

The Maury Mourning Covers – An Initial Census and Survey (Paul Bearer)



Richard Launcelot Maury (1840-1907), son of famed US Navy Commodore Matthew Fontaine Maury, served with distinction as a Confederate army officer. After studying law at the University of Virginia, he was admitted to the Virginia bar in 1860. One year later he entered the Virginia Militia as a Private, then became a Lieutenant in the Virginia Provisional Army, and by September 1861 was appointed to the rank of Major in the 24th Virginia Infantry Regiment. He saw fierce fighting at Williamsburg [1862], and was badly wounded in the arm at Seven Pines (Fair Oaks) also in 1862. Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in April 1863, Maury received a much more severe wound in the hip in the aftermath of the second battle of Drewry's Bluff in 1864, a wound from which he never fully recovered. Following the war Maury moved to Mexico and assisted with the re-settling of Confederate veterans in that country. Returning to Richmond in 1868, he formed a law partnership with former Virginia Governor John Letcher and remained active in Confederate veterans affairs.

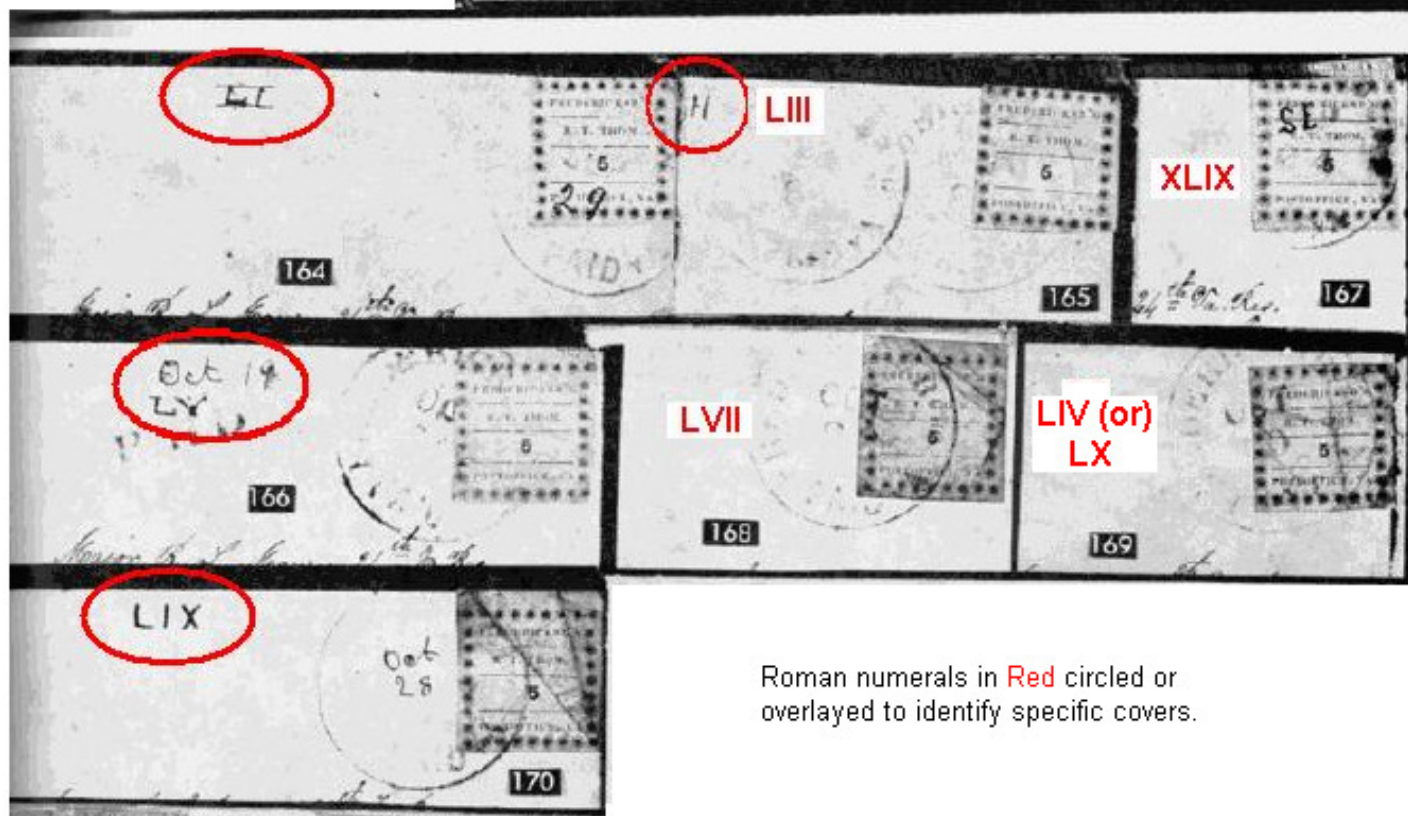


Confederate collectors are familiar with the Maury mourning covers, a lengthy series of which most have been annotated by Richard Maury with a sequential Roman numeral in the order of receipt. I'm not aware of any analysis performed on the series as a whole, so this article provides a preliminary census of the Maury covers currently known to me. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance provided by Renate Thayer, Scott Trepel of Siegel Auction Galleries, Francis J. Crown, and Tara Murray in compiling this information.

The earliest reference I located in the literature regarding the Maury covers comes from the 24 February 1966 Siegel Rarities of the World auction (sale 296). Lots 162 to 170 consisted of nine individual mourning covers each franked with the Fredericksburg Confederate

postmaster's provisional, Scott 26X1. The catalog illustrations show that Maury had enhanced the postmarks on lots 163, 164, 167, and 170. A date of Oct.14 had been added on lot 166.

Black and white illustrations from the catalog for Siegel sale 296, held on 24 February 1966.



Roman numerals in Red circled or overlaid to identify specific covers.

Maury's docketing upon receipt does help in sequencing the covers even without seeing the actual items. Several of the provisional covers have appeared in subsequent sales allowing them to be properly identified. Due to space-saving overlap in the catalog, the Roman numerals are only visible on lots 163, 164, 166, and 170; with a partial (II) on lot 165, which based on the sequencing and a subsequent sale must be cover 53 (LIII). Only one cover in the Siegel sale cannot be positively identified at this time, lot 169 – I believe it to be either cover LIV or LX. The Siegel sale involved only stamped Maury mourning covers. The table on the next page lists 30 Maury mourning covers, both stamped and stampless, and is obviously not all inclusive. When the stampless Maury covers initially appeared on the market is currently unknown.

