

**"The Sinking of the Rebel War Steamer Florida" near Fortress Monroe, Virginia, as depicted in Leslie's Illustrated Weekly.**

THE SINKING OF THE REBEL WAR STEAMER FLORIDA, NEAR FORTRESS MONROE, NOV. 24 - FROM A SKETCH BY OUR SPECIAL AGENT

## Confederate Prize Court Mail

BY PATRICIA A. KAUFMANN

Civil War mail from captured blockade runners was useful in identifying contraband and was introduced into evidence with the initials of the prize court commissioner and the case number.

In the April 2018 *American Philatelist*, my article "Civil War Prize Court Mail" described the United States Prize Court system as it pertained to Confederate vessels captured when they attempted to run the Union blockade of Southern ports, and how to recognize such mail.

The principal district courts dealing with Union prize cases were located in New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Providence, Baltimore, Washington, Key West and New Orleans. The latter two cities, although in the South, were occupied by the U.S. for most of the war. Only mail from New York City and Philadelphia Prize Courts has been identified by postal historians. Postal history students should be vigilant for such mail from other ports.

It was not until 1997, in the article "Prize Court Covers" by the late Joseph T. Holleman in *The Confederate Philatelist*, that collectors came to understand the evidentiary docketings on what usually appear to be otherwise simple Confederate covers, although there are a some rare and unusual mixed frankings recorded.

U.S. prize court markings were cataloged for the first time in 2012 in the *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History* as Type PC-01 for manuscript docketings "HHE" (Henry H. Elliot) and Type PC-02 for manuscript docketings "HF" (Henry Flanders), who were the respective prize court commissioners.

### United States Prize Courts

A letter of marque and reprisal is a government license authorizing a person, known as a privateer, to attack and capture enemy vessels and take them before prize courts to be condemned and sold. Cruising for prizes with a letter of marque was considered an honorable profession, in contrast to universally reviled capital crime of unlicensed piracy.

According to U.S. Senate historians, Congress hasn't issued a letter of marque since the War of 1812. However, the Confederate States of America (CSA) issued them during the

Civil War to deliver goods and supplies behind enemy lines. This did not mean the U.S. wasn't also keen on maintaining its own privateers.

On April 16, 1856, the *Paris Declaration Respecting Maritime Law* was issued to abolish privateering. The declaration was not binding except between those powers that acceded to it. The declaration did not, as such, make privateers into a new category of international criminals, but rather made it a treaty obligation that nations refrain from commissioning privateers in the first place. Most nations treated foreign privateers as pirates, an important distinction since pirates were subject to execution.

The United States, which aimed at a complete exemption of non-contraband private property from capture at sea, withheld its formal adherence in 1857. The rules contained in this declaration later came to be considered as part of the general principles of international law and the U.S., although not formally a party, also abides by its provisions.

Not possessing a great navy, the U.S. had been obliged in time of war to rely largely upon merchant ships commissioned as war vessels, and therefore the abolition of privateering would be entirely in favor of European powers, whose large navies rendered them virtually independent of such aid.

England and France, in accordance with the 1856 Treaty of Paris, closed their ports to both Confederate and United States privateers. Queen Victoria's Proclamation of Neutrality was issued May 13, 1861; Emperor Napoleon III of France followed suit on June 10, 1861.

### Confederate States Prize Courts

The Confederate Act of March 11, 1861, established "a Court of Admiralty and maritime jurisdiction at Key West, in the State of Florida," and adopted for its guidance the "laws of the United States," until otherwise provided. There were other such prize court offices in New Orleans, Louisiana; Mobile,

Alabama; Savannah, Georgia; and additional Southern port cities in Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.

The Act of March 16, 1861, “to establish the Judicial Courts of the Confederate States,” gave all district courts jurisdiction of all admiralty and maritime cases under the same laws of the United States in force on December 20, 1860, with “force and effect in the courts of the Confederate States.”

The Act of May 6, 1861, authorized issuance of letters of marque, unleashing a fleet of Confederate privateers to prey upon the commerce of the United States across the globe.

According to J. Thomas Scharf in *The History of the Confederate States Navy*, notwithstanding all the preparations made by the U.S. in the early days of the war, only two Confederate privateers had been captured or destroyed and only two of their prizes had been retaken by government vessels. Small Southern privateers, on the other hand, had within the same time captured approximately sixty federal vessels. Scharf was himself an officer in the Confederate States Navy and his thick history is considered the authoritative source.

Nonetheless, the initial enthusiasm for privateering was

not sustained because vessel crews found it difficult to impossible to deliver their prizes to Confederate courts because of the Union blockade. As a result, the anticipated profits were never realized. Instead, most turned to blockade running as a more profitable venture.

Consequently, most such efforts against Northern commerce were carried out by Confederate Navy commerce raiders. The two most famous were the CSS *Alabama* and the CSS *Florida*.

Figure 1 shows the sinking of the CSS *Alabama* on a Charles Magnus song-sheet, as well as an author-owned oil painting by Andreas Achenbach titled “The Brave *Alabama*,” shown in Figure 2. Figure 3 illustrates the CSS *Florida*. Their histories are legendary and well recorded in primary sources.

