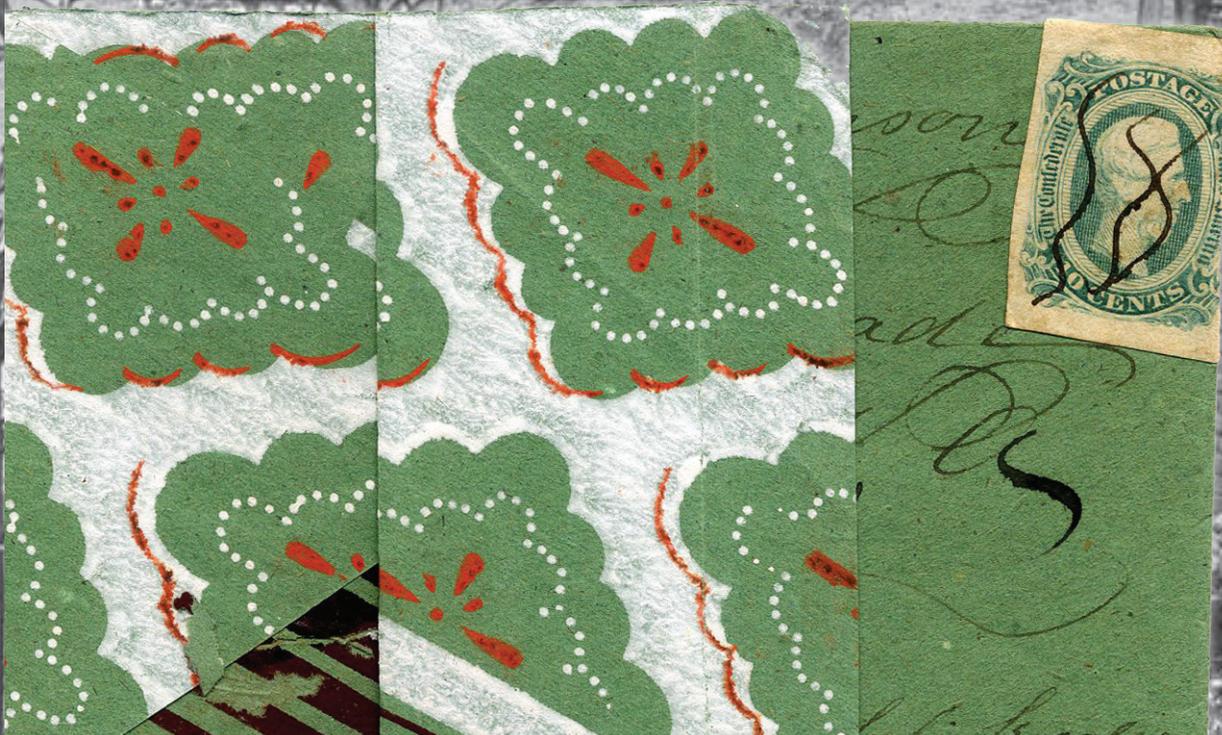


*“A favorite night’s employment  
was found in making envelopes...  
No bits of white paper suitable  
for writing with pen and ink  
could be wasted in envelopes.”*





Patricia A. Kaufmann



# *Resilience in Hard Times: Adversity Covers*

**L** eading up to the American Civil War, the South had pursued an agrarian lifestyle, primarily concentrating on the production of crops such as cotton and tobacco. They imported most manufactured materials from the industrialized North and from Europe. Once hostilities began, the North was no longer a source of vital manufactured goods.

The Confederacy was confident that Europe was so dependent on cotton and other goods supplied by the South that they would become strong allies. With the difficulties of running the blockade, including losing vessels, men, and cargo, Europe sought and found other suppliers. Southerners soon experienced great economic privations, which included the procurement of writing paper and envelopes.

Before the war, the South had obtained ordinary paper from the North and better-quality papers from Europe. With the interdiction of trade between North and South and blockade of Southern ports, Southerners turned to any available source of paper to make envelopes. Commercial enterprises in the South manufactured envelopes from plain brown paper similar to brown paper bags of today. While these are generally referred to in the philatelic trade as “home-made covers,” they were often commercially made but from rudimentary paper sources.

Ordinary people devised paper substitutes as well. Envelopes were used two or more times. Examples of paper sources included end papers from books, the blank side of maps, marine charts, military forms, election ballots, bank checks, insurance blanks, religious tracts, accounting forms, music sheets and—the very popular with collectors—spare rolls of colorful wallpaper.<sup>1</sup>

Postal historians refer to these make-shift uses as “adversity covers” due to the adverse conditions which caused them to occur; they are treasured by collectors. It is in a Confederate collector’s nature to look on the inside of the cover for something often more exciting and valuable than the ordinary use on the outside.

