

SECOND NORMAN S. WALKER BERMUDA BLOCKADE-RUN USE

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In the 4th quarter 2022 issue of the *Civil War Philatelist*, I wrote an article titled “Decades of Distortion: Norman S. Walker – Bermuda Blockade-Run Mail – Henry P. Walker – Internal Consular Mail.”

In that article, I stated:

The only recorded use of the “Forwarded by N.S. Walker St. Georges Bermuda” handstamp is on a blockade-run cover. It shows the proper 12¢ rate, and it bears the ship routing “Per Flora” into the port of Wilmington, N.C. This use clearly demonstrates Maj. Norman S. Walker indeed acted as mail forwarder. To date, there are no other recorded examples.



Figure 1. A second genuine blockade-run cover forwarded from Confederate agent Norman Walker, Confederate agent in Bermuda.

I need to retract the “only recorded” Norman Walker blockade-run cover statement. Although the subject cover does not have the Norman Walker handstamp, it is clearly a blockade-run Norman Walker cover forwarded from Bermuda. It is illustrated both back and front in Figures 1 and 2.

This cover is an incoming blockade-run use with a Wilmington, N.C., May 29, 1864, circular datestamp with a manuscript 12(¢) ship rate applied and addressed to “Mrs. C.C. Clay Jr., Petersburg, Virginia, Care of Dr. Thomas Withers,” with the penciled endorsement of (Maj. Norman S.) Walker up the left side.



Figure 2. Verso of subject cover with the blue monogram of G.F.W. (Georgiana Freeman Walker), Norman Walker's wife; cover overstamped by large purple Rebel Archives double-oval.

The blue monogram on the back of the cover, G.F.W., is that of Georgiana Freeman *Gholson* Walker (1833-1904), Norman Walker's wife. Dr. Thomas Withers (1808-79) was a physician in Petersburg. Mrs. Clay was doubtless visiting Petersburg, probably for an extended stay. The verso of the cover also bears the large magenta double-oval handstamp of the Rebel Archives.

Based in Bermuda, Maj. Norman Stewart Walker, Sr. (1830-1913) was the senior Confederate military agent responsible for coordinating the delivery of armament and supplies to the South and cotton to England from February 1863 until June 27, 1864.¹

Maj. Walker arrived in Bermuda in late 1862. Georgiana Walker arrived in St. George's on March 24, 1863, and remained there until June 1864, when she went to England to escape a yellow fever epidemic.

Blockade-runner *Lynx*

Steven Walske researched the journey of this cover, formerly in his collection, and determined it was carried on the blockade-runner *Lynx*. It departed St. George's, Bermuda, May 24, 1864, arriving in Wilmington, N.C., May 28.

The *Lynx*, a beautiful sidewheel steamer built by Jones, Quiggin & Co. in Liverpool, England, was nicknamed "glamour girl of the sea." A black and white photo of a water-

Figure 3. CS blockade-runner *Lynx* (1864) black-and-white photo of watercolor painting, unknown artist. Courtesy of Maj. A.M. Waddell, Naval History and Heritage Command.



color painting of the *Lynx* by an unknown artist is illustrated in Figure 3. *Lynx* had a short life running the blockade with guns, machinery and raw materials into Wilmington.

Lynx was owned by Richard Wright for Fraser Trenholm & Co. It was registered April 6, 1864, and launched April 16. It ran under Capt. Edward C. Reid.

Most sources I consulted state that *Lynx* made nine successful trips, but Joseph McKenna states it made 13 successful trips.² Of no dispute is that it met its fate Sept. 25, 1864, while heading out of port bound for Bermuda with a 600 bales of cotton and \$50,000 worth of government gold (payment for past cargos). It is one of the few vessels to be captured on an outgoing run.³

Lynx was chased down by three Union warships, USS *Howquah*, USS *Niphon* and USS *Buckingham*. The Confederate vessel was swift, but not fast enough to outrun the three pursuing adversaries. After a vigorous skirmish, *Lynx* was forced to turn back toward shore, where it ran aground. Much of the cotton had been thrown overboard in an effort to lighten the load and outrun the Union steamers. Upon grounding, the crew burned the vessel, and the ship's purser removed the gold and bonds. Some cotton was recovered from the Atlantic.⁴

Two different sites claim to be the wreckage of the *Lynx*, close in proximity, and both visited by recreational divers in relatively shallow water. Poor to zero bottom visibility, swift currents and deteriorated hulls have prevented positive identification.⁵

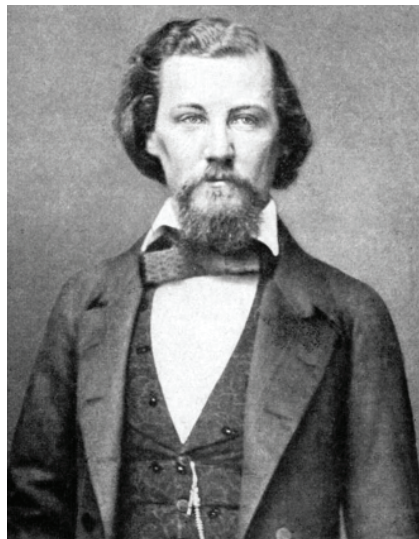


Figure 4. Clement Claiborne Clay, Jr. (1816-82), husband of Virginia Clay.

