

The Nitre and Mining Bureau

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The pages have been numbered at the bottom for ease of reference

Synopsis

This is the definitive exhibit on the C.S. Nitre and Mining Bureau

This postal history exhibit is a comprehensive study of semi-official imprinted envelopes of the C.S. Nitre and Mining Bureau. All but two of the major recorded types are shown. The missing two examples (each are the only copy known) are held in private collections. Since winning the single frame grand at FLOREX in 2009, a one new variety of Type WD-ND-08 and two new manuscript covers one of which has a Mobile Alabama Postmaster Provisional are shown.

Ordered on an "as needed" basis from various printers throughout the Confederate States, once the envelopes had been printed, the type was broken down and reset for the next job. The envelopes are classified as "semi-official" because they did not carry a free-franking privilege and required prepayment when mailed through the Confederate postal system.

Knowledge, Research and Personal Study of the Nitre and Mining Bureau of the Confederacy

On April 22, 1862, an Act of Congress established the Nitre Corps as the independent Nitre and Mining Bureau under the War Department for the purpose of supervising the mining of materials needed for military purposes, including saltpeter and nitre. By September 30, 1864, little more than a year later, caves and some 633 nitreries (artificial nitre beds) had produced 1,735,531 pounds of nitre, with 2,659 workmen.

The items from this exhibit are listed in the New 2012 Confederate Catalog for which the exhibitor was the section editor of Official and Semi-Official Imprints. In preparing this section of the catalog, I was able to develop a census of Nitre and Mining covers and discover there are less than 40 covers of all types and varieties known.

The exhibit does not discuss other Bureau activities and responsibilities related to iron and lead mining.

Condition and Key Items

The best available Confederate Semi-Official envelopes are shown, including a Turned Cover and Wallpaper Adversity cover and two manuscript covers. Two types not shown because there is only one known copy of each in the hands of private collectors.

Rarity

In addition to the well-known Nitre and Mining covers shown, there are several new items added:

- a newly discovered variety of Type WD-NM-08;
- the only recorded example of the 20-cent (Scott #13) on a Nitre and Mining Bureau envelope;
- the only known example of a Disbursing Office cover (Type WD-NM-15);
- adversity and turned covers; and,
- the only known example of a Mobile Alabama Postmaster Provisional used on a C.S. Nitre and Mining Bureau manuscript cover.

Presentation

Details of envelope types are discussed on the top of each page.

The chronological information pertaining to the history of the Nitre and Mining Bureau is shown at the bottom.

From personal research, I have also included narrative on the resourcefulness of the Confederates in obtaining nitre. Colonel St. John admitted in October 1864 that, collectively, all of the niter workmen from the Potomac to the Mississippi were the equivalent of 1½ regiments and were responsible for the entire army having "a full supply of ammunition."

References:

Hubert C. Skinner, Erin R. Gunter and Warren H. Sanders, 1986, *The New Dietz Confederate States Catalog and Handbook*, Bogg & Laurence Publishing Company, Miami, FL:177.

Thomas Lera, 2001, "Semi-Official Imprinted Envelopes of the C.S.A. Nitre and Mining Bureau," *The Confederate Philatelist*, Vol. 46 (4): 13 -137.

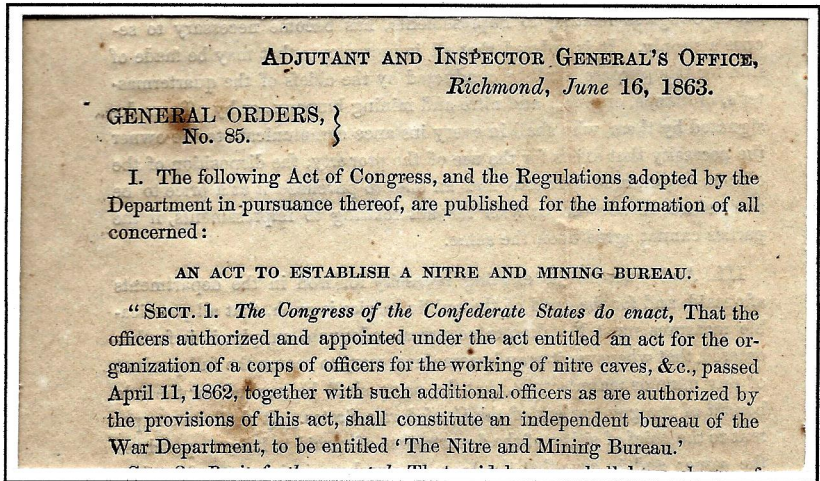
Ralph W. Donnelly, Local Defense in the Confederate Munitions Area, *Military Affairs*, Vol. 18 (3): 118-130

Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History. eds. Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown and Jerry S. Palazolo. Confederate Stamps Alliance, 2012: 402-3.

THE NITRE AND MINING BUREAU

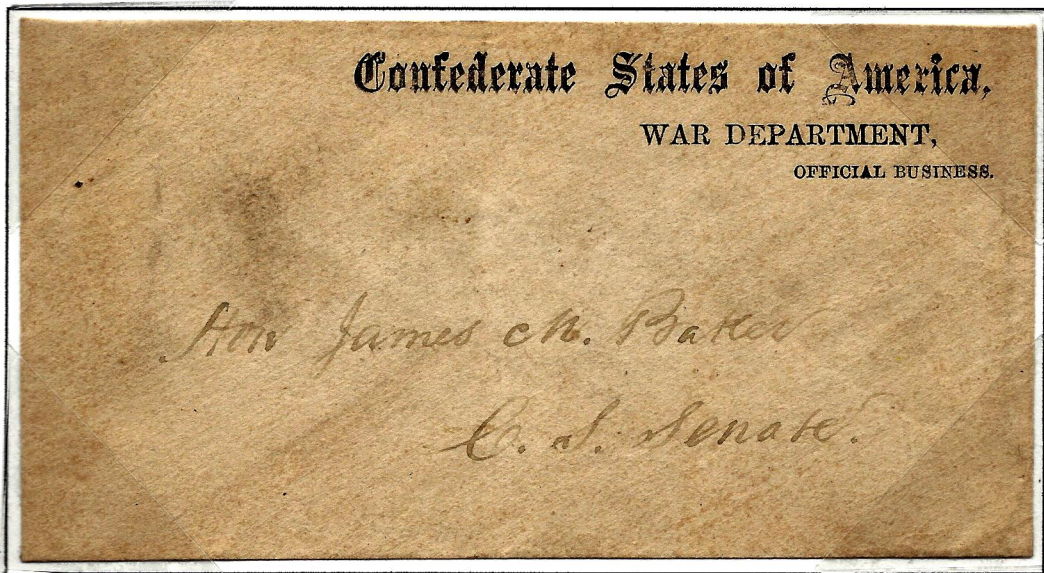
This postal history exhibit is a comprehensive study of semi-official imprinted envelopes of the C.S. Nitre and Mining Bureau, ordered on an "as needed" basis from various printers throughout the Confederate States. The exhibit does not include other Bureau activities and responsibilities related to iron and lead mining.

