

Confederate Collectanea



Figure 1: U.S. three-cent dull red tied by New Orleans, Louisiana, June 1 (1861) circular date stamp. It traveled north through Louisville, Kentucky, where it received a “DUE 3” marking representing additional postage due for a double rate letter. It should have been marked with a Confederate rate.

A First Day Cover that Escaped the System

By Gen. Patricia A. Kaufmann

The Figure 1 cover immediately captures the attention of knowledgeable Confederate postal historians for several reasons.

The initial reason is that it was postmarked New Orleans, Louisiana, on June 1 (1861), and thus represents the first day of the Confederate postal system, a coveted date for the exhibitor. However, it also immediately evokes questions.

The cover is franked with a United States three-cent 1857 stamp. This was the first day of the Confederate postal system and should properly have received a 10-cent Confederate rated postal marking or even a five-cent marking, although it was overweight and thus five cents would have represented an underpaid use. The earliest recorded use of a five-cent New Orleans provisional is June 12, 1861, so that apparently was not an option.¹

On May 31, 1861, all mail service in the

seceded states was suspended by the U.S. Post Office Department. Northbound mail from the east was mostly transported between the United States and the Confederacy between Washington, D.C., and Richmond, Virginia. In the west, it was routed between Memphis or Nashville, Tennessee, and Louisville, Kentucky.

Tennessee did not secede until June 8, 1861, and even then there were divided loyalties in some sections of the state. As a result, some routes in the state remained open to both United States and Confederate mail well into June.

The May 31 discontinuance of mail service in the Southern states did not apply to Tennessee, as it had not yet seceded. Letters on these routes usually show Confederate due markings in addition to prepaid United States postage.

U.S. Postmaster General Montgomery Blair's order suspending mail service in the



Figure 2: A close-up of the three-cent U.S. stamp and the June 1 (1861) New Orleans postmark.

seceded states after May 31 did not prohibit the transportation of Southern letters in the United States mails provided they reached a United States post office. Following the discontinuance of federal postal operations in Tennessee, mail was often diverted to the Dead Letter Office after having successfully passed through Nashville and Louisville.²

On June 24, the Louisville postmaster received instructions to "...forward letters from the South for the loyal states as unpaid after removing postage stamps."

This caused the Louisville postmaster to prepare the "Southern Letter Unpaid" marking to indicate that United States franking on these covers was invalid for postage.

Typically, these sought-after uses are struck with the large blue Louisville "DUE 3" marking that appears on the subject cover.

This is another thing about it that immediately captures the attention of the astute Confederate student. The large "DUE 3" fairly screams "Southern Letter Unpaid." But this cover is too early to achieve that status.³

Effective June 1, 1861, the new postal rate in the Confederate States was five cents per half-ounce under 500 miles and 10 cents over 500 miles. United States stamps and envelopes became invalid in the Confederacy on June 1. Thus this cover from New Orleans represents a cover that escaped the new Confederate postage rate of five cents or 10 cents.

The "DUE 3" does not represent a "Southern Letter Unpaid;" it represents additional postage due for a double rate letter.

Note the enclosure outline, which can easily be seen and is quite thick, consistent with a double weight letter. This cover received CSA

Authentication Service certificate #05852 in October 2013.

Some might question the difficult to read New Orleans postmark, shown more closely in Figure 2. It should be noted that, although this New Orleans postmark was used prewar, it became progressively more smeared into 1861.

Apparently, the postal clerk in New Orleans missed the memo that the new rate taking effect on June 1 was five cents and that United States postage was invalid as of that date.

Or, more likely, there was much confusion at that time surrounding the new postal system, which did not even have its own postage stamps until more than four months later.

Because the letter was directed to a United States destination in Cadiz, Kentucky, the postmaster or clerk may simply have just let it go, thinking it appropriate to let United States postage pass as it was going to the north. Alternatively, the Confederate rated postage could have been paid yet escaped the "Paid" rate handstamp, although this seems less likely. We have no way of knowing.

On a genealogical note, the cover is addressed to "Miss Maggie Jenkins, care of C.D. Bradley, Cadiz, Kentucky." Maggie was Margaret A. Jenkins, the stepdaughter of Judge Collins D. Bradley. She was married to W.S. Randolph on April 14, 1864; they were blessed with eight children. Randolph was a county judge in Trigg County, Kentucky.⁴

This is the only cover of its type that I have personally encountered. To the joy of Confederate students, it is a stellar first day use that escaped the system in the confusion over the transfer of postal systems.

Endnotes

1 Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown Jr., and Jerry S. Palazolo, *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*, Confederate Stamp Alliance, 2012.

2 Kaufmann, et al

3 Steven C. Walske and Scott R. Trepel, *Special Mail Routes of the American Civil War: A Guide to Across-the-Lines Postal History*. Confederate Stamp Alliance, 2008.

4 W.H. Perrin, J. H. Battle & G. C. Kniffin, *Biography from Kentucky: A History of the State, Volume 2*, 1887. Genealogy Trails History Groups, Caldwell County Genealogy Trails, http://genealogytrails.com/ken/caldwell/bios_perrin_5.html Accessed October 2014.

(Gen. Patricia A. Kaufmann has collected and written about Confederates for 50 years; she has been a dealer since 1973, specializing in Confederate stamps and postal history.)