

PRISONER OF WAR MAIL

Letters to and from prisoners of war represent perhaps the most significant human element of the Civil War mails. US and CSA flag of truce exchanges facilitated POW correspondence and the return of released POWs. Exchanges of POW mail were permitted from September 1861 to September 1862 and from July 1863 to June 1865—during the interim, flag of truce mail exchanges were suspended. Old Point Comfort (Fortress Monroe) was the principal exchange point in Virginia on the US side; on the other side in Virginia the CSA first used Norfolk, then Petersburg, and finally Richmond after exchanges resumed in July 1863. During the second period there were six primary exchange points: Richmond–OPC, Pocotaligo–Port Royal, Jackson–Vicksburg, Mobile–New Orleans, Shreveport–New Orleans, and between Galveston and US Blockading Squadron ships.

CSA/US 1861—Northbound

CSA Prison Camps

Prior to establishment of the formal flag of truce mail exchanges in September 1861, early prisoners used Adams Express to privately carry mail across the lines.



Sent by Union soldier captured at the First Battle of Bull Run and held at **Ligon's Tobacco Warehouse**, Richmond, to Vernon VT, with "PAID 10" in circle for CSA postage and matching "Richmond Va. Aug. 4, 1861" cds, US 3¢ 1857 tied by Adams Ex. Co. * Louisville, Ky. * Aug. 7, 1861 cds and additional US 3¢ 1857 tied by a blue grid with matching Louisville 7 Aug. 1861 cds.

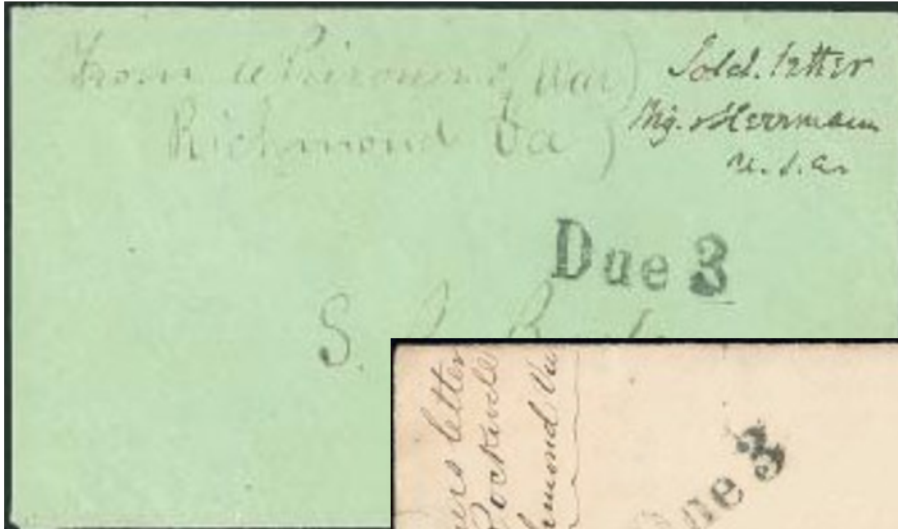
*One of three recorded across-the-lines express prisoner of war covers
according to the Special Routes book*

