

# SEARCHING FOR THE U.S.S. SEMINOLE & JARED LINSLEY, JR.

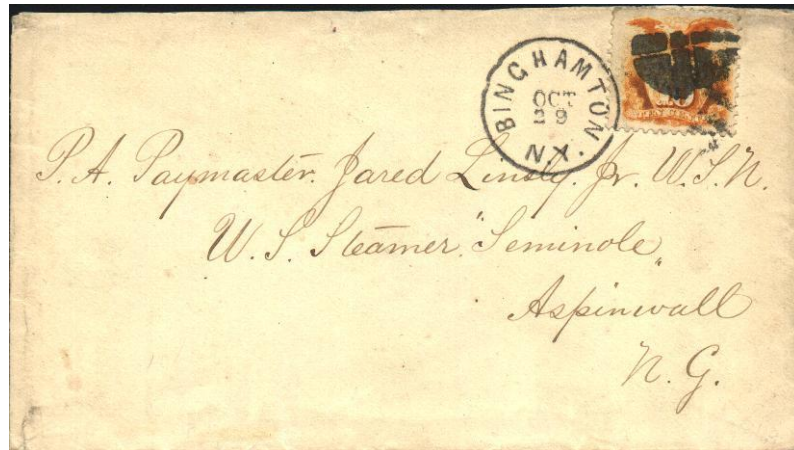
## A Philatelic Detective Story by David E. Williams

### Introduction

Collectors of postal history sometimes go beyond the study of postal rates, markings, and the origin/destination of covers to explore the background and history of either the sender or recipient of the letter in question. In my case the investigation of the recipient Jared Linsley, Jr, Passed Assistant Paymaster on the *U.S.S. Seminole*, played into my decision to purchase a cover which was offered for sale. Initial questions about the cover's genuineness led to an in depth search for answers to several questions. What was the history of the *U.S.S. Seminole*? Who was Jared Linsley, Jr. and what was his role in the U.S. Navy and in particular with regards to the *U.S.S. Seminole*?

### The Cover in Question

A couple of years ago a well known dealer of postal history offered me the cover shown in **Figure 1** below. The cover, bearing a 10¢ pictorial issue of 1869, was sent from Binghamton, NY to Jared Linsley, Jr. U.S.N., Passed Assistant Paymaster on the *U.S.S. Seminole* at Aspinwall New Grenada. The stamp is tied to the cover by a quartered cork killer and a Binghamton CDS dated October 29.



**Figure 1.** Cover sent from Binghamton, NY to *U.S.S. Seminole* at Aspinwall, New Grenada

While deciding whether or not to purchase this cover, and in an attempt to help determine its authenticity, I began to research the history of the *U.S.S. Seminole*. Early results did not look promising.

### The U.S.S. Seminole

My early search for information began as most searches nowadays - on the Internet. In Googling the *U.S.S. Seminole*, I was directed to several promising websites. The most authoritative appeared to be the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*.

According to this website there were four *Seminoles*. The first, *Seminole-I*, was a screw sloop of war launched from the Pensacola Navy Yard on June 25, 1859.<sup>1</sup> *Seminole-II* was an iron-hulled screw tug built in 1879 and not purchased by the Navy until 1898.<sup>2</sup> Thus, *Seminole-I* became the target of my investigation.

