

## A Technological Leap has Rekindled the Excitement in Philately

A technological leap, as I personally see it, is the introduction of a new technology that far surpasses the technology it replaces. Here are a couple of examples to set the stage. During the later stages of the Civil War, the repeating rifle was introduced to the battlefield by the Union army. This resulted in a soldier's ability to fire on the enemy 10 times before reloading. This was definitely a game changer. In 1944, the German Luftwaffe introduced the first jet fighter. Think of where we would be today if we had not already decimated Germany's industrial capacity. It would have been a game changer but it came a year or two too late.

For philately that leap is the Internet, but not the communications aspect, but the research aspect. The amount of information available at a "click" is just staggering. The search features have made researching our collections both easy and enjoyable. With more and more original source information being digitized, collectors now have access to information that was beyond our reach in the past. The Internet is like the *Encyclopedia Britannica* on steroids!

### Collecting without Borders

When I started gathering material that focused on the Battle of Port Royal Sound, I set up boundaries as to the towns and islands that would be included. This focus proved to be limiting. As I did more reading about both the Union and Confederate strategies after the battle, my interest grew and thus, so did the available material. In essence I started with the Sound and Hilton Head Island and have since expanded to the entire Beaufort District of South Carolina. The Union forces pushed in all three directions from Hilton Head Island. Each direction provided interesting skirmishes and battles that I now realized were all part of the story. I guess the moral of this story is to start out with an open mind and see where the journey leads you. If you have a narrow view you may just miss the best part of the journey.

### The Importance of Inbound Mail

I am aware that many of you collect postal history from a particular county or town. Unless you have a cover with a letter or an advertising corner card you will have no idea

as to the person who wrote the letter or their connection to the town from which it was sent. A couple of years ago I was offered a cover addressed to a man in McHenry, Illinois. The cover was from a town in upstate New York and did not have any type of McHenry receiving postmark. At first the cover was of no interest to me. However, as I thought more about the person to which it was addressed, I wondered if I could not find him on the Internet. The five dollar expenditure proved to be a gold mine. Within five minutes of my Internet search I found that he was one of the founders of the town of McHenry. There is still a street named for him there. Since that discovery I always look for incoming mail as it just adds to the story. This same approach has done wonders for my Battle of Port Royal collection as well.

### "One Final Pitch for Blue & Gray: Mail in the Civil War" Postal History Symposium

In addition to the lectures and bourse there will be meetings of the United States Philatelic Classics Society and the Carriers and Locals Society. There will also be a number of non-competitive exhibits including some on Confederate postal history. If the Civil War is even close to your collecting niche you will not want to miss this opportunity of a lifetime. You may even want to head east when the seminar ends on Sunday and tour the Civil War battlefields of Pennsylvania and Maryland. I personally plan to spend the time between Bellefonte and the ASDA National Postal Museum Show in Washington, DC the following weekend, touring the Antietam Battlefield in Maryland.

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