PRISONER OF WAR MAIL

CSA/US 1862—Northbound

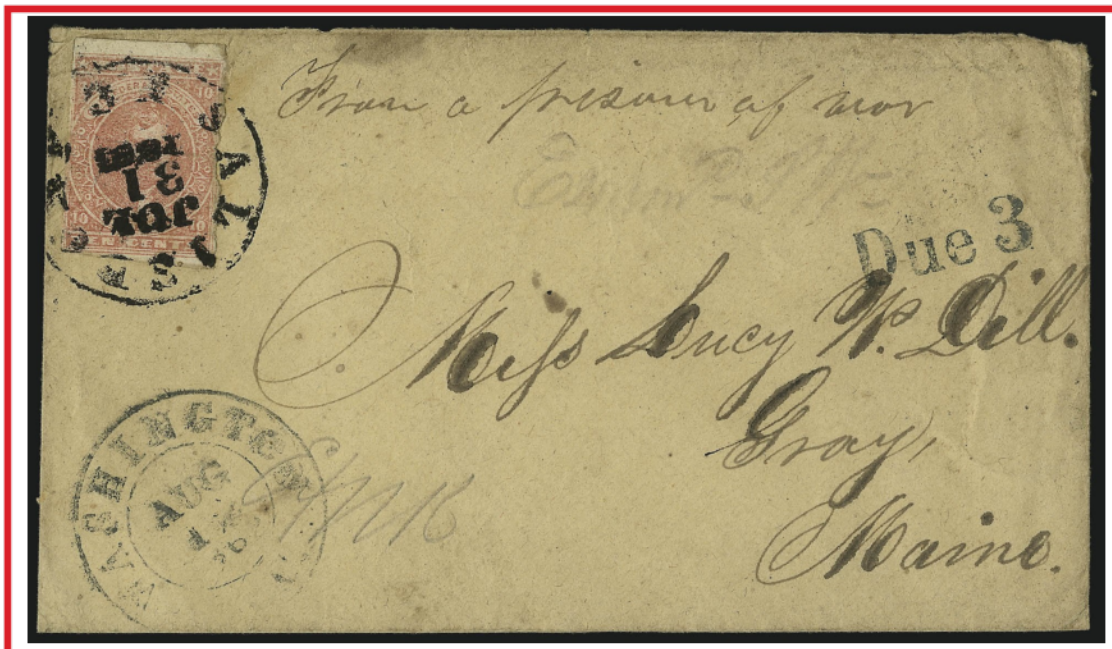
CSA Prison Camps

Following the establishment of flag of truce exchanges, northbound letters from US POWs in CSA prison camps were usually (but not always) enclosed in an inner envelope that was placed inside another envelope and mailed with CSA postage to the flag of truce exchange point. The inner envelope was either stamped with US postage or marked due and placed into the mails and the outer envelope was destroyed.



Inner envelope from Lt. Union POW held at **Ligon's Tobacco Warehouse**, incorrectly handstamped "Due 3" for unpaid soldier's letter despite POW's rank as an officer, which required 6¢.

Inner envelope sent from Union POW held at **Libby Prison**, Richmond, carried by flag of truce to Old Point Comfort where it entered mails with 9 March 1862 date-stamp and "Due 3", original letter is enclosed.



Sent from Union officer held as POW at Salisbury prison in North Carolina, pencil "ExNK" censor's mark, 10¢ **Rose Lithograph** cancelled at Salisbury 31 July ("1861" error date-should be 1862), carried by flag of truce and entered US mails at Washington D.C. 10 August, "Due 3" for US postage to Gray ME; original letter from Major D. M. Dill, datelined "Salisbury N.C. July 30, 1862."

Three 10¢ Rose Lithograph POW covers are recorded; this flag of truce routing during the first exchange period through Washington DC is unusual

PRISONER OF WAR MAIL

CSA/US 1864—Northbound

CSA Prison Camps



Sent by a Union officer held as a POW at **Camp Oglethorpe** in Georgia and exchanged by flag of truce to Port Royal SC, endorsed by Capt. James H. Pierce, Co. C, 118th Regt., NY Vol. Infantry, and censored "H.J.H. aag" (assistant adjutant general), 10¢ Die A cancelled at Savannah GA 28 August 1864; Port Royal 5 September datestamp and "Due 3" for unpaid US postage to Bloomingdale NY; Camp Oglethorpe was built in 1864 on the Old Fair Grounds as a stockade for captured officers; about 28 covers are recorded by Harrison.



Sent by Union officer held as POW at **Camp Sorghum**, Columbia SC, endorsed "Henry W. Cross Lieut 59th Mass Infy Vols., Prisoner of War Columbia, S.C.", censor's manuscript "Exd J. C. Martin, Capt Comdg"; carried by flag of truce to Old Point Comfort, 10¢ Die B corner position left uncanceled by CSA post office, cancelled by Old Point Comfort 16 December 1864 datestamp and "Due 6" for US postage to Newburyport MA; Harrison reports about 20 covers from Camp Sorghum.

PRISONER OF WAR MAIL

CSA/US 1864—Northbound

The Infamous Andersonville Prison

Sent from Union POW held at Camp Sumter in Georgia, better known as Andersonville, censored by **Camp Commandant Capt. Henry Wirz** ("Exd. H.W. In Extremis"), adversity use of wallpaper envelope to Lewiston ME, single 5¢ De La Rue Typograph underpays the 10¢ CSA rate, cancelled by 'ANDERSONVILLE GA.' dateless woodcut circle, carried by flag of truce to Old Point Comfort, entered US mails with 25 August (1864) datestamp and "Due 6" for US postage.



The only wallpaper envelope signed by Andersonville prison commander Henry Wirz—approximately 32 covers from this CSA prison are recorded by Galen Harrison and only some of those are signed by Wirz



Andersonville, officially Camp Sumter, was the largest and most notorious CSA military prison. On 27 March 1864 Captain Henry Wirz assumed command of the stockade. By the end of the war, 12,913 of the approximately 45,000 Union POWs held there had died, mostly from starvation and disease. After the war, Wirz was charged with conspiracy and murder by US authorities. His trial was held in the Capitol building in Washington. A number of former prisoners testified on conditions at Andersonville, many accusing Wirz of specific acts of cruelty (some

of these accounts were later called into question by historians as exaggerated or false). The court also heard from CSA officers and considered official correspondence from captured records. Wirz presented evidence that he pleaded to CSA authorities to obtain more food and maintained that he tried to improve the conditions for the prisoners. Wirz was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death. On 10 November 1865 he was hanged at the site of the current Supreme Court building, becoming one of very few Confederate officials to be tried, convicted and executed for war crimes.

