NINETEENTH CENTURY POST OFFICES OF WALLOWA COUNTY, OREGON by HELBOCK

In any discussion of the West's ruggedly beautiful and isolated places, the name of Wallowa County should certainly be mentioned. Tucked away far in the northeast corner of Oregon, Wallowa County contains some 3178 square miles of land area, most of which lies within the boundaries of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. As of 1965, the county had an estimated 6,151 inhabitants, or an overall density of less than 2 persons per square mile. The three Wallowa River Valley towns of Enterprise, Wallowa and Joseph accounted for well over half of the county's total population.

Wallowa County was created February 11, 1887, from territory which had formerly been part of Union County. The name of the county is a Nez Perce Indian word which was used to describe a triangular structure of stakes supporting a network of smaller sticks for trapping fish. This type of trap was used by the Nez Perce extensively in the Wallowa River below the outlet of Wallowa Lake.

There were eight post offices established in the territory destined to become Wallowa County before the county was created in 1887. Bancroft cites Lostine, Alder and Joseph as the largest communities of the Wallowa Valley in the late 1880s, but the Census of 1890 lists populations of 150 for Lostine and 17 for Alder, while the only other Wallowa town enumerated was Enterprise, a newly founded community which boasted a population of 500.

The following list details the Wallowa County post offices which were established prior to 1900. Offices are listed in the chronological order of their dates of establishment.

WALLOWA. Established April 10, 1873. The Wallowa post office was named for the Wallowa River, upon which it was located. The site of this post office was near the junction of the Lostine and Wallowa rivers in section 14, township 1 north, range 42 east.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:

John Snodgrass	April 10, 1873	Martha Ann Dougherty ...	April 26, 1881
John McCall	Feb. 5, 1874	Lucian J. Cole	May 19, 1884
James Masterson	Feb. 13, 1874	Samuel B. Willett	June 23, 1886
Francis Bramlet	July 22, 1874	Samuel Sproston	Aug. 6, 1887
Isaac Baston	Dec. 31, 1880	Maggie Bunnell	Dec. 12, 1894

Status: The Wallowa post office was not in service during the following periods: February 1st to April 26th, 1881; November 21, 1881 to May 19, 1884; and, June 30, 1885 to June 23, 1886. The office is currently operating as a 2nd class facility, ZIP code - 97885.

Postmarks: Based upon the level of compensation received by Wallowa postmasters, postal markings from this office may theoretically be evaluated in the following groupings: 1873 to 1881 - very scarce; 1884 to 1889 - moderately scarce; and, 1890 to 1899 - fairly common.

PRAIRIE CREEK. Established January 10, 1876. This post office was named for the stream upon which it was situated. Prairie Creek bears a descriptive name applied by Robert M. Downey, an early settler who admired the fine stands of bunch grass covering the surrounding prairies. The Prairie Creek post office was located about 2 miles east of Wallowa Lake, and in section 11, township 3 south, range 45 east.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:

Robert M. Downey	January 10, 1876	Rebecca A. Davis	Sept. 7, 1887
Francis X. Musty	October 24, 1882	Francis X. Musty	March 29, 1892
Thomas F. Rich	November 22, 1883		

Status: The Prairie Creek post office was discontinued July 6, 1893, papers to Joseph.

Postmarks: Postal markings of Prairie Creek should be considered very scarce from the 1876 to 1879 period, and moderately scarce from the 1880 to 1893 period.

ALDER. Established April 5, 1878. The Alder post office was named for the grove of alder trees which provided shade for the cabin of Henry Beecher, the first postmaster. This office was located on Alder Slope about 2 miles southeast of present-day Enterprise, and in section 27, township 2 south, range 44 east. After the community of Enterprise was founded, most of the residents of Alder moved to the new town, abandoning the older community to memory and history.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:

Henry Beecher	April 5, 1878	Cathrin Akin	Sept. 29, 1884
William McConnell	July 19, 1878	Edgar M. Simms	Aug. 26, 1886
E.J. Hambleton	Aug. 30, 1880	Cathrin Akin	Nov. 9, 1886
William P. Simms	Dec. 23, 1881	Frances Cobbs	Oct. 11, 1887
Albert C. King	Nov. 13, 1882		

Status: The Alder post office was discontinued October 9, 1890, papers to Enterprise.

Postmarks: Based upon compensation of Alder postmasters relative to the annual compensation of other Oregon postmasters of the period, postmarks from this town may be rated scarce to moderately scarce for the entire period of its existence.

LOSTINE. Established August 6, 1878. This office was named for Lostine in Cherokee County, Kansas, by an early settler from that midwestern community. The Lostine post office is located on Lostine River - named for the town - about 9 miles northwest of Enterprise, and in section 15, township 1 south, range 43 east.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:

William R. Laughlin	Aug. 6, 1878	Jacob H. Haun	Dec. 15, 1890
Guly Laughlin	Sept. 14, 1880	William Pullen	June 30, 1892
John H. McCubbin	Sept. 29, 1888	George W. Cray	March 15, 1894
Jacob H. Haun	Oct. 25, 1889	Bessie C. Poley	Aug. 30, 1899
John Luttrell	March 24, 1890		

Status: The Lostine post office is currently operating as a 3rd class facility; ZIP code - 97857.

Postmarks: 1878-1879, very scarce; 1880-1883, moderately scarce; 1884-1899, fairly common with those in the late 1890s rated as quite common.

JOSEPH. Established April 23, 1880. The Joseph post office is named for the famous chiefs of the Nez Perce Indians. It was the younger Chief Joseph who, after making threats to the settlers of the Wallowa Valley, led the U.S. Army on an epic chase to Montana where he finally surrendered in 1877. This post office is located about a mile north of Wallowa Lake, and in the southwest corner of township 2 south, range 45 east.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:

Matthew Johnson	April 23, 1880	John A. Rumble	Nov. 15, 1890
John D. McCully	Feb. 3, 1882	William Wurzweiler	Dec. 12, 1894
Albert W. Gowan	July 23, 1883	George F. Conley	July 22, 1897

Status: The Joseph post office is currently operating as a 2nd class facility; ZIP code - 97846.

Postmarks: Joseph postmarks may be considered moderately scarce from the 1880 to 1883 period, but between 1884 and 1899, postmarks should be fairly common.

IMNAHA. Established January 4, 1885. This office was named for the Imnaha River, along which it is located. Imnaha is a Nez Perce word which means "land ruled by Imna, who was a minor chief of the Nez Perce. The Imnaha post office is located at the mouth of Little Sheep Creek deep in the gorge of Imnaha River, and in section 16, township 1 north, range 48 east.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:

Alexander B. Findley	January 4, 1885	Orintha M. Chase	May 1, 1891
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Status: The Imnaha post office is currently operating as a 4th class facility; ZIP code - 97842.

Postmarks: Imnaha has never been a very busy place, and from 1885 to 1893 its postmarks should be considered very scarce. From 1894 to 1899, Imnaha postmarks are rated moderately scarce.

