

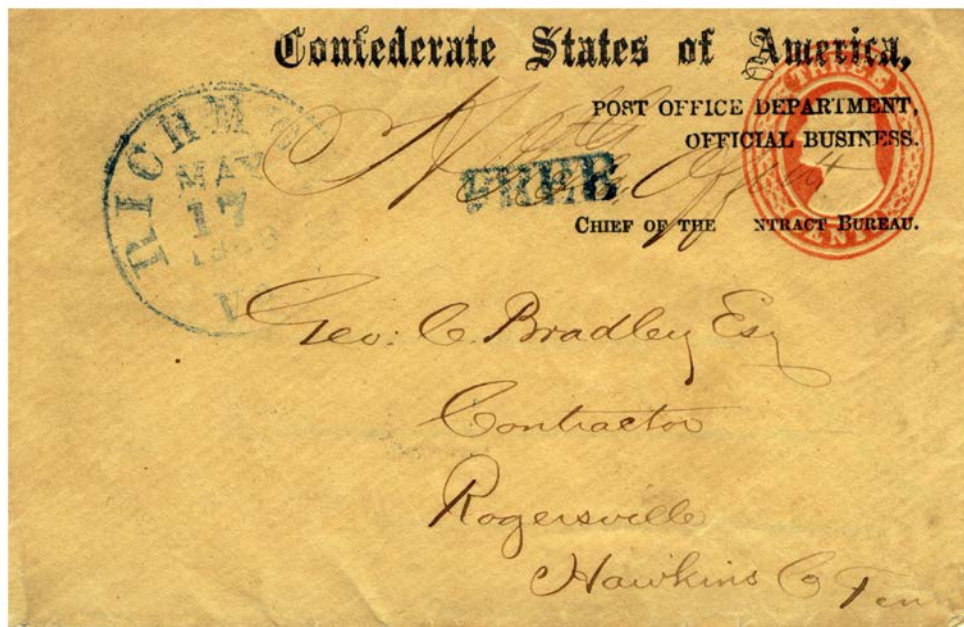
# U.S. Stamped Envelopes Used by the Confederate Post Office Department

by Thomas Lera

With the outbreak of the Civil War, the use of stamped envelopes became a problem for both the Confederacy and the United States. Effective June 1, 1861, CSA Postmaster John H. Reagan ordered all postmasters to render to the Post Office Department at Washington D.C., their final accounts and vouchers for postal receipts and expenditures up to the 31<sup>st</sup> of May, 1861. In addition they were ordered to forward, with said accounts, all remaining postage stamps and stamped envelopes belonging to the Post Office Department of the United States. However, not all stamped envelopes were returned. Rather, they were printed with Confederate States of America Post Office Department imprints and used for official Post Office Department mail.

“Official Mail” has a very distinct meaning in the Confederate Postal System and refers only to “Free” mail on Official Business from the Post Office Department.

The franking privilege was abolished by the CSA Postage Act of March 15, 1861, but provision was made for the Postmaster General, and various other Post Office Department officials to send official correspondence “free of postage” when endorsed with “Official Business” over their signatures with a penalty of \$300 for false endorsement. These provisions became effective on June 1, 1861, when the Confederate Post Office Department began functioning and carrying the mails.



*H. St. Geo. Offutt, Chief of the Contract Bureau sent this letter from Richmond on May 17, 1863.  
This is a Type CON-06a envelope with the “CO” is missing from “CONTRACT”.  
The envelope is Scott Number U10 and is identified as Die 5, Head XV, Group 2, Type 12.*

The Confederate postal authorities had a variety of official envelopes prepared by overprinting “Confederate States of America” {in Old English} / POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT./OFFICIAL BUSINESS.” followed by an open space for the signature and then, the printed rank or office of the authorized official on United States stamped (Nesbitt) envelopes taken from the demonetized stock of Southern postmasters. The inscription was printed at the upper right over the embossed indicia of the envelopes. In addition to this limited stock of “confiscated” Nesbitt envelopes, ordinary commercial envelopes of various sizes and colors were imprinted with

the same type-set forms for the use of officials of the Post Office Department. These were the only official envelopes of the Confederacy, and when properly endorsed, they were carried to their destinations postage free.

