

# THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR: ADVERSITY USES

**Exhibit Focus and Structure:** The American Civil War spanned four years, commencing with the bombardment of Fort Sumter in April 1861 and concluding with the surrender of the major CSA armies in the spring of 1865. This exhibit presents war-time mail known to collectors as *adversity covers*.

The conflict caused severe shortages of basic supplies among the soldiers and civilian population, and stationery and envelopes of good quality were among the staples in short supply. This was especially true in the South because the Northern states had a near monopoly in the paper manufacturing industry and the blockade of Southern ports and waterways by Union troops, which was intended to strangle the Confederate economy, restricted the flow of goods in and out of the major cities. Letter writers had to resort to a wide variety of products and methods to fill the void, and adversity covers include envelopes made from paper used for other purposes as well as re-used or modified envelopes.

The exhibit commences below with the unique wallpaper cover from Andersonville prison. It then presents two examples of Northern adversity uses, which are much scarcer than Confederate uses, and then Southern examples presented in four broad categories: (a) printed forms, (b) wallpaper, (c) re-used envelopes, and (d) "captured uses", which represent patriotic covers acquired in the field from dead or retreating soldiers and used by the opposing side. The exhibit is intended to illustrate the finest known examples of the innovative ways used by correspondents to maintain channels of communication during the war, many of which were never seen before or after.

## The Infamous Andersonville Prison

Sent from a Union prisoner of war held at Camp Sumter in Georgia, better known as Andersonville, and censored by **Camp Commandant Capt. Henry Wirz** ("Exd. H.W. In Extremis"), adversity use of wallpaper envelope to Lewiston ME, single 5¢ De La Rue Typograph underpays the 10¢ CSA rate, cancelled by "ANDERSONVILLE GA." dateless woodcut circle, carried by flag of truce to Old Point Comfort, entered US mails with 25 August (1864) datestamp and "Due 6" for US postage.



The only wallpaper envelope signed by Andersonville prison commander Henry Wirz

The camp was the largest and most notorious CSA military prison. Captain Henry Wirz assumed command in March 1864 and, by the end of the war, 12,913 Union POWs had died, mostly from starvation and disease. After the war, Wirz was charged with conspiracy and murder by US authorities, found guilty, and hanged on 10 November 1865, becoming one of very few Confederate officials to be tried, convicted and executed for war crimes.

**Bold statements describe important and especially rare covers. Every item has at least one certificate from The Philatelic Foundation or The Confederate Stamp Alliance.**

## NORTHERN USES

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### US 1862—US Troops in South

Soldiers in the field resorted to using a variety of paper products to send letters home, but Union soldiers were usually well-supplied—these adversity uses from the South to Northern destinations are extremely unusual.



Letter fashioned from a cardboard shirt collar, written by a Union soldier writing from Old Point Comfort VA to Philadelphia with three US 1¢ 1861.

Letter written in pencil and datelined "Head Quarters 2nd Regt. P.R.V.C., Banks James River, July 4, 1862", reports "We have fought five battles & won five victories... Genl. McCall is a prisoner, Genl. Reynolds ditto and wounded, Adj. Genl. Biddle and Simmons and a host of other officers killed."



Confederate imprint cover with "Confederate" crossed out and changed to "United" and "of Va." added after "Department of State," used from Union-occupied Old Point Comfort in Confederate Virginia to Syracuse NY, with US 3¢ 1861.

## SOUTHERN USES: PRINTED FORMS

Many different types of printed forms were used by Southern correspondents to fashion envelopes. Examples include insurance and bank forms, pages from instruction manuals, receipts and grocer's lists, bills of lading, printed circulars and advertisements, and programs.

CSA 1862



Envelope made from printed insurance form with 10¢ Hoyer & Ludwig Lithograph used from Mobile to Claiborne AL, 29 August (ca. 1862).

Cover made from printed ledger book form with 5¢ De La Rue Typograph block of four paying double 10¢ rate from Union City to Columbia SC, 30 July 1862.



OFFICE,  
Record Book,  
Page

Nov 9

Columbia  
S.C.



Envelope made from unusual paper printed in gold and white with "No." suggesting a form, used with 10¢ Rose Lithograph from Charleston SC to Dalton GA, 5 November 1862.

Very few adversary covers are known with the 10¢ Rose Lithograph

SOUTHERN USES: PRINTED FORMS

CSA 1863

Envelope made from printed fire insurance form with 2¢ Jackson Lithograph cancelled at Petersburg VA, drop letter to Captain Martin's Battery, ca. 1863.



