

## The Confederate States of America

# Critical Adversity Mails in the American Civil War: Confederate Mail Crossings of Union-Blockaded Borders

### Purpose of the Exhibit:

To demonstrate the **eight key routings** of mail employed by the CSA Postal Service in the “**Extreme Adversity Period**” and used by citizens and military personnel to penetrate the Union-controlled (and virtually closed) borders. “**Extreme Adversity Period**” definition: **From Mid-April 1863—when the Union grip on Southern borders had made cross-border mails nearly grind to a halt—to the end of the war in June 1865.**

About Rates: Intra-CSA regular mail was 10c per 1/2 ounce except the Trans-Mississippi Express Rate at 40c per 1/2 ounce.



One of six recorded East-To-West **Single (10-cent) Rate** Trans-Mississippi covers used after the 40-cent Express Mail period was established in the fall of 1863.  
The only recorded usage of a 10-cent Steel Plate stamp on a single-rate Trans-Mississippi cover.

By April of 1863—when the CSA issued the 10-cent Steel Plate stamps—Union forces had succeeded, for all practical purposes, in totally isolating the Confederate States of America within its land and maritime borders. Mail communication **to and from correspondents in non-CSA territory** had become very difficult—even dangerous and rare. There were, however, **eight forms of mail** that could be employed, under very harsh conditions for the mails to go through—*most of them judged illegal by the Union*. This exhibit tells the stories of these forms of mail showing uses of the highest philatelic importance and scarcity.

### Exhibit Outline

**I. Prisoner-of-War Correspondence.** Mail routed to/from CSA military personnel incarcerated in Union (Northern) prisons via Flag of Truce.

**II. Maritime Blockade Mails.** Mail that traversed it through the Union's successful, ever-tightening blockade of the CSA sea lanes.

**III. Civilian Flag of Truce Mail.** Very difficult (actually banned) mail to/from the Confederacy—making it through certain border checkpoints.

**IV. Official Trans-Mississippi Express Mail.** CSA mails taken at great risk across the well-patrolled Union-held Mississippi River after the fall of Vicksburg, July 1863.

**V. “The Immortal 600”.** Correspondence to/from CSA prisoners of war held hostage during a very harsh episode in 1864. (Story included)

**VI. E.H. Cushing's Private Trans-Mississippi Express Mail.** An unusual private form of mail conducted by the owner of the Houston, Texas, newspaper—across the Mississippi River after it fell to Union forces in July 1863.

**VII. Louisiana Relief Committee.** An unusual way for privately carrying mails to/from Union-held New Orleans through the city's closed borders.

**VIII. Hand-Carried.** Private individuals carrying mails into and out of the CSA at their own risk.



## I. Prisoner of War Correspondence

In March 1862, the first across-the-lines mail to/from Union and Confederate Prisoners of War, traversing the border **via Flag of Truce**, began to be delivered at Aiken's Landing on Virginia's James River. Then, in late 1862, City Point, Va., next to the post office at Old Point Comfort, Va., just below Richmond on the James, became the official exchange ground for mail & prisoners, and continued so to the end of the war.

The steamboat *New York* was the official flag of truce boat and carried mail for exchange from Fortress Monroe to Old Point Comfort, Va.; southbound letters cleared through Richmond, and northbound letters through Old Point Comfort.

As shown by uses herein, P.O.W. mail was sporadic, dangerous and undependable.

### Sent To—Then From—the Infamous Libby Prison, Richmond, Va.



#### Originally Addressed to Lt. Joseph A. Peloubet, a Union P.O.W. in Libby Prison

Type II stamp tied to cover by Danville, Va., cancel (stamp was originally over cover's edge, now is hinged to it) sent by CSA guard at the prison, as a favor to prisoner Lt. Peloubet, to Lynchburgh, Va., in Dec. 1864. Interior of cover shows original use (see below) from Druckler, N.Y., (**via Flag of Truce**) to Lt. Peloubet in Libby Prison. "ADVERTISED 2" handstamp applied after arrival in Lynchburg. PF Cert.



Red Lynchburg, Va. receiver marking on reverse



Inside of cover showing original use from Druckler, N.Y., across the lines to Libby Prison, Richmond, Va.



**Libby Prison** gained an infamous reputation for the harsh conditions under which officers from the Union Army were kept. Because of the high death toll, it is generally regarded as second in notoriety only to Andersonville Prison in Georgia. (Colorized 19th century postcard view at right)



## P.O.W. Use From Point Lookout Prison

During Brief "Posted in Washington" Period/Aug-Dec 1863



Examiner marking in use  
Oct. 1863 — April 1864

### Examined at Point Lookout Prison, but mailed at Washington, D.C.

Ten-cent Type II tied by Richmond, Va. datestamps (plus U.S. 3-cent stamp tied by Washington, D.C. "DEC 18" [1863] datestamp and target killer on tiny cover from prisoner Pvt. Noah Deaton to his father in Caledonia, N.C. Point Lookout "APPROVED/J.N. Patterson" examiner marking, upper left. Cancelled at Washington instead of Point Lookout because, from August-December 1863, prisoner mail was forwarded by military authorities there for posting—thence on into the Confederate States, the CSA stamp utilized for postage therein.