Figure 4 shows Capt. Raphael Semmes, Master of the CSS *Alabama*, as depicted on a 32¢ Civil War postage stamp issued in 1995, Scott 2975i.

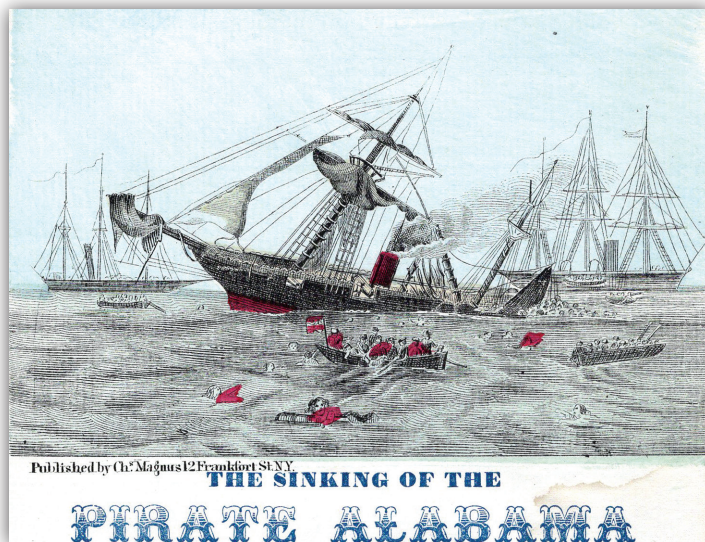


Figure 1. This dramatic header from a Charles Magnus-printed song-sheet shows the sinking of the “Pirate *Alabama*” by the U.S. Mohican-class sloop-of-war *Kearsarge*, on June 19, 1864.

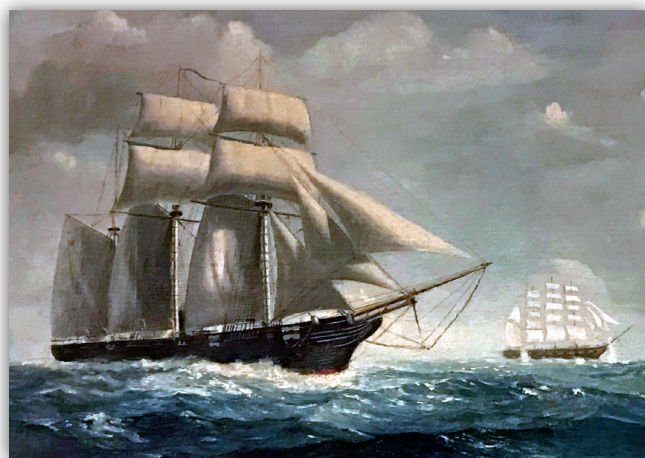


Figure 2. “The Brave *Alabama*” painting in oil by Andreas Achenbach, author owned.

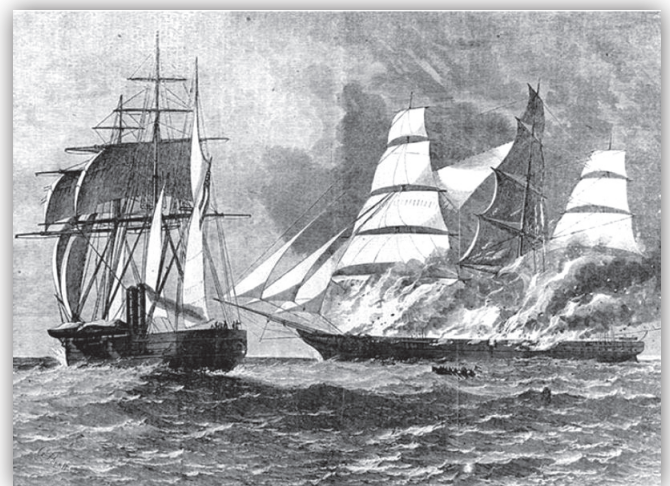


Figure 3. CSS *Florida* capturing and sinking the New York-based clipper ship *Jacob Bell* in February 1863, from the March 1863 *Harper's Weekly*.

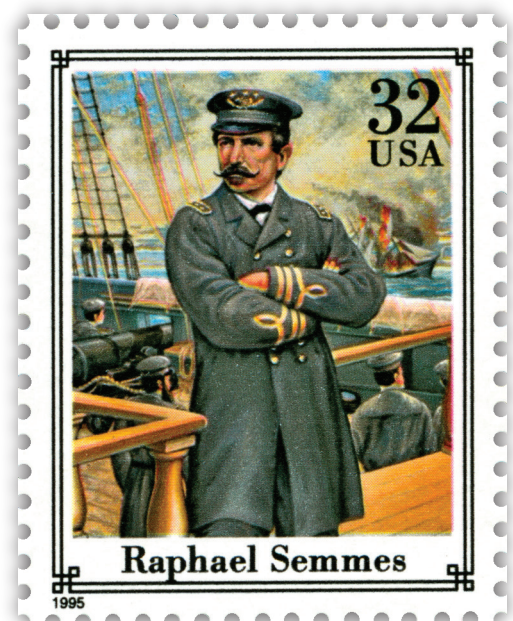


Figure 4. Capt. Raphael Semmes, Master of the CSS *Alabama*, as depicted on a 32¢ Civil War postage stamp issued in 1995, Scott 2975i.

sued in 1995. In the July 2, 1864, the *New York Times* quoted from letters to the editor from Semmes, as well as to the *London Times*. (The emphasis in the following quoted letters is my own.) The full *Times* article and Semmes' explanation are far longer.

