



Figure 1: A wallpaper cover franked with a ten-cent blue Jefferson Davis (Scott CSA 12) and tied with an Augusta, Georgia, circular datestamp.

A Cover Sent by the Georgia Relief Association

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

One of the joys of being a collector of one topic for a long time is the surprise and delight when we realize we have identified something new that is of philatelic importance.

Such was recently the case when I found the wallpaper cover in Figure 1. It is franked with a ten-cent blue Jefferson Davis (Scott CSA 12) tied with the circular datestamp of Augusta, Georgia.

The cover is addressed to Robert A(lexander) Lancaster Esqr. (Figure 2) in Richmond, Virginia. Lancaster was a Richmond banker. He served in the Confederate army during the American Civil War in Company L, First Virginia State Reserves (Second Class Militia).¹

Figure 3 shows the cover with the back flaps exploded, while Figure 4 reveals the unexpected postal history find. On the top back flap is written, "The Package to which this attaches has bin (sic) sent by the Ga Relief Association." How it was attached is unclear.

I had never heard of the Georgia Relief Association. I checked with Georgia postal history specialists, and it was unknown to them as well. With a relatively



Figure 2: Robert A. Lancaster, to whom the subject cover is addressed.



Figure 3: The Figure 1 cover with the flaps exploded.

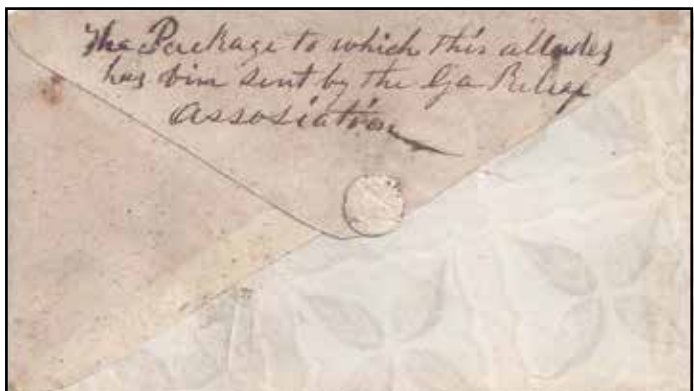


Figure 4: The top back flap of the wallpaper cover with the important note: "The Package to which this attaches has bin (sic) sent by the Ga Relief Association."

Figure 5: A cover franked with a 10-cent milky blue Jefferson Davis (Scott CSA 12a) tied by a Mobile, Alabama, double-circle postmark and endorsed “Mailed by La Relief Committee at Mobile.” (Robert A. Siegel Auctions)



minimal amount of digging, I found the Georgia Relief and Hospital Association (GRHA).

Louisiana Relief Committee at Mobile

The reason the GRHA instantly resonated with me is because of the scarce Louisiana Relief Committee mail well known to serious Confederate postal history students. It is easily recognized by the manuscript endorsements on the back flaps or the front of covers, as shown in Figure 5.

This Louisiana Relief Committee posting is franked with a ten-cent milky blue Jefferson Davis (CSA 12a) tied by a double strike of a Mobile, Alabama, double-circle postmark on a cover endorsed, “Mailed by La Relief Committee at Mobile.”

It was initially addressed to “Dr. S.S. Herrick, Naval Hospital, Mobile Ala.,” but was rerouted to him at “Navy Yard, Gunboat Landing, Tombigbee River, Ala.”²

Dr. Stephen Solon Herrick (1833-1906) was a New Orleans resident who served in the Confederate Navy at Mobile as an assistant surgeon. He had earlier served in the Confederate Army in the same capacity.³

On May 31, 1863, a group of expatriate New Orleans citizens in Mobile, Alabama, organized a committee to aid citizens who remained in occupied New Orleans after its capture by Union troops. To circumvent the federal post office, letters were smuggled out of New Orleans to Mobile where the Louisiana Relief Committee was situated. The committee also arranged



Figure 6: Confederate Provost Marshal Jules C. Denis was a member of the Louisiana Relief Committee and the officer responsible for official flag-of-truce mail through Mobile.

shipments of food and clothing to New Orleans and helped citizens leave New Orleans for the Confederacy.

Confederate Provost Marshal Jules C(harles) Denis (1829-1904), shown in Figure 6, was a member of the Louisiana Relief Committee, as well as the officer responsible for official flag-of-truce mail through Mobile.

Major Denis endorsed at least some of the covers smuggled to and from New Orleans. Soon after the posting of this letter, Denis was promoted to lieutenant colonel.

The committee was in operation from June or July of 1863 until September 1864.

The relief trips ran between Mobile and New Orleans via Pascagoula along the Mississippi Sound.

