

U.S. Mail Service in the Seceded and Confederate States
December 20, 1860 – May 31, 1861

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

U.S. Mail Service
in the
Seceded and Confederate States
December 20, 1860 – May 31, 1861

U. S. Post Office Service of Mail in the Seceded and Confederate States

December 20, 1860 – May 31, 1861

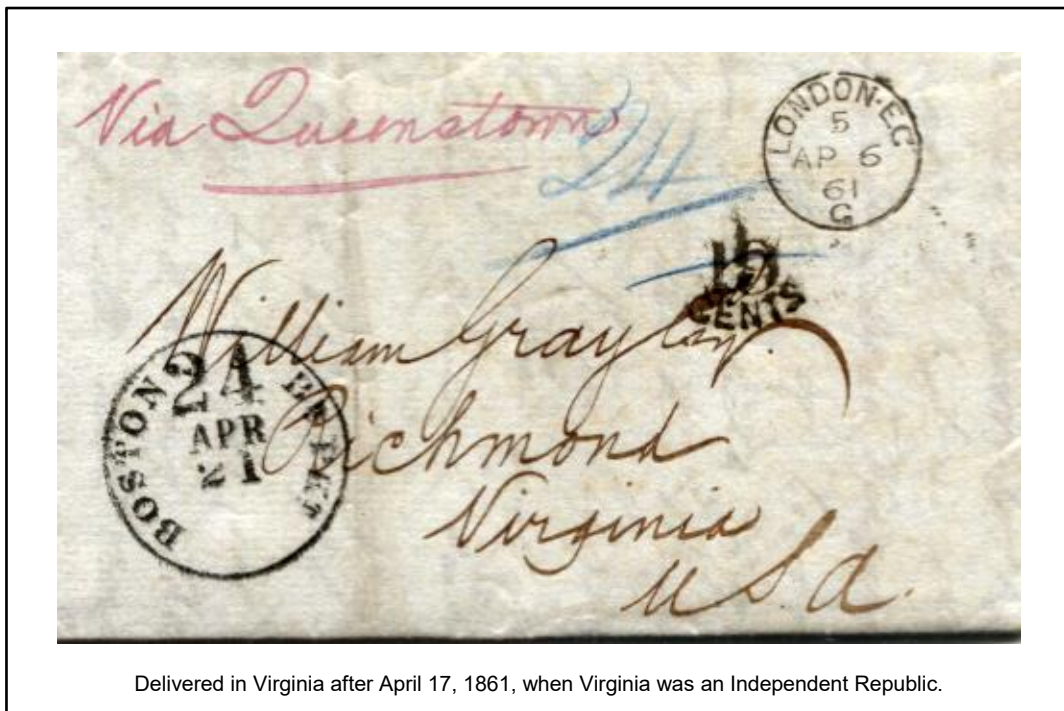
Secession. February 4, 1861, is traditionally considered the date the Confederate States of America formed, but this date was only one of several important dates in the process that led to the creation of the Confederacy.

Beginning February 4, and continuing through March 11, 1861, the assembled state delegates took the following significant steps to create the Confederacy:

February 4	Delegates from the six seceded states assemble in Montgomery, AL and present credentials
February 8	Delegates adopt a Provisional Constitution
February 9	Delegates elect Jefferson Davis and Alexander Stephenson as provisional president and vice-president, respectively, of the Confederacy
March 11	Congressional delegates adopt a Permanent Constitution

Independent Republic Period. The period from the date a state seceded from the United States through the day before the state was admitted to the Confederacy is known as the Independent Republic Period.

Confederate State Period. The period from and after the day a state was admitted to the Confederacy is known as the Confederate State Period.



Delivered in Virginia after April 17, 1861, when Virginia was an Independent Republic.

U. S. Service of Confederate Mail. On February 4, when the Confederacy was formed, the Confederate Post Office Department was not ready to service mail in the seceded states. Accordingly, for a variety of reasons, among others, having to do with north-south debtor-creditor relations, propaganda, and a naive hope that such an action would generate sufficient goodwill to lure the seceded states back into the Union, the United States Post Office Department continued to service mail to, from and within the seceded states — even after war commenced on April 12. This ended on May 31, 1861, when PMG Blair ended the practice. The Confederate Post Office commenced its own operations the next day.

South Carolina

Independent Republic Period

Confederate State Period

South Carolina Leaves the Union

Secession Date	Date Joined Confederacy
December 20, 1860	February 4, 1861

On December 20, 1860, South Carolina withdrew from the United States, and became the first state to move toward the formation of the Confederate States of America.

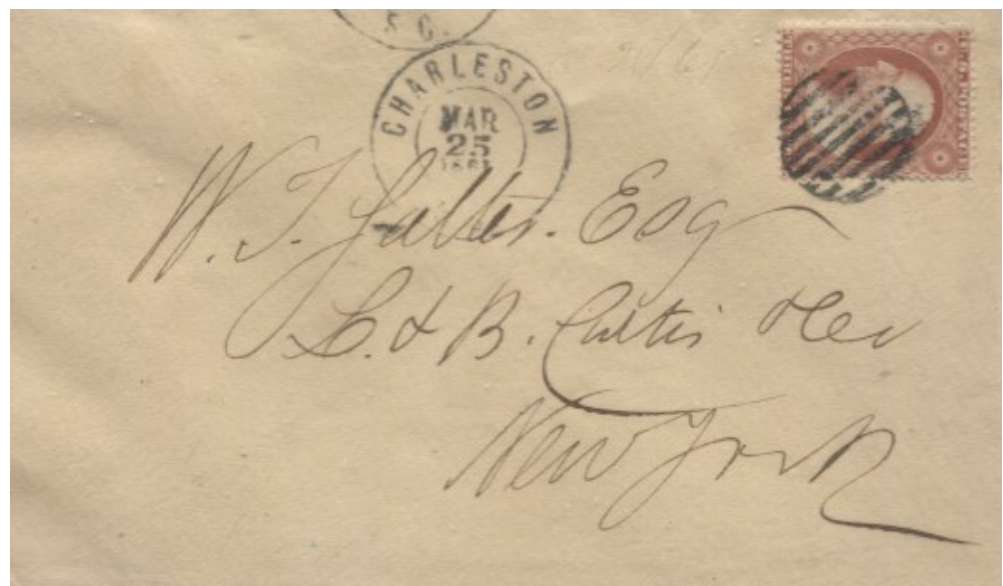


December 31, 1861.

Independent Republic
Period.

March 25, 1861.

CSA Period

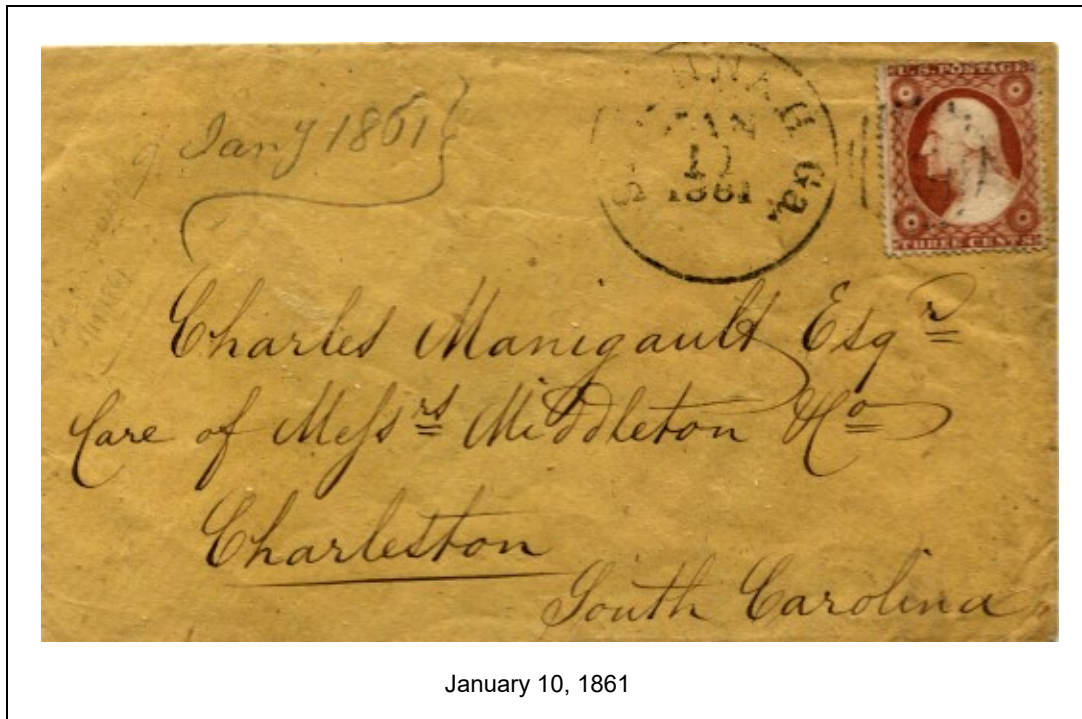


Letter From State of Georgia Before Its Secession to the Independent Republic of South Carolina After Its Secession

This cover was mailed from Savannah, GA, on January 10, 1861, to Charleston, South Carolina.

