



Patricia A. Kaufmann

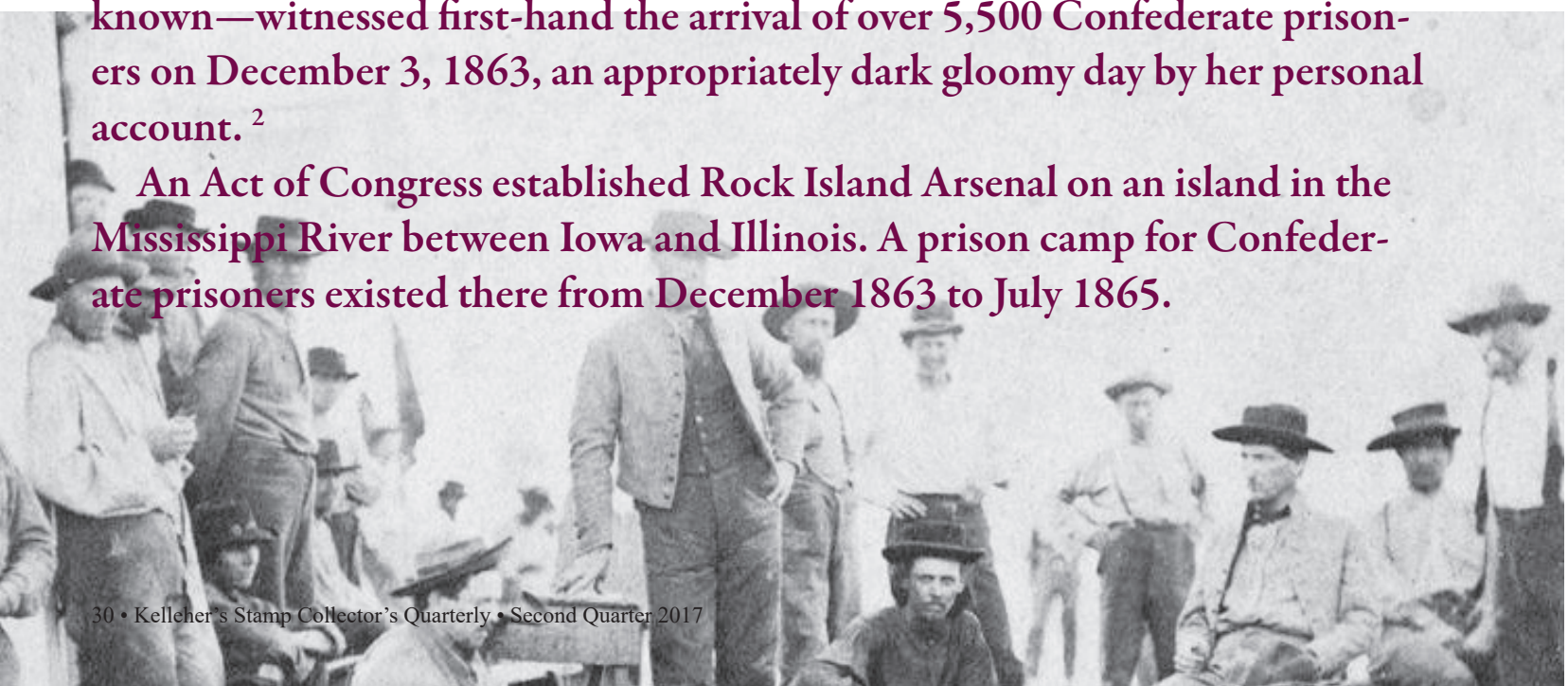


Underground Code Name “Faithful”

As she tells it, her covert nom de plume was “Faithful.” She was a rebel girl, born Catherine E. Perry on July 11, 1836, in Warsaw, Gallatin County, Kentucky.¹ In the 1860 U.S. Census, her occupation is listed as school teacher and her father’s occupation as mail agent.

