

CONFEDERATE WAY MAIL

Patricia A. Kaufmann

The average Confederate collector has no idea what “way” mail is unless he or she is also a student of U.S. postal history. This category of Confederates is rarely discussed and was not cataloged by August Dietz, nor his successors, until this was rectified in 2012 in the CSA catalog.¹ The section is only two pages long because it has attracted little prior attention, it is scarce and listings have not been specifically accumulated before to any degree by collectors or students.

The small way section appropriately precedes Confederate Railroad Markings and Inland Waterway Mail in the catalog. Confederate way mail is scarcer than U.S. way mail, perhaps because it is infrequently identified as way mail. By 1860, the use of the “way” designation in the United States had greatly diminished.

As explained in the catalog, way mail has been recognized as a category of mail since colonial times. It was addressed under the Constitutional postal system in the first United States postal statute (Section 15, Act of Feb. 20, 1792) and was defined in Section 15 of the United States Act of May 8, 1794, as “...letters received by a post-rider or other mail carrier on his way between two post-offices...”²

When the Confederate Provisional Congress adopted a constitution on Feb. 8, 1861, it led to the establishment of Confederate postal rates. The following day, Congress adopted the Act of Feb. 9, 1861, which continued all laws of the United States in force and in use as of Nov. 1, 1860, which were not inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States. This included all laws governing the Confederate Post Office Department. Specifically, this addressed all laws and regulations contained in the *Postal Laws and Regulations* issued by the United States on May 15, 1859 (1859 *PL&R*), and not conflicting with the laws of the Confederacy.³

Letters received by a post office too late to be bagged, but before the mail carrier departed, were also handled as way mail. Way mail was transported by all the normal means of mail transportation – stagecoach, horse, railroad or steamboat. In my experience, the most often-encountered Confederate way mail appears to be railroad mail, as this was arguably the most expedient means of mail transport.

Way letters received by a mail carrier on his *way* between two post offices was to deliver the letters to the next post office on his route. If demanded, the carrier could receive 1¢ for each such letter delivered. If paid, the fee was added to the postage on the letter and the postmaster was required to annotate such letters with the word “Way” next to the rate.

Rules applying to way mail were effective June 1, 1861. The fee was charged to the addressee of the letter. These are most often found with a hastily scrawled “Way” in pencil, crayon or ink. Less often, they are found with scarcer handstamped markings and the price they command goes up accordingly.

Prepaid loose mail picked up by route agents on railroads and steamboats between stations and landings was also classified as way mail, but normally not marked as such, making it harder for current-day postal historians to identify.



Figure 1.

Theoretically, way mail could exist from any post office in the Confederacy from the time a state seceded through the Confederate period. But mail actually identified as way mail is far from common.

In the case of loose letters carried by steamboats having a mail contract, if no mail carrier was aboard, the captain of the contract vessel was required to receive the loose letters as way letters only if the letters were prepaid by stamps. Unpaid loose letters were treated as ship letters and rated differently from way mail.⁴

The CSA catalog further explains the role of the railroads, station agents and route agents in handling way mail. The letters in local bag mail were deemed to have entered the mails at the local post offices where they received the postmarks and were, if appropriate, also rated.

The local pouches were secured by iron locks for which the route agent had the keys. Like through-bag mail, letters received from local post offices and placed in the local bags did not receive the types of markings listed in the CSA catalog, as they cannot be distinguished from other bagged mail merely because they were carried on a train.⁵

The way marking applied to such mail was both an origin and an accounting marking. As an origin marking, it indicated where the letter entered the mail system. As an accounting marking, it indicated the way fee had been paid to the carrier and that the fee should be collected from the addressee.

Logically, way mail listings are divided into the three main periods of Independent State Use, Confederate Use of U.S. Postage and the Confederate period beginning June 1, 1861. Listings are then separated first by the covers with postmarks, then those without postmarks. In the latter case, the markings are necessarily attributed to the town to which the covers are addressed.

Only one Independent State Use way cover with a postmark is listed in the catalog (New Orleans) and only four CSA Use of U.S. Postage with postmarks (Alexandria, Va.; Charleston, S.C.; New Orleans, La.; and Old Church, Va.). During the pre-Confederate period, only one manuscript way cover is listed (Westmoreland County, Va.).

