

PRISONERS OF WAR MAIL - FORT DELAWARE 1862 - 1865

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this exhibit is to acquaint the reader with the chronicle of the fascinating/significant period of the U.S. / Confederate postal systems from 1862 to 1865 involving **Fort Delaware POW prison** near Delaware City, DE. The United States Civil War began on April 12, 1861. Until the end of April 1861, the USA Post Office handled all the states' mail (including those seceded). Effective May 31, 1861 a USA Post Office order suspended all mail service in the seceded states. On June 1, 1861, the Confederate States of America (CSA) inaugurated its own postal system. **This is the largest display ever assembled showing the Fort Delaware POW postal history uses.**

BACKGROUND

Fort Delaware was completed in 1859 on the marshy island known as Pea Patch Island. Originally built to protect the ports of Wilmington and Philadelphia, it became a Union prison camp during the Civil War. The first prisoner arrived on July 11, 1861; by July 1863, there were more than 13,000 prisoners on the island and during the span of four years it had held almost 33,000 men. About 2,500 prisoners died on Fort Delaware. According to Galen Harrison, the census of known covers from all Federal Prisons totalled 1,976. **Only 244 covers are known from Fort Delaware, 34 are in this exhibit.**

IMPORTANCE

This is possibly the 1st exhibit attempt (in memory) to present this difficult to acquire and historically epic Civil War's Fort Delaware POW covers. The story of Civil War POW mail is historically important and profoundly philatelically significant.

ORGANIZATION

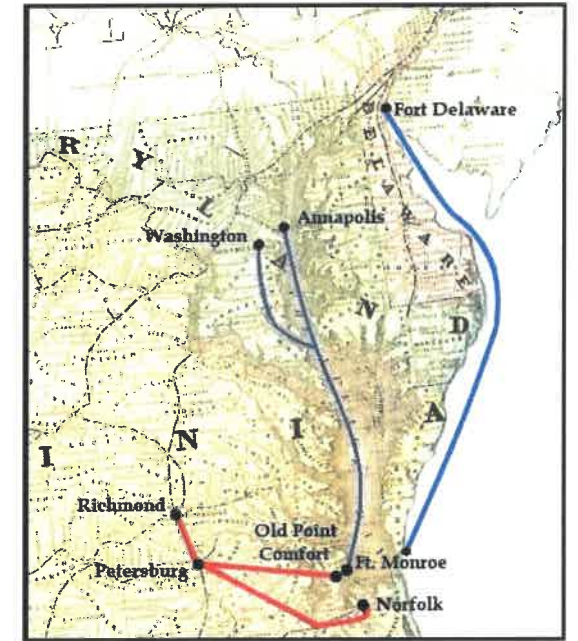
The exhibit is organized in four chapters: Mail to the Southern States, Mail to the Border States, Mail to the Northern States, Incoming Mail and Epilogue. Earliest cover shown in the exhibit is displayed in Chapter III, page 6. Flag-of-Truce mail is designated by *

Chapter I - Mail to the Southern States



Flag-of-Truce routes across military lines were established for military communications between warring parties, for the return of prisoners-of-war (POWs), and for the exchange of mail to and from POWs. Confederate soldiers were allowed to send their mail postage due with the recipient obligated to pay the postage. Most recipients were family and friends and more than happy to do so. The envelopes had to be endorsed by the prisoner and Confederate Postage had to be prepaid. Letters were to be enclosed in an outer envelope and were to be addressed to the commander at the exchange point. The southeastern Virginia coastal region offered the best connections for the Flag-of-Truce exchanges. Norfolk had good rail connections to Richmond and was just across the Chesapeake Bay from USA-controlled Fortress Monroe and the Old Point Comfort Virginia post office.

FLAG-OF-TRUCE MAIL



Map of the Norfolk-Fortress Monroe exchange point in southeastern Virginia. Thick red lines indicate railroad connections and blue lines indicate water connections

All the mail from Fort Delaware sent to the Southern states followed the Norfolk-Fortress Monroe Flag-of-Truce route through Old Point Comfort and Richmond, VA.



