

1846-47

THE MEXICAN WAR

U.S. Steam-ship Alabama (War Department)

127 ton side-wheel steamer built at Brownsville, Penn. in 1838 and was acquired by the War Department as a transport. She was transferred to the Navy under the Act of 3 March 1849. Found unfit for naval purposes, she was sold at New Orleans in October 1849.



PAID

10



December 30, 1846. A letter from the commanding general at Washington, D.C. informing Capt. Robert Allen that his a/c for the last two quarters have been approved. Letter was directed to him at Monterey, Mexico "Via New Orleans".

January 1, 1847. Letter posted at Washington City at the 10¢ 1845 rate for a single letter conveyed over 300 miles.

New Orleans Picayune, February 2, 1847. At 1 o'clock this morning the U.S. steam-ship Alabama, Capt. Windle, arrived from Brazos Santiago which place she left on Sat. evening last, the 31st, making the run to the Balize in forty-eight and to the city in fifty-six hours - the quickest trip ever made.

February 12. The New Orleans office knew that Capt. Allen was no longer at Monterey and directed the letter to Tampico, a coastal Mexican city.

PT. ISABEL
FEB 21 1847

New Orleans Picayune. February 12. The steamship Alabama, Capt. Windle left last night with a large number of officers and passengers for Tampico.

February 21. Letter was forwarded from Tampico to Point Isabel, Texas.

1847

MEXICAN WAR

U.S. Sloop-of-War Preble

At the Bay of Callao, Peru

The sloop-of-war Preble was built at the Portsmouth Navy Yard, launched June 13, 1839. She had a varied career, off Labrador, in the Mediterranean and off the west coast of Africa before sailing in 1846 from New York for the Pacific. She arrived at Valparaiso Jan. 26, 1847, and was in Callao March 10 where this letter was written. She continued on to serve with the Pacific Squadron off the west coast for the remainder of the Mexican War.

March 10, 1847. Letter datelined at Callao, Peru was entrusted to Capt. Wheelwright, who carried the letter ex-post office ("by favor") to New York.



Forwarded



April 24. Capt. Wheelwright deposited the letter unpaid at New York, where it was subject to the 5¢ Act of 1845 rate, single letter not over 300 miles, New York to Springfield.

April 26. Letter was forwarded from Springfield to Cabotville, Mass. At Springfield a second 5¢ rate charge was added for the forwarding. The new 5¢ notation in pen was added to the 5¢ in the New York cds to total 10¢ due.

A poignant docket notes: Lieut. J. Lanman, received after the death of N.P.A. Lieut Lanman's letter expressed concern for the health of his friend Mr. N.P. Ames.

1847

THE MEXICAN WAR

S.S. James L. Day. Brazos Santiago to New Orleans

The postage rates for Mexican War letters are mostly found at the rates of 1845 for single letters over 300 miles at 10¢ due. Originally, mail from soldiers in the field was sent via Brazos and Point Isabel, Texas and Vera Cruz to New Orleans and was postmarked there. Later covers were postmarked at those three points as well as at Tampico, Mexico.

BRAZOS
MAY 29, 1847

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May 26, 1847. A letter headed at Brazos St. Jago (Santiago) written by 2nd Lieut. Josiah Chadbourne, 9th Regiment Infantry, No. 1 Army, Mexico.

May 29. Letter posted unpaid at Brazos. 10¢ over 300 miles rate due.



Shipping & Commercial List, N.Y. Arrived at New Orleans May 31, Steamer Jas. L. Day, Wood, Vera Cruz, Tampico and Brazos Santiago.

N.B.: Jas. L. Day had arrived at Vera Cruz on May 19 from New Orleans.

James L. Day, 414 ton wooden paddle steamer, built 1843 at New York. In 1861 she passed to Confederate control and became C.S.S. James L. Day, also known as Day. (Holdcamper List.)

1848

MEXICAN WAR

VERA CRUZ TO PROVIDENCE. R.I. VIA NEW ORLEANS

U.S. Steamship Massachusetts

This 765 ton, 178' wooden steamship was built in 1845 in the shipyard of Samuel Hall, Boston. As an auxiliary steam packet, she helped pioneer commercial steamer service between New York and Liverpool. She was purchased by the War Department in 1847 and during the Mexican War served as a troop transport for the Army. On Aug. 1, 1849, she was transferred to the Navy and commissioned at Mare Island Navy Yard, San Francisco.

May 5, 1848. Letter datelined at "San Angel near Mexico" and concerns Charles Moseley of Co. G of the 2nd Pennsylvania Volunteers, Army in Mexico, and his belief that peace will soon be made.



VERA CRUZ

MEXICO MAY 11

May 11, 1848. Letter arrived at the Mexican port city of Vera Cruz on the Gulf of Mexico. It was occupied by American troops during the Mexican War, 1847-48. Letter marked at the military post at Vera Cruz (listed in ASCC under Texas.)

May 13. U.S.S. Massachusetts sailed for New Orleans.

