



U.S. Philatelic Classics Society

Volume: 33 Number: 3 Year: 1981 Chronicle: 111

Article: The Crittenden Correspondence

Author(s): Thomas J. Alexander

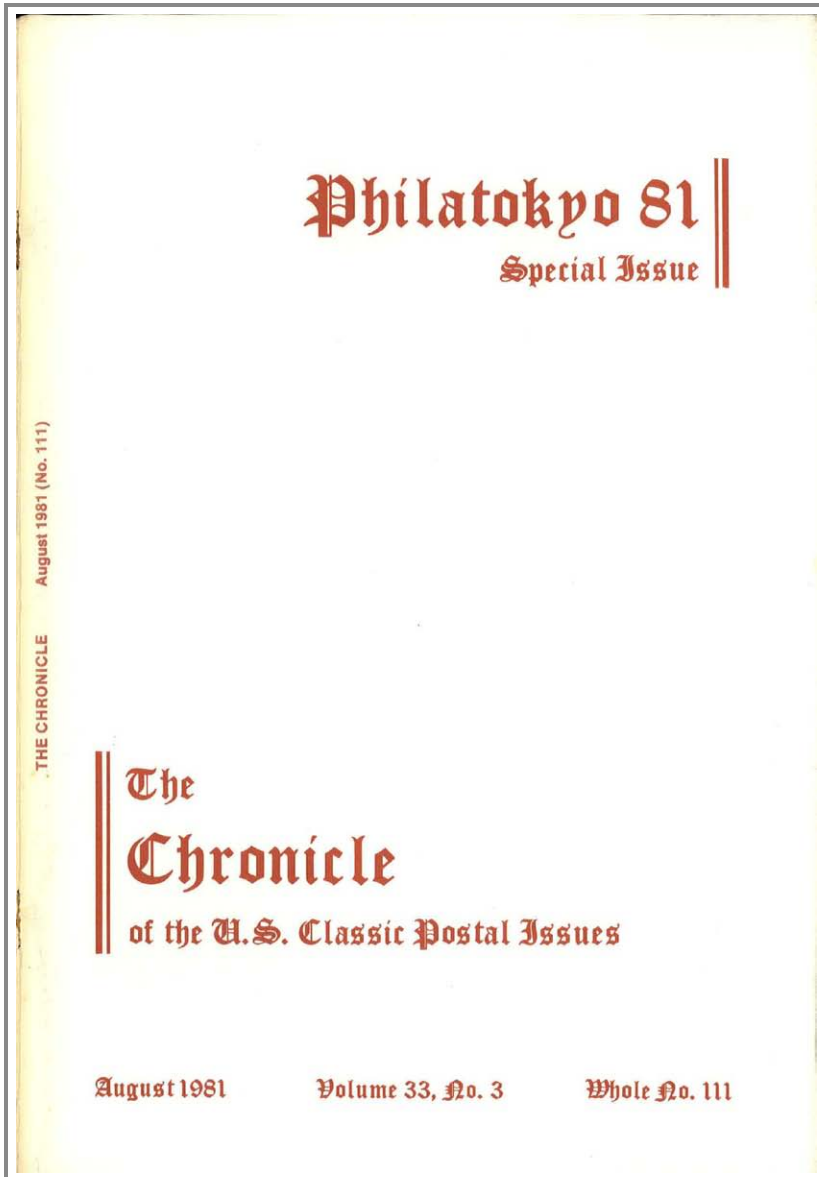


Table Of Contents

items marked with * cannot be viewed as an individual PDF document

[Click here to view the entire Volume: 33 No: 3 Chronicle: 111](#)

Starting Page

Front Cover (1 page)	Front Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.	Inside Front Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Robson Lowe Auctions	145
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Jack E. Molesworth, Inc.	146
Masthead (1 page)	147
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: John W Kaufmann	148
Table of Contents (1 page)	149
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Richard Wolfers Inc.	150
The Editor's Page	
The Editor's Page (1 page) <i>Susan M. McDonald</i>	151
Guest Privilege	
Phantom New York Postmaster's Provisional Stamps, Covers and Collections: Do They Still Exist? (3 pages) <i>Philip T. Wall</i>	152
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Alan T. Atkins	154
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Simmy's Stamp Co. Inc.	155
Prestamp and Stampless Period	
Kaskaskia, North West Territory (3 pages) <i>Richard B. Graham</i>	156
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Leonard H. Hartmann	159
1847 Period	
The 1847 Trial Colors (3 pages) <i>Creighton C. Hart</i>	160
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Danam Stamp Auctions	163
1851-61 Period	
The Crittenden Correspondence (17 pages) <i>Thomas J. Alexander</i>	164
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Richard C. Frajola Inc.	181
1861-1869 Period	
China and Japan Steam Service IV: an Update (12 pages) <i>Richard B. Graham</i>	182
Early 3c 1861 Shades Mailed at Ann Arbor, Michigan (2 pages) <i>William K. Herzog</i>	193
3c "Near Pink" and Ashbrook's "Pinkish Rose". The (3 pages) <i>William K. Herzog</i>	194
1861-1869 Period	
Review: "List of Post Offices in the United States - 1862" (1 page) <i>Richard B. Graham</i>	196
Modern Photographic Reproduction of Stamp Colors is Here (1 page) <i>William K. Herzog</i>	197
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Henry M. Spelman 111	198
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Henry M. Spelman 111	198
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: P.M. Tepper & Co.	198
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Henry C. Hensel	199
1869 Period	
The "Manila" Find (5 pages) <i>Jeffrey M. Forster</i>	200
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Andrew Levitt, Inc.	204
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Jacques Schiff, Jr., Inc.	205
Foreign Mails	
The Belgian Convention Rate to Spain (3 pages) <i>Charles J. Starnes</i>	206
Corrigenda (1 page) <i>Walter Hubbard</i>	209
Addendum - PCM Paid Only to the GAPU (2 pages)	209

Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Al Zimmerman	210
Classified (1 page)	210
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: George Alevizos	211
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Edelman's	211
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: William A. Fox Auctions, Inc.	211
The Cover Corner	
Answer to Problem Covers in Issue No. 110 (3 pages)	212
<i>Scott Gallagher</i>	
Problem Covers for This Issue (2 pages)	214
<i>Scott Gallagher</i>	
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: New England Stamp	215
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Greg Manning Company Inc.	216
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Harmers International	Inside Back Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Raymond H. Weill Co	Back Cover

THE CRITTENDEN CORRESPONDENCE

THOMAS J. ALEXANDER

A new find has been made which may rival the Carroll Hoy find made earlier in this century. It has been appearing on the philatelic market over the past five or six years, but only now has its magnitude become apparent. Parts of the correspondence first surfaced in this country when a prominent eastern dealer acquired and sold a very large accumulation of Wells Fargo covers, including 18 Virginia City ponies, each bearing a 25 cent blue Wells Fargo stamp. It is believed that another lot, marketed even earlier through some source unknown to this writer, again included Virginia City pony express covers.

The eastern dealer reports that the find originally consisted of upwards of 10,000 covers. Although relatively common 20th century items constituted a large percentage of this total, the balance contains hundreds of classic U.S., CSA to USA, and transatlantic covers.

Richard C. Frajola has now acquired what may be the balance of the correspondence. He has generously made it available for study and recording prior to its dispersal at auction. Unfortunately, the persons who originally came across this material did not realize its historical importance, and separated many of the letters from their envelopes. Some of the items described in this article are based on the letters only. It is hoped that the current owners of covers without letters bearing the names of persons mentioned here will supply the writer with photocopies so that an effort can be made to match covers with content.

Because of the size of the find, this note can only briefly summarize some of the items that it contains and indicate, again in summary form, its historic importance by means of selective quotations from some of the letters.

THE PROTAGONISTS

The entire accumulation is a single family's correspondence. It is called the Crittenden Correspondence for Alexander Parker Crittenden, the head of the family. Before describing individual items, it is necessary to identify certain members of the first two generations of this remarkable family, since theirs is the correspondence in the Frajola holding.

