

MAIL OF THE CONFEDERATE ARMIES:
NORTHERN VIRGINIA THEATER OF OPERATIONS
1861-1862

STEFAN T. JARONSKI

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27 NOVEMBER 1988

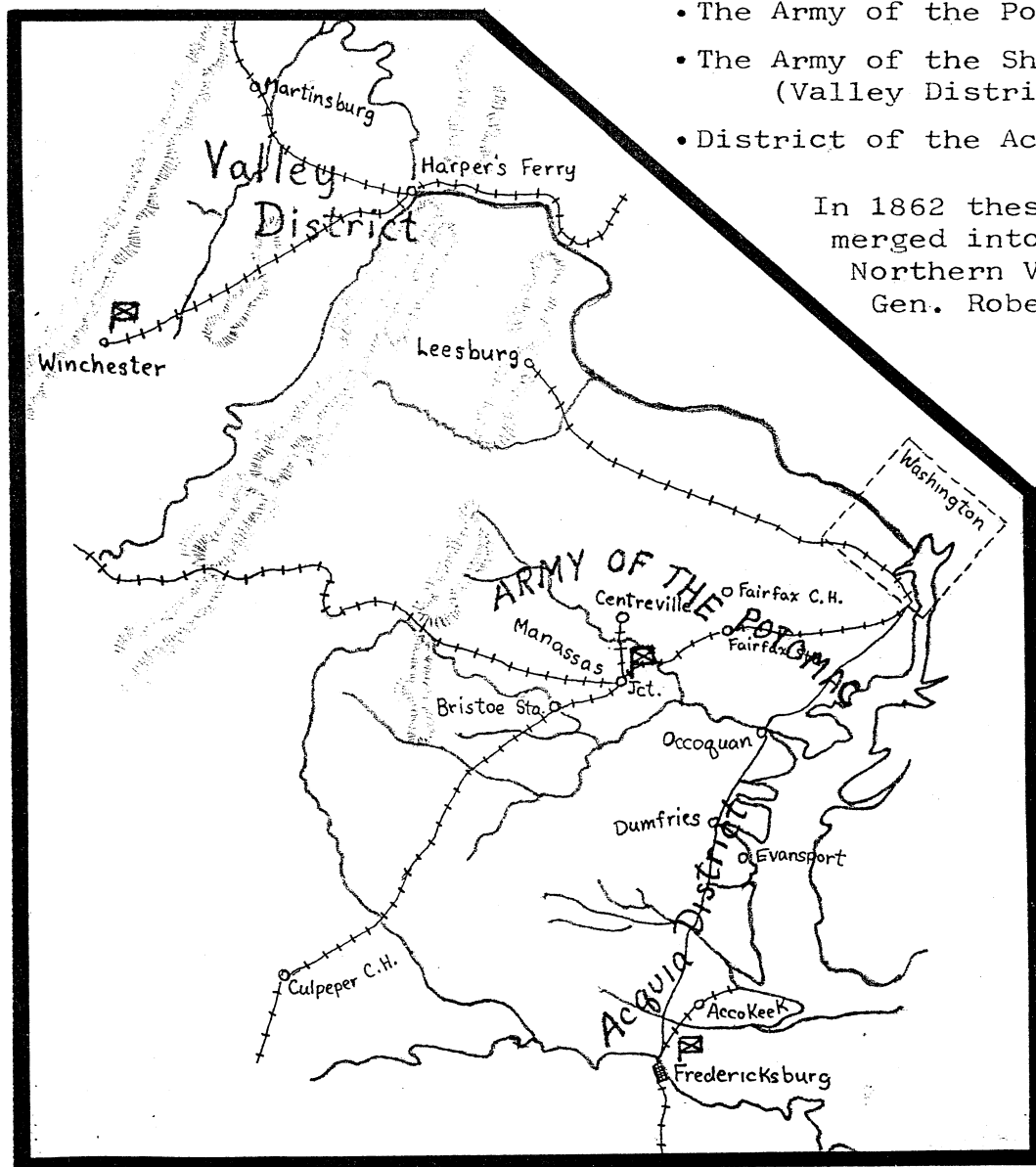
MAIL OF THE CONFEDERATE ARMIES

The Northern Virginia Theater 1861-1862

Confederate forces defending northern Virginia in 1861 were organized into three groups:

- The Army of the Potomac
- The Army of the Shenandoah (Valley District)
- District of the Acquia

In 1862 these forces were merged into the Army of Northern Virginia under Gen. Robert E. Lee.



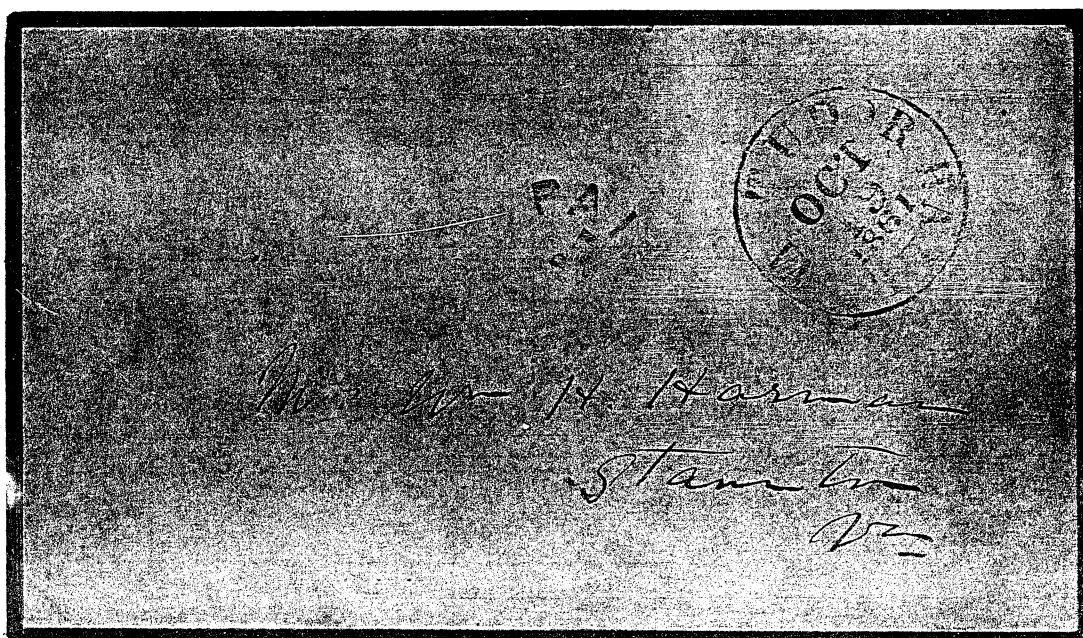
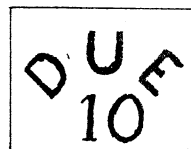
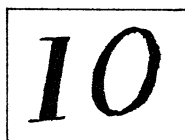
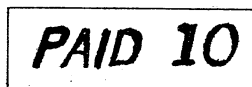
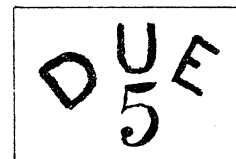
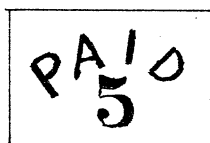
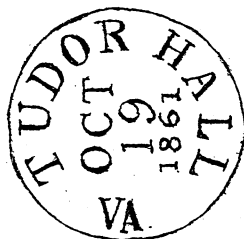
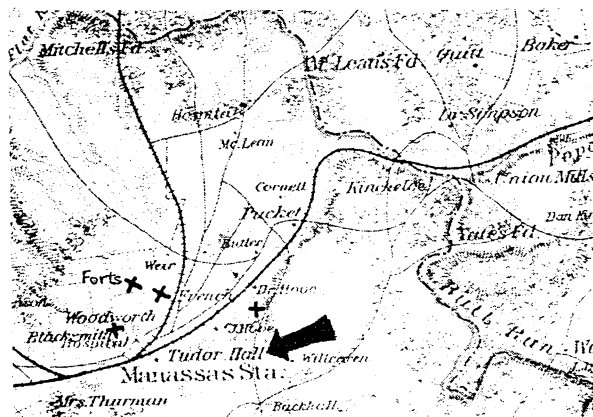
This exhibit presents the postal history of these forces through 1861 and until March 1862, when most of the troops were withdrawn to defend Richmond from attack on the east.

ARMY OF THE POTOMAC

Tudor Hall, Va.

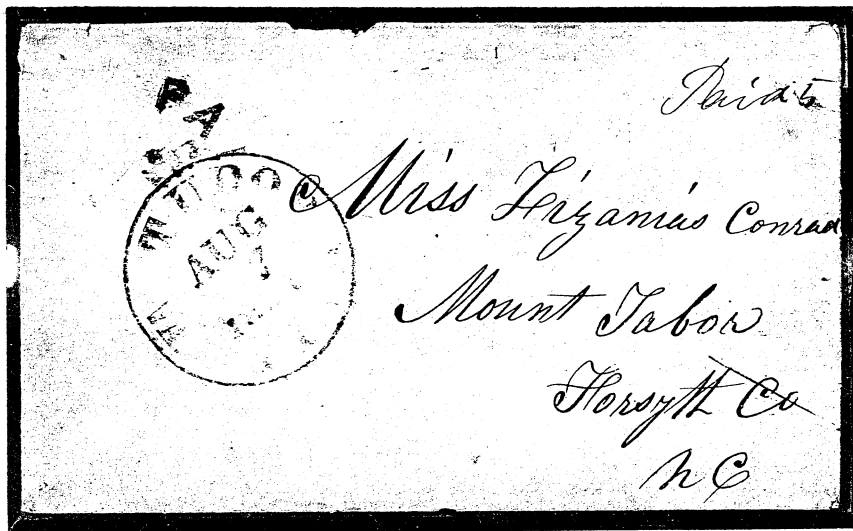
Manassas Junction was the supply base for the Confederate Army of the Potomac. Tudor Hall, located at the railroad junction, became the army's post office.

Before the war Tudor Hall had been a quiet rural facility. By August 1861 Postmaster George Robinson had ten clerks and a circular handstamp plus rate markings.



Tudor Hall, Va. – Handstamped Paids

No stamps were available to prepay postage until October 1861. Letters were prepaid in cash then marked paid with the correct rate marking and postmarked with the Tudor Hall circle date stamp.



Two rates were in effect until July 1862: five cents per $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce sent less than 500 miles (top cover) and ten cents per $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce sent more than 500 miles (bottom cover). Top cover is earliest known date for the Tudor Hall postmark.

The manuscript rates on these covers were applied by army mail orderlies to note prepayment, while the handstamped rate was applied at the post office.

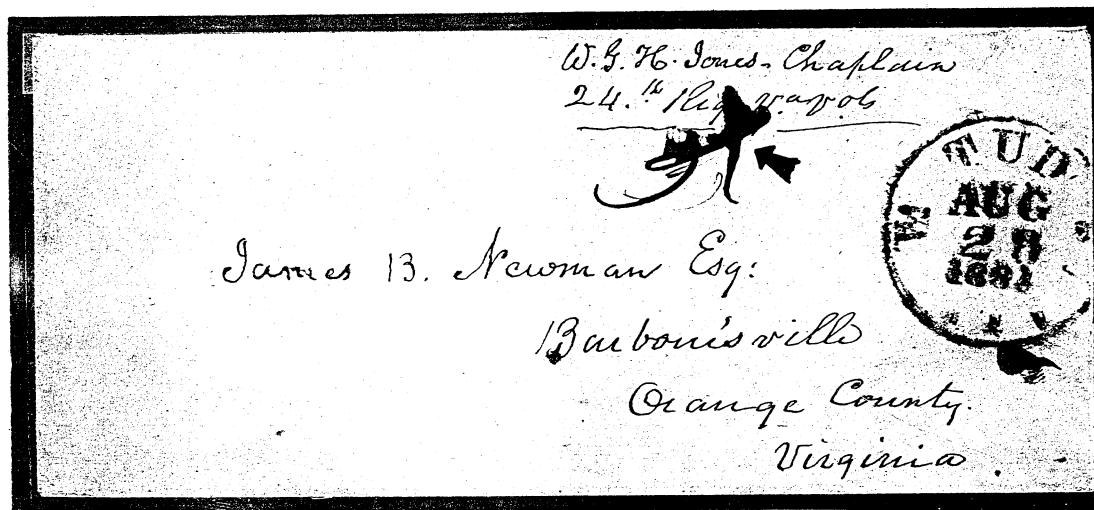


Tudor Hall, Va. - Due Markings

Prepayment was a considerable burden on soldiers at Manassas because they were not paid for several months.

On July 29, 1861 The Confederate Congress authorized officers and enlisted men to send their letters without prepayment. Postage was to be collected from the addressee.

