

## TERRITORY OF NEW MEXICO

Compiled from the official Records of the General Land Office and other sources

under the direction of

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Chief of Drafting Division G.L.O.

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# POSTMARK TYPES OF ALASKA TERRITORY : AN EMPIRICAL CLASSIFICATION

By Richard W. Helbock

## PREFACE:

Any attempt to make an exhaustive classification of the various types of postmarks used by offices in a state or territory during a given period of time is perhaps doomed to failure from the start. The absence of detailed records indicating what types of markings were used at individual postoffices means that the classification must proceed from an investigation of the surviving examples of postmarks, and it is unlikely that examples of all the types used at all postoffices have survived. Nevertheless, even though completion is not possible, the classification of postmark types is an interesting exercise and offers useful information for students of postal history. The current attempt to classify postmark types used by offices in Alaska Territory between 1867 and 1959 is an empirical review. It is based primarily upon research conducted in conjunction with the compilation of Postmarks of Alaska Territory (forthcoming), an illustrated catalog of more than 1000 postmarks used in Alaska Territory. Statements regarding postmark types used by Alaskan offices during the classic period (1867 - 1900) rely heavily upon information published in Joseph J. Cavagnol's Postmarked Alaska, and a similar debt is owed Walter Findlay, John Grainger, and Harry Smuckler, authoritative Alaska postal historians who have shared their knowledge of territorial postmarks with me.

## INTRODUCTION:

The treaty purchasing Alaska from Russia was ratified by the U. S. Congress on May 26, 1867, and, while formal transfer did not occur until October 18th of that year, Alaska passed legally to the United States. John Henry Kinkead was appointed the first U.S. postmaster in Alaska, his office at Sitka being authorized July 23, 1867. During the next 92 years Alaska was to remain a territory of the United States, and, with the exception of two rather brief frenetic periods - the gold rushes 1897 - 1910 and the Second World War - was largely forgotten. Approximately 520 postoffices operated in Alaska during its territorial years. The number must be given as an approximation for a number of offices listed as "established" in POD records were subsequently listed as "rescinded" and probably never operated. Other offices also are of questionable existence. Table I presents a decade-by-decade analysis of post office openings and closings for the Territory.

Table I  
Post Office Openings\* and Closings in Alaska, 1867 - 1959  
Cumulative

Decade	Openings	Openings	Closings	Net	Cumulative Net
1867-1869	4	4	0	+4	4
1870-1879	1	5	2	-1	3
1880-1889	17	22	4	+13	16
1890-1899	58	80	19	+39	55
1900-1909	173	253	71	+102	157
1910-1919	76	329	62	+14	171
1920-1929	71	400	41	+30	201
1930-1939	71	471	45	+26	227
1940-1949	65	536	49	+16	243
1950-1959**	50	586	74	-24	219

\*including offices later rescinded

\*\*includes all of 1959

Source: Ricks, Directory of Alaska Postoffices and Postmasters

The impact of the gold rush is clearly seen in the large increase in the number of new offices in the first decade of the twentieth century. Postmark examples are known from about 80 percent of the 520 offices, and they form the basis upon which this classification is founded.

The classification is organized into five parts which are arranged in a roughly chronological order. The classic period, 1867 - 1900, is considered first, and, while there were only 80 postoffices established in Alaska during this period, the variation in postmark types used by them was considerable. The second part considers duplex steel hand cancels which began to be used in certain of the larger post offices as early as 1898, and saw continued use at some offices until 1959. Part III is an attempt to classify the various types of four-bar and related hand stamps used at Alaskan postoffices between about 1903 and 1959. A discussion of machine cancels is given in Part IV, and the fifth and final part considers registry, money order business (MOB), and general purpose cancels used in the territory as postmarks.

## Part I. The Classic Period, 1867 - 1900

Postal markings during the earliest period of U.S. ownership of Alaska were characterized by a condition running from almost total individuality of design in the beginning toward more and more uniformity at the end of the period. The classification focusses upon three distinctive types, or type-groups, of postmarks used during the classic period: manuscripts, free-style, and steel handstamps.

### A. Manuscripts

Manuscript postmarks were the ultimate in individuality. No two post offices used the same manuscript. In fact, manuscript postmarks used at the same postoffice often differed substantially from one another. The earliest known Alaskan cover bears a two-line manuscript reading "Sitka, R.A.// Nov 8 1867." The second earliest cover bears a manuscript reading "Sitka A.T.// Jan 24, 1868," and the third, dated March 25, 1868, returns to the original form of "Sitka, R.A." The Post Office Guide for 1868 indicates that the post office was known as "Sitka, Russian America", and subsequent records show that it was not changed to Alaska until July 27, 1868. Correct postmarking was therefore Sitka, R.A., or Sitka, Russian America, but the point is the postmaster had the freedom to change the style and even the wording of his manuscript with the stroke of his pen.

Kodiak was another of the four postoffices established in Alaska during the late 1860's, and the two manuscript markings known from this office show an even greater degree of individuality than the Sitka examples. The earliest cover bears a manuscript reading "Kodiak A.T.// 24/8/69", but the other cover, bearing a pencil notation date of Oct 13/69, has a manuscript reading "Island of Kodiak// Alaska, Try."

In addition to the five examples already described, only two other manuscript markings are known, Cavagnol reporting and illustrating a "Fort Wrangel, A.T.//July 31 1870", and one from Douglas of 1887 having recently come to light. More may be expected from the pioneer postoffices already mentioned or from such other early offices as Fort Tongass, Chilkat, Killisnoo, Klawock, Loring, or Mitchell. Any of these or other early day postoffices may have postmarked letters by manuscript prior to the arrival of their postmark devices during the first weeks or months of operation, but mail volumes were in all cases very slight and any future discoveries of Alaskan manuscripts are likely to be few and far between.

### B. Free-Style Postmarks

The arrival of Sitka's first handstamp postmark device sometime during the summer or fall of 1868 marked the beginning of a period in the postal history of Alaska characterized by considerable variety in the style of postmarks used in the Territory. This free-style period extended through the decades of the 1870's and 1880's and into the early 1890's. It was brought on by postal regulations which permitted postmasters to purchase their postmark devices from any of a number of private manufacturers and the free enterprise competition between the latter which sometimes took the form of offering a wide range of postmark designs tailored to suit individual tastes and preferences. The range of postmark styles used in Alaska was not nearly as wide and varied as it was in most of the "lower states and territories". There are no known examples of county or postmaster postmarks, none of octagonal or oval postmarks, none of monogram or fancy "killers" such as the kicking mule of Port Townsend, Washington, and only a few which featured double circles, star killers, or decorative lines. Nevertheless, some variant styles emerged, and those that are known are considered below under the headings of basic design, territorial abbreviation, additional features, date type, style of printing, and integral killer type.