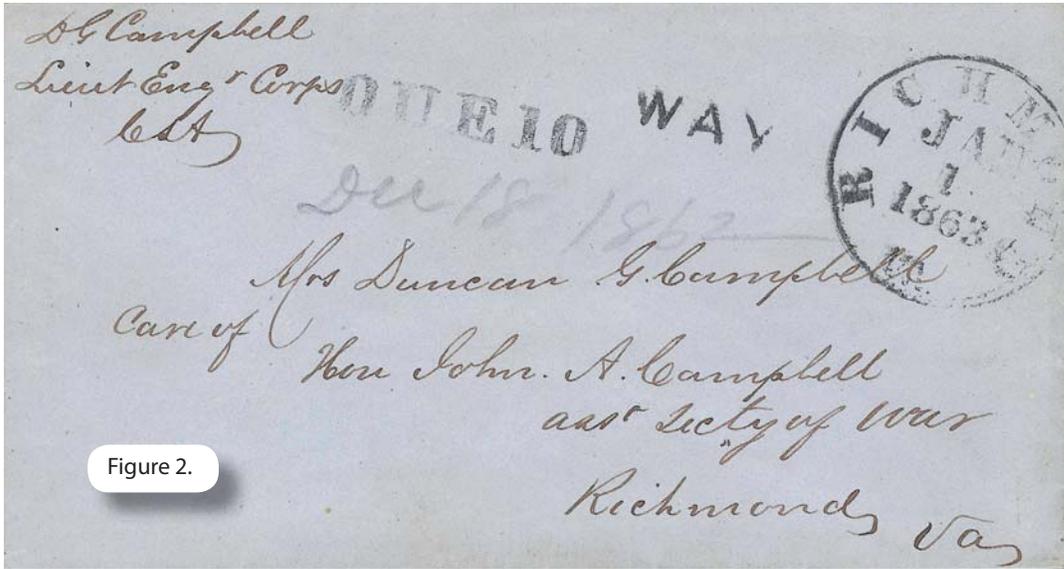


Figure 2.

New Orleans is the main source of way covers during the pre-Confederate periods. They usually show the large single-circle datestamp, but there are occasional steamboat covers that show the smaller double-circle datestamp. They do not necessarily have any auxiliary markings.

During the Confederate period beginning June 1, 1861, a total of 14 postmarks are listed and only 12 towns listed without postmarks, one of which is an institutional holding (Wilkesborough, N.C.).

Since the catalog was published, that number has grown as people become aware of them and report them to me for future catalog editors. Catalogers are often reluctant to publish listings when so few items are known. But one must start somewhere for collectors to be aware they might have something in such a category, thus the two-page beginning of a way mail section.

Figure 1 illustrates a 3¢ red Nesbitt entire with a New Orleans, La., Feb. 23, 1861, double-circle datestamp with a straightline WAY marking from the Confederate Use of U.S. Postage period. It was one of several scarce Confederate way mail covers in the 2003 Siegel sale offering the collec-



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

tion of the late Sam Zimmerman, Jr. While Sam was mostly known for his award-winning 2¢ rated Confederate mail, he also held a nice collection of Steamboat and Way mail.

Figure 2 shows a soldier’s “DUE 10” cover dated Jan. 1, 1863, from Richmond, Va., with a straightline WAY marking. It is endorsed by D[uncan] G. Campbell, a lieutenant in the Confederate Engineer Corps, to his wife in Richmond, care of Hon. John A. Campbell, Assistant Secretary of War. Duncan Green Campbell (1835-89) was an engineering officer on the staff of several generals during the war, including Smith, Kershaw, McLaws and Beauregard.

Another handstamped WAY straightline is shown in Figure 3 from Wilmington, N.C., to Gibson’s Store, Richmond County, N.C. The town postmark ties a type I 10¢ engraved Archer & Daly printing, which shows a trace of an imprint in the bottom sheet margin.

Two singles of the 5¢ blue lithographed issue frank the cover in Figure 4, plated as positions 23 and 21. The right stamp shows the well-known spur variety at upper left. The cover is addressed to Mrs. Hutson Lee in “Abbeville C.H., So. Ca.” The manuscript directive at lower left shows the desirable “Way Mail” marking.

An unlisted jewel, although stained, is a way cover to Summerfield, N.C., shown in in Figure 5. Delightfully, it is an embossed lady’s cover with a scarce patriotic 10-star flag design (CSA catalog Type F10-3). It is addressed to Eli Hodson, a soldier in the Guilford Guards. Hodson joined the army in 1861 at the age of 18; he was discharged a little more than a year later for tuberculosis, per the surgeon’s certificate in his military records. Figure 6 shows the “Way 5 cts” reading up the left side of the cover.

Figure 7 shows another unlisted way cover franked with a pair of 5¢ light blue De La Rue typographed (letterpress) stamps boldly canceled with blue crayon and a matching “Way” marking on an outer folded lettersheet to Dr. E.R. Calhoun, Greenwood, S.C. Dr. Ephraim Ramsey Calhoun (1801-83) was an eminent physician and one of the earliest settlers of Greenwood, a near relative of John C. Calhoun. He was heavily involved with the construction of the Greenwood & Augusta Railroad, as well as the Columbia & Greenwood Railroad. The cover is signed on the back by the initials of the late Scott Gallagher, indicating it was once in his collection.



Figure 5.