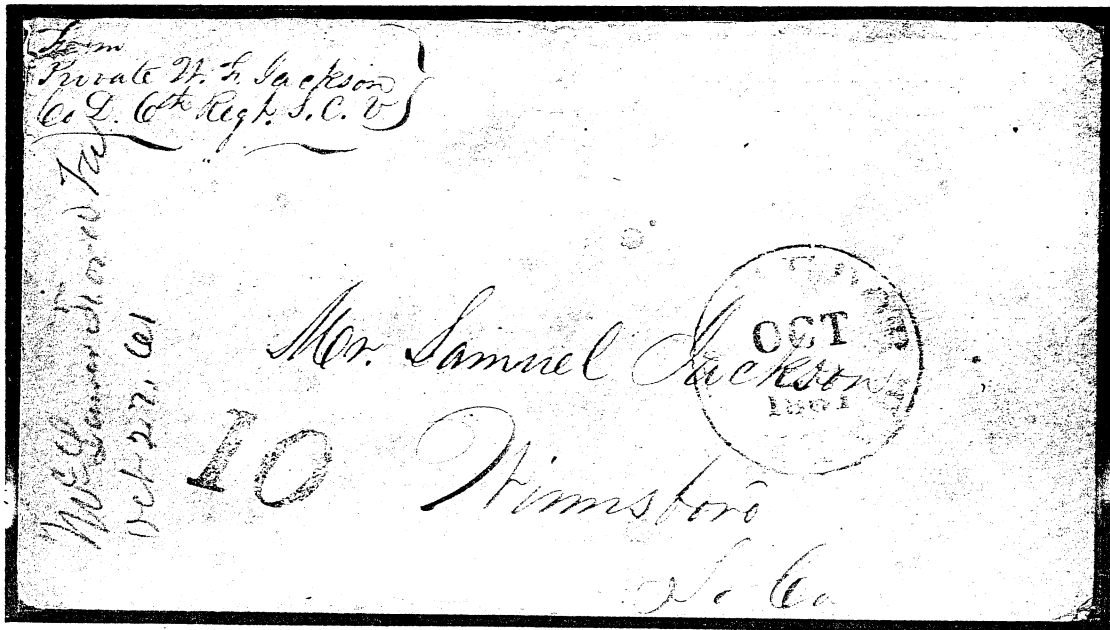
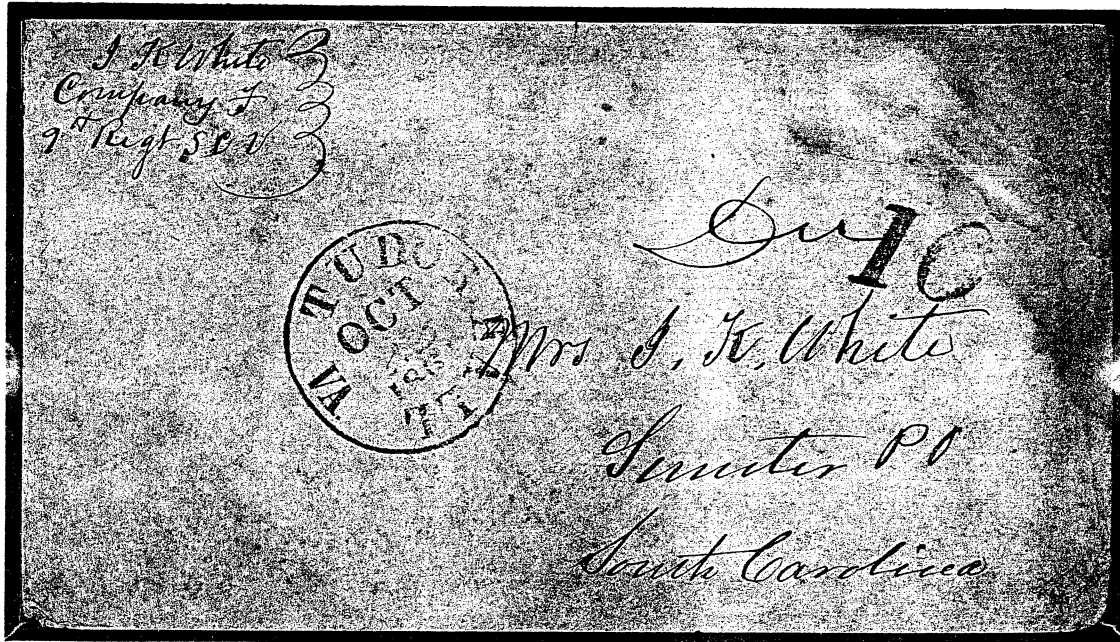
Such Soldier Due letters were to be endorsed with the name, rank and regiment of the sender.



At first Postmaster Robinson used a manuscript due marking such as the five cent due rate here. (The August 23 postmark is the second earliest known.)

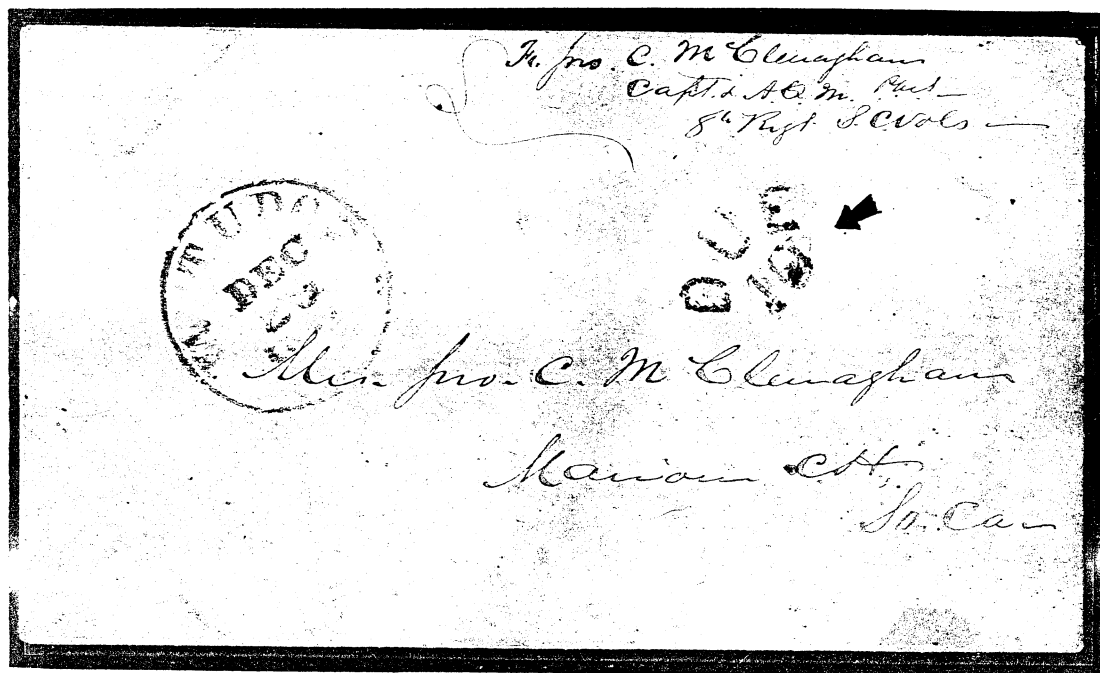
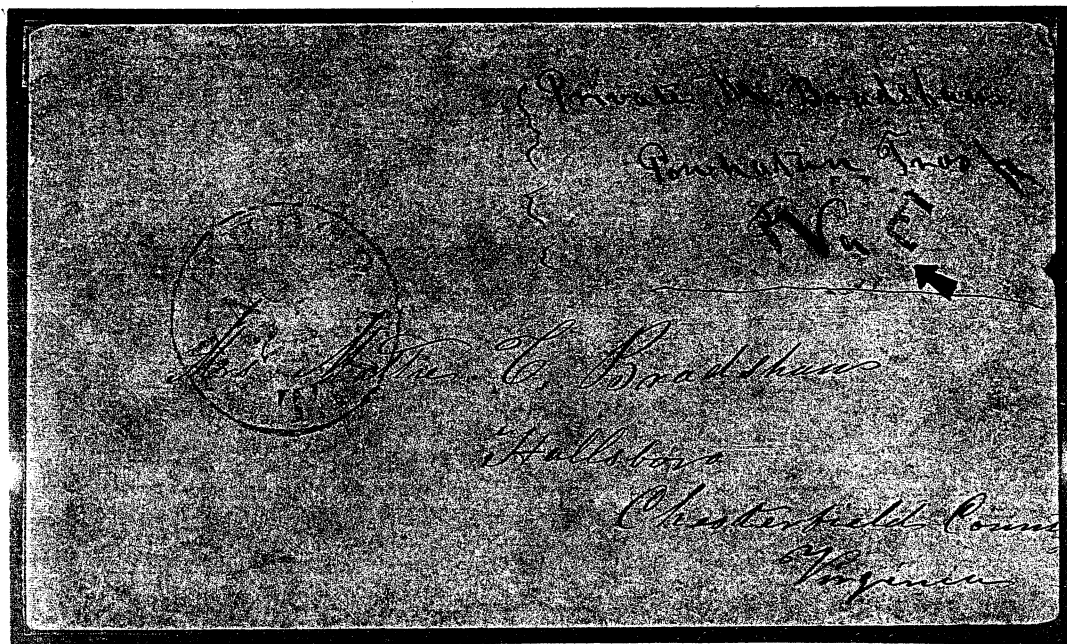
Tudor Hall, Va. - Due Markings

Earliest ten cent due marking was a handstamped italic numeral found both with and without a manuscript "Due" marking. Top cover postmarked Oct. 22; bottom cover postmarked Oct. 29. Both are from the Sixth South Carolina, camped at McLean's Ford on the Manassas battlefield.



Tudor Hall, Va. - Due Markings

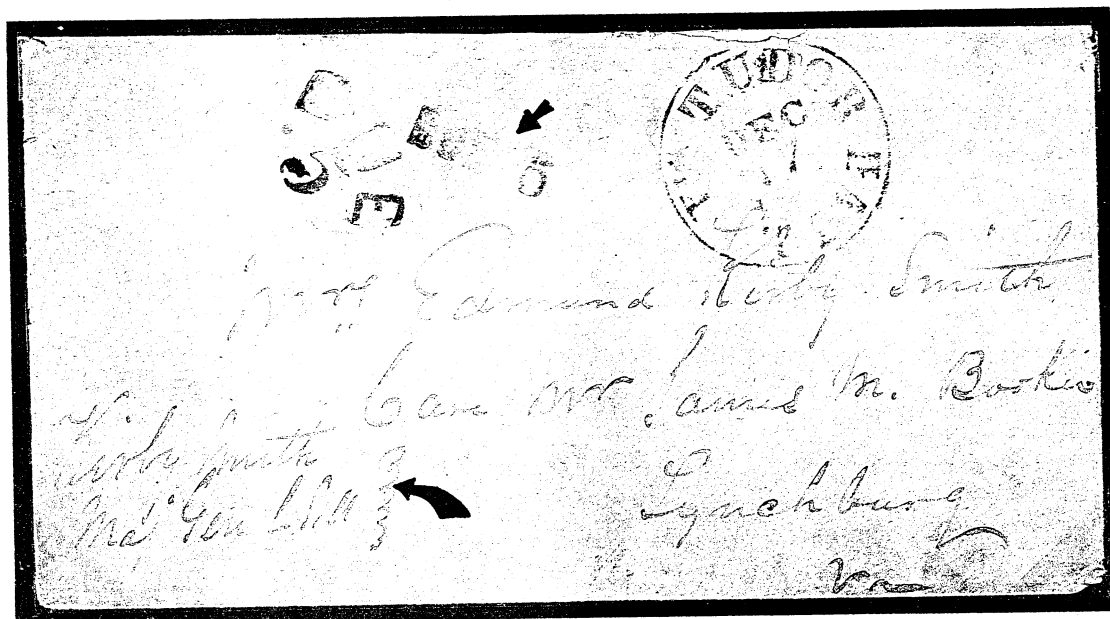
Proper due markings were sent by the Post Office Dept. to Tudor Hall in October and used on due mail thereafter.



Tudor Hall, Va. - Due Markings

The franking privilege extended even to general officers such as Major General Kirby Smith who sent this cover from Centreville in December.

The straight line DUE 5 was applied at Lynchburg possibly to denote extra charge for an overweight letter.



Tudor Hall, Va. - Rate Errors

Richmond Oct 1st 1861

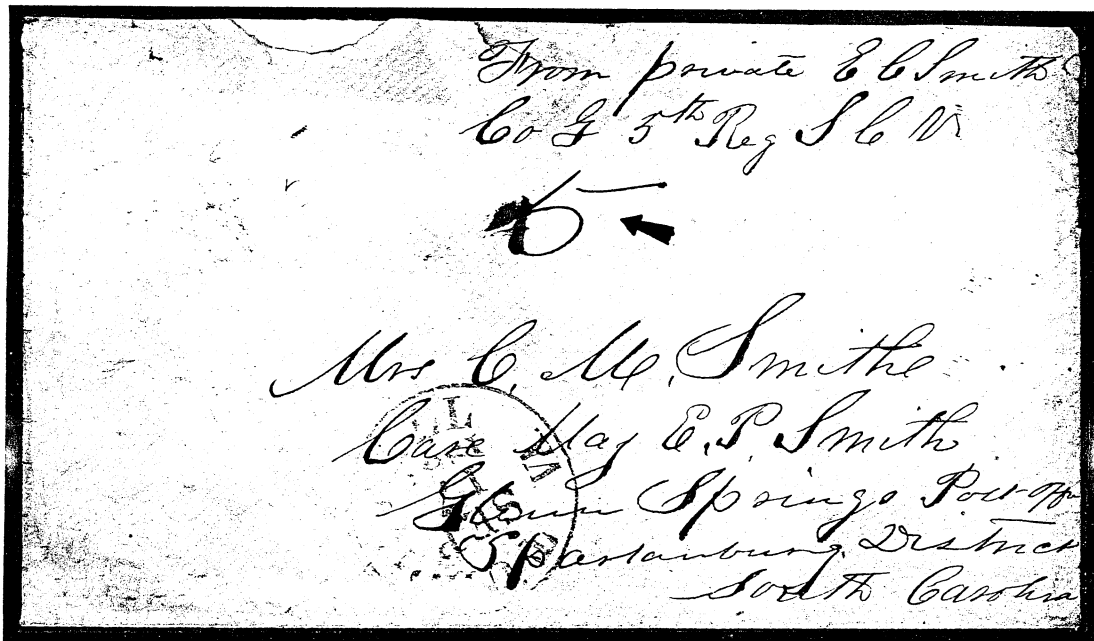
Sir,

Complaints continue to reach this office that you do not take care to calculate distances with any approach to accuracy in your rating postages. Many postmasters in South Carolina who charge 10 cents on letters posted to your office are placed in perplexing positions by finding that the return letters are carried over the same route and are only charged at the rate of 5 cents full postage.

In the absence of a guide for calculating full distance, be good enough as you can so that confusion in this particular matter may not increase or indeed continue.

Postmaster
Tudor Hall
Prince William Co., Va.