Georgia still was part of the United States although South Carolina was not. Georgia seceded on January 19, 1861; South Carolina had seceded on December 20, 1860.

Both Georgia and South Carolina joined the Confederate States of America on February 4, 1861.



Drop Letter Mailed On Second Day of War

This Drop Letter was addressed to “Marcus C. McClingham, Charleston, SC, Care of H.B. Stanley, Capt. Marions [sic] Volunteers, Morris Island.”

Morris Island sits in Charleston Harbor. It had been occupied by Union troops who evacuated it in January 1861, after South Carolina seceded from the United States.

The United States troops who evacuated Morris Island moved to Fort Pickens, also in Charleston Harbor, until they quit that fort and moved to Fort Sumter.



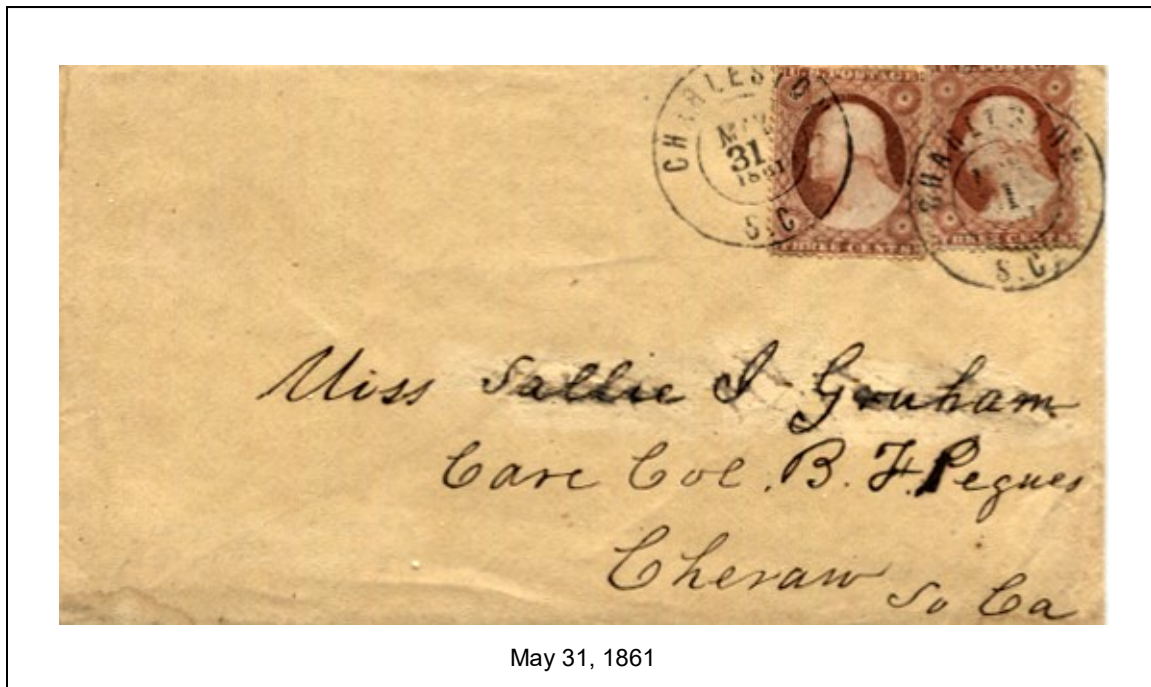
The South Carolina militia, called “Marion’s Volunteers,” occupied Morris Island beginning in January 1861.

The 1¢ U.S. stamp paid the U.S. Drop Letter postage.

Last Day U. S. Mail Service Provided To Seceded or Confederate States: May 31, 1861

Beginning with the secession of South Carolina on December 20, 1860, and continuing until the Confederate Post Office took over its own operations on June 1, 1861, the United States Post Office provided postal services to the seceded states and, thereafter, to each such state after it joined the CSA, as if the secession crises had not occurred.

There were many reasons for this, but once it became clear that none of the states was going to rejoin the Union, Postmaster General Blair ordered that all U. S. postal service in the CSA end on May 31, 1861, and that all U. S. post offices located in states in rebellion be closed on that date.



Beginning June 1, 1861, when the CSA took over its own postal operations, under U.S. PMG Blair's order, all mail from the North addressed to states in rebellion was to be sent to the Dead Letter Office. Mail from the South, however, could still enter the North, but not via the U. S Post Office Department. Such mail had to be conveyed from the states in rebellion to a northern post office (for onward transmission) via private express or per favor carriage.

This, too, would end when Blair, responding to an executive order issued by President Lincoln, prohibited all postal commerce with the states in rebellion. Thereafter, letters to the North from the South were sent to the U. S. Dead Letter Office.

Mississippi

Independent Republic Period

Confederate State Period

Mississippi Secedes and Then Joins the Confederacy

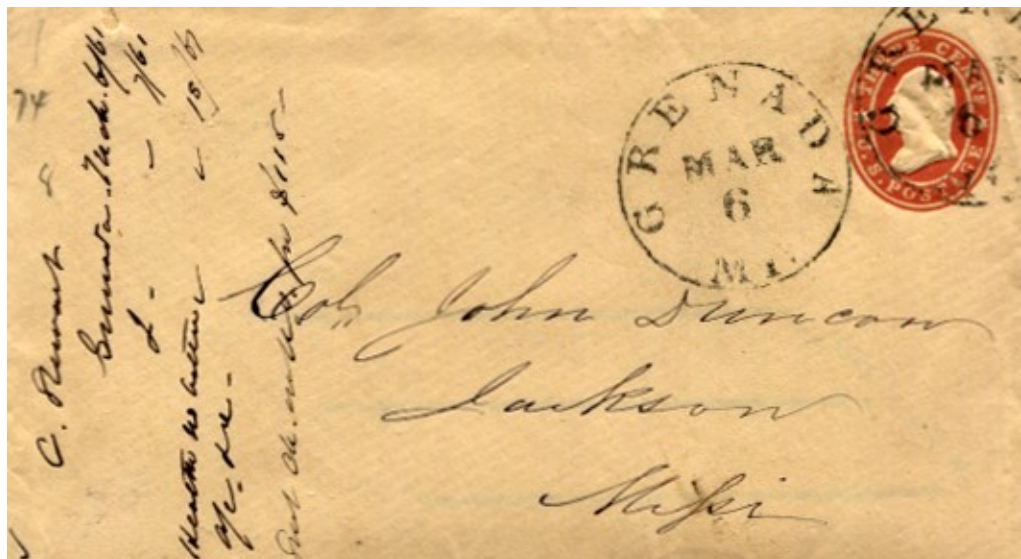
Secession Date	Date Joined Confederacy
January 9, 1861	February 4, 1861



Jackson, Miss.

January 30, 1861.

Independent
Republic Period.



March 6, 1861.

CSA Period.

Confederate Mail Serviced By United States Post Office and Carried on Union Steamboat

This cover was conveyed by the United States Post Office Department which serviced Independent States and Confederate States mails until June 1, 1861. During this time, United States postage was recognized in the Independent and Confederate States.

This cover likely was placed aboard the Steamboat *Fair Play* at some port or landing of unknown origin, and carried as a loose letter by the steamboat to Vicksburg, Mississippi, where the cover entered the mail system.



Route: Cover's place of origin unknown → Mississippi River → Vicksburg,
Mississippi → New Orleans, Louisiana [overland from Vicksburg].
Cover dated April 29, 1861.

Although it is likely (because such was the practice of the United States and Confederate Post Office Departments) that the sender's instruction to place the cover aboard the *Fair Play* was followed, it is not possible to be certain that this cover was actually carried by that vessel without other evidence.

**Confederate Mail Serviced By United States Post Office
and Carried on Union Steamboat**



Until June 1, 1861, the United States Post Office Department serviced all mail, such as this cover, in the Confederate States. The United States Mail packet oval marking *Steamer Vicksburg* was applied by the Natchez post office when the captain of the steamboat handed in this loose letter to the Natchez postmaster. The steamboat *Vicksburg* had a Union mail contract to operate between Vicksburg, Grand Gulf, Rodney, Waterproof, Natchez, Fort Adams and Bayou Sara, Mississippi [and all intermediate landings]. This contract ended on June 1, 1861, when the Confederate Post Office Department took over the servicing of the Confederate mails.

The three U.S. stamps on this triple weight cover were cancelled by the blue oval handstamp "STEAMER VICKSBURG" applied by the federal route agent serving aboard this vessel before he delivered the cover to the Natchez Post Office.



