

What Is the Latest Known Confederate Cover?

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An unusual Texas cover came my way recently — one which started me wondering about what are the latest known Confederate postal usages. I will begin by describing the item that started all this, will then discuss the history of the War Between the States after Lee surrendered on April 9, 1865, and will finally summarize postal uses during this final period.

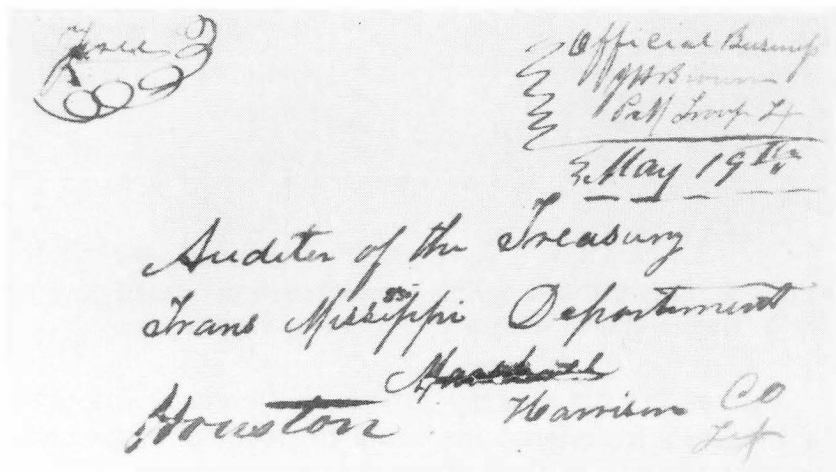


Figure 1. Stampless Confederate Texas cover that is dated by its enclosure (see Figure 2) to be May 19, 1865. The free-franking was authorized because the letter was from a postmaster writing on official business.

The cover in question is a stampless cover from the postmaster at Troup, Texas, to the Confederate Auditor of

the Treasury, Trans-Mississippi Department at Houston. The cover (Figure 1) is franked "Free" and "Official Business / J. H. Brown / P.M. Troup TX / May 19th." The 1863 Directory of Post Offices lists this town in Smith County, Texas. Troup is still in existence and is located near present-day Tyler in northeastern Texas. The contents of the cover (Figure 2) is an official Confederate States Post Office form requesting payment (\$131) to the mail contractor for his services on Mail Route No. 132 for the first quarter of 1865. The document is dated May 15, 1865, and bears the same signature of the postmaster as the cover.

TO THE POSTMASTER *J. H. Brown* 11107

PAY TO *J. H. Brown* 11107

CONFEDERATE STATES, up to the 1865, including any money paid or deposited with you as Postmaster, or Agent of the Post Office Department, any amount due for express collector, and the amount due on your quarterly return for the quarter ending on that day, or for any preceding quarters; provided the amount so paid does not exceed the whole amount due the Contractor for the 1 quarter (\$ 130) after deducting the amounts received from other Postmasters, as shown by the acknowledgment which must be presented by the Contractor, in all cases, before payment is made.

THE WHOLE AMOUNT due from you to the

Mail Route No. *132*

RECEIVED this *15th* day of *May* 1865 from

Postmaster at *Troup*

State of *Texas* *one hundred & thirty one* Dollars, — Cents,

161 DOLLARS. — Cts.

L. J. Hamilton

Figure 2. This CSPO order to pay and receipt, dated May 15, 1865, was enclosed within the cover in Figure 1.

Surrender dates vary for the different Confederate forces. Lee surrendered his army to Grant at Appomattox April 9, 1865. Joseph E. Johnston surrendered the Army of Tennessee to General Sherman on April 26. Richard Taylor surrendered to Canby on May 4. This last event ended all resistance east of the Mississippi. Forces in the western portion of the Confederacy, however, continued hostilities. The battle at Palmito (or Palmetto) Ranch in Texas, on May 13, is generally considered to be the last

action. E. Kirby Smith surrendered the Trans-Mississippi Department to Canby's forces on May 26.

The writer possesses a broadside of Governor Pendleton Murrah, the upper portion of which is shown in Figure 3. It eloquently expresses the sentiments of many.

TO THE PEOPLE OF TEXAS!

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, AUSTIN, TEXAS. /
April 27th, 1865. \

My Countrymen:

Disaster has befallen our arms in Virginia! Our chosen Chieftain, ROBERT E. LEE, victorious on so many glorious fields, is a prisoner of war, and a portion of his army has surrendered!

These unforeseen calamities impose additional responsibilities on the State of Texas. My object now is briefly to point you to the path of duty—to exhort you by all the considerations which make life desirable, or existence tolerable, to pursue that path, without flinching or flinching.

Your faith, your honor, and your manhood, are pledged to your brethren east of the Mississippi; for four years they have fought your battles, and stood a wall of fire, between you and the invader. Their cause is your cause—their fate is inseparably yours. They look now with eager eyes and anxious hearts, to the people and the armies of this Department, for rescue and deliverance. They will not—they must not look in vain!

With God's blessing, it may yet be the proud privilege of Texas, the youngest of the Confederate Sisters,

their helpless inmates stripped of their property—turned adrift to beg or starve; this, too, not unfrequently attended with such brutality as the tongue cannot pronounce, nor the pen record.

You cannot look for relief to emancipation, nor to those other weak and wicked delusions—reconstruction, or a foreign protectorate.

The men who would distract and divide you with such treasonable proposals, are unworthy of your confidence. Under God, we must rely upon ourselves for deliverance.

