



A Confederate Cover from Nebraska

A Confederate cover from Nebraska? Well, yes. Nebraska, Virginia, a town name of which I was unaware until I saw this rare use. Coincidentally, there is also a Virginia, Nebraska, with a population of 60 in the 2010 census.

The cover shown in Figure 1 features a CSA 11-AD,¹ a 10¢ blue Archer & Daly print with huge margins, the selvage of which is wrapped around the edge of the cover at the top left at an unusual angle, as shown in Figure 2. I'm sure the position and affixing helped the often-temperamental Confederate adhesive stay in place. These stamps were notorious for falling off envelopes before or after mailing, the complaint of many a correspondent of the era.

The stamp is canceled with a manuscript marking applied with a flourish. At left is a clear matching "Nebraska Va. / Aug 19th 1864" manuscript postmark. This sent me scurrying to find out what this little town was all about. I was rewarded with the amusing name-derivation history of Nebraska, Va.

Appomattox Depot was settled with the coming of the railroad in 1852. According to legend, in that same year, the McDearmon family headed west. In reality, they never really left the little railroad village; they began calling the place "Nebraska" instead.

Regardless of the origin of the name "Nebraska," a post office under this name was soon established, and Nebraska became the official name of the settlement until shortly after the county seat moved there in 1892, at which time the name Appomattox was chosen. The village was incorporated in 1925 and remains the seat of county government.

Samuel McDearmon's great-great-granddaughter, Frances Plunkett Harvey, is the source of the Nebraska name story. It seems Sam wanted to move to Nebraska, but his wife, Mary Frances, wanted to go to Texas. A heated argument ensued about which way they were going, so they decided to stay where they were – three miles from their original starting point.²

The name Appomattox is familiar to any Civil War buff as the site of Gen. Robert E. Lee's surrender of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865, signaling the end of the nation's largest war and the beginning of reunifying of our country. But few have ever heard of Nebraska, Va.

Samuel McDearmon was the appointed the first postmaster of Nebraska, Va., Feb. 23, 1855. In quick succession, he was replaced by Richard H. Mann (Dec. 31, 1855), Robert J. Boaz (Oct. 4, 1856), Thomas E. Walton (Dec. 22, 1857), William D. Hix (April 20, 1859) and William J. Collins (April 16, 1860), who are listed on the 1861 register of Virginia postmasters, which the Virginia Postal History Society (VPHS) used for its records.³ The VPHS catalog lists the first postmaster with a spelling of

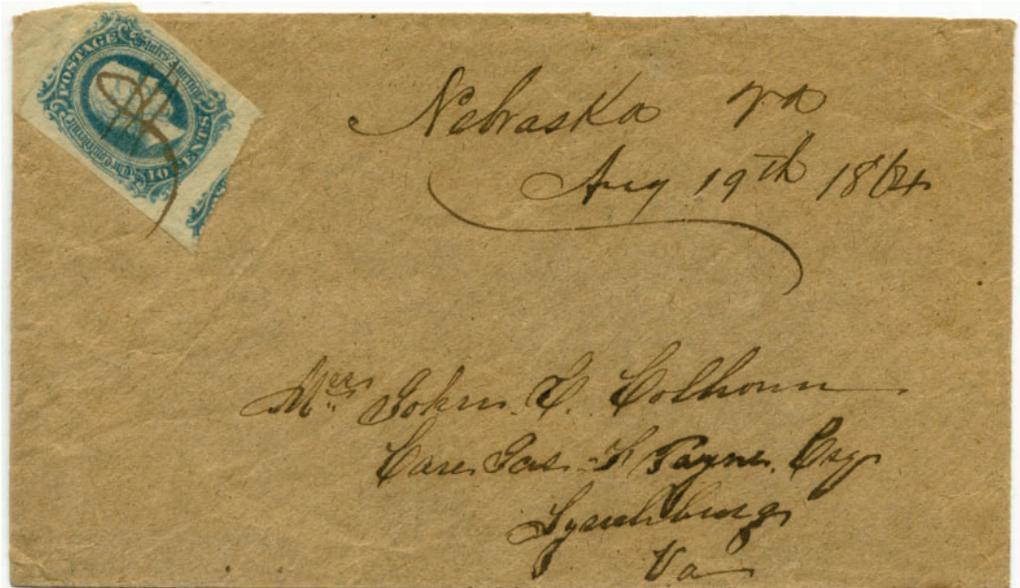


Figure 1 (above). CSA 11-AD, 10¢ blue, affixed over the edge of a cover used with the manuscript postmark of Nebraska, Va.

Figure 2 (right). Figure 1 cover shown from the back where the stamp selvage secures the stamp around the upper-left corner of the envelope.



McDearman instead of McDearmon, but comparing sources, I suspect this is a typical handwriting transcription issue, as all sources I found spell the name with an “o.”