Route: Cover's place of origin unknown → Mississippi River → Natchez.
Cover dated March 5, 1861. CSA Certificate

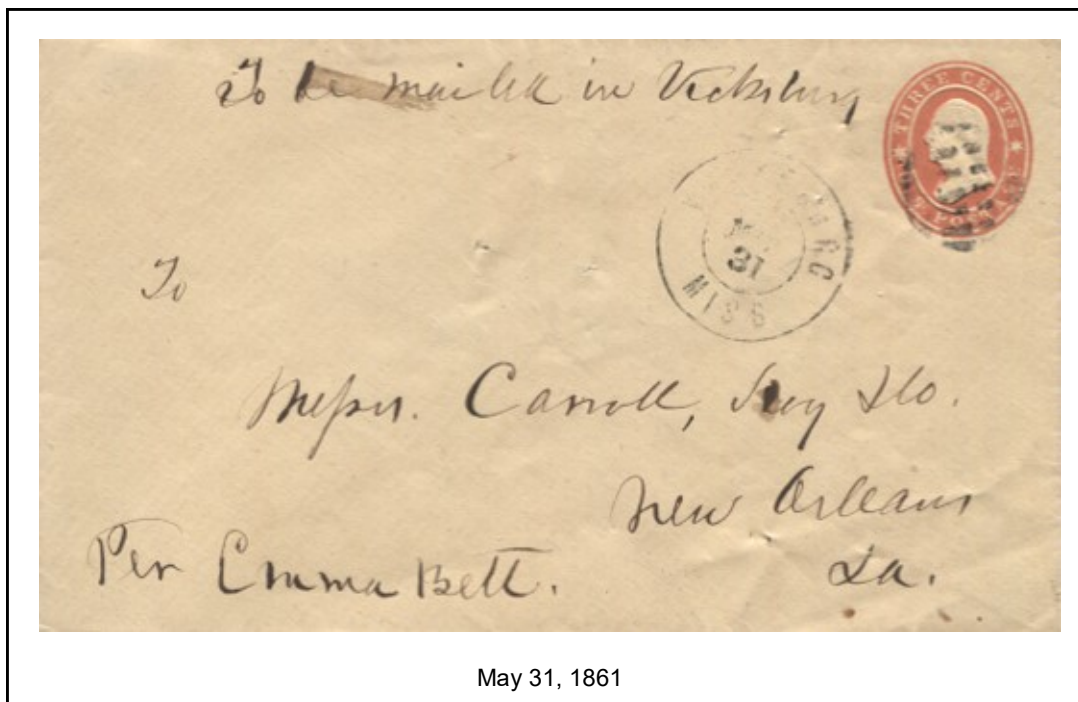
Mississippi passed its Ordinance of Secession on January 9, 1861. It joined the Confederacy on February 4, 1861.

Last Day U. S. Mail Service Provided To Seceded or Confederate States:
May 31, 1861

Mississippi River Steamboat *Emma Bett*

Beginning with the secession of South Carolina on December 20, 1860, and continuing until the Confederate Post Office took over its own operations on June 1, 1861, the United States Post Office provided postal services to the seceded states and, thereafter, to each such state after it joined the CSA, as if the secession crises had not occurred.

There were many reasons for this, but once it became clear that none of the states was going to rejoin the Union, Postmaster General Blair ordered that all U. S. postal service in the CSA end on May 31, 1861, and that all U. S. post offices located in states in rebellion be closed on that date.



Beginning June 1, 1861, when the CSA took over its own postal operations, under U.S. PMG Blair's order, all mail from the North addressed to states in rebellion was to be sent to the Dead Letter Office. Mail from the South, however, could still enter the North, but not via the U. S Post Office Department. Such mail had to be conveyed from the states in rebellion to a northern post office (for onward transmission) via private express or per favor carriage.

This, too, would end when Blair, responding to an executive order issued by President Lincoln, prohibited all postal commerce with the states in rebellion. Thereafter, letters to the North from the South were sent to the U. S. Dead Letter Office.

The Mississippi River steamboat *Emma Bett* regularly sailed between Vicksburg and New Orleans.

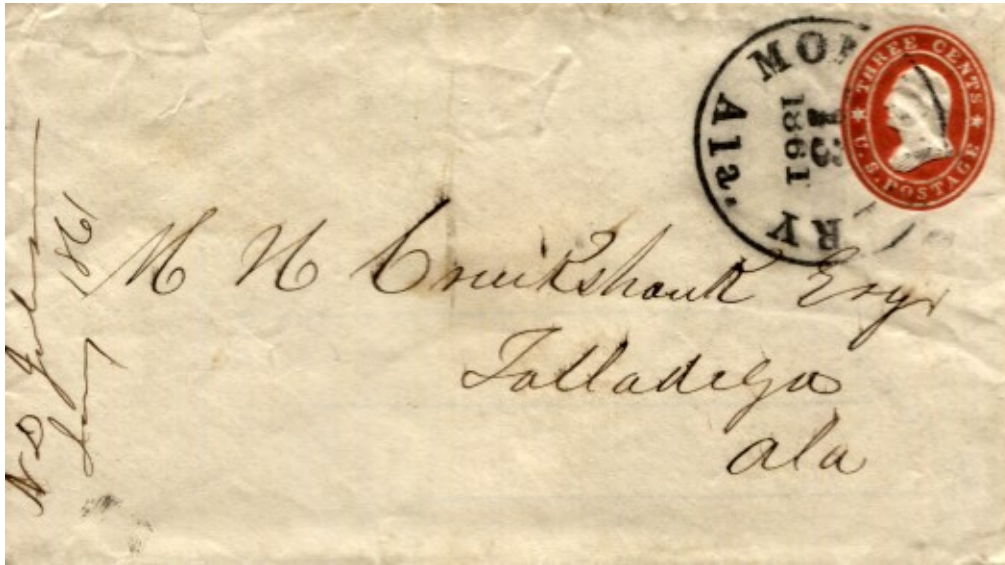
Alabama

Independent Republic Period

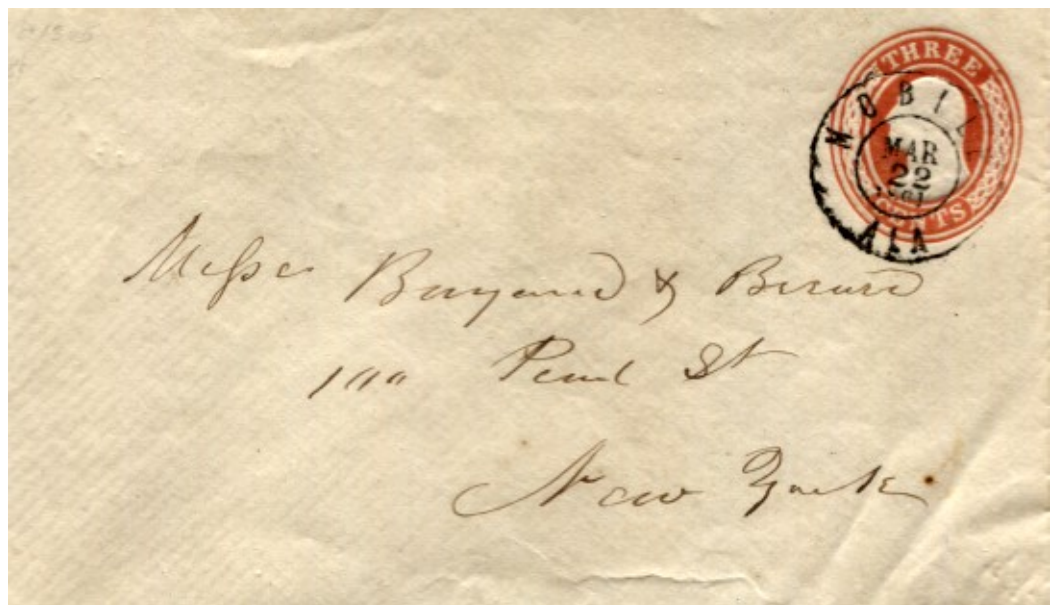
Confederate State Period

Alabama Secedes and Then Joins the Confederacy

Secession Date	Date Joined Confederacy
January 11, 1861	February 4, 1861



January 13, 1861.
Two days after
Alabama seceded.
Independent
Republic Period.



Mobile.
March 22, 1861.
CSA Period.

April 12, 1861: First Day of War
Contract Steamboat Mail: Key West to Mobile

This cover was sent from Key West, FL, to Blakeley, AL, then forwarded to Mobile. The postage was paid using a 3¢ Nesbitt embossed envelope.

South Carolina troops fired on Fort Sumter on April 12, beginning the Civil War.

At the time this cover was mailed, both Florida and Alabama were members of the Confederacy.



Forwarding postage was not charged to the addressee.

The cover was carried in a locked bag over steamboat Contract Route 6575 which ran between Key West and Blakeley.

Cover Forwarded and Charged Twice By U.S. Postal Service

This cover was sent from St. Martinsville, Louisiana, to Montgomery, Alabama. The postage was paid using a 3¢ Nesbitt embossed envelope.

