

Confederate Collectanea

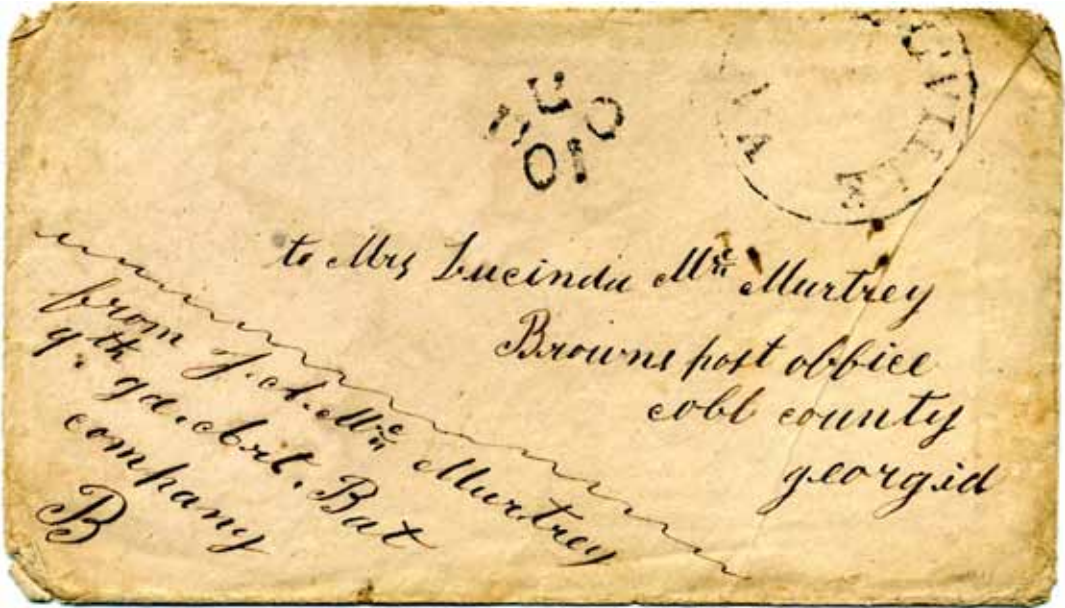


Figure 1: New discovery of a dateless Saltville, Virginia, postmark with a mirror image ‘DUE 10’ handstamped rate marking.

The Saltville, Virginia, Reversed ‘DUE 10’

By Gen. Patricia A. Kaufmann

I struggled to make out the Figure 1 dateless town postmark that was struck off the top right of the cover. It was clearly from Virginia and ended in “VILLE,” but I wasn’t sure what the town was. The matching rate marking immediately screamed “Mount Lebanon” to me. It was a Due 10 rate marking but in mirror image such as the legendary Mount Lebanon provisional.

As anyone familiar with printing knows, the plate used to print an image must mirror the intended design. This curved ‘DUE 10’ handstamp is a mirror image of a right-reading wood engraving.

I am often asked how I am able to research covers, as if there is a magic formula. The two most important things to me are perseverance and the ability to walk away from the problem for a time and potentially put the cart before the horse—which may (or may not) yield a solution to identification. This cover is a case in point.

Before I figured out what town cancel I was dealing with (the town is not listed with this reversed ‘DUE 10’ marking in the 2012 *CSA Catalog*),

I decided to follow the trail of breadcrumbs by researching the correspondents.

The cover is addressed: “To Mrs. Lucinda McMurtrey, Browns post office, Cobb County, Georgia” and endorsed “from J. A. McMurtrey 9th Ga. Art. Bat. Company B.”

I found that the McMurtrey correspondence is housed at Emory University in the Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library in Atlanta, Georgia.

In the library finding aid, it was clear that the subject cover should have been dated in May 1864 when James Addison McMurtrey was serving in Saltville, Virginia.

Putting a magnifying glass onto the postmark, sure enough, the slightly obscured letter to the left of “VILLE” was indeed a “T.”

A quick check of the stampless listings in the *CSA Catalog* showed a 34mm balloon cancel that aligned perfectly with the postmark on this cover, although no “due” markings of any kind are listed in the catalog for that town.

The collection at Emory consists of 36 letters (February 2, 1862–May 30, 1864) written by



Figure 2: An undated photo of James Addison McMurtrey (Courtesy, *Find a Grave Memorial #68897044* created by Charles Strickland, April 25, 2011)

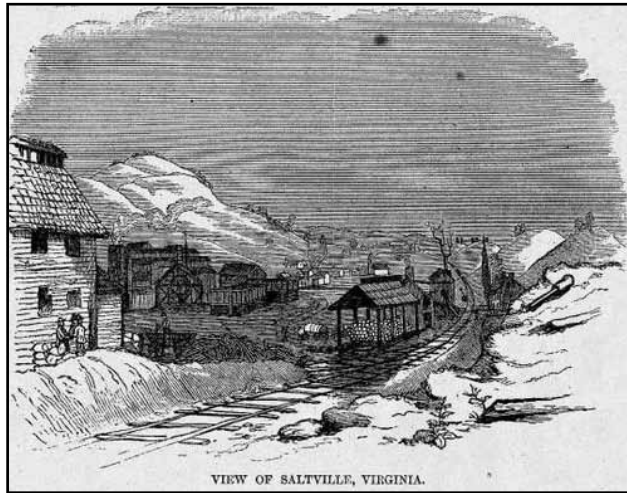


Figure 3: An engraving of Saltville from the January 14, 1865, edition of *Harper's Weekly*. According to the Harper's account, there was "a bed of fossil salt" in the hills surrounding the town, and the salt manufactured from it was "of the purest quality, white and beautiful as the driven snow."

