



The Civil War Post

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Across-the-Lines Use – Confederate Tennessee into Union Missouri

The cover bears the manuscript postal markings of “Richland Sta[tion] Ten July 9 / Paid 10 [1861].” It is addressed to “Edward Stratton, Lexington, Missouri,” with a blue crayon “Lafayette Co[unty, Missouri]” at the lower left. Up the side is noted “Opened by order of Col. Comdg. Ironton Mo.” (Figure 1).

The year of use can only be 1861, since Richland Station was in federal hands by July 1862 and during the rest of the war. It is an extremely early use for Confederate Tennessee with an across-the-lines use to Missouri where the Union prevailed.

Missouri - Union, Confederate or Neutral?

The “Show-Me” state of Missouri was a border state that sent men, armies, generals and supplies to both sides, had its star on both flags, had separate governments representing each side and endured an intrastate war within the larger national war.

A post-Fort Sumter broadside is shown in Figure 2, screaming, “War Declared!!” and “Brave sons of Missouri shall we stand still and see our Southern brothers thus tyrannized over by a Black Republican DESPOTISM. No, never, never.”

Before the Civil War, Lexington, Mo., was an agricultural town with more than 4,000 residents. It served as the county seat of Lafayette County. Though Missouri remained in the Union during the war, many Lexington residents were slave owners and openly sympathized with the Southern cause. According to the 1860 U.S. Census, 31.7% of its population were slaves. There were troops in the

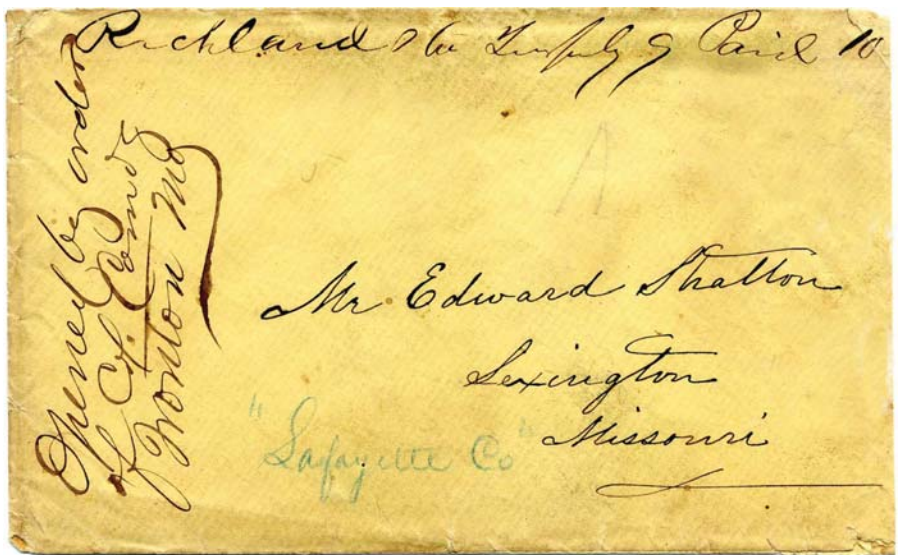
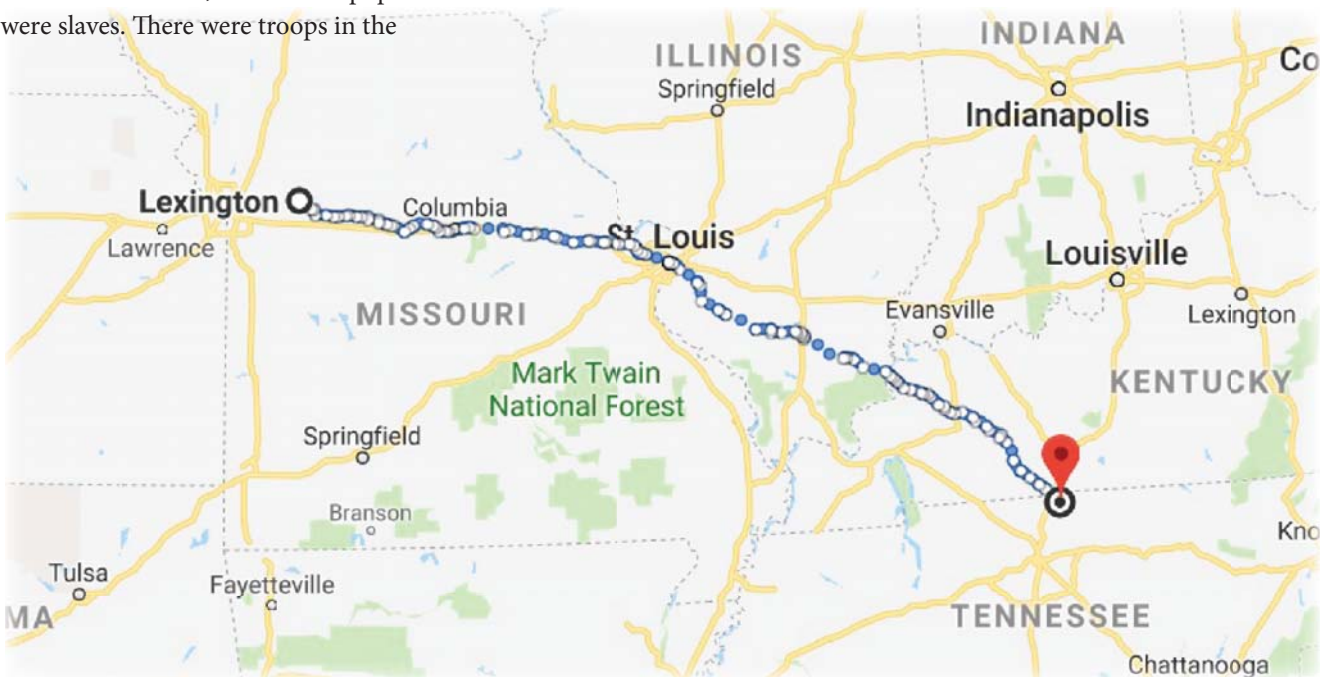