## South to North Mail to Fort Delaware Prison

1865 Usage with Erroneous "JUN" 1865 postmark belied by receiver notation



### Late-In-War Letter from Wife of CSA Prisoner of War

A Ten-cent Type I stamp and a U.S. 3-cent 1861 stamp franking a tiny ladies cover from Hillsville, Va., to the Fort Delaware Union prison. "Per Flag of Truce via City Point & Old Point Comfort" [ms. down left side] exchange point. The "JUN 18" cancel was applied when, in fact, it was actually January, 1865—per pencil notation at lower left "Rec'd Jan 29/65." Also note Old Point Comfort examiner's initial "H" in pencil. (PF Cert.)



## Unusual Late-in-War Prisoner of War Usage

Traveling South-to-North to New Union State of West Virginia • Feb-April 1865

*An uncommon and complicated routing*



February 1865

Placed into the mails as a favor to a prisoner.

A particularly uncommon P.O.W. use from a Union prisoner (in the small Confederate P.O.W. camp between Staunton and Fincastle, Va., where cover was mailed) who had given the envelope to a civilian or prison guard for mailing outside the camp. Camp examiner's initials in pencil at right. Also, apparently examined en route at CSA "War Department Richmond." Then through the Union-Confederate mail exchange point at Old Point Comfort, Va.—then on to Wheeling, W. Va. Ten-cent Type I stamp w/manuscript cancel. "Due 6" only partially paid by 3-cent U.S. stamp at Wheeling.

In manuscript down left side of cover:

*"Dear post master if he is not their publish this in the paper of town. In hast & pleas"*



Wheeling, W. Va., backstamp applied when, after having advertised the cover for nearly two months, it was marked "UNCLAIMED."



## II. Maritime Blockade Mails

### Incoming "BLOCKADE" Use Via Bermuda—1864

*One of three recorded uses* forwarded personally by Norman S. Walker, Confederate Agent

Mail from Europe (mostly from or thru the U.K.) to CSA destinations was carried as ship letters to Bermuda, Nassau or Cuba (usually prepaid to those islands)—then carried by blockade running vessels from those islands to the CSA (mostly Charleston, S.C.). CSA-bound mail was handled for transit by the CSA's own agent in Bermuda. Rarely, CSA franking was applied in Bermuda, but upon arrival on the coast (where franking normally occurred), it was there the CSA-franked mail always was cancelled and sent to its final destination. Blockade vessel captains were paid 6 cents per piece for delivery at the port of entry; if going beyond that point, an extra 2 cents captain's fee.



### Carried by the Confederate Blockade Runner vessel *Minnie*

From England incoming through maritime blockade into Charleston, S.C. The 10-cent Type I stamp cancelled there (March 29, 1864) on cover then sent to Gustavus A. Myers, Acting British Consul General in Richmond, Va. (CSA Cert.)

**Endorsed "AP[proved] Walker" in his hand at lower left. Norman S. Walker was the Senior Confederate Agent in Bermuda from February 1863 to June 27, 1864.**



**Norman S. Walker**  
CSA Agent in Bermuda



**Walker's St. George, Bermuda headquarters—  
all CSA blockade mail from Europe transited  
through this building.**

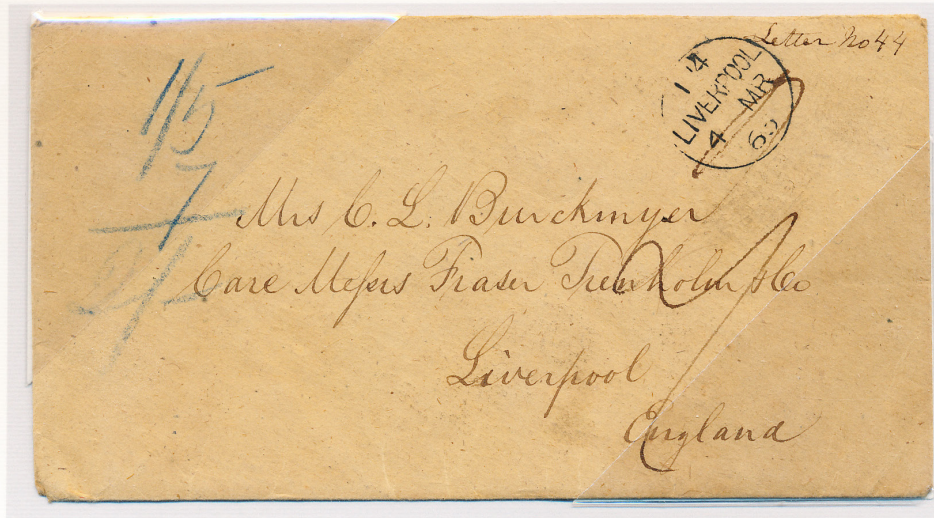
Originally a plantation owner in Virginia, Norman Walker left service in the CSA Virginia Infantry after appointment by President Jefferson Davis as CSA Agent in Bermuda where he oversaw the purchase and import of ordnance into the Confederacy from England—and sometimes, the forwarding of mail in transit to/from the CSA.