PRISONER OF WAR MAIL

CSA/US 1864—Northbound

CSA Prison-Richland Jail



Sent from Union POW held at **Richland Jail**, Columbia SC to Bedford PA, censor marking "Exd R. D. Senn Capt Post Gd", carried by flag of truce to Old Point Comfort, 10¢ Die A left uncanceled by CSA post office, US 3¢ 1861 and CSA 10¢ Die A cancelled at Old Point Comfort 25 August 1864.



Sent from Union POW held at **Richland Jail**, Columbia SC, patriotic envelope with 9th Corps, 4th Division design (Magee imprint) addressed to Warsaw NY, censor's marking "Exd R D Senn Capt Post Gd", carried by flag of truce to Old Point Comfort in care of Col. H. T. Oulde (Commissioner of Exchange), CSA postage paid on outer envelope, US 3¢ 1861 cancelled 25 August 1864, examiner's marking on bright yellow cover to Warsaw N.Y.; with letter datelined "In Prison, Columbia S.C. August 12th 1864" from Lt. William H. Mix to his mother.

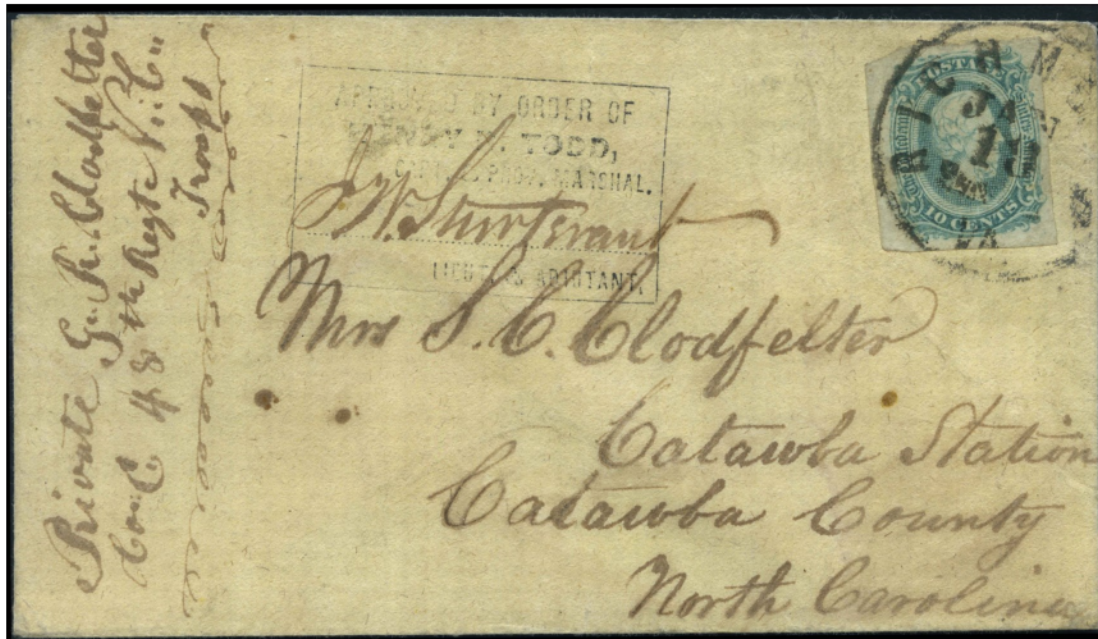
POWs in CSA prison camps rarely possessed or used patriotic stationery

PRISONER OF WAR MAIL

US/CSA 1861—Southbound

First Union Prison-Old Capitol

Following the Battle of Manassas in July 1861, Old Capital prison in Washington DC became the first in the North to hold Confederate POWs. Harrison records 94 covers known.

