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DONA ANA COUNTY: A POSTAL HISTORY (Part II)

The Civil War and the 1860's

Optimism occasioned by the beginnings of faster communication between the Southwest and the rest of the nation in the late 1850's was soon overshadowed by the ominous statements and events of 1860. There was strong sympathy with the Southern cause among Dona Ana County's residents, but in spite of the rising trend of concern with national affairs there was even more interest in local issues. High on the list of local priorities was the extension of more meaningful government into the territory added to Dona Ana County by the Gadsden Purchase of 1855. The Tenth Legislative Assembly of New Mexico attempted to meet this need by creating Arizona County from the part of Dona Ana lying west of a north-south line passing through a point one mile east of the Apache Canyon Overland Mail Station. The act creating Arizona County was signed February 1, 1860. Tubac was designated as the county seat, but before an effective government could be organized the seat was changed to Tucson on July 8, 1861.

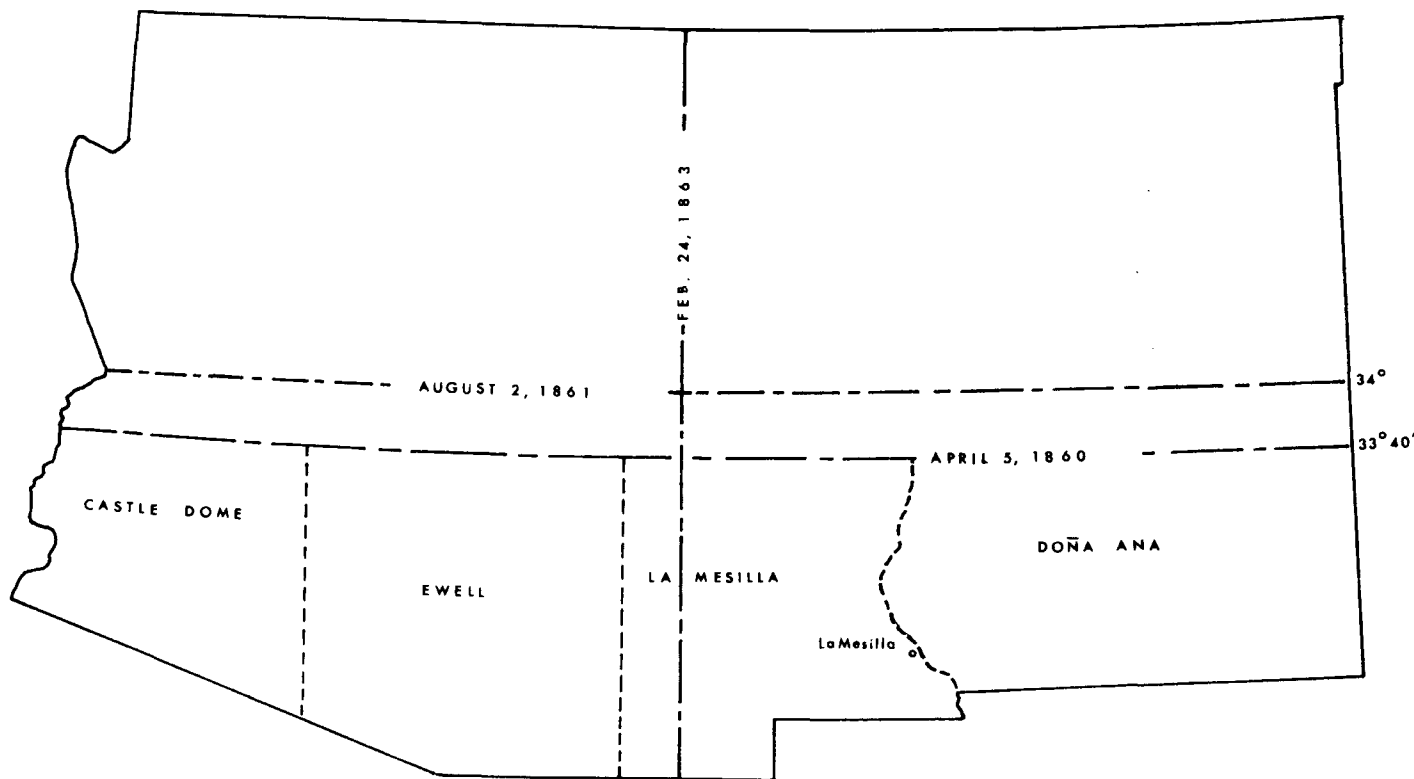
Meanwhile, the citizens of Dona Ana County had taken the control of local government into their own hands. The widening gulf of opinion between the people of northern and southern New Mexico over both national and local issues resulted in the declaration of an independent Territory of Arizona during the spring of 1860. The Mesilla Miner of June 9, 1860, published a "Constitution of the Provisional Government of Arizona," which had been adopted April 5, 1860. Lewis S. Owings was named governor of the new territory, and representatives were dispatched to Washington, D.C. to secure recognition by the Federal government. It need scarcely be mentioned that this was not the normal procedure for creating territories in the 19th century American West.

The geographic extent and organization of the self-proclaimed Territory of Arizona are of particular interest for they reflect quite well the desire for smaller, more local governmental units. According to the Constitution, the territory was bounded by a line:

"Beginning on the Colorado at the parallel of North Latitude 33° 40'; thence with said parallel to the Eastern boundary until it intersects the line of Texas; and then with said line to the Rio Grande and so on to the line of Mexico on said river as fixed by the treaty of 1854 to the Colorado, thence up the Colorado to the beginning."

The Territory was to consist of four counties: Dona Ana, La Mesilla, Ewell, and Castle Dome. Dona Ana County was to comprise all of the territory east of the Rio Grande. La Mesilla County was to extend from the west bank of the Rio Grande to the Chirrichua Mountains. (At the time, the community of La Mesilla was on the west bank of the river. It was not until the flood of 1865 that the Rio Grande changed its course leaving the town on the east bank.) Ewell County extended from the Chirrichua Mountains westward to the "Little Desert," and Castle Dome County comprised the territory lying west of Ewell to the Colorado River. The map below reconstructs this 1860

"Territory of Arizona" and its county organization as nearly as changing place names permit.



Various Boundaries of Arizona Territory

Lack of official recognition by the United States did not present immediate serious problems for the Provisional Government of "Arizona." Washington was a long way from the Rio Grande, and Federal officials were pre-occupied with events much closer at hand. Throughout the summer and fall of 1860, residents of southern New Mexico enjoyed their self-proclaimed independence. Governor Owings toured the booming mining districts of Santa Rita and Pinos Altos. The Mesilla Times (of Mesilla, Arizona) for October 25, 1860, noted that trade conducted by S. M. Hays & Company of Council Grove, Missouri, between Missouri and the Rio Grande Valley had increased dramatically over the 1859 figures. That same edition of the Times reported the results of the first census of Arizona. The census, as conducted by one Colonel Frazer, reported populations for the eastern half of Arizona as follows: Mesilla and surrounding ranches - 3000; Dona Ana - 780; Las Cruces - 820; Mesa - 700; Amoles - 90; Pino Alto Mines - 500; Santa Rita Copper Mines - 160; and Hanover Copper Mines - 240. Frazer reported the total population "including small towns not mentioned" as 6309.

