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## FORT LARAMIE: POST OFFICE IN THE OLD WEST

By Harry L. Fine

[Editors note: This article first appeared in the Sunland (AZ) Village in June, 1977. It is reprinted here with the kind permission of the author and editor.]

Study of the postal history of the West, a rich and challenging field for the researcher, is deeply bound up with Fort Laramie, the first permanent fur trading post in what is now Wyoming. Significant Western history was in the making here, from the dim days of the fur traders through the exciting years of westward expansion. Indeed it is a rare document dealing with Western history that does not mention this historic spot, located at the junction of the Laramie and Platte rivers in Wyoming.

Laramie River got its name in 1820 for a French-Canadian trapper named Jacques La Ramee, who was killed by Indians at this spot. The first trading post there was established in 1834 by fur traders Robert Campbell and William L. Sublette. It was named Fort William. The founders sold out the following year to a syndicate of trappers who in turn sold it to the American Fur Company. The new owners enlarged the installation, adding bastions and block-houses for defense and renaming it Fort John in honor of John H. Sarpy, an officer of the fur company.

For a time, the post was known as both Fort William and Fort John, and it is said that a shipping clerk mistakenly marked a box "Fort Laramie" instead of "Fort John". Campbell who then owned a supply house in St. Louis was impressed with the sound of the name in the marking and adopted it as the name of the post. On the recommendation of Captain John C. Fremont (of later fame), who had explored the region in 1842 and 1843, Fort Laramie was purchased by the United States Government in 1849 and became an Army post. Its location was of a strategic nature to curb the hostile Indians and protect emigrants on their way to the California gold fields. Over 55,000 emigrants passed Fort Laramie in 1850 where they were able to purchase supplies, have broken equipment repaired and occasionally find a letter from home.

It was in August, 1849, that the first mail arrived at Fort Laramie by supply train. Provision was made for the deposit of letters at the fort and these were carried by military or private express to post offices in Missouri. The charge was 25 cents per letter.

The official mail service by way of Fort Laramie to the Mormon settlement of Salt Lake was inaugurated during the summer of 1850, when Samuel H. Woodson was awarded a government mail contract for transporting mail from Independence, Missouri, to Salt Lake. The contract called for a monthly trip each way at \$19,500 per year. At first no mail stations were established, one team or set of pack

animals being used for the entire trip. The following year however, the mail line was divided into two segments with Fort Laramie as division point. Horses and drivers were changed there about the fifteenth of the month, schedules being maintained quite well in the summer but becoming erratic in the late fall, winter and early spring.

The first post office at Fort Laramie was established on March 14, 1850, with John S. Tutt as its first postmaster. The post office was housed in the Sutlers store, and the Sutlers store is one of the few original buildings still standing at Fort Laramie.

Fort Laramie experienced several territorial changes until it finally became a part of Wyoming Territory. Prior to May 30, 1854, the area was referred to as unorganized country or Indian country.

The earliest example of a Fort Laramie postal marking carried the designation of "OR". Many postal historians were of the opinion that this meant Oregon Route, but upon researching the letter



Figure 1. Fort Laramie, OR postmarks. (after Chase & Cabeen)

files of the Postmaster General, it was found that the Post Office Department attached Fort Laramie to Clackamas County, Oregon Territory for administrative purposes during the period to March 30, 1854. The official postal guide of 1851 list Fort Laramie in Clackamas County, Oregon Territory. Administrative responsibility for Fort Laramie during the early years was as follows:

Part of:	From	To
Clackamas County, Oregon Terr.	March 1850	May 30, 1854
Nebraska Territory	May 30, 1854	March 3, 1863
Idaho Territory	March 3, 1863	May 26, 1864
Dakota Territory	May 26, 1864	July 28, 1868
Wyoming Territory	July 28, 1868	July 10, 1890
State of Wyoming	July 10, 1890	Date

A Fort Laramie, M.T. postal marking appeared on several letters written during 1865. Fort Laramie was never part of Montana Territory and postal historians felt that with the indefinite boundary changes, the postmaster at the fort probably thought the post was in Montana Territory when it was created on May 26, 1864, and ordered a Fort Laramie, Montana, postmarker. (Figure 2)



Figure 2. The earliest "Fort Laramie/M.T." known is this cover mailed from Denver City, Colorado, to Nebraska City, N.T., which was missent to Fort Laramie. At Fort Laramie "MISSENT" and a "FORT LARAMIE/M.T." postmark of 19 Jun 1865 was applied.

It was my good fortune to find the answer in the post office files at the National Archives, Washington, D.C., wherein it states: "For the year 1865, the official register shows Fort Laramie as a post office in Dakota Territory, Idaho Territory and Montana Territory with L. Schuyder shown as postmaster in charge. The records further disclose that payments to L. Schuyder as postmaster for the period ending June 30, 1865, are as follows:

	Compensation	Balance Due
Dakota Territory	\$152.50	\$154.32
Idaho Territory	\$152.50	None
Montana Territory	\$389.00	\$27.15

It is my opinion that this is again a case of where the Post Office Department considered Fort Laramie in the three Territories for administrative purposes.

Most early letters do not have enclosures. They are usually of a personal nature and have been removed by the owners. One in my possession from Fort Laramie is an exception however, and its contents are quite interesting. It is reproduced below with very few corrections in spelling. Those that have been made were done to permit a better understanding of its continuity.



The letter carries a date line of Fort Laramie, June 8, 1854, and reads as follows:

Dear Father; I take this opportunity to leting you know that I am well and Skelt is well and hope these few lines will find you all in the land of living. We are getting along on the road first rate we left Karney (Fort Kearney) on the 22nd of May, this is June 6 and we are in thirty miles of Laramia, so in the last tou weekes have upwards of three hundred miles and laid up one day and half in that time. All the cattle looks well except one or tou of the old cowes and one of them ought to die. Old Misery, it is a foot this morning all ouer horses took to stampied last night and left us to drive the cattle and soon as Skelt and Sue could see the tracks they started on. As luck was on our side the horses were tired of traveling in day time and stayed on the road to California. Kept the road and went about fifteen miles and some Indians caught them and piketed them and Skelt and Sue got them and started back and met us. We lost a cow the same night, traveled on and camped at a place on the Platt river and run a narrow risk of lousin some of our cattle, some man camped just above us and got his cattle alkiled and lost eighteen head one or tou nights before we camped there, it happened none of our cattle got any. I saw Charley and Clem Thomas and the Stricklin boys on the road. They was well and I think they are behind us. We are ahead of the crowd of immigrants but there is a great many ahead of us, some wagones passed Laramay on the 1st of May. Skelt bought a hundred pounds of flouer and had to pay 12 dollars for the hundred pounds and if we cannot get flouer at Laramia we will half to send by Salt Lake for more, we started with 9 hundred pounds of flouer, most of the emegration is on the north side of the Platt river, there is very little sickness on the plains this year. Write us to Fort Hall.