TEEPY SPRINGS. Established August 3, 1886. The Teepy Springs post office was in operation briefly at or near a natural spring, which is locally spelled Tepee Springs. The office was named for the springs, but the variation in spelling is a mystery. The springs were so named because a group of tepee poles were found standing nearby. The poles were apparently left by Indians who had used the area as a camp ground. This post office was about 6 miles north of Enterprise, and about 1 mile west of the Lewiston Highway.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:

Chauncy Akin	August 3, 1886	William A. Tope	May 5, 1890
Sarah A. Akin	Dec. 7, 1887		

Status: The Teepy Springs post office was closed from September 14th to December 7th, 1887, and finally discontinued August 14, 1890, papers to Enterprise.

Postmarks: Postal markings from Teepy Springs with any year date should be considered exceedingly scarce.

ARCADIA. Established January 8, 1887. The name of this office represented an attempt by its first and only postmaster to express his awareness of the impressive landscape of the region. Arcadia comes from a pastoral area of Greece, which was noted for its peaceful simplicity. The Arcadia post office was located about 10 miles northwest of Imnaha, and in the west central portion of township 2 north, range 47 east.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:

Thomas Gwillim January 8, 1887

Status: The Arcadia post office was discontinued January 25, 1897, papers to Winslow.

Postmarks: An Arcadia postmark from any year of the office's 10 year life should be considered exceedingly scarce.

LOST PRAIRIE. Established August 17, 1887. The Lost Prairie post office took the name of the general locality in which it was located. A.C. Smith and a group of pioneer settlers were chasing a band of renegade Indians who had stolen some stock, and when the posse lost the trail in this area, it became known as Lost Prairie. The post office was located just a little south of the Oregon-Washington boundary on or near the Grande Ronde River, and in section 19, township 6 north, range 44 east.

19th Century Postmaster and Appointment Date:

Rion H. Bacon August 17, 1887

Status: The Lost Prairie post office was discontinued March 30, 1900, mail to Arko.

Postmarks: All postmarks of Lost Prairie should be considered moderately scarce to scarce, with the 1890 to 1895 period probably the easiest to find.

ENTERPRISE. Established November 9, 1887. Enterprise was named by a majority vote of those early settlers who were appropriately gathered in a mercantile company tent in 1887. The name was suggested by R.F. Stubblefield, and relative to the growth of other Wallowa Valley towns, Stubblefield proved something of a prophet. The Enterprise post office is located on the Wallowa River about 6 miles north of Wallowa Lake.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:

Cathrin Akin November 9, 1887 Levi J. Rouse April 21, 1897
Joseph C. Reaves April 22, 1893

Status: The Enterprise post office is currently operating as a 2nd class facility; ZIP code - 97828.

Postmarks: All postmarks from Enterprise should be considered fairly common.

JOY. Established November 3, 1888. The Joy post office is reported to have been so named because the residents of the locality expressed joy at the possibility of having local mail service. This office was located west of the Findley Buttes about 15 miles northeast of Enterprise, and in the southeastern part of township 1 north, range 46 east.

19th Century Postmaster and Appointment Date:
Newton W. Brumback Nov. 3, 1888

Status: The Joy post office was discontinued September 25, 1895, papers to Imnaha. An attempt was apparently made to re-establish the Joy office in June, 1901, but records indicate that the attempt was not successful.

Postmarks: Any postmarks from Joy should be considered exceedingly scarce, i.e., if you find a postmark from Joy you have a right to be joyous. (Sorry)

PARADISE. Established August 22, 1889. This office was named as the result of an expedition seeking winter range. Starting from the Wallowa Valley in 1878, Pres Halley, Sam Wade and William Masterson scouted the area and reported finding a regular paradise covered with fine grass. The Paradise post office was located about 4 miles south of the Oregon-Washington border, and about 2½ miles east of the Lewiston Highway in section 5, township 5 north, range 45 east.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:
John Calvin August 22, 1889 Henry C. McNeal April 20, 1895
J.S. Applegate March 21, 1895

Status: The Paradise post office was discontinued in August, 1942.

Postmarks: Postal markings from Paradise for any year between 1889 and 1899 should be considered only moderately scarce.

MINAM. Established June 25, 1890. The Minam post office was located at the mouth of the Minam River from which it took its name. The stream's name comes from the Indian word E-mi-ne-mah, which referred to this river as a place where a certain type of food plant grew. Minam post office was situated at the junction of Wallowa and Minam rivers in section 29, township 2 north, range 41 east.

19th Century Postmaster and Appointment Date:
Elizabeth Richards June 25, 1890

Status: The Minam post office operated for less than one year during the 19th century, as it was discontinued February 4, 1891, mail to Elgin. During June in 1910 the office was re-established, and it continued to operate until the autumn of 1945 when it was converted to a rural station of Elgin. The rural station was finally closed in the early months of 1963.

Postmarks: 19th century postmarks of the Minam office must be considered very rare due to the extremely short life of the office.

FLORA. Established October 6, 1890. This office was named for the daughter of its first postmaster, Adolphus D. Buzzard. The Flora post office was situated in the north-central part of Wallowa County about 3 miles east of Courtney Butte, and 3 miles west of the Lewiston Highway in section 21, township 5 north, range 44 east.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:
Adolphus D. Buzzard October 6, 1890 William H. Baker Feb. 24, 1899

Status: The Flora post office was discontinued December 27, 1966, mail to Enterprise.

Postmarks: Flora postmarks from 1890 to 1893 may be considered moderately scarce, but from 1894 through 1899, postal markings should be fairly common from Flora.

DIVIDE. Established January 31, 1891. This office bore a descriptive name which pertained to its location on the ridge dividing the waters of Big Sheep and Little Sheep creeks. The Divide post office was located about 10 miles east-southeast of Joseph, and in section 11, township 3 south, range 46 east.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:

Annie E. Shaw Jan. 31, 1891 Christina Needham June 30, 1892
Guilla A. Kutch Aug. 12, 1893

Status: The Divide post office was discontinued November 28, 1893, papers to Joseph.

Postmarks: Any postal markings from Divide should be considered extremely scarce due to its short life and low volume of business.

FRUITA. Established December 23, 1891. The Fruita post office was named for Fruita, Colorado, by T.F. Rich, who had formerly lived in the Colorado town. This office was located on Imnaha River near the mouth of Grouse Creek in the north-central part of township 3 south, range 48 east. The Official Highway Map of Oregon dated 1956 indicates the site of Fruita about 9 miles south of the mouth of Grouse Creek, or nearer the mouth of Gumboot Creek, and it can only be assumed that the office was moved farther south sometime during the 20th century.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:

Ellen A. Rodriguez Dec. 23, 1891 Sarah M. Rich Dec. 12, 1894

Status: The Fruita post office was discontinued between 1935 and 1960. Can anyone send me the exact date?

Postmarks: Fruita postmarks from the period 1891 to 1899 should be considered very scarce.

LEAP. Established April 22, 1892. When Fairview, the original name of this place, was rejected by postal authorities because of duplication, it was decided to call the post office Leap because it was leap year. The Leap post office was located about 9 miles east of Wallowa near Middle Fork Whiskey Creek, and in section 8, township 1 north, range 44 east.

19th Century Postmaster and Appointment Date:

Lizzie Heskett April 22, 1892

Status: The Leap post office was discontinued May 10, 1904, papers to Wallowa.

Postmarks: Based upon postmaster compensation, Leap postmarks should be considered only moderately scarce for the period 1892 to 1899.