A few years ago, I bought what appeared to be a relatively ordinary cover on eBay and when I received it, I was both shocked and delighted to find it was a spectacular undescribed wallpaper cover. Confederate postal history collecting is often something of a treasure hunt, which is undoubtedly what keeps so many of us enthralled.

This is a case where simple esthetics drive the price, not stamps, postal markings or routes. The more flamboyant the use, the more the cover is valued. Esthetics tend to be personal preference. Some prefer delicate floral wallpaper designs, for example, while others love the often-outlandish geometric patterns with garish colors which most people today could not imagine on the walls in any room in their

**Richmond, Virginia's infamous Libby Prison.** The supply of envelopes for the Union officers imprisoned there was no better than the "stationery" used by southern civilians. Virtually all mail emanating from southern prisons was of the "adversity" category.

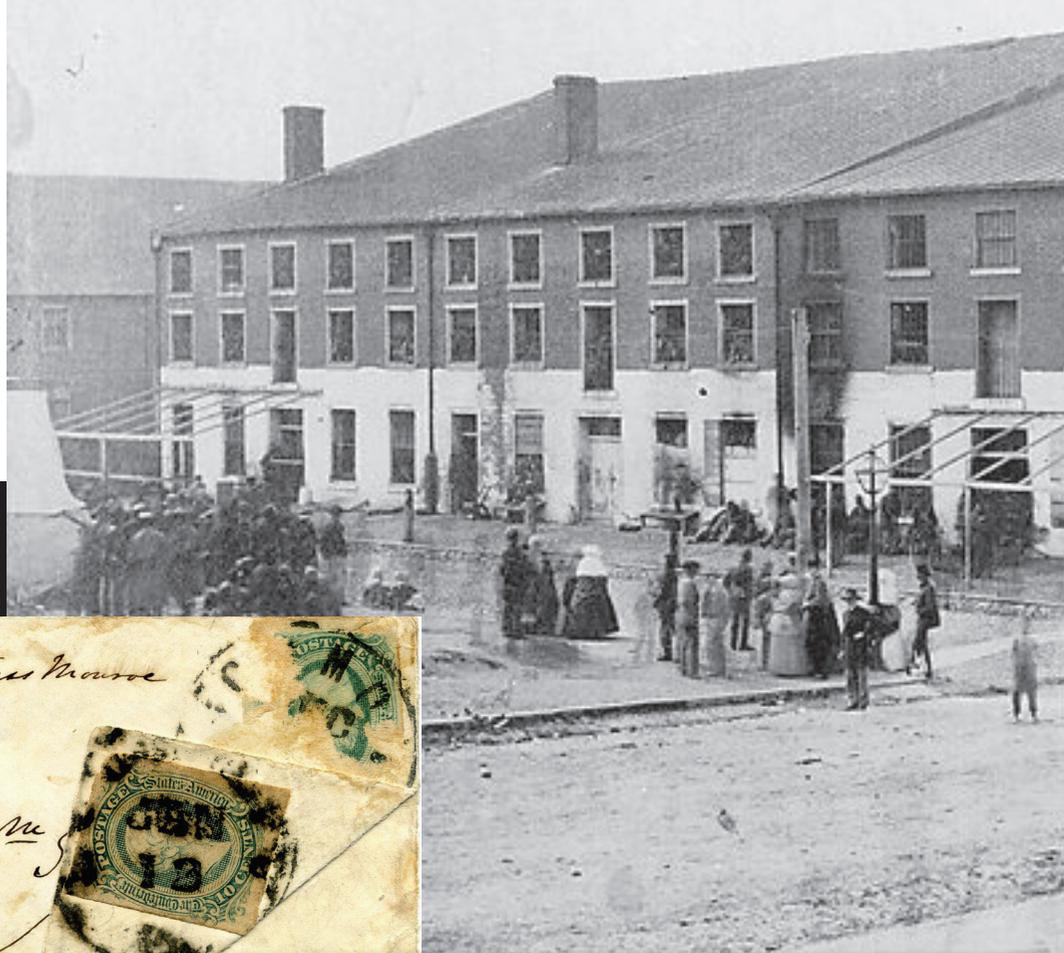


Figure 1.

