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COLORADO'S FIRST POST OFFICE: CORAVILLE OR ? by William Bauer

The January, 1970 issue of Western Express carried an article by the late H. Parker Johnson, which was originally published in the Colorado Magazine of January, 1947. The title of the article, "Coraville, Denver's First Post Office," is self-explanatory; or is it?

Coraville was one of the small settlements that formed around the junction of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River during the latter months of 1858 and the early months of 1859. The establishment of a "post office" is documented by Mr. Johnson through newspaper reports of the period. The date of establishment is given as March 22, 1859, and Mathias Snyder is listed as the first postmaster. This same information is also reported in R. W. Baughman's book, Kansas Post Offices: May 29, 1828 - August 3, 1961.

These reports, plus the existence of four known Coraville covers, confirm the presence of a postal facility at Coraville. But, was this office actually the first in Colorado or the Denver area? A careful examination of the microfilmed "Records of Appointments of Postmasters for Colorado", which includes copies of the records for those offices originally in territory organized as Kansas, Nebraska and Utah, makes no mention of Coraville. This fact alone does not preclude the existence of the post office for Fort Lupton and Julesburgh are also omitted from the Nebraska portion of the records. Reference to the complete Nebraska list must be made to obtain the early records of those offices. It is reasonable to assume that some similar omission accounts for Coraville's non-appearance, and that this office should appear in the complete Kansas list. (The author would appreciate confirmation of this theory by a reader with access to the complete Kansas records).

Now to return to the question of the first post office in the Denver area. Although Coraville, and its March 22, 1859 date, are missing from the Colorado list, there are other 1859 dates of establishment as follows:

AURARIA	Established: January 18, 1859 (Kansas Territory) 1st Postmaster: Henry Allen Name changed to Denver City: February 11, 1860
BOULDER	Established: April 22, 1859 (Nebraska Territory) 1st Postmaster: Martin Field 2nd Postmaster: Joel G. Williams, June 2, 1860 3rd Postmaster: Albert Thorne, July 20, 1861
DENVER CITY*	Established: February 11, 1860 (Kansas Territory) 1st Postmaster: William P. McLure 2nd Postmaster: Samuel S. Curtis, March 7, 1861

\* Denver City is listed for later reference.

MONTANA                      Established: January 18, 1859 (Kansas Territory)  
1st Postmaster: David T. Griffith  
Discontinued: October 1, 1859

ST. VRAIN                    Established: January 18, 1859 (Nebraska Territory)  
1st Postmaster: Charles M. Miles  
2nd Postmaster: Hiram J. Graham, January 16, 1860  
3rd Postmaster: George French, January 12, 1861

This listing, plus the elusive Coraville, indicate that during 1859, the Post Office Department authorized the establishment of five post offices within what is now Colorado: 3 in Kansas Territory and 2 in Nebraska Territory. Furthermore, three of those offices were authorized on the same date, January 18, 1859. That was better than two full months prior to the accepted authorization of Coraville.

There can be no doubt that the authorization of a post office did not create one instantly on the ground. It took time to notify the new postmaster, to provide him with supplies, and to establish mail routes. Thus, there does exist the possibility that Coraville was indeed the first post office in Colorado to begin actual operations. It was not, however, the first post office to be authorized for what is now Colorado.

The story is not yet complete. There is one more complicating piece of information. The microfilm reel of the appointment records for Colorado contains two frames of records from Nebraska which list Boulder and St. Vrain along with several other offices in territory which later became part of Wyoming, the Dakotas, and western Nebraska. There are two very puzzling entries:

AURORIA                    Established: December 11, 1858  
1st Postmaster: Samuel S. Curtis  
Name changed to Colona: April 27, 1860

COLONA                    Established: April 27, 1860  
1st Postmaster: Samuel S. Curtis

No disposition of Colona is indicated on the Colorado reel, so reference to the microfilm reel for Nebraska is necessary. That reel provides the information that Colona was discontinued on February 11, 1861, but mention is not made of what county Colona was assigned to. One very intriguing point does arise. The postmaster of Auroria/Colona was one Samuel S. Curtis. Please note that on March 7, 1861, only 24 days after the closing of the Colona post office, a Samuel S. Curtis was appointed postmaster of the Denver City post office. Were these really the same person, or is this a mere coincidence?

Either Samuel S. Curtis left Colona considerably before March, 1861, or he was already well known in Denver City. It seems doubtful that in one month he could have attained enough popularity to be appointed postmaster. That a Samuel S. Curtis lived in the Denver City area is confirmed by an item in The First Hundred Years, by Robert L. Perkin. On page 82, in a report on the winter of 1858-1859, Perkin states:

"From his winter-quarters ranch on the Platte, Sam S. Curtis sent thirty-seven and a half cents worth of Cherry Creek gold 'in its native purity' to his brother, S. R. Curtis, then representing Iowa in Congress."

This report establishes the presence of Samuel S. Curtis in the Colorado gold-fields in late 1858 or early 1859, but many other pieces are missing from the picture. Auraria and Auroria were not the same town. The location of Auroria/Colona is unknown, but in all probability it was in what is now Colorado. If that can be confirmed, then the first post office to be authorized for Colorado was Auroria, on December 11, 1858.

#### References:

Baughman, Robert W. (1961), Kansas Post Offices: May 29, 1828 - Aug. 3, 1961, Kansas State Historical Society.

Johnson, H. Parker (1970), "Coraville, Denver's First Post Office," in Western Express, Vol. XX, No. 1, (Jan., 1970), pp. 4 - 10.

Perkin, Robert L. (1959), 1859 - 1959, The First Hundred Years, An Informal History of Denver and the Rocky Mountain News, New York: Doubleday & Company.

United States, Post Office Department, "Records of Appointments of Postmasters, Colorado 1860 - 1929"

United States, Post Office Department, "Records of Appointments of Postmasters, Nebraska 1849 - 1929"

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NINETEENTH CENTURY POST OFFICES OF UNION COUNTY, OREGON by R. W. Helbock

Union County was created from the northern part of Baker County on October 14, 1864, by the Oregon State Legislature. Mining activity had increased rapidly in the area, and the expanding population brought pressure for a more local county government. The new county was named for the town of Union, which had been settled two years earlier by a patriotic group of pioneers. Patriotic spirit during the Civil War and the problem of frontier isolation are reflected in McArthur's comment that:

"Homemade flags from dresses and sheets were in the celebration (at Union) on July 4, 1863."

As originally constituted, Union County covered the entire northeastern corner of Oregon. Touching both Washington and Idaho territories, the original Union County contained some 5,200 square miles of sparsely settled land. Settlement was originally concentrated in the Grande Ronde Valley. Union and La Grande were the major communities. By 1880, the population of the county had grown to about 7,000, and miners and farmers had pushed eastward into the Wallowa Valley to establish towns such as Lostine, Joseph and Alder. (See La Posta, Vol. I, No. 5). The Wallowa Valley reached a population of sufficient size by 1887 to force the creation of Wallowa County. In that year, the area of Union County was reduced by about 3,000 square miles.

