

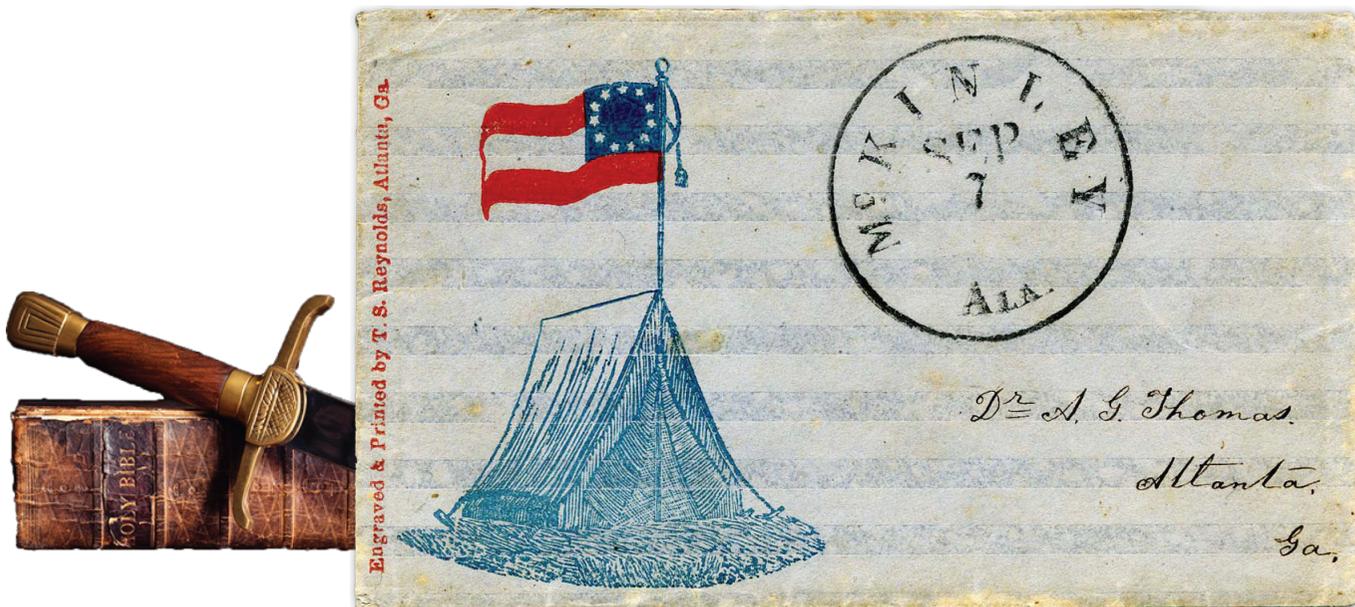


Patricia A. Kaufmann

# Dr. Alvinzi G. Thomas

*“...[with] the sword of Georgia in one hand and the sword of the Spirit in the other.”*

Tracing and studying the background and human story of the addressee of one of the most pristine, distinctive and colorful covers in the pantheon of Confederate States of America patriotic covers and postal history. A striking example of the intriguing mails of our country's once-rebel nation.



**T**he small blue-lined laid-paper patriotic cover (above) bears an 11-star flag and tent design (CSA catalog type TF-1, imprint 5) with the red imprint “Engraved & Printed by T.S. Reynolds, Atlanta, Ga.” up the left end. It is postmarked with a perfectly struck McKINLEY / ALA. // SEP / 7 circular datestamp without a rate marking (CSA catalog type A<sup>1</sup>), as commonly seen. It is addressed to Dr. A. G. Thomas, Atlanta, Ga.





Three unidentified soldiers of the 3rd Georgia Infantry, sister unit of the 5th Georgia Regiment also known as the Atlanta Rifles.