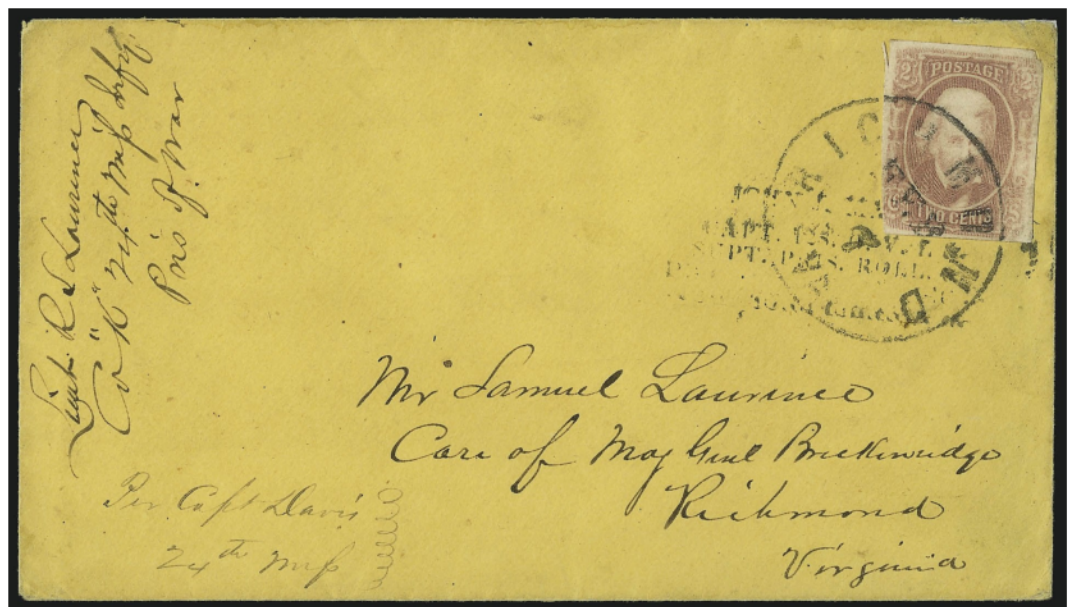


Inner envelope from Confederate POW held at **Old Capitol Prison** in Washington DC, addressed to Catawba Station NC, manuscript POW endorsement with 4-line boxed handstamp censor marking "Approved by Order of/Henry B. Todd/ Capt. & Prov. Marshal/J.W. Sturtevant/Lieut. & Adjutant," CSA letter rate paid by 10¢ Die A cancelled on 10 January (1864) upon entry into the CSA mails at Richmond.

US/CSA 1865—Southbound

POW Mail with CSA Drop Letter Rate

One of four or five
known POW covers
with 2¢ Jackson
Engraved



Inner envelope from Confederate POW held at **Johnson's Island** in Sandusky OH and addressed to Richmond, care of General Breckinridge, manuscript POW endorsement with "John J. Manor/Capt. 128 O.V.I. & /Supt. Pris. ROLL. & /Pris. Correspondence. /Johnsons Island. O." censor's handstamp, drop letter rate paid by 2¢ Jackson Engraved cancelled on arrival 7 February (1865).

PRISONER OF WAR MAIL

US/CSA 1863—Southbound

The Battle of Gettysburg

Benjamin F. Little was appointed captain in Co. E, NC 52nd Infantry Regt., on 28 April 1862 and promoted to full lieutenant-colonel on 3 July 1863, the last day of the Battle of Gettysburg. During Pickett's Charge, Lt. Col. Little was severely wounded while leading his men and captured on the battlefield. Lt. Col. Little's military records confirm that after spending time at the Letterman General Hospital at Gettysburg, he was transported to West's Building Hospital and eventually to Ft. McHenry, both in Baltimore MD prior to being exchanged at Point Lookout.

Letterman General Hospital. US 3¢ 1861 cancelled at Gettysburg PA, 24 July 1863, entering the CSA mails at Richmond VA, 4 August 1863 with CSA 10¢ Die A for postage to Little's Mills NC. Harrison reports 20 known covers.



West's Hospital Building. US 3¢ 1861 cancelled at Baltimore MD, 5 October 1863, entering the CSA mails at Richmond VA, 20 October with CSA 10¢ Die A for postage to Little's Mills NC. Harrison reports 20 known covers.

Ft. McHenry. US 3¢ 1861 cancelled at Baltimore MD, 10 December 1863, entering the CSA mails at Richmond VA, 18 December with CSA 10¢ Die A for postage to Little's Mills NC. Harrison reports 29 known covers.

