultural conventions that these documents illustrate.



*Mourning Envelope - Photograph by Michael Marx
Courtesy of www.VictorianWeb.org*

Focusing on letters written to Confederate widows will exclude variations arising from sectional differences or subtly different expectations for relatives.⁶ Communities North and South shared a love of both letters and family, and both sides faced incredible tragedy throughout the conflict. Yet, key differences influenced condolence letter writing. In antebellum America, cities, more often found in the North, permitted frequent mail, creating a more rapid conversational cadence than in the more rural South.⁷ With slow and unreliable mail, Confederate bureaucracy only worsened the struggle.⁸ Furthermore, the scale of death during the war placed a particular burden on white southern communities that mobilized and lost higher percentages of their populations.⁹

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The politicization of the dead during the Civil War altered the meaning of loss for each side. Scholars primarily studying Union sources have demonstrated that the war dead symbolized both individual tragedy and national loss. By assuming responsibility for burial and memorialization, the U.S. government expanded its role while building a national identity based on shared loss. The Confederacy, however, assumed no such responsibility, despite suffering proportionately higher death rates. The adversarial nature of civil war, and ultimately Confederate defeat, pushed white southerners to seek a meaning of loss, as well as expectations for grief, separately from their Union foes.¹⁰

Antebellum Americans increasingly viewed letters as a private and authentic connection between people separated by distance. To produce "a spontaneous effusion of sincere feeling," many letters relied on formulaic phrasings that marked the correspondence as epistolary and the writer as middle-to-upper class.¹¹

The combination allowed letters to fit into a culture of literary sentimentality, in which carefully crafted writings induced readers to "feel right," according to the writer's standards. Producing authentic feelings through artificial means sparked tension ultimately overcome by the combined power of cultural expectations and individual sympathy.¹² In many ways, condolence letters were an extreme version of sentimental literature, because they wielded a precise formula to produce an empathetic understanding of God's will within an emotionally vulnerable reader, yet they also strove to eliminate feelings, namely the sadness, bitterness, and anger associated with grief.¹³

To be continued....



*Courtesy of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
via North Carolina Digital Heritage Center.*

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Notes

1. See Leila Habersham, “A Sketch of the Life of Frederic Augustus Habersham, 1831–1863,” in Anna Habersham Wright Smith, A Savannah Family, 1830–1901 (Milledgeville, Ga.: Boyd, 1999), 27–202, esp. 160–76, 184–200. For more on widows and mourning during the Civil War, see Karen Halttunen, Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830–1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 128–44; and Mary Louise Kete, Sentimental Collaborations: Mourning and Middle-Class Identity in Nineteenth-Century America (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000).

Portions of this research appeared in an earlier format in the author’s works, ““A Past Still Living’: The Grieving Process of Confederate Widows” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014) and ““To Suffer in Silence’: Confederate Widows’ Grieving Processes after the Civil War” (MA thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2010).

2. For more on the rising postal culture in the mid-nineteenth century, see David M. Henkin, The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-Century America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), esp. 11–38, 137–47.
3. See Henkin, The Postal Age, 109–11. For a general discussion on epistolary letter writing, see William Merrill Decker, Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America before Telecommunications (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).
4. Drew Gilpin Faust, This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (New York: Vintage, 2008), esp. 14–30.
5. See also Michael Barton, Goodmen: The Character of Civil War Soldiers (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981).
6. For research on nineteenth-century widowhood, see Lisa Wilson, Life after Death: Widows in Pennsylvania, 1750–1850 (Philadelphia: Temple Free Press, 1992); Kirsten Wood, Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

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7. Henkin, Postal Age, 31–32. 8. See Richard F. Ridgway, Self-Sufficiency at All Costs: Confederate Post Office Operations in North Carolina, 1861–1865 (Charlotte: North Carolina Postal History Society, 1988).

8. See Richard F. Ridgway, Self-Sufficiency at All Costs: Confederate Post Office Operations in North Carolina, 1861–1865 (Charlotte: North Carolina Postal History Society, 1988).

9. See Faust, This Republic of Suffering, 273n2. While scholars have debated the significance of the casualty rate, wartime deaths occurred on top of the types of losses before the war. For proof of high antebellum death rates, see Mark Schantz, Awaiting the Heavenly Country: The Civil War and America's Culture of Death (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008); and Nicholas Marshall, “The Great Exaggeration: Death and the Civil War,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 4 (March 2014): 3–27. Mark E. Neely Jr. highlights the limits of brutality in The Civil War and the Limits of Destruction (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). For arguments emphasizing the transformative scale of death during the war, see J. David Hacker, “A Census-Based Count of the Civil War Dead,” *Civil War History* 57 (December 2011): 307–48, and Ian Finseth, “The Civil War Dead: Realism and the Problem of Anonymity,” *American Literary History* 25 (Fall 2013): 535–62.

10. See Faust, This Republic of Suffering; Gary Laderman, The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes toward Death, 1799–1883 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Franny Nudelman, John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

11. Henkin, Postal Age, 109.

12. Shirley Samuels, The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3–8.

13. For more on sentimental literature in mourning, see Kete, Sentimental Collaborations, esp. chaps. 3 and 4.

“I’d no idea a ‘orspittle was such a jolly place.”

Submitted by Jim Knights

Reprinted with permission from Maine at War
(<http://maineatwar.bangordailynews.com>)

A sick or wounded Maine soldier could not evade the army’s bureaucracy forever; sooner or later he either returned to duty or went home “Discharged for Disability.”

The army preferred a soldier rejoin his unit; an experienced soldier back in the ranks was worth several angry draftees under guard while en route to the front. While serving for several months as a nurse at the Union Hospital in Washington, D.C., Louisa May Alcott witnessed convalescents returning to the front.

“One of the lively episodes of hospital life” was “the frequent marching away of such [patients] as are well enough to rejoin their regiments, or betake themselves to some convalescent camp,” she recalled.

“The ward master comes to the door of each room that is to be thinned, reads off a list of names, bids their owners look sharp and be ready when called for,” Alcott said.