James Gamble

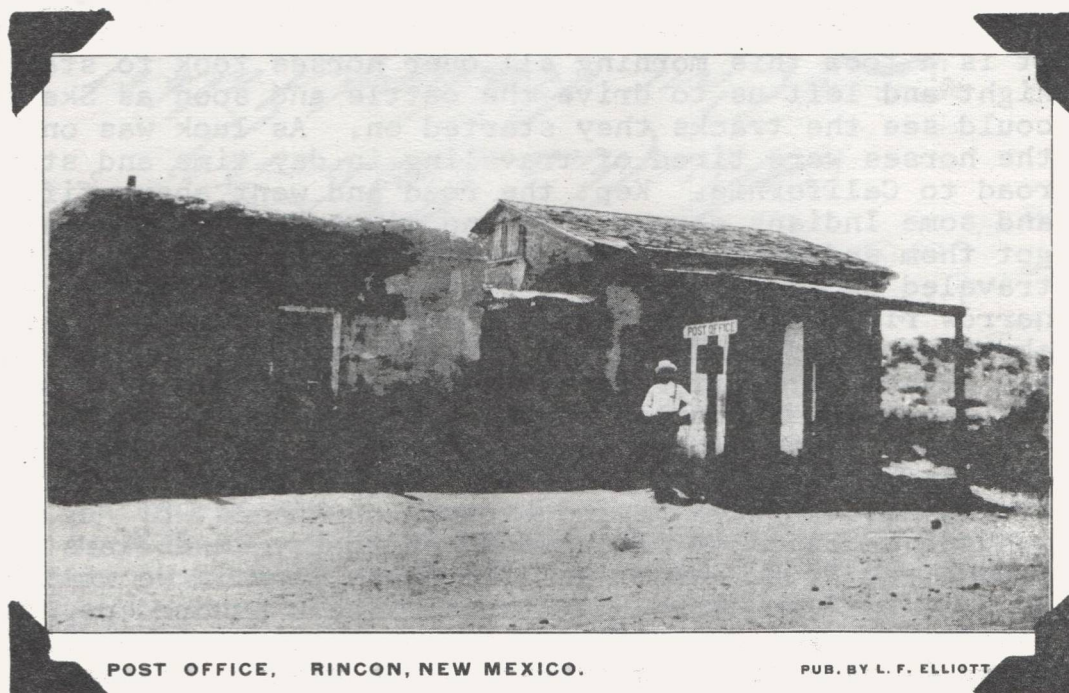
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References: National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.  
Post Office Library, Washington, D.C.  
Fort Laramie National Historic Site  
Smithsonian Institution, U.S. National Museum, Wash., DC  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Office  
of the Church Historian, Salt Lake City, Utah.

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TWO RINCON, NEW MEXICO, POSTMASTERS By Tom Todsen

Rincon, (Spanish "corner" or "angle") originally authorized a post office as Thorne with the name changed 20 February 1883, was established in Dona Ana County at the junction of the Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad lines going south to El Paso and west to Deming. Two of its territorial postmasters are connected with the illustration of the Rincon Post Office shown here, a photograph probably taken in the early 1900's. The obvious one



is the publisher of the post card, L. F. Elliott, listed in New Mexico "Appointments..." as Leander F. Elliott, appointed 28 May 1901 and serving until 6 November 1906.

Leander F. Elliott was born 29 March 1870 in Saginaw, Michigan, the son of Sylvauer G. and Annie (Brownrigg) Elliott. Young Leander quit school at twelve and went to work in a sawmill (his father was a lumber merchant). At the age of 15 he went to Texas and worked for nine months. Then, in 1886, he moved to Rincon and began working for general merchant A. McClintock. Elliott married Miss Alberta Coleman on 27 April 1902. In 1913 he purchased the McClintock Store, and by 1915 had established another store in Garfield, N.M., being listed in a 1915 New Mexico Directory as having general merchandise, hardware, saddlery, lumber, ice, alfalfa hay in carload lots, fuel, grain and feed, stockmen's and miner's supplies. He was a Presbyterian, an Elk, and a Republican. He was once elected tax assessor for Dona Ana County, but resigned because the office took too much time away from his business. [Concluded page 10]

## THE POST OFFICES OF WYOMING: PART XX, SUBLETTE COUNTY

By Daniel Y. Meschter & Ruth Dolezal

Sublette County was created on February 15, 1921; the same day that Teton County was created. It was the last county to be organized in Wyoming, the date of that event being January 2, 1923. The land for Sublette County was taken from that part of Fremont County which extended southwest of the Wind River Mountains and a portion of east-central Lincoln County which drains into the Green River. Sublette County embraces the upper Green River watershed from the crest of the Wind River Mountains on the east to almost the top of the Wyoming Range on the west. The area between the mountains, which forms the heart of the county, is a broad prairie that opens to the south and is drained by the Green River.

Sublette County was named for William Sublette, a famous fur-trader and one of the early proprietors of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. It might just as well honor the other four Sublette brothers, including Milton, who was one of the later proprietors of the company along with Jim Bridger. Both William and Milton Sublette traveled extensively through the upper Green River Basin during the fur trade period as did many other explorers, missionaries, traders, mountain men and adventurers. As many as eight of the 16 famous fur trading rendezvous held annually each summer between 1824 and 1840 may have been held within the present borders of Sublette County.

Among its many historic attractions, Sublette County includes the site where the Rev. Samuel Parker preached the first Protestant sermon in the Rocky Mountains on his way to Oregon in 1835 [a few miles from Bondurant in the extreme northwest corner], and where Father De Smet offered the first Mass five years later [near Daniell].