Figure 1. Manuscript postal markings of “Richland Sta[tion] Ten July 9 / Paid 10 [1861]” on Confederate cover through the lines to Union-held Lexington, Mo.



area from both sides. The Lafayette County Courthouse in Lexington still bears the scar of a cannonball from the Battle of Lexington, fought in September 1861, shown in Figure 3. Bullet holes remain in the outside walls of homes in Lexington.

Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson (1806-62), shown in Figure 4, was sworn in as Missouri's 15th governor on Jan. 3, 1861. In his inaugural address to the Senate, as printed in the *Liberty Tribune*, dated Jan. 18, 1861¹ (Figure 5), Jackson declared his support for the Union and the best interests of Missouri. Jackson campaigned as a supporter of the Union but quickly realigned himself with the pro-Southern majority and fought for secession. But most Missouri voters rejected secession.

At the time of the posting of the subject cover, Governor Jackson was still in office, deposed on July 31, 1861, when the Missouri State Legislature voted to remove him from office.² It then installed Hamilton R. Gamble as military governor of Missouri and appointed remaining state officers. It also declared all the seats of the legislature vacant.

Nonetheless, Claiborne Jackson issued a proclamation on Aug. 5 declaring Missouri a free republic, dissolving all ties with the Union. He continued doing "business as usual" with a portion of the Missouri General Assembly. In short, Missouri was a mess.

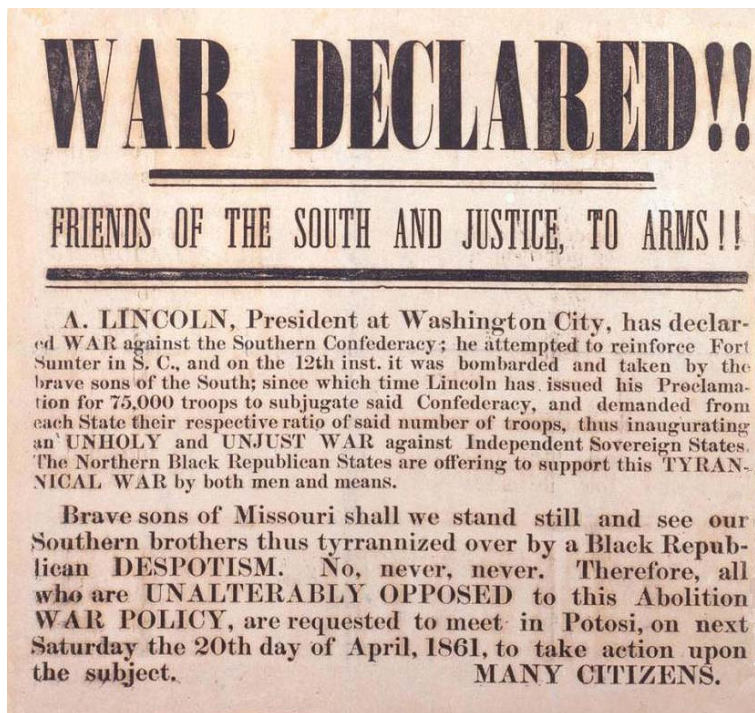


Figure 2. A broadside shouts, "War Declared!!" and "Brave sons of Missouri shall we stand still and see our Southern brothers thus tyrannized over by a Black Republican DESPOTISM. No, never, never."



Figure 3. Civil War cannonball still lodged in the Lafayette County Court House in Lexington, Mo.

