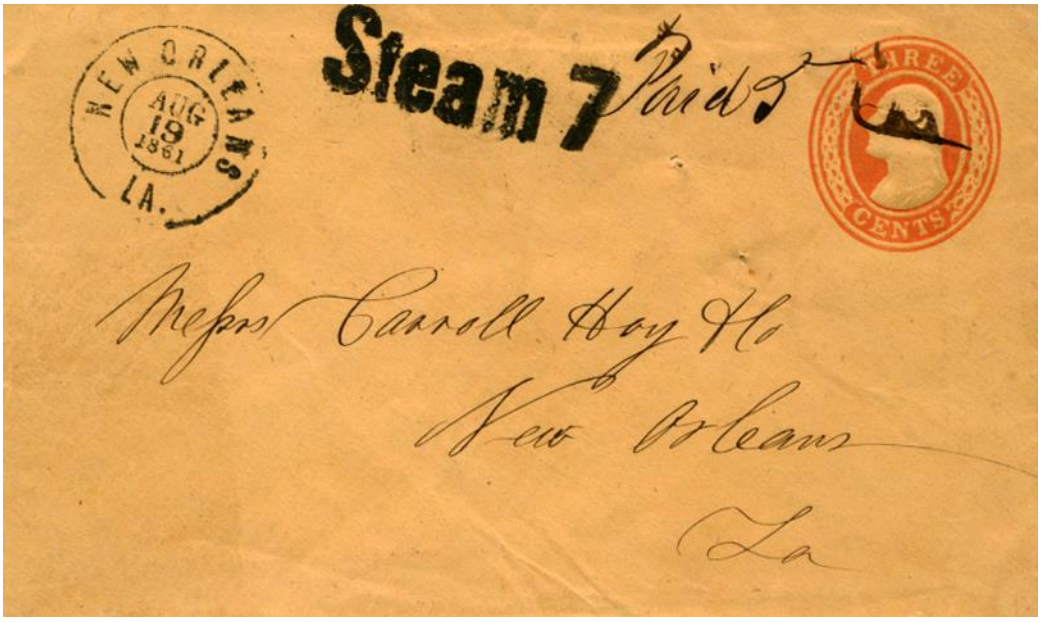
The Vital Role of Waterways in the Carriage of Confederate Mail

THE SOUTH'S RELIANCE ON WATERWAYS: Unlike its industrial-based northern adversary, the agrarian southern states did not have a well-developed system of infrastructure such as roads, bridges and railroad lines, but relied instead on its internal natural system of rivers, harbors, canals and coastline to move some of its commercial products, mail and human capital. This dependence by the Confederacy on waterways became the focus of the Union's wartime strategy to split the Confederacy in half by taking control of the Mississippi River and to starve the Confederacy economically by blockading its principle ports.

PURPOSE OF EXHIBIT: To show, using covers that relied on waterways for all or part of their routing, how the Confederate States used rivers and other waterways to send and receive mail to maintain communications during the Civil War.

SCOPE OF EXHIBIT: The exhibit shows the many ways in which waterways proved critical to the carriage of Confederate mail when other, land-based, avenues of carriage were cut-off or made impractical to use.



Steamboat carried mail from unknown place of origin into New Orleans via the Mississippi River. Postage (5¢) prepaid; steamboat captain's fee (2¢) paid by New Orleans Post Office, but, per statute, not charged to addressee.

ORGANIZATION: The exhibit displays covers principally organized by type of waterway:

- Inland Waterway Mail
- Cross-Border Waterway Mail
- Smuggled (Covert) Waterway Mail
- Private Express Waterway Mail
- Flag-of-Truce Waterway Mail
- Ocean Mail to the Confederacy
- Blockade Mail
- Prize Court Waterway Mail
- Claim for Prize Money
- Waterway Mail From Occupied Cities

Confederate Mail Serviced By United States Post Office and Carried on Union Steamboat

Until June 1, 1861, the United States Post Office Department serviced all mail, such as this cover, in the Confederate States. The United States Mail packet oval marking *Steamer Vicksburg* was applied by the Natchez post office when the captain of the steamboat handed in this loose letter to the Natchez postmaster. The steamboat *Vicksburg* had a Union mail contract to operate between Vicksburg, Grand Gulf, Rodney, Waterproof, Natchez, Fort Adams and Bayou Sara, Mississippi [and all intermediate landings]. This contract ended on June 1, 1861, when the Confederate Post Office Department took over the servicing of the Confederate mails.

The three U.S. stamps on this triple weight cover were cancelled by the blue oval handstamp “STEAMER VICKSBURG” applied by the federal route agent serving aboard this vessel before he delivered the cover to the Natchez Post Office.

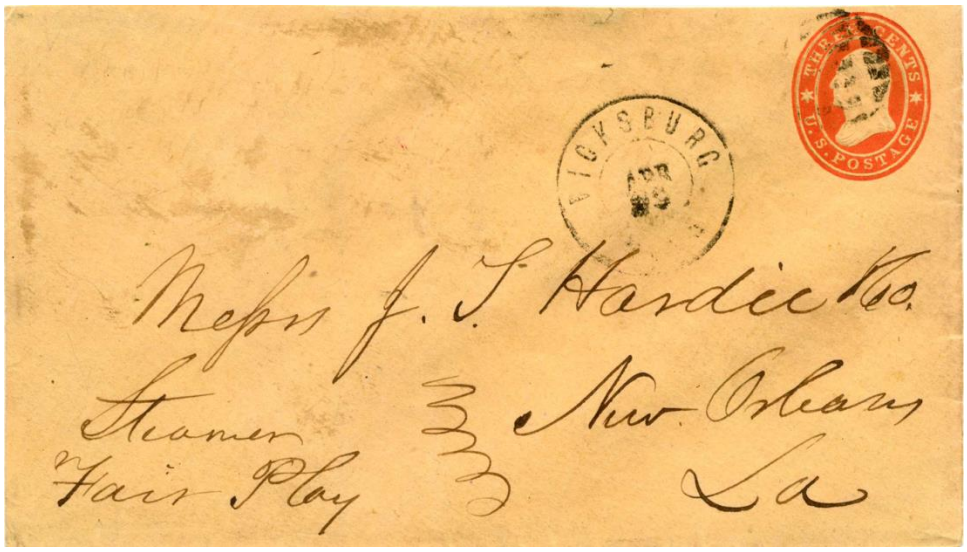
Route: Cover’s place of origin unknown → Mississippi River → Natchez.
Cover dated March 5, 1861. CSA Certificate

Mississippi passed its Ordinance of Secession on January 9, 1861. It joined the Confederacy on February 4, 1861.

Confederate Mail Serviced By United States Post Office and Carried on Union Steamboat

This cover was conveyed by the United States Post Office Department which serviced Independent States and Confederate States mails until June 1, 1861. During this time, United States postage was recognized in the Independent and Confederate States.

This cover likely was placed aboard the Steamboat *Fair Play* at some port or landing of unknown origin, and carried as a loose letter by the steamboat to Vicksburg, Mississippi, where the cover entered the mail system.



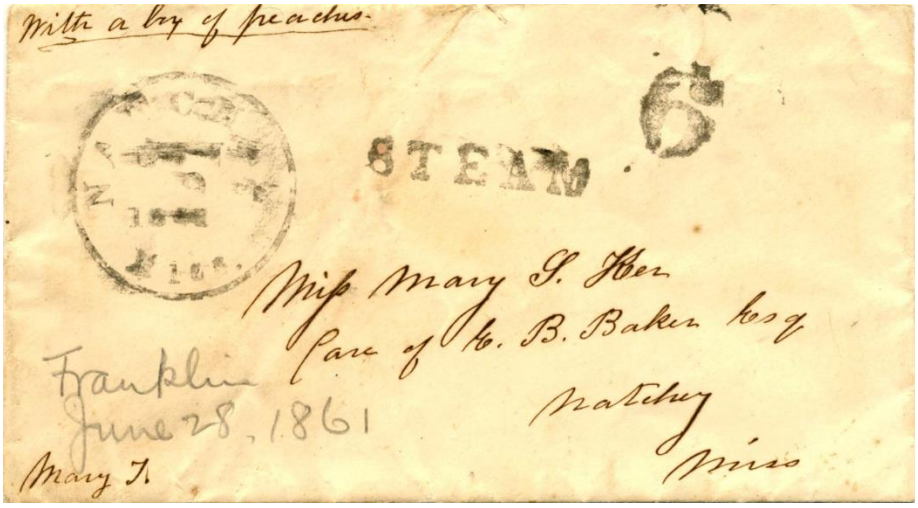
Route: Cover's place of origin unknown → Mississippi River → Vicksburg, Mississippi → New Orleans, Louisiana [overland from Vicksburg]. Cover dated April 29, 1861.

Although it is likely (because such was the practice of the United States and Confederate Post Office Departments) that the sender's instruction to place the cover aboard the *Fair Play* was followed, it is not possible to be certain that this cover was actually carried by that vessel without other evidence.

Steamboat Letter Serviced by Confederate Post Office and Rated "6" [¢ due] as if SHIP Mail

The docketing on the face of this cover suggests it originated at a town called Franklin. It is not possible, however, to determine which of the many southern towns by that name was the source of this cover.

Because there was no town named Franklin on or near the Mississippi River (assuming that Franklin was not the name of the sender), it is likely this cover was carried from its place of origin by a traveler as a favor to the sender, to some port or landing on the Mississippi River where it was given to the captain of the *Mary T*. At Natchez, Mississippi, the steamboat captain handed the cover in to the Natchez postmaster who marked the cover with the Natchez circle date stamp, marked it STEAM to indicate the cover had been transported to Natchez by steamboat, and marked it "6" [¢ due], the SHIP letter port-of-entry charge to reflect the postage and captain's fee due from the addressee.