Basic design refers to the general appearance of the postmark, and the most common basic design was of course the single unadorned circle (Figure 1a). Alaska postoffices known to have used postmarks of this basic design between 1868 and 1890 include Fort Wrangel, Juneau and Sitka. At first glance, the fact that only three postoffices are known to have used single-circle handstamps prior to 1890 seems surprising but handstamp examples of any type are recorded for only seven postoffices prior to 1890. An examination of the volume of mail originating at the various offices as reflected in the compensation to postmasters for the year ending 1 July 1891 quickly documents the scarcity of most pre-1890 postmarks (Table 2).

Table 2  
Compensation to Postmasters of Alaskan Post Offices  
1 July 1890 - 30 June 1891

Postoffice	Postmaster	Compensation
Afognac	J. A. Werth	a
Belkofsky	P. W. Parlott	a
Chilkat	John P. Lindsay	14.35
Douglas	Chas. H. Edwards	315.96
Fort Wrangel	Rufus Sylvester	197.02
Jackson (late Howcan)	John L. Gould	53.09
Juneau	Charles E. Coon	821.05
Killisnoo	Carl Spuhn	68.16
Klawock	E. D. Sanxay	25.68
Loring	S. S. Smith	86.13
Mitchell	Leroy N. McQuestion	b
Sitka	Pauline Cohen	586.67

a. Delinquent since second quarter, 1890.

b. From oct. 7, 1890; delinquent.

Source: Civil Service Registry, Vol. II, July 1, 1891.



Postmarks featuring a double outer circle (Figure 1c) are known to have been used before 1890 at the following offices: Fort Wrangel, Harrisburgh, Juneau, Loring, and Sitka. A postmark of this design was also used at Orca in 1897.

A design featuring an outer circle and an inner circle with office name and territory between the circles (Figure 1b) was used at Douglas between 1885 and 1895 and at Killisnoo between 1885 and 1887, while a design of three circles - two outer and one inner - was used at Klawock in 1891. Aside from registry, money order business (MOB), and general purpose postmarks, the only other basic designs known to have been used prior to 1900 are straight-line markings used in conjunction with the provisional U. S. POSTOFFICE // ALASKA postmarks of 1898 and 1899. Such straight-line markings, which may in fact have been applied along the route and not at the point of origin of mail, are known from Koserefsky and Saint Michaels.

Territorial abbreviations used during the free-style period were not numerous. The first Sitka handstamp (Figure 1a) read "ALASKA T.", but known subsequent Sitka postmarks all read "ALASKA". The greatest variety in territorial abbreviation is recorded from the Fort Wrangel postoffice. The first known device read "ALASKA TER.", the second which dates from 1877-1878 read "ALAS.", and all subsequent ones read "ALASKA". These are the only reported variations from the normal "ALASKA" known to have been used.

Additional features, decorative lines and markings within the postmark, are almost unknown. In other states and territories, this period of free-style postmark design saw the inclusion of such features as county, postmaster, and even mining district names, decorative lines, and embellishments such as tiny stars, Maltese crosses, and targets. From Alaska, the only known postmark example which may be said to incorporate additional design features is the Fort Wrangel postmark of 1876 which includes two dots before and after the wording "ALASKA TER.".

Date types of postmarks used during this period typically consisted of month (abbreviated), day, and year arranged vertically, or simply month and day vertically. One Fort Wrangel postmark, of which other examples are known with only month and day, features the month and day vertically with two horizontal bars beneath in place of the normal year. Dyea postmarks of early 1898 incorporate a single horizontal bar instead of the year, and the Orca postmark of 1897-98 has month, day and year arranged in a straight horizontal line.

Style of printing was either block (sans serif) or Roman (serif) with block being far more typical. The only postoffices known to have used postmarks with Roman-style printing for the office or territory name prior to 1900 were Fort Wrangel, Harrisburgh, Juneau, Orca, and Sitka. The postmarks of a few other offices used Roman printing in the date only.

Integral killer type refers to those duplex postmark and stamp cancelling devices which were used by many offices throughout the United States during the free-style period. Not all killers, or cancels, were integrated into the same handstamp as the postmark, and it is sometimes

very difficult to determine whether or not a killer was integral simply by examining a sample cover. In Alaska, as far as it is known, there were only two types of integral killers used during this time. The first and most common type was the "target" cancel consisting of three or four concentric circles. Such cancels are known to have been integral to postmarks used at Fort Wrangel, Juneau, and Loring. Similar target cancels, which may or may not have been integral, are known from Killisnoo, Harrisburgh, and Sitka. During the late 1890's and early 1900's several offices used target killers, e.g., Ounalaska, Mary Island, Udakta, Mitchell, and Metlakahtla, but these were not integral, being separate cancelling devices.

The only other type of integral killer known to have been used in the 1868-1890 period is the attractive five-point star of Douglas shown in Figure 1b. Its use is documented as early as 15 September 1889 and as late as 16 April 1895. Examples are known in black, purple and violet ink. The possibility exists that a duplex device featuring a star-in-double circle killer was used at Fort Wrangel during the late 1880's and early 1890's, but I have seen only one example from 1893 which was too indistinct to verify the pattern of the killer.

This discussion of the free-style postmarks used in Alaska from 1868 to 1890 is really not satisfying since there are so few known examples upon which to base an analysis. Further discoveries will undoubtedly be made, and perhaps future research will add more flesh to this brief outline. By the early 1890's, standardization was beginning to make itself felt in the postmark types of Alaska as elsewhere. A few offices persisted in using free-style devices, but by the last half of the decade most had adopted new standardized steel handstamps.

#### C. The Early Standardized Steel Handstamps.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact year that the standardized steel handstamps began to be used in Alaskan postoffices. Sitka and Juneau were using postmarks which incorporated the basic characteristics of the type as early as 1887 (Figures 2a and 2b), but general use probably did not begin until 1893-95.

