



"Coming events, cast
their shadows before."



Sour Apple



Hang Him from a Sour Apple Tree — A Battlefield Souvenir



By Patricia A. Kaufmann

Battlefield souvenirs are quite familiar to me. Usually they are stamps taken from dead soldiers and sent home to loved ones. The subject item is no different, but it is the most spectacular example I've ever encountered. All such battlefield souvenirs have a story to tell. I was fortunate that a friend and colleague shared it with me at APS StampShow 2018 in Columbus and has allowed me to share it and the following story.

An unknown Union soldier sent home his souvenir[s] with this note:

Darling these stamps were taken from a dead Rebel's pocket after the battle at Gettysburg. The gentleman who gave them to me is a Steward in one of the Battery Hospitals and he took them out of the Rebels pocket himself. Keep them as a relic of the war.

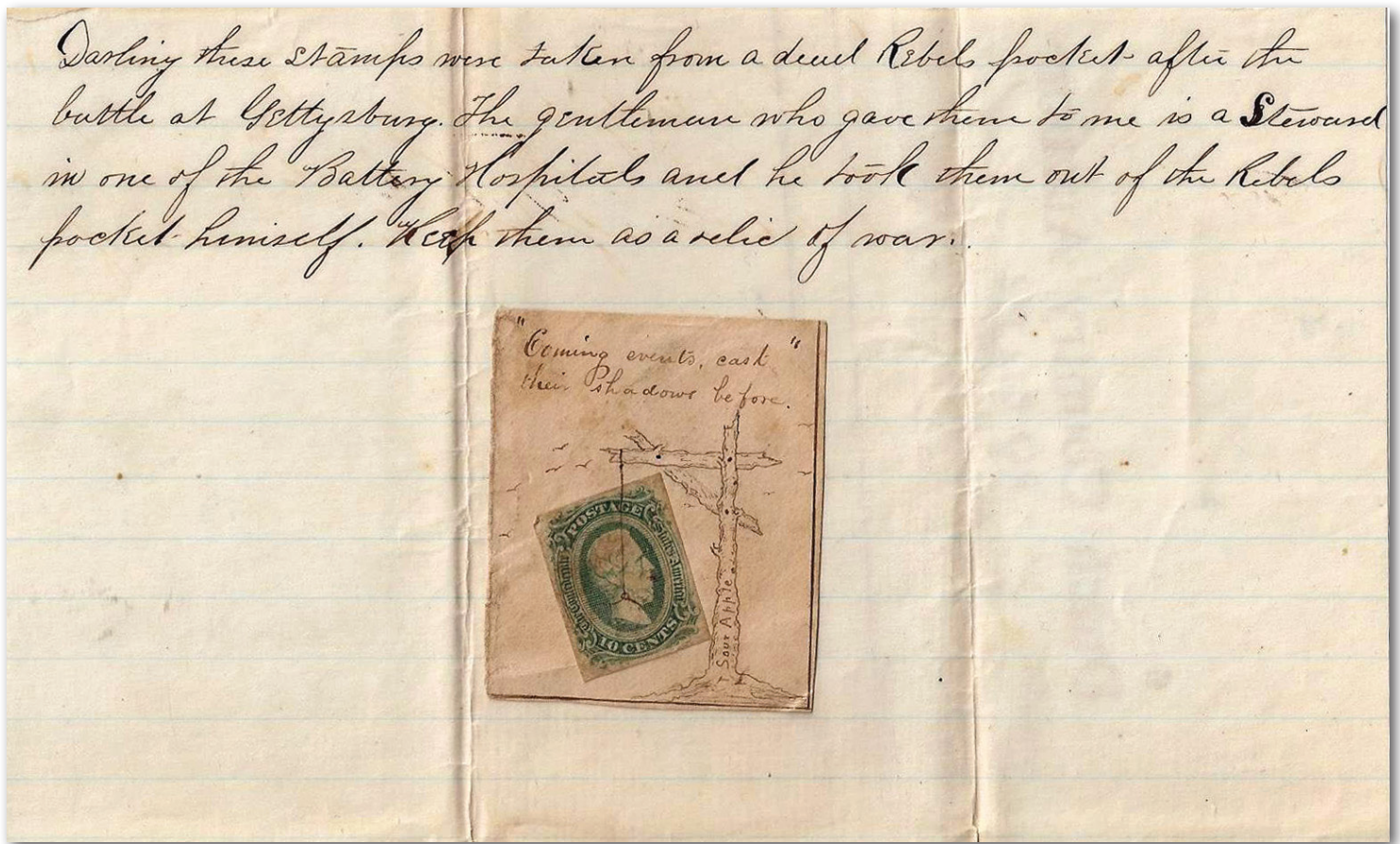
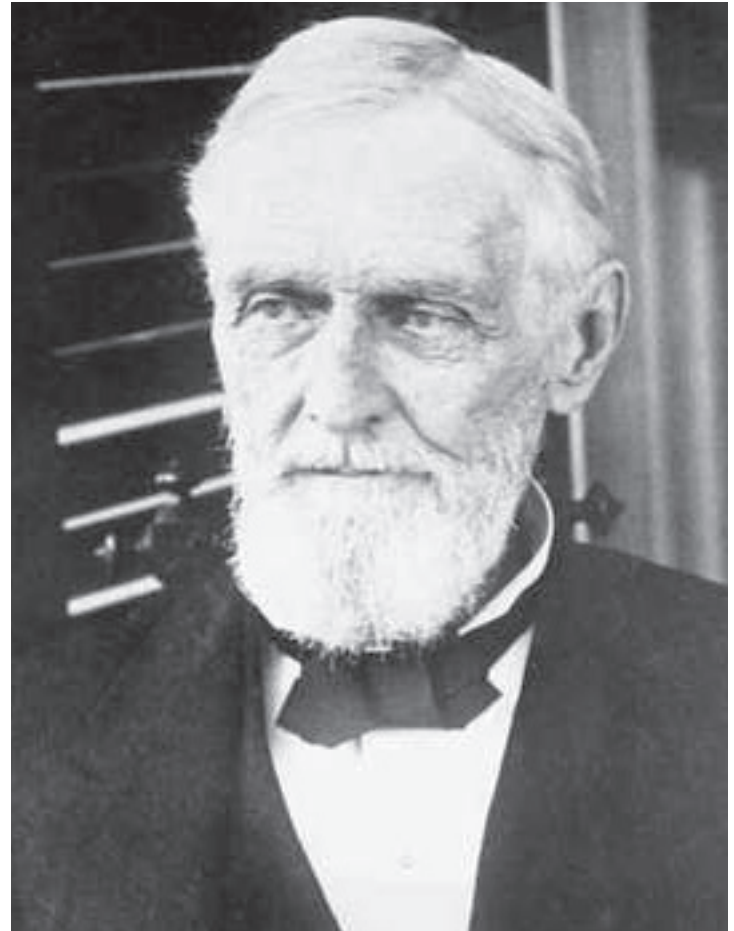


