



The Civil War Post

Patricia A. Kaufmann

20¢ Bisect Pays 10¢ Eastbound Trans-Mississippi Rate

Federal victories at New Orleans in April and Memphis in June 1862 effectively closed the Mississippi River to normal Confederate commerce. This caused a major disruption of the mail across the river.

The first Confederate government Trans-Mississippi express mail route was approved by the Confederate Congress on May 1, 1863, with a set rate of 40¢ per half-ounce. It took several months to establish the route and make arrangements for the necessary services. Recorded uses range from October 1863 to April 1865.¹ There are fewer than 200 recorded express mail covers and, of those, fewer than 50 are eastbound.

Trans-Mississippi express mails were explained in detail in 1961 by Lawrence L. Shenfield in *Confederate States of America, The Special Postal Routes*. A detailed pictorial census and follow-up addendum was written by Richard Krieger in *Trans-Mississippi Mails after the Fall of Vicksburg*, published 1984, and still heavily referred to today by students, dealers and auctioneers. Most recently, Steven Walske and Scott Trepel offered up-to-date information on the topic in *Special Mail Routes of the American Civil War: A Guide to Across-the-Lines Postal History*, published by the Confederate Stamp Alliance in 2008.

The illustrated Scott CSA 13d, a 20¢ green diagonal bisect, is tied with a pen stroke on a small commercially made envelope addressed to “Mrs. Adèle Allston, Society Hill, S. Ca. or Morven N. Carolina.” The stamp was severed to make the 10¢ Trans-Mississippi rate (Figure 1).

How incredible is it that, in those days, you could address a letter to someone in two different states – in this case North or South Carolina – and manage to have the letter arrive safely in the hands of the addressee? The subject letter was sent by Col. Benjamin Allston to his mother. He also had a sister named Adèle, who went by the name Della. The Allstons were well-known wealthy rice planters and had a half-dozen plantations in both North and South Carolina. There are numerous Trans-Mississippi covers from the Allston correspondence.

In very light pencil on the back flaps of the subject cover is the pertinent routing note, “*Ans[wer] me back B.A. (Benjamin Allston) of Austin (?) within ten days to Lt. Col. W. C. 8th Army Brig. Comd. Officer at Post at Meridian*” (Figure 2).

This cover was most likely sent before the official express service began or, alternatively, it was a regular 10¢ rate, as the regular rate was still valid but it did not receive priority handling. The express rate did not replace the regular 10¢ letter rate for letters directed across the Mississippi. Soldiers’ due letters were not authorized to be carried in the Trans-Mississippi express mail. Such regular 10¢ Trans-Mississippi uses are listed in the CSA catalog as TMW-07 Eastbound and TMW-09 Westbound.

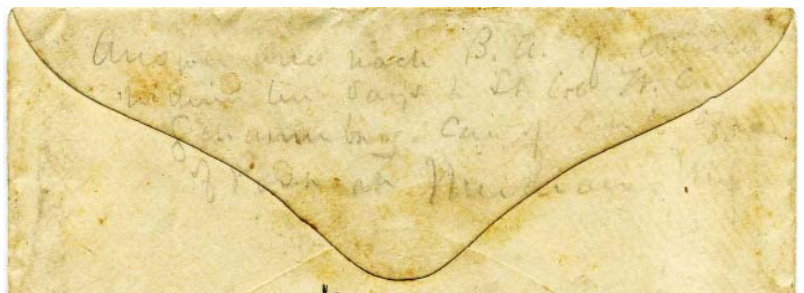
Owing to the note of urgency on the back flaps, I believe this use was most likely before the formal express mail service began. The Confederate 20¢ stamp was issued June 1, 1863, thus likely dating this use between June and October 1863.

Shown in Figure 3 is a copy of Allston’s 1865 parole, housed in the National Archives, and signed by Col. Benjamin Allston in what is clearly the same hand as the address panel of the cover to his mother.



Figure 1. Scott CSA 13d, 20¢ green diagonal bisect, tied with a pen stroke on a small commercially made envelope to “Mrs. Adèle Allston, Society Hill, S. Ca. or Morven N. Carolina.” The stamp pays the 10¢ Trans-Mississippi rate.

Figure 2. On the back flaps of the Figure 1 cover is a routing note, “*Ans[wer] me back B.A. (Benjamin Allston) of Austin (?) within ten days to Lt. Col. W. C. 8th Army Brig. Comd. Officer at Post at Meridian.*”



The Allston Family Papers (1730-1901) are housed at the South Carolina Historical Society. Elizabeth W. Allston Pringle wrote a lovely family tribute, *Chronicles of Chicora Wood*, in 1922. It is available online through Project Gutenberg and traces antebellum memories through to the death of her father, the challenging war years, including Sherman's advances and beyond.

The Allstons lost much of their fortune during the Civil War, as did many genteel Southern families. After the war, Adèle Allston made a living by running a small boarding school at their Charleston home, Russell House, called Mrs. R.F.W. Allston's Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies. She and her daughters taught classes in English, French, literature, music and math. The school also provided "moral, intellectual and physical training." Mrs. Allston closed the school in 1869 and retired to Chicora Wood, doubtless with poignant memories of a more peaceful time.⁴

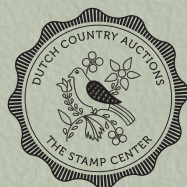


Figure 5. Adèle Petigru Allston (1810-96), 1850 portrait by George Whiting Flag. Courtesy Gibbes Museum, Charleston.

Figure 6. Robert Francis Withers Allston, 1850 oil painting by George Whiting Flag. Courtesy Gibbes Museum, Charleston

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. Joseph A. Groves, MD, *The Alstons and Allstons of North and South Carolina Compiled from English, Colonial and Family Records with Personal Reminiscences also Notes of Some Allied Families*. Franklin Printing and Publishing Company, Atlanta, Ga., 1901, pp. 64-65.
3. Elizabeth W. Allston (Elizabeth Pringle) Project Gutenberg EBook of *Chronicle of Chicora Wood*, www.gutenberg.org/files/56736/56736-h/56736-h.htm#ALLSTON/ Accessed Feb. 26, 2019.
4. Plantation-owners Biographies, <https://haygenealogy.com/hay/patriots/civilwar/plantationbios.html>



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