



# The Civil War Post

Patricia A. Kaufmann

## It's Not All About Stamps and Postal Routes

I know some will disagree with my column title, perhaps vigorously. But collectors do not necessarily care only about things philatelic when collecting covers, especially in the fascinating field of the American Civil War. A perfect example is adversity covers, those as envelopes fashioned from spare rolls of wallpaper, illustrated broadsides, marine charts, or other sources of paper goods. Or envelopes turned inside out and used again.

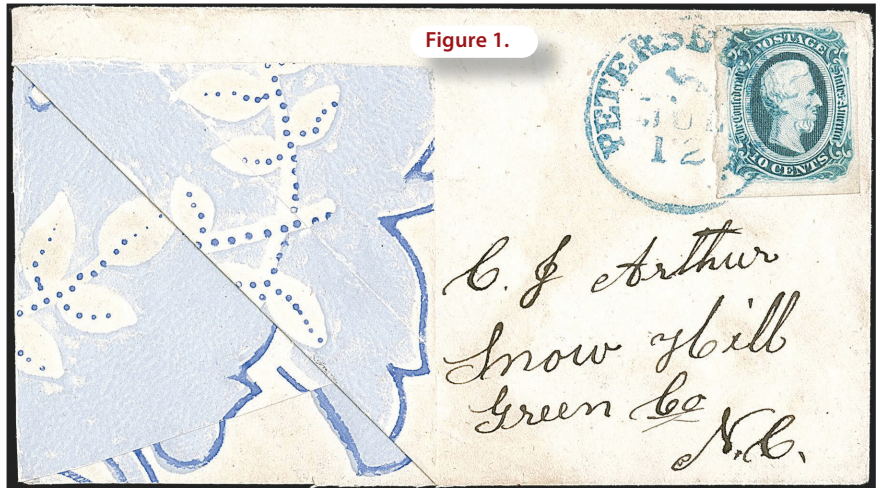
*Adversity covers* is the term used to describe homemade envelopes devised as substitutes for formal paper sources due to the adverse conditions that caused them to occur. The main complication was the blockade of Southern ports, which blocked trade between North and South and prevented the import of better-quality papers from Europe. Simple esthetics drives the price of these collectibles, not stamps, postal markings, nor routes. This is not to say that these things are not of paramount importance to postal history.

As I write this, the Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries sale featuring the Ozarks Collection of Civil War Adversity Covers (Sale 1241, held Sept. 28-29, 2021) has just taken place and the prices were very strong due to fierce bidding. All images for this article are courtesy of Siegel Auction Galleries.

Ever popular, Figure 1 is just one example of a stunning wallpaper cover, which sold for \$3,500 plus the 18% buyer premium. It is franked with a 10¢ blue, type II engraved issue (Scott CSA 12) tied by a blue Petersburg, Va., circular datestamp on a blue and pale blue floral design. As auctioneer Scott Trepel pointed out to the bidders, it is blue on blue on blue. It sports a provenance of Harold Brooks and Buck Boshwit, as well as being signed by Stanley Ashbrook.

Another example of a showy adversity cover was Lot 1273, shown in Figure 2, which is franked with a left sheet-margin pair of 5¢ green lithographs (Scott CSA 1) tied by a Marion, Ala., circular datestamp on a Breckinridge-Lane illustrated campaign cover with the names crossed out and Confederate candidates of "Davis" and "Stephens" added. The U.S. flags are also crossed out in the sender's handwriting.

The cover is addressed to Ridgeway, N.C. As the catalog description points out, Breckinridge was a Kentucky lawyer and politician who served as vice president of the United States from 1857-61. He came in third in the popular vote and second in the electoral vote, ahead of Bell and Douglas. He instead became a senator, until he was expelled for joining the Confed-



erate army. The sender leaves no doubt as to his sentiments, going so far as to cross out the "New York" on the imprint.

This campaign cover lot graced the collections of Alfred Caspary and Marc Haas before being offered in the Ozarks Collection, where it hammered down to an agent at \$7,500 plus the 18% buyer premium.

Other cases of very collectible "postal history," which technically aren't postal in nature at all, are Civil War patriotics – both North and South – as well as government imprinted covers, advertising covers, college covers and the like. Nonetheless, these collecting categories are wildly popular with collectors.

*Confederate patriotic covers* are listed in catalogs, such as the *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History* (CSA catalog). The most common stamped examples are listed with a guiding price in the *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*, although it is understandably of limited assistance. A specialized catalog showing recorded designs is more helpful if you are going to collect patriotic designs.

In 1991, Benjamin Wishnietsky wrote a 144-page book published by David G. Phillips, which is devoted to Confederate designs, with 230 illustrations, 90 of which are in color. It is titled *Confederate Patriotic Covers and their Usages*.

Published in 2019, the most recent Confederate patriotic cover publication is *Confederate Patriotic Stationery*, by James W. Milgram and John L. Kimbrough. It is 216 pages with 20 chapters, which includes six chapters devoted to designs printed in the North.

**Union patriotic covers** have famously been followed in stand-alone catalogs that are devoted to patriotic designs. These include Walcott, Grant, Bischel and Weiss.

*The George Walcott Collection* is a still-valued small auction catalog produced by Robert Laurence in May 1935. It listed 3,253 lots and is usually found with prices realized, which are obviously of limited use today.