Figure 1. Soldier's note home to his wife, sharing his battlefield souvenirs with her. Below is a Battlefield souvenir made into a piece of art envisioning Jeff Davis hanging from a sour apple tree.

Jefferson Davis, the former president of the Confederacy, is shown here in a photograph from the mid-1870s.



Notice the soldier mentions stamps—plural. Thus, I surmise the illustrated stamp and artwork were done with one of said stamps upon receipt. On a small piece of paper is mounted a single Confederate 10-cent engraved issue (Scott No. 11) with a hangman's noose drawn around his neck. Davis hangs from the gallows made from a Sour Apple tree—so inscribed at the base of the tree. Above the scene is prophesied, "Coming events, cast their shadows before."

The caption was doubtless written in the hope that Davis, who was clearly reviled as a traitor by the North, would be hanging ere long for crimes committed against the nation. Davis was a West Point graduate, an officer in the U.S. Army, a United States senator and a U.S. secretary of war. His desertion from North to the South was deeply felt.



Figure 2. Dead soldiers at McPherson Woods, Battle of Gettysburg.

Gettysburg

The Battle of Gettysburg was fought July 1-3, 1863. It involved the largest number of casualties of the war and is often described as the war's turning point. The Confederate soldier who lost his life at Gettysburg and provided the subject souvenir was one of an estimated 23,000-28,000 CSA casualties. Union casualties were similar in number.

Nearly one-third of the total forces engaged at Gettysburg became casualties. Bodies were collected on the field and interred near where they fell. Elizabeth Thorn, wife of the manager of the town's largest cemetery, reportedly dug over 100 graves herself, despite being pregnant. Among the corpses found near the west side of the stonewall on Cemetery Ridge was a woman who had disguised

her gender to fight for the Confederacy. Some 5,000 horses and mules also died in battle.³

Jefferson Davis

On April 2, 1865, with the Confederate defeat at Petersburg imminent, General Robert E. Lee informed President Davis that he could no longer protect Richmond and advised the Confederate government to evacuate its capital. Davis and his cabinet fled to Danville, Virginia; Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox on April 9, 1865.

Imprisoned for two years at Fort Monroe, Virginia, Davis was indicted for treason but was never tried. The federal government feared Davis would be able to prove to a jury that Southern secession



BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG.

