

Union Occupation Mail

From Occupation Post Offices in the South during the American Civil War

This exhibit tells the story of U.S. mail from Union occupation post offices in southern towns during the Civil War. The war began on April 12, 1861 and ended in different places in the South between April 9 and June 2, 1865 when various Confederate armies surrendered. During the war, as Federal troops moved into the South and occupied southern towns, they sometimes reopened the post offices in order to provide mail service for the military. These offices are known as occupation post offices. Soldiers' mail was collected by company quartermasters and consolidated up the chain of command until it reached the post office. Occupation mail consists of covers with war dated postmarks from southern towns, but with U.S. franking and rates. The cover below dated June 16, 1864 with Norfolk, Va. postmark and 3¢ U.S. postage stamp, is an example.



U.S. DOMESTIC SINGLE POSTAGE RATES DURING THE CIVIL WAR*

Mail Type	Distance	Before July 1, 1863	After July 1, 1863
Regular Letters**	East of the Rockies	3¢/½ oz.	3¢/½ oz.
" "	Over the Rockies	10¢/½ oz.	3¢/½ oz.
Drop Letters**	Local	1¢ @	2¢/½ oz.
Unsealed Printed Matter**	n/a	1¢/3 oz.	2¢/3 sheets
Transient Newspapers**	n/a	1¢ @	2¢/4 oz.
Unpaid and Underpaid	n/a	1x Deficit	Penalty, 2x Deficit
Forwarding (free if to soldiers)	n/a	Fee Equal to Regular Postage	
Soldier's Letters (not officers)	n/a	Optional Postage Due to Addressee***	

* From occupied South

** Prepayment by stamps compulsory at original mailing, except soldiers' letters

*** Provided the envelope is properly certified by an officer