



Figure 1: A Ridgeway, N.C., circular datestamp on a Confederate stampless cover with a large matching boxed PAID 5 (CSA catalog Type B).

‘It has to be true. I saw it on the Internet.’ The Warwick & Barksdale Mill ‘Confederate Prison’

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

One of the TV ads that has most delighted my friends and family is the State Farm commercial in which the ditzy blond proclaims, “They can’t put anything on the Internet that isn’t true.”

“Really?” her friend exclaims in disbelief, “Where did you hear that?”

“The Internet,” she replies.

Then her “French model” Neanderthal-like boyfriend appears. She found him on the Internet too. And we roll with laughter at the absurdity of it all.

One Thing Leads to Another

I love researching covers and not only finding the human-interest story behind the correspondents, but trying to determine what the cover may tell me about the way the mail was carried or new information revealed by markings, addresses or docketing.

I recently wrote about the cover in Figure 1, which bears a Ridgeway, North Carolina, circular datestamp on a Confederate stampless cover with a large matching boxed PAID 5 (CSA catalog Type B¹). It is addressed to “George A. Barksdale, Esqr (of Warwick & Barksdale), Richmond, Virginia.”

The enclosed original three-page letter (Figures

2-3) is headed “Popular Mt. near Ridgeway NC, 19th Sept 1861” from W.N. Edwards to George Ainsley Barksdale (1835-1910),² and includes a newspaper clipping about St. Mary’s School in Raleigh (Figure 4).

Weldon Nathaniel Edwards (1788-1873) was a representative of the U.S. Congress from North Carolina. He studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1810. He commenced practice in Warrenton, North Carolina, and was a member of the state house of representatives from 1814 to 1827, serving on numerous important committees. He declined to be a candidate for reelection in 1826.

Edwards returned to his plantation, but soon re-entered politics as a member of the state senate from 1833-1844. He was a member of the state constitutional convention in 1835; again, elected to the state senate in 1850 and chosen as its president. He was president of the North Carolina State Secession Convention in 1861. He died in 1873 and was interred in a private cemetery at his home, “Poplar Mount,” about 12 miles from Warrenton.³

I had less success researching Barksdale than I had with Edwards. The most interesting information I found was that, while noted as a physician, he was a principal

Peplos M^{rs} have Ridgeway N.C
19th Sept 1861

My dear Sir!

I take great pleasure in giving you without delay, the information asked for in y^r letter of 16th Inst. - rec^d yesterday.

Inclosed is a slip cut from a newspaper which will give you a correct idea of the character of St. Mary's School. It has been extensively patronized by the best families in this and other States from its commencement, many years since, to the present time & continued to maintain a very high reputation as a Female Seminary. The situation is a beautiful one with extensive grounds & shaded walks for exercise.

With M^{rs} Smiles, I am well acquainted. He is a gentleman of high character & high social position. It doubt not is highly approved as a competent instructor. As the Moral Standards of his pupils, he is considered he gives all proper attention. I think M^{rs} Warwick would be pleased

Figure 2: Page 1 of the letter from W.N. Edwards to George A. Barksdale.

in the Warwick & Barksdale Mill in Richmond. I found a George A. Barksdale listed in military records as captain and assistant quartermaster in the field and staff of the 16th Virginia Infantry. Although it seems likely, I cannot be sure it is the same person. The military records only show brief activity in 1861 with minimal detail. No other years were mentioned, nor when or how he was discharged.

‘The capacity to house 4,000 prisoners’

At this point in my research, all had been relatively ordinary biographical information. But what really got my attention was a brief mention in a primary source. *The Richmond Dispatch* of July 1, 1862, showed Warwick & Barksdale Mill as having a large new mill that had the capacity to house 4,000 prisoners.

My curiosity was aroused. I was not familiar with Warwick & Barksdale Mill as any sort of prison. The hunt was on!

And there it was. On *mycivilwar.com* under “Confederate Prisoner of War Camps, Virginia,”

with it as an indication for his daughter.

My hope of this year is an excellent one. She has been good, but at times seriously suffering with the rheumatism, by the rheumatism of her arm and hand. The hope of last year was very fine and realized some advantage, then nearly nothing. The rheumatism of her arm and hand is the exception of 1860, which I hope would not happen to her again. I hope she will be better. My school is not so much in a hurry about the future of her property. I hope you will be very satisfied with the school when it shall reach a good finish. I have kept it all at once. I can see the way to be guided against it.

I congratulate you upon the appearance of another in your family. I hope you are settled in it. I hope you will experience the comfort from this source you will feel that you have something to be proud of. I will be so.