## Blockade Mail from a Renowned Correspondence

### Outgoing "BLOCKADE" Use Via Nassau, The Bahamas—February 1865

Inside is a 4-page personal letter to sender's wife in Liverpool, England



#### Carried by the Cunard West Indies Steamship Corsica

Outgoing blockade-run use originating from Charleston, S.C., via Nassau to Liverpool with uncommon rimless "Nassau—New Providence / "FE 13/1865" transit handstamp on reverse. Unpaid with 2 shillings due, comprising 1sh packet postage to England and 1sh penalty fee, blue crayon "1/5+7=2/-" accounting. Liverpool "4 MAR" receiver on front.

From Cornelius L. Burckmyer in Charleston to his wife, Charlotte, in Liverpool.



January 17. It is reported today that the "Syien" by which I was to have sailed to Nassau and which undertook to go to sea on Saturday night was taken by the enemy. I have had a providential escape. I hope it is not true as I sent by her a large number of letters for friends and two for yourself. We shall soon know the truth.

Cornelius Burckmyer adds a postscript across the first of the 4-page letter to his wife, "January 17. It is reported today that the "Syien" by which I was to have sailed to Nassau and which undertook to go to sea on Saturday night was taken by the enemy. If so, I have had a providential escape. I hope it is not lost as I sent by her a large number of letters for friends and two for yourself."



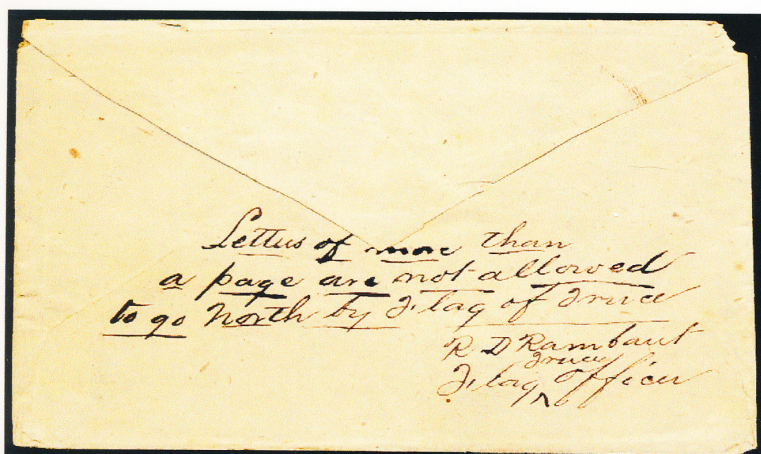
### III. Civilian Flag of Truce Mail

Unrecorded June 1863 cover returned to sender by Union Flag of Truce Officer because "**Letters of more than a page**" were not allowed to travel North by Flag of Truce.

[Civilian Flag of Truce Mail was **banned** by the Secretary of War in 1862. However, on very rare occasions, military officials allowed it to go through.]



Ten Cent Type II franking from Petersburg, Va. to Utica, Wisconsin. Returned to sender residing in Manassas, Ga., by Flag of Truce officer at exchange point at Old Point Comfort, Va., with special notation on reverse of the cover.