*Seminole-I* was commissioned on April 25, 1860. She was of steam and sail propulsion with a length of 188', beam of 30'6" and a displacement of 801 tons. Her crew consisted of a compliment of 120 officers and enlisted men. In mid 1860 she sailed to Brazil and served there for about a year before being called back home after the outbreak of the Civil War. She arrived in Philadelphia on July 6, 1861 where she was fitted for blockade duty. On July 16 she was ordered to join the Atlantic Blockading Squadron. For most of the rest of the war the ship served in the Potomac and off the coasts of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. In late June 1862 she was ordered back to the New York Navy Yard for repairs. She was recommissioned on June 8, 1863 and assigned to the West Gulf Blockading Squadron where she participated in the Battle of Mobile Bay on August 5, 1864. Five days later she was sent back to Pensacola for repairs and in September was sent to Galveston where she remained in service off the Texas coast through the end of the war. Her final action in the war came on May 23, 1865 after which she sailed north and was "*decommissioned on August 11 at the Boston Navy Yard where she was laid up until sold on 20 July 1870 to Mullen and Winchester*".<sup>3</sup> That last statement gave me great pause. If true it meant that the *Seminole* would have been out of commission from 1865 to 1870. If this were the case, how could it have been in Aspinwall in October 1869?

I informed the dealer of the timeline conflicts that I had encountered and asked him to check with some of his sources as to the cover's authenticity. The dealer heard back from someone who stated that the Navy Historical Center's records often contain discrepancies, as he had found when doing research on some Navy ship covers of his own. In the meantime, I took a chance by emailing, and later calling, Jeffrey Forster, Assistant Section Editor of the 1869 Pictorial Issue in the USPCS quarterly, "*The Chronicle*". Jeffrey stated that this particular cover was not listed in "*The 1869 Issue on Cover: A Census and Analysis*", published in 1986 by The United States 1869 Pictorial Research Associates, Inc. However he knew of several 1869 covers sent to the *U.S.S. Seminole* in Aspinwall, and he therefore felt this cover represented a legitimate usage. Jeffrey also referred me to the USPCS website where I obtained a copy of "*Name Collections and Auctions, The 1869 Pictorial Issue*" which Jeffrey had compiled. I also found and purchased on eBay, a copy of the 1869 census publication that Jeffrey had spoken about.

Armed with the auction list and census, I began searching past auction catalogs, at least those that were available for viewing on the Internet, for other covers bearing #116, sent to Aspinwall and, in particular, to the *U.S.S. Seminole*. Not only did I find examples of these, I also found that several were addressed to the same Jared Linsly, Jr. An example of one such cover is seen in **Figure 2**.

**Figure 2.**

Cover sent from New York City to Jared Linsly, Jr. aboard the USS *Seminole* at Aspinwall, New Grenada on October 1, 1869.



It was Lot # 2245 in the Robert A. Siegel Sale # 819. The cover was mailed from New York City on October 1, 1869 and bears the 10¢ orange Pictorial tied by a circle of wedges killer.<sup>4</sup>

Two other covers are shown in **Figure 3**. Both were mailed in from New York City; one on January 5 (NYD), and the second on January 21 (1870). The images are again from Robert A. Siegel, sales; # 876 and 911 respectively. Interestingly, both were addressed to Jared Linsly in care of the American Consul. According to the catalog descriptions, these were carried back to Washington DC by diplomatic pouch and then forwarded back to New York. These two covers seemed to indicate that the *Seminole*, or at least Jared Linsly, had departed Aspinwall sometime after January, 1870.<sup>5,6</sup> It seems likely that the January 5th cover was also mailed in 1870.



**Figure 3.** Two covers sent from New York in January to Jared Linsly Jr. aboard the *USS Seminole* at Aspinwall, New Grenada. Both covers were returned by diplomatic pouch to Washington, DC in March and then forwarded to New York City. One went to 29 Broadway, the other to 22 La Fayette Place.