The Missouri Ordinance of Secession passed the renegade Southern-leaning sections of the Senate and the House respectively on Oct. 28 and Oct. 30, 1861. It was signed into law by Jackson on Oct. 31, 1861. Secession provided Missouri with representation in the Confederate Congress as the 12th state, but otherwise was symbolic, since the Confederacy did not control any part of the state.

Jackson and his colleagues fled to Arkansas, pending a new successful invasion. Jackson died in office (some sources say of cancer, others of pneumonia) and in exile as the Confederate governor in December 1862.

Tennessee - More Muddled Allegiances

On May 13, 1861, Confederate Postmaster General John H. Reagan issued a proclamation announcing that on June 1, 1861, the Confederate States Post Office Department would take over all postal operations in the Confederate States.

On May 27, 1861, U.S. Postmaster General Montgomery Blair ordered the suspension of federal mail service beginning May 31 in the 10 states then part of the Confederacy. But this did not apply to Tennessee which, as of June 1, had not yet passed an ordinance of secession. Tennessee was still legally part of the Union when the Confederate Post Office Department took over throughout the rest of the South on June 1. The process of secession was finalized on June 8 with a referendum approving Tennessee's Ordinance of Secession by a two-to-one majority.

On June 10, PMG Blair responded to Tennessee's secession by formally suspending U.S. mail operations in Middle and West Tennessee, which were strongly sympathetic to secession. Blair's order excepted East Tennessee, which had opposed secession; the extent of the affected area was not defined. On June 17, a notice appeared in Memphis newspapers stating that the Confederacy had taken control of the mails in Tennessee.

Tennessee officially became part of the Confederacy on July 2. During the period beginning when the Confederacy took over its own postal operations (June 1) and the date Tennessee formally entered the Confederacy (July 2), the mail situation in the state was confused and sometimes deliberately in violation of official regulations of both sides, especially in East Tennessee. There was an erratic blend of U.S. and Confederate postal services and, occasionally, an attempt to amalgamate both.

Tennessee remained divided throughout the war. About 25% of the men who went off to fight did so for the North. There were widespread ironies in Tennessee during this period.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS.
*Gentlemen of the Senate
 and House of Representatives:*
 Assuming in your presence, the office of Chief Magistrate of the State, at a period when our whole country is in a condition of gloomy apprehension. I enter upon the discharge of the trust with which the people of Missouri have honored me, with deep convictions of its responsibility. Invoking the aid of that Almighty Being who has hitherto conducted us through perils of no ordinary kind, I can only bring to the post assigned to me an honest devotion to my State, to the Constitution of the United States, and to that Union which the Constitution was designed to perpetuate. My chief dependence in hoping to accomplish anything promotive of the prosperity and security of our State, and contributing to the honorable, pacific and satisfactory adjustment of our federal relations, is upon the representatives of the people, whom I meet here to-day.— You, gentlemen, are here to pronounce the will of the people of Missouri, and it will be my pleasure, as it my duty, to co-operate with you in the preparation and execution of such measures, as will, in your judgement, advance the interests and sustain the honor of our State.

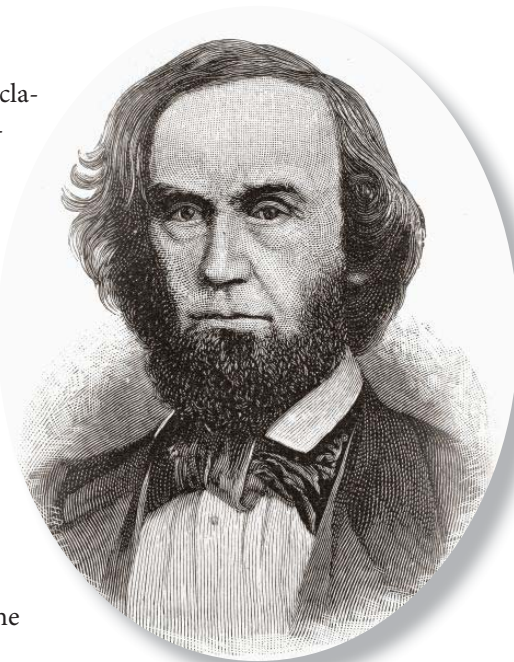


Figure 4. Claiborne Fox Jackson served as governor for Union Missouri as well as the breakaway Confederate government.

This situation is illustrated by covers that demonstrate the often-contradictory situation existing in all parts of the state. Some covers show:

- (1) United States postal rates paid with U.S. stamps;
- (2) Confederate postal rates paid in cash or by postmasters' provisional stamps;
- (3) Both U.S. stamps and Confederate postage on the same cover; and
- (4) A choice of using either U.S. or Confederate postage, determined not by the nature of the originating Tennessee post office, but by the destination of the cover.³

Richland Station, Tenn.