The envelopes are classified as "semi-official" because they did not carry a free-franking privilege and required prepayment when mailed through the Confederate postal system. All types are shown, including two unlisted manuscripts, one with a postmaster's provisional stamp, and a new variety of WD-NM-08. Types NM-03 and -05 are not shown because they are in a private collection.



Original Printing of General Orders No. 85 "An Act to Establish A Nitre and Mining Bureau"

On April 11, 1862, the Nitre Corps was organized under the War Department. Its charter created the Nitre and Mining Bureau whose name changed during the War to Nitre Bureau and Nitre and Mining Service. The exhibit narrative discusses its semi-official envelopes. Item specific information is noted at the bottom of exhibit pages.



War Department (WD-08) hand carried letter to Hon. James M. Baker, Judge and Confederate Senator

Plan of Exhibit:	Title Page	Page 1
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	Conclusion	Page 16

Red dot signifies only known copy. ●

Unlisted Manuscripts

Nitre Department, Official Business



"Paid 10" on handmade adversity cover from Pigeon River, NC

C S Nitre & Mining Bureau, Official Business



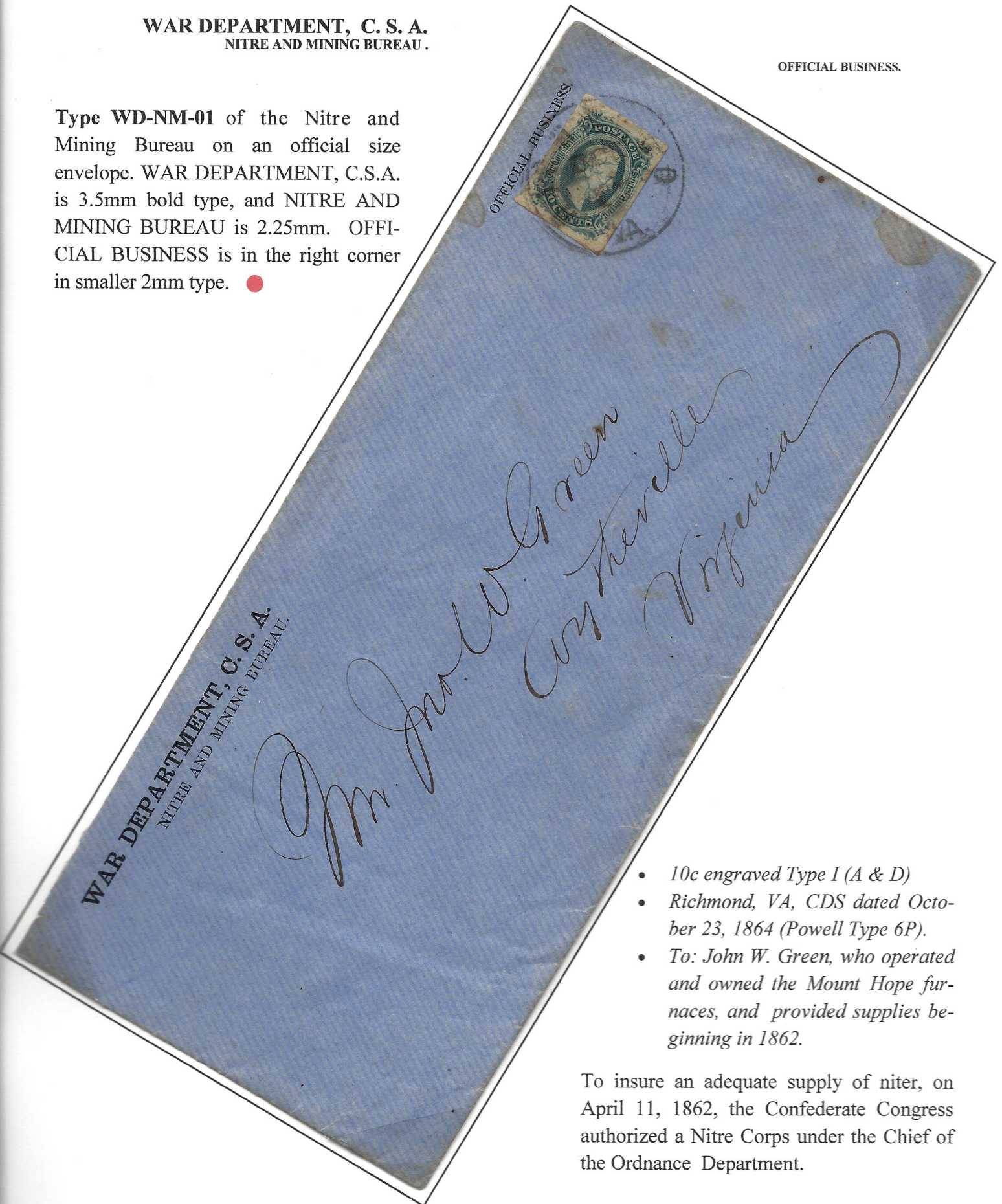
Dec. 10, 1861 circle date cancellation on Mobile, ALA postmaster's provisional 5c stamp, lithographed, on white woven paper (Type MOB-AL-B02b).