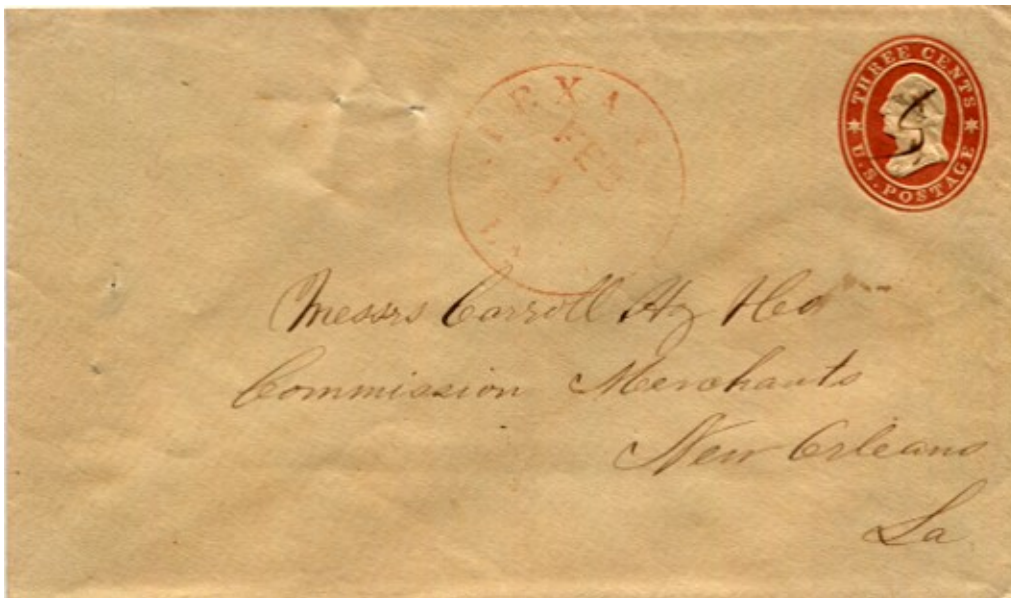
At Alabama, the cover was marked "Ford 3¢", and forwarded back to St. Martinsville, Louisiana. The 3¢ forwarding fee was collected from the addressee.



When this cover was originally mailed in Louisiana and then forwarded from Alabama, both states were members of the Confederacy.

Louisiana Secedes and Joins the Confederacy

Secession Date	Date Joined Confederacy
January 26, 1861	February 4, 1861



Alexandria, LA.

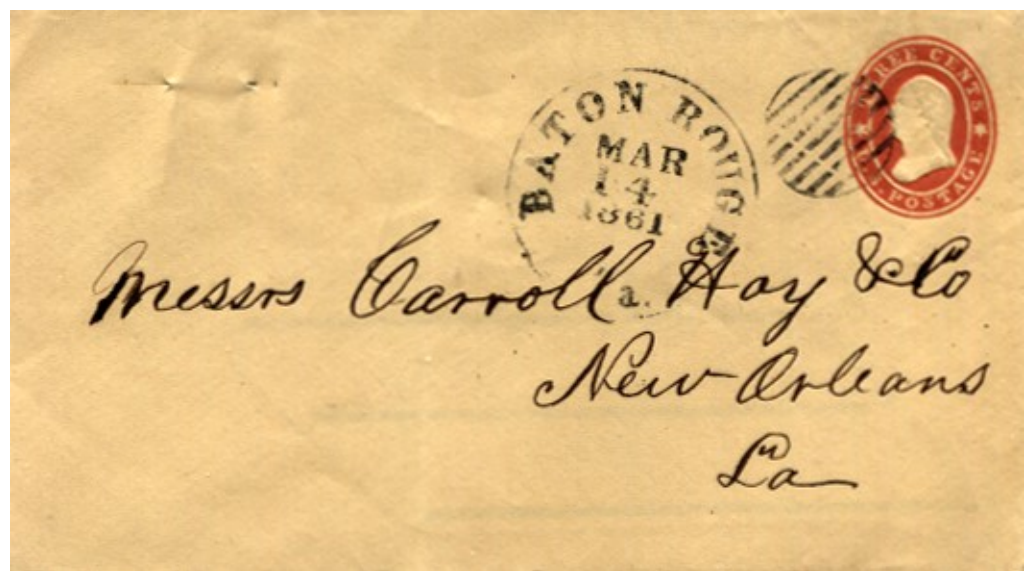
February 1, 1861.

Independent
Republic Period

Baton Rouge, LA.

March 14, 1861.

CSA Period



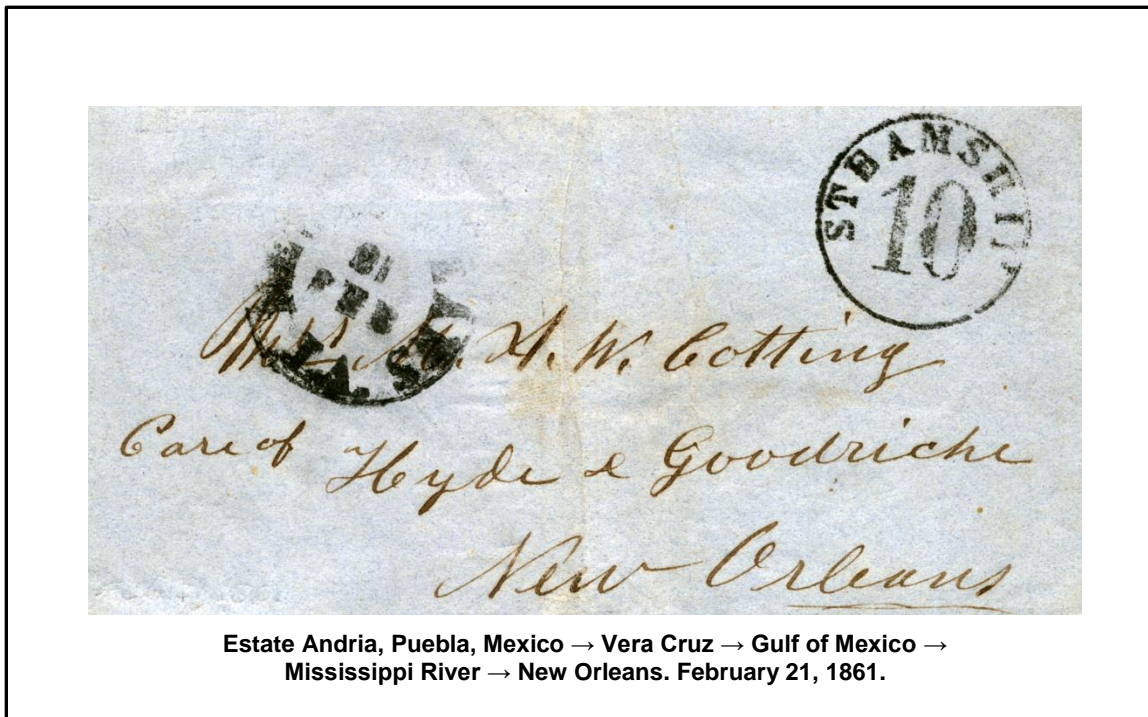
Port-of-Entry: New Orleans, Louisiana

Pre-Blockade Cross-Border Mail From Mexico

This cover was carried in the period after Louisiana joined the Confederacy [February 4, 1861], but before the Confederate government took over the operation of its own postal facilities [June 1, 1861]. During this interim period, the United States continued to assume responsibility for the mails in the Independent and Confederate States.

The folded letter arrived in New Orleans on February 21, 1861, before the effective date of the blockade of New Orleans.

The blockade of New Orleans by the United States began May 26, 1861, with the arrival of the U.S.S. *Brooklyn* off the city. New Orleans fell to Federal forces late in April 1862.



This cover was a loose letter carried on the contract steamship U.S.S. *Tennessee* under a contract between the United States Post Office Department and Charles Morgan. The contract continued in force until June 1, 1861. The cover originated at Estate Andria in the State of Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico, and was transmitted overland to Vera Cruz. There, the cover was given to the ship's captain or purser and not placed in the locked mail bag. Upon arrival at New Orleans, the STEAMSHIP 10 marking and the New Orleans circle date stamp handstamp were applied to the letter.

The cover was rated 10¢ due for carriage less than 2500 miles per the United States Postal Laws & Regulations, 1852, Ch. 18, Section 146.

Port-of-Entry: Boston, Massachusetts

Mail From France to the Confederacy

This cover was carried by the Cunard steamship *Arago* and left Paris on April 6, 1861. It arrived in Boston on April 27. It then was conveyed overland in a locked mail bag to New Orleans by the United States Post Office Department. The cover arrived in New Orleans on May 7, 1861 [backstamp].

Most mail from Europe at this time addressed to New Orleans entered the United States at either New York or Boston, and then was conveyed overland to New Orleans. This was still true in April 1861, the period when this cover traveled, because the Confederate mails were being serviced by the United States Post Office Department. Louisiana had seceded from the United States on January 26, 1861. It became a member of the Confederate States of America on February 4, 1861.



Route: Paris → South Hampton → Boston → New Orleans. April 27, 1861.