The Union also used these trips to transmit prisoner-of-war mail to and from prisoners in New Orleans. This occurred with the tacit approval of federal authorities.⁴

The committee additionally handled the forwarding of mail addressed to Confederate military personnel in Mobile.

This type of mail typically did not originate in New Orleans and is considerably rarer. Since it did not cross the lines, it was not censored by the provost marshal at Mobile.

The committee evidently paid the Confederate postage on these letters as a favor to the senders. For security reasons, the committee did not endorse westbound letters. Such mail has no postal markings since they were hand carried all the way to New Orleans.

Georgia Relief and Hospital Association

The Georgia Relief and Hospital Association was officially formed in Augusta, Georgia, on August 16, 1861, as announced in the August 18, 1861, issue of the *Daily Constitutionalist* (Augusta, Georgia).⁵

Chairman Judge Ebenezer Starnes (1810-1868),^{6,7} called the Georgia Soldiers' Hospital Fund Committee together for the purpose of devising the best method for increasing resources, enlarging the operations of the association, and to meet with Rev. Henry Holcombe Tucker of Penfield, Georgia, who had just returned from Manassas and Richmond. At the meeting, they officially changed the name to the Georgia Relief and Hospital Association.

Rev. Prof. H.H. Tucker, Rev. Wm. J. Hard, Rev. Dr. Joseph Ruggles Wilson, Rev. Wm. H. Potter, and the Rev. J. C. Clark were requested by the new GRHA board to act as agents for the association, "canvassing such parts of the State as it may be in their power to visit, and obtaining contributions."

Henry Moore was the listed secretary of the association. Professor Tucker accepted the appointment of general agent for the association, and also that of special agent for the Sixth Congressional District.

In the September 15, 1861, edition of the *Daily Constitutionalist*, Starnes pleaded with Georgia citizens to do their part to help, saying in Richmond alone there were more than one thousand sick and wounded Georgians. He asked newspapers in all parts of the state to copy and print his appeal. They were in particular need of reliable nurses with instructions that two-thirds were to be male, plus fifteen servants. Requests were also extended to rush beds, bedding, and bunks. A Georgia hospital was established in Richmond, staffed by patriotic Georgians.

The July 1862 *Richmond Dispatch* published:

NOTICE TO GEORGIANS – Georgia soldiers, sick or wounded, who may be at private residents, unable to procure medical attendance, are requested to notify the agent of the Georgia Relief & Hospital Association office corner of 21st and Cary Streets, and they will be visited by the medical officer of the Association, recently from Augusta. Mr. Selkirk Gen'l Agent Ga. R and H Ass'n.

The citizens of Georgia raised \$4,000 to provide relief. The hospital that had existed in Richmond for Georgia soldiers was turned over to the GRHA. The GRHA raised \$30,000 in its first two months and expended \$24,000 on Georgia soldiers. The Georgia Legislature provided its first funding.

The GRHA reported that additional clothing was needed in the winter of 1861-62 to meet the severities of winter and reduce sickness in the Georgia units.



Figure 7: The only example of clothing that survives from the Georgia Relief & Hospital Association.



Figure 8: The trousers shown in Figure 7 have an ink stamp on the left pocket bag: "GEO. RELF. & HOSP. ASS."

In Richmond, the GRHA set up three hospitals with about 700 beds. The hospitals were set up with a board of managers of which Confederate Vice President Alexander Stevens was appointed president. The Confederate Government Inspector of Hospitals, after inspecting all forty hospitals in Richmond, found that the Georgia hospitals were, "by far the best managed, the cleanest, and the most comfortable of all."⁸

The GRHA operated a clothing manufacturing depot in Augusta with a foreman-cutter and two assistant cutters. It had an issuing depot in Richmond, Virginia, where most of its production was sent for distribution.

According to Fred Adolphus in "Confederate Uniforms of the Lower South, Part III: Georgia and the Army of Tennessee," the GRHA reported for the period of October 20, 1862, to October 10, 1863, the following statistics:

Its clothing operation started the period with the following stock on hand: 29 coats, 224 pairs of pants, 746 shirts, 579 pairs of drawers, 363 pairs of socks and no pairs of shoes. The GR&HA manufactured or purchased 4,952 coats, 12,217 pairs of pants, 22,938 shirts, 18,682 pairs of drawers, 5,641 pairs of socks and 6,939 pairs of shoes. It received contributions of 483 coats, 1,727 pairs of pants, 814 shirts, 991 pairs of drawers, 2,845 pairs of



