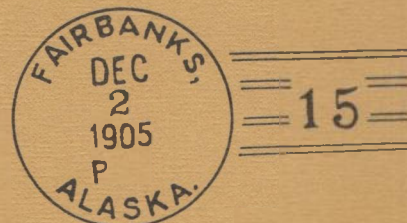
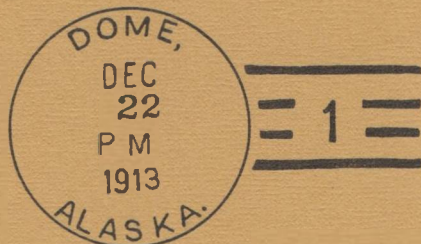
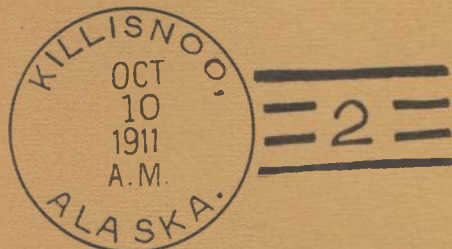
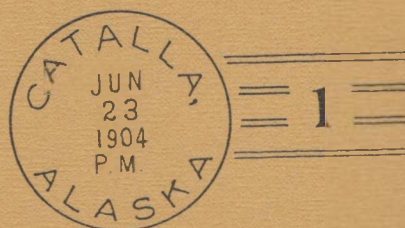
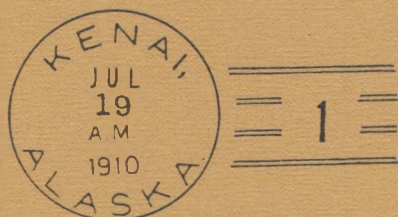
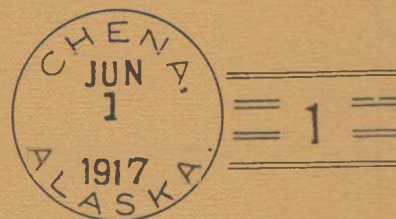
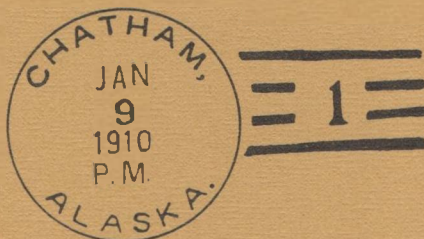
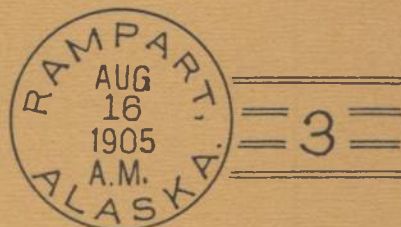


# LA POSTA



**V. Z. N. 2**





MAY 1976

POSTAL HISTORY JOURNAL - MOUNTAIN & DESERT WEST Vol. 7, No. 2

## SUSTAINING SUBSCRIBERS

Mr. William H. Bauer	Mr. Charles F. Nettleship, Jr.
Dr. Sheldon H. Dike	Mr. Lawrence W. Pawley
Mr. Robert P. Doddridge	Mr. N. Leonard Persson
Mr. Charles G. Finke	Mr. Ernest S. Peyton
Mrs. Inez C. Ford	Mr. Robert Potts
Mr. E. B. T. Glass	Dr. Joseph F. Rorke
Mr. Bernard Griffin	Col. Fred F. Seifert
H and H Marketing	Mr. Daniel R. Siegel
Dr. Robert Dalton Harris	Mr. Donald T. Smith
Mrs. Marion Herlihy	Dr. Jack E. Stucky
Mr. Charles W. Jones	Mr. Charles L. Towle
Dr. Owen H. Kriege	Dr. Samuel Wagonfeld
Mr. Daniel Y. Meschter	Western Postal History Museum
Mr. Robert F. Miller	Mr. Charles A. Whittlesey
Mr. Donald T. Morisch	Mr. Otto C. Yag

## IN THIS ISSUE:

	Page
THE POST OFFICES OF WYOMING, PART XIV, BIG HORN COUNTY By Dan Meschter and Ruth Dolezal . . . . .	2
POSTMARK TYPES OF ALASKA TERRITORY: AN EMPIRICAL CLASSIFICATION, PART III, FOUR BARS AND VARIATIONS By Richard Helbock. . . . .	6
NEW MEXICO POST OFFICES: PART VI, DONA ANA COUNTY By Richard Helbock and Ruth Dolezal . . . . .	14
EDITOR'S COMMENTS . . . . .	19

LA POSTA is the research journal of the Mountain & Desert West Postal History Research Society. It is published on an irregular basis with six issues per volume. The subscription rate is \$5 per volume, and single copies are available at \$1.50 each. For additional information, or to place a subscription, write: RICHARD W. HELBOCK, EDITOR, 1635 MARIPOSA DRIVE, LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO 88001.

## THE POST OFFICES OF WYOMING: PART XIV, BIG HORN COUNTY

By Daniel Y. Meschter and Ruth Dolezal

Big Horn County originally encompassed all of the Big Horn River Basin of northwestern Wyoming -- the last of the great Wyoming basins to be settled. The county was erected by the last territorial legislature on March 12, 1890; but it was not organized until January 4, 1897, for lack of sufficient population.

Most of the county was taken from Fremont County north of Owl Creek and the crest of the Absaroka Range. The eastern part was carved from the west ends of Sheridan and Johnson counties, and this reorganization pushed those counties back from the Big Horn River to approximately the crest of the Big Horn Mountains. This huge area, which originally constituted Big Horn County, was reduced to a little more than a quarter of its former self with the creation of Park County in 1909. Creation of Washakie and Hot Springs counties from southern Big Horn County in 1911 further reduced the county's size.

Relations between whites and Indians were generally friendly in this part of Wyoming. It is reported that Chief Washakie himself invited Judge Carter of Fort Bridger to run the first herds of cattle into the Big Horn Basin in 1879. Later H. M. Lovell and Otto Franc, among others, settled in the basin, and history has seen their names perpetuated on the lists of post offices for Park and Big Horn counties.

The Burlington Railroad entered Big Horn County from Montana in 1905. It was not until 1913 however that rail connections with the Colorado Southern by way of the Wind River were completed. The economy of the county is based upon its natural resources. Cattle and sheep are grazed on the plains and in the Big Horn Mountains. Farming is practiced along the stream bottoms and on irrigated land, particularly in the northeast around Lovell and Cowley. The mountains produce timber and offer hunting and fishing for both local residents and tourists.

Oil became an important economic factor for the county in 1887 when a seep was drilled near Bonanza. Discovery of the Greybull Field a few years later assured the future of the oil industry in Big Horn County. In addition to oil, Greybull is a producer of that peculiar and useful clay known as bentonite. Bentonite is found in few locations in the world and is used in a wide range of industrial processes ranging from sealing dams to paint additive.

