

Figure 1: A three-cent dull red (U.S. Scott 26) just tied by pen cancel with matching manuscript cancel of Bealeton (Virginia) on April 17 (1861), the day the Virginia legislature passed an Ordinance of Secession.

A Virginia First Day of Independent Use

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

A first day cover in any area of classic postal history holds a higher place than a similar cover of a common date. In the case of the Confederate States, there are numerous very collectible “First Days.”

Every Southern state that seceded from the Union produced a first day use.

If that state subsequently joined the Confederacy, it produced another collectible first day. There was also the first day of the Confederate Post Office (June 1, 1861) and the first day of the universal 10-cent rate (July 1, 1862).

From June 1, 1861, the rate was five cents for under 500 miles and 10 cents for more than 500 miles. On July 1, 1862, the rate became uniform no matter the distance, with some notable exceptions such as the government Trans-Mississippi express service, for which the charge was 40 cents.

Dates of battles are also collectible. For example, The Battle of the Crater was part of the Siege of Petersburg, which took place on July 30, 1864, between the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia under Gen. Robert E. Lee and the Union Army of the Potomac, commanded by Maj. Gen. George G. Meade under the direct supervision of Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant.

Thus a cover dated July 30, 1864, from Petersburg



is more desirable than another less historically dated cover.

Clearly, in the collecting of Confederate material, as well as other areas, it is important to know your dates. Conflicting dates of secession have been published in major Confederate philatelic

publications for more than a century. All of this makes dating a tricky matter as to exactly which date is the “true” date of secession.

For the first time, secession dates were researched “from the ground up” from original state congressional documents. This more accurate table of secession and supporting documentation was published in the CSA Catalog in 2012. In spite of using the identical criteria for all states, some postal historians are loath to give up the long-accepted historical dates of secession.

State legislatures would enact an ordinance decreeing or authorizing secession; that ordinance might or might not refer the matter to the state’s voting citizens for approval; and, the matter might or might not be presented to the governor for his approval.

On February 13, 1861, delegates representing all counties in Virginia met to decide how the state would respond to recent events, especially Abraham Lincoln’s election and South Carolina’s secession.

Edgewood April 16 1861

My dear Churchill

I got your letter a few days ago saying you had not heard from George but that there were General letters at the same rate for him from his wife and saying you expected he had left for Richmond but that he would be at home in a day or so at farthest and promising to let me hear as soon as he got back I wrote to Mr. [unclear] several days ago asking him to let me know if he had been in Richmond I have never heard from him and when I got your letter that Robert was not in Richmond by his return answered my letter I have been to the office every day expecting to hear either from you or him I am getting quite uneasy about George and nothing would please me more than to hear that he was at home I thought he was to bring his family back to Virginia with him

Figure 2: First page of letter headed “Edgewood April 16, 1861” and addressed to “My dear Churchill.”

It is the strangest thing in the world that a man of George's lineage should act as he does he knows in what condition his affairs are and while his family were such I did not expect him to leave them and think it was his duty not to do but if they are worse I think he ought to be consulting to his matters I have written to him twice since he went back to North Carolina the last time and he has never answered either of my letters if you have heard any thing since you last wrote please let me hear Mary has continued quite unwell since I last wrote to you she seems to have been better for the last ten days Sandy says he thinks he can release her he has never given her any thing yet he was here a little more than ten days ago and said he wanted to find out something about the treatment reported in the authorities and that as soon as he made up an opinion that he would come on and prescribed if you care

Figure 3: Second page of the enclosed April 16 letter.

They voted to remain in the Union and hoped that a compromise could be reached to defuse the situation. Two months later, the same men voted to secede from the United States, sparking a radically different war than might otherwise have taken place.

Virginia did not break its ties with the Union until the North took military action against the South. While the decision to secede came quickly and with less resistance in other more southern states, in Virginia it was the product of years of sectionalism and months of ardent debate. Only after actual war had broken out between the North and the South at Fort Sumter did Virginia secede from the Union.

The cover illustrated in Figure 1 shows a three-cent dull red (U.S. Scott 26) just tied by the tail of a squiggle pen cancel; it has a matching manuscript cancel of Bealeton (Virginia) April 17 (1861).

On April 17, 1861, the Virginia legislature passed an Ordinance of Secession and on May 7, 1861, Virginia was accepted into the Confederate States of America.

You might wonder just how it can be determined that this 1857-issued U.S. stamp was used in 1861. Ordinarily the answer would be, “you can’t.”