Documented postal history of this period of Dona Ana County's history is entirely absent. It seems probable that those post offices operating in the county before "independence" was declared continued to function as New Mexico

offices, for the Federal government never recognized Arizona as a separate political unit. The possibility exists, however, that in the spirit of local enthusiasm a postmaster at Mesilla or Las Cruces may have cancelled some of his mail with an "Arizona" notation in 1860.

Representatives from the Territory of Arizona were having little success in their mission to gain acceptance by the United States. Then, on the 20th of December, 1860, in far off Columbia, South Carolina, an event took place which was destined to shape much of the immediate history of southern New Mexico, and resolve the Arizona question. The event was the secession of South Carolina. During the next six months, South Carolina was followed by ten other southern states including Texas.

Formation of the Confederate States of America in Montgomery, Alabama, during February, 1861, seemed to capture the imagination of many residents of the Mesilla Valley. On March 16th, a group of southern sympathizers met in Mesilla, and adopted a resolution declaring in part that "the people of New Mexico would not recognize the present black administration (in Washington," and that they "would resist any officers appointed to the Territory by said administration with whatever means in our power."¹

A letter written by W. W. Mills, a Union sympathizer, visiting Mesilla in June, 1861, stated:

"I assure you that I find matters here in a most deplorable condition. A disunion flag is now flying from the house in which I write, and this country is now as much in the possession of the enemy as Charleston is."²

Scarcely a month later the Mesilla Valley was to be controlled by Confederate troops, and proclaimed a portion of the Territory of Arizona, C. S. A.

Colonel John R. Baylor marched his 250 Texas troopers north from Fort Bliss, Texas, on July 23, 1861. Proceeding along the Rio Grande, Baylor made good time and in less than 24 hours his forces were camped some 600 yards from Fort Fillmore, the only active Union garrison in the Mesilla Valley. The fort was commanded by Major Isaac Lynde, who had recently been transferred to the post from Fort McLane near the Santa Rita copper mines. Lynde commanded some 700 Union troops. His men were well equipped, and it was an assumption of the Union high command that Major Lynde was strong enough not only to defeat the invading Confederate forces, but to capture Fort Bliss.

Union scouts reported Baylor's encampment to Lynde. Realizing this, Colonel Baylor abandoned his plan for a surprise attack and marched his troops to La Mesilla, some 4 miles to the northwest. The people of Mesilla greeted the Texans as they entered the town on July 24th.

The following afternoon Major Lynde marched on Mesilla with six companies of the Seventh Infantry, a total of 380 men. Hauling his march about two miles south of the town, Lynde dispatched two riders under a flag of truce to demand of the Confederates "an unconditional surrender of the forces and

¹William A. Keleher, Turmoil in New Mexico 1846-1868, Santa Fe: The Rydal Press, 1952, p.389. ² Ibid., p. 390.

the town." Baylor replied in the negative, and Lynde began marching on the town. As the Union forces came within range, the Texans opened fire killing three Union soldiers and wounding six. Major Lynde ordered an immediate retreat to Fort Fillmore.

It is not the purpose of this narrative to either defend or condemn the actions of Major Lynde. There are those who said he was a coward, and certainly his actions seemed those of a frightened man, but it should be remembered that these were times of confused loyalties in the Southwest. Lynde must certainly have felt at times that he was part of an army of occupation rather than an army defending Union soil.

Upon returning to Fort Fillmore, Major Lynde began planning for its abandonment. He was apparently convinced that the fort could not be defended against Baylor's artillery. Lynde elected to march for Fort Stanton, 154 miles to the northeast. The evacuation of Fort Fillmore was accomplished during the night of July 26, 1861. Daylight the following morning found Lynde's entire command, plus all the women and children of the post, marching and riding over the hot dusty road leading up to San Augustine Pass through the Organ Mountains. Many of the fort's provisions had been destroyed, and some of the troops, not wishing to see good liquor go to waste, had replaced the water in their canteens with brandy and whiskey.

Baylor's scouts reported a large cloud of dust in the direction of the Organs. In a decisive move, Colonel Baylor sent part of his force to occupy the abandoned fort, and rode in pursuit of Lynde with the remainder of his troops. Baylor soon overtook the stragglers of the Union force, many of whom were in a state of anguish from trying to quench a desert thirst with liquor. There was no battle. The bulk of Lynde's forces were overtaken at San Augustine Pass, and though the Unions outnumbered the Confederates 700 to 200, Major Lynde agreed to an unconditional surrender.

On August 2, 1861, just 5 days after the capture of Lynde's Union forces, Colonel Baylor declared that part of New Mexico Territory lying south of the 34th parallel to be the Confederate Territory of Arizona. La Mesilla was designated the territorial capital, and Baylor proclaimed himself to be governor of the new territory.

United States Postmaster General Montgomery Blair had announced that on May 28, 1861, the United States would suspend postal services in the seceded states. On June 1, 1861, the postal system of the Confederacy officially began operations. Although the exact date on which the Mesilla post office officially became a Confederate facility is not known to this author, it must have been but shortly after Baylor's declaration of the Territory of Arizona. Sheldon Dyke reports the earliest known Mesilla postmark for the Confederate period to be dated November 23, 1861. The postmark type is described as a single circle measuring 25 mm. in diameter. Its latest usage is reported for March 29, 1862, and all known examples appear on stampless covers marked "DUE 10C." Interestingly enough, U. S. postal records do not report any break in service for the Mesilla post office during this period. George W. Frazier had been appointed postmaster on December 31, 1859, and according to the Records of Appointments of Postmasters, he remained the

town's postmaster until December 26, 1867. At that time he was succeeded by Francis DeRyther.



Figure 2

Mesilla postmarks of the Civil War period

Postal history artifacts from other Confederate Arizona Territory post offices are unknown. Other post offices which apparently continued to operate during the Civil War period included Las Cruces (Las Cruces) in the Mesilla Valley, and Tucson, Pimo Village, Tubac, Arizona and Gila City in what is now the State of Arizona. With regard to the operation of post offices in Arizona during the Civil War, the Theobalds report:

"It is doubtful that Arizona had any official mail service during this period. In line with this question we refer to an item in the Arizona Miner, of March 9, 1864, stating that 'stages and mails were non-existing. Only by private conveyance or irregular military expresses was the way to get mail matter.'³

Following Baylor's August 2nd declaration in Mesilla, the Confederate forces began to settle down for an uneasy occupation of the Mesilla Valley. The occupation was uneasy on at least two counts: hostile Indians and the threat of a Union counter-attack. Confederate reports dated as early as August 25 tell of skirmishes with Apaches near Fort Stanton (abandoned by the Union after the surrender of Lynde) and Fort Bliss.

