

Civil War Envelopes of Ohio

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Old envelopes and postcards are a source of genealogical information.¹ Ohio residents served in the military during the Civil War and surviving envelopes from these years let us glimpse their lives and handwriting. This article presents seven envelopes—five involving soldiers and two others—sent to or from Ohio during the Civil War, with basic genealogical data on the sender and recipient (when available). As with any source of genealogical information, old envelopes must be studied in combination with other sources before reaching any conclusion. While home delivery in large cities began in 1863, envelopes in rural areas were addressed to the nearest post office until after 1900.²

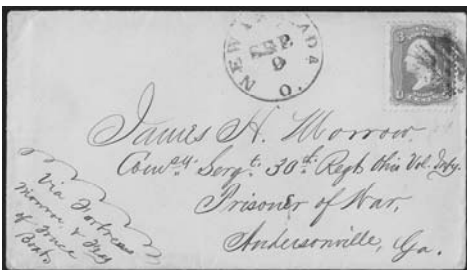


Figure 1. New Philadelphia, Ohio to prison camp at Andersonville, Georgia via Fortress Monroe, Virginia, circa 1864.

James H. Morrow, a commissary sergeant of the 30th Ohio Infantry and prisoner of war at Andersonville, Georgia, received an envelope from New Philadelphia, Ohio (Figure 1). A James Morrow is in New Philadelphia in the 1860 U.S. census, and a James H. Morrow, now married, is in New Philadelphia in the 1870 U.S. census.³ A James H. Morrow served as a sergeant and later commissary sergeant with the 30th Ohio Infantry.⁴ The 30th Ohio took part in the siege of Jackson, Mississippi in mid-July 1863 and James Morrow was captured by Confederate cavalry near Jackson on July 22, 1863.⁵ He was a prisoner of war at Belle Island, near Richmond, Virginia; Andersonville, Savannah, and Millen, Georgia; Mobile, Alabama; and then returned to Richmond, where he escaped.⁶ The envelope, which passed through a Union-Confederate exchange point near Fortress Monroe, Virginia,⁷ may have been sent by a family member. This envelope and Figures 2 and 6 are from a philatelic auction catalog collection from which Philgen.org has permission to use photographs.⁸

Mr. E. Rockhold of Bainbridge, Ohio received an envelope from “Elijah Rockhold Jr” at Prison Number 3 in Danville, Virginia that was postmarked in Old Point Comfort, Virginia in 1864 (Figure 2). An Elijah Rockhold, apparent son of Elijah Rockhold, is in Bainbridge in the 1860 U.S. census.⁹ An Elijah Rockhold served as a private

and later corporal in the 89th Ohio Infantry.¹⁰ He was taken prisoner, possibly in northwest Georgia in September 1863 at the Battle of Chickamauga, where many soldiers of the 89th



Figure 2. “Prisoners letter” from Danville, Virginia to Bainbridge, Ohio via Old Point Comfort, Virginia, 1864.

Ohio were captured.¹¹ He survived the war and is in Bainbridge in the 1870 and 1890 U.S. censuses.¹² This envelope appears to have been sent by a son to his father.

Mrs. Elmira V. Heskett of Martinsburg, Ohio received an envelope postmarked in Louisville, Kentucky in November 1861 (Figure 3). An Elmira V. (apparently Mrs.

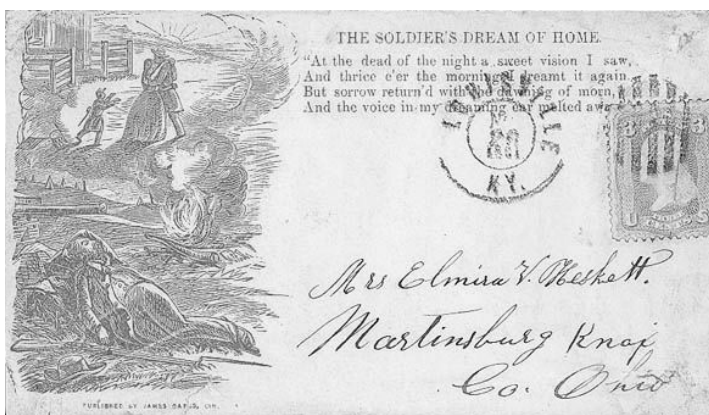


Figure 3. Louisville, Kentucky to Martinsburg, Ohio, 1861.