After the ward master left, “the rooms fall into an indescribable state of topsy-turvyness,” she expressed her indomitable humor.

“The boys begin to black their boots, brighten spurs, if they have them, overhaul knapsacks, make presents” by giving items to patients remaining at the hospital, Alcott observed.

Nurses “fitted out” their discharged patients “with needfuls, and [the men] — well, why not? — kissed sometimes, as they say, good by; for in all human probability we shall never meet again, and a woman’s heart yearns over anything that has clung to her for help and comfort.”

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A photograph reportedly taken in August 1865 shows soldier patients inside Ward K at Armory Square Hospital in Washington, D.C. During the war, patients deemed sufficiently healthy to rejoin their units would be summoned forth from hospitals. Nurse Louisa May Alcott described one such mass departure in her book “Hospital Sketches.” (Library of Congress)

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Alcott described a mother's love for her children, and many nurses (particularly older women) viewed their disparate patients often drawn from different states as their "boys."

Nurse Sarah Sampson from Bath initially cared for 3rd Maine Infantry soldiers as soon as they arrived in Washington in spring 1861. She traveled with the regiment and her husband, Charles, to the capital from Augusta and spent the war (except for periods home) nursing Maine soldiers.

Many became her surrogate children, and the 3rd Maine boys never forgot Sampson.

"I never liked these breakings-up of my little household," said Alcott, adding that she witnessed only three such events during "my short stay" at the Union Hospital.

This particular time "the big Prussian rumbled out his unintelligible *adieu*, with a grateful face and a premonitory smooth of his yellow moustache," she said. "But [he] got no farther, for some one else stepped up, with a large brown hand extended."

Satisfied with his medical care at "our very faulty establishment," the soldier said, "We're off, ma'am, and I'm powerful sorry, for I'd no idea a 'orspittle was such a jolly place. Hope I'll got another ball somewhere easy, so I'll come back, and be took care on again."

"Mean, isn't it?" he asked.

"I tried to look shocked, failed signally, and consoled myself by giving him the fat pincushion he had admired as the 'cutest little machine agoin.'"

The soldiers "fell into line in front of the house" as Alcott watched. Some looked "rather wan and feeble ... but trying to step out smartly and march in good order, though half the knapsacks were carried by the guard, and several [men] leaned on sticks instead of shouldering guns."

The soldiers "all looked up and smiled, or waved their hands and touched their caps, as they passed under our windows down the long street, and so away, some to their homes in this world, and some to that in the next," Alcott wrote.

For the rest of the day" her heart wept a little "when I saw the empty beds and missed the familiar faces," she admitted.

Source: Louisa May Alcott, *Hospital Sketches*, James Redpath, Boston, Massachusetts, 1863, pp. 95-96

POETRY

The Women Who Went to the Field

The women who went to the field, you say,
 The *women* who went to the field; and pray
 What did they go for? just to be in the way! -
 They'd not know the difference betwixt work and play,
 What did they know about *war* anyway?
 What could they *do*? - of what *use* could they be?
 They would scream at the sight of a gun, don't you see?
 Just fancy them round where the bugle notes play,
 And the long roll is bidding us on to the fray.
 Imagine their skirts 'mong artillery wheels,
 And watch for their flutter as they flee 'cross the fields
 When the charge is rammed home
 and the fire belches hot; -
 They never will wait for the answering shot.
 They would faint at the first drop of blood, in their sight.
 What fun for us boys, - (ere we enter the fight;)
 They might pick some lint, and tear up some sheets,
 And make us some jellies, and send on their sweets,
 And knit some soft socks for Uncle Sam's shoes,
 And write us some letters, and tell us the news.
 And thus it was settled by common consent,
 That husbands, or brothers, or whoever went,
 That the place for the women was in their own homes,
 There to patiently wait until victory comes.
 But later, it chanced, just how no one knew,
 That the lines slipped a bit, and some 'gan
 to crowd through;
 And they went, - where did they go? -
 Ah; where did they not?
 Show us the battle, - the field, - or the spot
 Where the groans of the wounded rang out on the air
 That her ear caught it not, and her hand was not there,
 Who wiped the death sweat from the cold, clammy brow,
 And sent home the message; - "T is well with him now"?
 Who watched in the tents, whilst the fever fires burned,
 And the pain-tossing limbs in agony turned,

Continued

And wet the parched tongue, calmed
 delirium's strife
 Till the dying lips murmured, " My Mother,"
 "My Wife"!
 And who were they all? - They were many,
 my men:
 Their record was kept by no tabular pen:
 They exist in traditions from father to son.
 Who recalls, in dim memory, now here and
 there one. -
 A few names where writ, and by chance
 live to-day;
 But's a perishing record fast fading away.
 Of those we recall, there are scarcely a score,
 Dix, Dame, Bickerdyke, - Edson, Harvey
 and Moore,
 Fales, Wittenmeyer, Gilson, Safford and Lee,
 And poor Cutter dead in the sands of the sea;
 And Frances D. Gage, our "Aunt Fanny"
 of old,
 Whose voice rang for freedom when freedom
 was sold.
 And Husband, and Etheridge, and Harlan
 and Case,
 Livermore, Alcott, Hancock and Chase,
 And Turner, and Hawley, and Potter and
 Hall,
 Ah! the list grows apace, as they come
 at the call:
 Did these women quail at the sight of a gun?
 Will some soldier tell us of one he saw run?
 Will he glance at the boats on the great
 western flood,
 At Pittsburg and Shiloh, did they faint at the
 blood?

