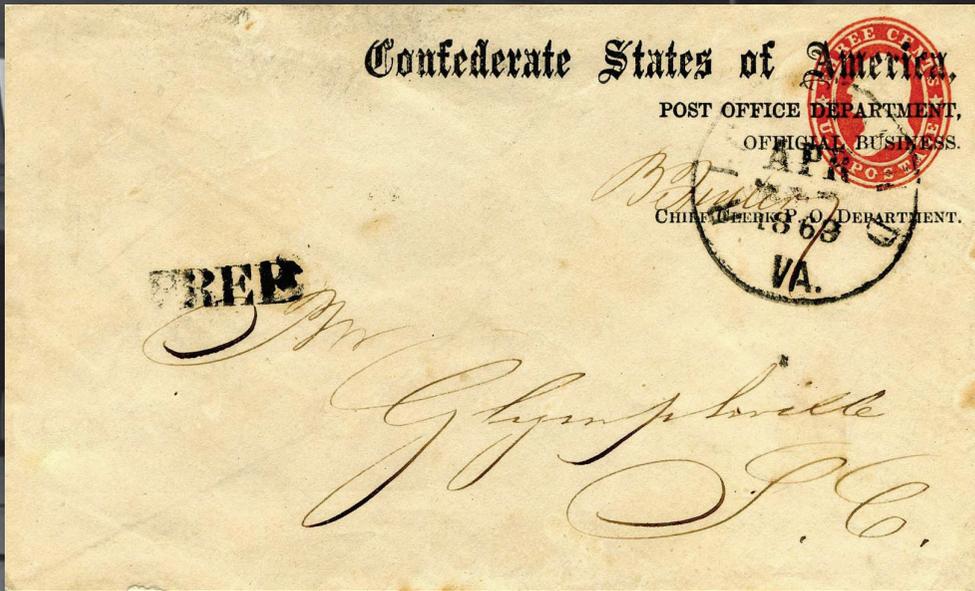


U. S. POST OFFICE



“The franking privilege was abolished by the Confederate Postage Act of March 15, 1861, but provision was made for post office officials to send correspondence free of postage when endorsed with “Official Business” over their own signatures.”

[Even for postmasters in the smallest of post offices—like this rural Georgia P.O., 1862.]



By Patricia A. Kaufmann

Illegal Use of Demonetized U.S. Envelope: The Fleet Correspondence

U.S. Star Die envelopes were first put into use in August 1860, but they were to have a short life. This postal stationery was printed by George Nesbitt, New York. They are known as “Star Dies” due to the small stars at either side of the bust of George Washington on the indicia.

When the Civil War began in April 1861, the U.S. Post Office Department (USPOD) was faced with a dilemma. Southern postmasters had large stores of 3-cent Star Die envelopes. To prevent their unauthorized use, these envelopes were demonetized by the USPOD in the South on June 1, 1861, when the Confederate Post Office Department (CSAPOD) took over its own affairs. They were demonetized in the Union from August 1861.

Nonetheless, western express mail is seen well into 1862. And there are numerous instances of Star Die entires doing no postal duty but being used simply as envelopes with Confederate stamps covering the federal postage or stampless markings to indicate postage paid or due.

One of the most flagrant uses was when the CSAPOD overprinted these demonetized envelopes for official business. “Official Mail” has a very distinct meaning in the CSA postal system and refers only to “Free” mail on official business from the CSAPOD.¹ The franking privilege was abolished by the Confederate Postage Act of March 15, 1861, but provision was made for post office officials to send correspondence free of postage when endorsed with “Official Business” over their signatures.

Figure 2. Illegal use of a demonized U.S. Star Die envelope, postmarked with a small postwar 23 mm blue University of VA circle datestamp.



Miss Lou Fleet -
from Mount -
St Stephens -
King & Queen -
Va -

Figure 3. Benjamin Robert (Benny) Fleet, Jr. (1846-1864).