Number	Roman	Date	Destination	Rank	Origin Postmark	Comment	Provenance
23	XXIII	June 11 1861	Lexington Virginia	Lt	Mount Pleasant Va (manuscript)	stampless	R. Thayer
24	XXIV	June 14 1861	Lexington Virginia	Lt	Fredericksburg	stampless	R. Thayer
27	XXVII	June 30 1861	Lexington Virginia	Lt	Fredericksburg	stampless	Confederate Stamp Alliance Cert 01269
34	XXXIV	July 28 1861	Smithfield Virginia	Lt	Fredericksburg	Charge Box 41 WTH	R. Thayer
(none)	(none)	Aug 12 1861	Charleston SC	Lt	Fredericksburg	Charge Box 41 WTH	R. Thayer see Mosher, page 246
42	XLII	Aug 14 1861	Charleston SC	Lt	Fredericksburg	Charge Box 41 WTH	Meyerson sale lot 267 P. Bearer
46	XLVI	Aug 24 1861	Savannah Georgia	Lt	Fredericksburg	Charge Box 41 WTH	R. Thayer Confederate Stamp Alliance Cert 02380
49	XLIX	Sept 24 1861	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Provisional 26X1	Siegel sale 296, lot 167 Siegel sale 679, lot 379 Siegel sale 737, lot 760 Confederate Stamp Alliance Cert 01381
51	LI	Sept 29 1861	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Provisional 26X1	Siegel sale 296, lot 164
53	LIII	Oct 8 1861	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Provisional 26X1	Siegel sale 296, lot 165 Ex- George Turner Kelleher sale 548 see Mosher, page 244
54(?) or 60 (?)	LIV (?) LX (?)	Oct 10 (or) 30 1861	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Provisional 26X1	Siegel sale 296, lot 169
55	LV	Oct 14 1861	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Provisional 26X1	Siegel sale 296, lot 166
56	LVI	Oct (21?) 1861	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Provisional 26X1	Siegel sale 296, lot 163
57	LVII	Oct 22 1861	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Provisional 26X1	Siegel sale 296, lot 168 Siegel sale 896, lot 746 Confederate Stamp Alliance Cert 00198
58	LVIII	Oct 25 1861	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Provisional 26X1	Siegel sale 296 lot 162
59	LIX	Oct 28 1861	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Provisional 26X1	Siegel sale 296, lot 170
64	LXIV	Nov 16 1861	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Scott 1	see Mosher, page 242
68	LXVIII	Nov 25 1861	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Scott 1	SPA Journal, Jan 1972, pgs 287-289 (B. Green)
70	LXX	Dec. 3(?) 1861	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Scott 1	Possibly Siegel sale 787, lot 3434 R. Thayer
77	LXXVII	Dec. 1861	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Scott 1	Siegel sale 850, lot 5815