Semmes stated, in part:

*“A blockade of the entire coasts of the Confederate States had already been declared, and the enemy was busy in collecting and arming ships to enforce it; and I presumed that in the course of a few months the blockade would be at least sufficient to keep out sail vessels, and of this class, with rare exceptions, it was probable my prizes would be. It was clear, therefore, that I should be effectually prevented from sending my prizes into the Confederate ports... The reason of the disappearance of these private armed ships is obvious. They are prepared at the cost of individuals and depend wholly upon their captures for success. If these cannot be made available, the enterprise becomes abortive, and the capital invested in it is sunk.”*

At the time I wrote the 2018 article, I was unaware of any covers that passed through the Confederate States court system by the capture of Union vessels. The only recorded prize court covers were from the United States regarding captured Confederate vessels. That is still the case.

To date, still no one has identified any Confederate prize court evidentiary markings, covers or letters. But one example comes close. It was hiding in plain sight in the collection of Richard Drews in his award-winning exhibit “My 3 Cents Worth.” The important distinction is that it never made it to Confederate Prize Court.

The story of Drews' cover parallels the tale of the fabled U.S. Prize Court evidence created when the 1,000-ton wooden U.S. steam screw gunboat *Mercedita* captured the blockade-running British steamer *Bermuda*. Aboard were roughly five million stamps printed for the Confederacy by the prominent printing company, Thomas De La Rue & Co, Ltd., as well as printing ink and stamp paper.

Figure 5 pictures what to postal historians was the most valuable part of the cargo: the now-legendary De La Rue stamp printing plate. It was purchased by the Smithsonian National Postal Museum from the Franklin Institute in April 2011 for the William H. Gross Gallery, where it is now on display. Most of the captured stamps were ordered destroyed by the court, while other things of value were sold to the highest bidder, including the vessel.

### The U.S. 3¢ Postage Stamp Cargo

In 1864, the Confederate Navy captured a Union mail steamer with \$10,500 in U.S. 3¢ stamps as part of the cargo. These stamps reached Great Britain, where

they were sold through Owen Tudor, a broker in Liverpool. He attempted to sell them through agents in Canada after the war, and the United States successfully brought suit in Toronto to regain possession.

In the *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of The Post Office Department of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1863* on pages 267–70, is the following case, again with my emphases.

Regarding the aforementioned cargo of postage stamps, it says, in part:

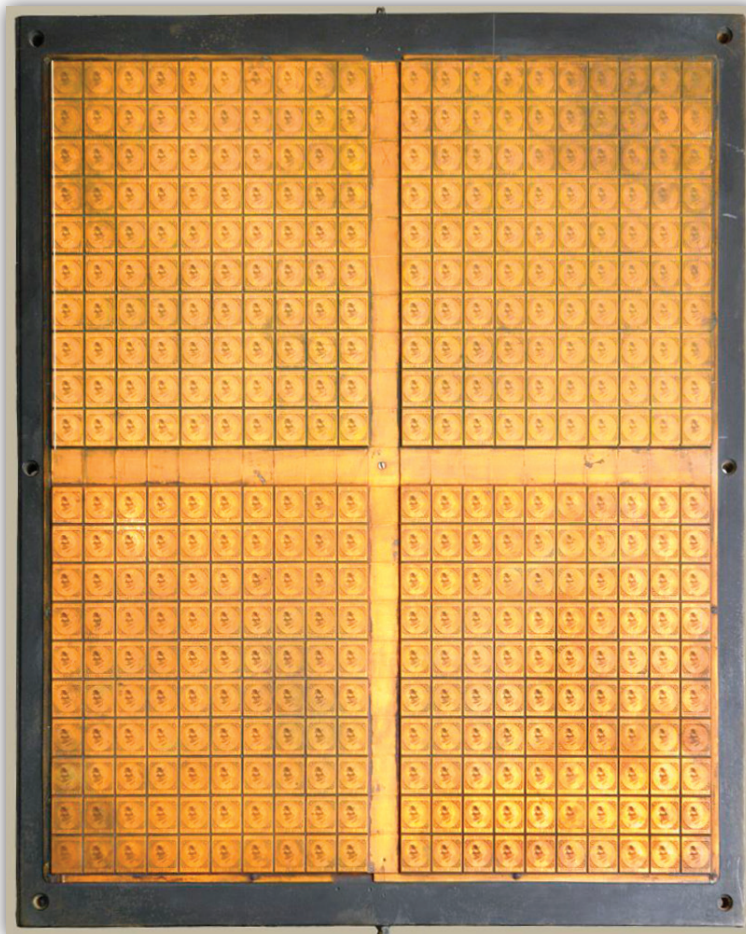
“Hon. ALEX. W. RANDALL, Postmaster General.