Sublette County was settled at a latter date than much of the rest of Wyoming. The railroads completely by-passed the territory, and no important roads or trails crossed it. Cattle were driven onto the prairies about 1878, and the first post office was established at Big Piney in 1879. Big Piney post office led a peripatetic existence during its first eight years, moving frequently from ranch to ranch, before finally settling down at its present location.

Economic growth proceeded slowly, and the resident population was widely scattered on ranches and the few small towns that grew up at strategic locations. Most of the 39 post offices in Sublette County were located at ranches. Rural free delivery eliminated the need for most of these offices, and the six offices that have survived are located at places which have become permanent trade centers.

The mail has been carried over an intricate network of rural and Star Routes. Horses, or horse and wagon, used in the early days have given way to automobiles and trucks. Some of the mail



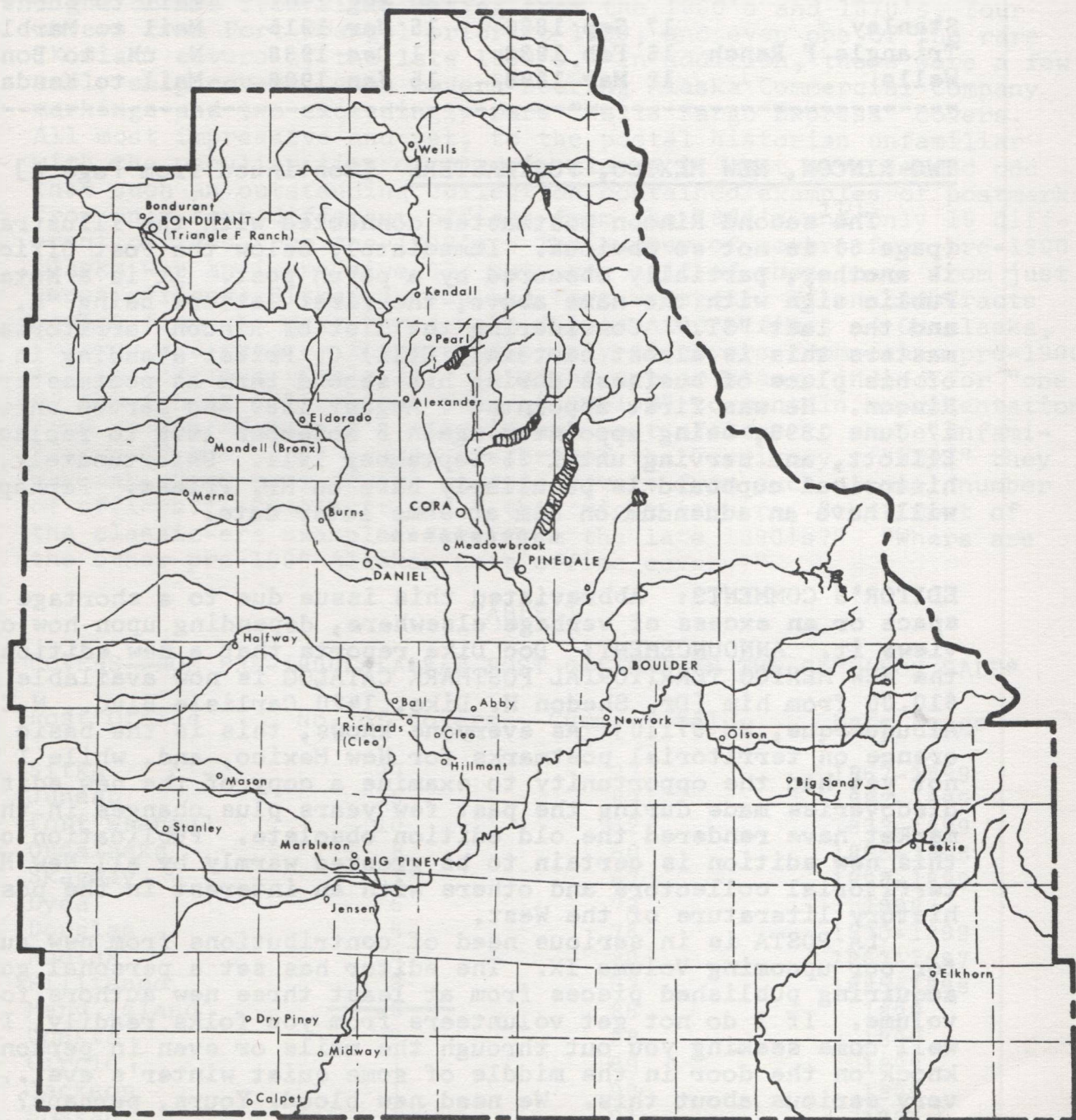
carriers have themselves become local legends. Mrs. Dele Bell of Big Piney lists six carriers, including herself, who were on the job from 16 to 40 years, averaging 25 years each, faithfully carrying the mail through mud, blizzards and the heat and dust of summer.

The dominant industry in Sublette County is still cattle ranching. Oil and gas have become more important recently, and the mountains support some logging. The slopes of the Wind River Mountains offer fine hunting and fishing so that Boulder, Pinedale and Cora also benefit from outdoor recreation and tourism along the well-traveled route from Rock Springs to Jackson and the Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks.

