



# The Confederate Post

By Patricia A. Kaufmann



Figure 1. Prisoner of war cover from Ft. Delaware from Charles Émile Cormier to his wife in Augusta, Georgia. Against regulations, it bears both U.S. and Confederate postage.

The cover shown in Figure 1 was sent by prisoner of war Charles Émile Cormier to his wife in Augusta, Georgia, who likely fled from New Orleans with the family rather than take the Union Oath of Allegiance. Many families fled New Orleans to Augusta after the occupation of the city by U.S. forces. The cover, against regulations, bears both United States (Scott #65) and Confederate postage (Scott CSA #11)—something quite desirable to collectors.

Regulations required that U.S. postage be affixed on an outer envelope addressed to the exchange point—usually Fortress Monroe—with a second envelope enclosed that was franked with Confederate postage and addressed to the ultimate destination. The outer envelope was supposed to be discarded after the censor examined the letter. In many cases, the rules were not followed and the mail was allowed through anyway. This cover crossed the lines via the Flag of Truce boat New York (Figure 2).

Charles Émile Cormier (1832-1873) served as an officer in the 1st Regiment Louisiana Volunteer Infantry (Blanchard's, Vincent's, Shiver's, Harrison's, Nelligan's) Company I (Orleans Light Guards Company A, Cormier's, Taylor's). He is described in military records as of light complexion with light hair, hazel eyes, standing 5'11" with the pre-war occupation of clerk. He was 26 years old when he enlisted on May 4, 1861 at New Orleans as a captain.

Most Louisianans trace their roots back to Robert Cormier, born c1610, who sailed to Acadia from La Rochelle, France, in early 1644, among the earliest settlers in the colony. However, per Cormier family and Acadian researcher Steven A. Cormier, Charles Émile was one of only a few for whom he can find no Acadian connection.<sup>1</sup>

Charles Émile Cormier would have been called a Foreign Frenchman in South Louisiana, or perhaps a Creole, says Steven A. Cormier. The overwhelming majority in the area by that name are Acadian, although it is likely that he heavily identified with the Acadians.

The term Creole describes the population of people who were born to settlers in French colonial Louisiana, specifically in New Orleans. In the 18th century, Creoles consisted of the descendants of the French and Spanish upper-class that ruled the city. Over the years, the term grew to include native-born slaves of African descent, as well as free people of color.<sup>2</sup>

The term Acadia refers to regions of North America that are historically associated with the lands, descendants, and/or culture of the former French region. It refers to regions of the Canadian Maritime provinces with French roots, language, and culture. During the American Civil War, our focus is more with the Acadian exiles in southern Louisiana after their resettlement in Louisiana, whom we also refer to today as Cajuns—a term used interchangeably.<sup>3</sup>

# A Foreign Frenchman in South Louisiana

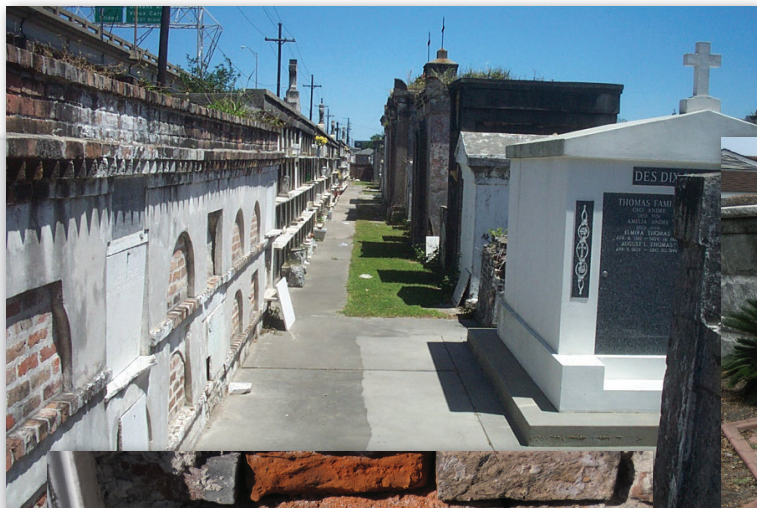


Figure 3. St. Louis Cemetery No. 2 in New Orleans, where Cormier and his wife are buried.



Figure 4. St. Louis Cemetery No. 3 in New Orleans.



Figure 5. Fragment of the headstone of Charles Émile Cormier.



Figure 6. Headstone of Frances J. Meeks Cormier, wife of Charles Émile Cormier.

Acadia refers to the existence of a French culture in any of these regions. Of the 64 parishes that make up the state of Louisiana, 22 named parishes and other parishes of similar cultural environment make up the intrastate region. And what a wonderful culture they have given us--from spicy cuisine, to folk music to their distinctive dialect.

