

# NOT A POW COVER

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What a strange title for this article you may think – especially since the writers have Civil War prisoners' mail as their main field of collecting interest. Now, if you merely glance at the cover fronts shown with this article and look away you will be even more mystified than before, because in that glance you may think they look pretty much like any number of the hundreds of these fronts you have seen before. But there is a difference. First a quick review. The *Confederate Philatelist* of January 1961 contained an article by Earl Antrim that explains these fronts pretty well. Antrim cites Stanley Ashbrook as having stated he bought a lot of about 2,000 fronts from a dealer named Coleman in 1920, nearly 100 years ago. Their origin was wastepaper, sold as being of no further use in the documentation of the War Between the States. The backs went on to be sold as waste paper, but the fronts were salvaged.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1.

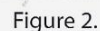
These fronts represent letters that were addressed to – but never received by – the prisoner. The markings other than actual postal markings were applied at Point Lookout. They are file markings, and tend to be consistent in format. In many, if not in most, cases four different implements were required to complete the filing format. A black pen was used to give a reason for non-delivery, such as “too long” “interlined” “dead” or “released.” The censor used the same pen to sign his initial. A blue crayon was used for the first letter of the addressee’s last name. A red pen was used to indicate the letter writer, date and place of origin. A pencil abbreviation was used to indicate state of origin.

Figure 1 is addressed to Henry Stark, Bat(tery) G, 1st Mo. Light Ar(tillery), Lookout Mt. It was mailed at Louisiana, Mo., Jan. 2, 1865, with a U.S. No. 65 used to pay postage. The cover was addressed to Lookout Mountain, which was in the upper northwest corner of Georgia, but postal handlers at some point misread Lookout Mt. for Point Lookout. The overworked censor at Point Lookout did not catch the error either and the cover was treated as rejected POW mail. The censor signed “G” and “Too long.” The writer, as indicated by the file markings, was Susan M. Stork (Stark), at Pike County, Mo. Our interest in this cover front was first piqued by a two-line interrogatory asking where the Point Lookout fronts were “de-backed” and where the usual set of examined markings and notations were applied. We were drawn to the cover due to its origin in Missouri, that being the senior scribe of this duo’s place of origin as well.

Over a period of many years we have seen several hundred of these cover fronts, a dealer once sent copies of something more than 250 of these. But this one, addressed to Henry Stark at Lookout Mountain, is the first that we had seen sent by mistake to Point Lookout. Who was Henry Stark of Battery G, 1st Missouri Light Artillery? We decided to find out. It wasn’t hard to determine that Stark’s unit did participate in the Battle of Lookout Mountain, but that didn’t tell us who



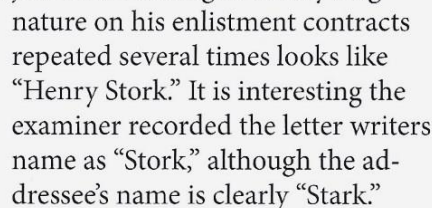
On *March 1862*, we went first to the 1860 census for Pike County, Mo. We found not one, but two Henry Starks, and each had a sister Susan. Both sets of siblings were on the same census page. Both Henry Starks were young, one was 13, and one was only 7.<sup>2</sup> Neither could be completely ruled out because there was an indication that a Henry Stark had enlisted in the Pike County Home Guard as a Musician. James Ryan, a prisoner at Andersonville, in a letter from there wrote, "there is 34 boys here some 12 and 11 years old."<sup>3</sup> They were drummer boys or other musicians. We needed to learn more about the family.



On Fold3 we located the military record of Henry Stark of Battery G, 1st Missouri Light Artillery. There was an enlistment contract dated March 11, 1862, at Louisiana, Pike County, Mo., the same town where both young Henry Starks lived (Figure 2). But, Henry Stark the soldier was 33 years of age, and was born in Nassau, Germany. He gave his occupation as a “spike smith.” Two years later, when he re-enlisted, Stark simplified that a bit by calling himself a “nail maker.”<sup>4</sup> The two young Henry Starks were therefore ruled out.