N.O. Picayune, Sunday, May 21. The steamship Massachusetts, Capt. Wood, arrived last evening from Vera Cruz, having sailed thence on the 13th inst., four days later than the Eudora. Her accounts from the City of Mexico are to the 8th inst...

Letter rated Act of 1845, over 300 miles at 10¢.

1848

U.S. transport Steam Ship Edith
VERA CRUZ, MEXICO TO NEW ORLEANS

The U.S.S. Edith in 1848 when this letter was written, was in the service of the War Department. She was transferred to the Navy on March 3, 1849, and became part of the Pacific Squadron. Unfortunately on August 4, 1849, she went aground while en route from Sausalito to Santa Barbara in a dense fog and was lost.

This 400 ton screw steamer was 120' in length, 26' breadth and 14' depth, complement of 25, armament 2 guns.



January 15, 1848. A letter to his parents from Rodney H. Davis who was aboard the ship Faneuil Hall at Vera Cruz. He describes his voyage aboard her, having left Boston, Capt. Bangs, for Vera Cruz. There is a U.S. Man of War in the harbor at Vera Cruz that has a band aboard that plays music "all the time."

N.Y. Shipping and Commercial List,
Feb. 9, 1848. Arrived New Orleans
Jan. 28: U.S. transport Steam Ship
Edith, Couillard...Vera Cruz.



STEAM

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This letter was transported on a War Department steamer, so was treated as an incoming Steam Ship Letter at the 10¢ rate.

1860

SHIP LETTERS

VERA CRUZ TO NEW YORK VIA NEW ORLEANS

U.S. Steam sloop-of-war Pocahontas

Mexican War of the Reform: Vera Cruz under siege

Reforms in Mexico of a religious and political nature were undertaken by the Mexican Liberal government in 1855. These reforms, including the attempt to release from mortmain the great holdings of the Church, led to civil war between the conservatives and Liberals. The Liberal government, with Benito Juarez as president, established its capital at Vera Cruz and was recognized by the United States (April 6, 1859.) The Conservative capital was in Mexico City.

Mail to and from Vera Cruz, which was under siege in 1860, was disrupted and U.S. naval vessels were pressed into the U.S. mail service, also to bring out military dispatches and their bearers.



May 15, 1860. Backstamp. Letter posted unpaid at Vera Cruz. The U.S. steam sloop-of-war Pocahontas left Vera Cruz on May 16, bringing out the mails and Mr. E.L. Plumb, who was bearing important dis-

patches for the Constitutional (Liberal) Government to the Mexican minister at Washington.