# WYOMING POST OFFICES SUBLETTE COUNTY

Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
Abby	6 May 1892	24 May 1893	Mail to Big Piney
Alexander	25 May 1900	9 Oct 1903	Mail to Cora
Ball	8 Feb 1904	15 Jan 1907	Mail to Daniel
Big Piney	25 Sep 1879	Operating	
Big Sandy	18 Sep 1906	10 Jun 1948	Mail to Boulder
Bondurant	30 Jun 1903	15 Aug 1935	M. to Triangle F Ranch
Bondurant	1 Dec 1938	Operating	Was Triangle F Ranch
Boulder	11 Mar 1905	Operating	
Bronx	11 Apr 1906	15 May 1917	Mail to Daniel
	3 Apr 1919	26 Jun 1919	N. ch. to Mondell
Burns	4 Apr 1898	2 Jan 1907	Mail to Daniel
Calpet	11 May 1927	1 Apr 1960	To Rural of LaBarge
Calpet Rural Sta.	1 Apr 1960	29 Apr 1961	
Cleo	28 Aug 1894	5 May 1899	N. ch. to Richards
Cleo	11 Jul 1899	29 Dec 1899	Mail to Big Piney
Cora	17 Jun 1891	Operating	
Daniel	1 Feb 1900	Operating	
Dry Piney	13 Jan 1888	18 Apr 1892	Mail to Big Piney
Eldorado	17 Nov 1899	31 Dec 1900	Mail to Burns
Elkhorn	12 Jul 1909	15 Nov 1928	Mail to Big Sandy
Fayette	23 Sep 1903	15 Jul 1916	Mail to Pinedale
Halfway	28 May 1903	29 Feb 1948	Mail to Daniel
Higgins	8 Feb 1896	15 Jul 1896	Mail to Big Piney
Hillmont	6 Oct 1915	25 Oct 1926	Mail to Marbleton
Jensen	17 Mar 1905	30 Jun 1908	
Kendall	15 Jun 1899	28 Feb 1935	Mail to Cora
Leekie	29 Jul 1897	15 Sep 1906	Mail to Olson
Marbleton	7 Jul 1911	20 Oct 1930	Mail to Big Piney
Mason	8 Jan 1903	30 Jun 1942	Mail to Big Piney
Meadowbrook	27 Apr 1915	29 Apr 1916	Mail to Cora
Merna	7 Jul 1900	15 Jan 1944	Mail to Daniel
Midway	18 Apr 1892	16 Sep 1892	Mail to Fontenelle
	12 Oct 1895	29 Jun 1918	Mail to Labarge
Mondell	26 Jun 1919		Was Bronx
		29 May 1921	Mail to Daniel

# Sublette County





Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
Newfork	1 Mar 1888	15 Aug 1918	Mail to Boulder
Olson	6 May 1899	5 Jan 1903	Mail to Newfork
	13 Feb 1903	31 Aug 1909	Mail to Boulder
Pearl	2 Oct 1899	31 Jan 1903	Mail to Kendall
Pinedale	24 Feb 1898	Operating	
Plateau	9 May 1901	20 Jun 1901	Rescinded
Richards	5 May 1899		Was Cleo
		30 Aug 1902	Mail to Burns
Stanley	17 Sep 1896	15 Mar 1915	Mail to Marbleton
Triangle F Ranch	16 Feb 1933	1 Dec 1938	N. ch. to Bondurant
Wells	12 May 1898	15 Jan 1908	Mail to Kendall

## TWO RINCON, NEW MEXICO, POSTMASTERS [Continued from Page 6]

The second Rincon postmaster connected with the illustration (page 6) is not so obvious. Immediately below the Post Office sign is another, partially obscured by a porch post. It is a Notary Public sign with the name above, the first letters being "E. C." and the last "ST." Considering the list of Rincon territorial postmasters this is almost certainly E(li) C. Priest standing in front of his place of business during his second term as postmaster of Rincon. He was first appointed 7 August 1889 and served until 17 June 1899, being appointed again 6 November 1906 to replace L. F. Elliott, and serving until 25 September 1911. Unfortunately, the historical cupboard is peculiarly bare on Mr. Priest. Perhaps we will have an addendum on him at some later date.

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS: Abbreviated this issue due to a shortage of space or an excess of verbage elsewhere, depending upon how one views it. ANNOUNCEMENT: Doc Dike reports that a new edition of the NEW MEXICO TERRITORIAL POSTMARK CATALOG is now available for \$10.00 from him [Dr. Shedon H. Dike, 1420 Carlisle Blvd., N.E., Albuquerque, NM 87110] As everyone knows, this is the basic reference on territorial postmarks for New Mexico, and, while I have not yet had the opportunity to examine a copy of the new edition, discoveries made during the past few years plus changes in the market have rendered the old edition obsolete. Publication of this new edition is certain to be greeted warmly by all New Mexico territorial collectors and others with an interest in the postal history literature of the West.

LA POSTA is in serious need of contributions from new authors for our upcoming Volume IX. The editor has set a personal goal of acquiring published pieces from at least three new authors for the volume. If I do not get volunteers from you folks readily, I may well come seeking you out through the mails or even in person. (A knock on the door in the middle of some quiet winter's eve...) I'm very serious about this. We need new blood. Yours, perhaps? It is a very easy thing to do, and the rewards are enormous in terms of pride of accomplishment. The New York Times we're not, but then even the Times might envy the interest and dedication of some of our readers.



# "WHERE ARE THE OTHER PRE-1900 ALASKAN POST OFFICE COVERS?"

By Richard W. Helbock

H. R. Harmer's sale of the Bruce Gimelson collection described the property in several publications as "one of the finest collections of Alaskan ever assembled," and there can be no doubt that the collection contained some outstanding rarities. There were eight covers from Sitka dating from the 1860's and 1870's, four covers from Fort Wrangel prior to 1880, and even one of the rare "Kodiak" covers of the late 1860's. In addition, there were a few early ship covers, some covers bearing Alaska Commercial Company markings and two exceedingly rare "Wells Fargo Express" covers. All most impressive and yet, to the postal historian unfamiliar with the peculiarities of classic Alaska it must have seemed odd that such an outstanding collection contained examples of postmarks from only four different offices from the 1880's and only 15 different offices from the 1890's. The number of covers from pre-1900 Alaska was an impressive 92, but over half of these came from just three offices: Sitka, Juneau and Fort Wrangel. If one subtracts covers from the next three well-represented offices -- Ounalaska, Skagway and Dyea -- there remain only 20 covers from other pre-1900 Alaskan offices (Table 1). It might appear stange indeed for "one of the finest collections ever assembled" to contain representation from so few of Alaska's classic-era post offices to those unfamiliar with the early postal history of the Territory. "Why," they may ask, "are most of the classic covers from such a small number of offices?" "Isn't it odd," they might inquire, "that most of the classic-era examples date from the late 1890's?" "Where are the other pre-1900 Alaskan post office covers?"

