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The Confederate Post

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

After Union mail service ended...a fascinating correspondence.

Sometimes letters in Civil War covers simply explode with the issues of the time. The illustrated small ladies cover is franked with three singles of 1¢ U.S. blue, Scott #24, tied by a blue LOUISVILLE/KY./JUNE/10/1861 double circle with matching grid and is addressed to Washington, D.C.

The original letter from Augusta, Georgia was written on June 4, 1861, only a few days after regular mail service between North and South was suspended. The original letter and three others from the same correspondence just before and after this one tell an interesting story that typifies the agonies encountered by those whose sentiments separated them from friends and family.

The vestry of St. Paul's church in Augusta was offering Rev. Charles Hall the position of rector, but he had not replied, although they knew he had received the original letter and a follow-up. These letters trace the original vestry call on May 27, 1861, to their *retraction* of same on June 25, 1861. Rev. Hall was rector of the Church of the Epiphany in Washington, D.C., and his sentiments were clearly Union. These fascinating articulate letters are from sister to sister about their brother and indicate, among other things, that Rev. Hall was being called a "Black Republican, having northern feelings and, the crowning point, his praying for the President of the U. States, insinuating that [was] terrible...". It also illustrates the struggle with the mails, "We have sent duplicates by different routes for fear one would not reach him."

At the time of the Civil War, the Church of the Epiphany was located in a residential neighborhood of strong Southern sympathies. Washington, although the capital of the Union, was essentially a Southern city, carved as it was from Maryland and Virginia. Many Washington residents had family and friends in the South; so those in the same family often held conflicting loyalties.

At one time, Senator Jefferson Davis, who became the president of the Confederacy, lived nearby and was an Epiphany member. Senator Judah P. Benjamin, later Davis' attorney general, and Senator Robert Toombs, who became Davis's secretary of state, lived on then fashionable F Street only one block from the church. U.S. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton attended worship services there on a regular basis during the War, using the former pew of Jefferson Davis.

In 1865, twenty-eight African-American men and women gathered to establish St. Mary's Chapel for Colored People, the first Episcopal church in Washington, D.C., where blacks could worship without the interference of white discrimination. It grew out of the desire of black Episcopalians to worship apart from the indignities of worship alongside white parishioners. Rev. Charles H.

Hall, white rector of the Church of the Epiphany, worked with the African-Americans to establish the new church.

They learned from Stanton that a small chapel attached to Kalorama Hospital was about to be torn down and sold for lumber. Stanton agreed to donate the chapel to the new congregation. Catharine Pearson donated a lot in Foggy Bottom, then a predominantly black settlement. The chapel was taken apart, moved, and rebuilt on the site.

A few months after its first service in 1867, the church changed its name from St. Barnabas Mission to St. Mary's Chapel for Colored People. The church was led by an assortment of clergy until it obtained its first full-time, African-American rector, Alexander Crummell, in 1873.

Both the Church of the Epiphany, also used as a hospital for Civil War wounded, and St. Mary's Church are on the National Register of Historic Places. ☒

Lesson No. 1 from this article: If there are contents in the covers you purchase, examine them carefully!