ALEXANDER PARKER CRITTENDEN

Addressed as "Parker" in much of this correspondence, Crittenden was a nephew of Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky. He was born on January 14, 1816, in that state and was an early argonaut to California. He became a prominent lawyer in San Francisco, taking part in local politics, serving as a member of the state legislature. He was the San Francisco recruiting agent for William Walker, the filibusterer who invaded Nicaragua in the 1850s, and who was later captured and shot in an attempt to invade Honduras. Several of Parker's family were members of these military expeditions. He was a Southern sympathizer, and at the outbreak of the Civil War helped finance Albert Sidney Johnston's flight from California to the Confederacy. Throughout the war he apparently raised funds for the South.

Parker had sent his two oldest sons (Churchill and James) to school in Indiana. After South Carolina seceded, emotion ran high at their school and the boys proposed joining the Union Army to put down the "rebellion". In a letter to Churchill on July 23, 1861, Parker expressed his outrage:

In your letter to me you speak of a desire to volunteer if force should be resorted to against the people of the South and ask my consent to your doing so . . . I am utterly amazed at the ideas both James and yourself have expressed on this subject. I regret from the bottom of my heart the grievous error I have committed in exposing you to such influences as it



Figure 1. Portraits (left to right) of Laura Crltenden and her husband, Ramon B. Sanchez, Annie (Nannie) Crltenden, and Alexander Parker Crltenden.

seems have surrounded you and have had such fatal effect . . .

You wish to enlist in the cause of the North against your own people! Well — In the ranks of those whom you call traitors and whom you would meet in the field as enemies you will encounter your own father and at least one of your brothers, for thank God I have yet one son who will stand by his father's side.

Come home at once. Get out of that pestilential atmosphere in which you have been living and once more reunite yourself with your family . . .

Come home my son, at once.

The sons made a sharp reversal of opinion and Parker decided that he didn't want them to join the Confederate Army after all. He shipped them off to Europe to continue their educations there. Both jumped ship at Havana, ran the blockade into the south, and joined the Confederate Army.

When California passed an act prohibiting anyone from practicing law who had not taken an oath of allegiance to the U.S., Parker moved to Virginia City, Nevada Territory, which had no such requirement. His wife remained in San Francisco, and their correspondence accounts for the bulk of the Virginia City ponies contained in the lot.

On November 6, 1870, Parker went to the docks at San Francisco with another son to meet his wife and a daughter, who were returning from a visit to the east. He was shot and

killed on the ferry boat by the "celebrated and notorious" Laura Fair, who was later tried and acquitted.

CLARA CHURCHILL JONES CRITTENDEN

The wife of Alexander Parker Crittenden. She was born on May 31, 1820, and died on December 29, 1881. She is the recipient of many of the letters in the correspondence.

ANNIE CHURCHILL CRITTENDEN

Daughter of Parker and Clara, born on January 19, 1843, and died October 27, 1916. She married Sidney M. VanWyck and was the recipient of some of these letters.

CHURCHILL CRITTENDEN

Eldest son of A. P. and Clara Crittenden, born May 17, 1840, died October 4, 1864. Bound for Europe at his parents' insistence, he jumped ship in Havana and sailed for Matamoros, Mexico. From there he crossed into Texas and made his way to Richmond, where he joined the Confederate Army as a member of the Cavalry. In October 1864, he penetrated Union lines to forage for provisions. He was captured by a Union force commanded by a Col. Powell, tried and shot as a spy. Later Col. Powell, because of this and other similar barbaric acts, was cashiered from the Union Army.

JAMES LOVE CRITTENDEN

Second son of A. P. and Clara Crittenden, born December 15, 1841, died January 4, 1915. Jumped ship with his brother Churchill and ran the blockade directly to Louisiana, where he joined the Confederate Army, rising to the rank of Captain.

HOWARD CRITTENDEN

Son of Parker and Clara, born November 17, 1844, died October 23, 1871. Seventeen years old at the beginning of the war, Howard was a mill superintendent at Aurora, California, until 1864. His letters to his mother are believed to be the source of the 18 Virginia City ponies previously sold from this correspondence. In 1864 he took a ship around the Horn for Europe to pursue his education. His letters home from England, France, and Saxony constitute the transatlantic covers in the accumulation.

LAURA CRITTENDEN

Daughter of Parker and Clara, born March 22, 1839, died October 14, 1919. Married Ramon Bernardo Sanchez on December 6, 1859. Laura received some of these letters. A Virginia City pony was addressed to Sanchez.

ALEXANDER JONES

Clara Crittenden's brother. A physician, Jones had graduated from the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. He was a member of the Walker expedition in Nicaragua, where he was wounded. He joined the Confederate Army and was the writer of many of the letters back to California.

WILLIAM MARLBOROUGH JONES

Brother of Clara Crittenden, born January 28, 1832. Served in Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua and in the Confederate Army. Was present at the siege and fall of Vicksburg. Both he and his brother Alex were disowned by their father, Rev. Alexander Jones, Jr., of Rhode Island, because of their allegiance to the Confederacy. Referred to as "Billie Jones" in the correspondence.

The letters at hand may be divided into six general categories, some of which will only be touched on in passing. These are Trip to California and Early Days there; The Nicaragua Expedition; Wells, Fargo Express Covers; Virginia City Pony Express Covers; CSA to USA Covers; and Miscellaneous Covers.

TRIP TO CALIFORNIA & EARLY DAYS THERE

In early 1849, Crittenden set out for California with his brother-in-law, Alexander Jones,

in a huge company of 200 or 300 men. They were in the van of the overland gold rush via the southern route. The route had not yet been fixed. The Crittenden party cut across southern Texas, dropped down into Mexico as far south as Chihuahua, veered northeast to Tucson, and then to San Diego.

Throughout the trip Crittenden wrote letters to his wife in Brazoria, Texas. They present a fascinating record of the ways in which mail was sent back to the states. These included private carriage to the nearest U.S. settlement, use of the Mexican mails including the British Postal Agent at Vera Cruz, and carriage by non-contract ships from Mexican ports.

The following is a record of the letters written along the route, with some of the comments they contained:

<i>Postmarks</i>	<i>Comments</i>
ms "San Felipe Tex/ Apl 12th, 1849" (Figure 2)	I shall leave the waggon and go on up the river to Washington thence to La Grange, where I shall overtake the crowd again. (datelined April 10th, 1849).
triple c: AUSTIN/ APRIL ms 25/TEXAS	(Datelined April 20th, 1849).
c: SAN ANTONIO/MAY/ 19/TXS.	(Datelined "near Fredericksburg, May 2nd 1849").
c: BROWNSVILLE/JAN/ 14/TXS.	Contrary to my expectations, the company would not venture direct to El Paso and we are still 200 miles from that point. There are some 300 or 350 of us in this region — but a good deal scattered. (Datelined Presidio del Norte, June 8th, 1849)
c: SAN ANTONIO/NOV/ 26/TXS.	I wrote yesterday by Chihuahua and write again today by some other route — I don't know what. There is very little chance of any letter from here reaching you . . . We leave in a day or two either for El Paso or for Yanos, passing within 60 miles of Chihuahua — I think the former. The latter is perhaps the best route, but we are afraid of difficulty with the authorities . . . (Datelined Presidio del Norte, June 9th, 1849)