To Charleston, SC
Oct 22, 1864

Sent by Dr. Gabriel Manigault to his mother, Endorsed "Via Flag-of-Truce".

U.S. postage paid by 3c Rose, tied by target cancel and CSA postage prepaid by 10c Blue, cut to shape, tied by partial Richmond, VA cds. DELAWARE DEL OCT 22 (1864) cds 24 mm



To Charleston, SC
Nov. 26, 1864

Sent by Dr. Gabriel Manigault to his mother, Endorsed "By Flag-of-Truce, 26 Nov 1864"

Franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL NOV 29 (1864) cds as well as Confederate DUE 10 straight line handstamp, thus bearing postage on both sides

DUE 10 CSA "P" 30mm
Scan @75%

Marked "DUE 10" handstamp for Confederate postage.

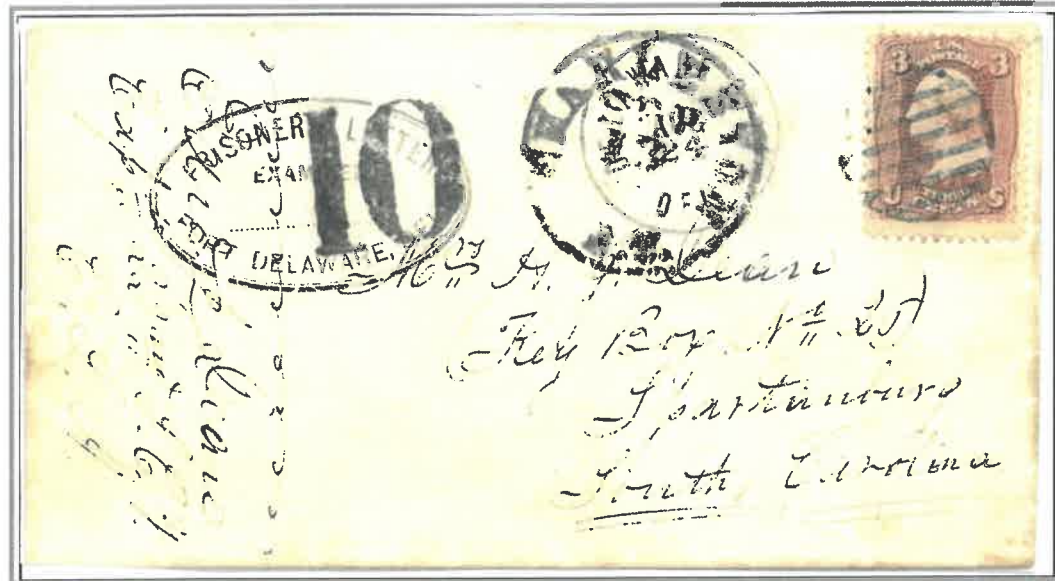


"Prisoner's Letter, Examined, Fort Delaware, Del" examiner's oval handstamp CSA PWH-01 Type A in use from April to October 1864

Scan @ 75%

Dr. Gabriel Edward Manigault (1833-1889) was a physician and biologist born into the Manigault family of Charleston, SC. He first served in the Charleston Dragoons and then in the 4th South Carolina Cavalry Regiment and was wounded in the face at the Battle of Pocotaligo. He was captured at Louisa Court House in June 1864 and held prisoner first at Point Lookout and then at Fort Delaware.

Scan @ 75% **10** 10 (Due)
CSA "K"
20x20mm



To Spartanburg, SC
Aug. 24, 1864
Endorsed "Edwd. J. Dean, Capt. 22nd S.C.V., C.S.A.," At left oval Examiner's handstamp.

