

## Confederate Collectanea

# Confederate Stamps and Covers as Battlefield Souvenirs

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

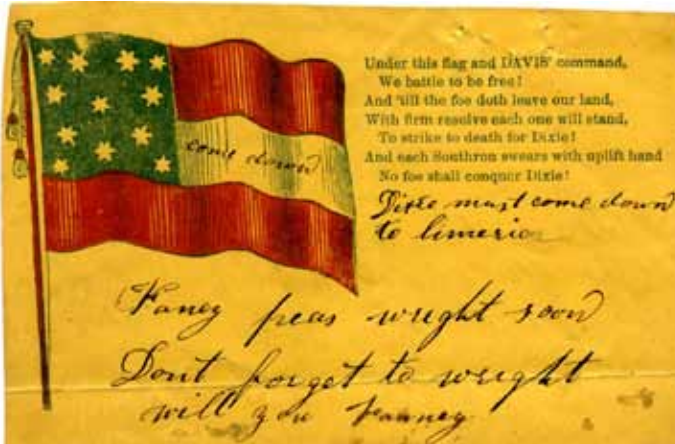
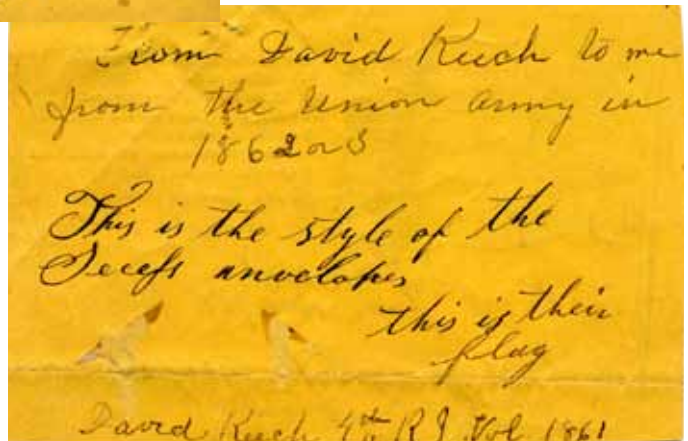


Figure 1 (Left):

A piece of a Confederate 12-star flag patriotic envelope sent home as a battlefield souvenir.

Figure 2 (Below):

The back of the Figure 1 piece of patriotic envelope with identification of the sender.



In virtually every war fought throughout the ages, soldiers have taken souvenirs from the enemy and sent or taken them home to loved ones as curiosities. The Civil War was no exception. Some of the most interesting uses of Confederate stamps and covers are those items captured by Union soldiers on the battlefield.

Such an example is shown in Figures 1 and 2, a large piece of a Confederate 12-star flag patriotic cover sent home as a battlefield souvenir by a Union soldier. It is CSA catalog Type F12-4, with verse 47.<sup>1</sup>

Under the verse is written, in the “creative spelling” of an uneducated soldier, “Dixie must come down to America” and across the flag “come down” – on the address panel “Faney peas wright soon, Dont forget to wright will you Fanney.”

On the verso, written by his recipient, is, “From David Keech to me from the Union Army in 1862 or 3. This is the style of the Secess envelopes, this is their flag.

David Keech 4th R.I. Vol. 1861”

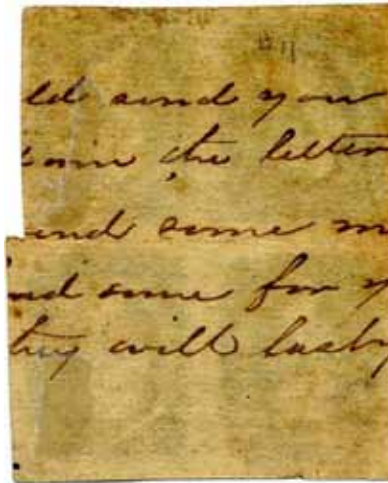
Military records show Keech (sometimes erroneously recorded as Keach) mustered into Company B of the Rhode Island 4th Infantry as a private and that he deserted on July 6, 1862,

at Beaufort, South Carolina. Yet another source shows Keech, “Served as Private. Was confined for disgraceful conduct, at Beaufort, N.C., jail, from whence he escaped, and deserted.”<sup>2</sup>

One source shows North Carolina, while the says other South Carolina. Further military records indicate that the charge was removed and that it was corrected to show that he was discharged to date from the time he left the service, by the authority of the War Department on December 12, 1893.

U.S. Adjutant General records for the 4th Regiment Rhode Island Volunteers show that Keech re-enlisted January 5, 1864, and “new organization,” October 21, 1864.

It often takes a search of several military record sources to find a more complete story



**Figure 3 (Far Left):**  
CSA 11-KB block of four  
used as writing paper.

**Figure 4 (Left):**  
The back of the CSA 11-  
KB block of four showing  
its use as a blank piece of  
paper.

about any soldier. Often, just one source is woefully incomplete, misleading or just downright incorrect.

The block of 10-cent dark blue, CSA 11, shown in Figures 3 and 4, is either a souvenir or perhaps done of sheer necessity. The back of the block of stamps has been pressed into service as writing paper. It could be that it was a letter or a note or perhaps it was a description of rebel stamps. There is no way of knowing whether this was done by a Northern or a Southern soldier.

The CSA 5 shown in Figures 5 and 6 is a scarce unused 10-cent rose. While it is a faulty stamp, it has a wonderful note on the back: “Taken from the pocket of a Confederate soldier dead on the battlefield of Stone(s) River.”

This certainly brings the War full into perspective.