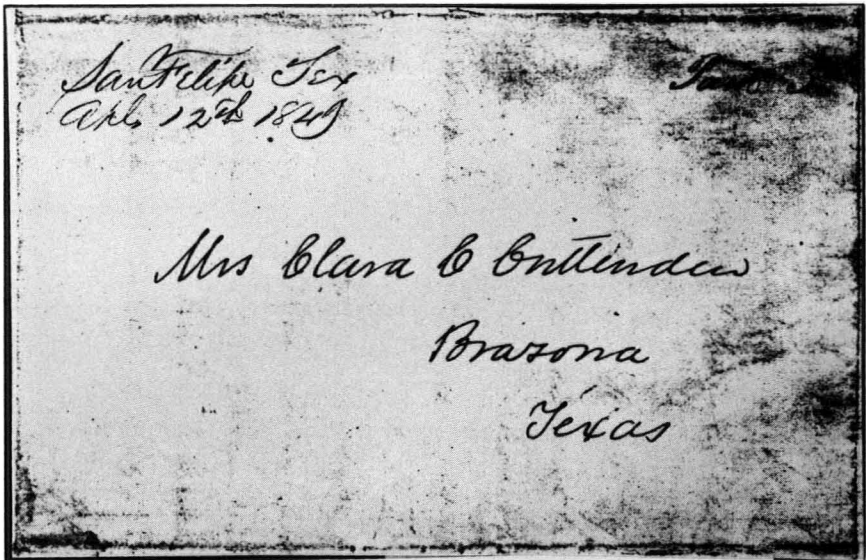


Figure 2. The first letter written by Crittenden back to his wife in Brazoria as he was beginning the trek to California, postmarked from San Felipe, Texas.

c: NEW ORLEANS/AUG/
19/La.
s/-SHIP
s/-12
(backstamped circular
VERA CRUZ)

c: MOBILE/AUG/21/Ala.
(Figure 3)
Crowned D1c PAID/AT/
VERA-CRUZ
c-SHIP
s/-10
ms "1/-"

This room where I am writing is in the American Hotel of the City of Chihuahua We could get no guide to El Paso and therefore we went to Presidio There was no wagon road to El Paso — the company broke up, one-half going to El Paso with pack mules, the other coming in this direction in search of a road to Yanos, and thence to Cooke's route. Such a route was reported but it did not exist (Datelined July 6th, 1849)

We left the town last night and moved out six miles on the road. Tomorrow we are off in earnest for the Gila by way of Yanos. Perhaps I shall have a chance to write from Tucson (Datelined Chihuahua July 17th, 1849)

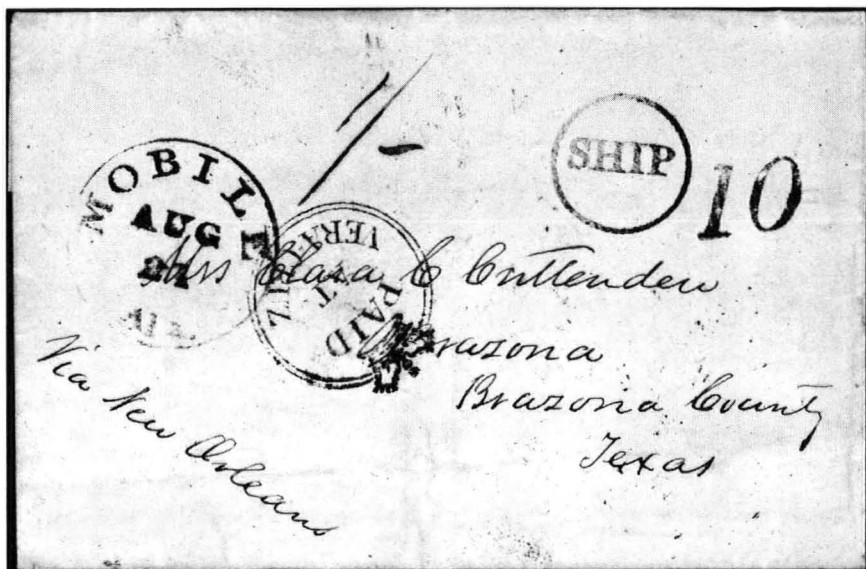


Figure 3. Cover sent by Crittenden in 1849 to his wife in Texas on his way to California. Placed in the mails at Chihuahua on July 17, 1849, arrived at Vera Cruz on Aug. 16 and sent by the British Postal Agent at Vera Cruz by ship to Mobile, where it entered the U.S. mails for the trip back to Texas.

c: NEW ORLEANS/NOV/?/La. (Datelined "Tucson — Senora, August 18th, 1849")
s/-SHIP
s/-12 (Backstamped circular
VERA CRUZ)
ms "San Diego Cal./ Nov. 3rd/49"

I write from a ranch 30 miles East of Pueblo de los Angeles I hear the letter may be sent on from here by San Diego in a day or two We have traveled over 2,000 miles and have still 600 before us

c: SAN FRANCISCO/
NOV/15/Cal.
b-40
ms "Via New Orleans/La"

I wrote you from Tucson on account of the mishaps which prevent Alex [Alexander Jones] from going farther than Chihuahua, but fear my letter may not have reached you. I will repeat, that in self defense he killed a man, was wounded, not dangerously but so as to render it imprudent for him to travel, and remained in Chihuahua Gold is just as abundant as was reported. Money is plenty as dirt, everything promising. I tell you, old woman, I shall make a fortune here (Datelined Pueblo de los Angeles October 12, 1849)

No cover

I sailed from San Pedro, the Port of Los Angeles, on the 26th Nov. on a schooner with 75 passengers . . . I can hardly give you any description of the region which would carry any idea of it. It is the wonder of the age, a perfect Babel. The Port [San Francisco] is crowded with shipping from every quarter of the world and people of all nations and tongues are streaming through the streets of the city in a tumultuous and never ceasing tide . . . There is hardly a shelter for the heads of the inhabitants, though the hills around are whitened with tents. Goods of every kind are piled up in the streets, exposed to the weather, and wherever a shelter of five feet square can be found there is an establishment for selling something . . . One of the first things I did after landing was to go to a Post Office. I found at least 200 persons waiting for their letters. They . . . went upon the principle of first come first serve. There was no chance of getting to the window by waiting even all day . . . I gave it up in the deepest despair . . .

Subsequent letters from California to Clara include a manuscript townmark from San Jose, STEAM SHIP markings and handstamps from San Francisco and Sacramento. A number of the San Francisco letters mention major fires which swept the city in the early days culminating in the great fire of May 1851, which was sufficiently serious to generate a fire storm. A cover of July 3, 1852, is an example of a very early registry system in San Francisco; it contained enough gold dust to justify a quintuple rate, Parker saying "I will enclose in this as much gold as it can conveniently carry for want of banknotes — it is not easy to make remittances by letter."

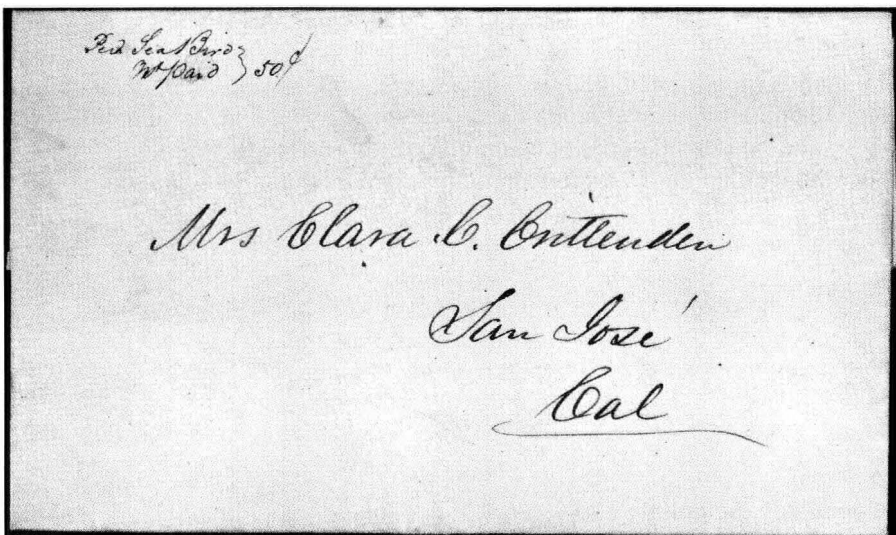


Figure 4. A privately carried letter with a manuscript "SEA BIRD/NOT PAID 50 c". Apparently the captain of a coastal vessel was running a private express.

