

A Soldier's Due Newspaper Wrapper

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According to Peter W. W. Powell in his 1987 book, the Richmond, Virginia, "DUE 2" handstamped markings were provided by the Confederate postal system for use on drop letters from either a congressman or a soldier. Powell goes on to say that "Almost all known examples of this marking are on incoming prisoner of war covers of which eight to ten are recorded."

The Point Lookout cover illustrated in Figure 1 is an example of such use. Marked "Per Flag of Truce Boat / Via Fortress Monroe," it was sent to a Richmond addressee,

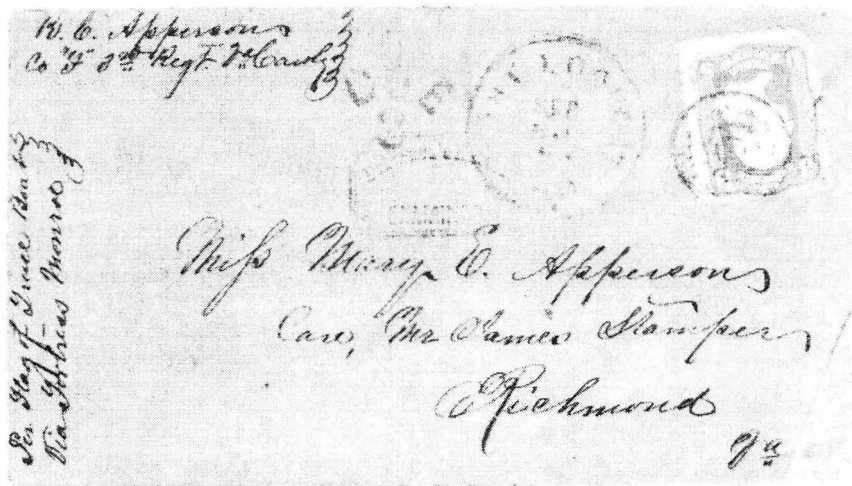


Figure 1. P.O.W. cover, with examined handstamp and post-marked Point Lookout MD SEP 20, [18]64. The DUE 2 was added by the Richmond post office.

and presumably rated as two cents due – the local rate for collection within the city. Atypically, the cover does not carry one of the Richmond date stamps of the period, as is customarily seen on similar prisoner of war mail from the north.

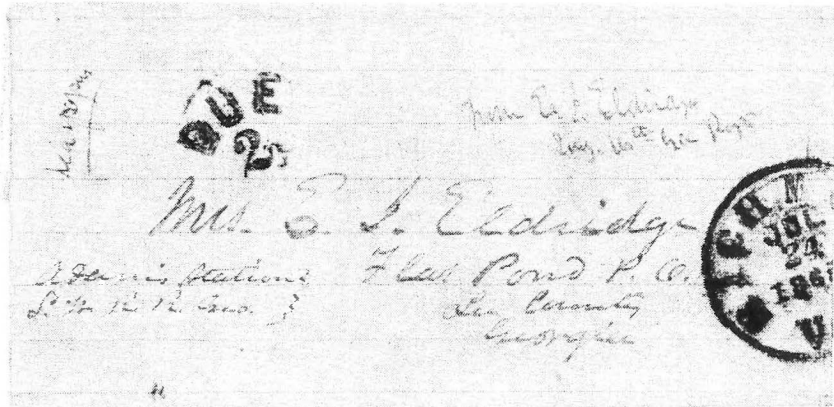


Figure 2. Newspaper wrapper, postmarked Richmond, Virginia, July 24, 1862.

A wrapper, illustrated in Figure 2, was made from a piece of blue-lined grey writing paper, marked “Newspaper” and endorsed “From E. J. Eldridge Surg. 16th Ga Regt”. It bears a clear impression of the Richmond curved “DUE 2” and a Richmond postmark. At the time Eldridge was with his regiment near the Seven Days’ battlefields.

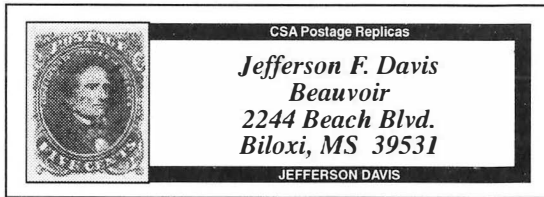
The Confederate postage rate for newspapers not exceeding three ounces in weight was fixed at two cents by the Postal Act of Congress of February 9, 1861, and does not appear to have been increased when the uniform ten-cent rate came into use on July 1, 1862. The Richmond postal clerk, finding this newspaper-within-a-wrapper among other soldiers’ due items, used the rarely seen “DUE 2” handstamp to indicate what he believed to be the

correct rate for transmission of a newspaper by a soldier.

The wrapper is from the large correspondence between Doctor Erwin James Eldridge and his wife, Mrs. Emma Louisa Eldridge. The story of this correspondence and its sender can be found in an earlier *Confederate Philatelist*, in the article by Etta M. Jurissen and Robert W. Werner.³

References:

1. Powell, P. W. W. *Confederate States of America Markings and Postal History of Richmond, Virginia*. Louisville, KY: Leonard H. Hartmann. 1987.
2. Dietz, A. *The Postal Service of the Confederate States of America*. Richmond, VA: The Dietz Printing Company. 1929.
3. Jurissen, B. M., & R. W. Werner. "The Eldridge Correspondence." *The Confederate Philatelist* 22:169-176 (Nov.- Dec. 1977).



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