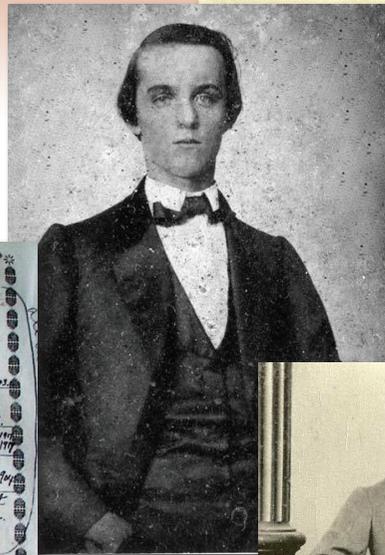


Figure 4. Family bible where Benny's father records he has been "murdered by the Yankees".

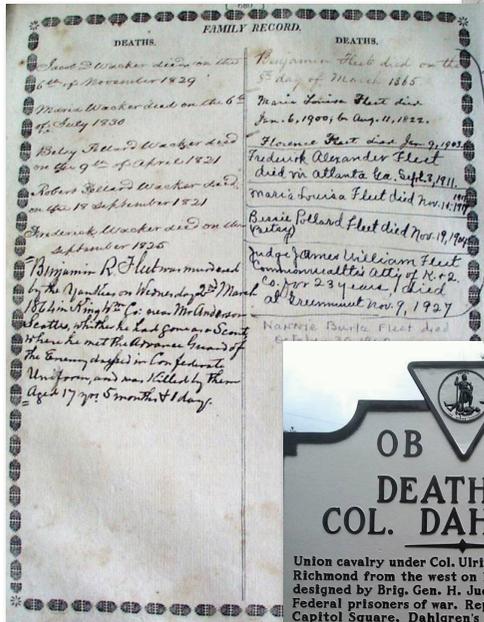


Figure 5. Roadside marker noting the death of Col. Ulric Dahlgren the same day as Benny.

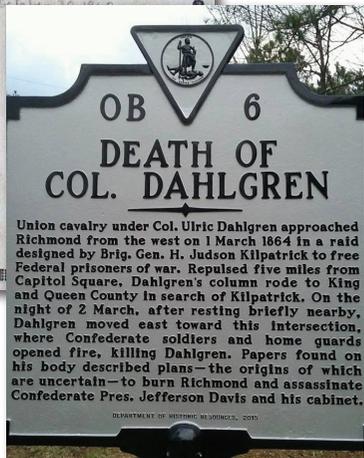


Figure 6. Alexander Frederick (Fred) Fleet as a youth in Confederate uniform.



Figure 10. Grave marker of A. F. Fleet (1843-1911).

The Star Die envelope postmarked with a small 23 mm blue University of VA / VA // JUN / 13 circle datestamp was declared by a late prior owner to have been illegally used in June 1861. He got half the story correct.

It is indeed illegally used, but the smaller circle datestamp looks nothing like the recorded wartime postmarks. The most commonly seen wartime postmark is a 26 mm double circle datestamp in black or blue. Less frequently seen is a 32 mm single circle datestamp, also in black or blue. The smaller 23 mm postwar marking was verified with a Virginia student who confirmed that this is indeed an authentic and illegal use of a demonized Star Die used at some date well after the war ended.²

The illegally used entire is addressed to "Miss Lou Fleet, Green Mount, St. Stephens, King & Queen (County), Virginia."

Maria Louise (Lou) Fleet

Lou Fleet (1847-1913) was born to Dr. Benjamin Robert Fleet, Sr. (1818-1865) and Maria Louisa (Wacker) Fleet (1822-1900). Her parents were married March 24, 1842. The Fleet ancestors in America trace back to Captain Henry Fleet, an

English adventurer from a wealthy family, who emigrated to Virginia about 1621, and who was a member of the Maryland legislature and the Virginia house of burgesses.³

Lou's siblings were Alexander Frederick (Fred) Fleet, Sr. (1843-1911); Florence (Flossie) Fleet (1845-1907); Benjamin Robert (Benny) Fleet, Jr. (1846-1864); David Wacker Fleet (1852-1903); and Betsy Pollard (Bessie) Fleet (1854-1904).

Benjamin Robert (Benny) Fleet, Jr.

Benny was only 17 years old when he was killed by Union forces March 2, 1864. He was scouting on horseback for the local defense force when he ran into Union soldiers dressed in Confederate uniforms.