A mail route was established about 1884 in connection with the early ranches of the Big Horn Basin. It ran north from Fort Washakie into Montana by way of Meeteetse and other settlements of what were later to become Big Horn and Park counties. The two short-lived post offices at Papypoe (probably in Park County) and Shell Creek in the summer of 1880 suggest an unsuccessful attempt to pioneer a postal route through the Big Horn Mountains to connect with the Bozeman Trail route north of Sheridan.

The 43 post office names listed for Big Horn County include five name changes. One of these name changes, Kane, was later re-established in its own right. Five offices are known to have never operated. The maximum number in operation at any one time was 23 in 1907-08. This has declined to 12 at present.

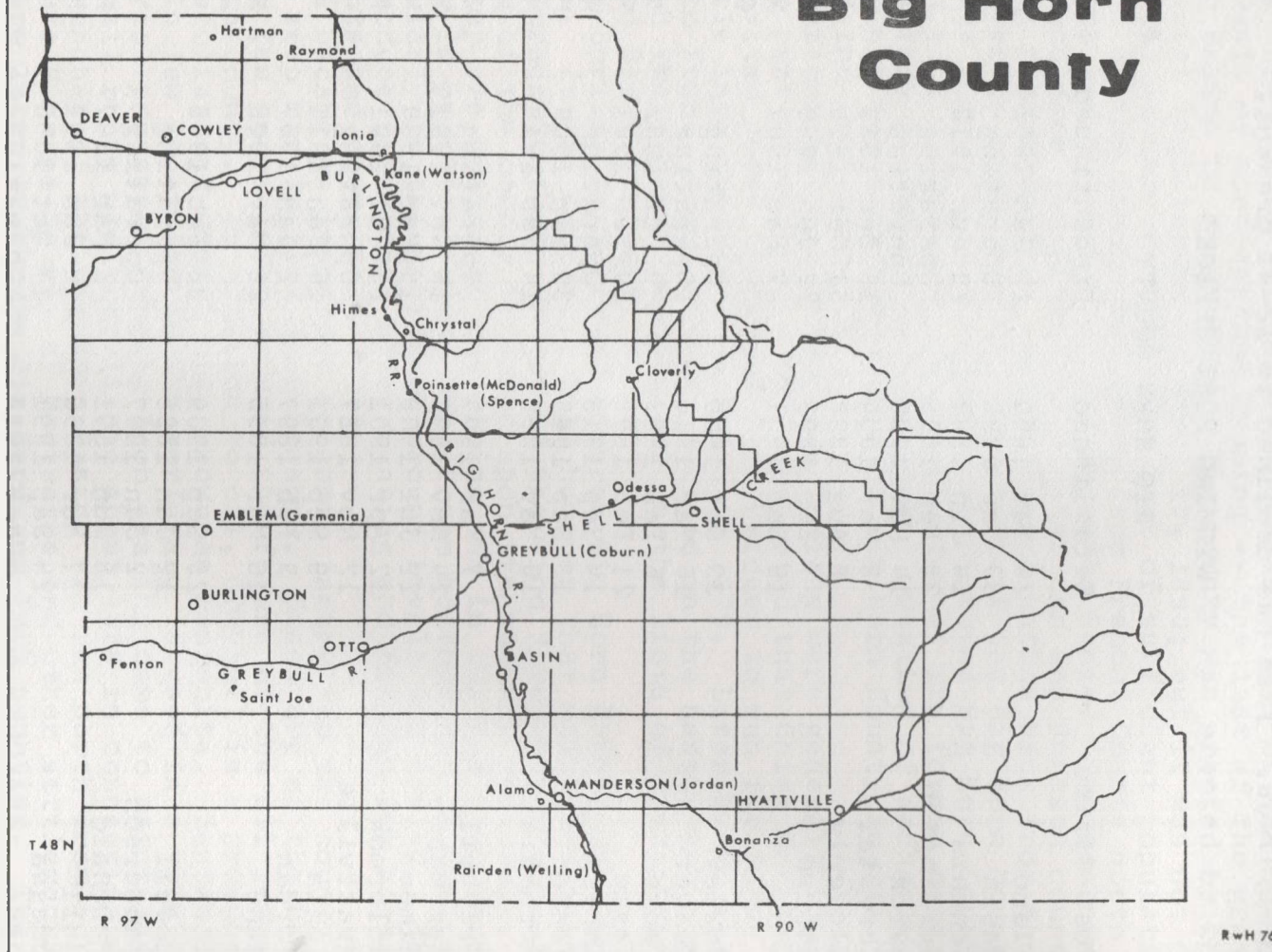
## WYOMING POST OFFICES

### BIG HORN COUNTY

Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
Alamo	26 May 1890	15 Jan 1901	M. to Jordan
Basin	30 Sep 1896	Operating	
Bonanza	14 Jun 1887	29 Jun 1918	M. to Hyattville
Burlington	28 Feb 1895	Operating	
Byron	14 Nov 1900	Operating	
Chrystal	5 Mar 1904	15 Dec 1912	M. to Himes
Cloverly	8 Aug 1898	31 Oct 1929	M. to Shell
Coburn	7 Sep 1892	22 Jun 1899	M. to Basin
	16 Dec 1901	7 Mar 1907	Name changed to Greybull
Cowley	30 Oct 1900	Operating	
Deaver	16 Mar 1916	Operating	
Dodge	6 Feb 1902	9 Oct 1902	Rescinded
Eagle	21 Feb 1898	30 Sep 1901	M. to Lovell
Emblem	14 Sep 1918	Operating	Was Germania
Fenton	13 Sep 1889	30 Sep 1909	M. to Burlington
Germania	10 May 1899	14 Sep 1918	Name changed to Emblem
Greybull	7 Mar 1907	Operating	Was Coburn
Hartman	24 Nov 1896	15 Nov 1901	M. to Lovell
Himes	22 Jul 1908	15 Mar 1939	M. to Kane
Holbrook	12 Apr 1901	25 Jul 1901	Rescinded
Hyattville	12 Nov 1887	Operating	
Ionia	9 Sep 1901	14 Jan 1911	M. to Kane
Jordan	9 Feb 1897	2 Jan 1907	To Manderson
Kane	16 Mar 1895	28 May 1906	Name changed to Watson
	25 Sep 1909	26 Feb 1965	M. to Lovell
Lovell	12 Jan 1888	Operating	
Manderson	2 Jan 1907	Operating	
McDonald	18 Jun 1891	1 Mar 1897	M. to Shell
Null	27 Mar 1896	10 Jan 1898	M. to Coburn
Odessa	24 Sep 1891	17 Oct 1895	M. to McDonald
Otto	4 Apr 1888	Operating	
Poinsette	3 May 1917	29 Jun 1918	M. to Basin
Rairden	24 Sep 1906		Was Welling
		15 Aug 1919	M. to Worland
Raymond	22 Apr 1907	15 Jun 1916	M. to Cowley