Confederate strategists saw in Baylor's success an encouragement to their plan to acquire vast territory in the West. General Henry Sibley persuaded Jefferson Davis to launch a large scale expedition through Texas and New Mexico for the conquest of Colorado, Arizona and, ultimately, California. Sibley was named to head the expedition, and by the autumn of 1861 he was in San Antonio making preparations for the march to New Mexico. Baylor wrote Sibley from Dona Ana, Arizona Territory on October 25th. In his letter, he warned that Union forces numbering 2500 men were marching on Dona Ana from the north. Baylor proposed to fall back to Texas.

³Theobald, John and Lillian, Arizona Territory Post Offices & Postmasters, Phoenix: The Arizona Historical Foundation, 1961, p.4.

Sibley's forces began the 700 mile march from San Antonio to El Paso in early November. By December 12th, Sibley had transferred his headquarters to Fort Bliss. The Confederate expedition moved into New Mexico early in 1862, and by February 5th, three regiments were camped on the east bank of the Rio Grande opposite Fort Thorn, where Sibley established a temporary headquarters. On February 14th, Sibley advanced to the north. One week later his troops engaged the Union forces from Fort Craig at Valverde.

History records Sibley's success at Valverde, his occupation of Santa Fe on March 23, and his subsequent defeat at Glorieta Pass on March 28th. By early May, General Sibley had withdrawn with the bulk of his forces to Fort Bliss. The Union forces did not pursue south of Fort Craig. Meanwhile, far across The Confederate Territory of Arizona, a new force of combatants was being formed under the command of General James Carleton in California. Carleton's California Column marched from Fort Yuma on the Colorado River on May 16, 1862. His advance guard reached Tucson on May 20th. The town was occupied without firing a shot as the small detachment of Confederate troops had already withdrawn to the Rio Grande.

Carleton arrived in Tucson on June 2nd. Six days later he issued a proclamation declaring martial law in the Territory of Arizona, and declaring himself as military governor. The proclamation is particularly interesting for it read in part:

"The Congress of the United States has set apart a portion of New Mexico and organized it into a Territory complete in itself. This is known as the Territory of Arizona. It comprises within its limits all the country eastward from the Colorado River, which is now occupied by the forces of the United States known as the Column from California; and as the flag of the United States shall be carried by this column still farther eastward, these limits will extend in that direction until they reach the farthest geographical boundary of the Territory." ⁴

Carleton's declaration of a Territory of Arizona was slightly premature. It was to be another seven months before the act creating the Territory of Arizona was signed on February 24, 1863.

After a month's pause in Tucson, Carleton dispatched an advance guard to the Rio Grande. The first troops of the California Column reached Fort Thorn on July 4, 1862, and for the first time since the Confederate invasion, Union forces commanded a Rio Grande fort in Dona Ana County.

General Sibley had withdrawn the bulk of his forces to San Antonio by July, 1862. A small force of about 400 men had been left to secure the Mesilla Valley, but they had run low on provisions and managed to alienate much of the local populace by conscripting food and supplies. On July 8, 1862, the Confederate Territory of Arizona was abandoned as the last troops withdrew to Fort Bliss.

Carleton left Tucson for the Rio Grande on July 23rd. He arrived at Fort Thorn on August 7th. Three days later, Carleton marched south to Las Cruces with three troops of cavalry. While in Las Cruces, the commander of the

⁴Keleher, op.cit., p. 243.

California Column issued an order to "Commanders of Towns living along the Rio Grande between the Jornada del Muerto and Fort Bliss, Texas." This order directed the people to clean up their streets and dwellings, establish sanitary regulations, and police their towns. It assured all Mesilla Valley citizens that "the era of anarchy and misrule" had come to an end. A California newspaper correspondent traveling with Carleton estimated populations of the major Mesilla Valley towns as follows: Dona Ana, 500; Las Cruces, 700; and Mesilla, 1000.

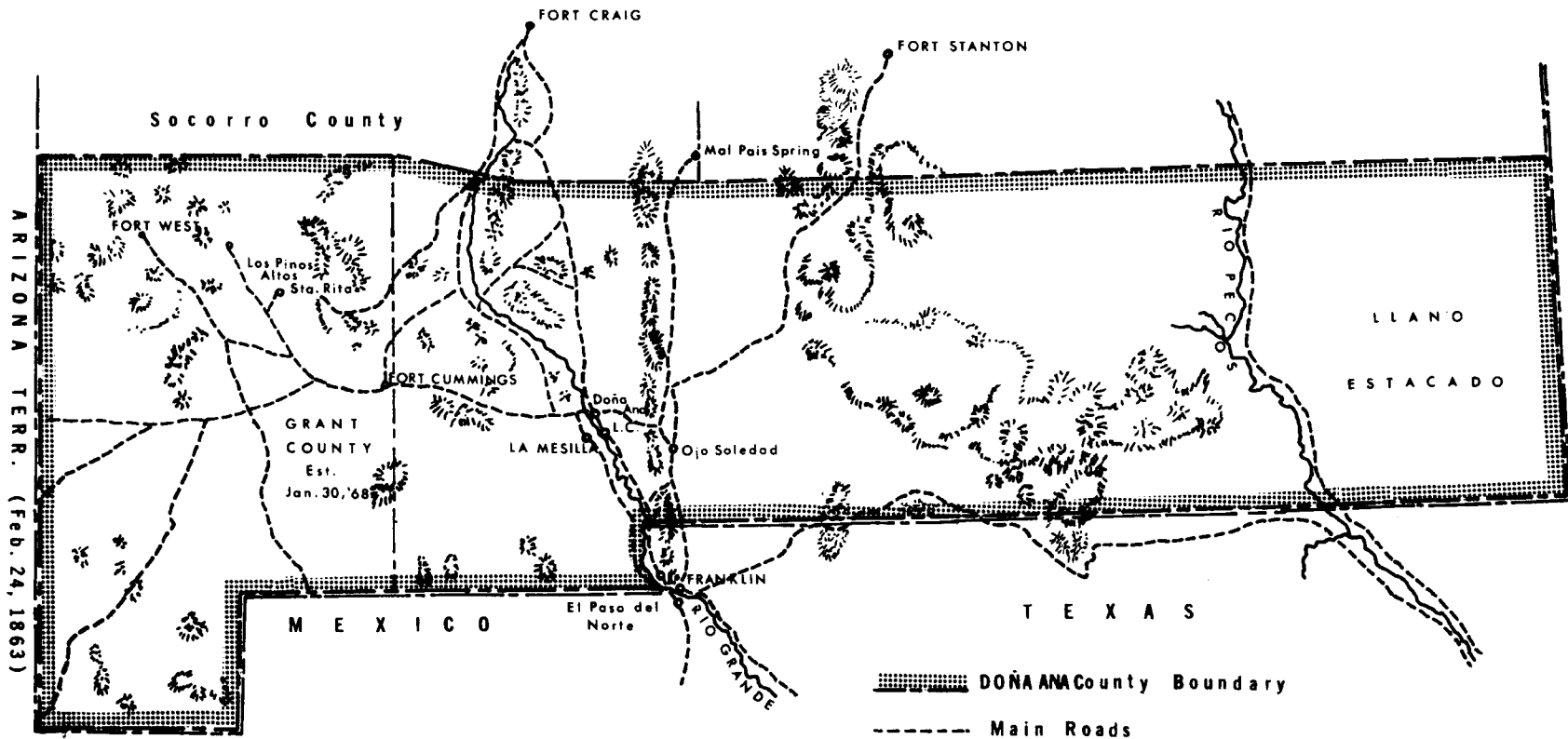
The arrival of the California Column and the departure of the last Texas troops in July, 1862, effectively brought Civil War hostilities to a close in Dona Ana County. Colonel Baylor worked hard in Richmond and Texas to convince his superiors of the necessity of a re-invasion of New Mexico, but his efforts were unsuccessful. A portion of the California Column was headquartered in Mesilla throughout the remainder of the war, but the only warfare in the county was conducted against the Apaches.