The Union soldiers were part of the infamous Dahlgren Raid—an ambitious attempt by Union cavalrymen to assault the lightly defended Confederate capital of Richmond.

Benny turned and galloped away but was shot in the back and fell off his horse in the woods. His father became alarmed when his horse came home in the early morning rain without him. Dr. Fleet organized a search party to find him, using Benny's own favorite hunting dog. After about an hour, they found him. He had bled to death during the

Dahlgren's Raid • March 1864

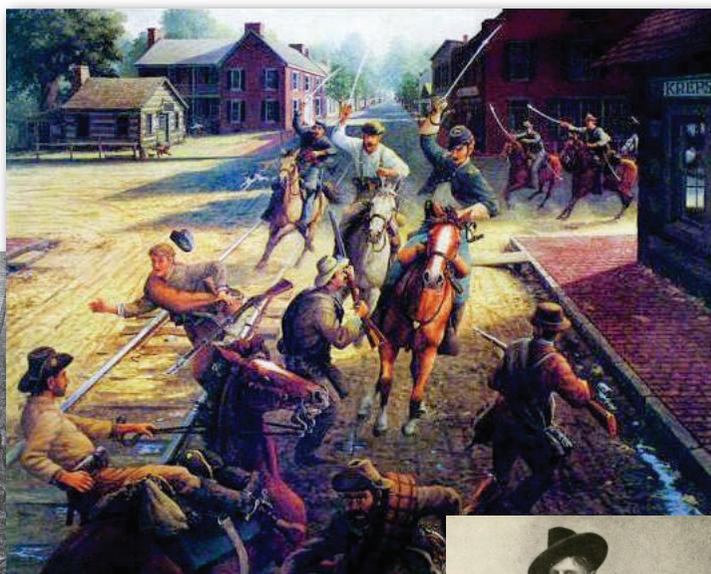
On leap year eve of February 28, 1864, during the American Civil War (1861-1865), a large Union cavalry raid was launched on the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia by the infamous Union cavalry general, Hugh J. Kilpatrick (b.1836-1881)

A force of almost 4000 blue jacketed cavalrmen attacked Richmond in and around the James River in an ultimately costly and failed raid which threatened the very heart of the Confederacy. This attack on Richmond can



be termed the Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid or Dahlgren's Raid by military historians, the former in posthumous honor (or infamy) of the young cavalry officer, **Colonel Ulrich Dahlgren** (1842-1864) whose 450 Union raiders nearly succeeded in penetrating Richmond.

Known to modern historians as the Dahlgren Affair, this failed Union attempt to storm Richmond in order to free Union prisoners of war and to controversially assassinate Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his rebel cabinet would become arguably one of the most controversial moments of the war between the states, 1861-1865. Modern historiographers have recently tied together, with a certain degree of accuracy, the chilling connection between the Dahlgren Affair and the later successful assassination of President Abraham Lincoln by Confederate sympathizer and professional actor John Wilkes Booth in April of 1865 after the wars' end. [Info from warfarehistorian/blogspot.]



Dahlgren Attacks Confederate Homeguards, March 1, 1864. Painting by Mark Twain Hoe.



Col. Ulrich Dahlgren, 1863



Gen. Judson Kilpatrick, 1863

late evening or early morning hours after he was shot. The family home, Green Mount, stayed in the family through Benny's younger brother, James William Fleet, and his descendants until the 1980s. Benny's diary, which he began at the age of thirteen, is still in his room to this day. The family bible is still at Green Mount as well.⁴

When Dr. Fleet opened the family bible to record his son's death, he found on a scrap of paper, the Last Will and Testament of Benjamin Robert Fleet, hurriedly written only two days before his death:

"I can't stand it any longer, I must answer my Country's call. I will and bequeath my books to Bro' Fred; my double-barreled gun to David; my Canadian horse to my sisters jointly; my dog, Stuart, to little Will; my henhouse and contents to Israel, and to my Mother and Father, my undying love. Signed: Benjamin Robert Fleet, Feb'y 29th 1864"

In the family bible is this anguished entry by his father:

"Benjamin R. Fleet was murdered by the Yankees on Wednesday 2nd March 1864 in King Wm. Co. near Mr. Anderson Scott's, whither he had gone as a Scout where me met the Advance Guard of the Enemy dressed in Confederate Uniforms, and was killed by

them. Aged 17 yrs. 5 months & 1 day."