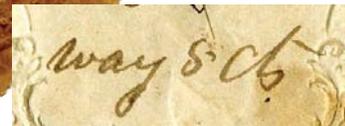
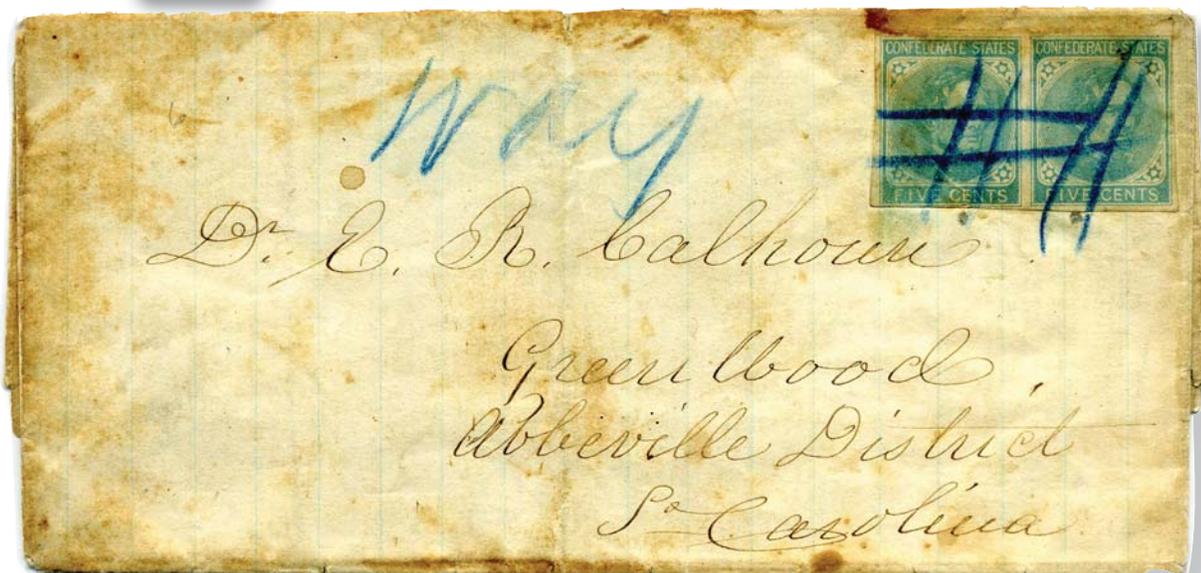


Figure 6.

A scarce item is offered in Figures 8-10, in that it

comes with original contents. From the cover alone, it would be impossible to know the origin and relegated to being listed at some future date as a way letter to Manchester. But the original hasty note is headed Kingsville and that provides us with the postal origin. It is written from Dr. John H. Furman, headed Kingsville and urging the recipient not to send the horses any dis-

Figure 7.



May
Mrs John A. Furman
Manchester
So Cal



Kuganin - Dear One - I am
safe thus far - I write to say
you had best not send the
horses any distance from the place
as they might possibly be im-
pressed if you know we can not

appear there - Aaron can
explain why he was so long
at Manchester -
Much Love in haste -
John A. Furman

Figure 8 (top), Figure 9 (center) and Figure 10 (bottom).

tance as they might be impressed (by the Army) and he knows they cannot spare them. Dr. John Howard Furman (1824-1902) was a physician and plantation owner.

In an aligned topic, Harvey Teal discusses a way cover in this issue of the *Confederate Philatelist* on Pages 45, shown in his Figure 2. The subject cover is a way use that was given to Confederate route agent Peter L. McIntyre, who dropped it into the mail at the first post office he reached after receiving the cover. When the cover arrived at Augusta, Ga., it was forwarded to Berzelia, Ga., without a forwarding fee charged. Charles L. Towle briefly discusses Confederate route agent markings in his book on that topic.⁶

Other new way listings reported are Graniteville, Georgetown and Bishopville, S.C.; as well as Flint Rock, Summerfield and Little River, N.C.; Galveston, Texas; and the towns of Augusta and Gordon, Ga. More way mail continues to be reported.

Due to the scarcity of this material and difficulty of identification, postal historians may never have a full picture of Confederate way mail, nor have all their questions answered, as most way mail has neither content nor postmark. But we keep trying.

If you believe you have an unlisted way cover to add to the knowledge base, please send your information to me at 10194 N Old State Rd, Lincoln DE 19960, or email trishkauf@comcast.net with an image of the cover at 300 dpi resolution or better. To be listed in the catalog, editors must have photographic confirmation, our refrain while working on the 2012 catalog.

Acknowledgements: My thanks to Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries for images used from the Sam Zimmerman, Jr. collection. I also thank Harvey Teal and Tony Crumbley, who reported way covers to me for future CSA catalog listings. The contributions of Van Koppersmith and Steve Roth, who worked on the seminal way listings for the CSA catalog and/or aligned sections, is also noted and appreciated.

END NOTES

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. Ibid, pp. 461-462.
3. Ibid, pp. 31-37.
4. Ibid, p. 461.
5. Ibid, pp.463-464.
6. Charles H. Towle, *U. S. Route Agent and Station Agent Postmarks*, (Mobile Post Office Society) Tucson, Ariz.: 1986, Page 77.

CSA Nominating Committee

President Deane R. Briggs MD has confirmed the nominating committee for the election of officers for 2020-21. The committee members are:

Patricia Kaufmann, Chair
Randolph Smith
Alexander Hall

The report of the committee will be published in the Second Quarter issue of the *CP*.