THE NICARAGUA EXPEDITION

A number of letters throughout the correspondence mention William Walker's Nicaragua Expedition. With a handful of mercenaries recruited in California, Walker was able to conquer the country, although his rule was brief. Figure 5 illustrates the only cover in the correspondence written from Nicaragua. It was written by Parker Crittenden's brother-in-law, Alexander Jones, a member of the expedition, and is addressed to his niece, Ana [Annie] Crittenden. The cover is endorsed "Pay Department/Nicaraguan Army" and

has a manuscript "P", presumably for "Paid". Although it is addressed to San Francisco, there are no other postal markings.

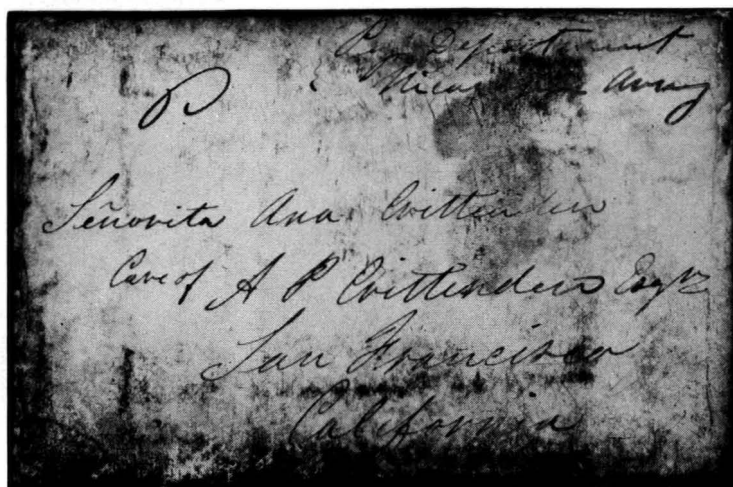


Figure 5. Cover from the Walker filibustering expedition in Nicaragua to San Francisco.

The letter is datelined "Pay Department/Grenada/October 27th 1856." He says "I am going to San Juan del Sur in a few days to meet your father [A. P. Crittenden], whom I expect on the next Steamer. I have not been out of the City since my return, excepting twice. Once about 2 miles around the City when in command of the night police; and once 10 miles up the lake after 10 o'clock at night on a scout of my own getting up."

WELLS, FARGO EXPRESS COVERS

There are more than 350 Wells, Fargo & Co. printed envelopes and their enclosures. Most were written by Alexander Parker Crittenden from Virginia City, Aurora, Carson City, and San Francisco, and are dated from 1861 to 1867. Many of the letters touch on the overland mail, raising money for Confederate prisoners, smuggling mail to and from the Confederacy, building the telegraph to the Comstock Lode, and the Indian War of 1864 which for a time stopped all overland communications with the East.

The following are sample excerpts from some of these letters:

<i>Origin & Date</i>	<i>Content</i>
Aurora, June 7, 1862	The telegraph is now completed to within nine miles of Aurora and will be in town in 2 or 3 days so that there can be instant communications with Sacramento and Placerville.
Aurora, June 10, 1862	Within an hour after your telegram was delivered at the office in Sacramento, I received it here. It was one of the first dispatches that came through to this place.
Aurora, July 6, 1863	I wish you never to [pre] pay any Express charges. When you pay, the Express take their own time to deliver articles or don't deliver them at all as they please.
Aurora, Aug. 10, 1863	Howard says you mentioned in a letter to him that Mr. Levi told you all my letters to the boys [Churchill and James] sent by Mazatlan had been opened in the Post Office. This is certainly not so for I never sent a letter by mail.
Virginia City, July 3, 1864	You must have been on the Yosemite when she sunk the Washoe, and must have had all but yourself, a big fright. I won't confess that you could be frightened. What were the facts? Was it intentional?
Virginia City, July 22, 1864	Alex's [Alexander Jones, CSA] letter must, of course, have come by way of Mazatlan and was no doubt sent up by Col. Grayson. Your letters to Alex had better be sent to Col. A. J. Grayson, Mazatlan, with a note asking him to forward it by the

- first safe opportunity. Your letter will have to be enclosed in an envelope addressed to Col. G.
- Virginia City, Sept. 16, 1864 You may think it strange that we have not heard from Howard for so long a time and may begin to torment yourself about it. The cause is evident. It is due to that humbug arrangement — the "Overland Mail". 3 or 4 weeks ago the Indians broke it up and all the mails east of the point where the interruptions occurred had to be returned to New York and sent to California by sea. They are now on the way. Letters which should have been here more than a month ago have not yet arrived. Many of them may never arrive. Some were probably taken and destroyed by the Indians and others may be left along the route and never be forwarded. I should not be surprised if many of the mails instead of being sent back to N. Y. should be detained where they were stopped until the route is reopened. When that will be no one can tell. I hope *never*.
- Virginia City, Nov. 21, 1864 Last night 3 letter bags arrived here by Overland Mail. They are the first that have come for nine days. The stages do not bring the mail. It is left on the road.
- Virginia City, Nov. 29, 1864 I sent a letter to Howard yesterday by Express from here, via Panama and New York and advised him never again to write by Overland Mail.
- Virginia City, Dec. 27, 1864 I do not yet know whether you wrote to Cousin Ann Mary as I wished, and told her what to do with the money in her hands or Mr. Faxon's. If you have not done so, do write at once and tell her to give 1/3 to Mrs. Hopkins for Mary — 1/3d to Mrs. Harvey or Mrs. Rhodes for the Confederate wounded and prisoners and to send 1/3d to James at Richmond. You will have to give her the address of Mrs. Hopkins, as Mrs. Selina M. Harvey Box 788 Washington City, DC., and Mrs. Rhodes, which you can get from her letters. The money for James, Mr. Faxon can send to him to the care of Dr. Geo. W. Jones, R[ichmond] in the shape of a draft on London payable to James' order, or in coin. Mr. F. can find some way of sending it.
- Virginia City, March 3, 1865 The pony is stopped. So hereafter your letters will not reach you for 2 or 3 days after they are written.
- Virginia City, April 22, 1865 Our former government and all the principles in which it was founded are overthrown. We have now no government but an arbitrary and military one. It is a mere form of republicanism and in a very short time the form will be disregarded and we shall openly have what people want — a strong government with a King or an Emperor. The sooner we have it the better. Rather than leave matters as they now are I should desire to see Grant Emperor. The old prediction is about fulfilled that in trying to secure the liberty of the negroes the people would lose their own.
- Virginia City, Jan. 23, 1866 I have not heard from you for many days, but I suppose that is to be attributed to the roads. The Express matter has been carrying over the Dutch Flat route and no stage over that route has come in for five days. The stages can't get through and I understand some 5 miles of the railroad have been swept away.
- Virginia City, March 4, 1867 I received two letters from you today. They were brought over by the Express Messenger on Snow Shoes. The roads are still closed and it will be some days yet before any stage or sleigh can cross the mountains.

VIRGINIA CITY PONY EXPRESS COVERS

In *The Pony Express* by M. C. Nathan and W. S. Boggs, the authors listed 29 known Virginia City Pony Express covers (as of March 1, 1962). That listing contained 11 with the 10 cent brown stamp, 12 with the 25 cent blue, and six with the 25 cent red. The earliest listed was September 23, 1862, and the latest was March 17, 1865.

While a few others have been noted since that time, the Crittenden Correspondence greatly expands the number of recorded covers. At least 19 from this source have previously appeared on the market (one 10 cent and eighteen 25 cent blues). The Frajola holding contains 30 more, including a new earliest date of use — September 1, 1862. In addition, it contains the last possible date of use and proof that the cover reported by Nathan as being dated March 17, 1865, could not have been carried on the pony at that date, which was 15 days after the pony stopped running.

The following is a list of the Frajola ponies, with pertinent comments from the enclosed letters (all except No. 12 are addressed to San Francisco):

Origin & Date

Contents

10 cent Brown

1. Aurora/Genoa, Sept. 1, 1862
(Figure 6)

Aurora is rather a rough, straggling place, filling some little ravines, very high up in the mountains, they say 8,000 feet above tide, which is 1,300 feet higher than Virginia [City] . . . I sent you a couple of Pony Express stamps. If you put one on a letter it will arrive here a day sooner.

