

## CHAPLAIN CHARLES S. STEWART, US Navy (Retired) 1795-1870 and a 158 year old cover

By: Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, U.S. Navy (Retired)<sup>1</sup>

*“The moral field in which I am to labor is confessedly a hard one ...”*<sup>2</sup>

*“I never witness [a flogging] without being tempted to ask Paul’s question to the centurion, ‘Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman?’”*

*Chaplain Charles S. Stewart, United States Navy, USS GUERRIERE*

*“Stewart’s Visit to the South Seas”*

*The Sailors Magazine and Naval Journal, August 1831*<sup>3</sup>

Charles S. Stewart was recognized as a “pioneer,” “creator,” and “one of the three ‘great’ chaplains” in the organization and development of the Chaplains Corps through the Civil War<sup>4</sup> by an official historian of the of the United States Navy Chaplain Corps, Reverend Clifford Drury.<sup>5</sup> He was a Navy Chaplain for more than 40 years from the administration of John Quincy Adams to the administration of Ulysses S. Grant; he served during 13 of the 18 presidencies during his lifetime, which ranged from Washington’s second term to Grant’s first term. He was a prolific author.<sup>6</sup>

The son of Robert Samuel Stewart<sup>7</sup>, he was born in Flemington, New Jersey, 16 October 1798, and he was graduated from the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) in 1815. Thereafter he studied law at Litchfield Law School between 1815 and 1818 but never practiced law.<sup>8</sup>



*Fig. 2: Harriet Stewart, from a portrait painted in 1822.*



*Fig. 1: Charles S. Stewart, 1795-1870. This picture dates from his later years, ca. 1863.*

An 1821 graduate of the Princeton Theological School, Stewart was ordained in the Presbyterian Church of New Brunswick on 14 August 1821. The

following year he was married to Harriet Bradford Tiffany<sup>9</sup> on 22 June 1822; they had three children<sup>10</sup> before she died at age 32.<sup>11</sup> The Stewarts were commissioned by the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaiian Islands) along with freed Black missionary, Betsey Stockton.<sup>12</sup> They sailed from New Haven, Connecticut on 20 November 1822 aboard *Thames* with the second company of missionaries to the islands. Their first child, Charles Seaforth Stewart, was born shortly before their arrival in the Islands, in April 1823. After

serving at the mission at Lahaina on Maui, the Stewarts returned to the U.S. in 1825 because of Mrs. Stewart's health; reportedly she was on her "deathbed,"<sup>13</sup> although (perhaps because of the return) she lived until 1830.

The third member of their party, Betsey Stockton, is a story all of its own. Sent as a teacher in this group of missionaries appointed by the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions to the Sandwich Islands, she was the first single woman appointed by the ABCFM. Born in slavery in 1798 and owned by Robert Stockton, she was given to his daughter on her marriage to Ashbel Green, President of the College of New Jersey, and the Greens fostered her education and gave her full use of their library. She became a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Princeton in 1817, and was formally freed at that time. She was eager to do missionary work, and was recommended by the Greens to the Board. Her desire was to serve in Africa, but she accepted this appointment to the Hawaiian Islands, and in 1822 travelled with the Stewarts and several others by ship to Hawaii.<sup>14</sup>



Fig. 3: Betsey Stockton, circa 1863.

Betsey Stockton taught school in Hawaii for native children, and trained native teachers as well. She and the Stewarts returned to the U.S. in 1825, because of Mrs. Stewart's health. She taught in an infant school in Philadelphia and established a school for Indians in Canada. In 1835 she returned to Princeton and helped found Princeton's First Presbyterian Church of Color, and its Sabbath School. The church was renamed the Witherspoon Street Church in 1848, and she taught there until her death in 1865.

