# American Civil War Postage Due: North and South

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*The American Civil War was a very traumatic period in the history of the United States. Not only were brothers fighting brothers and whole families being torn apart by geographic location and political differences, but also there were grave problems in communication between the North and the South, especially from soldiers in the field or in prisoner of war camps. The mail was the major form of communication for individuals and businesses in the United States (and the world for that matter) during this time period. After the start of secession on December 20, 1860 in South Carolina, the United States Post Office Department (USPOD) maintained mail service throughout the entire country for approximately 5 months.*

*Once the actual fighting started on April 12, 1861 with the firing on Fort Sumter, the USPOD began experiencing increasing difficulties in handling the mail within and across the Confederate borders. Escalating hostilities, coupled with a desire by the U. S. Government to inflict hardship on the Confederacy, caused the United States Postmaster General, Montgomery Blair, to suspend all mail service to, from, and within the Confederate States on May 31, 1861. Thus, while intra-Union mail was handled with relative ease and efficiency by the in place United States Postal System, mail traveling both north and south and within the Confederacy was handled by a newly formed and resource limited postal system under the direction of the Confederate Postmaster General, John H. Regan. The Confederate Postal System was formed in March 1861 and took over operations on June 1, 1861, immediately after the USPOD ceased operations. Regan was able to build the Confederate Postal System in just a few short weeks by raiding experienced USPOD employees, who sympathized with the South, to fill key administrative positions. In general; however, the Confederate Post Office was under supplied, rates were high, and operations were limited due to lack of funding from the Confederate Government (competing with war expenses). The efficiency of mail delivery was tied to the progress of the war and to some extent the will of the military commanders.*

*This article traces the flow of mail both within and between the North and the South. In particular the flow of Postage Due mail becomes the major focus of the discussion, since the Confederacy did not recognize Union stamps as postage, and the Union did not accept Confederate stamps for mail delivery in the North. A large portion of the mail handled during the American Civil War was postage due – especially mail that had to cross the border between the United States and the Confederacy. This article discusses Civil War Postage Due mail, the rates and penalties applied, and the method of delivery or route of the mail as it traveled from a sender in the North to a recipient in the South or vice versa. Flag-of-Truce mail involving prisoners on both sides will be a major discussion topic along with the operation of the Dead Letter Offices both within the North and the South.*

## Introduction

Trying to capture the full details of the use of "Postage Due" in connection with the passage of mails both within and between the North (Union, United States) and the South (Confederacy, Confederate States of America) is truly a daunting task and well beyond the scope of this work. This work is designed to introduce the reader to the flow of mail during the American Civil War and the circumstances that produced the need for a large fraction of the mail to be sent postage due. To this end the reader is given a brief background on the state of mail delivery prior to and during the early phases of the Civil War, which led to the development of special mail routes, once North-South service was suspended. This background includes a time line of mail related events during the first year of the Civil War, followed by a description of the circumstances that led to the separation of the mails into Union and Confederate systems. Also discussed are the changes made in United States stamps to prevent southern use and the development of Confederate postage stamps in the South.

Soldiers' mail is then addressed in some detail, describing the rampant need for and use of postage due. A special section on postage due is presented, illustrating the types of markings and other aspects of implementation of postage due. Since the North-South passage of mail was extremely difficult or impossible, the role of the Dead Letter Offices (both North and South) and how they handled undeliverable mail (including postage due mail) is described. Next a brief discussion of the Flag-of-Truce exchange process is presented along with a general summary of Postage Due and the American Civil War.

## Background

A major event leading to the start of the American Civil War was the peaceful secession of South Carolina on December 20, 1860. Quickly following on the heels of South Carolina were Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas as shown in Table 1. Each of these states acted separately and their status after secession was as independent states. Most Americans still felt that the issues driving secession would be resolved quickly and peacefully. Although the above mentioned states declared their independence, the United States Government still considered them part of the Union and, as such, they were allowed to continue to use the United States Postal System for mail service within the state and to outside destinations. Since most of the above states joined (or formed) the Confederacy (Confederate States of America, CSA) in a very short time (about a month or less) after secession, mail from their independent state period is relatively rare [1].

**Table 1: Dates of Secession, Admission to the Confederacy, and Re-admission to the Union for the Seceded Southern States and Territorial Regions. The table also lists the number of days as an independent state as well as the number of days from CSA joining to the suspension of mail service in the seceded states (Blair decree).**

| State/Territory | Date of Secession | Date of Confederacy Admission | Days Independent | Days from CSA Joining to Blair Decree May 31, 1861 | Date of Union Re-admission |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| South Carolina | 12/20/1860 | 02/04/1861 | 46 | 117 | 07/09/1868 |
| Mississippi | 01/09/1861 | 02/04/1861 | 26 | 117 | 02/23/1870 |
| Florida | 01/10/1861 | 02/04/1861 | 25 | 117 | 06/25/1868 |
| Alabama | 01/11/1861 | 02/04/1861 | 24 | 117 | 07/13/1868 |
| Georgia | 01/19/1861 | 02/04/1861 | 16 | 117 | 07/21/1868 |
| Louisiana | 01/26/1861 | 02/04/1861 | 9 | 117 | 07/09/1868 |
| Texas[a)] | 02/01/1861[a)] | 03/05/1861[a)] | 32/3[a)] | 88 | 03/30/1870 |
| Virginia[b)] | 04/17/1861 | 05/07/1861 | 20 | 25 | 01/26/1870 |
| Arkansas | 05/06/1861 | 05/18/1861 | 12 | 14 | 06/22/1868 |
| North Carolina | 05/20/1861 | 05/27/1861 | 7 | 5 | 07/04/1868 |
| Tennessee[c)] | 06/08/1861 | 07/02/1861 | 24 | None | 07/24/1866 |
| Missouri[d)] | 10/32/1861[d)] | 11/28/1861[d)] | None | None | [d)] |
| Kentucky[d)] | 11/20/1861[d)] | 12/09/1861[d)] | None | None | [d)] |
| Arizona Territory | 03/16/1861 | | | | |
| Indian Territory | 02/07/1861 (Choctaw) 10/28/1861 (Cherokee) | CSA Formed Bureau of Indian Affairs 03/16/1861 | | | |

a) Texas adopted the secession ordinance on February 1, 1861. It was ratified by the people on February 23, 1861 to become effective on March 2, 1861. Texas was admitted to the Confederacy on March 5, 1861.

b) Virginia adopted the secession ordinance on April 17, 1861 and admitted to the Confederacy on May 7, 1861. The process was ratified by popular vote on May 23, 1861.

c) The Tennessee legislature decided on May 6, 1861 to put the question of secession to the vote of the people. In referendum, on June 8, 1861 secession was approved by the people. The state legislature therefore adopted the secession ordinance dated June 8, 1861.

d) Missouri and Kentucky remained Union and never officially seceded. Because of divided loyalties, a rival Confederate government arose in each state. The dates for secession in parentheses are the dates the rival Confederate government voted to secede. The Confederacy admission dates are the dates the CSA recognized the rival governments as part of the Confederacy.

An example of a letter from South Carolina posted during the independent period (January 21, 1861) is shown in Figure 1. Even after the states began joining the Confederacy on February 4, 1861, there were still no real impediments to the delivery of mail. It should be remembered that during the 1860's mail (letters) was the major form of communication for both individuals and businesses.

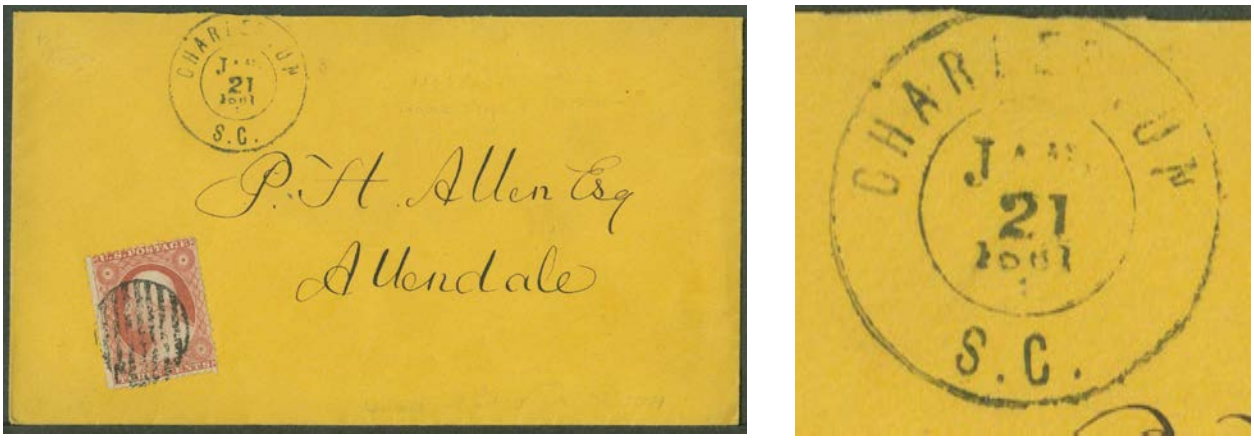



**Figure 1.Cover posted in South Carolina during its independent period. The cover was postmarked in Charleston approximately one month after South Carolina seceded on January 21, 1861. South Carolina joined the Confederate States of America just 14 days later on February 4, 1861. The cover was franked with a US Scott No. 26 and addressed to P. A. Allen, Esq. in Allendale, a small town in southwestern South Carolina (near the Georgia border) that was burned to the ground during the Civil War (but rebuilt in 1873).**

