WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”
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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

The war between the Union and the Confederacy raged from 1861 until 1865. The impact of the war on the mails manifested itself in many ways. Besides establishing a new and separate postal service in the Confederacy and creating new issues of stamps for both sides, it affected the mail’s rates, routes and postal markings. The Union had a financial and industrial advantage over the Confederacy, and this affluence is visible through the window of their postal systems.

The focus of this presentation will be those postal markings, of which I will endeavor to show a sampling, many of which take the form of cancellations. The majority of these cancels were fashioned by the local postmasters in their individual post offices and not by the U.S. Post Office. This showed the attitude of many individuals as opposed to a mandate from the federal government. The cancels have been arranged by lowest denomination first, within each of the two issues that were available during the conflict; the 1857 issue and the 1861 issue.

The earliest usages of what could be termed “patriotic cancels” are found on late in the life of the 1857 issue, which were valid for postage until the autumn of 1861. The following are some examples of the cancels on the 1857 issue.
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

“34” in Center of Star in Circle
Ex Newbury

“34th Massachusetts Volunteers”
Hatfield, MA -
SE ST-C 5

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

Shield of Dots & Bars
Unlisted

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

SHIELD OF BARS
SE PS-O 32

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WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

SHIELD OF DOTS & BARS

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WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

Shield of Bars

UNLISTED

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American Philatelic Society
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

SHIELD OF STARS & BARS
UNLISTED

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American Philatelic Society
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

SHIELD OF BARS
UNLISTED

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American Philatelic Society
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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

FLAG IN CIRCLE
NAPERVILLE, IL
SE PT-F 20
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

FLAG WITH 5 STARS
WEST HAVEN, CT
SE PT-F 25
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

On December 20th, 1860 South Carolina was the first state to secede. On January 9th, 1861, Mississippi joined South Carolina and on the following day, Florida enlisted and a day later, Alabama seceded. Others followed and by May 20th, 1861, North Carolina became the last state to join the new Confederacy, totaling eleven states. Although Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri remained slave states, they stayed in the Union.
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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

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American Philatelic Society
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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

Backwards “US” in Hollow 5 Point Star
Surrounded by “UNION”
Three Rivers, MI
SE ST-C 17
As you can see from this cancel, the stamp was used on April 18th 1861; over 3 months after Alabama seceded. The Union saw that the Confederate government was selling Union issued stamps and hence helping to fund the war with their own accountable paper. So, the Union demonetized the 1857 stamps and issued new stamps in the fall of 1861.

However, people continued to use the demonetized stamps and these usages are very desirable.
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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

“MOBILE ALA” CONFEDERATE USE
APRIL 18TH, 1861
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

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“OLD STAMPS / NOT RECOGNIZED”
PHILADELPHIA, PA (RESTORED AND REPAIRED)
SE PM-OS 1

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The stamps of the 1861 issue show far more patriotic cancels than the 1857 issue, since those stamps availability in the post offices extended from late 1861 until 1869. Here are some examples on the 1 cent stamp of 1861.
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“OLD STAMPS / NOT RECOGNIZED”

Philadelphia, PA
SE PM-OS 1

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

BLUE “OLD STAMPS / Not Recognized”
CHICAGO, IL
SE PM-OS 2
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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

“UNION” & FLAG
HEALDSBURG, CA
SE PT-F 33

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”
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SHIELD - SOLID TOP
CAMBRIDGE, MA
SE PS-S 15

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

SHIELD - OPEN TOP
NEW YORK
SE PS-O 30
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

SHIELD - SOLID TOP
CAMDEN, NJ
SE PS-S 9

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

EAGLE
CAMBRIDGE, MA
SE PA-B23

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

Shield
Waterbury, CT
Rohloff Q-3

Shield
Waterbury, CT
Rohloff Q-3

Negative “PAID” in Shield
Dedham, MA
SE PM-PE 4

Negative “PAID” in Shield
Dedham, MA
SE PS-C 13

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WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

