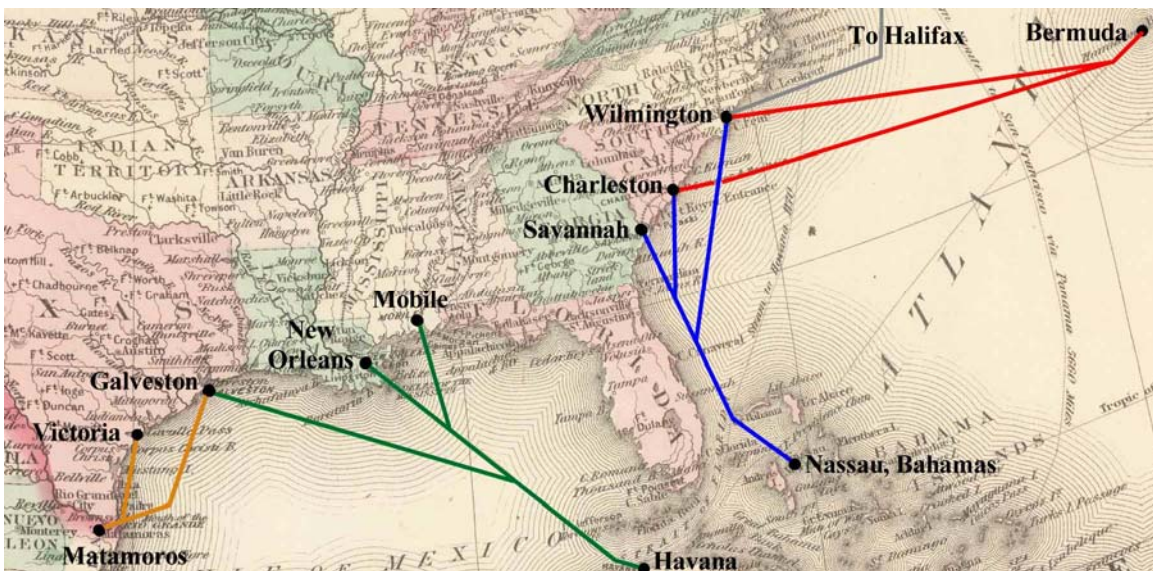


Civil War Blockade Run Mail, 1861-65

Background: President Lincoln proclaimed the blockade of the southern coasts on April 19, 1861. Stretching from Virginia to Texas, the blockaded area encompassed over 3,500 miles of coastline and nearly 200 harbors and river openings, so the USA concentrated on the thirteen CSA deep-water ports that could serve as effective transit points for supplies and mail. By early 1862, six of these ports had been captured by the USA before they could commence blockade running. By mid-1862, New Orleans was also captured and Savannah was effectively closed. The remaining five ports were active in blockade running until they were captured late in the war, although Federal naval actions temporarily stopped blockade running at Charleston and Galveston. The blockade ended with the fall of Galveston on June 2, 1865.

Geography: The map below shows the seven CSA ports active in blockade running for all or a part of the war. Also shown are the eleven routes to the five foreign ports (Halifax, Bermuda, Nassau, Havana and Matamoros) that acted as the staging points for supplies and mail.



The Mails: Fewer than 400 of the letters carried by blockade runners are known today. Other than at New Orleans and Mobile, the blockade mail service was slow to develop since less hazardous through-the-lines mail routes were available until early 1862. Nearly all of the surviving letters were carried in the May 1862 to March 1865 period.

An incoming letter to the CSA was typically sent inside of another envelope to one of the foreign staging ports for transfer to a blockade runner, and then posted in the CSA arrival port, where inland postage and a two cents ship fee were assessed. No West Indies postal markings appear on incoming mail. Outgoing mail was typically forwarded under cover by a blockade runner to a foreign port, where it was placed in the mails. With rare exceptions, CSA postal markings do not appear on outgoing mail.

Scope and Study: This exhibit shows incoming and outgoing blockade run mail carried on all eleven blockade run routes. Of particular note is mail carried on the little-used routes to Matamoros, and on the short-lived Wilmington-Halifax route of late 1864. Much research has gone into the identification of the ships that carried the mail, and of the routes followed by the letters. A selection of captured blockade run mail that passed through the Prize Courts concludes the exhibit.

Civil War Gulf Coast Blockade

Havana-Mobile - October 1861 to August 1864



The blockade of Mobile, Alabama was initiated on May 26, 1861 by the USS *Powhatan*. The few known covers carried through Mobile were used between October 1861 and May 1864. Mobile Bay was captured by Federal naval forces on August 5, 1864.



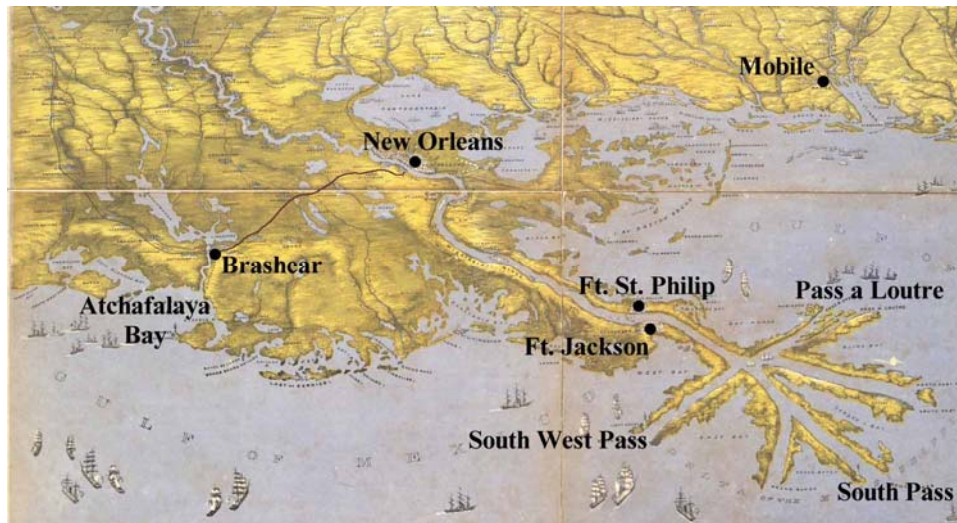
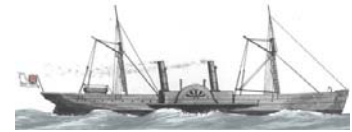
Envelope carried by blockade runner *Alabama* from Havana on August 10, 1863
Arrived in Mobile on August 15 - rated for 12¢ due (10¢ inland plus 2¢ ship fee)
Forwarded from Charleston on August 21 with additional 10¢ CSA postage due



Dated April 30, 1864 from the Confederacy - sent under cover to blockade runner at Mobile
Denbigh left on May 7 and arrived on May 10 in Havana - active on Gulf Coast 12/63-5/65
Spofford & Tileston steamship *Eagle* from Havana to NY on May 25 - 10¢ US postage due

Civil War Gulf Coast Blockade

Havana-New Orleans - May 1861 to April 1862



The blockade of New Orleans was initiated on May 26, 1861 by the USS *Brooklyn*. Blockade runners connected with Havana via three Mississippi River passes, or via Atchafalaya Bay and Brashear. New Orleans fell to the Federals on April 26, 1862.