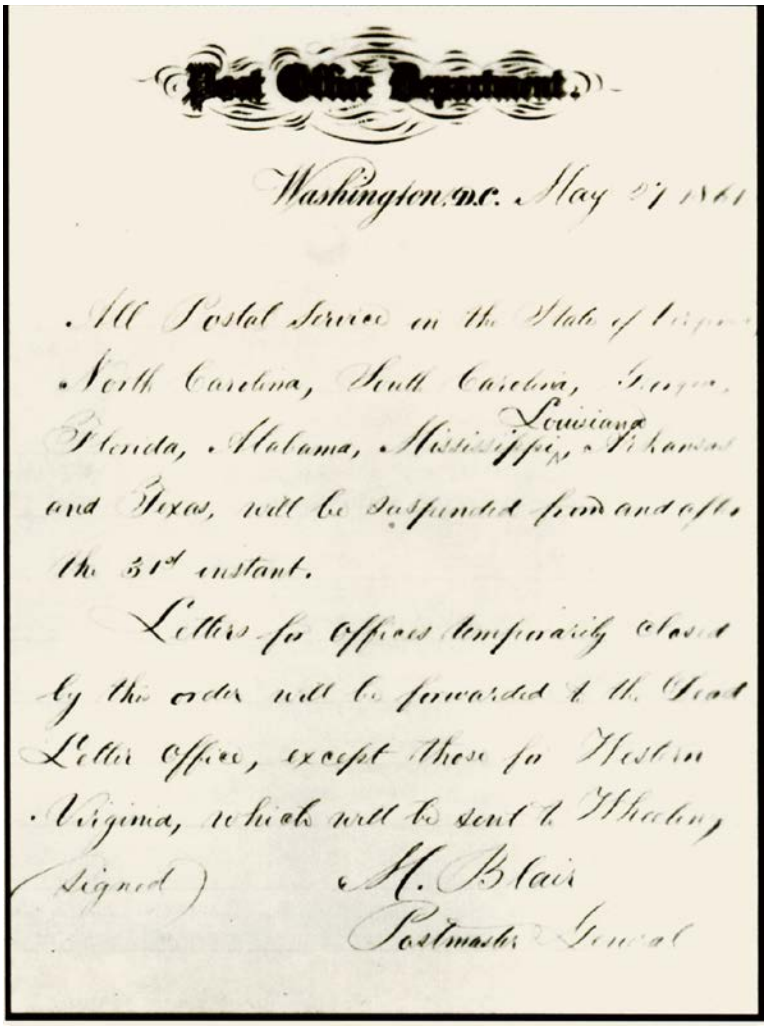
Following the start of hostilities with the bombardment of Fort Sumter [2] on April 12, 1861, many postal routes between the United States and the CSA had to be closed (abandoned) due to both the danger to personnel from the armed conflict and the threat of confiscation of the ships, trains, and wagons that transported the mail. Mail between the North and the South was still being exchanged at several points including the main route between Washington, D. C. and Richmond, Virginia. On May 23, 1861, the Union Army seized and occupied Alexandria, Virginia thereby effectively closing this primary route. After this time, mail continued to flow along other North South routes in the west, primarily between Nashville, Tennessee and Louisville, Kentucky. The increasing hostilities and a strategic desire by the United States Government to inflict hardship on the Confederacy caused the United States Postmaster General, Montgomery Blair [3] to issue a decree on May 27, 1861. In his decree Blair suspended all mail services in the seceded states effective May 31, 1861. A reproduction of this decree is shown in Figure 2. Service continued for a few days after the Blair decree, especially in the west, but essentially all North-South mail exchange between US and CSA post offices halted by mid-June of 1861. Key postal events between South Carolina's secession and the end of 1861 are captured in the timeline of Table 2.

**Table 2. 1860-1861 Civil War Timeline Featuring Key Postal Events.**

| Date | Event | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| 12/12/1860 | South Carolina Secedes | US Post Office Department continues to deliver mail |
| 02/04/1861 | Confederacy Established | Seceded States (South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana) join immediately. Texas follows on 03/02/1861. |
| 02/21/1861 | Confederate Post Office Established | |
| 03/06/1861 | John H. Reagan Appointed CSA Postmaster General | Appointed by CSA President Jefferson Davis. Reagan recruits from within the ranks of the US Post Office Department. |
| 04/12/1861 | Fort Sumter | CSA demands Fort Sumter Surrender. Fort does not surrender and the CSA Fires at the fort. The Civil War begins. |
| 04/15/1861 | Call to Arms | Lincoln calls for troops to suppress the rebellion. |
| 04/19/1861 | Call for Blockade | Lincoln calls for blockade of southern coast. 3500 miles of coastline with over 200 harbors. Anaconda Plan by General Winfield Scott |
| 05/07/1861 – 05/21/1861 | More states secede and join the Confederacy | Arkansas, North Carolina, and Virginia secede and join the Confederacy. |
| 05/13/1861 | Reagan Proclamation | Confederate Post Office to take over mail delivery on June 1, 1861. |
| 05/24/1861 | Suspension: Washington-Richmond Postal Route | Federal Troops seize Alexandria, Virginia and prevent the North-South flow of mail. Northbound mail diverted to CSA DLO in Richmond. South bound mail diverted to US Post Office Dead Letter Office in Washington, D. C. |
| 05/27/1861 | Blair Decree | In his decree, US PMG Montgomery Blair suspends all mail service from and within the Confederacy effective 05/31/1861. |
| 05/31/1861 | Suspension of Mail | All mail service between North and South and within the confederacy was ordered stopped effective 5/31/1861 |
| 06/01/1861 | CSA Post Office operational | Confederate postal system begins to take over mail delivery in the South. The transition period lasts several days. Even into July mail trickled North-especially by western routes. |
| 06/01/1861 – 06/02/1861 | DLO Policy Change | CSA decided to forward some Northbound mail - especially through the western routes - rather than send it to the DLO. |
| 06/01/1861 – 10/12/1861 | CSA without stamps | CSA postage stamps were on order, but not delivered. Old US stamps were not to be used. PMG ordered postmasters to use hand stamp markings or create their own provisional stamps or stationery. There are at least 81 known types of Confederate provisional adhesive stamps and press-printed envelopes. |
| 06/15/1861 | Suspension of western routes | Federal Post Office in Memphis closed down on 06/07/1861 and the one in Nashville on 06/14/1861. |
| 06/15/1861 | Louisville PM Holds Mail | Louisville, KY postmaster (John Speed, MD) held the accumulating mail that was still being sent north via the western routes-requested instructions from Washington as to its disposal. |
| 06/24/1861 | Washington Responds | Instructs Speed to forward mail to addressees postage due after removal of stamps or other methods of pre-payment. Speed creates Southn. Unpaid Letter hand stamp. |
| 07/02/1861 | Tennessee Officially Secedes and joins CSA | A small amount of cross border mail continues to make it north. |
| 10/12/1861 | Confederate Stamps | The first Confederate stamp was issued. 5¢ Jefferson Davis |

**Separate Mail Systems**

The CSA formed its own postal system under the direction of Confederate Postmaster General John H. Reagan [4]. Reagan was appointed to his post on March 6, 1861 by CSA



Post Office Department

Washington, D.C. May 27, 1861

All Postal Service in the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas will be suspended from and after the 31st instant.

Letters from offices temporality closed by this order will be forwarded to the Dead Letter Office, except those for Western Virginia which will be sent to Wheeling.

(Signed) M. Blair
Postmaster General

**Figure 2. Reproduction of the decree issued by Montgomery Blair, United States Postmaster General, on May 27, 1861, This decree suspended all postal service in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas, effective May 31, 1861.**

President Jefferson Davis [5]. At the time of his appointment, it was announced that the CSA Post Office would begin official operations on June 1, 1861. In order to build the Confederate Postal System in just a few short weeks, Reagan recruited experienced United States Post Office Department employees, who sympathized with the South, to fill key administrative positions. Was it coincidence or pre-planning that Blair suspended US postal service in the seceded states on May 31, 1861 and that the Confederate Post Office Department began mail operations in the

South on June 1, 1861? Blair remained silent on the subject, even after the war. While indeed Blair may have been influenced by the CSA Post Office Department announcement (on May 13, 1861) of the assumption of postal service in the seceded states on June 1, 1861, Confederate Postmaster General Reagan insisted until his dying day that he and Blair had never coordinated the timing of the two events. Thus, effective June 1, 1861 there were two separate non-communicating mail systems operating in this country, each of these having their own regulations and fee schedules. Table 3 contains the fee or rate schedules for both systems during the Civil War.

**Table 3: Civil War Postal Rates**

| Region | Rates | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| North-United States | | ***Prior July 1, 1863*** |
| | 3¢ | per ½ oz., East of Rocky Mountains |
| | 10¢ | per ½ oz., West of Rocky Mountains |
| | 1¢ | Drop Letters, Newspapers, & Circulars |
| | | ***After July 1, 1863*** |
| | 3¢ | per ½ oz., regardless of domestic distance |
| | 2¢ | Drop Letters, Newspapers, & Circulars |
| South-Confederacy | 5¢ | per ½ oz., under 500 miles |
| | 10¢ | per ½ oz., over 500 miles |
| | 2¢ | Drop Letters, Newspapers, & Circulars |
| | | ***After July 1, 1862*** |
| | 10¢ | per ½ oz., regardless of distance |
| | | ***After Spring-Fall , 1863*** |
| | 50¢ | Preferred Express mail rate-Trans-Mississippi |
| | 40¢ | Trans-Mississippi |

As can be seen from Table 3, the Union actually lowered the one-half ounce letter rate of 10¢ for main sent over the Rocky Mountains to a flat national rate of 3¢ per half ounce. Up until the Civil War the United States Post Office experienced a significant annual structural deficit mainly due to unprofitable postal routes in the South. With secession and the war these unproductive routes were eliminated, so that by 1863 the United States Postal Service was actually showing a profit. This return to profitability led to a number of postal reforms including the uniform 3¢ and the city home delivery of mail (to be briefly discussed below).

