



Figure 1: This appears to be a May 26, 1863, Charleston, S.C., Confederate dated cover with a straightline 'FREE' handstamp. Or is it?

A 'Wanna-Be' Confederate Cover to Postmaster John Glymph

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

The cover in Figure 1 appears to be postmarked by a May 26, 1863, Charleston, South Carolina, circular date stamp with a straightline "FREE" handstamp at left. It is addressed to "Mr. John Glymph, P.M., Glymphville, S.C." Or is it?

Upon close examination, the "3" of "1863" appears to have been altered from a weakly struck "0" to a "3" in slightly darker and shinier black ink, especially evident on the middle bar of the alleged "3" (Figure 2).

It is rather difficult to discern except with personal examination. An absolute test would be nondestructive forensic testing such as is available free of charge at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

The 'Free' Status in the Confederate Postal System

When John H. Reagan was appointed Confederate postmaster general, he sent an agent to Washington, D.C., soliciting various heads of the U.S. Post Office Department to work for the Confederate Post Office. Many did, bringing copies of records and account books with them.¹ The adoption of a constitution by the Confederate Provisional Congress on February 8,

1861, was the first step in the process that led to the establishment of postal rates in the new Confederacy. The next day, the Congress adopted the Act of February 9, 1861. This Act continued all laws of the United States in force and in use as of November 1, 1860, which were not inconsistent with the constitution of the Confederate States.

This included all laws governing the Post Office Department and its operation that were in effect under the United States government on November 1, 1860. The Post Office Department's October 1, 1861, instructions to postmasters expanded on this by stating



Figure 2: A close-up of the circular date stamp in Figure 1.

that all laws and regulations embraced in the *Postal Laws and Regulations* issued by the USPOD on May 15, 1859, (1859 PL&R) and not conflicting with the laws of the Confederacy were continued in force by the Act of February 9, 1861.

In effect, the Act of February 9, 1861, established the Confederate postage rates and services as those in effect in the United States on November 1, 1860. Any changes to these rates and services had to be specifically addressed in new Confederate legislation.²

Post Office Department Officials

The Acts of February 23 and May 13, 1861, authorized specific members of the Post Office and Treasury Departments to use the franking privilege for mail that was sent on official business. An Act of May 23, 1864, extended the franking privilege to the agent for the Trans-Mississippi Agency and the auditor of the Trans-Mississippi Department. This Act was more restrictive, allowing the Trans-Mississippi officials the franking privilege only “upon all matter connected with the adjustment and settlement of postal accounts.”

Franked mail matter was to be endorsed on the back of the letter or package “Official Business” over the signature of the authorized official. In practice, the endorsements were normally on the front of letters. The effective date of this franking privilege was June 1, 1861.

Postmasters were permitted to send free of postage letters and packages related exclusively to the business of their office or business of the CSAPOD. Postmasters sending such mail were to endorse on the letter over their signature the words, “Post Office Business.”

In practice, postmasters used various forms of endorsement or merely the word “Free.” The effective date of this privilege was also June 1, 1861.

There is no such mandated endorsement on the subject cover, automatically making it suspect as to Confederate use.

Glymphville, Newberry District, South Carolina

Fortunately—and unfortunately—there is a lot of information online regarding both John Glymph and the Glymphville Post Office. Glymphville was in the Newberry District of South Carolina. All post offices in Newberry County from 1785-1971 are listed online with names of postmasters, dates started and discontinued and any relevant comments such as name changes.³ But the source is not an official POD website.

The first Glymphville listing for the Palmetto state shows the first postmaster as John G. Glymph, appointed May 1, 1844, and discontinued August 22, 1866. Under comments, it shows that the prior post office at that location was known as Hoggs Store from 1827 to 1844; the postmaster is listed as Lewis

Hogg. Prior to that, it was known as Hendersonville from 1804 to 1827 and the postmaster listed is John Henderson.

Towns, or populated areas, were often known by the names of local storekeepers and postal business was, more often than not, done from inside the stores, along with politics, social gatherings and more. They were the hubs of activity for such areas.

I found an endless string of people named John Glymph with various middle names/initials and attributions as postmaster. These are the sorts of things that drive researchers crazy.

On an *Ancestry.com* message board,⁴ Al Metts stated that:

JOHN GLYMPH became postmaster in 1837 and Pleasant Grove community was changed to GLYMPHVILLE in 1844. It was discontinued 8-22-1866. Glymphville Post Office was one of 31 in Newberry Dist. at the outbreak of the War of Northern Aggression... In 1849 another JOHN GLYMPH STORE was one of the polling places in 15 precincts. In 1846 a magistrate was to serve the area of a “beat company” (area from which each company of militia was organized; theoretically a drum beaten at the center of the area could be heard by all the members of the company who could thus be assembled quickly on the sound of the alarm. Recommended appointments were made to the legislature each year; the year 1851 shows “Heller’s Beat - J. F. Glymph.” The notes, above, were taken from a copy of the ledger for the JOHN GLYMPH STORE May 8, 1834 to November 24, 1836. The ledger is hand written with well over a hundred pages. The John Glymph Store was located west of the Broad River a short distance north of the intersection Second Creek and Heller’s Creek.