Posted June 8, 1861 in St Vincent - franked 1 shilling 3d postage to Havana, Cuba
RMSP steamers *Teviot* and *Clyde* to Havana via St Thomas - 4d credit to St Thomas
Blockade runner *West Indian* to New Orleans on September 5 - 12¢ CSA postage due

Civil War Gulf Coast Blockade

Havana-New Orleans - May 1861 to April 1862



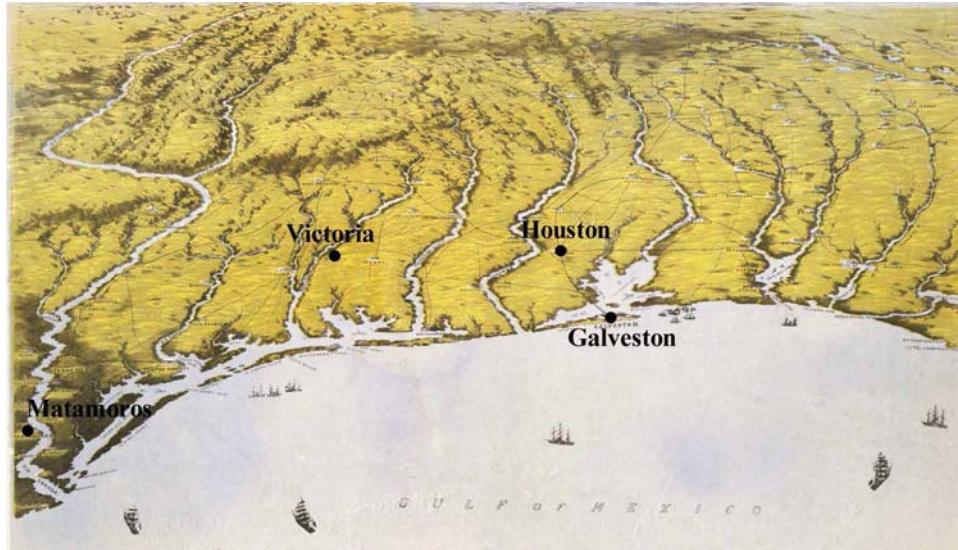
Dated Havana, Cuba 8th Feb 1862 - endorsed to schooner *Break O' Day*
Arrived March 15 in New Orleans - marked SHIP and rated 10¢ due (no ship fee)



Dated February 1862 in New Orleans - sent under cover to New York
Blockade runner *Florida* left February 19 and arrived February 23 in Havana
Spofford & Tileston steamship *Columbia* from Havana to New York on March 3
Postmarked unpaid on March 4 in New York - Cunard steamer *Niagara* to France

Civil War Gulf Coast Blockade

Havana-Galveston - February 1863 to May 1865



The blockade of Galveston, Texas was initiated on July 2, 1861 by the USS *South Carolina*. Blockade runners connected with Havana, except during the September-December 1862 Federal occupation. Galveston surrendered on June 2, 1865. Surviving letters were used between February 1863 and March 1865.



Docketed September 11, 1863 from Galveston - blockade runner to Havana
Trans-shipped to Nassau to catch Cunarder *Corsica* leaving September 28 for NY
Prepaid 1 shilling 5d (1/4 in cash) rate to Germany by forwarder Saunders & Son
Cunarder *China* left New York on October 7 - arrived in Liverpool on October 19

Civil War Gulf Coast Blockade

Havana-Galveston - February 1863 to May 1865



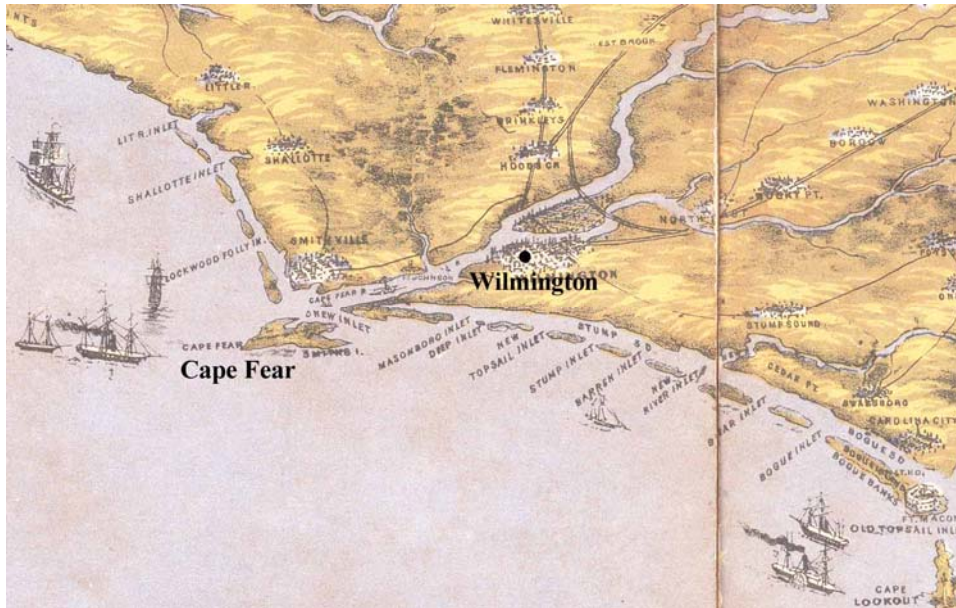
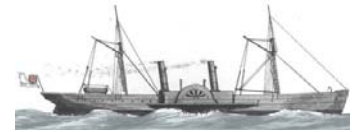
Letter forwarded by Vignier Robertson & Co. from Havana for 25¢ express fee
Blockade runner *Alice* arrived in Galveston on April 8, 1864 - active 4/62-9/64
Forwarded to Danville from Houston on April 10 with 10¢ CSA postage prepaid



Dated Richmond March 1, 1863 - hand-carried to Galveston (detailed in letter)
Blockade runner *Alice* left Galveston on April 30 and arrived in Havana on May 4
Havana Line steamer *Roanoke* arrived NY on May 24 - 10¢ steamship postage due

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Nassau-Wilmington - June 1862 to January 1865



The blockade of Wilmington, North Carolina was initiated on July 14, 1861 by the USS *Daylight*. Cape Fear formed two inlets, so blockade runners could choose the most favorable route. Wilmington's port defenses fell on January 15, 1865. Surviving letters were used between June 1862 and January 1865.



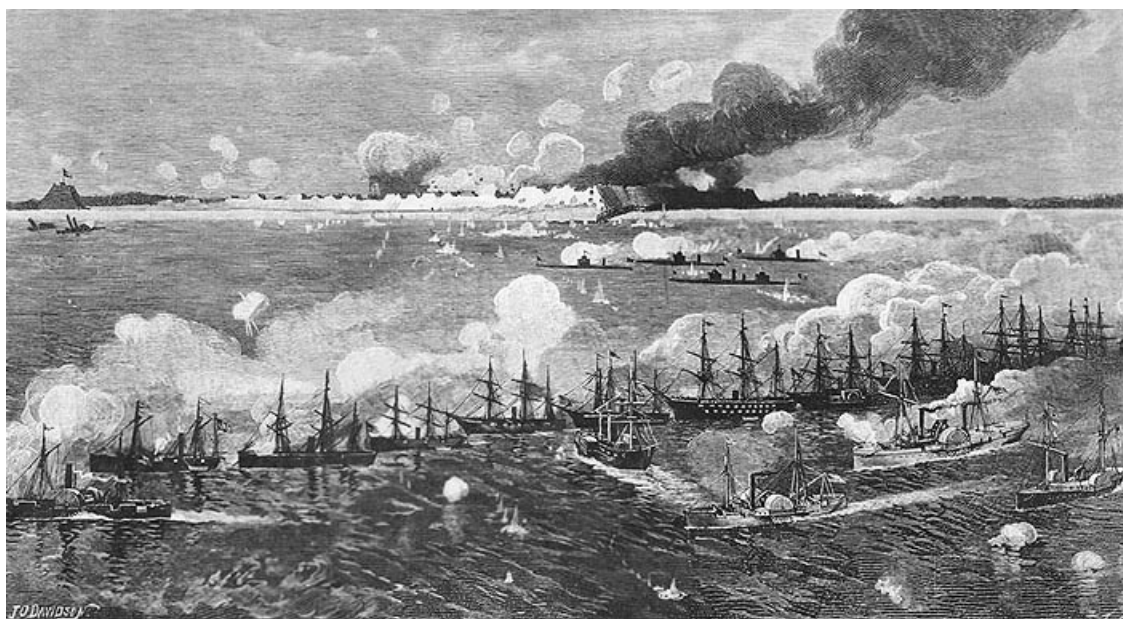
Posted September 25, 1863 in Liverpool - sent via Nassau forwarder Sawyer & Menendez
Prepaid 1 shilling postage to Nassau - 1d credit to Nassau - Carried by Cunard Line via NY
Fannie left Nassau on October 19 and arrived in Wilmington on October 23 - 12¢ due
Only known inbound blockade cover showing British packet postage prepaid

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Nassau-Wilmington - June 1862 to January 1865



The Union attacked Wilmington's port defenses in two land-sea operations from December 24, 1864 to January 15, 1865. The fall of Fort Fisher closed Wilmington to blockade running, and the last successful entry was by the *Wild Rover* on January 5.