There were two distinct groups of official envelopes. The first, for the Post Office Department at the seat of government in Richmond, Virginia; the other, for the Trans-Mississippi Agency, located in Marshall, Texas. By an Act of the Confederate Congress, approved on February 16, 1864, Dr. James H. Starr was appointed Agent for the Trans-Mississippi Department. Nesbitt envelopes as well as commercial envelopes were overprinted for official use by the Trans-Mississippi Agency.

There are nine major Post Office Department imprint categories each with variations in typesetting, spacing, font, etc, as necessary. The table below summarizes the various major imprint categories according to office, the number of types for each, and the signatures associated with each imprint type, as published in the *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook*.

### OFFICIAL POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT IMPRINTS

IMPRINT	TYPE	SIGNATURE (on Type)
Postmaster General	PMG-01	John H. Reagan (I) H. St. Geo. Offutt (acting)
Chief of Appointment Bureau	APP-01 – APP-09	B. N. Clements (01-09)
Chief of the Contract Bureau	CON-01 – CON-06	H. St. Geo. Offutt (01-06)
Chief of the Finance Bureau	FIN-01 – FIN-09	Jno. L. Harrell (01-03, 06, 08-09) A. Dimitry (04-07) J. L. Lancaster (05)
Auditor's Office	AUD-01 – AUD-15	B. Baker (01-04, 07-08, 11-13) H. C. Richardson (05) W. W. Lester (06) H. St. Geo. Offutt (09) J. W. Robertson (10, 14) I. W. M. Harris (15)
Third Auditor's Office	THR-01 – THR-02	Aaron Moise (01) I. W. M. Harris (02)
Chief Clerk, Post Office Department	CLK-01 – CLK-09	B. Fuller (01-03, 05, 07) John B. Dimitry (04) W. D. Miller (06) B. N. Clements (08, see APP-09) J. G. Griswold (09)
Trans-Mississippi Postal Agency	TRN-01 – TRN-05	Jas. H. Starr (01-05)
Dead Letter Office	DLO-01 – DLO-03	A. Dimitry (01) Jno. L. Harrell (02-03)

From "U.S. Stamped Envelopes Used by the Confederate Post Office." *The Confederate Philatelist*, 2009, 54(2): 25 – 30 and modified with revised updated information.

In reviewing auction catalogs and examples received from collectors to be considered for use in the "Official Envelopes" section of the *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook*, ten different varieties were

found of the “Nesbitt” Stamped Envelopes used by the Post Office Department and its Offices, Bureaus and the Trans-Mississippi Agency. The 2008 *Scott Catalog* lists them as U5, U6, U9, U10, U13, U14, U17, U18, U26 and U27. They all have the USPOD monogram known to collectors as Watermark Number 1.



*Watermark Number 1*

The George F. Nesbitt & Co., of New York, New York, was awarded the contract for the manufacture of United States stamped envelopes from October 25, 1852 to March 31, 1870. The First Series, 1853 – 1860, was printed on white and buff papers; the color, weight and texture of the papers varied considerably.



*Example of U5  
Type V, Head XV, Group 1, Variety IV*



*Example of U11  
Type III, Head XVIII*



*Example of U18  
Type II, Head XIX*

*(Source: Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection)*

The 1853 Nesbitt Issue had eight different dies of which Die 3, 5, 6, and 8 are recorded to be used.

- The Die 3 – 3¢ Red on White paper (U5) was a size 7, knife 20 type envelope.
- The Die 3 – 3¢ Red on Buff (Cream) paper (U6) was also a size 7, knife 20 type envelope.
- The Die 5 – 3¢ Red on White paper (U9) was a size 1, 2, and 7 envelopes with knife types 1, 2, 20, 21, and 22 recorded.
- The Die 5 – 3¢ Red on Buff (Cream) paper (U10) was a size 7 envelope with knife types 20, 21, 22 recorded.
- Die 6 – 6¢ Green on White (U13) and Green on Buff paper (U14) were size 7 envelopes with knife 20 recorded being used.
- Die 8 – 10¢ Green on White (U17) and Green on Buff paper (U18) were size 7 envelopes with knife type 20 recorded being used.