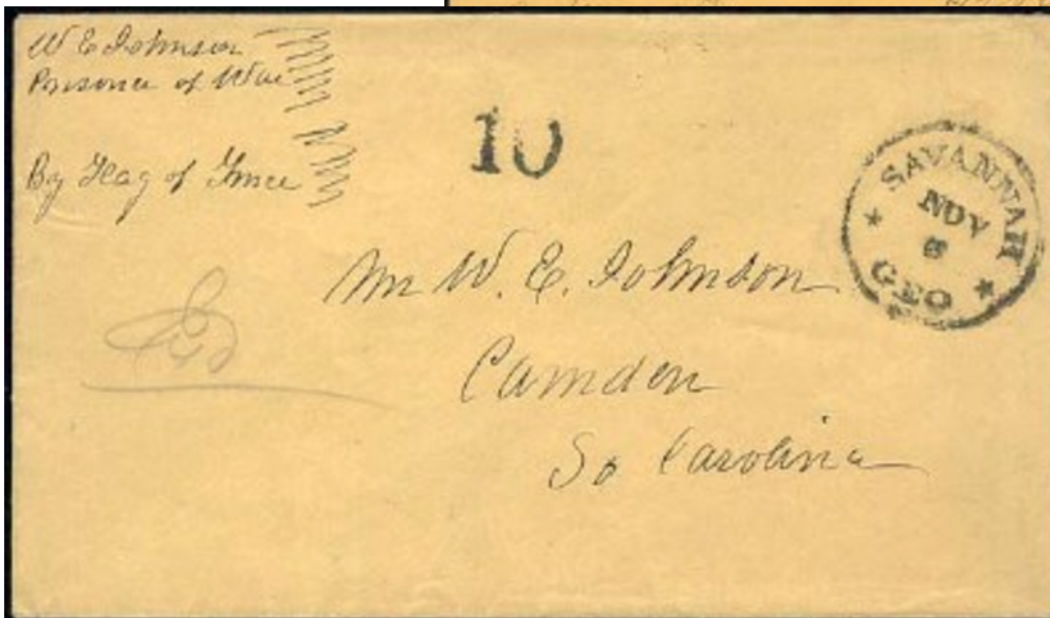


PRISONER OF WAR MAIL

US/CSA 1864—Southbound

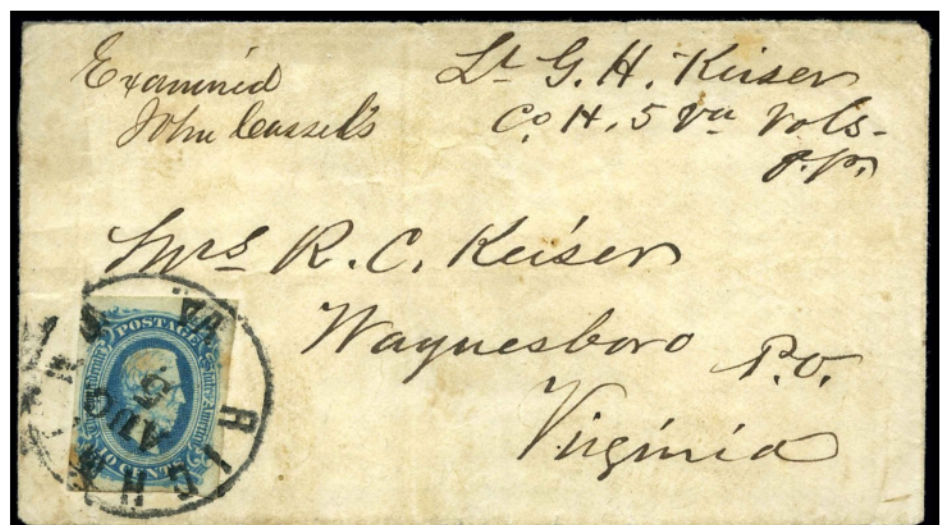
Confederate “Immortal 600” Prisoners

In June 1864 US and CSA generals in Charleston SC each placed 50 captured enemy in areas under bombardment; the tit-for-tat engagement ended in the exchange of the POWs. Shortly after the “50” prisoner incident, 600 more Union prisoners were brought to Charleston. In retaliation, approximately 600 CSA prisoners were moved from Fort Delaware on the vessel Crescent City to Morris Island near Charleston, arriving on 7 September. They were held in open barracks as human shields under direct shelling from CSA forces. After the stalemate, the “Immortal 600” CSA prisoners were moved from Morris Island on October 23 and sent to Fort Pulaski, then back to Fort Delaware.



From Lt. W. E. Johnson, a CSA prisoner and one of the “Immortal 600” held by US forces; 21 October 1864 from Morris Island; 6 November 1864 from Fort Pulaski.

Censored by John Cassels, Captain and Provost Marshal of **Fortress Monroe**, then sent by flag of truce to Richmond, where 10¢ Die A cancelled 5 August 1864; the Confederate prisoner, Lt. G. H. Keiser, was sent shortly after to Morris Island and became one of the “Immortal 600”.



PRISONER OF WAR MAIL

US/CSA 1863-1864—Southbound

US Prison—Camp Hoffman

Unique to the Southbound covers from Union prisons are handstamp censor and examiner markings applied by prison staff and district provost marshals who inspected the mail prior to it entering the postal system, and there were 11 prisons that used such handstamps at various times.

Presented bellow are covers bearing Type I and Type II censor's markings from **Camp Hoffman**, which was established at Point Lookout MD shortly after the Battle of Gettysburg and was built to hold 10,000 prisoners. Approximately 50,000 prisoners were confined during its operation and about 3,500 died. Harrison reports 196 known covers.



Sent by Confederate POW to Shady Grove VA, oval examiner's handstamp "Approved Point Lookout, MD/J.A. Patterson/Capt. Provost Marshall", flag of truce via Old Point Comfort with US 3¢ 1861 and CSA 10¢ Die B entering the CSA mails at Richmond where both stamps cancelled.