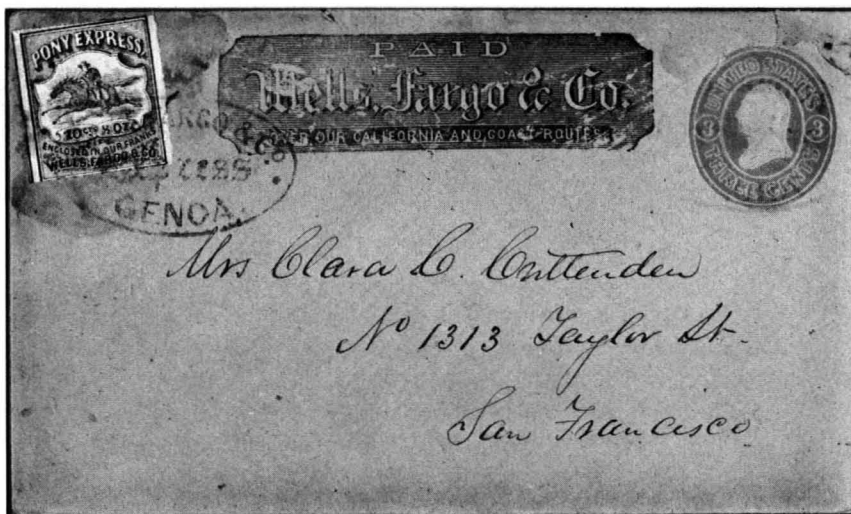


Figure 6. The earliest recorded Virginia City Pony Express cover, dated September 1, 1862, from Genoa, bearing a 10c stamp.

2. Aurora/Genoa, Sept. 26, 1862
3. Virginia City, Nov. 21, 1862
(Figure 7)

25 cent Blue

4. Strawberry, April 2, 1863
5. Aurora, April 7, 1863
6. Aurora, April 9, 1863
7. Aurora, April 12, 1863

I have just recd. your letter of the 7th. I don't know why it should have been so long on the road. Howard complains that your letters to him don't come by Pony and he sent you in his some pony stamps. He says don't put but one on a letter — that it will come just as fast with one as with two.

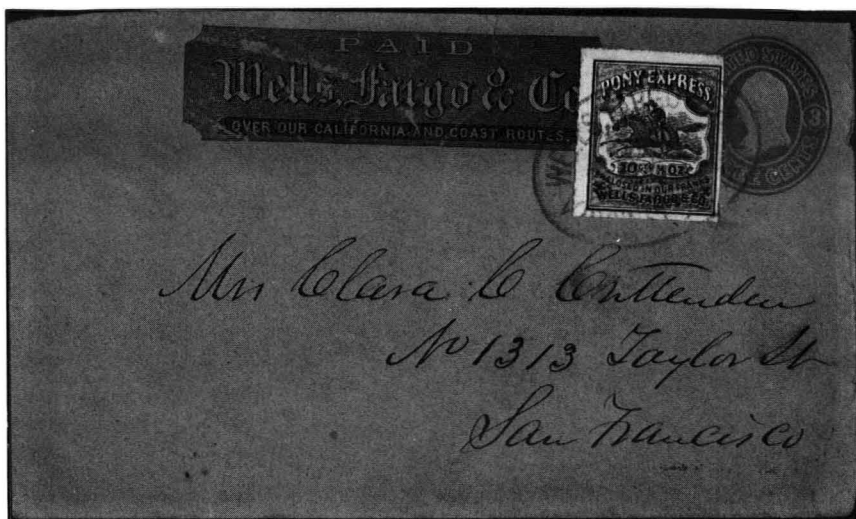


Figure 7. A pony from Virginia City with a 10c stamp.

- 8. Aurora, April 14, 1863
- 9. Virginia City, Sept. 23, 1863

She and Mr. Huston left for San Francisco this morning in the stage and arrive before — no — at the same time with this letter. The pony by which I will send this leaves at 3 o'clock P.M. and overtakes the stage that left about daylight.

- 10. Virginia City, Sept. 25, 1863
- 11. Virginia City, Sept. 27, 1863
- 12. Sacramento, Feb. 22, 1864
(Figure 8)

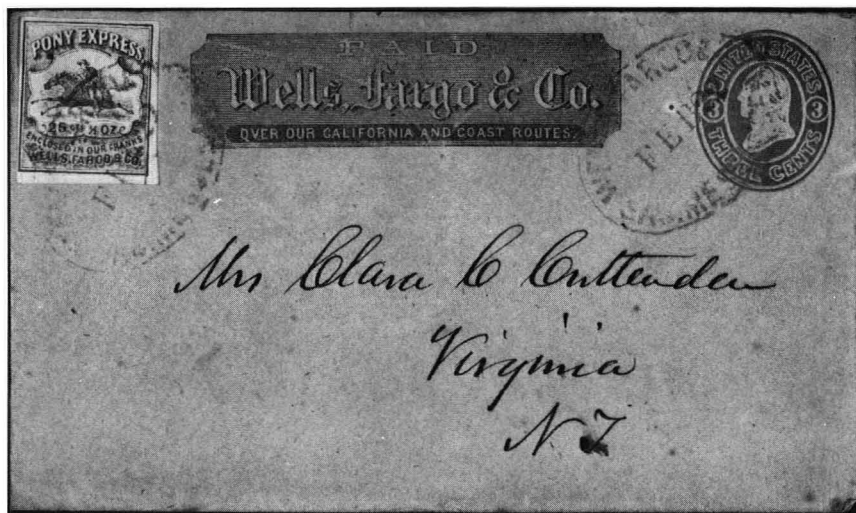


Figure 8. Sacramento to Virginia City with a 25c blue stamp.

25 cent Red

- 13. Virginia City, July 1, 1864
- 14. Virginia City, July 5, 1864
- 15. Virginia City, July 9, 1864
(Figure 9)
- 16. Virginia City, July 12, 1864

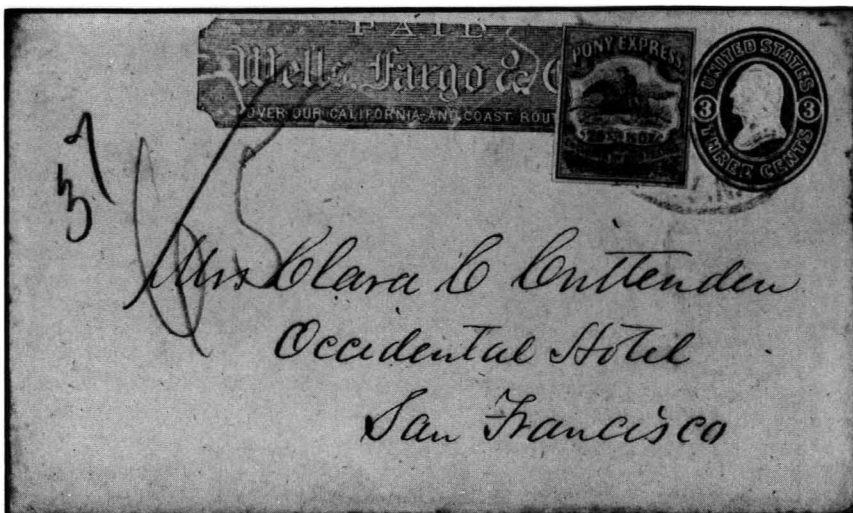


Figure 9. Virginia City to San Francisco with a 25c red stamp.

17. Virginia City, July 13, 1864

18. Virginia City, July 14, 1864
(Figure 10)

I enclose you a couple of letters rec'd this morning — one from Churchill & one from Mrs. Bullock. The former you will no doubt be rejoiced to have as it shows you that on the 16th of June Churchill was well. I can't imagine how we are to write him . . . When you have read those letters burn them. They won't do to throw about . . . All well here, Mr. V. W. [son-in-law Van Wyck] at work again this morning on 4000 ounces from the Savage.