In the Confederacy things were quite different. Supply shortages and rising delivery costs forced the Confederate Post Office to abandon its 5¢ per half ounce under 500 mile rate (in about one year) and adopt a uniform 10¢ rate regardless of distance. In addition to the raised 5¢ rate (which encompassed the mail of most Confederate citizens), services were curtailed to the point that mail delivery only occurred three days per week at most post offices.

The Confederacy was divided east and west by the Mississippi River. At the beginning of the war, Trans-Mississippi mail flowed freely and the normal Confederate postal rates applied

(See Table 3). After the fall of New Orleans in late spring of 1862, Union gun boats began to ply the Mississippi river making crossing the river difficult. Increasing gun boat presence forced the mail to be moved by clandestine means. Trans-Mississippi routes were extremely difficult involving significant risk in both transport (small boats at night on dangerous waters) and in the threat of being captured. Thus, in March of 1863, the Confederacy raised Trans-Mississippi rates to 40¢ per half ounce. The siege and ultimate fall of Vicksburg (July 4, 1863) gave the Union complete control of the Mississippi river, making Trans-Mississippi mail transport near impossible.

After June 14, 1861, even the western North-South routes were officially closed and all North-South postal communications were banned although small amounts of mail continued to trickle across the borders into early July 1861. On April 19, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln announced the blockade of the southern coast stretching from Virginia to Texas. Blockading this 3500 mile long coastline with over 200 harbors was a formidable if not an impossible task. The Federal strategy was to blockade or capture the major deep water ports thereby having the greatest impact on Southern shipping and commerce. By mid-1862 all but four were closed by the Union occupation of either the port city itself or by controlling key forts in its harbors. Four ports (Wilmington, North Carolina; Charleston, South Carolina; Mobile, Alabama; and Galveston, Texas) remained active in blockade running throughout most of the war [6]. Three foreign ports (Bermuda, Nassau in the Bahamas, and Havana, Cuba) acted as staging points for Confederate supplies and mail. Because of Texas' remoteness to the rest of the Confederacy, few blockade runners operated out of Texas. In addition Texas (Galveston) routes only connected with Havana and Mexico while most of the Confederate supplies and mail from Europe were routed via the British colonies of the Bahamas and Bermuda. Mobile suffered from similar problems as Galveston and thus the most active blockade running ports were Wilmington and Charleston. It is estimated that about 90% of all the blockade run mail went through Wilmington (50%) and Charleston (40%).

The Confederate Post Office required pre-payment of postage (except for soldiers' mail and Official Post Office correspondence (See Figure 3)). Even the Confederate President and Vice President did not have the free franking privilege. When pre-payment was not possible, such as mail from the U. S., Europe, and the West Indies, the mail was accepted as postage due. Thus, most incoming blockade run mail was rated for postage due by the Confederacy. Blockade run mail also contained a 2¢ fee for the ship's captain (as did regular ship mail in the U. S.), so due "12" and due "22" markings are common on blockade run mail. It should be noted; however, that blockade run mail is very scarce with only 371 pieces documented (216 inbound and 155 outbound).

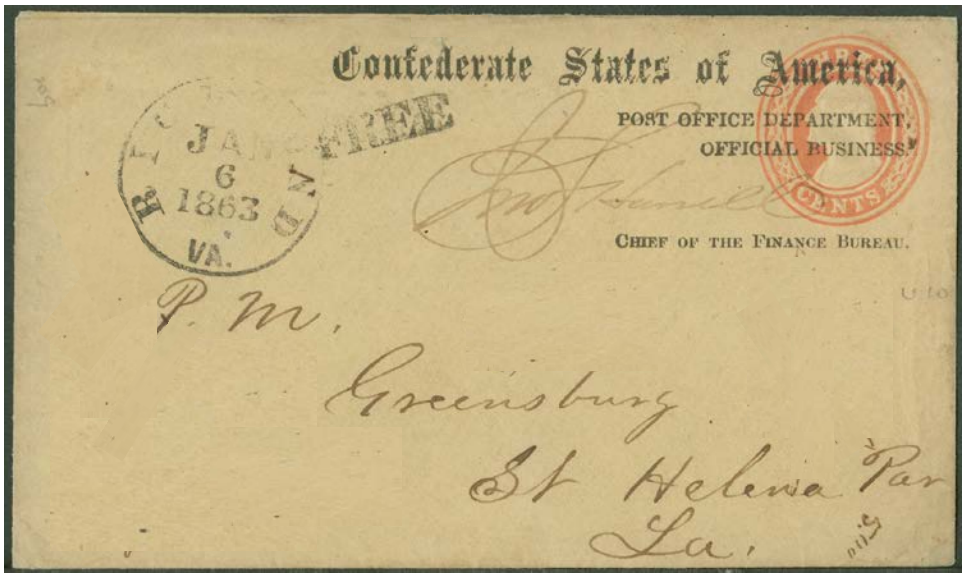



**Figure 3. Confederate States of America Official Postal Stationery illustrating the use of the Post Office Department's free franking privilege. The stationery was created by overprinting a United States 3¢ stamped envelope (Scott No. U10). The envelope was signed by "Jno L. Harrell" who was the Confederate Chief of Finance for the Post Office Department. The cover was addresses to the "P. M. Geensburg, St. Helena Par(ish), La."**

With the suspension of all across-the-lines routes, did this mean that all mail stopped between the North and the South? Absolutely not! As reported by Walske and Trepel [7] and others, special mail routes developed and many continued operations throughout the duration of the war. These routes allowed mail to: traverse the lines between the North and South; penetrate the Union coastal blockade of the Southern states; cross the Mississippi River despite the presence of Union gunboats; and maintain Confederate mail communications lines with Mexico. A brief description of these routes is given in Table 4.

**Stamps-North**

When the Confederate Postal System began official operation on June 1, 1861 they had no usable stamps. This was in spite of the fact that approximately $250,000 worth of United States stamps were still in the hands of Confederate Postmasters. By order of Postmaster General Reagan, the Southern postmasters were not to use these "Union" stamps on Confederate mail after official operations began on June 1, 1861. In fact on the day after the Civil War began (April 13, 1861) Reagan ordered the Southern postmasters to ship all the United States stamps back to Washington D. C. and settle their accounts. In general, the postmasters did keep their accounts current, but many did not return stamps. The United States Government realized that

**Table 4: Civil War Mail Routes**

| Period | Description | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| Late May-Early June 1861 | Transition Mail | Mail that was still being delivered during the period required by the Federal Government to complete the suspension of the regular pre-war Post Office routes between the North and the South |
| February 1861-June 1865 | Express Company Mail | Private express companies were used to supplement regular mail service both cross lines and within C. S. A. and Union states. Cross-line mail ceased with the August 26, 1861 ban by the United States on all communications with the South. |
| September 1861-June 1865 | Flag-of-Truce Mail | Prisoner-of-war mail exchange. Maintained by both the North and the South mainly for the benefit of captured soldiers (and a limited number of civilians). There were several exchange locations, but the main one was in Southern Virginia (Old Port Comfort-Fortress Monroe). |
| April 1862-April 1865 | Trans-Mississippi Mail | Operated by express companies and the C. S. A. Post Office after the Union took control of the Mississippi River and maintained an effective blockade. |
| September 1861-June 1865 | Covert Mail | Private mail systems (individuals) doing cross the lines mail delivery using secret routes (inland waterways) to avoid Union troops. Women even went so far as to carry mail and other contraband in their under garments. |
| May 1862-May 1865 | Blockade Mail | Small, fast ships (out run the Union blockade ships) connecting key C. S. A. ports with British held ports in Bermuda and the West Indies. Havana, Cuba was also involved in blockade runs across the Gulf. Blockade runs along the Gulf Coast may have started as early as September 1861. Blockade running allowed for the exchange of international mail. |
| July 1861-June 1865 | Trans-Rio Grande Mail | Mail transport between Texas and Mexico again allowing international mail to be sent and received by the C. S. A. |

This hoard of United States stamps in the South could cause issues for the Union. Thus, the United States Government decided to withdraw all existing stamps and postal stationery (and demonetize them, thus making them invalid for postage) and issue a new series of stamps (and stationery) for use only in the North. The then current United States postage stamp contract with Toppan, Carpenter & Company for printing the 1857 issues (including the 3¢ Scott No. 26) expired on June 10, 1861. A new contract was negotiated with the National Bank Note Company to produce the new stamp designs (Scott Nos. 63 to 72) for exclusive use in the North. These stamps took about two months to produce and were first available on August 19, 1861. Since the pre-war United States stamps and stationery were also in widespread use by Union postmasters, the Post Office Department devised an elaborate plan for phasing out the old stamps and stationery and issuing the new (exclusively for Union use). To begin, supplies of the new stamps

were issued to major post offices such as Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The post office would advertise to exchange the old stamps for new, and after a short exchange period (nominally one week) the old stamps would no longer be recognized as valid postage. The new 1861 issue adhesive stamps, as mentioned above, were announced as available on August 19, 1861 with the exchange period expiring on August 25, 1861. The 1861 embossed envelopes were available on August 8, 1861 with the exchange period expiring on August 13, 1861.

An envelope with a 3¢ stamp (Scott No. 65) from the new series is shown in Figure 4. The three cent rate was the common letter rate in the Union at this time (See Table 3).Many people still had some old series stamps and stationery in their possession after the withdrawal announcement (and the very short redemption period (a few days)), and they tried to use them on mail. The stamps (and stationery) were rejected by the U. S. Post Offices and the letters so mailed became "Postage Due." Often such letters, in addition to the Postage Due markings, received the hand stamp "Old Stamps Not Recognized" as shown in Figure 5. The envelope in Figure 5 has the old 3¢ stamp (Scott No. 26). Mint examples of the old and new 3¢ United States stamps are shown in Figure 6.