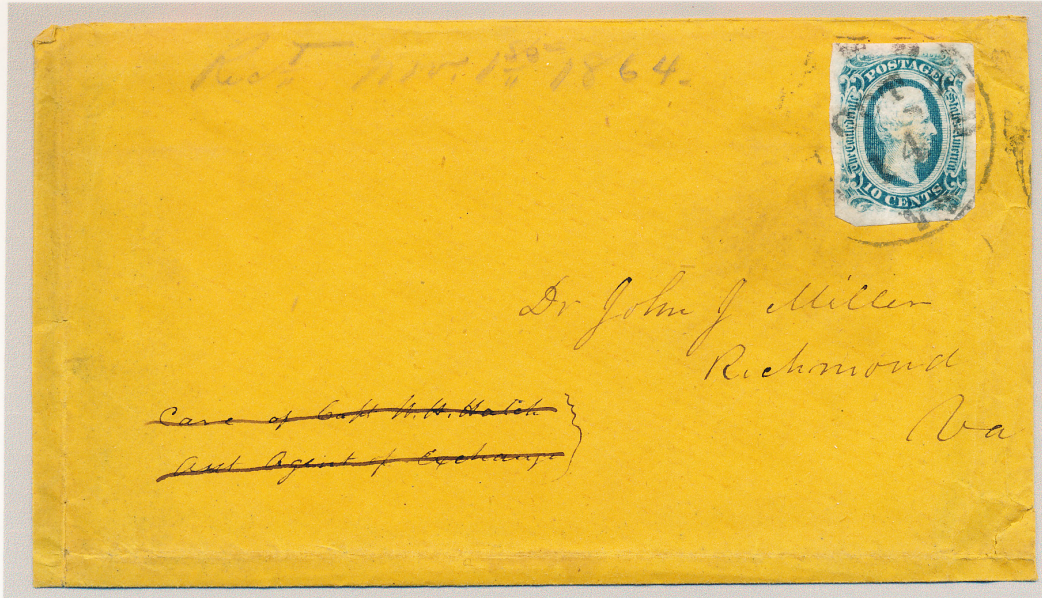
Reverse: Manuscript warning "**Letters of more than a page are not allowed to go North by Flag of Truce / R.D. Rambaut, Flag of Truce Officer.**"

Inside this cover is a 6-page letter from the person to whom cover was returned—an articulate school teacher addressing issues of mail, war, and free Negroes who sold themselves into slavery!



## Flag of Truce Correspondence—From Missouri

One of only 6 recorded uses of Confederate-related mail to or from Missouri  
Father in Union-held St. Louis, Missouri, sends letter to son in Richmond, Va.,  
a physician serving in the Confederate Missouri State Guard



### Recipient was Serving at Winder Hospital at Libby Prison, Richmond Va.

A Richmond, Va./Oct 14 (1864) datestamp ties the 10-cent Type II stamp to cover addressed to Dr. John J. Miller, Richmond, Va.—and routed (lower left, crossed out) “Care of Capt. W.H. Hatch/ Asst. Agent of Exchange.” A through-the-lines civilian flag-of-truce use via Old Point Comfort, Va.—with this being the inner envelope. **At the latter post office it was placed into the CSA mails, thus the need for a CSA stamp.**



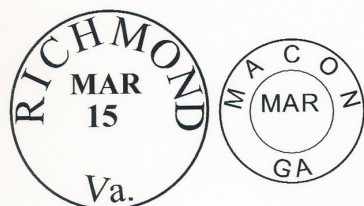
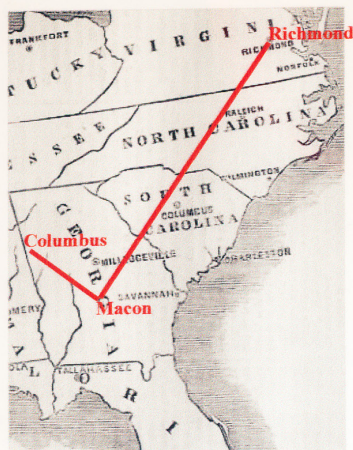
**Special Note:** Covers to/from Confederate-related individuals in Missouri and to/from Missouri soldiers serving in the CSA military **are the most uncommon uses** in Confederate postal history. **Only 6 have been recorded.**

The CSA considered Missouri a state, but it never formally seceded from the Union.

The original letter enclosed in this cover is **datelined “St. Louis Sept-24th 1864”** and is from the father of the recipient who offers mostly family news—also inquiring about his son’s artificial leg, the latter necessitated after being wounded, captured and imprisoned by Union forces.



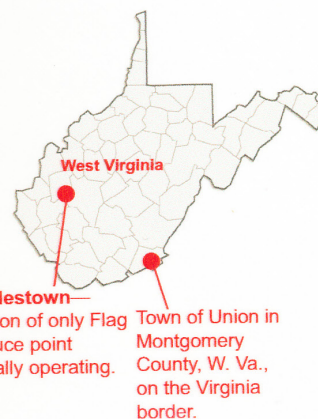
## Strange “Flag of Truce” Use on Mourning Cover



### Kindness Allows Death Notice Through The Lines

Small ladies'-sized mourning cover originating in Richmond, Va., on March 15, 1865, and sent to Columbus, Ga. Because much of Georgia was, by then, in the hands of Union forces (though Columbus wasn't, as yet), the Confederate Postal Service, sending the cover into that state, **prevailed upon local authorities in Union-occupied Macon to send it through the lines**, thus completing its “Flag of Truce” mercy mission to its destination. **Less than a month before war's end.**

## To the New Union State of West Virginia Flag of Truce Rules Applicable But Not Employed



### One Month After West Virginia Was Admitted to the Union

Ten-cent Type I stamp tied by “Harrisonburg, Va./July 22 [1863]” datestamp and sent to the town of Union in “Montgomery, Va.,” **which, since June 20, was actually in the new Union State of West Virginia.** Cover passed easily to **Union, West Va.**, because Confederate troops were still in control of that area—although regulations of the U.S. **and** CSA required that such mail should pass through a “Flag of Truce” point—the only official such point being in the city of Charlestown.