Typically, Confederate postmasters and their dates of appointment are not listed in the *VPHS Catalog*, only the U.S. postmasters. There is usually a void from before the war until shortly thereafter, as refederalization took hold. The first entry after the war was Mrs. Mary Alwood, appointed Feb. 10, 1866, followed by Ada A. Laudrum (June 26, 1866) and N.H. Gregory (Oct. 30, 1867).

Col. Samuel Daniel McDearmon (1815-71) served as a Confederate army officer. He held several political and government offices and played a significant role in the development of Appomattox. A slaveholder, he owned significant real estate with several hundred acres in the new county of Appomattox. He also operated a sawmill, Evergreen Mills, as well as a store and a tavern in Clover Hill (yet another earlier name for Appomattox).⁴

McDearmon served as an aide to Brig. Gen. Henry A. Wise early in the Civil War but, following the defeat of Wise's forces in 1861, he limited his service to providing the army with lumber and other essential supplies. He also served as Confederate tax collector for Appomattox from 1863-65.

As is readily apparent from the 1870 photo in Figure 3, McDearmon was not a vigorous physical specimen. By the end of the war, he was relegated to the reserve corps with the old and infirm. He died at age 55 on May 16, 1871, and was buried in Liberty Cemetery on Lee-Grant Avenue in Appomattox.⁵ Fittingly, they named their home Nebraska House, no doubt carrying on the joke between them. In Figure 4, the lovely house is shown as it was in 2005.

Figure 4. Col. Samuel McDearmon's home, Nebraska House; photo taken in 2005 at Appomattox, courtesy of Doug Coldwell.

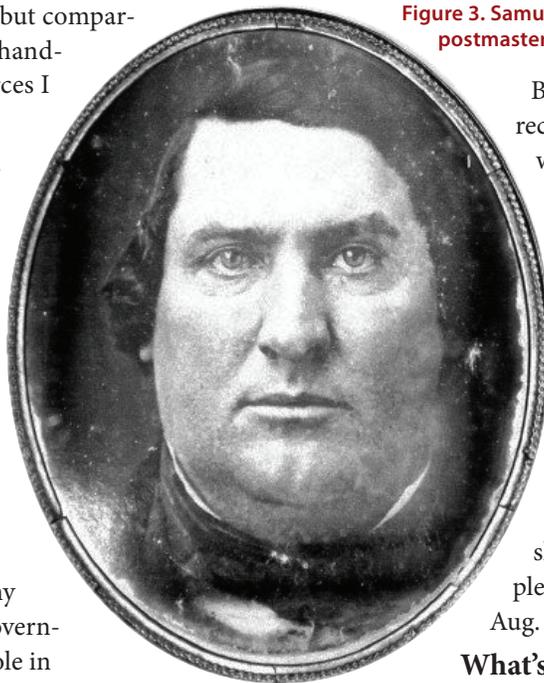


Figure 3. Samuel Daniel McDearmon ca. 1870, first postmaster of Nebraska, Va.

By 1870, McDearmon had sufficiently recovered his fortune to declare 600 acres worth \$8,000 to the county for the agricultural census that year. In addition, he had two milling operations: the Evergreen Mills gristmill, in partnership with his brother-in-law James D. Calhoun (1810-85) and a sawmill employing eight men.

The *Virginia Postal History Society Catalog* states the Confederate-era manuscript cancel is recorded June 2, 1862 - Aug. 19, 1864. The handwriting shown in the catalog matches this example perfectly. The catalog example is dated Aug. 19, 1864.

What's in a Name? Colhoun? Calhoun?

The Nebraska cover in Figure 1 is addressed to “Mrs. John C. Colhoun, Care Jas. F. Payne, Esq., Lynchburg, Va.” Note that her name is spelled with an “o,” not Calhoun with an “a,” which is the Scottish way of spelling the name.

Floride Bonneau Calhoun (née Colhoun; 1792-1866) was the wife of prominent U.S. political firebrand John Caldwell Calhoun, whose portrait appears on the 1¢ orange Confederate stamp printed by De La Rue, Ltd. in London, an example of which is shown in Figure 5.