Mining towns, Forts and Expansion of the Frontier

Dona Ana County's history during the mid and late 1860's was characterized by two separate but related phenomena: the spread of settlement outward from the traditional centers along the Rio Grande and increasing conflict with the region's indigenous inhabitants. The postal history of the county during this period reflects both of these phenomena.

Official creation of the Territory of Arizona on February 24, 1863, greatly reduced the area of Dona Ana County. Never-the-less, Dona Ana was still an immense county stretching across southern New Mexico from Arizona to Texas. Prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, men had been traveling in increasing numbers into the Black Range Mountains of southern New Mexico in search of mineral wealth. The famous Santa Rita copper mine, located in the Black Range, had been worked by the Mexicans since 1803. In May, 1860, a party of California miners came into the region and discovered gold. The place became known as Rich Gulch, and a community known as Pinos Altos developed nearby. By December of 1860, there were an estimated 1500 people in the vicinity of the original strike. In 1861, conflicts with the Apaches began to increase. On September 27th of that year a fierce battle was fought in the town of Pinos Altos with some 500 warriors led by Mangus Colorado and Cochise. Many miners began leaving the area as conflicts with the Indians increased and news of the Civil War reached the area. There were no post offices officially operating in the mining districts prior to the Civil War, but The Mesilla Times of November 1, 1860, carried an article on the newly established Catlett's Express, which had made its first trip in October carrying the U. S. mail between Mesilla and Pino Alto(sic). The return trip to Mesilla brought out 55 letters, and had been made in the remarkable time of 22 hours. The distance was about 120 miles.

The Confederate occupation of the Mesilla Valley apparently interrupted contact between the miners and the outside world somewhat. Mining operations certainly continued through 1861-62, for as General Carleton paused at a place known as Pichacho de los Mimbres in July of 1862, he was visited by a party of miners who reported that 90 to 100 miners and their families were



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DONA ANA COUNTY IN THE 1860'S

surrounded by Apaches at Pinos Altos and were slowly starving to death. At that time, Carleton sent two wagons of provisions and a troop escort.⁵

Carleton visited Pinos Altos in January, 1863. He was enthusiastic about the future of the mining area, and established Fort West nearby. The fort was manned by four companies of men whose primary job was to protect the miners. Carleton established an unusual furlough system at Fort West. One-quarter of the entire command was to be on a month's furlough at all times. During their month of leave, the troops were encouraged to work the gold mines for their own reward.

Recovery of the mining region from the disruptions of war and Indian raids was not an overnight occurrence, but by 1867 the population of the area had surpassed pre-war levels. Carleton visited Pinos Altos again during the summer of 1867. It was during that visit that he predicted:

"Before six years shall have passed away, there will be a town at or near Pinos Altos larger than the city of Denver..."⁶

Increased activity in the Black Hills mining region brought an increase in the amount of traffic over the old Butterfield Overland route between Mesilla and the mines. In 1866, two new post offices were established along the route. Both were located near points which had been former Butterfield stations. On October 11, 1866, Richard A. Sarle was appointed postmaster of the Rio Mimbres office. Two months later, on December 11th, Robert V. Newsham was appointed the first postmaster at the Fort Cummings post office.

The Fort Cummings post office was located at the entrance to Cooke's Canyon, about one-half mile north of the site of the old Cooke's Spring station. The canyon was a notorious hiding place for Apaches, and the military post had been built in 1863 to offer some protection for travelers. Rio Mimbres post office was located some 18 miles west of Fort Cummings, near the site of the former Mimbres station. The Mimbres is an intermittent stream, and not a serious obstacle to transportation, but its lush valley provided a natural route north from the Butterfield Trail to the mining region.

In 1867, two post offices were established within the Black Hills mining region for the first time. On October 4, 1867, William H. Willis was appointed postmaster at Fort Bayard, and on the same day John A. Miller was named the first postmaster at Pinos Altos. Fort Bayard was yet another military installation designed to protect the miners from the Indians. A garrison of troops had constructed the post during the autumn of 1866. It was located about 8 miles southeast of Pinos Altos.

Postal markings from three of these four post offices are known dating from the 1860's, but the earliest, from Pinos Altos, is a manuscript marking of February 19, 1868. On January 30, 1868, the western portion of Dona Ana County was re-organized as Grant County. (See map) As a result, no postal markings of these offices are known from their brief period in Dona Ana County.

⁵ Ibid., p.272.

⁶ Ibid., p. 349.

Settlement was expanding too in the Mesilla Valley during the late 1860's. On May 8, 1865, the U. S. Army established Fort Selden at the northern end of the valley to protect settlers in that area. The post was named for Colonel Henry Selden of the 1st New Mexico Infantry, who had died on February 2nd of the year the post was founded. Fort Selden was initially occupied by one company of cavalry and one company of infantry. A post office was established at Fort Selden, and George E. Blake was appointed its first postmaster on November 9, 1866.

Four miles south of Fort Selden, on the east bank of the Rio Grande, a second post office was established to serve the settlers of the northern Mesilla Valley. The office was named Leasburgh in honor of its first postmaster, Adolph Lea. Lea, who received his appointment as postmaster on June 12, 1866, was one of the first sutlers at Fort Selden. He later became one of the most prominent land-owners of the upper Mesilla Valley.

