

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

Mail from Johnson's Island Union Prison

The Johnson's Island prisoner-of-war cover is franked with a 3¢ rose, Scott U.S. No. 65, tied by a "Sandusky O. Feb 17 '65" datestamp. It bears a nice Type II five-line "John Man- or, Capt. 128 O.V.I.R., Supt. Pris., Roll & Pris. Correspondence, Johnsons Island O." examined handstamp, which also served as a corner card. The cover is addressed to New Orleans, Louisiana, and contains the original letter and pay receipt dated two weeks later, March 2, which is in line with his stated approximate time of arrival home.

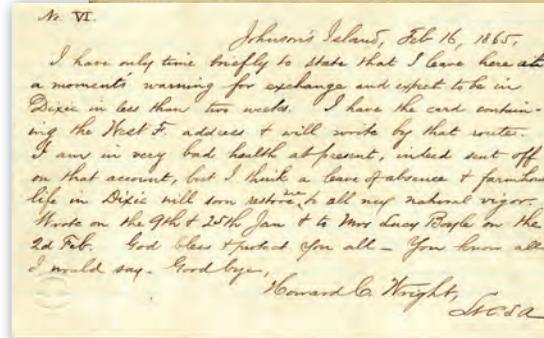
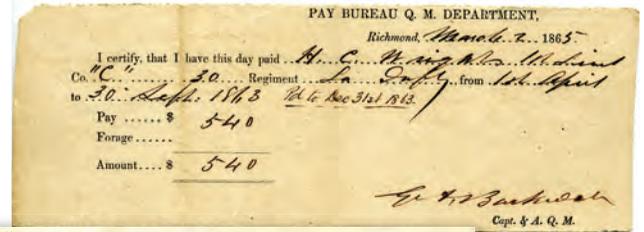
The letter is dated "Johnson's Island, Feb 16, 1865" and says, "I have only time to briefly state that I leave here at a moment's warning for exchange and expect to be in Dixie in less than two weeks...I am in very bad health at present, indeed sent off on that account...a leave of absence and a farm house life in Dixie will soon restore me to all my natural vigor...Howard C. Wright, Lt. CSA".

Wright is listed in the military records as serving in Company "C" 30th Louisiana Infantry, aka Sumter Regiment Infantry, Maxey's Brigade, 3rd Military District, Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana. Further online digging shows just how poor most military records are, and why one source alone is usually not enough. *The Federal Rolls of Prisoners of War* shows Wright captured at Port Hudson on July 9, 1862. He was sent from there to New Orleans via Steamer *Zephyr* on July 13, 1863, and received at Fort Columbus, New York Harbor on October 10, 1863. From there he was transferred to Johnson's Island on October 13, 1863 and paroled/forwarded to Point Lookout, Maryland, for exchange on February 16, 1865.

New York native Howard C. Wright was a newspaperman in New Orleans, Louisiana, when the Civil War began. He joined the 30th Louisiana Infantry Regiment when it was formed in 1862 and became a lieutenant. Captured at the surrender of Port Hudson, he was imprisoned with other officers in New Orleans. He wrote an account of the siege, which was originally serialized as *Port Hudson: Its History from an Interior Point of View as Sketched From the Diary of an Officer in the Daily True Delta*, less than a month after the surrender. Wright's account was printed in book form for the first time in 1937 by the editor of the *St. Francisville Democrat* and republished in 1961 by the Committee for the Preservation of the Port Hudson Battlefield in Baton Rouge in 1961 and again in 1978 by The Eagle Press, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

The following excerpt was found online and is taken from the 1978 printing (p. 51):

The last quarter ration of beef had been given out to the troops



on the 29th of June. On the 1st of July, at the request of many officers, a wounded mule was killed and cut up for experimental eating. All those who partook of it spoke highly of the dish. The flesh of mules is of a darker color than beef, of a finer grain, quite tender and juicy, and has a flavor something between that of beef and venison. There was an immediate demand for this kind of food, and the number of mules killed by the commissariat daily increased. Some horses were also slaughtered, and their flesh was found to be very good eating, but not equal to mule. Rats, of which there were plenty about the deserted camps, were also caught by many officers and men, and were found to be quite a luxury--superior, in the opinion of those who eat them, to spring chicken; and if a philosopher of the Celestial Empire could have visited Port Hudson at the time, he would have marvelled at the progress of the barbarians there toward the refinements of his own people. Mule meat was regularly served out in rations to the troops from and after the 4th of July, and there were very few among the garrison whose natural prejudices were so strong as to prevent them from cooking and eating their share.

As with most war-time compilations, Wright's recollections are a fascinating glimpse into conditions during the conflict. ☒