Cormier was wounded at Seven Pines, Virginia, on June 25, 1862. He was captured at Fredericksburg, on May 3, 1863, and sent to Old Capitol Prison in Washington, D.C. He was released from the hospital there on May 20, 1863. He was promoted to major of Field & Staff with his regiment on July 3, 1863. Cormier was captured again at Fisher's Hill, Virginia, on September 20 or 22, 1864. He was listed with a severe contusion on the back and side and was admitted to a hospital in nearby Winchester. He was forwarded to Ft. McHenry, Maryland, on October 20, 1864, then transferred to Ft. Delaware on October 26, 1864. This effectively dates the subject cover to December 1864 and January 1865. Cormier was released by Oath of Allegiance on July 24, 1865 by order of the President.<sup>4,5</sup>

The 1st Regiment Louisiana Volunteer Infantry served Lee's Army well, participating in some of the most famous battles of the

war. At Spotsylvania, the enemy overran the brigade's position and captured most of the men of the regiment. As part of General John B. Gordon's division, the remnants of the regiment participated in General Jubal Early's campaigns in the Shenandoah Valley during the summer and the fall.

So heavy had the casualties been that the 1st Louisiana was consolidated with the 14th Louisiana Infantry Regiment. By late December, the brigade had rejoined General Robert E. Lee's army at Petersburg. The men served in the trenches around that city until it was evacuated, on April 2, 1865. When Lee surrendered at Appomattox on April 9, the regiment had only 1 officer and 18 enlisted men present for duty. Of the approximately 960 men enrolled during the war, approximately 162 were killed in battle, 74 died of disease, and 1 was killed by accident. Approximately 88 men deserted the regiment.

Cormier died on February 22, 1873, in New Orleans at the age of 40. He is buried in St. Louis Cemetery Number 2 in New Orleans along with his wife, Anglo-American Frances J. Meeks Cormier (1840-1925).<sup>6</sup> (Figures 3-6)

Founded in 1789, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 is located just steps outside of the



Figure 2. Flag of Truce boat  
*New York*, on which the  
 Cormier cover on page 38  
 traveled.

Returned prisoners of war exchanging their  
 rags for new clothing on board Flag of Truce  
 Boat *New York*. By Alfred R. Waud, artist  
 for *Harper's Weekly*. Library of Congress



Returned Prisoners of War exchanging their rags for new clothing on board  
 Flag of Truce boat New York  
 The figures on the right - are coming in with the new clothing, in the Centre  
 pitching the old rags overboard, & going out - on the left - to get  
 their rations  
 See New York Times  
 X 10

Caption on back of Alfred R. Waud  
 drawing above. Library of Congress

French Quarter. Dramatically shown in the 1969 film, *Easy Rider*, it is the oldest existing cemetery in New Orleans. It is a maze of wall vaults, family tombs, and society tombs that artistically showcase the unique burial customs and traditions of New Orleans. It is the burial ground of some of the most illustrious citizens of New Orleans. Notable structures include the famed oven-wall vaults, the supposed resting place of Voodoo Queen Marie Laveau, and the magnificent tombs of the French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish societies.<sup>7</sup>

The Foreign Frenchman was wounded at least three times in battle, captured twice and endured the horrors of prison life during the final months of the conflict. One wonders what ultimately cut short his life at the relatively young age of 40, less than a decade after the war.

**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup>Steven A. Cormier, *Acadians Who Found Refuge in Louisiana*, February 1764-early 1800s, *Acadians in Gray*, [\[diansingray.com/Appendices-ATLAL-CORMIER.htm\]\(http://www.acadiansingray.com/Appendices-ATLAL-CORMIER.htm\) Accessed January 31, 2017.](http://www.aca-</a></p>
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<sup>2</sup>Jay Ducote, "Cajun vs. Creole: What's The Difference?" *The Huffington Post*. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/Menuism/cajun-vs-creole\\_b\\_1447822.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/Menuism/cajun-vs-creole_b_1447822.html) Accessed January 31, 2017.

<sup>3</sup>Steven A. Cormier, *Acadians in Gray*, <http://acadiansingray.com/> Accessed January 31, 2017.

<sup>4</sup>Robert K. Krick, *Lee's Colonels: A Biographical Register of the Field Officers of the Army of Northern Virginia*, 1984, Morning-side Bookshop, 2nd edition, c1979, p. 85.

<sup>5</sup>Steven A. Cormier, *Acadians in Gray*, [http://www.acadiansingray.com/1st%20\(Nelligan's\)%20Regt.%20Inf.htm](http://www.acadiansingray.com/1st%20(Nelligan's)%20Regt.%20Inf.htm) Accessed January 31, 2017.

<sup>6</sup>Find A Grave Memorial #1571 (his), Find A Grave Memorial #146967732 (hers). <https://www.findagrave.com/> Accessed January 31, 2017.

<sup>7</sup>St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 Tour, Save