In addition to the Leasburgh and Fort Selden offices, a third post office was provided the post-war settlers of the valley by the re-establishment of the Dona Ana office with Pablo Melenders as postmaster on March 27, 1866. This office was discontinued again on August 12, 1867, but once more re-established May 15, 1868, with John D. Barncastle as postmaster.

Finally, the late 1860's saw the first Dona Ana County post office established east of the Organ Mountains. The land east of the mountains is a wide desert bolsom known as the Tularosa Basin. In the early days, the Basin was known only as an unpleasant place to be crossed as quickly as possible. Along the extreme eastern edge of the basin there are a few places where water can be obtained, and it was at one of these places that a few settlers began to carve out a living in the late 1860's. The Tularosa River has its headwaters in the Sierra Blanca Mountains, and, unlike most streams with headwaters in this range, it flows to the west, eventually to disappear in the arid basin which bears its name. Farmers began to settle along the Tularosa River at the place where the stream left the mountains to meet the desert. They named their community for the river, whose name comes from the Spanish, and means "reeds with red stems." George W. Nesmith was appointed the first Tularosa postmaster on April 9, 1868. The office functioned for a little over a year, being closed on October 22, 1869. It was re-established in the early 1870's, however, and has continued to serve the tiny green valley to this day.

On December 31, 1869, there were five post offices operating in Dona Ana County. They were, from south to north along the Rio Grande, Mesilla, Las Cruces, Dona Ana, Leasburgh and Fort Selden. In the vast territory that was Dona Ana County in 1869, postal facilities and established settlement were largely restricted to a small string of towns stretching some 18 miles along the narrow Rio Grande Valley.

NEXT: NOTORIETY AND THE COMING OF THE RAILROAD IN THE 1870'S & 1880'S.

VOICES FROM THE MOUNTAINS AND DESERTS

Charles G. Finke, a new M&DWPHERS member from Albuquerque, sends along some additional New Mexico railroad post office information. Mr. Finke reports the following cancels as supplementary to those listed by members Rapp and Dike in earlier issues of La Posta:

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Amarillo & Vaughn | Santa Rita & Whitewater |
| Clovis & Carlsbad | Temple & Clovis |
| Clovis & Pecos | Trinidad & Albuquerque |
| Dawson & Tucumcari | Tucumcari & Canon City |
| French & Tucumcari | |

Mr. Finke is currently working on a list of New Mexico name changes along the lines of Bill Bauer's Colorado listing. We can all look forward to hearing more from Mr. Finke in the near future....

Robert Potts of Albany, Oregon has devised a scheme for rating DPO cancels for exchange purposes. He would appreciate any comments from other members who might have addressed themselves to the problem of evaluating DPO cancels. Basically, Bob's scheme employs a series of categories defined by the dates in which an office closed. His categories are: Z - discontinued before 1870; XX - establishing order rescinded within one year; X - discontinued between 1870 and 1890; A - discontinued 1891 - 1900; B - discontinued 1901 - 1910; C - discontinued 1911 - 1920; D - discontinued 1921 - 1930; E - discontinued 1931 - 1940; F - discontinued 1941 - 1950; and G - discontinued 1951 - 1960. Bob states that existence of an office for less than 3 years advances its cancels to the next highest category.

The current membership list, which appears in this issue of La Posta, reveals an interesting geographic distribution. New Mexico leads all states with 9 members. The Land of Enchantment is followed closely by Oregon with 8, then Colorado with 5, California and New York with 4 each, and Arizona with 3. Louisiana, Nevada and New Jersey are the only other states showing more than one M&DWPHERS member. In all, members live in 15 states and one foreign country. The question which plagues your editor is why we have not been able to add more depth of membership with all this geographic breadth. Isn't there someone you know who would like to subscribe?

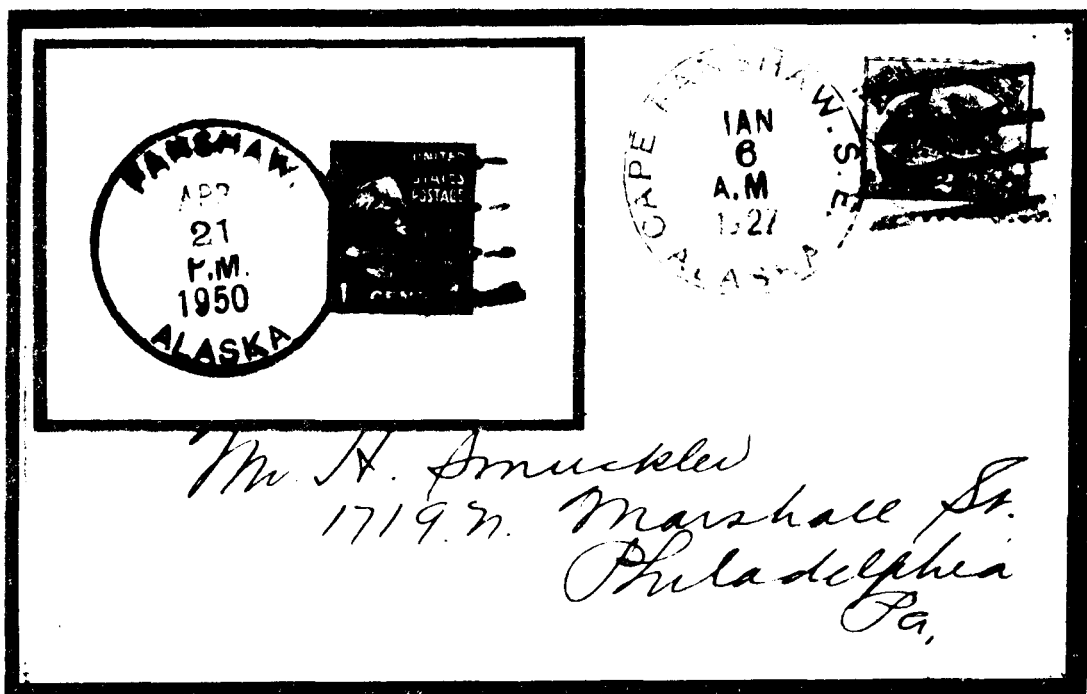
Jack Willard reports that the FOURTH CLASS CANCELLATION CLUB Sales Circuit is doing a land office business. Circuit books containing covers from many western states are available by writing Jack and stating your interests. You can also sell off your excess material through the FCCC's circuit. Jack has books available at no cost. Membership in the FCCC is not required to participate in the sales circuit, but the club's bulletin is a valuable source of current postal history information and well worth the nominal membership fee.