**Figure 4. Example of an envelope mailed with the new 3¢ stamp (Scott No. 65) from Worchester, Massachusetts on April 17, 1862. It was addressed to Lt. Colonel Sprague of the 2nd Map Artillery (connected to the 21st, 23rd, and 24th regiments from Massachusetts) in New Berne, North Carolina. He was part of the New Berne conflict that began on March 17, 1862 and after the battle victory was part of the occupation forces.**

**Stamps-South**

With the Confederate ban on using United States stamps and their ultimate demonetization by the Union, Confederate postmasters were left without government issued stamps. Postmaster General Reagan had issued contracts for Confederate stamps before the June 1, 1861 date, but the orders were not received until several months later. Confederate Postmasters were told by Reagan that they could locally create provisional stamps [9] or resort to manuscript and hand stamped markings. Examples of Postmaster Provisional stamps from New Orleans, Louisiana are shown in Figure 7. In all there are over 81 face different Confederate


**Figure 5. Cover mailed in Philadelphia on August 26, 1861 to a soldier at Camp Seward in Washington, DC. The stamp used was an 1857 three-cent issue (Scott No. 26). Since the stamp should have been exchanged for the new 3¢ stamp (Scott No. 65) by August 25, 1861, the old stamp was not accepted by the Philadelphia Post Office and stamped "OLD STAMPS NOT RECOGNIZED" and rated "DUE 3." Cover illustrated through the courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc. [8]**

Postmaster Provisional adhesive stamps and press-printed stationery items from 53 cities and towns. Three towns (Hillsboro, North Carolina; Madison Court House, Florida; and Nashville, Tennessee (although never used)) even created United States 3¢ provisional stamps to be used during the period from the state's secession until the start of Confederate postal operations on June 1, 1861. As an alternative to provisional adhesive stamps or press-printed postal stationery, many more towns (over 100) created hand-stamped postal stationery which could be purchased in advance and used when needed. But the bulk of the post offices including the post offices in Richmond just used hand stamps to indicate the payment of postal charges. Examples of "Paid 5" and "Paid 10" Confederate hand stamp markings are shown in Figure 8.


**Figure 6. A mint examples of Scott No.26 (dull red) is shown on the left and Scott No. 65 (rose) is illustrated on the right. Both stamps designs measure 19.5 mm wide by 24.5 mm high.**


**Figure 7. Confederate 2¢ Postmasters Provisional stamp from New Orleans, Louisiana (Scott 62X1) on the left. The stamp is blue in color and the design measures 19.0 mm x 24.5 mm. It was printed by John V. Childs using the stereotype printing process under the authority granted by Postmaster J(ohn). L. Riddell of New Orleans. The Confederate 5¢ Postmaster Provisional stamp on the right is also from New Orleans (Scott 62X5). It is brown in color and the design measures 18.6 mm x 23.7 mm. It too was printed by John V. Childs (engraver and printer located at 10 Camp Street, New Orleans).**

markings are shown in Figures 8. Five cents and 10 cents were the current letter rates in use by the Confederacy during the early stages of the war (See Table 3). The first Confederate stamp (CSA Scott No. 1) was issued on October 16, 1861. It was a 5¢ green stamp with a vignette depicting Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederate States of America. A 10¢ blue Thomas Jefferson stamp (CSA Scott No. 2) appeared shortly thereafter on November 8, 1861. An envelope with Confederate CS1 is shown in Figure 9.


Figure 8. Examples of Confederate "Paid 5" and "Paid 10" Markings.


**Figure 9. Folded letter mailed on April 17th of 1862 using a 5¢ Jefferson Davis Confederate stamp (Scott No. 1). It was mailed in Mobile, Alabama by the cashier of the Bank of Mobile acknowledging receipt of payment from the addressee in Marion, Alabama.**

The first Confederate stamps were printed using the stone lithography method and like all succeeding Confederate stamps were issued imperforate [10]. As the Civil War progressed the stone lithography was replaced by typography and finally line engraving for the printing of the stamps. In all, the Confederacy issued and used 13 face different stamps (Confederate States of America (CSA) Scott Nos. 1 to 13) [11]. Three of these stamps each had two different printers increasing the number of recognizable varieties of issued stamps to 16, neglecting color variations and plate flaws. Overall the Confederacy issued approximately 146 million stamps. The bulk of these (over 96%) were either 5¢ (64 million) or 10¢ (77 million) values, the rest were 2¢ Andrew Jackson stamps (approximately 2.5 million) for drop letters and 20¢ George Washington stamps (approximately 2.4 million) for higher weight letters and trans-Mississippi

rates. Over half of the 5¢ stamps were the July 25, 1862 issue of the blue Jefferson Davis stamp (CSA Scott No. 7) produced using typography by Archer and Daly (Richmond, Virginia) as shown in Figure 10. For the 10¢ stamps the line engraved printed blue to green Jefferson Davis stamps (CSA Scott Nos. 11 and 12) by Archer and Daly dominated with about 62%. Examples of these stamps are also shown in Figure 10. If the blue versions of these stamps (CSA Scott Nos. 11 and 12) printed by Keatinge and Ball (Columbia, South Carolina) are included the percentage rises to about 81%.

Despite the 146 million stamps produced, the Confederate Post Office was never able to keep up with stamp demand, especially late in the war due to shortages of paper, ink, and other supplies. The wartime shortage of paper had a major impact on the ability of an individual to write and then send a letter. Writing paper and envelopes were in very short supply; so people would reuse paper and envelopes or use alternate forms of paper (wall paper, ledger sheets, book pages, bills-any paper with a blank spot) in their correspondence. Envelopes made by an individual from alternate paper sources and sent through the mails are described as "adversity" covers. Even the Confederate Government re-purposed old Union envelopes (usually with an overprint). The reuse of envelopes deserves a special mention. Not only would individuals cross out addresses and re-address envelopes but also they would turn them inside out. These "turned" covers would then provide a clean envelope which then could be sent to the new recipient without difficulty. An example of such a turned cover is shown in Figure 11. The top image in Figure 11 shows the original envelope mailed on January 6, 1863 with a pair of 5¢ Jefferson Davis stamps. The envelope was then turned and mailed again on January 26, 1863 with a 10¢ Thomas Jefferson stamp as shown in Figure 11, bottom image.


**Figure 10. Blocks of the most widely issued Confederate stamps. The blue 5¢ Jefferson Davis stamp printed by the firm of Archer and Daly (CSA Scott No. 7) is shown on the left. About 36 million of these stamps were printed. The 10¢ Jefferson Davis (CSA Scott No. 11) printed by line engraving is in the middle and the same stamp design (CSA Scott No. 12) is illustrated on the right. The blue CSA Scott No. 11 was printed by Archer and Daly while the deep blue CSA Scott No. 12 was printed by Keatinge and Ball. The combined printing total of these three stamps was almost 100 million or about 68% of all the Confederate stamps printed.**

**Soldiers' Mail**

Mail was the key method (only method in most cases) for soldiers to keep in contact with their families. Since soldiers in the field often did not have ready access to stamps, soldiers were allowed to put letters into their respective postal systems. They would be sent through "postage due" providing they were endorsed soldiers letter and contained the senders rank and unit. Sometimes the soldier's commanding officer was required to endorse the envelope attesting to the fact that the soldier was in his unit. Both the United States Post Office and Confederate

**Figure 11. Turned cover originally mailed from Richmond, Virginia to an address in Petersburg, Virginia on January 6, 1863 (Top View). Two 5¢ Jefferson Davis stamps were used to pay the 10¢ rate. The cover was turned by the recipient in Petersburg and sent to someone in Lynchburg, Virginia on January 29, 1863 (Middle View). A 10¢ blue-green Thomas Jefferson stamp was used to pay the Confederate 10¢ rate. The cover was cut to illustrate both postmarks (Bottom View).**

Post Office Departments allowed soldiers this privilege and the worried families and friends gladly paid the postage due. Despite the ability to send things postage due, the Union soldier was expected to prepay the letter with a three cent stamp. An example of a prepaid Union soldier's letter sent through Old Point Comfort, Virginia [12] is shown in Figure 12. The envelope bears the corner card of the U. S. Christian Commission [13] featuring its dove of peace symbol and the preprinted identification as a "Soldier's Letter." Various Christian charity groups provided

pens, paper, and envelopes to the soldiers. As mentioned previously, active duty soldiers and/or prisoners of war rarely had the opportunity or the money to buy these items. If Union soldiers did not pay with a 3-cnt stamp, then the cover was sent as "Due 3" if properly endorsed with soldiers letter and contained the sender's rank and unit, as well as the units commanding officer signature (if required). If not properly endorsed the letter was rated "Due 6", 3¢ for the missing postage plus 3¢ as a penalty. An example of such a stamp-less soldier's letter with the Due 3 marking is shown in Figure 13. A similar cover without proper endorsement is also shown in Figure 13 rated as Due 6.