Respectfully yours
B.N. CLEMENTS
Chief, Appointment Bureau

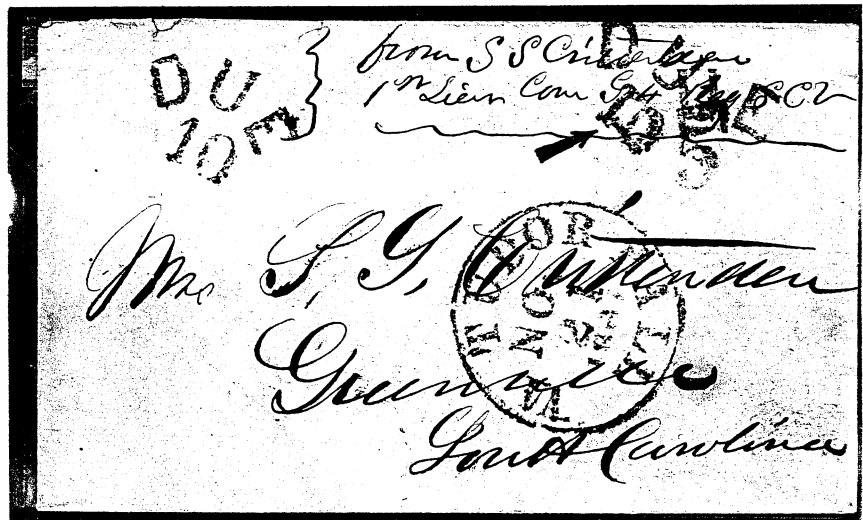


Undercharged due postage on a soldier's letter to South Carolina, reflecting the situation discussed above. Postage should have been ten cents. Postmarked date is Sept. 17, 1861.

Tudor Hall, Va.- Corrected Rates

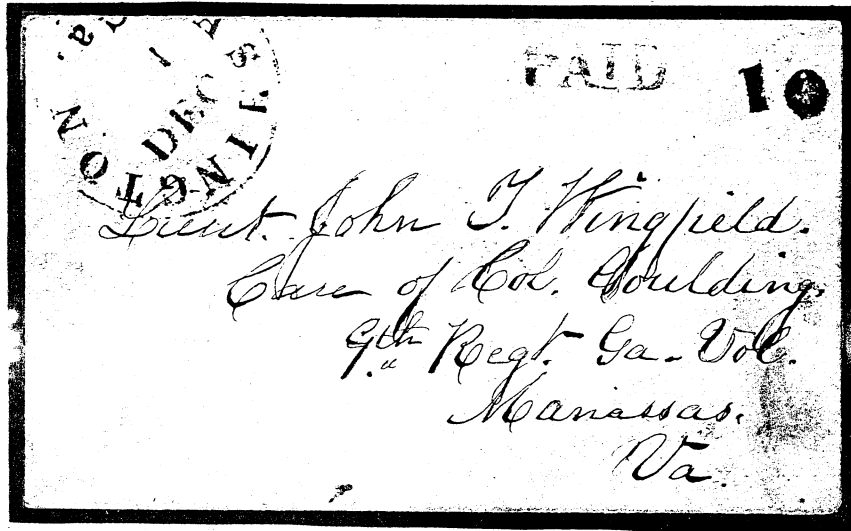
When mistakes in postage charged were caught the letter was revalued if the additional postage could be collected, resulting in revalued rate markings from Tudor Hall.

Handstamped PAID 5 revalued to the proper ten cent rate to Alabama. The folded letter is headed "Bristoe Depot, Va. Sept. 4, 1861."




Revalued soldier's due letter with the postage changed from five to ten cents. The postmark is dated Nov. 17, 1861.

Tudor Hall, Va. - Mail to the Army



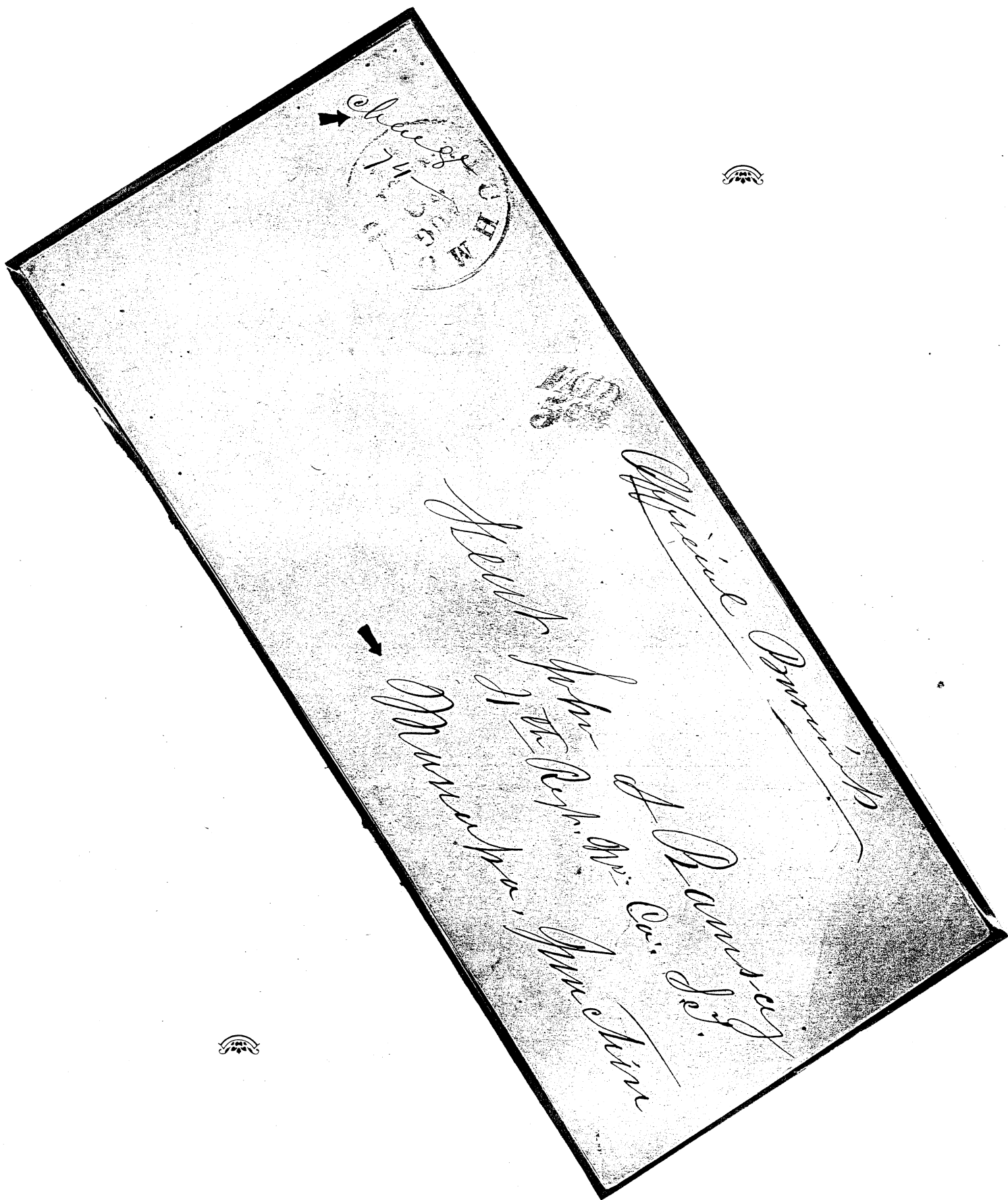
Letters to soldiers at Manassas Junction were addressed to that place, not Tudor Hall; Tudor Hall was known only to postal authorities.

The proper direction on letters included Name, Company, Regiment, Care of (company or regimental commander), Manassas or Manassas Junction.

Next Page 

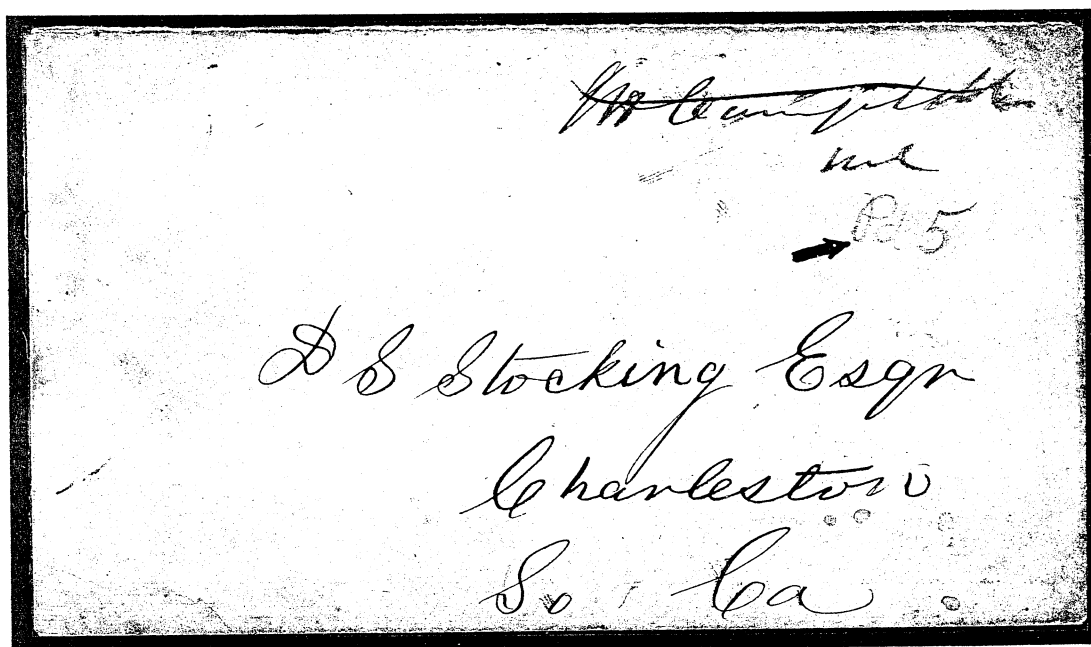
Official business correspondence to a Lieutenant at Manassas Junction. The cover bears a Richmond handstamped "PAID 5 Cts." and August 30, 1861 postmark. The postage was charged to Box 74 at the Richmond post office.

Tudor Hall, Va. - Mail to the Army



ARMY OF THE POTOMAC - Anonymous Markings

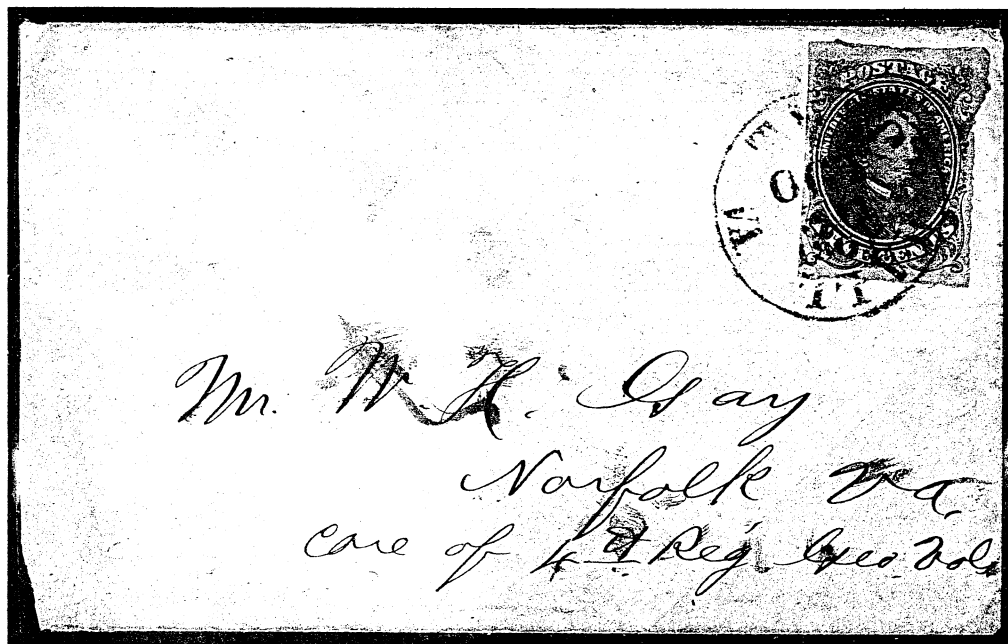
The postmark and rate markings were sometimes omitted because of haste and error. Such covers went through the mails regardless by virtue of the incidental army mail clerks' notations on them. Such covers were once thought to be army postmaster provisionals. They are not.



Captured Union envelope bearing the endorsement of J.H. Campbell MC (Member of U.S. Congress) used by a Confederate at Manassas. Such endorsed envelopes were widely distributed among Union troops by their congressmen so soldiers could write home for free using their congressman's free franking privilege.

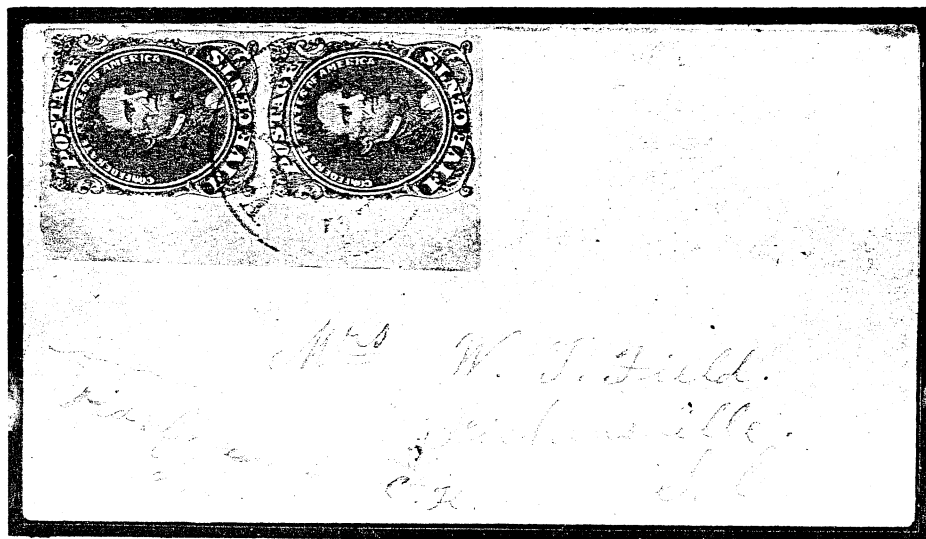
Tudor Hall, Va. - Use of Regular C.S.A. Stamps

On October 16, 1861, the Confederate Post Office issued its first stamp, the five cent green lithograph. Tudor Hall received its first stamps at the end of October. Earliest use of the stamp is Oct. 30, while paid markings were used as late as Oct. 29.



Top: single stamp, used to prepay the five cent rate, is postmarked Oct. 30, 1861.

Bottom: Vertical margin pair used to prepay the ten cent rate, is postmarked Nov. 3, 1861, third earliest date for this stamp recorded from Tudor Hall.