While visiting relatives in Rock Island, Illinois, Kate—as she was known—witnessed first-hand the arrival of over 5,500 Confederate prisoners on December 3, 1863, an appropriately dark gloomy day by her personal account.²

An Act of Congress established Rock Island Arsenal on an island in the Mississippi River between Iowa and Illinois. A prison camp for Confederate prisoners existed there from December 1863 to July 1865.



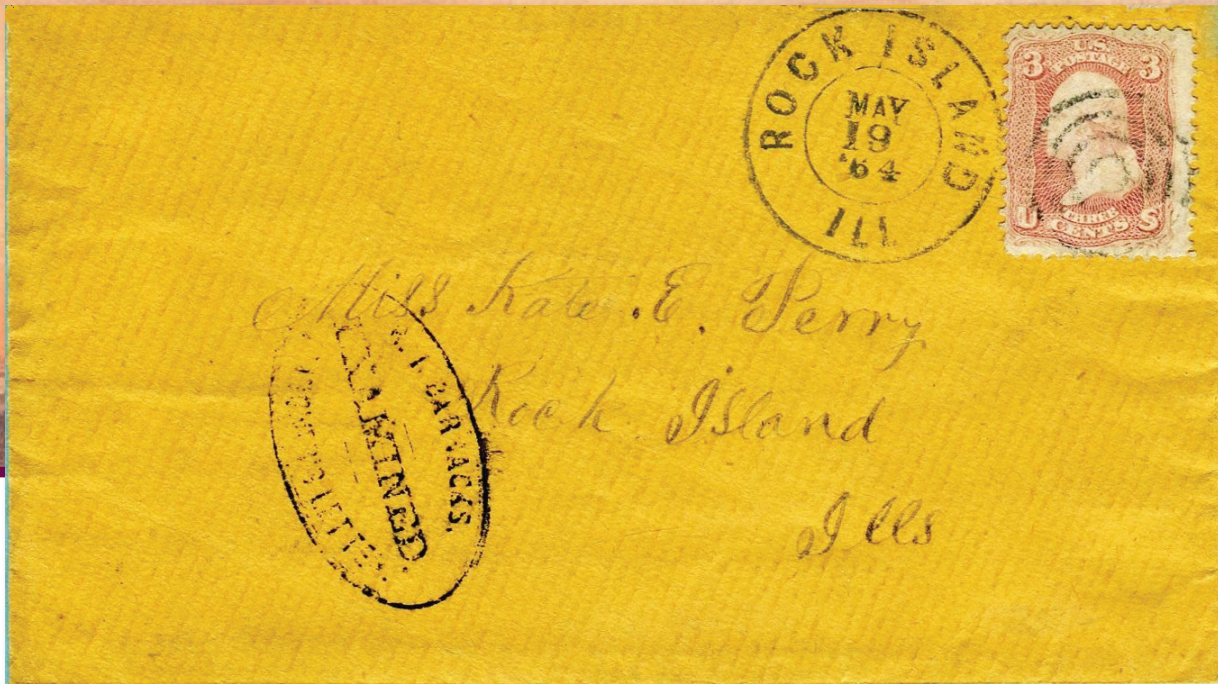


Figure 3. Prisoner of War cover with oval examined marking of R.I. Barracks, addressed to Southern sympathizer Kate E. Perry, Rock Island, Ills.



Engraved according to an illustration on the same date by C. Sprudel, in the Official Directory of the Department of War, 1864. The engraving is the property of the U.S. War Department.

Publ. by C. Sprudel, Rock Island, Ill.

ROCK ISLAND BARRACKS, ILL.