Semi-Official Imprint – Nitre and Mining Bureau

WAR DEPARTMENT, C. S. A.
NITRE AND MINING BUREAU.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

Type **WD-NM-01** of the Nitre and Mining Bureau on an official size envelope. **WAR DEPARTMENT, C.S.A.** is 3.5mm bold type, and **NITRE AND MINING BUREAU** is 2.25mm. **OFFICIAL BUSINESS** is in the right corner in smaller 2mm type. ●



- 10c engraved Type I (A & D)
- Richmond, VA, CDS dated October 23, 1864 (Powell Type 6P).
- To: John W. Green, who operated and owned the Mount Hope furnaces, and provided supplies beginning in 1862.

To insure an adequate supply of niter, on April 11, 1862, the Confederate Congress authorized a Nitre Corps under the Chief of the Ordnance Department.

Semi-Official Imprint – Nitre and Mining Bureau

C. S. NITRE AND MINING BUREAU.
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

Type WD-NM-02 of C.S. NITRE AND MINING BUREAU is 3mm. OFFICIAL BUSINESS is shifted 1 3/8" to the left and is 2.15mm type versus 1.75mm on Type WD-NM-03. Both types abbreviated CONFEDERATE STATES [OF AMERICA] to C.S.



- *Pair of 5c Richmond typographs with Richmond April 14 (1863) CDS postmark.*
- *To: John W. Green, Mount Hope Furnace, Wytheville, VA, a contractor, who provided not only pig iron from his Mt. Hope and Beauford Furnaces, but also guano from nearby caves to the 4th Nitre District .*

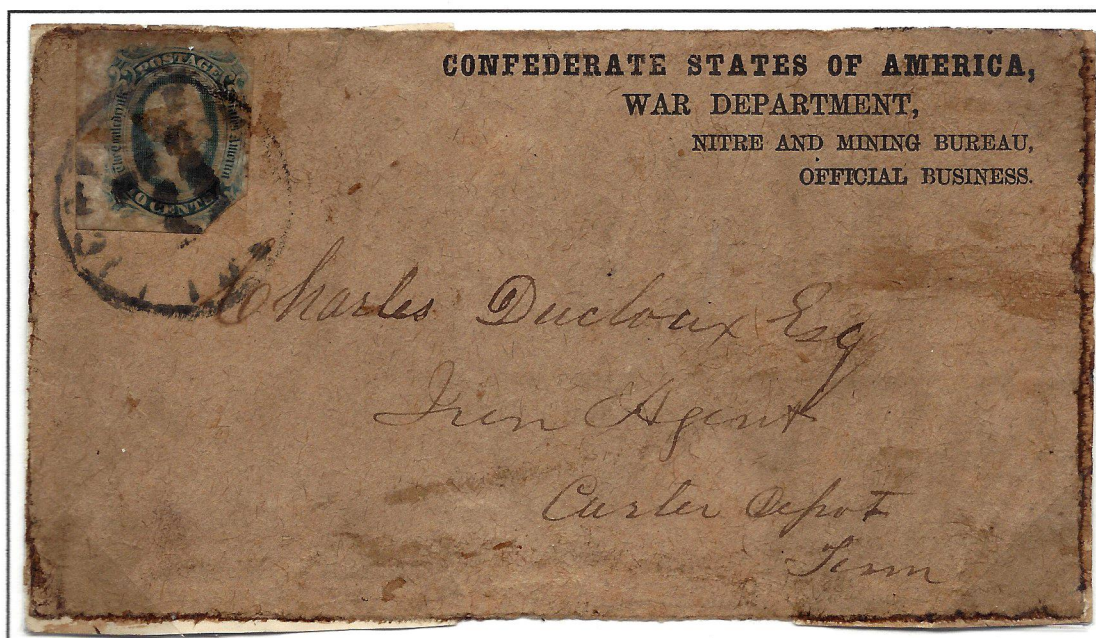
SPECIAL ORDER No. 85

Issued May 19, 1862 by J. Withers, Assistant Adjutant-General, Secretary of War authorized military commanders and officers of the Nitre Bureau to seize nitre in the hands of private individuals...All quartermasters are directed to give precedence in transportation to nitre over all other government stores.

Semi-Official Imprint – Nitre and Mining Bureau

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
WAR DEPARTMENT,
NITRE AND MINING BUREAU,
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

Type **WD-NM-04** is different from WD-NM-05 because it is printed on the right side of the envelope instead of the normal left side. CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA is 3mm, as is the WAR DEPARTMENT with its text shifted 1" to the right. NITRE AND MINING BUREAU is 2.25mm with the text shifted 3/8" to the right, and OFFICIAL BUSINESS is 2.25mm with the text shifted 7/16" to the left.



- 10c engraved Type I (A&D) on a *Wallpaper Adversity Cover*
- To: Charles Ducloux, attorney and Nitre and Mining Bureau agent for District 7 in Carter's Depot, TN