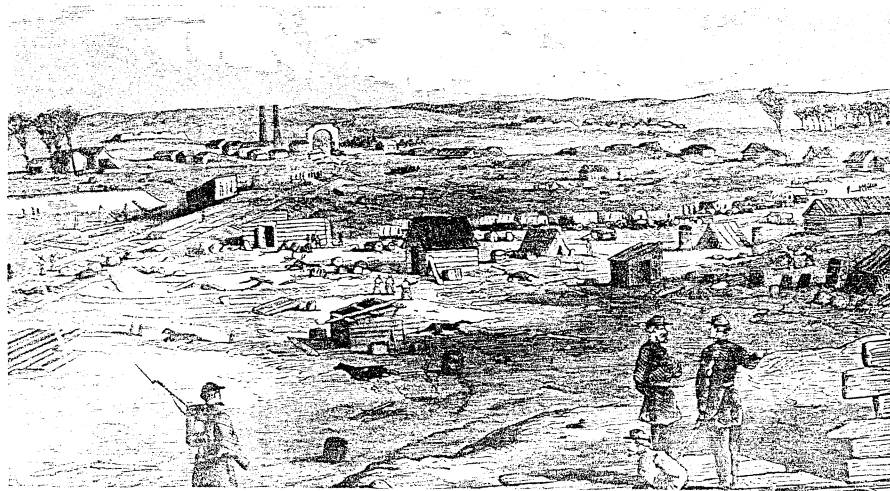


Tudor Hall, Va. – Use of Regular C.S.A. Stamps

A 10¢ lithographed stamp was issued in early November to allow prepayment of the higher postage rate. The Tudor Hall postmaster received his consignment of the stamp about two weeks after it first appeared on sale.



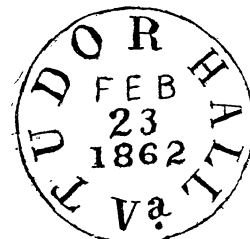
Earliest known usage of the ten cent lithograph from Tudor Hall being dated Nov. 23, 1861



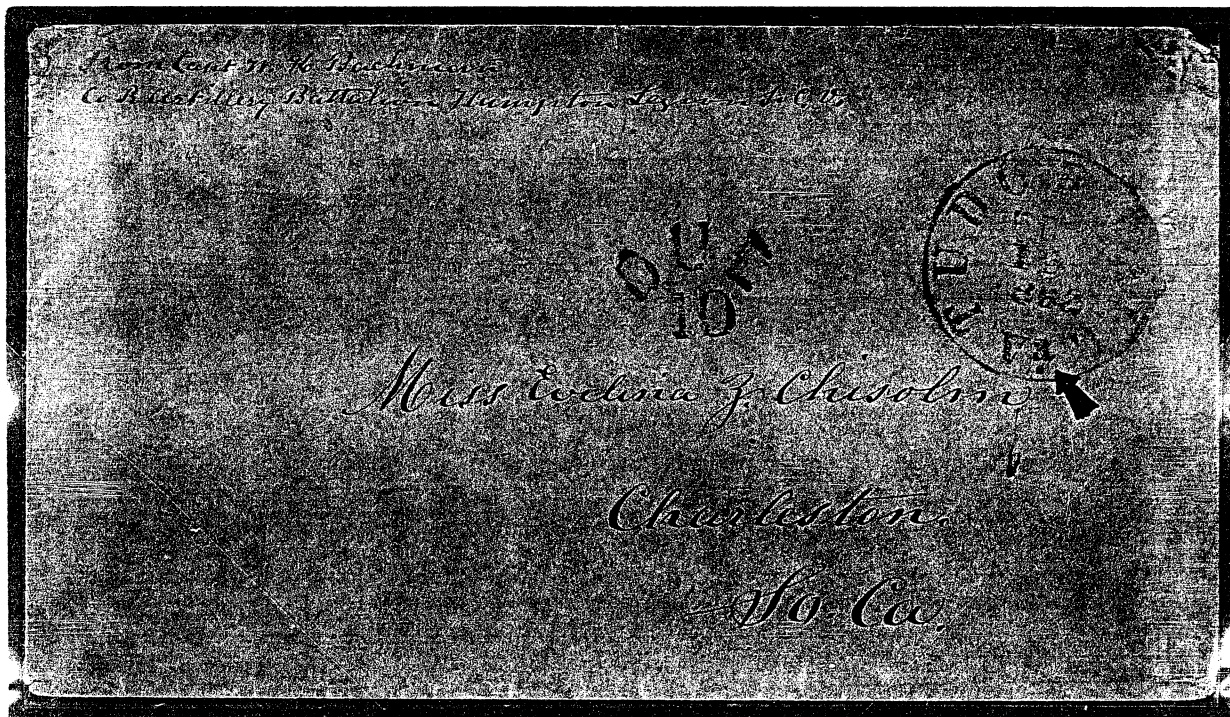
Contemporary view of Manassas Junction, Va.

Tudor Hall, Va.- The Second Postmarking Device

In late December Postmaster Robinson began using a second circular date stamping device, readily recognized by the "Va.". Both devices were used until February 1862 when the first type was set aside.

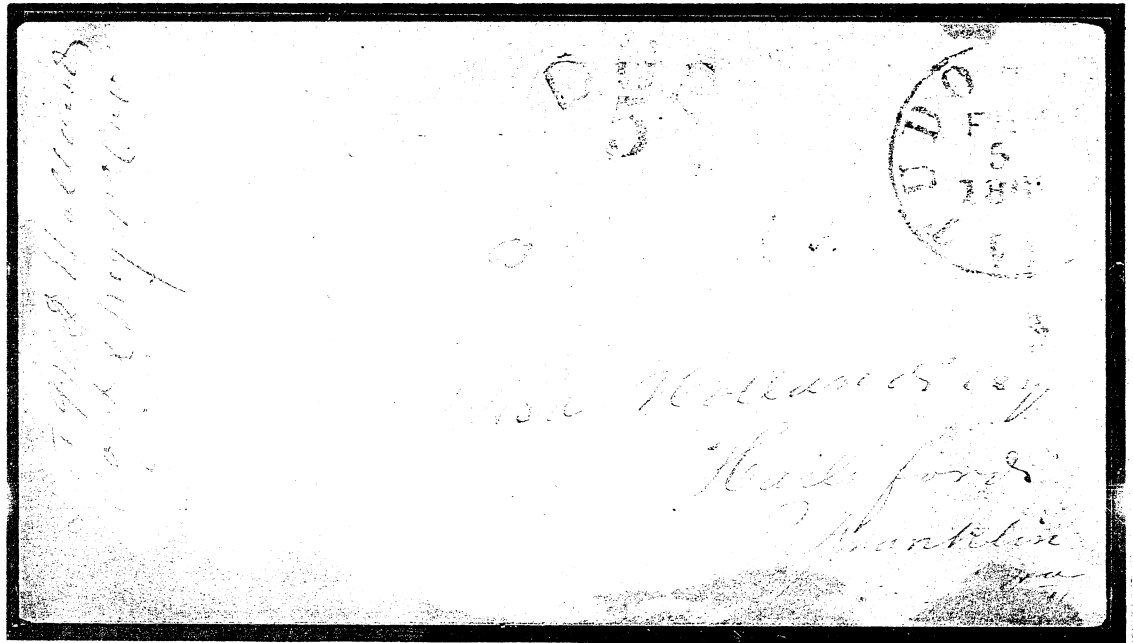


Due 10 soldier's letter postmarked Feb. 5, 1862 with the second device. Capt. Bachman, the sender, was stationed at Dumfries in the District of Acquia, yet his letter was posted at Tudor Hall rather than being processed through normal channels.



Tudor Hall, Va. – The Second Postmarking Device

Soldier's letter from the Second Virginia Cavalry to Franklin County in the future West Virginia. Cancel is dated February 5, 1862.



Winter quarters at Manassas Junction, Winter 1861.

Tudor Hall, Va. - The Second Postmarking Device

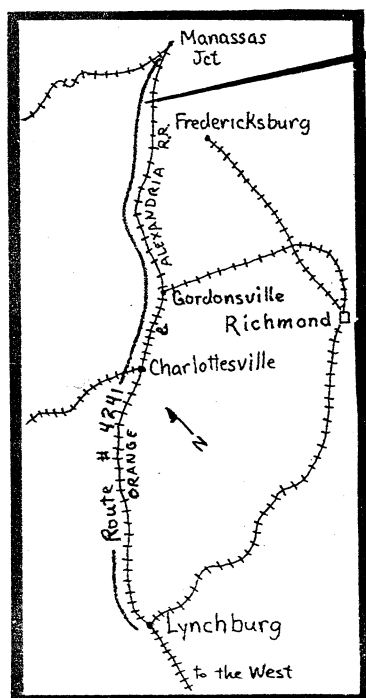
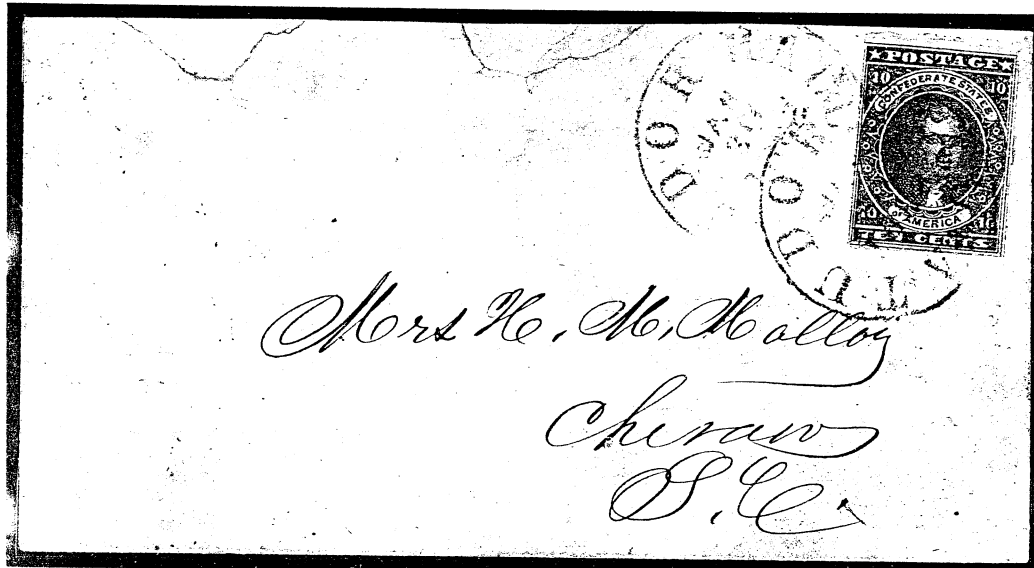


Two singles of the five cent stamp used to make the ten cent rate are postmarked Feb. 1862. The sender, John C. Sanders (left) belonged to the 11th Alabama and later became the youngest Confederate general, at age 24, to die a short time after.



Tudor Hall, Va. - The Second Postmarking Device

Ten cent lithograph, paying the over 500 mile rate, tied by a Jan. 30, 1862 postmark of the second type.



For the month of *January*, 1862
WEEKLY REGISTER—POST OFFICE AT Tudor Hall
 Route No. *4241* from *Tudor Hall* to *Daytonburg*
 CONTRACT TIME OF ARRIVAL, *5:15 P.M.*
 CONTRACT TIME OF DEPARTURE, *7:10 A.M.*

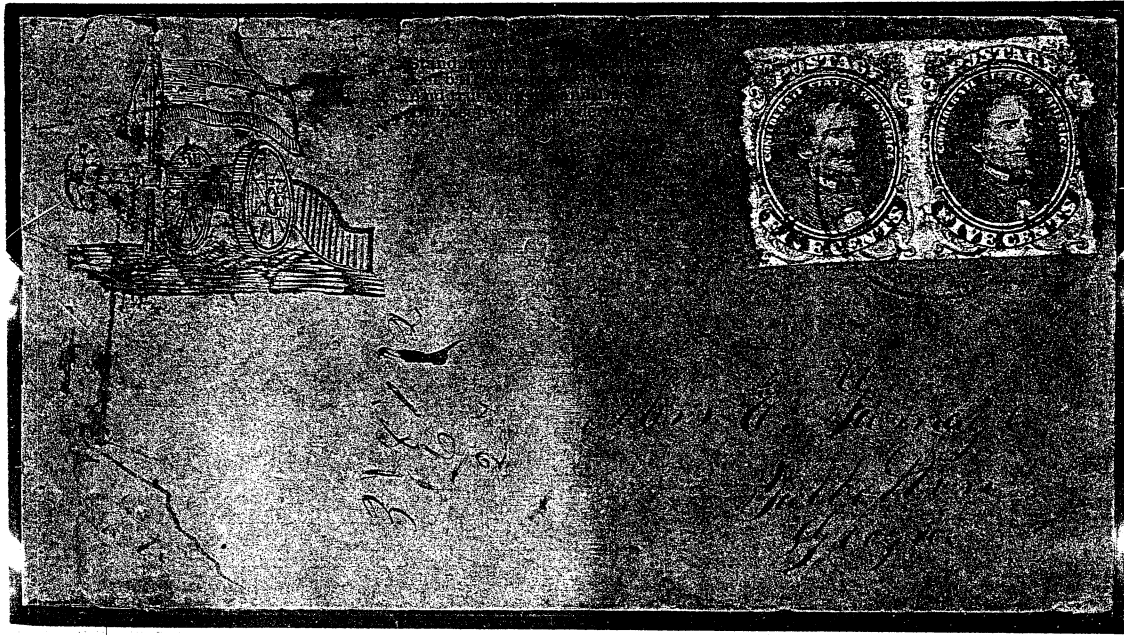
Day of the week.	Monthly date.	Hour of arrival.	Cause of delay, if known.	Hour of departure.	Cause of detention.	No. of Newspaper bags received.	No. of Newspaper bags sent.
SUNDAY.	<i>26</i>	<i>5:15</i>		<i>7:10</i>		<i>5</i>	<i>50</i>
MONDAY.	<i>27</i>	<i>5:15</i>		<i>7:10</i>		<i>5</i>	
TUESDAY.	<i>28</i>	<i>5:15</i>		<i>7:10</i>		<i>5</i>	<i>25</i>
WEDNESDAY.	<i>29</i>	<i>6:30</i>		<i>7:10</i>		<i>5</i>	
THURSDAY.	<i>30</i>	<i>6:30</i>		<i>7:10</i>		<i>5</i>	<i>25</i>
FRIDAY.	<i>31</i>	<i>6:30</i>		<i>7:10</i>		<i>5</i>	<i>25</i>
SATURDAY.							