82	LXXXII	January 1862	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Scott 1	ex-Rierson
91	XCI	(?)	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Scott 1	ex- George Turner Ref. Mosher page 247
108	CVIII	March 2 1862	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Scott 1	R. Thayer
109	CIX	March 7(?) 1862	Manassas Junction, VA	Major	Fredericksburg	Scott 1	R. Thayer
120	CXX	Apr 25 1862	Yorktown, VA	Major	(No postmark)	Scott 4	ex-Kaplan
121	CXXI	Apr 26 1862	Yorktown, VA	Major	(No postmark)	Scott 4	ex-Kaplan
10	(none)	Aug 26 1864	Richmond	Lt Col	University of Virginia	Scott 11	Siegel sale 850, lot 5838
12	(none)	Oct 8 1864	Hanover Junction, VA	Lt Col	University of Virginia	Scott 11	SPA Journal, Jan 1972, pgs 287-289 (B. Green) R. Thayer
(none)	(none)	January 30 (1865?)	Richmond	Lt Col	Richmond	overpaid drop rate Scott 12	P. Bearer
9	(none)	Feb 4 (1865?)	(Richmond)	Lt Col	Richmond	overpaid drop rate Scott 12	Rumsey sale 29, lot 3788

The numbering sequence for the Fredericksburg provisionals (XLIX-LIX) leads me to believe that there are a minimum of eleven mourning covers from the Maury correspondence bearing Scott Confederate 26X1. The 1980 survey compiled by Francis J. Crown records 27 total covers that are franked with the Fredericksburg provisional stamp, but that census does not include the nine 26X1 mourning covers from the 1966 Siegel sale. Mr. Crown wrote to me with an explanation: “*The survey of Confederate provisionals (for other than Georgia) was a compilation of the earlier surveys done by [Charles] Phillips and [Frank] Hart (1930s and 1950s)*”. One cover in the Crown census is described as “Caspary sale, with name changed and addressed to Manassas Junction, Va.” This cover falls within the overall Maury destination criteria, but seems unlikely to be a mourning cover.

The remaining stamped Maury mourning covers from the 1966 Siegel sale were lumped together as one lot (171) that sold for \$140, described below:

5c Green, 10c Blue (1 three, 11 sixteen). Nineteen covers from above find of Fredericksburg Provisionals all addressed to Lt. Col. Maury, Kempers Brigade, Picketts Division, all but one on small Mourning covers, also one 3c 1857 U. S. cover, Richmond, University of Va. and Fredericksburg pmks.

Only four covers in the Table appear to fit the parameters of being in this lot, the last four line items. R.L. Maury had been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in April 1863, so the 5-cent green (CSA 1) could not have been used solo at that time, unless these stamps were remainders used to overpay the 2-cent drop rate. With that in mind, perhaps three earlier Maury covers were included in this lot; the discrepancies due to the inexperience of the individual writing the lot's description. I have been able to record only two Maury mourning covers bearing Scott CSA 11, and another two franked with CSA 12. Where are the rest of them?

Renate Thayer believes that all of the Maury mourning covers were addressed by Richard Maury's girlfriend (and as of 17 July 1862 his wife), Susan Crutchfield Maury. I concur with her assessment, based on comparing the handwriting on the covers to surviving letters written by Susan Maury. Other researchers in the past attributed the covers as originating from Ann Herndon Maury, Richard's mother. Covers XXXIV to XLVI bear the endorsement "Charge Box 41 WTH" or similar. It's my opinion that WTH refers to William T. Herndon, a close relative of Ann Maury, but more research is needed to confirm that identification.