GENERAL ORDER No. 41

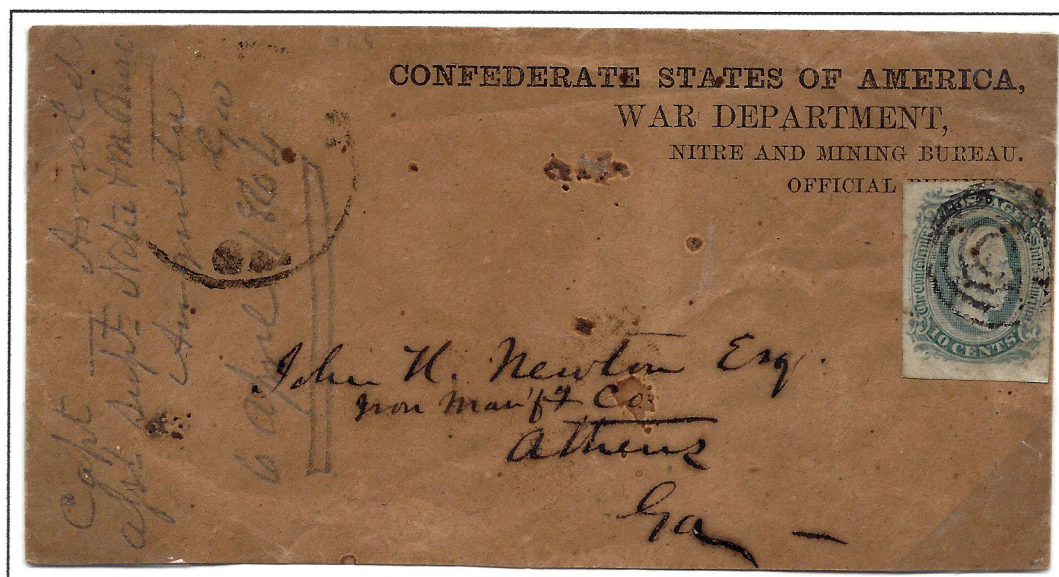
This order stated that "men would be detailed from the army to work the niter caves and to be organized temporarily under the officer in charge of that particular cave, who will make monthly reports to the officer commanding the district in which the cave is located."

Issued May 31, 1862 by S. Cooper, Adjutant and Inspector General

Semi-Official Imprint – Nitre and Mining Bureau

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
WAR DEPARTMENT,
NITRE AND MINING BUREAU.
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

Type WD-NM-06 is printed on the right side of the envelope instead of the usual left. When compared with Type WD-NM-04, CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA is 2.75mm, WAR DEPARTMENT is larger at 3mm and shifted 1 1/8" to the right, and NITRE AND MINING BUREAU is 2mm and 5/16" to the right. OFFICIAL BUSINESS is 2mm with the text moved 5/8" to the right.



- 10c engraved Type I (A&D) with Augusta, GA, April 4, 1864 CDS cancellation
- Army of Northern Virginia Field Target Cancel (Dietz Type AVN-T2)
- To: John H. Newton, Esq., Iron Manufacture Co., Athens, GA, who was a Georgia merchant, director of the Bank of Athens, attorney, and director of the North Eastern Railroad
- From: Capt. Arnold, Asst. Supt. Nitre & Mining, District 14. Capt. Arnold was once in charge of the 2nd Division of the Nitre and Mining Bureau in Augusta, GA

Variations in the semi-official imprints are the result of the printer having selected different type styles, and his positioning and spacing of the lines in relation to one another in the printing press setup.

Semi-Official Imprint – Nitre and Mining Bureau

**CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
WAR DEPARTMENT,
NITRE AND MINING BUREAU.
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.**

Type WD-NM-07 size by line is 3mm,
2.75mm, 2 mm and 1.50 mm in bold font.

Postmarked Richmond, VA, *April 22, 1864*,
this is the only recorded example of the
CSA 13-v2 (20-cent stamp with double
transfer in “20”) on a Nitre and Min-
ing Bureau. ●

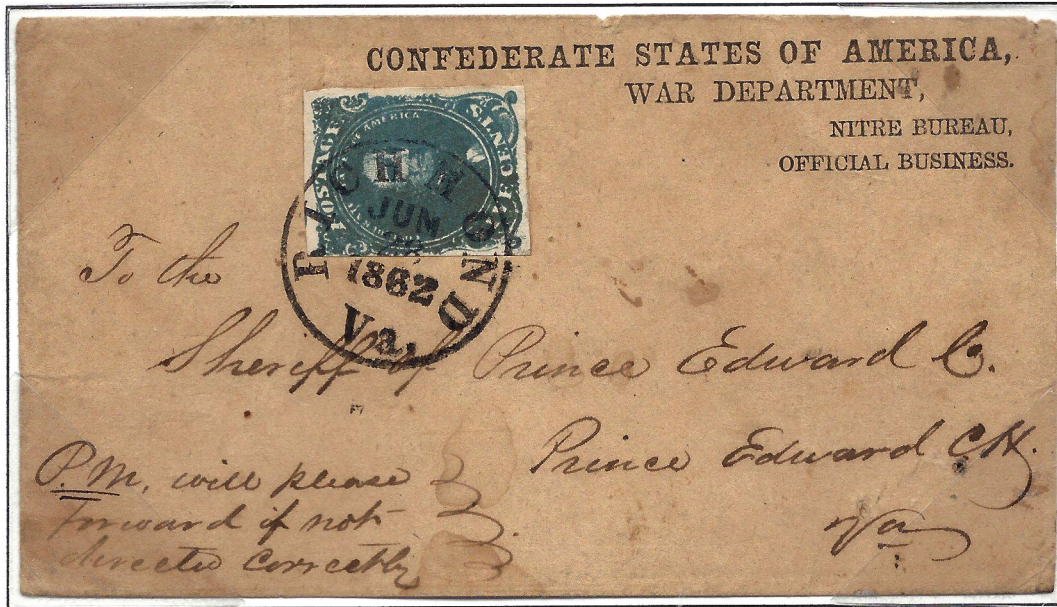


- *To: Messrs. F. B. Deane Jr. and Son, nitre and iron brokers in Lynchburg, VA.*

The Nitre and Mining Bureau was geographically decentralized and unaffected by Union advances. Their production of guano and saltpeter was so efficient the Confederacy never lost a battle for the lack of gunpowder.

