

# One of our great American Specialties

Here is a subject philatelists have been enthralled with for over 100 years.



## The Confederate Post

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

### Adversity Double Use to Signal Corps Balloonist on the *CSS Palmetto State*

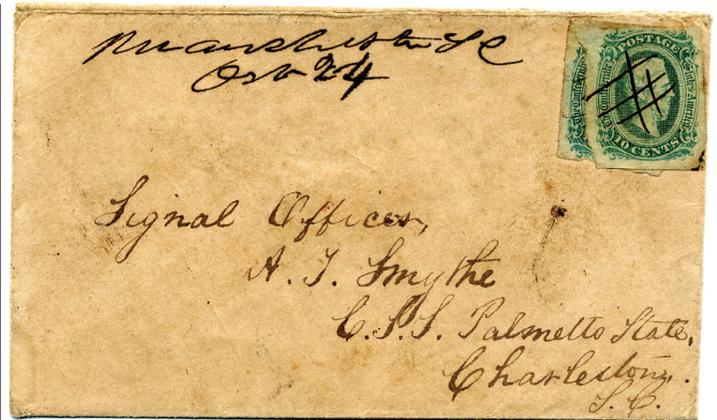
Confederate collectors are used to seeing turned covers and adversity uses, but one such as the illustrated example is less frequently seen. The cover is an example of a double use of one stamp over the other rather than having the envelope turned inside out with the second use on the inside. This is because there was no available writing space on the inside. Exploding the envelope reveals that it was made from a religious tract “Christ’s Representatives for the conversion of the world and self-denying love and liberality essential to Christian character by Thomas Smyth, D.D.” plus several complete bible verses.

The cover was franked with two different shades of the 10¢ type I steel-engraved issue and used with a manuscript cancel of Manchester, S.C. It was addressed to “Signal Officer A.T. Smythe, C.S.S. Palmetto State, Charleston, S.C.” This is thus a multi-threat cover with double use of an adversity cover fashioned from a religious tract, as well as a Confederate Navy cover.

Augustine Smythe (Smyth) (1842-1914) was born in Charleston, the son of the Reverend Thomas Smyth and Margaret Milligan Adger. He added an “e” to the spelling of his surname. Initially educated at Professor A. Sachtleben’s school in Charleston, he entered South Carolina College in 1860, but left during the Civil War. Joining the college Corps of Cadets as a corporal on January 25, 1861, he was present at the firing on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. After the cadet corps was disbanded, he enlisted as a private in Company A (Washington Light Infantry) of the 25th South Carolina Infantry (April 4, 1862). Smythe was detached for duty as a lance sergeant in the Signal Corps on October 20, 1862 and subsequently was a signal operator and observer at Fort Sumter, Battery Wagner, the steeple of St. Michael’s Church, and on the ironclad *C.S.S. Palmetto State* in Charleston harbor. In 1864, he was placed in charge of an experiment in which a captured balloon was used as an observation post and made several ascensions before the experiment was discontinued. After the evacuation of Charleston in February 1865, he joined the Fifth South Carolina Cavalry as a sergeant major, fought at the Battle of Bentonville, North Carolina (March 19, 1865), and surrendered at Greensboro, North Carolina April 26, 1865. In June 1865, he married Louisa R. McCord of Lang Syne Plantation, Columbia. He later returned to Charleston, qualified for the bar, and practiced law until his death, June 24, 1914. He served as a state senator for twelve years.

An article by Stokes and Coker - “Battle of Secessionville” on the South Carolina Historical Society website – quotes:

*“We have been in our first fight & have met the Yankees at last & thank God, we are not only safe but we have driven back the en-*

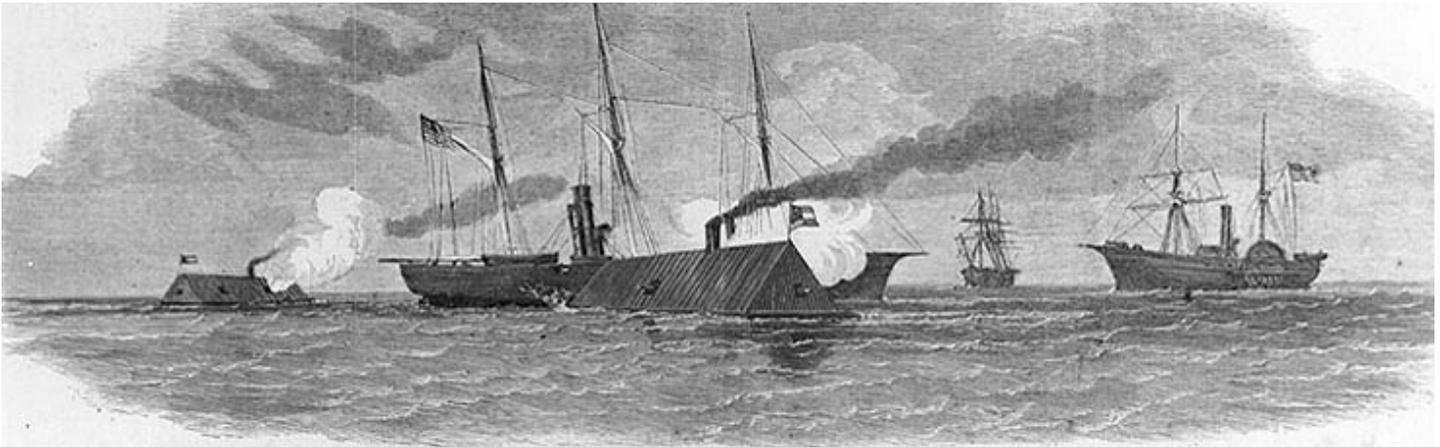


*emy with great slaughter”. Confederate soldier Augustine Smythe wrote on June 17th, 1862. Just the day before Smythe and the rest of his company were engaged in a fierce fight for possession of an unfinished earthen fort out in the Secessionville region of James Island, South Carolina. Had this fort fallen during the three hour Union assault, the entire course of the Civil War could have been altered.*