The enclosed letter from Churchill Crittenden, who was in the Confederate Army, is datelined "Bolivar County, Miss./ June 16, 1864." It entered the Union mails at Cairo, Illinois, on June 23. He says: "Taylor starts for the Miss River to carry letters and by his hurry I am compelled to shorten my letter. I cannot tell you how to direct your reply. The best and surest and shortest way is via Baltimore. I saw your note to Aunt Mary Jolliffe dated Dec. 10, 1863 and this is the last I have heard from home by all routes."

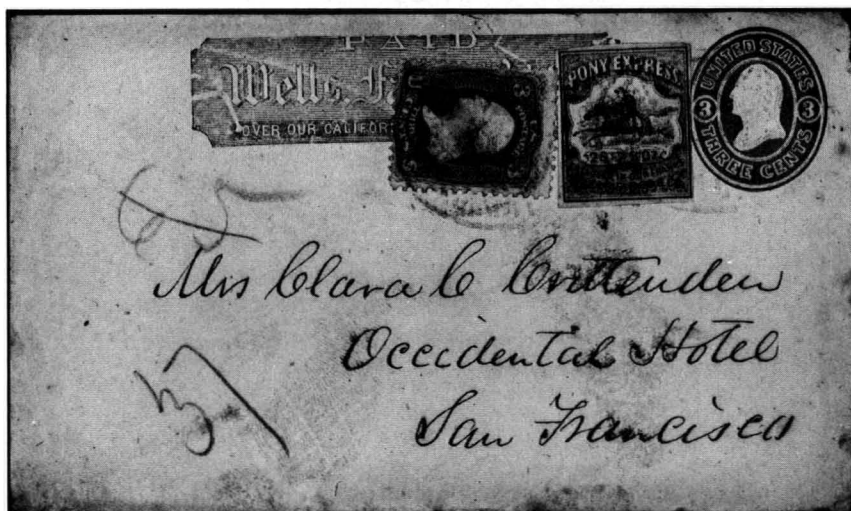


Figure 10. Double weight cover enclosing letter from Confederacy, bootlegged north.

19. Virginia City, July 17, 1864
20. Virginia City, Jan. 18, 1865
21. Virginia City, Jan. 19, 1865
22. Virginia City, Jan. 20, 1865
23. Virginia City, Feb. 12, 1865
24. Virginia City, Feb. 17, 1865
25. Virginia City, Feb. 18, 1865
26. Virginia City, Feb. 22, 1865

I still have not time to write to you at length as I hoped to do today — for they have changed the hour of starting the pony to 1 o'clock and it now wants but a few minutes of that time.

27. Virginia City, Feb. 23, 1865
28. Virginia City, Feb. 26, 1865
29. Virginia City, Feb. 28, 1865
30. Virginia City, March 2, 1865
(Figure 11)

This is apparently the last day of use of the Virginia City pony, since a letter datelined the next day, carried by the regular Wells Fargo Express, says: "The pony is stopped so hereafter your letters will not reach you for 2 or 3 days after they are written."

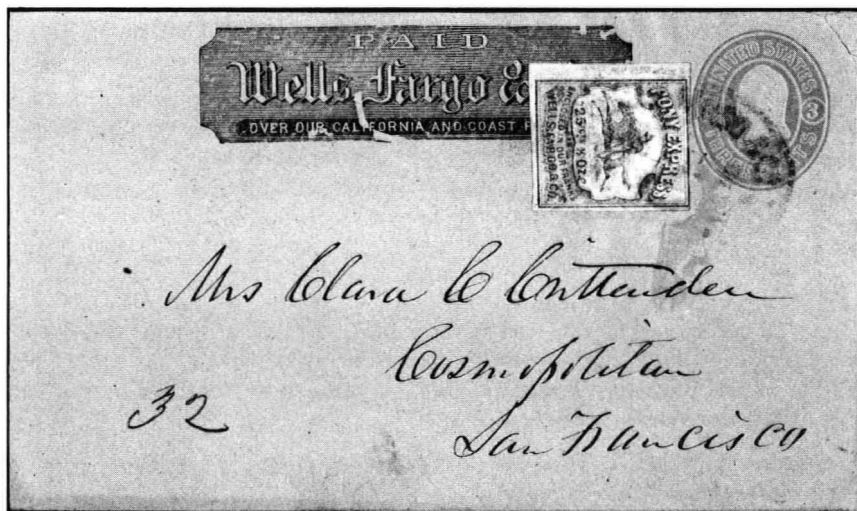


Figure 11. The last day of use of the Virginia City Pony, dated March 2, 1865.

CSA TO USA COVERS

Many of these letters refer to smuggling mail from relatives in the Confederate Army to the family back home. One example has already been mentioned (see note under Virginia Pony Express cover #18).

It is somewhat frustrating to deal with this group for two reasons. First, someone who was ignorant of their significance has separated many of the letters from their covers. The covers have apparently been sold separately, no doubt at a small fraction of their true value, since the covers alone show normal transmission from one northern town to another. Only the accompanying letters will verify that they in fact originated in the Confederate States and were smuggled into the north, where they entered the mail. Second, the letters themselves are frequently very cryptic regarding the routes which were used to take them across the lines.

The first chronologically is not across the lines, but describes the flight of General Albert Sidney Johnston from California to the Confederacy. It is datelined "Los Angeles June 21st

(1861) and is addressed to A. P. Crittenden in San Francisco. The writer is "Billie Jones" (William Marlborough Jones), Crittenden's brother-in-law:

We arrived here safe and all right last night after nine o'clock, and found only two of Gen. Johnston's party still here, they were waiting for the boat only and left this morning. By hard work and some of the tallest kind of bargaining you ever heard of I have succeeded in getting an outfit and will leave here tomorrow morning at five or six o'clock and join the main party at Rains Rancho del Chino, provided they have determined not to wait for us, and have gone on to-day. They will only have a day's start on us, so we will be able to overtake them in a few days.

Gen. Johnston left here last Monday, to wait for the party at Warners ranch, 150 miles ahead I believe. From the reports from San Francisco he got uneasy and thought it was best to get off himself as soon as possible. There will not be more than forty or fifty men all total in the party, probably not forty, no one seems to know exactly how many are in camp at Rains.

Dr. Sornell and myself mess together — our mules, wagon, provisions etc. have cost us something over six hundred dollars, more than I expected however I will have enough left to carry me through and we will be able to sell our mules etc. in Texas for something. If there are any more that you know are going over, advise them by all means to buy a light wagon in San Francisco, and everything else they want except mules, for they stick it on like the devil down here

The next is from Alexander Jones, brother of Billie and Clara Crittenden, to whom it is addressed. It is datelined "Headquarters Rio Grande Military District/Fort Brown June 22nd 1861" (Texas):

I must write to you now . . . though I believe there is but a slight chance of the blockade of the Southern Ports by that old abolitionist fool and humbug [Lincoln]. We have not had a paper mail from New Orleans for a month, as only letters for this part of the world are now brought by the tedious slow overland mail on horseback If this ever reaches you, do write me at once in reply . . . Even if you have to send your letter to me through Mexico to Matamoros. In case you cannot send me a letter by a more secure rout, direct to the care of Henrique Schreck, or Don Henrique Serechi Merchante, Matamoros, Mexico

I am yet in the Garrison at this Post as surgeon of one of the companies of State troupes . . . Capt. Powers commanding one of the comp's [is] here. He was with Walker the trip before the last, and is a gallant gentleman. He is also anxious to get off to Virginia. There is about a dozen Nicaraguans in this command

The next, from Billie Jones, contains an important contemporary description of Texas troops driving federal garrisons from Arizona and continues the saga of General Johnston's flight to the South. It is datelined "Mesilla Arizona/August 9th 1861" (where is the cover?) and is addressed to his sister, Clara:

An express leaves here tomorrow for Tucson, with the probability of going on still farther, maybe to Fort Yuma, if so, this letter I am about to write will reach you

We arrived at this place a week ago today, and with some fear of being arrested by the U.S. authorities, camped about five miles off. Our fear of being arrested was caused by an Express which was sent off, we found out the day before we left Tucson, saying who we were and where we were bound and advising our arrest. As there were seven or eight hundred of U.S. troops stationed at Fort Fillmore only a few miles from this place we should of course, have stood no chance, could they get at us. You can't imagine our relief when, the morning after we arrived a company of mounted rugged Texans came riding up to camp and informed us that Col. Baylor with a force of three hundred Texans had whipped the Federal forces eight hundred strong, taking the whole of them prisoners, Fort Fillmore, and thousands of dollars worth of ammunition, arms, provisions, etc. . . .