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**Shield**
Unlisted

**Shield with Star**
Williston, VT
SE PS-ST 52

**Shield with “X”s**
Boston, MA
SE PS-ST 27

**Shield with Center Star**
Madalin, NY
SE PS-C 9

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American Philatelic Society
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

Shield in Heart
Bridgeport, CT
SE PH-H 60

Shield with Stars
Sacramento, CA
SE PS-FC 52

“US” in Shield in Circle
SE PT-C 14

Shield in Geared Circle
South Lancaster, PA
SE PS-FC 9

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American Philatelic Society
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

SHIELD
NEW YORK
SE PS-O 8

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American Philatelic Society
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

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WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

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WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

FLAG
HEALDSBURG, CA
SE PT-F 33

FLAG IN CIRCLE
SE PT-F 21

FLAG
WEST POINT, GA
UNLISTED

FLAG
CARTHAGE, IL
SE PT-F 11

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

SOLDIER’S HEAD
NEW YORK
SE PH-F 73

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

Eagle with Shield
Waterbury, CT
Rohloff A-7

Eagle with Small Shield on Branch
Corry, PA
SE PT-E 4

Eagle Atop “US”
Albany, NY
SE PT-E 12

Eagle on Branch
Woonsocket Falls, RI
SE PT-E 8
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

EAGLE WITH SHIELD
Cambridge, MA
SE PT-E 5

EAGLE WITH SHIELD
Cambridge, MA
SE PT-E 7

EAGLE
Cambridge, MA
UNLISTED

EAGLE
Cambridge, MA
SE PA-B 23A

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ELABORATE EAGLE WITH TOWN SLUG OF “KINGSESSING PA”
KINGSESSING, PA - THIS BLANK WAS AVAILABLE TO MANY TOWNS
SE PM-TF 15

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WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

LARGE “UNION” IN SHIELD
NEW YORK
SE PT-UN 4
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

BLUE “US” IN CIRCLE
ATLANTA, GA
UNLISTED

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BLUE “US” IN CIRCLE
ATLANTA, GA
SE PT-US 57

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

“US” SHIELD WITH STARS
BOSTON, MA
SE PT-C 9

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

“US” IN NEGATIVE SHIELD
IN CIRCLE OF NEGATIVE STARS
ALBANY, NY
SE PT-C 18

“US” IN NEGATIVE CIRCLE
IN CIRCLE OF NEGATIVE STARS
ALBANY, NY
SE PT-C 19
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

“US” IN CIRCLE
KEESEVILLE, NY
SE PT-US 61

“USA”
NEW YORK
SE PT-USA 5A
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

NEGATIVE “USA” IN CIRCLE WITH NEGATIVE STARS
ALBANY, NY
SE PT-USA 1

“US” IN SEGMENTED FRAME
PUTNAM, CT
SE PT-C 23
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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

“PAID” SHIELD WITH STARS & STRIPES
DEDHAM, MA
SE PM-PE 4
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

BLUE SHIELD
Memphis, TN
SE PS-FC 20

SHIELD WITH STARS & BARS
Sacramento, CA
SE PS-ST 43

BLUE SHIELD IN CIRCLE
Chicago, IL
SE PS-FC 12

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WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

SHEILD WITH STARS AND BARS
DAYTON, OH
SE PS-ST 12

BLUE SHEILD WITH STARS AND BARS
SACRAMENTO, CA
SE PS-ST 43
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

SOLDIER’S HEAD
NEW YORK FOREIGN MAIL
SE PH-F 72

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

CANNON
NEWCASTLE, PA
SE PO-Ms 5

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BLUE UNION SOLDIER’S CAP
WORCESTER, MA
SE PO-Ht 9

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

Cavalry Boot in Circle
Hopkinton, MA
SE PO-Bt 5

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

“A.J.” (Andrew Johnson) in Tombstone with Skull & Crossbones
Waterbury, CT
Rohloff R-5

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”
WHEN THE MAIL GOES TO WAR

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BLUE MAN THUMBING NOSE
SE PH-F 3

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“A Nation at War: Contrasting Postal Systems”

Thank You!