This type I censor's handstamp was in use from early October 1863 to late April 1864.

Sent by Confederate POW to Greenville C.H. SC, octagonal examiner's handstamp "Prisoner's Letter/Examined", with US 3¢ 1861 and CSA 10¢ Die A entering the CSA mails at Richmond, both stamps cancelled at Point Lookout 8 December 1864 and CSA stamp additionally cancelled at Richmond with indistinct cds where it entered the CSA mails.



This type IIa censor's handstamp (without date) was in use from July 1864 to March 1865.

PRISONER OF WAR MAIL

US/CSA 1864-1865—Southbound

US Prison—Fort Delaware

Fort Delaware was located on an island on the Delaware River near Delaware City. It held prisoners from July 1861 until January 1866, at its peak housing over 12,000. During October 1863, the mortality rate reached 12.5%, which contrasts with the highest monthly rate at Andersonville, the most infamous of Southern prisons, of only 9%.



Sent from a Confederate POW at **Fort Delaware** to Augusta GA via Richmond-Old Point Comfort flag of truce route; US 3¢ 1861 cancelled at Delaware City 5 November 1864; entered CSA mails with 20¢ **Washington** cancelled 21 January 1865, single US rate but double CSA rate.

One of three recorded POW covers with the 20¢ Washington



Sent by Confederate POW held at **Fort Delaware** to Hillsville VA, censor's oval handstamp, flag of truce via Richmond-Old Point Comfort; US 3¢ 1861 cancelled at Delaware City 30 July (1864), CSA 5¢ Richmond Typograph also cancelled by grid at Delaware City, then by Richmond 17 August datestamp.

PRISONER OF WAR MAIL

US/CSA 1864—Southbound

US Prison—Johnson's Island

Johnson's Island was a 40-acre site on an island on Lake Erie. Throughout the conflict, more than 15,000 rebel prisoners were confined and, despite Winter temperatures approaching 30 below zero, Johnson's Island had the lowest death rate of any major prison in the North or South—less than 2%. Harrison reports 364 known covers, the most of all Civil War prisons.

The two covers presented below were sent by the same Confederate POW to Big Spring Depot VA via flag of truce from Old Point Comfort, entering the CSA mails at Richmond VA.



US 3¢ 1861 cancelled at Sandusky OH and CSA 10¢ Die B cancelled 5 March, with handstamp censor's oval "Prisoner's Letter/Johnson's Island, O./Examined JC".

US 3¢ 1861 and CSA 10¢ Frameline cancelled 23 December 1863 and 19 January 1864 at Sandusky OH and Richmond VA, respectively, with manuscript "Ex. DSA" censor's mark (DeAlva S. Alexander, 128th Ohio Volunteers).



One of two known POW covers with the CSA 10¢ Frameline and the only known example used in conjunction with a Union adhesive according to the Antrim book

PRISONER OF WAR MAIL

US/CSA 1863-1864—Southbound

US Prisons—Other



Sent from a Confederate POW captured at Gettysburg and held at **David's Island**, DeCamp General Hospital, Pelham NY, to Little Yadkin NC, US 3¢ 1861 cancelled at Pelham 4 August 1863, sent by flag of truce from Old Point Comfort to Richmond where CSA 10¢ Die A cancelled 25 August; with original letter datelined "David's Island NY Aug the 4th 1863," from R. H. Bennett who was captured on the first day of the battle—"I was wounded in the leg the 1st day of July at Gettysburg Penn. I reached this place the 25th. I am able to get about on crutches"—David's Island was open only four months to hold prisoners captured at Gettysburg. Harrison reports 10 known covers.



Sent from a Confederate POW held at **Elmira Prison** in upstate New York to Fork Union VA, oval examiner's handstamp "Prisoner's Letter Examined Elmira N.Y.", flag of truce via Old Point Comfort with US 3¢ 1861 and CSA 20¢ **Washington**, both stamps cancelled with 21 October 1864 Elmira double-circle datestamp Richmond VA cds, where it entered the CSA mails. The censor's handstamp was in use from 26 July 1864 to 6 June 1865. Galen Harrison reports 93 known covers.

One of three recorded POW covers with the 20¢ Washington

CIVILIAN FLAG OF TRUCE MAIL

US and CSA flag of truce exchanges were intended for released prisoners and POW mail, not for civilian correspondence. However, a small amount of civilian mail was exchanged by flag of truce, and covers fall into three periods defined by route: November 1861-April 1862 via Norfolk and Old Point Comfort (Fortress Monroe); May 1862-June 1863 limited mail exchange usually via Old Point Comfort; and June 1863-March 1865 via Richmond and Old Point Comfort.

CSA/US 1863-1864—Southbound/Northbound

Richmond-Old Point Comfort



Inner envelope exchanged between Old Point Comfort (Fortress Monroe) and Richmond, then put into the Richmond post office 11 February (1864) as an overpaid drop letter with two 5¢ Blue Lithograph, "Approved/Chas. M. Weelden [sic]/Lt. Col. & Provost Marshal/District Va." censor handstamp.