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And the brave wife of Grant stood there with
them then,
And her calm, stately presence gave strength to
his men.
And Marie of Logan; she went with them too;
A bride, scarcely more than a sweetheart, 'tis true.
Her young cheek grows pale when the bold
troopers ride.
Where the "Black Eagle" soars, she is close
at his side,
She staunches his blood, cools the
fever-burnt breath,
And the wave of her hand stays the Angel of Death;
She nurses him back, and restores once again
To both army and state the brave leader of men.
She has smoothed his black plumes and laid
them to sleep,
Whilst the angels above them their high vigils keep:
And she sits here alone, with the snow on her brow -
Your cheers for her comrades! Three cheers
for her now.
And these were the women who went to the war:
The women of question; what did they go for?
Because in their hearts God had planted the seed
Of pity for woe, and help for its need;
They saw, in high purpose, a duty to do,
And the armor of right broke the barriers through.
Uninvited, unaided, unsanctioned oftentimes,
With pass, or without it, they pressed on the lines;
They pressed, they implored, till they ran the
lines through,
And this was the "running" the men saw them do.

'T was a hampered work, its worth largely lost;
'T was hindrance, and pain, and effort, and cost:
But through these came knowledge, - knowledge
is power.-
And never again in the deadliest hour
Of war or of peace shall we be so beset
To accomplish the purpose our spirits have met.
And what would they do if war came again?
The scarlet cross floats where all was blank then.
They would bind on their "brassards" and march
to the fray,
And the man liveth not who could say to them nay;
They would stand with you now, as they stood
with you then,
The nurses, consolers, and saviours of men.



MIDNIGHT ON THE BATTLE FIELD – 1887
*Engraving published by A. D. Worthington & Co.,
Hartford, CT, showing a famous Civil War nurse,
Mary Ann Bickerdyke
(courtesy of Free Library of Philadelphia)*

"The Women Who Went to the Field" was written by Clara Barton. She read the poem during a reception on November 18, 1892 at the Willard Hotel in Washington, D. C. for the Potomac Relief Corps, a unit of the National Woman's Relief Corps.

The poem has been reprinted in various sources; this transcription is from *Angel of the Battlefield - The Life of Clara Barton* by Ishbel Ross. Published by Harper & Brothers Publishing, 1956.

Jennie Wade



From an 1861 photograph, Mary Virginia "Jennie" Wade is seated on the right. On the left is Jennie's sister, Georgia Ann Wade and in the middle is their neighbor, Maria Mickley Comfort.

Image is from the book, The True Story of "Jennie" Wade: A Gettysburg Maid by John White Johnston, published in 1917.

I cannot believe in early July eighteen sixty three
That I was destined to die it was the last of me
Caught we were in the battle fight
Of North and South it was a horrid sight
It's Gettysburg where these armies engage
That kill each other with such rage
So as I stood to bake the bread
For our Union men it was said
That a bullet did cross through the door
And struck me down and fell to the floor
The life of me gone in a blink of an eye
So fast it was not even to cry
The white light of God did call to me
Of tender twenty years so you see
I leave this earth please do not cry
For the only civilian that did die
But for the thousands of soldiers whose deaths I feel
Do not mourn me for I will kneel
To the Almighty that has called me home
I shall see you all there, by His throne.

Selection from
The Nameless and the Faceless of the Civil War
Lisa G. Samia, Author
Destiny Whispers Publishing, LLC.
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Ms. Samia, a member of the SWCW, has been named an Artist-in-Residence by the National Parks Art Foundation. She is currently working on her new book, The Nameless and Faceless Women of the Civil War, due for publication in 2021.

The Wife to Her Soldier Husband

By Malva

Reprinted from Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine
February, 1864

Shall I tell thee about our boy,
And how his darling face
Is growing, daily, more like thine
In all its infant grace?

The same brow, so white and high;
The same rich, wavy hair,
That lies in the soft rings, lovingly,
Around his face so fair.

The same blue eyes, deep, clear, and soft;
The mouth so like to thine;
His very features true to thee;
And he is mine, he's *mine*.

And when his eyes to me he turns,
With that dear look like thine,
I clasp and kiss him o'er and o'er,
And thank God he is mine.



Thomas Nast, "Christmas Eve, 1862," wood engraving on paper,
"Harper's Weekly," January 3, 1863 – courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art



THE RETICULE

This column presents general information which would be known by, and would be useful to, women of the Civil War era. For academics and historians, as well as reenactors/living historians, it provides insight into the everyday lives of these women.

Confederate States of America Postal Service Across the Lines During the American Civil War

By J. White

The Civil War meant separation of soldiers and prisoners of war from loved ones, and displacement of families and friends, all of whom longed greatly to receive news, reassurances and emotional support via letters from each other. It raised challenges for continuation of commercial enterprises which required communications of instructions and orders, guarantees of funds transfers via postal mail and shipping services. Conduct of the war also necessitated a tremendous increase in volume of governmental and military communications via postal mail.

Beginning in early 1861, the newly-formed Confederate government was immediately faced with performing the mission of providing reliable, efficient and economical postal mail service. Its greatest challenges lay in the secure and timely movement of mail between Confederate territories separated by Union-occupied territory and in maintenance of postal service between persons and businesses in the Confederacy and those in the United States or in Europe. [1]

Transition of Service Provision from the US Post Office Department to the Confederate Post Office

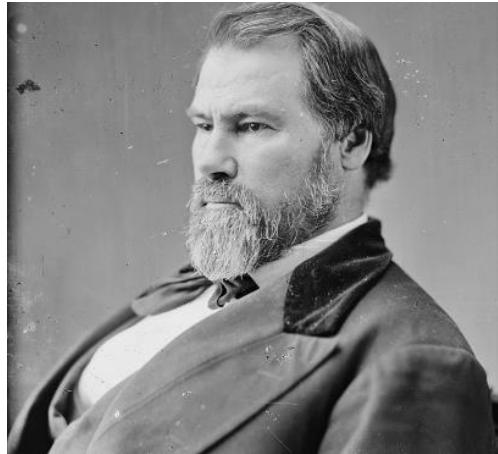
Postal communications between the United States of America (USA) and the Confederate States of America (CSA) continued for a short time after southern states began seceding in December 1860. This practice was intended to attract the seceded states to rejoin the Union by showing good will, and also to assist businesses in the USA to receive payments owed to them by customers in the CSA.