## IV. Trans-Mississippi Express Mail

### The July 4, 1863, Vicksburg Surrender Splits the Confederacy In Half

*Restoration of Mail Communication Would Need to be Attempted*

With the Mississippi River in complete control of Union forces in 1863 following the fall of both Vicksburg, Miss. (July 3), and Port Hudson, La. (July 8), on 20 October 1863, the CSA Postal Service established the 40-cent rated Trans-Mississippi Express Mail service. Traversing from East to West via either **Meridian** or **Brandon, Miss.**, and West to East via either **Shreveport** or **Alexandria, La.**, these mails were conveyed by courageous carriers who braved Union gunboat patrols, mostly at night, to keep mails flowing.

**Fewer than 110 uses are known of this unusual service.**

#### From Shreveport, La.

A strip of four of the Type II (Archer & Daly) stamp is tied to this piece by a May 1864 SHREVEPORT, LA. cancel.

The piece is very likely from a Trans-Mississippi Express Mail usage.

#### From Mount Lebanon, La.

A strip of four of the Type I (Archer & Daly) stamp is tied to this piece by a Dec 22/MOUNT LEBANON, LA. cancel. Also a likely Trans-Mississippi Express Mail usage.



## Trans-Mississippi Express Mail

### • WEST TO EAST •

The Only Known Trans-Mississippi Use from Bastrop, Texas

*One of only two known early West to East uses from November 1863.*



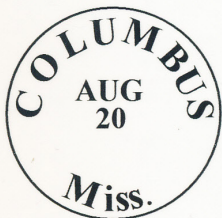
### From Bastrop, Texas, to Bay Spring, Mississippi

Two strikes of the NOV 17/BASTROP, TEXAS [1863], cancel tie 4 Type II stamps on a handmade turned cover for which this is the second usage. The first use was hand carried to Bastrop.

### • EAST TO WEST •

One of Only Nine Recorded Trans-Mississippi Uses to the State of Arkansas

*One of just two recorded East to West uses from the month of August 1864*



### From Columbus, Miss., to Washington, Arkansas

Three strikes of the "COLUMBUS/AUG 20/Miss." (1864) cancel tie 4 Type II stamps on cover to Washington, Ark. "Via Express Mail Meridian, Miss." in manuscript. *The only August 1864 Trans-Mississippi usage of the Type II stamp.*



## V. The "Immortal 600"

A pair of covers forming *unique companion "through the lines" P.O.W. uses* from one of the CSA officers held hostage by Union counter-tactic in 1864.

In October 1864, Union troops occupying Fort Pulaski, Ga. accepted transfer of *imprisoned* Confederate officers who would later be known as "The Immortal Six Hundred."

The officers' plight started in South Carolina when Edwin M. Stanton, Union Secretary of War, ordered that the 600 Confederate prisoners of war be positioned on Union-held Morris Island in Charleston harbor within direct line of fire from Confederate guns at Fort Sumter. Stanton's order followed word that 600 Union officers imprisoned in the Confederate-held city of Charleston were exposed to direct line of fire from federal artillery.

The standoff continued until a yellow fever epidemic forced Confederate Major General Samuel Jones to remove the Union prisoners from the Charleston city limits.