There were several books which came out of this period of their lives: notably by Stewart, *Private Journal of a Voyage to the Pacific Ocean and Residence at the Sandwich Island in the Years 1822, 1823, 1824, and 1825* (New York: John P. Haven, 1831), and Betsey Stockton's own journal, published in the *Christian Advocate* in 1824 and 1825.<sup>15</sup>

Reverend Stewart received an appointment as a chaplain in November 1828; he was commissioned Chaplain, United States Navy, on 10 January 1829. He served on USS GUERRIERE<sup>16</sup> between 15 November 1828 and 30 June 1829. Thereafter, Chaplain Stewart was reassigned to USS VINCENNES<sup>17</sup> from 1 July 1829 until 10 July 1830. He made his first cruise to Brazil, Peru, and other South American countries, on board VINCENNES in 1829-30; he was the first chaplain to circumnavigate during VINCENNES's 1830-31 cruise. His *New York Times* obituary noted, "On this cruise, Chaplain Stewart distinguished himself by working strongly for the abolition of the practice of flogging sailors and also by his efforts in various foreign ports to prevent the exploitation of natives by American business interests."<sup>18</sup>



Library of Congress ID #3b51002u

*Fig. 4: The U.S. Sloop Vincennes, from a Currier & Ives print in 1845.*

Following the death of his first wife, Chaplain Stewart was granted a leave of absence between 1831 and 1833. The widower took a second wife, Sarah Ann Skillman, on 24 September 1835. After that lengthy leave, he returned to sea duty in USS DELAWARE<sup>19</sup> from 16 May 1833 until February 1834 and then in USS UNITED STATES<sup>20</sup> from 19 February 1834 until 31 December 1834. He also wrote a book on English and Irish society, which was published in 1834. He became editor of the *Naval Magazine* in 1836. Chaplain Stewart enjoyed a lengthy tour of shore duty at Navy Yard, New York, from 9 February 1835 until 25 May 1839.

He again went to sea in USS BRANDYWINE<sup>21</sup> from 25 May 1839 until 12 February 1842, before going ashore at the Receiving Station, New York from 9 January 1843 until 1 May 1845 and then a back-to-back shore tour at Naval Hospital, New Hampshire from 1 May 1845 until 28 May 1846.

Chaplain Stewart was reassigned to sea again in USS CONGRESS<sup>22</sup> from 25 April 1850 until 21 July 1853. Unfortunately, the published Navy Chaplain Corps records do not reflect where he served between July 1853 and April 1856 and again between May 1857 and June 1860. We know from the cover (see *Figure 6*) which is the subject of this article that in 1857 Chaplain Stewart was in London.<sup>23</sup> Between those two gaps in his known service Chaplain Stewart was assigned ashore to Receiving Ship, New York from 21 April 1856 until 1 May 1857.



US Naval History Center<sup>20</sup>

*Fig. 5: USS Congress (1842-1862).*

On 14 June 1860, Chaplain Stewart's final sea tour began in USS NIAGARA<sup>24</sup> where he served until 14 June 1862. At age 67 he came ashore at the Navy Yard, New York on 21 July 1862, where he was stationed until 18 October 1866. The Chaplain received a commission as a Commander in 1864 when Navy chaplains were afforded grades of commissioned officers. He died at Cooperstown, New York at age 75 on 14 December 1870.<sup>25</sup>



*Fig. 6: A cover addressed to Rev'd Chas Sam'l Stewart, U.S. Navy at Morleys Hotel in London, sent from France with a French stamp of the Second French Empire, dated June 29, 1857.*

Figure 6 is a cover addressed to Chaplain Stewart at Morleys Hotel, London, England which was postmarked in Paris on 29 June 1857. It bears franking of a single reddish orange 40 centime imperforate Emperor Napoleon III stamp issued between 1851 and 1861 bearing the inscription "Empire Franc." About 59 million of these stamps (number 15) were printed; they were designed and engraved by Jacques Jean Barre.<sup>26,27</sup> On the face, there are two circular postmarks – one black and one red - and one – black with concentric circles - on the reverse in addition to the cancellation of the stamp in black and the boxed letters on the face of the cover in the lower right quadrant.