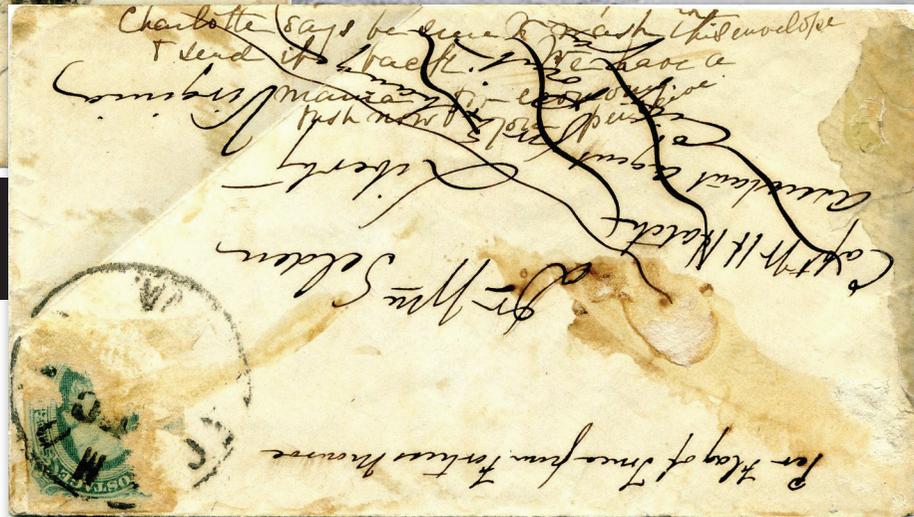


Figure 2.

This is a case where simple esthetics drive the price, not stamps, postal markings or routes. The more flamboyant the use, the more the cover is valued. Esthetics tend to be personal preference. Some prefer delicate floral wallpaper designs, for example, while others love the often-outlandish geometric patterns with garish colors which most people today could not imagine on the walls in any room in their houses. But even wallpaper was mostly manufactured in the North, preventing that from being as wide a source as it might have been had it been otherwise.

**"Wash this Envelope and Send it Back"**

The Civilian Flag of Truce cover shown in Figure 1 is franked with a CSA 12-ADc, 10¢ greenish blue, the stamp mostly torn off, and tied to the cover with a Richmond circular datestamp on a turned cover addressed to "Dr.

Wm. Selden, Liberty, Virginia" with a manuscript routing directive at lower left "Capt. W. H. Hatch, Assistant Agent for Exchange," which then appears crossed out. At the bottom and upside down is written, "Charlotte says be sure to wash this envelope & send it back. We have a mania for economy just now as you perceive." (Figure 2)

The inside use bears a CSA 11-AD, 10¢ blue, tied by a Liberty, Va., circular datestamp, to his daughter, Julia Selden (probably from her mother), care of Mrs. J. B. Dunn, Petersburg, judging from the note at the top "The dress has come." While this cover is not in exemplary condition, it is nonetheless an excellent first-hand example of an adversity cover with the bonus of a period note that directly demonstrates the hardships experienced.

Dr. William Selden (1808-1887—Figure 3) attended

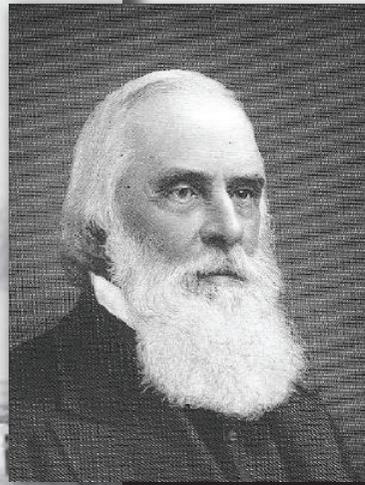


Figure 3.  
William Selden



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

the University of Virginia and received his M.D. from the University of Pennsylvania (thesis: Bilious Fever). He was in attendance at hospitals in Paris and London and prepared a report on yellow fever in Norfolk and Portsmouth that was widely acclaimed. He reported for duty in the Confederate States Army March 18, 1863, although he deeply deplored the necessity for secession; he was appointed Surgeon to rank from March 16, 1863; he was confirmed as Surgeon by Confederate States Senate January 30, 1864; and shown as a Surgeon at General Hospital in Liberty, Virginia, 1863-1864. Postwar, Dr. Selden practiced medicine in Norfolk, Virginia, and was twice elected vice president of the Medical Society of Virginia.