FAC-SIMILE PRINT BY L. PRANG & CO.

was legal. In May 1867, Davis was released on bail with several wealthy Northerners helping pay for his freedom, including *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley who campaigned in his newspaper for Davis' release.⁴

Iconic Civil War Patriotic Design – the “Hanging Lincoln”

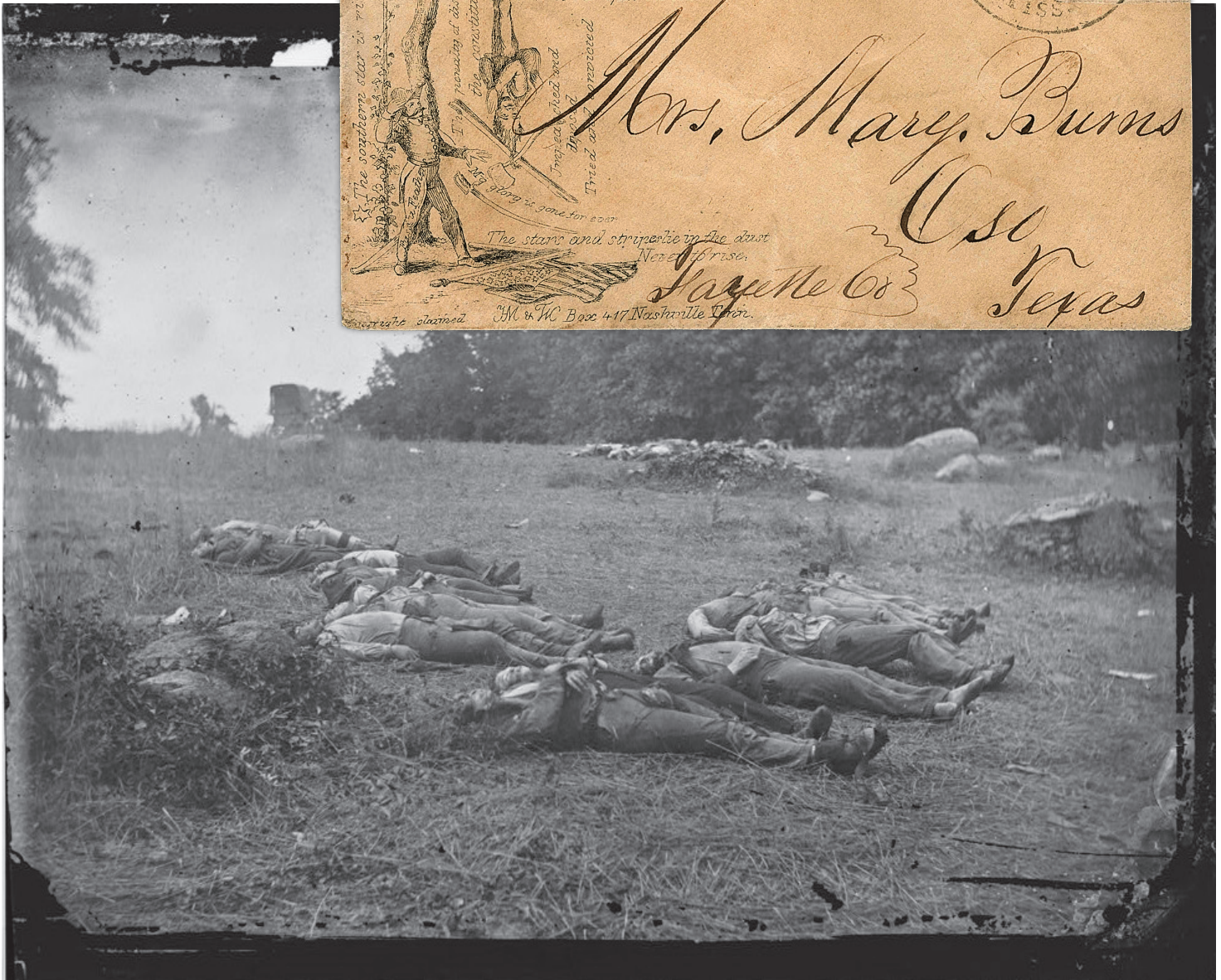
When I first saw this spectacular little battlefield souvenir, what immediately struck me was the hand-drawn design's similarity to the celebrated Hanging Lincoln patriotic. The illustrated example is one of only twelve covers recorded in the Siegel online census and one of only two that bear a 10-cent rose Confederate general issue (Scott #5), which depicts Thomas Jefferson. The stamp is tied by a circular date stamp of Camden, Mississippi, and the envelope is addressed to Mrs. Mary Burns of Oso, Texas. This cover sold in the first sale of the Kilbourne collection by Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries in June 2018 for \$53,100. It is listed in the CSA catalog as type MS-4.⁵

Figure 3. Print (Prang) based on the painting called *Hancock at Gettysburg* by Thure de Thulstrup. Major General Winfield S. Hancock is shown riding along the Union lines prior to Pickett's Charge. Library of Congress

The widely-recognized patriotic design is of President Abraham Lincoln hanging upside down from a sour apple (crabapple) tree. Next to the 11-star Confederate national flag at top, popularly known as the Stars and Bars, it proclaims: “The stars and bars shall forever wave triumphant.” The United States flag lies at the bottom of the tree with the declaration: “The star and stripes lie in the dust Never to rise.”