Figure 9: The Sanitary Commission Lodge and workers in Washington, D.C., in a photo taken between 1861-1865. (Library of Congress)

socks and 394 pairs of shoes. During that year it distributed 4,492 coats (3,476 to Richmond), 10,183 pairs of pants (7,344 to Richmond), 19,320 shirts (11,182 to Richmond), 18,457 pairs of drawers (11,524 to Richmond), 7,556 pairs of socks (4,755 to Richmond) and 5,589 pairs of shoes (3,667 to Richmond). The GR&HA ended the reporting period with the remaining stock on hand: 972 coats, 3,985 pairs of pants, 5,178 shirts, 1,795 pairs of drawers, 1,293 pairs of socks and 1,744 pairs of shoes. The prices for each article were as follows: coats \$15, pants \$12, shirts \$3, drawers \$2.25, socks per pair \$0.75 and shoes per pair \$12. The association used jeans as the basic coat and pants material, shirtings for making shirts, and both shirtings and osnaburgs for making drawers. In addition to the clothing, the GR&HA distributed blankets, quilts and comforters, and sheets. While Georgia soldiers in Richmond hospitals received roughly two-thirds of this bounty, other hospitals in Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, the Carolinas, and Georgia received modest amounts, as well.⁹

Only one fully provenanced example of clothing survives from the Georgia Relief & Hospital Association. Figure 7 shows a pair of trousers that belonged to Lt. Hamilton McDevit Branch, Sr. (1843-1899). Figure 8 reveals the trousers have an ink stamp on the left pocket bag that reads “GEO. RELF. & HOSP. ASS.”

Branch initially served with the 8th Georgia Infantry before transferring to the 54th Georgia Infantry. When he was wounded during the Atlanta Campaign in July 1864, he spent months recuperating in Savannah, where he may have acquired the trousers while in the hospital. Branch was wounded three or four times during the war, depending on the source consulted.

Hamilton Branch’s correspondence with his brothers John (killed at First Manassas) and Sanford (one of the legendary Immortal 600 prisoners held under fire of their own guns in Charleston) and their mother, Charlotte, is memorialized in a book by Mauriel Phillips Joslyn *Charlotte’s Boys: Civil War Correspondence of the Branch Family of Savannah*.¹⁰

Similar Aid Associations

In both the North and South, men and women set up groups generally called Soldier’s Aid Societies or Ladies’ Aid Societies, literally by the thousands. Some were state organizations, but far more were local. In the North, the most well known of these is undoubtedly the U.S. Sanitary Commission.

Figure 9 shows the Sanitary Commission Lodge and workers in Washington, D.C., in a photo from the gallery of Alexander Gardner housed in the Library of Congress. The lodge was photographed sometime during the war by James Gardner, brother and partner to the more well-known Alexander.

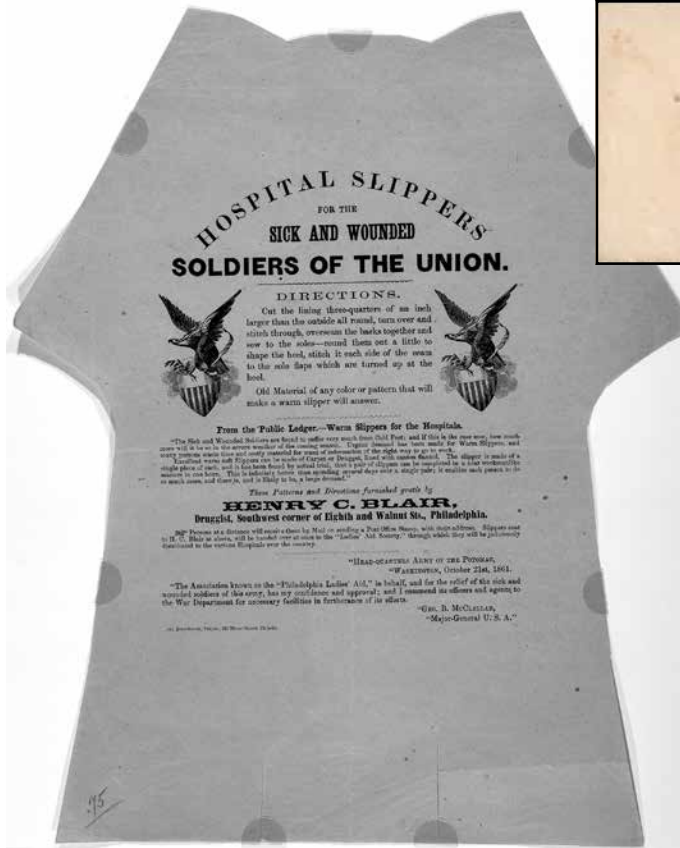


Figure 10: A pattern to make hospital slippers for sick and wounded Union soldiers. (Library of Congress)

The Library of Congress has a pattern for hospital slippers for the sick and wounded soldiers of the Union, as shown in Figure 10. It has directions printed on the pattern and was provided gratis by Henry C. Blair, a druggist in Philadelphia. A complimentary quote thanking the Philadelphia Ladies Aid Association is printed at the bottom under the name of Geo. B. McClellan, Major-General U.S.A. It is dated “Head-quarters Army of the Potomac, Washington, October 21st, 1861.”