Burritt College, Spencer, Tennessee (1848-1938) where Dr. A.G. Thomas served as president, 1886-87.

beginning about 1859, and received his MD degree.<sup>3</sup>

In his book, *Disciples of Christ in Georgia*, J. Edward Moseley stated in a footnote on page 190, that, “when the ‘Atlanta Rifles’ were organized in May, 1861, Dr. Thomas became an orderly-sergeant.”<sup>4</sup>

While I found Company D, 5th Georgia Regiment identified as the Atlanta Rifles, I did not find A.G. Thomas as part of that regiment in the military records.<sup>5</sup> It seems likely that he would have taken up the call in May 1861, roughly at the first opportunity, as he was loyal to the Confederacy. The 5th Georgia was organized on May 11, 1861.<sup>6</sup> I also came up empty finding him as part of the 5th Georgia after consulting the *Roster of the Confederate Soldiers of Georgia, 1861-65*. The 7th Georgia was organized in Atlanta May 1, 1861, and perhaps that is the regiment to which Moseley referred.

Dr. A.G. Thomas joined the ranks of the 7th Georgia Volunteer Infantry Regiment, Anderson’s Brigade, Fields’ Divi-

sion, Longstreet’s Corp, Army of Northern Virginia, Company G, July 15, 1862, and military records show he resigned April 2, 1863. However, he appears on a roster dated near Chaffin’s Bluff October 9, 1864. Doubtless, some records are missing or filed elsewhere, as is often the case. These “pot-holes” often make research a challenge. One record indicates he was “appointed by the president” and “assigned to duty with the Regt. as Chaplain.” [Figure 3]

Another document, signed A.G. Thomas, certifies that he has not been absent, without leave, during any part of the time charged for. This was common language when recording payment to any of the troops. [Figure 4]

In June 1861, the Georgia 7th Infantry Regiment moved to Harper’s Ferry, [later West] Virginia. Assigned to Colonel F. S. Bartow’s Brigade, Army of the Shenandoah, it was active in the fight at First Manassas. It served under the command of General G. T. Anderson until the end of the war. The

Figure 6. Gravestone of S. Adelaide Thomas, wife of A.G. Thomas.



The central promenade of Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta, Georgia.

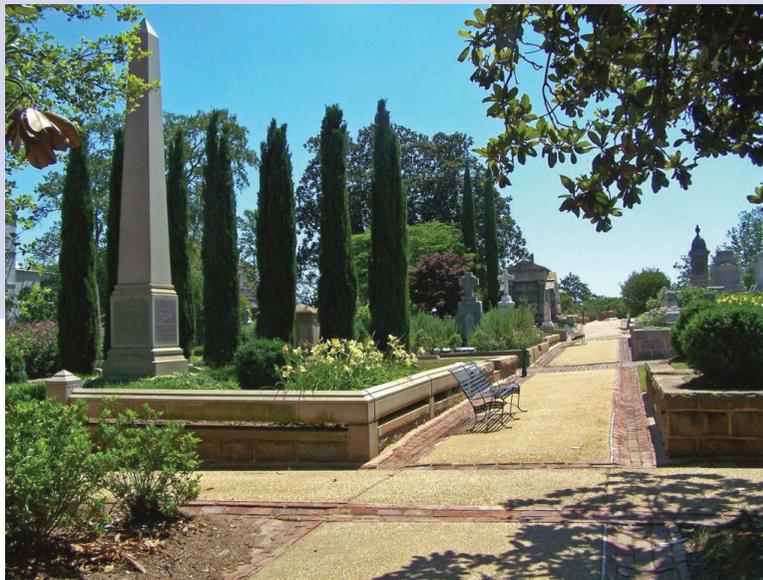


Figure 8. The Lion of Atlanta, a marble monument marking more than 3,000 unknown Confederate soldiers.

7th participated in the campaigns of the Army of Northern Virginia from the Seven Days Battles to Cold Harbor, except when it was detached with Longstreet at Suffolk, in Georgia, and at Knoxville. It was active in the long Petersburg siege south and north of the James River and later the Appomattox Campaign.

Before the war, Thomas' commitment to the South was noted by a visit from Tolbert Fanning, editor of the *Gospel Advocate*. Fanning was in Atlanta for a visit, beginning December 21, 1860, and stayed in the Thomas home.