# Big Horn County



# BIG HORN COUNTY

Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
Saint Joe	26 Apr 1905	15 May 1920	M. to Basin
Sarver	23 Feb 1895	20 Sep 1898	M. to Lovell
Shell	14 Nov 1888	Operating	
Shell Creek	22 Jun 1880	6 Sep 1880	
Spence	8 Jun 1908	19 Jan 1909	Rescinded
Strong	27 Jan 1896	28 Sep 1897	M. to Lovell
Waln	9 Jan 1896	14 Apr 1896	Rescinded
Warren	6 Jun 1890	27 Oct 1891	M. to Alamo
Watson	28 May 1906		Was Kane
		31 Mar 1908	M. to Ionia
Welling	3 May 1901	24 Sep 1906	Name changed to
			Rairden
Westfield	5 Sep 1896	23 Sep 1896	Rescinded

## ADDENDUM TO ALASKA POSTMARK ARTICLE WHICH FOLLOWS:

Following compilation of TABLE 8 two new Type 2 Doane postmarks have come to light. They are:

Kake 7 Jan 1907 and Tin City 8 Dec 1906.

Both incorporate the number "1" within their bars, and happily enough both were towns mentioned in the article as being expected to have used this type of postmark.

rwh

We were all deeply saddened by the recent news of the deaths of two people who had encouraged La Posta and been our friends. Mary McBride of Portland and James Cheni of Phoenix have both been eulogized in the philatelic press, and we will not make an attempt to do so here. Let us simply say that they were both great philatelists and postal historians, fine people, and good friends. They will be deeply missed and warmly remembered.

rwh

# POSTMARK TYPES OF ALASKA TERRITORY: AN EMPIRICAL CLASSIFICATION, PART III, FOUR BARS AND VARIATIONS

By Richard W. Helbock

The overwhelming majority of territorial Alaskan postmarks are of the four-bar variety, that is, a cancellation device with an integral dial containing office name, "Alaska", and time-date-month-year slots, together with a killer featuring four parallel horizontal bars. Four-bar cancels have received such wide-spread use in 20th century America that they have tended toward the monotonous, and have consequently received little serious study. That is too bad, for while it is true that the general form of the cancel has been around for nearly three-quarters of a century now, there have been some interesting evolutionary changes. If interest continues to lag, the natural mortality imposed by time will continue to diminish the supply of available specimens and postal history will lose much that could have resulted from an exhaustive study of these postmarks.

## A. The Doane Cancellations.

The prototype four-bar cancellations were not in fact four-bars at all, but devices of type which consisted of a circular dial integrated with a killer of bars and a number. Edith R. Doane is undoubtedly the leading authority on this type of cancellation, and, while she has referred to them as "20th Century Numeral Cancellations," it seems only fitting that they be called Doane cancellations in this study to prevent possible confusion with other types of 20th century cancellations featuring numbers. Doane has identified three distinct types of these cancellations (figure 9). The first and second types were introduced during the first six months of 1903 at 500 of the smallest fourth class post offices in the United States (offices with gross receipts of less than \$500). This experimental usage was considered a success, for between July 1903 and July 1904 distribution of devices of this type was extended to 10,711 more U. S. post offices. Fiscal year 1904 saw still another 9,000 offices receiving these cancels. Initially distribution was limited to 4th class post offices, but eventually larger offices also received cancels of this type.

The third type of Doane cancel was introduced late in 1905 with the earliest example reported by Mrs. Doane dating from December of that year. It appears as though the third type was considered by postal authorities to be an improvement over the second type whose very thin bars tended to become clogged with ink after repeated use. The first type received less wide-spread distribution than either of the other two, although the reason for this is not clear.

Doane cancels were distributed to post offices which opened or were re-established during the 1903-1910 period. They were also distributed to offices whose old cancelling devices had become worn. In many offices the Doane cancels replaced the early standardized steel handstamps which had made their debut during the mid-1890's, and judging from surviving examples they represented a big improvement in terms of legibility.



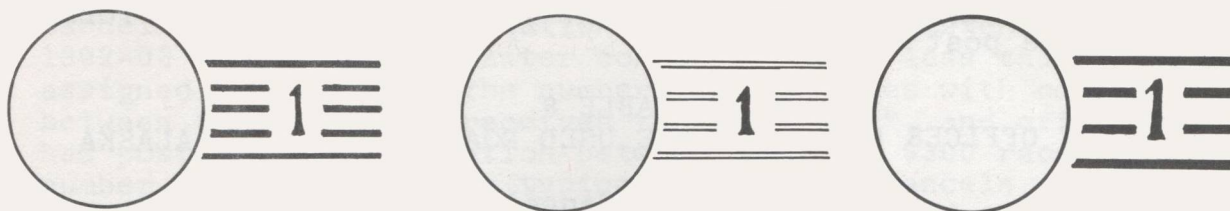


Figure 9. The three types of Doane cancellations.

The number portion of the Doane cancellation is a source of particular interest. Mrs. Doane reports numbers within the bars from 1 to 18. Numbers one through four were used most commonly, numbers five through nine used occasionally, and 10 and above rarely used. The numbers were apparently a fixed part of the rubber duplex device. There are no examples known where a particular postmark type from a particular post office has used more than one number. In other words, if an office was issued a Doane cancel with the number "1", all of its postmarks using that cancel show the same number. There are however instances where an office is subsequently issued another device of the same general type with a different number.

What was the significance of the numbers? Mrs. Doane does not speculate in her series of articles in the U. S. Cancellation Club News, but speculation in other quarters has suggested that the numbers referred to the number of clerks employed in a given office, the number of rural routes emanating from that office, or simply chance allocation of devices. There does seem to have been a system at work, and an analysis of numbers assigned with postmaster compensation for the Alaskan offices suggests that the larger the post office, the higher the number in its device. It is possible that the numbers were tied to a specific characteristic of an office like the number of clerks or rural routes, but it is the opinion of this author that the numbers were simply a rough equivalent of the relative volume of business. The smallest offices receiving "1", somewhat larger offices receiving "2", "3" and so on. The abundance of examples with number "1" reflects the fact that distribution of these devices favored the smallest post offices of the time.

Research in Alaska indicates that at least 24 post offices used Doane cancellations during the first decade of the 20th century. Fifteen offices are known to have used the type 2 Doane cancels. Ten offices are known to have used type 3 Doane cancels. The discrepancy results from Seward's use of both a type 2 and type 3 cancellation. No examples of the Doane type 1 cancel are known from Alaska. Table 8 lists the offices known to have used Doane



cancellations, their dates of use, and other relevant information about the post offices.

