

## One of our great American Specialties

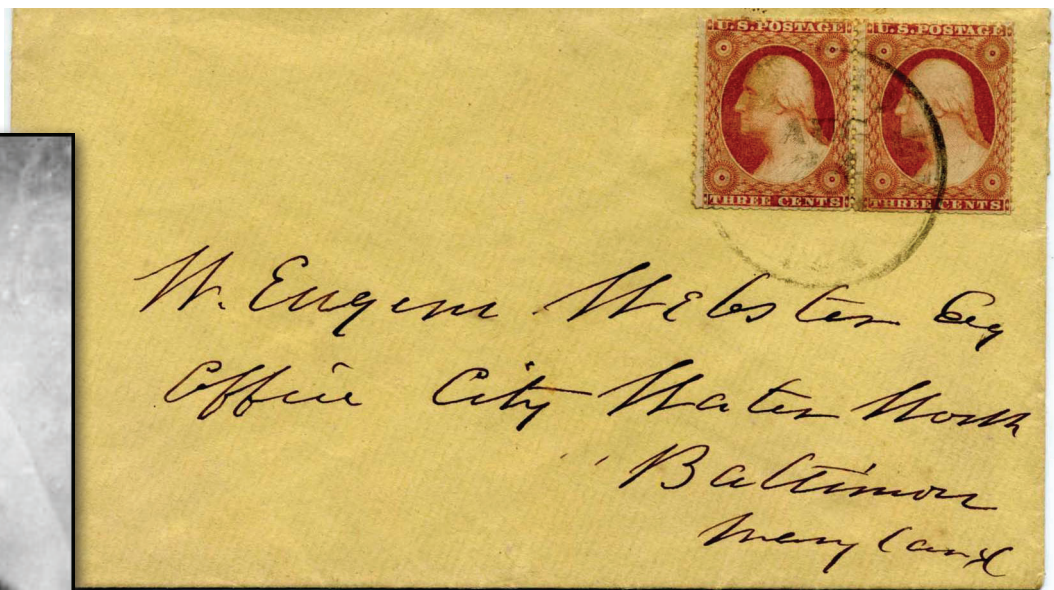
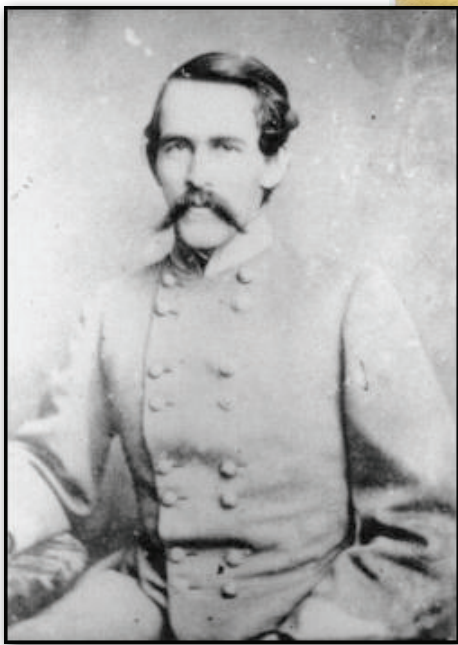
Here is a subject philatelists have been enthralled with for over 100 years.



# The Confederate Post

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

## Battlefield Condolence from Brig. Gen. Robert E. Rodes to Mrs. Webster



It is a classic case of family letters and envelopes separated over the generations. The pre-war envelope is franked with a pair of U.S. 3¢ 1857 stamps tied by an indecipherable postmark. It is addressed to W. Eugene Webster, Esq., Office City Water Works, Baltimore, Maryland. The enclosure clearly does not belong, as it is a war dated condolence letter from Confederate Brig. Gen. Robert E. Rodes concerning the death of Lt. Webster. The letter was clearly penned by a secretary, but was signed by Rodes in different darker ink – a rare war-time signature. The letter is directed to the wife of his aide de camp, Lt. W. Eugene Webster, giving her the details of Webster's valiant battlefield death.

A transcript of the remarkable letter follows with the original spelling and grammar as written. He references "Coal Harbour," no doubt a phonetic transcription. It actually refers to the First Battle of Cold Harbor, also known as the Battle of Gaines' Mill—part of the Seven Days Battles or Peninsula Campaign. It was the fiercest of the battles in the campaign and the only clear-cut tactical victory for the Confederacy.

*Richmond, July 4, 1862*

*Mrs. Webster*

*Yesterday I made a deliberate effort to obtain your address from Major Baldwin – who had just been brought in from the field wounded – in order that I might write to you and tell you and your children about the gallantry and about the circumstances attending the death of Lieut. Webster, their father. This morning I found a letter to Major Baldwin from a friend of yours asking for just the information I had intended to give, and I write there in my name and in that of Major Baldwin.*

*I must preface what I have to say however with the painful intelligence that death was sudden to himself and hours afterwards unsuspected by me. He accidentally met me on Thursday night at Mechanicsville whilst looking out for Genl Pender on whose staff intended to serve as volunteer aid de camp – Knowing his worth and character, I offered him the same place on my staff as long as he chose to remain – he accepted the position with me until the close of battle. On Friday we came under fire about 2 P.M. at Coal Harbour (Cold Harbor) where Lieut Websters conduct in obtaining information and carrying orders for me under desperately dangerous circumstances, won for him the admiration of all his associates on my staff and that of my whole command, and established for him the highest character for intelligence, intrepidity,*