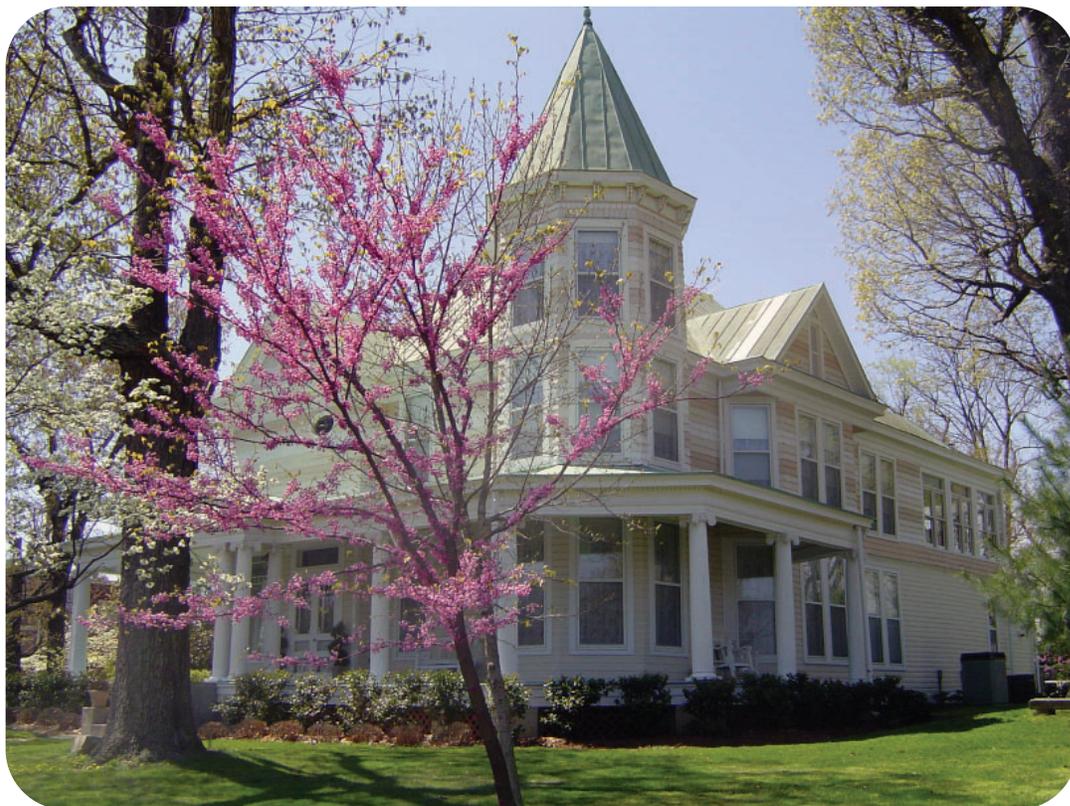




Figure 5. CSA 14a, 1¢ deep orange, honoring John C. Calhoun; printed by De La Rue, Ltd.

On Jan. 8, 1811, Floride married Calhoun, her first-cousin-in-once-removed (her father's first cousin). Soon after their marriage, her husband was elected to congress, leaving his wife in charge of his plantation Fort Hill, in present-day Clemson, S.C.

Floride is best known for her leading role in the Petticoat Affair, which occurred during her husband's service as Vice President of the United States. In her role as Second Lady, Mrs. Calhoun led the

wives of other cabinet members in ostracizing Peggy Eaton, wife of Secretary of War John Eaton, whom they considered a woman of low morals. The matter led to damaged relations between John Calhoun and President Andrew Jackson. It effectively ended any legitimate chance of him becoming president of the United States.⁶

Alone, the fascinating story of the Calhouns could fill the entirety of this publication. Floride Bonneau Colhoun/Calhoun was a strong woman in a male-dominated society who did much more than hold her own. She moved comfortably between her role in Washington, D.C., society to that

of capable plantation mistress who was shrewd with both finances and business management, all this while bearing and rearing 10 children.

As is often the case, one little cover from Nebraska, Va., offers endless storylines. ☒

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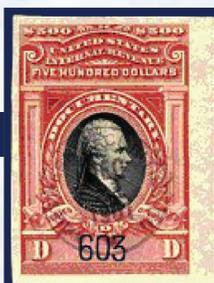
Patricia A. (Trish) Kaufmann was first introduced to Confederate postal history in 1965. She became actively involved in organized philately in 1969, became a dealer in 1973, and today specializes solely in Confederate stamps and postal history. She enjoys hearing from readers and may be reached at [trishkauf@comcast.net](mailto:trishkauf@comcast.net).

#### Endnotes

1. Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History* (Confederate Stamp Alliance, 2012, [www.civilwarphilatelicsociety.org](http://www.civilwarphilatelicsociety.org)).
2. Frances Plunkett Harvey, *Ancestor Histories and Photos L-M*, Appomattox Chapter 11, Virginia Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy, <https://appomattoxudc.tripod.com/id48.html/> Accessed Aug. 28, 2021.
3. Robert L. Lisbeth, compiler, *Virginia Postal Markings and Postmasters: Colonial-1865* (Virginia Postal History Society, 1984).
4. Samuel D. McDearmon, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel\\_D.\\_McDearmon/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_D._McDearmon/) Accessed Aug. 28, 2021.
5. Col. Samuel D. McDearmon, Find a Grave, [www.findagrave.com/memorial/34647030/samuel-daniel-mcdearmon/](http://www.findagrave.com/memorial/34647030/samuel-daniel-mcdearmon/) Accessed Aug. 28, 2021.
6. Floride Bonneau Calhoun, Find A Grave, [www.findagrave.com/memorial/12260832/floride-bonneau-calhoun/](http://www.findagrave.com/memorial/12260832/floride-bonneau-calhoun/) Accessed Aug. 28, 2021.

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