*Smythe was assigned to a squad to gather up arms and look after the wounded following the fighting. He gives this vivid account of the battle’s costly aftermath; “I was sent & such a scene I wish never again to witness. Many were in the water, dead, in a small creek between them & Secessionville, one poor fellow wounded in his back and throat lay in the water close to the bank, but unable to get out while the tide was up to his shoulders and continually rising.” Smythe pulled this man to safety and comforted him as best as he could. After gazing upon the area where Fort Lamar’s artillery fired into the Union ranks, Smythe remarks “On the other side of the marsh...the slaughter...was immensely greater.” Casualties from this battle would be found along James Island for a time afterwards. Smythe tells how “One poor fellow who had evidently been wounded, had crawled to the edge of the bushes & taken off his clothes...laid them by his side, then folded his hands across his breast & died. Poor fellow, had he been attended to & had food, he might have lived. He must have heard horrible stories of having his clothes torn off him after death & wished not to have his body disturbed.---Awful! “*

#### The CSS Palmetto State

John Porter designed the ironclad ram *CSS Palmetto State* built at Charleston, South Carolina by Cameron and Company under the supervision of Flag Officer D. N. Ingram, CSN (there is conflicting data on the spelling of his name, also seen as Ingraham).



“The Rebel Rams engaging our Blockading Fleet off Charleston, South Carolina, January 31, 1863.” Line engraving published in *Harper’s Weekly*, January-June 1863, page 117, depicting *CSS Chicora* and *CSS Palmetto State* attacking *USS Mercedita*, with *USS Keystone State* at right.

She was readied for service by September 1862 when Lt. Comdr. J. Rutledge, CSN, was placed in command. Rutledge held command from then until April 1864 when Lieutenant James Henry Rochelle, CSN, took over a command he held it until the destruction of the ship in February 1865.

Her armor was 4” thick on the casemate; this was backed by 22” of oak and pine. The remainder of the ship only had 2” of iron with oak and pine.

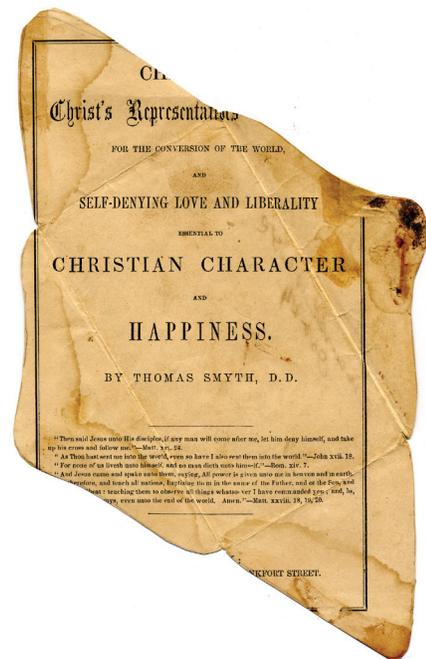
- Length: 176 feet 6 inches (conflicting data found, also seen as 150 feet) • Breadth: 34 feet • Draft: 12 feet • Displacement: 850? Tons • Speed: 5 or 6 knots • Engines: from the *CSS Lady Davis*, a small steamer; due to this the ship would always be underpowered.
- Armament: 2 x 7 inch Brooke rifles (or 80 powder rifle forward and 60 powder rifle aft), 2 x 9 inch Dahlgren smooth bores (or 2 x 8 inch), additional guns possibly mounted in 1864, spar torpedo added towards the end of the war • Crew: 125 • Cost: \$263,892 approximately, this being the cost of the *CSS Chicora*, her sister ship. The *Chicora* was also designed by John Porter and built at the same time in Charleston, but at a different yard.

As a warship, she was too deep a draft to be of much use in the defense of the harbor; her engines were underpowered, so she lacked speed. Also her guns, due to the smallness of the portholes, could not be sufficiently elevated.

With the launch of the *Chicora* in Charleston, a local newspaper described its appearance with a poem entitled “Turtle”, which would also be apt for the *Palmetto State*:

*Caesar, afloat with his fortunes!*  
*And all the world agog*  
*Straining it’s eyes*  
*At the thing that lies*  
*In the water, like a log!*  
*It’s a weasel! a whale!*  
*I see it’s tail!*  
*It’s a porpoise! a pollywog!*

For most of the Civil War, she remained active in the Charleston vicinity. The *CSS Palmetto State* was destroyed on 18 February 1865, when the city was evacuated, to prevent capture. This was done by the Chief Engineer, Eugenious A. Jack, whose skill caused the ship to explode “leaving a plume of smoke in the shape of a Palmetto tree much to the delight of the crew.” The wreck was removed prior to 1870. ☒



Confederate ironclads *Chicora* and *Palmetto State*. Nineteenth-Century photograph of a painting by Conrad Wise Chapman, depicting the ships in Charleston harbor, South Carolina, during the Civil War.