### More Covers from Binghamton

My initial searches had been focusing on other 10¢ solo usages of #116. In the course of my research I continued buying old auction catalogs that were directly related to the postal history of 1869 Pictorial Issue. In the 1978 sale of *The Juring Collection of 1869 Pictorial Issues* by Sotheby Parke Bernet Stamp Auction Company, I found Lot # 759. This cover bore three 3¢ and a single 1¢ Pictorial issue stamps and was mailed from Binghamton, NY on August 31, 1869 to Jared Linsly aboard the *Seminole* at Aspinwall. This prompted me to go back to the online catalogs and look for more multiple franking Pictorial covers to Aspinwall. In the catalog for Siegel's Sale #819, I found the cover pictured below in **Figure 4**.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 4.**

Cover mailed October 14, 1869 from Binghamton, NY to Jared Linsly, Jr. aboard the *USS Seminole* at the port of Aspinwall, New Grenada. This cover was lot# 2128 in Robert A. Siegel Sale #819

The cover had been mailed only two weeks before the cover that I was contemplating purchasing. The Binghamton CDS and the quartered cork killers were virtually the same. The CDS exhibited the same slight dimples in the circle above the “N” and “G” as on the cover in question. Given all the evidence already discussed, I was pretty much convinced that I would be buying a legitimate cover. I told the dealer I would buy it if he submitted it to APS and if it came back with a good certificate, which it did.

### **Jared Linsly, Jr.**

In the meantime, somewhat satisfied with the validity of the cover, I began to wonder just who was Jared Linsly, Jr.? How did he get to be on the *Seminole* and what was the story of his naval service? There was little information available; however some interesting facts could be pieced together from various sources.

Jared Linsly, Jr., born on July 30, 1842 in New York City, was the fourth child of Dr. Jared and Catherine Linsly.<sup>8</sup> Dr. Linsly was an 1826 graduate of Yale College, practiced medicine in New York City, and was later the personal physician of Cornelius Vanderbilt.<sup>9</sup> Dr. Linsly was a Yale classmate of Dr. John Jay Abernethy,<sup>10</sup> a Navy Surgeon who later served as the Medical Director of the United States Navy until 1870. Dr. Abernethy specialized in the study of yellow fever while stationed at Pensacola and later served with the Blockading Squadron off the Carolina coast during the Civil War.<sup>11</sup> It is quite possible that he knew Jared Jr. before Jared joined the Navy. His relationship with Dr. Linsly may have influenced Jared Jr. in his decision to enter the Navy.

Jared’s first assignment in June, 1864 was as a Paymaster aboard the tin-clad *Julliette* at Cairo on the Mississippi River. On July 23, 1866 he was commissioned by the President as Passed Assistant Paymaster and was assigned duty on the corvette *Massachusetts* where he remained until September, 1867. Prior to his duty on the *Seminole* he also served on the *Osceola*. While serving on the *Seminole* at Port-au-Prince there was a severe outbreak of yellow fever. Both the Surgeon and the Assistant Surgeon died as a result of the outbreak and were buried by Mr. Linsly. The Surgeon was buried at Port-au-Prince, while the Assistant Surgeon was buried at Key West.<sup>12</sup> Of special interest in this regard is a cover listed in “*The 1869 Issue on Cover: A Census and Analysis*”. That cover, sent from Aspinwall to New York City evidently contained either a letter or docketing that referred to “yellow fever on the *Seminole*”. The census lists the date as November 6, 1870<sup>13</sup>, however given the fact that the *Seminole* was in Aspinwall in mid October of 1869, and the fact that Jared Linsly (and supposedly the *Seminole*) were back in New York in early 1870, I am thinking that this cover might have actually originated in 1869. I attempted to find an image of the cover in an early auction catalog, with no success.

When the *Seminole* later returned to New York, several cases of yellow fever broke out and the vessel was placed in quarantine.<sup>14</sup> Just when the *Seminole* returned to New York can be estimated by examining several sources. We have already discussed the two covers that were forwarded from Aspinwall back to New York in March 1870. Even though no docketing appeared on those covers suggesting the year of use, examination of the 1870 Federal Census for the City of New York reveals that in July 1870 Jared Linsly Jr. was listed in the household of his father Dr. Jared Linsly at 22 La Fayette Place.<sup>15</sup> This is the same address to which the rightmost cover shown in **Figure 3** was forwarded to. Also in the “*Register of Commissioned and Warrant*