On April 19, 1861, President Lincoln declared a blockade against the major Confederate ports [Wilmington, North Carolina, Charleston, South Carolina, Savannah, Georgia, Mobile, Alabama, and New Orleans, Louisiana]. This did not mean, however, that the blockade was imposed or effective immediately with respect to those cities. In fact, the blockade evolved slowly.

The blockade against New Orleans did not commence until May 26, 1861, when the U.S.S. *Brooklyn* initiated its patrols off New Orleans. Before that date, mail carried by ships entered and left New Orleans just as it had before the declaration of the Confederacy.

Georgia

Independent Republic Period

Confederate State Period

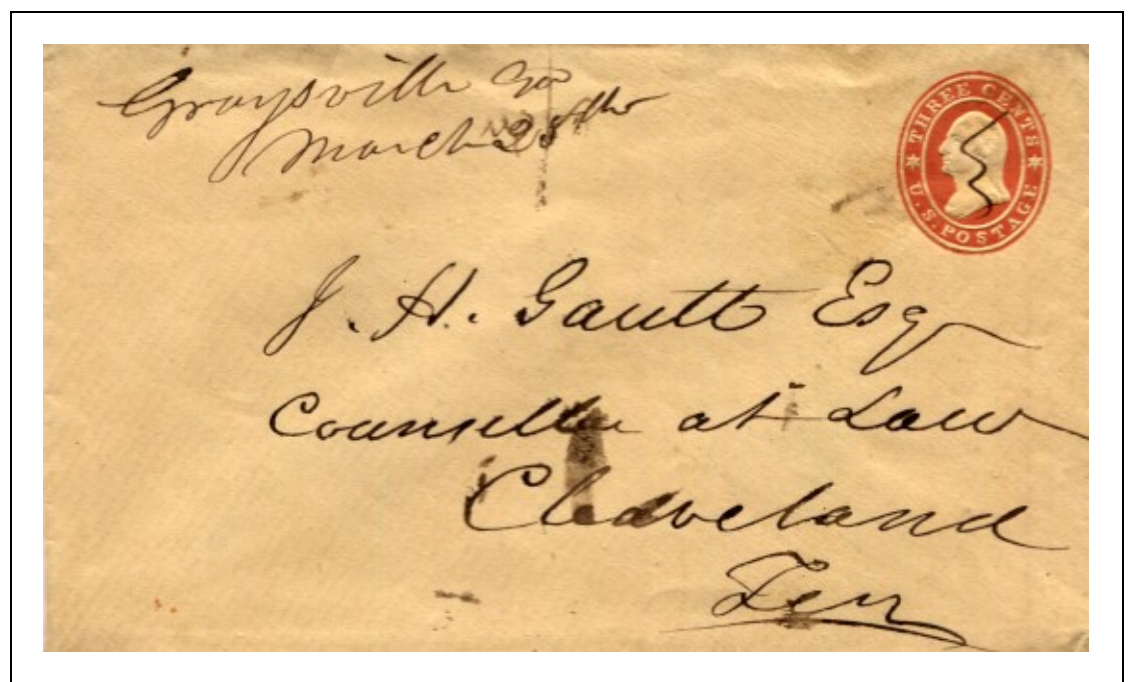
Georgia Secedes and Then Joins the Confederacy

Secession Date	Date Joined Confederacy
January 19, 1861	February 4, 1861



January 22, 1861.
Independent
Republic Period.

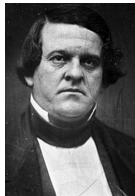
Graysville, GA.
March 28, 1861.
CSA Period.



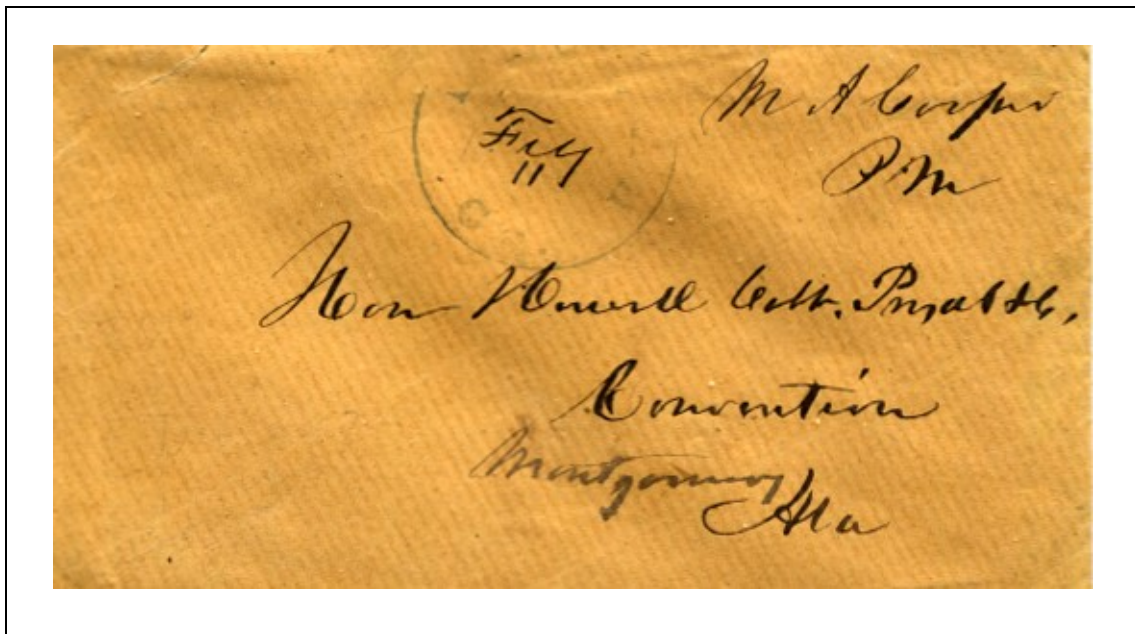
Postmaster's Free Frank Possible Only During Period of U.S. Service

Postmaster M.A. Cooper's free frank on this cover addressed to "Hon. Howell Cobb, President / Convention / Montgomery / Ala" was possible only until June 1, 1861, when the Confederate Post Office Department took over its own operations.

The free franking privilege under Confederate postal laws and regulations was more restricted than under U.S. postal laws. Under the Confederacy, postmasters could only frank mail that involved official post office business and post office correspondence. Such covers had to be marked "Post Office Business" or its equivalent. This cover would not have so qualified.



Howell Cobb - President of the
Provisional Confederate Congress

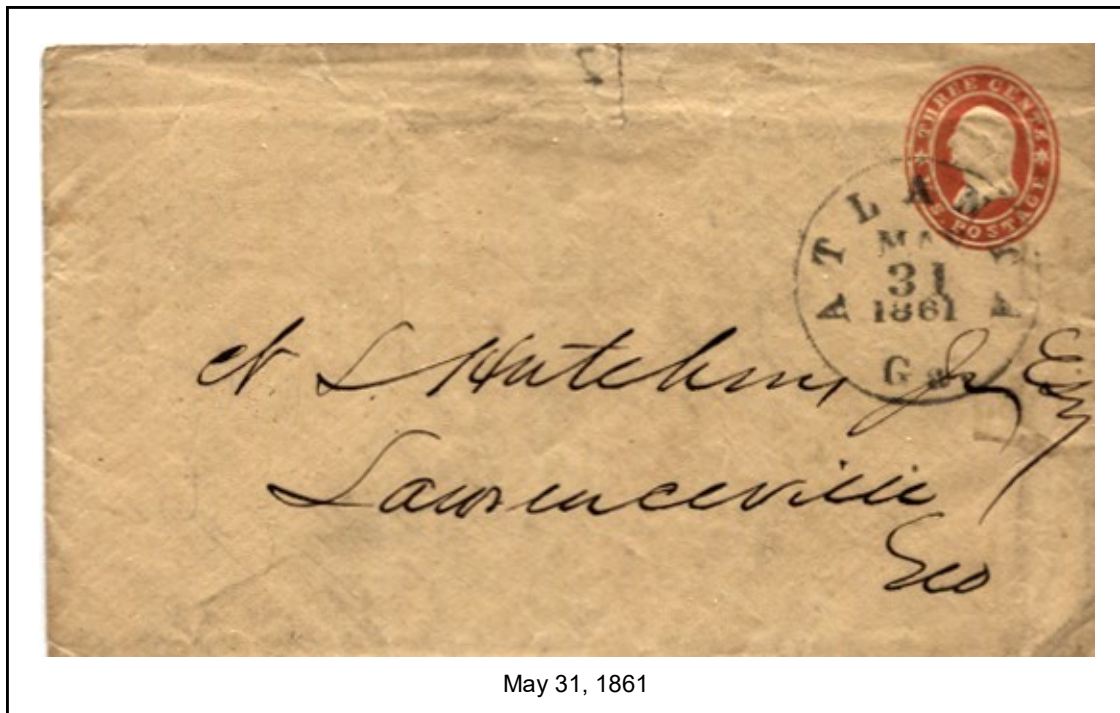


Howell Cobb served as president of the Confederate Provisional Congress (1861—1862). He also was a Major General in the Confederate army.

