

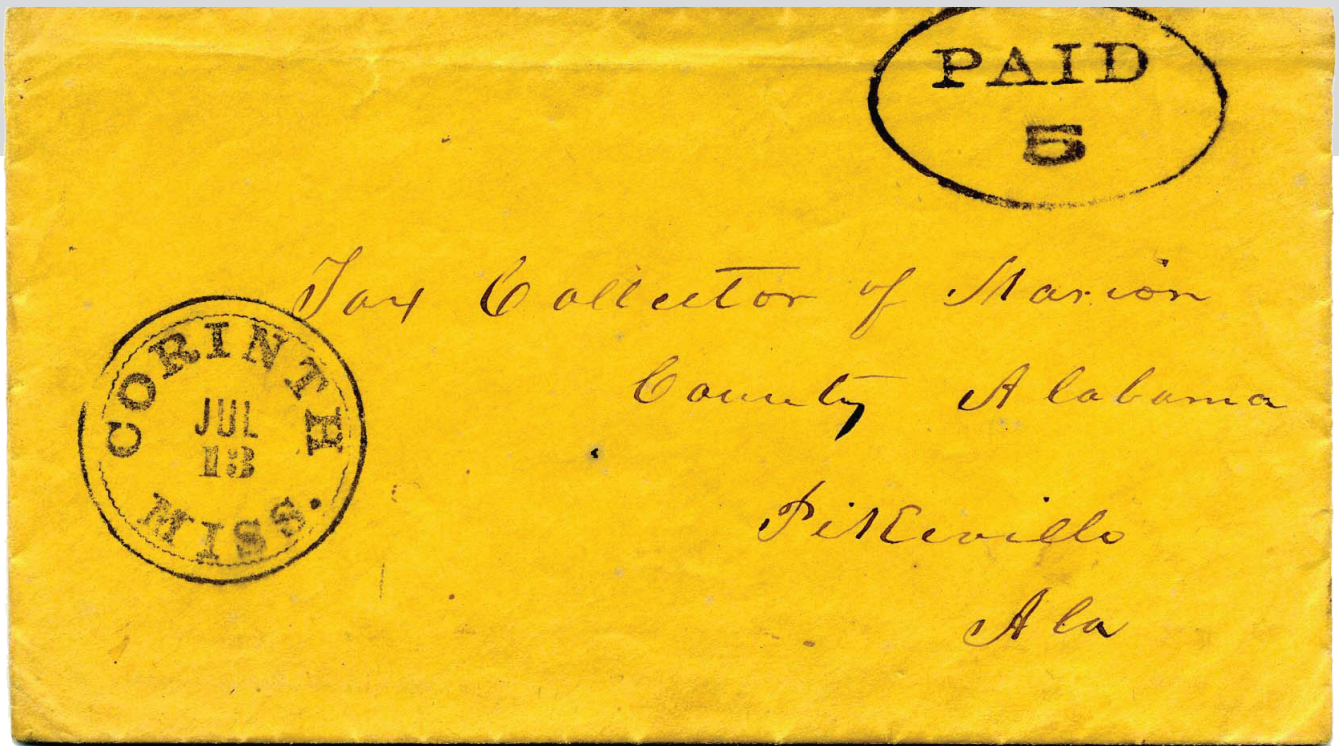


The Confederate Post

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

Keeping Up with the Times

Confederate stampless cover from Corinth, Mississippi, formerly referred to as a “Hand-stamped Paid.”



Mired in the Past

Are you still watching a tiny television set with a fuzzy black and white picture? No? Of course not, you say. However, I do know collectors who live somewhat “off the grid.” They do not own TVs, nor computers, nor carry cell phones. And some of them reside in urban areas, although that seems at odds with the “off the grid” concept.

Are you a pocket watch person? Or—alternatively—do you always want to own the latest in technology, such as the Apple Watch, which does virtually everything but bake bread? Or are you like most of the population—somewhere in between?

Over 20 years ago, on a beautiful Saturday morning, I was on a dive boat off the Delaware coast heading out to our first dive site of the day. The animated chatter of the divers was all about the slow-speed chase of the now infamous white Ford Bronco the day before.

One diver not only had not heard anything about that bizarre car chase, he had no idea who O.J. Simpson was, either as a pro football player or as the Hertz Rental Car pitch-man running

through the airport. When it came to media, that man lived in a virtual time capsule of the past.