WINSLOW. Established May 9, 1892. This office was named for Edward Winslow Rumble, who taught school in the area. The Winslow post office was located about 10 miles northeast of Enterprise, and less than a mile west of Crow Creek in section 13, township 1 north, range 45 east.

19th Century Postmaster and Appointment Date:
Fannie Root May 9, 1892

Status: The Winslow post office was discontinued December 13, 1900, mail to Joseph.

Postmarks: Winslow postal markings should be considered moderate to very scarce, with the earliest years being the hardest to find.

ARKO. Established February 12, 1895. The Arko post office was named by the wife of its first postmaster for her former hometown: Arkoe, Nodaway County, Missouri. Somehow the spelling was slightly altered. This office was located in the far northern part of Wallowa County, only a mile or so from the Oregon-Washington border, and about 3 miles northwest of the present-day community of Troy. Arko was in section 19, township 6 north, range 43 east.

19th Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates:
Perry Loy February 12, 1895 Caleb I. Weaver Nov. 29, 1899

Status: The Arko post office was discontinued November 5, 1902, mail to Flora.

Postmarks: Arko postmarks should be considered moderate to very scarce.

GROUSE. Established January 28, 1896. The name of this office reflected the local abundance of this game bird. The Grouse post office was located in the extreme northern part of Wallowa County on the Grande Ronde River in section 13, township 6 north, range 45 east.

19th Century Postmaster and Appointment Date:
Samuel M. Silver January 28, 1896

Status: On February 20, 1917, the site of this office was moved to Asotin County, Washington. The Grouse post office was discontinued October 3, 1919, mail to Bartlett, Wallowa County, Oregon.

Postmarks: Grouse postmarks from 1896 to 1899 should be moderately scarce.

PROMISE. Established December 22, 1896. W. Mann, one of the original settlers in this locality, called the area "Land of Promise," and when the post office was established it was named Promise for that reason. The Promise office was located about 19 miles north of Wallowa, and in section 10, township 4 north, range 42 east.

19th Century Postmaster and Appointment Date:
Thomas C. Miller December 22, 1896

Status: The Promise post office was discontinued in April, 1944, mail to Wallowa.

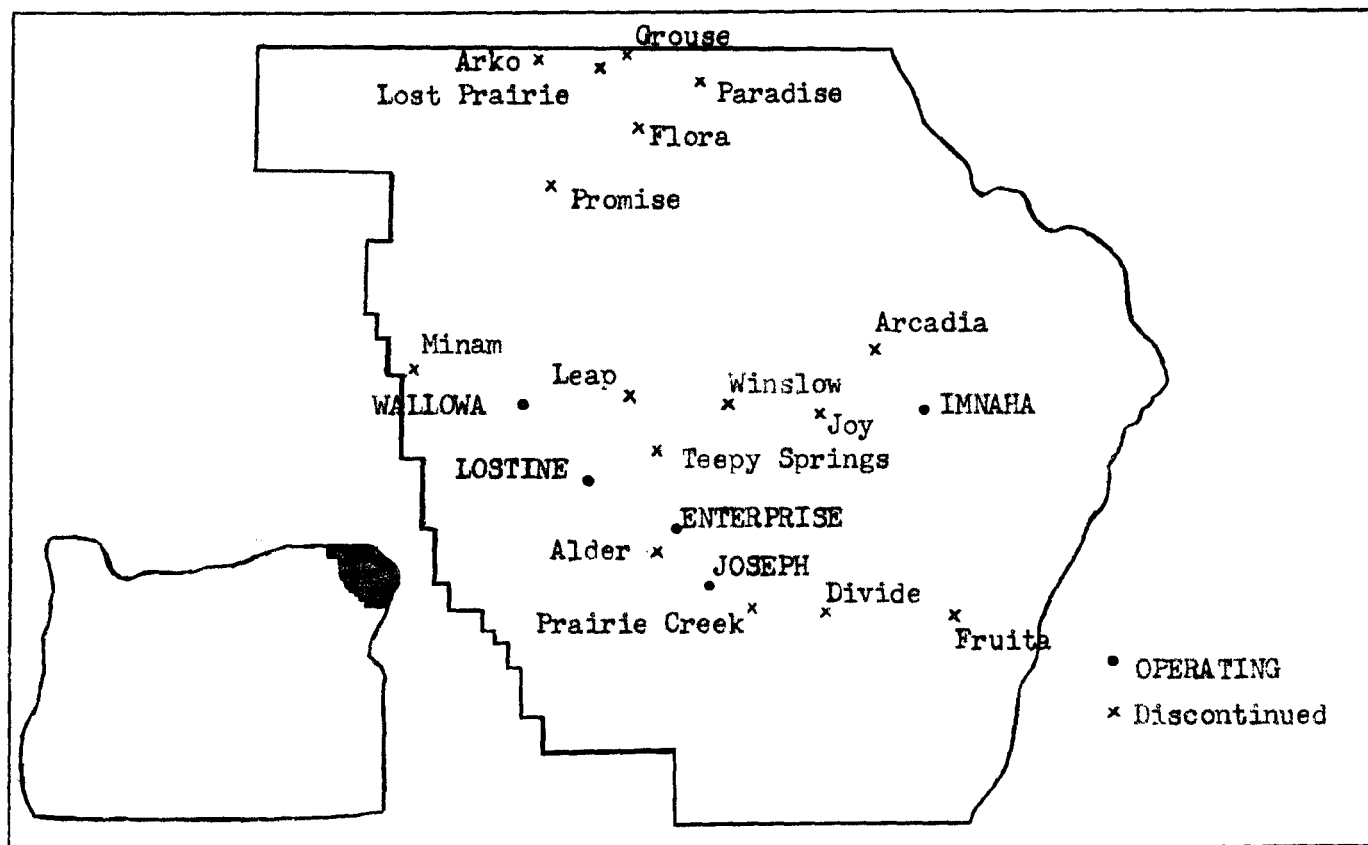
Postmarks: Promise postmarks should be only moderately scarce for 1896 to 1899.

Thus completes a chronological listing of Wallowa County post offices of the 19th century. Wallowa County is now, and always has been, a rugged, undeveloped region populated by hardy pioneer folk who prefer the quiet beauty and isolation to the hustle-bustle of city life. Material rewards are limited and certainly many of the sons and daughters of early settlers have been drawn away to brighter opportunities, but the names of some of these pioneer post offices - ARCADIA, JOY, PARADISE, PROMISE, and ENTERPRISE - remain as poetic reminders of the spirit and determination which characterized many a settler of our 19th century western frontier.

A NOTE ON DATES: Dates of establishment and postmaster appointment, as well as, dates of closing, name change, etc. are derived from Records of Appointments of Postmasters, the hand-written Post Office Department records available on micro-film from the National Archives. These dates should not be considered to be actual dates of establishment for a post office, but merely dates of record. There are just too many examples where an office is know to have began functioning at a much later date, and a few where offices began functioning at earlier dates.

A NOTE ON POSTMARK EVALUATION: Evaluations used in this article have been made in rather vague terms - scarce, common, etc. It is possible to be much more precise in evaluating the relative scarcity of a town's postmark, but there are simply too many unknowns to be very confident in a precise evaluation. For this reason, it was elected to sacrifice precision for a measure of confidence in this article.