IN CHANCERY.

THE UNITED STATES VS. BOYD.

Hon. J. H. Cameron, Q. C, Edward Blake, J. C, and George Morphy, counsel for plaintiffs, the United States; and John Roaf and W. B. McMunich, counsel for defendants.

*This is a suit respecting certain United States postage stamps (350,000 3-cent and some 12-cent, making together about \$10,500 worth) which the plaintiffs claim as theirs, and which are in the possession of the defendants, Messrs. Boyd & Arthurs, merchants of this city, as agents for their co-defendant, Arthur Woods. The bill prays that these postage stamps may be declared to be the plaintiffs' property... The defendant, Woods, claims to have*



: Figure 5. Captured De La Rue printing plate on display at the William H. Gross Gallery at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum in Washington, D.C.

purchased the stamps, without notice of the plaintiffs' right to them, from a broker in Liverpool who had them in his possession at the time, and who was believed by the defendant to have power to sell them.

**Subject to this defense it is quite clear that the stamps are the property of the plaintiffs.** The evidence satisfactorily establishes that these stamps were dispatched by the proper officers of the United States government, in pursuance of their official duty, to certain postmasters in the State of Louisiana, by the ship Electric Spark, which sailed from New York for New Orleans on the 9th of July, 1864; that on the day following the Electric Spark was captured by the Florida, a ship in the service of the Confederate States, and that these stamps, with the rest of the cargo, were taken possession of by the captors. **There was no condemnation by a prize court, and if there had been the property would still be the plaintiffs'...** The plaintiffs have regained their authority in those States; the government for which the capture was made has ceased to exist, and it has been expressly decided in England that the plaintiffs are now entitled to all the property to which the confederate government had the right during its existence.

...the defense chiefly relied upon was the defendants' alleged purchase without notice. **The purchase took place at Liverpool, England, on the 21st**

**of September, 1865, which was some months after the rebellion was at end.** The purchase was made from one Allan S. Hanckel, a commission merchant in Liverpool, who was acting in the transaction for one Richard Taylor, an officer of the Florida at the time of the capture. The 3-cent stamps were in seven packets of 50,000 each, and these, with, I presume, a packet containing the 12-cent stamps, were delivered by Hanckel to the defendant at or about the time of the purchase, but the price agreed upon (£1,120) was not then paid..."

There was a very detailed account of what transpired, which is too much to relay in an article and mostly irrelevant to the philatelic story. The judicial conclusion was that:

"...the plaintiffs are entitled to a decree for the stamps, with cost, as against the defendant Woods, who should also pay the costs of his co-defendants."

Figure 6 shows the main exhibit, a letter headed New York 9 May 1867, pertaining to the *U. States v. Boyd*. It is signed by Robert Leech, Commissioner, Joseph A. Ware, A[lexander]. N. Zevely and Francis Spinner. File docketing on the letter is shown in Figure 7. The 3¢ stamps are fittingly numbered exhibit "3."

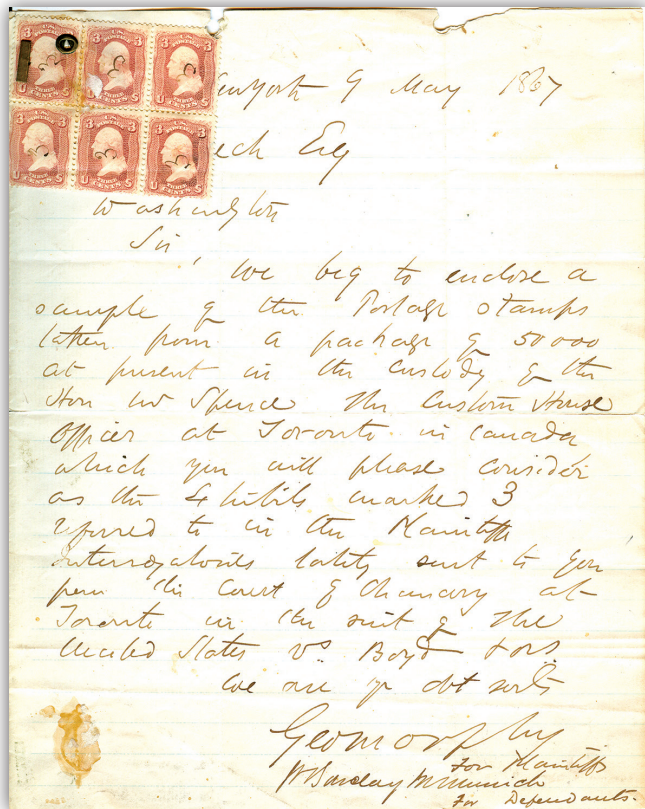


Figure 6. This block of six 3¢ stamps was attached as evidence in the case of the *United States vs. Boyd*, from a letter headed New York 9 May 1867 to Robert Leech Esq., Commissioner.