TABLE 8  
POST OFFICES KNOWN TO HAVE USED DOANE CANCELS IN ALASKA

Type 2 Cancels

Post Office	Est.	PM Comp. 1902-03	No. in Cancel	Known Dates of Use	
				Earliest	Latest
Afognak	1904	NA	1	24Jul05	8Aug07
Catalla	1903	NA	1	23Jun04	16Oct05
Chena	1903	NA	1	4Sep06	1Jun17
Fairbanks	1903	NA	15	2Dec05	12Jul06
Fort Liscum	1900	\$123	2	20Nov05	
Hope	1897	\$50	1	3May06	3Apr11
Kenai	1899	\$76	1	19Jul10	
Kodiak	1888	\$217	3	9May08	
Loring	1885	\$169	2	15Jun09	
Metlakatla	1904	NA	1	5Mar08	15Jul10
Rampart	1898	\$224	3	16Aug05	
Sandpoint	1891	\$46	1	17Feb08	5Jul08
Solomon	1900	\$9	1	18Jul10	
Tanana	1898	\$187	2	26Sep07	4Dec07
Seward	1903	NA	5	18Dec05	

Type 3 Cancels

Post Office	Est.	PM Comp. 1904-05	No. in Cancel	Known Dates of Use	
				Earliest	Latest
Amalga	1905	NA	1	23Dec06	16May13
Chatham	1906	NA	1	9Jan10	
Cleary	1905	NA	1	12Jul07	14Sep07
Dolomi	1900	\$107	1	20Jun10	3Jul17
Dome	1906	NA	1	22Dec13	
Kiam	1905	NA	1	21Sep07	
Killisnoo	1882	\$174	2	20Jun07	12Jul12
Knik	1904	\$0	1	12Jun08	10Aug11
Shakan	1886	\$111	2	26May07	
Seward	1903	\$562	7	06	

Notes: "Est." sometimes refers to re-establishment or name change.  
"NA" means not applicable.

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

The table shows a clear relationship between postmaster compensation in 1902-03 and the number assigned to an office's Doane cancel for type 2 cancellations. Offices in existence prior to 1902-03 which had postmaster compensation of less than \$100 were assigned cancels with the number "1". Offices with compensation between \$100 and \$200 received the number "2", and offices which had postmaster compensation between \$200 and \$300 received the number "3". New offices typically received cancels with the number "1", but in the case of Fairbanks and Seward this was not so. Fairbanks was assigned a Doane cancel with the number "15", and Seward was assigned number "5". Was this in anticipation of a large volume of business by these offices?

The situation regarding distribution of type 3 cancels was directly parallel to the type 2 distribution. In cases where the Doane cancel replaced an earlier device, the number assigned was based upon postmaster compensation of the previous year. And in cases where a new office was established, the number in the cancel was generally "1". The Seward post office represents an interesting case. The office was established in 1903, and did a high volume of business the 1904-05 fiscal year. Postmaster compensation for that year was \$562. By 1906 we find a new Doane cancel in use at Seward with a higher number, and records indicate that the Seward postmaster was paid \$1200 for the 1906-07 fiscal year.

Doane cancels from Alaskan post offices are scarce to rare, but based upon the pattern suggested by known examples it is possible to anticipate other Alaskan offices from which Doane cancels may be expected. For example, of the 10 offices listed for the first time in the Official Register of 1905 with non-zero postmaster compensation, four (Afognak, Catalla, Chena, and Seward) are known to have used type 2 Doane cancels. It stands to reason that the other six offices (Chicken, Kake, Kotzebue, Shungnak, Tonsina, and Windham) also received type 2 cancels as their initial postmark device. Tin City and Tolovana both established in 1904, but not listed until the 1907 Official Register, may also have received type 2 Doane cancels.

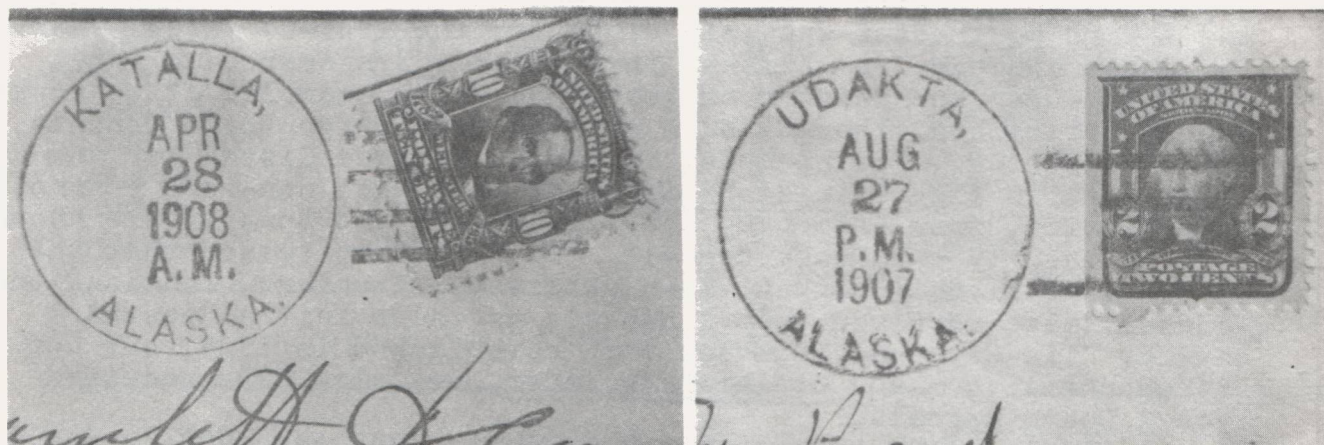
Similarly, post offices established in 1905 and 1906 typically received type 3 Doane cancels as their initial postmarks. Amalga, Chatham, Cleary, Dome, and Kiam are of this group. Other offices which may be expected to have received type 3 Doane cancellations are: Baldwin, Bethel, Calder, Dahl, Davidson, Dutton, Gakona, Gilmore, Gypsum, Howkan, Klinquan, Landlock, Quinhagak, Richardson, Taylor, Tyonok, and Washburn. Interestingly, some offices which were established late in 1906 are known not to have used Doane cancels. Berry and Katalla are both represented by postmarks dating from their two years of operation and neither of them are Doane cancels. Post offices established in 1907 apparently did not receive Doane cancels. A 1907 postmark is known from Hot Springs and a 1908 postmark is known from Eldorado, both offices established in 1907, and neither is a Doane cancel.

Other examples of Doane cancels from Alaska may be expected from offices in existence prior to 1903 which replaced old cancelling devices during the 1903-1906 period. Several such have already been

documented (Table 8) and more may be expected from offices such as: Circle, Council, Hoonah, Seldovia, and Sulzer. Readers aware of Doane cancels from Alaskan offices not mentioned herein are asked to contact the author.