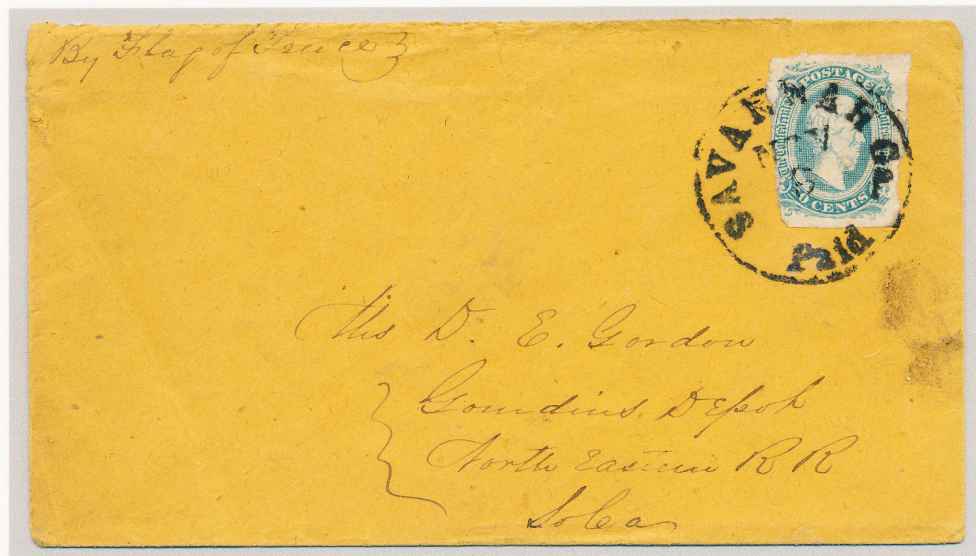


From CSA P.O.W. Lt. David E. Gordon at Fort Delaware Prison to South Carolina

Prior to becoming one of the "Immortal 600," Lt. Gordon sent this mail to his wife at his home at Gordiers Depot, South Carolina. This use, bearing the Fort Delaware, Del., Union "PRISONER'S LETTER/Examined" handstamp and sent *"per Flag of Truce via Fortress Monroe,"* validates the authenticity of the "Immortal 600" Fort Pulaski use below.

Among the first mails sent thru the lines by the "Immortal 600" from Fort Pulaski

The "NOV 6 / SAVANNAH, Ga. / Paid" cancel ties a Type I (A&D) stamp on a cover from Lt. David E. Gordon that left Fort Pulaski only days after the CSA prisoners of war arrived there. *One of the two earliest known uses from them at the fort and the only one known* with a "matching" earlier use (above) from Fort Delaware. Thru the lines from Union-held Fort Pulaski to South Carolina.

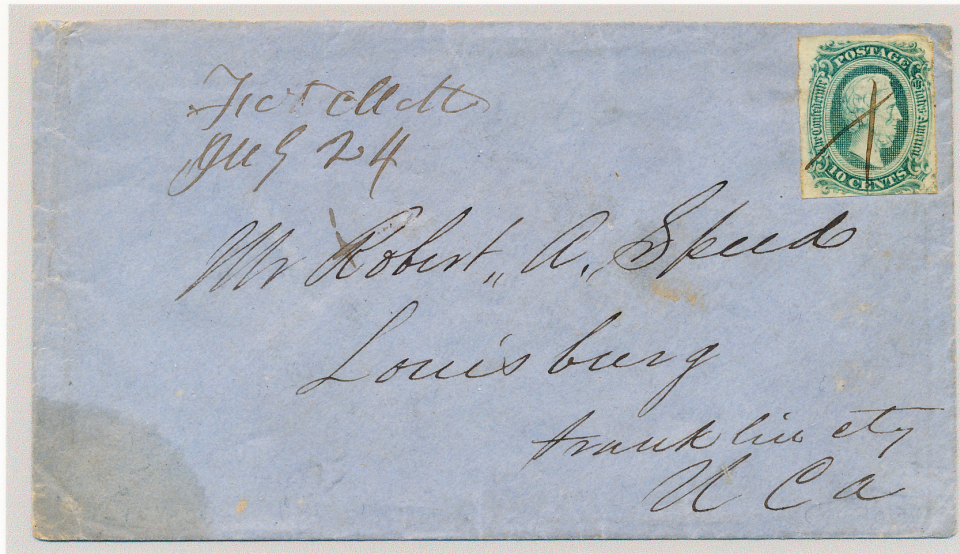




## VI. Cushing's Private Trans-Mississippi Express

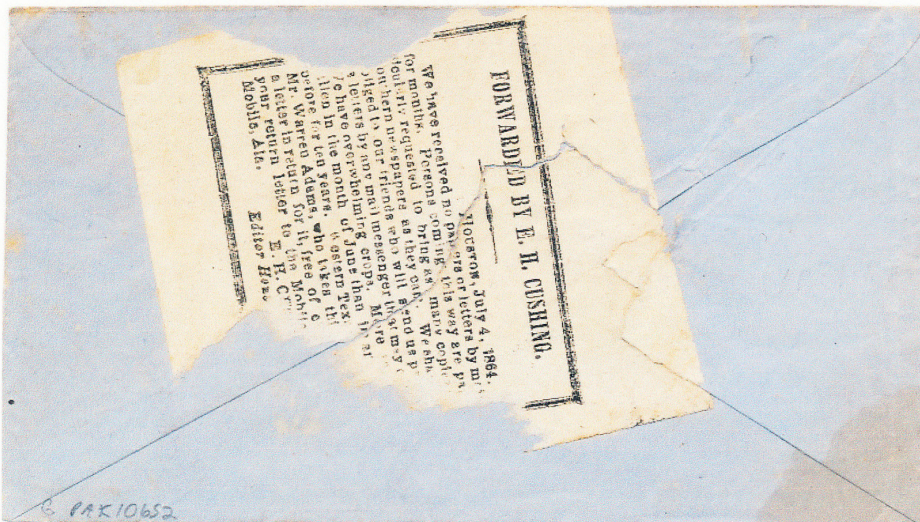
E.H. Cushing was publisher of the *Houston Daily Telegraph* and commenced his express service after New Orleans fell to Federal forces in April 1862. In an effort to improve communications between Texas regiments in the East and their relations at home, he established routes with pony riders and other means of conveyance necessary to cross the Federal lines—especially the Mississippi River after the fall of Vicksburg. His agents affixed labels to the backs of envelopes carried by the Cushing express that were intended to inform patrons and advertise the service. Only 20 examples (of all 4 types of labels) are recorded.