So where am I going with this? Well, I’m marching toward a few of my pet peeves in philately.

In general, the problem is that writers—collectors, dealers, exhibitors, auction describers, authors, researchers—all of us—sometimes get lazy, rushed or, for whatever reason, fail to be accurate when we can and should be. Yes, I count myself in this group too. And I—as do others—have my excuses.

Since this is a column about Confederate stamps and postal history, my examples are obviously from that field. But this problem extends to all areas of philately.

For starters, I’ll begin with an example of which I am somewhat guilty but for which I have an excuse—I told you—there are always excuses.

Stampless Covers—not “Handstamped Pairs”

In the 2012 *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*¹, of which I was editor-in-chief, the editorial team made a concerted effort to bring

“In general, the problem is that writers—collectors, dealers, exhibitors, auction describers, authors, researchers—all of us—sometimes get lazy, rushed or, for whatever reason, fail to be accurate when we can and should be. Yes, I count myself in this group too. And I—as do others—have my excuses.”

Confederate collectors into the 21st century. This was the successor volume to the series of Dietz catalogs that were the “bible” for Confederate philately during the 20th century. We heavily expanded the catalog and tried to correct the errors of the past—often with great resistance.

One of the many terminology changes was properly identifying the category of Stampless Covers, which had been called “Hand-stamped Pairs” by August Dietz and others for decades. In a 2013 review of the CSA catalog, esteemed scholar and *Chronicle* editor, Michael Laurence, pointed out that the revised terminology from Handstamped Pairs to Stampless Covers was long overdue. He also pointed out many other long overdue catalog changes.

Most U.S. collectors applauded the change to the proper term Stampless Covers, but Confederate collectors, in part, have continued to resist. Why is that?

Primarily, I believe this foot-dragging is out of habit. In my own case, I have used the “new” nomenclature—which has always been a classic US term—since just before the CSA catalog was in print.

But I have thousands of retail descriptions that were written before the catalog was published and I have neither the time nor the inclination to correct all of them, as it would likely literally take months, and to little advantage.

The exception to this is when the opportunity to correct antiquated terminology presents itself after I buy something which I sold years before and I am thus rewriting an old description. For the most part, I do not simply copy and paste the old description for the resurrected retail offering, but there are many writers who do just that in all sorts of publications.

Old Catalog Numbers, Types and Dates

Even more egregious, to my mind, is the use of outdated catalog numbers, types and incorrect dates. This continues.

The Internet has compounded the problem. I’ve written more than once in these pages about conflicting information found both online and in print. Researchers who stop at their first source and accept information as “gospel” are doing a disservice to their readers and perpetuating the problem.

Primary sources are critical to research—and even primary sources are not without mistakes. I have seen period newspapers

in which published information has been proven incorrect by overwhelming historical evidence. What? The media make a mistake? Perish the thought!

One of the major sections that was redone in the CSA catalog was the official, semi-official and state imprints. The old Dietz listings were, frankly, a confusing mess. The CSA catalog listings are a vast improvement and redoing the section took us countless combined hours of work.

More than one collector of imprints wrote me an impassioned thank you after the catalog appeared, citing order from Dietz chaos, etc. Yet I continue to see old Dietz catalog types and misinformation printed in current publications of all sorts.

Census Data

How many covers from a specific town, with a particular postmark or individual stamp issue are known? Obviously, what someone may pay for a certain stamp or cover may be tied into that all-important information. And this is information which is often difficult to quantify for the masses. Systematically acquiring and recording such information is not a simple task.

For example, Frank Crown edited and compiled the information from three important censuses in his book on Confederate postmasters’ provisional surveys.² This was published over 30 years ago and—worse—the original surveys from Charles Phillips and Frank Hart were compiled, respectively, in the

