

LA POSTA

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Replies to the form letter mailed to a number of postal history enthusiasts during the month of December, 1968, have indicated that there exists a level of interest in forming a study group, or seminar, along the general lines proposed in the letter. The purpose of this bulletin is to serve as a forum for the study group, to carry news of interest of the group, and to publish results of postal history research projects undertaken by group members.

Many of the letters received in reply to the December form letter expressed concern over possible conflict between this group and the Western Cover Society. Most of the people who received a copy of the first letter are, as I am, members of W.C.S., and the concern over conflict or duplication of effort is understandable. After considerable thought and consultation with other interested people, the decision has been reached to go ahead with the following considerations in mind:

- 1) this group will be primarily concerned with the postal history of the mountain and desert west, a scope of area much narrower than W.C.S.;
- 2) this group will be open and, hopefully, interested in undertaking research in all aspects of postal history in the area from pre-territorial to 20th century; and,
- 3) this group will be exclusively oriented toward research, some of the results of which may appear on the pages of Western Express, or other journals.

In summary, it is anticipated that this postal history study group will compliment the Western Cover Society, as well as, The 4th Class Cancellation Club, and other groups by producing postal history research in our geographic area of interest.

SCOPE OF INTERESTS

The December letter was framed in light of a group concerned with the postal history of the Southwest - Arizona and New Mexico. Many of the replies suggested, in fact demanded, that the geographic scope be increased to include such states as Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, Montana, etc. As a result, it has been decided to consider all of the mountain and desert west, a physiographic boundary as opposed to political boundaries. The term is quite broad and a little bit vague, but in terms of economic activities and human occupation - hence postal history, probably more meaningful than political delimitation.

There were also suggestions as to content and subject matter of research, and here the best guidelines, in the words of "Laugh In", seems to be "What ever turns you on." Who's to say that one man's piece on rural branches or DPOs of Bonner County, Idaho, is any less worthy research than another fellow's work on Colorado Territorial postmarks? While it seems true that people who collect territorials do not collect modern 4th class post offices, and vice versa, I can assure you that there are those among us who collect both. In any case, collectors or enthusiasts of both schools can and do benefit from the same types of information. High quality postal history research, whatever the topic, should be, and hopefully will be, the chief objective of this study group.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

It is by no means in the purview of this writer to suggest all the goals and objectives for a study group such as we are forming, and I will not attempt to do so. There is, however, one possible goal which I would like to list for your consideration. Due to the efforts of Dr. Sheldon Dike of Albuquerque, and a few other enthusiastic students of the postal history of New Mexico Territory, there exist two excellent reference works on the post offices and postmarks of New Mexico in its territorial period. The first of Dr. Dike's books is devoted to listing the dates of establishment, postmasters with appointment dates, and where relevant name changes and closing dates, for all New Mexico Territorial post offices. Dr. Dike's second book, last published in 1965, is titled New Mexico Territorial Postmark Catalog. This magnificent effort tabulates all known postmarks of the period by type, and lists earliest and latest known examples of each type together with the owner and a valuation based on age, desirability, scarcity, and a number of other variables. Both of these books are now out of print, but a goodly number are in the hands of collectors and therein lies a level of knowledge available to New Mexico Territory students enjoyed by few other area groups. The catalog is in a continual state of revision, but a strong core of knowledge exists (Len Persson estimates that 90% or more of all known markings are contained in the latest edition), and even our most "stable" catalogs - Scott's, Gibbon's, etc. - are revised and expanded periodically.

As a possible goal for this study group, I should like to propose that we work toward the compilation of catalogs similar to Dr. Dike's for all of our area of geographic interest. It is not an impossible goal, and I hope you can agree with me in its worth. This bulletin could serve as a means of distributing news and information as to who is working on various areas and topics. Who needs information on an area or subject, and who has information, represent other types of helpful instructions. Perhaps Dr. Dike can be persuaded to present technical and methodological tips, and the bulletin can certainly review important postal history data sources. If this idea sounds interesting, and you feel you might be able to participate in some way, please drop me a line so I can get some publicity for you and hopefully put you in contact with kindred spirits.

For example, William H. Bauer, 112 Jeanne Dr., Westwego, IA. 70094, is currently working on Colorado postal history up to 1929. He is interested in gathering information of various postmarks used and the periods of use, so if you have a number of Colorado covers and would like to see a Colorado catalog, it would probably be to your advantage to contact Bill Bauer.

Publicity for our research efforts will also be generated by Western Stamp Collector, which has taken an interest in us and will undoubtedly co-operate in our search for postal history data where they can.

THE BULLETIN

La Posta is a Spanish term meaning Mail Stop. It was applied in the Southwestern U.S. to express route stations. In La Mesilla, a small town 2 miles south of Las Cruces and once the capital of the Confederate Territory of Arizona, the term has endured as the name of a widely known restaurant housed in a building once used as a Butterfield Stage station. The name seems appropriate for a postal history bulletin published in this part of the nation.

The printing process is temporary. Negotiations are now underway to bring out all future issues of La Posta by a multilith process, and failing there, a mimeograph process. It would be preferable to bring out all issues in multilith, but it was decided to go ahead with this first issue before interest lagged and the matter forgotten.

ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL NOTES

The views expressed on the two preceding pages are necessarily heavily biased by my own opinions and desires, but they are heavily tempered by communications with some of the others who responded to the initial form letter. This writer would greatly like to learn the views and opinions of others of you who may not yet have written. Above all else, this group, or seminar, is to be guided by the interests of its members.

The study of postal history in our area is not so broad as to prevent every future edition of this bulletin from containing at least one article, or informative piece, of interest to every person who reads it.

Number 2, the next edition and the first to be printed by multilith, is currently planned for distribution in March. Bill Rapp, of The 4th Class Cancellation Club, is working up a piece on 4th Class post offices of San Juan County, New Mexico. If all goes well, his article will appear in the March issue. A piece on the Fort Stanton, New Mexico Territory post office is in preparation, and will appear in the March issue with illustrations of all know territorial period postmark types. In addition, the first of a series of "How to" articles on postal history research will appear.

Members of the seminar with questions they wish researched and projects they wish publicized are respectfully requested to contact myself. In addition, persons wishing to serve as special consultants in specific geographic areas or topics (RR postal history, DPOs, etc.) are asked to make their fields of specialization known to me.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The original estimate of \$5 for the first year subscription or enrollment fee for this study group still seems a fairly accurate estimate. I willingly confess ignorance of the costs of running a project such as this, but considering only supplies, printing and mailing estimates, the \$5 figure seems pretty close.

Funds will be managed as an organization, i.e., a checking account will be established in the name of the Mountain and Desert West Postal History Society and all bills will be paid by checks drawn on that account (as long as it has a positive balance). All financial records will be open to any member(subscriber) at any time, and if in fact costs do not justify the amount of dues, the balance at the years end will be divided equally among all members and credited toward next year's dues. Further, if anyone has any suggestions of a better way to work this, please do not hesitate to make them known.

One additional note here: the personal guarantee of a postal history publication with not less than 6 issues in 1969, and at least 60 pages still stands. If I have to, I can do that much research by myself, but please don't force me.

ADIOS

That will be all for the first number; very spare and not very informative, but a start none-the-less. Please make your desires and interests known. I firmly believe that this can and will be a highly productive group if only we work in concert.

Richard W. Helbock