Route: Franklin → Unknown port or landing on Mississippi River → Mississippi River → Natchez. Cover dated June 28, 1861. CSA certificate.

Under the Confederate Constitution, for postal matters not specifically addressed by Confederate statutes or regulations, the United States Postal Laws and Regulations in effect in November, 1859 [1859 US-PL&R] applied to Confederate mail, unless the terms of the 1859 US-PL&R conflicted with Confederate law. Because there were no Confederate statutes or regulations applicable to steamboat or SHIP mail, the US-PL&R applied to such waterway mail.

Under the 1859 US-PL&R, an unpaid steamboat letter [such as this cover] was to be treated as if it was a SHIP letter by the receiving post office. Therefore, this unpaid steamboat letter was rated "6" [¢ due] by the Natchez Post Office, the postage charge in 1859 for SHIP letters addressed to the port-of-entry.

The steamboat *Mary T*. in 1861 had a mail contract that required it to make stops at Vicksburg, Warrenton, New Carthage, Grand Gulf, St. Joseph, Rodney, Waterproof, Natchez, and all intermediate Mississippi River landings.

Port-of-Entry: Natchez, Mississippi

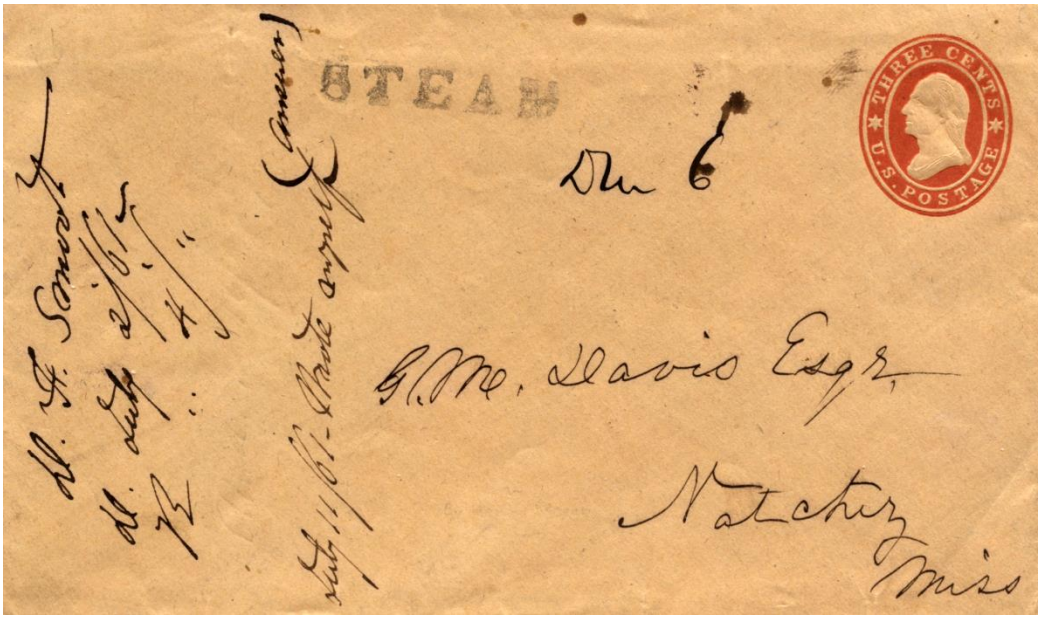
Steamboat Letter Serviced by Confederate Post Office and Rated “6” [¢ due] as if SHIP Mail

The docketing on this cover indicates it was mailed on July 2, 1861, from a place of unknown origin, received on July 4, 1861, and answered by the addressee, Mr. Davis, on July 11, 1861.

The marking STEAM was applied by the Natchez Post Office when the steamboat’s captain turned in the cover, indicating that the cover had been carried aboard a steamboat.

When the steamboat reached Natchez, the captain turned in the cover to the Natchez Post Office and received his 2¢ payment for doing so. This payment was not directly charged back to the addressee, but was subsumed in the overall postage [6¢] charged to the sender under the applicable 1859 United States Post Office Laws & Regulations for steamboat mail addressed to the port-of-entry.

This unpaid letter was rated “6” (rather than 3¢), which was the charge for steamboat letters addressed to the port-of-entry if the letters had not been fully prepaid (i.e., the unpaid steamboat letters were charged as if they were SHIP letters).



U.S. postage indicium not recognized as payment for postage.
Only documented Natchez manuscript SHIP rate indication.

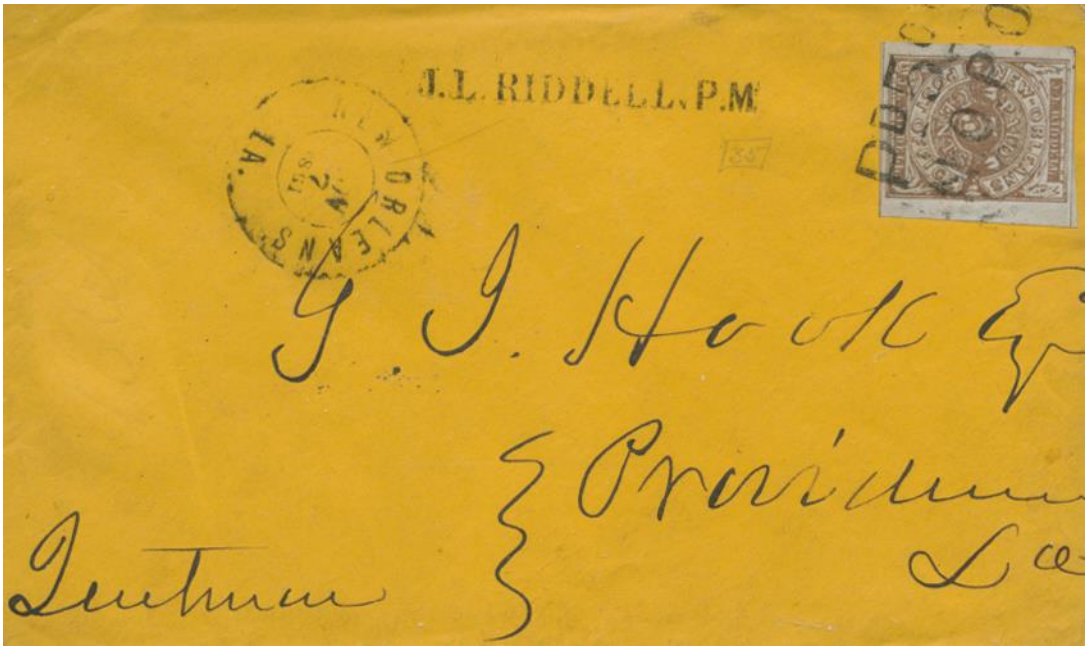
The 3¢ Star Die embossed United States postage envelope was used by the sender in July 1861, as a convenience only. The United States postage indicium was correctly ignored by the Natchez Post Office. United States stamps and embossed envelopes were not valid for postage in the Independent or Confederate States after May 31, 1861.

Steamboat Letter Serviced by Confederate Post Office

This letter was carried aboard the packet boat *General John A. Quitman*. This vessel ran the New Orleans → Greenville route. An article in the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* in April 1862, stated: "Regular Memphis and New Orleans Confederate States Mail Packet Genl. Quitman, John W. Cannon, master. This line connects at Napoleon with regular packets for the Arkansas and White Rivers, and at Memphis with the Memphis and Charleston Railroads."

"**PD 5 CTS/N.O.P.D.**" handstamp; "**J.M. Riddell, P.M.**" The purpose of this latter marking is not known.

This double circle CDS, used on incoming and outgoing New Orleans river mail, has frequently been called a "wharf marking" in the literature. This is based on the premise that the marking was applied to river mail at the wharf rather than at the nearby New Orleans Post Office. While the marking clearly is a river mail marking (used until the capture of New Orleans in late April 1862), there is no published evidence that the marking was applied at the wharf rather than at the nearby post office.



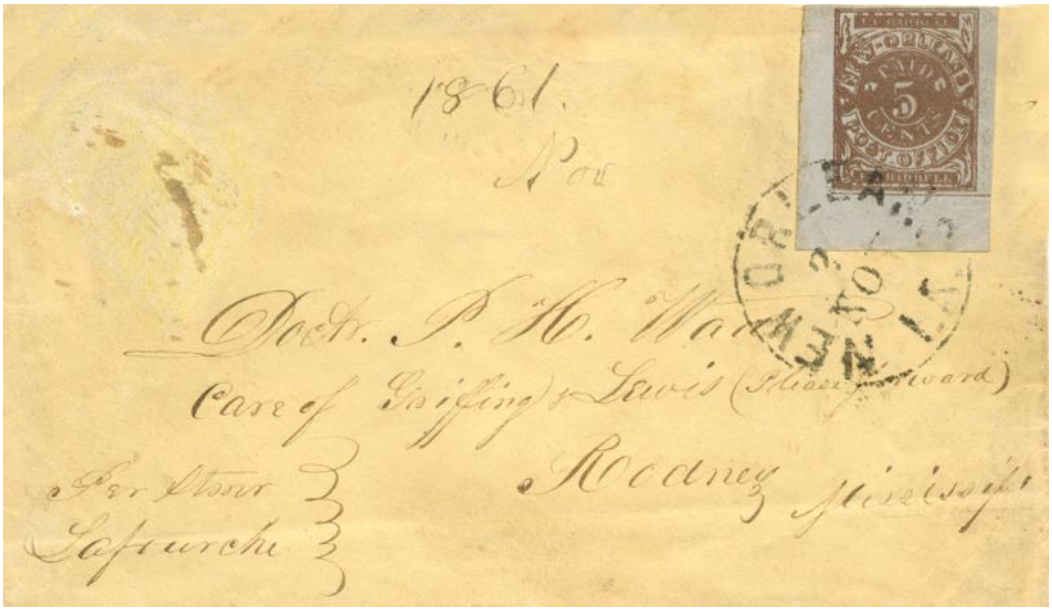
Place of origin unknown. November 7, 1861. The stamp is NEW-LA-A05 (62X5)

The last regular run of the *Quitman* was on April 11, 1862. On April 24, just days before New Orleans fell to Admiral Farragut's fleet, Captain Cannon ran the steamboat up the Red River to avoid capture. The vessel hid for the duration of the War just north of Shreveport in a small stream called Twelve Mile Bayou.

ex-Brown; ex-Hall

Steamboat Letter into New Orleans Serviced by Confederate Post Office

This steamboat *Lafourche* ran the New Orleans → Bayou Lafourche route until the fall of New Orleans in April 1862. When this occurred, the vessel was taken up the Red River and hidden until the War ended.