TABLE 1

## COVERS FROM PRE-1900 ALASKAN POST OFFICES IN THE GIMELSON SALE\*

Post Office	No. of Covers	Cumm. Total	Date Range
Sitka	27	27	1867-1899
Juneau	15	42	1882-1899
Fort Wrangel	10	52	1873-1899
Ounalaska	8	60	1896-1898
Skagway	7	67	1898-1899
Dyea	5	72	1898
Douglas	4	76	1890-1899
Kodiak	4	80	1867-1897
Killisnoo	3	83	1885-1898
Mary Island	3	86	1898
Udakta	2	88	1899
Circle	1	89	1899
Jackson	1	90	1899
Shakan	1	91	1895
Sumdum	1	92	1899
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These are legitimate questions which we, as students of Alaskan postal history, should be prepared to answer. The answers lie buried in statistics describing postmaster appointments and compensation for 19th century Alaskan offices. Let us explore beginning with the 1880's, and understanding that any postal activity before that time was quite limited.

In 1880 there were two post offices operating in all Alaska: Fort Wrangel and Sitka. For the most part those were the only offices which had ever served the Territory, although a few other had operated briefly during the early years. Postmaster compensation, a direct reflection of the volume of postal business, for the two Alaskan offices was only about \$200 combined for the year ending July 1, 1881 (Table 2). It is difficult to express precisely the implications such compensation figures have for scarcity of an office's postmarks. There are just too many unpredictable factors, but if one sticks one's neck out and assumes that the survivorship rate of items postmarked at two different offices has been the same, then postmaster compensation represents a crude measure of relative scarcity. The compensation figures for the Alaskan offices in 1881 may be compared with the following Western post offices in the same year: Camp Thomas, Arizona Terr., \$407.10; Volcano, Amador Co., California, \$547.69; Tin Cup, Colorado, \$655.12; Frenchtown, Montana Terr., \$338.82; Cornucopia, Nevada, \$120.88; Shakespeare, NM Terr., \$291.78; Fort Klamath, Oregon, \$248.69; and Fort Laramie, Wyo. Terr., \$626.60. Admittedly this makes for very rough comparison, but the message comes through pretty well. The two 1881 post offices of Alaska compared in terms of volume of business with some reasonably small Western post offices of the time. Surviving postmarks of these offices are scarce to rare, and so too the Alaskan postmarks of the period.

Let us now consider what happened in Alaska throughout the rest of the decade. By 1883 the number of offices had tripled, but of the six listed offices none had postmaster compensation over \$100, and three were under \$5. The Sitka office posted no returns for that year, but continued in service. The significance of that report is unclear. The year 1885 saw an additional increase of one office to the total, and both Juneau and Sitka received compensation over \$100. The other five offices were apparently very low volume. There were still seven offices in 1887, but three of them had \$100-plus compensations. Finally, in 1889 a "surge" of five new offices brought the total operating to 12 at the end of the decade. Among these newly listed offices was Douglas which became the fourth post office to boast a \$100+ compensation. Of the 12 Alaskan offices operating in 1889, eight were very small and only Sitka's postmaster was paid in excess of \$500.

The 1880's saw 15 different post office names in Alaska, but, with the exception of Sitka, Fort Wrangel, and Juneau (plus Douglas in 1889) all were very small, low-business offices from which surviving postmarks are sure to be very scarce. Further, the biggest

TABLE 2

## POSTMASTER COMPENSATION, ALASKAN POST OFFICES, 1881-1889

Post Office	1881	1883	1885	1887	1889
Afognac	..	..	..	..	--
Belkofsky	..	..	..	..	--
Douglas	..	..	..	..	\$209.91
Fort Wrangel	\$55.82	\$72.14	\$22.60	\$132.48	\$211.22
Haines	..	\$3.67	\$21.81	..	..
Howcan	..	..	..	\$12.76	\$45.77
Jackson (1)	..	\$2.95	\$22.99	..	..
Juneau	..	\$86.08	\$149.21	\$427.51	\$347.28
Killisnoo	..	..	--	\$22.55	\$71.76
Klawock	..	..	\$1.39	\$2.41	--
Kodiak	..	..	..	..	--
Loring	..	..	..	\$14.99	\$36.99
Metlakahtla	..	..	..	..	--
Roberts	..	\$0.41	..	..	..
Sitka	\$145.00	--	\$197.25	\$288.27	\$530.98

Notes: ".." indicates office not listed in that year.

"--" indicates office listed but no returns or compensation.

(1) Name changed to Howcan December 16, 1886.

of the Alaskan offices of the decade were only busy enough to rank them as small post offices among Western offices of the time.

The 1890's brought a great increase to the number of Alaskan post offices, but not dramatically so until the last two years of the decade (Table 3). In 1891 there were 12 offices, and the pattern was essentially the same as it was in 1889 in that four were fairly large and eight were quite small. The number of offices increased to 15 in 1893, but there were still only four offices with postmaster compensation in excess of \$100. In 1895 Juneau reached the \$1000 compensation level for the first time, and three new offices opened bring the total to 18. A total of 23 operating post offices were listed in 1897, and seven of them had compensations over \$100. The early impact of the Klondike gold rush was reflected in the 1899 list which showed three offices over \$1000 (Juneau, Skagway and Dyea), and a total of 45 operating offices. Only 15 of the 1899 offices had postmaster compensation over \$100. In summary, the number of offices tripled during the decade but most of the numerical increase occurred between 1897 and 1899 when the number of operating offices went from 23 to 45. Postmaster compensations increased similarly, but Juneau was the only \$1000+ office from 1895 until Skagway and Dyea "exploded" to the \$1000 level shortly after their establishment.