Benjamin F.) “Heskitt” is in “New Comerstown” (Newcomerstown, about forty miles east of Martinsburg) in the 1860 U.S. census, and an Elmira Heskett is in Martinsburg in the 1870 U.S. census.¹³ A Benjamin F. Heskett served as a captain in the 51st Ohio Infantry, and this regiment was in Louisville in November 1861.¹⁴ Benjamin F. Heskett died on January 4, 1863 from wounds he received at the Battle of Stone's River.¹⁵ Elmira V. Heskett, his widow, is in the 1890 U.S. census.¹⁶ This envelope, which was probably sent by a husband to his wife, is illustrated and has a verse entitled “The Soldier's Dream of Home.” This envelope and Figures 4, 5, and 7 are from another philatelic auction catalog collection from which Philgen.org has permission to use photographs.¹⁷

Mrs. Annie K. Horney of South Charleston, Ohio received an envelope marked “Prisoners Letter,



Figure 4. “Prisoners Letter” envelope from Charleston, South Carolina to South Charleston, Ohio via Port Royal, South Carolina, 1864.

tree shows that Paris Horney was married to Anna Kearns.¹⁸ A Paris Horney served as a second and later first lieutenant with the 110th Ohio Infantry.¹⁹ He was captured on June 14, 1863 near Winchester, Virginia and died on November 7, 1864 while a prisoner of war in South Carolina.²⁰ This envelope, which passed through a Union-Confederate exchange point near Port Royal, South Carolina,²¹ was apparently sent by a husband to his wife.

Mr. B. Sells of Georgetown, Ohio received a “Prisoner of War” envelope postmarked in Old Point Comfort, Virginia (Figure 5). A Benjamin Sells and his apparent son David are in Georgetown in the 1860 U.S. census.²² A



Figure 5. “Prisoner of War” envelope from Danville, Virginia to Georgetown, Ohio via Old Point Comfort, Virginia, 1864.

David C. Sells served as a private and later as corporal with the 89th Ohio Infantry, the same regiment as Elijah Rockhold.²³ A David C. Sells of the 89th Ohio Infantry was taken prisoner and died

November 23, 1864 in Florence, South Carolina.²⁴ The auction catalog states that the envelope was mailed from Building Number 5 at the Danville, Virginia prison camp.²⁵ This envelope, which passed through the exchange point near Old Point Comfort,²⁶ was probably sent by a son to his father.



Figure 6. Austinburg, Ohio to Hopedale, Ohio, circa 1855.

Cornelia R. Cowles, is in Austinburg in the 1850 and 1860 U.S. censuses, and an online family tree shows that Mary Hooker, Cornelia Rachel, and Betsey Mix Cowles were sisters.²⁷ The text of the banner is partially hidden by the stamp, but another copy of the same envelope shows that it

Charleston, S.C.” that was postmarked in Port Royal, South Carolina in August 1864 (Figure 4). A Paris Horney and his apparent wife “Cynthia” are in Harmony Township (centered about six miles north of South Charleston) in the 1860 U.S. census, and an online family

reads “God Hath Made of One Blood All Nations of Men.”²⁸ Betsey M. Cowles was an active abolitionist,²⁹ and this envelope may have been sent to her by a member of her family.

While the majority of Ohioans voted for Abraham Lincoln, parts of southern Ohio were opposed to Lincoln’s policies.³⁰ Mr. Benn Pittman of Cincinnati, Ohio received an envelope from Sweetwater, Tennessee in April 1861 (Figure 7). Benn Pittman, born in England, is in Cincinnati in the 1870 U.S. census.³¹ He helped establish Pitman shorthand (or phonography) in the United States.³² The envelope has an illustration of the Confederate flag known as the “Stars and Bars,” which first appeared on March 5, 1861, that includes the names of Jefferson Davis, the Confederate States of America (C.S.A.) President, and Alexander Stephens, C.S.A. Vice President.³³ The author has no information regarding whether Benn Pittman favored the cause of the South.

This article shows how postal history documents our ancestors’ wartime experience. Four other Civil War envelopes were shown in an earlier issue of *Ohio Genealogy News*.³⁴ Many more envelope and postcard photographs involving the military service, political and social interests, work, recreation, and immigrant origins of Ohio residents are available. Anyone interested in philatelic genealogy or in adding new envelopes and postcards to Philgen.org is encouraged to contact the author at jim@philgen.org.