Yours truly,
W.N. Edwards

W.N. Edwards

Figure 3: Pages 2 and 3 of the letter signed W.N. Edwards to George Barksdale of Warwick & Barksdale Mills

ST MARY'S SCHOOL, RALEIGH N. C.
 Right Rev. THOMAS ATKINSON, D. D., Visitor.
 Rev. ALBERT SMEDES, D. D., Rector.
 Rev. FREDERICK FITZGERALD, A. M. Assistant.

The thirty-eighth term of this School will commence on the 6th of July, 1861, and continue five months.

During the months of June and December there will be vacation. This time can be passed pleasantly and profitably at the School by those pupils to whom, on any account, it is inconvenient to spend it at home.

Terms, Payable in Advance :

For Board, with tuition in English, per term of five months, \$90. Tuition in French, \$10. Tuition in Music on the Piano, Organ, or Guitar, \$25. Use of Instrument \$3. Tuition on the Harp, with use of Instrument, \$40. Tuition in Drawing, \$10; in Water Colors, \$15; in Oil, \$20. Singing taught in Classes, three lessons per week, \$10. Singing in private lessons, \$25. Pens and ink, \$1. The charge for Washing is \$10. Use of library \$1. Board, during vacation, \$10.

To prevent rivalry and extravagance in dress, a simple uniform is adopted, to be worn on Sundays and special occasions. This, in summer, consists of a plain white dress, with straw bonnet, trimmed with blue ribbon. In winter, the dress is of merino, or other suitable material, of blue color. All the clothing of pupils must be marked with the owner's name in full. Each pupil must be provided with towels, pillow cases, and sheets, for a single bed. Parents will consult not only economy, but the comfort and happiness of their children, by a strict conformity to the rule for their dress. Bills for clothing and other articles will not be made for pupils without the request of parents. It is desired that the most explicit instructions should be furnished on this subject. Pupils are not permitted to make their own purchases.

The situation of the School is all that can be desired for convenience, health, and beauty. It is less than a mile from the Capitol, on elevated ground, and in the midst of an oak grove of more than twenty acres. The buildings of brick and granite, are substantial, convenient, and ample.

The Chapel is a beautiful Gothic edifice, exclusively appropriated to worship and religious instruction.

The course of instruction embraces the studies adapted to the most tender age, as well as those suited to the most advanced stage of school or college education.

For the illustration of the Natural Sciences, a full is provided.

N. B.—For the information of those who are unacquainted with the claims of this School, the Rector adds that he is in possession of communications from the Bishops of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, expressive of their full confidence in St. Mary's School, and commending it in warm terms to their respective Dioceses.

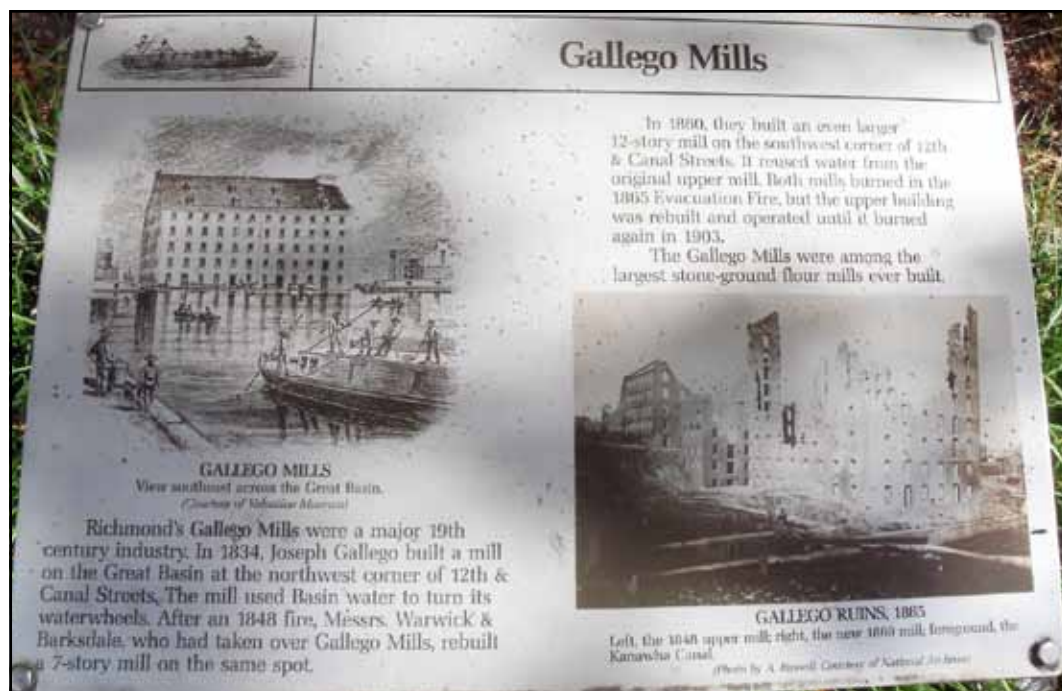
He has also been favored with similar letters from the Hon. Geo. E. Badger, G. W. Mordecai, Esq., the Judges of our Supreme Court, and other gentlemen, and is able to refer to many of the most eminent gentlemen of North Carolina and the South, who, during the eighteen years of its existence, have been the friends and supporters of this School.