### Cushing's Express Mail Cover (One of 4 Recorded Uses of the Type III Label)



### The Type III 1864 Cushing Label on Hand-Carried Cover

As required by Cushing's Express service, a Confederate stamp plus the Cushing label were affixed to this cover, then hand carried by Cushing's paid agent from the Houston, Texas, area and placed into the CSA mails at Fort Mott, S.C., (manuscript cancel at upper left) for delivery to Louisburg, N.C. An unusual eastern dispatch and destination (PF & CSA Certs.).



"Persons coming this way are particularly requested to bring as many copies of Southern newspapers as they can." E.H. Cushing's sponsorship of his private Trans-Mississippi Express mail service was based on his own newspaper's need for news from the other side of the Mississippi River.



## VII. Louisiana Relief Committee

Research on the Landry family (recipient of below cover is Ernest Landry) and other items in the family correspondence have proven that this cover was smuggled out of Union-occupied New Orleans by the Louisiana Relief Committee to Mobile, Ala., and posted into the mails there. The LRC was originally and surreptitiously founded jointly in 1862 by the a small group of anonymous citizens of New Orleans and Mobile, Alabama to effect the secret and non-governmental-controlled transmittal of mail to and from Mobile (and thence to other destinations) after the fall of New Orleans on April 25, 1862. By mid-1863, it had become the chief (still secret) method of New Orleans mail incoming & outgoing across the Union-held Mississippi River.

### Contraband Mail Smuggled Out of Union-Held New Orleans for Posting in Mobile, Alabama

Unusual mixed franking with 10-cent 1861 stamp



Double circle Mobile, Alabama cancel ties Ten-Cent Type II stamp on cover smuggled out of New Orleans by the Louisiana Relief Committee on May 17, 1864 (dated docketing inside cover). Ten-Cent 1861 stamp (upper left) was added to pay forwarding from first destination (Charleston, S.C.) to GreenPond, S.C. (in pencil). Addressee was member of prominent New Orleans family. (CSA Cert.)



New Orleans Post Office (at left—& still in existence) where this cover originated. At right: Battery Beauregard on Sullivan's Island, S.C., the cover's





## VIII. Hand Carried Mails

Because of the interruptions in—and sporadic nature of—mail transport through areas such as the Union-patrolled Mississippi River, CSA mail was sometimes entrusted to private individuals for either partial or straight-through delivery.

March 1865 • At the End of the War—in Richmond  
Civilian New Orleans-To-Richmond Through-the-Lines Use  
Hand Carried into Richmond, Va., just before that city's surrender

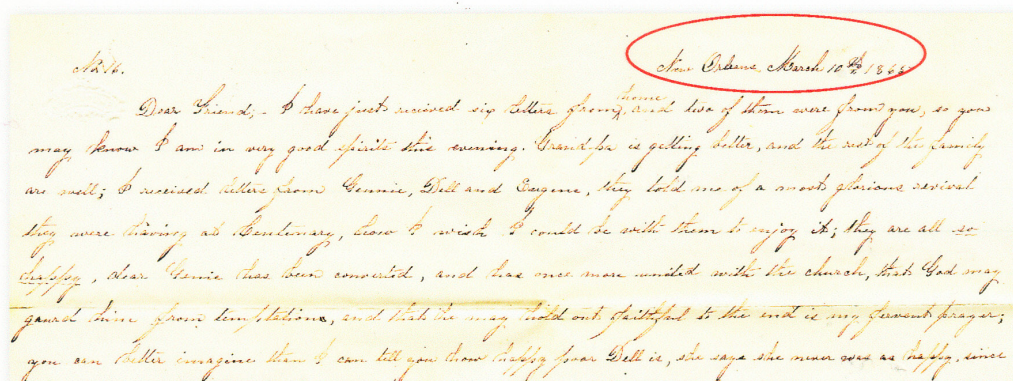


## A Very Late, Rare and Unusual Use Overpaid the 2-cent Drop Letter Rate—Unique

The letter inside this cover is datelined “*New Orleans March 10th 1865.*” Cover was hand carried by an exchange agent (notation at lower left: “*Care of W.H. Hatch Asst Agt of exchange*”) from Union-occupied New Orleans as an “inside cover” of a civilian through-the-lines routing. It traversed up the Mississippi River—hand-carried via St. Louis to Richmond where, being removed from its outer envelope, it was placed in the mail for **intra-city delivery a few days before the fall of Richmond to Union forces.**