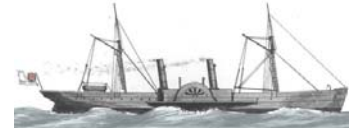
Federal fleet's January 12-15, 1865 attack on Wilmington's Fort Fisher



Endorsed to blockade runner *Wild Rover* by Nassau forwarder Saunders & Son
Addressed to a Wilmington forwarder - prepaid 10¢ - overpaid 6¢ in-port ship rate
Wild Rover left Nassau on January 1, 1865 and arrived in Wilmington on January 5

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Nassau-Wilmington - June 1862 to January 1865



Blockade run mail was typically sent unpaid, but some senders prepaid all or a part of the postage in cash or with postage stamps.



Prepaid with 10¢ 'TEN' stamp - *Fannie* arrived on October 22, 1863 from Nassau
Marked SHIP and rated for an additional 2¢ due (for the 2¢ ship fee)



Docketed Charleston, SC - *Pet* left Wilmington Dec. 10 - arrived in Nassau Dec. 14, 1863
Prepaid with 1863 Bahamas 4d stamp for outgoing packet postage on December 15
Cunarder *Corsica* left Dec. 21 - arrived in New York Dec. 26 - 5¢ U.S. postage due

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

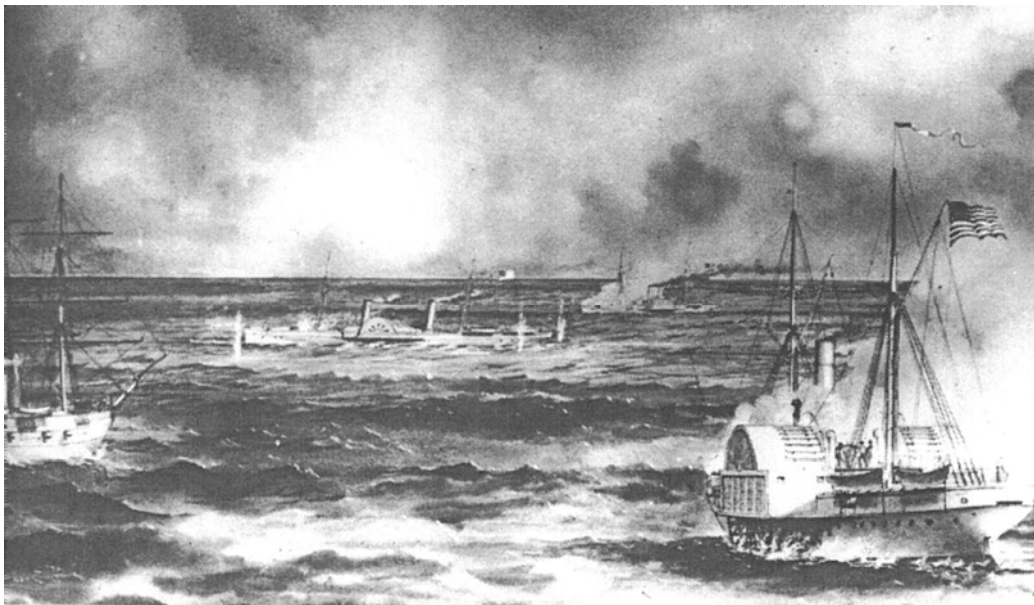
Nassau-Wilmington - June 1862 to January 1865



Most outbound blockade run letters were sent under cover to the departure port, so no CSA postmarks or appear on them. Some letters, addressed to Nassau or Bermuda, could be sent in the CSA mails via the departure port.



Posted August 20, 1864 in Raleigh, NC - prepaid 10¢ CSA postage to Wilmington
Endorsed to blockade runner *Lilian* which was bound for Bermuda, not Nassau
Sent instead by *Will of the Wisp* from Wilmington August 23 to Nassau August 27
Postmarked Nassau Ship-Letter on August 27 - 4d ship postage due



Lilian captured by the USS *Keystone State* and USS *Gettysburg* on August 24, 1864
The above letter would have been captured on this trip if carried as endorsed

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

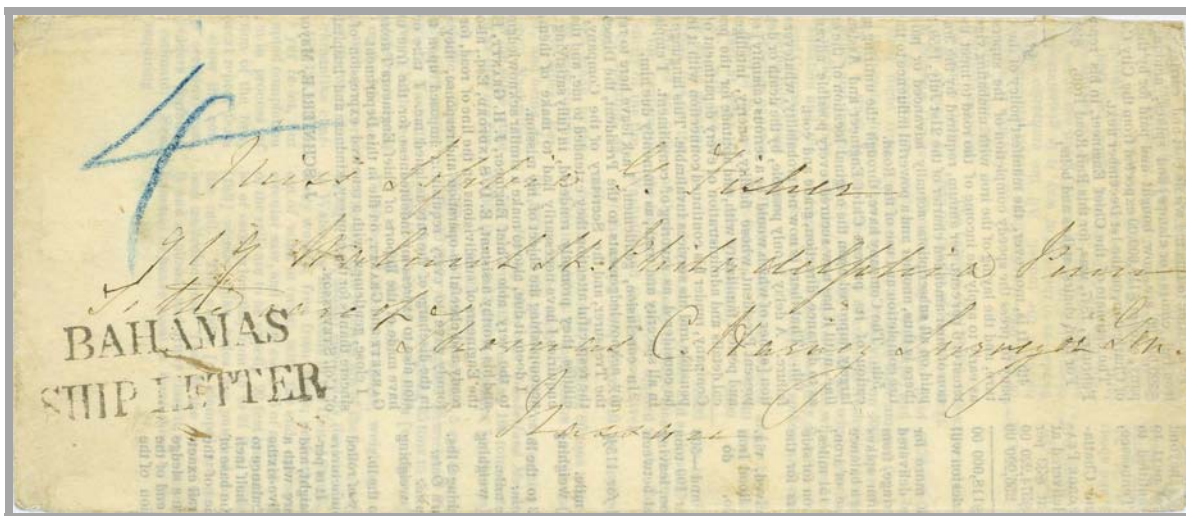
Nassau-Wilmington - June 1862 to January 1865



CSA ship postage to the port of arrival was 6¢, regardless of weight.
Bahamas incoming ship postage was 4 pence per half ounce.



Dated London September 23, 1864 - *Lucy* arrived in Wilmington Oct. 24 from Nassau
6¢ in-port ship fee due (under stamp) - 20¢ stamp paid double-weight forwarding postage



Originated in Charleston, SC - censored by Colonel B. Duncan, provost marshal at Charleston
Charleston was closed, so routed to *Fannie* from Wilmington Oct. 10, 1863 to Nassau Oct. 15
Marked BAHAMAS SHIP LETTER - assessed 4d ship fee - Cunarder *Corsica* to New York Oct. 31

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Nassau-Wilmington - June 1862 to January 1865



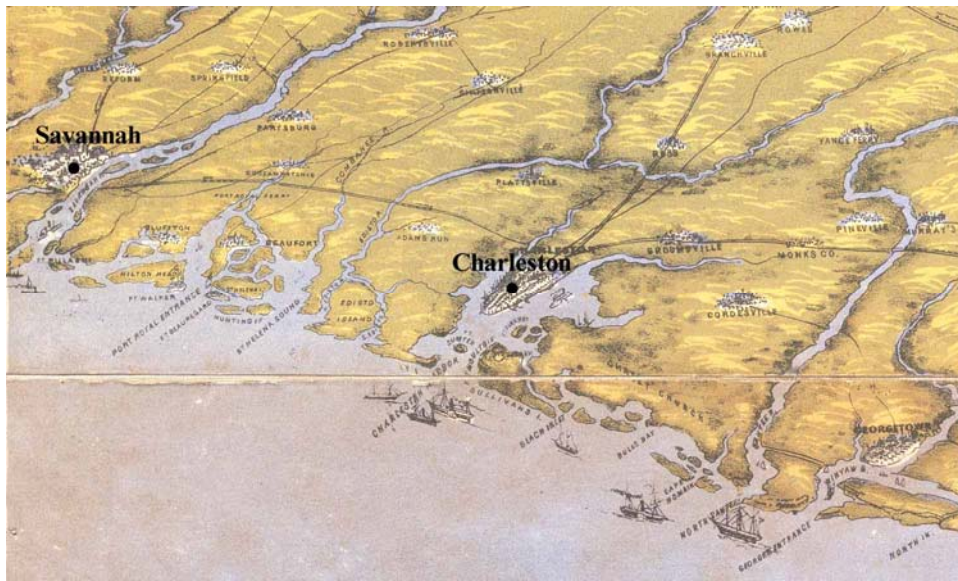
Dated London November 28, 1863 - endorsed to *Fannie* from Wilmington Dec. 3
Posted unpaid on December 7 in Nassau - double-weight 3 shillings due to Liverpool
Writer was a director of the Importing & Exporting Co. of S.C., which owned the *Fannie*