Between the horrors of 1848 and the uprisings across Europe and the Franco Prussian War in 1870 France enjoyed a relatively stable period under the Second French Empire (French: *Le Deuxième empire français*). This was the Imperial Bonapartist regime of Napoleon III, between the Second Republic and the Third Republic. During the United States Civil War the French installed a government in Mexico but that was short lived.<sup>28</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Copyright MMXV by Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, U.S. Navy (Retired). He is an admiralty and insurance coverage litigator in New York City specializing in complex coverage and bad faith litigation and major marine casualties including pollution and environmental damage. He also is an Adjunct Professor of Law at Fordham Law School. All legal and moral rights reserved. No claim to copyright is made to official U.S. Government publications and documents or item in the public domain. This article may not be copied or reprinted without the prior express written consent of the copyright holder.

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- <sup>2</sup> The second article of Navy Regulations 1775 read: "The Commanders of the ships of the thirteen United Colonies, are to take care that divine service be performed twice a day on board, and a sermon preached on Sundays, unless bad weather or other extraordinary accidents prevent."
- <sup>3</sup> *The Sailors' Magazine and Naval Journal*, American Seaman's Friend Society, 1831, Vol. 3 & 4, at [http://books.google.com/books?id=GNUZAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA365&lpg=PA365&dq=Charles+S.+Stewart+%2B+navy+%2B+chaplain&source=bl&ots=16Hc3vQFCF&sig=GTyAJG1U4oDJ04SuO8OB\\_7EY588&hl=en&sa=X&ei=jXFNU5FGZWksQTU7oHwCA&ved=0CDkO6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=Charles%20S.%20Stewart%20%2B%20navy%20%2B%20chaplain&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=GNUZAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA365&lpg=PA365&dq=Charles+S.+Stewart+%2B+navy+%2B+chaplain&source=bl&ots=16Hc3vQFCF&sig=GTyAJG1U4oDJ04SuO8OB_7EY588&hl=en&sa=X&ei=jXFNU5FGZWksQTU7oHwCA&ved=0CDkO6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=Charles%20S.%20Stewart%20%2B%20navy%20%2B%20chaplain&f=false)
- <sup>4</sup> Harris, Rev. William O., "Military Chaplains Part of Princeton's Earliest History," online at [http://www.ptsem.edu/Publications/inspire2/6.3/feature\\_1/earliest\\_history.htm](http://www.ptsem.edu/Publications/inspire2/6.3/feature_1/earliest_history.htm). William O. Harris was Princeton Seminary's librarian for archives and special collections. He served as a navy chaplain for three years (1954–1956) aboard navy destroyers in the Pacific Ocean off the coasts of Korea and China.
- <sup>5</sup> For biography of Clifford Merrill Drury, see <http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=drury-clifford-m-cr.xml>.
- <sup>6</sup> Stewart published numerous books on his travels to various parts of the world including *The Hawaiian Islands in 1822, Journal of a Residence in the Sandwich Islands During 1823, 1824 and 1825*, (1828), *A Visit to the South Seas In the United States' Ship Vincennes During the Years 1829 and 1830 Including Scenes in Brazil Peru* (1831), *Sketches of Society in Great Britain and Ireland*, (1834), *Brazil and La Plata, The Personal Record of a Cruise*, (1856), and *Charles S. Stewart and the Gulf Coast Blockade, 1861-1862*; reissued with *Letters of a Naval Chaplain*, by Charlotte Parker Hallock (1976).