B. The Close-spaced 4-bars of 1907.

While individual Doane cancellations often saw long periods of use at offices which had been assigned them, the actual period of assignment was fairly brief lasting only from 1903 to 1906. By late 1906 certain offices, newly established or requiring replacement devices, began using a new cancel type which was the first true four-bar. This device, a rubber duplex, featured a circular dial measuring 30 to 32 mm. in diameter with the office name at top, "ALASKA" at the bottom, and month-day-AM/PM-year slots arranged vertically. The killer consisted of four thin parallel horizontal bars measuring 21 to 24 mm. in length. From the top of the highest bar to the bottom of the lowest measured about 14 mm. Differentiating this postmark type from others which followed later can be a difficult exercise, but there are some key points of identification and they can best be illustrated by referring to figure 10.



(Enlarged about 35%)

Figure 10. The close-spaced 4-bar of 1907.

There are four key points which may be used to identify the close-spaced 4-bar of 1907. First, "ALASKA" covers approximately 75° of arc, not including the period. Second, the letters tend to be long and thin, and are always spaced close to the rim of the dial. Third, punctuation is always present (although may be worn off in later examples) and consists of a long-tailed comma after the name of the office and a period after "ALASKA." Fourth, the bars are frequently squared at left as in the case of the Katalla example, or with the center two sharply indented as with the Udahta example. These four points appear to be constant for the type, and even if the example is somewhat indistinct it is usually possible to pick out one of these four features.



The close-spaced 4-bar of 1907 apparently saw fairly wide use in Alaska. As of this writing some 30 different Alaskan offices are known to have used postmarks of this type (Table 9). For the most part the device was distributed to small fourth class offices, but larger offices such as Sitka, Wrangell, Seward, and Haines are also known to have used such a postmark. The earliest recorded use dates from Katalla (23 July 1907), but Udakta (27 Aug.) and Hot Springs (25 Nov.) are also known to have used this type in 1907. Other early examples may be expected. Many more post offices were assigned devices of this type in 1908 as the table suggests.

TABLE 9  
POST OFFICES KNOWN TO HAVE USED THE CLOSE-SPACED 4-BAR OF 1907

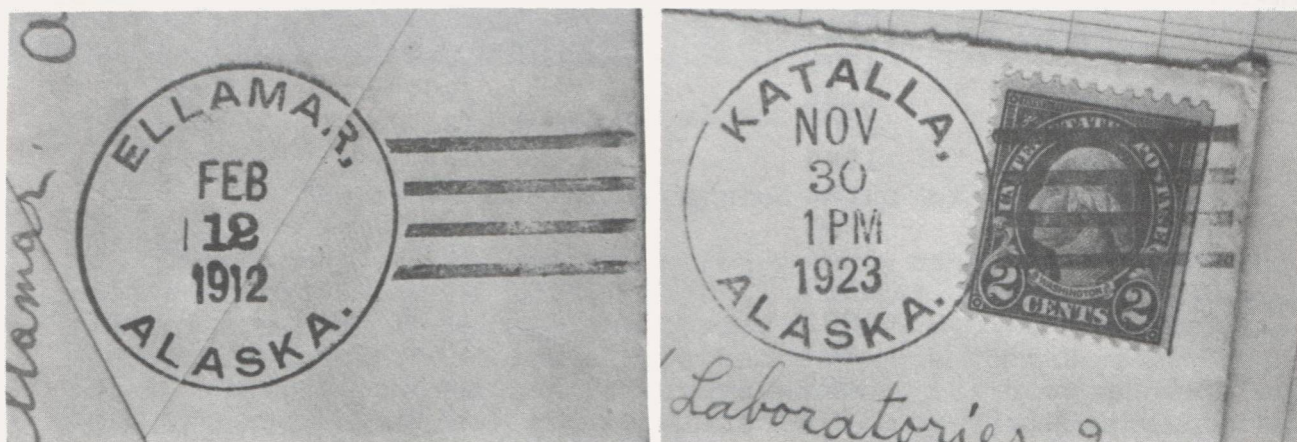
Post Office	Established	Known Dates of Use	
		Earliest	Latest
Anvik	1897	1916	1922
Berry	1906	1908	
Bethel	1905	1929	
Bettles	1901	1914	1930
Chatanika	1908	1909	1910
Circle	1898	1911	
Copper Center	1901	1908	1915
Cordova	1906	1908	1909
Council	1900	1908	
Deadwood	1906	1911	1929
Eldorado	1907	1908	
Fort Liscum	1900	1908	
Haines	1898	1909	
Hoonah	1901	1910	
Hot Springs	1907	1907	
Jackwade	1901	1929	
Katalla	1906	1907	1913
Meehan	1906	1911	1932
Porcupine	1900	1908	
Rampart	1898	1909	
Seward	1903	1909	
Shakan	1886	1915	1926
Sitka	1867	1908	1916
Tenakee	1902	1919	
Tyee	1907	1935	
Udakta	1899	1907	
Unalaska	1898	1908	
Wales	1902	1924	
Washburn	1905	1909	
Wrangell	1902	1908	1909

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

The relative scarcity of examples of the close-spaced 4-bar of 1907 leaves some interesting questions regarding its use unanswered. For example, the table shows that earliest known use for some offices dates from the late 1920s and in the case of Tyee from 1935! Surely we may expect new discoveries which will push these dates back to the 1908 era, but an interesting question concerns the continuous use of the device. In the case of the Jackwade post office it is known that a different postmark type was in use between 1912 and 1916. Why then did the postmaster revert back to this 1907 type in 1929? Since no examples of this type are known for Jackwade prior to 1929, it is possible that the postmark was not issued until the 1920s. Possible, but the type characteristics make its late issue unlikely. In offices for which solid documentation exists, such as Sitka, the life-span of the close-spaced 4-bar of 1907 appears to have averaged 10 to 12 years. Naturally, the life of the device was related to demands for its use among other things, and for low business volume offices the postmark saw some exceptionally long use such as the 16 years in Bettles and the 21 years in Meehan.

#### C. The Close-spaced 4-bars of 1909.

In 1909 or possible late 1908 a new type of four-bar postmark was introduced in some Alaskan offices. The general appearance of this new postmark was quite similar to the 1907 type in that the bars were thin and closely spaced. Major differences occurred in the style of lettering, punctuation, and beveling of the killer bars to match the circular dial. The most readily identifiable feature separating the 1909 type from the 1907 type is the degree of arc covered by "ALASKA." In 1907, "ALASKA" covered 75° plus or minus 5°. In the 1909 type, "ALASKA" covered 95° plus or minus 5°. A ready identification is usually possible based upon this feature alone.



(Enlarged about 35%)

Figure 11. The close-spaced 4-bar of 1909.

Lettering of the 1909 type is thicker, bolder and more squared than the 1907 type. Punctuation includes both a comma after the name of the office and a period after "ALASKA" for all known examples, but the comma is distinctive in that it is boxed with its tail tucked under the box (see figure 11). The killer bars differ from the squared-off bars of 1907 in that the 1909 bars are beveled to match the circular dial.