**Partial illustration of the original letter** from Mary Burd who, in early 1865, temporarily moved from St. Louis, Mo., to New Orleans. It is written to her good friend, Capt. John J. Miller, an assistant surgeon with the Missouri State Guard, then posted for her in Richmond. Note 1865 New Orleans date encircled.



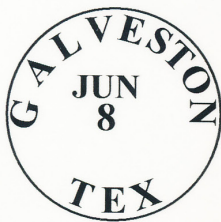
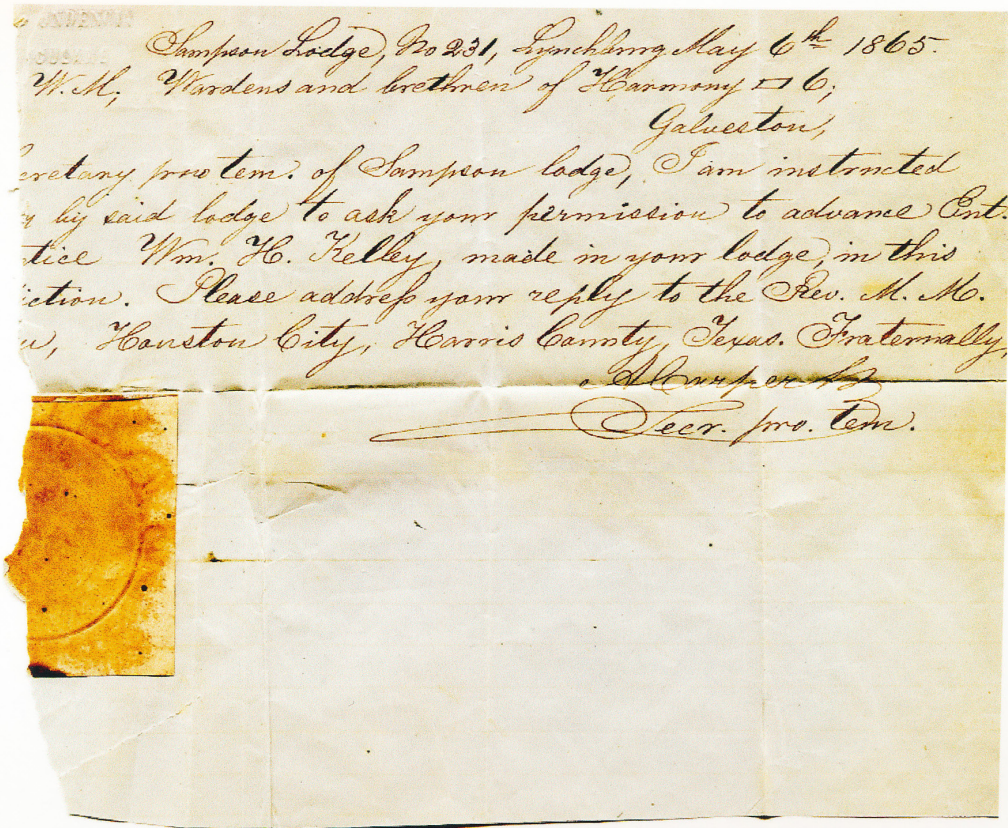
Actual size



Hand-Carried Very Late Use to Galveston—Originating at Lynchburg, Va.

Carried to, and Mailed from, Galveston, Texas, **AFTER** Appomattox Surrender  
Unique.

Letter from Masonic National Secretary to "Brethren, Harmony Lodge, Galveston", dated May 6th—the latter date being three (3) days before U.S. President Andrew Johnson declared the war over. Therefore, this piece of mail was, at the time, actually contraband—carriage across the CSA border into Texas was still quite illegal.



Postmarked Galveston, June 8, 1865  
Overpaid Drop Letter Rate  
Even After the Fall of Galveston

Folded letter hand-carried from Lynchburg, Virginia, nearly one month after Confederate forces had surrendered at Appomattox on April 9th...**but before the official ending of the war.** Placed into the mail as an overpaid drop letter on **June 8th** within the City of Galveston. This is very unusual mail from and to areas of the Confederacy still operating a mail service while awaiting resumption by USPOD—even though Galveston had been surrendered by Gen. Kirby Smith on **June 2nd.**)