Today Union County covers some 2032 square miles and is home for 19,334 people according to the preliminary 1970 census. The majority of the county's residents live in and near La Grande in the beautiful Grande Ronde Valley.

The purpose of this article is to present a capsule history of each Union County post office which operated during the 19th century. Each office is listed in chronological order by date of establishment.

UNION. Established May 8, 1863. The Union post office, first in the area that was to become Union County, was so named because of the patriotic feeling prevalent among the community's pioneer settlers. This office is located on Catherine Creek, about 12 road miles southeast of La Grande, and in section 18, township 4 south, range 40 east.

**Nineteenth Century Postmasters:**

John A. J. Chapman .....	May 8, 1863	George F. Hall .....	Aug. 15, 1883
Edward C. Brainard .....	Nov. 17, 1865	Emma A. Alger .....	Apr. 29, 1889
Norman S. Hubbell .....	Aug. 3, 1870	James Raymond .....	Nov. 4, 1891
George Wright .....	Nov. 21, 1871	Amos K. Jones .....	May 15, 1896
George Starks .....	Oct. 14, 1878	Marion F. Davis .....	Feb. 14, 1899

Status: The Union post office is currently operating; ZIP code - 97883.

Postmark Evaluation: Compared to other 19th century Oregon post office, Union post marks should be considered RARE for the 1863-1867 period; SCARCE for the 1868-1877 period; and COMMON for the 1878-1899 period. (See end note for the definitions of RARE, SCARCE and COMMON.)

LA GRANDE. Established May 28, 1863. The name of this office was selected from a group of alternatives at a meeting held by the early settlers of the community. It was apparently suggested by the location of the community at the western edge of the Grande Ronde Valley. La Grande lies in the central portion of Union County at the spot where the Old Emigrant Trail crosses the Grande Ronde River.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

Benjamin P. Patterson .....	May 28, 1863	Jessie G. Baker .....	Feb. 27, 1890
John Cramblit .....	Sept. 22, 1875	Jessie G. Malott ....	June 10, 1891
Justin P. Clark .....	Jan. 13, 1879	Robert L. Lincoln ...	Oct. 28, 1893
William A. Worstell .....	Dec. 23, 1879	Alphonzo LeRoy .....	Feb. 15, 1894
Joseph H. Shambaugh .....	Aug. 28, 1885	John C. Ardrey .....	Sept. 17, 1897
Franklin T. Dick .....	Dec. 27, 1886		

Status: The La Grande post office is currently operating; ZIP code - 97850.

Postmark Evaluation: La Grande postmarks should be considered SCARCE for the 1863-1877 period and COMMON for the 1878-1899 period.

FOREST COVE. Established June 4, 1863. The Forest Cove post office bore a name descriptive of its locality in a natural pocket where Mill Creek flows from the Wallowa Mountains into the Grande Ronde Valley. This office was located at the extreme eastern edge of the valley, about 17 road miles east of La Grande in section 16, township 3 south, range 40 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

Samuel G. French .....	June 4, 1863	William A. Crawford ....	Dec. 3, 1866
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Status: The name of this office was changed to Cove on June 29, 1868. This was undoubtedly done to avoid confusion with Forest Grove in Washington County.

Postmark Evaluation: All Forest Cove postmarks must be considered exceedingly RARE due to their age, short period of operation and low volume of postal business.

SUMMERVILLE. Established May 30, 1865. This post office was named by its first postmaster for his close friend and neighbor, Alexander Sommerville. The variation in spelling probably resulted from clerical error. Summerville post office is located about 12 airline miles north-northeast of La Grande near the junction of Spring and Willow creeks in section 13, township 1 south, range 38 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

William H. Patten .....	May 30, 1865	David Sommers .....	Dec. 24, 1878
Stephen C. Stone .....	Mar. 11, 1872	Simon McKinzie .....	June 9, 1879
Daniel Elledge .....	Apr. 29, 1874	Cyrus McDowell .....	Apr. 22, 1884
W. H. Parrant .....	Dec. 15, 1874	Thomas A. Rinehart ..	May 24, 1893
Madison B. Morris .....	Feb. 19, 1877	Cyrus McDowell .....	June 4, 1897

Status: The Summerville post office is currently operating; ZIP code - 97876.

Postmark Evaluation: Summerville postmarks should be considered RARE for the 1865-1871 period; SCARCE for the 1872-1881 period; and COMMON for the 1882-1899 period.

ORODELL. Established October 18, 1867. This post office bore a name which was manufactured from the Greek word oros, meaning mountain, and the English word "dell." The name was somewhat descriptive of the location of the post office on Grande Ronde River where that stream leaves its canyon and flows into the valley. The Orodell office was located about 2 miles northwest of the present business section of La Grande, and in section 31, township 2 south, range 38 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmaster:

William J. Snodgrass ..... Oct. 18, 1867

Status: The Orodell post office was discontinued October 2, 1878.

Postmark Evaluation: Orodell postmarks range from RARE during the 1867-1869 period to SCARCE from all other years.

COVE. Established June 29, 1868, by change of name from Forest Cove. The prior existence of a Forest Grove post office in Washington County, Oregon, brought a shortening of the name of this office. See FOREST COVE for locational information.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

Samuel D. Cowles .....	June 29, 1868	Mrs. Anna Arnold .....	Mar. 30, 1881
Reuben Z. Warren .....	Aug. 19, 1869	Mark Stevens .....	May 24, 1882
Samuel D. Cowles .....	Feb. 3, 1870	James H. Russell .....	Mar. 8, 1888
Alice Cochran .....	Jan. 5, 1877	Jasper Stevens .....	Apr. 9, 1889
John S. Clark .....	Mar. 2, 1877	Major L. White .....	Dec. 28, 1896
Daniel B. Rees .....	Apr. 21, 1880	Jasper Stevens .....	Apr. 21, 1897

Status: The Cove post office is currently operating; ZIP code - 97824.

Postmark Evaluation: Cove postmarks are RARE for the 1868-1871 period; SCARCE for the 1872-1883 period; and COMMON for the 1884-1899 period.

NORTH POWDER. Established December 2, 1868. The North Powder post office has been located throughout its existence on or near the North Powder River which is the boundary between Union and Baker counties. At times the post office has shifted from the Union County list to the Baker County list. The office was named for the river, and is currently located in Union County about 2 miles southwest of the mouth of Wolf Creek in section 22, township 6 south, range 39 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

Joseph Austin .....	Dec. 2, 1868	Orin Thomlinson .....	Mar. 20, 1889
Mary Ann Tarter .....	May 15, 1876	Joseph Carroll .....	Apr. 22, 1893
James Welch .....	Sept. 30, 1878	Henry Parker .....	July 30, 1897
George H. Robin .....	Jan. 29, 1886		

Status: The North Powder post office was closed during two periods: May 7, 1872 to May 15, 1876; and September 16th to 30th, 1878. This office is currently operating; ZIP code - 97867.