* * * The School is within half a mile of the Railroad Depot, where omnibuses and baggage wagons await the arrival of passengers.

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Figure 4: A newspaper clipping included with Edwards' letter.

Figure 5: The historical marker in Richmond for Gallego Mills/Warwick & Barksdale Mills.



Warwick & Barksdale Mill was listed as housing 4,000 prisoners from 1862-63 with the prison type described as old buildings converted into prisons.⁴

On *americancivilwar101.com* I found a nearly identical, but more visually appealing, table of Civil War prisons listed by state.⁵ It was listed there as well.

I'd found it on the Internet—and in two places. Found and confirmed; it must be so! (*Not*)

Yet Warwick & Barksdale Mill was a prison of which I'd never heard nor from which I'd ever seen a letter or cover. I've seen many POW covers over five decades pursuing this topic. I had to dig further.

I found that Warwick & Barksdale Mill was better known by its prior name, Gallego Mills. Figure 5 shows an historical marker placed at 12th and Canal Streets, where the mill once stood. It reads:

Richmond's Gallego Mills were a major 19th century industry. In 1834, Joseph Gallego built a mill on the Great Basin at the northwest corner of 12th & Canal Streets. The mill used Basin water to turn its waterwheels. After an 1848 fire, Messrs. Warwick & Barksdale, who had taken over Gallego Mills, rebuilt a 7-story mill on the same spot.

In 1860, they built an even larger 12-story mill on the southwest corner of 12th and Canal Streets. It reused water from the original upper mill. Both mills burned in the 1865 Evacuation fire, but the upper building was rebuilt and operated until it burned in 1903.

The Gallego Flour Mills were founded by Joseph Gallego in the 1790s. The mill gained an international reputation for the superior type of flour he shipped to Europe and South America.

The mill, when completed, stood nine stories high, contained 31 pairs of grinding stones, and was

powered by six waterwheels designed to use the water twice over. Water was drawn from the Great Basin to drive these water wheels and then returned to the canal along a flume that ran under 13th Street via an arch.⁶

On April 2, 1865, as the Union army advanced on Richmond, Gen. Robert E. Lee gave orders to evacuate the city. A massive fire broke out the following day, the result of a Confederate attempt to destroy anything that could be of use to the invading Union army. In addition to consuming 20 square blocks, including nearly every building in Richmond's commercial district, it consumed the mills.

The mills became an iconic image of the defeated South after Mathew Brady, Alexander Gardner (Brady's former gallery manager and rival), and Andrew J. Russell all shot photos of it. At the time of their destruction, the mills were the largest of their kind in the world⁷ (Figures 6-8).

There is no doubt the mills would have been an excellent site for a prison but there is no evidence prisoners were ever housed there.

Turning to Civil War prison specialist Galen Harrison, he states on page 81 of his book about Civil War prisons:

In an unpublished diary by J.B. Hawkins, a Southern Express Company employee, under date of July 5, 1862 is an entry, "The 'Warwick Mills' capable of holding 7,000 men is rented." This was a result of an order from General Lee to prepare for the arrival of 10,000 prisoners. The Warwick Mills which is probably better known as the Gallego Mills is believed not to have been used, however. By the time prisoners arrived, most were sent to Belle Isle or housed in one of the other existing prisoner buildings...By November 1863 there were