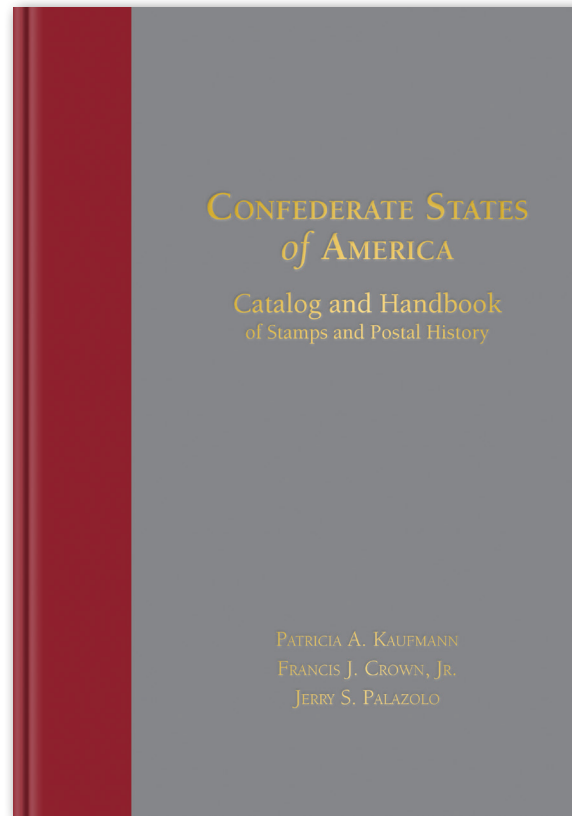
1930s and 1950s—some information originating over 80 years ago. It would not be a stretch to say that most listings in this work are out of date.

But what else do we presently have? Despite the drawback of seriously dated material, it is nevertheless a valuable source. It gives us a point in time where only one of a certain provisional was recorded (and is often still the case such as the Mt. Lebanon, La., or Rutherfordton, N.C., provisionals), for example, or where 100 were recorded and thus are clearly far more common.

An appropriate illustration is the huge disparity in a listing for a Confederate handstamped provisional from Abington, Va., (Scott 2XU2). Only 15 are listed in the Crown surveys, but in the far more recent publication of Rick Calhoun’s *Confederate Postmaster Provisionals of Virginia*³, there are 35 listings for this same provisional entire—over twice as many. Regrettably, Rick’s fine work was a very small printing and thus a limited audience.



Ladies pocket watch from my great-great aunt, Lottie Cozad (1877-1927)—a piece of the past.



CONFEDERATE STATES of AMERICA

Catalog and Handbook
of Stamps and Postal History

PATRICIA A. KAUFMANN
FRANCIS J. CROWN, JR.
JERRY S. PALAZOLO

A slight aside on census data: Frank Crown recently gave a talk at the 2016 mid-year meeting of the Confederate Stamp Alliance in Memphis. It was about the necessity of recording complete detailed information when undertaking a census—the precise wording of the written address, the exact location of the postal markings on the cover, e.g., upper left corner, any docketing and so forth. He gave examples of similar covers which, at first, sounded identical until examined more carefully.

About Secession and Admission to the Confederacy: Correcting the Record

The first collectible postal history section of the Civil War is Independent State Use, from the time a state seceded until the time it joined the Confederacy. The date traditionally accepted in both philatelic and academic circles as the founding date of the Confederate States of America (CSA) is February 4, 1861. The process began with South Carolina's secession on December 20, 1860, and proceeded step-by-step through February 8, 1861, when the assembly of delegates from the six seceded states approved a provisional constitution.

In 1860, there was no precedent in US history nor jurisprudence to guide a state if it wanted to secede from the United States. Consequently, each state and territory that eventually comprised the Confederacy created its own procedures to bring about secession from the US and to effectuate its application for admission into the CSA.

Beyond these legislative steps, the states ran in uncharted waters. Because the process of secession was novel and often fueled by political and emotional catalysts, not all states adhered to their own legally mandated prerequisites to achieve secession. Some states strictly followed their own procedures; some states skipped one or more prescribed steps; and, some states followed

the required steps, but not in the stated order. In the end, however, each state—as well as the Confederacy—concluded that it had sufficiently complied with its own legal requirements to achieve secession.

To ascertain the actual dates of secession and admission for each state, the editors of the CSA catalog re-examined the secession and admission processes of each state compared to prior editions of the predecessor Dietz catalog, where dates of secession inexplicably changed from volume to volume over the decades.

In the 1931 edition of the Dietz catalog,⁴ Florida is listed as having seceded on January 10, 1861, but that is legally incorrect. In the 1945 edition,⁵ that was improperly “corrected” to “Passed Ordinance of

Secession January 7, 1861, to take effect January 10, 1861.” That misinformation continued into the 1959 and 1986 editions of Dietz until it was properly listed in the 2012 CSA catalog.

Although Texas is often thought of as being one of the “seven” founding states, this is legally not the case. Yet historians and postal historians continue to debate this when the legalities are clear and indisputable. The Internet is filled with conflicting information and partial truths on this topic.