"Who would be free,
Themselves must strike the blow!"

Rally around the battle-scarred and well known flag of the Confederacy, and uphold your State Government, in its purity and integrity—there is no other hope of safety for you and yours.

Like the Spaniard, the fleet, which invited retreat, has been burned.

Like the heroes of San Jacinto, the axe has been laid to the bridge.

Texas, so far as depends upon me, shall play a

Figure 3. Proclamation of Governor Murrah to the citizens of Texas to continue the struggle for the Confederacy.

Certainly, the latest postal usages of the Confederacy can come only from Texas, because this was the last portion of the Confederate States that was not under Federal control in May 1865. Ter Braake described a cover from Crockett, Texas, postmarked April 30, 1865, with letter enclosed. He also illustrated a cover to James H. Starr as Agent of the Post Office Department, Marshall,

Texas. This latter cover bears a bisected 20¢ green tied with the Crockett postmark in which the May 12 date was altered in pen to May 22. I do not know whether this cover has any contents proving the year of use, and I also wonder if the postmark date was altered after usage. If this cover was actually sent on May 22, then its is three days later than the cover illustrated in this article.

Figure 4 illustrates an interesting cover sold at a Shreves auction (July 6, 1997). It bears both a 10¢ Keatinge & Ball issue and a U.S. 3¢ 1861, with both

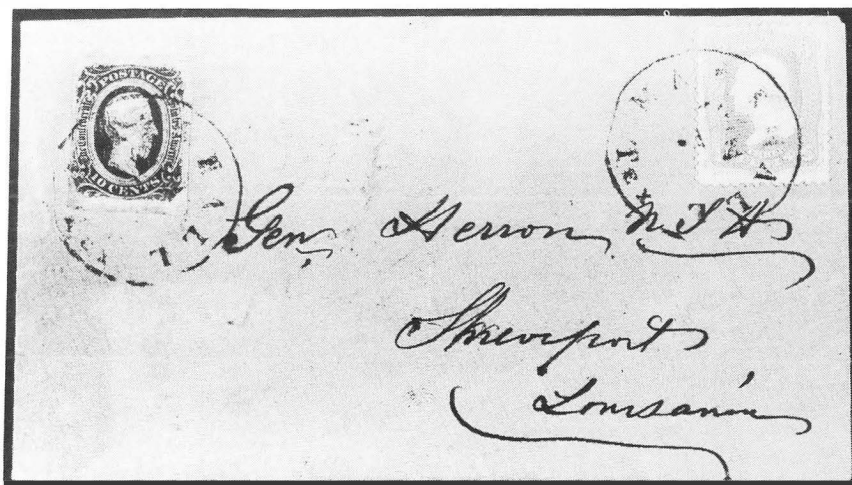


Figure 4. This combination franking is really Federal postal use.

stamps tied by a Marshall, Texas, postmark, dated June 7. Although the auction description touts the cover as possibly the "latest known Confederate stamp usage west of the Mississippi," the Confederate stamp did no postal service. This cover is of purely Union usage. There was no Confederate postal service at that time. A latest known usage must show *only* Confederate postage being paid for transmission of the letter.

In Figure 5 is a cover containing a letter from Richmond, dated June 19, 1865. This is one of the covers from the Bowers correspondence, which was previously discussed by the writer in this journal.¹ The postmark is clearly struck, but the stamp is unfortunately not cancelled. Yet the cover and enclosed letter were within the correspondences, so it seems to have arrived at its destination. This cover was examined by the Confederate Stamp Alliance Authentication Committee (Certificate No. 699) who declared it to be genuine Federal postwar postal usage -- not Confederate. I would concur with this opinion. Although the stamp was accepted in payment of postage, it was not *Confederate* postage.

What has to be the latest use of a Confederate stamp to properly pay postage is shown in Figure 6. It is a 2¢ 'Red Jack' illegally paying the two-cent U. S. revenue charge on



Figure 5. This cover from the Bowers correspondence is really a post-war Federal postal usage. The date based on postmark and enclosure is June 20, 1865.

a check in 1866. It certainly was accepted by the parties involved in the transaction, and bears the proper manuscript initials, "F.W.A. Ap 16/66," the same as those of F. W. Adams, who signed the check at Athens, Georgia, on April 16, 1866.

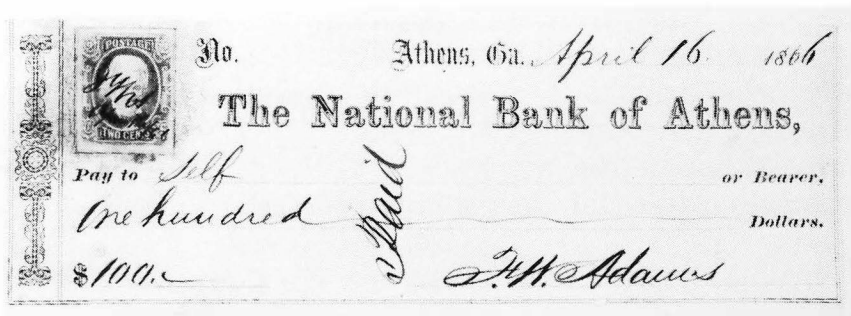


Figure 6. Illegal use of a Confederate 2¢ engraved issue of 1863 on an 1866 bank check.

I would very much like to hear from readers who have late usages and include updates in a follow-up to this article.

References:

1. Milgram, J. W., M.D. "The Marcus Bowers Letters." *The Confederate Philatelist* 22:87-92, 1977.

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