November 3, 1861

New Orleans Postmaster Provisional stamp is CSA NEW-LA-A05; Scott #62x5. Position 33.

Ex-Haas; Ex-Skinner

Steamboat Mail from Bayou La Chute, Louisiana to New Orleans

The steamboat *Texas* did not have a mail contract, but picked up mail at various landings along the Red and Mississippi Rivers as it made stops for other purposes. It operated between Shreveport, Louisiana on the Red River and New Orleans on the Mississippi River.

Prepaid steamboat mail carried by a vessel (such as the *Texas*) not having a contract to carry the mail was rated as if the letters it carried were transmitted overland. Such prepaid mail was not treated as if it was SHIP mail, and therefore was not subject to the penalty SHIP rates applicable to unpaid steamboat mail. The steamboat's master still received his captain's fee [2¢] from the postmaster for each letter he deposited with the post office although this fee was not always indicated on the cover. Pursuant to applicable statute,* the fee was not passed on to the addressee.

Route: Bayou La Chute, Louisiana → Red River → Mississippi River → New Orleans. March 22, 1862.

After the fall of New Orleans (in April 1862), the vessel's master took the steamboat up the Red River and hid it. The steamboat survived the War.

The stamp is CSA 1. It is not cancelled, but is tied to the folded letter by the ink of the address.

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* Per Section 178 of the 1859 United States Post Office Laws & Regulations which governed Confederate steamboat mail [CSA Act of February 9, 1861]

Steamboat Letter Serviced by Confederate Post Office

The sender's directed that the letter travel "via // Care // Steamboat Argo // Vicksburg // Miss." The cover entered the Confederate mails at New Orleans where it received the New Orleans circle date stamp.

The Steamboat *Argo* ran the Vicksburg → Yazoo River route, connecting with the Mississippi River, and on to New Orleans. The vessel was burned by the Confederates on the Sunflower River on May 26, 1863, to avoid her capture by Union forces.

April 2, 1862

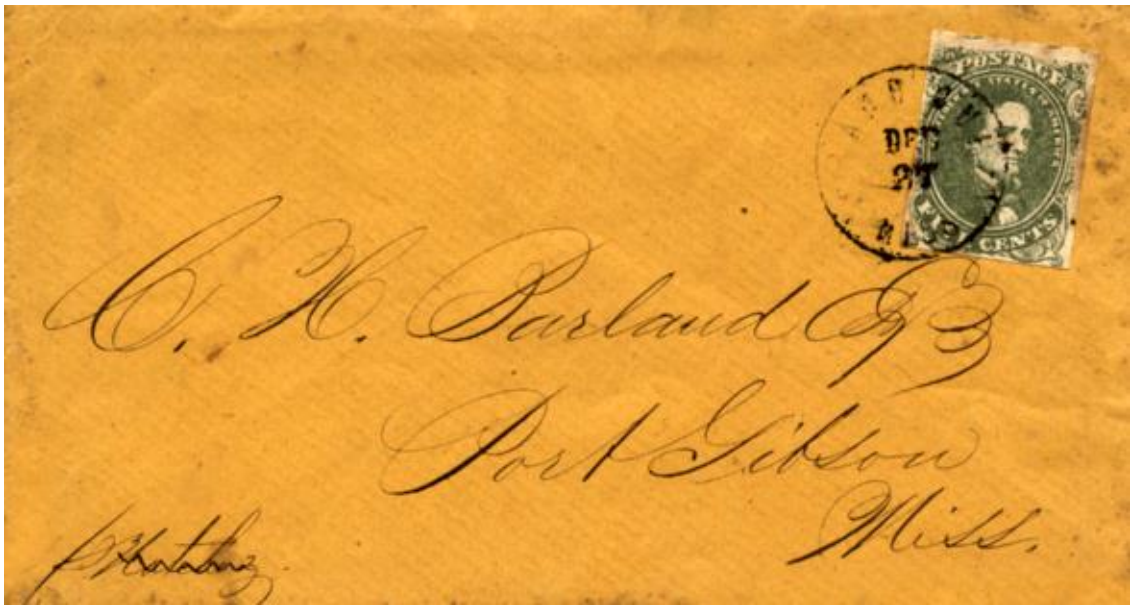
Although the cover's New Orleans corner reference suggests that this cover might have originated in New Orleans rather than at or near Vicksburg, Mississippi, both the circle date stamp and the sender's admonition indicate that the envelope was used as a convenience envelope only and does not show the place of origin of this cover.

The stamps are CSA 1.

Sender's Request to Send via Steamboat *Natchez* Ignored

~~**-P Natchez-**~~

The sender of this letter indicated he desired to have it carried on the mail packet *Natchez* to Port Gibson, its Mississippi River destination. The letter possibly arrived too late to be placed aboard that vessel so that the admonition was struck through. It is likely the letter then was carried in a locked or closed bag on some other steamboat having a mail contract to its destination where it entered the Confederate States mail system and the Port Gibson circle date stamp was applied to cancel the stamp [CSA 1].



Route: Grand Gulf, Mississippi → Mississippi River → Port Gibson, Mississippi.

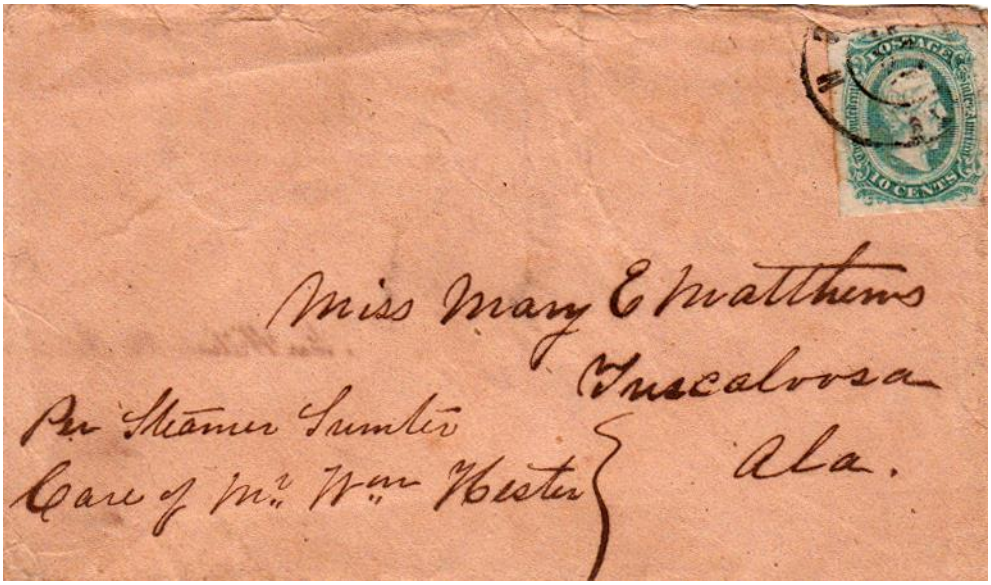
Mississippi River covers frequently are found having the name of a steamboat written on them. This generally reflects the sender's desire to have the letter carried by the named vessel, and is known as a sender's admonition or instruction. The presence of the admonition does not, in itself, indicate that the letter was carried by the named vessel. Other evidence is necessary – such as a purser's name-of-boat handstamp struck on the cover – to be sure the sender's admonition was followed.

Ports-of-Entry: Mobile and Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Alabama Rivers Steamboat Mail

Steamboat
Cherokee

Mobile River



Steamboat
Sumter

Black Warrior River

The top cover with CSA 1 was carried by the steamboat *Cherokee* on the Mobile River to Mobile Alabama. The bottom cover with CSA 11 was carried by the steamboat *Sumter* on the Black Warrior River to Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Port-of-Entry: Benton, Alabama

Alabama River Steamboat Mail

The port of origin of this undated cover is not known. It was carried on the steamboat *St. Nicolas* to Benton, Alabama.

The cover never entered the Confederate mail system even though it has a CSA 11 adhesive on it.