**Figure 12. U. S. Christian Commission Soldier's letter cover franked with U. S. Scott#65 (3¢ Washington issued in 1861) and cancelled on August 17 in Old Port Comfort, VA (a Union stronghold throughout the war). This is a Union cover addressed to Mrs. Thomas L. Bailey from probably her husband (Corporal Thomas L. Bailey of C Company of the 21st Regiment Connecticut Volunteers). His dates of service were December 21, 1862 to June 3, 1865. Thus, this cover is either from 8/17/1863 or 8/17/1864.**


**Figure 13. Examples of Due 3 and Due 6 markings on Union Covers. The "Due 3" cover was mailed from Gallipolis, Ohio to an address in Lancaster County, PA as an unpaid soldier's letter. The "Due 6" letter was mailed in New Orleans after Union occupation of the city to an address in Iowa.**

Mail to and from Confederate and Union prisoners of war was exchanged at designated points (See Flag of Truce Mail below) and forwarded postage due by the receiving postal system. An example of a letter home from a Confederate prisoner in a Union prison camp is shown in Figure 14. This letter was mailed with a current United States 3¢ stamp (Johnson's Island, Sandusky, Ohio) and addressed to a person in Mississippi. The U. S. mails carried the letter to the main Union-Confederate exchange point (Fortress Monroe-Old Point Comfort, Virginia) and exchanged it under a Flag of Truce. The letter then entered the Confederate mail stream via Richmond and was rated "Due 10," the current rate for an unpaid letter within the Confederacy.


**Figure 14. Johnsons Island Prisoner of War letter mailed February 15, 1863 in Sandusky, Ohio, with a United States 3¢ Washington (Scott No. 65) stamp. It was sent to Fortress Monroe where it entered the Confederate mail system under a Flag-of-Truce for delivery to its final destination in Plantersville, Alabama. It was rated as "Due 10" by the CSA mail system.**

People expressed their support of the war in many ways. One of the most visible was the use of patriotic covers, especially in the North. Paper shortages, as well as general lack of printing supplies prevented their widespread use in the South, although Southern patriotic covers exist. It has been estimated that over 10,000 distinct designs of Union patriotic covers exist. One design out of the thousands that were available is shown on the two envelopes in Figure 14. The top cover is from a Union soldier, operating in the Port Royal, South Carolina region, to his family in Ohio. The cover is stamp-less and rated "Due 3" as a soldier's letter. The cover is interesting in the fact that the design was printed on an embossed corner card envelope from a produce and commission merchant in Cleveland, Ohio. The bottom cover is captured Union stationery used by a Confederate soldier to send a message home to Port Gibson, Mississippi. This cover is also stamp-less and rated "Due 10" for the missing Confederate postage. Thus, we

have two Union patriotic design covers. One used in the South by a Union soldiers (printed on an Ohio merchant's embossed envelope) and the other (captured Union stationery) used in the South by a Confederate soldier and both were rated postage due. Enlargements of the patriotic envelope design elements are also shown in Figure 15.


**Figure 15. Civil War Patriotic Cover Design "Not A Star Must Fall" The top cover was captured Union stationery used by a Southern soldier in mailing a letter home to Mississippi. It was rated "Due 10" by the CSA Postal System. Note that when the letter was received in Jackson, Mississippi, the Jackson Post Office not only applied the Jackson CDS, but also used the CDS to try and obliterate the Union Patriotic Design. It was postmarked on September 23, 1862. The bottom cover of the same design was mailed by a Union soldier from occupied Port Royal, South Carolina to his family in Ohio. It was postmarked on June 2, 1863 and rated "Due 3". The patriotic design was printed over an embossed advertising cover ("Clark Gardener & Co., Produce, Commission Merchants, Cleveland, O." (in four lines)). The envelopes measure approximately 78 mm by 140 mm. The enlargements show design detail.**

Prior to and at the beginning of the Civil War, people had to pick up their mail at the post office. As the war continued and casualties mounted, there was growing concern that the soldier death notifications which were sent by mail to the next of kin would be received in (and probably read in) the post office lobby. It was felt that the notification of the death of a loved one should not be received in such a public setting. Thus, on July 1, 1863 the post office began home delivery of mail in the Union's 49 largest cities [14] and gradually extended it to all city dwellers in the ensuing decade. For our rural citizens, this home delivery of mail had to wait until 1896 with the passage of the Rural Free Delivery Act [15, 16].

**Postage Due**

Postage Due is a concept that has been in existence since the beginning of mail service in the United States. During the period from the system beginnings, under the direction of Benjamin Franklin (first Postmaster General of the United States), to the postal reforms of the 1850s most mail was sent postage due (i.e. paid by the recipient rather than the sender). The amount of postage due was typically written in manuscript, although sometimes it was indicated by special hand stamps or labels. With introduction of the first postage stamps in 1847 and the subsequent postal reforms requiring prepayment of the mail prior to delivery, postage due was relegated to the collection of fees and underpayment of mail delivery charges. Charges for postage due were indicated by manuscript markings or special hand stamps since the United States did not adopt the use of postage due stamps until the summer of 1879 [17]. Postage due soldiers' mail was allowed by both Union and Confederate post offices, and it was used to address special circumstances including lack of viable postage stamps. As mention above Union and Confederate postage due mail was a necessity. Soldiers in the field had little access to stamps, and, even if stamps were available, they did not have money. Soldiers pay was small and often lagged many months behind (if they received any at all). The two postage due letters shown in Figures 16 and 17 illustrate the plight of Confederate and Union soldiers, respectively. Each contains a poem or phrase reflecting lack of money (and food). Examples of Civil War postage due markings and hand stamps used by Northern post offices are illustrated in Figure 18. Examples of their Confederate counterparts are illustrated in Figure 19.

*"Soldiers letter*
*No hard tack and no corn*
*bread, Six Months due*
*and not a red.*
*Please P.M. Shove this*
*ahead,*
*Due 10 cents in Confed."*


**Figure 16. Confederate Postage Due cover capturing the plight of the common soldier and the recognition of the need for postage due (10¢ in the Confederacy). The cover was addressed to Frog Level, South Carolina. Frog Level changed its name to Prosperity in 1873 and still exists today. Cover illustrated through the courtesy of Lewis Kaufman.**

*"Soldiers Letter Nary red hard tack in plase of bred" (sic)*


**Figure 17. Union Postage Due cover with verse lamenting lack of money and food. Cover rated 3¢ Due as a soldier's letter. Cover illustrated through the courtesy of Lewis Kaufman.**

## Dead Letter Offices

The Dead Letter Office (DLO) of the United States Post Office Department had been in operation for many years at the start of the Civil War. The purpose of the DLO was to handle all letters in the mail that were undeliverable or unclaimed. The focus of the activity was to return letters of "value" to the senders. The DLO's definition of value included: currency, securities, legal documents, family records, irreplaceable papers, etc. Only circulars, advertisements, and perhaps casual content letters were destroyed and no attempt made to return them to the sender [18]. Before 1856 letters could be sent "Postage Due" with the cost of mail delivery collected from the recipient. A law was passed in 1856 requiring prepayment of all mail with postage stamps. This law had a profound effect on the Post Office Department in general and the DLO in particular.

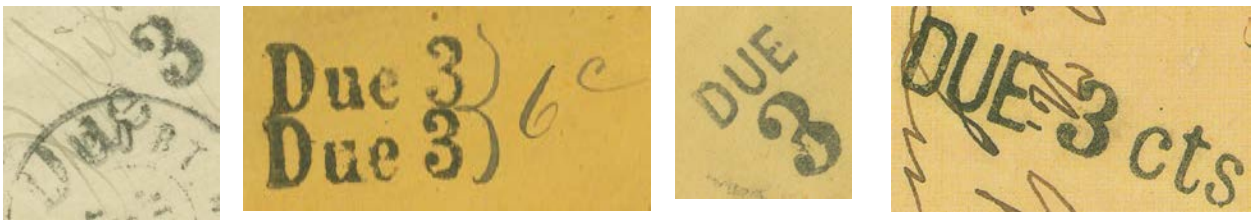



**Figure 18. Northern due hand stamp examples. The "Due 3" on the left is from Port Royal, SC again after Union occupation. The double "Due 3" (left middle) is from Michigan City, IN, and the markings on the right are both from Washington, DC.**


**Figure 19. Representative Southern due hand stamp examples. The marking on the left is from Winchester, VA; the "Due 5" was stamped in Hopkinsville, KY; the "Due 2" is from Memphis, TN; and the "Due 10" on the right is from Manchester, SC.**

The law required that all unpaid letters in the mail stream be held for postage. The sender, if identifiable, would be notified of the postage due, and if paid the mail would be sent on its way. If left unpaid after a period of time (30 days to 3 months (depending on whether the letter was advertised or not)) the letter would be sent to the Dead Letter Office. At the start of secession, the US mails and the DLO operated relatively normally despite a few changes in Postal Law on the frequency of returning dead letters to Washington, D. C. and a reduction in the time of holding advertised mail from 3 months to 2 months. As the war started and hostilities forced suspension of mail service in the South (Blair decree), two major situations occurred that had lasting impact on the Dead Letter Office.

First, as mentioned above, soldiers in the camps or fields did not have money or a place to buy postage stamps. Thus, the DLO received a steady flood of unpaid letters from the soldiers and their families. Eventually, soldiers were allowed to send letters collect or postage due at normal postal rates if properly endorsed (double rate if not properly endorsed), but still the volume of unpaid, improperly endorsed soldiers' letters overwhelmed the DLO at times, causing long DLO turn-around delays. Second, all Federal mail service in the seceded states was suspended by United States Postmaster General Montgomery Blair on May 31, 1861. See the letter in Figure 2 that was apparently sent to all postmasters. Thus, the DLO received a large number of letters sent from northern addresses to the Southern states. Although the number of such letters declined as the war progressed it still amounted to an average of over 40,000 letters per year. Other things, like brief elimination of the held for postage process, added to the chaos.