Very few adversity covers are known with the 2¢ Jackson Lithograph



Envelope made from printed receipt with top left corner margin pair 5¢ Richmond Typograph used from Mobile AL, ca. 1863.

Envelope made from Methodist Episcopal Church Program folder with 5¢ Blue Lithograph used from Augusta GA.



SOUTHERN USES: PRINTED FORMS

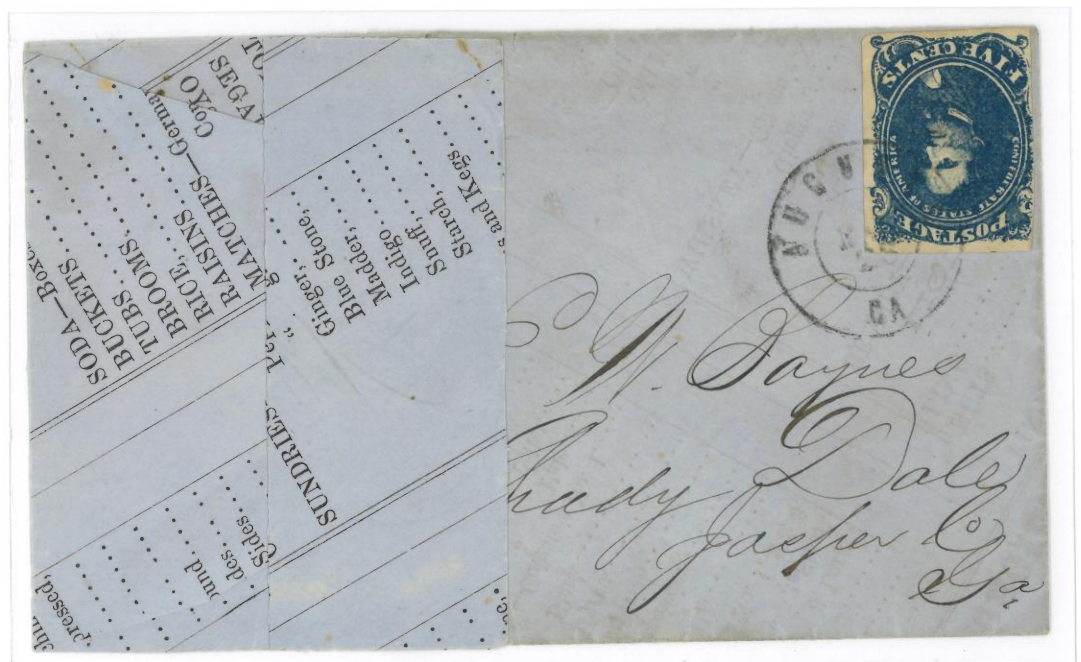
CSA 1863

Envelope made from legal form with 10¢ Die A used from Charleston SC to Wal-terboro SC, 13 May 1864.



Envelope made from printed bank form with figure of Ceres, goddess of agriculture, with 10¢ Die B used from Staunton to Lewisburg VA, 28 December (ca. 1863).

Envelope made from grocer's list with 5¢ Blue Lithograph used from Augusta GA to Shady Dale GA (ca. 1863).