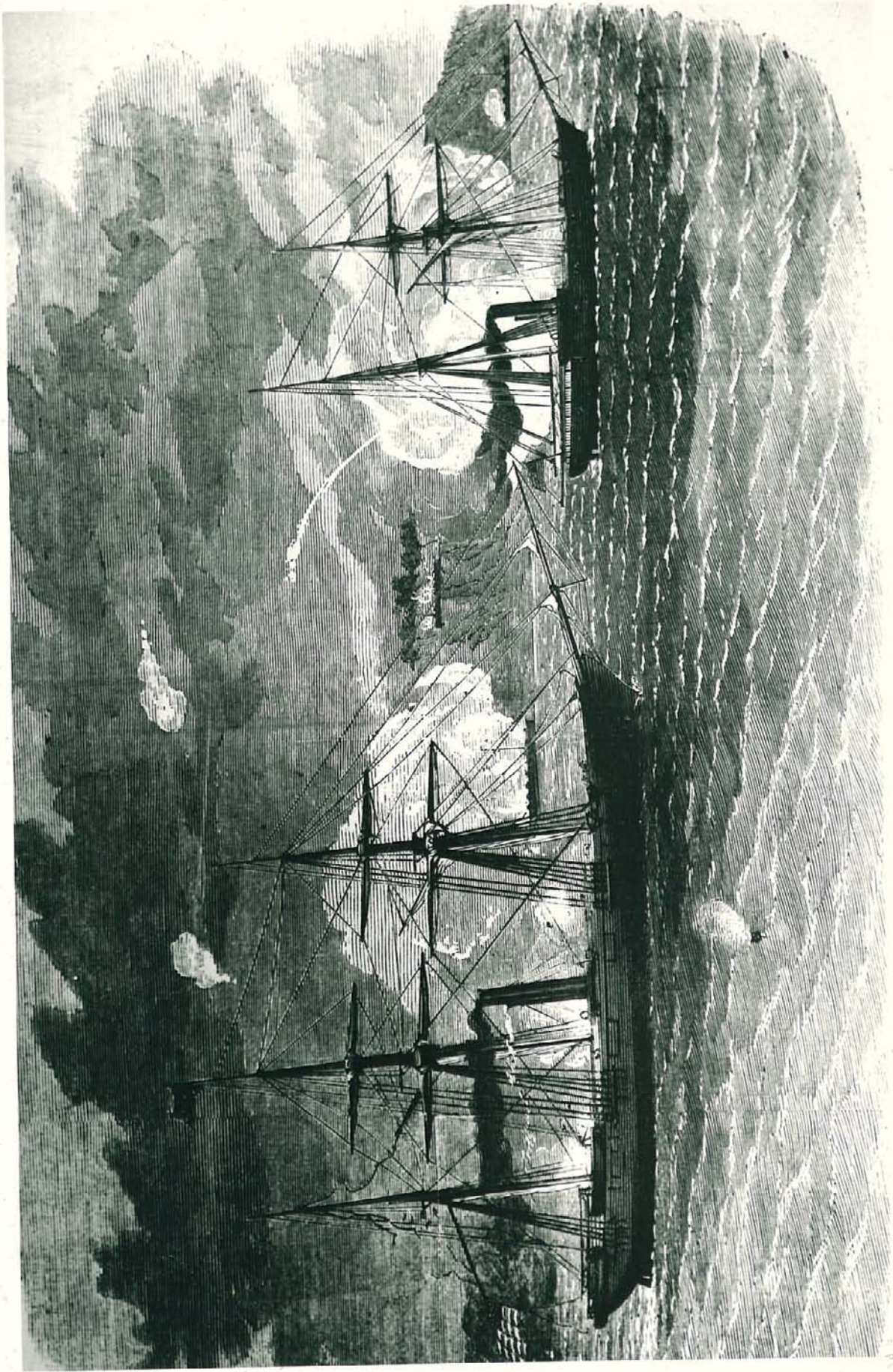


SHIP
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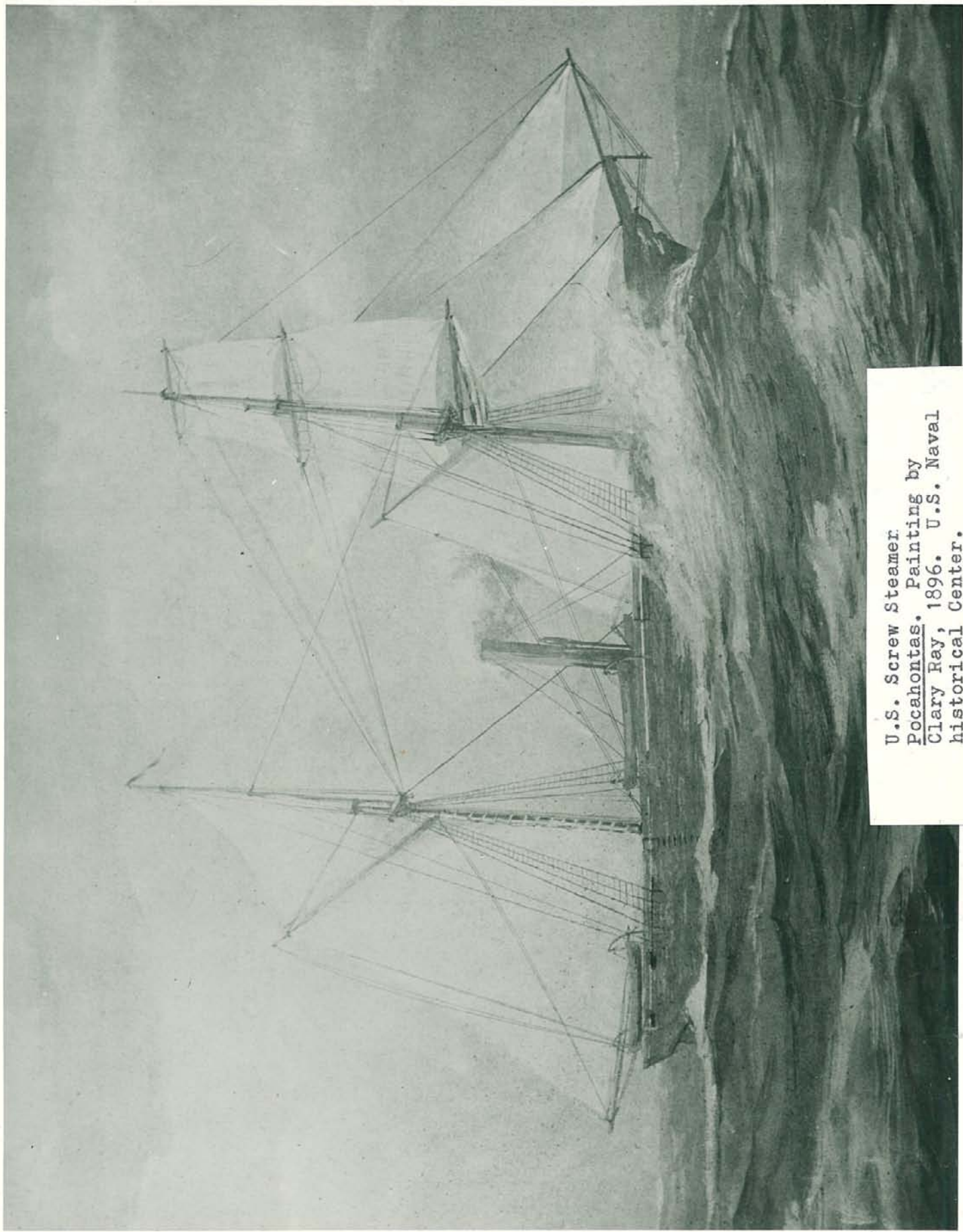
Daily Picayune, New Orleans, May 24, 1860: The U.S. steam sloop-of-war Pocahontas, Commander Samuel F. Hazard, came up to the city this morning, and is anchored in the river opposite Canal street. One of her principal objects in coming up was to bring the mails. She will return to Vera Cruz the first or

middle of June, taking out the U.S. mails.