Steamboat *St. Nicolas*

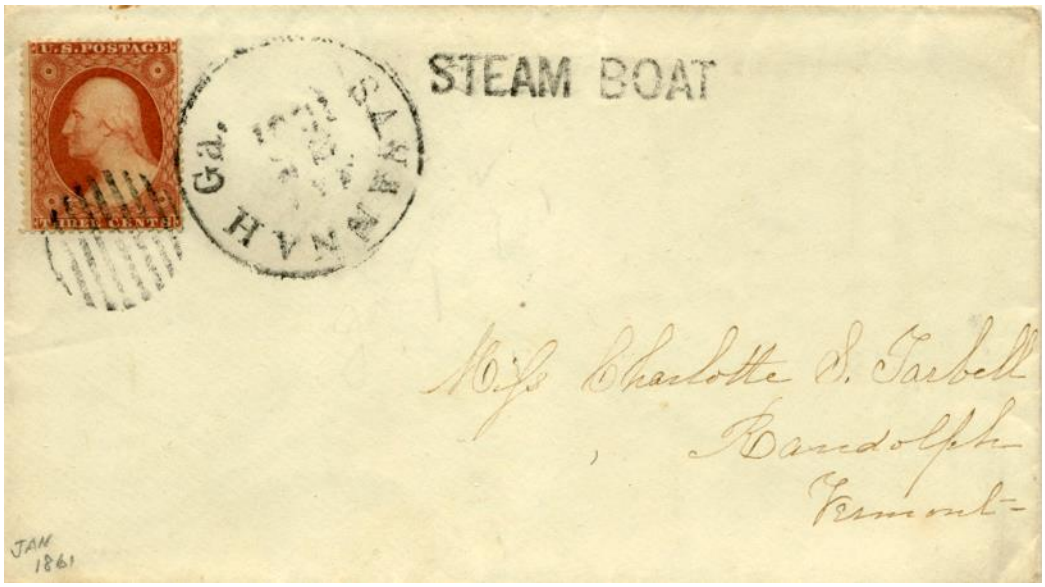
Port-of-Entry: Savannah, Georgia

Georgia's Independent State Period
Steamboat Mail Serviced by United States Post Office

STEAM BOAT

Georgia seceded from the Union on January 19, 1861. It joined the Confederacy on February 4, 1861. This cover is dated January 22, 1861 during Georgia's period as an Independent State. Prior to June 1, 1861, after Georgia joined the Confederacy, the United States Post Office serviced mail in the seceded states. United States postage continued to be accepted during this period.

Although the place of origin of this cover is unknown, the cover was placed aboard a steamboat that proceeded along the Savannah River until it reached Savannah, Georgia. At Savannah, the steamboat's captain delivered the cover to the postmaster who applied the marking "STEAM BOAT" and the Savannah circle date stamp (to show where and how the letter entered the mail system). He also paid the steamboat captain 2¢ for his delivery of the letter to the postmaster. Under the 1859 United States Postal Laws & Regulations, which governed Confederate steamboat mail, the captain's fee was not passed on and charged-back to the addressee.



CSA AS Certificate.

Under the Confederate Constitution, for postal matters not specifically addressed by Confederate statutes or regulations, the United States Postal Laws and Regulations in effect in November, 1859 [1859 US-PL&R] applied to Confederate mail unless the terms of the 1859 US-PL&R conflicted with Confederate law. Because there were no Confederate statutes or regulations applicable to steamboat or SHIP mail, the 1859 US-PL&R applied to waterway mail.

Port-of-Entry: Charleston, South Carolina

Twice-Used Cover with Directions to Send “By Boat”

This twice-used turned cover originally was carried out-of-the-mails to Charleston, South Carolina. The inside of the envelope was endorsed by the sender, “By Boat”. The cover traveled from an unknown point of origin to Charleston Harbor where it was delivered to the addressee.

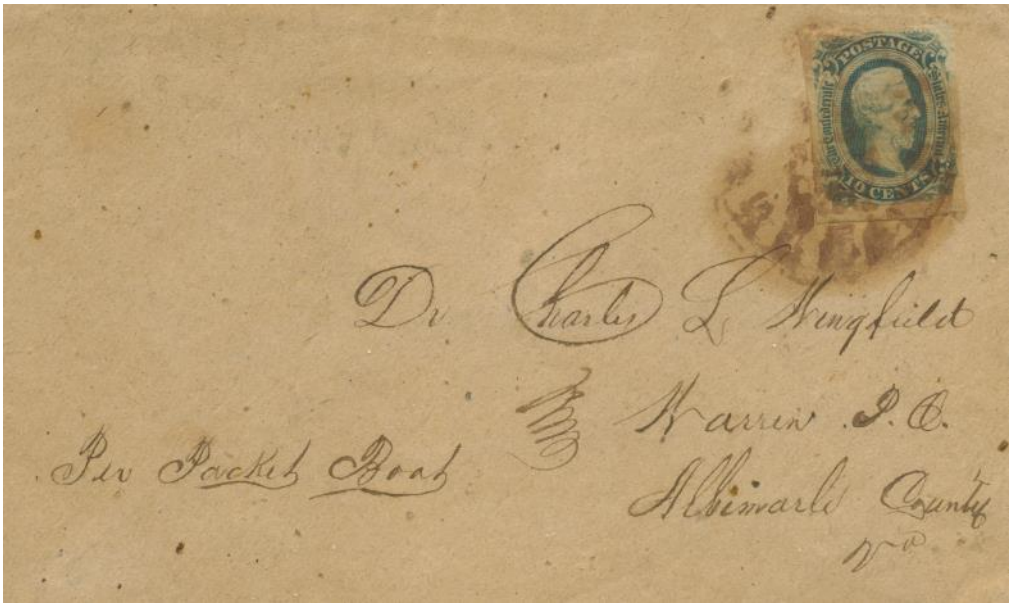
At some time after delivery of this cover at Charleston, the cover was turned, readdressed, and on May 29, 1862, mailed to Flat Rock. The stamp [CSA 6] was affixed at the time of re-mailing.

Port-of-Entry: Lynchburg, Virginia

Sender's Instructions to Send Cover "Per Packet Boat"

The place of origin of this cover is not known. What is known, however, is that its destination, Warren Post Office in Virginia, was located on a tributary of the James River called the Ravinna River, and that the sender of this cover wished it to travel via waterway as expressed by the admonition, "Per Packet Boat".

The cover entered the Confederate mails at Lynchburg, Virginia, a town on the James River, where that town's oily circle date stamp was used to cancel the stamp (CSA 12) paying the single rate letter postage.



It is impossible to tell from this cover,

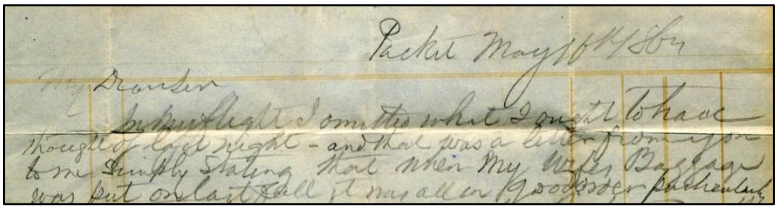
- If the sender's admonition was heeded by the Post Office and if the cover was carried aboard a packet boat?
- If the cover *was* carried aboard a packet boat, if it was carried from some point of origin on the James River other than Lynchburg, but placed in the mails at Lynchburg?
- If the cover originated at Lynchburg, if it was carried from Lynchburg along the James River to its tributary, the Ravinna River, rather than being carried overland in a locked mail bag?

We can tell from this cover, the following: It was not carried as a loose letter on a steamboat because it was not marked "STEAM" or "STEAMBOAT" at Lynchburg when it entered the mails there.

Port-of-Entry: Willow Bank, Virginia

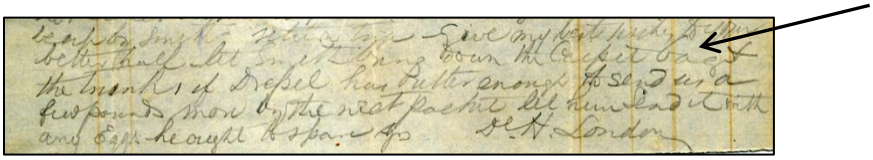
Folded Letter Written Aboard a Packet Boat

The place of origin of this cover is not known, but it entered the mails at Brentsville Virginia, on the Occoquan River, where the Brentsville circle date stamp was applied to cancel the stamp (CSA 11). The stamp acted as a seal for the folded letter and was torn and partly removed when this folded letter was opened.



Cover datelined: "Packet May 16, 1864".

The writer of the letter referenced in the letter's dateline that he was on a packet boat. He referred again to the packet in the letter's next-to-last sentence shown below.



Brentsville is in Prince William County, Virginia. It was the base from where John Mosby ["The Gray Ghost"] operated.

Port-of-Entry: New Orleans, Louisiana

Pre-Blockade Cross-Border Mail From Mexico

Although President Lincoln announced the creation of the blockade of the principle Confederate ports on April 19, 1861, the blockade did not come into being over-night. The blockade of New Orleans began May 26, 1861, with the arrival of the U.S.S. *Brooklyn* off New Orleans.

This cover was carried in the interim period after Louisiana joined the Confederacy [February 4, 1861], but before the Confederate government took over the operation of its own postal facilities [June 1, 1861]. During this time, the United States continued to assume responsibility for the mails in the Confederate and Independent States.

This cover was a loose letter carried on the contract steamship U.S.S. *Tennessee* under a contract between the United States Post Office Department and Charles Morgan. The contract continued in force through May 31, 1861. Rated 10¢ due as a loose letter aboard a contract mail ship for carriage less than 2,500 miles.

Route: Vera Cruz, Mexico → Gulf of Mexico → Mississippi River → New Orleans. February 27, 1861.

The cover originated at Puebla de los Angeles in the State of Puebla, Mexico on February 21, 1861, and was transmitted overland to Vera Cruz. There the cover was given to the ship's captain or purser (and not placed in the locked mail bag). Upon arrival at New Orleans on February 27, the STEAMSHIP 10 marking and the New Orleans circle date stamp were applied to the cover by the New Orleans Post Office. The cover then was transmitted to New York from New Orleans in a closed (locked) mail bag by the United States Post Office Department.

Vera Cruz forwarder's handstamp ("F. NERRON, WITTENEZ / VERA CRUZ"] is on the folded letter's front.

Port-of-Entry: New Orleans, Louisiana

Pre-Blockade Cross-Border Mail From Mexico

This cover was carried in the period after Louisiana joined the Confederacy [February 4, 1861], but before the Confederate government took over the operation of its own postal facilities [June 1, 1861]. During this interim period, the United States continued to assume responsibility for the mails in the Independent and Confederate States.