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When the CSA government was formed – two months prior to the outbreak of hostilities in April 1861 – it established the CSA Post Office Department (POD) on 21 February 1861. Former US Congressman from Texas John Henninger Reagan was appointed as the CSA Postmaster General on 6 March 1861.[2] Reagan recruited southerners working in the USA POD, who brought with them to the CSA POD not only their knowledge of postal operations, but also documents, forms, postal system maps and supplies.

When the USA POD had provided postal service in the southern states prior to the states' secession, the cost to provide that service was more than three times the income it generated. According to the US Postal Service, "in 1861, the cost of mailing a half-ounce letter up to 3,000 miles by the U.S. Post Office Department was 3 cents (77 cents in 2011 dollars). On June 1, 1861, the Confederate Post Office began charging 5 cents (\$1.30 in 2011 dollars) for mailing half-ounce letters up to 500 miles." Reagan raised the rates for delivery to meet actual costs, cut back on the types of services offered, and applied strict efficiencies [3]. The CSA POD thus met the CSA Congress' mandate to be self-financing by 1 March 1863.



*CSA Postmaster General John Henninger Reagan
(Library of Congress)*

As a result of the 23 May 1861 US Army occupation of Alexandria, Virginia, the primary north-south route between Washington, DC, and Richmond, Virginia – which had become the seat of the CSA government three days earlier – was closed.

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On 24 May, USA Postmaster General Montgomery Blair ordered discontinuation of USA mail to Richmond and the diversion of all letters addressed to the seceded states to the USA Dead Letter Office (DLO) in Washington, DC. On 31 May, the USA POD extended that action and completely suspended its operations within the seceded states. On the next day, 1 June 1861, the CSA POD began operating its own new postal system, which continued its services until June 1865.

The USA government confirmed the policy of the US Postmaster General, and, on 7 June 1861, it ordered the discontinuation of all postal communications between the USA and the CSA. After that date, all mail addressed from senders in the USA to recipients in the CSA was diverted to the USA DLO. Still, a USA postal route remained between Nashville, Tennessee, and Louisville, in the as yet neutral state of Kentucky. On 8 June 1861, Tennessee voted to secede, but the USA postal mail route continued to operate until the USA government received official notice of Tennessee's secession on 12 June. The USA POD then closed the last official postal mail route between the USA and CSA. As of 13 June, rather than diverting to the USA DLO that mail in transit from Nashville, now in a CSA state, through Louisville to the USA, the neutral state Louisville city postmaster began holding that mail. On 24 June, the Louisville city postmaster received instructions from the USA POD to "forward letters from the South for the loyal states as unpaid after removing postage stamps."^[4] Invoking Kentucky's neutrality, the Louisville postmaster instead established a mechanism for releasing CSA-originated mail passing through Louisville to northern states beginning on 25 June. He created the "SOUTHn. LETTER/UNPAID" marking to indicate to USA addressees that USA postage stamps applied to USA-bound mail by Southern senders were invalid for postage, and that payment for postage was due from the recipient.

CSA Governmental and Private Postal Routes Through US Military-Controlled Territory and Blockades

All of the USA POD policies and actions contributed to a key USA war strategy which sought to cut off all of the CSA's outside communications.

Continued

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As the CSA was early on effectively surrounded or blockaded by the USA, special postal routes across, or circumventing, the lines were needed for diplomatic inter-governmental and critical private mail between the USA and CSA, for mail between parts of the CSA separated by USA military activities, and for mail between the CSA and other countries. An interlinked system of official CSA POD, CSA POD-contracted, and privately-operated special postal routes evolved and expanded as the war lengthened. Because of the difficulty and danger in getting mail across enemy lines, most of these alternative routes carried much less mail than the CSA POD; however, their operators demonstrated great ingenuity, resolution, and often courage, in order to maintain them. Payment for CSA-contracted and private delivery mail usually used CSA official postage stamps for part or all of the routes.

In addition to official USA POD routes used during the transitional period from December 1860 until August 1861, the following constituted the primary alternative mechanisms for the movement of mail into and out of the CSA and between areas of the CSA physically cut off by US military action or occupation.

Private Express Company Routes were established routes used by private express mail companies after the Nashville-Louisville mail routes were suspended in June 1861. They were in use until 26 August 1861, when the USA government prohibited all commercial activity between the USA and CSA, to include mail carried by private express companies. Private express companies which had provided this service were the Adams Express Company, American Letter Express Company, the Southern Express Company and Whitesides Express.

Adams circumvented the USA government prohibition by continuing southern operations undertaken by Adams Southern Express Company, which it claimed was not related to Adams Express Company but was actually a clandestine subsidiary. Other express companies operating internal CSA routes after June 1861 included Harnden's Express, Pioneer Express Company, the Southern Express Company, and White's Southern Express.

Continued

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*Letter carried by Southern Express Company from Mobile to a CS Army officer serving in Norfolk, Virginia, in December 1861, with CSA postage paid.
(Courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.)*

Flag-of-Truce Routes were maintained from September 1861 until the end of the war by both governments. This was for the benefit of prisoners of war as well as for military and diplomatic communications between the USA and CSA. Private citizens could also send letters via the flag-of-truce system; however, just like PoW mail, their letters were read by censors and rejected if the contents were deemed objectionable. Old Point Comfort – in the vicinity of the US Army's Fortress Monroe – served as the primary crossing point for flag-of-truce mail.

According to noted postal historian Daniel M. Knowles, flag-of-truce civilian mail was “poorly tolerated and actively discouraged by the severe restrictions imposed by the USA Post Office Department. Flag-of-truce routes established across military lines were usually used to convey civilian mail at the discretion of the local military authorities.... Regulations required that a flag-of-truce letter be enclosed in an unsealed inner envelope and sent in an outer envelope with postage paid to the exchange point.”

