American Civil War Postage Due: North and South

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The Civil War era began with peaceful secession of South Carolina on December 20, 1861.

Five other Southern states (Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana) soon followed suit.

These states formed the Confederacy (Confederate States of America (CSA)) on February 4, 1861. Texas joined the CSA on March 2, 1861.

During the independent state period (period between secession and the joining of the CSA) the United States Postal Service continued to deliver mail to and from as well as within the South.

Even after CSA formation, the mail delivery process was basically business as usual.

Only after hostilities began (April 12, 1861 with the bombardment and surrender of Fort Sumter) was mail service disrupted (closing of routes, endangered personnel, loss of equipment).

Mail service in (and to and from) the South by the US Postal Service was ultimately suspended on May 31, 1861.
Independent States

Cover posted (January 21, 1861) in Charleston, South Carolina during its independent period (December 20, 1860 until February 4, 1861).

The cover is franked with a US Scott No. 26 and addressed to P. A. Allen, Esq. in Allendale, a small town in southwestern South Carolina (near the Georgia border) that was burned to the ground during the Civil War (but rebuilt in 1873).
Confederate Postal System

- Soon after the Confederacy was formed a Post Office Department (recognizing that postal communications were key to the rising nation) was created.
- On March 6, 1861, John Henninger Reagan was appointed CSA Postmaster General by CSA President Jefferson Davis.
- The CSA postal system was patterned after the existing United States Post Office Department. In fact several key employees of the USPOD (with southern leanings) were enticed to join in the formation of the Confederate Post Office.
- Reagan had the CSA Post Office Department up and operating in a couple of months. In May of 1861, he announced that the CSA Post Office department would take over the mail system in the South on June 1, 1861.

Two Separate Postal Systems!
The Postmaster Generals

USA: Montgomery Blair

CSA: John Henninger Reagan

Two Different Postmaster Generals!
Blair Decree

- Dated May 27, 1861.
- Suspended all mail service in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas.
- Suspension date May 31, 1861.
- Letters addressed to temporarily closed offices will be sent to the Dead Letter Office (Washington, D. C.).
- Western Virginia letters were to be sent to Wheeling.

Mail Service Suspended!
## Postal Rates-North and South

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Rates</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>North</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>3¢</td>
<td>per ½ oz., East of Rocky Mountains</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10¢</td>
<td>per ½ oz., West of Rocky Mountains</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1¢</td>
<td>Drop Letters, Newspapers, and Circulars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decreasing Costs</strong></td>
<td>3¢</td>
<td>per ½ oz., regardless of domestic distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2¢</td>
<td>Drop Letters, Newspapers, and Circulars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South</strong></td>
<td>5¢</td>
<td>per ½ oz., under 500 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confederacy</td>
<td>10¢</td>
<td>per ½ oz., over 500 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2¢</td>
<td>Drop Letters, Newspapers, and Circulars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increasing Costs</strong></td>
<td>10¢</td>
<td>per ½ oz., regardless of domestic distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50¢</td>
<td>Preferred Express Mail Rate-Trans-Mississippi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40¢</td>
<td>Trans-Mississippi River</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Stamps-North

Old Series: 3¢ Stamp

New Series: 3¢ Stamp

Scott No. 26

Scott No. 65
Envelope mailed to a soldier in Camp Seward with Scott No. 26. It was cancelled in Philadelphia on August 26, 1861 the First Day of the requirement for using the new Northern issue of postage stamps (Scott No. 65). The stamp received the “OLD STAMPS NOT RECOGNIZED” hand stamp to explain the “Due 3” rating.
A 3¢ red on white postal stationery star envelope (Scott No. U26) mailed in Philadelphia on August 22, 1861, the first day of the requirement in Philadelphia to use the new Northern stationery items. Thus it was hand stamped “OLD STAMPS NOT RECOGNIZED” to help explain the “Due 6” postage due rating.
Envelope from Worcester, Massachusetts (April 17, 1862) addressed to Lt. Colonel Sprague of the 2nd Map Artillery (connected to the 21st, 23rd, and 24th regiments from Massachusetts) in New Berne, North Carolina. He was part of the New Berne conflict that began on March 17, 1862 and after the battle victory was part of the occupation forces.
Stamps-South (Provisionals)

New Orleans Postmaster’s Provisional Stamps
J(ohn) L. Riddell-Postmaster

Printed by John V. Childs using a stereo type printing process

Overall there are 81 face different Confederate Postmaster Provisional adhesive stamps and pre-printed postal stationery items from 53 cities and towns!
In addition to just hand stamping mail when it was brought to and paid at the post office, many postmasters (over 100) created hand-stamped postal stationery which could be purchased in advance and used when needed.
Stamps-South (First Stamp)

Folded letter mailed on April 17, 1862 using a 5¢ Jefferson Davis Confederate stamp (CSA Scott No. 1). It was mailed in Mobile, Alabama by the cashier of the Bank of Mobile acknowledging receipt of payment from the addressee in Marion, Alabama.

Appeared: October 16, 1861; Quantity Issued: 9,250,000; Printed: Stone Lithography by Hoyer & Ludwig, Richmond
About 100 million of these three stamps and their color variations were printed. This is almost 70% of all the Confederate stamps printed during the Civil War. The 5¢ stamp was printed by Archer & Daly (Richmond, VA). The 10¢ stamps were printed by both Archer & Daly and Keatinge & Ball (Columbia, SC).
Stamps-South (Free Franks)

Confederate Post Office Department’s Free Franking Privilege. The stationery was created by overprinting a United States 3¢ stamped envelope (Scott No. U10).