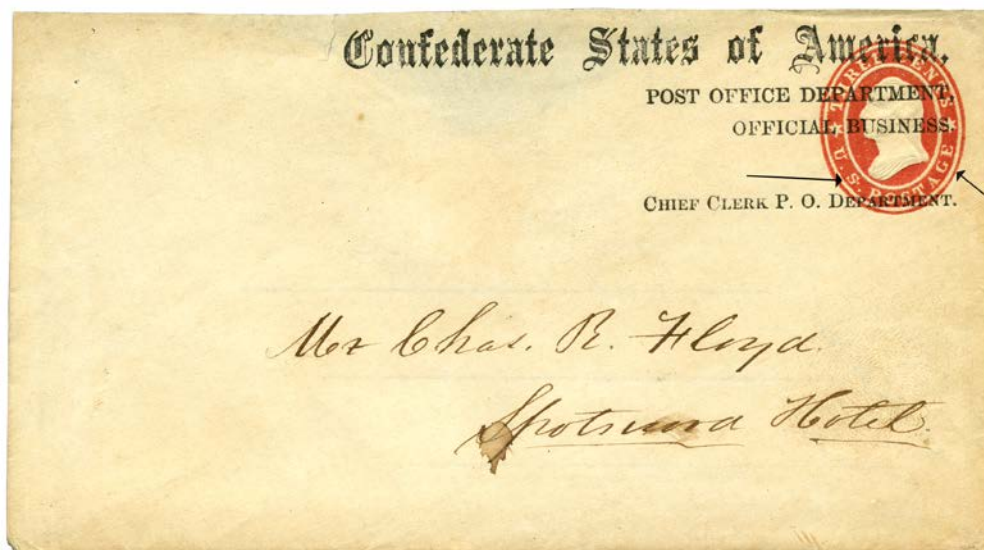
Within each of these dies, different varieties exist of Washington’s head, and are referred to as the Nesbitt Heads.

- Die 3 – 3¢ Red has 2 different types, one with Head XIII and the other with Head XIV.
- Die 5 – 3¢ Red uses only Head Type XV but there are 31 different recorded types. Group 1 has long strokes on the “T”s” and has 11 types (1 - 5, 5A, 6 -10). Group 2 with short strokes on the “T”s” has 20 different types (11 – 30).
- Die 6 – 6¢ Green uses Heads - I, XVI, XVII, and XVIII. There are 5 different types.
- Die 8 – 10¢ Green has only one type with Head XIX.

The Second Series, 1860, necessitated by the Postal Act of April 30, 1860, which reduced the postage on drop letters to one cent, and the Postal Act of June 15, 1860, reduced the charge for delivery by carrier to one cent. This series of envelopes is called “Star Dies” from the small stars on either side of the design. The basic paper colors for the envelopes of this issue are white and buff.

From the 1860 Nesbitt Issue only Die 9 is recorded to be used.