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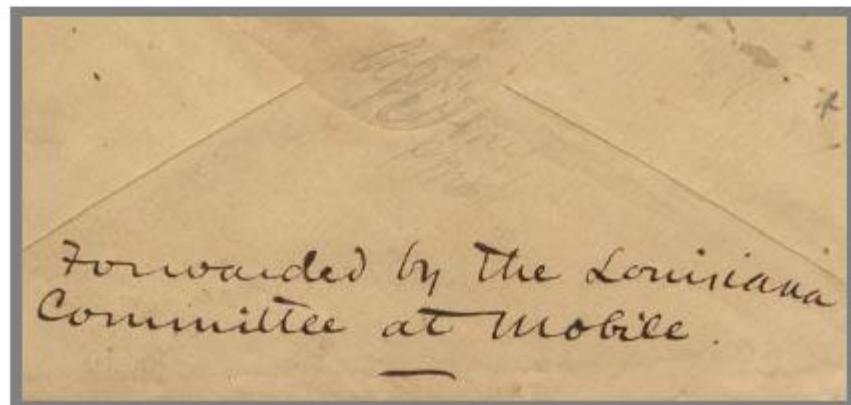
“There, the outer envelope was discarded and the letter examined by the military authorities. Delivery from the exchange point to the destination required payment of the postage by stamps of the other side or by an attached or inserted coin. The USA and CSA postage could be paid on a single envelope if the sender possessed stamps of both sides.”

Smuggling Routes were employed by private entities, by individual private line-crossers (as volunteers or for profit) and by secret agents acting as couriers for the governments and military forces of the USA and CSA. These routes varied according to the types of the couriers, the items which they carried, their destinations, the means of transportation available, and the threats which they sought to avoid.

One notable well-organized semi-covert postal route was operated by Mobile, Alabama, residents who were refugees from US Army-occupied New Orleans. The Louisiana Relief Committee was organized on 31 May 1863 and operated until the 24 June 1864 replacement of the US Army New Orleans Provost Marshall, who had given tacit approval to the organization’s charitable activities. The organization’s agents couriered postal mail between the two cities, directly, or, in some cases, via flag-of-truce, using US Navy vessels as the exchange point. More direct routes ran close to the shoreline – inside the blockade – between Mobile and New Orleans via Pascagoula, Mississippi, along the Mississippi Sound. For mail being forwarded from Mobile to the CSA interior, the Committee applied to the envelopes CSA postage which it had purchased. The Committee also provided food and clothing relief support to the impoverished remaining in New Orleans and aided them in departing New Orleans for CSA states.

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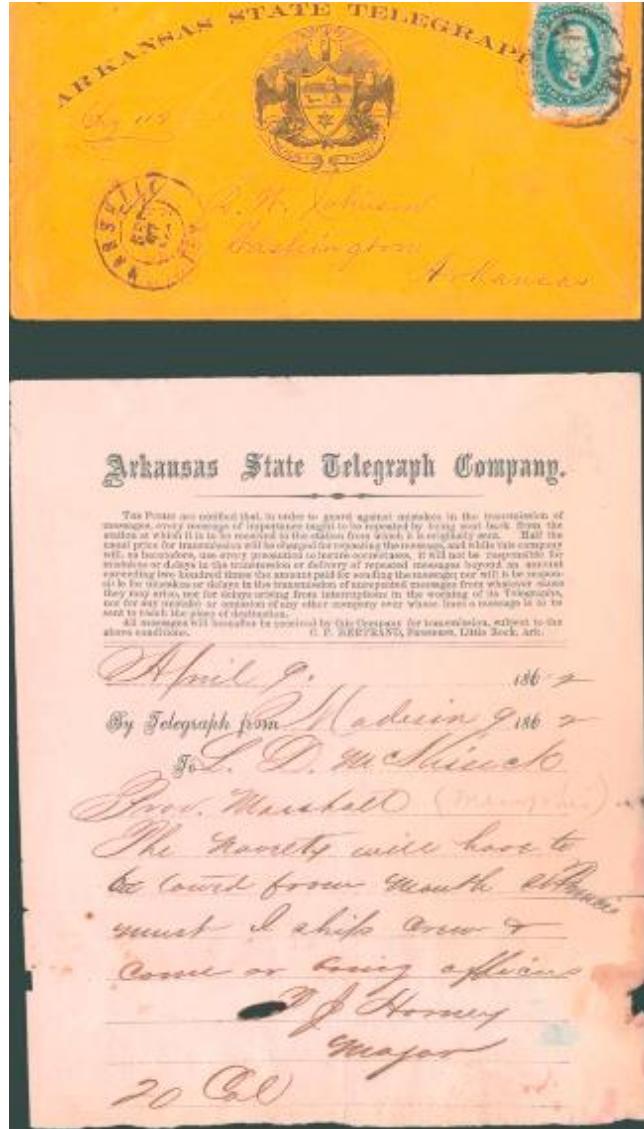


*Letter smuggled from New Orleans to Mobile in November 1863, then placed in the CSA postal system by the Louisiana Relief Committee, with stamps provided by the Committee, for delivery to an address in Richmond.
(Courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.)*

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Telegraph Companies in the CSA transmitted short letters between stations. These communications were copied into telegraph forms which were folded up or enclosed in envelopes, with CSA postage applied. They were then conveyed to CSA POD offices for delivery as postal mail.



Arkansas State Telegraph Company Telegram-Letter,
Marshall, Texas, to Washington, Arkansas, 15 September 1862.
(Courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.)

Continued

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Railroads and Interior River Boat Shipping provided postal delivery service for mail with postage paid by CSA stamps, by direct fee to the operating company, or, in the case of individual steamships and packets, to the ship's captain or purser.

Trans-Mississippi Routes were established by the CSA Postmaster General on 1 October 1863, under the authority of the CSA Congress. The US military had gained control of the Mississippi River in 1862, thus disrupting CSA postal service between CSA states on either side of the river. Trans-Mississippi routes were then established by both the CSA POD and private CSA-based Trans-Mississippi express companies.

The primary Trans-Mississippi CSA postal route was operated until April 1865, with Meridian and Brandon, Mississippi, acting as the eastern termini and Alexandria and Shreveport, Louisiana, serving as the western termini. An additional route, between Shreveport, Louisiana, and Marshall, Texas, operated until Shreveport was occupied by the US Army on 7 June 1865.