Col. Baylor heard that Lieuts Lord and Moore [Union] were coming from Fort Buchanan, the other side of Tucson. So our party determined to stay and help whip them. Lord and Moore had about three hundred men, Col. Baylor gave Gen. Johnston command, he had made every arrangement to surprise them, and would have taken every one of them without losing twenty men, but somehow or other, though we had forty spies on the road, to

prevent any communication, they found out Fillmore was taken and that we were waiting for them, burnt their wagons, and destroyed all they could, spiking their cannon and struck across the mountains. . . .

We had glorious news last night, the victory at Manassas Va. I fear they will make peace before I get there.

In early 1862 Crittenden tried to remove his sons to Europe to prevent their joining the Confederate Army. They (Churchill and James) sailed from San Francisco on a steamer, crossed Panama, and were on their way to New York when the steamer stopped at Havana. From there (datelined "Habana March 29th 1862"), James wrote his mother giving her the dreaded news that they had both jumped ship and intended to run the blockade into the Confederacy to join the army:

Knowing our destination to have been Europe the heading of this letter must greatly surprise you. In my letter to father the reasons for this change are fully set forth. . . .

Do not let our being present in this conflict give you too great uneasiness. . . . We must do our duty and trust to God for the rest. If it is his will that we should die in battling for Southern freedom we should humbly bow to his decree as we ought to do were we on the bed of death with our friends around us. . . .

In a letter from Grand Junction, Tennessee, dated April 13, 1862, James described to his parents the manner in which he had run the blockade:

On the 4th of April I parted with brother Churchill in Havana and set sail in the schooner Surprise, Capt. Wilson, to run the blockade. On the 6th the Federal war steamer Chuyler of eight thirty-two's boarded while some thirty miles from Cuba. Finding our papers all right for Matamoros he warned us to keep off the coast of the Southern States and well to the South of our line. On the evening of the 8th we anchored off Berwick's Bay just in time to escape being driven to sea by a strong North Wester. Soon after sunrise next morning the man at the mast head described a U.S. war steamer running down upon us from the mouth of Berwick bay. As we had both anchors and many fathom of chain out the enemy got fairly well within range before we got fully under way. She then commenced and continued to shell and shoot at us for more than two hours during which time she chased us. . . . The enemy finally got aground of the S.E. part of Point au Fer. . . . Sailing inside of Ship Island Shoal we ran for Grand Caillow and were fortunately seen by a pilot who came to us and piloted us in. . . . I came by stage and railway to New Orleans. . . . I left New Orleans yesterday morning and reached here today. This place is 42 miles west of Corinth where the army is posted. . . . I hope to be with it in a few hours. . . .

. . . I forgot to tell you why Churchill and I separated in Havana. We had been in Havana twelve days trying to buy a schooner to go to Matamoros or to get passage in a steamer to the same place. Several good chances of running the blockade had offered. Gen. Higley was unwilling to take the chance of running the blockade. . . . I and another gentleman determined to risk [it]. . . . Churchill preferred staying with Gen. Higley and the other members of the party and going by way of Matamoros. I regretted to part with brother but was glad he remained because going by Matamoros is the only safe way. . . .

On July 5, 1862, James wrote his mother in San Francisco from Richmond:

A friend assures me that this letter has many chances of reaching you without being seized. . . . To begin — Churchill and I have both arrived safely in the Confederate States. Churchill entered the Rio Grande in a schooner which he, Higley and Col. Greenfell, an English Officer, had purchased and freighted. He crossed Texas in a stage and reached the river Sabine in safety. He was captured by a Federal cruiser but was released when they discovered that he was a citizen travelling on private mercantile business. So he owed his safety to the fact of his having charge of the ship and cargo which the three had purchased. In crossing the Mississippi in an open boat he was chased by a Federal Gunboat which fired several shots at the boat. He made a very narrow escape for one of the shells burst very close by the little skiff in which he was. After passing that river brother came on to Richmond. . . .

The letter then goes on to describe the Battle of Mechanicsville, where he was wounded twice. James's next letter to his parents is datelined "Head Quarters of 5th & 6th/Brigades near Rich., July 21, 1862". He reports on many family members in the South, and com-

ments on getting mail through the lines:

Some letters from friends have reached me, so I know of home Send your letters as you sent yours of May 20th, but send no names, letters may be stopped, and names are bad things. I shall be able to send letters once or twice in two months I found out the way at once as I knew your anxiety to hear from your disobedient sons, who came here when told to go to Europe Keep Howard at home, he is one too many to come unless with the family, take him to Europe

A letter from Alex Jones at Fort Brown, Texas, dated October 10, 1862, speaks of the difficulty of getting mail to California and commenting on his estrangement from his father, Rev. Alexander Jones, a New England clergyman:

I was pleasantly surprised two days ago by receiving a letter from you dated June 30th present year. I had about given up hearing from all dear to me in California for a year or more, for I have written frequently to you, sending each letter in some different way, or by some different route. I was satisfied that my letters had reached you, and that yours in reply had been lost or opened and thrown aside. As both Gov'm'ts detain all letters containing political matter, I was careful to write only of family and business matters I will address this under cover to Col. A. J. Grayson as you direct, and have a wealthy House (Merchantile) in Matamoros to enclose it to a branch of their House at Colima, Mexico, where the Pacific Steamers stop. My next I shall address under cover to Mr. J. F. Schleiden, Mazatlan, and have the above Matamoros House enclose it

From Father I have not heard for over a year. The last I heard of him was in a letter from Joseph, in which Joe wrote that he had seen an address of Father's in the New York Times, in which he stated he hoped the Union would be preserved even if the Stars and Stripes waved over the dead bodies of his six sons — or some such stuff

Address your letter to me at this place under cover to J. San Roman and Co., Matamoros, Mexico, and if you can, send it through Mexican Post on the Pacific.

On November 14, 1862, Billie Jones began a long letter to his niece, "Nannie" (Annie Churchill Crittenden). The first part of it was datelined Jackson, Mississippi. It was completed on January 14, 1863, at Vicksburg:

Your letter has been near five months reaching me. I do not know if this will ever reach you. I do not know even where I may, or if I shall ever be able, to send it. But I write, so should I have an opportunity I may not be unprepared, as I have twice before

I was in the battle of Belmonte [Missouri] but escaped unhurt. I went over on my own hook as a volunteer, and got reprimanded next day for deserting my post After the evacuation of Columbus Ky. without a fight, I was at Island 10 for a short time, but was ordered on to Richmond on business, sometime before the evacuation of that place

I saw, while in Corinth Genl Johnston and had a few minutes conversation with him. It was the last time I saw one of the noblest characters God ever made [Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston was killed at the Battle of Shiloh]

Vicksburg Jan. 14 1863. Two months ago dear Nannie I commenced this letter, and have as yet had no opportunity to send it to you. I shall send it tomorrow by a party who will mail it probably somewhere North — it is like casting a sealed bottle upon the ocean. I hope favorable winds and tides will carry this to its destination

As regards myself, I have been ordered on duty at this place. Got here on the 25th of Dec. just as the enemy made their appearance. There was some severe fighting but the Yankees got scared and left, we are looking for them again daily, they will not give up their attempt so soon to take this place. They will never take it. Your father knows the peculiarities of its situation, the hills and bluffs are well fortified on all sides, and a large force has been concentrated here