Entered mails bearing U.S. 3c Rose tied by circular grid cancel with matching DELAWARE CITY DEL Aug 24. Routed via Flag of Truce, entered C.S.A. mails with Charleston SC Sep 13 cds and matching large "10" due rating stamp

To Abbeville, SC
Oct, 28, 1864
Endorsed "Care of Major General Battalion Commander Dept. Va. N.C."

Also endorsed "For Flag-of-Truce"

U.S. postage paid by 3c Rose, and CSA postage prepaid by 10c Blue, tied by partial Richmond, VA cds. DELAWARE DEL OCT 28 (1864) cds 24 mm



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To Augusta, GA
Dec. 12, 1864
Endorsed "Per Flag- Truce Boat" and "Via Fortress Monroe".

U.S. Postage paid by 3c Rose tied by circular target and DELAWARE CITY DEL Dec 12 (1864) duplex and 10c Blue, tied by partial Richmond, VA cds

Cover crossed the lines via Flag of Truce boat "New York"

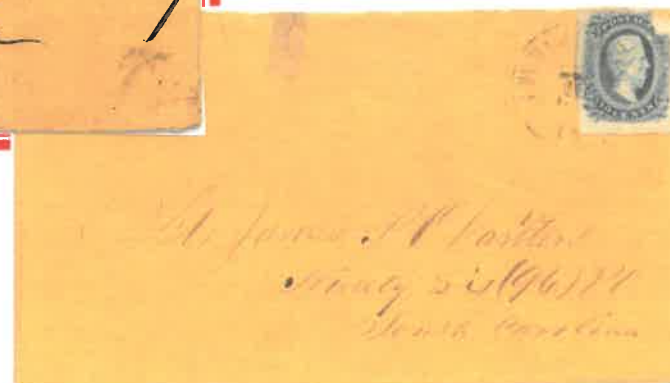
To Albemarle County, VA (Charlottesville)
August 29, 1864

U.S. postage paid by 3c Rose, and CSA postage prepaid by 10c Blue, tied by partial Richmond, VA SEP 15 cds. DELAWARE DEL AUG 29 (1864) cds 24 mm

"Prisoner's Letter, Examined, Fort Delaware, Del" examiner's oval handstamp

Endorsed "Via Flag-of-Truce"

The University of Virginia located in Charlottesville, Virginia, was founded in 1819 by Declaration of Independence author Thomas Jefferson.



Scan of inside cover (@75%)

Upon arrival at Charlottesville, cover was **TURNED** and sent to James P. Chatters, Ninety Six (96) South Carolina with CSA 11 10c Blue stamp.

UNUSUAL TURNED USE DUAL FRANKING COVER

Signed Stanley B. Ashbrook

To Fishersville, VA
Jan 31, 1865
10c tied Richmond, VA. Feb. 10 cds (Powell Type 6mm) and 3c rose tied by target cancel (20 mm) and DELAWARE CITY DEL JAN 31 cds (24mm).

"Care of Comdg. Officer, Fortress Monroe, by "Flag-of-Truce" in manuscript at lower left.

Examiner's markings were discontinued in Nov. 1864



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To Washington County, VA
(Emory, VA)
Sept. 25, 1864

10c tied Richmond, VA., Sept. 31 cds (30 mm) and 3c rose tied by circular grid cancel with matching DELAWARE CITY DEL SEP 25, (26mm) to prepay both the Union and Confederate postage on North to South POW cover from Fort Delaware.

Emory & Henry College (E&H or Emory) is a private liberal arts college in Emory, Virginia. The campus comprises 338 acres of Washington County. Founded in 1836, Emory & Henry College is the oldest institution of higher learning in Southwest Virginia.



To Union Occupied
Nashville, TN
Oct. 22, 1864
Outgoing inner cover franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL OCT 22 (1864) cds and target cancel (20 mm).
Addressed to Ex Gov. W.B. Campbell (Governor of Tennessee 1851-1853)
Endorsed "The PM will please forward to Gov Campbell if not at Nashville"
"Prisoner's Letter, Examined, Fort Delaware, Del" examiner's oval handstamp



To Union Occupied
Gallatin, TN
Oct. 13, 1864

Outgoing inner cover franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL OCT 13 (1864) cds (24 mm) and target cancel (20 mm).