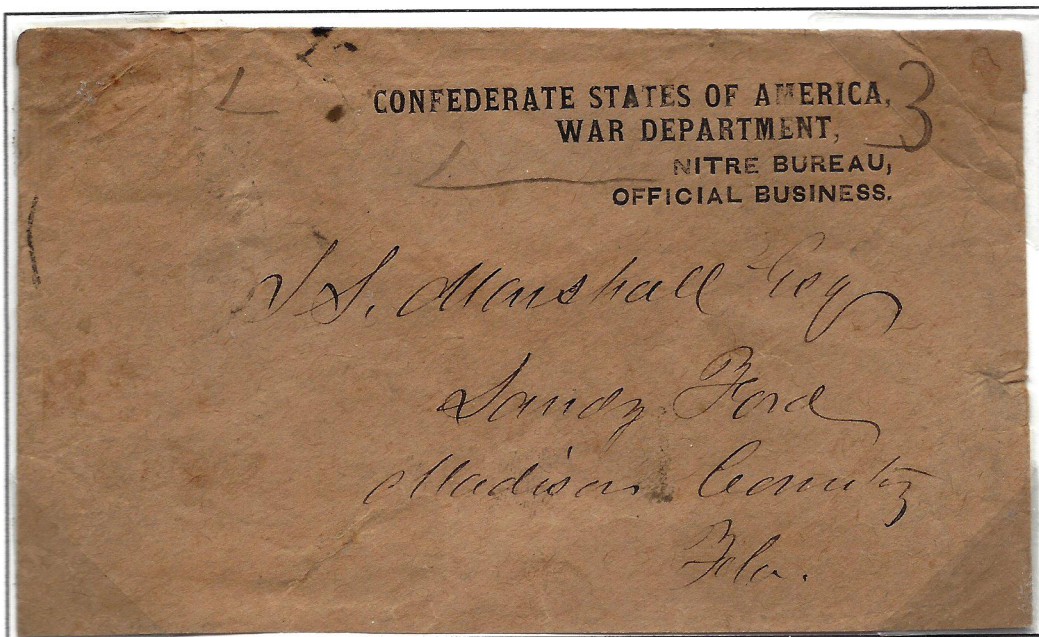
Semi-Official Imprint – Nitre Bureau

**CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
WAR DEPARTMENT,
NITRE BUREAU,
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.**



Type WD-NM-08 with 5¢ Blue Lithograph Stone 3 and a Richmond Va. June 28, 1862 cancel (Powell Type 3d). Instructions to postmaster to forward since the court house was in Farmville, Va.

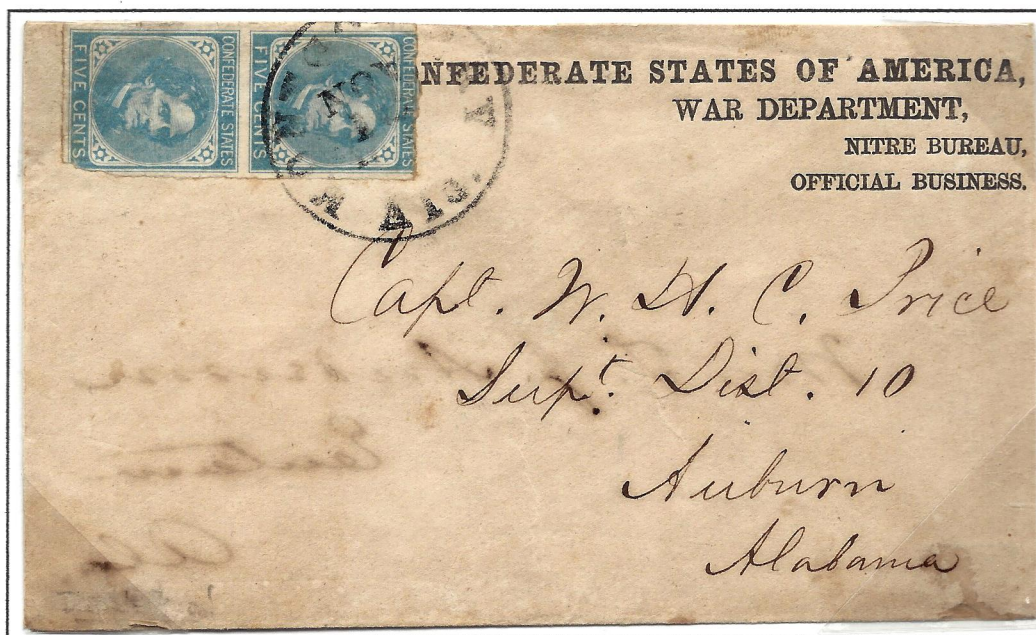
Type WD-NM-08 NEW VARIETY uses a combination of type fonts. In Courier Serif 3mm type are CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA and WAR DEPARTMENT, with the latter below and shifted 1" to the right. In Arial San Serif 2mm type is NITRE BUREAU, shifted 7/16" to the right of WAR DEPARTMENT, and OFFICIAL BUSINESS is 5/16" to the left of NITRE BUREAU.



Semi-Official Imprint – Nitre Bureau

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
WAR DEPARTMENT,
NITRE BUREAU,
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

Type **WD-NM-09** is similar to **WD-NM-08** except it is printed on the right side of the envelope instead of the normal left side, and the “W” of “WAR” is under the “TA” of “STATES”.



- *Adversity Turned Cover* with pair of 5c London typographs and Montgomery, ALA, November 12 (1862) CDS postmark ●
- *To: Captain William H.C. Price, Superintendent of Nitre and Mining District 10, Auburn, ALA*

