

Grenada, Mississippi Cover and Letter May 20, 1865

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By mid-May 1865, the war in the eastern part of the Confederacy was all but finished. Gen Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia on April 9, 1865 at Appomattox Court House, Virginia. Gen Joseph E. Johnston surrendered the remnants of the Army of Tennessee at Greensborough, North Carolina on April 26, 1865. The last organized surrender east of the Mississippi River occurred on May 4, 1865 when Gen Richard Taylor surrendered Confederate troops in Alabama. Confederate President Jefferson Davis was captured near Irwinville, Georgia on May 10, 1865. The war in the Trans-Mississippi would carry on for a few more weeks with Gen Edmund Kirby-Smith surrendering in the West on May 26, 1865 and Gen Stand Watie surrendering his Indian forces on June 23, 1865. The point to make is that the war just did not abruptly end on a certain day and time with everything immediately returning to a pre-war status. This was especially true of the postal service.

News often traveled slowly, and it took time for the Union Army to establish control throughout the defeated Confederacy. It would be weeks before certain more isolated areas would come under Union control. When that happened, one of the first priorities was to re-establish the United States postal system. Until the Union Army took control of the area, certain Confederate postmasters would simply continue to function as normal using an operational local Confederate postal system. The postmasters used Confederate stamps even during this transitional period and even though there was no functioning central Confederate government. Therefore, it has always been a challenge for Confederate postal history collectors to attempt to identify very late legitimate Confederate postal uses.

The latest legitimate recorded use of a Confederate general issue stamp on cover west of the Mississippi River is May 22, 1865. This date was recorded years ago and has stood the test of time as no later use of a Confederate general issue stamp has as yet been recorded. A stampless use from Seguin, Texas was reported by this writer in *The Confederate Philatelist* (May-Jun 1995) with a June 4, 1865 date. Texas should be good hunting grounds for late uses as the Union Army did not enter and occupy Texas until mid-June 1865.



Figure 1 – 10c Blue AD Type I Grenada, Miss to Caseyville, Miss May 20, 1865

The east side of the Mississippi River is a different story. Until this report, the latest recorded use of a Confederate general issue stamp east of the Mississippi River known to this writer was a wallpaper cover used from Jackson, Mississippi on May 8, 1865. Dates are constantly changing. Now a cover has surfaced (Figure 1) with a 10c Blue Type I Archer & Daly stamp used from Grenada, Mississippi on May 20, 1865. This is only two days earlier than the latest recorded Trans-Mississippi use and 12 days after the late use Jackson wallpaper cover. The stamp is cancelled and tied by a partial strike of the Grenada, Miss postmark with a more complete strike of the same postmark to the left dated 20 MAY. The 1865 year date is confirmed by the original letter which still remains with the cover (Figures 2a and 2b). The docketing on the face of the cover does not appear to be period and was most likely added somewhat later. The cover is addressed to Rev E. L. Compere, Caseyville, Miss.

Grenada, Mississippi, located in Yalobusha County in the 1860's which is now part of Grenada County, is located north of Jackson on the Yalobusha River. Caseyville, which no longer appears on a modern map of Mississippi, was located south of Jackson in Copiah County near Brookhaven. The cover traveled approximately 160 miles on an almost direct north to south route in east central Mississippi apparently using a still functional Confederate mail route in an area which the Union Army had apparently not as yet established complete control.

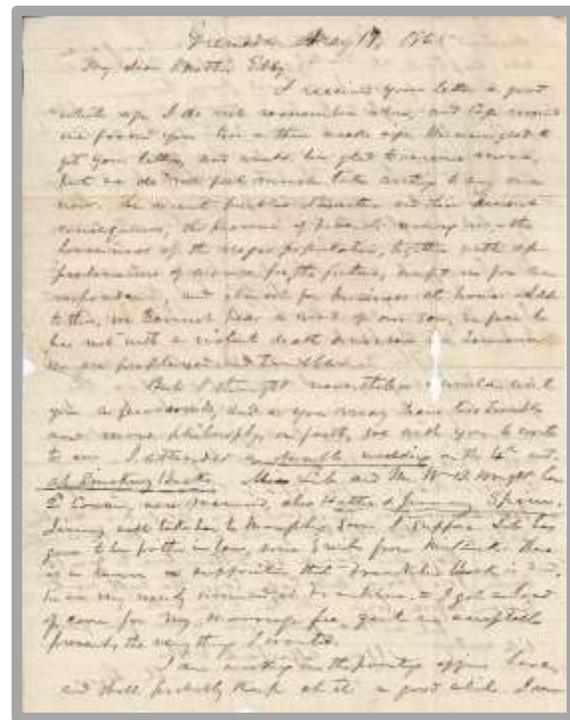
The letter clearly establishes 1865 as the year of use and contains interesting information about the time. The sender and the addressee were both Baptist ministers.