Private CSA express companies provided mail service using the same Mississippi and Louisiana termini and others. The most prominent private services were those operated by J. M. Barksdale, Elias W. Black, E. H. Cushing, Arthur H. Edey and J. W. Sturdivant.

Cushing's service, operating from 26 April 1862 to 12 September 1864, supported his Houston newspaper and provided mail service for CSA soldiers serving in the eastern CSA states. As the mail agent for the CSA 5th Texas Regiment, Edey's Express operated during the period June-October 1862. Edey served the soldiers of the unit and their correspondents, but also carried mail for others. Black provided service between Arkansas residents and Arkansans serving in the Army of Tennessee during 1863. Barksdale operated his service between Arkansas citizens and troops of Reynolds' Arkansas Brigade during the summer of 1863 and late 1864.

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Cover of letter carried by Arthur Edey from a soldier in the CSA Army of Virginia to Houston, Texas, via Meridian, Mississippi, and Shreveport, Louisiana, termini on the Trans-Mississippi Route. Placed by Edey's Express in official CSA POD mail in Houston. The time required for transit was approximately 27 days.

(Courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.)

Blockade-Runner Routes were sea lanes between the Confederacy and neutral West Indies, Cuban or Mexican ports, used by CSA and foreign steamships – mostly British – from May 1862 to June 1865. These were used to evade the US Navy's mostly successful blockade of the Southern coastline. Primary points of debarkation for onward shipment to the CSA included Nassau, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Havana, Cuba, and St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Primary CSA ports of arrival used by blockade runners included Wilmington, North Carolina, Charleston, South Carolina, Savannah, Georgia, Mobile, Alabama, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Galveston, Texas.

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Mail from Europe to the CSA would be enclosed inside an outer envelope addressed to a forwarding agent in one of the neutral foreign ports used by blockade-running ships. Upon receipt, the agent would remove the inner envelope, containing the correspondence, and deliver it to the ship planning to run the blockade. If a blockade-running ship was captured by a US Navy ship, legal proceedings at a “Prize Court” determined if the captured vessel had been legally taken. When mail addressed to recipients in the CSA was discovered in the ship’s cargo, this was often used as proof of the intention of the ship’s captain to run the blockade, and the capture was ruled legal, with forfeiture of the ship and its cargo. Despite the danger of capture or destruction, the needs of the Confederacy, the lure of profits, and the significant chances of success kept blockade-runners at their business. According to the North Carolina state historian, “Although more than 100 ships were captured or destroyed trying to run the blockade [from Wilmington], about three-fourths of all blockade runners made it through.”



Letter sent 25 September 1863 from Liverpool, England, to Augusta, Georgia, via forwarder Sawyer & Menendez, located in Nassau, the Bahamas. Carried by Cunard Line ship via New York City to Nassau, the Bahamas. The blockade-running ship Fannie carried it from Nassau to Wilmington, North Carolina, arriving on October 23. Postage from Liverpool cost 1 British shilling. Postage cost upon arrival in Wilmington was 12 CSA cents (2 cents fee to the ship's captain plus 10 cents CSA inland postage fee). This successful mail delivery took less than one month to accomplish.
(Courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.)

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Diplomatic Communications service by ‘bearers of despatches’ between the governments of foreign nations and their consuls in the CSA was, under international custom, required to be permitted to pass unhindered by the USA and CSA. In 1861, thirty-nine nations were represented by consulates in the CSA. Of these, the most active consular operations were those conducted by the British government, located in Charleston, Mobile, Richmond, Savannah and New Orleans. Following the expulsion of British consuls in 1863, British interests in the CSA were represented by French consuls. French consuls were located at Charleston, New Orleans and Richmond, with vice-consuls or consular agents located in Baton Rouge, Galveston, Key West, Mobile, Norfolk, Savannah, and Wilmington. The Spanish government also provided consular service in Charleston and New Orleans. The opportunity to utilize this means of communication was available to support international business operations, foreign citizens and the elite – or well-connected – private CSA citizen.

Trans-Rio Grande Routes were overland and river routes between Texas and Mexico used by CSA carriers to circumvent the US Navy blockade of CSA ports on the Gulf of Mexico.^[5] One prominent service, Costa’s Foreign Express Mail, authorized by the CSA POD, began operations on 10 October 1861. Antonio Costa operated his route with a western terminus at Tampico, Mexico, which was served by British Royal Mail Steam Packet Service out of St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Costa’s service transited via horseback overland from Tampico through Matamoros, Mexico, and was carried over the Rio Grande at Brownsville, Texas. The route’s eastern terminus was located at New Orleans. The South Western Express Company continued its pre-war delivery service to and from European addresses by using the same route as Costa’s service. The Brownsville crossing site was available for use until Brownsville’s occupation by the US Army on 6 November 1863, and then again, after the CS Army’s re-capture of Brownsville on 20 July 1864. Another service between Mexico and the CSA was operated by José San Ramon out of Brownsville. The relay points for San Ramon’s service were Monterrey, Mexico, Matamoros, and Brownsville. This service also accepted mail from the interior of Mexico. The mail forwarding agent Droege Oetling & Co. also used the Matamoros-Brownsville crossing point to serve its German clients with European transit points at Manchester, England, and Hamburg, Prussia (Germany). The Commercial Express Co. of Bagdad, Mexico, and New Orleans used the Matamoros-Brownsville crossing for mail departing Texas, transporting it onward by ship from Bagdad, Matamoros’ port on the Gulf of Mexico, to New Orleans.

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The mail forwarding agent A. Uhde & Co. used the Matamoros-Brownsville crossing as a leg in its route which continued to New Orleans. Uhde then used the "Texas and New Orleans Great Southwestern Passenger Route" crossing the Atchafalaya River – a distributary of both the Mississippi and Red Rivers – in the vicinity of Brashear (later renamed Morgan City) and Berwick, Louisiana.