Other lines of this caricature read: “Abe Lincoln the destroyer, He once split Rails, Now he has split the Union” and “Impeached and deposed, Tried and convicted.” At far left is asserted: “The south-

Figure 4. The most iconic of Civil War patriotic covers, the "Hanging Lincoln." From the Kilbourne collection, courtesy Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries.



Dead Soldiers in the Wheatfield Near Emmitsburg Road - Gettysburg Pa., July 1863

ern star is rising." Surrounding Lincoln's overturned figure is written: "The penalty of disregarding the constitution." Standing beside Lincoln is a mustachioed General Winfield Scott (Old "Fuss and Feathers") proclaiming: "My glory is gone for ever."

Across the bottom is printed "Copyright claimed. HM & WC Box 417, Nashville, Tenn." To date, neither the manufacturers' nor artist's identities are known. These iconic covers have passed

down through the most celebrated of Civil War collections over the years. It is one of the "must haves" in a comprehensive Confederate collection.

Sour Apple Tree – Political Cartoons

So, what's all this about a sour apple tree? In print, political cartoons in the 1860s exploded with images of Davis being hanged, such as the illustrated 1867 Currier & Ives print with the caption: "Jeff. D_ Hung on a 'Sour Apple Tree,' or Treason Made



A souvenir-filled encampment of soldiers shortly following the Battle of Gettysburg

Odious.” It shows *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley with a copy of his newspaper in his pocket holding Jefferson Davis’ cell door open to release him from prison.

Another political cartoon shows Jefferson Davis hanging and “Sour Apple Tree” rising in print from the base of the tree. At top is heralded: “Freedom’s Immortal Triumph!” with a blindfolded Lady Justice at center holding a sword and scales; she is enthroned on a bank of clouds. At the bottom: “Finale of the ‘Jeff Davis Die-Nasty’ – ‘Last Scene of all, ends this strange eventful History.’”

Among the Confederate mourners—each with an awaiting noose above their heads—are General Robert E. Lee, Secretary of War John C. Breckinridge, Secretary of State and War Judah P. Benjamin, Senator William Lowndes Yancey—one of the Southern “Fire-eaters,” Secretary of State Robert A. Toombs, Senator Louis T. Wigfall from Texas, and

the ultimate betrayer sneaking up behind with a pistol—Lincoln’s assassin, John Wilkes Booth.

On the ground lie copperheads (symbols of Peace Democrats), skulls, and broken artillery. At left, Liberty sits beside an urn partially covered by the Union flag, an eagle beside her. A grieving soldier and sailor attend the urn, while a slave man, his wife, and child look toward the far right, where the recently-assassinated Abraham Lincoln is escorted heavenward by angels.

This political cartoon was designed by Burgoo Zac and copyrighted in 1865 not long after the war’s end and Lincoln’s assassination. It reveals a clearly distraught nation with a vindictive fantasy.

Northern rejoicing at the end of the war often took the form of vengeful portrayals of the execution of Confederate president Jefferson Davis. Southerners had their own earlier versions such as that on the legendary Hanging Lincoln patriotic.

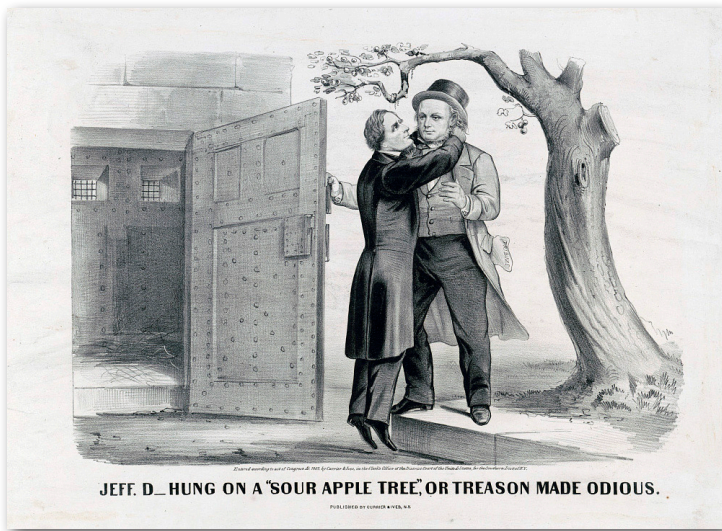


Figure 5. Currier & Ives print with the caption “Jeff. D_ Hung on a ‘Sour Apple Tree,’ or Treason Made Odious.”