Postmark Evaluation: North Powder postmarks should be considered RARE before 1880; SCARCE for 1881 to 1883; and COMMON from 1884-1899.

ISLAND CITY. Established April 10, 1873. This post office bore a name which was descriptive of its location on an island formed by a slough of the Grande Ronde River, which leaves the main channel west of the community and rejoins the river several miles to the east. The Island City post office was located about 3 miles northeast of the main business section of La Grande, and in section 3, township 3 south, range 38 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

Marshall Mallory .....	Apr. 10, 1873	Oscar Kirkpatrick .....	Mar. 29, 1880
Myndert Sterling .....	May 27, 1873	Frederick Holmes .....	July 16, 1886

Status: The Island City post office was converted to a rural station of the La Grande office in 1959. It is currently operating as such.

Postmark Evaluation: Island City postmarks may be considered RARE for the 1873-1877 period; SCARCE for the 1878-1881 period; and COMMON for the 1882-1899 period.

INDIAN VALLEY. Established April 10, 1873. The Indian Valley post office was so named because of the proximity of the office to Indian Creek, a stream which flows into Grande Ronde River a few miles south of present-day Elgin. This office was located on or near the Grande Ronde River in the southern part of township 1 north, range 39 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

John W. White .....	Apr. 10, 1873	Madison B. Morris .....	May 26, 1879
Joel Weaver .....	June 11, 1877	Robert Cummins .....	Jan. 31, 1881
Andrew J. Bartlett .....	Feb. 11, 1878		

Status: The Indian Valley post office was not in service from January 13, 1874 to June 11, 1877. This office was discontinued October 26, 1881.

Postmark Evaluation: All Indian Valley postmarks must be considered RARE.

SAND RIDGE. Established April 6, 1875. This post office was on the old stage road between Union and Summerville. It was named for a local geographic feature. The short-lived Sand Ridge post office was on Grande Ronde River about 2½ miles east of the present-day community of Alicel, and in section 16, township 2 south, range 39 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

Cyrus G. Enloe .....	Apr. 6, 1875	Benjamin Kendall .....	June 22, 1876
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Status: The Sand Ridge post office was not in service from October 21, 1875 to June 22, 1876. This office was discontinued July 9, 1877.

Postmark Evaluation: All Sand Ridge postmarks should be considered RARE.

ELK FLAT. Established April 17, 1878. The Elk Flat post office was located about 5 miles east of Elgin on a level area known locally as Elk Flat. In pioneer days elk were to be seen grazing in the vicinity of the post office. This post office was initially located at the Tucker homestead in section 17, township 1 north, range 40 east. It was later moved about 3 miles to the northeast.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

Joseph M. Tucker .....	Apr. 17, 1878	James Brayton .....	Oct. 10, 1883
James Brayton .....	June 1, 1881	William Ezell .....	Feb. 5, 1886
Andrew J. Bartlett .....	Apr. 9, 1883		

Status: The Elk Flat post office was discontinued November 11, 1886, papers to Summerville.

Postmark Evaluation: Elk Flat postmarks should be considered RARE for the 1878-1881; and SCARCE for the 1882-1886 period.

STARKEY. Established December 10, 1879. This post office was named for a pioneer Union County homesteader, Fred Starkey. The Starkey post office was located on Grande Ronde River in the extreme western part of the county about 17 miles southwest of La Grande, and in section 14, township 4 south, range 35 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

John Starkey .....	Dec. 10, 1879	Ballard Burnett .....	June 23, 1892
Willis Nail .....	Feb. 2, 1881	Andrew Sullivan .....	June 6, 1895
George F. Dunn .....	Feb. 28, 1890		

Status: The Starkey office was out of operation from January 3rd to February 2nd in 1881; and then again from March 25, 1881 to February 28, 1890. This post office was discontinued during the late 1930's or early 1940's.

Postmark Evaluation: Starkey postmarks should be considered RARE if dated prior to 1891; and SCARCE from 1892 to 1899.

SLATER. Established June 9, 1881. The Slater post office was named for James H. Slater of Union County. Slater was serving as U. S. Senator from Oregon at the time this post office was established. This post office was in operation very briefly, and was located at or near the site of the former Sand Ridge office in section 16, township 2 south, range 39 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmaster:

Stowell L. Payne .....

Stowell L. Payne .....	June 9, 1881
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Status: The Slater office was discontinued January 31, 1882, papers to Summerville.

Postmark Evaluation: All Slater postmarks must be considered exceedingly RARE.

CROMWELL. Established July 24, 1882. This office was named for its first and only postmaster, Julius T. Cromwell. The Cromwell post office was located on the railroad between North Powder and Telocaset, near the point the tracks cross Antelope Creek in the northwestern corner of township 6 south, range 40 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:  
Julius T. Cromwell ..... July 24, 1882

Status: The Cromwell post office was discontinued December 2, 1884.

Postmark Evaluation: All Cromwell postmarks must be considered RARE.

HOT LAKE. Established May 7, 1883. The Hot Lake post office was named for the nearby steaming mineral lake, which was visited by white men as early as 1812. This office was located a little over 5 airline miles northwest of Union, in section 5, township 4 south, range 39 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:  
Samuel F. Newhard ..... May 7, 1883

Status: The Hot Lake post office was discontinued in May, 1943, papers to La Grande.

Postmark Evaluation: All 19th century Hot Lake postmarks should be considered RARE.

DAN. Established July 9, 1883. The Dan post office was located about 8 airline miles northwest of La Grande on the railroad, and in the southwest corner of township 2 south, range 37 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:  
George A. Steel ..... July 9, 1883

Status: The name of the office was changed to Hilgard on August 23, 1883.

Postmark Evaluation: Due to the extremely short existence of the Dan post office, any postmarks would be exceedingly RARE.

HILGARD. Established August 23, 1883, by change of name from Dan. In his Oregon Geographic Names, Lewis McArthur suggests that this change was made to honor Henry Villard, whose original name was Hilgard. This seems a reasonable theory, as the office was established during the time the railroad was under construction over the Blue Mountains. Villard was one of Oregon's great pioneer railroad builders. See DAN for locational information.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

George A. Steel ..... August 23, 1883    Clarence N. Lewis ..... Jan. 25, 1895  
Edwin P. Staples ..... Dec. 20, 1887

Status: The Hilgard post office was not in service from May 21, 1884 to Dec. 20, 1887. This office was discontinued during the late 1930's or early 1940's.

Postmark Evaluation: Hilgard postmarks should be considered SCARCE from the 1883-1884 period; and fairly COMMON from the 1887-1890 period.

