



The Civil War Post

Patricia A. Kaufmann

First State Postal History Keepsakes

Lower Slower Delaware

Delaware, a map of which is shown in Figure 1, is known as “The First State” because on Dec. 7, 1787, it became the first of the 13 original states to ratify the U.S. Constitution. Locals call the southernmost County of Sussex “lower slower Delaware,” in contrast to the frantic pace of urban areas up north, such as Wilmington. Sussex County is heavily agricultural, as well as home to popular beach resorts Rehoboth, Dewey, Bethany, Fenwick and more.

I live in Lincoln, Sussex County, Delaware. The rural 19960 ZIP code area has a population of more than 7,000, while the unincorporated town of Lincoln has a population of only about 850. I kiddingly refer to Lincoln as “suburban Milford,” where my husband grew up and where I bank, shop and go to church. Milford had a population of more than 11,000 in 2020 and continues to grow south toward Lincoln. Living in Lincoln since 1991, I have enjoyed getting to know the history and recognizing the local surnames.

Recently, an unexpected envelope arrived from my thoughtful friend

Bill Schultz, who enclosed an 1890s advertising cover franked with a 2¢ red stamp postmarked by a Lincoln, Del., April 21 duplex. The cover is shown in Figure 2. The printed ad was from the Davis Roller Mills, F.W. Davis & Co., in Milford.

I found that Frank W. Davis (1861-1933) inherited Cubbage Pond Mill from his father, Mark H. Davis. The mill had stood on the site since about 1785, when it was built by John and William Draper.¹ The Draper family was influential then and continues to be so now, generations later. Today, the Draper family owns

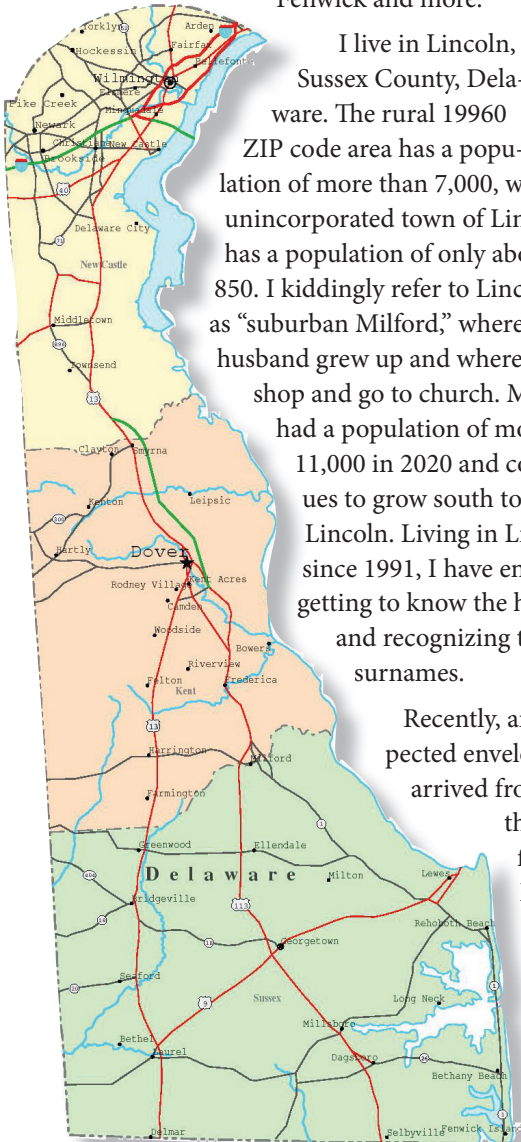


Figure 1 (left). Map of the State of Delaware showing all three counties.

Figure 2 (top). This 1890s advertising cover postmarked by a Lincoln, Del., duplex from The Davis Roller Mills was a gift from Bill Schultz; it started me on a Delaware journey of discovery.

Figure 3 (above). An 1861 3¢ rose (Scott U.S. 65) pen canceled on cover postmarked by two strikes of Lincoln, Del., June 19, 1866.

numerous broadcast news and radio stations on the Delmarva Peninsula under the company umbrella of Draper Media.