ALASKA POST OFFICE PROFILES - CAPE FANSHAW

The Cape Fanshaw post office was originally established on June 9, 1902. Herman G. Halkett was the first postmaster of the office which was situated near the geographic feature for which it was named. The origin of the name of the cape is somewhat in doubt. Orth in his Dictionary of Alaska Place Names (1967) explains that the name was applied by Captain George Vancouver when the point was discovered on August 14, 1794. On the other hand, James S. Couch in his Alaska Postal History, attributes the name to "an early settler." John Muir mentions "Cape Fanshawe" in the report of his Travels in Alaska from as early as 1879, so certainly the name was well known before the first post office was established.

Cape Fanshaw is located at the southern end of Stephens Passage, between Fanshaw Bay and Frederick Sound. The post office was on Fanshaw Bay, about 85 miles southeast of Juneau. The first period of operation was very brief. On July 31, 1903, the Cape Fanshaw post office was closed. It was almost 18 years before the office reopened. On January 10, 1921, George Ramstead was appointed postmaster.

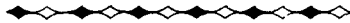
The primary economic activity at Cape Fanshaw was fishing. A cannery was operated for a short time, but it proved uneconomic, and the community became a minor fishing port. On May 2, 1932, the name of the post office was changed to Fanshaw, and it remained in that form until the office was closed on September 20, 1953. During the later years, Cape Fanshaw became almost a ghost town. Couch reported 25 whites living in the community in the early 1950's, and Orth reported only 5 people there in 1960. Postal receipts for the last 5 years of the Fanshaw office (1948-1952) averaged less than \$250 per year.



Territorial Post Offices of the Black Hills

The pre-post office period of the history of mail service in Dakota's Black Hills was detailed in La Posta, Vol. II, No. 4. In March, 1877, the United States Post Office Department established its first offices in the Black Hills. The purpose of this article is to provide a complete listing of the post offices which operated in and about the region between 1877 and 1889.

In the interest of simplicity, the Black Hills have been defined along county boundaries. Here, the region consists of Butte, Lawrence, Pennington, Custer and Fall River counties. The portion of present-day Meade County lying west and south of the Belle Fourche and Cheyenne rivers was attached to Lawrence County until 1890. Post offices in that portion of Meade County are listed under Lawrence County. As a general rule, information is not given in this listing for the post-territorial period. South Dakota was admitted to the Union on November 2, 1889, and a notation of "OPERATING" applies to the status of an office on that date.

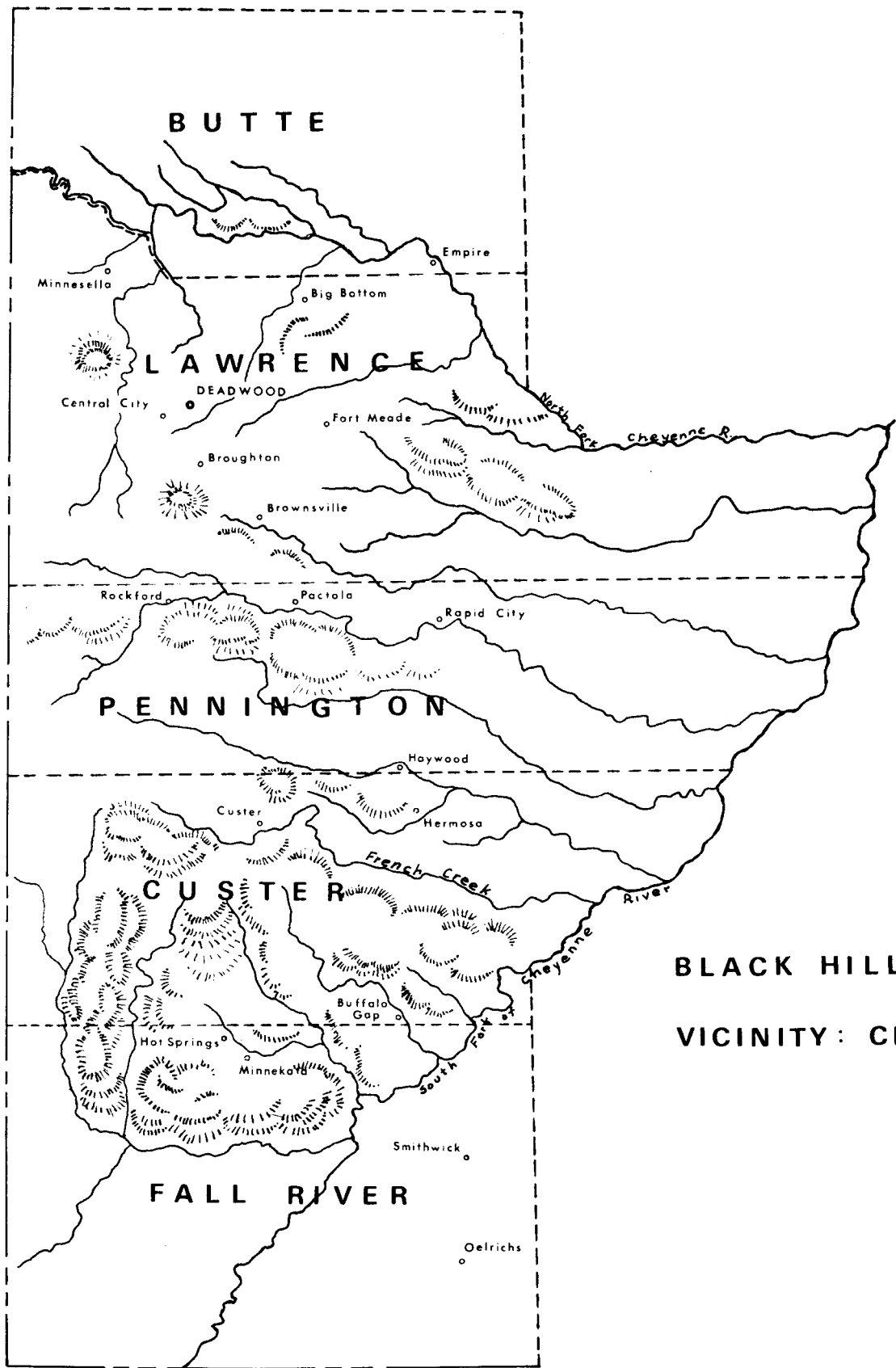


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**BLACK HILLS &
VICINITY: CIRCA 1890**