The folded letter arrived in New Orleans on February 21, 1861, before the effective date of the blockade of New Orleans.

The blockade of New Orleans by the United States began May 26, 1861, with the arrival of the U.S.S. *Brooklyn* off the city. New Orleans fell to Federal forces late in April 1862.

Estate Andria, Puebla, Mexico → Vera Cruz → Gulf of Mexico → Mississippi River → New Orleans. February 21, 1861.

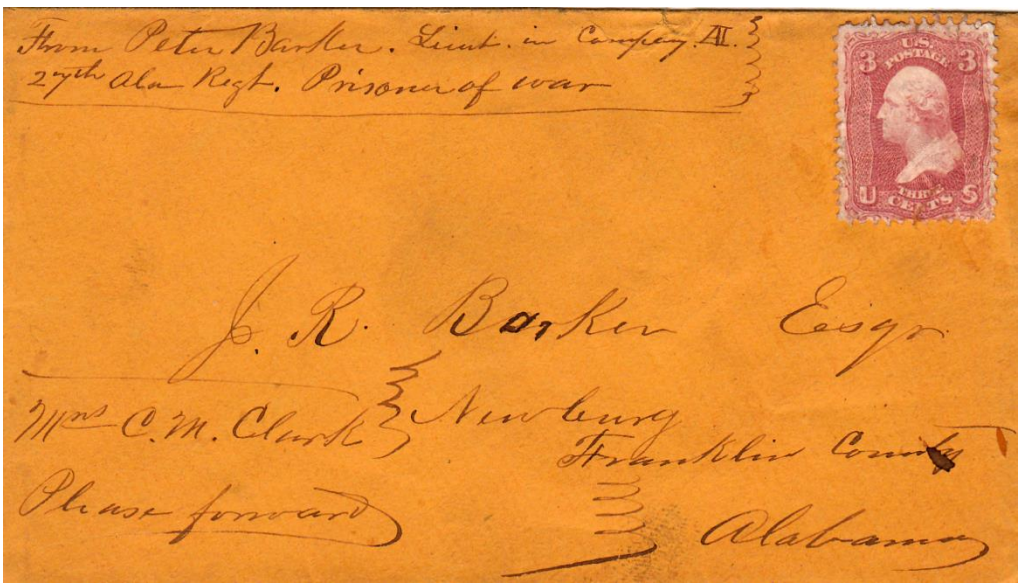
This cover was a loose letter carried on the contract steamship U.S.S. *Tennessee* under a contract between the United States Post Office Department and Charles Morgan. The contract continued in force until June 1, 1861. The cover originated at Estate Andria in the State of Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico, and was transmitted overland to Vera Cruz. There, the cover was given to the ship's captain or purser and not placed in the locked mail bag. Upon arrival at New Orleans, the STEAMSHIP 10 marking and the New Orleans circle date stamp handstamp were applied to the letter.

The cover was rated 10¢ due for carriage less than 2500 miles per the United States Postal Laws & Regulations, 1852, Ch. 18, Section 146.

Prisoner's Mail Smuggled South By Lottie Moon Clark

Mail from Confederate prisoners held at the Union's Camp Chase prison (near Columbus, Ohio) sometimes was smuggled out by Charlotte "Lottie" Moon Clark, a Confederate sympathizer, who carried the hidden mail south down the Ohio River by riverboat to Lexington, Kentucky. At Lexington, she gave the mail to another Confederate mail runner who carried it southward along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers for deposit into the Confederate postal system.

Lottie Moon Clark often traveled with her sister, Ginny Moon, among Richmond, Virginia, Washington, DC and Columbus, Ohio, gathering information which she passed on to Confederate authorities.



Prisoner's endorsement: "From Peter Barker, Lieut in Company A., 27th Ala Regt. Prisoner of war" // "Mrs. C. M. Clark/Please forward".

In due course, Ginny and the girls' mother were detained in Columbus and held by the Union military as spies. Learning of this, Lottie confronted the Union officer holding her sister and mother, bluffing that General Ambrose Burnside had ordered them released. When the skeptical officer arranged to have Burnside visit the compound, Burnside recognized Lottie - the woman who had jilted him at the marriage altar years before - and ordered her arrested.

Prisoners of war on both sides of the conflict were permitted to send mail provided the letters complied with strict regulations relating to the number of sheets of paper, prohibited subject matter, and the like. All such mail was subject to examination and censorship at the prison. Sometimes, however, prisoners' mail was smuggled from prison by carriers (such as Lottie Moon Clark) and carried to safe destinations where, unexamined and uncensored by Union authorities, it was placed in the mail system.

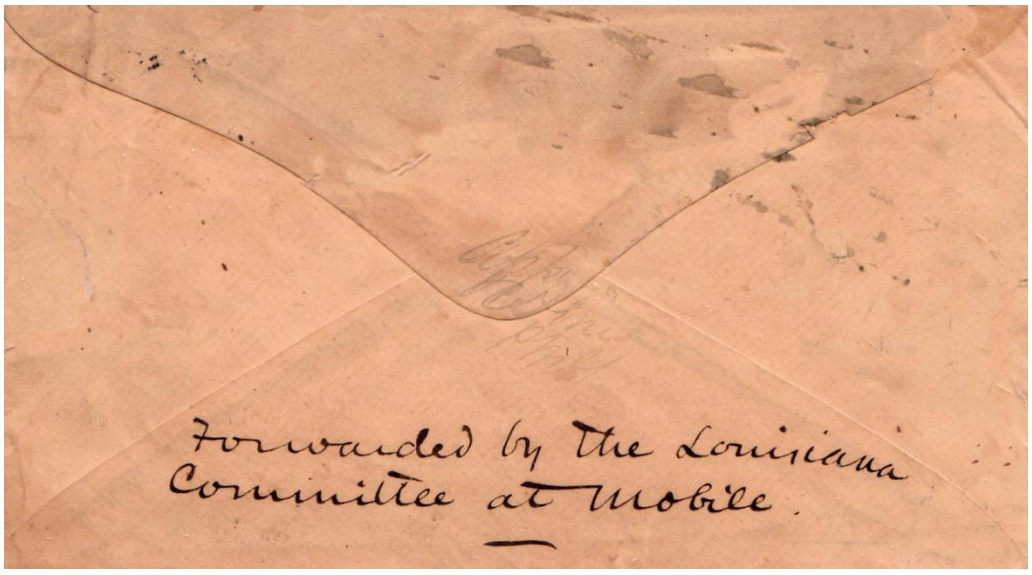
Smuggled (Covert) Waterway Mail Lake Pontchartrain & Mississippi Sound

Port-of-Entry: Mobile, Alabama

Mail Smuggled by The Louisiana Relief Committee at Mobile

In May, 1863, General Nathaniel P. Banks, the Union commanding officer of occupied New Orleans, ordered the deportation from the city of approximately 700 New Orleans citizens who refused to take the oath of allegiance to the United States. Many of these refugees wound up destitute in Mobile, Alabama, whose citizens took pity on them and set about offering them housing, medical services, clothing, food, transportation and other benevolent relief.

To achieve this, in June 1863 a group of prominent Mobile citizens formed The Louisiana Relief Committee at Mobile. This committee, among other things, undertook to smuggle mail for the refugees, using small vessels that traveled across Lake Pontchartrain and Mississippi Sound, running between New Orleans and Mobile. The Relief Committee continued to function until early September 1864.



Cover sent from New Orleans to Richmond, Virginia. Carried by The Louisiana Relief Committee to Mobile, Alabama, where the cover was mailed on November 10, 1863. Stamps affixed at Mobile. Cover censored at Mobile by CSA Provost Marshal.

Front. Reduced 60%. PF Certificate. Stamps are CSA 4

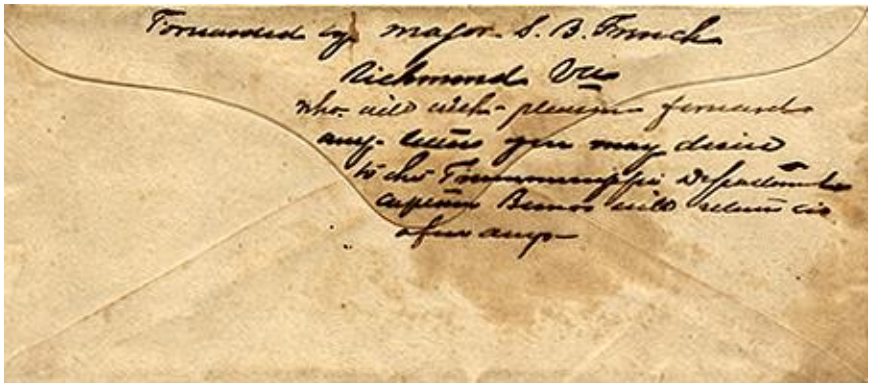
Confederate Provost Marshal at Mobile, Jules C. Denis, examiner's marking in light pencil is visible across the tip of the back flap.

