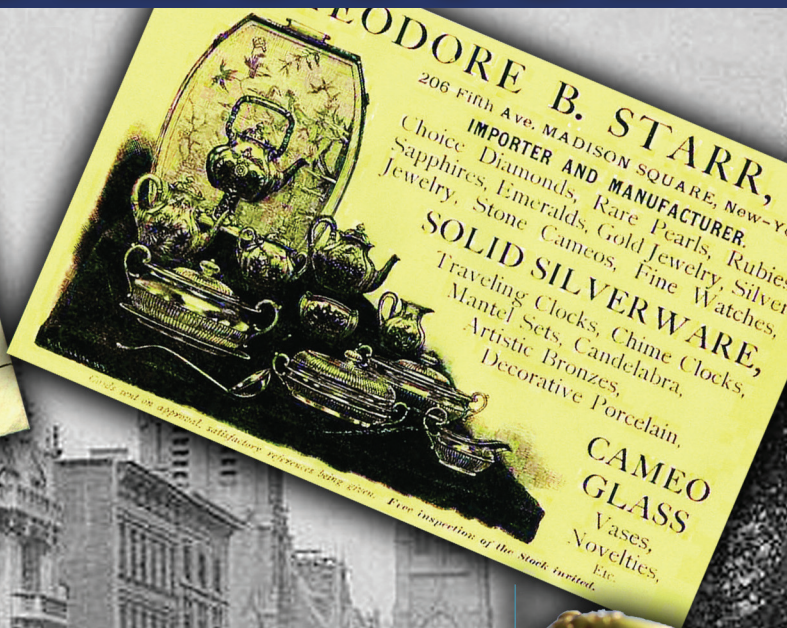
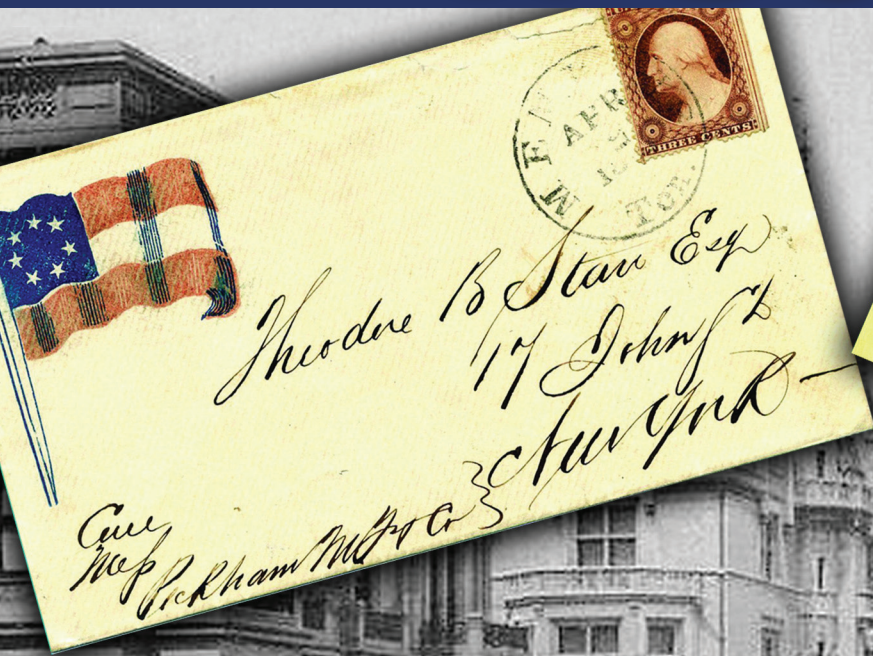


\$5.95

The American Stamp Dealer & Collector

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Patricia Kaufmann
Civil War Pre-Seccession
Mail to a Gilded Age
Jeweler in New York City!
p. 50

ASDA's NORTHERN CALIF. SHOW!
WESTIN HOTEL • MILLBRAE, CA. JULY 10-12



The Confederate Post

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

Theodore B. Starr: Gilded Age Jeweler

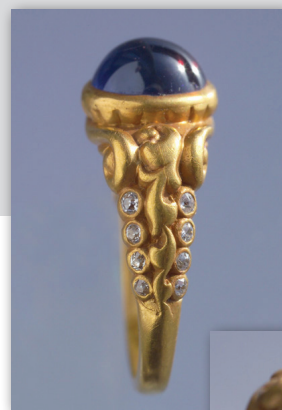


Figure 2a. A Starr architectural gold ring displays a cornflower blue sapphire with 16 diamonds. Circa 1900.