James Addison McMurtrey to his wife Lucinda. The letters were written mainly from camps in western Virginia. The library finding aid gives a brief synopsis of the letters and notes from which locations they were written, concluding with May 1864 in Saltville.

This is where the letters end and the philatelic story begins. I had come full circle to solving my philatelic identification problem with research about the correspondents.

The collection at Emory also contains "Letters to Lucinda, 1862-1864" written by J.A. McMurtrey; 72 pages typed and compiled by Mary Frances Honea Johnston in 1985. This is a privately printed transcription of the Civil War correspondence of James McMurtrey to his wife, Lucinda. It also includes genealogical material, reproduced photographs, clippings, letters, etc.

James Addison McMurtrey (1837-1901) Lucinda Johnson McMurtrey (1842-1929)

James McMurtrey (Figure 2) was a farmer, born in Anderson, South Carolina, on August 15, 1837. He married Lucinda Johnson in 1857 and they had three children. They made their home in Sandy Springs, Fulton County, Georgia, in the area of Oak Grove Post Office. During the war, he was a teamster in Company B, 9th Georgia Artillery Battalion. He was with his battalion in Western Virginia and Tennessee

from January 1862-1864. After the war, he went back to farming in Fulton County.

Saltville, Virginia Salt Capitol of the Confederacy

Southwestern Virginia was important to the Confederacy, though few battles were fought there. The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad ran through the region, connecting the eastern and western theaters of operation. Salt and lead mines located in the area were vital to the Southern war effort.

Saltville (Figure 3) was site of the Confederacy's main salt works, vital to the Confederate war effort because salt was used in preserving meat for both Confederate soldiers and civilians. If the Union controlled the salt of the Confederacy, they controlled the Southern diet. Union control of the main food preservative would have surely starved the South into submission in short order.

Millions of years ago, the area around Saltville was submerged in salt water and the deposits left behind provided for everything from woolly mammoths to the first humans.

Salt was abundant in the pre-war South. There were salt wells in Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, and sea salt operations in Georgia and Florida.

Early in the war, Union forces captured key Confederate salt works in Louisiana and

*Requisition clerk
 Examine the papers of
 Mess Stuart Buchanan & Co
 and make requisition for
 the \$50,000 recommended to
 be advanced by the Commissary
 General to be advanced
 to them.
 G. W. Randolph
 Sec of War.*

Figure 4: A Secretary of War G.W. Randolph signed request for a requisition clerk to examine the papers of Mess. Stuart, Buchanan & Co. and make requisition for \$50,000, recommended by the Commissary General, to be advanced to them. (Courtesy, microfiche records, National Archives)

Texas. Federal troops then targeted Florida, Kentucky, and West Virginia. By the end of 1862, Saltville was the Confederacy's last major salt supplier; "The Salt Capital of the Confederacy."

Stuart, Buchanan & Company owned the Saltville works throughout the war. Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart, brother of partner William A. Stuart, sent his wife and children to live with William in Saltville during the war. He believed Saltville to be the one of the best-defended locations in the Confederacy.

Shortly after the war began, the firm negotiated a contract with the Confederate government to provide, 22,000 bushels of salt per month "to and for the uses of the Confederate State armies."

Over the next three and a half years, Stuart, Buchanan & Co. managed to do this and much more, with production reaching a peak of 4,000,000 bushels in 1864. By 1862, the scarcity of salt throughout the Confederacy caused Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, Florida, as well as Virginia, to negotiate contracts to obtain Saltville's salt.

There were two battles in Saltville. The first was on October 1, 1864, when the Confederates, with 2,800 men, successfully repulsed Union troops. The second battle was in December of that year by which time only 200-300 Home

[No. 23]

THE CONFEDERATE STATES,
 To Stuart Buchanan & Co. Dr.

No.	Date	Description	Dollars	Cts
104	October 1	For services of two four horse wagon teams, four days for use of Levi King's Battery, impressed when Burbridge made his raid on Saltville Va. C. of	40	00

\$ 40.00

I certify that the above account is correct and just; that the services were rendered as stated; and that they were necessary for the public service.

G. W. Randolph Quartermaster

Received at Saltville Va. the 17 day of Octo 1864
 of Capt. A. P. Kelly
 the cash of Forty Dollars

Stuart B & Co

Figure 5: An October 1, 1864, Confederate document to pay Stuart Buchanan & Co. for services for two four-horse wagon teams for four days of use by Levi King's Battery, impressed when Burbridge made his raid on Saltville, Virginia (First Battle of Saltville). (Courtesy, microfiche records, National Archives)

Guard were left in defense of the Salt Works, the majority of whom were young boys or old men not fit for strenuous army service.

The Home Guard tried valiantly to defend the town but they were not equipped for heavy battle. Outnumbered three to one, these loyal men were finally forced to surrender. Union General Stoneman and his men marched into Saltville on December 20, 1864, and destroyed the wells, boiling kettles, and part of the fortifications as well.

By March 1865, the salt works were up and running again at almost full capacity. One month later, the Army of Northern Virginia surrendered, and the war began to end.

A New Catalog Listing

The Saltville, Virginia, mirror image 'DUE 10' is a new and interesting listing. Listings that do not appear in the *CSA Catalog* will be added to a section of new additions and corrections at www.csacatalog.org. The website will be totally revamped for this purpose.