Dr. Selden's son, William Boswell Selden, graduated as a Civil Engineer from Virginia Military Institute. Lt. Selden

was killed on Roanoke Island February 7, 1862, where he had charge of building fortifications on Roanoke Island, North Carolina. He was the first man from Norfolk to die in the Civil War. The heart-rending letter from Lt. Selden's commanding officer, Col. H.M. Shaw, to Dr. Selden informing him of his son's death is quoted in full on the Find-a-Grave website.

A slightly different problem is revealed by the cover in Figure 4. This highly unusual cover is franked with a CSA 11-AD which is sewn onto the cover with brown thread over which is the postmark of Boydton, Virginia. One can only suppose that the sender feared the poor-quality gum would not hold the stamp tight to the envelope. It is addressed to Miss Hennie W. Seay, Fort Union, Virginia. This cover was treasured by its illustrious former owner, August Dietz.

Figures 6 & 7—  
Showing the front  
and reverse of a very  
striking use of a legal  
document (printed legal  
act) turned into the envel-  
ope for a love letter.



**Nothing was ever “normal” back home.** What scant photographs there are available of the wartime home front in the South during the Civil War show sad faces and people “making do” to get by. Adversity mail was a symbol of the ravages of the conflict.

The cover in Figure 5 is franked with CSA 4-2, 5-cent blue, Stone 2, position 17, tied with a Unionville, S.C., June 3 [1862] circular datestamp on a cover fashioned from a Unionville Female High School advertising flyer. It gives a full proposal of how the school is to be established and run in the old Methodist Church. It is addressed to Reverend Whiteford Smith, Spartanburg, S.C.

A scarce CSA 9, 10-cent blue T-E-N graces the charming adversity cover in Figures 6 and 7, used with the manuscript cancel of Pleasant Grove, NC. The cover is made from a printed legal act and embellished with blue hearts both front and back. It is addressed to Miss Eliza Long, Hillsboro, NC.

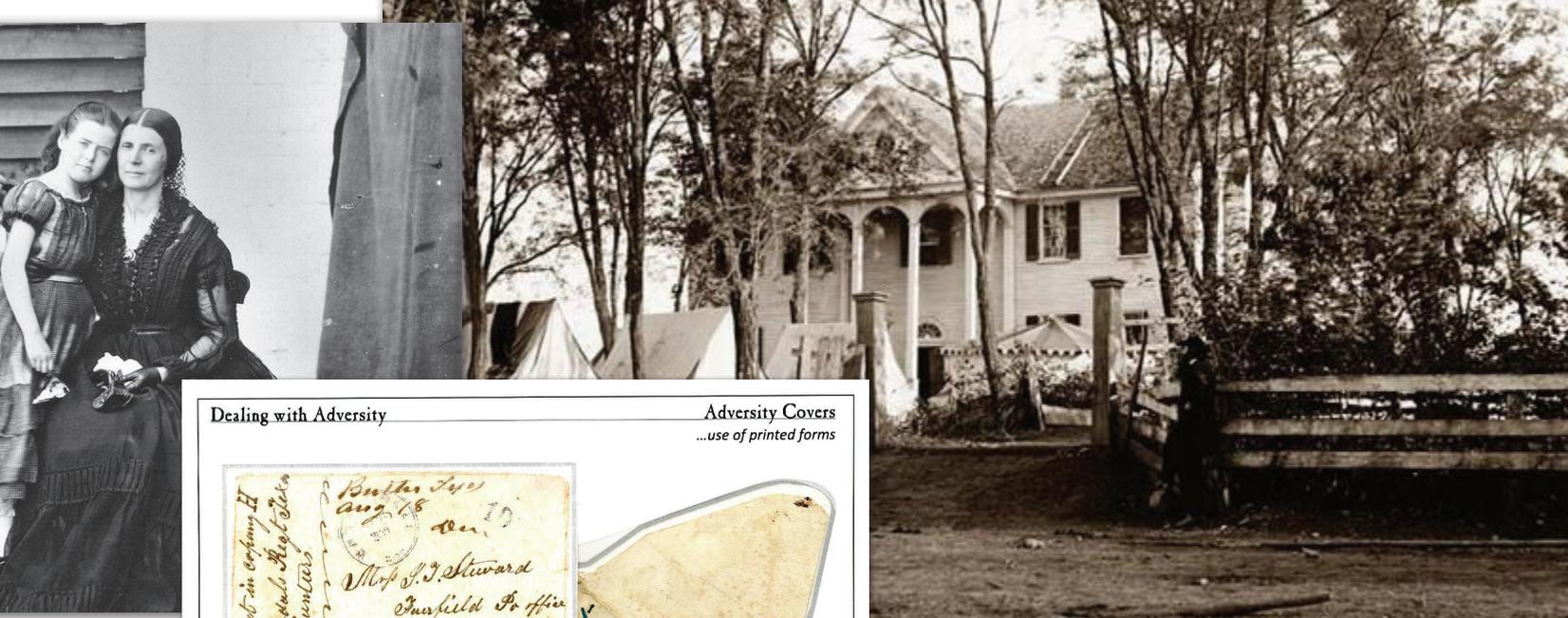
**A Circus Broadside Serves as an Envelope**