Certified to be correct by *Geo. H. Robinson* — P. M.
Geo. H. R.—When failures occur, note whether they are total failures, or only to connect. Fill up the blanks at the head of each Register.

Mail left Tudor Hall on Route 4241. Letters for Virginia post offices went direct; Those bound for other states went to Lynchburg for distribution.

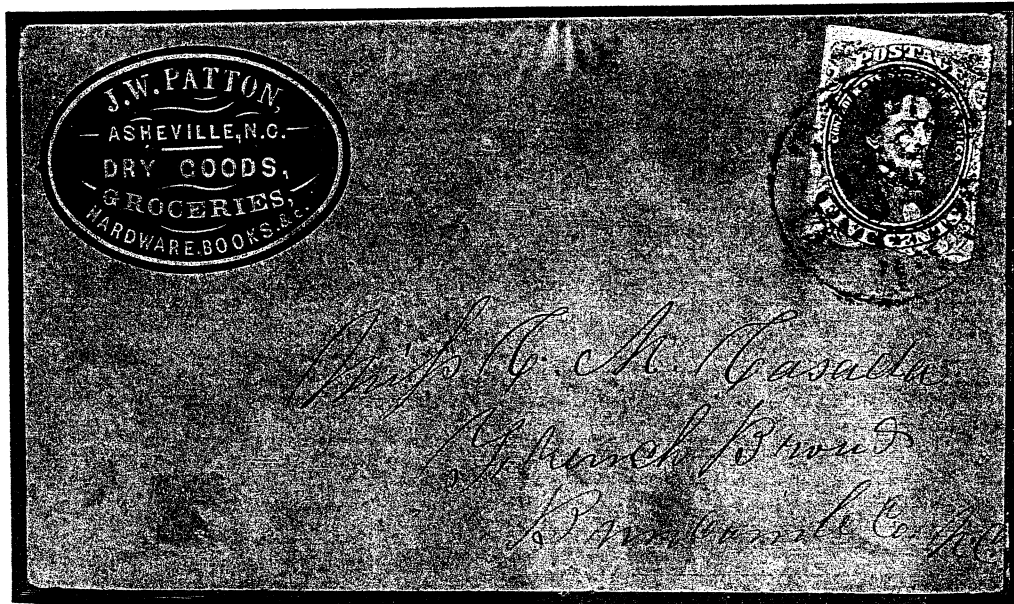
Tudor Hall, Va. – Patriotic Envelopes

Patriotic envelopes were a popular extension of wartime sentiments. Soldiers could purchase such items from the sutlers who accompanied the army. The pair of stamps on this cover is postmarked Mar. 1, 1861.



Some military units arranged for envelopes to be printed for their troops, for example the Washington Artillery of New Orleans. This example is postmarked Sep. 11 and has a PAID 10 marking.

Tudor Hall, Va. – "Adversity Use" Covers



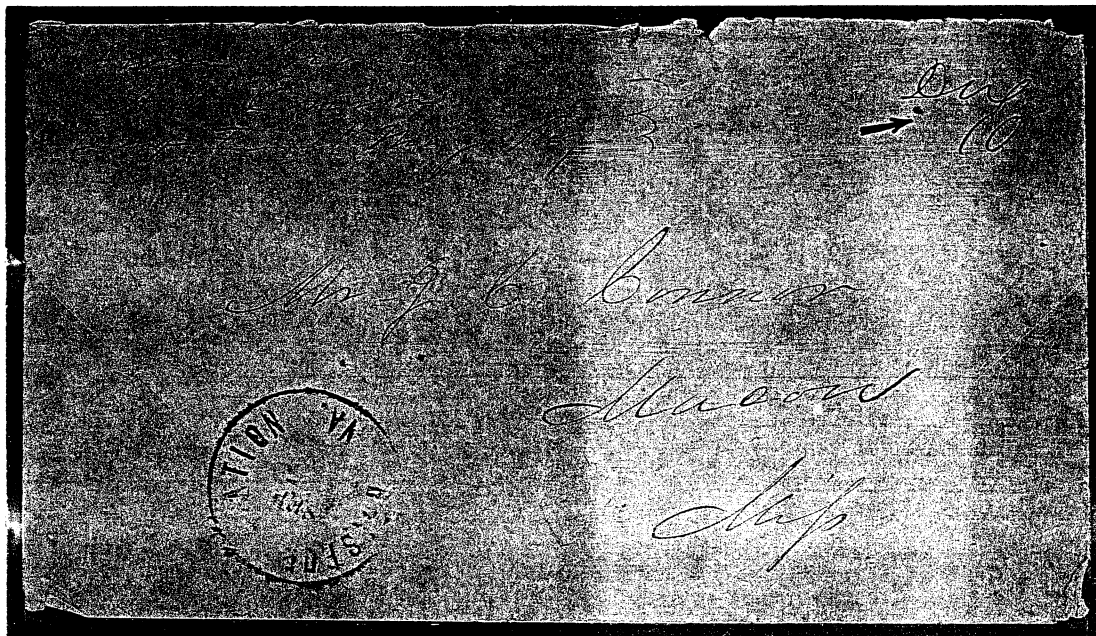
Envelopes quickly became scarce in the South, especially around army camps. One solution was use of envelopes with merchants' advertising. These were often sold by the army sutlers near camps or given to good customers.



Miscellaneous Post Offices — Bristoe Station, Va.

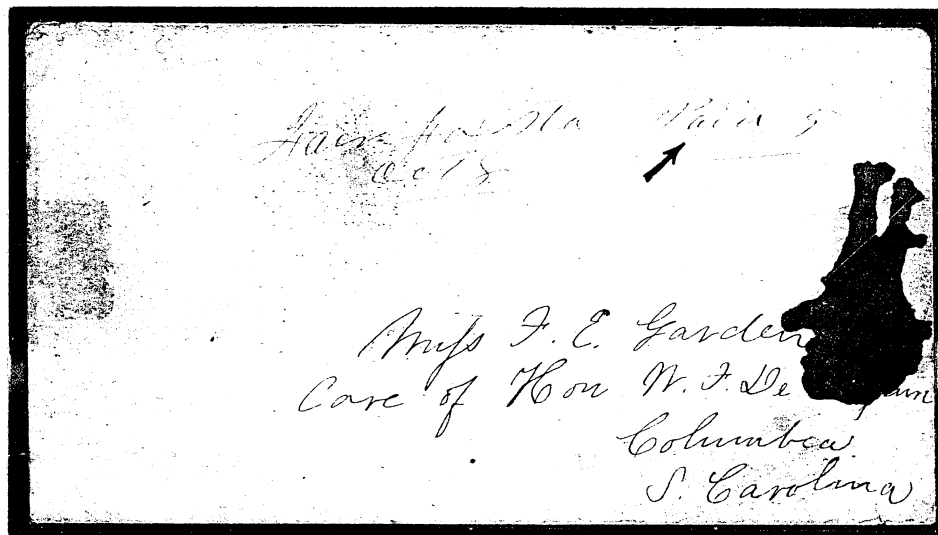
Other post offices besides Tudor Hall received army mail, but such commerce was for convenience rather than from established procedures.

Bristoe Station, south of Manassas, was often used by soldiers camped in the vicinity. Due covers were rated in manuscript.

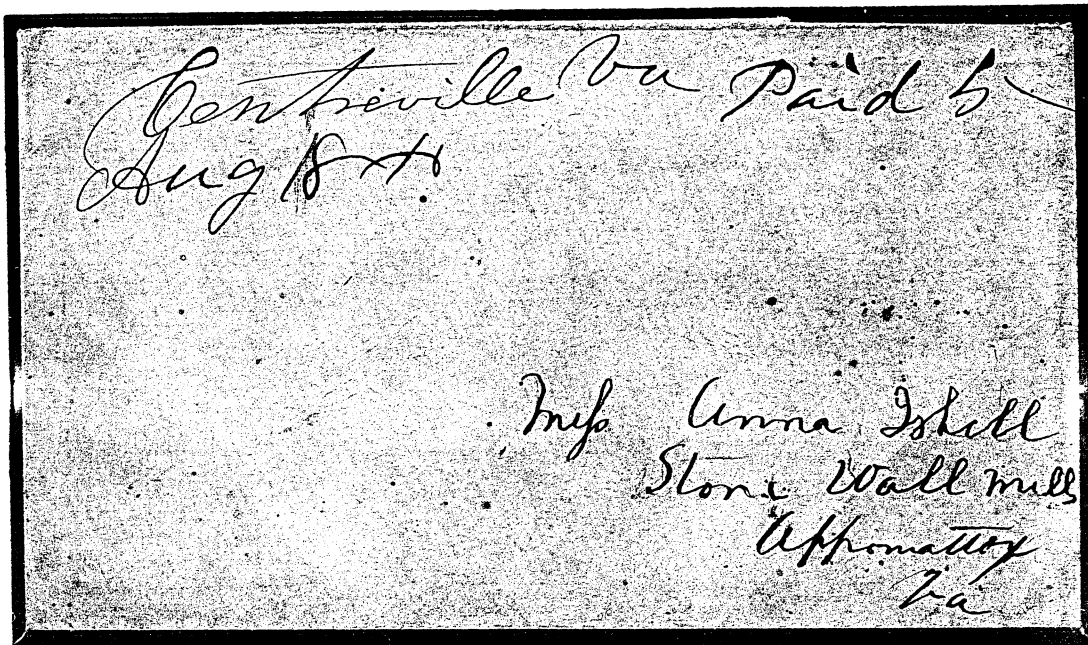


Fairfax Station, Va.

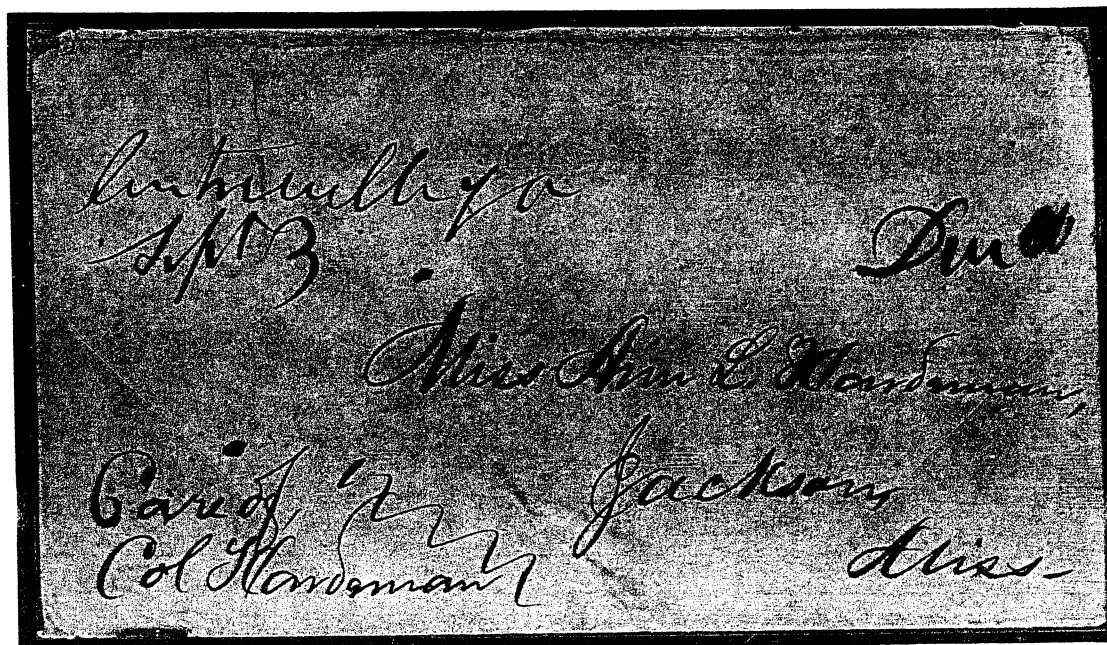
Fairfax Station, another depot on the Alexandria & Orange RR, was used by soldiers until mid-October when consolidation of army positions left the depot exposed to Federal occupation.



Miscellaneous Post Offices – Centreville, Va.

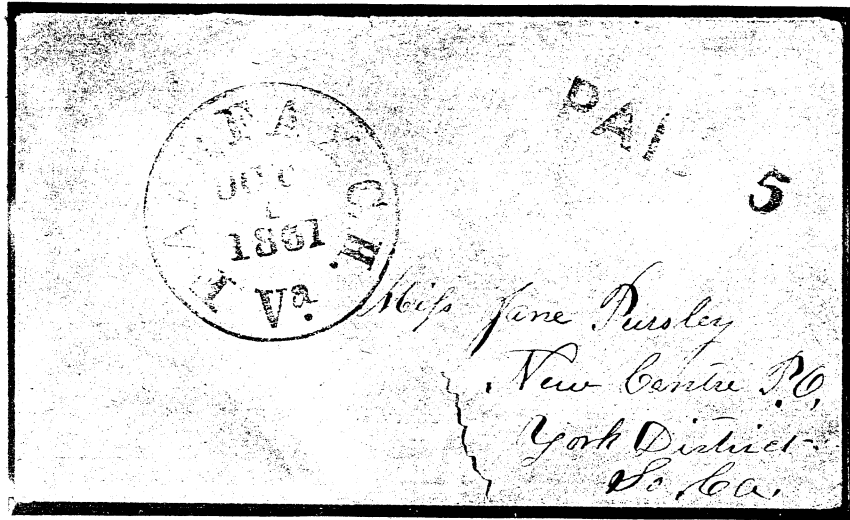


During the winter of 1861 Centreville became the center of Confederate lines. The small post office run by William Forsyth enjoyed a large increase in business but not enough to warrant a handstamp. Letters were postmarked in manuscript. Top: prepaid letter from Robert Isbell of Robertson's Battery; Bottom: soldier's due letter (the endorsement is faintly visible in upper right).



Miscellaneous Post Offices – Fairfax Court House Va.

