

Confederate Postal History



Figure 1: This legal-sized Confederate envelope is franked with a British four pence vermilion Queen Victoria (Great Britain Scott 34) and one shilling green Queen Victoria (Great Britain Scott 42) tied by a London “W21” oval grid and other European transit markings.

Confederate States Diplomacy Abroad

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

Confederate Department of State Use

While the imprint on the Figure 1 cover is listed in the CSA Catalog¹ as Type DS-02, it is not a common use. The legal-sized envelope is franked with a British four pence vermilion Queen Victoria (Great Britain Scott 34) and one shilling green Queen Victoria (Great Britain Scott 24) tied by a London “W21” oval grid and other European transit markings.

The back flap of the cover is sealed with the red wax seal of the Confederate Department of State, as well as a Paris backstamp, shown to the right of the seal in Figure 2.

The cover is addressed to Edwin de Leon, Esq., Hotel du Rhin, Place Vendôme, Paris. This was, and still is, a ritzy area of Paris with fashionable and deluxe hotels.

Edwin de Leon

Edwin de Leon (1818-1891, Figure 3) was a Confederate diplomat, writer, and journalist. He was born in Columbia, South Carolina, of Sephardic Jewish parents. His father was Mordecai (also seen as Mardici) Hendricks de Leon, a distinguished physician and three-term mayor of Columbia. His mother was Rebecca Lopez de Leon.

De Leon studied law and practiced for a short time, but soon turned to literature and politics.

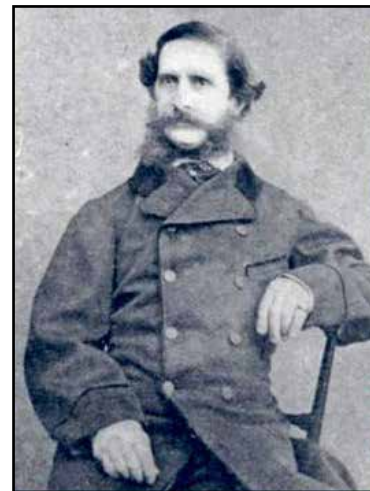


Figure 3: Edwin de Leon.

He contributed to the *Southern Review*, the *Magnolia*, the *Southern Literary Messenger*, and other periodicals. He became editor of the *Savannah Republican* and the (Columbia, S.C.) *Telegraph*, a daily publication. He also established the Southern Press in Washington, D.C., at the invitation of a group of Southern members of the U.S. Congress.²

De Leon’s literary friends included James Fenimore Cooper, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Nathaniel Hawthorn, William Thackeray, Charles Dickens, and Alfred Lord Tennyson.³



Figure 2: A red wax seal of the Confederate States of America with “DEPT OF STATE” at center seals the back flap of the Figure 1 envelope with a Paris transit marking at right.

De Leon was diplomatic agent and consul general to Egypt during the Crimean War, a position to which he was appointed in 1853 (some cite 1854) by President Franklin Pierce. De Leon retained that position during the subsequent administration of President James Buchanan.

At the outbreak of the War between the States, De Leon resigned his position and ran the blockade to return to the South, where he met with his old friend, Confederate President Jefferson Davis. He ran the blockade seven times during the war. He refused any salary for his services, advancing large sums of his own money to advance the cause.

As a Confederate diplomatic agent on a confidential mission for Davis, Edwin de Leon was received in the highest circles, both in England and in France. He personally pleaded the cause of the Confederacy with Henry John Temple, Lord Palmerston (1784-1865), in Britain, and with the Emperor Napoleon after he moved to France. De Leon published pamphlets and used journals in an attempt to sway those governments, but to no avail.

Despite a spirited effort, De Leon was unable to secure the official support of the French or the British who wisely stayed out of the fray in the Americas. Instead, he managed to alienate the Confederate Secretary of War, Judah P. Benjamin. De Leon was dismissed in February 1864.

De Leon’s memoirs were first published in 1867-68 but then all but vanished until rediscovered by well-known American Civil War historian William C. (Jack) Davis. Davis edited and, in 2005, republished them as the *Secret History of Confederate Diplomacy Abroad*.

Per the Find a Grave Memorial for both Edwin

EDWIN DE LEON.