Figure 7. Sweetwater, Tennessee to Cincinnati, Ohio, 1861.

The author thanks Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries and Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions for the use of photographs, the genealogists who posted online family trees and responded to email and message board queries, and Lisa Birsinger for database and website support.

NOTES

¹ Reprints of articles on philatelic genealogy that use old envelopes and postcards as a genealogical source are viewable on Philgen.org (<http://philgen.org>, look in the Main Menu for a list that begins with *American Ancestors*).

² National Postal Museum, “Bringing the World Home,” (<http://arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=4&cmd=2&eid=370>, accessed January 2, 2011). David M. Henkin, *The Postal Age, The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-century America* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 9. James H. and Donald J. Bruns, *Reaching Rural America: The Evolution of Rural Free Delivery* (Washington, D.C.: National Postal Museum, 1998), p. 21.

³ Figure 1 is from Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 988, Lot 169. 1860 U.S. census, New Philadelphia Post Office, Goshen Township, Tuscarawas County, Ohio, p. 190 (written), National Archives and Records Administration [hereafter

NARA] series M653, roll 1,042. 1870 U.S. census, New Philadelphia, Goshen Township, Tuscarawas County, Ohio, p. 53 (written), NARA series M593, roll 1,273. His wife's first name, Priscilla, also appears in General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934, James H. Morrow, Ohio, NARA series T288, roll 338. Viewed on Ancestry.com.

⁴ National Park Service [hereafter NPS], Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System [hereafter CWSSS], (<http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/soldiers.cfm>, accessed January 21, 2011), Soldiers, James H. Morrow, 30th Ohio Infantry. 1890 U.S. census, Veterans Schedules, Goshen Township, Tuscarawas County, Ohio, ED 296, p. 3, NARA series M123, roll 74; James Morrow is shown incorrectly as a private in the 30th Ohio Infantry. Viewed on Ancestry.com.

⁵ NPS, CWSSS, Regiments, 30th Ohio Infantry. Historical Data Systems, compiler, "U.S. Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles" [hereafter USCWSRP], James H. Morrow, served Ohio. Viewed on Ancestry.com.

⁶ Jon Baker, "Soldiers went on the lam during Civil War," *The [Dover-New Philadelphia, Ohio] Times-Reporter* (viewed online at www.timesreporter.com/local_news/x1720635364/Soldiers-went-on-the-lam-during-Civil-War, accessed January 21, 2011).

⁷ Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries [hereafter Robert A. Siegel] (www.siegelauctions.com, accessed January 21, 2011), click on "Past Sales," and then "Sale Listings," select Sale 988, select "View the Catalog as a pdf file," and scroll to "Flag-of-Truce Mail," pp. 89-90 (90 and 91 of 305).

⁸ Robert A. Siegel. Civil War postal history is featured in the catalogs for Sales 795, 801, 815, 822, 823, 834, 840, 841, 845, 850, 860, 870, 874, 875, 907, 933, 950, 954, 966, 980, 981, 988, and 1,002.

⁹ Figure 2 is from Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 988, Lot 138. 1860 U.S. census, Bainbridge, Paxton Township, Ross County, Ohio, p. 7 (written), NARA series M653, roll 1,031. Viewed on Ancestry.com.

¹⁰ NPS, CWSSS, Soldiers, Elijah Rockhold, Jr, 89th Ohio Infantry.

¹¹ USCWSRP, Elijah Rockhold Jr, served Ohio. Viewed on Ancestry.com. NPS, CWSSS, Regiments, 89th Ohio Infantry.

¹² 1870 U.S. census, Paxton Township, Ross County, Ohio, p. 44 (written), NARA series M593, roll 1,263. 1890 U.S. census, Veterans Schedules, Paxton Township, Ross County, Ohio, ED 175, p. 1, NARA series M123, roll 68. Viewed on Ancestry.com.

¹³ Figure 3 is from Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions, Sale 35, Lot 1744. 1860 U.S. census, New Comerstown, Tuscarawas County, Ohio, p. 55 (written), NARA series M653, roll 1,043. 1870 U.S. census, Martinsburg, Clay Township, Knox County, Ohio, p. 22 (written), NARA series M593, roll 1,229. Viewed on Ancestry.com.