Fairfax C.H. served as the army headquarters from late July until October 16, when the town was abandoned. Business was sufficiently great for Postmaster Chapman to have two postmarking devices, differentiated easily by the state abbreviations.



Handstamped PAID 5 dated OCT 1, 1861, from a member of the 18th South Carolina near Manassas.

Rare congressman's due letter from A.H. Kenan, postmarked OCT 12 (1861). Kenan was a member of the Military Affairs Committee.

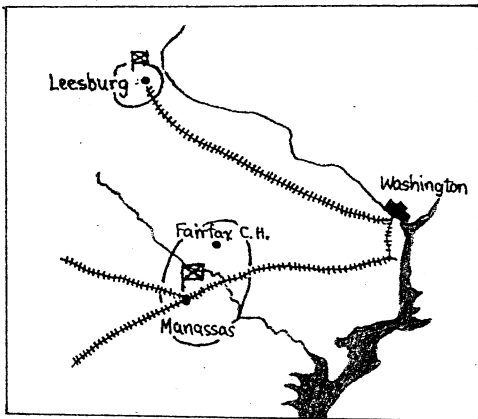


Fairfax Court House Va.

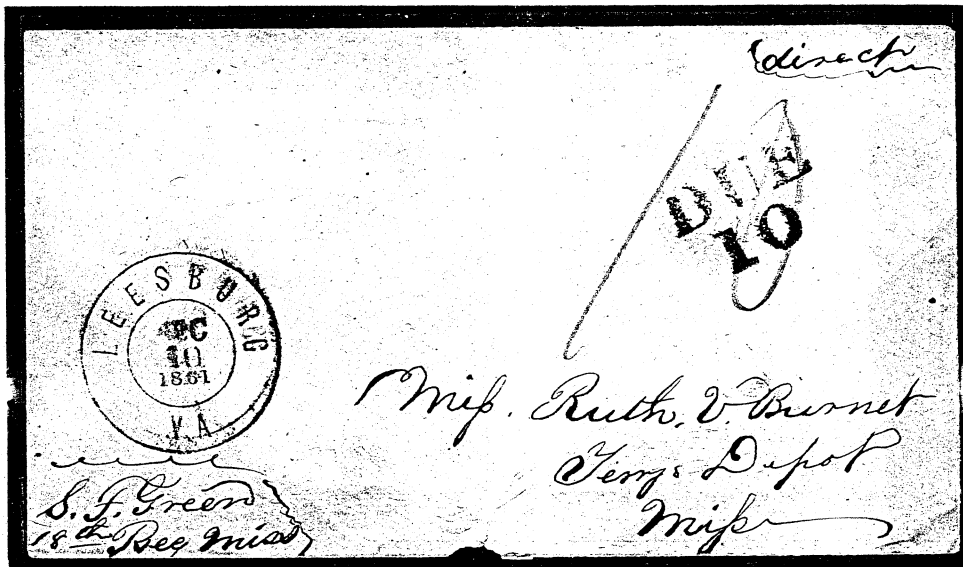
Manuscript postmarks were also used concurrently with the two handstamp devices. Manuscript paid markings can be found in addition to the hand-stamped ones (previous page). The variety of markings indicates heavy mail volume at Fairfax Court House.



Forces at Leesburg, Va.



Soon after the battle of Manassas Leesburg was occupied by several Confederate regiments. The troops remained until Leesburg was evacuated on March 7, 1862. During this period the Leesburg post office, B.F. Sheelty Postmaster, was used by the soldiers.

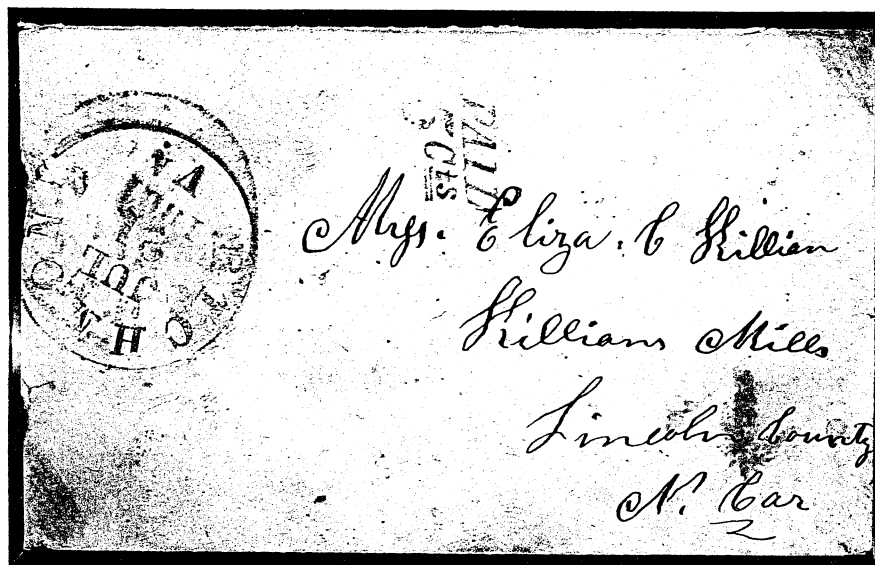


Many due letters from Leesburg bear a large pencil 10 in addition to the handstamped DUE/10. This manuscript marking may have been a memo by the postmaster of the proper rate for the letter.

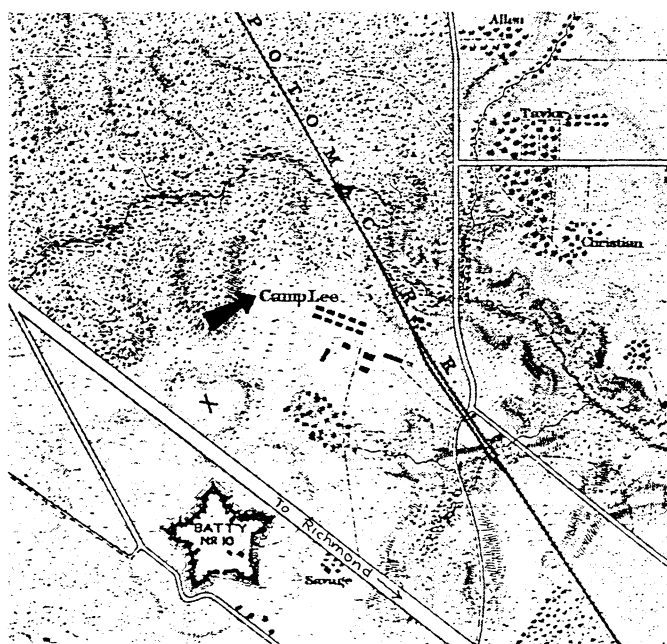


Richmond, Va., Mustering & Training Camps

Almost all troops enroute to northern Virginia spent some time mustering, arming, and training at one of the Richmond-area camps. Camp Lee, near the Hermitage, was the most heavily used. These troops used the Richmond post office to send letters.



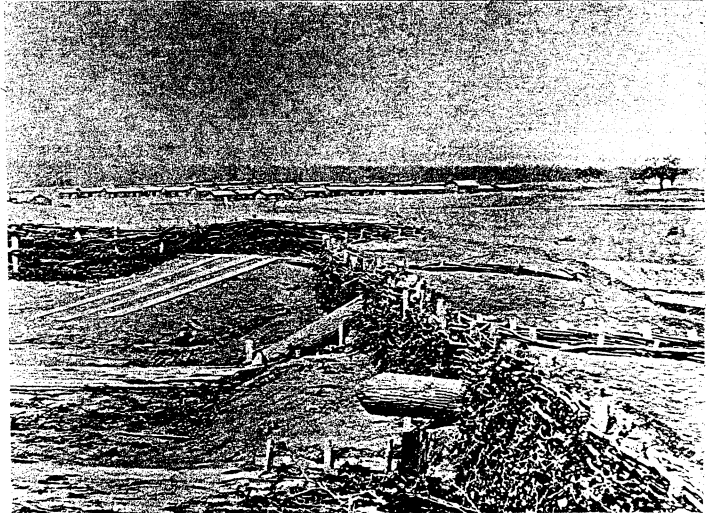
Handstamped paid cover from a North Carolina soldier at Camp Lee. Postmark is dated July 21, 1861.



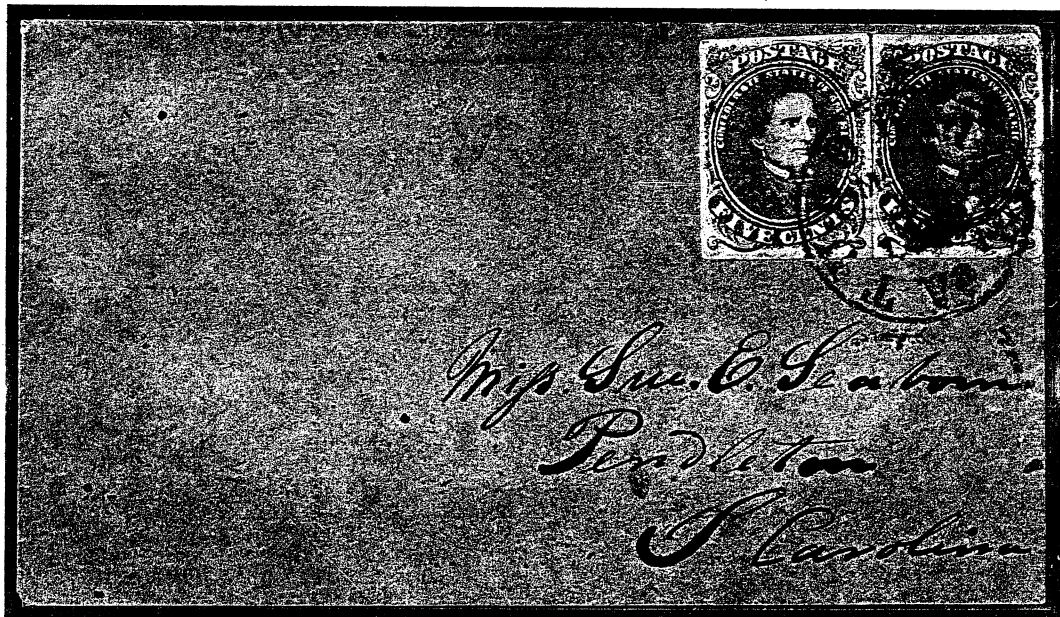
Tudor Hall, Va. — The End of a Post Office

Manassas Junction was abandoned by the Confederate Army during the night of March 8. Postmaster Robinson transferred post office property and undelivered mail to Gordonsville and disappeared.

After the Union Army occupied Manassas Junction, the U.S. Post Office opened an office under the name of Manassas. This name was retained after the war.



(Abandoned Confederate works at Manassas.) →

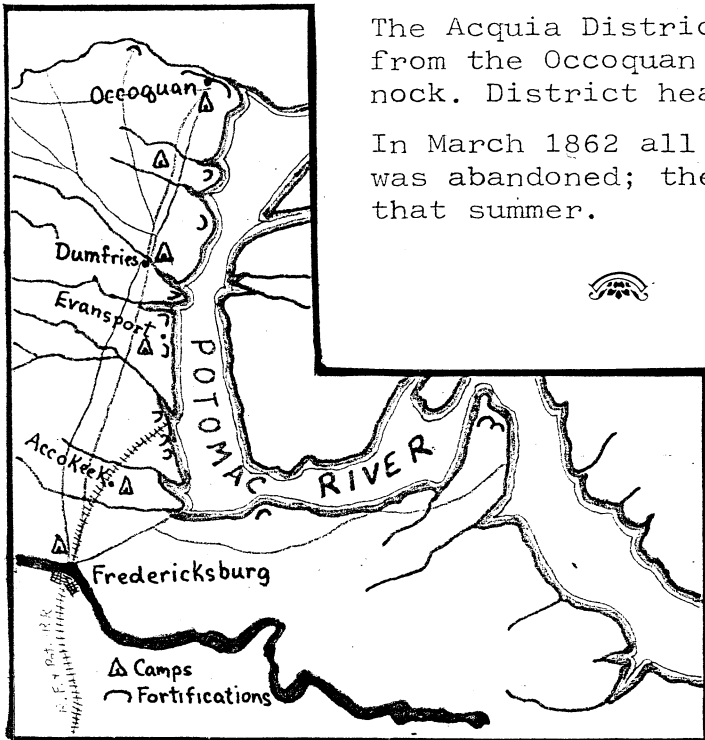


Postmark dated last day of operation, March 8, 1862.

2 3
→8

Day logos from the
type 2 canceler.

ACQUIA DISTRICT Fredericksburg, Va.



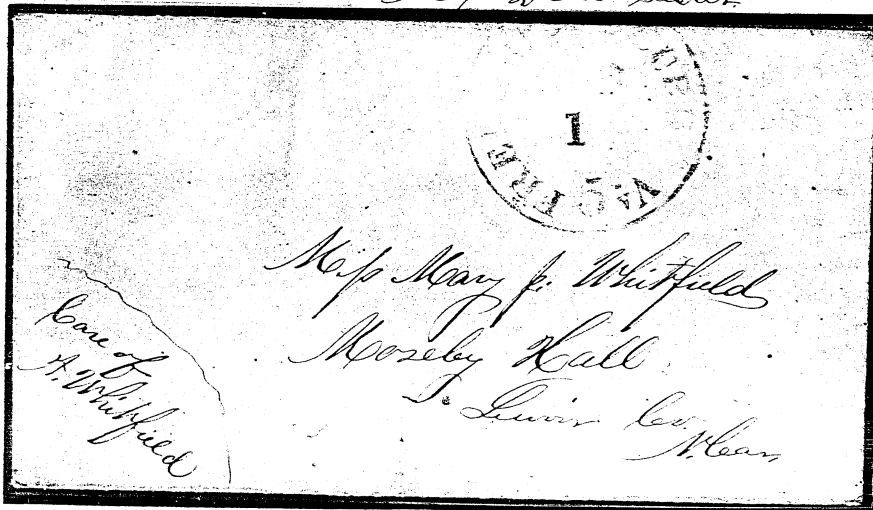
The Acquia District embraced the Potomac shore from the Occoquan to the mouth of the Rappahannock. District headquarters was Fredericksburg.

In March 1862 all territory north of the city was abandoned; the district was discontinued that summer.

Army mail was generally sent from Fredericksburg. Almost all mail directed to troops was directed to the city.