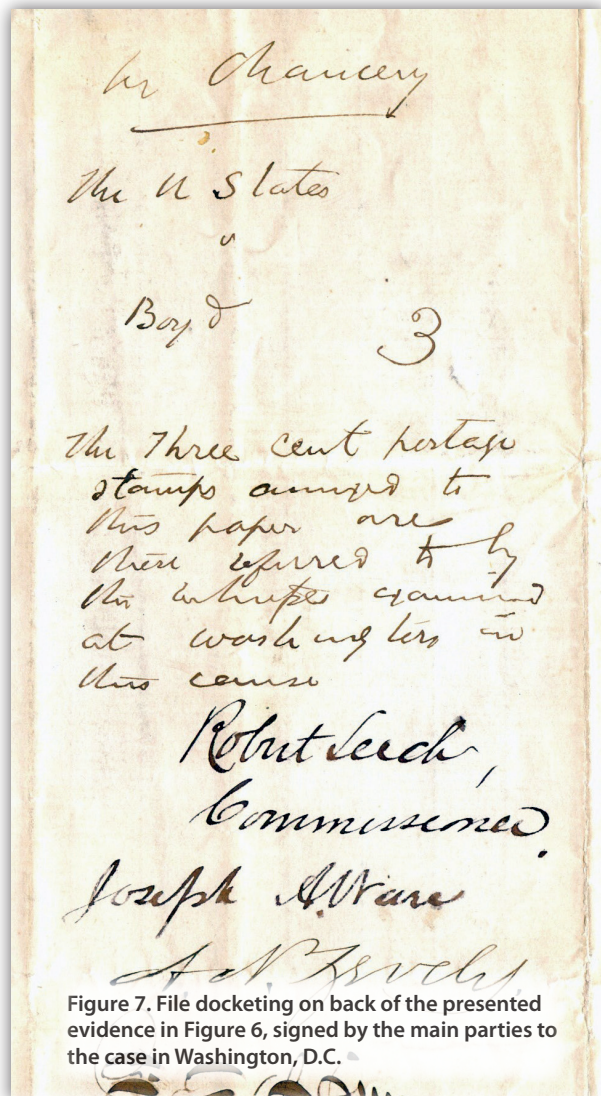


Figure 7. File docketing on back of the presented evidence in Figure 6, signed by the main parties to the case in Washington, D.C.



**Figure 8.** This block of nine 3¢ stamps each with a manuscript “3” and signed by Owen Tudor was entered as evidence in the case of the *United States vs. Boyd*.



**Figure 9.** A pair of 3¢ stamps signed and entered as evidence in *United States vs. Boyd*.

The evidence also includes a block of nine, as well as a pair, shown in Figures 8 and 9. The block of nine 3¢ stamps are individually marked with the evidentiary “3” under which is written, “These are the stamps marked with the figure 3 referred to in the Evidence of Owen Tudor.” It bears Tudor’s signature.

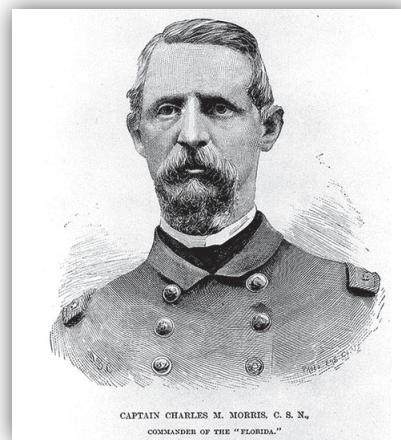
## Two Passions Collide

When I became aware of Drews’ 3¢ treasure, I was delighted to see the drama surrounding the capture of the U.S. sidewheel mail steamer took place in what are virtually local waters to me off the Atlantic coast.

Those who know me well are aware that, in addition to being a postal historian, I co-owned and operated a seasonal part-time wreck diving charter boat in the 1990s and 2000s. It is how I met my current husband, Capt. Darryl Boyer, in 1990. We ran out of Indian River Inlet, Delaware, and dived the many shipwrecks off the Atlantic coast of Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland, and occasionally Virginia.

In a rare occurrence, I went to my own nautical library for information, instead of resorting to other sources. It is no surprise that, regardless of the provider, I find conflicting information.

Sources noted two different locations, which were 55 miles apart. The first set of numbers were off Cape May, New



**Figure 10.** Captain Charles M. Morris, in command of the *CSS Florida* (then ranked lieutenant) when she captured the U.S. mail steamer *Electric Spark*.

Jersey, in 190 FSW (feet sea water), while the second set of coordinates put the *Electric Spark* 48 miles off the coast in 335 FSW.

The *Electric Spark* of Philadelphia was captured *en route* from New York to New Orleans by the famed *CSS Florida*, with Lieutenant Charles M. Morris, CSN commanding, shown in Figure 10.

In the U.S. Naval War Records Office *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* is the following first-hand account from Lieut. Morris of the drowning of a midshipman during the capture of the *Electric Spark*.