TABLE 3

## POSTMASTER COMPENSATION, ALASKAN POST OFFICES, 1891-1899

Post Office	1891	1893	1895	1897	1899
Afognac	D	--	..	..	..
Anvik	..	..	..	..	\$3.67
Apollo	..	..	..	..	\$7.40
Belkofsky	D	..	..	..	..
Chilkat	\$14.35	--	\$28.63	\$93.53	\$64.38
Circle	..	..	..	--	D
Douglas	\$315.96	\$281.93	\$376.32	\$462.87	\$535.32
Dyea	..	..	..	\$89.57	\$1025.00
Eagle	..	..	..	..	--
Eaton	..	..	..	..	--
Fort Wrangel	\$197.96	\$251.59	\$160.48	\$251.47	\$885.92
Haines	..	..	..	..	\$102.42
Homer	..	..	..	\$25.56	\$17.27
Jackson	\$53.09	\$44.28	\$59.67	\$73.34	\$81.62
Juneau	\$821.05	\$726.37	\$1000.00	\$1100.00	\$1800.00
Karluk	..	--	\$10.26	\$57.88	\$47.18
Kenai	..	..	..	..	--
Ketchikan	..	\$49.25	\$65.37	\$88.17	\$274.17
Killisnoo	\$68.16	\$92.85	\$137.26	\$53.31	\$86.10
Klawock	\$25.68	\$30.61	\$13.73	\$23.62	\$27.86
Kodiak	..	\$73.57	..	\$172.54	\$144.75
Koyukuk	..	..	..	..	--
Loring	\$86.13	\$25.29	\$34.52	\$46.29	\$34.60
Mary Island	..	--	\$63.73	\$218.15	\$132.43
Metlakahtla	..	..	..	\$37.27	\$74.53
Mitchell	--	\$4.59	..	..	..
Nome	..	..	..	..	--
Orca	..	..	\$9.60	\$21.73	\$261.96
Ounalaska	..	--	\$119.63	\$123.55	\$126.39
Peavey	..	..	..	..	--
Rampart	..	..	..	..	--
Saint Michael	..	..	..	..	\$406.06
Sand Point	..	\$30.98	\$20.04	\$11.76	\$14.05
Saxman	..	..	..	..	\$33.39
Seldovia	..	..	..	..	\$13.50
Shakan	..	..	\$173.12	\$7.99	\$26.23
Sheep Camp	..	..	..	..	\$83.71
Sitka	\$586.67	\$782.58	\$984.22	\$976.15	\$753.88
Skagway	..	..	..	..	\$1150.00
Star	..	..	..	..	\$15.14
Sumdum	..	..	..	..	\$113.90
Sunrise	..	..	..	..	\$23.27
Tanana	..	..	..	..	--
Tyoonok	..	..	..	--	\$168.63
Udakta	..	..	..	..	--
Unga	..	..	\$13.93	\$80.89	\$62.78
Valdez	..	..	..	..	\$28.61
Yakutat	..	--	\$15.68	..	\$43.22

Notes: "D" means delinquent, i.e., no returns submitted.

".." indicates office not listed in that year.

"--" indicates office listed but no returns or compensation.

Alaskan postmarks prior to 1895 should be almost as scarce as those of the 1880's. Juneau postmarks of 1895 and later ought to be reasonably plentiful, and Skagway and Dyea postmarks of 1899 ought not to be too scarce. Other "less-scarce" Alaskan offices of the 1890's should be Sitka, Douglas and Fort Wrangel throughout the decade; Killisnoo and Tanalaska from 1895 to 1899; Shakan from 1895 only; Kodiak and Mary Island from 1897 to 1899; and Haines, Orca, Saint Michael, Sundum and Tyoonok from 1899. Looking back now at the 19th century covers from the Gimelson collection listed in Table 1, it may be noted that 12 of the 15 different offices represented are the same as those just listed. Udakta, Circle, and Jackson covers from 1899 should be quite scarce, but the collection lacked examples of 1899 covers from Haines, Orca, Saint Michael or Tyoonok.

The purpose of this article has not been an evaluation of the comprehensiveness of the Gimelson collection, but an attempt to explain the relatively small number of 19th century post offices represented in the collection. Two of the three questions should now be answerable. Most of the classic covers come from Sitka, Juneau, and Fort Wrangel along with a few other offices because those were the only offices of size in pre-1900 Alaska. It is not odd that so many classic Alaskan pieces date from the late 1890's for that is when many of the pre-1900 offices opened and other attained larger volumes of business.

The third question is still unanswerable. Covers from 32 of the pre-1900 Alaskan post offices are known to exist, and that list is added to from time to time. A manuscript from Howcan of 1888 was discovered recently, and without a doubt other discoveries will turn-up in years to come. But there are still about 20 offices of pre-1900 Alaska from which no postal markings are known, so good hunting everyone.

Notes: \* on Table 1 - listing does not include ship, express and "U.S. Post Office, Alaska" covers from the collection.

References: H.R. Harmer, "Alaska: Postal History, Literature and Memorabilia," Auction Catalog, Jan. 13-14, 1977.

Official Register, 1881-1889, Washington, D.C.

Helbock, Postmarks of Territorial Alaska, 1976.

## NEW MEXICO POST OFFICES: PART VIII, QUAY COUNTY

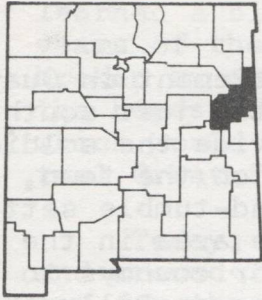
That portion of New Mexico known as Quay County has been part of Spain, Mexico, Texas and the Territory of New Mexico. Border claims between Texas and the Territory of New Mexico were finally settled in 1851 when the eastern plains area, including Quay County, was officially determined to be part of New Mexico. On January 28, 1903, Quay County was organized from portions of southern Union and eastern Guadalupe counties. The name of the county honored Senator Matthew S. Quay from Pennsylvania (1887-1904), a staunch backer of statehood for New Mexico early in the twentieth century. The Quay County boundaries were rearranged in 1907 when the northern border was adjusted abutting Union and San Miguel counties. On March 13, 1923, Quay County was abolished by the State Legislature, but it was re-established the following day.

Quay County consists of 2,883 square miles of rolling hills, mesas, grasslands, canyons, arroyos and pinon-juniper breaks. The Canadian River provides the major drainage for the county, flowing through the north from west to east. Elevation varies from a high at Mesa Redondo, just east of the community of Quay, at about 5000 feet to a low of about 3800 feet in the Canadian River Valley. The county is part of the High Plains, and caprock delineating the northern boundary of the Llano Estacado forms a distinct line in southern Quay County.

