



The Civil War Post

Patricia A. Kaufmann

Stolen Mail at Salem Post Office

On the back of the envelope is written "P.O. Salem N.C. / Dec 11th 1863. This letter was stolen out of this office last May. I retained as evidence against the thief who has been convicted & sentenced to 2 years imprisonment. O.A. Keehln, P.M." (Figure 1).

The front of the envelope reveals it as a desirable Confederate patriotic (CSA Catalog¹ type SN1-2, Verse 25 "Men of the South, arise, arise—"), which portrays a pair of Continental Soldiers. It is a relatively scarce design and bears the imprint of W. & J. Bonitz, Goldsboro, N.C. (Figure 2)

The patriotic is franked with a pair of 5¢ typographed (letterpress) issues, printed by De La Rue in London (CSA Catalog and Scott 6), and used with a "Brice Creek N.C. 25th May" manuscript postmark. It is addressed to Governor Z.B. Vance, Raleigh, N.C. Up the right side of the envelope is the docketing "File with envelope Z.B.V."

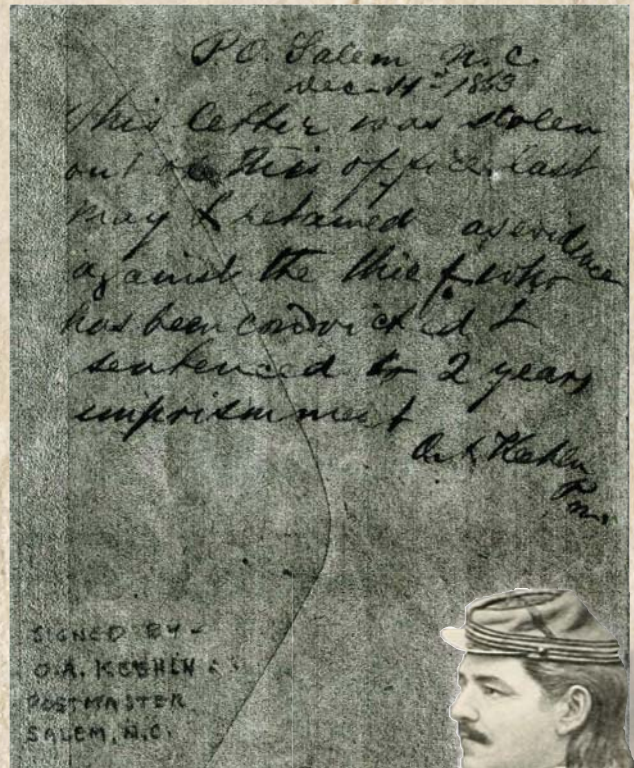
Zebulon Baird Vance (1830-94) was one of the most popular political leaders North Carolina ever produced. He was a symbol of leadership, integrity and loyalty during a time of great turmoil.² (Figures 3-5)

Vance equated the Democratic party with sectionalism, which he believed dangerous to the best interests of North Carolina and the South. Determined to oppose it, he cast his allegiance with the declining Whig Party. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1858 to fill a vacant seat. His harsh criticism of Democrats as promoters of sectionalism resulted in a hot re-election campaign against David Coleman, which almost ended in a duel.

Figure 1 (above right). O.A. Keehln, postmaster, docketing on the back of patriotic cover (Figure 2) in which he explains that this cover is being used as evidence in a court case of mail theft.

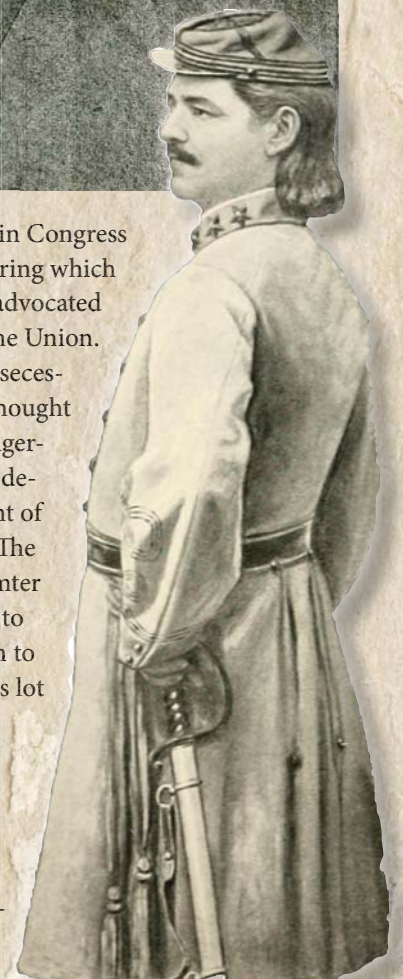
Figure 2 (below). Continental Soldiers, used Confederate patriotic to Governor Z.B. Vance, docketed and initialed by him up the right side.