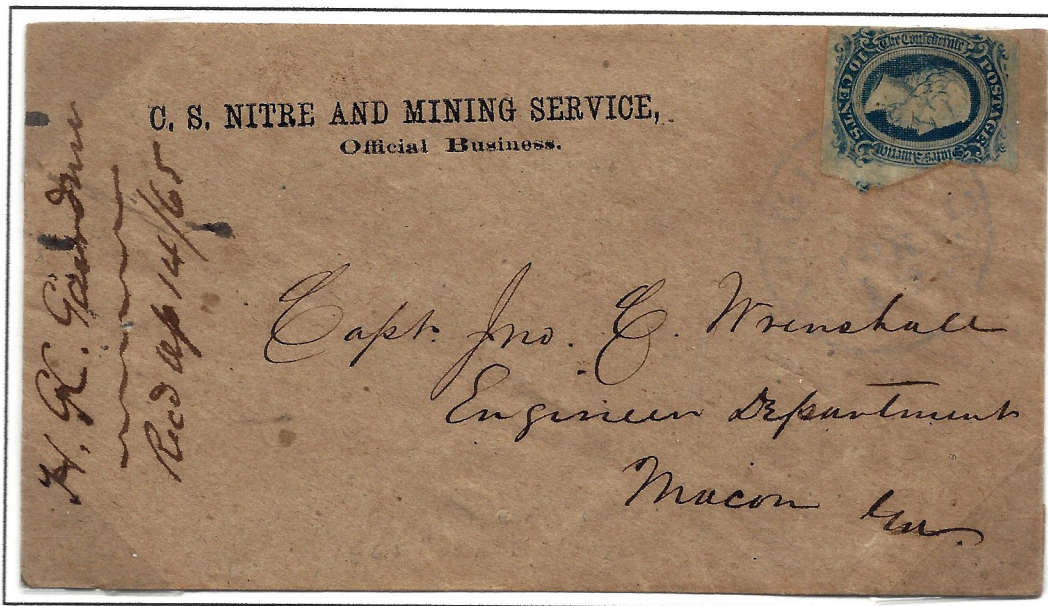


- *Color reproduction of the reverse - a pair of 5c typographs (A&D) on London paper*
- *Auburn, ALA - Blue-green CDS postmark dated Jan 31 (1863)*

Semi-Official Imprint – Nitre and Mining Service

C. S. NITRE AND MINING SERVICE,
Official Business.

Type WD-NM-10 has C.S.NITRE AND MINING SERVICE in 3.25mm type and OFFICIAL BUSINESS in 1.75 mm, with lead cap at 1.50mm, lower case shifted 1" to the right. The printing press feed tray, was misaligned causing the imprint to angle upward left to right.



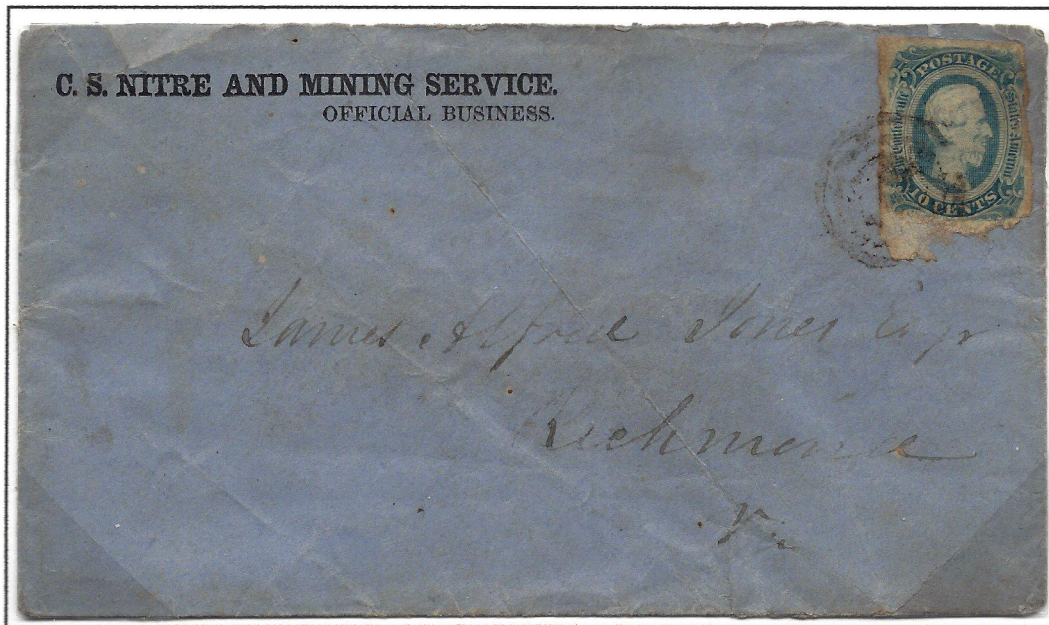
- 10c engraved Type I (A&D)
- April 12, 1865 violet postmark from Augusta, GA
- To: Capt. J. C. Wrenshall, Engineering Depot, Macon, GA, an architect and civil engineer in charge of the engineer's office in Macon. He was also responsible for converting field notes and duplicating maps for use by the army.
- This letter was received by Henry Kollock Gairdner, cotton buyer, guano merchant, and Assistant Superintendent of Nitre and Mining District 8.

In October 1864, Colonel St. John chronicled "important nitre works in Virginia, Georgia and Upper Alabama have been destroyed and workmen killed and captured." But despite all difficulties, "the important requisitions of the Army for niter have been promptly met."

Semi-Official Imprint – Nitre and Mining Service

C. S. NITRE AND MINING SERVICE,
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

Type **WD-NM-11** is similar to WD-NM-12 with the type size of C.S. NITRE AND MINING SERVICE at 3mm, and OFFICIAL BUSINESS at 2mm. The “O” of “OFFICIAL” is under the “T” in “Mining”.



- 10c engraved Type II (A&D)
- The Army of Northern Virginia target cancel (Dietz Type AVN-2T) is one of three known Semi-official Nitre and Mining Service covers with field post markings.
- To: James Alfred Jones, a Richmond attorney