*Officers of the United States Navy and Marine Corps to January 1, 1871*” Jared Linsly, Passed Assistant Paymaster (ranking with Lieutenant) is listed with the expiration of his last cruise shown as February, 1870.<sup>16</sup> In comparing the above edition of the “Register” to the January 1, 1870 edition, it is seen that over the course of the preceding 12 months, Paymaster Linsly accumulated 2 months of shore duty, 8 months as unemployed and 2 months of sea service. The 2 months of sea service agrees with expiration date of his last cruise (February 1870).<sup>17</sup>

Jared Linsly Jr. died on January 24, 1878 at his father’s house at 22 Lafayette Place. At the time of his death he was serving as Paymaster attached to the training ship *Minnesota* stationed at New York City. He had held that position since May 8, 1875. His obituary noted that he had seen more sea service than any other officer of his rank.<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusions

Based on the records of both the U.S.S. Seminole and Jared Linsly Jr. one can reasonably make the following conclusions:

The original cover in question was mailed October 29, 1869.

Both covers sent to Aspinwall in January, carried to Washington, and forwarded from there to New York in March were mailed in 1870.

The cover mentioned in the 1869 census which was mailed from Aspinwall to New York in which there was a reference to “yellow fever on the Seminole”, was also most likely mailed in November of 1869 rather than 1870 as shown in the census.

## Footnotes:

1. Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships: Department of the Navy – Naval Historical Center; Seminole; <http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/s9/seminole-i.htm>
2. Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships: Department of the Navy – Naval Historical Center; Seminole; <http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/s9/seminole-ii.htm>
3. Answers.com, USS Seminole; <http://www.answers.com/topic/uss-seminole>
4. *A European's Large Gold Collection of The 1869 Pictorial Issue*; Robert A. Siegel Sale # 819, Lot# 2245; December 13, 1999.
5. *The Millard Mack Collection of 1869 Pictorial Issue*; Robert A. Siegel Sale # 876, Lot# 46; June 12, 2004.
6. *The Elliott Coulter Collection of The U.S. 1869 Pictorial Issue*; Robert A. Siegel Sale # 911, Lot# 177; May 12, 2006.
7. *A European's Large Gold Collection of The 1869 Pictorial Issue*; Robert A. Siegel Sale # 819, Lot# 2128; December 13, 1999
8. Genealogy Forum, Genealogy.com; <http://genforum.genealogy.com/linsley/messages/55.html>



9. Virtualology.com, Virtual American Biographies, Jared Linsly; <http://famousamericans.net/jaredlinsly/>
10. New York Times, October 31, 1879, Page 7; *Dr. Abernethy's Funeral*
11. New York Times, October 29, 1879, Page 5; *Obituary, Dr. John Jay Abernethy*
12. New York Times, January 26, 1878, Page 8; *Death of Paymaster Linsly.*
13. Jonathan W. Rose and Richard M. Searing, Editors; *The 1869 Issue on Cover: A Census and Analysis*, The United States 1869 Pictorial Research Associates, Inc. 1986; Page 77.
14. New York Times, January 26, 1878, Page 8; *Death of Paymaster Linsly.*
15. United States Federal Census of the 9<sup>th</sup> District, 15<sup>th</sup> Ward of New York City, enumerated July, 1870 Page 10.
16. *Register of Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the United States Navy and Marine Corps to January 1, 1871*; United States Bureau of Naval Personnel, United States Navy Department, Bureau of Navigation, 1871, Page 54-55.
17. *Register of Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the United States Navy and Marine Corps to January 1, 1870*; United States Bureau of Naval Personnel, United States Navy Department, Bureau of Navigation, 1870, Page 50-51.
18. New York Times, January 26, 1878; Page 8; *Death of Paymaster Linsly,*

## **Donald McKay, Master Builder of Ships at East Boston**

### **Some Historical Perspective of the *USS Seminole* and the Civil War Navy**



Donald McKay, upon his return from England in late 1861, put his shipyard into readiness to build naval vessels. He was one of the earliest proponents of armored vessels and turret mountings for guns. At the time, many American papers were making erroneous statements about the Navy's readiness. McKay wrote numerous letters to the *New York Commercial Bulletin* as well as other papers refuting their views and reaffirming the readiness of the US Navy fleet.