Last Day U. S. Mail Service Provided To Seceded or Confederate States: May 31, 1861

Beginning with the secession of South Carolina on December 20, 1860, and continuing until the Confederate Post Office took over its own operations on June 1, 1861, the United States Post Office provided postal services to the seceded states and, thereafter, to each such state after it joined the CSA, as if the secession crises had not occurred.

There were many reasons for this, but once it became clear that none of the states was going to rejoin the Union, Postmaster General Blair ordered that all U. S. postal service in the CSA end on May 31, 1861, and that all U. S. post offices located in states in rebellion be closed on that date.



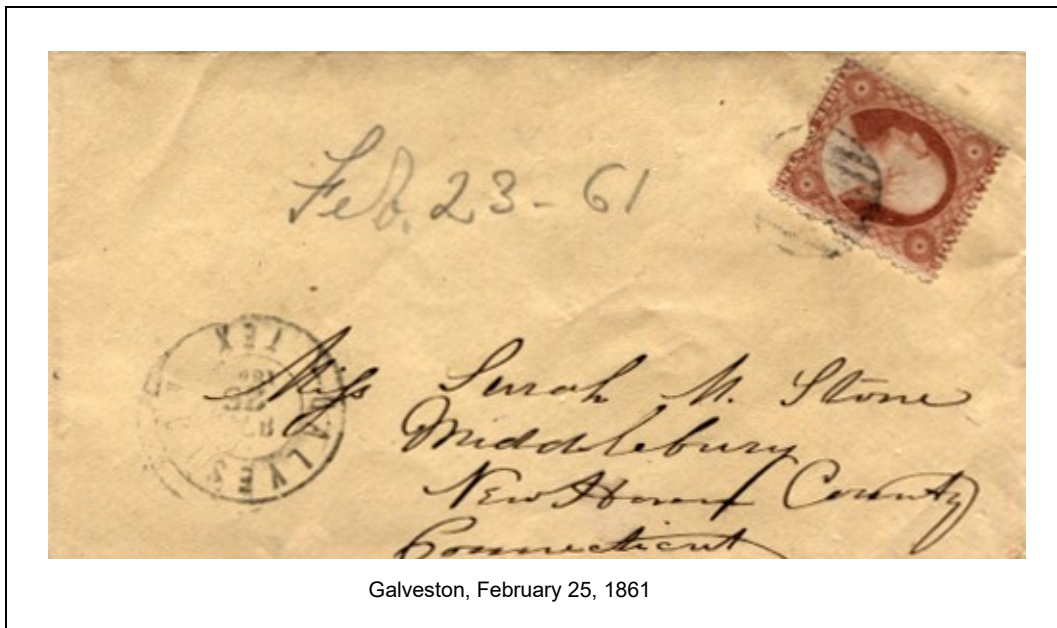
May 31, 1861

Beginning June 1, 1861, when the CSA took over its own postal operations, under U.S. PMG Blair's order, all mail from the North addressed to states in rebellion was to be sent to the Dead Letter Office. Mail from the South, however, could still enter the North, but not via the U. S Post Office Department. Such mail had to be conveyed from the states in rebellion to a northern post office (for onward transmission) via private express or per favor carriage.

This, too, would end when PMG Blair, responding to an executive order issued by President Lincoln, prohibited all postal commerce with the states in rebellion. Thereafter, letters to the North from the South were sent to the U. S. Dead Letter Office.

February 23, 1861: Texas Votes to Secede

The secession convention in Texas convened on January 28, 1861. The Ordinance of Secession passed on February 1, 1861. In accordance with Section 2 of the Ordinance, the matter was put to a referendum on February 23, 1861. Pursuant to Section 2 of the Ordinance, because the Ordinance passed the referendum, it automatically became effective on March 2, 1861, the date stipulated in the Ordinance.



Pencil note in contemporary hand on front of cover: "Feb. 23—61". This was the day the Texas citizens voted to approve the Ordinance of Secession. The penciled date likely was the date of the cover's enclosure.

Texas' Independent Republic period was only three days.

Key Dates toward Secession and Confederacy

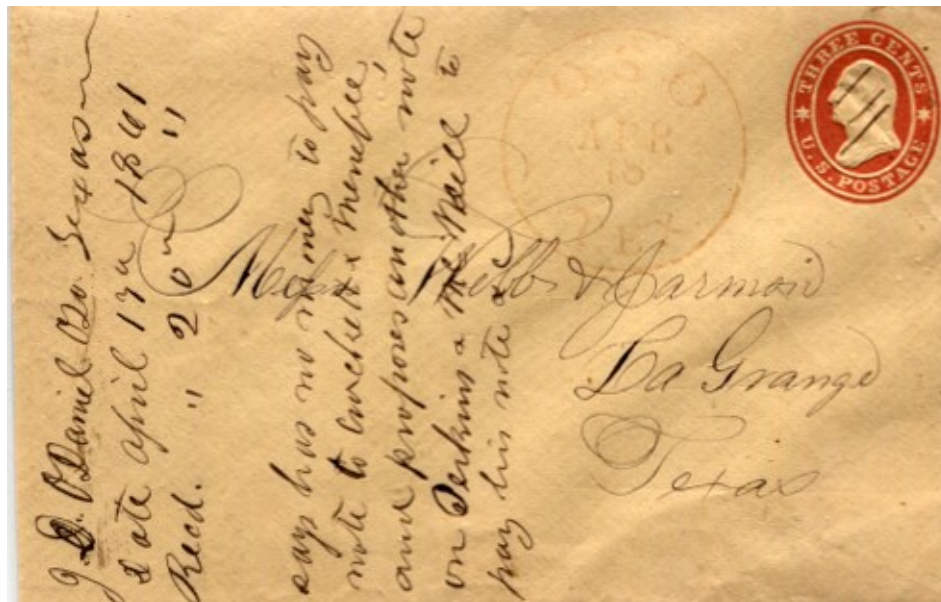
Event	Date
Secession Convention Convenes	January 28, 1861
Ordinance of Secession Adopted	February 1, 1861
Popular Referendum Held	February 23, 1861
Referendum approves Ordinance	February 23, 1861
Secession Occurs	March 2, 1861
Texas joins the Confederacy	March 5, 1861

Texas Joins the Confederacy

Secession Date	Date Joined Confederacy
March 2, 1861	March 5, 1861

On March 2, 1861, the Confederate Provisional Congress passed a statute to admit Texas into the Confederacy. By its terms, this statute became effective March 2.

On March 5, 1861, the Texas Secession Convention voted to accept the CSA's invitation to join the Confederacy. No further action was required.



Oso, Texas. April 18, 1861.