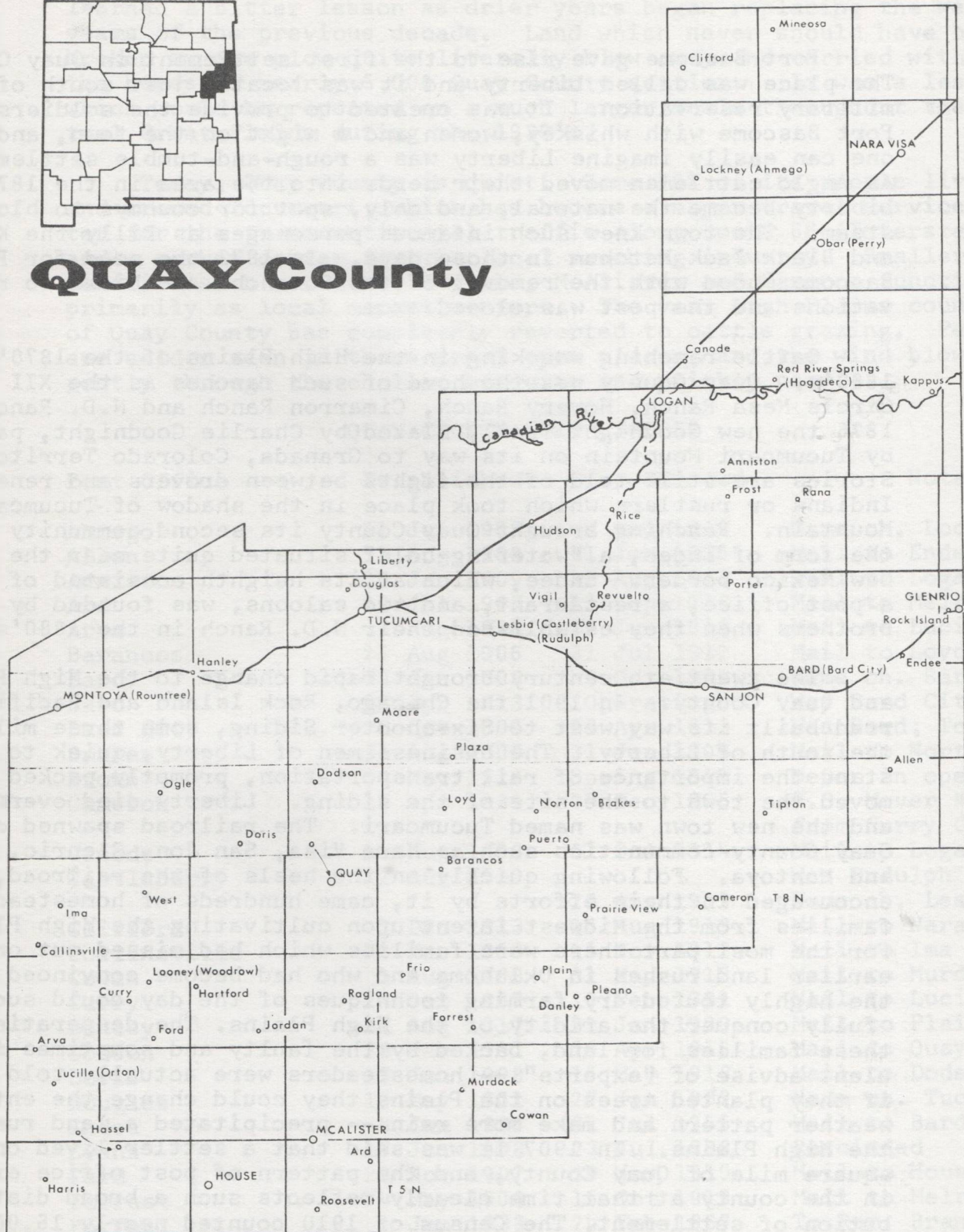
When Spanish livestock ranchers of the Rio Grande Valley first began driving their stock eastward and onto the High Plains in the early 1800's, the area was dominated by the Comanche Indians. By the 1840's a distinctive trade pattern had developed between the Spanish and the Indians, and one of the main routes followed the Canadian River. The traders, initially Spanish villagers of lower class, were known as Comancheros, and the trade consisted of village made items such as bread and cloth for the mules, horses and cattle of the Indians. Trade was very profitable to the Comancheros and gradually Anglos became involved. By the 1860's the Comanchero trade consisted mainly of stolen cattle, which the Indians took from the ranchers and sold to the traders at very low prices. The High Plains became a dangerous place as ranchers attempted to curb the Comanchero trade, but little success was achieved until 1872 when the Comanches, Kiowas, and other plains Indians were driven from the territory and placed on reservations.

Wagon trains began moving through the High Plains between Fort Smith, Arkansas, and Santa Fe as early as 1832. As Texas continued to grow, trade and travel increased westward to the settlements of the Rio Grande, and hostile encounters between Indians and travelers became more numerous. In 1863 the United States Army founded Fort Bascome in what is now eastern San Miguel County just north of Tucumcari. The purpose of the fort was to protect travelers from the menace of Comanche and Kiowa attacks.





# QUAY County



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Fort Bascome gave rise to the first settlement in Quay County. The place was called Liberty and it was located just south of the military reservation. It was created to provide the soldiers of Fort Bascome with whiskey, women and a night on the town, and as one can easily imagine Liberty was a rough-and-tumble settlement. As Anglo cattlemen moved their herds into the area in the 1870's, Liberty became the natural, and only, spot for cowboys to blow off steam. The town knew such infamous personages as Billy the Kid and Black Jack Ketchum in those days. In 1872 the need for Fort Bascome ended with the removal of the Comanche and Kiowa to reservations and the post was closed.

Cattle ranching was king in the High Plains of the 1870's and 1880's. Quay County was the home of such ranches as the XII Ranch, Circle Mesa Ranch, Howery Ranch, Cimarron Ranch and N.D. Ranch. In 1875 the new Goodnight Trail, blazed by Charlie Goodnight, passed by Tucumcari Mountain on its way to Granada, Colorado Territory. Stories are still told of the fights between drovers and renegade Indians or rustlers which took place in the shadow of Tucumcari Mountain. Ranching brought Quay County its second community in the form of Endee, a "watering-hole" situated quite near the Texas-New Mexico border. Endee, which at its height consisted of a store, a post office, a restaurant, and two saloons, was founded by the Day Brothers when they established their N.D. Ranch in the 1880's.

