



## Mixed Franking Forwards Soldier's Mail from Howard's Grove Hospital

Addressed to wounded soldier Robert Clay Bernard, the Figure 1 cover bears a very scarce combination of Confederate stamps.

A pen-canceled 10¢ blue (CSA catalog No. 11)<sup>1</sup> pays the origin postage to "R.C. Bernard, Howards Grove (Hospital), 1st Division, Tent 7, Richmond Va.," from where it was readdressed to Rocky Mount, Va., with a scarce 10¢ blue "T-E-N" (CSA catalog No. 9) paying the forwarding postage.

### Robert Clay Bernard

Robert Bernard (1837-1919) was the son of Robert and Sarah (Scott) Bernard. The family farmed and lived in the Rocky Mount area of Franklin County, Virginia. The cash crop before and after the war was tobacco (Figure 2).



Figure 1. Scarce combination of Confederate issues (CSA 11 and CSA 9), the latter used to forward the cover from Howard's Grove Hospital in Richmond to Rocky Mount, where the soldier/patient had been furloughed.

Legend has it that Robert's parents were against any of their sons fighting, so Robert and his brother Walter rode to Richmond (roughly 140 miles) to enlist in Company K, 10th Virginia Cavalry on June 1, 1861. The company was dismantled in January 1863.

Robert was wounded in the right leg on Aug. 16, 1864, at Charles City Road near White's Tavern. This was said to have been an artillery duel after the enemy attacked the 10th Virginia as they camped to rest along Fisher's Run some two miles from the tavern.



Figure 2. Robert Clay Bernard in uniform.

The fight is known by many different names – the Second Battle of Deep Bottom (also known as Fussell's Mill, particularly in the South), New Market Road, Bailey's Creek, Charles City Road or White's Tavern.<sup>2</sup> The First Battle of Deep Bottom was less than a month before, July 27-29, 1864 (Figure 3).

The fighting took place in a dense swampy area in muggy heat in Henrico County as part of the Richmond-Petersburg Campaign. The commander, Col. Beale, was quoted as having said, this was "the most trying our regiment had ever experienced ... not one drop of water could be had; the heat was intense, and the wood was dense and tangled."

The fight produced a Confederate victory under the leadership of Genls. Robert E. Lee and Charles W. Field. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock led the Union troops.

Union strength is reported as 28,000 against 8,500-20,000 Confederates. Union casualties were reported as 2,899 total (327 killed, 1,851 wounded and 721 missing or captured).

Confederate casualties were reported as 1,500 total (200 killed, 900 wounded and 400 missing or captured).<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 3. First Battle of Deep Bottom, July 27, 1864. Sketch by William Waud, *Harper's Weekly*.**

and local civilians. The hospital had its own laundry, bakery, storehouses, water supply and recreational facilities – a total of 62 buildings.<sup>5</sup>

### Epilogue

Robert was hospitalized at Howard's Grove Hospital for about a month until furloughed Sept. 17, 1864, for 60 days, during which time the subject cover followed him.

Robert's brother, Walter, received a pension in 1902 and died six months after Robert. Their brother Linus enlisted in Company A, 37th Virginia Cavalry and was killed at Mt. Pleasant on Aug. 24, 1864.

Robert married Abigail Bernard on Jan. 5, 1875. They would have no children but raised Robert's nephew, Thomas Linus, who was orphaned when his father was killed at Mt. Pleasant.

Robert died in 1919, and Abigail in 1921. They were originally buried off Tanyard Road in Rocky Mount, but their graves were moved to Franklin Memorial Gardens and dedicated on July 8, 2006.<sup>6</sup>

### Howard's Grove Hospital

Howard's Grove was originally a popular Richmond picnic and recreation area. At the outbreak of the war, it became a drill and bivouac point until converted to a hospital area by the construction of buildings for ward and utility purposes. The June 4, 1862, edition of the *Richmond Dispatch* first announced that hospital tents were being erected at Howard's Grove (Figure 4)<sup>4</sup>.

Having a capacity of 659 in December 1862, Howard's Grove Hospital was quickly expanded to accommodate more than 1,800 patients with employees averaging 85. A section was set aside for the isolation of smallpox cases, both military



**Figure 4. Painting of Howard's Grove Hospital by unknown Confederate soldier during the war.**

### 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](http://www.csalliance.org).
2. Second Battle of Deep Bottom, Wikipedia. Accessed July 23, 2018.
3. Ibid.
4. 1862-6-04, *Richmond Dispatch*; good long hospital directory, Civil War Richmond, [www.civilwarrichmond.com/hospitals/howard-s-grove-hospital/1156-1862-06-04-richmond-dispatch-good-long-hospital-directory/](http://www.civilwarrichmond.com/hospitals/howard-s-grove-hospital/1156-1862-06-04-richmond-dispatch-good-long-hospital-directory/) Accessed July 23, 2018.
5. Howard's Grove Hospital, Civil War Richmond, [www.civilwarrichmond.com/hospitals/howard-s-grove-hospital/](http://www.civilwarrichmond.com/hospitals/howard-s-grove-hospital/) Accessed July 23, 2018.
6. Robert Clay Bernard, *Confederate Veteran Biographies*, Jubal Early Chapter 553, United Daughters of the Confederacy. Accessed July 23, 2018.