Frank Davis, sender of the envelope, owned Cabbage Pond Mill from 1892-1908,² after which it was briefly owned by Samuel Cabbage, who last operated it from 1908-1917. Davis father and son operated fruit evaporating plants in both Lincoln and Milford, as well as numerous other lucrative business operations. Frank Davis is on record as having applied for a patent June 2, 1924, for a variation of the Bessemer process of making steel (serial number 1,709,389). I also found him listed as Milford's postmaster in 1912.³

Numerous ponds pepper the length of Cedar Creek; one of which is Cabbage Pond, not far from my home. A meandering portion of Cedar Creek runs through our property. My husband and I enjoy watching families of annually returning Canada geese, an assortment of ducks, varied species of turtles and small fish, white-tail deer traversing the stream, beaver and more. We occasionally spot bald eagles – seen ever more frequently in recent years – as well as majestic great blue herons, egrets and more. We keep binoculars at both ends of the house to be quickly retrieved for various sightings.

Lincoln, Delaware – Cedar Creek Hundred

It was fun to link Bill's thoughtful gift to the history of my local area. It caused me to dig out the balance of my tiny Sussex County collection to see how else I might connect the dots. Figure 3 shows another cover in my small holding, canceled by a Lincoln, Del., June 19, 1866, postmark – the year after the American Civil War ended.

The extension of railroad lines into Sussex County before and after the war greatly increased the profitability of farming in the region. The Delaware, Maryland & Virginia Railroad connected the Delaware towns of Harrington, Milford and Georgetown by 1869. I can literally hear a train engine whistling in the distance as I write these words. In town, the Lincoln post office sits on Front Street, just to the east of the train tracks; I often park on the gravel shoulder parallel to the tracks.

“Lincoln City” was established in 1865, by Col. Abel Stokes Small (circa 1820-23 to 1889) of New York, a portrait of whom is shown Figure 4. There are still some street signs that identify the town this way. Due to its noticeably small size, in jest some older locals still call it Lincoln City. But a few years back Lincoln did rate a traffic light!

Col. Small commissioned A.T. Johnson to survey and lay out a town along the proposed route of the railroad south of Milford, planning the “future metropolis of southern Delaware” that did not materialize. It was presumably named after



Figure 4 (left). Portrait of Lincoln City, Del., founder Abel Stokes Small.

Figure 5 (below). Tombstone of Abel Stokes Small in Lincoln Cemetery.



the recently assassinated U.S. president. Col. Small ambitiously predicted Lincoln City would be the county seat, which was firmly in place in Georgetown by 1791. The town was laid out into 774 building lots. The post office was first established Aug. 21, 1865, and the town was reached by the railroad in 1867. A newspaper, *The Lincoln Herald*, was published in the community, beginning in October 1865.

By 1888, Lincoln had grown to 500 people, with two churches, three stores, a school and such industries as canning houses, sawmills and basket factories. Col. Small established a lumber and planing mill in Lincoln, but it was destroyed by fire Jan. 2, 1889, just four days before Small's death. He died of pneumonia with chronic bronchitis on Jan. 6, 1889.

Figure 5 shows Small's grave monument in Lincoln Cemetery upon which his birth date is inscribed as July 19, 1823, while Find A Grave memorial ID 225704865, where the photo is posted, states in one place that he was born in 1820. Another line in the same memorial listing records the date as July 20, 1821. Yet a third source states he was born July 19, 1821. The 1870 federal census shows him as born in New Jersey, while the 1880 federal census records show him as born in Pennsyl-

Figure 6. Lincoln, as shown in the Delaware 1868 Hundreds Maps in the 1868 Beers and Pomeroy Atlas.

vania. I also found recorded his July 3, 1862, marriage to Elizabeth Davis Parham in Calvary Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. Have I told you before that conflicting sources drive me crazy?!

Perhaps Small's death had an influence on the anticipated growth of the town. Sadly, an 1897 Christmas morning fire also destroyed a store, granary, an icehouse and four more stores.