Barrack No. 5, Rock Island I

May the 17th 1864

Miss, Kate E. Perry }

Madam I am in need of some clothing namely pair pants pair drawers & hat of a friend of mine Mr S. P. Cheairs is needing a pair of pants and waistcoat & if you can furnish these articles we will be und lasting obligations to you Besides I trust you will call down the Blessing of high heaven in ministering to the necessities of a poor and needy prisoner hoping you will at least write to me I am your humble an sincere friend

Bartholomew Burk



Figure 4.
Bartholomew Burk
beseeches Miss
Perry for clothing
in the enclosed
letter from the
cover shown on
the previous page.

Figure 1. Union
prison at Rock
Island, Illinois,
circa 1863-65. An
unknown artist's
rendering for *Frank
Leslie's Weekly* in
the 1860s.

“I at once saw a way for an ‘underground,’ and believe me, I improved it.”

Kate E. Perry-Mosher

A group of Confederate prisoners pose for a photograph for an agent of Matthew Brady at the Rock Island Prison in 1863.



Figure 2. Rock Island Barracks Prison, circa 1863.



The prison consisted of 84 wood-framed barracks surrounded by a 12-foot high fence. Barracks and out buildings were also provided for the Union guards, headquarters buildings and a hospital complex. (Figures 1 and 2)

Although figures seem to vary according to the sources quoted, one resource reveals that a total of 12,192 Confederate prisoners were held at the camp with 8,954 the highest number held at any given time; a total of 1,964 prisoners died there and are buried in the Confederate cemetery.³

Portions of Kate Perry’s narration, in her own words, are presented here:

Real, live Rebels were coming and, ridiculous as it may seem it is a fact that many citizens were actually afraid of a disarmed foe...Here they stood, hopeless,

forlorn, and seemingly forsaken! As they marched past, I was beside myself with suppressed pity—fury, if you will—and excitement!

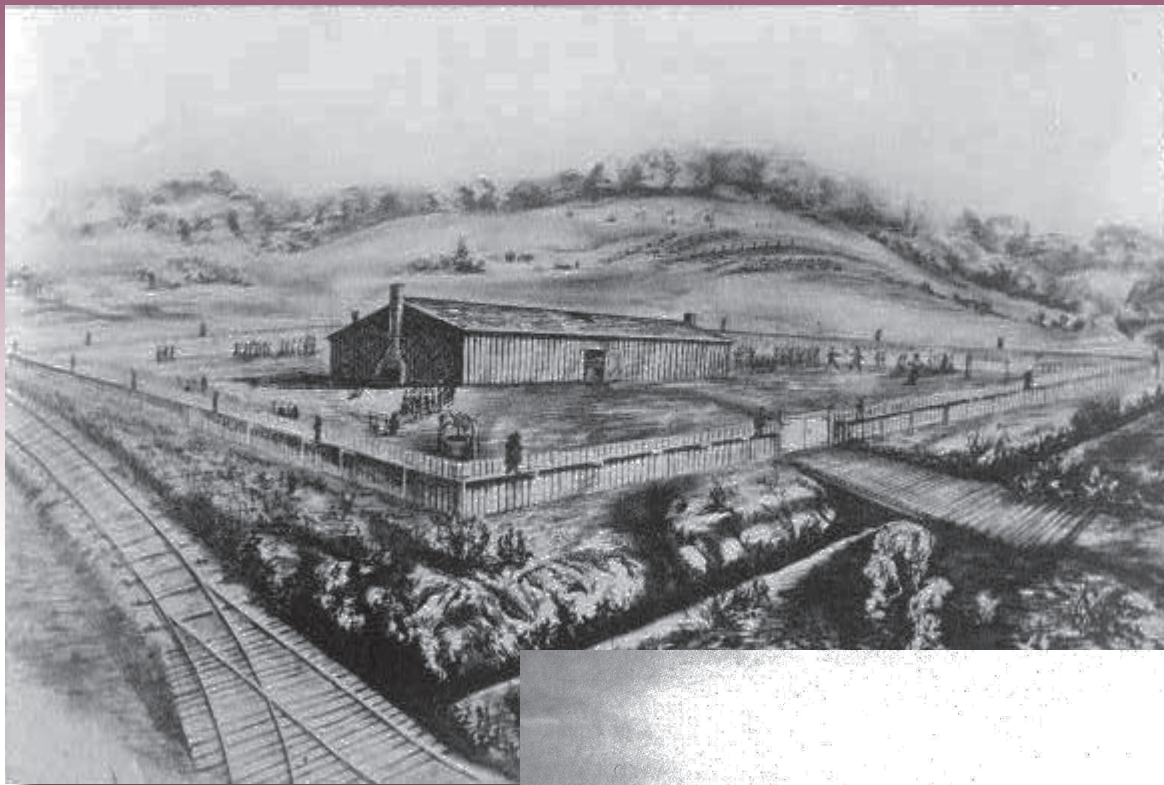
Waving my kerchief, I steadied my voice and said: ‘I am from Kentucky, and a friend.’