Mississippi River Closed by Union Forces: Mail Smuggled Across by Private Express

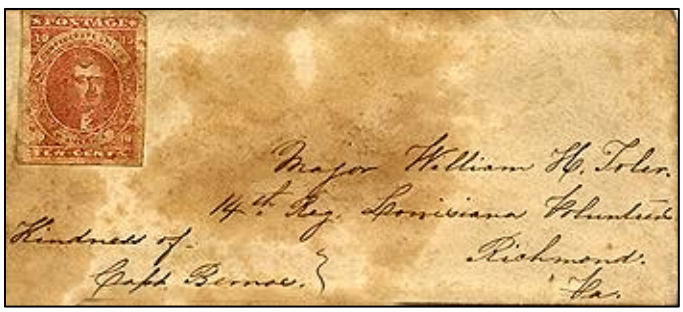
After the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, regular mail service across the Mississippi River ceased. The Confederate government responded by establishing a trans-Mississippi River express service, but the service was erratic, at best. Private express services, such as Cushing's Express, evolved to fill the gap. Cushing was based in Houston where he operated his express as an adjunct to his newspaper, the Houston *Telegraph.* Cushing had agents in several cities in Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas who acted as covert mail couriers and/or distributors. Occasionally, Cushing's couriers were unable to successfully cross the river so that the west bank Confederate States were left without mail and newspapers. One of Cushing's couriers sent a letter to the Houston *Telegraph* (issue dated November 27, 1863) which addressed this problem:

> ". . . The government express is not yet in working trim; at least no mail from the other side has reached this point up to this time. It may have gone to Shreveport. Neither has any mail under the new arrangement crossed to the other side of the Mississippi, unless it crossed yesterday. **I sent today, by Captain Bernos**, all the letters from the other side entrusted to my care, as well as my own. I know his facilities, and have no doubt that he will make the trip." [Emphasis added]

Captain John Bernos was a Confederate Army Captain who, among his other duties, supervised the transmittal of military and civilian mail across the river. This water-stained cover was carried out of the mails across the Mississippi River and delivered privately via Captain Bernos in Texas and S.B. French in Richmond. The stamp (CSA 5) served no purpose on this cover.



"Forwarded by Major S.B. French, Richmond, Va., who will with pleasure forward any letter you may desire, to the Trans-Mississippi Department. Capt. Bernos will return in a few days."



Cover's front side. Reduced 40%. "**Kindness of Capt. Bernos**".

Prisoner of War Mail Carried By Flag-of-Truce Boat

Point Lookout Prison [also known as Camp Hoffman] was located at the southern tip of St. Mary's County, Maryland. Prisoners' mail was examined and processed at Point Lookout Prison beginning in January 1864.

This cover is endorsed at top "Samuel M. Dunlap Co II, 4th Va Inft". Dunlap was captured at Gettysburg by Union forces on July 3, 1863.

The cover transited Richmond on its way to Lexington, Virginia. There is a partial strike of the Point Lookout circle date stamps to the left of the stamp (Scott 65). There also is the Richmond *DUE 10* handstamp (CSA Richmond Type P) to the left of the stamp.

The cover bears the "Prisoner's Letter Examined" octagonal Point Lookout Union examiner's handstamp (CSA Type PWH-17).

Ports-of-Entry: Aiken's Landing (Confederate); Fortress Monroe (Union)

Civilian Mail Carried Across-the-Lines by the Steamboat *New York*

This cover was endorsed "Per Flag of Truce via Fortress Monroe / Steamer *New York,"* and is the only documented cover expressly stating it was intended to be carried by the Flag of Truce boat *New York*.

The *New York* was a Union side-wheel steamboat that carried prisoners of war and mail between Fortress Monroe, Virginia (or Annapolis, Maryland), and Aiken's Landing, Virginia. The federal post office for such mail was located near Fortress Monroe at Old Point Comfort, Virginia.

The cover also was endorsed, "Care of Major Mulford". On July 29, 1863, Major John E. Mulford was placed in charge of Flag of Truce matters aboard the *New York*.

OLD POINT COMFORT / VA // MAR / 1 [1864]

This cover contained a letter, dated February 21, 1864, from Anna R. Tuthill, in Columbia, South Carolina, to her sister, Emma J. Tuthill, in East Otto, New York. The original letter accompanies the cover. The cover was conveyed by the Confederate mail system from South Carolina to Aiken's Landing in an outer envelope that would have been franked with Confederate stamps to pay the Confederate postage to Aiken's Landing.

When the outer envelope arrived at Aiken's Landing, it was opened and discarded, and the cover placed aboard the *New York*. From Aiken's Landing the cover was carried to Fortress Monroe and, subsequently, to adjacent Old Point Comfort where it entered the United States mails for delivery to its addressee.

The United States postage stamp (Scott #65) likely was placed on the cover at Fortress Monroe, with cash probably accompanying the cover from South Carolina to pay for the stamp, because United States postage stamps generally were not available in the Confederate states.

Civilian Mail Carried By Flag-of-Truce Boat

Route: Fort Norfolk → Chesapeake Bay → James River → Richmond, Virginia → Danville, Virginia [overland from Richmond].

The cover is endorsed on the back flap: "Approved. Horace T. Sanders Capt. Provost Marshall District Va."

Most of the known Flag-of-Truce covers passing through Norfolk were not from prisoners of war, but were from civilians who desired to write to someone who was in the Confederacy. Such civilian persons were required to present their letters to the provost marshal for approval before they could be mailed.

This cover is addressed to "John M. Knowles, Esq./Care of Major Morfit/Danville, Virginia". Major Morfit was in charge of the Danville prisons. Knowles was a civilian clerk working for him. This letter likely originated in Baltimore since both Knowles and Morfit resided there.

The stamps are CSA 7 (Richmond prints on local paper).

Port-of-Entry: Boston, Massachusetts

Mail From France to the Confederacy

This cover was carried by the Cunard steamship *Arago* and left Paris on April 6, 1861. It arrived in Boston on April 27. It then was conveyed overland in a locked mail bag to New Orleans by the United States Post Office Department. The cover arrived in New Orleans on May 7, 1861 [backstamp].

Most mail from Europe at this time addressed to New Orleans entered the United States at either New York or Boston, and then was conveyed overland to New Orleans. This was still true in April 1861, the period when this cover traveled, because the Confederate mails were being serviced by the United States Post Office Department. Louisiana had seceded from the United States on January 26, 1861. It became a member of the Confederate States of America on February 4, 1861.

Route: Paris → South Hampton → Boston → New Orleans. April 27, 1861.

On April 19, 1861, President Lincoln declared a blockade against the major Confederate ports [Wilmington, North Carolina, Charleston, South Carolina, Savannah, Georgia, Mobile, Alabama, and New Orleans, Louisiana]. This did not mean, however, that the blockade was imposed or effective immediately with respect to those cities. In fact, the blockade evolved slowly.

The blockade against New Orleans did not commence until May 26, 1861, when the U.S.S. *Brooklyn* initiated its patrols off New Orleans. Before that date, mail carried by ships entered and left New Orleans just as it had before the declaration of the Confederacy.

Port-of-Entry: Charleston, South Carolina

Running the Blockade: Incoming Mail from Nassau, Bahamas

Typically, a letter from England to the United States (and, by extension during this period, to the Confederacy) would be transmitted by the Cunard Line which serviced the contract for closed (locked) bag mail between Liverpool and Nassau, Bahamas via New York City. Under the treaty arrangement, the locked mail bags were not opened in transit through New York City so that Cunard mail to and from the Confederacy would not be seized or examined by United States postal authorities on that leg of the journey. From New York, the locked mail bag would be carried to Nassau, Bahamas where it was placed aboard a blockade runner for further transit to the Confederacy.

This cover entered the Confederate mails at Charleston where the Charleston Post Office rated it “12” representing 10¢ Confederate postage (for the distance overland from Charleston to destination) + 2¢ for the fee paid to the blockade runner’s captain for delivering the letter to the post office. The Charleston Post Office also stamped the cover “STEAM-SHIP” to account for the additional 2¢ charge and added the Charleston circle date stamp to indicate where the letter entered the Confederate postal system.

Route: France → England → New York City → Nassau → Charleston → Spartanburg. March 18, 1864.

From July 10, 1863 to March 4, 1864, Federal ships hovered outside Charleston harbor in anticipation of a Union assault on the city. Federal troops occupied Morris Island, at the mouth of the harbor, and prevented most blockade runners from entering or leaving the port. In response to the Union’s threatened assault, the Confederates mined the harbor to prevent Union ships from entering the seaport.

Most blockade running ships during this period was therefore diverted to Wilmington, NC, with few blockade covers known from Charleston. Charleston never regained its lost supremacy as the port of choice for blockade runners. Charleston-run blockade covers in the period after July 10, 1863, are scarce.

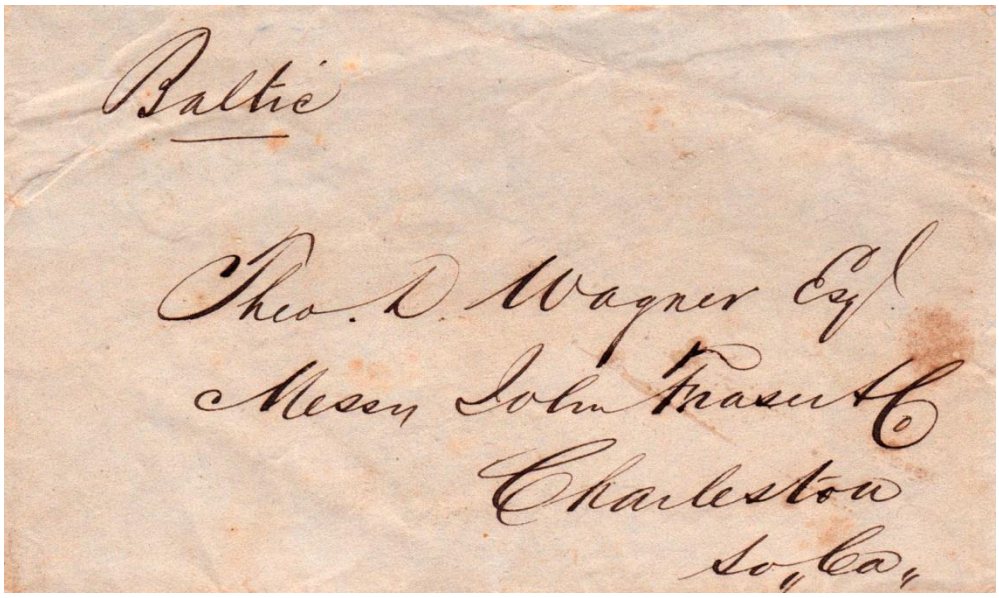
ex-Walske; ex-Kohn

Port-of-Entry: Charleston, South Carolina

Running the Blockade: Incoming Mail from Nassau, Bahamas

This cover was carried by the following vessels: the Cunarder *Corsica* which departed Liverpool on June 6, 1863, and arrived at New York City on June 15; the Cunarder *Scotia* which departed New York on June 20 and arrived at Nassau on June 24; and the blockade runner *Raccoon* which departed Nassau on July 15 and arrived off Charleston July 19.