WANTED: INFORMATION in the form of tracings or xeroxings of POSTMARKS from the following towns up to 1899: ALDER, ARCADIA, ARKO, DIVIDE, ENTERPRISE, FLORA, FRUITA, GROUSE, IMNAHA, JOSEPH, JOY, LEAP, LOSTINE, LOST PRAIRIE, MINAM, PARADISE, PRAIRIE CREEK, PROMISE, TEEPY SPRINGS, WALLOWA, and WINSLOW. Any information on these postmarks of Wallowa County towns will be deeply appreciated by Richard W. Helbock, 930 Lee's Drive, Las Cruces, NM 88001. Thank you.



WALLOWA COUNTY, OREGON, POST OFFICES

VOICES FROM THE MOUNTAINS AND DESERTS

Thanks to the response of a number of our members, we are now able to kick-off a column devoted to, and composed entirely of, dialogue between postal history students working in postal history research.

From Bill Bauer: WANTED. Access to the U.S. Postal Guides for the following years: 1874, 1875, 1879, 1880, 1909, 1913, 1914, and 1920. Specifically I need a copy for each of these years of the listing of Post Offices for Colorado. I would prefer the list by state and county, but the alphabetic listing is most acceptable. In addition, I would also like a copy, from the same publications and years of the Classified List of Post Offices, with Salaries of the Postmasters. This information is to be used as a cross check of the Post Office Department's microfilmed records.

I would appreciate the loan of the books for about 10 days (send by insured mail). If that is not possible then a Xerox of the desired pages or the name of a library having the needed volumes would be most helpful. I will, of course, re-imburse for any expense.

William H. Bauer
112 Jeanne Drive
Westwego, IA 70094

From Dr. Sheldon "Doc" Dike on the use of U.S. Registers and Postal Guides:

"... the U.S. Registers and Postal Guides are extremely unreliable sources -- but useful as secondary sources. The appointment records are best, but even these have to be backed up with maps (more than one of the period is often required), etc., and even then there are errors and mysteries. I have solved a few of these just by becoming familiar with the handwriting of each entry clerk."

As an example of the problems encountered by relying too heavily upon U.S. Registers and Postal Guides, Doc cites CANON and SATEKON as two short-lived San Juan County, New Mexico, post offices which were never listed in the U.S. Register. He continues, "La Boca, by the way, was very near the Colo. line and may never have actually been in N. Mex. (I would have to check several maps, etc.) It was transferred to the records for La Plata County, Colorado in early 1909."

"An indication of how misleading even the appointment records can be is the statement at the top of page 6 (La Posta, Vol. I, No. 4): 'this post office (Bringhurst was) active from August 1855 until September 1860.' Golly, there was nobody there for the last two or three years of that period. And somewhere I have a copy of a letter written at the 'fort' mentioning that 'the forms arrived today to allow us to have a post office' ... assigning it the name B. instead of Las Vegas (as requested) because there already was an office by that name in N. Mex. I forget the date of the letter, but it was much later than Aug. '55. The 'antedating' of the office at Fort Defiance 'by eight months' (same paragraph) is another such statement. The appointment dates written in Washington were eight months apart. Who knows when each went into actual operation."

"For example, we know pretty conclusively that the office in Santa Fe did not commence operation until sometime between April and June of 1850 (7 - 10 months after the appointment date of the first postmaster), and its even listed in the Official Postal Guide published in January 1850."

"And so on get my gripe? Its' not really a gripe so much as perhaps an exhortation to all researchers: Be extremely cautious about making positive statements of 'fact' just because its in print (or handwriting) somewhere. Almost never believe an 'old timers' story of 'how it was' unless you can back it up with other data."

Doc

From Ernie Peyton, a problem:

"In his book A Century of California Post Offices, Walter Frickstad states that the post office of EILEEN, California, opened on 31 July, 1907, closed on 30 October, 1909 ... after which mail moved via Hutton."

"I have a postcard in my collection bearing a very clear and heavy cancellation from Eileen, Calif., and it is dated Feb. 15, 1907 approximately 5½ months prior to the published opening date of the office."

"Perhaps other members have some information that would clear this thing up."

Send help to: Ernie S. Peyton
1203 South 16th St.
Las Vegas, NV 89104

From Jack Willard: Jack has prepared some high quality copies of several early 20th century postal route maps of some of the plains states. He has a few extra copies of some of these maps which he will part with for rather nominal prices, unfortunately your absent-minded editor has mislaid Jack's letter, and can not recall the exact details. If you are interested in a limited offer of high quality postal route maps, please write Jack for the details - and Jack, please accept my apologies.

John H. Willard
1025 Monroe Street
Denver, Colorado

From Oregon, a new research project:

Your editor was fortunate to be able to meet with Howard Mader, Bob Landis, and Chuck Whittlesey while visiting Oregon in June. It was decided at that meeting to undertake a research project designed to produce a catalog of 19th century Oregon postmarks along the line of Sheldon Dike's New Mexico Catalog. The project is still in the early formative stages, although we have some idea of how we plan to proceed. Persons interested in taking part in this effort are urged to contact one of the people mentioned.

Incidentally, Dr. Robert Landis has just published a comprehensive listing of the post offices of Oregon, Washington and Idaho. It is a high quality book-type printing job, and available by writing Bob directly for \$25. See NEW MEMBERS for his address.