A circus broadside is the source of paper for the unusual twice used cover shown in Figure 8. It was originally mailed

from a Texas soldier in Mansfield, Louisiana, and processed through Shreveport with a due 10. Sergeant Jeremiah Stewart was corresponding with his wife in Fairfield, Texas. The cover was then turned and mailed prepaid back to Sergeant Stewart in the Louisiana theatre. Somewhere along its journey, it was used again in Butler, Texas, where it was placed in the mails, endorsed “due” and sent on to Fairfield.

Sergeant Jeremiah Terry Stewart (sometimes spelled Steward) was in Company H of the 28th Texas Cavalry, Randal’s Brigade, McCullough’s Division, District of Arkansas, Trans-Mississippi Department.

Colonel Horace Randal, an 1854 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, organized the 28th Texas Cavalry. The unit began its organization at a camp three miles east of Marshall, Texas. Company H (Freestone County, AKA 1st



Dealing with Adversity

Adversity Covers

...use of printed forms



Mansfield, LA to Fairfield, TX  
Fairfield, TX to Shreveport, LA  
Butler, TX to Fairfield, TX

April 30, (1867) undated  
August 18, (1867)

Homemade cover made from a circus broadside containing illustrations of a circus performer and a revolver originally mailed from a Texas soldier in Mansfield, Louisiana and processed through Shreveport due "10". Cover then turned and mailed prepaid back to Sergeant Stewart in the Louisiana theatre. It appears somewhere along its journey the cover was once again used by the soldier...this time at Butler, TX where it was placed in the mails, endorsed "Due", and sent on to Fairfield. An unusual 'twice turned' cover.



Floral print wallpaper is among the most sought after of designs among collectors of southern adversity covers. Such items were next to non-existent in the Union, which never experienced serious paper shortages.

Figure 8.

Texas Lancers) joined the regiment in July. The unit traveled to Shreveport, Louisiana, in July 1862 where they remained until 18 July 1862. The soldiers then traveled northward and arrived in Austin, Arkansas, on September 3, 1862. By late September, the unit was dismounted, i.e., the unit was converted to infantry. The 28th Texas Cavalry was dismounted because of a surplus of cavalry units in Arkansas and because of a lack of forage for the horses. The men refused to call themselves "infantry" instead preferring the term "dismounted cavalry" as though it were a temporary condition. Much to the disappointment of the men, the 28th Texas was never remounted. The unit spent the entire war in the Trans-Mississippi Department and campaigned extensively in Arkansas and Louisiana. The Battle of Mansfield was April 8, 1864, thus partially dating the cover.

Some of the letters between Sergeant Stewart and his wife may be found online although, according to the Fairfield [Texas] County Museum, some were destroyed by descendants because they were considered "too warm" for others to read.

Military forms are a favorite adversity collecting area. The cover in Figures 9 and 10 bears a CSA 7-R, 5-cent blue pair of Richmond prints tied by a scarce dateless blue Richmond, Virginia, postmark. It is addressed to Edward McCrady, Esq., Charleston, So. Ca., and fashioned from a military requisition form of the German Riflemen, South Carolina Militia, detailing such items as knapsack, haversack, canteen, cartridge box, bayonet scabbard, gun sling and more.

The printing that shows through the front of the envelope in Figure 11 is a promise of something good inside. The cover is franked with two overlapping singles of CSA 11-AD, 10-cent blue, tied together by Newberry C.H. / S.C. // Sep / 3 / 1864 double circle datestamp on a cover made from a dramatic Beexiasis Cough Syrup wrapper produced in Newberry, South Carolina, by W.F. Pratt & Co. The inside is shown in Figure 12.

The doctor who made Beexiasis cough syrup died shortly before 1860, so remaining wrappers made good envelopes. The cover is addressed to Rev. J. Scott Murray, Anderson

Figure 9.