But in this case, we are fortunate that it contains a letter headed “Edgewood April 16th, 1861” with a

Come over I will get Sandy here and you can talk it over together there is nothing I would not give odds to have her cured I fear you will not be able to read some of this it is jellied or I think I can't see how to write I have become perfectly disgusted with politics I have no faith in the Convention or the people of the state or I fear a majority are against us I hope I will hear from you as soon as you get this

I am ever affectionately
Yours
C.K. Gordon

Dr. J. G. [unclear]

Figure 4: Final page of the April 16 letter, signed C.K. Gordon.

salutation to, “My dear Churchill.” Not only does it have an 1861 date, but says in part, “I have become perfectly disgusted with politics, I have no faith in the (Secession) Convention or the people of the State or I fear a majority are against.” (Figures 2-4)

The cover is addressed to, “Dr. Jno C. Gordon, Trevillian’s Depot, Louisa, Va.” Dr. John C. Gordon (1831-1919), known by his middle name Churchill, was born at Edgewood, from where this letter was written. I repeatedly found online references, including the *U.S. Congressional Record*, referring to “Edgeworth” as the family home, but it is clear from this letter and the fact that the home still exists that the correct name is “Edgewood.”

Edgewood’s third floor was used during the Civil War as a lookout post for Confederate generals when they were camped at nearby Berkeley Plantation. The estate also includes the 1725 Benjamin Harris Grist Mill, which ground corn for both the Union and Confederate armies. On June 15, 1862, Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart stopped at Edgewood for coffee on his way to Richmond to warn Gen. Robert E. Lee of the Union Army’s strength. Today, it is an elegant Bed and Breakfast, as shown in Figure 5.

Dr. Gordon’s grandson, Edward Stuart Gordon, wrote, *A Novel, Memoirs of a Civil War Surgeon: The Old Doctor’s Rigmarole* (Figure 6), honoring Dr. Gordon. Grandson Edward Gordon attended Virginia Military Institute and flew combat planes in World War II. He was 90 when he began writing this book.

John Churchill Gordon was the son of William Fitzhugh Gordon (1787-1858), a member of the United States Congress from Virginia, a Commonwealth attorney and a major general in the Virginia Militia.

Churchill Gordon graduated from medical school at the University of Virginia in 1854 and from the Medical College of Virginia at Richmond in 1855. On May 4, 1861, the state of Virginia appointed him assistant surgeon and assigned him to the Hermitage Camp. Selected military records of Dr. Gordon are shown in Figures 7-11.

On the June 6, he married Mary Beall Pegram (1841-1912). They had 10 children. Four days after their wedding, Gordon entered the 38th Virginia Infantry of the Confederate Army. Post-war, he practiced medicine in various locations in Albemarle County, Virginia.

Dr. John Churchill Gordon and his wife, Mary, are buried at Riverview Cemetery, Charlottesville, Virginia. Their joint headstone is shown in Figure 12.

Important dates such as that on the subject cover add both interest and value to collections. You can also sometimes get a good buy from a dealer’s stock by knowing your dates.

For information about the Confederate Stamp



Figure 5: Edgewood as it appears today as a Bed and Breakfast.

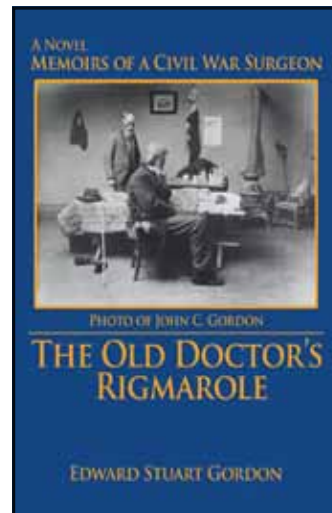


Figure 6: Cover of a book about Dr. Gordon by Edward Stuart Gordon, A Novel, *Memoirs of a Civil War Surgeon: The Old Doctor’s Rigmarole*, showing a photo of Dr. Gordon postwar during his medical practice.

Alliance, e-mail Trish Kaufmann at trishkauf@comcast.net or write to: 10194 N. Old State Road, Lincoln DE 19960. You may also see the society website at: www.csalliance.com.

Bealeton, Virginia

Bealeton was a depot of the former Orange & Alexandria Railroad, since renamed Southern Railroad. The area was a major traveling stop during the Civil War and was host to many skirmishes related to nearby engagements.

Despite the presence of southern troops during the early years of the war, the northern troops succeeded in pushing the Confederate line south of the Rappahannock River and eventually into Fredericksburg. This move led to the control of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, thus allowing the Union army to transport supplies deep into southern Virginia. The town lost importance with the decline of railroad travel and became a bedroom community of Manassas.

(CONFEDERATE.)

G | 38 | Va.

John C. Gordon
Asst. Surgeon, 38 Reg't Va. Infantry.

Appears on a
Roster
of the 38th Regiment Virginia Volunteers; Stewart's Brigade; Pickett's Division; Longstreet's Corps; Army of Northern Virginia; organized June, 1861; mustered into C. S. service June 12, 1861, for 12 months.

Roster dated *Company G, Bermuda Hundred*
Sept. 23, 1864.

Date of entry or muster into State service, 1861.

Date of entry or muster into Confederate service, *June 12, 1861.*

Date of rank, and whether by appointment, election, or promotion, *Asst. Surgeon, June 12, 1861.*

Date and cause of vacancy, *Resig. Dec. 4, 1861.*

Name of successor, *Thomas M. White.*

Remarks:

Book mark:

J. B. Woodward
(648) 1118 Copyist.

(CONFEDERATE.)