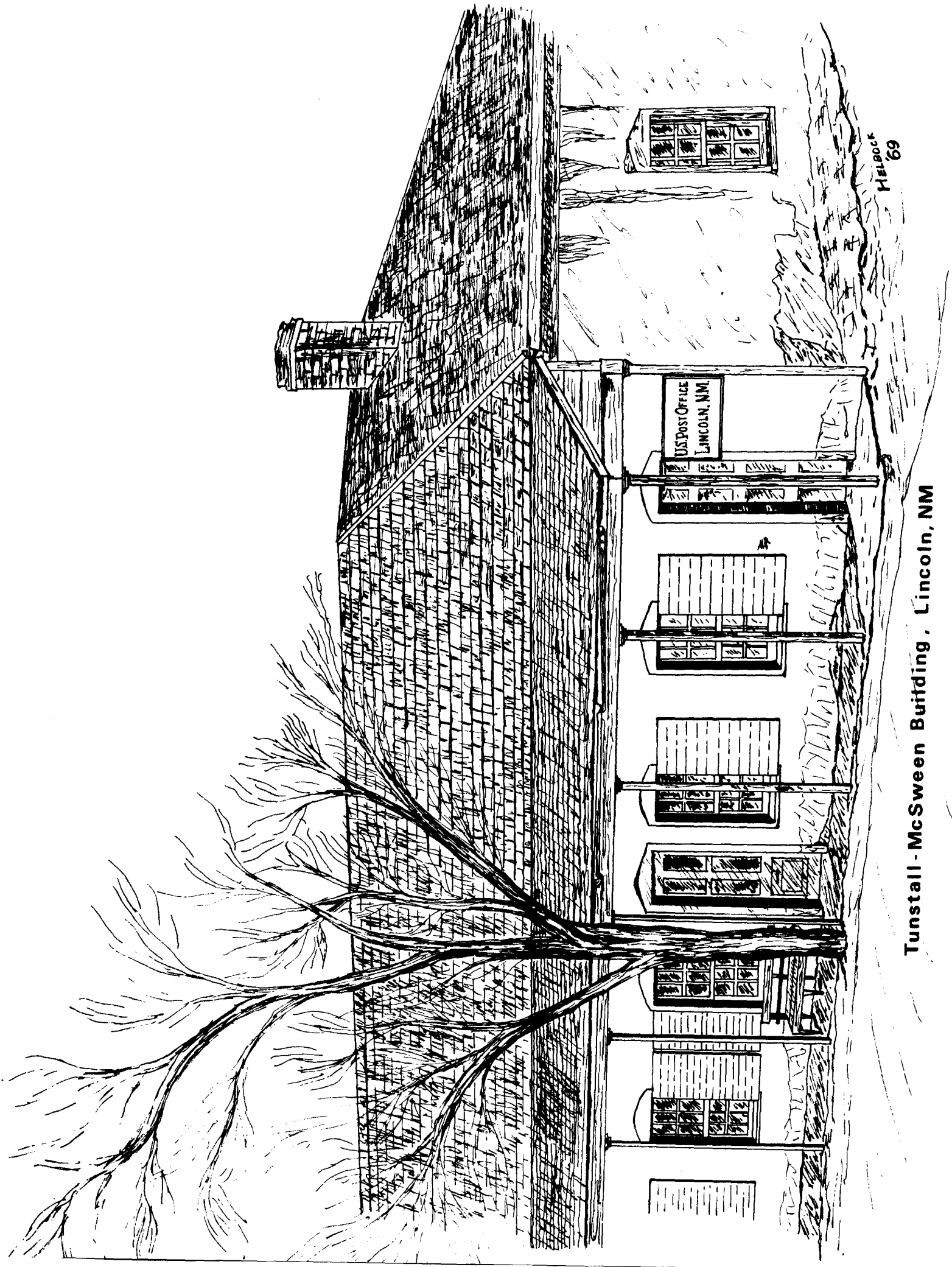
For one five day week, Monday through Friday, the dusty main street of the small southern New Mexico town of Lincoln was the scene of a combination siege and pitched gun battle between two forces which numbered between them a total of over 100 men. The date was July 15 - 19, 1878, and the Five Days Battle described above was one of the more dramatic events in a series which spanned a five year period from 1877 to 1881. This series of events has come to be known as the Lincoln County War, and it is probably fair to say that the War and its interwoven story of Billy the Kid represent the single most popular episode in the history of New Mexico.

It is not the purpose of this brief article to recall the major events and chronology of this bygone conflict, for that task rightly is the purview of historians, and an interested reader will find some of the standard accounts of the conflict listed in the short bibliography at the end of this piece. The major objective of this article is to describe the postal facilities existing in Lincoln County at the time of the War, and to cite some specific examples of the ways in which post offices and postal employees interacted with the primary participants of the conflict.

A total of four post offices served Lincoln County in 1877. They were: Fort Stanton, established May 5, 1857 (La Posta, Vol. I, No. 2); Roswell, established August 20, 1873; Lincoln, established September 19, 1873; and, South Fork, established September 28, 1875. Postal records indicate that the South Fork post office was known as White Sulphur Springs from February 15th to September 28th, 1875. A glance at the accompanying map reveals the tremendous distances separating these four facilities, and suggests some of the immense obstacles faced in providing mail service for the residents of early day Lincoln County. For example, the South Fork post office, located somewhere near the southwestern border of the county, served an area with a radius of about 50 miles. This region was lightly settled by 20 or so men and their families engaged in scattered farming and trapping. The nearest postal distribution point to South Fork post office was located at Mesilla on the Rio Grande, a hard ride of some 4 days to the west across the desolate Tularosa Basin with its now famous White Sands, and over San Augustine Pass dividing the Organ and San Augustine mountain ranges. The round-trip must surely have taken a week or more for the solitary rider and his pack horse, and it is little wonder that mail reached South Fork post office only once a month.

On February 15, 1878, the Territorial Legislature enlarged the area of Lincoln County greatly by adding the eastern portion of Dona Ana County. With that addition, Lincoln encompassed the entire southeastern portion of New Mexico with a land area of about 27,000 square miles. There were no new post offices added to Lincoln County's list by the transfer of territory, as the eastern part of Dona Ana County had been almost entirely unsettled.

The next office added to the Lincoln County list was named Rudolph, with the family name of its first postmaster, Millnar Rudolph. Postal records indicate that it was established November 4, 1878, and less than a month later on December 2nd its name was changed to Sunnyside with Mr. Rudolph still postmaster. Given the slowness of communications between Washington, D.C. and territorial New Mexico, it seems highly unlikely that this post office ever functioned under the name Rudolph, and it is quite possible that the name was simply a recording error by a Post Office Department clerk in the nation's capital. Be that as it may, Sunnyside, or Rudolph, was probably never actually located in Lincoln County for records indicate that it was re-classified into San Miguel County shortly after being listed as Sunnyside. The fact that the Sunnyside post office eventually became combined with the Fort Sumner office adds further credence to the theory that it was never in Lincoln County.



Tunstall-McSween Building, Lincoln, NM

Seven Rivers became the fifth post office to operate unquestionably within the great expanse of Lincoln County. This office was established December 9, 1878, with Marion Turner as the first postmaster. The Seven Rivers office, so named for a stream of seven branches which flows into the Pecos River at Lake McMillan, served a small ranching area centered about 10 miles northwest of present-day Carlsbad. Settlement began about 1867 with the establishment of a trading post, and the community had gone by the name of Dogtown until the post office was opened.

Nearly a year and a half passed before Lincoln County received a sixth post office, and by that time much of the Lincoln County War was already history. The new postal facility was established at White Oaks, a gold mining boom town that had sprung-up in the hills some 30 miles northwest of Lincoln. The White Oaks post office was established June 4, 1880 (La Posta, Vol. I, No. 3).

Three other Lincoln County post offices were added to the roll before Billy the Kid was killed on July 14, 1881. They were Galena, established November 4, 1880; Manchester, established June 10, 1881; and, Vera Cruz, established July 5, 1881, but they played no significant part in the Lincoln County War, and are mentioned here only to bring the record up to date for mid-1881.

Personalities and Events

The population of Lincoln County, New Mexico, was not large during the late 1870s, so it should not seem too surprising that the overlap between persons prominent in the early-day postal history and persons involved in the War is fairly sizeable.

We may begin with Paul Dowlin, postmaster of the Fort Stanton office from December 4, 1873, until his untimely death on May 5, 1877. Dowlin was a long-time resident of New Mexico. He served as a captain in the New Mexico Volunteers during the Civil War, and after the war he became Post Trader at Fort Stanton. Dowlin became fairly successful, and at the time of his death he owned a flour mill, sawmill, ranches, livestock, a store, and assorted other property in the vicinity of the Fort. It was at Dowlin's mill, six miles from Fort Stanton, that the unarmed Paul Dowlin was shot and killed by Jerry Dillon, a former Dowlin employee. The murder was apparently not directly connected with the main current of the Lincoln County War, but it was most certainly symptomatic of the climate of violence which helped precipitate the bloody events of the days ahead. Of interest to postal historians is the fact that the Records of Appointments list William Dowlin as postmaster at Fort Stanton on June 8, 1877 -- over a month after Paul Dowlin was killed.