These handstamps were characterized by the following features:

- (1) a single circle postmark 27 to 29mm. in diameter;
- (2) block lettering for office and territory names and either block or Roman style for the date;
- (3) no integral killer, but usually accompanied by a four-ring target or cork cancellation.

Table 3 lists the offices known to have used the general type and shows the different sub-types along with the recorded range of dates the sub-types were used. Figure 2 presents some representative illustrations of the type. A total of 38 postoffices are known to have used the type from the earliest in 1887 until Unalakleet's late useage in 1914. The larger offices, Douglas, Dyea, Juneau, Saint Michael(s), Sitka, and Skagway, used more than one postmark of this type. Since it appears that nearly all postoffices operating in Alaska between 1893 and 1902 used this type of postmark for at least a few years, many more examples of the type can be expected for there were 45 offices listed in operation as of 1 July 1899, and 66 as of 1 July 1901.

At Skagway and Juneau the original standard handstamps were beginning to be replaced by a new type of duplex postmarking device in 1899. These new devices were the first model of a whole new family of postmark types which would see use at many postoffices throughout the remaining territorial years in Alaska. They are called in this study the duplex steel hand cancels and will be the subject of the following PART II.

Table 3  
Post Offices and Dates of Use Known  
for  
Early Standardized Steel Handstamps

Post Office	Size(mm)	Earliest Date	Latest Date
Anvik	28	23 Sep 99	
Chilkat	28	Dec 97	
Chisna	28	6 Aug 01	
Chomly	28	15 Jan 01	26 Jul 12
Circle	27	15 Feb 99	2 May 99
Circle	28	20 Feb 00	10 Mar 00
Coldfoot	28	26 Feb 09	10 Jul 09
Copper Center	28	Jun 05	
Coppermount	28	1 May 01	7 Feb 02
Dolomi	28	17 Apr 01	10 Nov 02
Douglas	28.	8 Aug 95	
Douglas	27.5	15 Jul 98	20 Sep 01
Dyea	28	1 Apr 98	30 Apr 98
Dyea	28	31 May 98	
Dyea	28	6 Jun 98	28 Jul 98
Eagle	28	20 Apr 01	23 Jul 03
Fort Wrangel	28	10 Feb 98	
Fort Yukon	28	17 Aug 09	
Jackson	28	29 Dec 93	15 Feb 99
Juneau	27	18 Jun 87	26 Apr 89
Juneau	27.5	9 Feb 88	16 Jun 88
Juneau	28	3 May 90	9 Jan 91
Juneau	27.5	27 Mar 95	6 Dec 98
Kasaan	28	5 Jul 01	9 Apr 02
Kodiak	28	17 Aug 96	15 Jun 00
Koserefsky	?	25 Jun 02	
Mary Island	27.5	10 Sep 98	5 Dec 98
Metlakahtla	27	7 Nov 97	26 Mar 00
Mitchell	28	1 Aug 95	
Niblack	28.5	27 Jan 07	
Nome	28	8 Oct 99	8 Aug 00
Ounalaska	27	Sep 95	20 Aug 97
Petersburg	?	2 Oct 01	
Rampart	27	17 Aug 99	17 Dec 00
Saint Michaels	28	17 Sep 98	6 Jul 99
Saint Michaels	28	23 Jul 99	10 Aug 99
Saint Michael	28	6 Aug 00	Oct 00
Shakan	27	5 Aug 95	



Table 3 (continued)

Post Office	Size(mm)	Earliest Date	Latest Date
Sitka	27	5 Nov 87	28 Jun 88
Sitka	29	20 Jul 88	9 Aug 88
Sitka	27.5	17 Jul 90	25 Mar 93
Sitka	29	3 Nov 99	2 Jan 00
Sitka	27.5	14 Nov 05	
Sitka	29	27 Oct 06	
Skagway	28	5 Mar 98	13 Apr 98
Skagway	28	23 May 98	
Skagway	28	5 Nov 98	
Sumdum	28	2 Jul 98	13 Jul 02
Tanana	27.5	1 Sep 99	15 Feb 01
Treadwell	29	2 Mar 08	
Udakta	27.5	7 Sep 01	5 May 02
Unalakleet	28	10 Aug 14	
Valdez	28	19 May 00	18 Mar 01
Yakutat	28	12 Jun 98	19 Jan 01

Source: Helbock, Postmarks of Alaska Territory (in preparation)