Edwin De Leon, who died yesterday at the New-York Hospital, was well known on both sides of the Atlantic as an author, lecturer, and diplomatist. He came from the old South Carolina family of De Leon, and was born at Columbia, in that State. He practiced law for some years, and then took charge of the *National Democrat* in Washington, D. C. In 1854 Mr. De Leon was appointed by President Pierce Consul General and Diplomatic Agent at Cairo, Egypt, which post he filled for eight years, under Pierce and Buchanan.

At the commencement of the civil war Mr. De Leon resigned, and was appointed by Jefferson Davis as a special agent of the Confederacy to negotiate with France and England. He made frequent ocean trips during that period, and ran the blockade seven times. He contributed his whole personal fortune to the Confederate cause.

After the war Mr. De Leon remained abroad, writing for various English periodicals. In 1881 he established the Bell telephone in Egypt. He published several books, the best known being the “*Khédive’s Egypt*” and “*Thirty Years of My Life on Three Continents*.” He also wrote two Eastern romances and numerous magazine articles. He was a friend of Chinese Gordon, de Lesseps, King Otho of Greece, from whom he refused a decoration; Louis Napoleon, and Lord Palmerston. Just before his death Mr. De Leon signed a contract for a series of lectures on Egypt. He married a Miss Nolan of Dublin, Ireland, who survives him. He will be buried this morning from St. Francis Xavier’s Church, on Sixteenth Street.

Figure 4: A December 22, 1891, *New York Times* newspaper obituary regarding the death of Edwin de Leon.

de Leon and his wife, Ellie M. Nolan De Leon, (circa 1846-1891):

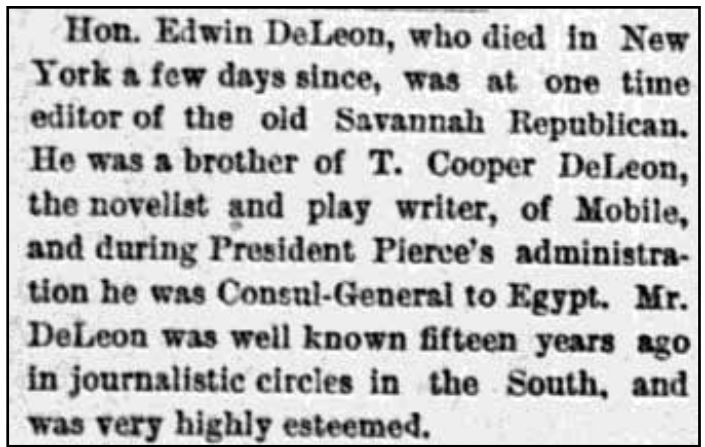
According to an article entitled "Mrs. De Leon's Death" in the Times-Picayune (New Orleans, LA) issue of Saturday, December 12, 1891, page 2, col. 7, quoting the New York Times, issue of Dec. 05, 1891, saying that, prior to his death, Edwin De Leon [who was Jewish] joined the Roman Catholic Church at his wife's request and that Mrs. De Leon "will be buried from the church of St. Francis Xavier tomorrow morning with the same ceremonies that accompanied the funeral of her husband at the same place last week."

Ellie was born in Ireland and that is where their romance flourished. They were also married in Ireland.

I could not quickly find a cause of death listed for either husband or wife. One can reasonably assume from her much younger age, her request that he convert to Roman Catholicism, and their respective demises within less than a week, they most likely succumbed to an epidemic or some form of contagious disease. New York City was nicknamed "Germ City" and home to outbreaks of yellow fever, cholera, typhoid, and influenza. A sad end to a distinguished career.

Endnotes

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



Hon. Edwin DeLeon, who died in New York a few days since, was at one time editor of the old Savannah Republican. He was a brother of T. Cooper DeLeon, the novelist and play writer, of Mobile, and during President Pierce's administration he was Consul-General to Egypt. Mr. DeLeon was well known fifteen years ago in journalistic circles in the South, and was very highly esteemed.

Figure 5: A short December 5, 1891, Columbus (Georgia) *Daily Enquirer* newspaper obituary regarding the death of Edwin de Leon.

- 2 Cyrus Adler, L. Hühner, "Leon, Edwin de," *Jewish Encyclopedia* <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/9760-leon-edwin-de>
- 3 Hugh Davis, "Edwin De Leon," *South Carolina Encyclopedia* <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/de-leon-edwin/>

(Patricia (Trish) Kaufmann has been involved in organized philately since 1969 and a dealer since 1973, specializing solely in Confederate States stamps and postal history. She may be reached by email at trishkauf@comcast.net)