



The Civil War Post

Patricia A. Kaufmann

Fiancé's Ultimatum: Change Your Name or Farewell!

It is said that John Winn Smith (1802-88) met a woman he wanted to marry but she refused to marry anyone with so common a last name as "Smith." That would be an audacious stance to take today, let alone 200 years ago. But so smitten was he that he legally changed his name to John Winsmith to secure the hand of Catherine Elizabeth Faber (1812-81).

Figure 1 shows a CSA Hoyer & Ludwig 10¢ dark blue lithograph tied to a cover by a light Tudor Hall, Va., circular datestamp. It is addressed to Dr. J. Winsmith, Janney's Hotel, Columbia, S.C.

Figure 2 displays Dr. Winsmith's Oath of Allegiance to the United States, dated Aug. 7, 1865.

The renamed Dr. John Winsmith practiced medicine in the Spartanburg and Union Districts after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in 1825. He was a member of the state General Assembly from 1830 to 1832 and again 1852-62 and 1865-66. Additionally, he served as a delegate to the Southern Rights Convention of 1852.

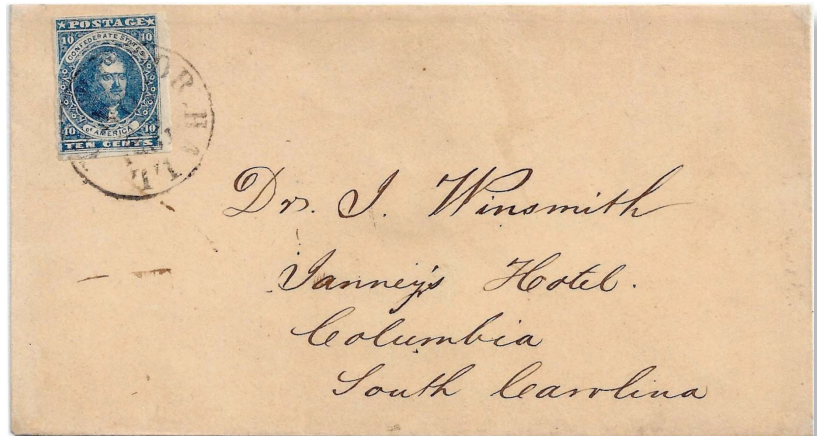


Figure 1. A 10¢ dark blue Hoyer & Ludwig stamp on cover addressed to Dr. J. Winsmith, after changing his name to win the hand of the woman who was to become his wife.

While serving in the South Carolina Senate, Dr. Winsmith opposed the 1865 "Black Code" that attempted to exert control over freedmen. Previously a Democrat, he joined the Republican Party in 1870 and was subsequently attacked and seriously wounded by the Ku Klux Klan because of his cooperation with the radical government.

Dr. Winsmith and "Cate" Winsmith were parents to John Christopher Winsmith (1834-77), who was known as Christopher. Christopher attended the Citadel Military Academy in Charleston, from which he was expelled due to poor conduct. But

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this did not prevent him from earning a law degree at Charleston College, which he obtained in 1859. Two years later, he was serving in the Confederate Army. He was commissioned a lieutenant in Company G of the Fifth South Carolina Volunteer Infantry, later transferring to Company H.

Like other slaveholding families, Christopher set out to war from the family home of Camp Hill in the Spartanburg District of South Carolina with a personal body servant (slave) named Spencer. The detailed story of their interaction may be found in the pages of the *New York Times* in Kevin Levin's series, "Disunion," which follows the Civil War as it unfolded. The fascinating article, published Nov. 10, 2012, is titled "The Best Servant By Far" – the title referring to the enslaved Spencer, who had a wife, Peg, and children at home.

In June 1862, as part of the organization of his new regiment, Winsmith spent time away from camp to procure bounties for new enlistees and later to organize conscripts from the area around Columbia. This meant leaving Spencer alone at camp. It was in Columbia that Winsmith learned that Spencer was "missing." Christopher and others felt Spencer must have been captured, doubtless deluding himself that Spencer was content with his situation

in life. It is far more likely that he made good his escape to the North when he found the opportunity. [E]

References:

John Christopher Winsmith Letters, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Va.
John C. Winsmith papers, 1773-1878, University of South Carolina.
New York Times, Kevin Levin's series "Disunion."

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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](mailto:trishkauf@comcast.net).

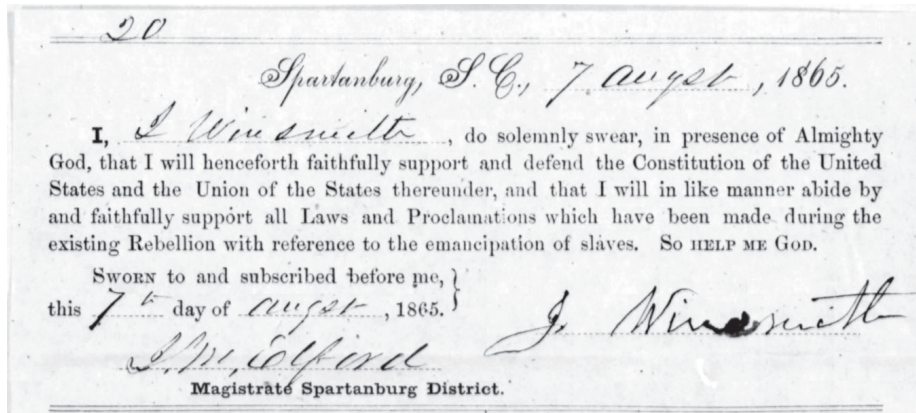


Figure 2. Dr. Winsmith's 1865 Oath of Allegiance to the Union.

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