It is no wonder that postal historians are confused when you consider that the first Confederate flag patriotic shows seven stars. The automatic presumption is that Texas seceded before February 4, 1861, and indeed the process had been started, but it was not complete nor legally binding.

The region of the United States west of the Mississippi River, sometimes referred to as “Indian Territory,” was part of the Louisiana Purchase acquisition made by the United States from France in 1803. The area referred to comprised most of present day Oklahoma. Although it is often referred to as a “territory,”

The monumental Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History which was released in 2012 and was edited by the author and associates Francis Crown and Jerry Palazoloz.

An Apple Watch—a time piece today’s modern world.



it never achieved formal territorial status. It was not part of the United States and thus had no need to secede, nor could it.

Rather, this area was loosely organized around the Five Civilized Nations of Native Americans—the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles—which owned all the land in common. The US Post Office Department provided sporadic and unreliable postal service within and through the region.

For years, catalogs, auction catalogs, and articles listed New Mexico as part of the Confederacy and—indeed—there are well-known postmarks bearing “N.M.” for New Mexico. Despite “N.M.” in the canceling device, this is an Arizona marking, as there was no Confederate New Mexico Territory.

On September 25, 1861, the Confederate Postmaster General appointed William D. Skillman as postmaster at Mesilla. The only operating Confederate post office in the Confederate Territory of Arizona was Mesilla. Postmaster Skillman appropriated the old Mesilla, N.M., canceling device from the US post office and used it in his new Confederate Arizona Territory post office.

This “new” information about Confederate New Mexico and Arizona was first put forth in the 2012 CSA catalog. Or was it?

I attended the exciting Grand Opening of the American Philatelic Research Library in Bellefonte, Pa., October 28-29, 2016. While there, I had time to peruse the library stacks. I picked up a 1966 publication which was bound but in very crude typewritten and mimeographed form with many typos and without page numbers. I have since bought a copy.

This work was *Indian Territory Mail* by Gaspare Signorelli and Tom J. Caldwell.⁶ It had the correct information about the “Five Civilized Tribes” and Arizona Territory. But mainstream philately never picked up that information nor ran with it. Note that the title of the publication was “Indian Territory” and the overwhelming content was indeed about the later period, properly known as Indian Territory mail. But within that book, the history of the Civil War era mails was correctly noted as Arizona Territory. But, at that time, this information was never retained or explored for future catalog editions.

Tennessee is another state whose secession history has been heavily misrepresented over the years. Collectors continue to carry on information from old auction catalogs, journals or books and parrot incorrect dates from past publications. Without repeating the entire story of Tennessee, the correct date of secession is June 8, 1861, and the date of admission to the CSA was July 2, 1861.

The 2012 CSA catalog corrected the misinformation on secession and admission dates with a systematic approach and research

into the actual laws in place for each state at the time, reexamining the legal processes. Yet collectors and dealers continue to reiterate incorrect information without regard to the legalities at work in the individual states. In my opinion, most of this is due to repeating writeups of the past. Or worse, some argue against the “new”—legally accurate—dates because the old dates are more convenient for their collections, exhibits or dealer stock.

It is time the postal history world is unified on these legally accurate dates as well as the use of current catalog types, census data and terminology. ✉

Endnotes

1. Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown Jr., Jerry S. Palazoloz, *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*, Confederate Stamp Alliance, 2012.
2. Francis J. Crown Jr., Editor, *Surveys of the Confederate Postmasters’ Provisionals*, 1984.
3. Richard L. Calhoun, *The Confederate Postmaster Provisionals of Virginia*, Virginia Postal History Society, Henrico, Va., 2011, pp. 7-8.
4. *Dietz Specialized Catalog of the Postage Stamps of the Confederate States of America*, The Dietz Printing Company, Richmond, Va., 1931, p. 31.
5. *Dietz Catalog & Handbook (Specialized) of the Postage Stamps of the Confederate States of America*, The Dietz Press, Inc., Richmond, Va., 1945, p. 19.
6. Gaspare Signorelli and Tom J. Caldwell, *Indian Territory Mail*, 1966, Gaspare Signorelli.

[Editor’s Note: Patricia (Trish) Kaufmann was introduced to Confederate postal history in 1965. She embarked on a lifetime of collecting, research, and writing about this aspect of American postal history, all the while heavily engaged in organized philately. She was editor-in-chief of the critically acclaimed 2012 Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History.]