Rare use of CSA and US stamps on the same flag of truce cover sent from Durham's NC 6 November (ca. 1863) to general hospital in Baltimore via Richmond-Old Point Comfort, 18 November; US 3¢ 1861 and CSA 10¢ Die A, the US stamp was probably affixed at Old Point Comfort in exchange for a US coin.

THE WAR'S END

With Union forces surrounding but not yet occupying the City of Richmond, the CSA postal system discontinued operations on 31 March 1865. On 2 April, Gen. Robert E. Lee and his forces evacuated Petersburg and Richmond, and the next morning the mayor requested that Union forces occupy the capital city to “preserve order and protect women and children and property.” Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia fled towards the village of Appomattox Court House, but were met by Grant and surrendered on 9 April. President Lincoln was shot five days later and died the following day, and Jefferson Davis was captured on 10 May by Union troops and imprisoned at Fortress Monroe.

US/CSA — 1865

Sent by Confederate POW to Mebaneville NC, censor's oval handstamp, US 3¢ 1861 cancelled at Sandusky 22 March 1865, and entered CSA mails at Richmond with CSA 10¢ Die A cancelled 31 March 1865.

This unique through-the-lines POW cover entered the CSA mails via Fortress Monroe in Richmond on the last day the Confederate post office operated.



Last Day of CSA Post Office

CSA 1865—South



General Lee's Surrender

Southern Express Company Telegraph Department letterhead datelined “Charlotte N.C. Apr. 11, 1865,” two days after General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox.

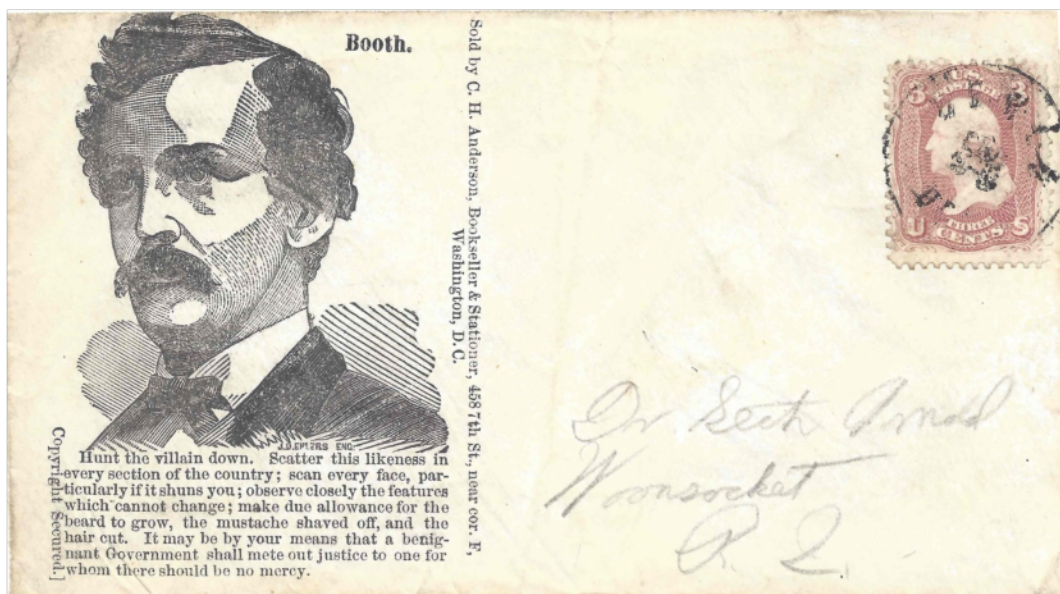
Letter indicates confusion regarding the status of the Confederacy and states: “We hear conflicting rumors that the Yankees are moving on Salisbury. We have no news of Gen. Lee or Johnson. The rail and telegraph lines are cut to Greensboro.”

THE WAR'S END

US 1865—North

The Assassination of President Lincoln

Five days after the General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House, President Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth, a Confederate sympathizer, while attending a play at Ford's Theater in Washington DC on 14 April 1865. The President died the following day, spawning outpourings of grief throughout the world and commencing a national period of mourning that preceded the period of Reconstruction.



Envelope depicting Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth, with caption imploring the public to "Hunt the villain down,... for whom there should be no mercy," used from Lewis DE to Woonsocket RI, with US 3¢ 1861.

One of two known examples

Lincoln chose Andrew Johnson, the only sitting senator from a Confederate state who did not resign his seat upon learning of his state's secession, as his running mate in the election of November 1864. Johnson ascended to the presidency upon Lincoln's death, only 42 days after the inauguration on 4 March 1865, and a train carried Lincoln's body on a circuitous path home for burial in Springfield IL. Mary Todd Lincoln and her sons left Washington DC for Chicago, where they resided until leaving for Europe in 1868.