In addition to Brownsville, an alternate crossing point was established between Eagle Pass, Texas, and Piedras Negras, Mexico. This route was used by a service operated by F. Groos & Co., based in Piedras Negras. Another crossing point was operated between Laredo, Texas, and Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.

The links between the Mexican termini in this route and European ports often required the cooperative activity of mail forwarders in the West Indies. Among the better known of these agents were Henry Adderley & Co., and Sauders & Son, both based in Nassau.



*Letter carried by South Western Express Co. from Liverpool to Wilmington,
via St. Thomas, Havana, Tampico, Matamoros, Brownsville and New Orleans.*

*The time period is believed to be 1862.
(Courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.)*

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The continuation of safe, reliable, efficient and cost-effective postal mail delivery and shipping services throughout the Civil War was essential to the continuity of the CSA's economy and the conduct of military business. It was also vital to the maintenance of social cohesion and morale – for both civilians and military members. Despite the constant difficulty of establishing and replacing routes due to threat from military action, the CSA Post Office Department rose to the occasion with creativity and determination. The accomplishment of its mission may have been one of the most positive enduring legacies of the war.

Notes

[1] International mail service for all nations was quite difficult during the period of the American Civil War. Every set of countries originating and receiving mail from each other had to negotiate a treaty for exchange of mail. Thus, postal mail originating in the CSA, carried to Mexico by overland route or ship, transported by ship through British-held West Indies ports to Liverpool, England, and then, again by ship to Hamburg, Prussia (Germany), required multiple postal treaties. When treaties did not exist – even the USA still did not have a postal treaty with France as late as 1873 – private businesses operating mail forwarding services might be used. Not until the 9 October signing of the 1874 Treaty of Bern established the General Postal Union was this issue resolved and an international structure for postage payment and delivery established. In 1878, the Second Postal Union Congress renamed the regulatory body as the Universal Postal Union. It is now a specialized agency of the United Nations.

[2] According to the US Postal Service, CSA Postmaster General Reagan was arrested at the end of the war. However, he was later pardoned and eventually reelected to Congress, where his postal expertise and accomplishments were recognized in his appointment as Chairman of the House's Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads. Ironically, this appointment placed him in a position of oversight of the USA Postmaster General.

[3] As part of its economizing measures, the CSA POD ended franking privileges (free postage) for all CSA government departments and officials in March 1861. These departments, including the War Department, were then required to pay postage fees, just as were private citizens. Only the Postmaster General and elements of the CSA POD were permitted to continue using franking privileges.

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[4] According to Knowles, in “Confederate Mail Transmission Across the Union Lines During the American Civil War,” this action was taken because “Tens of thousands of dollars’ worth of USA stamps resided in Southern post offices at the beginning of the Civil War. The Federal government feared that Southerners would smuggle them into the North to sell them there, thus financially aiding the Confederate rebellion. So, the Federal government demonetized all prior USA postage stamps and all but two stamped envelopes. Three cities – Chicago, Harrisburg, and Philadelphia – used ‘Old Stamps Not Recognized’ hand stamps to indicate non-acceptance of the demonetized stamps. Many other postmasters used manuscript inscriptions, such as ‘Old Stamp,’ ‘Stamp No Good,’ ‘Not Recognized,’ etc. The Federal government issued new stamps in 1861 to replace the demonetized stamps. The earliest known use of the 1861 issue 1 ct. and 3 ct. stamps on cover are September 21 and September 17, 1861, respectively.”

[5] The Brownsville – Matamoras route to the port of Bagdad usually involved a combination of horseback riders, mule trains, stage coaches, freight wagons and shallow-draft river craft. The CSA government grew concerned regarding the slow speed of movement through it of cotton – the economic fuel of the Confederacy. As Secretary of War for the USA prior to the secession of the southern states, CSA President Jefferson Davis had, beginning in 1856, introduced camels into Texas for military transportation use. During the war, the CS army captured nearly 100 US Army camels and made use of them for the speedier transport of cotton. Each camel taking the route to Matamoras could carry two whole bales of cotton and return with a 600-pound load of salt.

For more in-depth information regarding the CSA postal system and CSA philately, see the information posted by celebrated subject matter expert Patricia A. Kaufmann at her website <https://trishkaufmann.com>.

A bibliography of books on CSA philately prepared by Leonard H. Hartmann may be found at <http://www.pbbooks.com/csa.htm>.

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THE CIVIL WAR SONG BOOK

Postal Music

By J. White



The first postage stamp – the British Penny Black – was issued on 6 May 1840 in England. The first US postage stamp was issued on 1 July 1847. Postage stamps not only improved the efficiency of postal service, but their visual appeal excited public interest. By the time of the American Civil War, postage stamps were familiar and beautiful items in everyday life. The next major innovation in American postal service came to the North as a direct result of the Civil War: home delivery in urban areas. US Postmaster General Montgomery Blair funded this service with money saved by no longer having to provide postal mail service for the Southern states – which had, moreover, been a money-losing undertaking for the US Post Office Department. Home delivery meant being able to receive personal mail at home – without the invasion of the prying eyes of fellow customers picking up their own mail at the post office. The war also meant that soldiers separated from their sweethearts had to woo them from afar in love letters. Sitting at home, watching for the mail carrier would send a delicious frisson of anticipation, mixed with anxiety, down the spine of a young lady awaiting a *billet-doux* from her military swain at the front.

American composers celebrated both postage stamps and love letters in music and song. We offer three examples of American Nineteenth Century “postal music” for our readers to experience, with links to downloadable sheet music to try.