On February 23, 1876, John H. Riley was appointed postmaster of South Fork Post Office. Although the author has no documented confirmation, it seems most likely that this Mr. Riley was the same John H. Riley who was to become a partner with James J. Dolan in 1877. Dolan, Riley & Company was a Lincoln based firm which held contracts to provide beef and flour to the Mescalero Indians, and became one of the principal combatants in the Lincoln County War.

John H. Riley was succeeded on March 19, 1877, by Mrs. Clara Godfrey (sic), who was probably the wife of Major Frederick C. Godfroy, Agent for the Mescalero Apaches from 1876 to 1878. Major Godfroy was removed from his position in late 1878, after having been accused of being a pawn of J. J. Dolan & J. H. Riley in that firm's shady dealings with the Indians. The accusation was made by Alexander A. McSween, who, as a partner in Tunstall & Company of Lincoln, was a bitter competitor of Dolan, Riley & Co.

James A. Dolan was appointed postmaster of Lincoln Post Office on April 10, 1876, and the growing distrust and rivalry between Dolan, Riley & Co. and Tunstall & Co.

prompted Alex McSween to work out a "home delivery" service with the Roswell Post Office. By early 1878, McSween was using the following notice:

My correspondents are requested to address me at Roswell Post-office, N.M. as my mail is put in a special sack and left at my office, putting me in possession of it several hours before the general mail is distributed at Lincoln Post-office, thus enabling me to reply to all letters on the day on which received.

McSween had secured this arrangement with Ash Upson, who became the Roswell postmaster on August 6, 1877, and it was a well-known local story that McSween was considerably more interested in keeping his mail away from James Dolan, than in any savings in delivery time.

Marshall Ashmun (Ash) Upson was later to file a claim against the estate of Alex A. McSween on January 15, 1879, for \$68.89 for "attending private mail sack between Roswell and Lincoln from August 20, 1877 to August 27, 1878, at \$1.50 per week, for 400 three-cent postage stamps and like items." Upson continued to serve as the Roswell postmaster until February 24, 1879, but his most important niche in history was not carved until late 1881, when Upson ghosted for Sheriff Pat Garrett "The Authentic Life of Billy the Kid, the Noted Desperado of the Southwest, Whose Deeds of Daring Have Made His Name a Terror in New Mexico, Arizona and Northern Mexico." Garrett's book was published in 1882, and seven years later the two men formed a real estate business called Upson & Garrett.

Before leaving the subject of Alex McSween, mention must be made of the role played by the Tunstall-McSween Store Building in Lincoln. This building (see illustration) presently houses the Lincoln post office, as it has from time to time throughout the past 90 years. During the bloody battle on Lincoln's streets in July, 1878, the building escaped damage. It was located next door to McSween's house in which Alex McSween and a number of his supporters, including William "Billy the Kid" Bonney, had decided to face the show-down. McSween and four other men were killed in an attempt to escape, but William Bonney and several others successfully fled behind the Tunstall Store Building and into the Rio Bonito River bed. It was at this time Bonney became the unofficial leader of the "anti-establishment" forces in the War.

Dr. Joseph H. Blazer, South Fork postmaster from January 9, 1884 to July 24, 1886, (and probably from August 5th to September 7, 1880, although records are unclear), was present at a gun battle fought at Blazer's sawmill near Mescalero on April 4, 1878. Two deaths resulted from the battle: Andrew L. "Buckshot" Roberts of the Dolan faction; and, Richard M. Brewer of the McSween faction. Dr. Blazer was elected foreman of the Lincoln County grand jury of 1878, which, as one might expect, had an exceptionally heavy docket.

Other citizens of Lincoln who were later to serve as postmaster of that office, and played some small part in the Lincoln County War included Samuel R. Corbet, a clerk at Tunstall's Store, postmaster from January 10, 1879 to April 29, 1880; Benjamin H. Ellis, a member of the jury at the inquest of the body of John H. Tunstall killed by the Dolan faction on February 18, 1878, postmaster November 8, 1880 to May 26, 1882; and, Jose Montano, a Lincoln merchant, postmaster from January 29, 1883 to August 22, 1883. Benjamin Ellis served a second term from August 22, 1883 to February 5, 1884.

Finally, Milnor Rudolph, whose name came to light in connection with the Sunnyside post office, played a role in the Lincoln County War. Rudolph, who changed the spelling of his name to Rudolph, was foreman of the coroner's jury which held the

inquest over the body of William "Billy the Kid" Bonney at Fort Sumner on July 15, 1881. Bonney had been killed the previous day by a bullet from the gun of Sheriff Pat Garrett.

No claim is intended that all the interfaces between the postal history and greater social drama of the era have been brought to light, and the author would be delighted to learn of other areas of overlap. As is the case with most conflicts, the Lincoln County War and its principal participants were extremely controversial. They identification of "good-guys" and "bad-guys" depended almost entirely upon the background of the person making the identification. Even today, 90 years after the fact, there is controversy. When the Lincoln County Centennial Committee selected a commemorative coin design which showed a picture of Billy the Kid on one face, they received complaints that it was inappropriate to honor a vicious outlaw. To many people, however, Billy the Kid is more a Robin Hood figure than a wanton killer. Whatever one's persuasion, the history of this period makes fascinating reading and is heartily recommended.