G | 35 | Va.

J. C. Gordon
Asst. Surgeon, Va.

Appears on a Register of
Medical Director's Office,
Richmond, Va.,
under the head of "Assistant Surgeons of the Vol. Forces of Virginia appointed by the Governor and Council."

Residence *Albemarle*
Date *May 4, 1861.*
Assignment *Hermitage Camp*

Remarks:

Confed. Arch., Chap. 6, File No. 142, page 21.

J. B. Woodward
(636) 176 Copyist.

Figure 7 (Left):
Military record dated September 28, 1864, at camp near Bermuda Hundred, which shows Dr. Gordon's enlistment date and appointment.

Figure 8 (Right):
Military record from the Medical Director's Office, Richmond, Virginia, that shows Gordon's appointment as assistant surgeon to the Volunteer Forces of Virginia appointed by the governor and council. It is dated May 4, 1861, showing his assignment to the Hermitage Camp, Company G, 35th Virginia.

Requisition for forage for one horse in my personal possession of 35th Va. Regiment for seven days commencing July 12th 1861

| Daily Allowance | Estab Allowance |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 7 1 9 1/4 | 63 98 |

I certify on honor the above requisition is correct and have drawn forage for no part of the above named time

John C. Gordon

Received at Winchester July 12th 1861 of Prof Abbott Quartermaster of 38th Va. Regiment one hundred and ninety eight pounds of corn and ninety eight pounds of Hay in full of the above requisition

John C. Gordon

Figure 9: Requisition for forage received at Winchester on July 12, 1861, and signed twice by John C. Gordon.

Headquarters of the Forces
Richmond Va 6th July 1861

Special Order
No. 213

VII. Asst Surgeon Churchill Gordon, now at Camp of Instruction, is assigned to the 38th Reg't Va. Vol. and will report accordingly.

By order of General Lee
L. D. Lee

J. C. Gordon
Hospital Family

RECORD DIVISION
REBEL ARCHIVES
WAR DEPARTMENT.

Figure 10: Special Order No. 213 from Head Quarters of the Forces of Richmond, Virginia, 6th July 1861, assigning Dr. J. Churchill Gordon to the 38th Regiment Virginia Volunteers.

The Confederate States of America,
To *Jno C Gordon asst Surg 38 Regt Va Vol, Dr.*

| ON WHAT ACCOUNT. | COMMENCEMENT AND EXPIRATION. | | TERM OF SERVICE CHARGED. | | PAY PER MONTH. | | AMOUNT. | | REMARKS. |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------|----------------|------|--------------|------|----------|
| | From— | To— | Months. | Days. | Dolls. | Cts. | Dolls. | Cts. | |
| PAY— For Myself..... | <i>June 30</i> | <i>August 31</i> | <i>2</i> | | <i>100</i> | | <i>220</i> | | |
| For year's service... | | | | | | | | | |
| Forage for horses... | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | <i>\$220</i> | | |

I hereby certify that the foregoing account is accurate and just; that I have not been absent, without leave, during any part of the time charged for; that I have not received pay, forage, or received money in lieu of any part thereof, for any part of the time therein charged; that the horses were actually kept in service and were mustered for the whole of the time charged; that for the whole of the time charged for my staff appointment, I actually and legally held the appointment and did duty in the department; that I have been a commissioned officer for the number of years stated in the charge for every additional five years' service; that I am not in arrears with the Confederate States on any account whatsoever; and that the last payment I received was from *Major Will* and to the *30* day of *June* 18 *61*.

I, at the same time, acknowledge that I have received of *Capt John Ambler* this *24* day of *Sept* 18 *61*, the sum of *Two hundred & twenty* dollars, being the amount, in full, of said account.

Pay.....\$ *220*
Forage.....
Amount...\$ *220*

(Signed Duplicates.)
Jno. C. Gordon
asst Surg 38th Regt Va. Vol.

Figure 11: Confederate States of America printed payroll form dated September 24, 1861, and signed by Jno. C. Gordon as assistant surgeon, 38th Regiment, Virginia Volunteers.

Endnotes

- 1 Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo. *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*. 2012.
- 2 Virginia Secession Convention. University of Richmond. <http://secession.richmond.edu/> Accessed March 8, 2016.
- 3 Edgewood Plantation Bed and Breakfast. <http://www.edgewoodplantation.com/> Accessed March 8, 2016.
- 4 Dr. F. T. Hambrecht, F. T. *Biographical register of physicians who served the Confederacy in a medical capacity*. Unpublished database.
- 5 Find A Grave Memorial# 6254427. Accessed March 8, 2016.
- 6 Bealeton, Virginia. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bealeton,_Virginia Accessed March 8, 2016.



Figure 12: Gravestone of Dr. John Churchill Gordon and wife Mary Pegram Gordon.

(Patricia (Trish) Kaufmann is a fulltime dealer specializing solely in Confederate States stamps and postal history. She began collecting in the mid 1960s and has been a professional philatelist since 1973. E-mail: trishkauf@comcast.net)