“Hon. S. R. MALLORY,  
Secretary of the Navy, Richmond, Va.

*Report of Lieutenant Morris, C. S. Navy, commanding C.S.S. Florida, of the drowning of Midshipman William B. Sinclair.*

C. S. S. FLORIDA,  
At Sea, July 23, 1864.

*SIR: It is with deep sorrow that I have to report the death of Midshipman William B. Sinclair, he was drowned on the evening of the 10th instant by the swamping of the second cutter, while coming from the prize steamer Electric Spark to this vessel. The moment it was known that the cutter was in danger a boat was sent to her assistance. On reaching her she found all of her crew hanging on the bottom of the boat, and Mr. Sinclair missing. Mr. Sinclair had nobly refused the assistance of the crew, ordering them to hang on to the boat, and he would swim to the ship and would take care of himself. He was never seen afterwards, and I fear must have been seized with cramp or taken by a shark; one had been seen not long before swimming about the ship. Every exertion was made to find him, but of no avail.*

*Mr. Sinclair was a most promising young officer,*

and esteemed and beloved by officers and crew. His death has cast a deep gloom over all.

I am, sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,

C. M. MORRIS, Lieutenant, Commanding.”

There are lengthy reports by Morris on file of captures by the *Florida* from July 2 to 13, 1864. Morris relates the capture of the *Electric Spark* in detail:

“Soon after leaving her (English Schooner Lane) discovered a steamer standing to the southward. Went in chase, steering so as to cut her off. As soon as we were near enough hoisted English colors, When within range of our guns hauled down the English flag and fired a shot astern of her, showing our own colors. As she still kept on, fired two shots at her; all well directed. She stopped and hauled down her flag...Found her to be the new propeller **steamer Electric Spark, of Philadelphia, 810 tons, from New York, bound to New Orleans with the United States mail, forty-three passengers, a crew of thirty-six, and a very valuable assorted cargo...Put Lieutenant Stone with a prize crew on board, with orders to follow us. After chasing the schooner for two hours, fired a gun to windward. She hove to. Made the following terms: We were to pay \$720 (in gold) for her deck load of fruit, which he would be obliged to throw overboard to make room for the passengers and crew, which she would land at the Delaware Breakwater, then distant 73 miles...**

My first intention was to put her in charge of Lieutenant S. G. Stone, with a prize crew, and let him try to run her into Wilmington; but **my great difficulty was a want of competent men to run her engines. I sent two of our best firemen on board, but they were totally incompetent.** Mr. Jackson, acting second assistant engineer, had just been dangerously wounded by the falling of a tackle from the maintop, striking him on the ankle joint; and Mr. Thompson said it would be impossible for him to spare one of the engineers of the vessel. **Under these circumstances I deemed it best to destroy her by cutting all of her pipes and opening her air ports, and allow her to sink before daylight, giving the passengers the idea that we had carried her off to make a tender of her or to run her into Wilmington...As the prize crew left her she was settling down rapidly by the head.** At 11:15 p. m. we left her, only taking away the mail bags and Adams & Co.’s iron chest, as I deemed it most prudent to be well off the coast before daylight, the *America* having had ample time to reach Cape May and telegraph the news of our being on the coast, and we had gathered from the newspapers that there were vessels both at Philadelphia and New York ready for sea; also at Fortress Monroe... **On opening the mail bags I found no dispatches, but some \$12,000 worth of postage stamps; all of**

**the remaining mail matter I threw overboard.** In Adams Express Company’s chest we found the following: \$1,305 in United States greenbacks; \$328 in New Orleans bank notes, and \$132.25 in New Orleans city notes; \$210 in American gold; one gold watch; one silver watch, and a diamond pin. All of the above articles have been placed in charge of the paymaster.”

Acting Master William P. Gibbs of the *Electric Spark* tells substantially the same account in *Volume 3, Series I, of the Civil War Official Records...Navy.*

### United States v. Boyd. Court of Chancery, Toronto, Canada

In the *American Law Review*; October 1868, Vol. III, No. 1. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, p. 584, is found the following concise summary:

CANADA.

United States v. Boyd. Court of Chancery, Toronto.

Several packages of postage-stamps were shipped from New York, in July, 1864, on the steamer *Electric Spark*, which was captured by the Confederate armed cruiser *Florida*.

The stamps came into the private possession of Richard Taylor, who was the purser of the *Florida*, and who sold them on the 21st of September, 1865, through the medium of a broker, to one Alfred Woods, of Liverpool. Woods paid for the stamps in two promissory notes, payable on demand, dated Oct. 1, 1865, and consigned them to Boyd & Arthurs, commission merchants at Toronto, Canada. The plaintiffs claimed the stamps, and the principal defense was that they were purchased without notice of the plaintiffs’ title.