"Prisoner's Letter, Examined, Fort Delaware, Del" examiner's oval handstamp



To Union Occupied
Memphis, TN.
July 13, 1864

Outgoing inner cover franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL JUL 13 (1864) cds (26 mm) and grid cancel (20 mm).

Endorsed "Dr. Weld will please forward to Laconia, Arkansas J. Chas. Classon"

"Prisoner's Letter, Examined, Fort Delaware, Del" examiner's oval handstamp



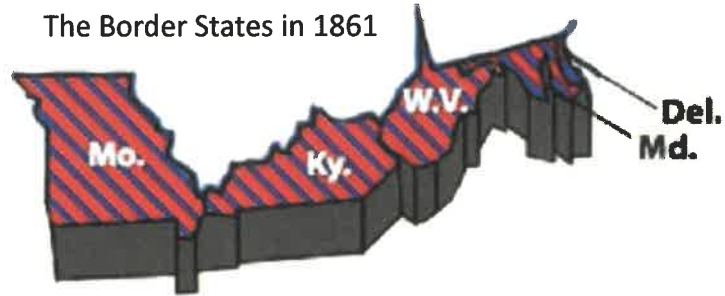
To Raleigh, NC
Oct. 18, 1864

Endorsed "Via Fortress Monroe per Flag-of-Truce"

Examiner's marking, U.S. postage paid by 3c Rose tied by target cancel, DELAWARE CITY, DEL OCT 18, (1864) cds and Richmond, VA cds.(30mm)

NOTE TO CSA "P" 30mm
Scan @ 75%
Marked "DUE 10" handstamp for Confederate postage.

The Border States in 1861



Map source: Pinterest

To Martinsburg, WV
May 4, 1864

Outgoing inner cover franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL MAY 4 (1864) cds and target cancel (20 mm).



To Point Pleasant, WV
May 30, 1864

Outgoing inner cover franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL MAY 30 (1864) cds (26 mm) and grid cancel (20 mm).

"Prisoner's Letter, Examined, Fort Delaware, Del" examiner's oval handstamp



To Brownsville, MD
June 18, 1864

Outgoing inner cover franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL MAY 2 (1865) cds and grid cancel (20 mm).

"Prisoner's Letter, Examined, Fort Delaware, Del" examiner's oval handstamp



To Point Lookout, MD
May 2, 1865

Outgoing inner cover franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL MAY 2 (1865) cds and target cancel (20 mm).

With red docketing "April 30, 1865 From Charles J. Williams Pris of War Fort Delaware, Del."

Manuscript examined marking "G" from Point Lookout, reported by G. Harrison as used between Jan 16 -April 3, 1865, thus this is a later use.

Wonderful **DOUBLE PRISONER USE** both of whom were in "Batty C", NC 2nd Light Artillery. Williams was released June 17, 1865 and Sessoms was released May 29, 1865. Both had been captured at Fort Fisher on January 1, 1865, where both were wounded.



To Baltimore, MD
May 22, 1865

Outgoing inner cover franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL MAY 22 (1865) cds and target cancel (20 mm).

Endorsed
"Lieut. H.J. Cartwright, 9th Ala. Inf. C.S.A., Prisoner of War, Dv. 23, Fort Delaware, May 20th, 1865, With Permit"

Hezekiah John Cartwright (1841-1871) 3rd Lieutenant was captured at Gettysburg on July 2, 1863 and released on June 12, 1865

From Delaware City to Baltimore via the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad (PW&B), founded in 1831



To Union Occupied
Covington, KY
June 17, 1864

Letter with contents franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL JUN 17 cds (26.5mm) and grid cancel (SD-G 71- 20 mm).

