

## Speaking of Stamps, Etc.

Herman Herst, Jr.

# A Civil War Treasure House

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A priceless treasure house of rare letters, manuscripts and documents of the Confederate States of America has been found in the archives of Florida Atlantic University at Boca Raton.

Dr. Otto Bettmann, an adjunct professor at F.A.U., has been investigating the collection, which is professionally bound into four huge gilt and leather albums. Dr. Bettmann called this writer [Herst], a professional appraiser of manuscripts, as no one at the University had any idea of the total value of the collection, which runs well into six figures.

Letters of Robert E. Lee are well represented, some of them of great historic importance. Some undoubtedly are unknown to historians, and can shed a new light on incidents of the Civil War. As an example, there is a letter from Lee to his northern counterpart, General George B. McClellan, setting up an exchange of prisoners of war in 1862 to take place at Shirley, Va., with General Dix of the Union Army to make the arrangements. (Shown here.)

One of the most unusual items is a two-page letter by the Confederate doctor in attendance on the dying General "Stonewall" Jackson, who was inadvertently shot by his own men at the Battle of Chancellorsville. The doctor was in attendance on Jackson for the two and one-half days he lingered, and wrote down all conversations with Jackson, who died in the presence of his wife and young daughter. Among Jackson's last words was the asking of the day of week. When told it was Sunday, and that he would die before evening, he replied "I always wanted to die on a Sunday."

A very tangible link with the historic past was an irregularly cut piece of gray cloth. Accompanied by amply documented provenance, a statement says that it was cut from Jackson's uniform after he was wounded.

There are important letters by numerous other Confederate generals. One has a short, terse postscript by General Pierre Beauregard, in command at the first real battle (Bull Run, or First

Manassas). A northern colonel, James Cameron, of Lancaster, Pa., volunteered and was killed on the first day of the war, at 60 years of age. A Louisiana former friend of Beauregard's asked the general to permit his body to be sent to his wife. Beauregard replied that he did no favors for traitors. The friend had not enlisted.

The first president of the Confederacy was Jefferson Davis. When he was told he was to be asked to head the South, his reply (in the original letter contained in the collection), stated that he felt he could be of greater use to the South in military matters as he had served in the War with Mexico in 1846, and had been Secretary of War for the United States. The letter,

Head Quarters Dept. A. Va  
14<sup>th</sup> July 1862

General,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 13<sup>th</sup> inst; informing me that Major General John W. Dix had been invested by your government with authority to negotiate for a general exchange of all prisoners taken and held or paroled on both sides.

I have the honor to inform you that I have appointed Major General D. H. Hill U.S.A. to meet General Dix, and arrange with him the terms of a general exchange.

General Hill is clothed with full authority to act for this government in the premises.

I propose that the meeting be held at Shirley, and General Hill will meet General Dix at that place on Wednesday next, the 16<sup>th</sup> inst;

Very respectfully,  
Your obt. Serv<sup>t</sup>  
Major Genl. Geo. B. McClellan,  
Command<sup>g</sup> Army Potomac.

P. B. Lee  
Genl Command



written just four days before the Confederate government had its birth, had no effect on those who wanted Davis as president. Davis accepted the presidency.

The collection cannot be disposed of by law, but parts of it may ultimately be put on display. One very interesting part of the accumulation is numerous Currier and Ives prints, showing not only battle scenes, but portraits of various figures, all

supporters of the Confederate cause.

While philatelic items were at a minimum in the accumulation, there were a few, such as about a dozen used Confederate stamps, all more or less common, and in very poor condition. There was a good representation of Confederate paper money and bonds, but nothing of great value. Unfortunately, whoever saved the many letters totally ignored any covers.

*The Jefferson Davis letter is reproduced on pages 22-24.*

*Perhaps someone can make out the handwriting sufficiently to provide a print version. I could not. JFD.]*

