



Figure 1: An envelope showing a deliberate strike at the lower edge of the envelope of ‘REGULAR PACKET HOMER.’ The address is to New Orleans which, in May 1861, was Confederate. The cover bears a three-cent 1857 stamp with a typical manuscript cancel and no postmarks.

A New Confederate Steamboat Handstamp

By Col. James W. Milgram

The Figure 1 cover with a “REGULAR PACKET HOMER” in a half moon strike has been known for a long time. It was pictured in the steamboat book by Eugene Klein as listing 246.

However, a full strike of the marking, shown in Figure 2, was from lot 1298 in the Paul Rohloff collection of steamboat covers sold by Sothby Parke Bernet (Andrew Levitt) on September 24, 1980. The complete wording is: “REGULAR PACKET/HOMER/SAML. APPLGATE/MASTER” in a circle.

I used this photograph to list the marking as M613 in my book, *Vessel-named Markings on United States Inland and Ocean Waterways 1810-1890*. Of course, I knew of the Klein listing, but I thought that listing was just a partial strike. I had not seen the full cover shown in Figure 1.

But, once I saw the complete cover with the partial strike, it was obvious to me that this was a deliberate half strike. It was struck so as to eliminate the Applegate name as master (captain). There is plenty of space above the address in which the full marking could have

appeared. In fact, the present strike is over a portion of the address.

I possess a very rare series of books, *Ship Registers and Enrollments of New Orleans, Louisiana*, which was issued in six volumes for each 10-year period up to 1871.

These books were prepared by The Survey of Federal Archives in Louisiana, Work Projects Administration in 1942.

Volume V in this set discusses the *Homer* of New Orleans. It was built at Parkersburg, Virginia, in 1859. The vessel weighed 183 tons and measured 150 feet x 26 feet x 5 feet. It had one deck, no masts, a billet head, side wheels, and a cabin on deck.

It had been previously enrolled (before it was enrolled at New Orleans) as Number 49 on November 14, 1859 at Cincinnati, Ohio. Lytle-Holdcamper lists the first homeport as Wheeling, Virginia, in 1859 but, whatever was the first homeport, it first traveled on the Ohio River. It was enrolled at New Orleans as Number 78 on May 3, 1860. The owners were Samuel Applegate (2/3), and James W. Parsons (1/3). The master was Samuel Applegate.



Figure 2: A partial photograph of a ‘REGULAR PACKET/HOMER/SAML APPLGATE/MASTER’ marking on a three-cent entire addressed to New Orleans with no postmarks.

Fred Way, in *Way's Packet Directory, 1848-1983*, lists that the vessel ran a New Orleans-Ouachita River trade and in June 1860 ran on the New Orleans-Red River route in place of the steamboat *Grand Duke*.

The Ouachita River trade may be later because Applegate was the first master at New Orleans. Way states that the vessel continued in the same trade (on the Red and Mississippi Rivers) under a new master, W.W. Withenbury, who replaced Applegate in May, 1861.

Withenbury had been the master of the *Lecompte*, which snagged and was lost 10 miles above Campti, Louisiana, on April 16, 1861. He had also been master and part owner of the *Monterey*, which was lost on April 24, 1850.

In Volume VI of the series previously mentioned, the owners remained the same, but the vessel was enrolled as Number 97 on May 11, 1861 with W.W. Withenbury as master.

The vessel continued in the Confederate trade and was reenrolled as Number 252 on November 2, 1861, now owned by Ambrose W. Skardan (2/3) and James W. Parsons (1/3) at New Orleans.

The master continued to be W.W. Withenbury, who is also listed as master in 1862. There is no data on how long the *Homer* continued to run in the steamboat trade. It may have been lost during the war.

Thus, from two different sources we have the information that Applegate was master for a year from May 1860 to May 1861, when a new master, W.W. Withenbury, replaced him.

It appears evident from the data on the cover in Figure 1 that the date of this usage was in May 1861.

In June of 1861 there would have been no three-cent 1857 stamp used. And the change of masters took place on May 11, 1861.

I have already described how the marking was deliberately struck so that the previous master's name did not appear. Thus the cover in Figure 1 was used between May 11 and May 31, 1861, a period when all steamboat travel to New Orleans was Confederate.

Therefore, the marking shown in Figure 1 is a new Confederate steamboat marking, unlisted in the new catalog.

I should mention that there is an earlier *Homer*, a vessel built in Louisville, Kentucky in 1846.

Marking M612 in my book shows a red straight line marking “HOMER,” including a usage on a bill of lading.

In fact, there is also an earlier *Homer* built in 1832 at Albany, Indiana. That vessel, according to the Lytle-Holdcamper list, ran out of Louisville, Kentucky until it was lost in 1841 when it snagged near Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

No handstamped markings are known from any U.S. Mississippi steamboat until 1839.

The earliest known steamboat marking in North America was from the *Frontenac*, which ran in 1818 on the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario (M-487).

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