TELOCASET. Established February 25, 1885. This post office was named with a Nez Perce Indian word which means "a thing at the top." The Telocaset post office is located on the Union Pacific Railroad about 8 miles south of Union, and in section 28, township 5 south, range 40 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

William A. Cates ..... Feb. 25, 1885    Thomas Yowell ..... Aug. 27, 1896  
Susan Washburn ..... Sept. 12, 1892    John A. Cates ..... June 25, 1897

Status: The Telocaset post office is currently operating; ZIP code - 97878.

Postmark Evaluation: Telocaset postmarks should be considered SCARCE for the entire 19th century.

ELGIN. Established September 28, 1885. The Elgin post office was apparently named for the ballad, "Lost on the Lady Elgin," which told the story of the sinking of a lake steamer in 1860, and is reported by McArthur to have deeply impressed Westley B. Hamilton, the community's first postmaster. This office is located near the Grande Ronde River, a little north of the mouth of Phillips Creek, and near the center of township 1 north, range 39 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

Westley B. Hamilton ..... Sept. 28, 1885    Henry Procter ..... Mar. 25, 1892  
John W. Snyder ..... Nov. 24, 1886    Jasper Stevens ..... Apr. 21, 1897  
John W. White ..... Oct. 24, 1889

Status: The Elgin post office is currently operating; ZIP code - 97827.

Postmark Evaluation: Elgin postmarks should be SCARCE for the 1885-1887 years, and COMMON for the 1888-1899 period.

LARCH. Established January 20, 1887. This office operated for an extremely brief time on the Union County list, and because of its short existence very little is known about it. The post office was probably named for the larch tree which is common to much of the Blue Mountain country, and it is tempting to theorize that it was located in the mountainous part of the county. Until more data is uncovered, Larch is likely to remain a mystery.

Nineteenth Century Postmaster:

George Ruckman ..... January 20, 1887

Status: The Larch post office was discontinued September 10, 1887.

Postmark Evaluation: Any postmarks from Larch should be considered exceedingly RARE.

KAMEIA. Established July 30, 1887. The Kamela post office was named with the Nez Perce Indian word for "tamarack," which in the Blue Mountain country of Oregon refers to the western larch. This post office was on the railroad a little over a mile south of the Union-Umatilla county line. It was in section 35, township 1 south, range 35 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

John D. Corbett .....	July 30, 1887	Sarah J. Cayler .....	Feb. 1, 1894
Alexander Cuthbert .....	Sept. 22, 1888	Charles Taylor .....	Apr. 30, 1894
John D. Corbett .....	Aug. 4, 1892		

Status: The Kamela post office was not in service from July 28th to Sept. 22nd, 1888. This office was discontinued during the 3rd quarter of 1949.

Postmark Evaluation: Kamela postmarks dated from 1887 to 1889 are SCARCE, and those from 1890 to 1899 should be fairly COMMON.

MEDICAL SPRINGS. Established August 9, 1887. This office was so named for the hot sulphur springs located nearby. The Medical Springs post office is located in the southeastern corner of the county, about 20 miles southeast of Union on Oregon Route 203. The office is in section 25, township 6 south, range 41 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmaster:

Mrs. Mishy Wright .....

August 9, 1887
----------------

Status: The Medical Springs post office is currently operating; ZIP code - 97860.

Postmark Evaluation: Medical Springs postmarks should be considered RARE for the 1887-1889 period; SCARCE for the 1890-1897 period; and fairly COMMON for 1898-99.

ALICEL. Established July 14, 1890. The Alicel post office on the Joseph branch of the Union Pacific Railroad was named for Alice Ladd, the wife of a local settler. This office is located about 9 miles northeast of La Grande, and in section 7, township 2 south, range 39 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

William M. McCart .....	July 14, 1890	Royal Reasoner .....	Nov. 29, 1895
Duncan McDonald .....	Dec. 7, 1894	Benjamin F. Webb ...	May 16, 1899

Status: The Alicel post office is currently operating; ZIP code - 97811.

Postmark Evaluation: Alicel postmarks should be considered SCARCE from 1890 to 1897, and COMMON from 1898-1899.

PERRY. Established August 26, 1890, but did not begin actual operations until September 11, 1890. The Perry post office is reported to have been named arbitrarily by the Post Office Department when the original name of the locality was rejected because it duplicated existing office names. The community was previously known as Stanley, and while there were no other Stanley offices in Oregon at the time, there were offices with somewhat similar names. This post office was located about 4 miles west of the center of La Grande on the railroad in section 35, township 2 south, range 37 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmaster:

Robert Smith ..... August 26, 1890

Status: The Perry post office was discontinued February 27, 1931, papers to La Grande.

Postmark Evaluation: The Perry post office enjoyed a relatively large volume of business during its early years. As a result, Perry postmarks should be fairly COMMON.

IMBLER. Established April 27, 1891. The Imbler post office was named for the family of its first postmaster, Albert Imbler. This office is located 8 road miles south of Elgin on Oregon Route 82, and in section 29, township 1 south, range 39 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

Albert E. Imbler ..... Apr. 27, 1891 Rhoda J. Conklin ..... Dec. 26, 1896  
Christopher Stanley .... Feb. 25, 1892 Sarah A. Kemp ..... Mar. 2, 1898  
Datus M. Conklin ..... Feb. 14, 1894

Status: The Imbler post office is currently operating; ZIP code - 97841.

Postmark Evaluation: All Imbler postmarks of the 19th century should be considered SCARCE.

WOODLEY. Established February 1, 1896. This short-lived post office was named for the nearby Woodley Mine, which was discovered by Frederick Woodley. The Woodley post office was located in the southwestern part of Union County near Grande Ronde River in the northwest portion of township 6 south, range 36 east.

Nineteenth Century Postmasters:

Daniel M. Griffith ..... Feb. 1, 1896 William Heaughan ..... Oct. 20, 1896

Status: The Woodley post office was discontinued November 20, 1896, papers to La Grande.

Postmark Evaluation: All postmarks from this short-lived office must be considered RARE.

NINETEENTH CENTURY UNION COUNTY POST OFFICES: ANNUAL COMPENSATION

Post Office	1863	1865	1867	1871	1873	1875	1877	1879	1881	1883	1885	1887	1889	1891	1893	1895	1899
ALICEL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	135	90	169
COVE	-	-	-	39	120	95	77	176	155	219	318	364	371	316	319	317	444
CROMWELL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DAN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ELGIN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	72	NL	579	632	547	799
ELK FLAT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	28	51	59	-	-	-	-	-	-
FOREST COVE	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
HILGARD	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	79	-	215	376	318	248	276
HOT LAKE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	NR	11	21	14	16	15	16	29
IMBLER	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	113	72	145
INDIAN VALLEY	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	14	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ISLAND CITY	-	-	-	-	12	22	53	76	150	394	593	527	505	523	513	386	443
KAMELA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	261	184	199	220
LA GRANDE	-	126	220	320	310	291	297	457	692	962	1000	1000	1100	1400	1700	1600	1700
LARCH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MEDICAL SPRINGS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	77	97	119	176
NORTH POWDER	-	-	-	12	-	-	NR	7	21	258	360	482	392	445	364	383	398
ORODELL	-	-	-	63	18	83	118	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PERRY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	98	162	157	269
SAND RIDGE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SIATER	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
STARKEY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	40	38	100
SUMMERVILLE	-	-	42	43	110	114	95	102	158	316	419	546	555	531	401	309	360
TELOCASET	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	68	93	77	85	86	68
UNION	NR	11	300	139	210	220	344	497	618	605	830	926	970	1000	1100	1100	1200
WOODLEY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