Figure 1. Early 7-star Confederate patriotic cover franked with 3¢ 1857 issue tied Memphis, Tennessee, postmark and addressed to Theodore B. Starr, 17 John Street, New York.

The early Confederate 7-star patriotic cover (CSA Catalog F7-5C¹) shown in Figure 1 is franked with a U.S. 3¢ dull red 1857 issue tied by a Memphis, Tennessee, April 5, 1861 circular date stamp with the day date inverted. This pre-secession use is addressed to Theodore B. Starr, 17 John Street, New York/Care Messrs Peckham Mfg. & Co. As is my habit, I looked up the addressee online and a tale of jewelry luminaries revealed itself.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, was the one who coined the name “Gilded Age” to describe the excesses of the wealthy in a period from about 1870 until the turn of the century in *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* (1873), which he wrote with Charles Dudley Warner. This work satirized greed and political corruption in post-Civil War America.

Other countries had their own versions of the Gilded Age, such as La Belle Époque (the Beautiful Era) in France, conventionally dated 1871-1914, and the Victorian and Edwardian eras in the United Kingdom. In the United States, New York was the epicenter of Gilded Age extravagances.

Many of the great jewelry designers of the period are well-known to most. Louis Comfort Tiffany, René Lalique and Peter

Carl Fabergé are but a few. Others are not well-known, except to specialized collectors. Theodore B. Starr is one of those.²

Theodore Burr Starr (1837-1907) first opened his luxury retail business as Theodore B. Starr in 1862, during the early years of Civil War. Two years later, he partnered with German-born Herman Marcus and together they did business from 1864-1877 as Starr & Marcus at the 17 John Street address on the patriotic cover. They were importers and huge dealers in fine diamonds, pearls, jewelry, watches, clocks, porcelain, as well as silverware, which became their most popular product.³ The firm was the exclusive retail outlet for Gorham silver in New York until 1884.⁴

A few of the wares and marks of Theodore B. Starr & Co. and Starr & Marcus are shown in Figures 2 through 7. This is only the scantest of illustrations of these high-end Gilded Age retailers. Their many marks extended to fine porcelain and far more. Further information is easily obtained from various catalogs on vintage jewelry, silver and the other top of the line merchandise in which they dealt.

Herman Marcus began his career with Tiffany & Co. in 1850 when he immigrated to the United States from Dresden. Marcus left Starr to rejoin Tiffany for unknown reasons. Starr reverted to



Figure 3. Manufacturer's mark of Starr & Marcus / New York / 448 / English sterling.