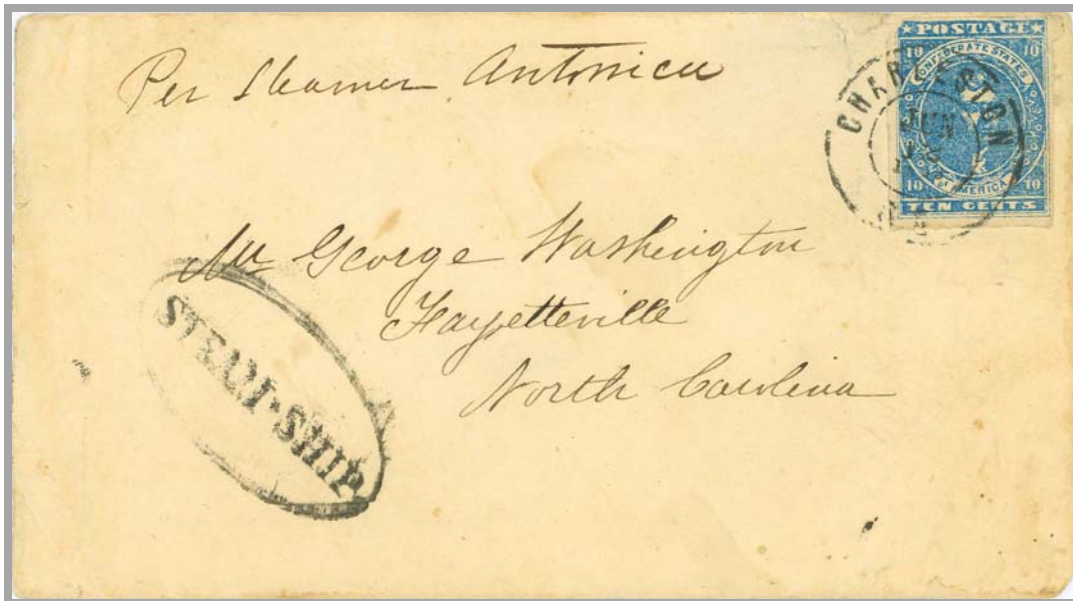
Dated London 1862 - *Giraffe* arrived at Wilmington Dec. 29 from Nassau Dec. 25
Marked SHIP and rated for 52¢ due (quintuple 10¢ inland plus 2¢ ship fee)
Earliest recorded Wilmington arrival postmark and largest known due marking

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Nassau-Charleston - May 1862 to February 1865



The blockade of Charleston, South Carolina was initiated on May 10, 1861 by the USS *Niagara*. Charleston was closed by Federal actions from September 1863 to March 1864, and fell to Sherman's Federal army on February 17, 1865. Known letters were used between May 1862 and February 1865.



Docketed (England) April 24, 1863 - 10¢ Patterson stamp prepaid CSA postage
Carried by Cunard Line via New York to Nassau on May 26 - endorsed to *Antonica*
Antonica left on June 7 for Charleston on June 11 - marked oval STEAM-SHIP
Accepted as paid in Charleston on June 12 - no 2¢ ship fee assessed

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Nassau-Charleston - May 1862 to February 1865



Liverpool-based Fraser Trenholm & Co. and its Charleston-based affiliate, John Fraser & Co., used Henry Adderley & Co. as their Nassau agent for the transfer of supplies and mail.



Forwarded by Adderley & Co. - *Leopard* left July 30, 1862 for Charleston on Aug. 3
Endorsed 'From J.F. & C.' (John Fraser & Co.) - 6¢ in-port ship fee due



Originated in Charleston, SC - sent under cover to Nassau forwarder, Adderley & Co.
Leopard left Jan. 14, 1863 for Nassau on Jan. 19 - Cunard Line to England on Feb. 12
Prepaid 1 shilling 4d rate to France in cash at Nassau - 1d retained by Nassau

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

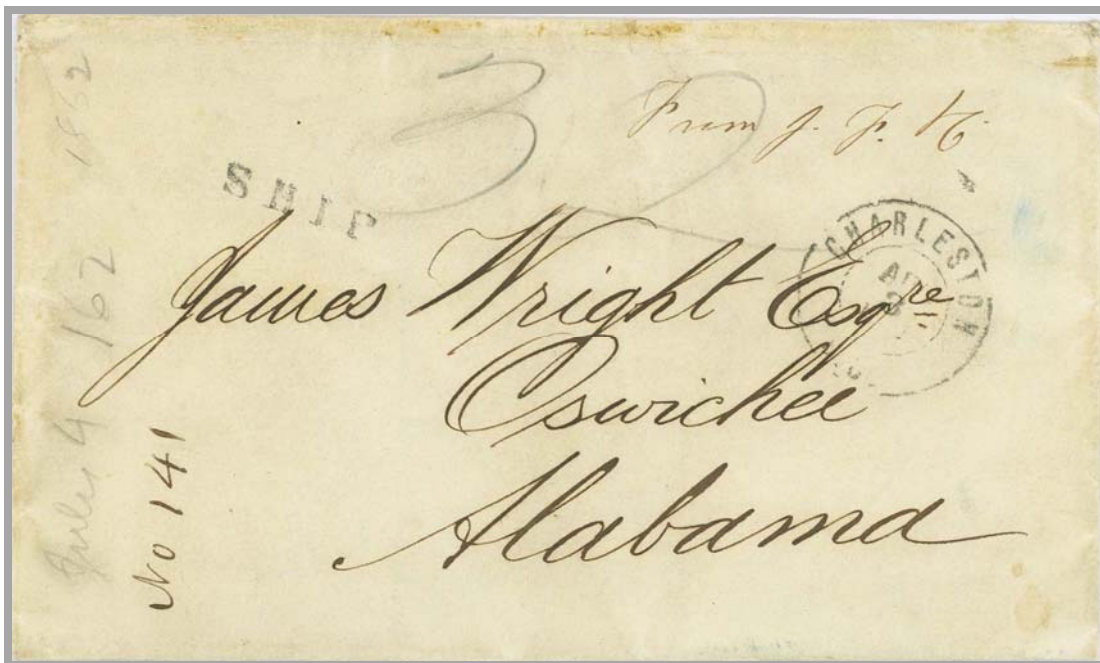
Nassau-Charleston - May 1862 to February 1865



The blockade runner *Leopard* made 8 successful trips for Fraser Trenholm & Co. from May 1862 to March 1863. She ran aground and was burned while trying to enter Charleston on April 12, 1863.



Remains of destroyed blockade runner near Charleston



Docketed (Liverpool) July 4, 1862 - endorsed 'From J.F. & C.' (John Fraser & Co.) Cunard Line to Nassau on July 23 - *Leopard* left July 30 for Charleston on August 3 Triple-weight 32¢ due - one of three known Charleston straight-line SHIP marks

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Nassau-Charleston - May 1862 to February 1865



Endorsed to *Fox* - arrived August 8, 1864 from Nassau - 6¢ in-port ship postage due
Envelope turned and re-used from Charleston to Columbia, SC on August 17 with CSA #12