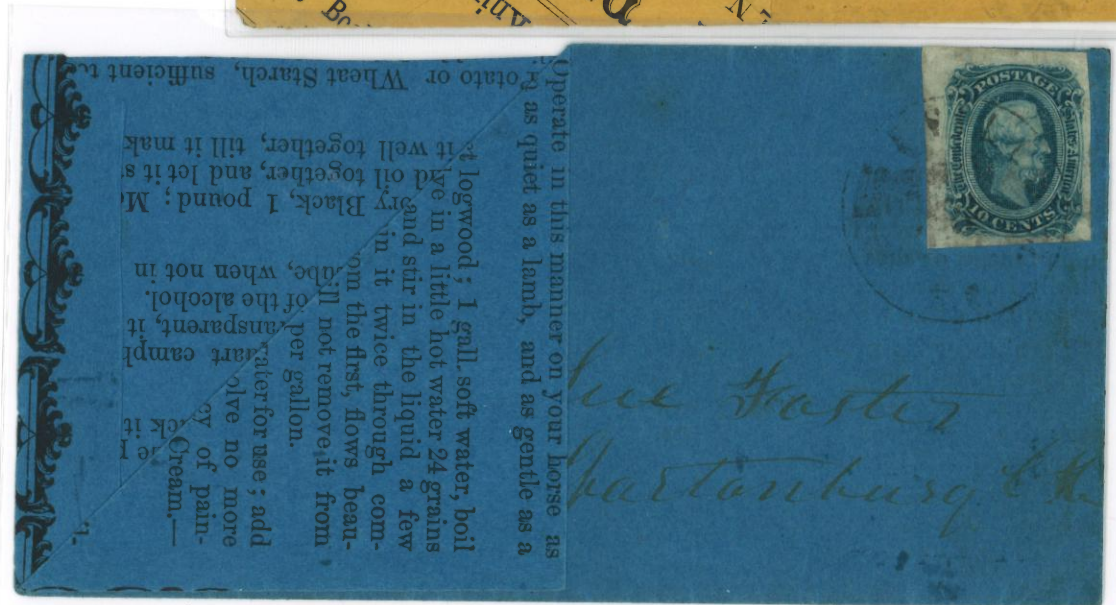
SOUTHERN USES: PRINTED FORMS

CSA 1864-1865



Envelope made from railroad bill of lading in red and blue with 10¢ Die A used from Atlanta GA to Gainsville Junction AL, 1 Apr. (ca. 1864-5).

Envelope made from bookseller and stationer's advertisement with 10¢ Die A used from Adam's Run SC, 21 October (ca. 1863).



Envelope made from instructions on horse training and making black writing ink, printed on dark blue paper, with 10¢ Die B used from Greenville Court House to Spartanburg SC (ca. 1864-5).

## SOUTHERN USES: WALLPAPER

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Envelopes made from wallpaper are among the most colorful and easily recognizable postal history artifacts of the Civil War. Generally cut from unused rolls, these covers represent the most ornate examples of human ingenuity in responding to the shortage of paper in the South. No wallpaper covers are known from the North.

CSA 1861-1863



Envelope made from wallpaper with 5¢ Green Lithograph used from Wilmington NC to Davidson College in Mecklenburg County NC, 4 April 1861.

**Examples of the first General Issue on wallpaper covers are rare because these adversity uses did not become widespread until late 1862, long after the 5¢ Green Lithograph was superseded by the 5¢ Blue**



Envelope made from wallpaper with 10¢ Stone Y Lithograph used from Rock Wall TX to Shreveport LA, 2 July (ca. 1863).

**Very few wallpaper covers are known from Texas or with the 10¢ Jefferson**

## SOUTHERN USES: WALLPAPER

CSA 1863



Envelope made from wallpaper with 10¢ Die A used from Columbia SC to Charleston SC, marked "Care of Penny Post."

Charleston's mail carrier service, which was known as the Penny Post, commenced in 1849 and was operated by appointed carriers within the post office. Initially, the service utilized a variety of small labels, but by the time South Carolina seceded the penny post labels were no longer used and envelopes were simply marked "care of penny post" or a similar notation. The service continued until mid-1863 when Union forces began shelling the City from Morris Island and the post office was relocated. This effectively dates the cover to 1863.



Envelope made from wallpaper with 10¢ Die B used from Wilmington to Raleigh NC, 24 September (ca. 1863).

Envelope made from wallpaper with two 5¢ copies Richmond Typograph used from Georgetown to Camden SC, 2 February (ca. 1863).





## SOUTHERN USES: WALLPAPER

CSA 1863-1864



Envelope made from wallpaper with 10¢ Frameline used from Mobile AL to Marianna FL, 19 September 1863.

**Extremely rare use of the 10¢ Frameline on wallpaper cover**



Envelope made from wallpaper with 20¢ Washington tied by red Blacks & Whites VA 24 May (ca. 1864) datestamp to Sturgeonville VA; double 10¢ rate.

**Combined rarity—20¢ Washington on wallpaper cover with red postmark**

## SOUTHERN USES: WALLPAPER

CSA 1863-1865



Envelope made from wallpaper with 10¢ Die B used from Fayetteville to Kinston NC, 1 October 1863, forwarded to Hillsboro NC with manuscript due 10¢.



Envelope made from wallpaper with 10¢ Die A used from Wilmington to Clemmonsville NC, 26 October (ca. 1863), with altered "5 PAID" from "3 PAID" datestamp.



Envelope made from wallpaper with 10¢ Die B used from Wadesboro to Whiteville NC.