| Office | Co. | Established | First Postmaster | Discontinued | Changed to | Notes |
|-----------------|--------|-------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Altamine | Penn. | 29 Mar 1880 | Matthew Daley | 27 Sep 1881 | | |
| Bakerville | Custer | 6 May 1886 | Sidmond Potts | OPERATING | | |
| Baltimore | Law. | 11 Apr 1881 | George W. Adler | 6 Jun 1881 | | |
| Battle River(1) | Custer | 7 Aug 1879 | Walter N. Walker | 14 Feb 1882 | | Mail to Custer |
| Battle River(2) | Custer | 6 Nov 1885 | Walter N. Walker | 20 Jul 1886 | Hermosa | |
| Bear Gulch | Law. | 16 Jan 1878 | Darwin Knight | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$16 |
| Beaver | Law. | 4 Mar 1878 | Nathan Coleman | 18 Oct 1878 | | |
| Bend | Law. | 21 Jul 1886 | Mary L. Howes | OPERATING | | (Meade County) |
| Big Bottom | Law. | 15 Feb 1883 | William C. Pryor | 1 Feb 1890 | | PM Comp. '83 - \$4.95 |
| Black Hawk | Law. | 26 Jan 1887 | Charles L. Ward | OPERATING | | (Meade County) |
| Bluevale | Penn. | 15 Mar 1888 | Charles E. Little | 29 Dec 1890 | | Mail to Rapid City |
| Boulder | Law. | 29 Nov 1880 | Levi L. Merrifield | 11 Oct 1887 | | PM Comp. '83 - \$21.94 |
| Brashville | Law. | 2 Feb 1881 | John Brasch | 8 Jun 1882 | | |
| Bridgeport | Custer | 3 Dec 1888 | George F. Colb | OPERATING | | |
| Broughton | Law. | 15 Nov 1880 | Ensebe C. Volin | 18 Oct 1882 | | Mail to Lead City |
| Brownsville | Law. | 21 Jul 1882 | John Monheim | 16 Dec 1889 | Elk Creek | PM Comp. '83 - \$113 |
| Buffalo | Custer | 6 Mar 1880 | George C. Boland | 10 May 1880 | Buffalo Gap | |
| Buffalo Gap(1) | Custer | 9 Jul 1877 | George C. Boland | 15 Sep 1879 | | |
| Buffalo Gap(2) | Custer | 10 May 1880 | George C. Boland | OPERATING | | |
| Butte | Butte | 7 May 1883 | Eva S. Woolston | OPERATING | | |
| Camp Ruhlen | Law. | 10 Oct 1878 | William S. Fanshaw | 29 Jan 1879 | Fort Meade | |
| Carbonate | Law. | 17 Nov 1884 | Josiah Craig | OPERATING | | |
| Cascade | F.R. | 29 Jun 1882 | Frank T. Allabough | 11 Nov 1891 | Cascade Springs | |
| Castleville | Custer | 27 Mar 1877 | J. Austin Lewis | 24 Sep 1879 | | |
| Centennial Park | Law. | 9 Jun 1879 | George Z. Richards | 23 Feb 1892 | | PM Comp. '83 - \$26.80 |
| Central City | Law. | 27 Jun 1877 | Charles Collins | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$1500. |
| Compton | F.R. | 21 Sep 1886 | George M. Hollenback | 12 Nov 1888 | | |
| Creston | Penn. | 11 May 1886 | Marshall Nye | OPERATING | | |
| Crook City | Law. | 27 Mar 1877 | William Bause | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$236. |
| Custer | Custer | 14 Mar 1877 | Thomas E. Harvey | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$672. |
| Deadwood | Law. | 14 Mar 1877 | Richard O. Adams | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$2700. |
| Diamond | Law. | 18 Mar 1880 | Charles W. Yana | 29 Mar 1881 | | |
| Elkhorn City | Law. | 24 Feb 1879 | Hattie A. Houghton | 9 Mar 1880 | | |
| Empire | Butte | 5 May 1882 | Andrew Craig | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$8.88 |
| Etta Mine | Penn. | 10 Mar 1886 | Joseph W. Applegate | OPERATING | | |
| Fairburn | Custer | 17 Mar 1887 | Sherrill Sagendorf | OPERATING | | |

| Office | Co. | Established | First Postmaster | Discontinued | Changed to | Notes |
|-----------------|--------|-------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Farmingdale | Penn. | 15 Jan 1887 | Americus Thompson | OPERATING | | |
| Florence | Law. | 30 Dec 1880 | Erastus Green | 10 Jan 1882 | Minnesela | |
| Folsom | Custer | 20 Nov 1886 | John N. Cunningham | OPERATING | | |
| Forest City | Law. | 25 Oct 1877 | John Johnston | 21 Dec 1880 | | |
| Fort Meade | Law. | 29 Jan 1879 | William S. Fanshaw | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$784 |
| Fourche | Law. | 28 Apr 1880 | Pembroke B. Stearns | 22 Mar 1883 | | Mail to Minnesela |
| French Creek | Custer | 17 Jun 1878 | John Weldon | 17 Mar 1887 | Fairburn | (Out 1878-1885) |
| Galena | Law. | 28 Nov 1877 | Artemus McDonald | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$244 |
| Gay City | Law. | 24 Mar 1877 | Charles Collins | 27 Jun 1877 | Central City | |
| Goldrock | Penn. | 11 Oct 1881 | Chester J. Wheelock | 3 Apr 1882 | Harney | |
| Grashville | Law. | 3 Aug 1885 | Nettie F. Hill | OPERATING | | (Meade County) |
| Harney(1) | Custer | 19 Jun 1877 | Calvin L. Spooner | 27 Jun 1879 | | |
| Harney(2) | Penn. | 3 Apr 1882 | Chester J. Wheelock | 26 Jan 1887 | | PM Comp. '83 - \$33.23 |
| Hermosa | Custer | 23 Jul 1886 | Herman M. McKnight | OPERATING | | |
| Herrmann | Penn. | 18 May 1883 | George W. Burr | 1 Aug 1883 | | |
| Hill City | Penn. | 26 Oct 1877 | Joseph McClure | OPERATING | | |
| Hilton | Custer | 14 Feb 1889 | Mary E. Bailey | 28 Feb 1889 | Martin's Valley | |
| Horse Head | Custer | 6 Dec 1880 | George H. Holden | 2 Aug 1882 | | Mail to Buffalo Gap |
| Horsehead | F.R. | 31 Aug 1887 | Thomas O. Rourke | 26 Oct 1887 | | Mail to Oelrichs |
| Hot Springs | F.R. | 6 Mar 1883 | Alexander S. Stewart | OPERATING | | |
| Laflin | Law. | 11 Aug 1884 | Robert Florman | 3 Dec 1889 | Nemo | |
| Laverne | Penn. | 4 Feb 1889 | Anson J. McCain | OPERATING | | |
| Lead City | Law. | 19 Jun 1877 | Giles A. Noyes | 5 Dec 1890 | Lead | PM Comp. '83 - \$1600. |
| Link | Penn. | 10 Jun 1886 | Joseph J. Pitts | 18 Dec 1891 | Dakota City | |
| Lookout | Penn. | 24 Oct 1884 | John T. Hooper | 27 Jul 1891 | Castle | |
| Macy | Butte | 30 Jan 1885 | Isaac E. Macy | OPERATING | | |
| Maitland | F.R. | 12 Dec 1888 | Maria Williams | OPERATING | | |
| Martin's Valley | Custer | 28 Feb 1889 | Mary E. Bailey | OPERATING | | |
| Mathews | F.R. | 23 Nov 1888 | Albert A. Powell | 20 Jul 1889 | Collins | |
| Maverick | Penn. | 15 Feb 1883 | Stephen Peabody | 5 Feb 1889 | | Mail to Hermosa |
| Melvin | Custer | 20 May 1889 | John W. Penkins | 22 Aug 1890 | | Mail to Buffalo Gap |
| Merritt | Penn. | 14 Dec 1888 | John N. Jones | OPERATING | | |
| Minneapolis | Law. | 30 Oct 1879 | William M. Martin | 16 Mar 1880 | | |
| Minnekata | F.R. | 28 Nov 1881 | J. C. Hooper | 6 Mar 1883 | Hot Springs | Name means "hot water." |
| Minnesela | Butte | 10 Jan 1882 | Edward M. Bowman | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$37.14 |