Who remains unmoved by this father's torment?

Some say that Benny was planning to go to Richmond to join Col. John Singleton Mosby's command the day he was killed.⁵ Col. Ulrich Dahlgren was killed only hours after Benny met his untimely end. It is known that Dr. Fleet was present when Dahlgren and his men were ambushed that same day. It is not inconceivable that locals were part of a retaliation for young Benny's death.

Alexander Frederick Fleet, "Fred" to his family and friends, was a precocious youth of seventeen and a student at the University of Virginia in the fall of 1860. He was 18 years old when he enlisted at Gloucester Point on June 13, 1861, as a 1st sergeant in Company I (Jackson Grays), Virginia 26th Infantry Regiment. He was promoted to 2nd lieutenant on May 13, 1862. He was detailed as AA General under Col. Goode and General Henry Wise. He was wounded in the left side and right leg and hospitalized in Richmond Hospital 4 on June 22, 1864. His Appomattox Parole is still retained at Green Mount; it is signed by General Wise

Fred returned to university 1865-67. He had an illustrious

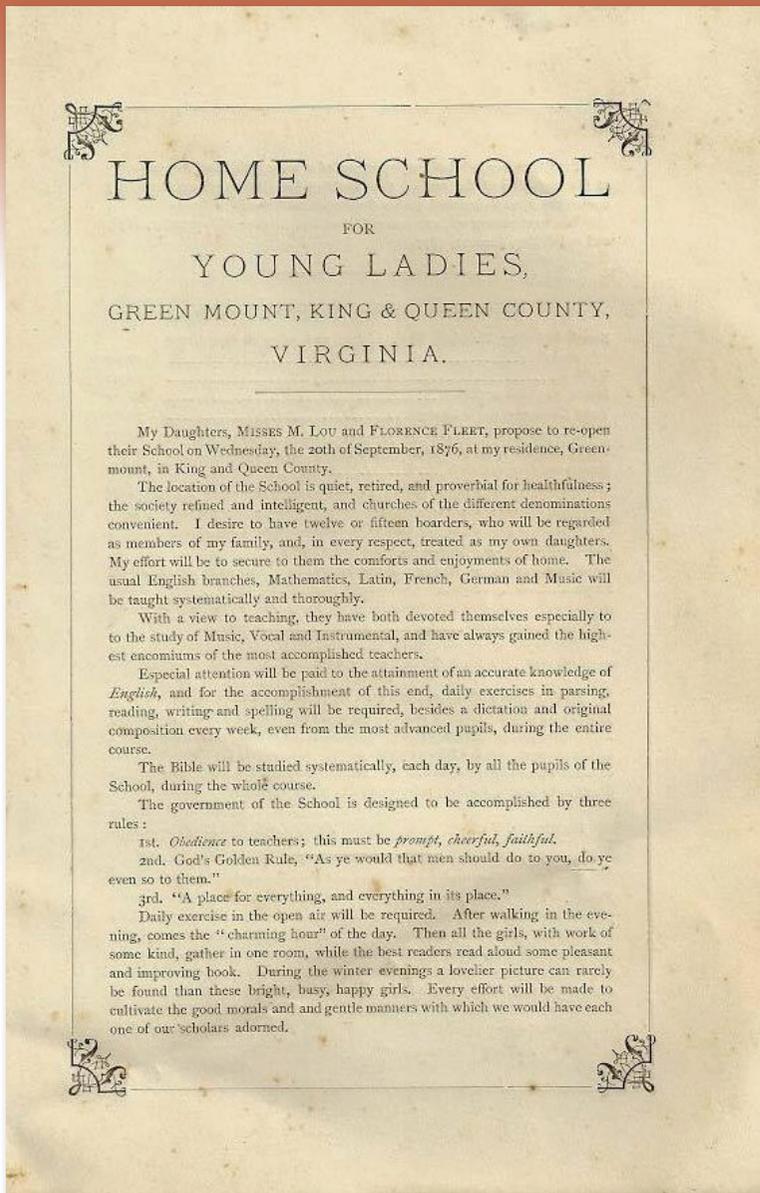


Figure 7. Handcarried envelope "Care of some kind friend," addressed to Lieut. A. Frederick Fleet.