## SOUTHERN USES: WALLPAPER

CSA 1863-1865

Envelope made from floral wallpaper with 2¢ Jackson Engraved, used locally in Fayetteville NC, 9 April 1863. The year date in this cancel is likely incorrect - most likely 1864.



Rare wallpaper cover with the 2¢ Jackson Engraved



Envelope made from floral wallpaper with 10c Greenish Blue Die B from Eutaw AL to Uniontown AL, 7 December 1863.

Envelope made from wallpaper with 10¢ Die A used from Charleston SC to Pocotaligo SC, 10 December (ca. 1863).



## SOUTHERN USES: WALLPAPER

CSA 1863-1865

Envelope made from wallpaper with 10¢ Deep Blue Die A, Keatinge & Ball, from Chester Court House SC to Abbeville Court House SC, 2 February 1865.



Envelope made from wallpaper with 10¢ Greenish Blue Die B from Greensborough NC to Litteron NC, 31 October (ca. 1864).

Envelope made from wallpaper with 10¢ Die A from Wadesboro NC to Garysburg NC, 8 June (ca. 1864).



## SOUTHERN USES: RE-USED ENVELOPES

Correspondents found an array of innovative ways to make multiple use of paper and envelopes that historically would have been discarded. Use of previously used envelopes, known to collectors as turned covers, because they are typically turned inside-out, refolded and used again represent one example. Another is the repurposing of obsolete envelopes produced for another purpose.

CSA 1863



Envelope made from blue lined notepaper and re-used; posted at Mobile AL both times, first 21 August 1863 with pair of 5¢ De La Rue Typograph, evidently originating from somewhere else and posted as a drop letter; used a second time 9 September 1863 with 10¢ Rose Lithograph, addressed to Artesia MS.

**A double adversity use—envelope made from notepaper and used twice**



Obsolete US 3¢ Star Die envelope, franked with two copies 10¢ Frameline (Positions 89 and 81), paying two times the letter rate, Mobile AL 31 August 1863 date-stamp.

**The 10¢ Frameline is rare when used on an adversity cover, and this example with two copies paying the double rate is unique**

This cover is addressed in the hand of CSA Navy Lieutenant George W. Gift, one of the officers who accompanied Captain John Wilkinson to Canada in October 1863 on a secret mission to organize a raid on Johnson's Island Prison; Lt. Gift sent this cover to his future wife in Cedar Spring GA a few months before leaving on the mission.

SOUTHERN USES: RE-USED ENVELOPES

CSA 1863-1864



2¢ drop-letter and  
10¢ regular rates

Twice-used envelope postmarked at Charleston SC both times: first addressed to military fort on James Island in Charleston harbor, drop-letter rate paid by 2¢ Jackson Engraved, 16 December 1863; used a second time from Charleston to Greenville SC with 18 December 1863 datestamp and large "10" rate handstamp.



2¢ circular and  
10¢ regular rates

Envelope used twice, first with 2¢ Jackson Engraved paying circular rate from Richmond to Staunton VA, 31 December 1863; second use from Staunton to Lewisburg West VA with 10¢ Die A, 18 January 1864.

## SOUTHERN USES: RE-USED ENVELOPES

CSA 1863-1864



Envelope used twice within Texas, first from Austin to Corsicana, 26 February 1862 with "Paid 5" handstamp, then from Anderson to Galveston, 19 January (ca. 1864) with 10¢ Die A, addressed to member of Colonel Elmore's Regiment; combination of 5¢ and 10¢ rates.



Round-trip envelope between Richmond VA and Buena Vista GA; first use 17 June (ca 1863) with 10¢ Die B from Buena Vista to Richmond; second use 7 July (ca. 1863) from Richmond to Buena Vista with 20¢ Washington paying double rate for weight over half-ounce.

## SOUTHERN USES: RE-USED ENVELOPES

CSA 1863-1864



Envelope used twice with 20¢ Washington paying double rate for weight over half-ounce both times, first from Petersburg VA, December 1864 and then turned and to Richmond VA.

**Extremely rare turned use with both sides bearing the 20¢ Green and one with Red postmark**



Incoming blockade-run cover, used twice, endorsed "per Fox" and carried by that blockade runner via Nassau on 4 August 1864, arriving Charleston 8 August 1864, with large "6" due handstamp for delivery at port of entry, turned and sent to Columbia SC with 10¢ Die B, 17 August 1864.

**Rare turned use of an incoming blockade run cover**