



The Civil War Post

Patricia A. Kaufmann

Young Cold Harbor Combatant Dies of Wounds at Lincoln General Hospital

The U.S. Sanitary Commission prisoner of war cover shown in Figure 1 is addressed to William C. Bee, Esqr., Charleston, S.C., from his son, James L. Bee. The younger Bee, or a surrogate, applied the mandated soldier's endorsement at upper right, "J.L. Bee Co. K, 4th Regt SC Cav."

The envelope bears the manuscript endorsement "Via Flag of Truce" along the left end and is franked by a U.S. Scott 65, 3¢ rose, which is canceled with a four-ring target, duplexed with a Washington, D.C., June 14 circular datestamp. The cover is also manuscript "Prisoner Letter, Thos. Butler, Chaplain U.S.A." at upper left. The chaplain may have written the letter for the young soldier. It also bears red manuscript censor markings "Exd, J.A.C." and "Ex. N. Soulé, Cpt: AAG."

The United States Sanitary Commission (USSC) was a private relief agency created by federal legislation on June 18, 1861, to support sick and wounded soldiers of the

U.S. Army during the American Civil War. It operated across the North and enlisted thousands of volunteers (Figure 2). Some who served are well known in history. Among others, Louisa May Alcott, author of *Little Women*, served as a nurse for the USSC at a Union hospital in Georgetown, D.C.



Wichita State University Libraries houses the Kantor Collection of the U.S. Sanitary Commission and Sanitary Fairs. Robert and Marjorie Kantor were well known in U.S. postal history circles and published a book on the Sanitary Fair stamps,¹ one of which is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 1 (above). Censored U.S. Sanitary Commission envelope from prisoner of war James L. Bee in Lincoln U.S. General Hospital home to his father in Charleston, S.C.

Figure 2 (left). Thomas Nast's illustration of the work of the U.S. Sanitary Commission for the April 9, 1861, edition of *Harper's Weekly*. Library of Congress

More than two dozen sanitary fairs, which relied heavily on the volunteer efforts of women, were held between 1863 and 1865. They raised millions of dollars for the benefit of the U.S. Sanitary Commission and provided a way for civilians to contribute time, energy and money to show their support for the Union cause.

William Cattell Bee (1809-81) owned W.C. Bee & Co., a cotton and rice factory during the war. Bee was an agent for the Importing & Exporting Co. of South Carolina, which organized trade with Great Britain via the West Indies. The company was well known and acknowledged as the foremost blockade-running operation in Charleston, the first of five such companies in South Carolina formed solely to run the blockade. Bee had several blockade runners built in Liverpool, England. A charming miniature of him is housed in the Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston.

Figure 4 shows the plaque placed on the William C. Bee House at 122 Tradd Street, in Charleston in 2015. It states that the property, built in 1835, was home of Governor – later U.S. Senator – Burnet R. Maybank. U.S. Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and President Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton were entertained there as guests.

James Ladson Bee (1843-64), is shown in Confederate uniform in Figure 5. He was 19 years old when he enlisted as a private March 25, 1862, at Grahamville, S.C., in the South Carolina Charleston Light Dragoons Cavalry, Lt. R.H. Colcock's Company, B.H. Rutledge's Regiment. He was transferred into Company K, SC 4th Cavalry, Army of Northern Virginia on April 20, 1864.

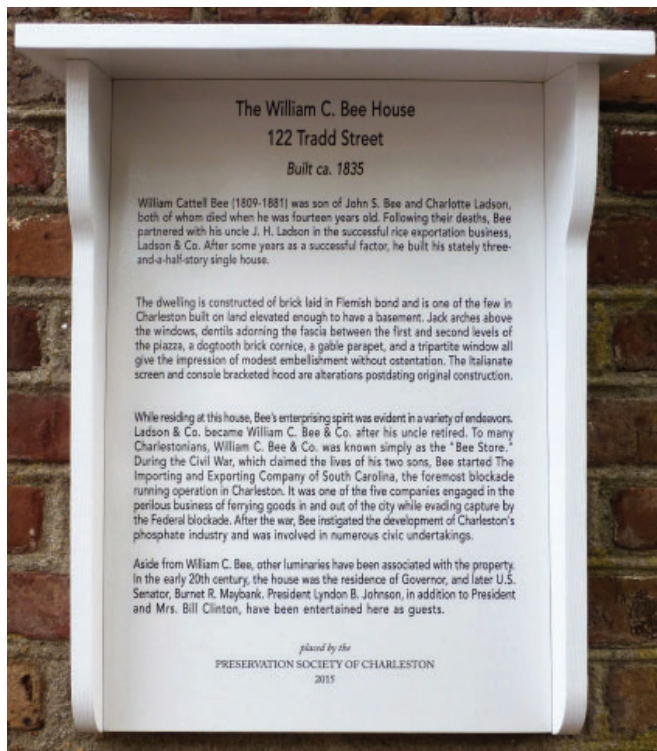


Figure 4 (above). Historical marker on William C. Bee House in Charleston, S.C.