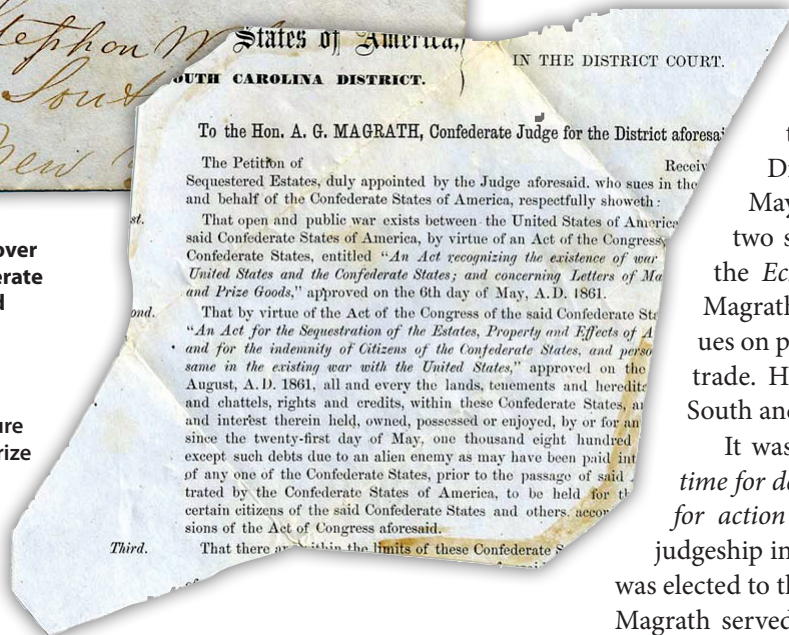
The Vice Chancellor ordered a decree entered for the plaintiffs. The following were the main points decided:

1. That, there having been **no condemnation by a Prize Court**, the title of the plaintiffs was not lost.
2. That, even if there had been such condemnation, it was necessary to show that the property had been parted with by the Confederate States.
3. That at the close of the Rebellion, the United States succeeded to all the property to which the Confederate government had the right during its existence.
4. That postage-stamps are not equivalent to money, and may be followed by the owner.
5. That a Court of Chancery has jurisdiction of the case.
6. That the circumstances of the case show that the defendant took the stamps with notice.”



**Figure 11. An outboard blockade-run adversity cover fashioned from a Confederate Prize Court document and addressed to New York.**

**Figure 12. The exploded blockade-run cover in Figure 11 with the Confederate Prize Court document visible.**



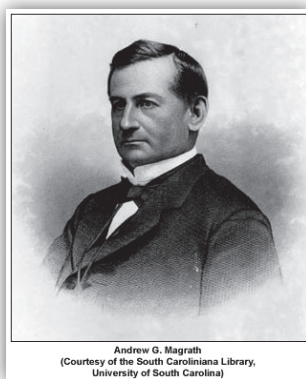
## Blockade-run Adversity Cover Fashioned from Confederate Prize Court Document

Figure 11 shows an outgoing blockade-run cover addressed to Stephen W. Cary at No. 61 South Street, New York. It is an adversity cover made from a printed Confederate court document concerning prize court matters and letters of marque and prize goods. The document from which the adversity cover is fashioned notes the Hon. A. G. Magrath (pronounced “McGraw”). The exploded cover with legal document visible on the inside is displayed in Figure 12.

“Adversity covers” are so called by postal historians because of the adverse war-time conditions which caused them to be made. The Union blockade proved critical in restricting goods from entering and leaving the Confederacy. Southerners faced calamitous shortages of supplies, including paper and envelopes. Thus writers used whatever was handy as writing paper or to fashion envelopes, such as spare rolls

of wallpaper—arguably the most popular form of adversity cover with collectors.

This cover was likely carried on an outbound blockade runner and given to an agent bound for New York at Bermuda or Nassau, where it



**Figure 13. Judge Andrew G. Magrath, Confederate Judge for South Carolina District in charge of the prize court.**

entered the mails bearing a top sheet margin 3¢ rose (U.S. Scott 65), tied by a New York March 25 double-circle datestamp duplexed with a circle of wedges, probably from 1864. The known correspondence originated from Charleston, South Carolina.

Pictured in Figure 13, Harvard-educated lawyer Andrew Gordon Magrath had been appointed by President Franklin Pierce to a seat on the U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina on May 9, 1856. In cases surrounding two ships seized as slave traders—the *Echo* and the *Wanderer*—Judge Magrath declared that the federal statutes on piracy did not apply to the slave trade. His decision was hailed in the South and condemned in the North.

It was Magrath who asserted: “*The time for deliberation has passed; the time for action has come!*” He resigned his judgeship in 1860 when Abraham Lincoln was elected to the presidency.

Magrath served as Secretary of State during South Carolina’s brief tenure as an independent republic, from secession until joining with other states to create the Confederate States of America. He served as South Carolina District Court Judge from May 6, 1861, until December 20, 1864, at which time he became the 71st Governor of South Carolina until May 25, 1865, when the Union Army arrested him and sent him to be imprisoned at Fort Pulaski, Georgia. Magrath was released in December 1865 and he resumed his lucrative practice of law in Charleston.