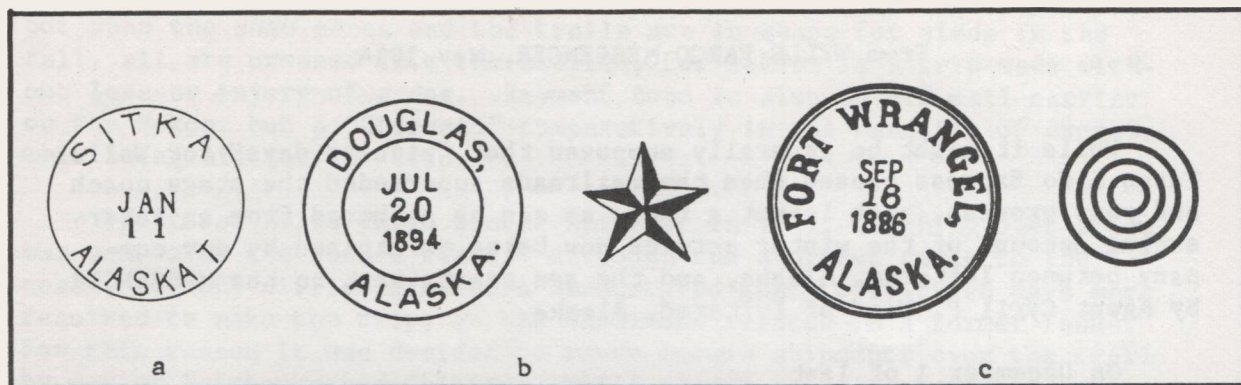


Figure 1. Free-Style Postmarks

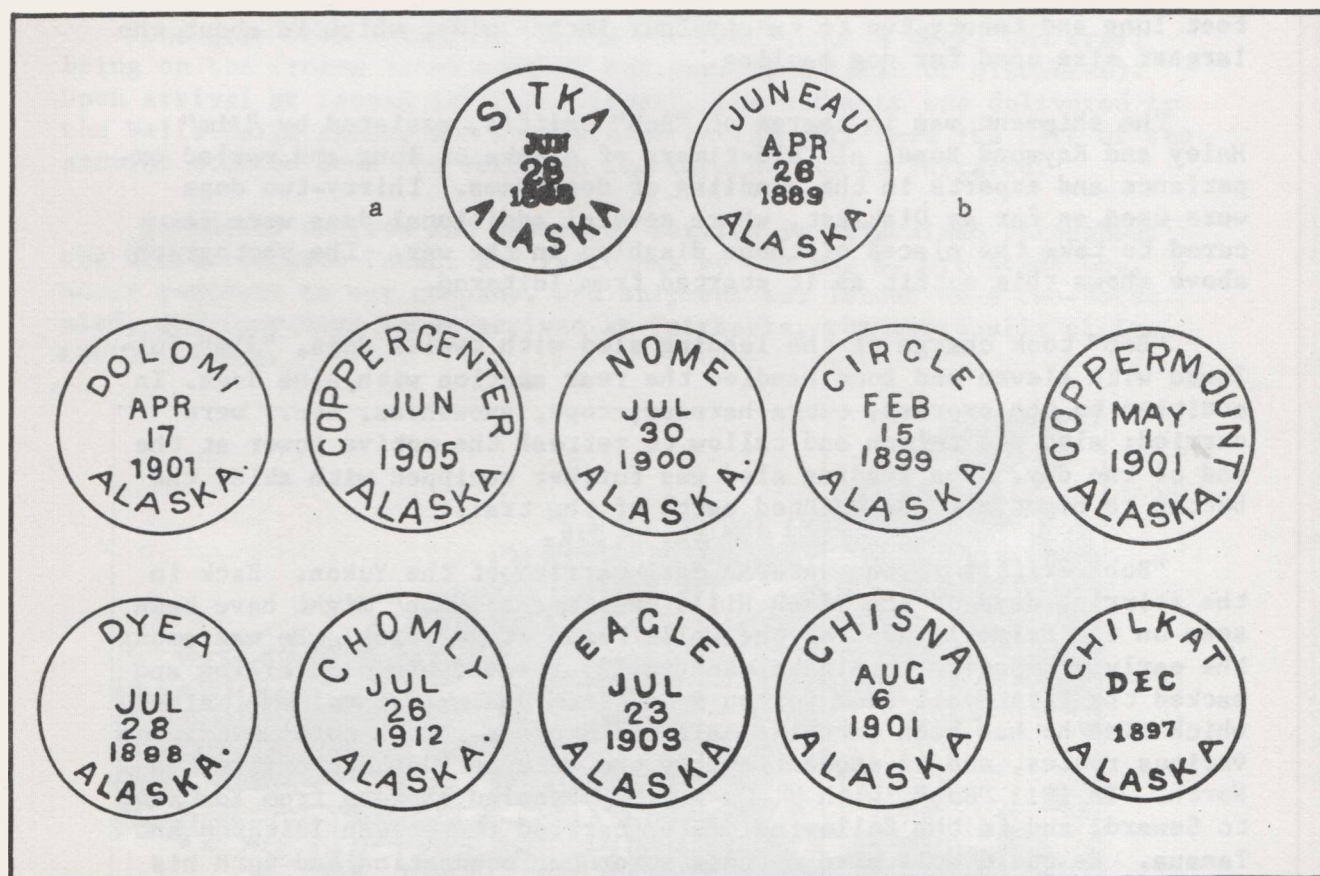


Figure 2. Early Standardized Steel Handstamps



## PIONEERING IN ALASKA

From WELLS FARGO MESSENGER, May 1914

While it might be generally supposed that "pioneer days" for Wells Fargo & Co Express ceased when the railroads superseded the stage coach and pony express, such is not a fact, as can be gathered from an interesting account of the winter service now being maintained by our company between Iditarod, Alaska, and the sea coast, sent to the MESSENGER by Agent Cyril P. Wood of Iditarod, Alaska.

On December 1 of last year, Agent Wood states, our third winter shipment, weighing approximately a ton, loaded on three sleds with three drivers and 32 dogs, left Iditarod for Tanana, 428 miles by trail with final destination Seattle and San Francisco.

The weather was somewhat cold (about 30 degrees below zero), and the dogs were in fine condition. The sleds used were of the "basket" type, of hickory, twelve to fourteen feet long and twenty-two to twenty-four inches wide, which is about the largest size used for dog hauling.



*When the Wells Fargo shipment started from Iditarod*

The shipment was in charge of "Bob" Griffis, assisted by "Jim" Haley and Raymond Bond, all old-timers of Alaska of long and varied experience and experts in the handling of dog teams. Thirty-two dogs were used as far as Diskaket, where several additional dogs were secured to take the places of those disabled on the way. The photograph above shows this outfit as it started from Iditarod.

"Bob" took charge of the leading sled with twelve dogs, "Jim" followed with eleven and Bond handled the rear section with nine dogs. In addition to the express, extra harness, rope, snowshoes, etc., were carried; also dog salmon and tallow to refresh the motive power at the end of the day. The leading sled was further equipped with skis, the better to negotiate the drifted parts of the trail.

"Bob" Griffis is the veteran mail carrier of the Yukon. Back in the stirring days of the Black Hills excitement, "Bob" might have been seen on the driver's seat of the Wells Fargo stage coach. He was among the early stampeders to Alaska, and in '98 resumed his old calling and packed the first mail over Norton Sound from Unalakleet to Nome, since which time he has been carrying mail and express almost continuously on various routes, and is unquestionably the veteran "Dog Musher" in the North. In 1911 "Bob", with U. G. Norton, handled express from Iditarod to Seward, and in the following winter carried it between Iditarod and Tanana. He could well give up this strenuous occupation and turn his dogs over to his men, but he would be lost and unhappy away from Alaska and his dogs, so much is he a part of the country.

"Jim" Haley has also for years handled mail and express shipments, and accompanied "Bob" with the winter shipments of 1912.



During the summer they keep their dogs in Diskaket on the Innoko, but when the snow comes and the trails are in shape for sleds in the fall, all are pressed into the service, for seldom is a trip made without loss or injury of a dog. Raymond Bond is also an old mail carrier on the Yukon, but a "Chechaco" comparatively in the handling of express, this being his initial trip.