Figure 3 (right). Col. Zebulon Vance of the 26th N.C. Infantry Regiment, as he appears in *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-65*, published 1901.



Vance served in Congress from 1858-61, during which time he strongly advocated maintenance of the Union. He spoke against secession because he thought it unwise and dangerous, but he never denied the legal right of a state to secede. The firing on Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call to arms forced a him to choose; he cast his lot with his state.

Zeb Vance refused to be nominated as a candidate for the Confederate Con-



gress. Instead, he raised his own company, the Rough and Ready Guards, of which he was the captain. He was elected colonel of the Twenty-Sixth North Carolina Infantry Regiment on Aug. 27, 1861, and saw considerable action. Still, politics was never far from his mind.

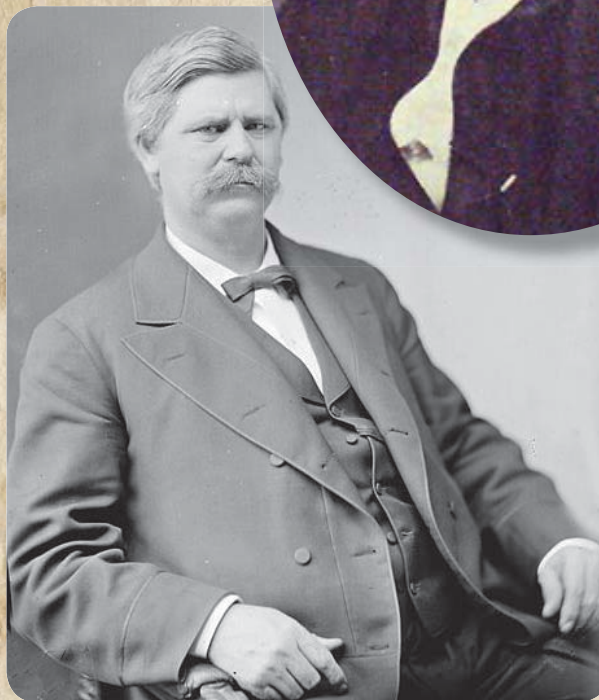
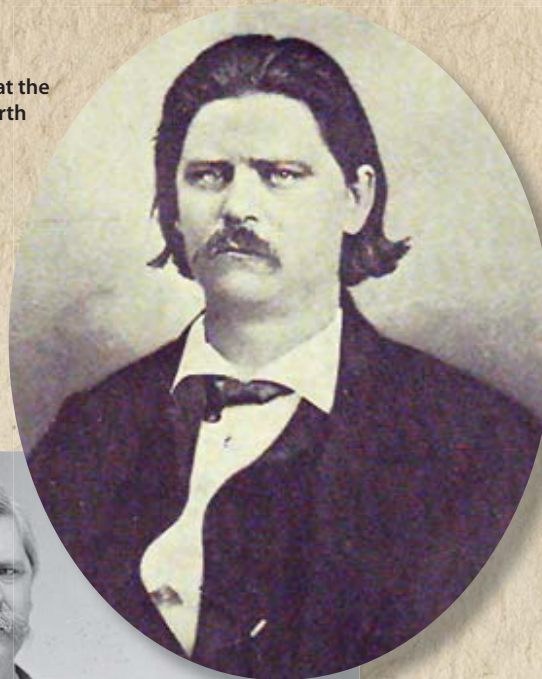
Vance served as governor of North Carolina 1862-65 and 1877-79, as well as a United States senator 1879-94. He also had dealings in real estate, nickel mining and lumber in Buncombe and Mecklenburg counties. His papers (1824-1915) are archived in the Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Figure 4 (right). Zebulon B. Vance in 1862, at the time of his inauguration as governor of North Carolina.

Courtesy North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources.

Figure 5 (below). Zebulon Baird Vance postwar portrait by Brady and Handy. Library of Congress.

Figure 6 (below left). Gravestone of Salem's Civil War postmaster, Orestes A. Keehln, with Masonic symbol at top.



Orestes Aeneas Keehln (1831-78) was the son of a prominent Moravian physician. His father, Dr. Christian David Keehln, immigrated from Germany in 1818. Orestes was born in North Carolina; he was a bookseller by profession. His gravestone is shown in Figure 6.

On April 11, 1853, at the age of 21, Orestes became postmaster of Salem. He continued his postal duties throughout the war until June 24, 1865.

During this time, Salem had a population of approximately 3,000. The post office continued to operate as Salem until 1899, when it merged with Winston to become what we today know as Winston-Salem.³

Serious Confederate philatelists are very familiar with the Keehln name, as it was incorporated into the scarce handstamped provisional marking from Salem. Fortunately, Keehln was diligent in keeping postal records and passing down valuable philatelic information to us.