- <sup>7</sup> Robert's father (Reverend Charles Stewart's grandfather) was Charles Stewart (1729-1800), the Commissary General of Issues, Continental Army and delegate to Continental Congress from NJ.
- <sup>8</sup> *Catalogue of the Litchfield Law School* (Hartford, CT: Press of Case, Tiffany and Company, 1849), 15. Stewart, Charles Samuel, *Lectures of Reeve and Gould, 1818*, Notebook, Harvard Law Library.
- <sup>9</sup> Harriet Bradford Tiffany, June 24, 1798 - September 6, 1830.
- <sup>10</sup> They had three children: Charles Seaforth 1823-1904 (originally Charles Clasby - Captain of "Thames"), Harriet Bradford Stewart 1825-1843 and Martha Stewart Wilson 1828-1860. Only the son, the first born, lived a full life; his two younger sisters died at ages 18 and 32 respectively. <http://genforum.genealogy.com/cgi-bin/pageload.cgi?New.Haven:ct:6207.html>.
- <sup>11</sup> Charles Samuel's son, Charles Seaforth, soldier, born at sea, 11 April, 1823, was graduated in 1846 at the United States Military Academy, where he was assistant professor of engineering in 1849-1854. He was made 1st lieutenant in the corps of engineers in 1853, serving as assistant engineer in 1854-57, and as superintending engineer in the construction of fortifications in Boston harbor until 1861, having been promoted captain in 1860. He served during the Civil War in the Corps of Engineers, was made major in 1863, and was chief engineer of the Middle Military Division in 1864-65. He was made lieutenant-colonel in 1867, colonel in 1882, and was retired in 1886.
- <sup>12</sup> Stockton, Betsey (c. 1798 – October 24, 1865), Born in slavery about 1798, Betsey was given by her owner Robert Stockton to his daughter upon her marriage to Reverend Ashbel Green, president of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University). She, as well as Charles Stewart - then a student at Princeton, were caught up in the religious fervor of the era. She became a convert, and in 1817, Betsey Stockton was admitted as a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Princeton, New Jersey, and formally freed at that time. <http://www.phcmontreat.org/bios/Bios-Missionaries-Hawaii.htm>
- <sup>13</sup> <http://genforum.genealogy.com/cgi-bin/pageload.cgi?New.Haven:ct:6207.html>.
- <sup>14</sup> Introduction: Betsey Stockton journal at [http://www3.amherst.edu/~aardoc/Betsey\\_Stockton\\_Journal\\_1.html](http://www3.amherst.edu/~aardoc/Betsey_Stockton_Journal_1.html).
- <sup>15</sup> Stockton, Betsey, Journal, "Religious Intelligence. Sandwich Islands," *Christian Advocate* 2 (May 1824): 233–35; 2 (December 1824): 563–66; 3 (January 1825): 36–41, published by Ashbel Green and available at [http://www3.amherst.edu/~aardoc/Betsey\\_Stockton\\_Journal\\_1.html#back15](http://www3.amherst.edu/~aardoc/Betsey_Stockton_Journal_1.html#back15). Excerpted from *African-American Religion: A Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents*, edited by David W. Wills and Albert J. Raboteau (emeritus), to be published by the University of Chicago Press. ©2006 by the University of Chicago. All rights reserved.
- <sup>16</sup> USS *Guerriere* was the first frigate built in the United States since 1801. The name came from a fast 38-gun British frigate captured and destroyed in a half-hour battle by USS *Constitution* 19 August 1812.