Continued

October 2020

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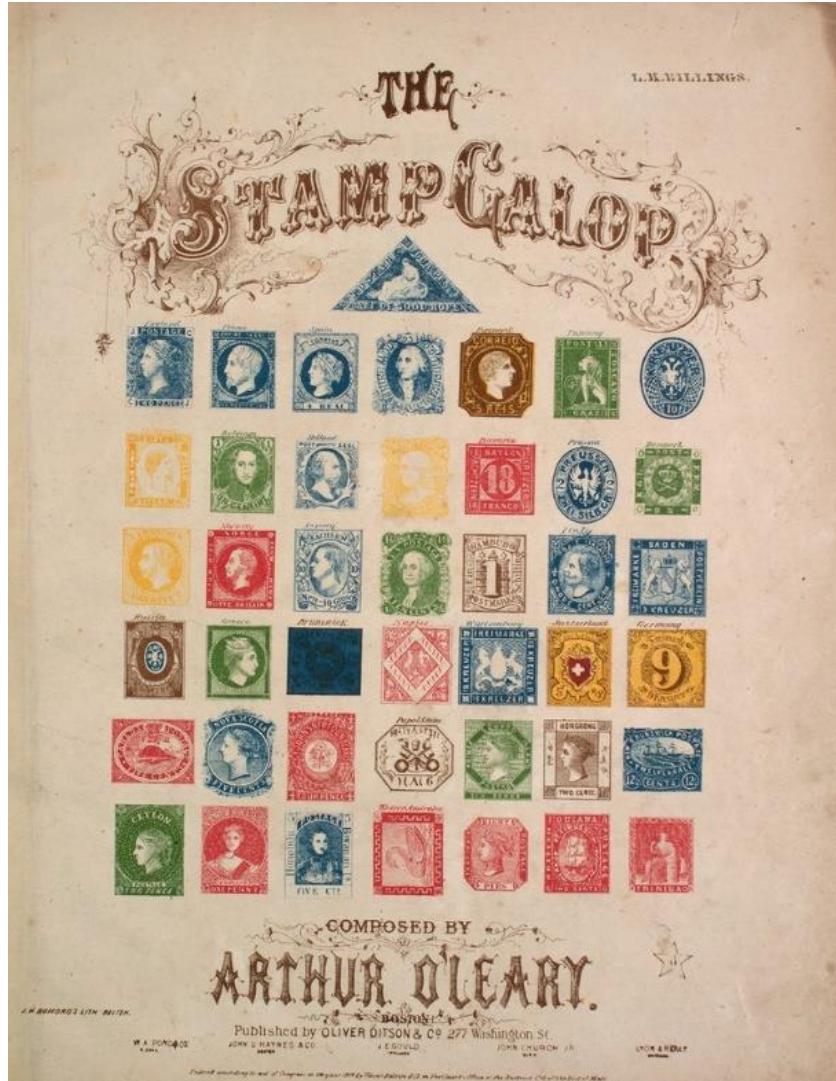


"The American Stamp Polka" Maria Seguin, Piano Instrumental,
Wm. A. Pond & Co., New York, 1863-4.

Sheet music: <https://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/collection-pdfs/levy-103-001.pdf>
Performance view: <https://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/performance/67477>

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"*The Stamp Galop*", Arthur O'Leary, Piano Instrumental, Oliver Ditson & Co., Boston, 1864.
Also published by Ewar & Co., London, 1864.

Sheet music: <https://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/collection-pdfs/levy-103-046.pdf>
Performance view: <https://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/performance/67522>

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"*The Love Letter Schottisch*", Carl Bodisco, Piano Instrumental,
J. E. Gould, Philadelphia, 1853 & 1866.

Sheet music: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015096552362&view=1up&seq=1>

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Collections of Civil War-Era Letters

By J. White

Major collections of Civil War private correspondence are found in national and state-level archives. The most prominent of these are at the Library of Congress Civil War Collection – Letters, which is found at:

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-war/?fa=subject%3Acorrespondence>, and multiple collections at the National Archives, which can be found at www.archives.gov. Some less well-known collections of Civil War letters can be particularly useful because they focus upon a specific set of correspondence, providing continuity of intimate insight into relationships and settings for families at home and soldiers in the field. Some of the more interesting of these collections include the following:

Auburn University Digital Library – Civil War Letters Collection

<http://content.lib.auburn.edu/cdm/search/collection/civil2>

Scanned images, without transcription.

The Civil War Letters of Wellesley College and Brandeis University

<http://omeka.wellesley.edu/civilwarletters/collections/browse>

The Civil War Letters Collection, Digital Collections, University of Washington Libraries

<https://content.lib.washington.edu/civilwarweb/index.html>

The letters and original writings have been scanned and have also been transcribed as written, with no attempt to change spelling. Many of the correspondents have ties to the Pacific Northwest, some eventually settling in Washington State.

Digital Humanities - American Civil War Collection

<https://cwl.dhinitiative.org/>

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Hardship on the Home Front – Texas Women during the Civil War

<https://medium.com/save-texas-history/hardship-on-the-home-front-texas-women-during-the-civil-war-a1bc1f59b979>

“The Rufus Brooks Mann Civil War Letters, generously donated to the Texas General Land Office by Ray and Doris Moore in 2008 and housed in the GLO Archives, provide a unique and personal look into the lives of Texas women during the Civil War. The letters offer important insight into what life was like for tens of thousands of women thrust into the role of head of household.”

New York Heritage Digital Collections – Civil War Letters

<https://nyheritage.org/collections/civil-war-letters>

Vanderbilt University Libraries Special Collections - Elizabeth Lee Smith Civil War Letters Collection

<https://collections.library.vanderbilt.edu/repositories/2/resources/1851>

This collection contains 116 letters written to Elizabeth Lee Smith during the American Civil War. The majority of the letters are from Jasper Newton Smith who Elizabeth would marry during the war. The letters concern the progress of the war and the budding romance between Jasper and Elizabeth. The remaining letters are mostly from Elizabeth and Jasper's family members.

VMI – Civil War Manuscripts

<https://vmi.edu/archives/manuscripts/civil-war-manuscripts/>

At Home & in the Field



At Home and in the Field is published quarterly as an exclusive benefit for members of the Society for Women and the Civil War.

Articles of interest to our membership, including period poetry, stories of women's contributions and period recipes, should be directed to the Editor:

Jim Knights - swcw1865@gmail.com

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