



The Confederate Post

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Eagle Machine Works

So-called “captured” Union patriotic covers used in the South during the Civil War are very popular with collectors of Confederate postal history. Not only are Confederate patriotics far rarer than Union ones, those with Union designs used in the South are rarer still.

The cover shown in Figure 1 bears a 2¢ brown-red (CSA 8)¹ tied by a “Richmond / Va. // May / 20” circular datestamp on a Northern patriotic cover with a red and blue Liberty and Shield design. It is addressed to “Miss Annie V. Howle, Care Thomas R. Howle, Eagle Machine Works, Richmond, Va.”

Eagle Machine Works, shown in Figure 2, was a maker of steam engines and saw mills, among other products; it was in business in 1851. The business was founded by Philip

Rahm (1819-62), who invented a circular sawmill. Eagle Machine Works can also be found as Eagle Iron Works, but that reference leads to confusion with a Northern company of that name. An ad for the Eagle Machine Works (from 1862) is shown in Figure 3.

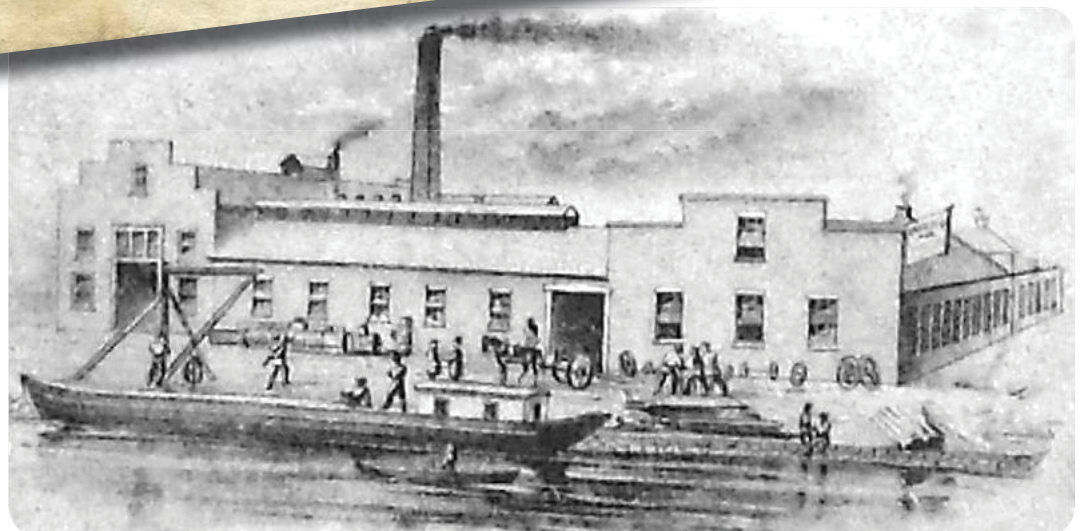
The certificate shown in Figure 4 was awarded the “Grand Gold Medal of Honour” by the United States Agriculture Society. It was presented to Kahl & Rahm, successors to Philip Rahm. Rahm’s partner was Frank Kahl. It is shown courtesy of Wellford Dowdy, the great-great-grandson of Frank Kahl.²

The United States Agricultural Society (USAS) was founded in 1852. Twelve different states in the country had agricultural societies at that time. They decided to become one unit, the USAS. It was started at a time when there was no Department of Agriculture in the United States. Abraham Lincoln established an independent Department of Agriculture on May 15, 1862.³



Figure 1 (above). Confederate use of Northern patriotic cover addressed to Eagle Machine Works.

Figure 2 (right). Eagle Machine Works, 1866, factory view.



The Vintage Machinery website, quoted from the *Proceedings of the N. Y. State Agricultural Society* for 1858:

“At the Royal Agricultural Show at Windsor, in 1851... The engine of Philip Rahm, Eagle Machine Works, was a very compact and useful one, and which has had very extensive use among the planters of the South. His arrangement of his heating tubes in a circle was different from the others, and his spark arrester and the arrangement of heating the water before it was poured into the boiler, seemed well adapted to prevent danger from explosion or fire. Mr. Rahm was the architect of his own fortune, as we were informed by one of the editors of the *Enquirer*. From a journeyman in a machine establishment, he, with little capital commenced for himself, and has now, after about fourteen years labor, as we understood, among the most valued and extensive establishments at Richmond, supplying engines to all the Southern States and to Brazil. His engines are not complicated, and after a few days instruction the hands upon the plantation, we are assured, manage them without trouble. The three engines examined were very good ones. The Society’s Gold Medal, 1st prize, was awarded to Mr. Rahm—a Special Honorary Diploma to the other exhibitors.”

Sustain the Manufactures of the Southern Confederacy!

PHILIP RAHM, EAGLE MACHINE WORKS

RICHMOND, VA.

Continues to Manufacture PLANTATION MACHINERY
of the most substantial and workmanlike character.

Stationary & Portable Steam Engines

OF ALL SIZES, WITH EITHER

FLUE, CYLINDER OR TUBULAR BOILERS.