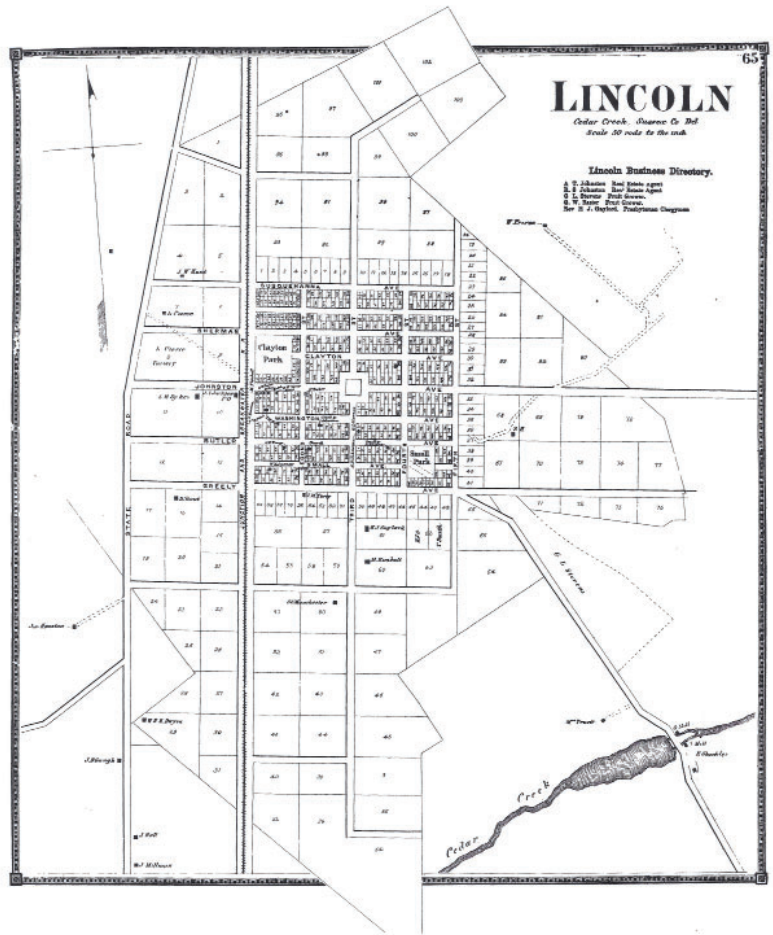
Lincoln is recorded in the *1868 Beers and Pomeroy Atlas* and in the Delaware 1868 Hundreds Maps, as shown in Figure 6.

“Hundreds” is a geographic division. Smaller than counties, hundreds are roughly equivalent to the division townships in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Delaware is the only state that currently uses this division. There are 33 hundreds today. The most recent changes to hundreds were more than a century ago in the 1870s.⁴ When I first moved to Delaware, I had no idea what the geographic designation of a hundred meant. Some locals still don't know what it means or its history.

Prior to the 1960s, hundreds were used as voting districts and as units for reporting taxes. The remaining use of hundreds today is in property tax assessments. The use of hundreds in America dates to colonial days. Hundreds were used as a sub-county division in England and were introduced in some of the British colonies. For Delaware, the origin is cited as a letter written in 1682 by William Penn, the newly-appointed Lord Proprietor of the province of Pennsylvania and the counties on the Delaware. Penn directed that from this point onward, settlements be divided into sections of 100 families. Each family was presumed to have about 10 members, including servants. The first use of the term hundred in official records relating to the Delaware colony dates to 1687. Lincoln is part of Cedar Creek Hundred.

A horse racing track was also established in Lincoln in 1891. But in the 20th century, Little Lincoln Speedway stole the limelight in its location not far off DuPont Highway, a main Delaware North-South thoroughfare. Not all the action was up the road at the Monster Mile at Dover Downs, today's well-known NASCAR track.

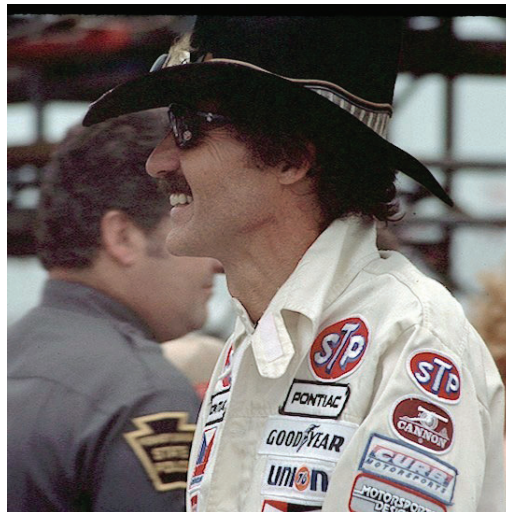
Nearly all competitors on Delaware's various dirt tracks learned the art of sliding a car sideways through a turn, a technique that improved



lap times and thrilled fans. Almost all the dirt drag tracks are gone now, including Little Lincoln Speedway, a half-mile track, although it is still distinctly visible in aerial photographs. My husband has fond childhood memories of riding his bicycle from Milford to Lincoln to watch the excitement.

In researching Little Lincoln Speedway, I was stunned to find listed famous drivers who raced there, such as Lee Petty (three-time NASCAR champion and winner of the first Daytona 500) and his son, Richard Petty, shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Richard Petty, the greatest NASCAR driver of all time, raced at Little Lincoln Speedway.