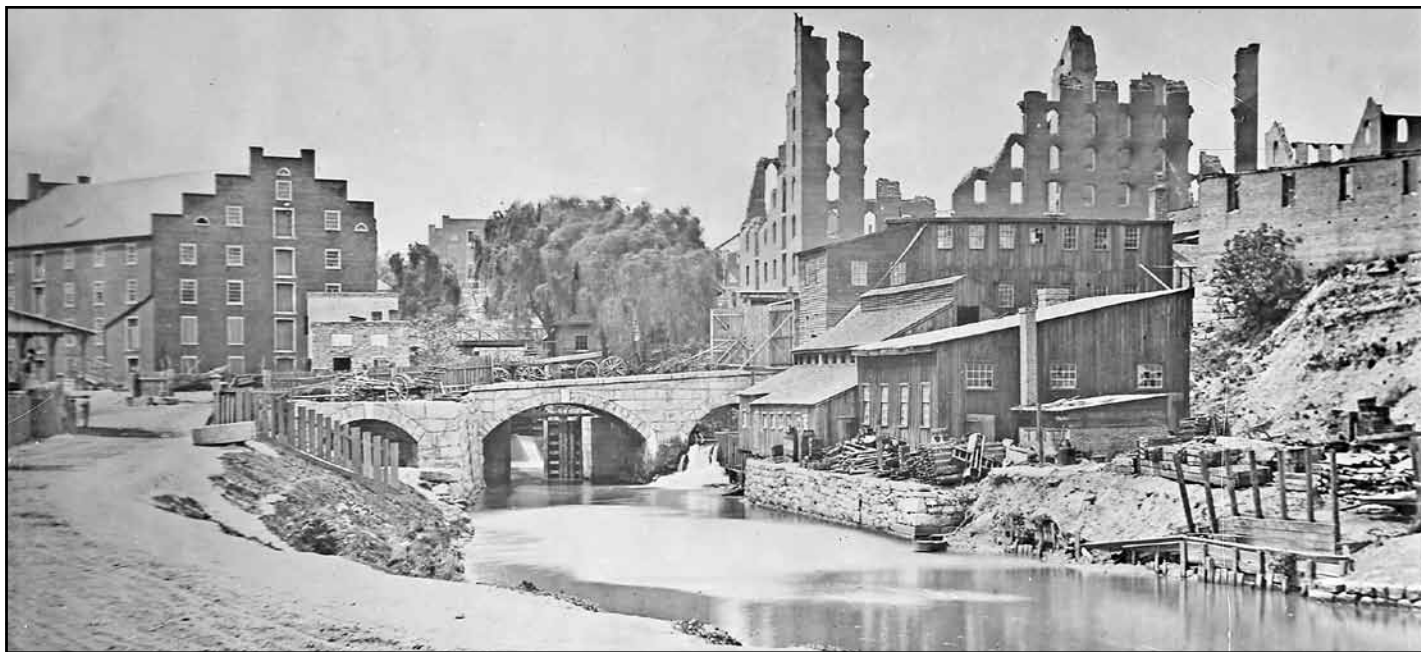


Figure 6: Silhouette of ruins of Gallego Mills, shells of the buildings of Richmond, silhouetted against a dark sky after the destruction by a Confederate attempt to burn Richmond in 1865. (Mathew Brady collection, Library of Congress)

over 13,000 prisoners in Richmond. The number of prisoner was so great that censorship of their mail was becoming unmanageable. For this reason, on February 1, 1864 an order was circulated throughout the Richmond prisons limiting the length of letters to six lines; the order also limited each prisoner one letter per week.⁸

To my mind, this lays to rest the notion that Warwick & Barksdale Mills was used as a prison during the war—despite such assertion on the Internet.

Endnotes

- 1 Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, editors, *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*, Confederate Stamp Alliance, 2012.
- 2 The Jones Families of Virginia, rootsweb, <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=randy2222&id=I106244> Accessed December 27, 2016.
- 3 Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-Present, Weldon Nathaniel Edwards, (1788-1873) <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=E000083> Accessed December 27, 2016.
- 4 The American Civil War, Confederate Prisoner of War Camps, Virginia. <http://www.mycivilwar.com/pow/confederate.html#va> Accessed December 27, 2016.
- 5 The American Civil War, Confederate Prisoner of War Camps, Virginia Prisoner of War Camps. <http://www.americancivilwar101.com/pow/confederate.html#va> Accessed December 28, 2016.
- 6 Historical Marker Database. Gallego Mill Flume. <http://www.hmdb.org/Marker.asp?Marker=23951> Accessed December 28, 2016.
- 7 The Met, Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, Ruins of Gallego Flour Mills, Richmond. <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/33.65.11,33.65.226/> Accessed December 28, 2016.
- 8 Galen D. Harrison, *Prisoners' Mail from the American Civil War*, Dexter, Mich.: Thompson-Shore, 1997, p. 81.

(Trish Kaufmann is a writer and fulltime dealer specializing solely in Confederate States stamps and



Figure 7: The ruins of Gallego Mills, taken by Alexander Gardner (1821-1882), but formerly attributed to Matthew Brady. (Library of Congress)



Figure 8: Inside the Richmond mill ruins, 1865. (Library of Congress)

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