The first Wells Fargo winter shipment in 1911, weighing over a ton, was sent over the Seward trail. Although the shortest route to the coast, so many difficulties were encountered that forty-three days were required to make the trip, as the MESSENGER related in a former issue. For this reason it was decided to route future shipments over the trail by way of Fairbanks and Chitina. While nearly twice as long this route is more practicable for heavy loads.

As Iditarod is connected with the government telegraph line on the Yukon by wireless only, the caravan was without telegraphic communication until Kaltag was reached, but beyond that station the trail is not more than a few miles from the government wires at any point.

A week was required in making the trip to Kaltag, as a rough, drifted trail was encountered, but the trail along the Yukon was in much better condition, as the Nome and Lower Yukon travel kept it well broken.

The trip from Kaltag to Tanana occupied about a week, the trail being on the frozen Yukon most of the way. (See table of distances). Upon arrival at Tanana (or Fort Gibbon), the shipment was delivered to the Wells Fargo agent, and the caravan having performed its part of the service started down the Yukon on the return trip to Iditarod.

Bi-weekly express and passenger service is maintained throughout the winter between Tanana and Fairbanks by the Ed. S. Orr Stage Co., under contract to our company, and shipment was loaded on a two-horse sled, and four days later arrived at Fairbanks, the metropolis of interior Alaska.



*In the winter months the stage route and dog teams are the only means of transportation*

From Fairbanks to Chitina, a distance of 310 miles, there is a good road, built by the government at great expense, available for summer as well as winter travel, and the traffic during the winter is especially heavy. Large four-horse bob sleds are used by the Ed. S. Orr Stage Co. from November to April in their tri-weekly service to the Copper River & Northwestern railroad terminus at Chitina. Six or seven days are usually required over this section, although the distance has been covered in four days by running night and day, changing horses at relays of approximately twenty miles.

At the Rapids it is necessary to transfer the passengers and express to six "double-enders", each pulled by one horse, for the fifty-seven mile trip over the summit to Paxson's, from which point the run down to Chitina is made in three days.

Before the Copper River railroad was completed to Chitina, stages went through to Valdez, which necessitated another transfer to "double-enders", in order to get over the Valdez summit by way of Thompson's Pass, probably the most difficult and dangerous part of the entire trip. At Chitina, express was transferred to Copper River & Northwestern train and taken to Cordova, where it was put on board one of the Alaska Steamship Company's vessels for delivery at Seattle.

Here is a table of distances:	Miles
Iditarod to Diskaket . . .	100
Diskaket to Kaltag . . . .	69
Kaltag to Nulato . . . . .	40
Nulato to Ruby . . . . .	99
Ruby to Tanana . . . . .	120
Tanana to Fairbanks . . .	164
Fairbanks to Chitina . . .	310
Total . . . . .	<u>902</u>

Although excellent service is afforded to patrons during the summer months to all points on the Yukon and its tributaries reached by the lines of the Northern Navigation Company and White Pass and Yukon Route, during the winter months after the close of navigation, while it is comparatively easy to reach Fairbanks and Tanana and points en route, by reason of the Ed. S. Orr Stage Company's service, beyond Tanana to interior points dog teams are practically the only means of transportation. An enlarged map of this vast territory makes an excellent subject for study."

This article is through the courtesy of the History Room, Wells Fargo Bank, San Francisco.

## NEW MEXICO POSTOFFICES: PART V, CHAVES COUNTY

By Richard W. Helbock and Ruth Dolezal

Chaves County was formed on February 25, 1889, from the northeastern third of Lincoln County, being that part of the latter east of the line between Ranges 19 and 20 East and north of the Third Standard Parallel. It was named for Colonel Jose Francisco Chaves, the son of a former Governor of New Mexico during the Mexican period. Colonel Chaves was prominent in the early military and political life of New Mexico Territory, having been elected to three terms as Territorial Delegate to Congress, beginning in 1865.

Much of the action in the Lincoln County Wars took place in what became Chaves County. It was the home of John Chisum of "Chisum Trail" fame, and of many another New Mexico pioneer. The reader will find a great store of information in such modern studies as "My Girlhood among Outlaws" by Lily Klasner, edited by Eve Ball.

Chaves County was subjected to the usual adjustments and carvings which occurred so often to New Mexico counties in the late 1800's and early 1900's. On January 30, 1899, another portion of Lincoln County, the present southwestern corner of Chaves County, was added. Then, on February 28, 1903, the county lost its northeastern part to the formation of Roosevelt County. On February 28, 1917, the rest of the northern part went to De Baca County and a little more of the eastern part to Roosevelt County. Finally, on March 7, 1917, all of Chaves county along the Texas border went to the formation of Lea County. Even with all of these changes, the county is still the fourth largest in New Mexico with a land area of 6042 square miles.