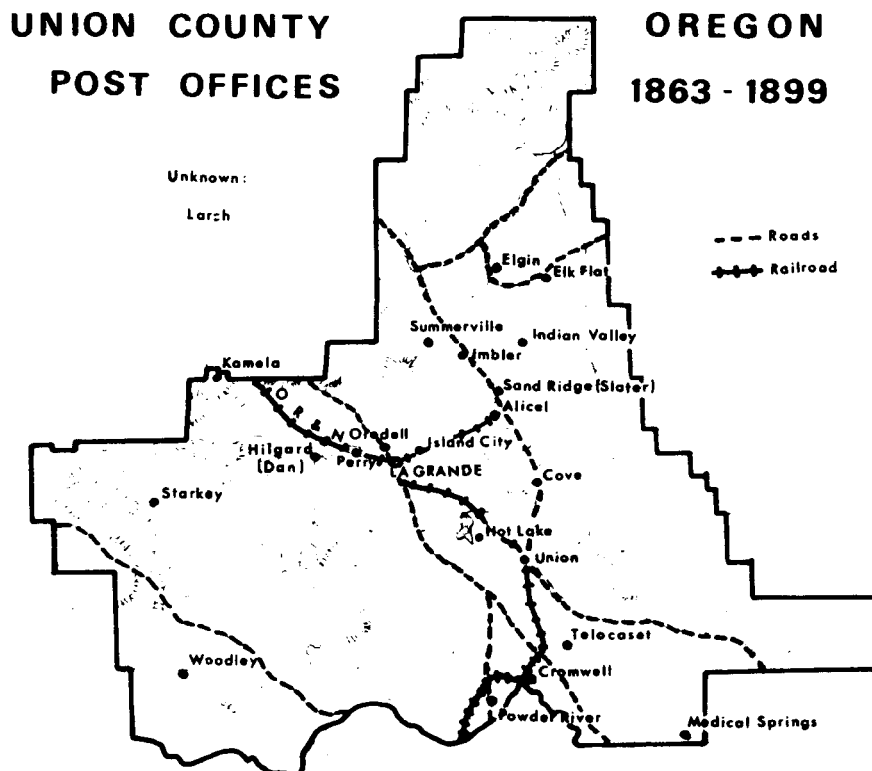
All Postmaster Compensations rounded to the nearest dollar. NR - Office listed, but no compensation.

Source: Official Register, U. S. Civil Service, 1863 - 1899.

### A Note on Postmark Evaluation

The postmark evaluation scheme employed in this article on Union County is based entirely upon the relative volume of business done by the office, and the age of the postmark. Volume of business is implied from postmaster compensation data on the assumption that postmasters at larger offices were paid more money for their service. The assumption is valid, but the relationship between volume of business and compensation was not linear. Never-the-less, postmaster compensation represents the best known way of comparing the size of post offices of the past.

The terms RARE, SCARCE and COMMON are used in an entirely relative sense. A postmark classified as COMMON is probably not very easy to find. It is only common when compared to others of 19th century Oregon classified as RARE or SCARCE.



## NEW MEXICO POSTAL HISTORY: PART VI - SAN JUAN COUNTY

Contemporary Postal Markings by William F. Rapp of Crete, Nebraska

Very little has been published on the types of postal markings used in New Mexico during the period of statehood. Sheldon Dike has done an excellent job of recording the various types of cancels used during the territorial period. There appears to be very little interest in the study of contemporary postal markings today. This lack of interest is probably due to the Post Office Department's rules and regulations standardizing the types of cancels which post offices can use. However, if future generations of postal historians are to have knowledge of the postal markings used in the 1970's, it is our duty to record this information.

Figure 1 illustrates the types of cancels which were in common use by the post offices of San Juan County during 1969. There is reason to believe that other types of cancels are also used by these offices, but because of postal regulations the postmasters did not provide examples. As a case in point, there is reason to believe that most post offices in the county have the Double Circle Cancel (Type DC-1) commonly used on parcel post, Post Office Money Orders and registered mail. Yet, to date, the author has recorded only one example; that from Farmington.

The following list is keyed to Figure 1, and records only types personally recorded by the author.

AZTEC - machine cancel (Type M-2); roller type cancel (Type R-1)  
BLANCO - 4-bar ZIP cancel (Type Z-1)  
BLOOMFIELD - machine cancel (Type M-1)  
FARMINGTON - machine cancel (Type M-2); roller cancel (Type R-1);  
                    roller cancel (Type R-2); Double circle cancel (Type DC-1)  
FRUITLAND - 4-bar ZIP cancel (Type Z-1)  
FLORA VISTA - 4-bar ZIP cancel (Type Z-1)  
LA PLATA - 4-bar ZIP cancel (Type Z-1)  
KIRTLAND - 4-bar ZIP cancel (Type Z-1)  
NAGEEZI - 4-bar ZIP cancel (Type Z-1)  
NAVAJO DAM - 4-bar ZIP cancel (Type Z-1)  
SHIPROCK - machine cancel (Type M-2); roller cancel (Type R-1)  
TOADLENA - 4-bar ZIP cancel (Type Z-1)  
WATERFLOW - 4-bar ZIP cancel (Type Z-1)

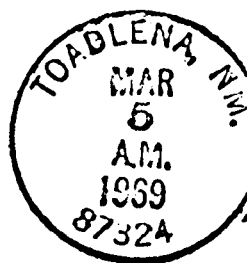
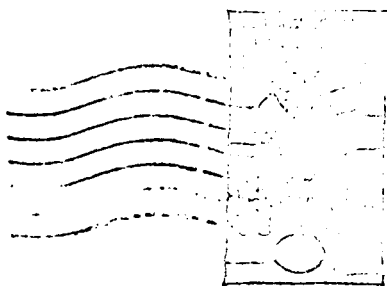
The author would appreciate seeing any other types of cancels currently used by San Juan County post offices.

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NOTE: Bill Rapp's address is: 430 Ivy Avenue, Crete, Nebraska 68333.