Fanning wrote in the *Gospel Advocate*,

Dr. A.G. Thomas is a brother of fine address, superior talents and learning, but we saw him with a feather in his hat and a glittering sword in his right hand, and doubted if he would be able to hold the sword of Georgia in one hand and the sword of the Spirit in the other.<sup>7</sup>

In 1879, Thomas established the first Negro Church of

Christ in Atlanta. Moseley noted on p.247, "In February, Mrs. Mary D. Howell informed Dr. Thomas that a number of these colored friends, who had enlisted her interest and advice, were anxious to become members of the Church of Christ, and to be organized into a congregation." A Brother Jones was authorized to preach and the Negro congregation was established, meeting in a room on Marietta Street in Northwest Atlanta.

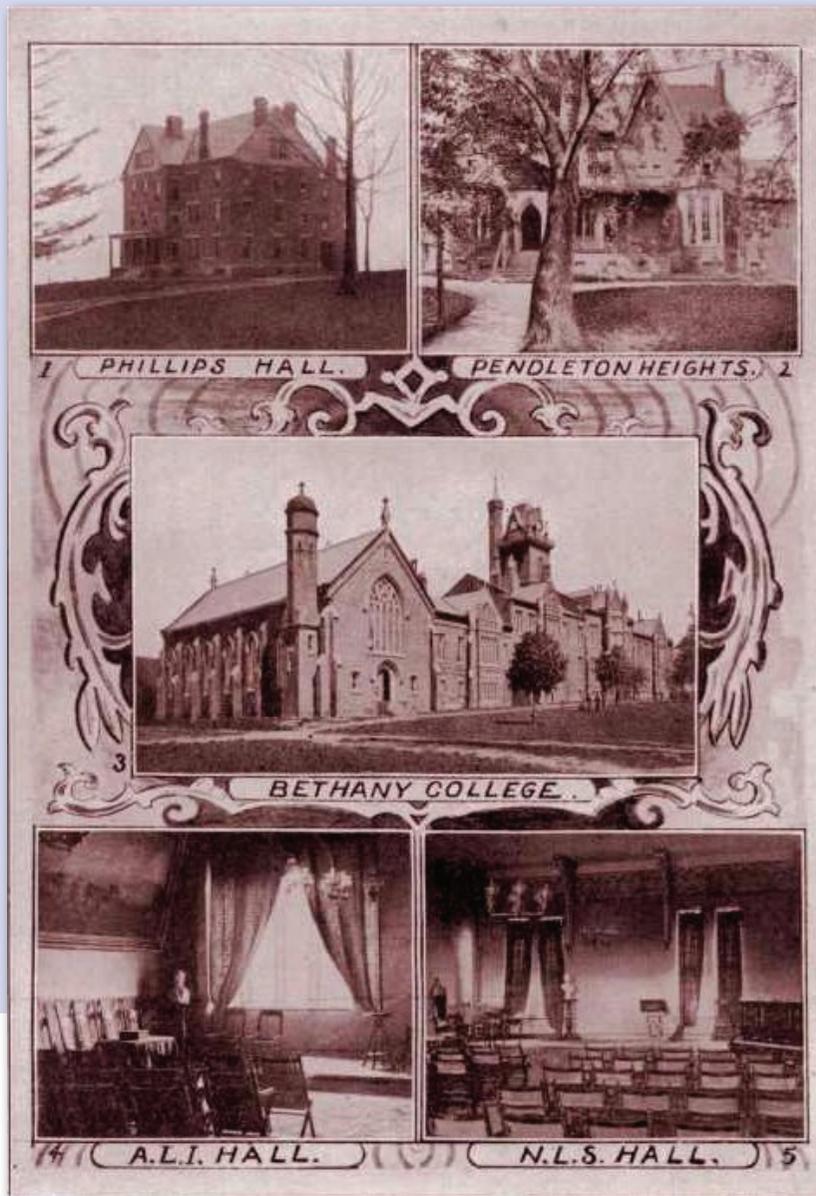
In 1881, Dr. Thomas was elected as president of the Georgia Convention where it was stated that there were 23 churches from Georgia represented. J.S. Lamar claimed that at least 60 churches were not represented. His greatest honor in the brotherhood was conferred upon him two years later at the General Christian Missionary Convention in St. Louis, Mo., when he was elected president of the Convention. Moseley said, on p. 239, "No other Georgian, before or since, received such recognition from the national brotherhood."