GENERAL ORDER No. 82

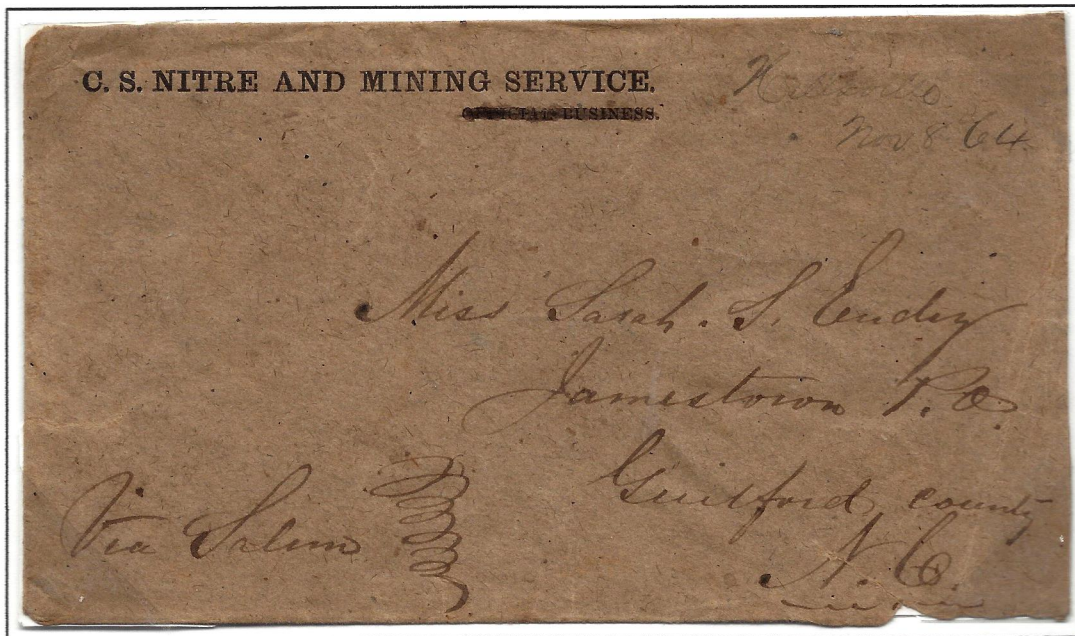
Because of War casualties, the Ordnance and Nitre Bureaus were instructed to place in the field one-fifth of all their men, including contractors and their employees.

Issued October 20, 1864 by S. Cooper, Adjutant and Inspector General.

Semi-Official Imprint – Nitre and Mining Service

C. S. NITRE AND MINING SERVICE,
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

Type WD-NM-12 is similar to WD-NM-10 and WD-NM-11, however, the “O” of “Official” is now under the “NG” of “MINING”.



- Manuscript from Hillsville, VA routed through Salem VA November 8, 1864
- OFFICIAL BUSINESS obliterated because envelope used for personal mail
- On reverse is a 10c engraved CSA 11, Type 1 (A&D) with pen cancel

GENERAL ORDER 18

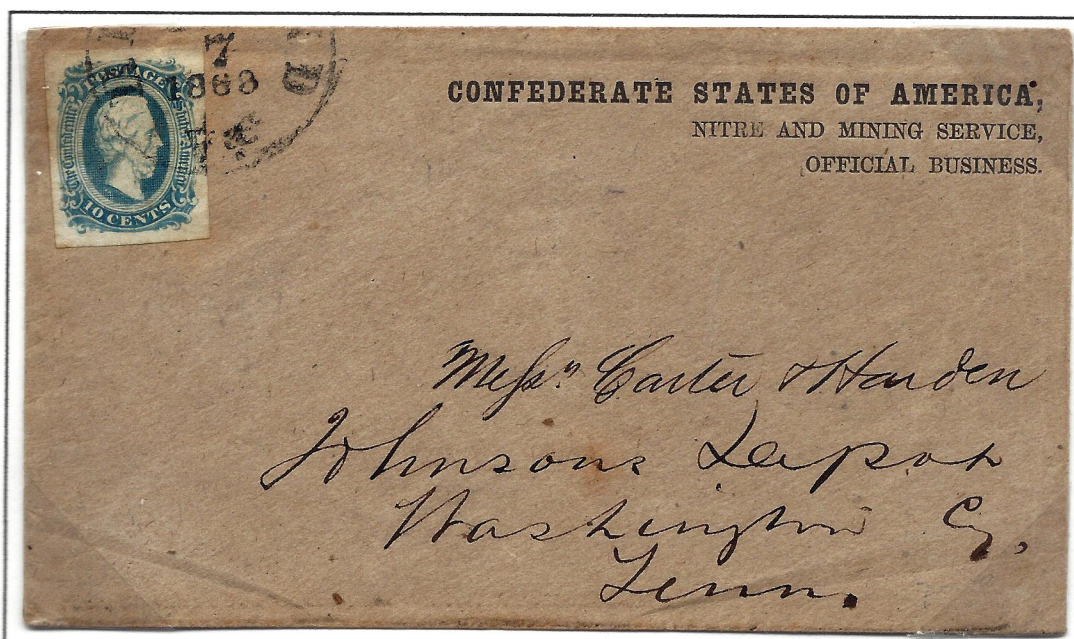
Section III stated military commands would extend to the Nitre and Mining Service, for protection, aid and encouragement, especially in districts exposed to the enemy. [The Confederates were losing ground and more able-bodied fighting troops were needed.]

Issued on February 9, 1864, by S. Cooper, Adjutant and Inspector General.

Semi-Official Imprint – Nitre and Mining Service

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
NITRE AND MINING SERVICE,
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

Type WD-NM-13 - The imprint is on the right side of the envelope instead of the usual left side. The type size of CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA is 2.50mm and the size of the other two lines is 2mm. The “N” of “NITRE” is under the first “S” of “STATES”.



- 10c engraved Type I (A&D) with a Richmond, VA 1863 CDS cancel (Powell Type 5d)
- To: Carter Harden, a niter and guano contractor who mined Keplinger Saltpeter Cave in Johnsons Depot, Washington Co., TN, Nitre District 7

Supervision of the activities of the corps was decentralized by dividing the Confederate States into fourteen niter districts, seven of which were in Virginia. In October 1864, Colonel St. John stated all of the niter workmen, from the Potomac to the Mississippi, were the equivalent of 1½ regiments and were responsible for the entire army having “a full supply of ammunition.”

Semi-Official Imprint – Nitre and Mining Service

**CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
NITRE AND MINING SERVICE.
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.**

Type WD-NM-14 differs from WD-NM-13 in that the “N” of “NITRE” is under the first “T” of “STATES” and it is imprinted on the left side of the envelope.