Figures 12 and 13 show the front and back of a cover from Corpus Christi, Confederate States, to San Francisco. The letter is datelined "Corpus Christi Texas/June 20, 1863". It is from Alex Jones to his brother-in-law, A. P. Crittenden, and illustrates the handling of Confederate mail through Mexico to California. The letter states that it is enclosed under separate cover from Corpus Christi to a forwarding agent in Matamoros. The following analysis of how it traveled West depends upon the presumption that the handstamped "1" is

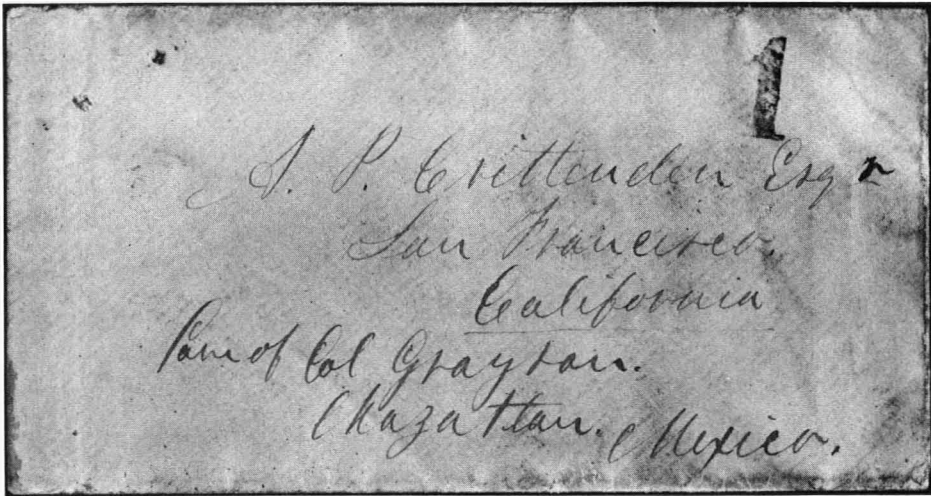


Figure 12. Front of a cover sent from Confederate Texas through Mexico, and to San Francisco.

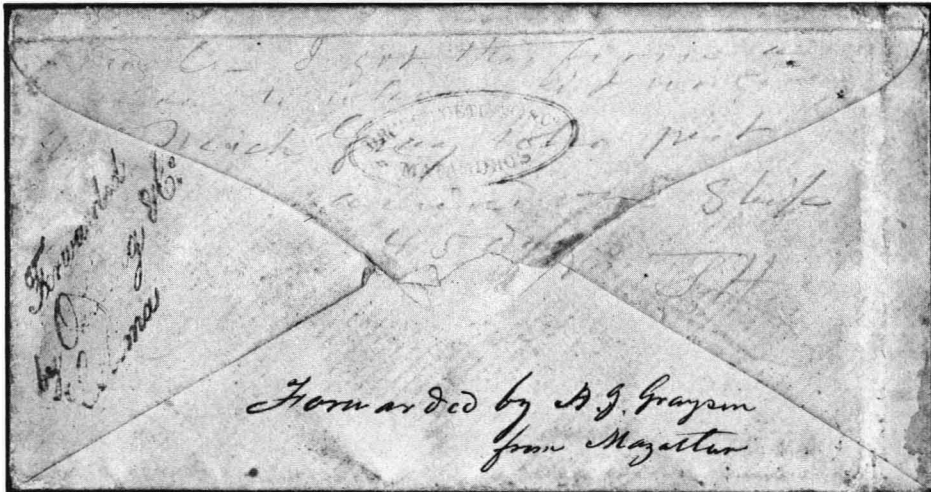


Figure 13. Back of the same cover, showing the Mexican forwarder's hand stamps.

a Mexican rating mark. Carried privately from Matamoros to the forwarding agents office in Colima, it was there apparently placed in the Mexico Mails (there is no townmark, but a "1" rating mark) where it was picked up by Col. Grayson. Grayson delivered it to an individual on a ship bound for San Francisco. From there it was handed to a trusted local resident, who conveyed it to Crittenden. The hand written note on the back flap says "Dear C — I got this from a man to whom it was given by Mich(?) Gray who just arrived on Ship 45 days — S.H.".

The letter says:

It has been several months since I have heard from you. I fear Col. Langstrom's leaving Monterey for Europe is the cause of it, & that the same cause may prevent your receiving my letters. I shall send this under cover to Droege Oetting & Co. Matamoros, to be forwarded, & hope it will reach you. At present I think you had better get Col. Grayson at Mazatlan to forward your letters to me through Droege Oetting & Co. Matamoros.

Billie Jones suffered through the seige and fall of Vicksburg. In a letter datelined "V Burg July 7th 1863" he reports to the family on the experience:

I owe this opportunity of writing to you to one of the most terrible blows that the Con-

federacy has yet received — the fall of Vicksburg. Lt. Gen. Pemberton commanding our forces surrendered on the 4th of this month after struggling for near fifty days against most fearful odds, and at last from want of provisions was compelled to succumb a more gallant and brave army — officers and men — that there has ever been known — quarter rations and mule meat we willingly accepted as long as our Gen's thought there was a chance of relief. It is all over now, sad, sad, sorrowful day that we were compelled to give up after a long and determined resistance . . . Gen. McPherson (Lt. in S.F.) has charge of all, is in command here, it is through the kind offer from him to send this in one of his letters, that I with feeling too it will reach its destination safely.

I rarely ever hear of an opportunity [to send mail], and am then fearful of injuring Mr. C. in some way. I have heard such accts from S.F. that I can't but fear that letters from the South would but if found . . .

A letter from Churchill datelined "Grenada, Miss./Yallabusha County/April 21st 1864" implies that mail can be smuggled through Baltimore:

In my last I stated that I had obtained assistance through a lady in Maryland. This same will be returned by my friend as soon as possible . . .

A letter from Alexander Jones in Galveston on June 10, 1864, again discusses problems with getting mail through the lines:

It seems useless to attempt again to get a letter to or from you, yet I am so anxious to hear from you all that I will again take the chance. I have written and sent letters to you by different persons and by various routes. The last I sent by a young man who had been living at Mazatlan, and expected to go on to California and back . . . Neither can I get a letter from Virginia, though I have sent several letters through to Richmond by private courier . . .

Bob Mills is at Havana where he has been for two years. He has made much money sending in blockade runners with government stores, and running out cotton. I shall enclose this to him, to have it forwarded. In reply you had better enclose it to him also . . . I shall send this by English Steam blockade runner to Havana. She is very fast, and being small not easily seen. This will be her second trip from here . . .

MISCELLANEOUS COVERS

The balance of the Frajola accumulation is quickly summarized. There are 34 covers from California to Churchill while he was in school in Indiana prior to the war. Each has a perforated 10 cent 1857 stamp. In addition, there are some 200 letters from Howard to the U.S. while he was in Europe. These were written from England, France and Saxony, and are dated from 1862 to 1867.

DEATH OF A. P. CRITTENDEN

Perhaps the most bizarre chapter in this remarkable story concerns the death of Alexander Parker Crittenden in 1870. As reported earlier, he was shot by a "notorious" lady on a ferry boat before numerous witnesses. Arrested, she was nevertheless acquitted.

A. P.'s son, Parker, reported the incident to his sister, Nannie, in a letter dated November 4, 1870:

Ma and Carrie arrived home last night and Tom & myself went up to San Antonio to meet them. We went over on the 4 PM boat. Pa went over on the next boat and Mrs. Fair went over on the same boat, in disguise and without Pa's knowledge. Pa came off the boat and met us on the wharf and escorted Ma on board. Mrs. Fair watched where Pa sat down and waited until I went down to attend to the baggage, when she walked up to Pa and saying something drew a pistol and shot him in the right side. He sat still a minute as if stunned and then slid down upon the deck insensible.

When we reached San Francisco we put Pa in a wagon on a mattress and took him home, and just as he arrived there he became conscious. He has been lying in a very critical condition up to the present time.

Pa has recognized us all but cannot converse. That woman was arrested on the boat and acknowledged having shot him. She is now in safe keeping in the City prison. Crittenden died the next day, November 5.