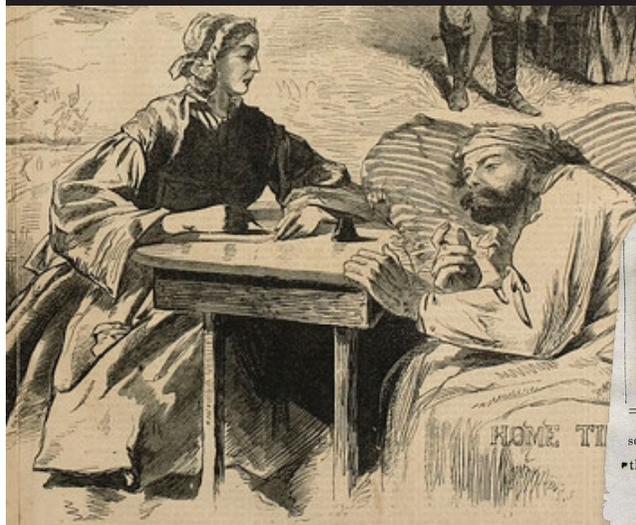


Figure 10.

C.H., S.C., and, per the docketing, the sender was George A. Sligh.

George Augustus Sligh (1822-1903) served in South Carolina Walpole's Cavalry Stono Scouts. They surrendered at Greensboro, N.C., on April 26, 1865. They were also known as the South Carolina Independent Rifleman, operating as an independent company of mounted infantry. They were mostly the sons of the plantation owners; they patrolled Johns Island to prevent looting. They also acted as lookouts and fought when called upon. Sligh also served in Company G, South Carolina 9th Reserves Infantry. He had eight children with wife Mary Magdalena Bundrick Sligh.

A spectacular triple-turned use is shown in Figure 13. The first use is a CSA 11-AD, 10-cent blue, tied by a Talbotton, Ga, circular datestamp to Ways Station, Ga. The second use is also a CSA 11-AD tied by a Savannah, Ga., postmark to Eatonton, Ga. The third use is the showy top sheet margin horizontal pair of CSA 7 local typographed issues postmarked by a Guyton, Ga., circular datestamp and sent

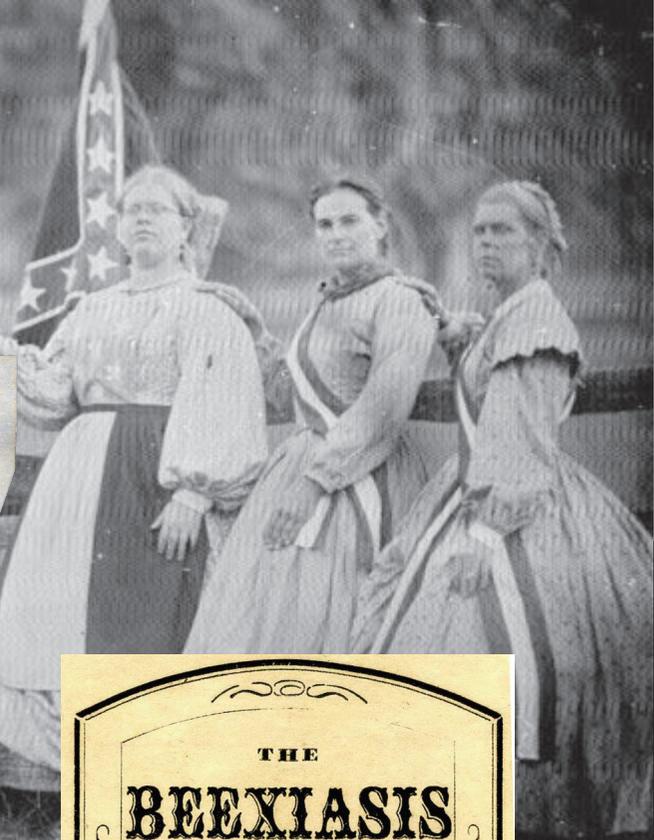
to the same recipient as the second use. There are probably less than a handful of covers reused more than twice.

### Economic Hardships of War

Paper was hardly the only scarce commodity. In the war-time memoirs of Anna Simpson, she recounts:

*"We replaced our worn dresses with homespun, planning and devising checks and plaids, and intermingling colors with the skill of professional designers... The samples we interchanged were homespun of our last weaving. Our mothers' silk stockings of antebellum days were unraveled and transformed into the prettiest of neat-fitting gloves. The writer remembers never to have been more pleased than she was by the possession of a trim pair of boots made of the tanned skins of squirrels.*

*"Our hats, made of palmetto and rye straw, were pretty and becoming... Our jackets were made of the father's old-fashioned cloaks... We even made jewelry of palmetto intermingled with hair, that we might keep even with the boys, who wore palmetto cockades! For our calico dresses, if we were fortunate enough to find one, we sometimes paid one hundred dollars, and for the*



**A very unusual photograph of southern women with the look of determination on their faces.** Not a particularly unusual state of mind for patriotic women who, during the way, were continually facing the challenges of wartime adversity.

