

Figure 1:
The Texas Ordinance
of Secession.
 (Courtesy Texas State
 Library and Archives
 Commission)

A Last Day Cover Sent by the Texas Word Family?

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

Texas Secedes

Like other slave-holding states, Texas left the Union early in 1861, the seventh state to secede and the last to secede before the shots fired at Fort Sumter that signaled the actual start of the war. In vitriolic language, the Texans declared the causes that impelled the state of Texas to secede from the Union. An example of two caustic paragraphs is offered here:

The controlling majority of the Federal Government, under various pretenses and disguises, has so administered the same as to exclude the citizens of the Southern States, unless under odious and unconstitutional restrictions, from all the immense territory owned in common by all the States on the Pacific Ocean, for the avowed purpose of acquiring sufficient power in the common government to use it as a means of destroying the institutions of Texas and her sister slave-holding States.

By the disloyalty of the Northern States and their citizens and the imbecility of the Federal Government, infamous combinations of incendiaries

and outlaws have been permitted in those States and the common territory of Kansas to trample upon the federal laws, to war upon the lives and property of Southern citizens in that territory, and finally, by violence and mob law to usurp the possession of the same as exclusively the property of the Northern States.

The Texas legislature drafted an ordinance to dissolve the union between Texas and the other states united under the compact styled, "The Constitution of the United States of America."

SECTION 2. This ordinance shall be submitted to the people of Texas for their ratification or rejection by the qualified voters thereof, on the 23rd day of February, 1861, and, unless rejected by a majority of the votes cast, shall take effect and be in force on and after the 2nd day of March, A. D. 1861. Provided, that in the Representative district of El Paso, said election may be held on the 18th day of February, 1861.

Adopted in Convention, at Austin City, the first day of February, 1861, O.M. ROBERTS, President.

In Anderson County, Texas passions were high. The county voted 1,500 to 7 in favor of secession. Anderson County was represented in Austin at the State Secession Convention by A.T. Rainey, S.G. Stewart and John H. Reagan, who was soon to become the Confederate Postmaster General.

Thomas Jefferson “T.J.” Word was among the delegates who served only at the adjourned secession session and signed the ordinance on, or after, the second day of March when the ordinance took effect. His signature is the last one in the fifth column. (Figure 1) His name is variously recorded as “Wood” or “Ward” in different documents due to incorrect handwriting interpretation, which is always a challenge for researchers and record keepers.

On March 2, 1861, the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States of America enacted a statute to admit Texas into the Confederacy (Chapter XXIV “An Act to Admit Texas as a Member of the Confederate States of America). By its terms, this Act was effective March 2, 1861. On March 5, 1861, the Texas Convention accepted the CSA invitation to join (Section 5—An Ordinance in Relation to a Union of the State of Texas with the Confederate States of America). The secession ordinance and the admission ordinance do not specify whether formal acceptance by the Texas convention was required.

The Word Family

The correspondence of the Word family of Palestine, Anderson County, Texas is instrumental in authenticating some scarce Confederate covers.

Thomas Jefferson “T. J.” Word (1805-1890, Figure 2) was born in Mount Airy, N.C., on Feb. 6, 1805. He served as a colonel in the North Carolina Militia, as well as a state representative in 1830.

Word slowly migrated west, serving as a U.S. congressman from Mississippi in 1838, as well as a presidential elector for that state in 1840. After the Civil War, he served as a Texas state senator in 1875. He died in Palestine, Texas, on May 25, 1890.

A plaque to Word’s memory (Figure 3) was placed in St. Philip’s Episcopal Church in Palestine, Texas of which he was a founder, the first lay reader and the first senior warden (1859). The plaque was placed by his daughter, Mrs. Jeff D. Reagan. The church burned in 1989, but the plaque was saved and hangs in the office area today.

In Harmer-Schau Auction 94, held in August 2012, Lot 2045 offered three faulty, but rare, stampless covers from Texas and New Mexico sent from Capt. J.J. Word and addressed to his father, T.J. Word.

Capt. John J. Word (1843-1909) was a member of Sibley’s Brigade, Company I, Steele’s 7th Texas Mounted Infantry, which was deployed from Texas to



Figure 2: Col. Thomas Jefferson ‘T.J.’ Word



Figure 3: The plaque honoring T.J. Word in St. Philip’s Episcopal Church, Palestine, Texas. ‘Patriot, Lawyer and Devout Churchman—Beloved from Generation to Generation.’

New Mexico in late 1861. Capt. Ward later became a lawyer and congressman from Mississippi. He also served as mayor of Palestine, Texas, from 1889-91.