‘No talking to the prisoners!’ ordered the police.

O, you should have seen the eager faces of the Confederates! How they lighted up to know that even one confessed from was so near, and she a countrywoman! It seemed to thrill them. The word was passed up and down the line like wildfire. ‘There she is! there she is!’ and every hat was raised as they passed.

A few days later, a Union sergeant rang her doorbell and gave her a letter from a Confederate soldier who said he was a friend of her brother’s.

I at once saw a way for an ‘underground,’ and believe me, I improved it...I



Rock Island was one of the largest and most notorious Union prison camps during the Civil War. The prison was opened in November 1863. This is a pencil sketch by an unknown artist of its appearance on the day it was opened.

The first contingent of Confederate prisoners photographed outside the prison when it opened in 1863.



talked to this sergeant until he promised me most faithfully that he'd aid me all he could in carrying both notes and tobacco to the prisoners. He proved true as steel. Although arrested several times after returning to the island from the city, each time, he told me he had torn the notes into snips, and before reaching headquarters he had thrown away the pieces. When he went into the prison (he had charge of a barrack), he'd take the tobacco in and give it as per my wish.

I wrote at once to Mr. Stanton, President Lincoln's Secretary of War, to ascertain what privileges I would be granted in sending food and clothing. I took particular pains to let it be known at headquarters that I had done this and that I had received instructions.

I was young, healthy to a degree, and one of the most devoted, enthusiastic Rebels that ever claimed glorious 'Old Kentucky' as her birthplace and home.

The prisoners knew what I was doing, and were constantly writing through headquarters for aid. I would take each letter, make a list of the writer's wants, get the required articles together, putting same into a secure package, then on a slip of paper write the prisoner's name and number of barrack, then beneath itemized the contents of said package, sign my own name as the sender (this was required), and secure this paper upon the bundle. Of course these were all searched at headquarters, that no contraband should go in.

Kate went on to say that, besides the faithful sergeant, there were others who aided with the underground routes, such as a U.S. Army surgeon and his family members and friends. Also, the driver of a milk wagon, a Roman Catholic priest, and others.

Kate helped create a network of contacts to deliver letters and packages to the prisoners at Rock Island prison. She also worked openly with prison officials to bring in food, clothing, and other necessities. Her home became a safe-house for Confederate prisoners who escaped from Rock Island prison, as well as others from Camp Douglas in Chicago. Although frequently questioned by Union officers about her activities, she was never arrested.

The cover and enclosed letter in Figures 3 and 4 are addressed to "Miss Kate E. Perry, Rock Island, Ills."

The cover bears a Scott U.S. No. 65, 1861 3-cent rose tied by Rock Island, Illinois, May 19, '64 duplex. The examined oval handstamp is type C, PWH-13, in the CSA catalog.⁴ It was used from May to July 1864 in black ink and from August 1864 to Feb. 1865 in blue ink.

Most censor markings on Flag of Truce covers were in manuscript. The few recorded Civil War handstamped marking are all from U.S.