Richard Petty is hailed as “The King” – the greatest NASCAR driver of all time, winning an astounding 200 races during his career and the NASCAR championship seven times. The Pettys and other racing royalty sped around the track right here in “Little Lincoln.”

Delaware During the Civil War

Slavery had been a divisive issue for decades before the war began. Opposition to slavery was great in Delaware, primarily due to the resident Quakers who immigrated from Pennsylvania to northern Delaware. Many slaveowners freed their slaves. Consequently, half the state's Black population was free as early as 1810,

and more than 90% were free by 1860.⁵ There was a strong abolition movement in the state; whites, and both free and enslaved Blacks were actively involved with the Underground Railroad before and during the war.

The Delmarva Peninsula is proud that Harriet Tubman, shown in Figure 8, ran the Underground Railroad from Maryland through Delaware and north into Pennsylvania. She proudly stated she never lost a passenger on her railroad, despite the many dangers.

Delaware constituents voted not to secede on Jan. 3, 1861, thus Delaware remained in the Union as one of the border states. Sussex County is the southernmost of the three Delaware counties – the fewest number of counties of any state. In contrast to New Castle County, its populace was overwhelmingly pro-Southern.

Most Delaware citizens who fought in the war served on the Union side, although some served in Delaware companies on the Confederate side in Maryland and Virginia regiments. Estimates of the number of Delawareans who enlisted with Confederate units range from several hundred to several thousand.

It was not until Feb. 12, 1901, that Delaware ratified the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery – more than 30 years after the rest of the nation.⁶ The Delaware General Assembly refused to ratify the amendment, calling it an illegal extension of federal power over the state. I call Delaware's shameful 36-year delay a monumental embarrassment.

Because Delaware stayed in the Union, it prospered economically. The woolen mills of New Castle County and the flour and sawmills of Kent and Sussex counties all operated at increased capacity during the Civil War.

Caleb Rodney Layton and Caesar Rodney

As I looked through my Sussex County postal history treasures, I found a Civil War cover franked with a U.S. 3¢ rose (Scott 65) tied on cover with a blue cork cancel and postmarked Georgetown, Del., Feb. 20. Georgetown is located a scant 10 miles south of me.

Figure 9. U.S. 3¢ rose (Scott 65) tied on cover with a blue cork cancel and postmarked Georgetown, Del., Feb. 20 (1862-63); it is addressed to Capt. C. Rodney Layton, Company F, 11th U.S. Infantry, Army of the Potomac, New Potomac Creek, Va.



Figure 8. Harriet Tubman, circa 1895, known as "Moses" because she led slaves to freedom from Maryland through Delaware North on the Underground Railroad before and during the Civil War.

The cover, shown in Figure 9, is addressed to Captain C. Rodney Layton, Company F, 11th U.S. Infantry, Army of the Potomac, New Potomac Creek, Va. He was known by his middle name, Rodney.

The U.S. 1861 George Washington 3¢ rose was issued in August 1861. I checked military records to try to pin down the year of use. Layton held the rank of captain in the 11th U.S. Infantry until he was promoted in July 1863. This narrows the February use to either 1862 or 1863.

Previously issued U.S. stamps were in possession of disloyal postmasters in the South at the beginning of the war, thus a new series of postage stamps was issued in August 1861. The old stamps were demonetized, no longer accepted for postage.

Initially, all mail to and from Union soldiers required postage stamps. But it was soon recognized that fighting men could not easily access a post office. On July 22, 1861, Congress passed a law permitting ordinary soldiers to either send letters prepaid or postage due. To be accepted, an officer had to validate the communication was a soldier's letter. Later, chaplains and physicians in hospitals could also certify soldiers' letters. It is important to note that commissioned officers did not have the option of sending their mail unpaid; they had to use postage stamps. Such regulations applied to both the Army and Navy.

As a Delaware transplant, the moment I see "C. Rodney" I think of Caesar Rodney (1726-84), an American Founding Father who signed the *American Declaration of Independence*. The reverse of the 1999 Delaware State Quarter shows Caesar



Rodney (Figure 10), astride his horse on his historic 18-hour midnight ride to Philadelphia in a thunderstorm to cast the critical, deciding vote in favor of separating from Great Britain. Occasionally, I hear someone ask why Delaware has an image of Paul Revere on their State Quarter. No! That's Caesar Rodney, not Paul Revere.