In one such letter written later in the war, he wrote "*At the breaking out of the Rebellion, the Navy of the United States consisted of the following steamers, namely: The screw frigates Merrimack, Wabash, Minnesota, Roanoke, and Colorado, of about 3,350 tons each; of the large screw sloop Niagara, of 4,582 tons; of the first class screw sloops Richmond, Brooklyn, San Jacinto, Hartford, Pensacola and Lancaster, of about 2,000 tons each; of the second-class sloops Pawnee, Iroquois, Wyoming, Mohican, and Dacotah, of about 1,070 tons each; of the third-class sloops Narragansett and Seminole, of about 850 tons each; of the first-class paddle-wheel sloops Susquehanna and Powhattan, of about 2,430 tons; the Mississippi, of 1,692 tons; and the*

*Saranac, Michigan, Saginaw, and Spitfire, of about 470 tons each; making a total of twenty-five steamers and 49,700 tons."*

*"Such was the steam navy with which the administration began the task of rigorously blockading 3,600 miles of the most difficult coast in the world, against the fastest and best steamers that the shops of England could produce, built exclusively for speed and blockade running at the particular localities; in addition to which the oceans of the world were to be kept free of the steamers called "Confederate Cruisers," but which, in reality, English pirates, being built in England, equipped with English guns and manned by English crews, whose purpose was not to fight our cruisers as war vessels, but to plunder our sailing merchant ships, and to keep out of the path of our war steamers."*

*"In this pressing emergency the Department did all that could possibly be done. It purchased every merchant steamer that could be converted into a blockading vessel or war cruiser, and the United States Navy at this moment contains every merchant steamer of any size or excellence that has been built in the country. It set at work every steam engine factory in the land that could produce marine machinery, in ordnance, and in armor-plating. It rapidly covered the Mississippi and its tributary waters with an immense inland fleet, many of which were armored, and which sweeping the Rebels from those waters, have been an indispensable element to our holding the whole interior of the country, as it gives us exclusive command of its water highways. It lined the Atlantic coast with such a blockading fleet as the world never witnessed before, and has practically closed the rebellious district to the world; the few vessels which succeeded in running the blockade being too small to carry cargo sufficient to give aid of any consequence. The Rebels have not been able to import even drugs enough to supply the medical department of their Army."*

*"There are now in the United States Navy, in active service, five hundred and fifty-eight steamers, with an aggregate tonnage of 408,000 tons, against the original twenty-five steamers and 49,700 tons with which the war commenced. Of this number, two hundred steamers, with an aggregate of 241,000 tons have been built by the Navy Department."*

*"In no country, and with such limited means, and under such difficult circumstances, has there ever been put afloat in the same time, such immense naval armaments. In no place has there been any failure, but wherever the naval forces moved victory followed. The Rebel coast has been held with a grasp of iron and nearly hermetically sealed. The pirates of the enemy have been followed around the world, and captured wherever they could be found, and the internal navigation and command of this vast country has been kept open and in the hands of the Government."*

Upon finishing reading that part of the foregoing statement, President Lincoln remarked, *"That's the way to appeal to the intelligence of our people; Donald McKay tells them honestly and well what the Navy Department has done during this war."*

[The above photograph and narrative are from Richard C. McKay's *A Famous Shipbuilder Acts as Peacemaker at Home and Abroad* as it appeared at [www.eraoftheclipperships.com](http://www.eraoftheclipperships.com) . Richard C. McKay was the grandson of Donald McKay. D.E.W.]