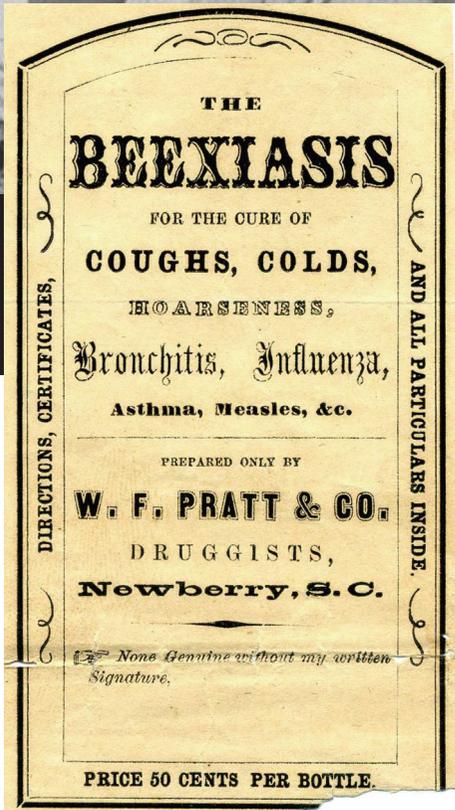
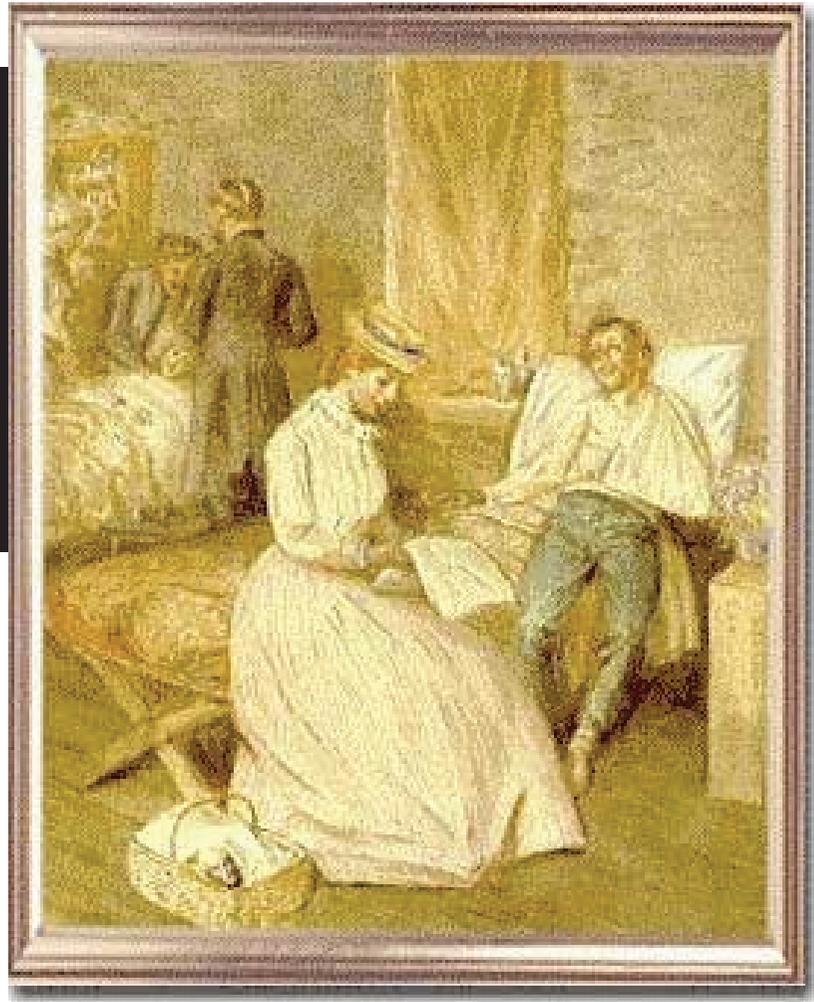


Figure 12.



**A war era painting of a southern woman** seeing to the letter writing needs of a wounded soldier.

spool of cotton that made it, from ten to twenty dollars.