From Richmond to Covington via the Virginia Central Railroad which operated between 1850 and 1868 from Richmond westward for 206 miles (332 km) to Covington.



To Union Occupied
Lexington, KY
August 11, 1864

Outgoing inner covers franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL AUG 11 and SEPT. 22 (1864) cds and grid cancel (SD-G 71- 20 mm).

Letter from Major Robert Bullock, member of the infamous Morgan's Raiders, specifically the 8th Cavalry.

From Richmond to Lexington, KY via the Virginia Central Railroad which operated between 1850 and 1868.

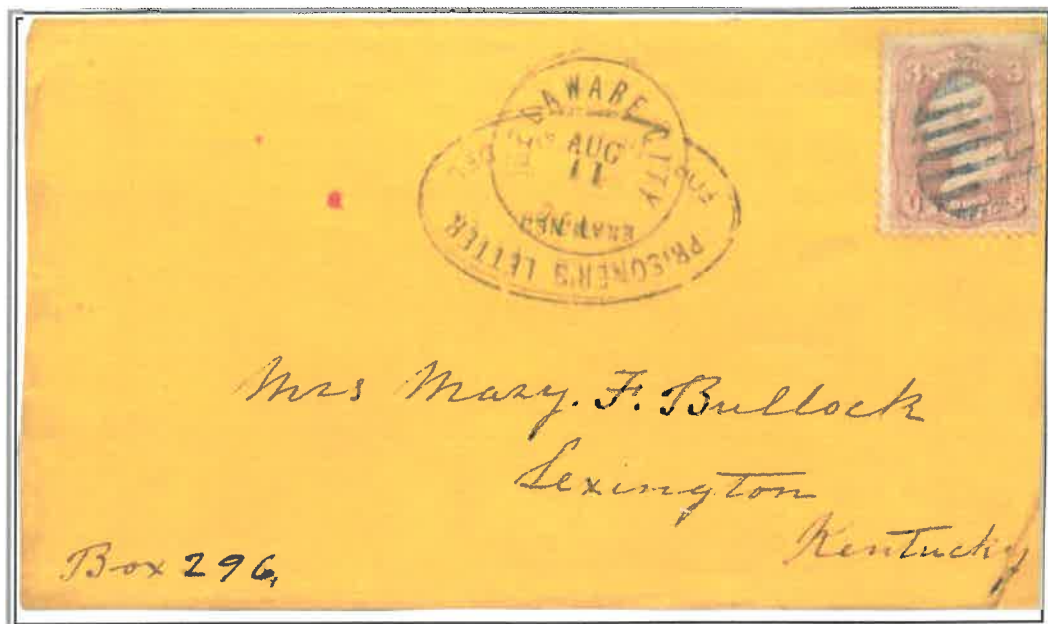


To Union Occupied
Springfield, KY
July 13 & Aug 2, 1864

Franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL JULY 13 (26.5mm) and grid cancel (SD-G 71- 20 mm).

Letter sent by Frank Cunningham 3rd. Lt. captured at Pulaski, Tenn and sent to Ft. Delaware, paroled June 17, 1865.

"Prisoner's Letter, Examined, Fort Delaware, Del" examiner's oval handstamp



To Union Occupied
Keene, KY
Oct. 28, 1864

Letter written by Van Buren J. Sellers (b.1835) of Woodford County. Franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL OCT 28 (1864) cds and target cancel (20 mm).

As 2nd Lieutenant in Co. G, 9th Tennessee Cavalry, Sellers was captured on Morgan's Ohio raid (20 July 1863) spent the remainder of the war in prison, first at Allegheny, then at Point Lookout and finally at Fort Delaware.

"Prisoner's Letter, Examined, Fort Delaware, Del" examiner's oval handstamp





To Littleville, MO
May 13, 1864

Outgoing inner cover franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL MAY 13 (1864) cds (26mm) and grid cancel (SD-G 71- 20 mm).