This Glymphville information does not agree with the post office records from the *carolana.com* website. Pleasant Grove is not listed as a town, nor is an associated postmaster.

From page 3 of the *Unionville Journal* of August 16, 1861,⁵ we glean:

Glymphville was one of the oldest post offices in the County. John Glymph kept the post office in his store. His son, Walter Glymph moved it to his store where his son, Ernest Glymph now lives. It was on a star route from Hope Station. Walton was on the same route. For years Johnnie Crooks rode this star route.

This was the only mention of Walter or Ernest Glymph that I found. “The John Glymph Papers—1838-1860,” are at the South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.⁶ They state that Glymph was postmaster and merchant of Hoggs Store and Glymphville, Newberry District, S.C.

By coincidence, a year or so after I acquired the “wanna-be” Confederate cover, I purchased a collection with the exhibit page shown in Figure 3.

It displays a March 17, 1838, folded letter (Figure 4) from Charleston, (S.C.) dated March 14, 1838, with a canceled promissory note to N.H. Wildman & Co. signed by John Glymph (Figure 5).

The letter specifies the enclosed note was paid in full. The exhibit page states that the name of the post office of Hogg’s Store was not changed to Glymphville until the start of the Confederate period. We already know that is not true; it was changed in 1844, as confirmed by various sources.

The second cover on the page is purported to be from November 1861. Neither is that true, as any serious Confederate South Carolina student should instantly recognize this outer folded lettersheet (no contents) as a prewar use.

Another Glymphville listing on the *carolana.com* website shows Alfred Y.W. Glymph appointed May 28, 1878, and discontinued June 30, 1906.⁷

It seems to indicate that there were two towns with the same name, but the USPOD would not have let that happen during the same period. More likely, it is the same location with perhaps a hiatus in postal service, although this is speculation and not researched further.

On a Newberry County, South Carolina, Genealogy Trails website,⁸ are various newspaper abstracts that show that Glymphville was the stopping place between Columbia and Spartanburg for the stages before the railroad was built.

According to most sources, there was not a town named Glymphville in 1819, nonetheless, page 8 of the *Newberry Observer*, dated August 2, 1904, states:

***Glymph, A.Y.W.** was a son of John Glymph, one of the first merchants of Newberry, who came from Germany in 1749 and was a postmaster at Glymphville in 1819. A.Y.W. Glymph became postmaster after his father’s death, which position he held until his own death. He served in the Civil War as quartermaster general. He was born 1/25/1840 and was survived by a wife, several sons, one daughter, two living sisters who are Mrs. B.A. Rawls of Columbia and Mrs. R.E. Bell of Clinton. He was a brother to D.B. Glymph of Hodges.*

Alfred Yancey Walton Glymph was born January 20, 1840, and died July 25, 1904. He is buried in Suber & Glymph Cemetery in Newberry County, South Carolina. His Find A Grave Memorial is #112576269, where his gravestone is shown. There are no links to his parents on the website, but another website indicates he was born of John Glymph and Hanner Suber in Glymphville.⁹ The family was descended from Johann Abraham Glymph, who arrived from Prussia on the ship *Neptune* at Philadelphia on December 13, 1794.



Figure 3: An exhibit page full of half-truths.

Confederate Post Office Department records show John Glymph as CSA postmaster until July 16, 1861, when he was replaced by A.Y.W. Glymph on July 17, 1861, until the end of the war.¹⁰

Clearly, John Glymph was still postmaster on the last day of U.S. postal service, as evidenced by Figure 6. This cover is a virtual mate for the cover in Figure 1. It was offered in the February 27, 2015, Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries sale of the Richard L. Calhoun collection of Charleston, South Carolina.

The cover was sent by Postmaster Alfred Huger to Postmaster John Glymph on the day U.S. post office operations in the South were terminated and asserted to be the only recorded example of the Charleston handstamped “FREE” marking used in the Confederate period. It was sold as lot 443 for \$900 plus the 15 percent buyer premium.

As evidenced by the research herein, there are liberties with the facts across all types of records from collector exhibit pages to purported official records to general family research websites.

Figure 4:
A folded letter dated 1838 to
Postmaster John Glymph.