Figure 2b. The sapphire and diamond ring bears the mark of T. B. Starr.⁵

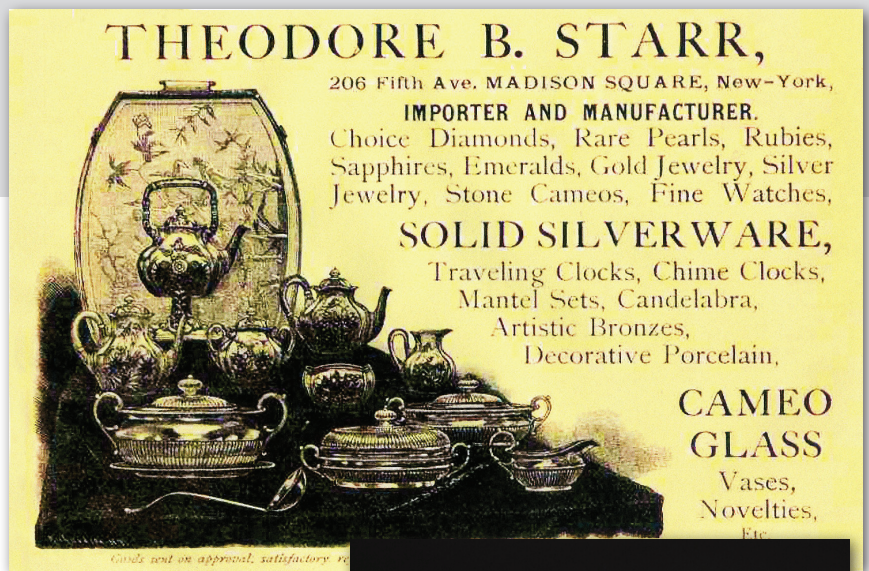


Figure 8. Theodore B. Starr trade card, 206 Fifth Avenue, Madison Square, New York.

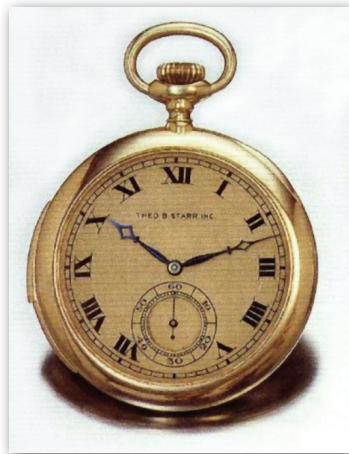


Figure 4. Swiss pocket watch, 18K gold, keyless minute repeating, marked Theo. B. Starr, Inc. circa 1910. Price is estimated in 1999 at \$3,500-\$4,000.



Figure 5. Mantle clock, English, made for Theodore B. Starr & Co., circa 1910.



Figure 6. Theodore B. Starr sterling silver tea and coffee service, which sold for \$2,600 in a Skinner Auction in 2013.



Figure 7. One of the many marks of Theodore B. Starr.

the name Theodore B. Starr & Co. from 1877-1900. One of his trade cards is shown in Figure 8 with one of his long-standing addresses, 206 Fifth Avenue, Madison Square West, New York. Starr's son took over the business and incorporated the company in 1907. In 1918, the company was bought by Reed and Barton, the silver firm. Theodore Starr & Co. closed its doors in 1923.

After partnering and establishing multiple firms, Herman Marcus established Marcus & Co. with his sons William and George. He continued to work with his sons until his death in 1899.

In 1882, *The New York Times* carried a story entitled "Exhibition of Jewelry" describing Starr's work. In it, the anonymous writer declaimed that art jewelry "Recognized as that art which must be in a certain measure indifferent to the costly materials which enter into its composition, it seeks to enhance the beauty of the gems and the gold by making them subservient to human skill. Barbaric and uneducated tendencies care for huge surfaces covered with stones, where crude masses of gold are displayed..."

The writer goes on to describe the exhibit as containing many "exquisite jewels, rivers of diamonds, a bracelet of diamonds and emeralds and pearls of various hues..."⁵ Indeed, this was clearly a popular period of excess. ☒

Endnotes

¹Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown, Jr., and Jerry S. Palazolo, *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*, Confederate Stamp Alliance, 2012.

²Professional Pearl and Bead Stringing, "Little Known Gilded Age Jeweler" <http://fsommers.com/little-known-gilded-age-jeweler/> Accessed April 13, 2015.

³Kathryn Siedenburtg and Danforth Starr, *Our Heritage*. Published privately. 1955. Their source was Burgis Pratt Starr. "A History of the Starr Family of New England, from the Ancestor Dr. Comfort Starr" Hartford, Conn. <http://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Starr-941> Accessed April 13, 2015.

⁴*American Silversmiths*, Theodore Burr Starr, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~silversmiths/makers/silversmiths/171079.htm> Accessed April 13, 2015.

⁵Tadema Gallery, 10 Charlton Place, Camden Passage, Islington, London N1 8AJ, United Kingdom. http://www.tadema-gallery.com/Tad_PHP/Tadema_ImagePage_Archive.php?paraSub=7328&xtra= Accessed April 13, 2015.