Free frank mourning cover sent by President Johnson to Ohio Secretary of State Smith, with "Washington D.C./Free/Apr 28 '65" postmark, two weeks after Lincoln's assassination.



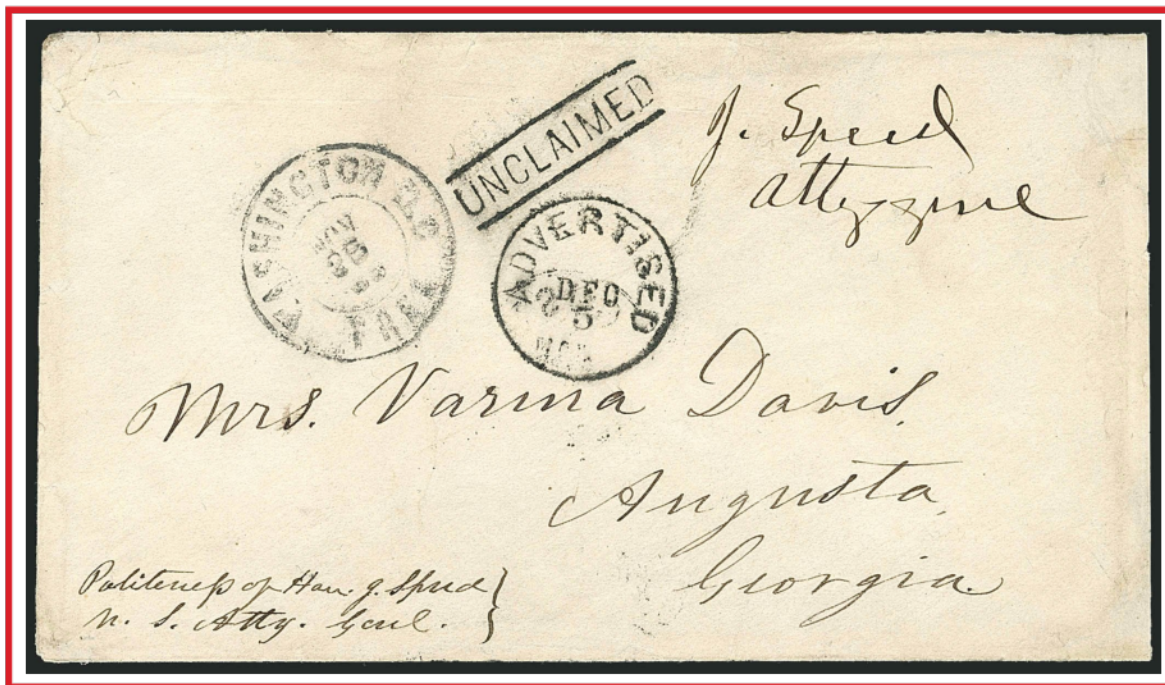
Free frank mourning cover sent by Mary Todd Lincoln, addressed and signed in her hand to the wife of James W. White, a prominent jurist and newspaperman, who was a close friend of Mrs. Lincoln, with "Chicago, Ill/Jun 29" postmark, two and a half months after the President's death.

THE WAR'S END

US/CSA — 1865

The Capture of Jefferson Davis

Following the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia on 9 April 1865, Jefferson Davis and a cadre of trusted advisors fled Richmond and established a temporary center of government in Danville, VA. With the Union army in close pursuit - largely due to the assertion that Davis was involved in the assassination of President Lincoln and the \$100,000 reward promised for his capture - he fled further south and held a final meeting of his cabinet on 4 May before the members dispersed. On 10 May 1865, Davis was captured by Union troops and transported to Fortress Monroe, VA, thus marking the unofficial end of the War and collapse of the Confederacy.



Sent by Jefferson Davis to his wife while a POW at Fortress Monroe and marked "Politeness of Hon J. Speed US Atty Genl." Speed's signature served as both a censor's mark and free frank; letter entering the mails with 25 November 1865 Washington DC datestamp, subsequently marked "Advertised Dec. 5" and "UNCLAIMED," although eventually received by Ms. Davis and backstamped January 5 at Augusta. Davis was indicted for treason though never tried, and eventually released on bail in May 1867 and pardoned by President Johnson on 25 December 1868.

One of three known postally used covers sent by the ex-president as a prisoner of war

* * * * *

The capture and imprisonment of Jefferson Davis marked the collapse of the Confederacy. The War was over, and along with 625,000 soldiers and countless civilian deaths from disease and other causes, President Lincoln was arguably the last casualty of the conflict.

As the Nation entered a period of Reconstruction and tremendous political conflict, the mail systems that had functioned independently for four years were merged again under Federal authority.