| Office | Co. | Established | First Postmaster | Discontinued | Changed to | Notes |
|-------------|--------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Mona | Penn. | 2 Apr 1883 | John J. Wood | OPERATING | | |
| Montezuma | Law. | 29 Jan 1879 | Josiah McKirahan | 11 Sep 1879 | | |
| Moulton | Penn. | 6 Dec 1886 | David C. Robinson | OPERATING | | |
| Newton | Penn. | 17 Mar 1888 | James Vyer | OPERATING | | |
| Oella | F.R. | 10 Nov 1881 | J. C. Hopper | 28 Nov 1881 | Minnekata | |
| Oelrichs | F.R. | ?? | Samuel N. Moses | OPERATING | | |
| Otis | Custer | 10 Jan 1889 | Reisin Otis | OPERATING | | |
| Pactola | Penn. | 25 Sep 1877 | Arthur Harvey | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$39.78 |
| Perry | Law. | 8 Dec 1885 | James Parker | OPERATING | | |
| Phinney | Custer | 14 Jun 1888 | Harvey P. Graham | OPERATING | | |
| Postville | Law. | 14 Jul 1881 | John A. Case | 16 May 1890 | Piedmont | PM Comp. '83 - \$66.63 |
| Rapid City | Penn. | 27 Mar 1877 | John R. Brennan | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$1000. |
| Redwater | Law. | 30 Oct 1879 | Michael Lynch | 2 May 1881 | | |
| Rochford | Penn. | 16 Jan 1879 | Robert D. Kelley | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$136 |
| Rockerville | Penn. | 1 Apr 1879 | Joseph Dow | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$233 |
| Rocks | Custer | 14 Jul 1886 | William C. Fenwick | OPERATING | | |
| Rockville | Penn. | 15 Jan 1878 | Edward D. McEvena | 1 Apr 1879 | Rockerville | |
| St. Onge | Law. | 5 Dec 1881 | Henry T. St. Onge | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$8.16 |
| Saratoga | Law. | 12 Feb 1880 | Henry C. Dunning | 14 Oct 1880 | | |
| Sheridan | Penn. | 22 Oct 1877 | James Ridpath | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$47.83 |
| Silver City | Penn. | 9 Mar 1887 | George H. McDonald | OPERATING | | |
| Slate | Custer | 15 Apr 1880 | George D. Jenks | 2 May 1881 | | |
| Smithville | Law. | 30 Jan 1880 | William E. Smith | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$58.74 |
| Smithwick | F.R. | 19 Feb 1887 | Benjamin O. Avery | OPERATING | | |
| Spearfish | Law. | 21 Jan 1878 | Henry M. Jorgens | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$899 |
| Strater | Custer | 12 Apr 1883 | John Strator | 6 Nov 1885 | Battle River | |
| Sturgis | Law. | 12 Dec 1878 | Charles Collins | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$286 |
| Tenderfoot | Custer | 16 Feb 1880 | Benjamin Miller | 14 Feb 1881 | | |
| Terraville | Law. | 12 Feb 1880 | J. P. McKinnis | OPERATING | | PM Comp. '83 - \$265 |
| Tigerville | Penn. | 2 Jan 1879 | Thomas M. Kittrell | 26 Jan 1885 | | PM Comp. '83 - \$51.67 |
| Tilford | Law. | 16 Jan 1888 | John D. Hale | OPERATING | | |
| Vale | Butte | 6 Mar 1883 | Andrew Rosander | OPERATING | | |
| Verdi | Law. | 22 Sep 1882 | L. D. Waln | 10 Apr 1883 | | Mail to Sturgis |
| Viewfield | Law. | 31 Mar 1881 | Robert Thompson | OPERATING | | (Meade County) |
| Volunteer | Law. | 7 Nov 1887 | William C. Logan | OPERATING | | (Meade County) |
| Whitewood | Law. | 6 Jun 1877 | William W. English | 12 Sep 1881 | | |

EDITOR'S COMMENTS AND MEMBERSHIP REPORT

And so we come to the end of our second year of La Posta and the Mountain & Desert West Postal History Research Society. This year has seen considerable changes in the format, if not the content, of our bi-monthly journal. From the reports reaching this desk, I must assume that the changes have been, for the most part, warmly received.

La Posta contained 120 pages of postal history and related trivia in 1970. Of that total, 20 pages were authored by Bill Bauer in his two fine Colorado pieces. Bill Rapp contributed 6 pages in articles dealing with San Juan County, New Mexico, and Dorothy See's reprinted article on Nevada's early mails accounted for another 6 pages. The remaining 88 pages were filled in various ways by your editor. Please do not misunderstand. I enjoy writing postal history, and there has been no one forcing La Posta to average 20 pages per issue, but it really would be wonderful, if at the end of 1971, I could report that Volume III contained articles by 10 or 12 different people.

That brings us to 1971, and a contemplation of La Posta, Volume III. Last year at this time we had 32 individual and 2 institutional members of the M&DWPHRS. Today there are 42 individual and 7 institutional members. Our growth during 1970 has not been spectacular. My decision to go ahead for one more year has already been made, and given enough members wishing to continue there will be a La Posta Volume III. My decision to continue is, however, conditional. The condition is acceptance by the membership of one of two alternatives. It matters not which alternative is accepted, but La Posta simply can not afford to be published as it has been in 1970 with our current level of membership. The alternatives are:

1) Membership dues & subscription rate be raised back to \$5 for all members in 1971, and La Posta will remain bi-monthly;

or

2) La Posta go to a quarterly format, and dues/subscription will remain at \$3 for old members.

There is, of course, a third alternative; not to renew your subscription. All three alternatives will be offered on a ballot enclosed with this issue, and you are asked to cast your vote to help decide the future of La Posta for 1971. Once a majority of the current membership has displayed preference for either alternative, everyone will be notified, and a request for 1971 dues will be made.

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