¹⁴ NPS, CWSSS, Soldiers, Benjamin F Heskitt, Jr, 51st Ohio Infantry. NPS, CWSSS, Regiments, 51st Ohio Infantry.

¹⁵ N.N. Hill, Jr., *History of Knox County, Ohio, Its Past and Present* (Mount Vernon, Ohio: A.A. Graham & Co., 1881), p. 691. Viewed on Ancestry.com.

¹⁶ 1890 U.S. census, Veterans Schedules, Clay, Knox County, Ohio, ED 130, p. 1, NARA series M123, roll 70. Viewed on Ancestry.com.

¹⁷ Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions (www.rumseyauctions.com, accessed January 3, 2011). Civil War postal history appears in the catalogs for Sales 29, 32, 34 and 37.

¹⁸ Figure 4 is from Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions,

Sale 29, Lot 3892. 1860 U.S. census, Harmony, Clark County, Ohio, p. 74 (written), NARA series M653, roll 943. "Horney Family Tree," owner Rochelle Horney, (source citations include 1860 U.S. census and USCWSRP). Viewed on Ancestry.com.

¹⁹ USCWSRP, Paris Horney, 110th Ohio Infantry.

²⁰ *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), Series I, Vol. 27, Part 2, Number 387, pp. 60-61 (viewed online January 20, 2011 at <http://ehistory.osu.edu/osu/sources/recordview.cfm?content=/044/0061>). USCWSRP, Paris Horney, 110th Ohio Infantry. See Schuyler Rumsey, Sale 29, Lot 3892 for uncertainty in place of death.

²¹ Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions (web link shown in 16), Sale 29, Lot 3892. To locate this entry, select "Auctions" from the menu bar, scroll down to the correct sale, click on "View Catalog," and scroll in the "Table of Contents" to the appropriate range of lot numbers. For exchange point near Port Royal, South Carolina, see Robert A. Siegel (web link and directions in 7), scroll to "Flag-of-Truce Mail via Pocotaligo-Port Royal," p. 166 (167 of 305).

²² Figure 5 is from Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions, Sale 32, Lot 1338. 1860 U.S. census, Georgetown, Brown County, Ohio, pp. 8-9 (written), NARA series M653, roll 939. Viewed on Ancestry.com.

²³ NPS, CWSSS, Soldiers, David C Sells, 89th Ohio Infantry.

²⁴ NPS, CWSSS, Prisoners, Andersonville, David C Sells, Ohio.

²⁵ Schuyler Rumsey, Sale 32, Lot 1338.

²⁶ For exchange point near Old Point Comfort, Virginia, see Robert A. Siegel (same details as in 7).

²⁷ Figure 6 is from Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 958, Lot 538. 1850 U.S. census, Austinburg, Ashtabula County, Ohio, p. 400 (printed, verso), NARA series M432, roll 659. 1860 U.S. census, Austinburg, Ashtabula County, Ohio, p. 27 (written), NARA series M653, roll 932. Viewed on Ancestry.com.

²⁸ Robert A. Siegel, Sale 970, Lot 17.

²⁹ *Ohio: A Four-volume Reference Library on the History of a Great State* (Chicago, Illinois: Lewis Publishing Company, 1937), Vol. 4, p. 187. Viewed on Ancestry.com.

³⁰ Wikipedia, "Ohio in the American Civil War" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ohio_in_the_American_Civil_War, accessed January 21, 2011).

³¹ Figure 7 is from Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions, Sale 37, Lot 1650. 1870 U.S. census, Cincinnati Ward 17, Hamilton County, Ohio, p. 54 (written), NARA series M593, roll 1,215. Viewed on Ancestry.com.

³² Wikipedia, "Benjamin Pitman" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Pitman, accessed January 21, 2011).

³³ Wikipedia, "Flags of the Confederate States of America," (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flags_of_the_Confederate_States_of_America, accessed January 21, 2011).

³⁴ James R. Miller, "Philatelic Genealogy in Ohio: An Introduction," *Ohio Genealogy News* 41:1 (Spring 2010): 6-9, Figures 3-6. The four Civil War era envelopes were sent to Westly Clark of Montpelier, Evan Schooler of De Graff, Elias Simon of Van Buren, and Charles Wiswell of Cincinnati.