The United States Dead Letter Office used special preprinted envelopes to return the "dead letters" to their senders [19]. These envelopes reflected the amount of "Postage Due" for the return process. An example of a "Due 3" envelope is shown in Figure 20. These envelopes are known in "Due 6" and the author has seen them hand corrected to reflect other amounts of payment due. The amount of postage due was determined by the perceived value of the original letters content. Originally, ordinary letters were returned at double the rate (Due 6) and valuable letters returned at triple the rate (Due 9). Later (after July 1, 1863) this was reduced to single rate for ordinary letters (Due 3) and double rate for valuable letters (Due 6). The author has not seen a preprinted "Due 9" envelope. A special "Soldier's Letter" preprinted "Due 3" envelope is also

known. The United States DLO also had a special hand stamp. Examples of which are shown in Figure 21.

Just like its northern counterpart, the CSA Post Office Department put a Dead Letter Office (DLO) in operation. The Dead Letter Office was located in Richmond. With the closing of the Richmond-Washington mail route on May 24, 1861 (evening of May 23, 1861), all northbound mail from the eastern Confederate states was diverted to the CSA Dead Letter Office. Two types of Confederate DLO markings are known. The first is a horizontal oval double ringed hand stamp with a manuscript notation insert "M-78-1" (with "M" the starting letter of the addressees last name (Merchant's Bank, Baltimore) and the "78-1" probably for tracking purposes) as shown on the cover in Figure 22. This cover was mailed on May 22, 1861 from a bank in Athens, Georgia to a bank in Baltimore, Maryland. Reaching Richmond on the evening

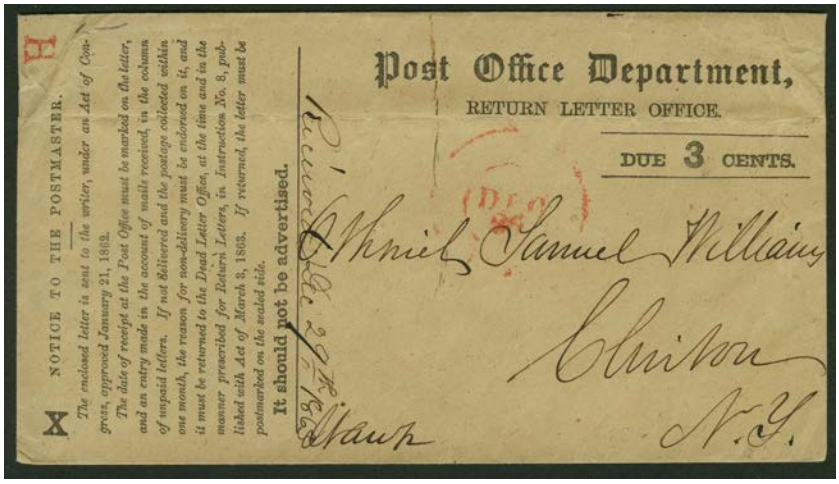



**Figure 20. United States Post Office "Due 3" DLO Envelope used during the Civil War. It was received on December 29, 1863. The envelope refers to the DLO as the Return Letter Office. According to Wegner [19] the letter "X" in the lower left corner is a clerk identifier. Each clerk was assigned a letter and was expected to use similarly marked envelopes in returning mail. A count of the envelopes used allowed the clerk's productivity to be measured. The "H" signifies it was used by another clerk who was assigned the letter "H." These DLO envelopes measure 159 mm wide by 89 mm high.**

of May 23, 1861 after the mails closed, it was diverted to the Confederate DLO the next day. The Confederate DLO oval hand stamp was applied on August 23, 1861 some three months after the letter was diverted. The second marking type is illustrated on the cover in Figure 23. It is an all manuscript marking reading "P. O. D. Dead Letter Office" followed by the date "2 Sept. 1861" and the "K" for Kissam & Taylor (New York City) and again "78-1" for tracking. This cover was addressed to New York from Newberry, South Carolina and was postmarked on May 30, 1861. Arriving in Richmond after the northbound route closure and before the change in Confederate policy on handling northbound mail, it was diverted to the Confederate DLO. The manuscript DLO markings were applied on September 2, 1861. Confederate DLO cover

markings are very rare for several reasons: 1) the markings were apparently applied to Northbound or foreign mail only with no evidence of Confederate DLO markings being used on mail sent within the Confederacy [20]; 2) the quantity of Northbound mail waned as the war progressed and the postal and communications bans took effect; and 3) although records are spotty it seems that most mail that reached the Confederate DLO during the war was destroyed, especially true for soldier's mail. There is some evidence from United States Post Office records that about 4,000 pieces of northbound mail were received from the Confederacy during the period November 1, 1861 and October 31, 1862, perhaps containing Confederate DLO markings. There is also some belief that the Confederate DLO hand stamp was only in use during 1861[21].


**Figure 21. Examples of Northern DLO Hand stamps.**

On or about June 1, 1861, the Confederate Post Office Department policy on northbound letters changed. Instead of sending them to the DLO, Richmond and other eastern post offices forwarded northbound letters to key western interchange points such as Memphis and Nashville (both in Tennessee) where they were sent North via Louisville, Kentucky. Until June 6, 1861 northbound mail travelled from Memphis or Nashville to Louisville. From June 7th through June 12th only Nashville forwarded mail to Louisville. After June 12, 1861, due to the resignation of the Nashville Federal Postmaster (W. D. McNish) and the withdrawal of the U. S. mail agent from the route, the Louisville postmaster (John J. Speed) began to hold mail still being sent north by the discontinued Federal post office at Nashville rather than send it to the U. S. Dead Letter


**Figure 22. Cover mailed from the Bank of the State of Georgia (form enclosed), Athens, Georgia on May 22, 1861 to Merchants Bank in Baltimore, Maryland. The letter was diverted to the Confederate Dead Letter Office due to the closing of the Washington-Richmond mail route on May23-24, 1861. The Confederate DLO applied its oval date stamp on August 23, 1861 along with the manuscript M-78-1 record identifier. The envelope is Scott No. 26, 3¢ red on white with star. Cover illustrated through the courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc. [22].**


**Figure 23. Cover mailed from Newberry, C. H., South Carolina on May 30, 1861. It was a repurposed envelope (Scott No. U9, 3¢ red on white Nesbit envelope) addressed to Kissam & Taylor, New York City. With the Richmond-Washington mail route closed and all service suspended with the North on May 31, 1861 (Blair Decree), the letter was forwarded to the Confederate DLO. There on September 2, 1861 it received a manuscript DLO marking with a K-78-1 record identifier all in red ink. Cover illustrated through the courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc. [23].**

Office. Speed wired (sent telegram) Washington for instructions on how to handle this rapidly accumulating mail. On June 24th Speed received instructions by wire from the Post Office Department in Washington D. C. to "forward letters from the South for the loyal states as unpaid after removing the postage stamps…" Since it was difficult and time consuming to remove the stamps (without damaging the mail) from the approximately 5,000 letters that had accumulated, Postmaster Speed created the "SOUTHN. LETTER UNPAID." hand stamp marking. The marking explained to the addressee why stamps applied to the mail by the sender (either U. S. or Confederate provisional) were invalid for postage and hence why the mail was postage due. An example of a "SOUTHN. LETTER UNPAID." cover sent postage "Due 3" to Eddyville, Kentucky is shown in Figure 24 through the courtesy of Robert A. Siegel auction galleries [24]. Louisville started marking letters with the "SOUTHN. LETTER UNPAID." hand stamp on June 25, 1861 but did not apply a date stamp to the first batch handled. All subsequent batches had the Louisville CDS applied in addition to the special "SOUTHN. LETTER UNPAID." hand stamp [25]. According to Walske and Trepel [26], only 29 examples of the "SOUTHN. LETTER UNPAID." markings exist (of which one has been verified as a fake).


**Figure 24. The cover is stamped with two New Orleans 5¢ Provisional stamps (See Figure ) to pay the Confederacy 10¢ postal rate and a United States 3¢ stamp (Scott No. 26) to pay the Union rate. The postmaster of Louisville, Kentucky (John Speed) was ordered to forward letters received from the South as postage due (after removing all signs of prepayment), rather than try to remove the stamps he created the "SOUTHN. LETTER UNPAID." hand stamp to explain to the recipient why the letter was postage due. This letter was received in Louisville between June 17 and June 25, 1861. It was release on June 25th without the Louisville CDS. The image is supplied through the courtesy of the Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc. [24].**

**Flag-of-Truce Mail**

At the peak of the war there were more than 1,400,000 soldiers in prisons camps. The need to write letters home and receive mail from loved ones was paramount. Both sides proposed and supported mail exchanges under Flag-of-Truce arrangements. Thus, Flag-of Truce mail was exchanged throughout most of the Civil War, although the Union suspended exchanges during the period from September 1862 to June 1863 fearing that the Confederacy was using these sanction mail exchanges to send espionage data southward  Flag-of-Truce exchanges took place at several locations as listed in Table 5. The Old Point Comfort-Fortress Monroe exchange point was by far the most important (largest volume of mail).

Regulations called for the Flag-of-Truce letters to be placed in unsealed envelopes addressed to the final destination (North or South). These unsealed envelopes (inner envelopes) were then placed inside others envelope (outer envelopes) on which postage had been paid to the exchange point. At the exchange point the outer envelope was removed and the letter in the inner envelope was read by a military examiner. Examiner approved letters were then exchanged and sent on their way to their final destination. Delivery from the exchange point to the final destination required postage of the other side. Since the senders did not typically have access to postage stamps of the other side, they enclosed coins in the outer envelope to pay the required postage or requested that the letter be forwarded postage due. Since the inner envelopes were only handled by the postal system of the receiving side, they only have postal markings and franking of the receiving side. Due to many circumstances, senders did not follow the two-envelope rule and one envelope was used containing a final address, as well as instructions to exchange the letter at a certain place under a Flag-of Truce. Such letters bear markings of both postal systems and are franked with appropriate postage in the sending system and are typically marked postage due in the receiving system. A so marked Flag-of-Truce cover is shown in Figure 13, where a prisoner in a northern camp (Johnsons Island, Ohio) used a U. S. three-cent stamp to mail his letter to the Old Point Comfort, Fortress Monroe exchange point. The letter was then accepted as postage due (Due 10) in the Confederate system. Flag-of-Truce covers with both Union and Confederate stamps do exist, but are quite rare.