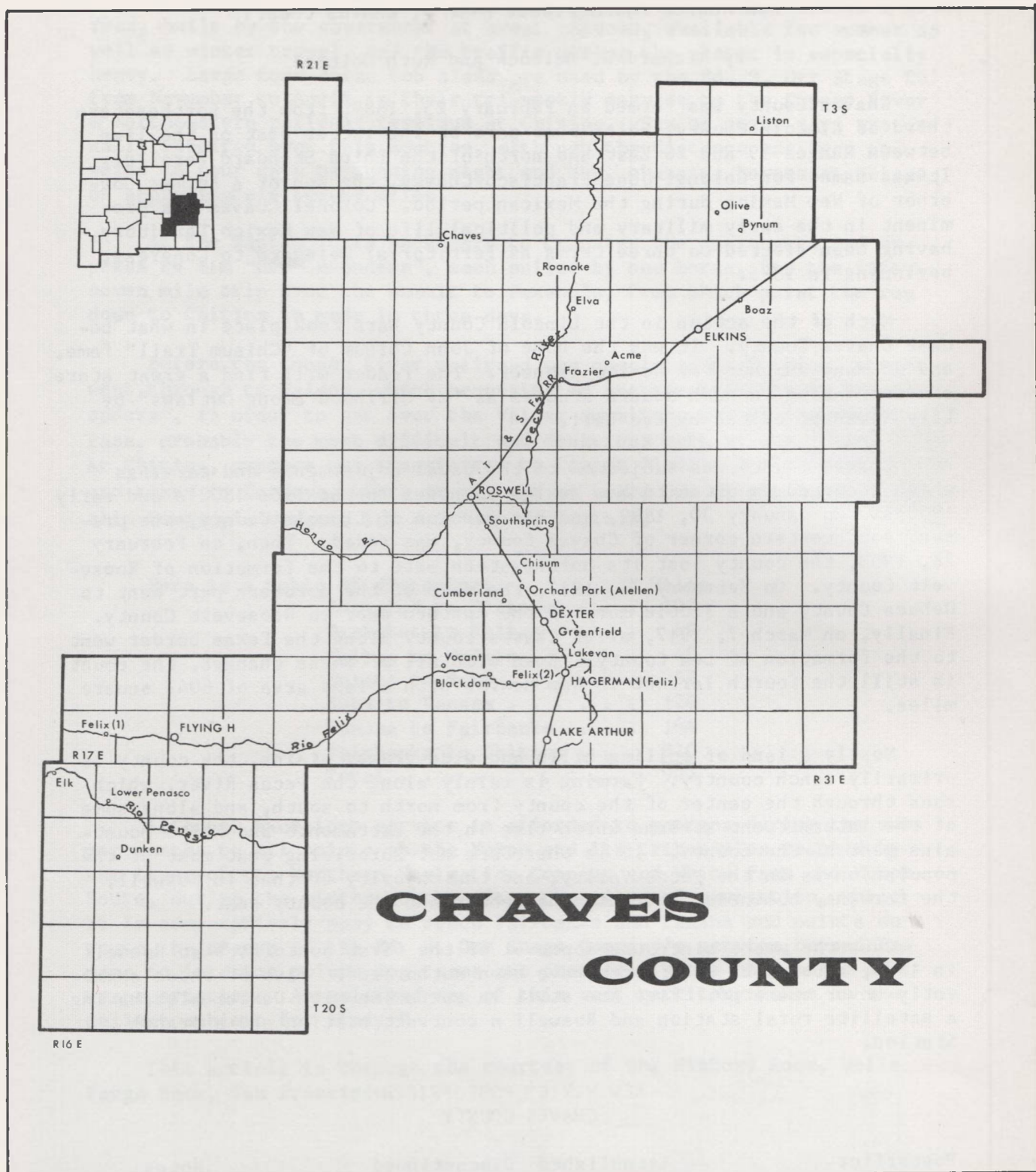
Mostly a land of rolling hills and wide grassy plains, the county is primarily ranch country. Farming is mainly along the Pecos River, which runs through the center of the county from north to south, and along some of the intermittent streams which rise in the Sacramento and White Mountains west of the county. It is therefore not surprising that most of the population is in the Pecos Valley, and the majority of that in Roswell, the farming, business, and shipping center and the county seat.

Over the years since the approval of the first postoffice at Roswell in 1873, a total of 37 offices have been authorized. Five of these apparently never operated. Five are still in operation with Dexter also having a satellite rural station and Roswell a contract station and a branch Station.

### NEW MEXICO POSTOFFICES CHAVES COUNTY

Postoffice	Established	Discontinued	Notes
Acme	11 Jun 1906	15 Apr 1946	Mail to Roswell
Air Base	?	16 Apr 1955	Class. Branch Roswell
Albatross	13 Jun 1906		Rescinded 10 Aug 06
Alellen	25 Apr 1904	20 May 1907	Name ch. to Orchard Park
Blackdom	10 Apr 1912	31 Jul 1919	Mail to Dexter
Boaz	17 May 1907	31 Jul 1955	Mail to Elida
Broadmoor	1 Dec 1959	Operating	Contr. Station Roswell
Bynam	24 Oct 1907	15 Jul 1910	Mail to Olive
Chaves	9 Mar 1932	16 Nov 1942	Mail to Roswell





Postoffice	Established	Discontinued	Notes
Chisum	14 Aug 1884	8 Dec 1885	Mail to Roswell
Cumberland	14 Aug 1907	15 Feb 1933	Mail to Dexter
Dexter	26 Aug 1902	Operating	
Dunken	25 Nov 1908	15 Aug 1919	Mail to Hope
Elk	10 Aug 1894	28 Feb 1958	Mail to Artesia
Elkins	20 Apr 1907	30 Apr 1943	
	16 Jan 1948	30 Jun 1972	Mail to Clovis
Elva	23 Jun 1910	29 Apr 1916	Mail to Acme
Felix(1)	12 Feb 1903	30 Nov 1918	Mail to Elk
* Felix(2)	26 Feb 1934	14 Mar 1936	Mail to Hagerman
Flying H	5 Mar 1938	Operating	
Frazier	27 Apr 1937	31 Sep 1954	Mail to Roswell
Greenfield	28 Aug 1911	15 Sep 1925	Mail to Dexter
Hagerman	27 Feb 1895	Operating	
Lake Arthur	4 Nov 1904	Operating	
Lakevan	4 May 1897	17 Dec 1898	Mail to Hagerman
Liston	22 Jun 1907	31 Jan 1914	Mail to Elida
Lower Penasco	11 Nov 1884	31 Dec 1917	Mail to Dunken
Olive	8 May 1909	31 Jul 1955	Mail to Elida
Orchard Park	20 May 1907	14 Sep 1926	Mail to Dexter
	1 May 1948	1 Jan 1965	Conv. to Rur. Sta. Dexter
	1 Jan 1965	Operating	
Punneo	26 Jun 1917		Rescinded 27 Jul 1917
Roanoke	28 Mar 1908	31 Jan 1911	Mail to Elkins
Roswell	20 Aug 1873	Operating	
Rubin	28 Jun 1917		Rescinded?
Southspring	27 Jun 1899	15 Jan 1900	Mail to Roswell
Stanbro	9 Jul 1914		Never in operation
Valley	9 Apr 1901		Rescinded 22 Jul 1903
Vocant	16 Jul 1908	15 Apr 1913	Mail to Hagerman
Walker Air Force Base	16 Apr 1955	Operating	Class. Br. Roswell
* Feliz	4 May 1894	27 Feb 1895	Name ch. to Hagerman



A Cool Spot on North Spring River, Near Roswell, N. M.

Payton Drug, Book & Stationery Co.

## MEMORY SKETCHES OF A PIONEER POSTMASTER'S DAUGHTER

By Inez Cosgrove Ford

When Anthony and Bridget Cosgrove of County Galway, Ireland, came to America in 1836 by steamship to New Orleans and by river boat up the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers to Independence, Missouri, they approved the location. After the purchase of property for a blacksmith shop and for a home, they returned over the same route to get their two young children who had been left in Ireland at a boarding school. The eastern terminal of the Santa Fe Trail was an ideal place for a blacksmith in the 1830's, and Anthony and Bridget considered their move a wise one.