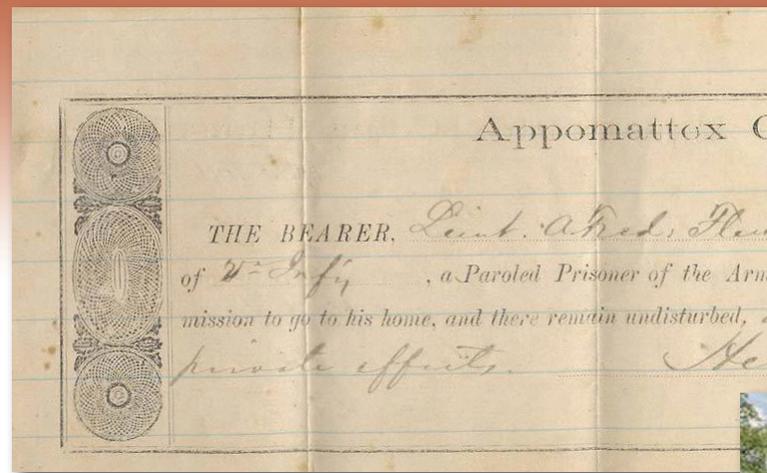
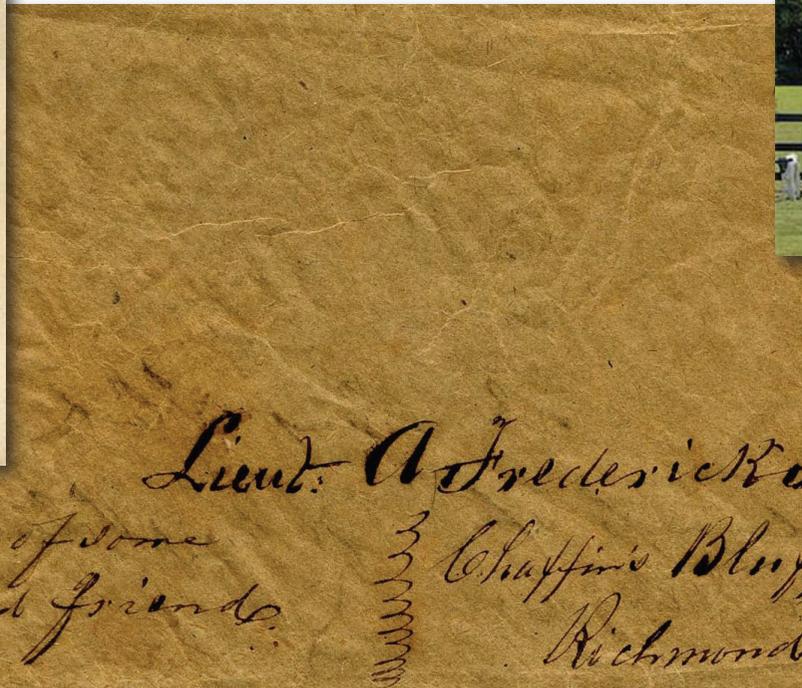


Figure 11. 1876 brochure for Green Mount Home School for Young Ladies.

Figure 12. Front of Green Mount, as it appears today.



career in education. He was professor at Kenmore School, Fredericksburg, Va., 1867-68, and had charge of the department of Greek studies in various colleges and universities, to wit, William Jewell College 1868-73 (also chairman of faculty); president of Baptist Female College 1873-79 and the University of Missouri, 1879-90.

In 1890, he founded and was superintendent of the Missouri Military Academy, Mexico, Mo. In 1896, upon the destruction by fire of the Academy, he transferred his school to Culver, Ind., and united with the Culver Military Academy, of which he was twice superintendent.