Virginia

Independent Republic Period

Confederate State Period

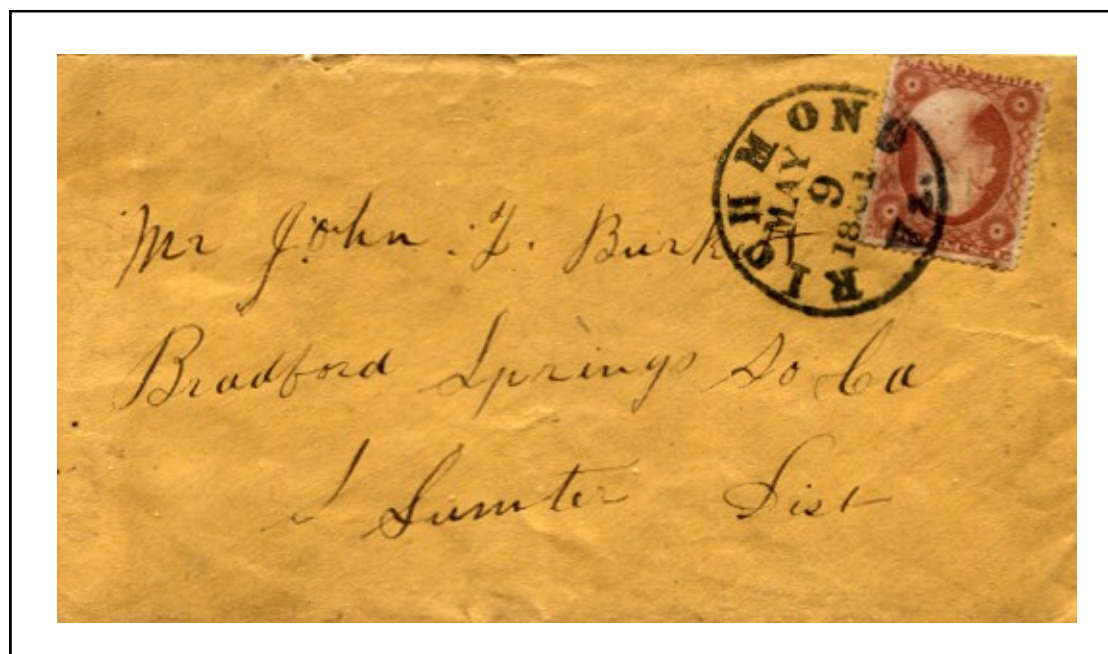
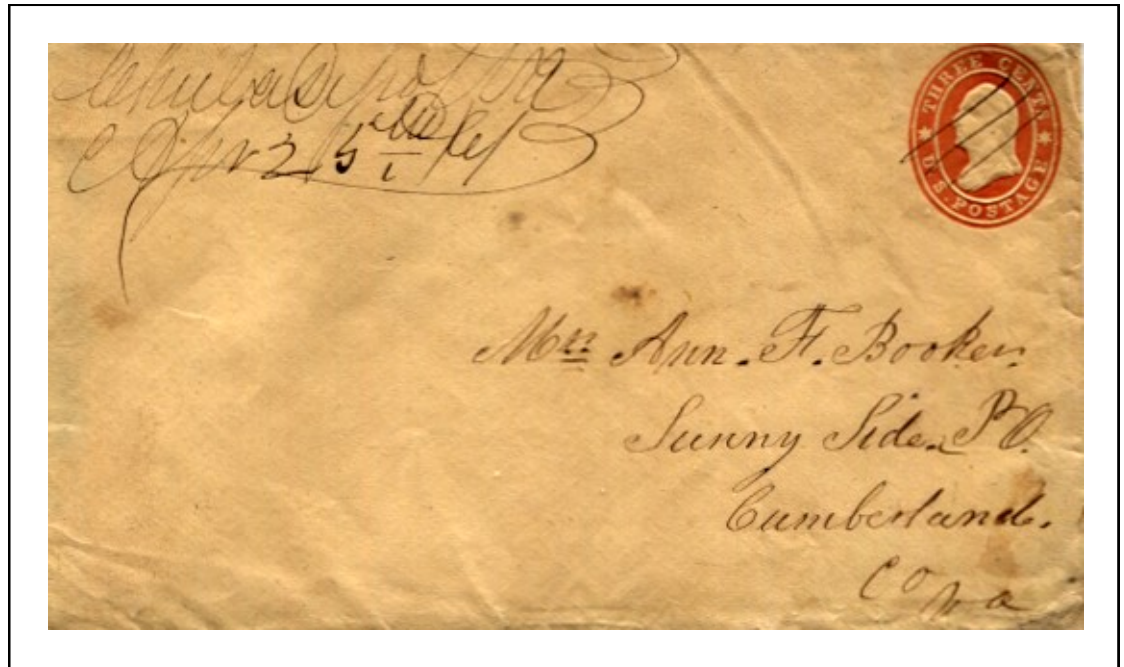
Virginia Secedes and Joins the Confederacy

Secession Date	Date Joined Confederacy
April 17, 1861	May 7, 1861

April 25, 1861.

Chula Falls, VA..

Independent Republic
Period



May 9, 1861.

Richmond, VA.

CSA Period

Last Day as an Independent Republic: May 6, 1861

Secession Date	Date Joined Confederacy
April 17, 1861	May 7, 1861

Virginia, compared to several other states, seceded late, and joined the CSA 20 days later on May 7, 1861. It's Independent State period, therefore, was relatively short, from April 17 through May 6.



The cover below was mailed from Balcony Falls, VA to Lexington [VA] on May 6, 1861, the last day before Virginia joined the CSA.

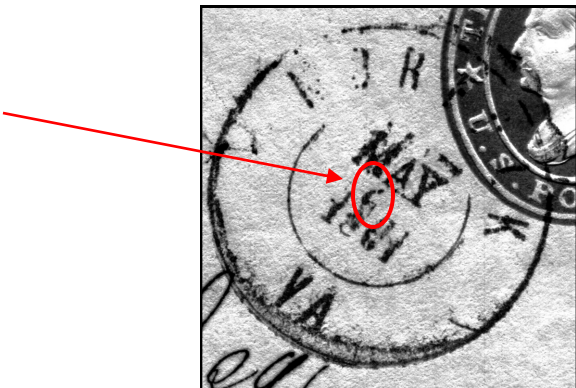


Although the cover does not contain a year date, the year — based on the month date — must be 1861 for the following reasons: the blue Balcony Falls CDS was used from November 1860 through September 10, 1864; and, the 3¢ 1857 United States stamp was not valid in the CSA after June 1, 1861, when the Confederate Post Office took over its own mail service operations.

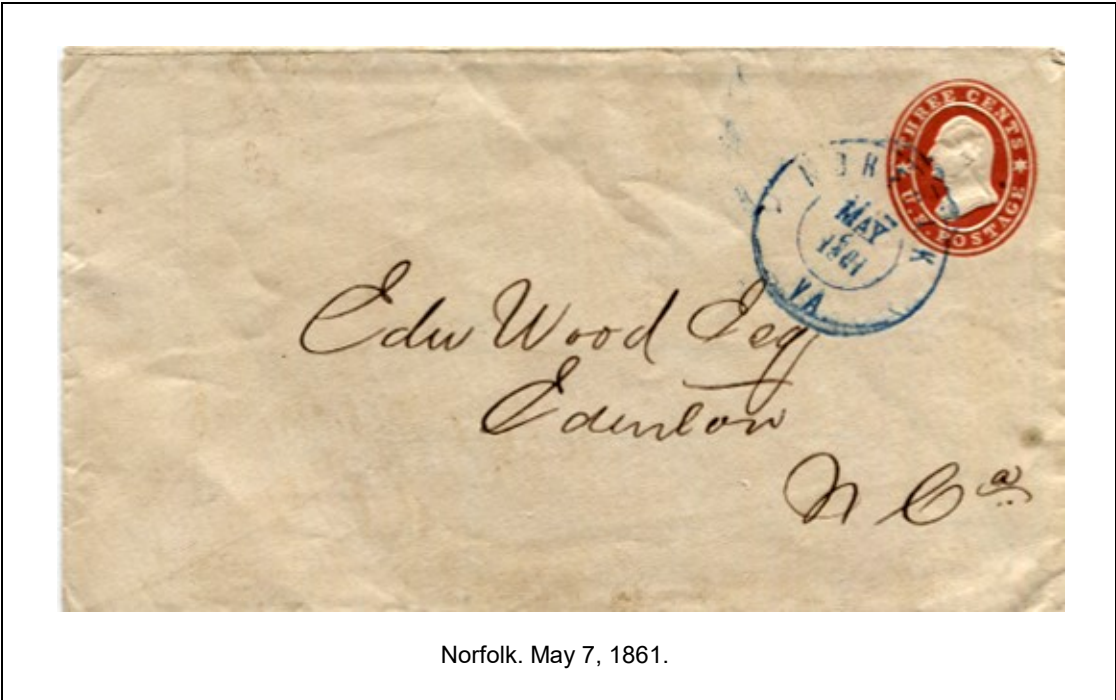
First Day as a Member of the Confederate States of America:
May 7, 1861

Secession Date	Date Joined Confederacy
April 17, 1861	May 7, 1861

Virginia had a short period as an Independent Republic (20 days) and joined the Confederacy on May 7. This cover was mailed from Norfolk, VA on May 7, where it received a double-strike of the Norfolk CDS.



Detail enlarged 50%



Norfolk. May 7, 1861.

First Day as an Independent Republic: May 20, 1861

North Carolina Secedes from the United States

Secession Date
May 20, 1861



North Carolina had a very short period as an Independent Republic — only seven days. It joined the Confederacy on May 27, 1861.

Cover Mailed During the Republic State Period and Possibly Received
on the First Day of the Confederate State Period: May 27, 1861

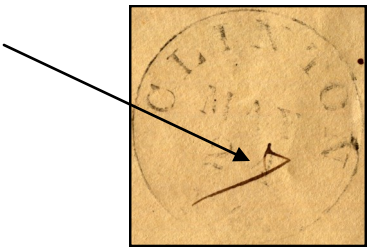
Mailed: May 24, 1861 at Clinton, NC

Received: May 27, 1861 at Fayetteville, NC

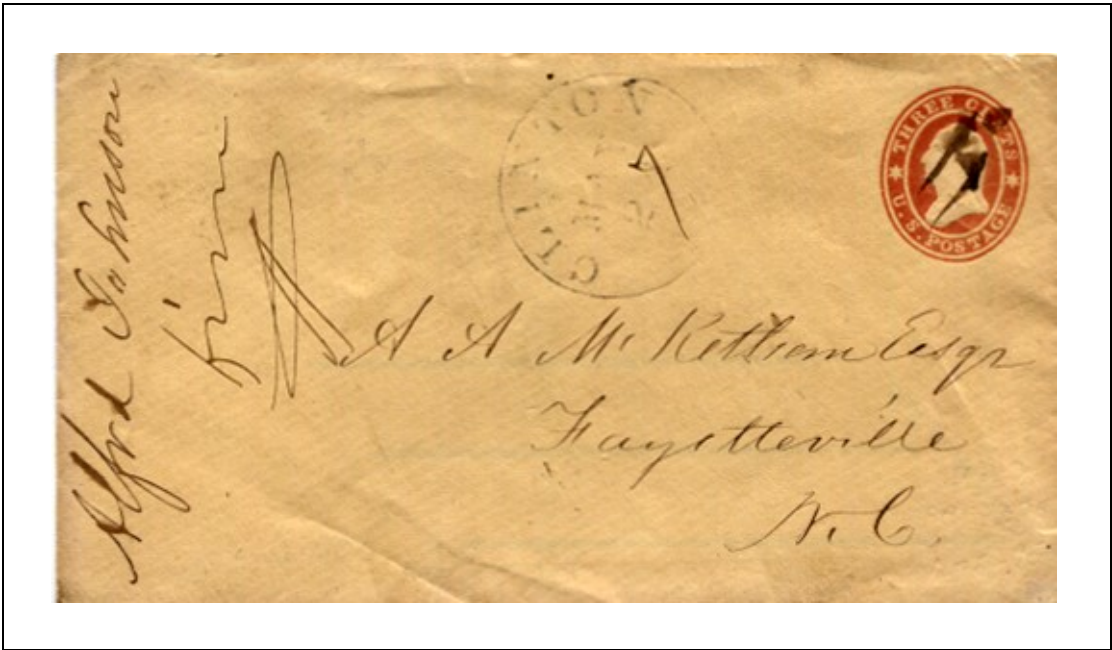
Secession Date	Date Joined Confederacy
May 20, 1861	May 27, 1861