Sour Apple Tree – Songs

Since the beginning of the war, Union soldiers had sung about “hanging Jeff Davis from a sour apple tree.” *We’ll Hang Jeff Davis from a Sour Apple Tree* sheet music is illustrated in Figure 7. Words were created and sung by Union soldiers to the tune of John Brown’s *Body* in Figure 8.

The song *John Brown’s Body* was popular with Union troops during the war. Learned by rote, it was a marching song about abolitionist John Brown, although according to an 1890 account, the lyrics were a collective effort by a group of Union soldiers who were referring to both the famous John Brown and also, humorously, to a Sergeant John Brown of their own battalion. Little doubt, however, that most soldiers believed it referred to the abolitionist.

Many have published additional verses or claimed credit for originating the lyrics and tune. African-American units picked up the melody and added their own spin: “We’re done with hoeing cotton, we’re done with hoeing corn / We’re colored Yankee soldiers just as sure as you were born.”⁶

It is a tune that resonates with most of us from childhood, from humorous grade-school lyrics to high school football game chants.⁷

We’ll Hang Jeff Davis from a Sour Apple Tree and *John Brown’s Body* appeared before Julia Ward Howe used the tune to famously pen the lyrics for *Battle Hymn of The Republic*.

“We’ll feed old Jeff Davis sour apples/’til he gets



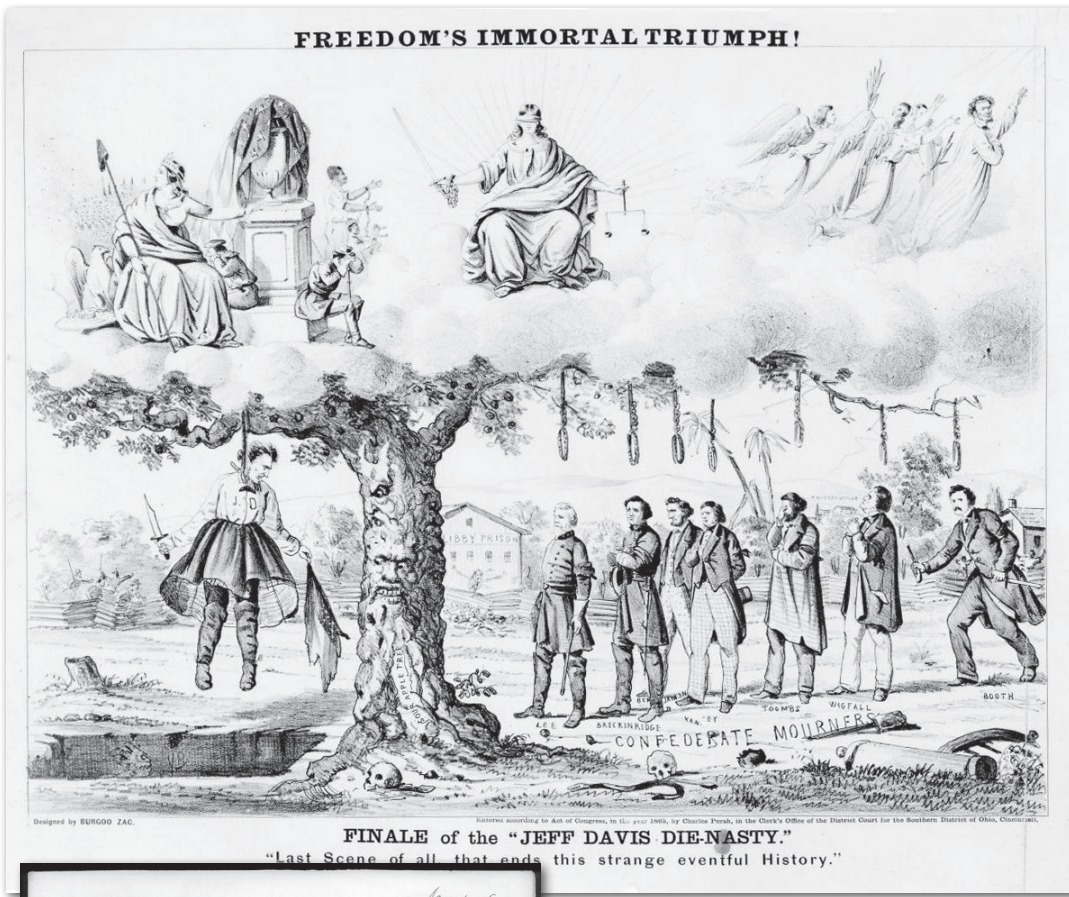


Figure 6. Political cartoon with vindictive fantasy designed by Burgoo Zac and copyrighted in 1865 shortly after Lincoln's assassination.