As of 2015, there are 34 surviving hand-stamped provisionals recorded, according to North Carolina specialist Tony L. Crumbley. Figure 7 shows a used example of the provisional marking on a postal

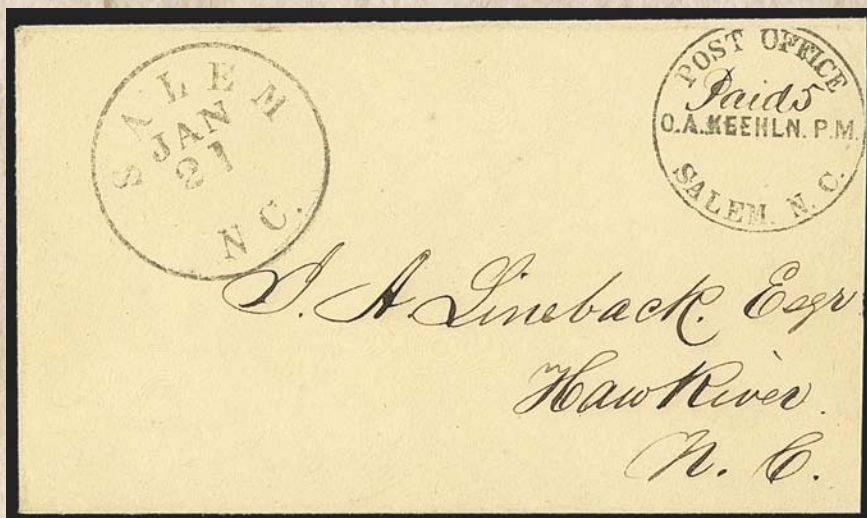


Figure 7 (above). Scarce Confederate Salem, N.C., provisional that incorporates Keehln's name within the handstamp.

Figure 8 (far left). Salem, N.C. provisional marking, CSA Catalog type A.

Figure 9 (left). Salem, N.C., provisional marking, CSA Catalog type B.



entire. Four distinct varieties have been recorded using the same printing die.

These provisionals were prepared by handstamping envelopes with a specially prepared brass die to print envelopes on a small hand press. The design incorporated Keehln's name as postmaster. Separately, "PAID" and "5" were struck within the device. On others, the rates "Paid 5" and "Paid 10" were applied in manuscript. Figures 8 and 9 show examples of CSA *Catalog* types A (Scott #73XU1) and B (Scott #73XU3).

Many reprints of this provisional exist because the die, along with other handstamp devices, survived the war. In 1936, Postmaster Keehln's son, George, offered 1,400 reprints for \$125 to Charles J. Phillips, a prominent stamp dealer of the day. Fortunately, they can be distinguished from the genuine provisionals with the proper reference material, although they continue to fool unsuspecting collectors and dealers.

Tony Crumbley and Brian Green jointly wrote up the full story of the Salem provisionals in *Opinions II*, published by the Philatelic Foundation.⁴ Since then, the story has been repeated in several places, most recently and notably in the 2015 book on Confederate fakes and forgeries by Peter Powell and John Kimbrough.⁵



Figure 10. One of the many commonly encountered Salem provisional reprint entires.

At some time, a "Paid 5" die was made for printing the rate within the envelope to make it look like the manuscript. Since this "Paid 5" die was not used during the war, it is believed that this die might have been created by George Keehln after the war in anticipation of a need for a large quantity of "reprint" provisionals. It continues to ensnare the unwary (Figure 10).

Subject Cover Offers Much

Our subject cover is everything that a lover of postal history could want.

- It is a scarce patriotic.
- It was used as evidence in a court case of postal theft, a titillating scenario for collectors.
- It was addressed to – and annotated by – a famous North Carolina politician during his term as wartime governor of the state.
- It was signed by a famous Confederate postmaster who created provisionals incorporating his own name. And the postmaster concisely tells the story in his own words on the back of the cover.

It is a perfect example of "every cover tells a story." ☒

Trish Kaufmann was introduced to Confederate postal history in 1965 and became a full-time dealer in 1973. As a researcher, writer and dealer, her sole focus today is on Civil War postal history. She enjoys hearing from readers and may be contacted at trishkauf@comcast.net

Endnotes

1. Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown, Jr., Jerry S. Palazoloz, Editors, *Confederate States Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*, 2012, Confederate Stamp Alliance, www.csalliance.org.
2. Jerry L. Cross, Zebulon Baird Vance, NC Office of Archives and History, 2007. <http://ncpedia.org/biography/governors/vance>, Accessed Jan. 9, 2019.
3. Tony L. Crumbley, "O.A. Keehln's Salem Post Office," *North Carolina Postal History Society Newsletter*, April 1986, p. 3.
4. *Opinions II: Philatelic Expertizing – An Inside View*, Philatelic Foundation, New York, 1985.
5. Peter W. W. Powell, John L. Kimbrough MD, *Confederate States of America Philatelic Fakes, Forgeries and Fantasies of the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 2015, Confederate Stamp Alliance, www.csalliance.org.



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