Two of those Charge Box covers (XLII and XLVI) show a dual rate, initially marked with the Fredericksburg 5 integral marking, then re-rated with the Fredericksburg Paid marking and a separate 10. This combination is not listed in the 1986 edition of Dietz. Based on the numbering sequence, there should be at least three more mourning covers with this pairing.



Non-numbered Maury mourning cover postmarked 12 August 1861, with integral rate 5 crossed out and manuscript rate 10 added. illustrated on page 246 of Mosher in cropped format not showing the black border on the left edge. The right edge has been trimmed.



Maury cover CXXI, the last in the table with a Roman numeral. Condition leaves a lot to be desired, which is true for many of the Maury mourning covers. Union troops captured Yorktown on 4 May 1862, eight days after Maury's docketing. No postmark, so origin town cannot be ascertained. Since Fredericksburg was temporarily occupied by the Union Army beginning on 17 April 1862, and if Susan Crutchfield remained in residence there, covers CXX and CXXI (and perhaps others) must have been smuggled out and mailed from another town still under Confederate control. However that is just speculation at this time.



Non-numbered cover postmarked January 30, most probably 1865.
An overpaid drop letter.

In the address, Kemper refers to Major General James Lawson Kemper, and Pickett is of course Major General George Edward Pickett, whose name will always be unfairly linked to the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg.

One additional observation: All the Roman numeral covers in the Table are dated before Richard Maury's marriage; those afterwards do not continue with the Roman numeral sequence. The significance of this, if significant at all, is not known.

In his January 1972 article published in the Society of Philatelic Americans journal, Brian Green writes in reference to Maury's wound sustained at Seven Pines:

"The surgeons set his badly fractured arm and advised him that he would be unsuited for active duty for an extended period of time.

Shortly afterwards, his mother and the rest of his family moved from Fredericksburg (his birthplace) to the former infirmary of the University of Virginia at Charlottesville to get beyond the reach of Major General John Pope, who was treating the populace of Fredericksburg with extreme severity."

Combining the cover dates in the above Table with some key dates in Richard Maury's life:

6 September 1861 – Maury appointed to the rank of Major with the 24th Virginia Infantry Regiment.

24 September 1861 – First Maury cover in the Table addressed to him as Major.

7(?) March 1862 – Last Maury cover from Fredericksburg in the Table.

17 April 1862 – Fredericksburg temporarily occupied by Major General John Pope's Union troops.

26 April 1862 – Last Maury cover annotated with Roman numerals in the Table, and the last cover with his rank as Major.

5 May 1862 – The two regimental officers who outranked Maury (Colonel William Terry and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Hairston) are both wounded at the Battle of Williamsburg. By default, Maury ascends to the position of regimental commander. The 24th Virginia commended for bravery during the battle.

31 May 1862 – Maury wounded in the right arm at Seven Pines, and declared unfit for active duty.

xx June 1862 – Maury's family evacuates Fredericksburg for Charlottesville.

30 June 1862 – Lt. Col. Hairston is back in command of the 24th, leading an infantry charge at the Battle of Frayser's Farm.

17 July 1862 – Maury (on convalescent furlough?) gets married to Susan Crutchfield at Richmond.

31 August 1862 – The second Battle of Manassas. With Maury still absent, Captain Joseph Hambrick commands the 24th Virginia, which suffered heavy losses.

4 September 1862 – Union troops occupying Fredericksburg depart after the Confederate victory at the second Battle of Manassas.

9 April 1863 – Maury promoted to Lieutenant Colonel to replace Lt. Col. Hairston, who resigned his commission.

3 July 1863 – the 24th Virginia sustains heavy casualties as part of Kemper's Brigade during Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg. Once again Maury is not with the regiment; Captain William Bentley acting as temporary commanding officer. General Kemper is badly wounded and does not command the Brigade again, although it retained his name. Colonel William Terry assumes command of Kemper's Brigade in September 1863. After Gettysburg, the regiment sees no further action during 1863.

8 January 1864 – 24th Virginia Infantry departs Richmond by train for Weldon, North Carolina. By this time, Maury had returned to duty with the 24th as commander.

10 January 1864 – General Pickett orders Maury to conduct an investigation into an incident where a civilian accused soldiers of robbing his house and assaulting his guests.

9 May 1864 – the 24th Infantry returns to Virginia.

16 May 1864 – Maury receives a minor wound in the second battle of Drewry's Bluff near Richmond.

16 June 1864 – Maury severely wounded in the hip during a skirmish on the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike, a month after Drewry's Bluff.