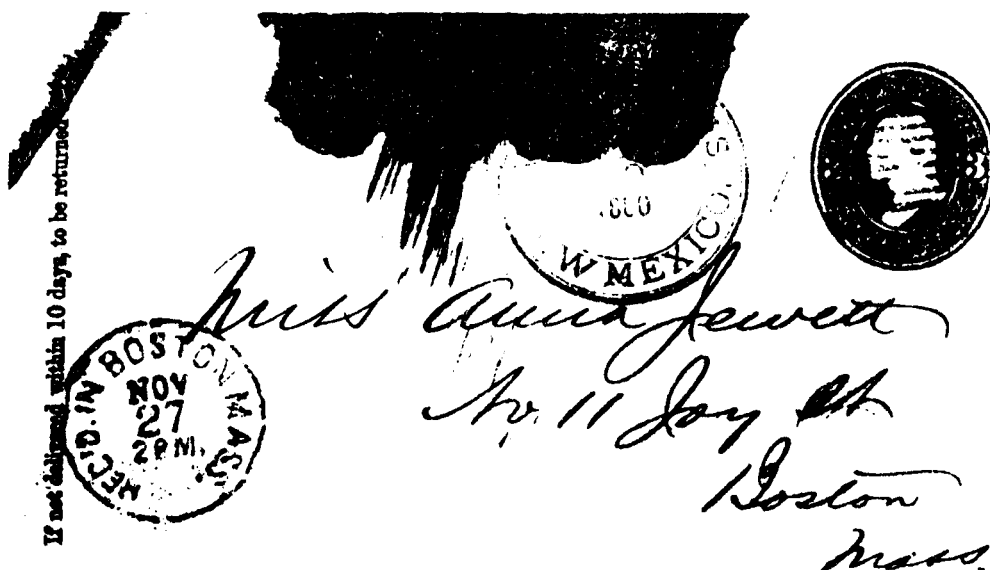
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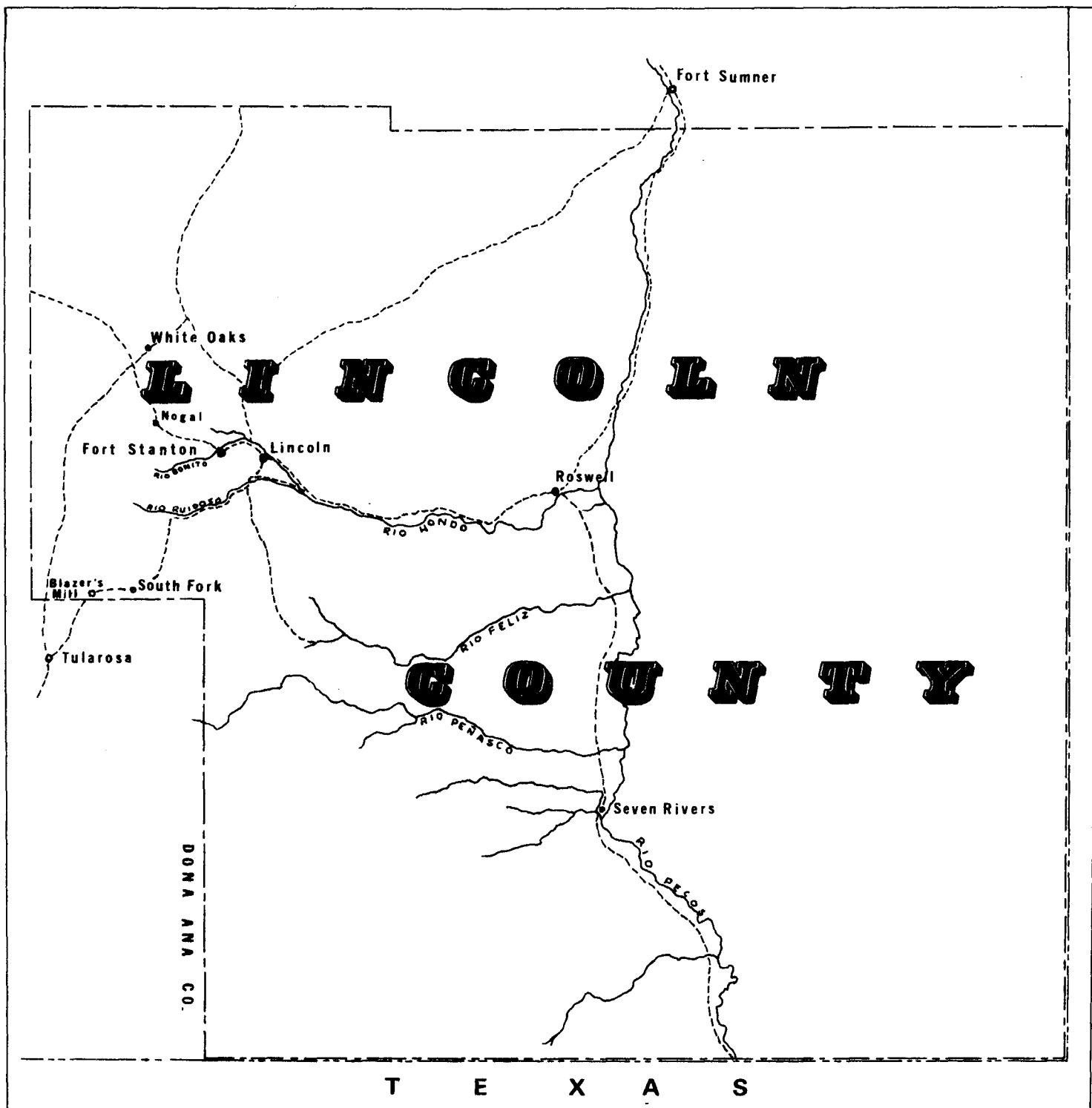
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White Oaks, Lincoln County, New Mexico (Type 1) Nov. 20, 1880



NEW MEXICO POSTAL HISTORY: PART III - SAN JUAN COUNTY - DISCUSSION and QUESTIONS

By William F. Rapp of Crete, Nebraska

In the first two parts of this study of the postal history of San Juan County we have listed all of the territorial post offices which were established in the county plus the names of the postmasters. (as recorded in the Official Register). However, we consider this only one part of the postal history of the period and believe that before we go into either a study of the mail routes or the post offices from 1912 to date, we should bring before the members of M&DWPERS some of the questions which the preparation of parts one and two have raised. Since our organization was founded as a study group, it is only fitting that at this time I open my study of San Juan postal history for discussion by the other members.

First, is the list of postmasters and their dates of office correct? This data was compiled from official publications of the Post Office Department, however, it is well known that mistakes have been made in compilation of government publications. In addition, often data in the Official Register does not agree with the Post Office Department list of postmaster appointments.

Second, where were these post offices located in San Juan County? I am unable to determine the geographical location of many of the post offices on maps which are available to me. There is no doubt in my mind that some of the post offices were located on ranches or in private homes, but we need to know the exact location.

Third, which of the discontinued San Juan post offices were located in private homes, stores, city buildings or in their own buildings? This type of data often helps explain why a post office was established.

Fourth, how many different types of postmarks were used by the San Juan County post offices? Dr. Sheldon Dike has published an excellent work on New Mexico territorial postmarks, but there are many offices for which no markings are known, and the post-territorial period is virtually unknown.

Any answers, or leads to answers, of the above questions will be a worthwhile contribution to the postal history of San Juan County, and will be deeply appreciated.

EDITOR'S NOTE: If you can assist Mr. Rapp in obtaining answers to any of these questions, he may be addressed direct at:

430 Ivy Avenue, Crete, Nebraska 68333

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POSTAL HISTORY RESEARCH TECHNIQUES III By Helbock

Data Sources: Records and Documents of the United States Government (continued)

Herein your editor continues his myopic investigation of various and sundry government documents which prove valuable to the conduct of postal history research. The earlier chapter (Vol. I, No. 3) dealt with the microfilmed series known as Records of Appointments of Postmasters. In this article we shall turn our attention to a series known as Register of Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval, in the Service of the United States. As the name suggests, this series contains a great deal of factual information, but more importantly some of the information contained is relevant to postal history research. The series in question, which passes by the more convenient nickname of the U.S. Official Register, was published during every other fiscal year

throughout most of the 19th century. The exact date this series was started is not known to this writer, but Registers of the mid-1840s have been personally seen, and that is most certainly early enough for the purposes of the Mountain and Desert West. Throughout the period of primary interest to postal historians of the West, say post-1850, the Register was published for every odd numbered year, i.e., 1869, 1871, 1873. From the 1850s up to and including 1877, the information is based upon a fiscal year ending September 30th. From 1879 on, the fiscal years end June 30th.