Grenada May 17, 1865

My dear Brother Ebby,

I received your letter a good while ago. I do not remember when, and Casse received one from you two or three weeks ago. We were glad to get your letters, and would be glad to receive more, but we do not feel much like writing to any one now. The recent public disasters and their (?) consequences, the presence of Federals among us – the looseness of the negroe population, together with apprehension, and almost for business at home. Add to this, we cannot hear a word of our son, we fear he has met with a violent death somewhere in Tennessee. We are perplexed and troubled.

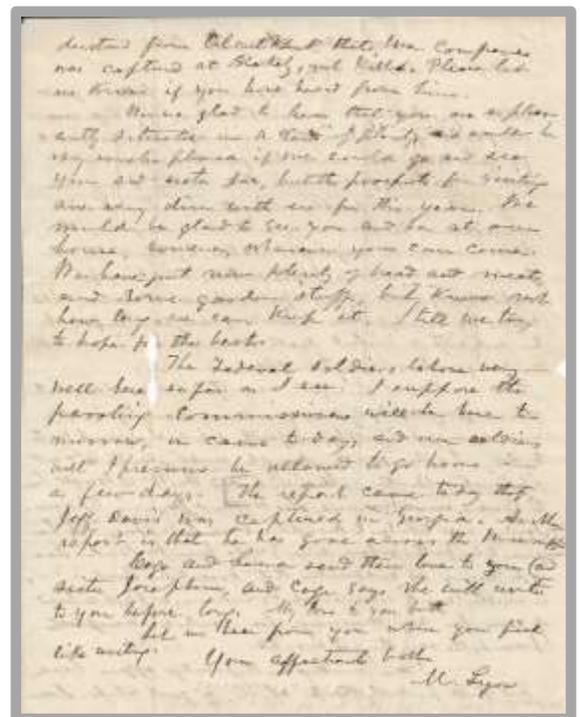
But I thought nevertheless I would write you a few words, and as you may have less trouble and more philosophy, or faith, we wish you to write to us. I attended a double



wedding on the 4th inst at Pinckney Becks. Miss Lib and Mr. Wm B. Wright, her 2nd cousin, were married, also Hattie & Jimmy Spicer. Jimmy will take her to Memphis soon I suppose, Lib has gone to her father in law, some 5 miles from Mr. Beck. There is a rumor and supposition that Franklin Beck is dead. He was very recently wounded at Franklin. I got a load of corn for my marriage fee, quite an acceptable present, the very thing I wanted.

I am working in the (?) office here, and shall probably keep at it a good while. I understood from (?) that Wm Compere was captured at Blakely, not killed. Please let me know if you have heard from him.

We are glad to learn that you are so pleasantly situated in a "land of plenty" and would be very much pleased if we could go and see you and Sister Joe, but the prospects for visiting are very



dim with us for this year. We would be glad to see you and her at our house, however, whenever you can come. We have just now plenty of bread and meat, and some garden stuff, but know not how long we can keep it. Still we try to hope for the best.

The Federal soldiers behave very well here so far as I see. I suppose the paroling commissioners will be here tomorrow, or come today, and our soldiers will I presume be allowed to go home in a few days. The report came today that Jeff Davis was captured in Georgia. Another report is that he has gone across the Mississippi.

Casse and Laura send their love to you and sister Josephine, and Casse says she will write to you before long. My love to you both.

Let us hear from you when you feel like writing.

Your affectionate brother

M. Lyon

It is difficult to believe that at this late date and with Federal troops in the area as the letter states that an open Confederate mail route was still operational. But that is clearly the case as this letter and cover demonstrate. It is therefore still possible that an even later use may be discovered.