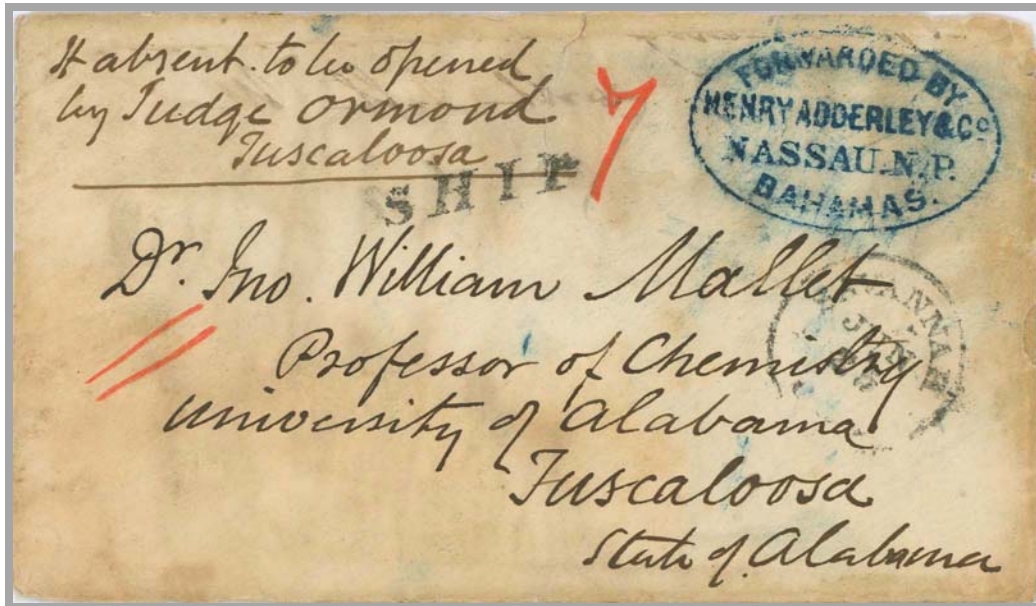
Prepaid 1d in London Oct. 26, 1864 to Reading - forwarded to Fraser, Trenholm in Liverpool
Addressee had returned to Charleston - letter forwarded under cover via New York to Nassau
Julia left December 10, 1864 - arrived in Charleston December 14 - 6¢ in-port ship postage due
Letter forwarded one more time within South Carolina with additional 10¢ postage due

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Nassau-Savannah - June to July 1862



The blockade of Savannah, Georgia was initiated on May 28, 1861 by the USS *Union*. Access to Savannah was limited after Union forces captured Fort Pulaski at the head of the harbor on April 11, 1862. Known letters were used in June-July 1862.



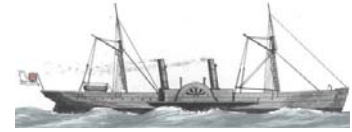
Dated London May 7, 1862 - sent under cover to Nassau forwarder Adderley & Co. Blockade runner *Kate* left June 21 and arrived in Savannah on June 25 - active 1-11/62
7¢ CSA postage due - only known inbound blockade run letter via Savannah



Kate left Savannah July 22, 1862 - arrived July 26 in Nassau - sent to forwarder Saunders & Son
Paid 4d postage on July 26 - Cunard steamer to N.Y. on August 2 - 5¢ due to San Francisco

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Bermuda-Wilmington - Dec. 1862 to January 1865



Starting in December 1862, Bermuda became continuously active in blockade running. Most ships ran between Wilmington and St George's until the 1864 yellow fever epidemic, when Hamilton and Halifax, Nova Scotia became alternate ports.



Endorsed to the steamship blockade runner *Flora* by a CSA agent in Bermuda
Flora left St George's on October 3, 1863 and arrived in Wilmington on October 8
Prepaid with 10¢ 'Frameline' stamp in Bermuda - additional 2¢ assessed for the ship fee

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Bermuda-Wilmington - Dec. 1862 to January 1865



Dated Wilmington, NC May 23, 1863 - CSS *Cornubia* to St George's on May 29
Prepaid 4d ship postage on June 3 - Cunard steamer *Merlin* to Halifax on June 19
Private ship to Boston on June 23 - 5¢ postage (3¢ inland plus 2¢ ship) due to Missouri
Return mail instructions via Halifax to agent A.H. Williams at St George's, Bermuda



Endorsed "pr Advance" by CSA agent in St George's - prepaid 20¢ CSA postage
Advance left St George's on July 28, 1864 and arrived in Wilmington on August 2
20¢ overpaid the 12¢ postage (10¢ plus 2¢ ship fee) to Richmond, Virginia

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Bermuda-Wilmington - Dec. 1862 to January 1865



Important or official mail was often sent in duplicate by different blockade runners to improve the chances of safe arrival. Colonel James Burton was superintendent of the CSA armories, trying to get English rifle-making machinery into the CSA.



Dated St George's, Bermuda April 18, 1864 - endorsed per "Helen"
Helen left St George's on April 27 and arrived in Wilmington on May 2



Duplicate of above letter - endorsed to the *Atalanta* on its first trip through the blockade
Atalanta left St George's on April 29, 1864 and arrived in Wilmington on May 3

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Bermuda-Wilmington - Dec. 1862 to January 1865



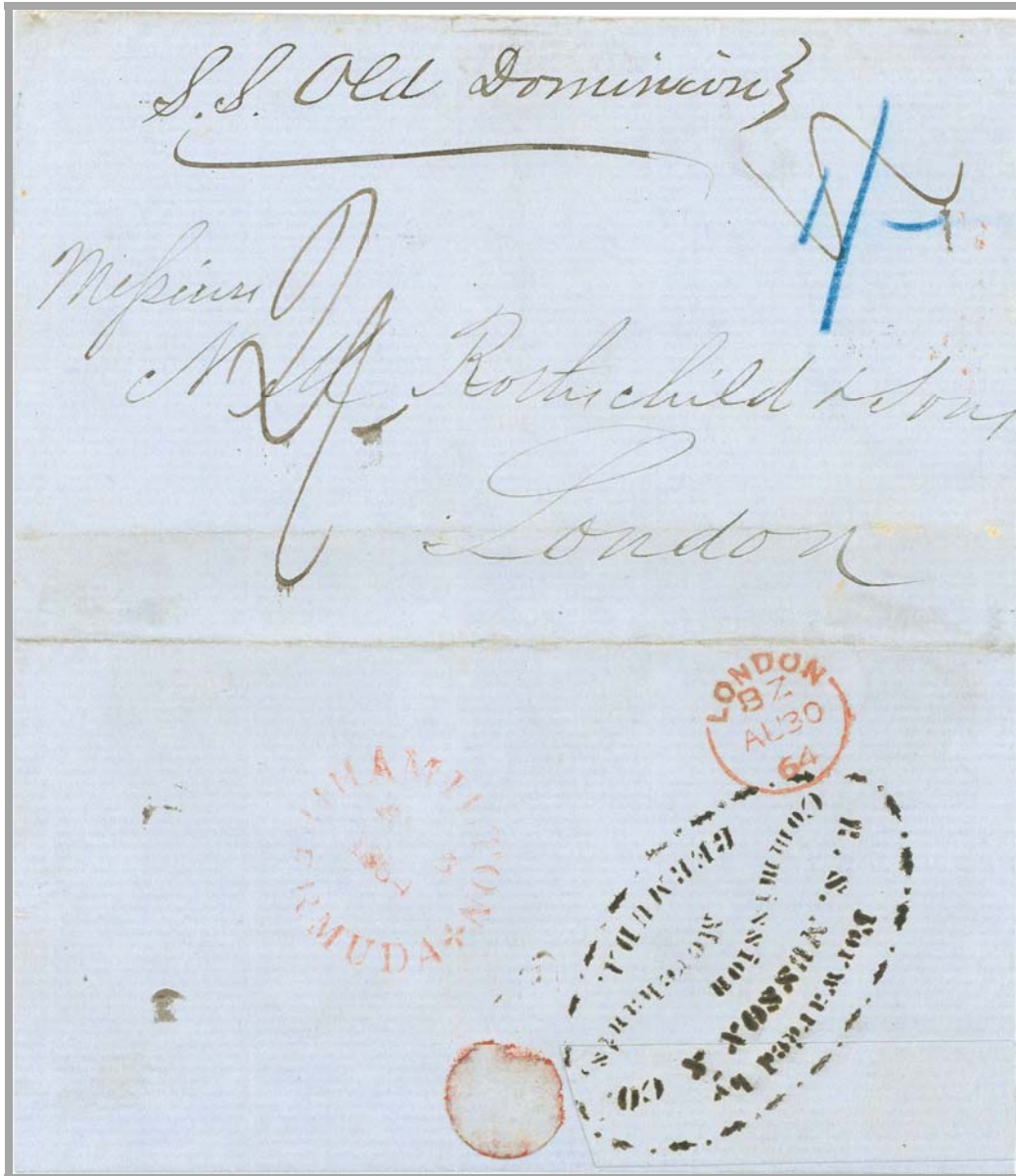
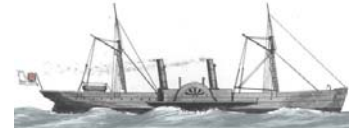
The *Fannie* brought yellow fever to St George's from June to October 1864, so some ships entered Hamilton; three covers are known with postmarks of July 28-August 30.