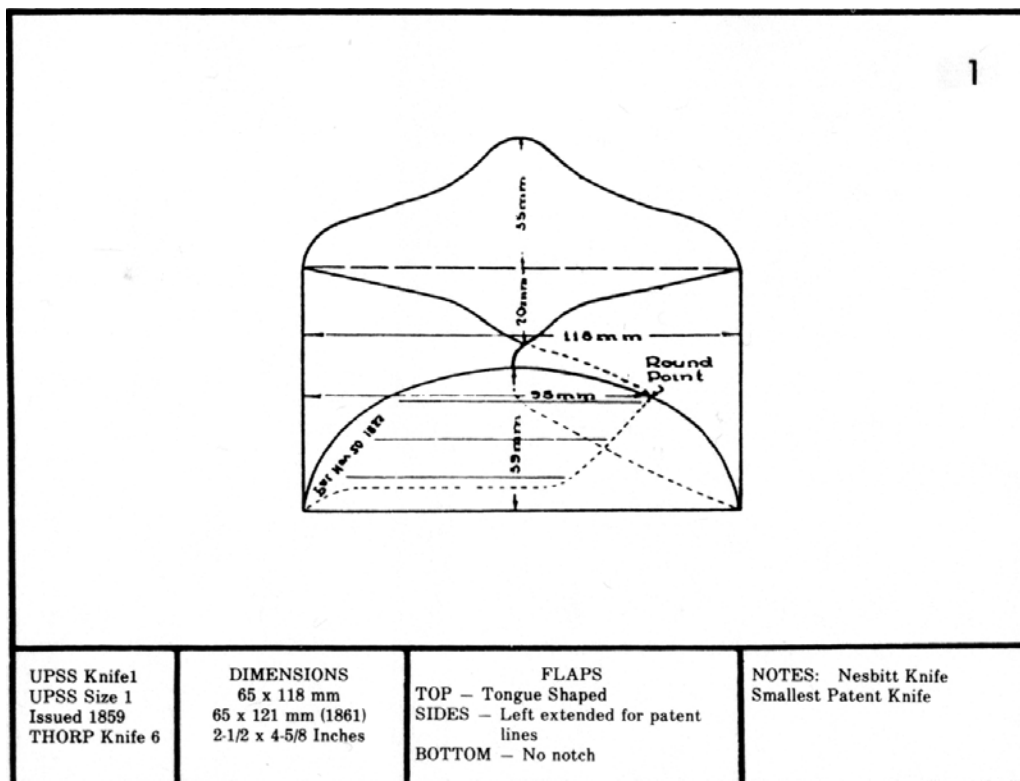
- Die 9 – 3¢ Red on White paper (U26) is size 1, 2, 5, and 7 envelopes with Knife types 1, 2, 12, 13, and 20 recorded.
- Die 9 – 3¢ Red on Buff (Cream) paper (U27) is size 5 and 7 envelopes with Knife types 12, 13, and 20 recorded.



*Hand-carried not signed Type CLK-05 Cover. This envelope is Scott Number U 26.  
Die 9 – Group 1, Type 2. There is an additional period close to the upper end of the “S” of “U.S.”  
(source: Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection)*

The easiest method of classifying Die 9 is to extend the baseline of the bust and note its position in relationship to the letters “A” and “G” of “POSTAGE.” It falls into one of three of the following classifications with 9 different types:

- Group 1 – Back of bust points at the “G” of POSTAGE, there are 7 types.
- Group 2 – Back of bust point between the “G” and the “E”, there is 1 type and it is the largest of the Die 9 working dies.
- Group 3 – Back of bust points almost at the “E”, there is only 1 type.



*Knife Type 1 (source: the UPSS Catalog of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Stamped Envelopes and Wrappers of the United States)*

The following chart describes the knife and size of the various envelopes.

Knife	Size	Dimensions	Issued	Notes
1	1	2 ½ x 4 ⅝”	1859	Top – Tongue Shaped
2	2	2 ⅞ x 4 ¾ ”	1853	Top – Broadly Rounded
12	5	3 x 5 ⅜”	1860	Top – Broadly Rounded
13	5	3 x 5 ⅜”	1860	Top – Small Round
20	7	3 ¼ x 5 ½ ”	1853	Top – Wide Curved Point
21	7	3 ¼ x 5 ½ ”	1855	Top – Moderately Curved Point
22	7	3 ¼ x 5 ½ ”	1856	Top – Small Curved Point

For additional details on the descriptions of the different die sizes, knives, types, and heads, I recommend you review *The UPSS Catalog of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Stamped Envelopes and Wrappers of the United States*. Earl Kaplan’s censuses of stamped envelopes show the diversity of towns and a variety of usages in the independent and Confederate States.

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