This folded letter was marked by the sender for carriage aboard the *Baltic*. Instead, after arriving at Nassau aboard the *Scotia*, the letter was carried privately out-of-the mails aboard the blockade runner *Raccoon*. The *Raccoon* ran aground off Sullivan's Island (at the mouth of Charleston Harbor) and was abandoned by its crew who took the mail bags with them to Charleston. The abandoning crew burned the *Raccoon*.



Route: Liverpool → New York City → Nassau → Charleston. Dateline: June 5, 1863.

The sender endorsed the cover to be carried by the West Indies blockade runner *Baltic*, but for some reason the admonition was ignored and the cover placed aboard the *Raccoon.* This blockade run was the *Raccoon's* third and last.

The enclosure for this cover was datelined "Liverpool June 5, 1863". The letter was sent by C. Prioleau, manager of Fraser, Trenholm & Co. in Liverpool, to Theodore Wagner, President of the parent company, John Fraser & Co.

ex-Walske

Port-of-Entry: Wilmington, North Carolina

Running the Blockade: Incoming Mail from Nassau, Bahamas

Blockade runner *Alice*. Forwarded To Wilmington from Nassau, Bahamas by Saunders & Son.

The point of origin of this cover is unknown, but likely was Great Britain since the cover does not bear any transit markings before those from England. This cover was carried in an outer envelope to Nassau and delivered to the forwarder, Saunders & Son. The forwarder removed the cover from the outer envelope and delivered the cover to the blockade runner, *Alice*, which carried it to Wilmington, North Carolina.

Upon arrival in Wilmington, the postmaster handstamped the cover SHIP, rated it “12” for the 10¢ postage + 2¢ Ship captain’s fee. The postmaster then forwarded the cover in a closed locked bag overland to St. Mary's, Georgia, its destination.

This cover traveled as follows:

- Trans-Atlantic to Nassau September __, 1863
- Nassau to Wilmington September 08, 1863
- Arrived in Wilmington September 12, 1863
- Delivered to St. Mary's September 24, 1863

Alice was a successful blockade-running side-wheel steamer with 24 blockade running trips, including this one, into Wilmington, North Carolina.

ex-Walske.

CSA AS Certificate

Port-of-Entry: Brownsville, Texas

Running the Blockade: Cross-Border Mail from Mexico to New Orleans

This cover originated in Monterey, Mexico, and was carried out of the mails to Matamoros. From Matamoros, the cover was carried across the Rio Grande River to Brownsville, Texas, which was then held by the Confederates. The cover entered the Confederate mail system at Brownsville from where it was carried overland in a closed (locked) bag to New Orleans which was still in Confederate hands.

The cover received the Brownsville, Texas, rimless circle date stamp dated January 13 [1862]. The cover is docketed on its back: “1862, Louis G. Coindreau, Monterey, Enero 7, Rcda 31 Cda Abril 1” indicating that the letter was dated at Monterey on January 7, 1862, received in New Orleans on January 31, and answered April 1.

The United States Navy maintained a loose blockade on the Texas half of the Rio Grande River using shallow draft gunboats.

Some students [such as Dr. Hubert Skinner] argued that this cover might have been smuggled by Antonio Costa’s Express from Brownsville to New Orleans, but this is unlikely. Once the cover entered the Confederate mail system at Brownsville (receiving the rimless circle date stamp upon doing so), the Confederate Post Office would not have turned the cover over to a private express carrier.

ex-MacBride; ex-Skinner; ex-Walske; ex-Felton

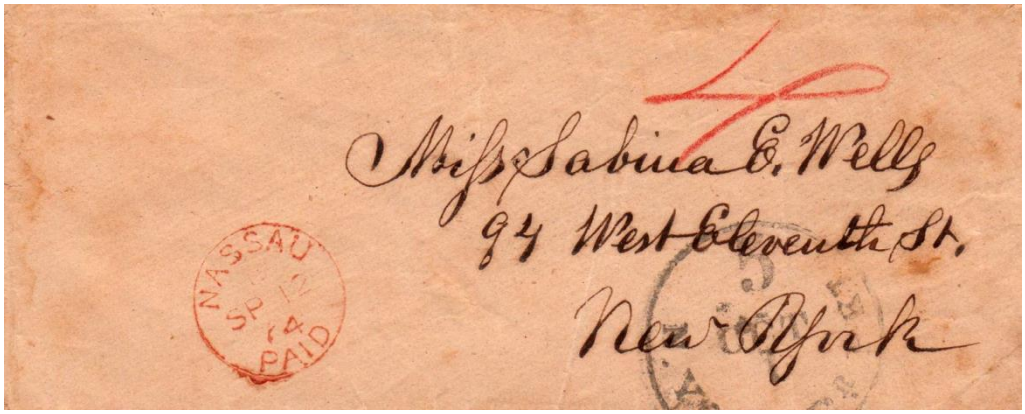
Port-of-Exit: Charleston, South Carolina

Running the Blockade: Outgoing Mail from Charleston, South Carolina to New York City

This cover was part of the Wells correspondence which originated in Charleston, South Carolina. The cover was carried from Charleston to Nassau, Bahamas by the blockade runner, *Fox*. From Nassau, the cover was carried by the Cunarder steamship *Corsica* to New York City.

This cover traveled as follows:

- Charleston, South Carolina — Departed Charleston on September 9, 1864
- Nassau, Bahamas — Arrived at Nassau on September 12, 1864
- New York City — Departed Nassau for New York City on September 25, 1864
- Arrived New York City — October 1, 1864



Route: Charleston [via *Fox*] → Nassau → New York City [via *Corsica*]

When the cover arrived at Nassau, it was marked in crayon “4” [pence due] for the British sea postage and entered the British mail system. When the cover entered the United States mail system at New York, it was rated 5¢ due for the United States portion of the treaty postage [“N. York Br. Pkt. 5/ October 1”].

Fox was a successful blockade running side-wheel steamer with 18 blockade running trips, including this one from Charleston to Nassau

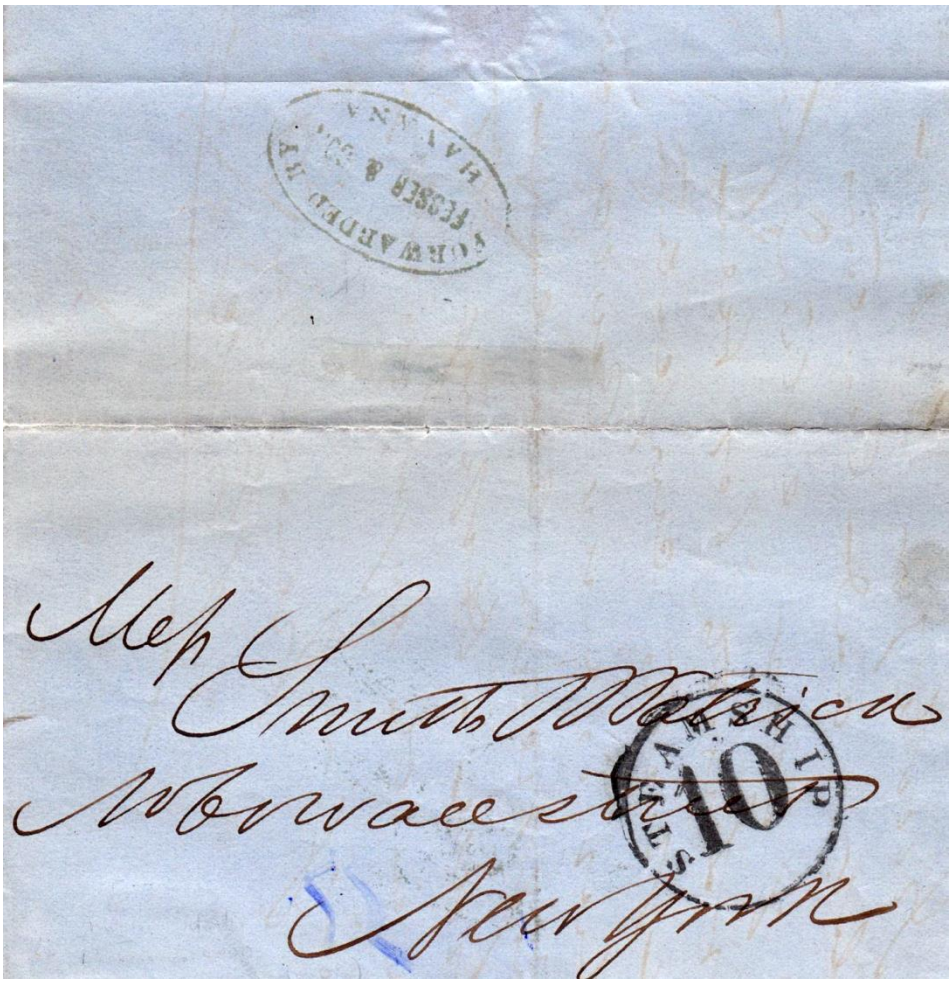
ex-Walske

Port-of-Exit: Mobile, Alabama

Running the Blockade: Outgoing Mail from Mobile to New York City via Havana, Cuba

This cover was carried through the blockade of Mobile to Havana, Cuba from where it was forwarded by Fesser & Co., forwarding agents located in Havana. The forwarding company placed its green oval handstamp on the folded letter.