May 23. Letter rated Act of 1855, 3¢ per 1/2-oz., up to 3000 miles plus 2¢ Ship Letter charge = 5¢ due.



USS Seminole and USS Pocahontas (right)
engaging Confederate batteries at
Evansport. From Harper's Weekly
July-Dec. 1861, PG. 701.



U.S. Screw Steamer
Pocahontas. Painting by
Clary Ray, 1896. U.S. Naval
historical Center.

1862

U.S. Screw Gunboat Pembina

Serving with the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron

Pembina saw early action with the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron. In early December 1861, she penetrated into Wassaw Sound to assist in closing off Savannah. By the end of the month she had engaged Confederate positions at Port Royal Ferry and into January 1862, assisted in clearing the Coosaw River.

Pembina continued service in 1862 along the Georgia and Florida coasts finally shifting to the Carolinas where on 6 June she seized her first prize, the schooner Rowena. She was still at Port Royal when this letter was written. She later moved to the Gulf coast.



August 19, 1862. A letter to John J. Hovenberg, U.S.N. on board the U.S.S. Pembina at Port Royal, S.C. The 3¢ rate was paid by the Issue of 1861.

N.Y. Times. Cleared New York August 21, Schooner Julia A. Helleck, Sinclair, Port Royal, S.W. Lewis & Co.

1863

NEW YORK TO THE WESTERN GULF SQUADRON

U.S. Screw Gunboat Pembina

U.S. Mail Steamship Columbia, New York to New Orleans

Pembina, 507 tons, 171' x 31'6" beam, 15'9" draft, 10 knots. Armament one twenty pounder, one 11" Dahlgren smoothbore and two 24 pounder howitzers. Built by Thomas Stack and Novelty Iron Works, N.Y., commissioned October 16, 1861. By November 5 she was in the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, engaged in dispersing a small Confederate Squadron in Port Royal Sound. She continued in several East Coast actions and later shifted to the gulf coast. She took her second prize vessel, sloop Elias Beckwith near Mobile on April 23, 1863, just two weeks before this letter was written. Remaining on the gulf coast, she seized her third and last blockade runner, the Dutch brig Geziena Hilligonda carrying medicines, iron and cloth, off Brazos Santiago, Texas, December 4, 1864.



June 9, 1863. Letter at New York addressed to the Western Gulf Squadron. It is endorsed: Per Str. "Columbia", and paid at the Act of 1855 rate, 3¢ per $\frac{1}{2}$ -oz. up to 3,000 miles by Issue of 1861. An interesting note on the reverse says, "If the 'Pembina' has left for Home please re-mail to 24 Schermerhorn St. Brooklyn L.I."

N.Y. Times, June 12, 1863. Sailed from N.Y. June 11, steamship Columbia for New Orleans.

June 25. Docket notes received by J. F. Bingham, U.S.N. on this date.

1863

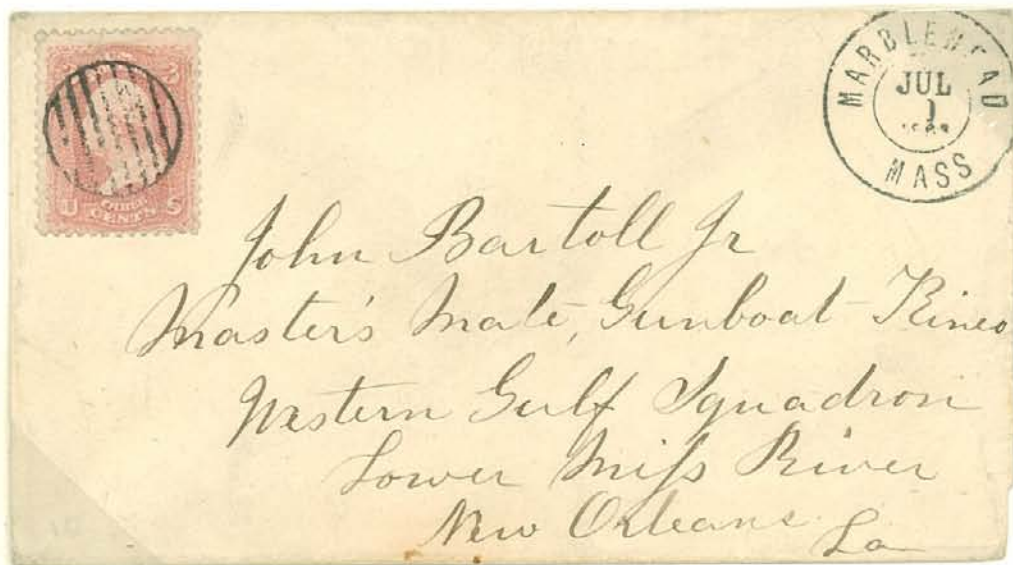
MARBLEHEAD, MASS. TO WESTERN GULF SQUADRON, N. ORLEANS