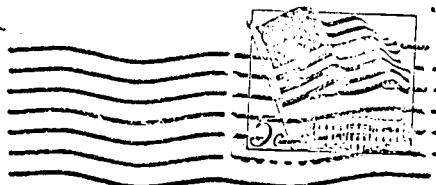


# Types of Cancels Used by San Juan County Post Offices



M-1 Machine Cancel

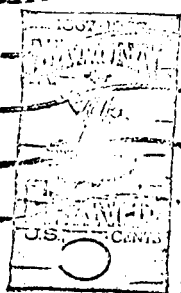
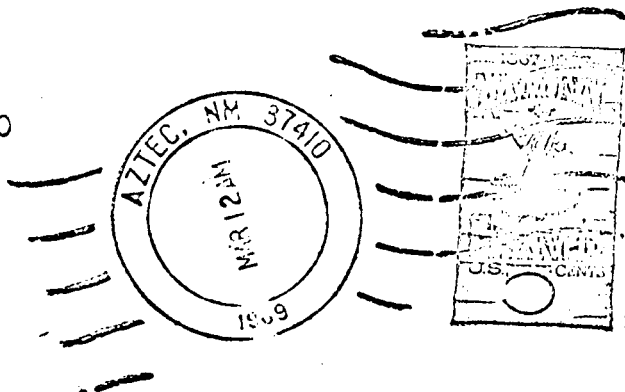
Z-1 4- Bar Cancel



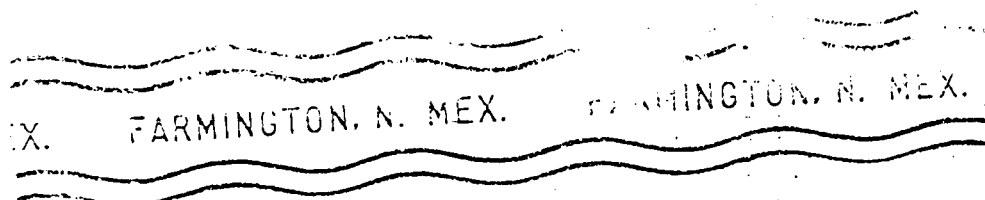
M-2 Machine Cancel

DC-1 Double Circle Cancel

by  
+10



R-1 Roller type cancel



R-2 Roller type cancel

HOW MAIL ROUTES THROUGH NEVADA WERE DEVELOPED by Dorothy E. See

La Posta is indebted to The NEVADAN, the Las Vegas Review Journal, and the author, both of whom gave their kind permission to reprint this outstanding article. The article was brought to our attention by Dr. Charles Seeger, and M&DWPFRS member Ernie Peyton contacted The Nevadan for permission to reprint.

For those who are critical of present day mail service it may be of some consolation to know that there was a time when it took as long as two months to receive a letter from the East Coast, and it could cost as much as sixty dollars to send a single letter.

When the news of the California gold strikes reached the rest of the country, the day of the stagecoach was drawing to a close in the East and the Midwest. Many stagecoach operators had been forced out of business by the network of railroads. In the West, where in one generation the great lands lying between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean would be settled, the golden age of the stagecoach was yet to dawn.

Several men soon formed stagecoach companies in St. Louis, claiming impossible speeds to the Far West. One line, the Pioneer, ran an ad in early May of 1849, insisting that its stagecoaches could make the twenty-five-hundred-mile trip in seventy days for a fare of \$200. Practical minded men formed wagon trains but the fool-hardy were setting out in anything that would move.

A Concord coach cost \$1200.00 and the amount was too much for most people so the same carriage makers came up with the "Mud Wagon" built on the same principle but plainer in design and only costing \$500.00 F.O.B. Later, when it was obvious that western conditions demanded something sturdier, the same carriage makers made a heavier, longer coach with heavier brake assemblies, stronger axles, wider wheels and with leather curtains replacing the easily broken glass at the windows. Hundreds of stagecoaches were shipped around the Horn from Concord to California during the 1840s and 50s.

By 1851 California had a network of roads that could be traveled by these vehicles and had sent their newly elected senators, William Gwin and John Charles Fremont to Washington to demand a railroad connection with the rest of the nation, equal mail service and awards of sizable mail carrying contracts. The stage for the Civil War had been set in the United States and pro-slavery senators were clamoring for a railroad through the south and the abolitionists were insisting on a railroad through a northern route. Because of the turmoil no railroad bill was passed.

When the government invited bids for mail service from Independence, Mo., to Salt Lake City, the high bid for \$45,000, with the provided service of four horse stage coaches, was rejected. The low bid, from Samuel Woodson, was for \$19,000 and did not specify any means of transportation, but this bid was accepted. The contract effective July 1, 1850, required a time limit of thirty days for each one-way trip.

It soon became evident that Woodson had contracted for more than he could deliver. To maintain a thirty day schedule, sometimes carrying three or four hundred pounds of Government printed matter, traveling over fourteen hundred miles, most of it mountainous, would mean averaging forty-seven miles a day, with frequent relay stations and fresh horses and mules along the way. As it was, mail delivery was extremely irregular in the summer and ceased to exist in the winter.

To meet the demands of the Californians, the government advertised for bids to provide service from Salt Lake City to Sacramento and once more accepted the lowest bid from Absalom Woodward and George Chorpenning for muleback service over a route estimated to be 910 miles long. Their bid for \$14,000 was accepted in April 1851 and on May 1, Chorpenning left Sacramento with several men and a string of mules to carry the "Jackass Mail" across the Great Basin. It took them sixteen days to cross the heavy snows of the Sierra Nevadas and it was June 5th before they reached Salt Lake City. At Genoa, Nevada, Chorpenning staked out a quarter section of land for a mail station.

In November Woodward was killed by hostile Indians. Chorpenning was unable to get the mail through the snow of the high Sierras in December and January. In February he found a way through the Feather River Canyon, but later all of his horses froze to death and he and his men carried the mail on foot through snow for the last two hundred miles, reaching Salt Lake City in April. The March mail and that of the following winters was sent by ship to San Pedro and then by pack mule over the Old Spanish Trail and the Mormon Trail to Salt Lake City.

Woodson was not doing much better in the east. In November he and his men had gotten lost in a blizzard near South Pass and had struggled through drifts for a month before reaching Utah's Wasatch Mountains. Unable to get their animals across the mountains they had been forced to abandon them and cache the printed matter, dragging the letter mail for forty miles across the rugged terrain on foot.

Governor of the Utah Territory Brigham Young wrote to Utah's delegate in Congress, "So little confidence have we in the present mail arrangement that we feel considerable dubiety in your receiving this or any other communication from us." In June of 1853 the Deseret News reported that twenty-four heavy bags of mail had been cached enroute during the past eight months as it was impossible to carry them through the deep snow or across swollen streams.

It was clear that mail could not be carried with any regularity until there was a bridged highway or a transcontinental railroad and a government mail subsidy large enough for the contractor to build and maintain relay stations at frequent intervals.

Congress, during the winter of 1852-53, devoted more time to the discussion of a transcontinental railroad than anything else, but no decisions were made. Legislation was passed in both houses giving Postmaster General Aaron Brown absolute choice of contractors and absolute control over the route chosen for the California mail. The South had won a clear victory in the mail war for Aaron Brown was a close friend of President James Buchanan and an ardent pro-slavery man from Tennessee.