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<sup>17</sup> USS *Vincennes* (1826) was a 703-ton *Boston-class sloop* of war serving from 1826 to 1865. During her service, *Vincennes* patrolled the Pacific, explored the Antarctic, and blockaded the Confederate Gulf coast in the Civil War. Named for the Revolutionary War Battle of Vincennes, she was the first U.S. warship to circumnavigate the globe. Her service life nearly coincided with that of Chaplain Stewart.

*Vincennes*—the first American ship to be so named—was one of ten sloops of war whose construction was authorized by Congress on 3 March 1825. She was laid down at New York in 1825, launched on 27 April 1826, and commissioned on 27 August 1826, with Master Commandant William Compton Bolton in command. She was decommissioned after the Civil War after more than 40 years of service.

<sup>18</sup> *The New York Times*, December 19, 1870.

<sup>19</sup> The third USS *Delaware* of the United States Navy was a 74-gun ship of the line, named for the state of Delaware. She was laid down at Norfolk Navy Yard in August 1817 and launched on 21 October 1820. She was roofed over and kept at the yard in ordinary until on 27 March 1827, was she was ordered repaired and fitted for sea.

*Delaware* was decommissioned on 10 February 1830, and lay in ordinary at Norfolk until 1833. Recommissioned on 15 July 1833, she received President Andrew Jackson aboard on 29 July, firing a 24-gun (*sic*) salute at both his arrival and departure. The following day she set sail for the Mediterranean where she served as flagship for Commodore D. T. Patterson and cruised on goodwill visits and for the protection of the rights and property of American citizens until her return to Hampton Roads on 16 February 1836. She was placed in ordinary on 10 March 1836 until recommissioned on 7 May 1841 for local operations from Norfolk.

*Delaware* returned to Hampton Roads on 4 March 1844 and was decommissioned at Norfolk Navy Yard. on the 22nd. Still in ordinary there in 1861, she was burned on 20 April along with other ships and the yard facilities to prevent their falling into Confederate hands.

In June 1930, a bronze replica of *Delaware's* figurehead was presented by the Class of 1891 to the United States Naval Academy. This bust, one of the most famous relics on the campus, has been widely identified as that of Native American leader of the Shawnee people, Tecumseh. However, when it adorned the man-of-war, it commemorated not Tecumseh but Tamanend, the revered Delaware chief who welcomed William Penn to America when he arrived in Delaware country on 2 October 1682.

<sup>20</sup> USS *United States* was a wooden-hulled, three-masted heavy frigate of the United States Navy and the first of the six original frigates authorized for construction by the Naval Act of 1794. She was built at Humphrey's shipyard in Philadelphia and launched on 10 May 1797 and immediately began duties with the newly formed United States Navy protecting American merchant shipping during the Quasi-War with France.

In 1861 *United States* was in port at Norfolk and was seized and subsequently commissioned into the Confederate States Navy as CSS *United States*, but was later scuttled by Confederate forces. Union forces raised the scuttled ship, and retained control of the ship until she was broken up in 1865.

<sup>21</sup> USS *Brandywine* (formerly *Susquehanna*) was a wooden-hulled, three-masted frigate of the United States Navy bearing 44 guns which had the initial task of conveying the Marquis de Lafayette back to France. She was later recommissioned a number of times for service in various theaters, such as in the Mediterranean, in China and in the South Atlantic Ocean. She was well suited for diplomacy.

<sup>22</sup> USS *Congress* (1841) — the fourth United States Navy ship to carry that name — was a sailing frigate, like her predecessor, USS *Congress* (1799). Photo number NH 590 on US Naval History Center at <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-c/congres4.htm>. *Congress* served with distinction in the Mediterranean, South Atlantic Ocean, and in the Pacific Ocean. She continued to operate as an American warship until the American Civil War, where she was sunk by the ironclad CSS *Virginia* in battle off Newport News, Virginia.

<sup>23</sup> Series: V. Papers of Charles Samuel Stewart Stewart, Charles, 1729-1800. Charles Stewart family papers, 1768-1877: Guide. Houghton Library, Harvard College Library. For finding aid and further study, see <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~hou01286>

<sup>24</sup> The second USS *Niagara* was a steam-driven screw frigate in the United States Navy. *Niagara* was launched by New York Navy Yard on 23 February 1855; sponsored by Miss Annie C. O'Donnell; and commissioned on 6 April 1857.

*Niagara* recommissioned on 14 May 1860, Captain William McKean in command. Another unique assignment awaited; she was to carry Japan's first diplomatic mission to the United States from Washington to New York, and then home. Leaving New York on 30 June, *Niagara* called in Porto Grande, Cape Verde Islands; São Paulo-de-Loande (now Luanda), Angola; Batavia (now Djakarta), Java; and Hong Kong. The frigate entered Tokyo Bay on

8 November to land her distinguished passengers, then sailed on 27 November for Hong Kong, Aden, and Cape Town, returning Boston on 23 April 1861 to learn of the outbreak of the Civil War.