In a 2003 issue of *The Confederate Philatelist*, an article announced that a number of New Mexico campaign covers had been sold on eBay. They were all from this same Word correspondence.

“Confederate New Mexico” is an obscure, but highly desirable, collecting interest, but it is also a misnomer.

Recent research by John Birkinbine has proven

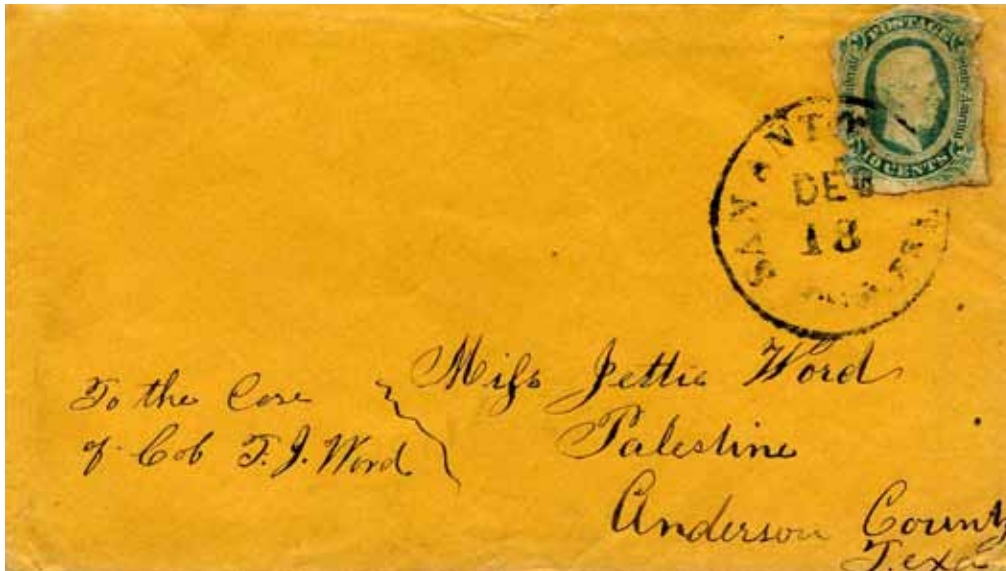


Figure 4: A cover franked with a 10-cent blue (Scott CSA 12) tied by a ‘San Antonio, Tex. Paid’ postmark addressed to Jettie Word, Palestine, Texas, in care of her father, T.J. Word.

that these are really not New Mexico covers, in spite of the “N.M.” in the canceling device. The Mesilla, New Mexico, covers that are so coveted by Confederate collectors actually bear Arizona markings, as there was no Confederate New Mexico Territory.

New Mexico Territory never seceded from the United States and never entered the Confederate States as a territory or as a state.

The only Confederate relationship for the towns in New Mexico Territory consisted of mail sent by military courier in those land areas where Confederate troops occupied Union territory. This information flies in the face of decades of writings about “Confederate New Mexico” that have gone before. It is illustrative of why researchers should strive to use primary sources and not simply quote articles from the distant past.

Figure 4 shows a 10-cent blue (Scott CSA 12) tied by a “San Antonio, Tex. Paid” postmark on a cover addressed to “Miss Jettie Word, Palestine, Anderson County, Texas” with endorsement “To the Care of Col. T.J. Word.” It is typical of the more commonly encountered covers from the Word correspondence.

Jettie was the nickname of T.J. Word’s daughter, Justiana, the eldest of five children by his first wife. Justiana was born in Mississippi in 1842 and her mother died there in 1852, after which her father remarried twice and had three more children. Jettie married Dr. Henry J. Hunter, a doctor in Palestine.

Two other covers from the Word correspondence are franked with scarce 20-cent (Scott CSA 13) green diagonal bisects. Although not authorized by the Post Office Department, bisected uses were widely accepted in order to make up the 10-cent rate when supplies of the regular 10-cent value were exhausted or postmasters’

requisitions for stamps were delayed by war.

Individual post office patrons were discouraged from bisecting a 20-cent stamp as evidenced by the following notice in the April 24, 1863, *Richmond Daily Examiner*:

“POSTAGE STAMPS. From ignorance or other causes, a number of letters have been put in the post office boxes with halves of the twenty cent stamps attached to them for postage. These letters go to the Dead Letter Office. The stamps, of course, cannot be divided to represent different denominations, and the public are requested to take notice of this, to save their mail matter from the Dead Letter Office.”

Despite this public warning, some postal patrons continued to send letters using bisects. Confederate bisects are often seen from Texas, undoubtedly because of the difficulty in getting stamps the great distance from Richmond, as well as the challenge them across the Mississippi River.