U. S. ironclad screw gunboat Kineo

First day use of Act of March 3, 1863 rate, effective July 1, 1863

U. S. Mail steam-ship Columbia, New York to New Orleans

The 507 ton, 158' x 28' iron clad gunboat Kineo was launched October 9, 1861, at Portland, Maine. She participated in the conquest of New Orleans April 24-27, 1862. She did much fighting on the Mississippi River during her first period with the so-called Western Gulf Squadron in 1862-63, when this letter was addressed to Master's Mate John Bartoll, Jr. aboard her.



July 1, 1863. First day use of the 1863 rate effective July 1. This Act defined letter mail as First Class Mail, with a rate of 3¢, any distance within the U.S., prepayment compulsory.

Letter was sent on to New York for forwarding on to New Orleans by U.S. Mail Steamer Columbia

N.Y. Times, Thursday, July 2, 1863.

FOR NEW ORLEANS DIRECT

The United States Mail sidewheel Steamship
COLUMBIA

Will leave Pier No. 4, North River, on TUESDAY, July 7
at 3 o'clock P.M. precisely, for New Orleans - direct.

All letters must pass through the Post Office. . .

SPOFFORD, TILESTON & CO.

No. 29 Broadway.

1826

SHIP LETTERS

NEW-ORL: SHIP Gibraltar to St. Louis via New Orleans

U.S. Ship of the Line North Carolina

North Carolina was laid down in 1818 at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, launched 7 Sept. 1820. Master Commandant Charles W. Morgan was assigned to North Carolina as her first commanding officer 24 June 1824. She served in the Mediterranean as flagship for Commodore John Rodgers from 29 April 1825 until 18 May 1827. This letter was written aboard her during that period.

April 29, 1826. Letter datelined aboard the U.S.S. North Carolina at Gibraltar and the writer, Jonathan Graham, informs his father he is forwarding him some seeds by way of New Orleans. Letter went overland to Havre.



SHIP

*Richard Graham Esq
St. Louis
Missouri*

SHIP

GIBRALTAR
1826
U.S. SHIP North Carolina

June 14, 1826. Arrived at New Orleans June 12, from Havre Ship Gen, Ferrier. (N.Y. Shipping & Commercial List.)

*U.S. Ship N Carolina
April 29th 26. Gibraltar*

Letter rated, Act of 1825, single letter over 400 miles, New Orleans to St. Louis, 25¢ plus 2¢ Ship Letter charge = 27¢ due, shown in manuscript.



1833

U. S. Sloop-of-War Ontario

16 guns, sailed for the Mediterranean November 1833.



U. S. Ship Ontario,

My dear Friend,

Newport, R.I., Oct. 25th, 1833

Herewith you receive the remaining Forty dollars, which I am afraid you might have thought that I had forgotten. But no, I have just received my advance money which I expected to receive in Portsmouth, but as we did not take our final departure from the U. S. then, but are now ready, which makes my funds in such a state as to refund you

to me immediately

1833

U. S. Sloop-of War Ontario

The Ontario, a 16 gun sloop-of-war, was built by Thomas Kemp, Baltimore, Md., in 1813. She sailed for the Mediterranean Sea to put a stop to the piracy of the Barbary States of Tripoli and Algiers, arrived Gibraltar June 15, 1815, and two days later, in company with frigates Constellation and Guerriere and sloop Epervier, captured the Algerian frigate Mashouda. She arrived home early in 1817.

In October 1817 she made a pioneer mission to the Pacific, returning to Chesapeake Bay April 23, 1819.

She made three more trips to the Mediterranean for extended deployment with the Mediterranean Squadron. The writer of this letter notes that the Ontario would sail soon, and indeed she sailed for Gibraltar in November 1833, returning May 1838.

After several tours of duty to the West Indies, the Caribbean and Mexico, she returned to Baltimore July 30, 1843, where she began duty as a Navy Yard receiving ship until June 1856, whereupon she was sold at public auction.



STEAM BOAT

October 25, 1833. Letter datelined: U.S. Ship Ontario, Norfolk Va.

October 31. Letter posted unpaid at Baltimore. It went by steamboat New York to Providence by a steamboat of the New-York and Providence Steam-Boat Co.

Letter rated, Act of 1825, as a triple letter inland over 400 miles at 25¢ x 3 = 75¢ due, shown in manuscript.