Quickly preparing for duty on the blockade of southern ports, USS *Niagara* arrived off Charleston, South Carolina on 10 May, and two days later captured blockade runner CSS *General Parkhill* attempting to make Charleston from Liverpool. Through the summer she gave similar service at Mobile Bay, and was at Fort Pickens, Florida on 22 September when Flag Officer William McKean in *Niagara* took command of the East Gulf Blockading Squadron. She engaged Confederate defenses at Fort McRee, Pensacola, and Warrington on 22 November, and was hulled twice above the waterline. On 5 June 1862 she sailed for repairs at Boston Navy Yard, where she decommissioned 16 June. Recommissioned 14 October 1863, *Niagara* steamed from New York on 1 June 1864 to watch over Confederate warships then fitting out in Europe. She reached her base at Antwerp on 26 June, and from there roved the English Channel, the French Atlantic Coast and the Bay of Biscay. On 15 August she took steamer *Georgia*, a former Confederate warship, off Portugal. In February and March, with USS *Sacramento* she lay at Ferrol, Spain, to prevent Confederate ironclad *Stonewall* from departing, but the much more powerful southern ship was able to make good her escape.

*Niagara* patrolled with the European Squadron until 29 August when she cleared Cadiz for Boston, arriving on 20 September. There she decommissioned on 28 September 1865, remaining in the Boston Navy Yard until sold on 6 May 1885.

<sup>25</sup> Some of Stewart's papers are archived at New York State Historical Association – Research Library. Title Rev. Charles S. Stewart Papers. Date [inclusive] 1822-1862. New York State Historical Association – Research Library, Special Collections, P.O. Box 800, 5798 State Highway 80, Cooperstown, NY 13326, ACCESSION NUMBERS nm-009.57 – Nm-039.57, Nm-001.03.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.stampworld.com/stamps/France/>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> There is more to the French adventure in Mexico beyond the Charlton Heston movie “Major Dundee.”



# NJPH

The Journal of the  
**NEW JERSEY POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY**  
 ISSN: 1078-1625

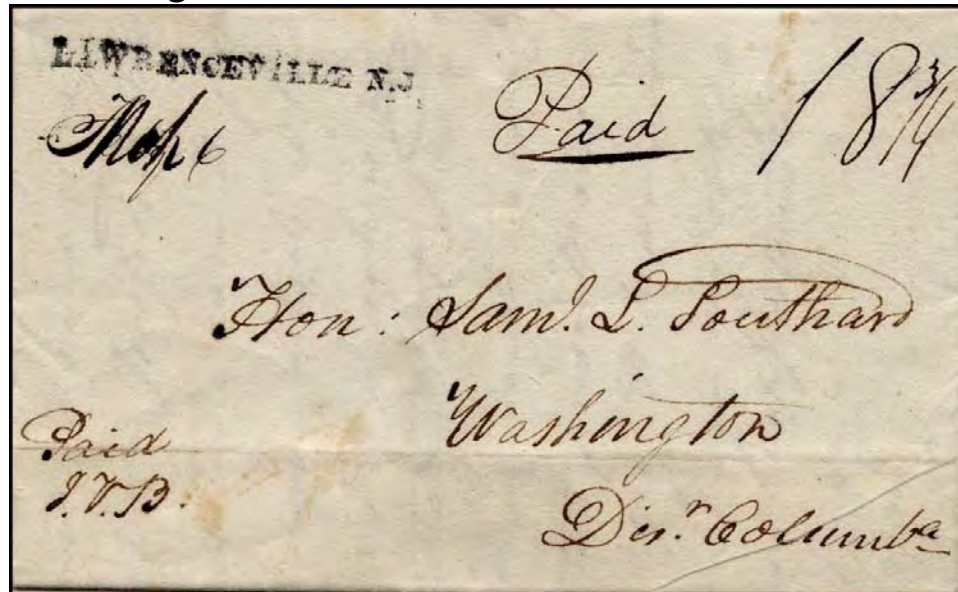
Vol. 43

No. 3

Whole Number 199

August 2015

## *Straight Line Post Marks of NJ: Lawrenceville*



*An 1829 Lawrenceville, NJ straight line marking on a stampless folded letter addressed to New Jersey's Samuel L. Southard, then completing his term as Secretary of the Navy. Straight line hand stamps are explored in this issue by Robert G. Rose. The first of this series is devoted exclusively to Lawrenceville, which used the greatest number of straight line hand stamps in New Jersey. See page 128.*

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