A two-cent green Andrew Jackson (Scott CSA 3) franking a scarce circular-rate use is shown in Figure 11. It is tied by a Columbia, South Carolina, circular datestamp on a fifteen-page pamphlet titled “Central Association for the Relief of the Southern Soldiers of South Carolina. The Plan, the Address, adopted by the Citizens of Columbia, Oct 20, 1862.” The printed publisher information reads, “Charleston: Steam-Power Press of Evans and Cogswell.”

Mail Forwarding by the Georgia Relief and Hospital Association

Considering thousands of aid societies were known to have existed during the war, very few examples of forwarded mail are known by any of these groups. In this case, we know a package was involved. There were probably far more packages sent than solely letters.

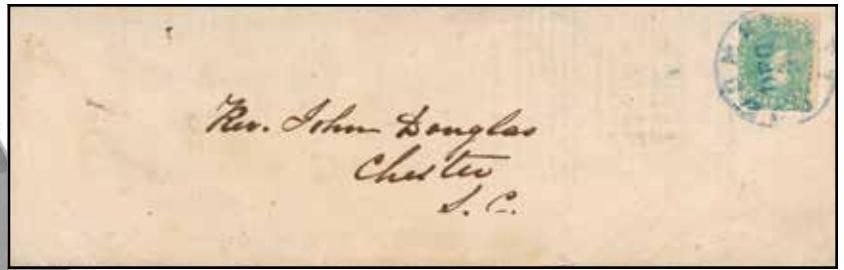


Figure 11: A two-cent green Andrew Jackson (Scott CSA 3) tied by a Columbia, S.C., circular datestamp on a fifteen-page pamphlet titled, “Central Association for the Relief of the Southern Soldiers of South Carolina. The Plan, the Address, adopted by the Citizens of Columbia, Oct 20, 1862.” (Schuyler J. Rumsey Auctions)

Perhaps that is why there are so few known uses. This was likely both.

It was exciting to be able to recognize the only known Georgia example of a mail or package forwarding service for what it is. Sometimes the significance to postal history found on the backs of envelopes is far more sensational than the front.

Endnotes

- 1 WikiTree: Where genealogists collaborate, Robert Alexander Lancaster Sr. (1829-1902), <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Lancaster-2710>.
- 2 Courtesy Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 933, lot 1042.
- 3 Find A Grave: Dr. Stephen Solon Herrick, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/87995820/stephen-solon-herrick>
- 4 Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown, Jr., and Jerry S. Palazolo, *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History* (Sumter, S.C.; Confederate Stamp Alliance, 2012), p. 507.
- 5 Vicki Betts, University of Texas at Tyler, “Scholar Works at UT Tyler,” (Augusta, GA) *Daily Constitutionalist*, August-December 1861, p. 3, col. 2. https://scholarworks.uttyler.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=cw_newstiles
- 6 Find A Grave: Ebenezer Starnes, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/135652834/ebenezer-starnes>
- 7 Geneanet: Starnes Ebenezer, Genealogy and memoirs of Charles and Nathaniel Stearns: and their descendants (Volume 2), https://en.geneanet.org/archives/ouvrages?action=detail&book_type=livre&livre_id=404874&page=94&name=STARNES&with_variantes=0
- 8 Lincoln News Now: Trevor Steinbach, From the Civil War Courier: Supplying the Wounded of Georgia. https://www.lincolnewsnow.com/news/history/from-the-civil-war-courier-supplying-the-wounded-of-georgia-by-trevor-steinbach/article_2ab35342-e74a-544e-bcaa-b4529f289296.html
- 9 Report of the Board of Superintendents of the Georgia Relief & Hospital Association to the Governor and General Assembly of Georgia with the Proceedings of the Board, Convened at Augusta, Ga, October 28, 1863, published in Augusta, Georgia by the Steam Press of Constitutionalist, 1863 (and made available in a digital format by the Boston Athenaeum, ca 2017), pp. 8, 16-25, 28.
- 10 Mauriel Phillips Joslyn, *Charlotte's Boys: Civil War Correspondence of the Branch Family of Savannah*. (Berryville, Va.: Rockbridge Publishing Company, 1966 (pp. xix, 374).

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