1848

U.S. Sloop-of-War St. Louis at Rio de Janeiro

Brig Wm. T. Duggan, Capt. Kelly, Rio de Janeiro to Boston

St. Louis, 700 tons, 127' x 33'-9", depth 15'-6"; draft 16', complement 125, armament 20 24-pdr. smooth bores. Laid down Feb. 12, 1827 at Washington Navy Yard, final fitting at Norfolk, Va. After a varied service, she departed Norfolk on August 11, 1848, she sailed to Rio de Janeiro, where she served on the South American Station until returning in July 1851.

October 5, 1848. A letter written by Lieut. T.W. Todd to his father Purser Samuel P. Todd at the U.S. Navy Yard, New York. The letter is headed: At Sea Long. 36°25', Lat. 15°10' S. which puts the St. Louis off the east coast of Brazil in the Brazil Current about 700 miles northeast of Rio de Janeiro.

October 13. He further reports that they have made the Sugar Loaf October 12 and anchored at Rio at 8 P.M.

October 14. The brig Wm. T. Duggan left Rio for Boston.



N.Y. Shipping List and Price Current. Arrived at Boston December 14, Brig Wm. T. Duggan, Kelly...Rio Janeiro.

Letter rated, Act of 1845, single ½-oz. letter under 300 miles, Boston to New York, at 5¢ plus 2¢ Ship Letter charge = 7¢ due.



B.215

SHIP



B.554

B.677

1852-3

U. S. Sidewheel Sloop-of-War Saranac at Rio de Janeiro
Ship S. S. Bishop, San Francisco to Philadelphia via Rio



1852-3

U.S. Sidewheel Sloop-of-War Saranac at Rio de Janeiro
Ship S.S. Bishop, San Francisco to Philadelphia via Rio

U.S.S. Saranac, 1463 tons and armed with nine 8" guns, was launched 14 November 1848 at the Portsmouth Navy Yard and got underway on 10 April 1850 for a trial cruise in the North Atlantic. Saranac operated along the Atlantic Coast of the U.S. until being placed in ordinary at Philadelphia on 23 June 1852. Reactivated on 15 September, the ship sailed for New York to embark the Chevalier de Sodre, the Brazilian Minister to the United States, and got underway again on 5 October to return that distinguished diplomat to his home. She arrived at Para on the 26th and, after disembarking her passengers, she served on the Brazil Station until returning to Philadelphia and decommissioning on 20 JULY 1853.

She was recommissioned 5 November 1853 and served in the Mediterranean, and spent the Civil War years on the West Coast. She was wrecked on 18 June 1875 in Seymour Narrows off Vancouver, British Columbia.

December 27, 1852. This envelope bears a note on the reverse: Steamer Saranac Rio Brazil/December 27, 1852. It is endorsed on the face: Per S.S. Bishop/ From Rio. This letter was written aboard the Saranac while she was on the Brazil Station following returning the Brazilian Minister to Para.



SHIP

December 27, 1852. Letter put aboard the ship S.S. Bishop at Rio de Janeiro, the latter en route from San Francisco to Philadelphia via Rio.

N.Y. Shipping List & Price Current, February 9, 1853. Arrived at Philadelphia Feb. 5, 6. Ship S.S. Bishop, Turley, San Francisco via Rio Janeiro.

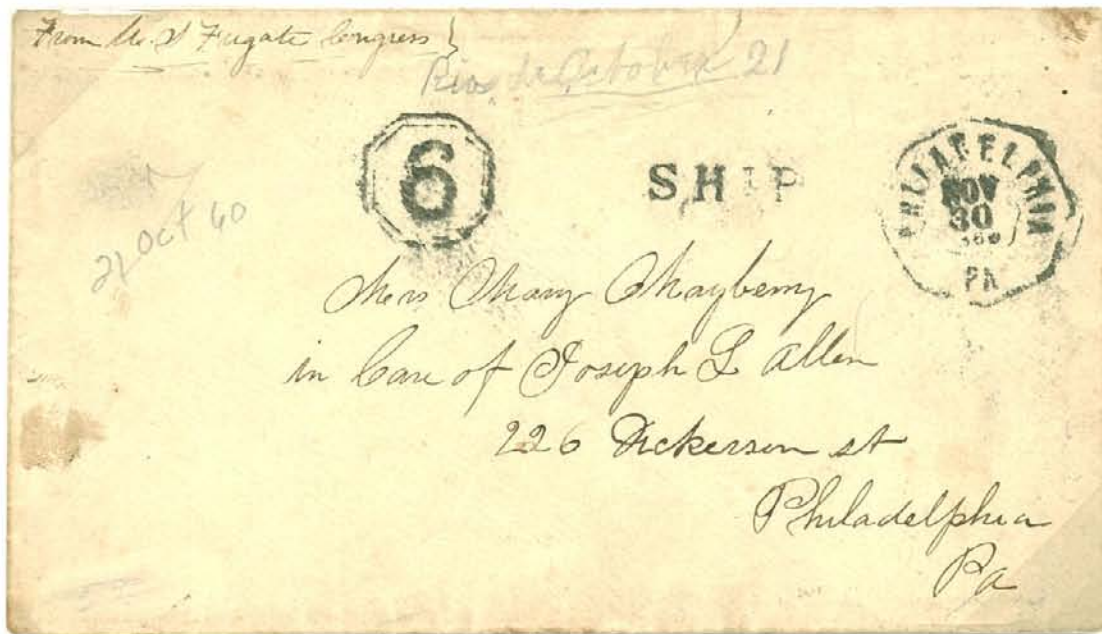
Letter rated, Act of 1851, unpaid letter not over 3,000 miles at 5¢ + 2¢ Ship Letter charge = 7¢ due.