It was about this time that John Butterfield, also a friend of Buchanan, entered the picture. He designed a route longer and more expensive to maintain, but avoiding the Rocky Mountain snows and offensive to neither the north or south. His route would go from St. Louis along the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico and on to California. Postmaster Brown had accepted St. Louis, but added his hometown, Memphis, and Little Rock, Ark., as eastern terminals. The northern states and California screamed in protest, so to justify himself, Postmaster General Brown wrote in his annual report that the route through Salt Lake City and the Great Basin "Was entirely out of the question."

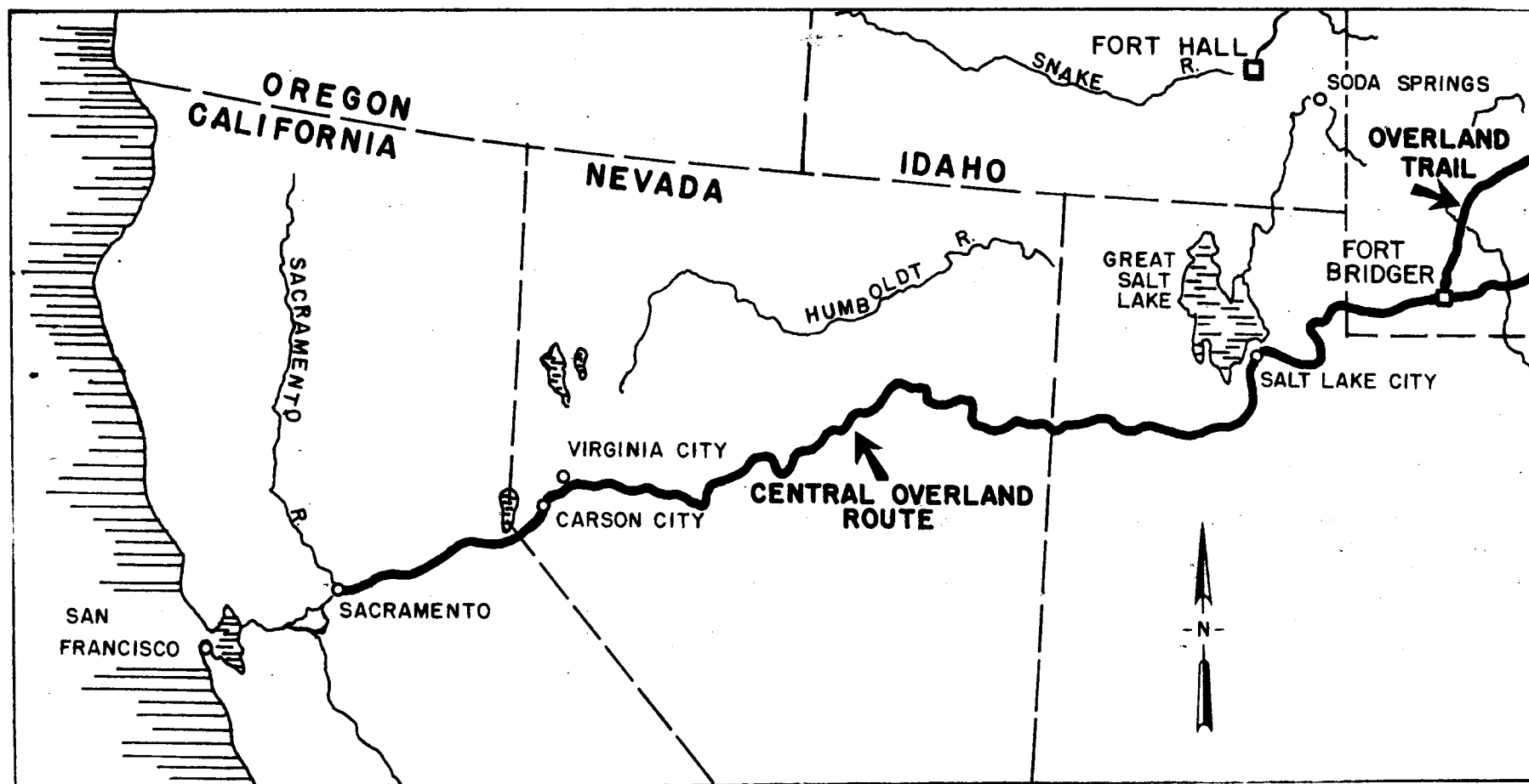
The chosen route was seven hundred miles longer than the Central Overland route, the total distance from St. Louis to San Francisco being 2757 miles, doubling the cost of building and supplying relay stations, and with no local service as most of the territory was uninhabited. Between Little Rock and El Paso lay eleven hundred miles of wilderness, two-thirds of it Comanche Indian territory. What Brown referred to as a "new road being constructed" was not new but the most dangerous wheel tracks in North America. One embittered person called it "the road from no place going through nothing to nowhere."

The mail from Independence was still being carried irregularly. West of Salt Lake City the California mail was still taking a full thirty days to go by muleback over the Mormon Trail to Los Angeles, then on to San Francisco. George Chorpenning, who still had the Utah to California run, was summoned to Washington in April, 1858. He offered to furnish weekly mail-stage service on a twelve day schedule between Salt Lake City and Placerville, Calif., for a compensation of \$190,000 annually. Instead he was given a contract for a semi-monthly schedule at \$34,000. Evidently Postmaster General Brown was afraid that improved service along this route would jeopardize his Southern Continental Railroad. He offset Chorpenning's route by adding additional service south of Kansas.

While this was going on, preparations were being made to alter the western end of the Central Overland Route. It was discovered that the \$300,000 post road, instead of following the Emigrant Trail (now U.S. 40), would be turned westward at the present site of Lovelock, Nevada, and reach the California border at dry Honey Lake. From Sacramento to Honey Lake would be nearly 220 miles. Furthermore, the Central Overland Route if extended through the Feather River Canyon, would make Marysville rather than Sacramento the transportation center of California.

This caused great distress and prompted immediate action. When George Chorpenning started his mail route in 1851, he had gone by the way of the north wall of the American River to the south end of Lake Bigler (Tahoe), followed another trail eastward across the Carson Range to Genoa, Nevada, and proceeded along the Humbolt River, and thus on to Salt Lake City.

In 1855, Mormon desert explorer Howard Egan had gone westward from Utah Lake to the southern tip of the Ruby Mountains, about eighty miles south of present day Elko, Nevada. Then he turned to the southwest, following the general course of today's Route 50. This route from Salt Lake City was a third shorter than the California Emigrant Trail, which circles Great Salt Lake to the north. Later, Egan rode a mule from Salt Lake City to Sacramento in an unbelievable ten days.