The Correspondents

Virginia Caroline Tunstall Clay

Virginia Caroline Tunstall (1825-1915) married Clement Claiborne Clay, Jr. (1816-82) on Feb. 1, 1843. C.C. Clay, Jr. is shown in Figure 4, as well as on the 1864 \$1 Confederate note (T71) printed by Keatinge & Ball, Figure 5. A circa 1860s carte-de-visite (CDV) of Virginia Clay is shown in Figure 6.

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Figure 5. A 1864 \$1 Confederate note (T71) printed by Keatinge & Ball, that features the portrait of C.C. Clay, Jr.



Figure 6a and 6b. Virginia Caroline Tunstall Clay (1825-1915), circa 1860s, addressee of subject cover.

Clement Clay served as a United States senator from Alabama before the war from 1853-61. When her husband was elected as a U.S. senator in 1853, Virginia moved with him to Washington, D.C., where they were part of elite political social life. Virginia was reported to be a consummate hostess.

Clay was an articulate legislator and lawyer who strongly advocated secession. He served as a Confederate States senator from Alabama, 1862-64. Jefferson Davis sent Clay to Canada as a commissioner for the Confederate government to undermine the Union. Clay was instrumental in planning the well-known St. Albans Raid, staging an attack from just over the Canadian border into Vermont.

Clement Clay was suspected of being involved in the assassination plot against President Abraham Lincoln, with the accusation that he had met John Wilkes Booth in Canada, although that was never proven. Charges were eventually dropped. Thus Clay was among those imprisoned at Fort Monroe after the war. He was released in April 1866 with the help of Ulysses S. Grant, whom Clay knew before the war. Held at the same prison in the next cell was former Confederate President Jefferson Davis, with whom Clay and his wife had developed a close friendship.⁶

Georgiana Freeman Gholson Walker

Pencil notations on the back of the cover incorrectly state that Georgiana Walker was writing to her sister Cary in Petersburg. Not only is “Cary” not Mrs. Clement C. Clay, Jr., so far as I can determine, Georgiana did not have a sister named Cary. However, her mother’s name was Cary Ann Gholson (1810-96).

Like Virginia Clay, Georgiana Walker had a close relationship with Varina Davis, wife of President Jefferson Davis. Her friends included Confederate spy Rose O’Neal Greenhow; and



Julia Tyler, the widow of U.S. President Tyler; as well as countless other influential people. The Walkers lived in Petersburg before the war, where Georgiana was a well-connected Southern hostess. Georgiana began keeping a journal in 1861 in which she superbly documented the war years. It was published in 1963. Georgiana’s journal provides insights into the war and Bermuda’s role through blockade running.⁷

An 1860s carte-de-visite of Georgiana with two of her young children is shown in Figure 7. The photographer was Henry Ashdown of Hastings, England. The CDV is housed in the collection of the American Civil War Museum.

I visited the Confederate Museum in St. George’s, Bermuda, nearly 50 years ago. To me, it seemed like the “Norman Walker Museum.” Such is the way of collectors. Now named the *Bermuda National Trust Museum at the Globe Hotel*, it calls the 1703 stone building the “Confederate Headquarters during the American Civil War.” It is well worth a visit if you ever visit Bermuda.

Figure 7. An 1860s carte-de-visite of Georgiana with two young children; photographer Henry Ashdown of Hastings, England. Courtesy of the American Civil War Museum.

Endnotes

1. Chris Michael, "Liverpool-built Blockade Runners," *Lelia*, University of Liverpool, 2004. <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/~cmi/books/br.html>, accessed Feb. 17, 2024.
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5. Mark Wilde-Ramsing and Wilson Angley, National Register of Historic places Nomination, Cape Fear Civil War Shipwreck District, September 1985, North Carolina government, <https://files.nc.gov/dncr-arch/Cape-Fear-Civil-War-Shipwreck-Register.pdf>, accessed Feb. 17, 2024.
6. Virginia Clay, Civil War Women, "Southern Belle and Wife of Confederate Senator Clement Clay" <https://www.womenhistoryblog.com/2007/06/virginia-clay.html>, accessed Feb. 17, 2024.
7. Elizabeth Jones, "Georgiana's Journal," Nov. 26, 2012, <https://www.thebermudian.com/heritage/heritage-heritage/georgiana-s-journal/>, accessed Feb. 17, 2024.

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