From 1886-87, Dr. Thomas served as president of Burritt College (1848-1938), Spencer, Tenn., for only one year. He proved unsuccessful reversing the downward trend of admissions Burritt had experienced the prior five successive years. The conditions facing Burritt College were like those which confronted it immediately following the Civil War. The student body was greatly reduced and the school, although with a new and expanded campus, was bankrupt and incapable of functioning. Some said he treated the school with “kid gloves” and that it needed a stronger hand than Dr. Thomas was able to muster.

After his return to Atlanta, Dr. Thomas was president of the Georgia College of Eclectic Medicine and Surgery. Love that name! Who knew? I was not familiar with the Eclectic Movement in medical schools, lasting from 1845 to 1939.<sup>8</sup>

On March 10, 1845, a bill incorporating The Eclectic Medical Institute was passed. “The intolerant and illiberal spirit of medical monopoly was most signally rebuked.” For the new school and its faculty, it was the hour of triumph, and it was appropriately celebrated. Medical reform was now fairly launched. Announcing the good news, the *Western Medical Reformer* issued the following manifesto: “Our college will be strictly what its name indicates— Eclectic—excluding all such medicines and such remedies as, under ordinary circumstances of their judicious use, are liable to produce evil consequences or endanger the future health of the patient.”

Dr. Thomas passed from this life, December 14, 1903, in Atlanta, Ga. He is buried near a mausoleum in Atlanta’s splendid Oakland Cemetery with his wife, Adelaide. Along with many other famous Georgians, Margaret Mitchell, au-



thor of *Gone With the Wind*, is buried there amid ancient oaks and magnolias. [Figures 5-7]

In July 1864, Confederate General John Bell Hood stood on the hill that became the grounds of Oakland and watched the Battle of Atlanta, just a couple miles away. The Lion of Atlanta, a marble monument sculpted by T.M. Brady in 1894, now marks the final resting place of approximately 3,000 unknown Confederate war dead buried in Oakland Cemetery. The proud, mortally wounded lion is lying down, signifying defeat in battle and the end of an era. [Figure 8]

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown, Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, Editors, *Confederate States Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Post-*

*al History*, 2012, Confederate Stamp Alliance.

<sup>2</sup>Bethany College (West Virginia), Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bethany\\_College\\_\(West\\_Virginia\)/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bethany_College_(West_Virginia)) Accessed July 24, 2018.

<sup>3</sup>Dr. Alvinzi Gano Thomas, *History of the Restoration Movement*. [http://www.therestorationmovement.com/\\_states/tennessee/thomas\\_ag.htm/](http://www.therestorationmovement.com/_states/tennessee/thomas_ag.htm/) Accessed July 23, 2018.

<sup>4</sup>Wallace P. Reed, *History of Atlanta, Georgia* [Syracuse, N.Y.: D. Mason & Co., 1889], p.116.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph T. Derry, *Confederate Military History*, 1899, p. 880.

<sup>6</sup>5th Georgia Volunteer Infantry, Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5th\\_Georgia\\_Volunteer\\_Infantry/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5th_Georgia_Volunteer_Infantry/) Accessed July 24, 2018.

<sup>7</sup>Tolbert Fanning, *Gospel Advocate*, February 1861, p. 39.

<sup>8</sup>Harvey Wickes Felter, M.D., “An Historical Sketch of the Eclectic Medical College, 1845-1911,” *The Biographies of King, Howe, and Scudder*, 1912. *Henriette’s Herbal Homepage*. <https://www.henriettes-herb.com/eclectic/bios/bios-emi.html/> Accessed July 24, 2018.