



# The Civil War Post

Patricia A. Kaufmann

## Cotton Gin Port, Miss.; Only Recorded Confederate Use

In pencil on the back of the cover is a note that it was Lot 2521 in the sale of the Brown collection in 1939 and that it is unique. This name sale of U.S. stamps and covers, which included stellar Confederate postal material, was sold by Harmer, Rooke & Co., Ltd., Oct. 30-Nov. 4, 1939, with more than 2,600 lots (Figure 1).

The collection was formed by Stephen D. Brown of Glens Falls, N.Y. The high-end auction catalog is found in the collections of many philatelic bibliophiles. Although the London-based firm had won the privilege of selling the collection, the outbreak of World War II made the sale impracticable and it was transferred to the Collectors Club in New York City.

The auctioneers had expected realizations of \$75,000 or so. Instead, the total sales were \$106,625.50. Many prices were above catalog quotations and some broke records; the sale was consigned by order of Louis P. Brown of Glens Falls, N.Y., president of the Glens Falls National Bank and Trust Co. and executive with Glens Falls Insurance Co.

Stephen Brown owned position 38 of the Inverted Jenny (Scott C3a), early U.S. general issues with strong U.S. 1847s, carriers and locals and a top-flight selection of more than 250 Confederate postmasters' provisionals.

Lot 2521 in the Brown sale was a deceptively simple cover, franked with two singles of the 5¢ blue local print (CSA *Catalog* 7-R, Scott 7). It is pictured in Figure 2. On the back of the cover is the penciled note "unique," which is likely true. What is purportedly unique is that it is postmarked with a red circular datestamp of "Cotton Gin Port, Mi(ssissippi)" on a cover to Mr. N. Graham, Enterprise, Miss.

Often, such assertive notes on covers or in print have not withstood the test of time. But in more than 50 years of looking at Confederate covers, I've never seen this postmark before. And the cover is clearly genuine.

In speaking with other specialized students, I found they had never seen a Confederate use of Cotton Gin Port postmark either. No

stampless uses are listed in the *CSA Catalog*; but in the colored cancels section of the catalog,<sup>1</sup> Cotton Gin Port is listed under red uses with an asterisk. This indicates it is a legacy listing that had never been seen by any of the primary catalog editors. I'm happy to add that to my "remove asterisk" list for future catalog editions.

An antebellum folded business letter from Cotton Gin Port is shown in Figure 3. The contents are dated Dec. 21, 1846, from H.M. Johnson to Archabal (sic) Canady in Fraziersville, S.C.

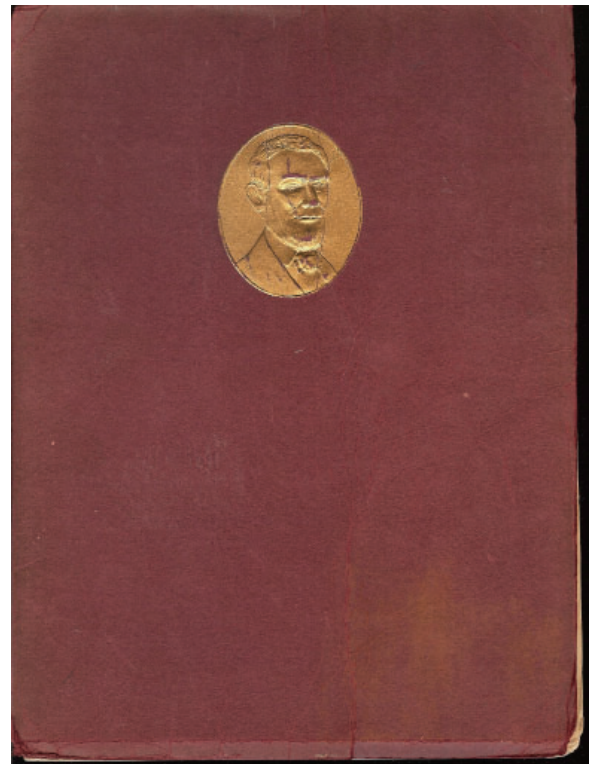


Figure 1. Front cover of Harmer Rooke & Co. auction catalog for the collection of Stephen D. Brown, 1939.



Figure 2. Two singles of Confederate local prints tied on cover by red Cotton Gin Port, Miss., circular datestamp.