Figure 8. Words to tune of John Brown's Body.

JOHN BROWN SONG!

John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave,
John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave,
John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave,
His soul's marching on!

Chorus.

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally Hallelujah! Ohey Hally Hallelujah!
His soul's marching on!

He's gone to be a soldier in the army of the Lord,
He's gone, he's gone,
He's gone, he's gone,
His soul's marching on!

Chorus.

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! he.
His soul's marching on!

John Brown's knapsack is strapped upon his back—
John Brown's, he.
John Brown's, he.
His soul's marching on!

Chorus.

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! he.
His soul's marching on!

His pet lambs will meet him on the way—
His pet lambs, he.
His pet lambs, he.
They go marching on!

Chorus.

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! he.
They go marching on!

They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree!
They will hang, he.
They will hang, he.
As they march along!

Chorus.

Glory, Hally, Hallelujah! he.
As they march along!

Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!
Now, he.
As we are marching on!

Chorus.

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah!
Hip, Hip, Hip, Hurrah!

Published at No. 256 Main Street,
CHARLESTOWN, MASS.

The First Printed Copy of the Song. From an Original in the Possession of Mr. Abram E. Carter of Charlestown.

No. 406
Deposited June 28th 1865
J. Marsh
Proprietor

**HANG HIM ON THE
SOUR APPLE TREE**

A SARCASTICAL BALLAD
as sung by
JOHN FORBES
AT THE PRINCIPAL CONCERTS
Composed by
JAS. W. PORTER.

Philadelphia J. MARSH 1022 Chestnut St.
New York 3 1/2 Garden Street 81 Dime Store Bldg.
New London Conn. 201 High Street No. 100

M 1640
P
3044

Figure 7. We'll Hang Jeff Davis from a Sour Apple Tree sheet music with new words created and sung by Union soldiers to the tune of John Brown's Body. Library of Congress

Dedicated to MISS ELSIE LINDAU

**Battle Hymn
of the Republic**
WITH VARIATIONS, FOR THE PIANO

Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
O'er God is marching on.

Variations by LOUIS WEBER
Published by
WEBER BROTHERS
622 Minnesota Avenue
Kansas City, Kansas
FOR SALE BY ALL MUSIC DEALERS

Figure 9. Sheet music cover for Battle Hymn of the Republic.



Figure 12. Julia Ward Howe 14¢ U.S. postage stamp – Scott No. 2176. Issued 1987 as part of the Great Americans Series.