Figure 6. The Woman's Pavilion at the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia, 1876.



Figure 5. Opening day ceremonies at the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, May 10, 1876.

prisons and provost marshal districts. Those applied at Rock Island were applied by prison staff as opposed to district provost marshals. Not all flag of truce mail bears a censor marking.⁵

The prisoner's letter is from Bartholomew Burk, as he signed it, but the name is also seen in military records as Burke or Burkle, likely a matter of incorrect handwriting interpretation. The letter is headed "Barrack No. 5. Rock Island Ills, May the 17th 1864." Addressed to Miss Kate E. Perry, Burk declares that himself in need of clothing for himself, as well as for a friend. He trusts she will "call down the blessing of high heaven" in ministering to the necessities of poor needy prisoners.

Private Bartholomew Burk served in Company B of the 24th Alabama Infantry, Manigault's Brigade, Major General Wither's Division, Polk's Corps, Army of Tennessee. He signed on for one year of service on October 18, 1861, at Mobile, Alabama. He was detached as a teamster to General Withers on July 23, 1862. Burk was captured November 27, 1863, at Chattanooga from where he was forwarded to Louisville on November 20, 1863, for exchange. He was returned to duty and captured again at Dalton, Georgia, on April 1, 1864. By May

of 1864, he had arrived in Rock Island, as evidenced by the subject letter.

In her memoirs, Kate tells of numerous schemes to assist escaping prisoners, such as secreting a needed bridge pass in an old-fashioned jelly cake to be delivered to a prisoner. She hid the pass in the center of the cake wrapped in oil silk.

One of her more amusing conspiracies consisted of dressing a small slender man as a young lady complete with hoops, scoop bonnet, handkerchief and a pretty little hand-basket. They powdered his face and he successfully—although no doubt quite anxiously—impersonated a shy county girl. He was properly horrified at the ruse, but listened carefully as they instructed him how to handle his hoops and how he must act to take on proper feminine manners. He efficaciously made his escape.

In another plot, she describes setting up a well-crafted alibi for herself by calling on the wife of the post commandant, Col. A. J. Johnson. Although the Kentucky-born sympathizer was constantly under suspicion, Mrs. Johnson declared that Kate was certainly innocent of helping anyone escape, for at that very time she was calling on Mrs.

Johnson. In reality, Kate and her coachman had raced a carriage to Mrs. Johnson's after successfully helping the Rebel soldier make good his departure.

A few days after that incident, two soldiers visited her house, bringing a letter addressed to "Faithful." Her cousin was foolish enough to accept the letter for Kate, which was tacit admission that Kate was the underground communicator known as "Faithful." Kate knew instantly that either some underground mail had been captured or some other treachery was afoot.

The letter addressed to her code name was written in an unfamiliar hand, saying that one of a party who was planning to escape with him had been requested to write this missive for him. It stated that their plans were all laid and she and others directly involved must not fail to be at the depot on a certain night.

When she finished reading that letter, she laughed out loud and wondered if the writer considered her an absolute fool. She did a mental recitation of those who had loyally helped her for so long. Kate determined instead that some of the mail must have been captured. She felt sure that no one in her underground team had betrayed her.

She immediately wrote to her friends inside the prison, telling them of the calamity and asking them to never address "Faithful" again, but instead "Pauline."

The day for the "coup" at the depot came and went. She paid no attention, not so imprudent as to fall into their trap. She heard later that it was indeed a deep-laid plot to catch all the sympathizers at once.

Women in the war

Overall, the work that women performed during the war inspired new ways of thinking about women's place in society. Many women became providers for their families, managing farms and businesses while husbands, brothers and fathers served in the military. Some raised money and supplies through ladies' aid societies, some nursed the sick and wounded or cooked and laundered for the soldiers. A now famous few cut their hair, donned uniforms and fought unrecognized alongside the men in the heat of battle. Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad "conductor," led armed expeditions to lead slaves to safety. A brave number served as spies or, as in the case of our Kentucky heroine, established underground mail systems—all at grave risk to themselves.

Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross, declared that the war put the American woman "at least fifty years in advance of the normal position which continued peace would have assigned her." This was also true of World War I and World War II. War has continued to inspire women and shown men that the "fairer sex" are capable of far more than raising children and keeping house.

Post-war art education and career: Kate E. Perry-Mosher

After the war, Kate was visiting friends in Cincinnati, Ohio. While attending a gala at Newport Barracks, she contracted meningitis, which led to her becoming completely deaf. Kate communicated by spelling words with her fingers on her hand. Fingerspelling began centuries ago.

Kate E. Perry married William Webster Mosher (1834–1897), a produce merchant and Covington City Commissioner. They lived in Covington, Kentucky, with William's widowed mother.

Kate Perry-Mosher studied with Ohio master woodcarver Benn Pitman, the godfather of Cincinnati's late nineteenth century art-carved furniture movement. Her talent at woodcarving was recog-

nized immediately. Her pieces were displayed at several exhibitions, including the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, the first official World's Fair in the United States. (Figure 5 and 6)

Nearly 10-million visitors attended the Centennial Exhibition and 37 countries participated. The overall goal of the Woman's Pavilion was to increase female confidence and choices, win woman's social, economic, and legal advancement, abolish unfair restrictions discriminating against their gender, encourage sexual harmony, and gain influence, leverage, and freedom for all women in and outside of the home.⁶

Kate also participated in the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Her piece was a panel of a relief trumpet creeper begonia. There is a ribbon scroll on the left-hand side that says, 'State of Kentucky, K.E.P. Mosher.'

She wrote the following note when she gave the panel to her brother. "A souvenir to my dear brother Roderick Perry from his sister, Kate E.P. Mosher. This panel was carved by me--at the request of the women's comm--State Board Columbian Exposition--to represent Kentucky. The trumpet vine being the state flower. The panel goes into the wainscoating (sic) of the reception room Women's Building. Each state in the union has a panel and thus the wainscoating (sic) is formed. Covington, Ky. Dec. 15, 1892."⁷

This and other pieces may be seen online in the Kate E. Perry-Mosher Photographs Collection, of the Kentucky Historical Society. Due to copyright restrictions, I am regrettably unable to use the images herein. They have an exquisite large oak cabinet that she carved. Although she was very active, many of her pieces remain unidentified and are likely in private collections. (Figures 7 and 8)

Kate E. Perry-Mosher was ranked among the best of those in the late 19th century art-carved furniture movement. It was a wonderful achievement for the feisty self-described "Kentucky rebel girl" who ran an underground mail system during the "late unpleasantness."

Endnotes:

¹Kentucky Death Certificate #10669.

²Kate E. Perry-Mosher, "The Rock Island P.O.W. Camp, Being the account of a 'girl rebel' who served as a link in a Confederate underground to this Federal Prison." *Civil War Times Illustrated*, July 1969, Historical Times, Inc., Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, pp. 28-36. Originally printed as the "History of Rock, Island, ILL., 1863," *Confederate Veteran*, Tidings Company, Nashville, January 1906.

³U.S. Army Rock Island Arsenal. <http://civilwaralbum.com/misc4/rockisland1.htm/> Accessed July 12, 2017.

⁴Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown, Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*, Confederate Stamp Alliance, 2012. pp. 491-492.

⁵Ibid, p. 490.

⁶Mary Frances Cordato, "Toward a New Century: Women and the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, 1876," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 107, Number 1, January 1, 1983.

⁷Kentucky Historical Society Object Record, oak carving by Kate E. Perry Mosher, 1892. Roderick Perry Collection. <http://ky-history.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/AF92F935-69E4-45A6-B5A9-294164063363/> Accessed July 12, 2017.