The earliest recorded use of a close-spaced 4-bar of the 1909 type dates from February 24, 1909, at Uyak. Other 1909 dates are recorded for Tanana (July 17), Ellamar (August 5), and Fort Liscum (September 13). It seems entirely possible that a postmark of this type may have seen use as early as fall, 1908 at some office. Table 10 reports known distribution of the 1909 type in Alaska together with recorded dates of use.

TABLE 10  
POST OFFICES KNOWN TO HAVE USED THE CLOSE-SPACED 4-BAR OF 1909

Post Office	Established	Known Dates of Use	
		Earliest	Latest
Chena	1903	20Oct11	
Ellamar	1900	5Aug09	12Feb12
Eureka	1909	13Nov13	21Jul15
Fort Liscum	1900	13Sep09	24May12
Gulkana	1909	31Aug29	
Kaltag	1908	11Jun16	
Katalla	1906	20Jul10	30Nov23
Nolan	1909	20Apr18	
Salchaket	1909	29May11	10Oct13
Steel Creek	1907	23Nov19	
Tanana	1898	17Jul09	15Sep17
Teller	1900	3Mar12	3Aug23
Token	1909	15May14	
Uyak	1900	24Feb09	23May11

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

Confusion arises regarding the identification of the 1909 type not in the early examples for it differs significantly from both the 1907 and 1911 types (discussed below), but in the matter of post-1920 examples. In 1922 a postmark type very similar in style to the 1909 type was introduced. There were still a few of the 1909 devices in use during the mid-1920s, and distinguishing between these and the 1922 type can be difficult. These difficulties as well as a general description of the 1922 type are considered below in their proper chronological sequence.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



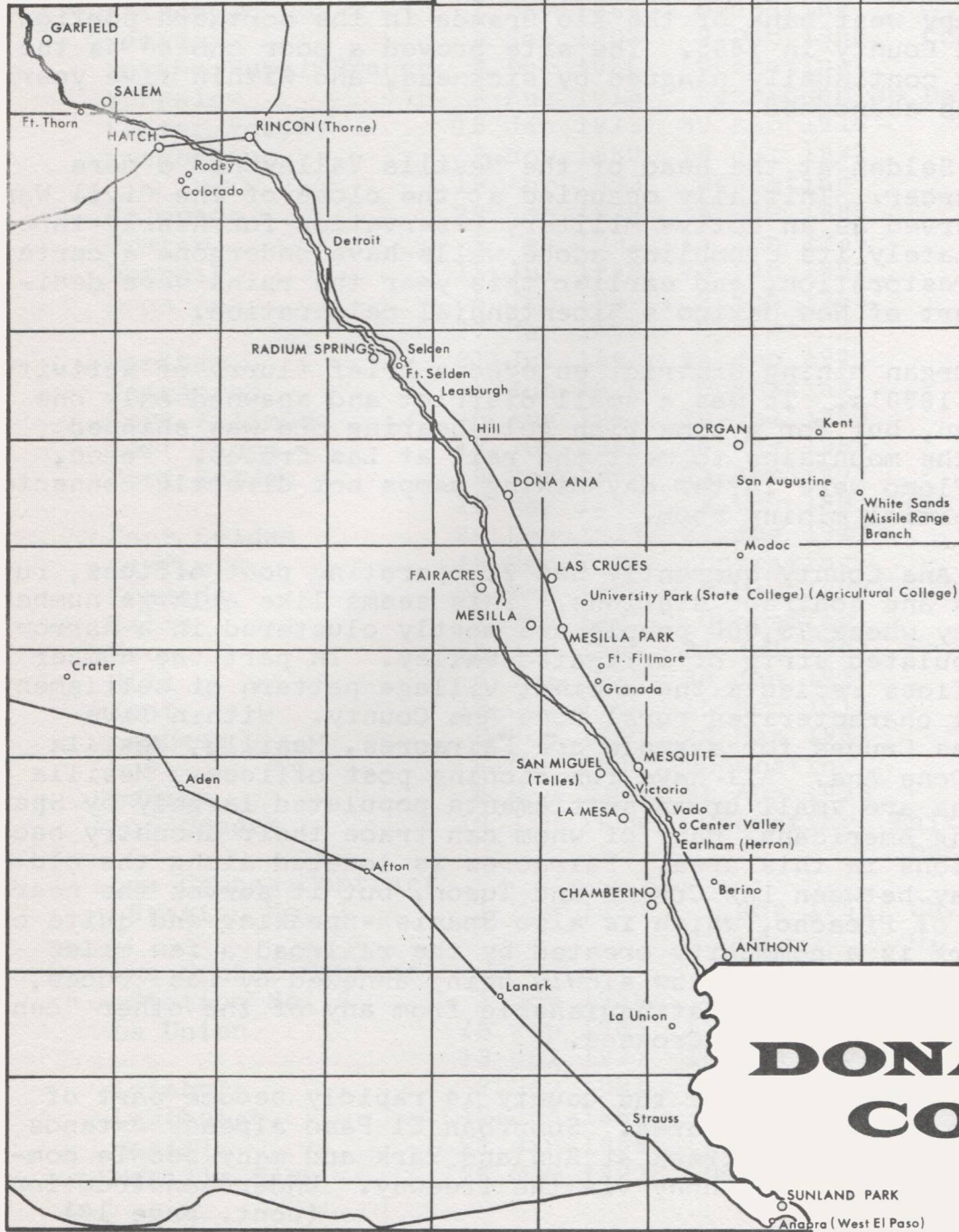
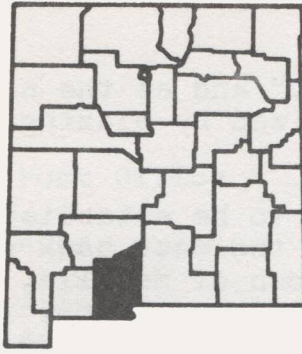
## NEW MEXICO POST OFFICES: PART VI, DONA ANA COUNTY

By Richard W. Helbock and Ruth Dolezal

Dona Ana County in south-central New Mexico represents a microcosm of the historical threads which create the fabric of history of the West. It has been the home of American Indians for more than a millennium. It has known the passage of Spanish explorers and colonists for nearly 400 years. The Butterfield Stage route slashed across its southern expanse. Civil War armies from both the Union and the Confederacy have marched through it and occupied it. It has been the site of three different forts established to guard the trails, protect settlers, and fight Indians. It has a very long history of irrigated agricultural settlement by both Hispanic and Anglo cultivators. Its settlements have felt the impact of the coming of the railroad in the 1880's and the automobile three decades later. It experienced a mining boom, a cotton boom, a government employment boom, and is now undergoing rapid suburbanization. This rich cultural history is there for all to see who are willing to search below the veneer of today's modern southwestern American civilization. Among the many places it may be found is in a listing of the county's post offices. Unfortunately such a list does not reflect the full scope of Dona Ana County's past for the first post office was established only 124 years ago.