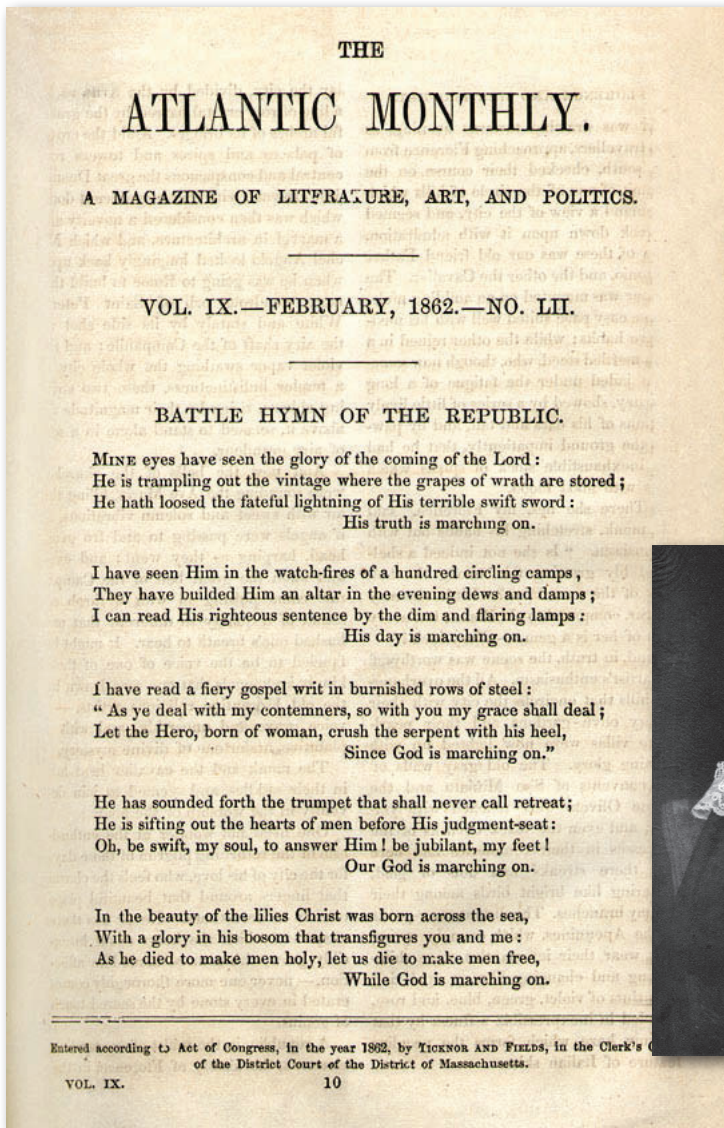


Figure 10. Julia Ward Howe's lyrics for the Battle Hymn of the Republic, as printed in the Atlantic Monthly, February 1862.

the diarhee" was a sung version, which in print became, "We'll hang old Jeff Davis /from a sour apple tree." Apparently, social niceties of the time suggested that hanging was more acceptable than the mention of bodily functions.⁸

Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910)

Writer, lecturer, abolitionist and suffragist, Julia Ward Howe not only authored *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, she co-founded the American Woman Suffrage Association and was instrumental in the establishment of Mother's Day as a national holiday.

Julia was the fourth of seven children of prominent New York City banker Samuel Ward and poet Julia Rush Ward. Ward was a descendant of Roger Williams, who founded the Rhode Island colony

Figure 11. Painting of Julia Ward Howe by John Elliott, begun c. 1910, finished c. 1925.



Photograph of Julia Ward Howe circa 1895.



Figure 13. Grave of Julia Ward Howe, Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Mass.

in 1636. Her mother died in childbirth when Howe was five years old. Thereafter, she was raised by an aunt who ensured her exposure to literature, languages and science. Early on, Julia developed a love of poetry and by age twenty was anonymously published in literary magazines, a sadly common fate for female authors of the day if they wanted to be taken seriously.

When her father died in 1839, Julia sought solace by visiting friends in Boston. As a wealthy young woman, she traveled in social circles that included noted writers, among them Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller.

In 1843, while touring the Perkins School for the Blind (later, famously the school of Annie Sullivan and Helen Keller) with poet friend Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Julia met and became smit-

ten with its founding director Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, who was nearly twenty years her senior. They quickly married and had six children.

The Howe marriage was troubled from the start; Julia enjoyed writing and socializing while her husband preferred the solitude of his studies at the Perkins Institute and preferred she be content with homemaking. In 1848, she gained acclaim for her published poetry, and the couple did work together on a journal advocating the end of slavery.⁹

At the beginning of the Civil War, Julia met with President Abraham Lincoln in Washington in November 1861 and, while there, attended a public review of the troops at which John Brown's Body was sung. The irreverence and coarseness of the lyrics to the popular tune caused friends to encourage her to write more appropriate lyrics.

Julia recalled:

I went to bed that night as usual, and slept, according to my wont, quite soundly. I awoke in the gray of the morning twilight; and as I lay waiting for the dawn, the long lines of the desired poem began to twine themselves in my mind. Having thought out all the stanzas, I said to myself, 'I must get up and write these verses down, lest I fall asleep again and forget them.' So with a sudden effort, I sprang out of bed, and found in the dimness an old stump of a pen which I remembered to have used the day before. I scrawled the verses almost without looking at the paper.

Thus, on the night of November 18, 1861, the words of *Battle Hymn of the Republic*—full of biblical references—were composed in a room in the Willard Hotel, Washington, D.C. They were first published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in February of the following year, noted as “written by Mrs. Dr. S.G. Howe.” Her original manuscript differed slightly from the published version—it included a sixth and final verse.

The song was highly acclaimed and quickly became the anthem of the Union army and one of the best-known songs of the Civil War. It has survived as a stirring patriotic and Christian hymn of the United States, loved even by those beyond our shores. Julia witnessed first-hand the horrors of the Civil War. She was a member of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, set up to promote healthy and clean conditions in the Union Army camps to reduce the numbers dying from infection. She saw the terrible

results of conflict – death, disease, maiming, bereavement, poverty, and the destruction of towns and infrastructure. She also worked to support and raise funds to help widows and orphans on both sides.