N.B.: S.S. Bishop. Sailing vessel, ship rigged, 595 tons, built 1851 at Philadelphia.

1860

U.S. Frigate Congress at Rio de Janeiro on the Brazil Squadron.
Ship Gray Eagle, Rio de Janeiro to Philadelphia

The fourth Congress was launched at the Navy Yard, Portsmouth, N.H. August 14, 1841. The 1867 ton frigate had a complement of 480 and armament of eight 8" guns and 42 33-pounders. She had a varied career until 1859, when she was reassigned as flagship of Commodore J. Sands and the Brazil Squadron, on which duty she was engaged when this letter was written. The Civil War precipitated her return to Boston on August 22, 1861.



SHIP



N.Y. Shipping List & Price Current. December 5, 1860. Arrived at Philadelphia November 30: Ship Gray Eagle, Hughes from Rio Janeiro. She brings 6030 bags of coffee.

Letter rated at 6¢ due for a single Ship Letter addressed to the port of entry.

1861-62

U.S. Steam Frigate Colorado

Gulf Blockading Squadron

The U.S.S. Colorado, a steam screw frigate, was launched June 19, 1856, at the Norfolk Navy Yard. After a brief period of service she was recommissioned at Boston on June 3, 1861, and sailed on June 18 to join the Gulf Blockading Squadron. On September 14 she cut out and destroyed the schooner Judith, then fitting out as a privateer, and spiked one gun of the battery at the Pensacola Navy Yard. On December 11 she was on another expedition to Pilot Town where she succeeded in capturing a small schooner and two men. Colorado assisted in the capture of the steamer Calhoun (or Cuba) January 23, 1862 off South West Pass at the mouth of the Mississippi, and a week later engaged four Confederate steamers. She returned to Boston June 21, 1862.

Most of these exciting events were taking place before during and after the letter below was in transit to the Colorado.



December 28, 1861. Posted at Boston, this is a letter paid at the 3¢ rate of 1855. It is addressed to the U.S. Steam Frigate "Colorado"/Gulf Blockading Squadron/Key West/Fla., Care U.S. Naval Lyceum/Navy Yard, New York. The U.S. Naval Lyceum acted as poste restante and forwarders for the U.S. Navy. In this case they directed this letter Pr. "Connecticut",* a steamer running regularly between New York and New Orleans.

January 29, 1862. Docket notes receipt at Key West. This was during the time the Colorado was engaging four Confederate steamers in a sea battle.

*This was the U.S.S. Connecticut, a side-wheel steam gunboat which delivered men and supplies to ships on the blockade along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts as far as Galveston. She made 5 voyages between Jan. 7 and Nov. 15, 1862. She returned to NY Feb. 19 from Key West.