## Southern District Courts

As the states in the South seceded from the Union, the judges of the U.S. district courts there resigned their commissions or became inactive. Confederate judges took over and sometimes even used the same record books. When areas of the South were taken by Union forces, the president appointed new judges. Before the end of the war, federal courts were re-established in the Northern District of Florida, Eastern District of Louisiana, Eastern District of Virginia, District of Arkansas and the district in Tennessee.

The following are listed under District Courts of the United States Judiciary in the *Register Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval, in the Service of the United States on the Thirtieth September 1861:*

- Alabama — Northern and Southern Districts — George W. Lane, Judge (no residence noted)
- Florida — Southern District (none listed for Northern District) — William Marvin, Judge; Thomas Jefferson Boyton, Attorney; James C. Clapp, Marshal — all listed at Key West

Texas — Eastern District — John C. Watrous,  
Judge (Galveston)

Texas — Western District — Thomas H. Duval,  
Judge (Austin)

Virginia — Eastern District — Judge and Attorney  
vacant. Thomas H. Fisher, no designation but in  
usual slot for Marshal (Markam's)

Virginia — Western District — John J. Jackson,  
Judge (Parkersburg); Attorney spot vacant; Ed-  
ward M. Norton, Marshall (Wheeling)

All positions are shown vacant for Arkansas,  
North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Louisi-  
ana, Mississippi.

All positions shown filled for the border states  
of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri and  
Tennessee.

Not surprisingly, most names and offices for Southern  
States were shown as vacant, with some exceptions, as noted  
above. Perhaps publication of these names or initials will  
help yield some new philatelic discoveries, although chances  
are slim. Consider it a challenging scavenger hunt.

Although Confederate privateers weren't beating a path  
to the Confederate courts, foreign governments still provid-  
ed them business.

For example, in *Confederate Navy Department Corre-  
spondence, 1861-65*, on page 353, is found a letter from the  
Foreign Office dated December 23, 1862, from A.H. Layard  
to Messrs. Wm. Ewing & Co., Royal Exchange, Glasgow, in  
which Layard acknowledges the

*"...destruction by the Confederate Steam-  
er Alabama of British property on board the  
merchant ship Lafayette...the owners of any  
British property, **not being contraband of  
war, on board a Federal vessel captured  
and destroyed by a Confederate vessel cap-  
tured and destroyed by a Confederate ves-  
sel of war may claim in a Confederate prize  
court compensation for the destruction of  
such property."***

There are other similar letters from outraged captains  
whose vessels and/or property had been destroyed.

## Useful Sources

At the National Archives of the United States, among the  
Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Record  
Group 92, is a series of charters, bills of lading, claims papers,  
plans and correspondence relating to vessels ("Vessel File"),  
1834-1900. Individual files pertain to both sides - Confed-  
erate vessels captured by U.S. forces or former U.S. vessels

captured or otherwise acquired by the Confederacy.

The "Vessel Papers" are a part of the War Department  
Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109, most  
of which were created by the Confederate War and Treasury  
Departments. These files were part of those created during  
the late nineteenth century to facilitate research in claims  
cases. Many of the claims submitted were from Southern ves-  
sel owners or their heirs. The Archive Office listed 66 such  
cases pending before the Southern Claims Commission in  
1873.

For a detailed account of the procedure to be followed in  
Confederate Prize Courts, see the appendix in *The Confed-  
erate Privateers* by William Morrison Robinson, Jr., published  
in 1928 by the Yale University Press. Standing interrogatories  
and rules in cases of prize and capture from the "Minutes of  
Court of Admiralty, C.S." were found by Robinson in April  
1926 in the attic of the Post Office in Savannah, Georgia.

The aforementioned *History of the Confederate States  
Navy* by Thomas Scharf lists five pages of U.S. vessels de-  
stroyed by Confederate cruisers. It enumerates them by ves-  
sel name, type of vessel, by whom captured, when they were  
destroyed, and what was destroyed—vessel, cargo, personal  
property (although not in detail)—and value. The appendix  
includes a register of the commissioned and warrant officers  
of the Provisional Navy of the Confederate States to June 1,  
1864, from the Navy Register.

## Final Thoughts

Civil War prize court mail is undoubtedly one of the  
most fascinating areas I have studied in the past half century.  
When I first heard of the U.S. 3¢ stamp evidence captured  
on a Union mail steamer by a Confederate vessel, I thought  
I had found that elusive piece of Confederate Prize Court  
evidence. But, although a fascinating and valuable philatel-  
ic item, it regrettably did not pass through the Confederate  
prize court system.

According to Thomas Scharf, during the Revolutionary  
War, letters of marque issued by the Continental Congress  
were held valid for two years before the new government  
was recognized by any foreign power. During the first year,  
the American privateers captured 530 British vessels and  
their cargoes, valued at \$5,000,000. The U.S. had 1,500 pri-  
vateers on the ocean, equipped with 15,000 guns. The aver-  
age person today is likely to confuse a respectable licensed  
privateer with a despised pirate, not appreciating the interna-  
tionally significant distinction between the two.

It is clear that the American Civil War marked the end of  
privateering. What had once been perceived as an honorable  
profession vanished. In Margaret Mitchell's immortal words  
describing the era, it, too, was "gone with the wind."