Acquia Creek Camp, Holmes
July the 29th 1861

My dear sister



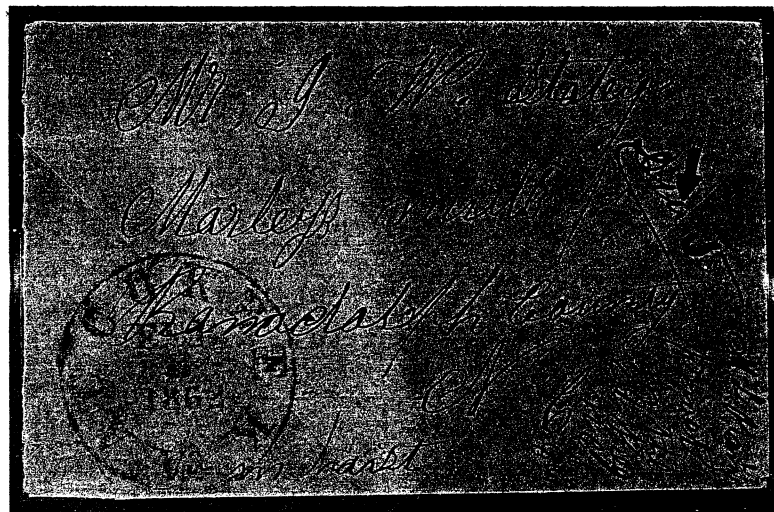
Most - welcomed

My dear sister
Mr. Ellis is

near the river
S. Lewis Lee

ACQUIA DISTRICT — Accokeek, Va.

Accokeek, a small office between Fredericksburg and Acquia Landing, serviced much of the district's mail, even from troops at Occoquan and Evansport, such as this cover from the 22nd North Carolina at Evansport.



Evansport, Va.

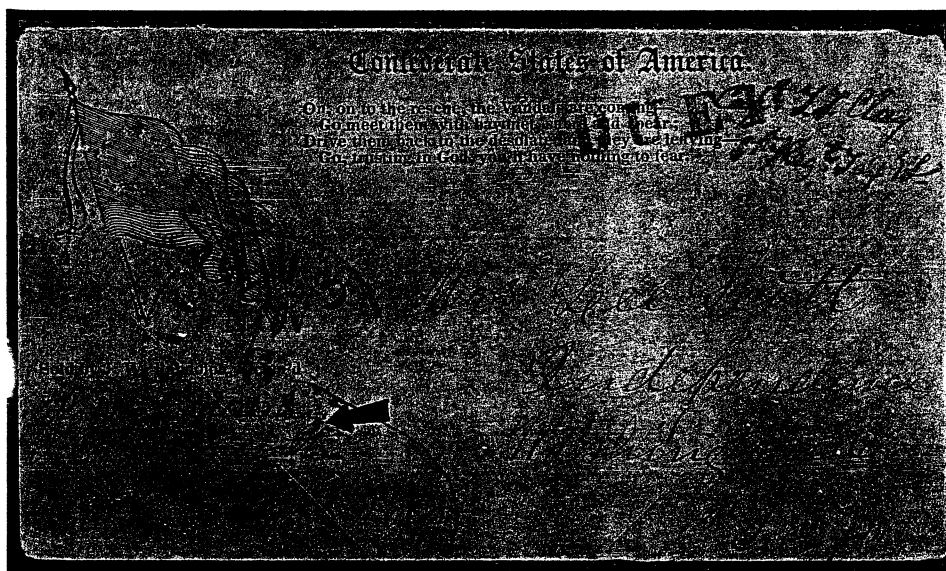
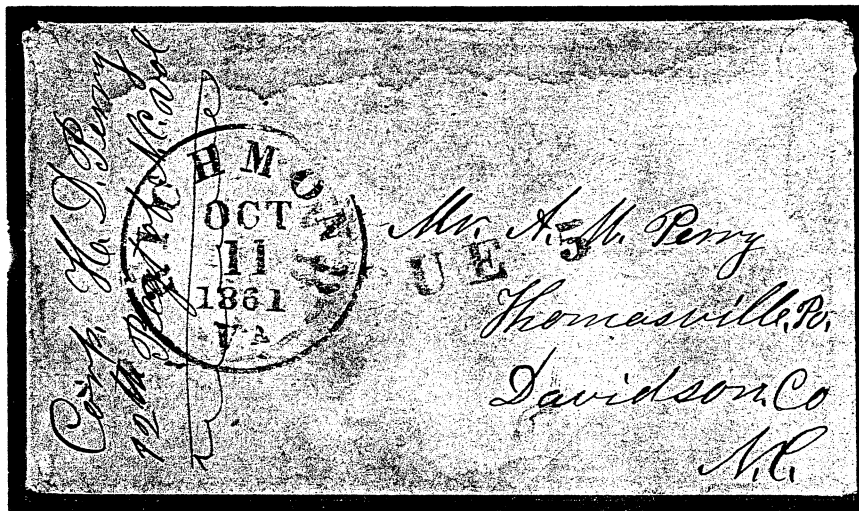
Evansport had a large garrison and several artillery batteries commanding the Potomac. Very few covers from Evansport are known; most mail was sent to Accokeek or Fredericksburg. The below cover is from the 22nd North Carolina.



ACQUIA DISTRICT

Mail routed through Richmond

Some of the Acquia District mail was transported to Richmond. This cover is an example. Corporal Perry and the 12th North Carolina were camped at Accokeek Va. when this cover was sent.

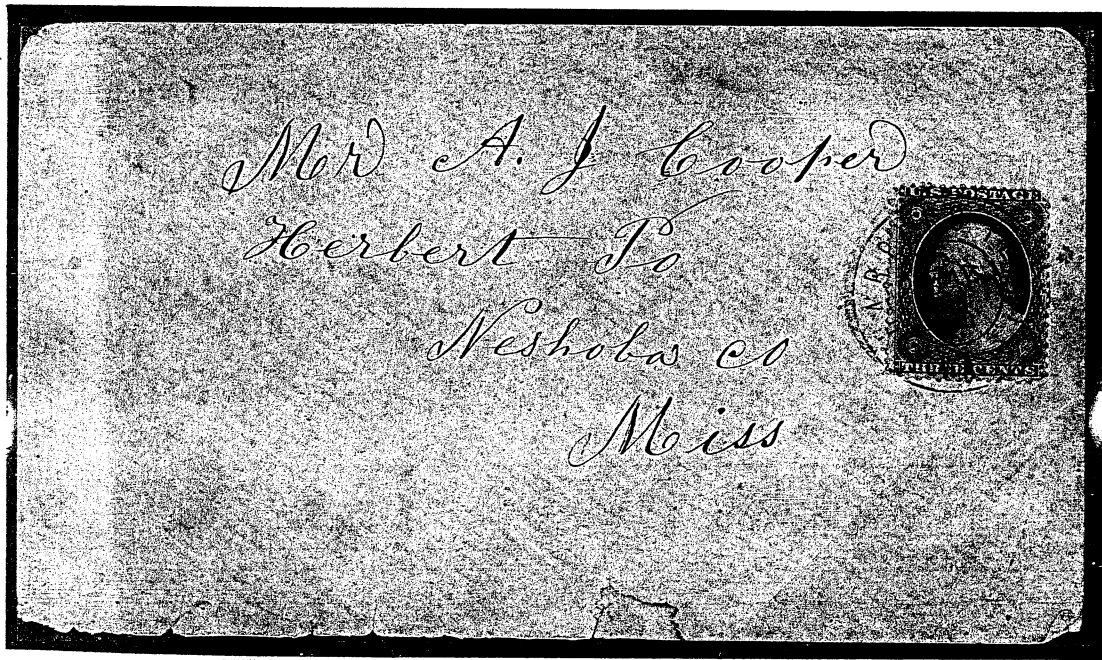


Patriotic cover mailed at Richmond was from the 5th Texas near Dumfries. The notation "Forwarded by J.C. Hill 5th Regt of Texas Vols," remains to be explained. Hill was assigned to the 5th Texas Depot in Richmond and may have acted as forwarding agent.

ARMY OF THE SHENANDOAH (VALLEY DISTRICT) Harper's Ferry, Va.

Confederate military units in the lower Shenandoah Valley were formed into the Army of the Shenandoah. This army was redesignated the Valley District in July 1861.

Harper's Ferry was the army's headquarters from April 18, when the U.S. Arsenal there was captured by Virginia militia.

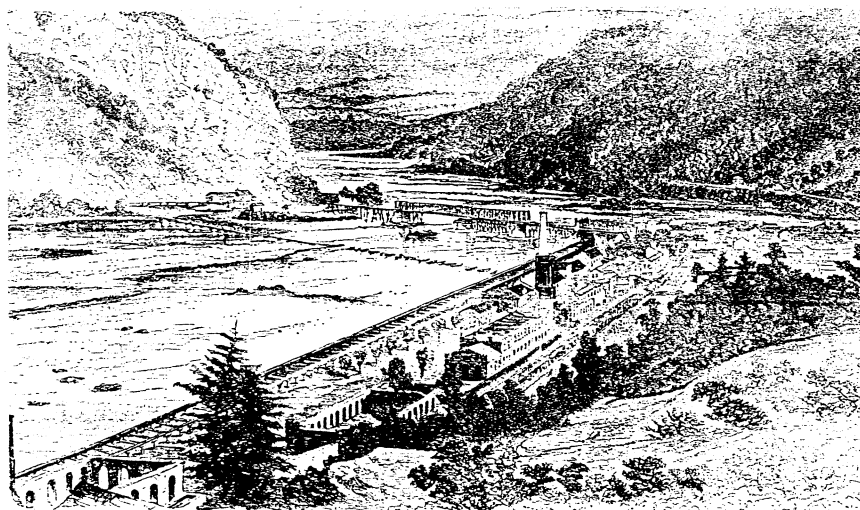
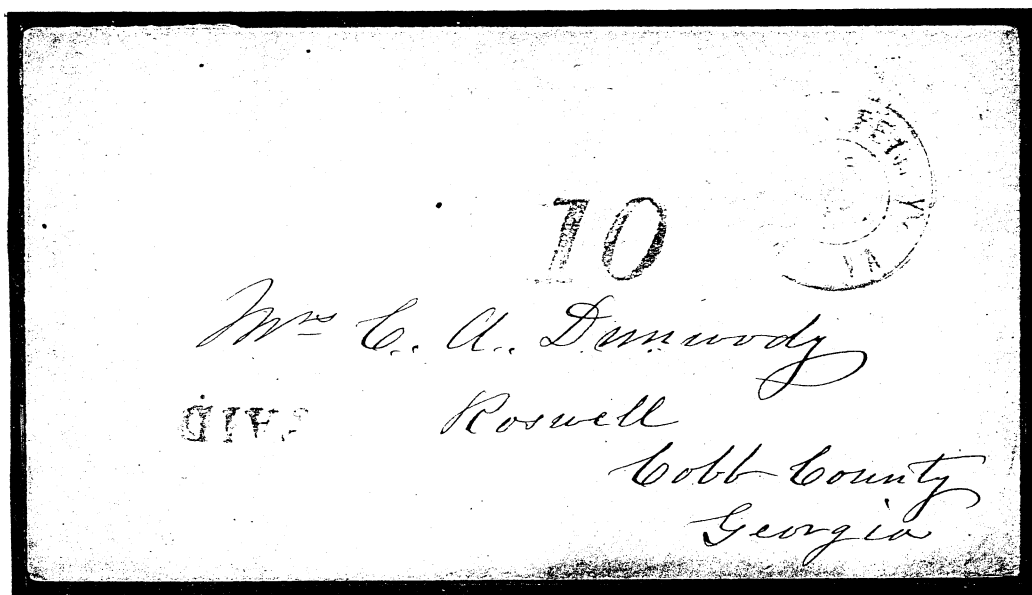


Cover sent by a Mississippi soldier at Harper's Ferry during Virginia's Independent Statehood, when U.S. stamps were still valid. The postmark is dated May 21, 1861.

Harper's Ferry, Va.

True Confederate postal service did not begin until June 1, 1861 and lasted only until June 20 because the town was evacuated on June 15.

This cover is from Major C.A. Dunwody, 7th Georgia Infantry, a part of the Harper's Ferry garrison. The faint postmark is dated June 13.



General view of Harper's Ferry and the Maryland Heights

ARMY OF THE SHENANDOAH (VALLEY DISTRICT) Winchester, Va.

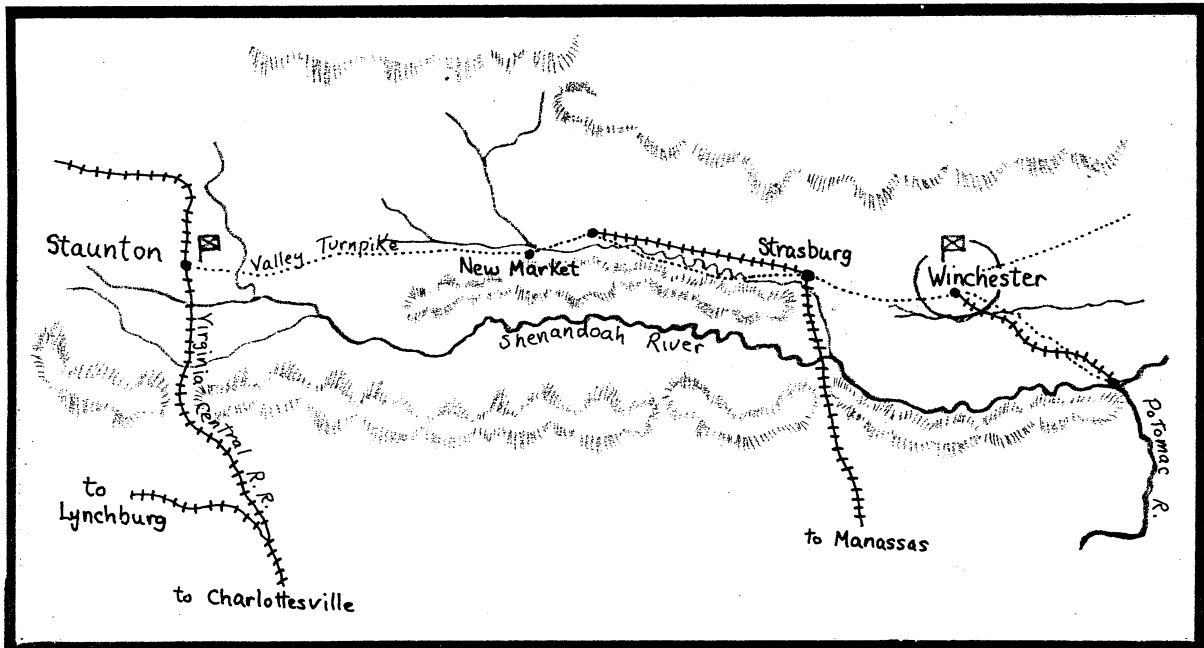
Mail from the troops at Harper's Ferry was also taken to Winchester and mailed there by a Major Walker, who had been appointed army mail agent (illegally) by General Johnston.



