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



The Confederate Post

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

Six Degrees of Separation – Dibble, Kohn, and Kaufmann



This photo is of Samuel Dibble and Mary Christian Louis taken on their wedding day, November 10, 1864, less than three weeks after Lt. Dibble was released from Johnson's Island prison.

The common term, “Six degrees of separation” refers to the idea that, if a person is one step away from each person he or she knows and two steps away from each person who is known by one of the people he or she knows, then everyone is an average of



six “steps” away from each person on Earth. Several studies have been conducted to empirically measure this connectedness. Hence, six degrees of separation is synonymous with “small world”.

Not long after sending off my February 2008 column to editor and frequent email correspondant Randy Neil, I bought a nice folded letter that was franked with a scarce but somewhat smudged handstamped PAID 2 from Charleston, S.C. headed May 30, 1862 from a mother to her son. It was addressed to “Lieut. Saml Dibble, Capt. Glovers Company, Simontons Regt, Secessionville, So Ca”. The seller had listed it on eBay as “looks like a 2”, but he didn’t think it was a drop use (2¢ rate for local town use vs. 5¢ rate for out of town up to 500 miles, at that time) since it is used from Charleston to Secessionville.

The Battle of Secessionville is reenacted annually today. Union General Henry Benham, against the orders of his superiors, decided to prematurely test the line of Confederate defenses. Benham threw several thousand soldiers against a position on James Island, in the area known as Secessionville. James Island is located in Charleston Harbor. The Civil War began on James Island on April 12, 1861, when Confederate forces at Fort Johnson fired on Union-occupied Fort Sumter. Both forts were located on the island’s northern shore.

Ironically, Secessionville’s name had nothing to do with the Southern States secession just before the war started in the spring 1861; it refers to an earlier event in which a group of younger planters “seceded” from an area occupied by their elders. The focus of the attack was near a fortification called the Tower Battery. The Union gave it this name because of the wooden observation tower nearby, while Confederates would come to dub the M-shaped earthenwork Fort Lamar in honor of its commander Col. T.G. Lamar.

While researching Samuel Dibble (1837-1913), I found an extensive family website complete with a photo of him in uniform on his wedding day. I am indebted to his great-great-grandson, Tony Emanuel, for allowing me to share this with you. Tony and I struck up an interesting email conversation. In exploring this website, I found the transcript of a letter from Dibble home to his mother while he was a prisoner-of-war at Johnson’s Island on July 26, 1864. In it he queries, “How is young Theodore? I hope Theo. K. has quite recovered.”

If you are a reader of this column, you may remember last month’s column on Confederate valentines in which I quoted a wonderful handwritten valentine addressed to Theodore Kohn that referred to the unusual physical characteristic of one blue eye and one brown eye. I pointed out that Theodore Kohn was the father of David Kohn, a mentor of mine in the 1970s. Yes, it is the very same “young Theodore” and he was also related to Dibble, a young cousin and fellow member of the Edisto Rifles. I also found another totally different connection to Dibble to another Confederate collector. Amazing...six degrees of separation indeed!

Dibble was twice taken prisoner (the second time incarcerated up the road from me at Fort Delaware) and had both illustrious military and civilian careers. An attorney by profession, he represented the First Congressional District of South Carolina after the War for eight years, dubbed a brave and wise leader during the reconstruction period who did his full share to redeem the State.

For complete information on the Confederate Stamp Alliance, contact Trish Kaufmann, 10194 N. Old State Road, Lincoln, DE 19960, e-mail trishkauf@comcast.net, or visit the Alliance’s colorful website at csalliance.org. Membership is open to anyone interested in the stamps and postal history relating to the American Civil War (or War Between The States). ☒