After the war, the family home of Green Mount opened as the Green Mount Home School for Young Ladies. Sisters Lou and Flossie Fleet ran the school, teaching studies in En-

glish, Mathematics, Latin, French, German and Music. The Bible was also studied systematically every day by all pupils during the whole course. Miss Lou said she had only three rules: First, obedience to teachers, which must be prompt and cheerful; Second, God's Golden Rule; Third, a place for everything and everything in its place.

The school for girls operated from 1873 until 1888. Several girls boarded in the home, while others would come from nearby homes to study. Every girl also had to learn to play the piano. The girls, ranging in ages from 13 to 20, formed a club called the "Evergreen Society" and held meetings every Wednesday at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. The minutes of those meetings during the year 1880 are still in the house, as is much of the original furniture.⁶

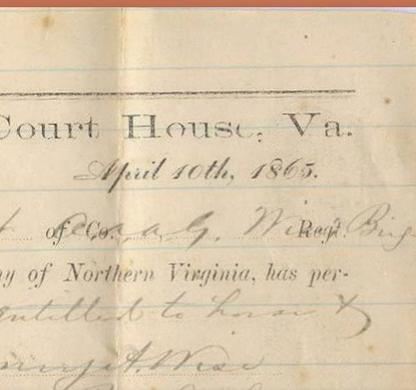


Figure 8. Appomattox Court House parole for Fred Fleet, a treasured Army of Northern Virginia collectible.

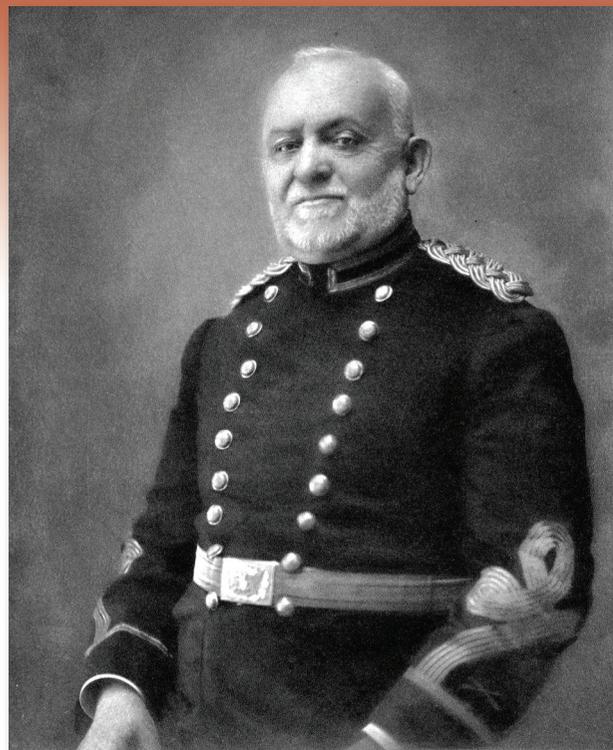


Figure 9. Alexander Frederick Fleet in later years.



Figure 13. Back of Green Mount, as it appears today.



Figure 14. Fleet family gravestone.



The Fleets were prominent landowners, and Green Mount was but a piece of the extended family's sprawling empire. Green Mount was built around 1775 and went through a series of owners before Dr. Fleet purchased it after graduating from medical school. The doctor and his wife occupied it in 1842, raising their family on the plantation that in those days encompassed several thousand acres. King and Queen is one of Virginia's smaller counties by population, with an estimated 7,100 residents, according to recent census estimates; it has but one traffic light. The Fleets surely owned a regional dynasty.

The author welcomes messages from readers and may be reached at trishkauf@comcast.net

Endnotes:

¹Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown, Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, Editors, *Confederate States Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*, 2012, Confederate Stamp Alliance, www.csalliance.org.

²Gene Lightfoot, via email 9:18 a.m., April 4, 2018.

³Captain Henry Fleet, *Exploring Maryland's Roots: Library*. <http://mdroots.thinkport.org/library/henryfleet.asp/> Accessed April 4, 2018

⁴Fleet & Gignilliat, http://www.maxinkuckee.history.pasttracker.com/cef_cma_fleet-gignilliat/fleet_gignilliat.htm/ Accessed April 4, 2018

⁵Green Mount: a Virginia plantation family during the Civil War, Facebook. Accessed April 4, 2018

⁶Ibid.