So who was the Susan M. Stark who wrote to Henry? We think it was his sister, but at this point we can't say for sure. There was a Susan M. Stark who married Issac Newton Jump, who was related to the two young Henry Starks by marriage. She was old enough to be Henry the soldier's sister,

Figure 3. but the census record gives no indication she was from Germany. Either of the young Susan Starks might have written to Henry, but that just didn't feel right. Henry's sig-



We found the cover front seen as Figure 3, on eBay. It was listed as being sent to a prisoner of war at Point Lookout, and is addressed to Charles Moshier, Point Lookout, Md. The CDS is Washington, D.C.,



Jun. 21 (65), and is franked with a U.S. No. 65. In red pen the cover front is marked "June 20, 1865 from N.D. Penney." The blue "M" is for the first letter of the presumed POW's last name. The writer's last name was spelled Penny, rather than Penney. There is a pencil "D.C." for District of Columbia. From the time we first saw this piece offered, we suspected it might be a variation on the Stark cover, rather than being a POW use.



Figure 4.

Sanitary Commission covers are rarely seen used to or from Confederate prisoners. And this is a United States Sanitary Commission soldier's letter front. Researching these two men was much easier than what it was for Henry Stark. After eliminating a few men with similar names, we came across a book called, *Heavy Guns and Light: A History of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery*. In it we found both Nathan D. Penny and Charles Moshier. They enlisted on the same day Dec. 10, 1861, at Pawling, Dutchess County, N.Y. Both men were in Company A, 4th New York Heavy Artillery. Penny was 25, Moshier was 22.<sup>5</sup> The 1850 census of Pawling, N.Y., showed 1,734 persons, both Moshier and Penny were listed on the same census page.<sup>6</sup> Given their shared history, they must have been "best pals." This is the second example of a cover that was treated as POW mail although neither man was a POW.

While the basis for this article is the two cover fronts that were handled as if they were prisoners' mail, we would feel remiss if we failed to mention an ironic detail. We have established the fact that Henry Stark was never a prisoner. However, Capt. Henry Hescok, who commanded Battery G, 1st Missouri Light Artillery, was captured and spent time in both Libby Prison and Macon's Camp Oglethorpe.<sup>7</sup> Figure 4 shows a cover from Captain Hescok to Lieutenant J.L. Follett through Old Point Comfort, Va., on May 2, 1864. A letter dated April 22, 1864, was enclosed. Although addressed to St. Louis, Mo., the blue Chattanooga marking shows the cover was forwarded from St. Louis to there. We have covers from him from both places. He escaped from Columbia, S.C., and we have a letter from him at Fayetteville, N.C., in which he describes his escape. In the last line of that letter he wrote, "remember me to the men".<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to us that Stark was born in Germany, Hescok was from Michigan and Lt. Follett was from New York.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. Antrim, Earl, "The 'Rebel Archiver' Prisoner-of-War Covers," *Confederate Philatelist*, Vol. 6, No. 1, January 1961, pp. 3-6.
2. United States Federal Census 1860 of Pike County, Mo. Page 159.
3. Ryan, James, Pvt.Co. B, 14th U.S. Inf., Letter July 7, 1864, to Capt. Sinclair, Washington, D.C.
4. [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com), Union Service Records, Battery G, 2nd Mo. Light Art. (Stark).
5. Kirk, Hyland Clare, *Heavy Guns and Light: A History of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery*, pp. 487-488.
6. United States Federal Census 1850, Dutchess County, N.Y.
7. [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com), Union Service Records, Battery G, 2nd Mo. Light Art. (Hescok).
8. Hescok, Henry Capt. Battery G, 2nd Mo. Light Art., Letter March 12, 1865, to Lt. J.L. Follett of the same unit.