Physically Dona Ana County consists of a narrow strip of irrigated Rio Grande River flood plain averaging three to five miles in width and running northwest to southeast across the county. On either side of the valley lie arid plateaus which are populated by jack rabbits, coyotes, and smaller desert animals. The eastern boundary of the county is marked by a north-south trending range of mountains which is called the San Andres north of the Organ Pass and the Organ Mountains south of the pass. While only a few peaks exceed 8,000 feet, the mountains rise sharply from the plateau and provide a spectacular backdrop for settlements of the valley.

The majority of settlements served by post offices have been located in the Rio Grande Valley. South of Radium Springs the valley is known as the Mesilla Valley, for the community of the same name which was the chief population center prior to the arrival of the Santa Fe railroad in 1881. North of Radium Springs, the Rio Grande cuts through a steep-sided gorge so that the northern portion of the valley is effectively partitioned into a separate section. This small northern valley is called the Hatch Valley. It was at Rincon in the Hatch Valley that the old Spanish route from Chihuahua to Santa Fe left the valley of the Rio Grande to follow a more direct, but much more difficult, path to the north. This section of the trail was known as



# DONA ANA COUNTY



the Jornada del Muerto, "the journey of death," and as the name suggests it was a much dreaded area characterized by blazing sun, little water, and marauding Apaches.

Fort Fillmore was the first post office to be established in Dona Ana County. The fort was situated on the east bank of the Rio Grande about six miles south of the town of Mesilla, and its purpose was to protect travelers on the El Paso to Fort Yuma wagon road. (See La Posta, Vol. 2, No. 4). Charged with protection of travelers along the Camino Real, Fort Thorn was established on the swampy west bank of the Rio Grande in the northern portion of Dona Ana County in 1855. The site proved a poor choice as the garison was continually plagued by sickness, and within five years the fort was abandoned.

Fort Selden at the head of the Mesilla Valley had a more glorious career. Initially occupied at the close of the Civil War, the post served as an active military reservation for nearly three decades. Lately its crumbling adobe walls have undergone a certain amount of restoration, and earlier this year the ruins were dedicated as part of New Mexico's Bicentennial celebration.

The Organ mining district enjoyed a brief flurry of activity during the 1880's. It was a small district and spawned only one lasting town, but for a time rich gold-bearing ore was shipped down from the mountains to meet the rail at Las Cruces. Modoc, Kent, and Plomo were latter day mining camps not directly connected with the initial mining boom.

Dona Ana County currently has 21 operating post offices, rural branches and contract stations. This seems like a large number for a county whose 75,000 people are mostly clustered in a narrow densely populated strip of irrigated valley. In part the number of post offices reflects the ancient village pattern of settlement which still characterizes rural Dona Ana County. Within five miles of Las Cruces for example are Fairacres, Mesilla, Mesilla Park, and Dona Ana. All have functioning post offices. Mesilla and Dona Ana are small urban settlements populated largely by Spanish-speaking Americans, many of whom can trace their ancestry back 10 generations in this area. Fairacres is located along the old U.S. Highway between Las Cruces and Tuson, but it serves the nearby village of Picacho, which is also Spanish-speaking and quite old. Mesilla Park is a community created by the railroad a few miles from old Mesilla. It is now slowly being annexed by Las Cruces, and will soon become indistinguishable from any of the other "centers" of the City of the Crosses.

The southern part of the county is rapidly become part of the El Paso metropolitan area. Suburban El Paso already extends well north of the race track at Sunland Park and many people commute to El Paso from Anthony via the freeway. Under construction  
(cont. page 18)



NEW MEXICO POST OFFICES  
DONA ANA COUNTY

Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
Aden	27 Jan 1894	16 Jun 1898	
	10 Aug 1905	15 Aug 1925	Mail to Cambray
Afton	27 Dec 1923	13 May 1941	Mail to Strauss
Agricultural College	1 Dec 1905	2 Mar 1912	Ch. to State College
Anapra	25 Jun 1907	10 Apr 1914	Ch. to West El Paso
Anthony	2 May 1884	Operating	
Berino	3 Sep 1902	2 Dec 1966	Conv. to Rural Br.
Berino Rural Branch	2 Dec 1966	Operating	
Bungalow	3 Aug 1918	Rescinded	No Date
Center Valley	18 Jan 1913	30 Apr 1919	Mail to Mesquite
Chamberino	8 Nov 1880	13 Jul 1882	
	18 Apr 1893	Operating	
Colorado	29 Sep 1879	6 May 1886	Mail to Rincon
Crater	9 Feb 1933	15 Jun 1935	Mail to Cambray
Detroit	15 Jul 1889	23 Feb 1892	Mail to Rincon
Dona Ana	5 Jan 1854	2 Sep 1855	
	27 Mar 1866	Operating	
Earlham	31 Jul 1888	15 Jun 1911	Mail to La Mesa
Fairacres	15 Jun 1926	Operating	
Fort Fillmore	6 Aug 1852	14 Jul 1863	
Fort Thorn	17 Jun 1855	14 Mar 1859	
Fort Selden	9 Nov 1866	24 Apr 1877	Mail to Dona Ana
	16 May 1881	2 May 1891	Ch. to Leasburg
Fort Selden	20 Dec 1913	31 Aug 1923	Was Selden
Garfield	19 Sep 1896	Operating	
Granada	26 Dec 1896	8 Mar 1898	Mail to Mesilla Park
Hatch	2 Feb 1887	Operating	
Herron	26 Jan 1886	31 Jul 1888	Ch. to Earlham
Hill	5 Jul 1913	30 Jan 1937	Mail to Las Cruces
Kent	13 Jul 1904	15 Sep 1911	Mail to Organ
La Mesa	8 Nov 1880	20 Mar 1882	Mail to Chamberino
	4 May 1908	Operating	
Lanark	9 Nov 1905	31 Aug 1923	Mail to Strauss
Las Cruces	10 Jan 1854	Operating	Initial spelling "Las Gruzes".
Las Cruces Contract Station No. 1	1 Mar 1950	1 Nov 1953	Ch. to White Sands P. G. Classified Branch
Las Cruces Contract Station No. 2	1 Nov 1958	Operating	
La Union	25 Sep 1909	15 Jun 1913	
	13 Jul 1927	14 Jun 1957	Mail to Anthony
Leasburg	2 May 1891	15 Apr 1898	Mail to Dona Ana
Leasburgh	12 Jun 1866	7 May 1873	
Mesilla	21 Jan 1858	Operating	
Mesilla Park	25 Mar 1892	Operating	

Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
Mesquite	17 Jan 1913	Operating	
Modoc	8 Oct 1901	14 Dec 1903	Mail to Las Cruces
Organ	14 Sep 1881	23 Aug 1895	
	20 Jan 1896	Operating	
Pine Forest	20 Sep 1860	31 Jan 1861	Probably located in Grant County
Plomo	8 Feb 1902	30 Sep 1902	Mail to Las Cruces
Radium Springs	9 Jun 1926	Operating	
Rincon	20 Feb 1883	Operating	Was Thorne
Rodey	22 Mar 1904	30 Jun 1927	Mail to Hatch
Salem	22 Jan 1908	Operating	
San Augustine	9 May 1876	20 Aug 1888	Mail to Organ
San Miguel	1 Mar 1952	Operating	Was Telles
Selden	23 Aug 1911	20 Dec 1913	Ch. to Fort Selden
State College	2 Mar 1912	1 Apr 1959	Ch. to University Park
Strauss	3 May 1894	26 Jan 1897	
	11 Jan 1918	10 Sep 1943	Mail to El Paso
Sunland Park	1 Nov 1960	Operating	
Telles	31 Jul 1894	3 Jun 1897	
	26 Oct 1906	15 Oct 1917	
	1 Feb 1950	1 Mar 1952	Ch. to San Miguel
Thorne	15 Jun 1881	20 Feb 1883	Ch. to Rincon
University Park	1 Apr 1959	7 Oct 1966	Conv. to Classified Br. of Las Cruces
Vado	28 Aug 1911	30 Dec 1911	
	31 Mar 1927	5 May 1967	To Rural Branch
Vado Rural Branch	5 May 1967	Operating	
Victoria	8 Nov 1880	4 May 1908	Ch. to La Mesa
West El Paso	10 Apr 1914	15 Nov 1918	Mail to El Paso
White Sands Missile Range Class. Branch	23 Jun 1958	Operating	
White Sands P.G. Classified Branch	1 Nov 1953	1 Nov 1954	Ch. to White Sands Proving Ground Cl. Br.
White Sands Proving Ground Class. Br.	1 Nov 1954	23 Jun 1958	Ch. to White Sands Missile Range

-----

on the mesa near the site of Strauss is a totally new community called Santa Teresa. It is being built in part by Lee Trevino, and features a modern golf course. The anticipated population for 1980 is on the order of 5,000 with further growth expected during the last two decades of the century.

The character of Dona Ana County is changing rapidly. Some say too rapidly, but the history of the county has been change and it would be even more revolutionary to attempt to halt the change, than it is to anticipate and accept it. The people and their customs which give this area its flavor, its ambiente, have proved very durable through the centuries. There is reason to believe they will continue to be so.

## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

This time I have a little space left so I'll expand a little to tell you about my experiences in Asia and a few other things that come to mind. First let me say how good it is to be home again. We have been back almost exactly three months as I write this, and it's really a comfort. There were times in Asia which I would not have traded for anything (such as flying over the high Karakoram in a little Fokker Friendship as a storm approached, or standing at the Khyber Pass and watching a caravan of nomadic herdsmen as they camped among the boulders, or sitting in the archeology guest house at Moenjo Daro, a 5,000 year old city, and listening to the Sindi chokidar play his eektara and flutes), but day in and day out it's awfully hard to beat the life-style we enjoy here.

My work in Pakistan was with the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics at Islamabad, the new capital city. I was engaged in demographic research, specifically studies dealing with migration, urbanization, and differences in social well-being within the nation. I worked closely with Pakistani scholars, and served as an integral member of the Institute staff. If any of you should be interested in my work, I refer you to the 1975 volume of The Pakistan Development Review, which contains two of my articles and is likely to be available at your nearest major library.

I traveled to Pakistan by way of Europe, and, as they say, getting there was half the fun. After three days in London and a brief train trip to Cardiff, Wales, I flew to Vienna for a four-day "weekend." What a city! The music, the food, the wine, all simply superb. I wondered at my ancestors for ever leaving Austria. From Vienna I flew on to Istanbul, and arrived just in time for the second invasion of Cyprus. It was a little disconcerting. The airport was shut down. Everyone was putting up blackout papers in their windows. There was talk of a Greek invasion through Thrace. One American got so panicky that he took a taxi all the way to the Bulgarian border to get out of Turkey. I was nervous but camped at the Pera Palas next to the American Embassy, and all in all not too worried. After four days the airport opened and I flew on to Teheran. I was only supposed to be in Iran for three or four days, but my Pakistani visa had not yet arrived there and I spent nearly two and one-half weeks in Teheran, Shiraz, and visiting Fars Province. Finally I reached Karachi and then the last 1000 miles to Islamabad. Turns out Pakistan is almost exactly half way around the world from New Mexico.

My wife and children arrived 5 months after I did and from their arrival in January 1975 until our departure in late December we enjoyed a more or less normal home life. We were fortunate in being able to see much of the country, which has some very beautiful and interesting things to see. The old bazaar in Peshawar, Nathia Gali and the other hill stations of the Karakoram foothills,



the wonderful Swat Valley, the Khyber Pass, Moenjō Daro, Lahore, Karachi, and on and on. Some of the food was marvelous. Some of the people we met are now very dear to us. In the future it will be hard to read Kipling without a sigh. There were bad times too. Just before the monsoon arrives it becomes unbelievably hot and dusty (far, far worse than New Mexico). We became very ill with a slight touch of cholera. It was miserable, and we longed for relief. There was none, and we just had to wait it out. When the monsoon rain began at last relief came, and we gradually felt better.

The trip home was very exciting. We flew to Bangkok for two days and then took the train to Penang, Malaysia. Our plan was to spend only two or three days in Penang and then take the train on to Singapore for Christmas, but we fell in love with the island. The people are a hodge-podge of Chinese, Malays, and Indians and very cheerful and friendly. We stayed at a modest motel located on the beach at Batu Ferenghi, and might have stayed there forever. The other guests included two elderly American couples, several Australian families, a few Europeans, and a young couple from Hong Kong with whom we got along quite well. A few days after Christmas we reluctantly boarded the train back to Bangkok and then flew on to Hong Kong for two days. Our trans-Pacific flight was by way of the old China clipper route: Hong Kong-Manila-Guan-Honolulu. What a huge ocean! Finally on New Years Day, 10 seconds after midnight, we landed in Portland to visit friends and relatives.

Sincerely hope I haven't bored you with this rehash, but I know many of you slightly and others well on a personal basis, and my correspondence has not been what it should be. I felt it might be worthwhile to catch my friends up on what I was about while absent, and for those of you who are not concerned with my doings, please accept my apologies.

NEWS: The Vermont Yankee, Star #2, Windsor, VT 05089 is now engaging in mail auctions of less expensive, but elusive, covers. If you are not already on his mailing list, drop him a line.

Donald Smith, our friend and Sustaining Subscriber, is now preparing the second OREGON POST AUCTION. Don's address is P.O.Box 5384, Eugene, OR 97405.

The Alaskan Philatelist has been revived by Don Morisch, another of our Sustaining Subscribers. Its first issue was miles beyond the old TAP, and we are very optimistic that under Don's guidance it will be a first-rate publication. Write Don at: USCG Group Office, Humboldt Bay, Samoa, CA 95564.

RICHARD W. HELBOCK, EDITOR, 1635 MARIPOSA DR., LAS CRUCES, NM 88001