Improved Circular Saw Mills; Corn and Flouring Mills
Shafting, Pulleys and Belts for Gin Houses; Shingle
Machines; Circular Saws; Artesian Well
Machinery, etc., etc.

In addition to the Prizes already received from various Mechanical and Agricultural Associations, including the Gold Medal of Honor, (worth \$100,) from the old U. S. Agricultural Society, which was the most valuable Premium ever offered in this country for a PLANTATION ENGINE, we were awarded the First Premium, a Gold Medal, by the Virginia Central Agricultural Society, in October, 1859, for the best PORTABLE FARM ENGINE; and at the same time the highest prize, a Gold Medal, by the Virginia Mechanics' Institute, for the best PORTABLE ENGINE.

Figure 3 (above). An 1862 advertisement for Eagle Machine Works, Philip Rahm.

Figure 4 (left). Certificate for “Grand Gold Medal of Honour” presented to Kahl and Rahm, 1866.



From a circa 1859 catalog,

“Manufacturer of portable, strictly portable (ca 1850’s) and stationary steam engines, with either cylinder, flue or tubular boilers, sugar mills, saw mills, grist mills, draining machines, circular saw mills, shingle lath and surface planing machine, iron work for Bagasse burners, beef packing machinery, tobacco factory fixtures, presses, screws, flattening mills, sinkers, levers, &c. &c. and machinery of any description, adapted to the southern country, on exhibition and for sale at my warehouse.”

The catalog contains a plate showing “[Philip] Rahm’s Circular Saw Mill” and an improved circular sawmill, which is shown in Figure 5.

A descendant of Philip Rahm’s sister writes that, “Philip died during the Civil War from lockjaw resulting from a wound incurred while helping his workmen load a wagon.” He is buried in Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, Va.

Figure 5 (left). Ad for Eagle Portable Circular Sawmills.

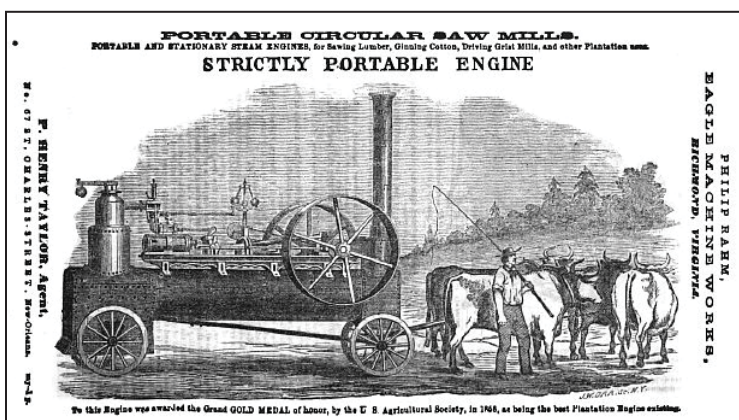




Figure 6. Richmond Fire Engine No. 3, fallen Richmond, April-June 1865.

Philip's son, Adolphus, was released from the Confederate Army to run the factory. The factory was then destroyed by the great fire that engulfed Richmond at the time of the Confederate withdrawal from the city in April 1865.

During the evacuation of Richmond ahead of Union forces on April 3, 1865, Confederate soldiers set fire to tobacco warehouses; the blaze spread throughout the commercial heart of the city, leaving most of the business district in ruins, including Eagle Machine Works.

The so-called Burned District was

chronicled in powerful images made by Union photographers eager to capture the devastation endured by the defeated foe. The irony was that the fires were started by the Confederates themselves; it was the Union soldiers who contained the blaze. On file in the Library of Congress is a photo of Richmond Fire Engine No. 3 from Fallen Richmond, April-June 1865, Figure 6.

Born in Richmond, April 22, 1842, Adolphus James Rahm was educated at the Episcopal College in Alexandria, Va., which he left at the beginning of the War to join the Richmond Howitzers. At the death of his father, he was released from the army to operate the Eagle Iron Works. After the war, the business was rebuilt by A.J. Rahm (1842-1906), and his father's former partner and plant superintendent, Frank Kahl.⁴

During the years 1861-65, Eagle Machine Works was devoted heavily to the manufacture of ordnance and ammunition for the Confederate government, although advertisements placed during the war indicate the company continued to produce farm machinery as well.⁵

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Endnotes

1. Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown, Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, Editors, *Confederate States Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*, 2012, Confederate Stamp Alliance, www.csalliance.org.
2. Eagle Machine Works, Richmond, Va., U.S.A., Vintage Machinery. <http://vintagemachinery.org/mfgindex/detail.aspx?id=276/> Accessed Aug. 25, 2017.
3. United States Department of Agriculture, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Agriculture#History/ Accessed Aug. 25, 2017.
4. Eagle Machine Works, Vintage Machinery.
5. Adolphus James Rahm, Find A Grave Memorial No. 93515072. www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=93515072/ Accessed Aug. 25, 2017.