"Paul Revere's ride is better known, but Rodney's ride had the greater impact on the future of the colonies," asserts Leigh Rifenburg, chief curator of the Delaware Historical Society.⁷

Caesar Rodney is highly esteemed in Delaware. Rodney Square in Wilmington is named for him, but recent national events have taken their toll and the statue of Delaware's most famous son was removed from Rodney Square and placed in storage in June 2020 because Rodney was an enslaver, as were many wealthy citizens of the era. A high school not far from me is named for Rodney, as well as numerous other Delaware landmarks and signs.

There was a direct – but somewhat distant – blood relationship between Caleb Rodney Layton (1826-87) and Caesar Rodney, hence the prominent name continuum. The Layton family was one of the oldest and most influential in Delaware. Forebearer Tilghman Layton moved from Virginia to Sussex County, Del., in the early 1700s.

C. Rodney Layton was a cadet at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point 1843-45, then read the law with his father. He was admitted to the bar in 1848 and joined his father's law office in Georgetown, Del. He was commissioned captain, Company G, First Delaware Infantry on May 16, 1861, quickly promoted to major on July 1, 1861, then transferred to Field & Staff. On Aug. 5, 1861, he was commissioned into the 11th Infantry, regular Army, and later transferred to the 16th Infantry and 20th Infantry. He was promoted to major July 2, 1863, at Gettysburg. Layton continued in military service until retiring due to disability Oct. 8, 1885, as a colonel.

Rodney Layton was the son of Hon. Caleb Sipple Layton (1798-1882) and Penelope H. Rodney (1799-1870) – the source

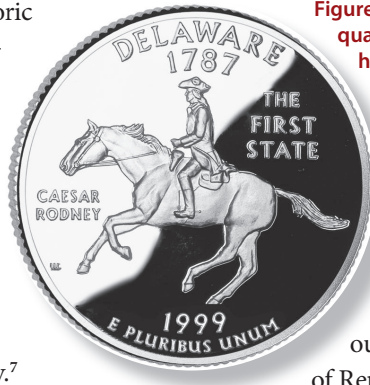


Figure 10. The reverse of the 1999 Delaware state quarter shows Caesar Rodney astride his horse on his historic 18-hour midnight ride to Philadelphia in a thunderstorm to cast the critical, deciding vote in favor of separating from Great Britain.

of the blood relation to Caesar Rodney. In April 1862, Rodney married Mary Hemphill Bush (1840-65), who died young. He remarried in April 1873 to Clara Howard Benedict (1847-87). Statesman Caleb S. Layton was variously a lawyer, a member of the Delaware House of Representatives, a Delaware state senator, Delaware secretary of state and associate justice of the Delaware Supreme Court. He was strongly opposed to slavery and, as a member of the Legislature, caused the first abolition bill to be introduced in the State of Delaware.⁸

There are several Layton Civil War covers and letters posted online at "Spared and Shared 7 – Saving American History One Letter at a Time." It is a worthwhile site (<https://sparedshare7.wordpress.com/>) if you enjoy Civil War history and postal history. The letters are from Capt. C. Rodney Layton to his father in Georgetown, as well as other family members. Unfortunately, the images are copyrighted, and I am not at liberty to share them with you. But I commend the website to you as worth a gander.

I thought this would be a quick column to write, but I was so fascinated by the local history it took much longer than expected. I almost always let my chosen topic take me on a journey; thus it often turns out quite differently than my initial vision.

A tip of the hat to Bill Schultz for sending the Lincoln cover that propelled me down this enjoyable path into local Delaware history. I learned a lot. I now look at local street signs and landmarks just a little differently. ☺

Endnotes

1. Cabbage Pond, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabbage_Pond (accessed Nov. 28, 2022).
2. https://deldot.gov/environmental/archaeology/cubbage/pdf/cubbage_chap3.pdf (accessed Nov. 28, 2022)
3. United States Post Office, *Milford Chronicle*, May 31, 1912.
4. "Delaware 1868 Hundreds Maps," The Delaware Geological Survey, www.dgs.udel.edu/delaware-1868-hundreds-maps (accessed Nov. 30, 2022).
5. History of Delaware, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Delaware (accessed Nov. 29, 2022).
6. "Delaware Refuses to Ratify Thirteenth Amendment for 36 years," A History of Racial Justice, <https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/feb/12> (accessed Nov. 29, 2022).
7. "Founding Fathers | American Revolution," History Stories, www.history.com/news/founding-father-you-never-heard-of-caesar-rodney (accessed Nov. 29, 2022)
8. Thomas J. Scharf, Chapter XXV, "The Bench and Bar," *History of Delaware, 1609-1888*, Volume One, pp. 508-611.

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.