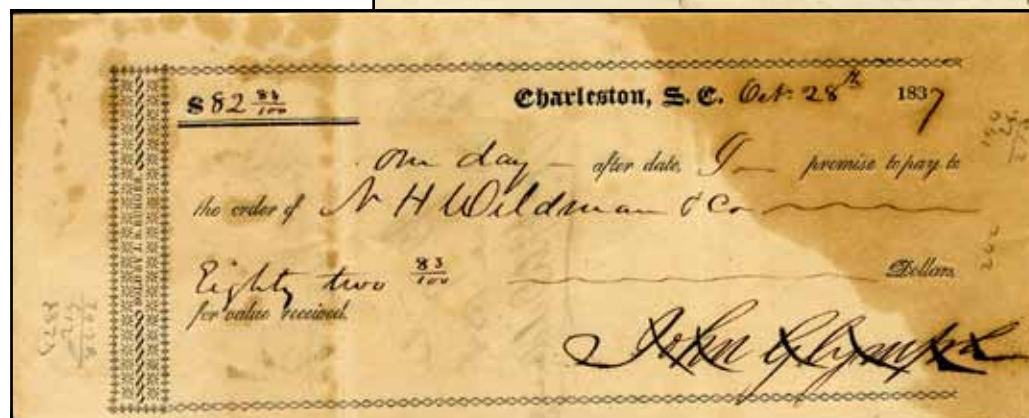
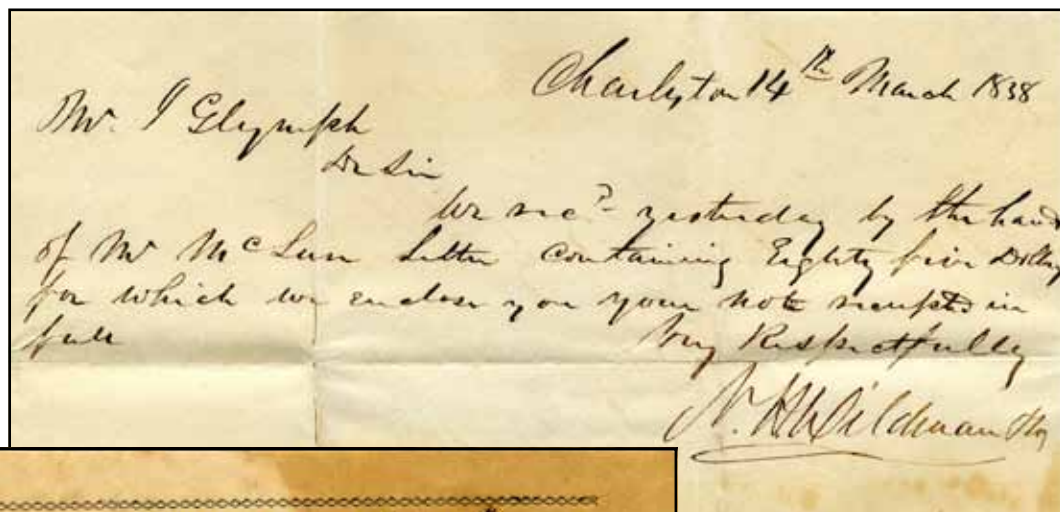


Figure 5:
An 1838 released promissory
note to John Glymph.

Figure 6:
Almost a twin for the cover in
Figure 1, this is purported to be
the only recorded example of
the Charleston handstamped
“FREE” marking used during
the Confederate period.



There are three major strikes against the Figure 1 wanna-be cover as a Confederate use:

- Physical examination reveals the date appears to be altered from 1860 to 1863.
- There is no official post office endorsement on the subject cover, as mandated by the CSAPOD.
- John Glymph was not the postmaster in 1863; A.Y.W. Glymph was.

Your best defense to such misinformation is research, careful examination of the subject matter, a network of other students in the field, as well as invaluable reference books across a variety of applicable topics.

Endnotes

- 1 John H. Reagan, *Memoirs with Special Reference to Secession and the Civil War*, New York and Washington, The Neale Publishing Company, 1906.
- 2 Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown, Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, eds.,
- 3 Newberry County, SC Post Offices—1785 to 1971. http://www.carolana.com/SC/Towns/Newberry_POs.html Accessed July 10, 2017.
- 4 Al Metts, Ancestry Message Board, post March 12, 2002. <https://www.ancestry.com/boards/thread.aspx?mv=flat&m=1&p=surnames.glymph/> Accessed July 10, 2017.
- 5 Newberry County Historical & Museum Society Bulletin, Fall/Winter 2013. “Postal Service of Newberry, Newberry County, South Carolina, Genealogy Trails History Group.” <http://genealogytrails.com/scar/newberry/postoffice.html> Accessed July 10, 2017.
- 6 John Glymph Papers. <https://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/collection/data/35618709/> Accessed July 10, 2017.
- 7 Newberry County, S.C. Post Offices.
- 8 Edith Greisser, 1878 and 1905 (Newberry) *Observer* abstracts. <http://genealogytrails.com/scar/newberry/observer/1878-1905Gl.html> Accessed July 10, 2017.
- 9 The Glymph Family, The James Warren Goldsmith Genealogy Page. http://goldsmithjw.tripod.com/audreys_site_-_the_james_warren_goldsmith_genealogy_page/id18.html/ Accessed July 10, 2017.
- 10 Richard F. Murphy, e-mail exchange, September 15, 2015.