Figure 5 (right). Portrait of young James Ladson Bee in Confederate Army uniform.

side shattering tibia extensively.” He died of his wounds July 8, 1864, not long after this letter was posted. The cause of death is listed as pyemia (blood poisoning/sepsis). The document is signed J.C.W. Kee, Asst Surgeon, U.S. Army. Records show Bee as “joined station” (hospital) on June 4, 1864.

Although James Bee is shown as interred in Washington, he must have been removed at a later date, as he is noted on a FindaGrave website² as buried in Magnolia Cemetery in Charleston, along with his brother, Lt. John Stock Bee (1841-63), who was also killed in the war from wounds sustained during the defense of Morris Island, Charleston. John Bee was



Figure 3. U.S. Sanitary Commission Central Fair 20¢ stamp (Scott WV-12)

James Bee was taken prisoner May 30, 1864, at Old Church, at the Battle Cold Harbor, Va., where he was severely wounded in the right leg, resulting in amputation. Figure 6 is a Kurz & Allison print from the Library of Congress, depicting the Battle of Cold Harbor, created circa 1888.

Bee's military record of death and interment, obtained from the National Archives & Records Administration (NARA) via *Fold3.com*, is shown in Figure 7, which indicates he was treated at Ward 18 at Lincoln Military Hospital, a U.S. General Hospital in Washington, D.C.

Other military records show “Gunshot fracture right tibia lower third, ball entered just above articulations anteriorly and passing out on inner



Figure 6 (right). *Battle of Cold Harbor*, chromolithograph by Kurz and Allison.



Figure 7 (below). Record of Death and Interment for James L. Bee, signed at Lincoln Military Hospital July 8, 1864.

in the South Carolina Artillery. James died at age 20 and John at age 22, William's only two sons.

The Bee-Chisholm family papers (1852-1964) are housed at the South Carolina Historical Society. They include two letters from Lt. Nathan S. Moseley, a Confederate prisoner of war who nursed James Bee during his final days in the hospital in Washington. Moseley's letters were sent to

No. 2.
RECORD OF DEATH AND INTERMENT.

| | | |
|--|----------------------------------|-----|
| Name and number of person interred. | James L. Bee | 104 |
| Number and locality of the grave . . . | | |
| Hospital number of the deceased . . . | 18 | |
| Regiment, rank, and company | 4th S.C. Cav. Sai. Co. A | |
| Residence before enlistment | | |
| Conjugal condition, (and if married, the residence of the widow) | Single | |
| Cause of death | Poison | |
| Age of the deceased | 20 | |
| Nativity | So. Carolina | |
| References and remarks | | |
| Date of death and burial | Died July 8th Buried July 9 1864 | |

[A duplicate of this Record has been forwarded to the Section, and another remains at this Hospital.]

To *Brig. Gen. L. Thrug*
Adj. Gen. U.S.A.

SIR:

It becomes my duty to inform you that the person above described died at this Hospital as herein stated; and that it is desired his remains should be interred with the usual military honors.

Respectfully,
J. M. Keene
Adj. Surgeon U. S. Army.

MILITARY HOSPITAL *Lucas, July 8, 1864*

This copy of Record is to be transmitted to the Adjutant General at Washington immediately after the place of burial and the number of the grave have been ascertained and registered. The above notification is to remain attached.

William Bee from Fort Delaware (Del.) and Morris Island (S.C.). Moseley was one of the “Immortal 600” kept prisoner in open stockades under fire from their own troops. He served in the 12th North Carolina Infantry Regiment. Of interest are also letters from William Bee regarding his fears of being treated as a criminal for his activity in blockade running during the war.

Galen Harrison records only two covers from Lincoln U.S. General Hospital in his Civil War prison opus, published in 1997³ although, from my own personal experience, I believe there are at least double that number now known. The subject cover was acquired simply as a “Washington hospital,” easily verified as Lincoln U.S. General Hospital with some diligent research at NARA. ☐

Patricia (Trish) Kaufmann was first introduced to Confederate philately in 1965, became active in organized philately in 1969 and became a full-time dealer in 1973. Trish enjoys hearing from readers and may be reached at trishkauf@comcast.net.

- Endnotes:**
1. Alvin Robert Kantor and Marjorie Sered Kantor, *Sanitary Fairs: A Philatelic and Historical Study of Civil War Benevolences*, 1992.
 2. Find A Grave Memorial 27245152 – incorrectly lists both his age and his date of death, per official death records.
 3. Galen D. Harrison, *Prisoners' Mail from the American Civil War*, 1997.