The subject cover has been the topic of an article before. The late Richard B. Graham highlighted it in the *Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues* in August 1977.⁴ Graham stated the cover was part of a captured mail. He says that it may have been found innocent and forwarded on to its addressee in Lexington, Lafayette County, Mo. (just east of Kansas City), but that if it was, it went in a Dead Letter Office envelope, with postage collect. Presumably, the cover contained a letter from a Confederate soldier to the addressee in Missouri. The late D. Scott Gallagher, a well-known collector and student of Tennessee and Kentucky postal history, signed the cover on the back, as well as the late prolific collector Dick Littlejohn.

Richland Station was in Sumner County on the Louisville & Nashville Railroad (L&N) between those cities on the Highland Rim in extreme northern Middle Tennessee just south of the Kentucky line. Today it does not show on maps. The town was later renamed Portland, which took effect April 10, 1888. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Portland (in Sumner and Robertson counties) had a

Figure 5. Inaugural address of Governor Jackson to the Senate of Missouri, as printed in the *Liberty Tribune*, dated Jan. 18, 1861.

population of 11,486. It is part of the Nashville metropolitan statistical area.⁵

Ironton, Mo.

Before 1857, the only way for the Pilot Knob Iron Co. to transport its iron ore to market was over an old plank road in oxen-pulled wagons. The completion of the St. Louis & Iron Mountain Railroad to Pilot Knob, a sister community to both Ironton and Arcadia, was met with jubilation. Ironton became the center of commerce for the area.

Ironton was thriving until the Civil War pitted Missourian against Missourian. The recently completed railroad at Pilot Knob was valuable to both the Union and the Confederacy, as it transported many raw materials to St. Louis. One of the most critical battles in the state was fought there. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant received his commission as brigadier general in Ironton and became commander of the Union forces in southeast Missouri.⁶

Judge Edward Stratton

Richard Graham did not attempt to identify the addressee of the cover. I believe him most likely to be Judge Edward Stratton, who is listed in the first edition of *The Missouri State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1860*⁷ as Clerk County Court and County School Commissioner of Lafayette County.

In 1867, Stratton was recorded as the first county court clerk and the first probate judge. Also noted among the first attorneys admitted to practice in Lafayette County was Hamilton R. Gamble, the wartime military governor of Missouri.⁸

A Civil War Postal Rarity

Until June 1861, Richland Station was a federal marking, but after the Confederacy took over the mails in Tennessee, they became Confederate in origin, as evidenced by the Confederate 10¢ rate on the subject cover, the proper charge for a distance farther than 500 miles. Using today's maps, from Portland, Tenn. (formerly Richland), to Ironton, Mo., is a distance of 280 miles. It is another 292 miles from Ironton to Lexington via St. Louis.

Mail authorities did not attempt to stop the subject cover from crossing the lines. There was apparently no objection, provided postage was paid when such letters were under their government jurisdiction. Dates are of paramount importance when evaluating such covers: dates of secession, dates of admission to the Confederacy, the date the Confederacy took over Southern mail delivery and the date commercial communication was banned by the federal government on Aug. 26, 1861. Obviously, this severely limits the opportunity to find such postal uses.

Most who want Missouri represented in their general Confederate collections do so by finding infrequent covers with manuscript soldier endorsements from the Missouri Confederate military. There are also 11 covers listed in Harrison⁹ from

Gratiot Street Prison in St. Louis, which housed Confederate prisoners. Finding an across-the-lines use, such as the subject cover, is truly rare.

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The author always enjoys hearing from readers. She may be reached at trishkauf@comcast.net or 10194 N Old State Rd, Lincoln DE 19960-3644.

Endnotes

1. "Inaugural Address," *The Liberty Tribune*, Jan. 18, 1861, Page 1, c. 3.
2. "Claiborne Fox Jackson," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claiborne_Fox_Jackson, Accessed May 28, 2019.
3. Patricia A. Kaufmann, *Independent State Mail and Confederate Use of U.S. Postage: How Secession Occurred; Correcting the Record* - Expanded Edition, La Posta Publications, 2018.
4. Richard B. Graham, "Across the Lines in 1861," *Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues*, August 1977, Vol. 29, No. 3, Whole No. 95, pp. 171-172.
5. Portland, Tenn., Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portland,_Tennessee#Nearby_communities, Accessed May 28, 2019.
6. Explore Ironton, Missouri History, Missouri Historic Towns, www.missourihistorictowns.com/missouri-historic-places/ironton-missouri-history-landmarks.htm, Accessed May 28, 2019.
7. *The Missouri State Gazetteer and Business and City Directory, 1860*, Sutherland & McEvoy, Publishers and Compilers, St. Louis, Mo.
8. Nathan H. Parker, *Missouri as it is in 1867: Illustrated Historical Gazetteer of Missouri*, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co. 1867.
9. Galen D. Harrison, *Prisoners' Mail from the American Civil War*, 1997.

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