## Cotton Gin Port – A Once Prosperous Town

Today, Cotton Gin Port is a ghost town in Monroe County, Miss. See the historical road marker shown in Figure 4, which declares the town was initially an Indian trading post at the southern terminus of Gaines Trace, a road in Mississippi Territory. The town was named for the cotton gin built by the U.S. Government for the Chickasaw in 1801. President George Washington purportedly offered a gift of a cotton gin to the Native Americans, hoping to encourage peaceful farming rather than warfare.<sup>2</sup>

The town was once part of Marion County in Alabama Territory. The circle on the map of Alabama and Mississippi Territories pictured in Figure 5 reveals its location on the east bank of the Tombigbee River. This area was a crossing for many Indian trails. Artifacts found at Cotton Gin Port date back as early as 600 B.C., or possibly earlier.

The first White settlers arrived in 1816. In 1821, when the state line was surveyed, it was determined the town was actually in Mississippi and not Alabama.<sup>3</sup> In 1835, the Chickasaws ceded the remainder of their lands in Northeast Mississippi and began their “Trail of Tears” trek to Oklahoma, starting from Cotton Gin Port.

By the time of the Civil War, the town was booming, home to about 500 residents. The town had the best landing site along the Tombigbee River where river trade was the main livelihood. Before 1860, there were no railroads in Monroe or neighboring counties. The roads were in poor condition, so overland competition was sparse. The steamboats carried cotton, furs, hides, passengers, mail and more.

Figure 6, courtesy Alabama Department of Archives and History, shows a cotton slide used to roll bales down to the waiting steamboat *Magnolia*.

As was the case with many towns, the war took its toll. The damage to the economy and loss of the need for shipping via steamboat spelled the end for Cotton Gin Port. It died virtually overnight in 1887 when the Kansas City, Memphis and Birmingham Railroad laid its tracks three miles east of town.<sup>4</sup>

Businesses and residents relocated to the new town of Amory. Citizens put their houses on logs and rolled them to the site of the start-up town or dismantled them and reassembled them in Amory. The town was named in honor of Harcourt Amory of Boston, Mass. Currently, Amory has a population of about 8,500.

Figure 5 (right). Early map of Alabama and Mississippi Territories, showing the location of Cotton Gin Port.

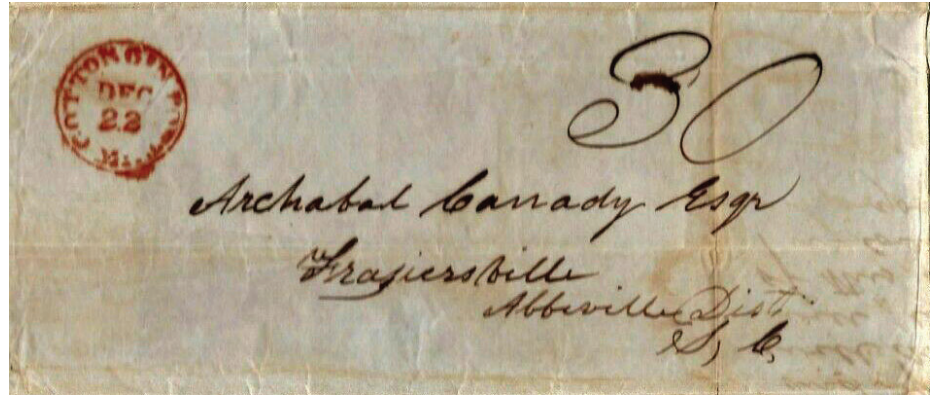


Figure 3 (top). An 1846 dated, folded letter with red postmark of Cotton Gin Port, Miss.

Figure 4 (above). Historical road sign for the ghost town of Cotton Gin Port.