"Prisoner's Letter, Examined, Fort Delaware, Del" examiner's oval handstamp

From Richmond to Littleville, St. Louis, and Gilead MO via Virginia Central Railroad which operated between 1850 and 1868.



To St. Louis, MO
Sept. 12, 1864

"Prisoner's Letter, Examined, Fort Delaware, Del" examiner's oval handstamp

Outgoing inner cover franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL SEP 12 (1864) cds and target cancel (20 mm).



To Gilead, MO
Sept. 28, 1864

Outgoing inner cover franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL SEP 28 (1864) cds and target cancel (20 mm).

William La Rue was transferred to Fort Delaware Prison on April 11, 1864 and remained until the close of the war on April 1, 1865

"Prisoner's Letter, Examined, Fort Delaware, Del" examiner's oval handstamp

Chapter III

Mail to the Northern States

The Northern States in 1861



Map source: Pinterest



EARLIEST KNOWN PRISONER OF WAR COVER FROM FORT DELAWARE TO DATE

To New York, NY
June 23, 1862

Outgoing inner cover franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL JUNE 23 (1862) cds

Docketed "Examined by Ed. S. Caldwell 2 Lt. PA Vols, Fort Delaware, Del, June 23, 1862." Per Galen Harrison, period of use May 2,- July 31, 1862



To Marysville, OH
June 2, 1864

Outgoing inner cover franked with 3c Rose duplexed with DELAWARE CITY DEL JUNE 2 (1864) cds (26mm) and grid cancel (SD-G 71- 20 mm).

Letter sent by A. Toland Turner from the the 15th Louisiana Regiment who was captured at Spotsylvania on May 12, 1864.

Prisoner's Letter, Examined, Fort "Delaware, Del" examiner's oval handstamp



To Paterson, NJ
June 20, 1864

Letter sent by Major J.P. Carsen
of Georgia's 12th Regiment.

Outgoing inner cover franked
with 3c Rose duplexed with
DELAWARE CITY DEL JUNE
20 (1864) cds (26mm) and
hand cancel.

From Delaware City to York,
PA and Paterson, NJ via The
Baltimore and Ohio Railroad
(B&O) which initiated
operations in 1830

To York, PA
June 22, 1864

Outgoing inner cover with
contents, franked with
3c Rose duplexed with
DELAWARE CITY DEL
JUNE 22 (1864) cds (26mm)
and target cancel (20 mm)

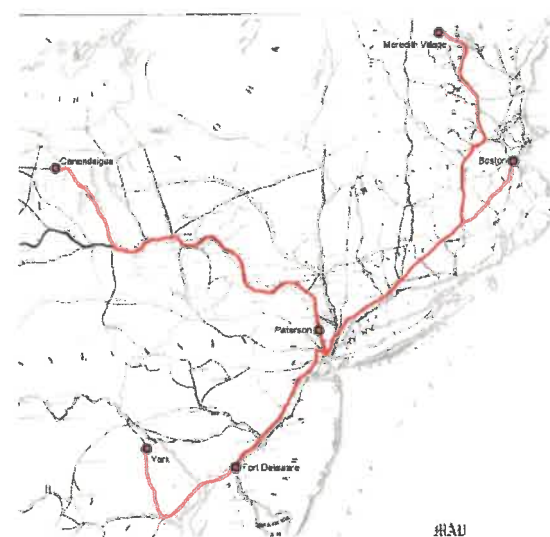
"Prisoner's Letter, Examined,
Fort Delaware, Del"
examiner's oval handstamp

To Meredith Village, NH
September 27, 1864

Prisoner's Letter, Examined,
Fort "Delaware, Del"
examiner's oval handstamp

Outgoing inner cover franked
with 3c Rose duplexed with
DELAWARE CITY DEL SEP 27
(1864) cds (26mm) and target
cancel (20 mm)

"Prisoner's Letter, Examined,
Fort Delaware, Del"
examiner's oval handstamp



To Canandaigua, NY
September 17, 1864

"Prisoner's Letter, Examined,
Fort Delaware, Del" examiner's
oval handstamp, only used for 7
months from April 12 to October
29, 1864, per Galen Harrison

Outgoing inner cover franked
with 3c Rose duplexed with
DELAWARE CITY DEL SEP
17 (1864) cds (26mm) and grid
cancel (SD-G 71- 20 mm).