In time seven additional children completed the family. William Howe Cosgrove, Born November 28, 1843, was next to last and forty five years later was to become my father. When he reached sixteen years of age, to test and reinforce his self-reliance, William made a trip to Santa Fe over "The Trail".

Unlike his parents, Father (William Cosgrove) spent some time and much travelling searching for a location, going as far as Montana. By 1874, he found himself back in Santa Fe again, but in 1883 he chose Roswell as his home and bought the Lea and Bonney General Store. At that time everybody spoke and understood Spanish to some degree, as, indeed, that language was used as much as English; and it was especially necessary that those working in a store be bilingual. Father was not satisfied to speak the general patois of the day, enough to get by in the usual over-the-counter exchange; he purchased in Santa Fe a Spanish-English dictionary and taught himself to speak the most fluent and flowing Spanish that I have ever heard. This same dictionary is now one of my most cherished possessions. Three years after Father had acquired the store, John W. Poe and Smith Lea bought into the business, which then became Poe, Lea, and Cosgrove. It was Mr. Poe who dubbed Father "The Don", and many referred to him as Don Cosgrove.

Father was not a stranger to Roswell before settling there permanently, having travelled there during the seventies in connection with the first mail route. Roswell had been given a postoffice in 1873 and was placed on a weekly mail route. From 1884 to 1893, Father served as Roswell's postmaster, the postoffice being in the Poe, Lea, and Cosgrove Store. In 1894, Father was commissioned Receiver of Public Moneys in the U. S. Land Office and continued in this office for four years.

Roswell was growing rapidly. Banking business had been transacted in Las Vegas, two hundred miles away, but in 1890 the Bank of Roswell opened with Edward A. Cahoon as cashier. The railroad came four years later. Civic pride went with the business of making a living. A memorandum of a donation of Father's reads: "October 1894, Deeded to J. J. Hagerman for Rail Road the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 30, T. 11 S., R. 24 E." The coming of the railroad represented progress of the highest degree, a union with the rest of the world. The enormity of the arrival of the first train from Eddy (Carlsbad) completely overwhelmed with emotion one six-year-old girl; I wept!!



Pioneer life in Roswell was simple, but challenging, and certainly satisfying and complete to the residents, who had mutual interests and cooperated in achieving their goals. Security was enhanced by ties of friendship. Father said that locking the doors to one's home would be an "insult to the natives".

Father was all business, the no-nonsense type, yet he did have a subtle wit and was mild-mannered and kind. On returning from a Sunday afternoon buckboard ride before he and Mother were married, they found Roswell deserted. Someone motioned to them to come in the back way. On the street (the only one) was one of the boys, drunk and threatening to shoot up the town. Father saw Mother safely into her house, took care of the horse, then went out front to talk to "Buck" Guyse. Soon the gun was in Father's hands; the tipsy troublemaker was pacified, and all was well. Not all Sunday afternoon rides ended so dramatically. Another buckboard ride included a hen, finally discovered undisturbed on the nest she had chosen to make under the seat.

The families drawn to Roswell were home-seekers. Churches and schools made an early appearance. As early as 1878 the first schoolhouse was completed; built of adobes, it was located four miles east of the village on what is now Second Street. Another adobe school, the first right in town, was built just south of the Rio Hondo in 1885; financing the building was accomplished simply by passing the hat. School buildings served as community centers, the scene of box suppers, dances, and other social events.

Gus and Mattie Lee lived in a small house back of Captain Lea's home. Their cooperation and responsibility contributed to the substantial atmosphere of the growing community. Gus was the first cook at New Mexico Military Institute. When the Masons gave their big Christmas banquet, Mattie was asked to care for the children. Bedded down like cordwood, the children slept peacefully in her home.

The many fountains of artesian wells and the water from beautiful North Spring River made Roswell an oasis. I have been told that Nathan Jaffa's well was the first indication that sub-surface pressure existed, which produced the flowing, even gushing, of the many artesian wells to follow. These wells, uncapped, gradually ran their course, becoming a phenomenon of the past, making pumping necessary to raise the water to the surface. The great pressure was lost by the late 1930's. However, it was the verdant and lush farming community that was the setting for early day Roswell, home to those who lived and loved in an era now past. When Father's second well was "brought in", Mr. Elza White, the driller, held me up to pull the cord that blew the whistle signalling the event, and people came running, a usual sight as new wells sprang into existence.

Routine for Father was duty at the store and the office. For Mother it was the usual home duties, helping ill or needy neighbors, church work, and during World War I helping at the Red Cross work room, where she spent much time unsnarling the work of inexperienced knitters.

Roswell must have come close to being a paradise for children. When we tired of playing with the family horse, there were always burros and

bicycles to ride, and good fishing was only a few steps from the house. Spring River was beautiful with maidenhair ferns growing profusely near the spot where the railroad bridge later came to be. A big irrigation ditch running along the north side of the courthouse block also made a convenient fishing place. One time when we were fishing there, a friend of mine, Carrie Timony, caught a turtle. I can still see the parade of children leading the turtle to my home and Mama; she would know what to do, she always did.

In 1889, Chaves County and Eddy County were made from part of Lincoln County, and the courthouse was built just south of our home in the center of that block bounded by Main Street and Virginia Avenue and by Fourth and Fifth Streets. We children, with an ever-ready eye for entertainment, found that we could stand on the wide ledge of the courthouse foundation, hold on to the cell bars, and talk to the prisoners. I'm not sure who found this more entertaining, the children or the prisoners, the direct and pointed questions of childish candor could have been embarrassing.

A high seat on top of the grape arbor afforded an excellent view of Main Street, where there was always some sort of activity. At train time there were always people walking up from the station, maybe a newcomer! Now if we turned around and looked the other way, we could watch the boy collecting the family milk cows on their way to pasture at the east edge of town. In summer we had the small duty each morning of seeing that the cow was let out of the corral gate. There she would wait patiently for the boy with his little herd, adding another cow at each corral. In the evening the process was reversed, each cow dropping off at her own gate and waiting to be let in and to be milked.