One of the pioneers of California stagecoaching, Jared Crandell, went over the trail from Sacramento to Genoa and decided that an expenditure of \$50,000, and not too much labor, would permit the passage of wheeled vehicles on the trail. Although a railroad was being built from Sacramento to Placerville, he took over the old Pioneer Line, reasoning that the Egan Route was the most direct and would eventually become the main thoroughfare, thereby making a stage line from Genoa to Placerville and the railroad most profitable.

A committee was formed to promote the construction of the road and the Sacramento Union supported the project with strong editorials. On June 15, 1857, the Union announced that, "Mr. Crandell has established semi-weekly stage service between Placerville and Carson Valley."

In September, Sacramento and El Dorado counties each voted \$25,000 for improvements to what was then known as Johnson's Pass between Placerville and Genoa. When, in the spring of 1858, Postmaster General Brown awarded California mail contracts over routes as far south as Hehauntepec to avoid "the impassable mountains" of the Central Overland Route, Crandell's stagecoaches were regularly making the eighty mile crossing of the Sierra Nevada twice a week on a one day schedule.

Congress, unhappy over the inequalities between Chorpenning's mail contract and that of Butterfield, wanted a change. In June, 1858, champions of the Central Overland Route introduced a resolution directing the Postmaster General to increase the speed needed for service between Independence and Placerville. The House passed the resolution, but President Buchanan vetoed it. In partial appeasement, the Postmaster General shortened the Central Overland Route by designating St. Joseph as the eastern terminus, increasing the service between Salt Lake City and Placerville from semi-monthly to weekly, and reducing the time limit from twenty-six days to sixteen. This automatically raised the compensation of Chorpenning's contract to \$130,000 per annum and put the service from St. Joseph to Placerville on a weekly schedule with a time limit of thirty-eight days for each one-way trip. The total annual compensation to contractors of the Central Overland Route became \$320,000.

Chorpenning immediately began construction and improvements on relay stations. He also ordered Concord coaches and the best mules available. His next act was to employ Howard Egan as his general superintendent to lay out the stage line over the Egan Trail between Salt Lake City and Genoa, marking the route from water to water across the desert. Butterfield, on his line seldom failed to meet his schedule, and occasionally beat his own time by a day or more.

Chorpenning set out to do better. He offered to cut the time to twenty days, the year around, and furnish tri-weekly service for the same amount that Butterfield was receiving for twenty-five day, semi-weekly service. The pro-slavery faction ridiculed the idea, but Chorpenning countered by saying that his line only wanted a fair opportunity to prove the superiority of the Central route.

In the following October, service was started on a steamship line from New Orleans to San Francisco via Tehuantepec. The Louisiana line had put fast steamers on the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific with a fast stagecoach line across the Mexico Isthmus. The company boasted that they would get the mail to San Francisco faster than Butterfield, ignoring the central line entirely.

George Chorpennning saw a golden opportunity to prove his line and test the competition. He proposed that when the President sent his annual report to Congress, that advance copies to all the nation's newspapers be carried by the three rival lines to San Francisco over their various routes. Confident that the Central Overland Route would be buried in snow in December, the Butterfield and Louisiana lines agreed to this test of speed.

The well equipped Butterfield spared no expense preparing his relay stations. Chorpennning, with limited funds, spent \$8,000 stocking temporary relay stations with fast horses, and chartered a steamer on the Missouri River. He then hired crack stagecoach driver Jared Crandell to superintend the western portion while Howard Egan took over the Salt Lake City end.

A courier was to arrive in St. Louis the day before the message was to be read in Congress with three sealed packets, which would be delivered to the riders upon receipt of a telegram from Washington signaling the start of the race.

On December 5th, the telegram arrived, but it was discovered that the courier had left only two packets: one for Butterfield and one for the Louisiana representative. As Chorpennning's man stood bewildered, the other men left the starting line. The Butterfield man carried a message in his packet that would have clarified things. It read in part that the contractors have made arrangements to carry the message by express on their line, but that the President had refused to let them have it. Should Mr. Buchanan persist to the last in this refusal, the Hon. Mr. Craig of Missouri will come out in a card tomorrow denouncing the President for his partiality, and charge him with a determination to foster the southern route at the expense of the Salt Lake City route.

On December 8th, the Chorpennning agent was still waiting. On December 9th, the weather conspired against the Central Overland Route. The St. Louis papers reported that the worst storms of a decade had hit the Midwest, Great Basin, the Rockies and the Sierra Nevadas. "Everything is frozen solid, the river falling with great masses of floating ice being carried by the current. It is reported that the upper Mississippi is closed for the season."

The Central Overland agent obtained a copy of the President's message when it appeared in the St. Louis newspapers, and on December 14th he was on his way up the ice-choked Missouri to St. Joseph. By now, the Butterfield man had been on his way for more than a week. The determined rider plunged into the blizzard which was still raging when a relief rider left Salt Lake City with the message. The Salt Lake City rider was still fighting his way through the deeply drifted snow when the Butterfield man reached San Francisco on December the 26th. On December 28th, the steamer arrived with the Tehuantepec representative. It was not until New Year's Day that the cold, exhausted rider rode his tired pony into Placerville.

The race was lost, and their achievement was totally unappreciated in Washington, for the courageous riders had proven the superiority of the Central Overland Route beyond any doubt. Under the worst possible weather conditions they had made the run from St. Joseph in seventeen days and twelve hours, cutting the time on the Butterfield Line by two days, and the Tehuantepec line by twice that margin.

Chorperming was forced into bankruptcy, and his mail contract eventually cancelled, but mail service over his route was established in time for the silver strikes, the Civil War - when the southern routes had to be abandoned, and for Nevada's statehood.

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#### EDITOR'S COMMENTS AND MEMBERSHIP REPORT

After a summer which featured copious amounts of trout fishing in the beautiful San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado, and some practical experience in economic development work in the Four Corners Region, it is now time for your editor to climb back into the "ivory tower." It is because of this summer activity that this issue of La Posta is being mailed out about two weeks late. Please accept my sincere apologies for this delay.

We have the following new members to the M&DWPHRS:

- 41. University of Arizona Library, Tucson, Arizona 85721
- 42. New Mexico State University Library, Las Cruces, NM 88001
- 43. Phillip Schroeder, 8032 Rosewood, Tucson, Arizona 85711
- 44. Daniel A. Stone, 1545 Glenarm Place, Denver, Colorado 80202
- 45. Dr. Samuel Wagonfeld, 1890 So. Niagara Way, Denver, Colorado 80222
- 46. Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado
- 47. Robert F. Allen, 1506 W. Fairmont Drive, Tempe, Arizona 85281

Total paid members, including our institutional members, now stands at 43. The printing of La Posta each issue is being held at 100 copies, and the average printing costs in our new format are running just under \$60 per issue. If we had a membership of 120, we would just about break even on printing costs. In the meantime, La Posta is being supported to a large degree by financial assistance from the Department of Earth Science, New Mexico State University. A letter of thanks to its chairman, Dr. William King, would not seem inappropriate. His address is: Box 3AB, University Park Station, Las Cruces, NM 88001.

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