The postal information available from this series includes:

- 1) A state by state or territory listing of each post office operating as of the date of the listing, i.e., Sept. 30th, or June 30th.
- 2) The name of the county in which the office was operating.
- 3) The name of the postmaster in charge of each office as of the date of listing.
- 4) The monetary compensation of the postmaster for the fiscal year immediately preceding the date of listing
- 5) For years up to and including 1869, the net revenue returned by each post office to the Department
- 6) Sometimes an indication as to when a given office was "established", "re-established", "delinquent" or had its name changed
- 7) Sometimes an indication of the date a postmaster began or ended his term.

In addition, the Official Register also lists the names and salaries of post office clerks, and data on contract carriers for some years.

Cautions, Questions and Problems

The above listing of data available from this series of documents may sound too good to be true, and in fact it is. Before running right out to purchase a set of the Official Register for your postal history library, there are some hard cruel facts to consider, as well as, some rather puzzling questions.

First comes the problem of locating a usable set of the Official Register. If you live in a large city with a good government documents section, it may be possible to find the entire series intact. This writer has never had that experience, but is willing to believe that it may be possible in New York, Boston, or Washington, and maybe even a few other places. In Pittsburgh, for example, it is possible to obtain reference to an almost complete set by consulting both the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Public libraries. Mr. Rapp's work indicates that he has found at least a run from 1881 to 1911, somewhere in eastern Nebraska. The point of course, is that this is not an easy series to find intact. If you find such a series, considerate yourself blessed, or possibly, some compensation for living in New York City. For would-be authors who do not like to write, a simple re-publication of these post office lists for a group of territories or states should be at least a postal history best-seller. The U.S. Government has no copyright laws applicable to their publications.

A particularly puzzling question with regard to use of the Official Register is the exact significance of the various dates listed throughout the series. For example, some years for which the Register appears seem to list dates of establishment for the bulk of the post offices opened during the preceding fiscal year. These dates rarely, if ever, correspond with the dates of establishment listed in Records of Appointments. Some examples from the 1887 Oregon listing may help illustrate the differences:

Post office	Estab. (<u>RofA</u>)	Estab. (<u>Register</u>)
Arago, Coos County	April 7, 1886	January 17, 1887
Arcadia, Wallowa County	January 8, 1887	May 21, 1887
Bar, Malheur County	May 14, 1886	July 8, 1886
Buxton, Washington County	December 27, 1886	January 24, 1887
Contention, Wheeler County	July 8, 1886	August 6, 1886

As can be seen from the examples listed above the dates of establishment vary widely, and while the dates listed in the Official Register are always later than those given in the Records of Appointments, the length of time between the two dates varies quite a bit, i.e., 4 weeks to 8 months.

It would be very nice if we could assume that the Records of Appointments date was the day on which the Post Office Department in Washington, D.C., recorded the authorization of the office, and the Register date was the date upon which the facility actually opened for business. That, indeed, seems to be what is implied, but the wide amount of variation in "start-up" times between post offices yields a bit of uncertainty as to the reliability of such an interpretation.

A third problem with the Official Register is the old bug-a-boo of inaccuracies. The entire series is replete with a variety of errors of almost every imaginable stripe. Offices omitted, misspelled or wrongly listed; postmaster transposed; money amounts grossly mislisted, and many other research traps loom in the path of a student using this series. An example of the dogged determination of errors in the Official Register was the listing of Highland post office, Chickasaw County, Oregon, for the years 1871, 1873 and 1875. Oregon never had a Chickasaw County, and Highland was in Clackamas County. It is not surprising that the error occurred, but the fact that it took 6 years to correct is worth a raised eyebrow.

One of the most exciting features of the data contained in the Official Register is the listing of postmaster compensation. The temptation is over-whelming; a means of estimating the relative scarcity, or abundance, of postal markings from a specific post office. After all, if a postmaster was only paid \$15.32 for a year, how much mail could have passed through his office? Not much. So far, so good, but the next step is dangerous. If we know how much each postmaster was paid, then it should be an easy problem to convert the whole set of compensations to a measure of the relative scarcity of postmarks from each office, i.e., a mark from an office listed at \$150 should be about ten times as common as one from an office listed at \$15. Although this assumption has a certain intuitive appeal, this writer can assure you that it may prove painful if followed too rigorously.

The major problem involves the fact that other variables influence the relative scarcity of a postmark; namely age and the number of examples that have survived. The problem of age is easily accommodated, but survival is a purely random factor. A future column will deal with the problem of developing scarcity indices at a greater level of detail. At this juncture a simple warning of "BEWARE" seems appropriate.

Next Issue: STILL MORE RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS

EDITOR'S COMMENTS & MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The passing of a milestone of sorts should not go unnoticed. The page you are now reading is actually the 69th page of La Posta, Volume I. Not counting, No. 1, yours truly and some dear and faithful friends have cranked-out 66 pages of postal history so far in 1969. The original guarantee of 60 pages has been surpassed, but more importantly I believe we have started something worthwhile as a group.

Consider: Bill Bauer and Jack Willard have been collaborating on their Colorado studies, and it looks like Bill might be bringing out the first in a series of M&DWPFRS postal history monographs in the near future. More on that in the next issue.

Consider: Charles Whittlesey, Howard Mader, Bob Landis, Bernard Griffin and I are now beginning to break ground on a comprehensive study of 19th century Oregon postmarks, which will hopefully lead someday to a catalog of the style of Dike's New Mexico.

Consider: Bill Rapp has done some promising spade work on the San Juan County postal history mine, and is now looking for assistance before proceeding on to consider some of that county's other postal history aspects.

These are but three of the kinds of encouraging developments which are beginning to evolve through group co-operation. With Autumn and Winter not far in the future, and the annual shift from outdoors to indoors involved, why don't you consider becoming involved in a postal history research project. The potential material rewards are almost non-existent, but the fun of doing is very real, and the pride in accomplishment is something that no one should miss. Here is an area where you can make a real contribution to your fellows. Maybe nothing that will shake the earth, but never-the-less, a worthwhile contribution.

We have the following new members to welcome to our midst:

21. Howard Mader, 531 Brenner N. E., Salem, Oregon 97301
22. Dr. Robert Landis, 4030 S. W. Patrick Place, Portland, Oregon 97201
23. Bernard Griffin, 201 Lowell Street, Klamath Falls, Oregon 97601
24. Frank A. Zid, 1341 Heartwood Drive, Cherry Hill, New Jersey 08034
25. Robert P. Harris, 2373 Pruneridge Avenue, Santa Clara, CA 95050
26. Ray L. Newburn, Jr., 77 Patrician Way, Apt. 2F, Pasadena, CA 91105

Only four more members and we can hold a convention...

Seriously, the editor is gratified to see members joining whose interests will help to fill out our regional expertise. Mr. Zid, for example, is a student of Wyoming, and we can hope that he may be willing to answer postal history questions from that area. Mr. Newburn's interests include Colorado, and he will find several conspirators on that state already among our number. The growing number of Oregon members is encouraging to your editor who obviously shares their enthusiasm. Montana, Utah and Idaho represent states lacking specific consideration by M&DWPFRS members. If anyone is aware of persons who are students of those states, it might be worthwhile to introduce to our group. Time to go. Right now, the only piece I have lined-up for La Posta, No. 6 is a short article on Dillon, Montana Territory. Drop me a line if you have any requests, or better yet, wish to contribute an article....

EDITOR: RICHARD W. HELBOCK, 930 LEES DRIVE, LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO 88001.