*"The buttons we used were often from a gourd, cut into sizes, and covered with cloth. On children's clothes, persimmon seeds in the natural state, with two holes drilled through them, were found both neat and durable.*

*"The things we ate and drank came in, too, for a prominent position... Coffee was made of rye, wheat and sweet potatoes, chipped, dried and parched — also okra seed, etc. It was sweetened, if at all, with sorghum or honey. For tea, the leaves of blackberry vines were gathered and dried. Fruit cakes were made of dried apples, cherries, pears and plums, without any spices at all."*

Of particular interest to postal historians is the following entry:

*"A favorite night's employment was found in making envelopes...No bits of white paper suitable for writing with pen and*

*ink could be wasted in envelopes. Thus it happened that wall paper and sheets with pictures on one side, taken from 'United States Explorations,' served to make envelopes, neat enough...These we stuck together with gum from peach trees. Ink was made from oak balls and green persimmons, with rusty nails, instead of copperas, to deepen the color. The noisy goose supplied our pens."*

Shown herewith are a number of colorful wallpaper covers, arguably the most popular of the adversity categories.

The wallpaper cover shown in Figure 14 is interesting in that it was produced from recycled newsprint. It is easy to see the stray specks of various letters from print fonts all over the front of the cover.

#### **A Rare Trans-Mississippi Wallpaper Cover**

Rarer by far is the Trans-Mississippi wallpaper cover displayed as Figure 15. It is franked with a CSA 11, 10-cent

blue strip of four, uncanceled and without postal markings. The stamps appear absolutely original to the gold and white geometric leaf patterned wallpaper cover with period staining tying them to the cover. They were undoubtedly affixed to pay the 40-cent Trans-Mississippi rate from Louisiana to Richmond, but were more likely carried by military courier.

The cover is addressed to "Col. H. M. Favrot, Superintendent army records for Louisiana, Richmond, Va. Care of Col. N. N. Galleher, Nachitoches [LA]." Col. Galleher was a staff officer and Assistant Adjutant General for the Military Department of Arkansas and West Louisiana. This cover is listed as WS-1 in the 1984 monograph by Richard Krieger on Trans-Mississippi mails.

Capt. Henry M. Favrot was born in West Baton Rouge parish in 1826 and died there in 1887. He served as a member of the Louisiana legislature in the 1850s and was opposed to secession. However, with the outbreak of the Civil War he joined the Confederate Army and became captain of the "Delta Rifles," 4th Louisiana Infantry, and served throughout the war. Capt. Favrot participated in the Battle of Shiloh, was stricken with typhoid fever at Corinth and later returned to New Orleans. After his recovery, he was sent to Northern Virginia with rank of colonel to gather all the records of the Army of Northern Virginia. He remained on active duty until the close of the war, when he returned to New Orleans.

#### In Conclusion

While we may regret that Southern homefolk and soldiers endured deprivations, as collectors, these adverse conditions are precisely what caused the necessity of creating the magnificent treasures we collect today. Such uses even fascinate non-collectors and, perhaps, serve to inspire them to begin their own collections.

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Brian and Patricia Green, "Adversity Covers of the Confederacy," *Thirty-sixth American Philatelic Congress*, 1970, pp. 119-136.

<sup>2</sup>Catherine Lynn, *Wallpaper in America*, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1980.

<sup>3</sup>William R. Weiss, Jr., *Confederate States General Issue Stamps Used on Adversity Covers, 1861-1865*. Bethlehem, PA; William R. Weiss, Jr. 1995.

<sup>4</sup>Patricia A. Kaufmann, "The Rebel Post," *Scott's Monthly Stamp Journal*, April 1976.

<sup>5</sup>Patricia 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. Catalog numbers used are from the CSA catalog.

<sup>6</sup>F. T. Hambrecht and J.L. Koste from an unpublished database of physicians who served the Confederacy in a medical capacity.

<sup>7</sup>Find A Grave Memorial #11378736 <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=fls&FLid=109887901&FLgrid=11378736> Accessed September 29, 2017.

<sup>8</sup>Anna Simpson, 1861-1885, *Memoir of Anna Simpson, in South Carolina Women in the Confederacy*, Vol. 1. United Daughters of the Confederacy, South Carolina Division; Taylor, Thomas, Mrs. and Conner, Sallie Enders, eds. Columbia, SC: State Company, 1903, p. 34.

<sup>9</sup>Richard Krieger, *The Trans-Mississippi Mails After the Fall of Vicksburg*, 1974, The Philatelic Foundation, New York.



Figure 11.



Figure 13



**The streets of Baton Rouge, La.**  
—where Union troops permitted no outgoing mail in 1864.



Figure 15.



Figure 14.