- Both envelopes have a 10c engraved Type II (A&D) with Staunton, VA, CDS
- **Above:** addressed to Robert L. Horner (Nitre Works) Superintendent of Douglas Cave Works in Nitre District 4 ½, Bath Alum Post Office, Bath, VA,
- **Below:** addressed to James E. A. Gibbs (Nitre Contractor), Collierstown P.O., Rockbridge Co. VA in Nitre District 4



Semi-Official Imprint - Nitre and Mining Service

C. S. NITRE AND MINING SERVICE,
DISBURSING OFFICE.
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

Type WD-NM-15 is the only imprint known from the DISBURSING OFFICE which handled payments for the NITRE AND MINING SERVICE. ●

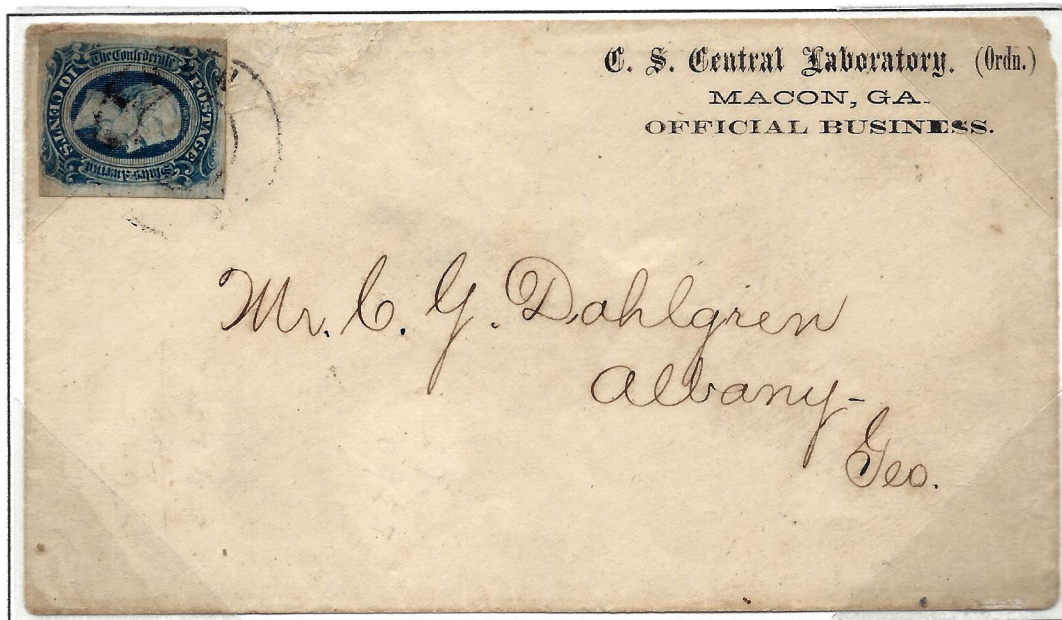


- To: Captain R. C. Morton, who later became Colonel and Chief of the Nitre and Mining Service.
- He received this hand-carried letter which contained 500 postage stamps.

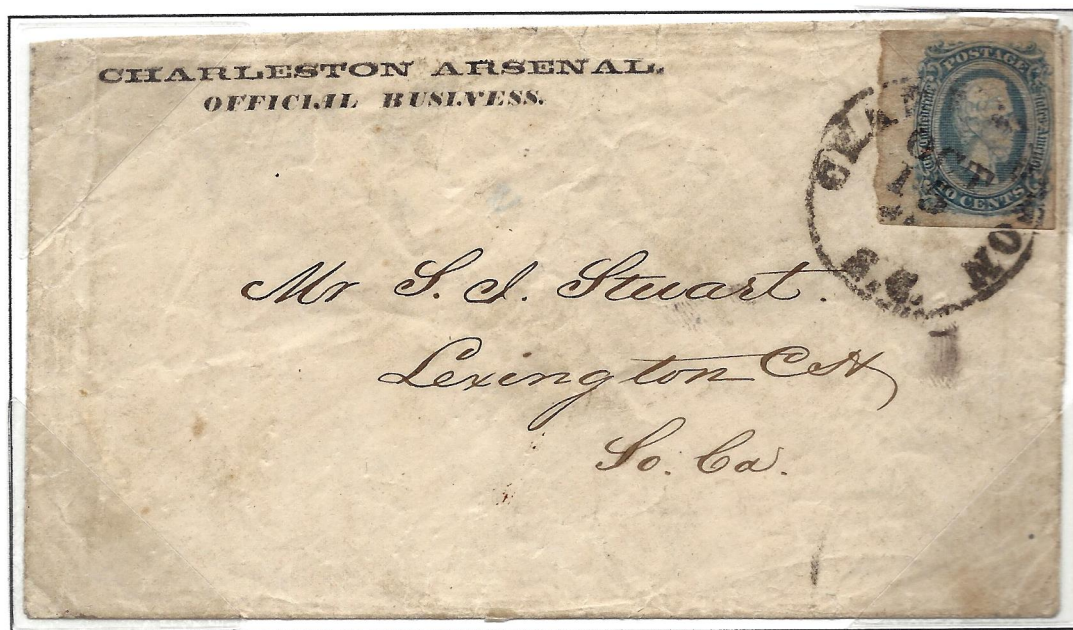
In September 1864, Colonel Morton reported there were more than 250 caves mined for their niter deposits and more than 1,735,000 pounds of cave niter had been delivered to the powder mills to be converted into gunpowder.

Conclusion

Material collected by the Nitre Bureau and Service was sent to the C.S. Laboratory to be processed, mixed with charcoal and sulfur into ammunition, and shipped to Confederate Armories.



Above: WD-OD-19 C. S. Central Laboratory. (Ordn.) at Macon, GA. This letter was sent to General C.G. Dahlgren of the 7th Regiment, Army of the Mississippi in charge of coastal defense.
Below: WD-OD-14 Imprinted on the left is CHARLESTON ARSENAL where finished ordnance was received and shipped for distribution to the Army and Navy.



By 1865, conditions were deteriorating so fast the Confederacy itself had only a few weeks of existence left. The Nitre and Mining Bureau and Service had done its job. The South had gunpowder and ammunition to the end, but was overwhelmed by the greater resources of the North.