

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

Rediscovered Family History - Stephen A. Corker, POW

Last spring I put up a very nice Johnson's Island Prisoner-of-War cover on my retail website. The cover was addressed to Mrs. Margaret Corker and, as I normally do, I researched the soldier to include the information with the description. I found it had been sent by POW Stephen Alfestus Corker to his wife Margaret in Georgia. Corker was one of the commanders of the Burke Guards, Company A, 3rd Georgia Infantry Regiment. He was captured on the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg, sent to Ft. Delaware in July and then Johnson's Island. Eventually he was forwarded to City Point, Virginia, for exchange and paroled in Augusta, Georgia on May 19, 1865.

I received a phone call not long after I uploaded the retail description in which I included the information I knew about Corker. Imagine my surprise when the caller said his name was Stephen Corker! It took me a fraction of a second to correctly guess why he might be calling. Needless to say, he was elated to find and acquire the cover and enclosed letter.

The modern day Steve Corker has been a stamp collector since the age of eleven and told me that he had begun genealogy research about two years before. His great-great grandfather was the Johnson's Island POW and, yes, he was named after him. Steve traveled to Georgia to research his roots, but ran into many roadblocks as the courthouse in Burke County burned down twice. He did find out that Stephen A. Corker was a successful lawyer, a member of the Georgia State House of Representatives and was later elected as a Democrat to the 41st Congress of the U.S. House of Representatives representing Georgia in 1870-71.

Steve found that another branch of the family had donated 58 letters to and from S.A. Corker to the University of Georgia. They were originally saved by his wife, Margaret Myrtis Palmer Corker. Of special interest was a letter to her written for and signed by Gen. Robert E. Lee on August 18, 1863 saying in part,

"He did his part bravely and well in a charge of Wrights Brigade on the enemy's position at Gettysburg on July 2nd and when last seen was standing near a piece of the enemy's artillery where the fire was very severe. It is not known whether he was killed or wounded. I hope he is living and may long be spared to his family

and the country. We hold no communications with the enemy now on this line and they have restricted almost to prohibition visits to the North by the Flag of Truce boats. I sympathize deeply with you



in your anxiety and regret that I can do so little to relieve it."

After we had spoken on the phone, I asked Steve if I might share his story in this column. He graciously consented and sent me a large package of information about his great-great grandfather before he had even received the treasured cover and contents.

With his accompanying letter to me, he wrote, "...if you look at a photo of me and of Stephen's likeness in the enclosed photo, we look like doubles...I will be humbled to actually hold the letter he wrote, to see his handwriting, to see the stamp he affixed and knowing that my great-great grandmother held and read the same letter. Thank you for making that possible."

What a wonderful feeling to help reunite a family with their roots!

For information on the Confederate Stamp Alliance, write Trish Kaufmann, 10194 N. Old State Road, Lincoln, DE 19960, e-mail trishkauf@comcast.net, or visit csalliance.org. ✉