From Havana, this cover was carried to New York City as a loose letter aboard a steamer having a contract to carry United States mails. At New York, the post office applied the STEAMER 10 [¢ due] handstamp to this unpaid letter.



Dateline: "Mobile Oct 24, 1861"

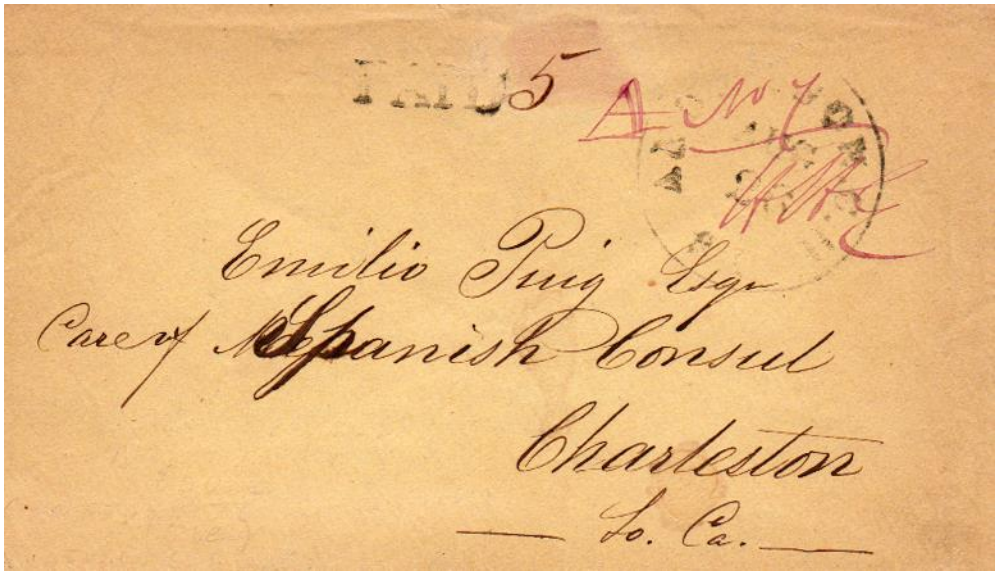
There are five documented covers carried aboard vessels that ran the blockade from Mobile.

Mail Aboard A Captured Blockade Runner: Prize Court Evidence

An unidentified blockade runner carrying this cover left Anderson, C. H., South Carolina, for Charleston, but was captured en route. The vessel was taken to New York City as a prize of war, and put on trial in the federal New York City Prize Court. If found to contain contraband (and therefore be a prize of war), the ship and its contents would be sold and the proceeds of sale distributed among the Navy's Pension Fund, the squadron commander, the capturing vessel's captain, and its crew.

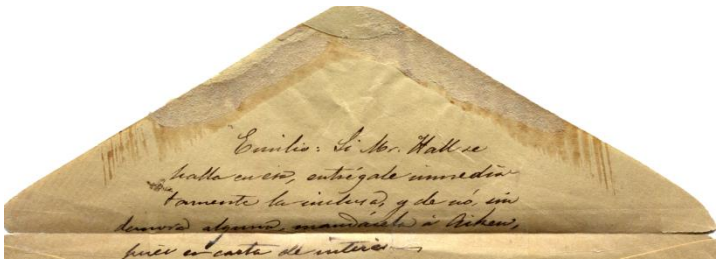
The New York Prize Court Commissioner, Henry H. Elliot, marked this cover as evidence to be used in the ship's trial by initialing the cover in magenta ink with his initials and with the designation "P No. 7" indicating that this cover was Plaintiff's seventh exhibit in the trial.

"P No. 7 / HHE"



August 26, 1861.

The underside of the backflap had a message in Spanish, signed *Malga*, that translates as follows: "*Emilio, If Mr. Hall is in Charleston, deliver the enclosed letter to him immediately and if he is not, send it without any delay to Aiken, as it is an important letter*."

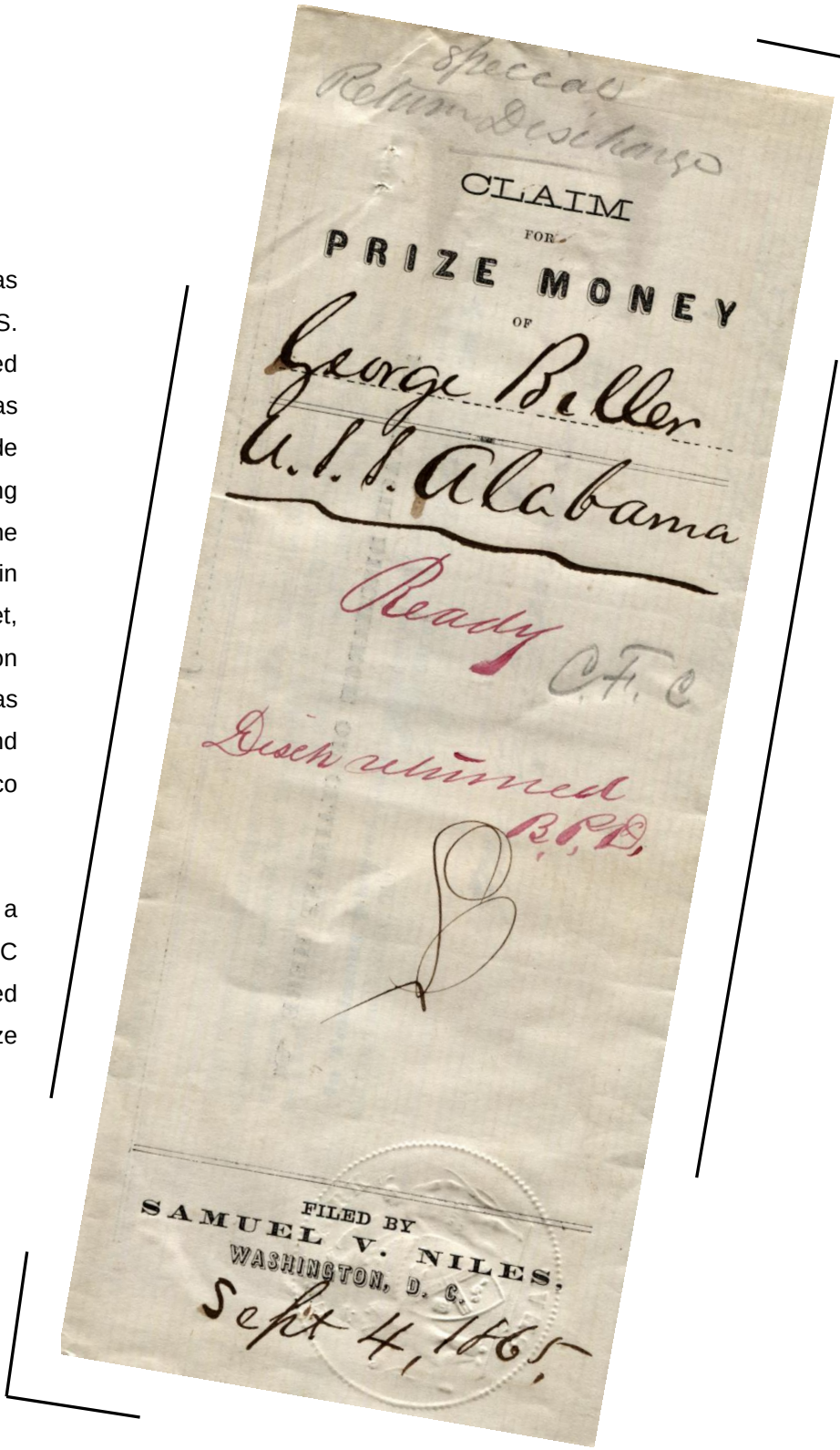


Back flap reduced 50%

Victor Malga was a cousin of Emilio Puig, to whom the cover is addressed. V. Malga & Co. of Havana was in the import/export business and was connected with W. P. Hall Company. Malga was Hall's brother-in-law. Their companies were involved in blockade running in and out of Charleston.

Claim for Prize Court Spoils: Captured Blockade Runner *Annie*

This artifact is a claim form for prize money filed September 4, 1865 by the captain of the USS *Alabama*, a Union blockading vessel that was part of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, for its capture of the blockade runner *Annie*.



Captain George Biller was senior officer on the U.S.S. *Alabama* when it captured the British steamer *Annie* as it tried to run the blockade off North Carolina, leaving the port of Wilmington. The capture was made in October 1864 at New Inlet, North Carolina. Upon capture, the *Annie* was found to have a contraband cargo of cotton, tobacco and turpentine.

Samuel V. Niles was a prominent Washington, DC attorney who represented claimants in trials for Prize Court spoils.

Occupied New Orleans to Paris, France

Union forces reoccupied New Orleans on April 29, 1862. This did not mean, however, that mail from that city could travel to the North via former land and steamboat routes since much of the Mississippi River was still held by Confederate forces and subject to combat conditions.

During this time, most of the U. S. mail headed for the North from New Orleans was carried by steamship, the fastest and safest method for such mail to move. The route this cover traveled was south from New Orleans down the Mississippi River, then around to the Atlantic Coast and up the Atlantic seaboard to New York City. From New York, the cover was carried by steamship to England and then to France.

This double weight letter left New Orleans via steamer on March 27, 1863. It arrived in New York on April 8. In New York, it was put aboard the Cunard steamship *Asia* which carried the letter to Queenstown, Ireland, where it arrived on April 18. From Queenstown it was taken to England, then to France. The letter arrived in Paris on April 21.

Vicksburg fell to Union forces on July 4,1863, opening up the entire length of the Mississippi River to Union control and splitting the Confederacy in two. Thereafter, mail from New Orleans heading to the North was carried by steamboats.