Similar bisected uses are also recorded in Untied States and foreign philately.

Genuinely used bisected uses on cover are valuable and collectible. A Scott CSA 13 used on cover catalogs \$1,250 in the *2013 Scott Specialized Catalogue*, while a diagonally bisected use catalogs \$2,000 and a horizontally bisected use catalogs \$3,500.

There are also bisects recorded on prisoner’s covers and wallpaper covers and these are extremely sought after by those with deep enough pockets. The latter listing catalogs \$11,500.

Serious Confederate students know to look for tied stamps on any cover, but there is a distinct caveat with the bisected uses. It is preferable to see the “tying” postmark across the bisected side of the

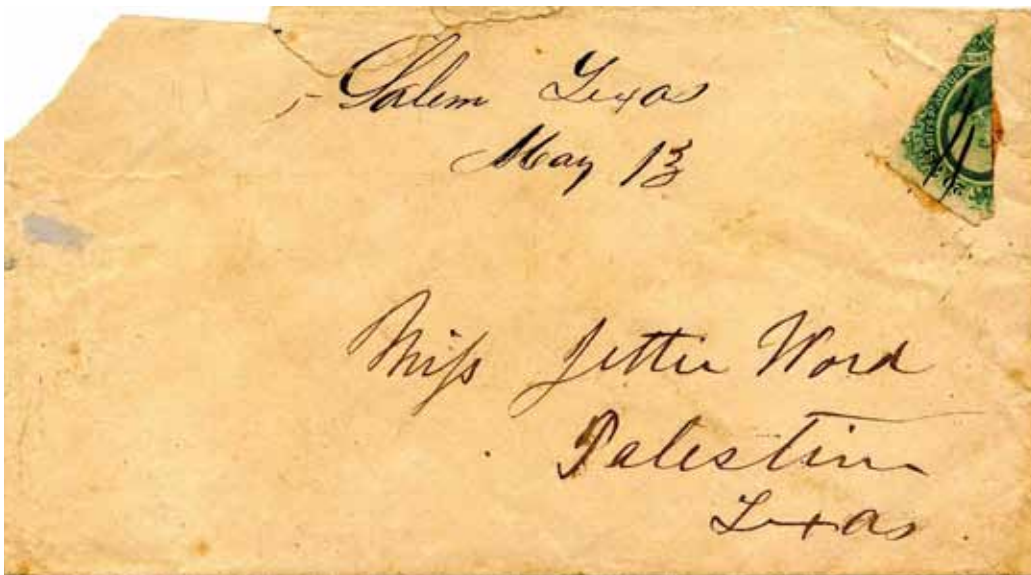


Figure 5: A Confederate 20-cent green diagonal bisect tied on cover with a matching [New] Salem, Texas, May 13 manuscript postmark, addressed to Miss Jettie Word, Palestine, Texas. This could be a last day cover!

Figure 6: A Confederate 20-cent green diagonal bisect used on cover with no postmark but addressed, in the same handwriting as Figure 5, also to Miss Jettie Word, Palestine, Texas, and likely thus also from New Salem, Texas.



stamp. This helps eliminate the likelihood of the stamp having been added to the cover. Authentication organizations are reluctant to give clean certificates to untied stamps on covers of any kind, although other indicators of genuineness, such as tying age stains and correspondence provenance, help the cause.

The damaged cover shown in Figure 5 is franked with a Confederate 20-cent green diagonal bisect barely tied on cover with a matching [New] Salem, Texas, May 13 manuscript postmark. It is addressed to Miss Jettie Word at Palestine, Texas. Texas town postmarks on cover command a 200 per cent premium in the new *CSA Catalog*. The upper left corner has unfortunately been torn away, presumably upon opening.

Another bisect cover from the same correspondence, with the identical addressee and same handwriting, is shown in Figure 6. It clearly came from the same sender. Unfortunately it is not postmarked, but it can be reasonably assumed that it also was sent from New Salem, Texas. There is pencil docketing of unknown origin under the stamp indicating "1865" use, but I have not been able to verify that year date.

The last battle fought during the Civil War was in Texas at Palmetto Ranch on May 12-13, 1865, more than two months after Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox.

Native, African, and Hispanic Americans were all involved in the fighting. While the last battle of the war was a Confederate victory, it could not change the reality that the South had been defeated. This battle is also known as the Battle of Palmito Ranch and the Battle of Palmito Hill.

The Figure 5 cover could only have been used in 1864 or 1865, as the earliest recorded use of the 20-cent green is June 1, 1863. If this cover could absolutely be proved as a May 13, 1865 use, it would be an important last day cover. While neither bisect cover would win any beauty contests, they still pique the interest of postal history collectors.

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