Docketed Petersburg, Virginia July 19, 1864 - routed to blockade runner at Wilmington
City of Petersburg left Wilmington on July 23 and arrived in Hamilton, Bermuda on July 26
Rated 4d ship plus 1 shilling packet on July 28 - marked HAMILTON-BERMUDA SHIP LETTER
Transferred to St George's on August 4 to catch Cunarder *Alpha* to Halifax on August 10
Re-rated 2 shillings due in London - 1 shilling packet postage plus 1 shilling unpaid letter fine

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

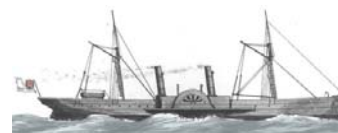
Bermuda-Wilmington - Dec. 1862 to January 1865



Docketed Petersburg, Virginia July 16, 1864 - endorsed "S.S. Old Dominion" at Wilmington
Old Dominion left Wilmington on July 23 and arrived in Hamilton, Bermuda on July 26
Forwarded by R.S. Musson & Co. at Hamilton - posted August 4 with 1 shilling postage due
Transferred to St George's on August 4 to catch Cunarder *Alpha* to Halifax on August 10
Re-rated 2 shillings due in London - 1 shilling packet postage plus 1 shilling unpaid letter fine

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Bermuda-Wilmington - Dec. 1862 to January 1865



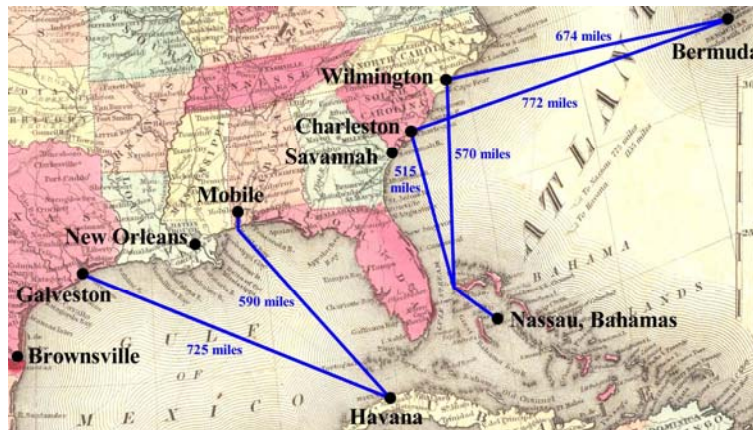
The CSS *Florida* was a commerce raider under the command of Lt. John Maffitt that captured 37 prizes from January to August 1863 and from March to September 1864. She was finally captured in Brazil on October 7, 1864.



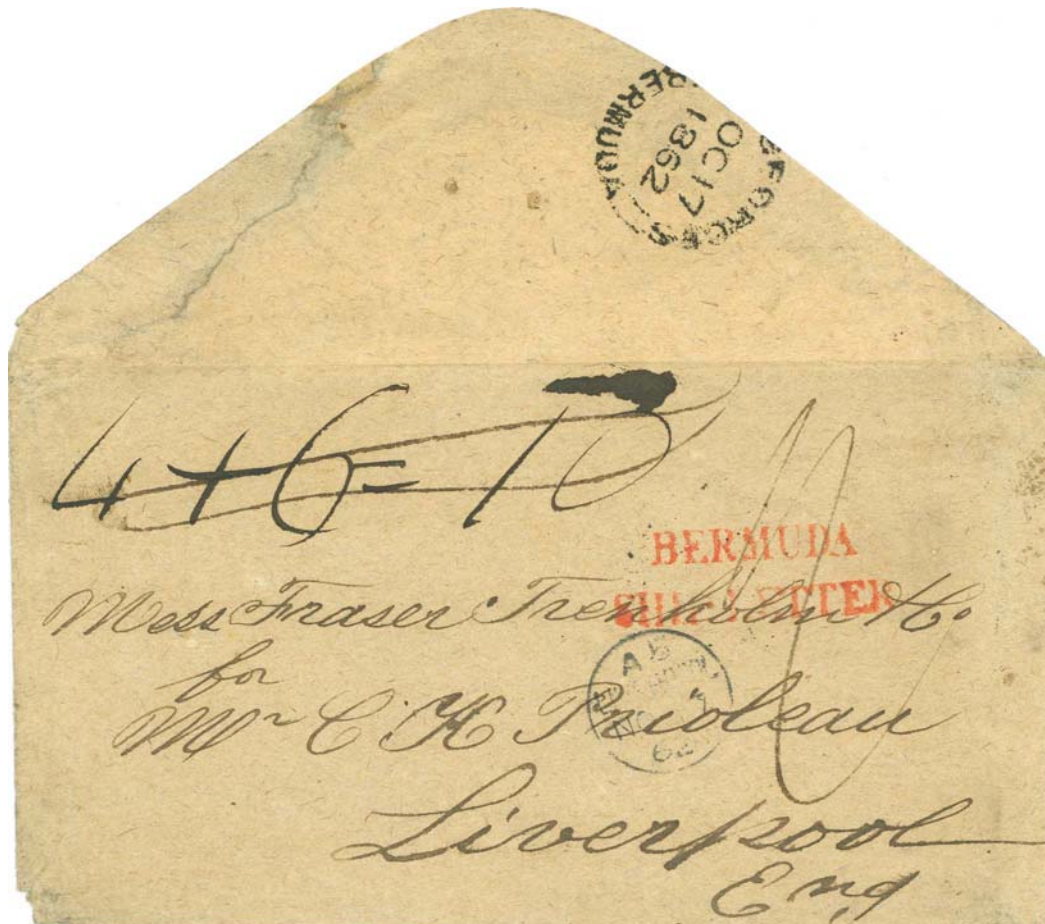
From CSS *Florida* at Bermuda in July 1863 - CSS *R.E. Lee* to Wilmington on July 28
Marked SHIP and rated for 12¢ due (10¢ to Richmond plus 2¢ ship fee) on July 30
One of two known covers that originated from the CSS *Florida*

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Bermuda-Charleston - July 1862 to April 1863



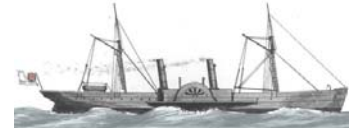
Charleston was 250 miles closer to Nassau than Bermuda, so virtually all Charleston trips connected with Nassau. There were only six successful blockade run trips between Charleston and Bermuda, all in the July 1862 to April 1863 period.



Dated in Charleston October 3, 1862 - *Herald* arrived in Bermuda on October 16
 Marked BERMUDA SHIP LETTER and rated for 4d ship fee plus 6d packet postage due
 Cunard and RMSP steamships via St Thomas to Southampton on November 13

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Bermuda-Charleston - July 1862 to April 1863



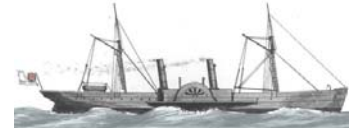
Endorsed "Per SS Princess Royal" by CSA agent in St George's - departed January 23, 1863
Princess Royal ran aground and was captured entering Charleston on January 29 - mail saved
Double-weight 22¢ postage due (20¢ plus 2¢ ship fee) to Richmond, Virginia



Dated lined Charleston March 17, 1863 - endorsed to 'Capt Cox' (etter) of the *General Beauregard*
General Beauregard left Charleston on March 20 and arrived at St George's on March 24
Carried by HMS *Orlando* from Bermuda on March 1 to Portsmouth, England on April 16
From George Trenholm of Fraser, Trenholm & Co. - owners of the *General Beauregard*

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Halifax-Wilmington - August-December 1864



Because of yellow fever in Bermuda, much of the blockade running activity was shifted from Bermuda to Halifax, Nova Scotia in the August-December 1864 period. Only 25 trips between Wilmington and Halifax are recorded.