**Table 5: Dates and Places for Flag-of-Truce Prisoner-of-War Mail Exchanges between the North and the South**

| Dates | Exchange Points | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| July-August 1861 | None | No Flag-of-Truce Mail |
| September-May 1862 | Norfolk-Old Point Comfort | Norfolk captured by Union on May 9, 1862 |
| May-September 1862 | Petersburg (Richmond)-Old Point Comfort | Petersburg replaced Norfolk |
| September 1862-June 1863 | None | Prisoner of War mail exchanges suspended by North (fearing Southern espionage use) |
| July 1863-June 1865 | Various (Multiple)* | Flag-of-Truce exchanges resumed in volume |

- Exchange points were established in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. While exchanges usually took place between two cities or areas on dry land an exchange route in Texas was actually established between Galveston and the U. S. Blockade ships. The Petersburg (Richmond)-Old Point Comfort Route was still the most important, handling the largest volume of mail.

## Summary

In summary, we have taken a brief glimpse into the mail systems and stamps in use during the Civil War--both Union and Confederate. In particular, we have looked at the flow of mail North and South, especially mail that was rated postage due. Prior to the 1850s most mail was sent unpaid (cost to be paid by the recipient) and hence postage due. After the postal reforms of the 1850s, requiring prepayment of mail, postage due was relegated to a secondary role of fee collection due to missing stamps or if stamped the mail was otherwise underpaid. A large fraction of the mail sent during the Civil War involved soldier's correspondence. By mutual agreement on both sides, soldiers' mail was allowed to be sent postage due because of the lack of availability of stamps in the field or in prison camps. Postage due rates of 3¢ and 6¢ were common on soldiers' mail in the North and "Due 10" was the common Confederate marking. "Due 5" was used during the first year of the war by the South reflecting its 5¢ half-ounce rate under 500 miles, but it was soon raised to 10¢ to cover increasing costs of the Confederate mail service. Flag-of-Truce mail exchanges usually resulted in dual franked envelopes, because the required two envelope process was often ignore. Dual franking in this case usually referred to a stamp or paid marking on the sender's side with postage due marking or hand stamp on the recipient's side. True dual franking with stamps is very rare. The role and scope of the Dead Letter Offices on both sides was discussed and the resultant destruction of letters or the letters' return via postage due. The north even created special envelopes for this return process. In general, the Civil War was a period of turmoil for the entire country and such turmoil was reflected to a large degree in the mail systems and routes that evolved to meet the demands of

war time correspondence. It is hoped that this work will lead to more detailed studies of Civil War mail, especially the postage due letters.

References and End Notes

[1] Several First Day of Independence and First Day of the Confederacy covers were offered as Lots 1 to 18 in Robert A. Siegel Sale No. 988 "The Steven C. Walske Collection of Special Postal Routes of the American Civil War", Thursday, May 27, 2012, Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., 600 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022, pp. 9-19.

[2] Fort Sumter (in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina) was built after the War of 1812 as one of a series of fortifications on the Southeastern United States coastline. It dominates the entrance to Charleston Harbor and, in keeping with the fort designs of the day, it is a five-sided brick structure with 1.5 meter thick walls standing at least 15 meters above the water at low tide. Each side of the fort measured between 55 and 61 meters in length and the fort and the surrounding sand bar structure (that had been reinforced with 70,000 tons of granite rock) occupy about 235 acres. Construction was begun in 1829, and it was still not complete at the start of the Civil War in 1861. It was designed to hold 650 men and over 135 pieces of artillery (on three levels). Being undermanned with few guns and munitions and little food (re-supply attempts were stopped by the Confederate), the garrison in Fort Sumter surrendered the fort to the Confederates on Saturday, April 13, 1861 and evacuated the garrison. The fort was never recaptured by the Union forces although several mis-guided attempts were made. When the Confederates were forced by Sherman's advance to evacuate Charleston on February 14, 1865, the fort was abandoned. The Federal Government formally took back possession of Fort Sumter on February 22, 1865.

[3] Montgomery Blair (May 10, 1813- July 27, 1883) was a lawyer and politician from the state of Maryland. Blair was an abolitionist and during the Civil War was a loyal member of President Abraham Lincoln's cabinet serving as the 20th United States Postmaster General from March 5, 1861 to September 24, 1864. Blair resigned over differences with the radical wing of the Republican Party, but still campaigned strongly for Lincoln's re-election. The Blairs and the Lincolns remained close friends.

Blair was born in Kentucky and graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1835. After service in the Seminole Indian War, Blair left the Army and studied law, setting up practice in Missouri. His law practice led him to stints as U. S. District Attorney and to the holding of court judgeships. In 1852 he moved to Maryland and practiced law principally before the U. S. Supreme Court. Blair became a founding member of the new Republican Party. In 1860 Blair was very active in Lincoln's campaign and after the election was invited by Lincoln to join his Cabinet as Postmaster General. Under Blair's watch as Postmaster General, the United States Post Office Department established: the free delivery of city mail; the money order system; and the use of railway mail cars (at the suggestion of George B. Armstrong).

[4] John Henninger Reagan (October 8, 1818-March 6, 1905) was a politician from the state of Texas. He was a member of the U. S. House of Representatives at the time Texas seceded from the Union and joined the Confederate States of America. Reagan resigned from the Congress on January 15, 1861 and soon became the Confederate States' Postmaster General. He took office on March 6, 1861 and served in that post until the end of the war (Confederate Post Office Department was abolished on May 10, 1865).

Reagan was born in Gatlinburg, Tennessee but moved to Texas at age 19. He worked as a surveyor and farmed for several years. Reagan studied law and was licensed to practice in 1846. He opened a law office in Buffalo, Texas. After being admitted to the bar in 1848, he expanded his practice to include Palestine, Texas. Over the next few years he was a district judge and became very active in politics which led to his election to Congress in 1857. After the Confederacy was defeated, Reagan urged the people of Texas to cooperate rather than face the inevitable military occupation and control. Reagan was denounced by his fellow Texans, but after his predictions came true during the harsh Reconstruction period, his foresight and consistency of purpose and message were praised. He was again elected to the U. S. House of Representatives and later to the Senate. His last official position was as the Chairman of the Railroad Commission of Texas which he held until 1903, two years before his death.

[5] Jefferson Finis Davis (June 3, 1808-December 6, 1889) was the President of the Confederate States of America for its entire duration. He was born in Kentucky and attended Transylvania University before going on to West Point. Davis fought in the Mexican-American War as a volunteer regiment colonel. He was the United States Secretary of War under President Franklin Pierce. As a United States Senator from Mississippi, Davis argued against secession, but believed in the sovereignty of the states and their right to secede. On February 9, 1861 Davis resigned from the Senate and was appointed the provisional President of the Confederacy. In November 1861, he was elected to a six year term (without opposition). Davis took charge of the Confederate war plans, but ultimately could not devise a strategy to stop the larger, more powerful North.

At the end of the war, Davis was captured and imprisoned under a charge of treason (although he was never tried). Held at Fortress Monroe for two years, he was finally released on $100,000 bail which was posted by prominent citizens representing both the North and the South. Davis travelled to Canada, Cuba, and various European Capitals in search of work. Slowly he regained his reputation through his writings and his belief in the prosperity of the new Union. He was befriended by a wealthy Mississippi widow, and he inherited her estate upon her death in 1878. From 1878 to his death in 1889 (in New Orleans) Davis lived in relative comfort and is best remembered for his historical writings about the Confederacy.

[6] The Union blockade was ineffective by almost any standard--allowing and overall average of successful blockade runs of about 84% (i. e. only one time out of six was a blockade running ship successfully intercepted). The Union blockade fleet was ill equipped for the task, with few

ships of which many were in need of repair. As the war progressed the fleet grew, and it was somewhat more successful. In the later stages of the war, the blockading fleet intercepted one out of three blockade runs. While the blockading ships were old and in need of repair, the blockade runners had new, specially designed ships (iron hulls, shallow drafts, low silhouettes, painted foggy gray, and burned smokeless anthracite coal) that (by the end of the war) were capable of 18 knot speeds or greater. With that speed and running on moonless nights blockade penetration was relatively easy. The blockade running ships were financed mainly by British businessmen who saw and made huge profits in the blockade running business. A couple of successful runs could easily pay for the ship (e.g. cotton could be brought in the Confederacy for 3¢ a pound and sold in England for 50¢ to $1.00 a pound). While blockade running was successful and quite profitable to the entrepreneurs, it was not run to the benefit of the Confederate government. The ineffectiveness of the Union blockade gave the Confederacy the great opportunity to trade cotton for military supplies. Instead they imposed an embargo on cotton export in hopes of drawing England into the war on their side. The embargo was a dismal failure because Britain had excess cotton supplies due to bumper crops in 1859 and 1860, so England could wait the Confederates out. Thus, the embargo waned and finally ceased, but the Confederacy lost a significant opportunity to raise ample money and import enough arms and ammunition for its troops. Private entrepreneurs had thousands of blockade running ships while the Confederate government had only 11 of its own ships. By 1863 the Confederacy had passed laws reserving one-third to one-half of the cargo space on every blockade running ship. In 1864 the reserved was changed to a mandate along with outlawing importation of certain luxury items (silks, perfumes, liquors, quinine, etc.). Even with the stricter regulations, the Confederacy failed to take full advantage--receiving revenue from only 5% of the cotton shipped by the South during the war. Since blockade runners were relatively small, they could only carry a limited amount and the captains and ship owners opted for light, high return cargo such as silks, linen, quinine, perfume, and alcohol (hard liquor and wine). Despite the failure to fully exploit the success of the blockade runners, the Confederacy did depend on it for survival, especially late in the war. According to shipping company records, the Confederacy imported about 600,000 arms (over 60% of their need), 3 million pounds of lead (one-third of the army's need), 2.5 million pounds of saltpeter (two-thirds of the army's need), about 75% of all gun powder ingredients, and most of the cloth and leather for uniforms. For further details on the blockade and blockade running see Jochem H. Trans, "The Hapless Anaconda: Union Blockade 1861-1865," *The Concord Review, Inc.*, 1995, PP. 13-30.