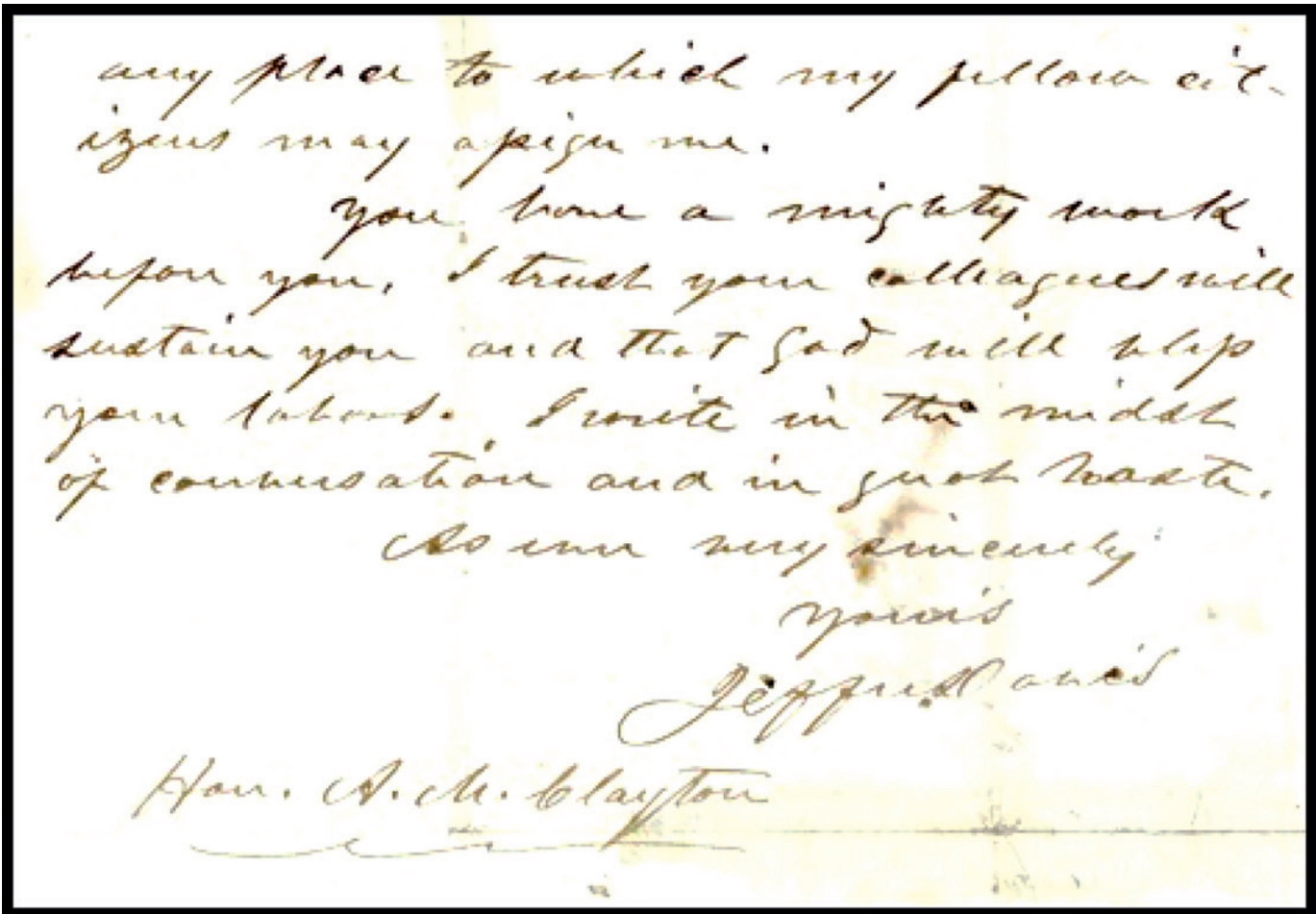
Jackson Missi  
July 30. 1861

My dear friend,

Mr. Goodman commu-  
nicated your kind message and  
I have in vain endeavored to form  
a satisfactory reply. The current of  
events rolls on with such rapidity  
that the conclusion of today may be  
inapplicable to the case of tomorrow.  
You will hear at Montgomery informa-  
tion in relation to the progress of the war  
in the border states which will enable you  
to judge of the future of the Southern confederacy.  
If the border state holding states unite  
with us there will probably be a peaceful  
separation and we shall have full  
time to organize our government. Then  
the civil branch of the Govt. will be the  
only field for useful labor. But if the  
border states are to maintain their position  
alone, war is probable and the military

branch of the government be come of paramount importance. If the provisional government gives to the chief executive such power as the Constitution gave to the President of the U. S. then he will be the source of military authority and may in emergency command the army in person. I have said enough to qualify ~~me~~ in stating that with the limited knowledge I now possess it is not possible to decide as to what it is best to do in relation to the position I should occupy. The post of Presid. of the provisional government is one of great responsibility and difficulty, I have no confidence in my capacity to meet its requirements. I think I could perform the functions of Genl. if the Executive did not cripple me in my operations by acts of commission or omission. I write as one thinking on paper and say to you who will understand me that I would prefer not to have either place, but in this hour of my country's adversity I will accept





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