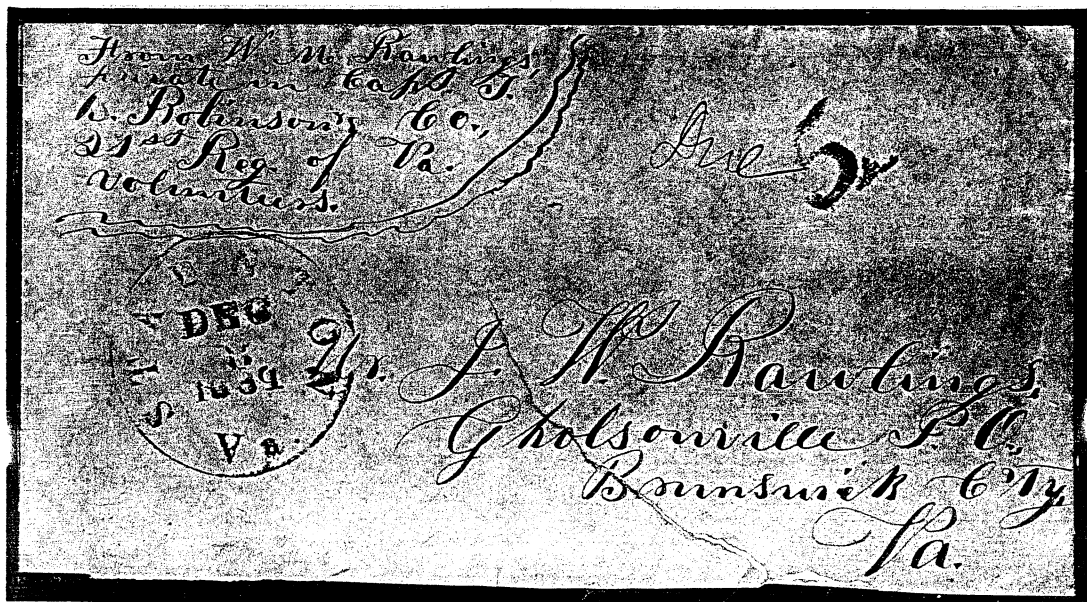
Handstamped paid cover from a member of the Fourth Alabama Regiment, which was at Harper's Ferry. Postmark date is June 15, 1861.

ARMY OF THE SHENANDOAH (VALLEY DISTRICT) Staunton, Va.

Staunton, at the head of the Valley, also served as an army post office. Daily couriers and a mail route linked Confederate headquarters at Winchester with the town and railroad.

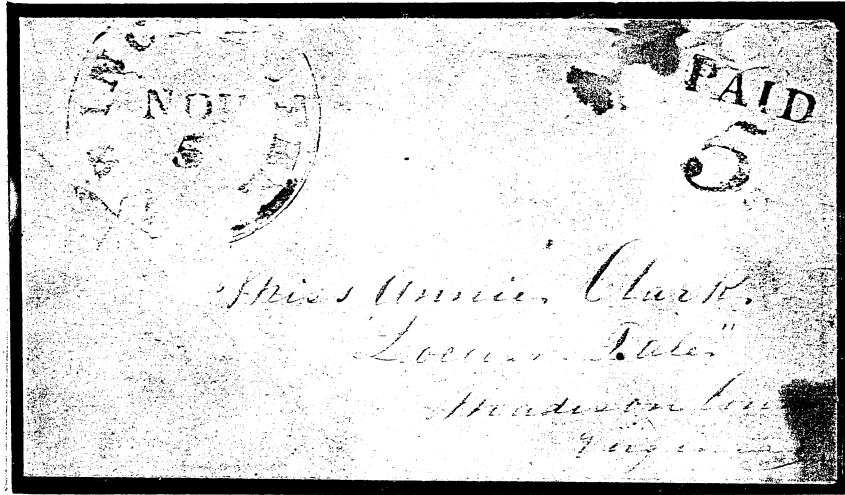


Due 5 soldier's letter from the 21st Virginia which was near Winchester. The Staunton postmark is dated Dec. 8, 1861.

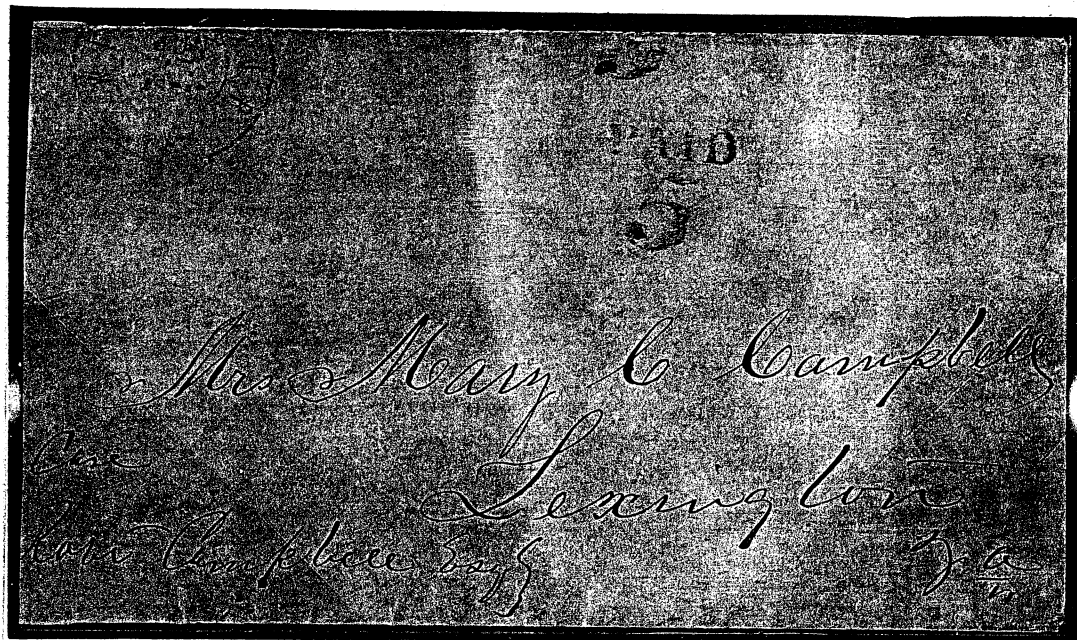


Winchester, Va.

After Harper's Ferry was abandoned, Winchester became the District headquarters. Mail to and from the army was sent through Winchester's post office June 16, 1861 to March 11, 1862, when the town was abandoned. Postmaster George Graves used two postmarking devices concurrently.



Handstamped paid cover with the large postmark used from the 1850's. Cover, dated Nov. 5 (1861) is from a Virginia soldier at Winchester to his sister.



Second Winchester postmark, acquired in March 1861, on handstamped paid cover dated June 25, 1861. Origin of letter indicated by note on reverse - "Camp near Martinsburg" (northwest of Harper's Ferry).

Winchester, Va.



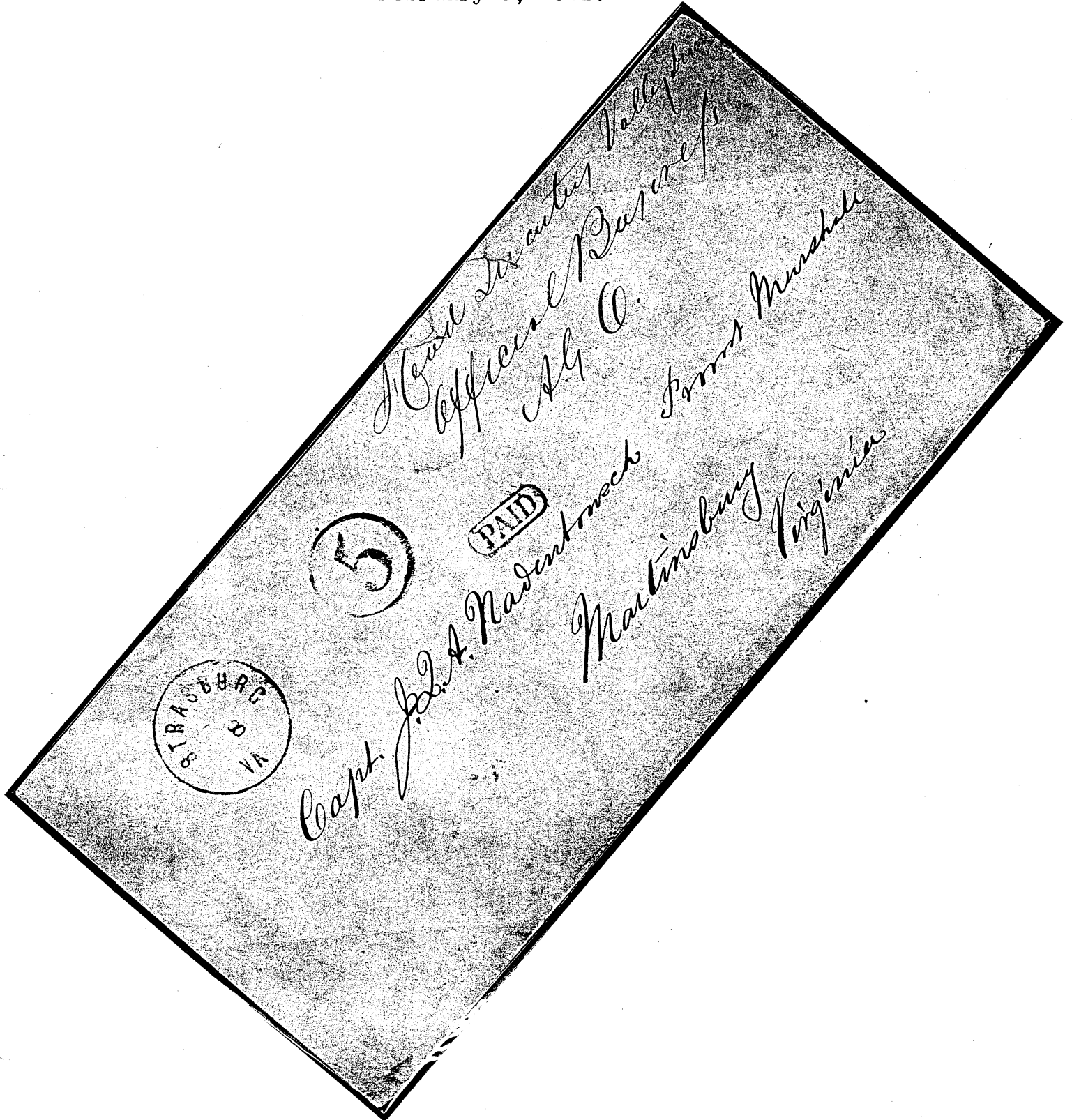
Double-use cover: the envelope was originally addressed to the Commandant, 55th Regiment, Virginia Militia (at Winchester) and handcarried, then readdressed by the regimental quartermaster, A.C. Timberlake, and sent as a due letter from Winchester, Nov. 5, 1861.

Postmaster G.B. Graves did not have a proper due handstamp. So he used the bottom half of the PAID/5 and wrote in the "due".

The privilege of due letters was not extended to militia and troops in state service so that this cover represents illegal usage that nevertheless went to its destination.

VALLEY DISTRICT
Strasburg, Va.

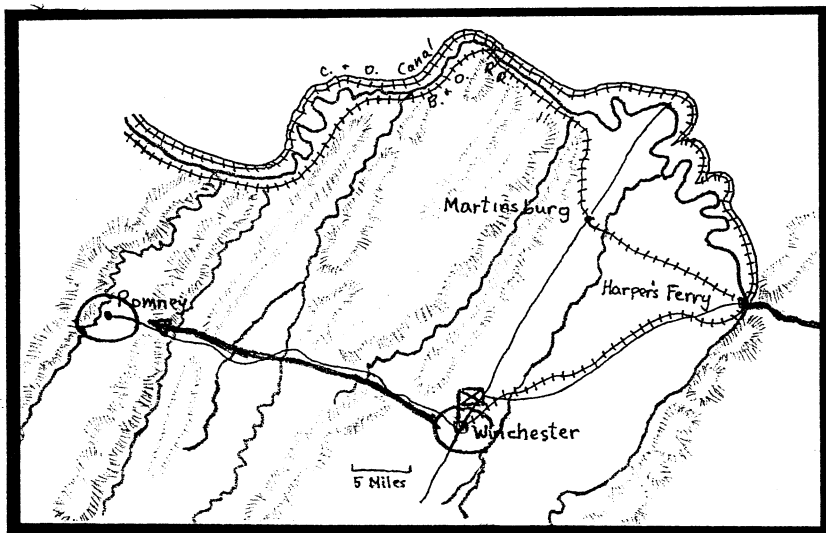
Strasburg, on the Manassas Gap R.R. served as supply base and frequent administrative headquarters of the Valley District. This cover was sent sometime between December 8, 1861 and February 8, 1862.



VALLEY DISTRICT

Romney, Va.

Romney, Va. was occupied by Stonewall Jackson's troops from January 10 until February 7, 1862. The Confederate post office operated under the charge of James Ream to process military and civilian mail during this time.



This example is a due letter from Capt. William Harrison of the 23rd Virginia, and is postmarked Jan. 25. A DUE handstamp was not available so the due status was in manuscript.

VALLEY DISTRICT – Mail to the Army

Example of mail directed to troops of the Valley District during the first year of the war. Cover sent from Marion, Va., to a Private in the 42nd Virginia at Romney, 48 miles west of Winchester. Such mail was always directed care of the soldier's company commander.