In his history of the 24th Virginia Infantry, Ralph Gunn writes regarding Maury's hip wound: *"His wounds were so severe that he was never able to rejoin the regiment. Major Bentley (only recently promoted) took command of the regiment,"* William Bentley's promotion to Major is recorded as occurring on the 29th of May 1864. Even though Maury no longer served as the regimental commander for the 24th due to his diminished mobility and being unable to lead the regiment on foot, after a partial recovery he rejoined Pickett's Division, most probably in a staff position as by then the Confederate Army was very short of experienced officers.

26 August 1864 – First Maury cover in the Table after a gap of two years and four months, and first cover addressed to him as a Lieutenant Colonel.

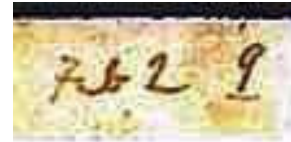
6 March 1865 – Maury wrote in his diary (per Ralph Gunn): *"in the past ten days, forty men from the 24th Virginia had deserted."* During the period from January to March 1865, Pickett's Division was in a defensive posture between Petersburg and Richmond.

I have tried to ascertain why there is a gap of over two years in the Maury correspondence, and provide the following possible explanation. Army surgeons declared Maury unfit for duty after treating his arm wound from Seven Pines, but for how long was he absent from the 24th? The timeline seems to indicate until the end of 1863 or the first week in 1864. Gunn's history of the 24th Virginia Infantry makes no mention of Maury's presence with the 24th at the battles of Antietam and Fredericksburg in 1862. Following Gettysburg, the remaining men of the regiment returned to Virginia and camped near Taylorsville, performing guard duty on roads and bridges in the area. During the fall of 1863, the regiment built quarters and prepared for the winter of 1863 -1864. I speculate that Maury, while now fit for duty, did not stay with the 24th in their winter quarters, but rather remained either with his family or in Richmond. The regiment began its North Carolina expedition in January 1864 by train from Richmond; Maury probably rejoined the 24th at that time. If Maury was absent from the regiment from 31 May 1862 through 8 January 1864, it logically follows that no family correspondence to him exists for that time frame. No covers have been seen during the time Maury and the 24th were in North Carolina.

Correctly positioning the last four Maury mourning covers in the Table is proving to be somewhat of a challenge. There are no year dates in the postmarks on any of the four. With Richard Maury's family residing at Charlottesville starting in June 1862, do the two University of Virginia postmarked covers come before or after the two covers postmarked Richmond? I have placed them before. In his article, Brian Green positively dated cover #12 as being from 1864. I have opted to disregard the Arabic numbers and list the covers in what appears to be the proper sequence based on both the dates and Richard Maury's physical location.. This puts cover #9 last in the Table. However, the sequence of the last four covers is somewhat a "best approximation". And where are covers numbered one through eight and 11, if they exist? Were these covers part of Siegel lot 171?



Cover #9, another overpaid drop letter, and the final cover in the Table. The Feb 2 docketing probably indicates the date the letter was written.



Even after the war, Richard Maury continued to receive his family correspondence enclosed in mourning envelopes. This sent at the 6-cent treaty rate to Maury c/o Baring Brothers, the banking and commercial credit company in London. Quite ironic that a cover to a former Confederate officer was franked with a stamp depicting Abraham Lincoln. Allowing for a difference of plus ten years, the handwriting appears to be the same as the war-time covers. As with many of the other Maury covers, it had been trimmed on the right edge.



26 August 1874: Lexington, Virginia to Richard Maury while visiting London.



Richard Launcelot Maury's grave is located in Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, Virginia.

I am interested in obtaining scans or photo copies of any Confederate Maury mourning covers not currently listed in the table to help fill in the gaps.

Reference material:

Crown, Francis J. (editor). Surveys of the Confederate Postmasters Provisionals. Lawrence, Massachusetts, Quarterman Publications, 1980.

Dietz, August. The New Dietz Confederate States Catalog and Handbook. Miami, Florida. Bogg & Lawrence Publishing Company, 1986.

Gunn, Ralph W. 24th Virginia Infantry. Lynchburg, Virginia. H.E. Howard, Inc. 1987.

Mosher, Ernest, Mourning Covers, The Cultural and Postal History of Letters Edged in Black. Topeka, Kansas, self published, 2003.