Endorsed "S.S. Old Dominion" and put with official dispatches by CSA agent in Halifax *Old Dominion* left Nov. 16 and arrived Nov. 22 - franked 10¢ and mailed by Navy Agent



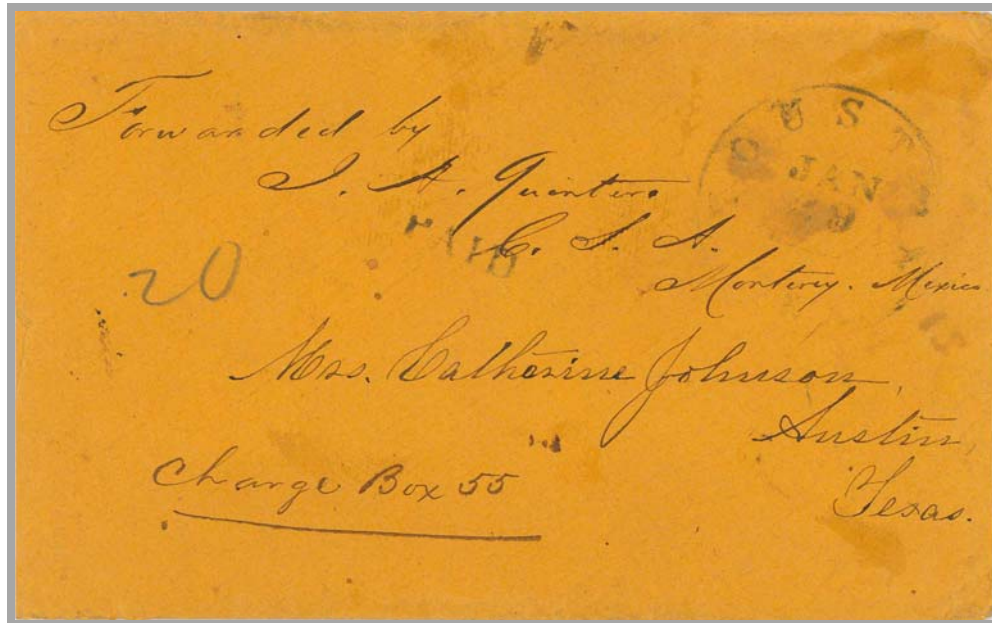
Carried by *Helen* from Wilmington on September 15, 1864 to Halifax on September 20
Censored (reverse) at Wilmington by "W Strong aag" - posted unpaid at Halifax September 20
1d Halifax debit to London - 50c debit to France - 33 kreutzer due in Heidelberg, Germany

Civil War Gulf Coast Blockade

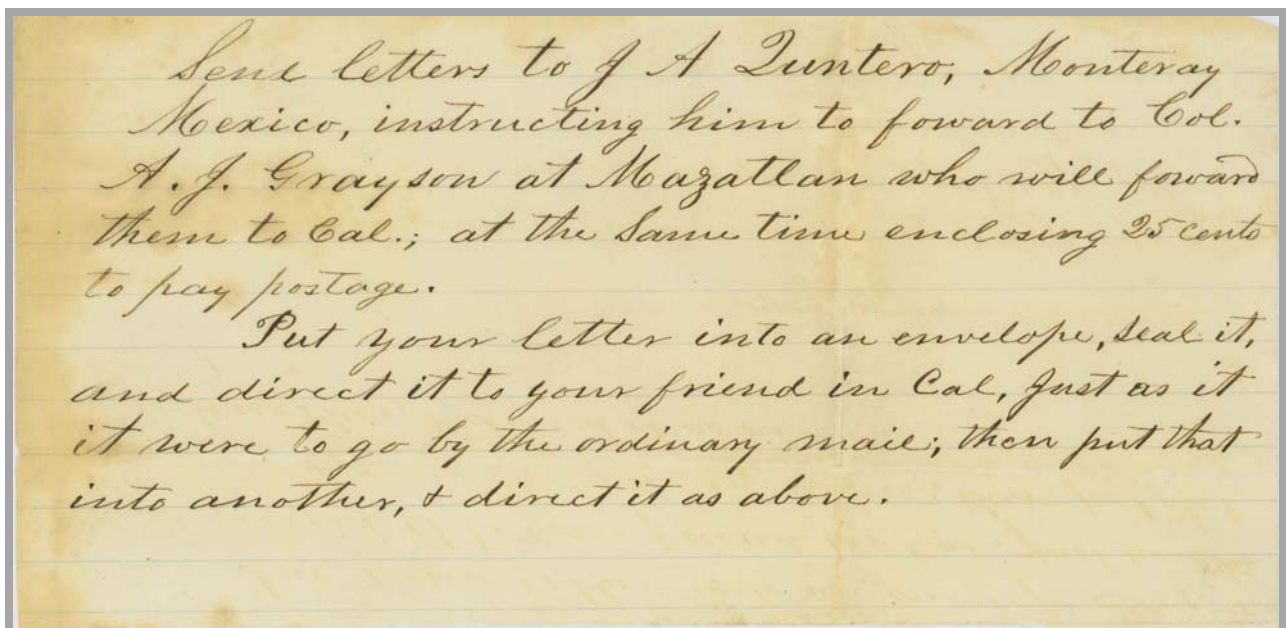
Matamoros-Galveston - November 1863 to July 1864



Matamoros, Mexico was a conduit for trans-Rio Grande mail via Brownsville, Texas, except when Brownsville was occupied from November 6, 1863 to July 19, 1864. During that period, mail to the CSA was sent by coastal blockade runner.



Dated Santa Clara, California Sept. 27, 1863 - forwarded via Mazatlan and Monterrey
Then forwarded by CSA agent Jose Quintero to Matamoros - enclosed broadside below
Blockade runner from Matamoros to Galveston - prepaid 20¢ in Houston on January 29



Enclosed Quintero broadside giving return mail instructions to California

Civil War Gulf Coast Blockade

Matamoros-Victoria - February 1862 to Dec. 1863



On February 1, 1862 the USS *Portsmouth* initiated the blockade of the west Texas coast. Coastal blockade runners ran between Matamoros, Mexico and Matagorda Bay, Texas. Mail was processed at nearby Victoria. Matagorda Bay was occupied by Federal forces on December 26, 1863.



Dated Mulhouse (France) July 2, 1863 - RMSP steamers to Tampico on August 29
Forwarded by A.M. Erhard in Matamoros (mark on reverse) - charged "3/- specie"
Blockade runner to Matagorda Bay - posted prepaid in Victoria on September 25
Received at Houston on October 1 - recipient was French consul at Houston

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

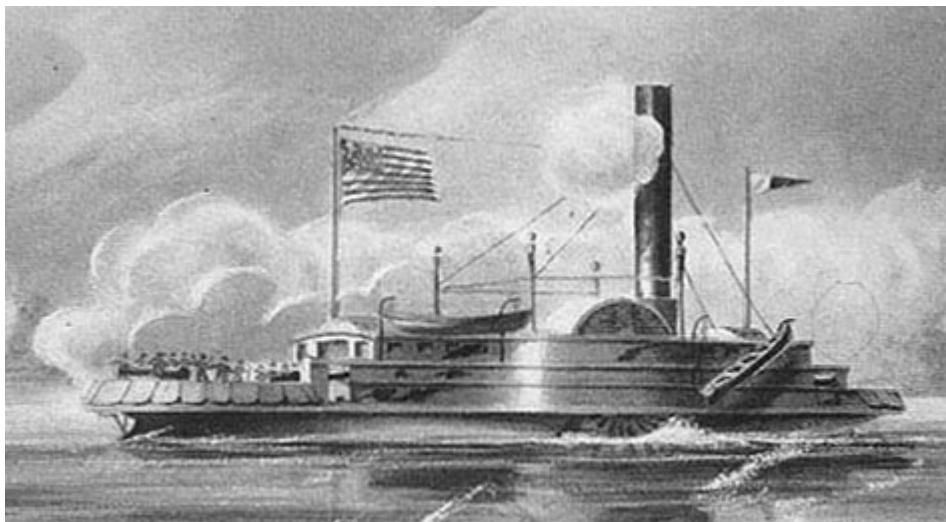
Prize Court - May 1861 to June 1865



Mail on a captured blockade runner was useful in determining whether it was contraband. It was often introduced into evidence with magenta ink docket numbers. The New York Prize Court commissioner was Henry H. Elliot.