Although the mailing CDS is lightly struck, it is possible to see the numeral “24” under the manuscript “7”.

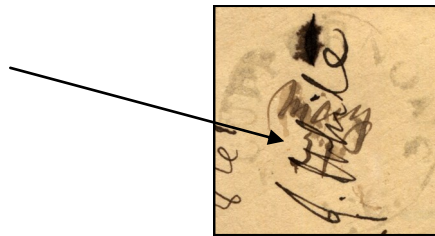
The “7” appears to be in the same ink and handwriting as the receiving docketing appearing on the left side of the cover. The numeral suggests that the addressee picked up the letter at the Fayetteville Post Office on May 7, three days after it had been mailed.



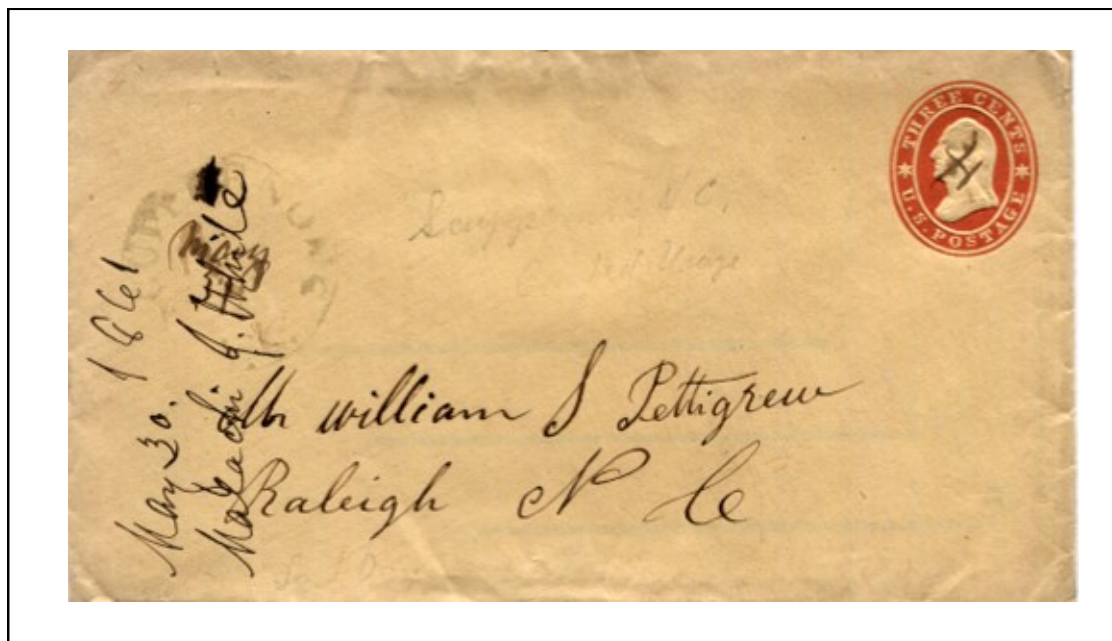
Rotated 90° clockwise



Last Day U. S. Mail Service Provided
to Seceded or Confederate States: May 31, 1861



This cover was mailed from Scuppernon, NC, on May 31, 1861, to Raleigh, NC.



The United States Post Office ceased providing service to the Confederacy on May 31. The CSA took over its own postal operations on June 1.

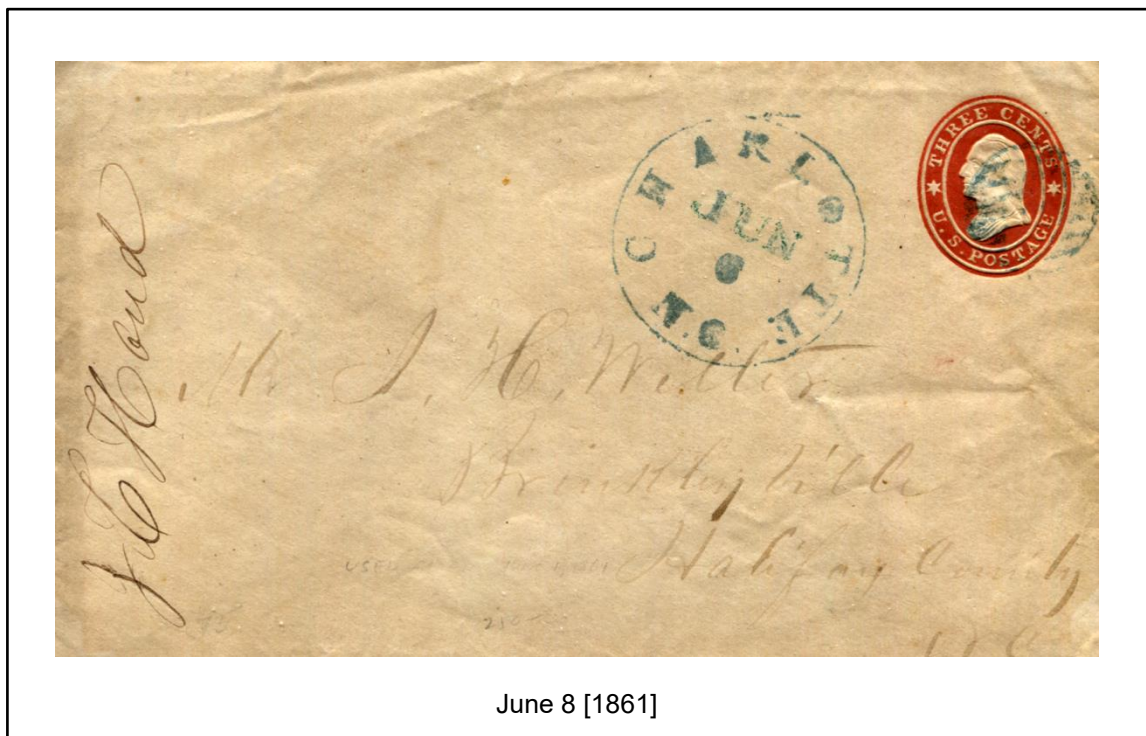
Transition to the Confederate Post Office

Post- May 31, 1861

Charlotte Postmaster Seems to Accept U.S. Postage?

The cover below presents several questions:

- Did the Charlotte postmaster accept the Star Die envelope in payment of Confederate postage?
- If not, why did he cancel the Star Die indicia?
- If not, why wasn't the cover sent to the Dead Letter Office as required for unpaid letters?
- If not, and if the postmaster did not want to confine the cover to the CSA DLO, why didn't he mark the letter 5¢ due?
- Finally, why didn't the postmaster at Halifax City either send the cover to the DLO or mark it due?



Was this cover an anomaly?

Probably not although I do not have an explanation for it. I am aware of one other cover from Charlotte treated the same way,¹ addressed to Statesville, NC, dated June 17 [1861]. This cover raises the same questions.

¹ Tony Crumbley collection.

Private Express Company Cross-Border Mail After United States Prohibits South → North Mail

This folded letter, which originated in New Orleans after Louisiana joined the Confederacy, was carried from New Orleans to Nashville, and from Nashville to Louisville, where it received the Adams Express handstamp. From Louisville, the letter was carried in the United States mail to New York for onward transmission to Italy via Calais.

Mail from the western Confederacy to the United States was suspended on June 13. As a result, private express companies began carrying mail from the South to the Northern states.

Adams Express Company began service on June 22, 1861, between Nashville and Louisville. Service was suspended by the United States government on August 26, 1861, by a federal decree prohibiting all communications with the South.



The prepaid cover arrived in New York and was placed in a locked bag which was carried aboard an American packet which departed New York for England on July 31, 1861. The American post office was credited with 36¢; the French postal system with 6¢.