Horses were always more exciting than cows, and a runaway team could count on an appreciative audience. We once had a horse that, seeing he was heading back home, managed to increase his speed with every step. Mother didn't appreciate rounding home gatepost on two wheels; so after an afternoon of calling on friends, she would simply tie her lively transportation to a handy fencepost and walk home. Dear Papa! I never once heard him complain about coming home from work and having to walk some distance to bring the horse and buggy safely home. Other than his exaggerated home love, this same horse was an extremely satisfactory household fixture. The fiery steed could be seen reduced to blissful submission while several little girls crawled over, under, and around, currying, brushing, braiding, and curling. Once in my zeal for a more artful mane coiffure, I found myself facing backwards and astride the horse's neck. About that time, "Old Bill" decided to nibble a juicy blade of grass at his feet, and I slid backward, as if on polished wood, to land with a thud by his nose. The surprise was mutual.

Life was never dull for children growing up in this pioneer community that had no paved streets or sidewalks, no movies, no hamburger stands. We made our own fun, and each new piece of equipment that came to town we were sure was meant especially for us. When a horse-drawn street sprinkler was acquired, vast new fields were opened to young imaginations as the battalion of youngsters trailed this new amusement, its beautifully symmetric jets of water wetting down the dusty roads.

In the early 1890's, A. L. Adams, known as "Ice Man" Adams, hauled in loads of ice, which he stored in a small icehouse filled with sawdust. He later built a small ice plant. George F. Blashek had owned and operated a flour mill on Spring River since 1882. In 1906 he included an ice plant in connection with the mill, and this same ice plant functioned until 1919. With the advent of year-round ice, a few families acquired some of the more modern frivolous gadgets including hand-turned ice cream freezers. On special occasions, such as the Fourth of July, ice cream was a treat of the highest order. Whether it was the occasion, the company, or all the turning of the freezer handle, the quality of any ice cream produced since then has fallen far short of such ambrosia.

The Pecos Valley Register, a weekly paper, appeared in November of 1888, just eight months after I was born. A. Erwin and L. O. Fullen were the owners; the principal advertisers were Jaffa-Prager and Poe, Lea, and Cosgrove. Community pride led to publicity, and word of the fruitful and thriving community became general knowledge. The printed word seemed to seal the feeling of stability within the community.

What is more precious than the natural gift of water! The early planting of shade and fruit trees, alfalfa fields, and farms stemmed from this gift. Proud developers displayed their products of 1892 in a structure made of baled hay, a veritable palace, rightfully called the Alfalfa Palace. Apple Blossom Days were marked by tours through the farm area. Any tour at any season would convince even the most skeptical of the bounty of this garden spot. Wild grapes found along the Rio Hondo were the source of excellent jelly for those willing to expend a little energy, and my mother always had time in the fall for making jelly, a work of art. . . or of love. When the tragedy of a killing freeze took excessive toll of the many fruit trees soon after the turn of the century, old orchards were soon converted to cotton fields, and expansion continued.

Not far from Roswell the Bottomless Lakes, now a State Park, still present their eerie depths for the wonder and awe of visitors. In the days of horse-drawn vehicles and self-made roads, the trip from Roswell to the Lakes was also an adventure. The Pecos River was known for its spots of quicksand, and fording it with horse and buggy could be exciting. From the river on to the lakes the porous ground gave forth a hollow sound under the horses' hooves; the memory of this clop-clopping still lingers as if more than three quarters of a century were only yesterday.

Through the efforts of Captain J. C. Lea, Goss Military Institute was established in 1891. Situated just west of the courthouse, the school boasted a natatorium (in other words, a swimming bath), which was simply a small structure built over the irrigation ditch at the edge of and parallel to Fifth Street. G. M. I. became New Mexico Military Institute in 1893; but because of red tape and lack of appropriations, it was not an active and going institution until 1898. N. M. M. I. has contributed immeasurably to Roswell's prestige through the school's high rating recognized nationally and its influence through several generations of loyal cadets.

A Masonic Lodge was organized in 1889, after the few Masons then in the Roswell area had built a suitable Hall through donations, subscriptions, and a loan. This body of stalwarts was representative of the true pioneer.



Father became the first Master Mason raised by this group and served faithfully as Secretary of the Lodge for many years. A brochure (resume of the Roswell Lodge) issued in 1914 designates Father's service as Secretary as "long and full of honor". His last years were devoted wholly to this trust. He was a pioneer among pioneers, a gentleman and a gentle man.

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EDITOR'S NOTES - - The time seemed to drag along after Bill Helbock left for Pakistan but now, in retrospect, the time has flown by and not nearly as much was accomplished as should have been. It's therefore to your advantage (and LA POSTA'S) that Bill will return shortly to pick up the reins of editorship. I have enjoyed it, though I'm not sure but that a further year would be too much for me.

A suggestion of a possible means to broaden interest in LA POSTA comes from S. R. Shepard. He thinks that most of you must have your special things mounted, catalogued, and so on and that a simple way to get information around without the trauma of writing and editing would be to reproduce selected pages from your albums or whatever, and call the series "Album Pages". I personally agree that this would be an excellent way for you to participate in LA POSTA and am sure that many interesting and unique items rest unknown and unrecorded in your personal collections. Your comments by card or letter would be appreciated.

Many of you enjoyed the mail auctions of M. Severy of Livermore, CA, and were sorry when poor health forced him to discontinue them. Now we hear that our sustaining subscriber, Don Smith, is taking over the business and will call it "The OREGON POST Auction Co., Inc." Get in touch with Don at P. O. Box 5438, Eugene, OR 97405, if you want to be on his list or if you have goodies for him to auction off for you. (P. S. This is not an advertisement).

It is now time to reaffirm your support for LA POSTA in terms of cash, so that the next Volume will appear in your mailbox every now and then. The price is still five dollars for a regular subscription of six numbers with sustaining subscribers who send ten dollars or more receiving two copies of each issue. Despite inflation and postal rate increases, the cost to you is still the same, at least for Volume 7. A form has been tipped in to this number. Those few of you who have already sent us your check will find a red X on the form. Please return the completed form with your payment so that we may be certain our list of addresses is correct. Incidentally, that list is not available to anyone except your editors, so you and your mailbox can rest easy!!

HASTA LA VISTA !! from  
TOM TODSEN, EX EDITOR, LA POSTA, 2000 Rose Lane, Las Cruces, NM 88001.

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