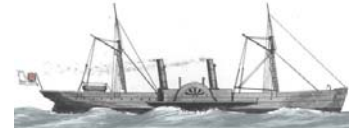
Posted September 11, 1861 at Pendleton, SC - prepaid 10¢ CSA postage to Charleston
Letter was aboard *Nuestra Senora del Regla* - ran the blockade from Charleston to Havana
Captured December 1, 1861 by USS *Aries* near Port Royal - taken to New York Prize Court
Magenta evidentiary docket "E(xhibit) 16/HHE" (Henry H. Elliott)



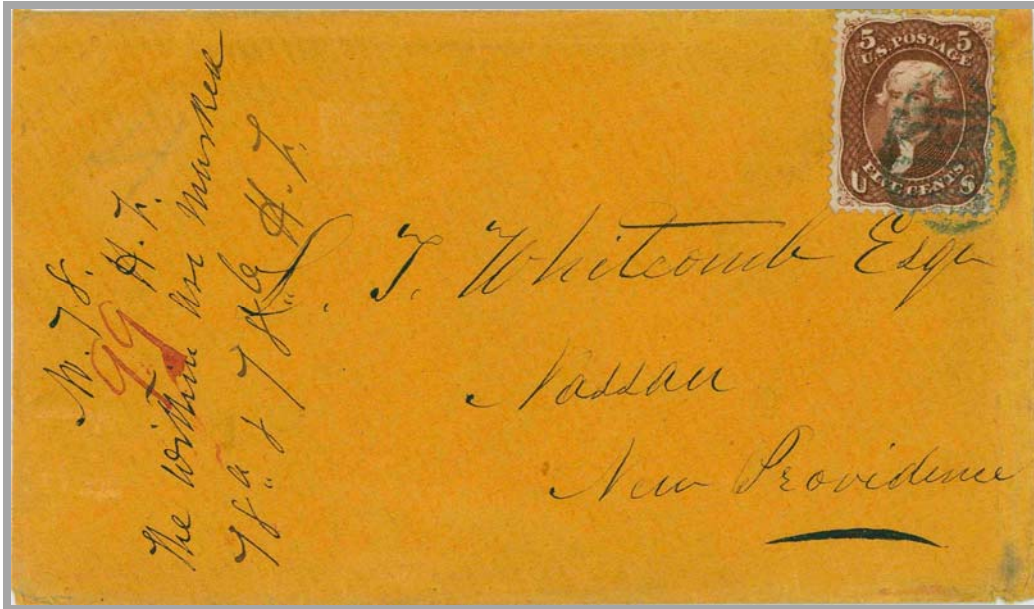
Nuestra Senora del Regla re-flagged as the USS *Commodore Hull*

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

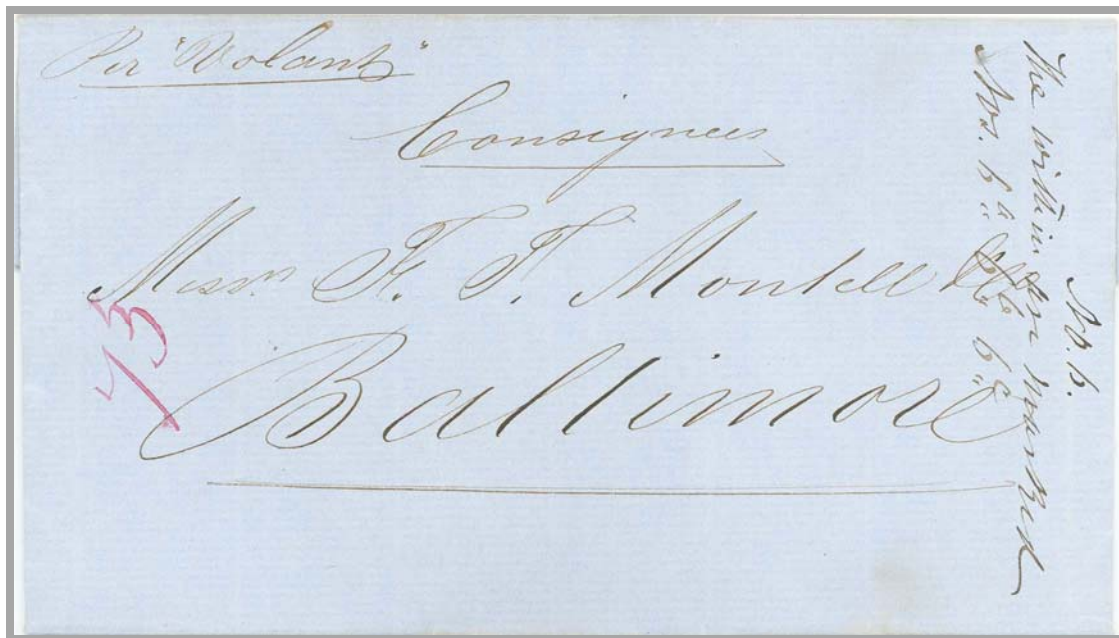
Prize Court - May 1861 to June 1865



The Philadelphia Prize Court commissioner was Henry Flanders. His initials appear on letters entered into that Prize Court as evidence.



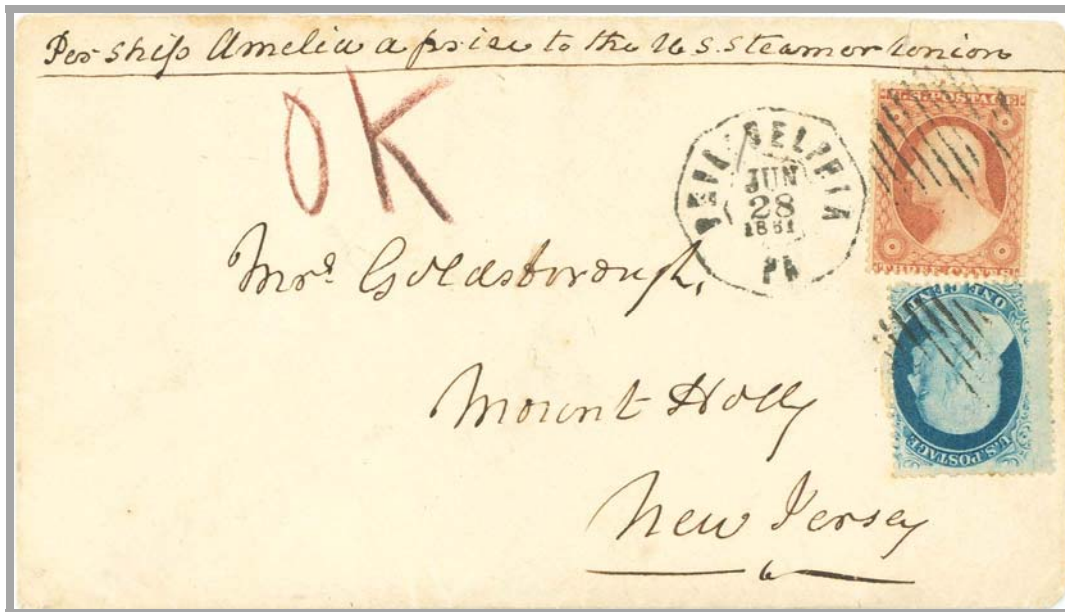
Posted prepaid 5¢ in Baltimore and received November 15, 1862 at Nassau
Was aboard the schooner *Lightning* when it was captured off Georgia on March 9, 1863
Taken to Philadelphia - manuscript evidentiary docket "No. 78 99 HF" (Henry Flanders)



Consignee's letter from Henry Adderley & Co. dated June 21, 1862 at Nassau
Addressed to Baltimore to mislead Federals - captured July 2, 1862 on schooner *Volant*

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

Prize Court - May 1861 to June 1865



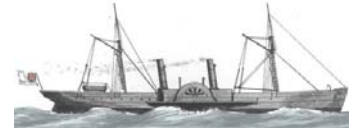
From Commander John Goldsborough, captain of USS *Union* off Charleston in June 1861
Union captured the blockade runner *Amelia* inbound to Charleston on June 18, 1861
Amelia sent north to Philadelphia Prize Court with this letter aboard - arrived June 28



Private papers captured on CSS *Calhoun* - attempted to enter New Orleans on January 23, 1862
Note on back: "letter to T.B. King, Rebel Commissioner...found on the capt'd Schr *Calhoun* 1862"
Calhoun was taken to Ship Island, and then north to the Philadelphia Prize Court

Civil War Atlantic Coast Blockade

End of the Blockade - January-June 1865



The last blockaded Atlantic ports of Wilmington and Charleston fell in January-February 1865, and the last Gulf port of Galveston surrendered on June 2, 1865. Lincoln formally lifted the blockade on June 23, 1865.



Carried by Southern Express from Augusta, Georgia to Union-occupied Savannah
Posted June 14, 1865 at Savannah - sent via New York on June 26 to France



Overpaid by 2d on March 1, 1865 at Nassau, Bahamas - addressed to South Carolina
Charleston had fallen February 17, so sent via New York - mails suspended to the South