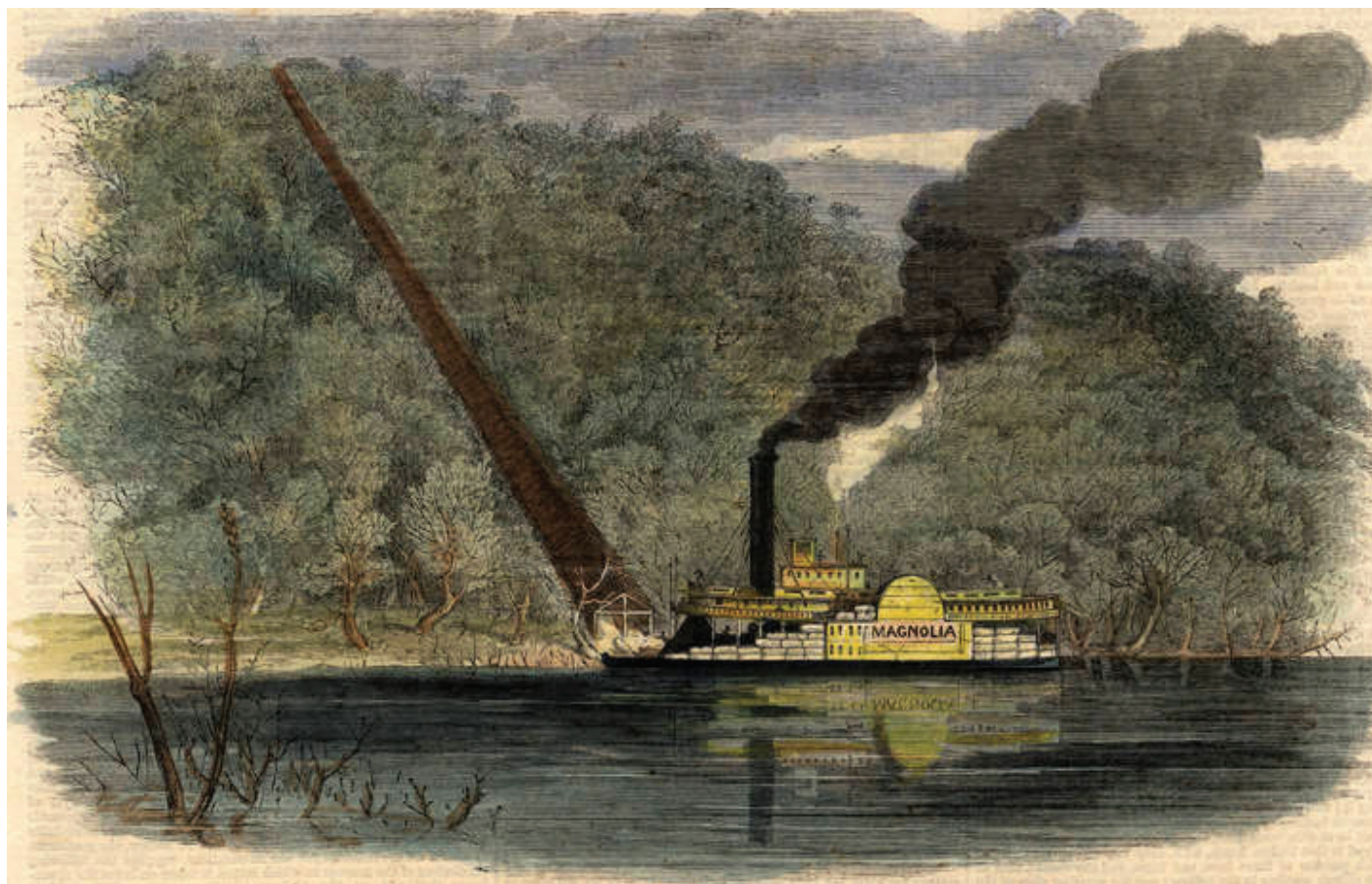


Figure 6. Cotton slide used to roll bales down to the waiting steamboat *Magnolia*. Courtesy Alabama Department of Archives and History.

Today, Cotton Gin Port is but a memory brought forward by a distinctive Confederate cover. ☐

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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](mailto:trishkauf@comcast.net).

**Endnotes:**

1. Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown, Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, Editors, *Confederate States Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*, 2012, Confederate Stamp Alliance, [www.csalliance.org](http://www.csalliance.org).
2. City of Amory, Mississippi, "Our History," [www.cityofamoryms.com/amory-proud/our-history](http://www.cityofamoryms.com/amory-proud/our-history), accessed Jan. 30, 2021.
3. Donna R. Causey, Alabama Pioneers, "A historic ghost town in Mississippi was once a prospering town in Marion County in Alabama," updated with podcast, [www.alabamapioneers.com/ghost-marion-county](http://www.alabamapioneers.com/ghost-marion-county), Accessed Jan. 30, 2021.
4. Mississippi Crossings, "Cotton Gin Port...in its hey day," [www.swroadsigns.com/mscrossings/cgp3.htm](http://www.swroadsigns.com/mscrossings/cgp3.htm), accessed Jan. 30, 2021.



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