To Boston, MA
September 22, 1864

Outgoing inner cover franked
with 3c Rose duplexed with
DELAWARE CITY DEL SEP
22 (1864) cds (26mm) and grid
cancel (SD-G 71- 20 mm).

Back of cover has names of several men
including Private Miles O'Reilly, a pseudonym
for Charles Graham Halpine who wrote letters
and poems.

No examiner's markings

According to "Confederate States of America - Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History" Patricia Kaufmann et al, Confederate Stamp Alliance, Inc. 2012, "In general letters addressed to prisons are much scarcer than letters from prisons"



From Old Point Comfort, VA
January 17 (1864)

Incoming cover with mixed franking of both sides with CSA 10c Blue tied by light strike of NEW MARKET VA cds (30 mm) and 3c Rose tied by segmented grill. OLD POINT COMFORT VA JAN 17 cds. With 1997 PF certificate.



Old Point Comfort served as the terminus and connection point for passenger and express freight ships connecting cities of Chesapeake Bay by both water and rail routes with Boston, New York and along the southeastern coast.



From Onancock, VA
April 1865
U.S. postage paid by 3c Rose, tied by ONANCOCK VA cds (30 mm)

Docketing indicates it was answered just as Richmond fell. Onancock is on the Eastern Shore on the Delmarva Peninsula. Scarce Eastern Shore town.



From New York, NY
June 15 (1864)
U.S. postage paid by 3c Rose, tied by geometric grid cancel and NEW YORK JUN 15 cds (23 mm)

Sent to Adj. J.B. Jordan
26th N.C. Regt
Fort Delaware, Del

Docketed "Care Gen. Schoepf"



Source "Find a Grave. com"

Civil War Union Brigadier General Albin Francisco Schoepf was born in Podgórze, Poland, he emigrated to America in 1851. At the start of the Civil War, he was appointed Brigadier General of US Volunteers and led his brigade at the Battles of Camp Wild and Mill Springs. In August 1862, he was in command of a division and led his troops at the Battle of Perryville. He became commanding officer of Fort Delaware Prison in April 1863 and served the balance of the war guarding captured Confederate soldiers and sailors.

Epilogue

The last of the military prisoners of war departed the fort on July 24, 1865. Burton Harrison, Private Secretary to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, had the distinction of being the very last political prisoner to be released. His last day on the island was January 1, 1866, which ironically was also the last day that General Schoepf served as Fort Delaware's commanding officer.

During the Civil War, from July 1862 to July 1865, Fort Delaware housed a total of 32,305 war prisoners. At its peak in July 1863 it housed 12,595 prisoners. 59 escaped. Disease was rampant and nearly 2,450 prisoners died from malnutrition and neglect. Confederate prisoners were buried at Finn's National Cemetery in a common grave as can still be seen as a huge pit in the northwestern corner of the site.

The U.S. Government erected a Confederate Monument in 1910 to memorialize the Confederate soldiers buried at the cemetery. The 85-foot tall concrete and granite obelisk features a marker that reads: "ERECTED BY THE UNITED STATES TO MARK THE BURIAL PLACE OF 2436 CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS WHO DIED WHILE PRISONERS OF WAR AND WHOSE GRAVES CANNOT NOW BE INDIVIDUALLY IDENTIFIED"



Imposing view of Fort Delaware on Pea Patch Island today.

Photograph courtesy of the Fort Delaware Society