The Battle of Stones River, also known as the Battle of Murfreesboro, was fought from December 31, 1862, to January 2, 1863, in Middle Tennessee (Figure 7).

Of the major battles of the Civil War, Stones River had a huge number of casualties on both sides. Total casualties in the battle were 23,515: 13,249 on the Union side and 10,266 for the Confederates. This was the highest percentage of casualties of any major battle in the Civil War, higher in absolute numbers than the famous bloodbaths at Shiloh and Antietam earlier that year.

The battle was tactically inconclusive, although Bragg was traditionally considered to be defeated since he withdrew first from the battlefield. He received almost universal scorn from his Confederate military colleagues. Only the support of Joseph E. Johnston and President



**Figure 5 (Left):** CSA 5, 10-cent rose, which did  
duty as a battlefield souvenir.

**Figure 6 (Right):** The back of the CSA 5 from  
Figure 5 saying that it was taken off the body of a  
dead Confederate soldier at Stone’s River.

Jefferson Davis’ inability to find a suitable replacement saved his command.

But a case can also be made that it was at least a strategic Union victory. The battle was very important to Union morale, as evidenced by Abraham Lincoln’s letter to Gen. Rosecrans: “You gave us a hard-earned victory, which had there been a defeat instead, the nation could scarcely have lived over.”<sup>3</sup>

A similar example of a notation on a stamp appears on an unused CSA 11c, a 10-cent greenish-blue right sheet margin pair with a contemporary notation in the margin, “Sent home from the South 1863 by J Beecher New Haven” (Figure 8).

That bit of information sent me to the military records and I was fortunate enough to specifically find only two soldiers with the name of J. Beecher from Connecticut and



Figure 7: ‘Battle of Stone River’ by Kurz & Allison. (Library of Congress)

only one from New Haven, which pretty convincingly pegs him as the person in question (Figure 9).

Jeremiah B. Beecher of New Haven, Connecticut, enlisted on August 11, 1862, as a private. On August 25, he mustered into Company E of the 15th Connecticut Infantry, the day it was organized, and mustered out on June 27, 1865. He was listed as a prisoner of war March 8, 1865, at Kinston, North Carolina, and was paroled a couple weeks later on March 26 — place not stated.

The 15th was known as the “Lyon Regiment” and participated in many notable battles such as Fredericksburg. They were variously part of the Army of the Potomac, the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, and the Department of North Carolina.

Most of their movements in 1864 and 1865 were in the area of New Berne, Plymouth and Kinston, North Carolina.

Records show the 15th as occupying Kinston on March 14, 1865, only a week after



Figure 8: Right sheet margin pair of CSA Scott 11c with notation, ‘Sent home from the South 1863 by J. Beecher New Haven.’

Beecher’s capture at what was known as the Battle of Southwest Creek, as there was a first Battle of Kinston earlier on December 14, 1862.

The 15th performed provost duty at Kinston and New Berne until June 1865. During the war, 1,617 men served.

Although I found conflicting data, one source shows that the regiment lost four officers and 34 enlisted men who were killed in battle, as well as five officers and 142 enlisted men by disease for a total of 185; fourteen died in Libby Prison, Richmond, Virginia.<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah Beecher was clearly one of the lucky ones.

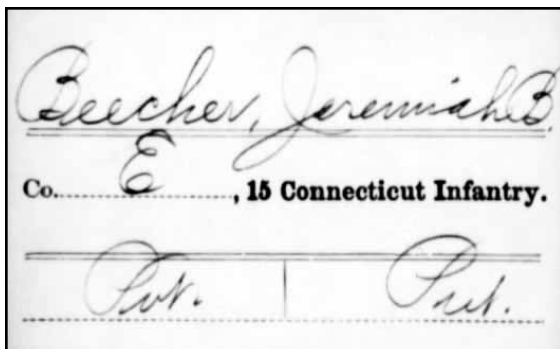


Figure 9: Index card record of Jeremiah Beecher from the National Archives and Records Administration.

Battlefield souvenirs, such as those illustrated in this article, really bring the war alive to us over a century and a half after the end of the war.

### Endnotes

- 1 Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown, Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*, Confederate Stamp Alliance, 2012.

- 2 George H. Allen, (1886) *Memoir of George H. Allen, in Forty-six Months with the Fourth R.I. Volunteers in the War of 1861 to 1861: Comprising a History of the Marches, Battles, and Camp Life, Compiled from Journals kept while on Duty in the Field and Camp*. J.A. & R.A. Reid Printers, 1887.

- 3 Stones River, Saving America's Civil War Battlefields, Civil War Trust.  
<http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/stones-river.html>

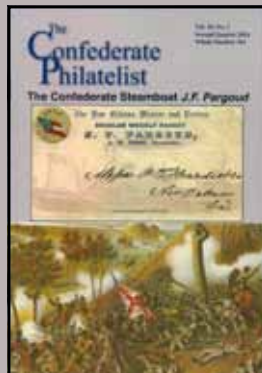
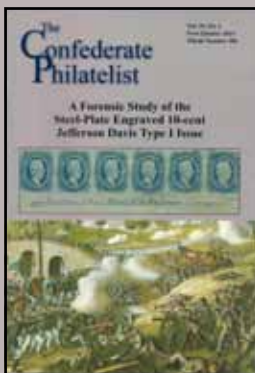
Accessed March 25, 2016.

- 4 15th Connecticut Infantry Regiment. Wikipedia.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/15th\\_Connecticut\\_Infantry\\_Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/15th_Connecticut_Infantry_Regiment)

Accessed March 25, 2016.

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