As the Howe marriage faltered, Julia wrote dark poems and plays about her unhappiness with her husband. Their violent marriage inhibited her liberal views and causes. Her husband controlled, resented and, at times, mismanaged her financial inheritance. He held the notion, prevalent at the time, a woman's place was in the home. He forced her to remain in the marriage by threatening to keep her from their children.¹⁰

After her husband's death in 1876, Julia wrote a flattering biography of him, despite his death-bed confession of multiple adulterous affairs. She continued to publish poems, essays, and books throughout the 1880s and was the first woman elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1908. She also received an honorary degree from Smith College.¹¹

A portrait of Julia Ward Howe hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC. Begun circa 1910, it was finished circa 1925, and was painted in oil on canvas (approximately 42" x 28"). The painter was John Elliott, her son-in-law.

John Elliott (1858-1925) was an artist, illustrator, and muralist. Born in Lincolnshire, England, he studied in Paris at the Académie Julian. In 1878, he went to Rome to study and there met his future wife, Maud Howe, Pulitzer-prize-winning American writer and the daughter of Julia Ward Howe.

In 1987, at a ceremony at the Perkins School for the Blind, the U.S. Postal Service issued a 14-cent stamp honoring Julia Ward Howe on the 125th anniversary of the publication her poem in *The Atlantic Monthly*.

It is reported that she was paid \$4 or \$5 for the poem, depending on the source cited. The stamp was part of the Great American series—a collection bearing portraits of people who contributed extensively to American history.

Battle Hymn of the Republic

by Julia Ward Howe

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of
wrath are stored;*

He hath loosed the fatal lightning of his terrible swift sword:

His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps;

They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;

I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps.

His Day is marching on.

*I have read a fiery gospel, writ in burnished rows of steel:
"As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal;*

Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,

Since God is marching on."

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;

He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgment-seat:

Oh! be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!

Our God is marching on.

*In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me:
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,*

While God is marching on.

*He is coming like the glory of the morning on the wave,
He is Wisdom to the mighty, He is Succor to the brave,
So the world shall be His footstool, and the soul of Time
His slave,*

Our God is marching on.

(Chorus)

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

While God is marching on.

Epilogue

What I love about researching postal history items is the journey on which they take me. In this case, following a remarkable battlefield souvenir takes us from the horrors of Gettysburg, to political cartoons and sung parodies ridiculing nation-

al leaders of opposing forces, and ultimately to an amazing woman and the story behind one of our most beloved national anthems.

The lyrics for *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, in myriad forms, are still found in the back of Christian hymnals, sometimes restructured in shorter form as *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory* or *Glory, Glory, Hallelujah*, but all with proper credit to Julia Ward Howe. Those not enamored of history sometimes erroneously believe this is an anthem with Christian origins. It is not.

When Julia Ward Howe died in 1910 at age 91, approximately four thousand people attended her funeral at Boston's Symphony Hall, an overflowing crowd. It was a moving moment when those four thousand voices rang out with her song, *Battle Hymn of the Republic*.¹²

Endnotes:

¹Ravindra Vora, August 21, 2018, email

²*Battle of Gettysburg*, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Gettysburg/ Accessed August 23, 2018.

³*Gettysburg Casualties (Battle Deaths at Gettysburg)*. HistoryNet. <http://www.historynet.com/gettysburg-casualties/> Accessed August 23, 2018.

⁴*This Day in History*. History Channel. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/jefferson-davis-captured/> Accessed August 23, 2018.

⁵Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown, Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, Editors, *Confederate States Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*, 2012, Confederate Stamp Alliance, www.csalliance.org.

⁶Andrew Limbong, with digital contributions of Daoud Tyler-Ameen, "One Song Glory—How 'Battle Hymn of the Republic' became an anthem for every cause." as heard on *Morning Edition* of National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/2018/07/04/625351953/one-song-glory/> Accessed August 24, 2018.

⁷*John Brown's Body*, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Brown%27s_Body/ Accessed August 24, 2018.

⁸"Mother's Day and *Battle Hymn of the Republic*," The Silver Voice. <https://thesilvervoice.wordpress.com/2011/05/07/mothers-day-and-the-battle-hymn-of-the-republic/> Accessed August 24, 2018.

⁹Debra Michals, "Julia Ward Howe," National Women's History Museum 2015. <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/julia-ward-howe/> Accessed August 22, 2018.

¹⁰Julia Ward Howe, Find a Grave memorial 516. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/516/julia-howe/> Accessed August 24, 2018.

¹¹"Mother's Day and *Battle Hymn of the Republic*," *The Silver Voice*.

¹²*Ibid*.

¹³Andrew Rinaldi. "Battle Hymn of the Republic." *GodTube*. <https://www.godtube.com/popular-hymns/battle-hymn-of-the-republic-lyrics-story-behind-hymn/> Accessed August 24, 2018.