*The Handbook of Civil War Patriotic Envelopes and Postal History* was written and published by Robert Grant in 1974-75. It was noted as “part one,” but there never was a part two. While far more informative than Walcott, it stops short of comprehensive coverage since it was never completed. Since I bought it at the time of publication, I never realized how scarce it was until more recently when I realized many had never heard of it. It also made me realize how long I’d been doing this.

*Civil War Patriotics Postally Used, featuring the Collection of Professor Jon E. Bischel* was sold by Nutmeg Stamp Sales/Andrew Levitt in June 2000. More than 6,000 covers are illustrated in full color with values, the only full-color reference. It was described by Andy Levitt as the most inclusive collection of used Civil War patriotic covers. The vast majority are Union designs, but there are more than 200 Confederate uses as well.

To me, the most useful of the available Union patriotic publications is the *Catalog of Union Civil War Patriotic Covers*, written and published by William R. Weiss, Jr. in 1995. It illustrates more than 5,500 designs with a cross section of verses and comes with a cross-reference to the Bischel catalog. It also comes with a price guide and cross-references Walcott numbers.

A slightly different type of publication is *Patriotic Envelopes of the Civil War: The Iconography of Union and Confederate Covers (Conflicting Worlds: New Dimensions of the American Civil War)*, by Dr. Steven R. Boyd, October 2010, 169 pages, sparsely illustrated. This is not a catalog. It is a dialogue and not all will agree with Professor Boyd’s conclusions. Nonetheless, it is an important volume if you are attempting to cover all bases on the subject.

All these publications have something distinctive to commend them and all are important if you are collecting



Figure 2.

patriotics. It should also be obvious that current auction catalogs of the major auction houses are a valuable resource of information, market trends and pricing.

As should be evident by the number of pages in books devoted to Confederate patriotics vs. Union, the Southern productions are far more rare.

An example that ticks boxes of both North and South was Lot 1302 in the Ozarks Collection, with a stellar provenance of George Walcott, Hubert Judd, Marc Haas, Dr. Howard Green and Blake Myers.

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This cover is an exceptional use of a multicolored two-panel Magnus patriotic design, which was captured and mailed during the Seven Days Battles. It is post-marked by a Richmond, Va., June 30 (1862) circular datestamp with a matching "DUE 10" handstamp on a multicolored map of the District of Columbia and Washington, as well as a portrait of Maj. Gen. McClellan. Wade Hampton's Legion of South Carolina Volunteers participated in most major campaigns in the East. This was probably picked up on the battlefield and used to send a letter to family. Shown in Figure 3, that cover sold for \$11,000 plus the 18% buyer premium.



Figure 3.

The caveat with this type of "topical collecting" is that, if you are an exhibitor, you need to be very mindful of this potential disconnect and present your exhibit in such a way that there is a postal correlation.

### Do Your Homework

Joining a society such as the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors (AAPE, [www.aape.org](http://www.aape.org)) is practically an imperative if you want to be a successful (winning) exhibitor. AAPE exists to share and discuss ideas and techniques for improving standards of exhibit preparation, judging and the management of exhibits. The society name says it all.

AAPE is a group that serves the entire range of people who work or have an interest in one or more of these fields, whether novice, experienced or those just beginning to think about getting involved. The goal is to encourage your increasing participation and enjoyment of philatelic exhibiting, and to ensure the health of this part of our hobby. The organization has an exhibit feedback service, which is an excellent tool for beginner and experienced exhibitors alike. Its journal is a quality thought-provoking magazine edited until recently by Randy Neil, one of the AAPE founders (along with John Hotchner), and a well-known and respected philatelic editor. *The Philatelic Exhibitor* recently welcomed a new editor, Martin Kent Miller, also a talented and experienced editor.

If you just don't care what judges think, you can always march to your own beat. But don't be surprised at the results. Many Civil War postal history collectors have done this with predictable outcomes. One such is Brian Green, Maria and Alexander's exhibit of Confederate Generals (covers addressed to, from or in care of a general officer), yet the display is appreciated by collectors and the general public. It often wins the "Most Popular Exhibit" award at whatever show. There is even a small section in the CSA catalog dedicated to Confederate Generals' mail.

If you have never exhibited and have no clue how to start, an excellent starting point would be the American

Philatelic Society (APS), which has an all-important downloadable *Manual of Judging*, explaining what judges are looking for. There are articles, seminars and online exhibits to peruse at [www.stamps.org](http://www.stamps.org). The American Philatelic Research Library has more than 750 exhibit reproductions, nearly 100 of which are digital scans with the remainder being paper copies.

Whether you are interested in getting an appropriate medal for your exhibiting efforts or simply want to put an exhibit together for your own pleasure, it's all about having fun. There are people on both sides. The admonition is that you understand the rules and, if you don't want to follow them, you willingly and graciously accept the outcome. ☐

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Patricia A. (Trish) Kaufmann was first introduced to Confederate postal history in 1965. She became actively involved in organized philately in 1969, became a dealer in 1973, and today specializes solely in Confederate stamps and postal history. She enjoys hearing from readers and may be reached at [trishkauf@comcast.net](mailto:trishkauf@comcast.net).

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