The envelope was signed by “Jno L. Harrell” who was the Confederate Chief of Finance for the Post Office Department. The cover was addresses to the “P. M. Greensburg, St. Helena Par(ish), La.”
Patriotic Stationery

Civil War Patriotic Cover Design” “Not A Star Must Fall”!

Common Civil War Patriotic Design with Eagle and Star Design Elements. Both the Star and Eagle have been used separately on covers.
Mailed by a Union soldier from occupied Port Royal, South Carolina to his family in Ohio, on June 2, 1863 and rated “Due 3”. The patriotic design was printed over an embossed advertising cover (“Clark Gardener & Co., Produce, Commission Merchants, Cleveland, O.” (in four lines)).
Soldier’s Letters-Confederate

Civil War Patriotic Cover Design” “Not A Star Must Fall”!

Captured Union stationery used by a Southern soldier to mail a letter home to Jackson, Mississippi. The Jackson Post Office not only applied the Jackson CDS and rated it “Due”, but also used the CDS to try and obliterate the Union Patriotic Design. It was postmarked on September 23, 1862
"Soldiers letter"

"No hard tack and no corn bread, Six Months due and not a red. Please P.M. Shove this ahead, Due 10 cents in Confed."

"10¢ Postage Due"

Image supplied through the courtesy of Lewis Kaufman.
Soldiers’ Letters-Union

Union Soldiers were expected to send their letters pre-paid with a 3¢ stamp. If no stamps were available, with proper endorsement* they could send them postage due without penalty. Otherwise, 6¢ Postage Due was assessed (3¢ for the unpaid postage and a 3¢ penalty).

* Proper endorsement usually consisted of the words “Soldier’s Letter” and the rank and military unit of the sender. Some times a superior officers signature was also required. Officers were typically not afforded the postage due privilege.
Prisoner’s Letter

Johnsons Island Prisoner of War letter mailed February 15, 1863 in Sandusky, Ohio, with a United States 3¢ Washington (Scott No. 65) stamp. It was sent to Fortress Monroe where it entered the Confederate mail system under a Flag-of-Truce for delivery to its final destination in Plantersville, Alabama. It was rated as “Due 10” by the CSA mail system.

“Flag-of-Truce” prisoner or war mail was exchanged at several locations during the course of the war. The Fortress Monroe-Old Point Comfort exchange point was the major one throughout the war. Typical franking was a stamp in one mail system with postage due in the other. Envelopes franked with stamps from both postal systems are rare.
"Soldiers Letter"

"Nary red hard tack in plase of bred" (sic)

"3¢ Postage Due"

Image supplied through the courtesy of Lewis Kaufman.
Soldier’s Letter-Due Markings

Union Soldiers’ Letters

Confederate Soldiers’ Letters
The envelope refers to the DLO as the Return Letter Office. The letter “X” in the lower left corner is a DLO clerk identifier (each clerk was assigned a letter and was to return mail in similarly marked envelopes as an accounting measure). The “H” signifies that an X envelope was used by another clerk.
Dead Letter Office-Union

Dead Letter Office Markings.

[Images of various dead letter office markings from 1861 and 1863]
Cover mailed from the Bank of the State of Georgia (form enclosed), Athens, Georgia on May 22, 1861 to Merchants Bank in Baltimore, Maryland. The letter was diverted to the Confederate Dead Letter Office due to the closing of the Washington-Richmond mail route on May 23-24, 1861.

Image supplied through the courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.
Cover mailed from Newberry, C. H., South Carolina on May 30, 1861. It was a re-purposed envelope (Scott No. U9, 3¢ red on white Nesbit envelope) addressed to Kissam & Taylor, New York City. With service suspended, the letter was forwarded to the Confederate DLO. Processed on September 1, 1861.

Image supplied through the courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.
Louisville Forwarding

“SOUTHn UNPAID LETTER” marking applied rather than remove stamps as directed by USPOD. Stamps on cover include two 5¢ New Orleans Provisionals (for Confederate postage) plus 3¢ US stamp (prior to demonitization) to pay US postage.

Only 28 Genuine Examples Known!

Image supplied through the courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.
Secession, the formation of the Confederacy, and the resultant Civil War caused great disruption in communication and mail service both North and South and within the Confederate states themselves.

The Confederate states saw fit to form their own Post Office Department which took over postal operations in the South on June 1, 1861. (without any postage stamps)

The United States suspended mail service as of May 31, 1861 (Blair Decree).

Suspension of mail service and the subsequent demonetization of all United States stamps produced significant opportunities for postage due mail (Dead Letter Office mail, “Old Stamps Not Recognized” mail, and “Southn Letter Unpaid” mail to name a few)

The soldiers in the fields and in prison camps did not have access to postage stamps—so most of their mail was sent postage due.

Flag-of-Truce mail gave the opportunity for dual franking and in most cases postage due on one side or the other.

Blockade run mail in the South was almost entirely handled postage due.
Summary

Thus, the use of postage due was integral to mail movement during the Civil War and strongly supported personal and business communications at all levels!