[7] Steven C. Walske and Scott R. Trepel, *Special Mail Routes of the American Civil War: A Guide to Across-the-lines Postal History*, Confederate Stamp Alliance, Charlotte, NC 28216, 283 pages, 2008.

[8] "United States and Confederate Postal History" Sale No. 927, Wednesday December 20, 2006, Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., 600 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022, Lot No. 1170, p. 53.

[9] "The D. K. Collection of Southern Postmaster's Provisionals of the American Civil War" Sale No. 1022, Wednesday March 28, 2012, Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., 600 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022, Introduction pp. 9-10.

[10] Confederate stamps were all issued imperforate and had to be cut from the sheets by scissors or a sharp knife or razor. A few of the CSA Scott No. 11 and 12 were experimentally perforated 12½ by the Confederate Post Office Department. Postmasters were also known to have privately perforated or rouletted very small quantities. Genuine perforated or rouletted Confederate stamps are thus very rare and should be screened by experts.

[11] A 1¢ Yellow/Orange stamp (Scott No. CS14) with a John C. Calhoun image was prepared by De La Rue printing firm (London, England) using typography. The quantity printed was 400,000, but the stamp was never issued.

[12] Old Point Comfort is located on the Virginia coast just north of Norfolk and across Hampton Roads (a natural harbor formed by the confluence of the James and Elizabeth Rivers). Located at Old Point Comfort was Fortress Monroe a large, well-built fort that was part of the pre-war costal defense system of the United States. It guarded the entrance to Hampton Roads, the James and Elizabeth Rivers, and to the east it overlooked the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay. At the start of the Civil War, Fortress Monroe (Fort Monroe) was garrisoned by Union troops who were able to maintain control of the fortress and the entire Old Port Comfort area (north side of Hampton Roads) throughout the entire war. Thus, an Old Point Comfort, Virginia postmark signifies Union usage and not Confederate. During their operations in Virginia much of the Union's Army of the Potomac mail went through Old Port Comfort and bear its postmark. Unlike Confederate soldiers, Union soldiers were expected to prepay their letters. Thus, Old Port Comfort Union covers bear a 3¢ stamp (See Figure 12) or were sent through postage due. If the soldier did not prepay the letter with a 3¢ stamp and the cover was properly endorsed ("Soldiers Letter" plus name, rank, and unit and sometimes a superior officer signature), the cover was rated "Due 3." If the cover was not properly endorsed, it was rated "Due 6" (3¢ for the missing postage plus a 3¢ penalty).

Besides being an important location for Union soldiers' mail, Old Point Comfort and Fortress Monroe also served as the main exchange point for Flag-of-Truce mail. Flag-of Truce exchanges were maintained by both the North and the South for benefit of the prisoners of war. Confederate soldiers held in Northern prisons could send letters home through Fortress Monroe. The Confederate prisoner's letter would be taken from the prison by the United States postal system to Fortress Monroe where it would be exchanged under a Flag-of-Truce with the Confederacy. Once in Confederate hands the letter would be taken to Richmond for entry into the Confederate Postal System and the ultimate delivery to its final Southern destination. These north to south letters did not receive an Old Point Comfort postmark, but they typically contained manuscript markings for Flag-of-Truce exchange and either Old Point Comfort or Fortress Monroe or both. Such an example is shown on the cover in Figure 14. Covers that entered both

postal systems were expected to pay postage in each system. For example, the cover in Figure 14 had a 3¢ stamp to pay postage in the Union system and was rated "Due 10" by the Confederate Postal System. The 10¢ would be paid by the recipient in Alabama.

Letters from the south would take the reverse route. They would first be sent to Richmond and the taken by Flag-of-Truce to Old Point Comfort for entry into the Union postal system and delivery to their northern destination. These South to North bound covers bear the Old Point Comfort postmark as their point of entry into the Union system.

[13] The United States Christian Commission (USCC) was formed by the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) at the start of the Civil War (after the first battle of Bull Run) to provide supplies, medical services (in cooperation with the United States Sanitary Commission), and religious literature and support (social services) to Union soldiers. At the November 14, 1861 national YMCA convention in New York, the United States Christian Commission was authorized and approved. It was formed the next day under the leadership of Vincent Colger and George Stuart. Stuart was chairman of the USCC. It had its main headquarters in Philadelphia with regional headquarters in Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Louisville, New York, St. Louis, and St. Paul. As a joint effort of the YMCA and Protestant ministers, the USCC fielded over 5,000 volunteers (called delegates) to help the Civil War soldiers (mainly Union). These delegates distributed over $6,000,000 worth of goods and supplies in hospitals, camps, prisons, and on the battlefield. They worked hand-in-hand with the Army's fledgling Chaplain Core (about 30 in number) which was overwhelmed by the scale of battle and the soldiers' needs (battle fatigue, wounds, death, and disease).

[14] Free home delivery of mail during the Civil War started in Cleveland, Ohio where a postal employee named Joseph Briggs convinced postal officials to deliver letters the city's residents for free. Encouraged by the results, officials expended the service to other cities and on July 1, 1863 Free City Delivery Service began in 49 of the Union's largest cities (population greater than 50,000). The system was popular and profitable and after the war this home delivery service provided jobs for Civil War veterans. Within a few short years every city (town) in the country with a population greater than 20,000 had free mail delivery. After 1887 the service was opened to areas with an aggregate population of 10,000 or more or where the postal revenues exceeded $10,000. Before allowing home delivery to take place, postmasters could insist on civic improvements such as paved sidewalks, street lighting, house numbering, and street name signs be posted at intersections.

[15] Rural Free Delivery is said to have been created by an Act of Congress in 1896 during President Grover Cleveland's Administration, but, in fact, it actually started several years earlier. In 1891, the Post Office Department began a series of experiments on rural mail delivery. They began with five routes covering ten miles in rural West Virginia (Jefferson County). The experiments were a success and, by the time the R.F.D. act was passed in 1896, the number of routes had increased significantly. In 1896 alone eighty-two rural routes were added. Nation-

wide R.F.D. took several more years to implement. By 1902, the mileage logged by rural carriers was over 100,000 miles, and by 1910 it had risen to almost a million miles on an annual basis.

[16] H. K. Charles, Jr., "United States Parcel Post System: Postage Due Stamps and Proofs," *The Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposium Selected Papers 2010-2011*, Thomas Lera, Editor, Smithsonian Contributions to History and Technology Number 56, Smithsonian Institution Scholar Press, Washington, D.C. 2012, pp 119-132.

[17] The United States introduced postage due stamps some twenty years after they were invented by the French in 1859. While the concept of postage due on mail had been in place since the beginnings of the United States postal service, it relied on the veracity of the postmaster to ensure that the deficit was first collected and then it was deposited in Post Office accounts. This need for accountability caused the United States to adopt the French postage due stamp concept. Postage due stamps were required by postal law to be affixed to all underpaid or other fee-required mail. Thus, the postmaster either had to have money in his account for any postage due stamps used or the stamps in his inventory. The United States introduced their first series of seven postage due stamps (1¢, 2¢, 3¢, 5¢, 10¢, 30¢, and 50¢) in the summer (four low values) and fall (three high values) of 1879. For additional details on the start of postage due adhesive stamp usage in the United States see, for example, Harry K. Charles, Jr., "United States Postage Due Stamp Essays and Proofs Part I: Introduction and Essays of the First Design," *The United States Specialist*, Vol. 81, No. 12, December2011, pp. 554-571.

[18] Richard B. Graham, "The U. S. Dead Letter Office and the Civil War" *S. P. A. Journal*, July 1983, pp. 689-700.

[19] Thomas R. Wegner, "Dead Letter Office Return Envelopes, 1862 Clerk Identification Letters," *The Chronicle* 159, Volume 45, No. 3, August 1993, pp. 151-159.

[20] Van Dyke MacBride, "The Confederate Dead Letter Office, Its Envelopes and Handstamps," *Tenth American Philatelic Congress Book*, Philadelphia, PA, December 1944, pp. 15-25.

[21] Ibid, page 21.

[22] "The Steven C. Walske Collection of Special Postal Routes of the American Civil War", Sale 988, Lot No. 24, Thursday, May 27, 2010, Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., 600 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022, p. 27.

[23] "The Steven C. Walske Collection of Special Postal Routes of the American Civil War", Sale 988, Lot No.26, Thursday, May 27, 2010, Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., 600 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022, p. 28.

[24] “The Steven C. Walske Collection of Special Postal Routes of the American Civil War”, Sale 988, Lot No. 32, Thursday, May 27, 2010, Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., 600 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022, pp. 34-35.

[25] Lawrence L. Shenfield, “Southn. Letter Unpaid Marking of Louisville, KY, June and July 1861,” *Twelth American Philatelic Congress Book*, Boston, MA, November 1946, pp. 133-139.

[26] Walske and Trepel Opt, cit. [24] page 35.