1861

U. S. Screw Steamship Flag

Serving with the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron

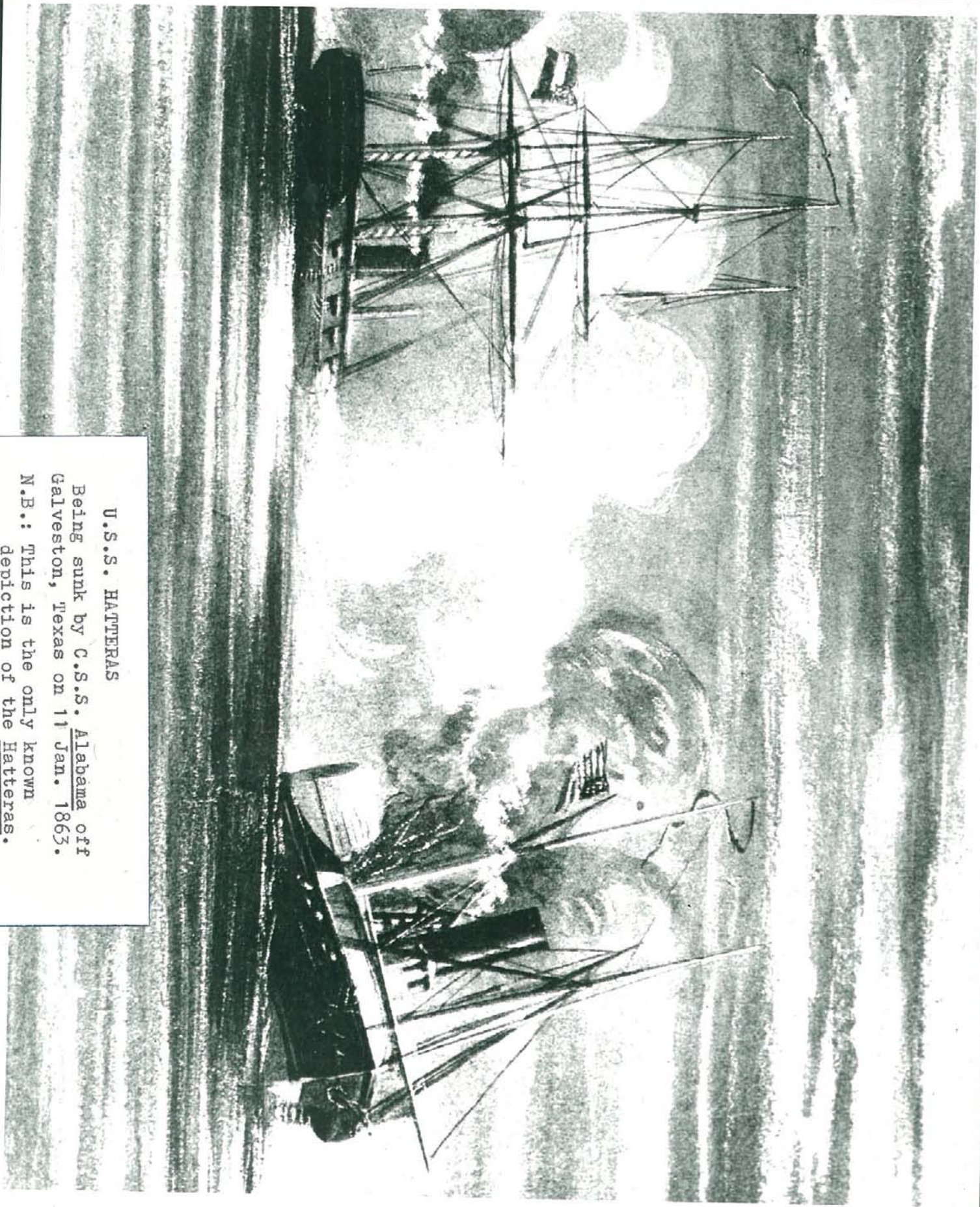
The 938 ton Flag was purchased as Phineas Sprague by the U.S. Navy on 26 April 1861, and renamed and commissioned on 26 May 1861. Flag reported for duty in the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron at Charleston, S.C. on 6 June 1861, and patrolled the coastal waters of the Carolinas until early 1865.

On 24 November 1861, just one month after this letter was posted, Flag joined Seneca and Pocahontas in taking Tybee Island and two days later drove several southern ships back into Fort Pulaski, from which they were attempting to sail.



October 19, 1861. A letter posted at Clinton, Mass. and paid at the 3¢ rate by the Issue of 1861. It is addressed to 3rd. Assistant Engineer H.S. Robinson at Hampton Roads, located at the mouth of the James River and the anchorage for Fortress Monroe.

October 20. N.Y. Times. Sailed U.S. gunboats Mohican, Issac Smith and Ellen for Fortress Monroe. This letter was forwarded south aboard one of these gunboats.



U.S.S. HATTERAS

Being sunk by C.S.S. Alabama off
Galveston, Texas on 11 Jan. 1863.

N.B.: This is the only known
depiction of the Hatteras.

1862

U. S. Steamer Hatteras - Gulf Blockading Squadron
Tugboat Boston - Mail from the Forts. to New Orleans
S. S. Cumbria - New Orleans to New York

A letter docketed "from the U.S. Steamer Hateras (sic)." At this time Hatteras was engaged in blockading the Confederate coast off Berwick, La. Earlier in 1862 she had made a very successful raid on the Cedar Keys, Florida harbor. She was very successful in capturing enemy ships until transferred to Texas early 1863. Off Galveston on Jan. 11 she pursued a strange ship that proved to be the Confederate Steam-ship Alabama. In the ensuing battle, lasting 45 minutes, Hatteras was sunk with the loss of 2 lives, 5 wounded and 113 captured, including Captain Blake.



Letter was handed ashore at one of the down-Mississippi forts.

New Orleans Picayune. Arrived Nov. 19, 1862. Tugboat Boston, Tibbets, from the Forts. - brought up Brigs Belle of the Bay and Poinsett. Second trip - From McCall's Flats - brought steamer Morning Light, Dillon, from the Coast.

Nov. 19. Letter received at New Orleans as a Ship Letter, rated, Act of 1855, double letter not over 3000 miles at $3c \times 2 = 6c + 2c$ Ship Letter charge = $8c$ due.

Nov. 20. The United States mail steamer Cumbria, Capt. Sumner, will leave her wharf this morning direct for New York.

Nov. 29. N.Y. Times. Arr. steamship Cumbria, Sumner, New-Orleans Nov. 20 and the Bar 21st. with mdse. & pass. to Dennison & Wyckoff. Was detained 10 hours in the Mississippi River in consequence of the pilot getting the ship aground. 22d., 200 miles S.E., 14., from the Bar, passed steamship McClellan.