The twentieth century brought rapid change to the High Plains and Quay County. In 1901 the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad built its way west to Six-shooter Siding, some three miles to the south of Liberty. The business men of Liberty, quick to understand the importance of rail transportation, promptly packed up and moved the town to the site of the siding. Liberty died overnight, and the new town was named Tucumcari. The railroad spawned other Quay County communities such as Nara Visa, San Jon, Glenrio, Logan and Montoya. Following quickly on the heels of the railroad, and encouraged in their efforts by it, came hundreds of homesteading families from the Midwest intent upon cultivating the High Plains. For the most part these were families which had missed out on the earlier land rushes in Oklahoma and who had become convinced that the highly touted dry farming techniques of the day could successfully conquer the aridity of the High Plains. The desperation of these families for land, backed by the faulty and sometimes fraudulent advice of "experts" -- homesteaders were actually told that if they planted trees on the Plains they could change the entire weather pattern and make more rain -- precipitated a land rush to the High Plains. In 1907 it was said that a settler lived on every square mile of Quay County, and the pattern of post office extant in the county at that time clearly reflects such a broad distribution of settlement. The Census of 1910 counted nearly 15,000 people living in Quay County; about 50% more than now live there.

The decline of population and abandonment of dry farms came quickly during the decade from 1910 to 1920. Families which had been sold on the modern agricultural techniques of dry farming soon



learned a bitter lesson as drier years began replacing the wetter years of the previous decade. Land which never should have been broken by the plow quite literally blew away and carried with it the hopes of nearly 5,000 Quay County settlers. It was a lesson which would be repeated on a much larger scale throughout the central Great Plains during the 1930's.

Today, Quay County is quiet. Some 70% of its people live in and around Tucumcari, which has become a major travel service center for the transcontinental traffic along Route 66 (Interstate 40) and a market center for the local ranching industry. Smaller communities such as House, Ragland, McAlister and Cameron function primarily as local market centers. The vast High Plains country of Quay County has completely reverted to cattle grazing. People are seldom seen in these great open places, and the wind blows gently through the cholla, mesquite and prickly pear.

#### QUAY COUNTY POST OFFICES

Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
Ahmege	11 Jun 1908	4 Sep 1909	Name ch. Lockney
Allen	11 Aug 1906	31 Jan 1916	Mail to Endee
Anniston	20 Jan 1909	15 Aug 1913	Mail to Logan
Ard	23 Jul 1907	15 Sep 1913	Mail to Melrose
Arva	9 Aug 1916	29 Jun 1918	Mail to Lucille
Barancos	25 Aug 1906	31 Jul 1912	Mail to Loyd
Bard	30 Jan 1908	8 Oct 1909	Name ch. Bard City
Bard	23 Apr 1913	Operating	Was Bard City
Bard City	8 Oct 1909	23 Apr 1913	Was Bard; To Bard
Brakes	31 Aug 1907	31 Jan 1909	Mail to Norton
Brown	9 May 1910	Spring 1911	Never in operation
Cameron	17 Apr 1939	30 Dec 1965	P.O. Mover 4.5 mi. from Curry County
Canode	14 Aug 1908	31 Oct 1914	Mail to Logan
Castleberry	2 Aug 1910		Was Rudolph
		29 Aug 1913	Name ch. Lesbia
Clifford	1 Dec 1913	15 Aug 1919	Mail to Nara Visa
Collinsville	26 Mar 1908	15 Nov 1912	Mail to Ima
Cowan	1 Aug 1908	31 May 1912	Mail to Murdock
Curry	24 Oct 1907	15 Feb 1921	Mail to Lucille
Danley	31 Aug 1917	31 Jan 1920	Mail to Plain
Dodson	28 Mar 1901	29 Apr 1916	Mail to Quay
Doris	15 Jan 1908	15 May 1913	Mail to Dodson
Douglas	10 May 1901	27 Jan 1902	Name ch. Tucumcari
Endee	4 Jun 1886	31 Jul 1955	Mail to Bard
Evans	17 Jun 1908	23 Jul 1908	Rescinded
Ford	29 Nov 1907	30 Nov 1910	Mail to House
Forrest	4 May 1908	15 Oct 1919	Mail to Melrose
Forrest	1 Jan 1933	24 Feb 1967	To Rur. Branch
Forrest Rural Br.	24 Feb 1967	15 Nov 1969	
Frio	7 Aug 1918	15 Mar 1922	Mail to Jordan
Frost	5 Mar 1909	31 Aug 1910	Mail to Porter
Glenrio	31 Aug 1915	Operating	Was Rock Island



# QUAY COUNTY POST OFFICES

Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
Hanley	17 May 1907	30 Apr 1918	Mail to Tucumcari
Harris	4 May 1908	31 Oct 1918	Mail to Lucille
Hartford	9 May 1907	31 Aug 1910	Mail to Looney
Hassell	23 Jul 1907	30 Nov 1948	
Hogadero	6 Oct 1884	28 Oct 1885	Mail to Ft. Bascom
House	23 Nov 1906	Operating	
Hudson	6 Jun 1908	30 Jun 1926	Mail to Logan
Ima	26 Feb 1908	30 Apr 1955	Mail to Cuervo
Jordan	2 Aug 1907	31 Jul 1955	Mail to McAlister
Kappus	11 Feb 1910	15 Apr 1913	Mail to Nara Visa
Kirk	4 May 1908	15 Feb 1921	Mail to Jordan
Lesbia	30 Aug 1913	15 Feb 1918	Mail to Tucumcari
Liberty	29 Nov 1880	30 Apr 1902	Mail to Tucumcari
Lockney	4 Sep 1909	28 Feb 1935	Mail to Nara Visa
Logan	31 Aug 1901	Operating	
Looney	7 Jan 1908	18 Jun 1913	Name ch. Woodrow
Loyd	25 Aug 1906	30 Apr 1914	Mail to Norton
Lucille	5 Sep 1911	15 Nov 1934	Mail to Hassell
McAlister	2 Aug 1907	Operating	
Mineosa	21 Mar 1908	30 Nov 1913	Mail to Nara Visa
Montoya	4 Nov 1902	Operating	Was Rountree
Moore	6 Nov 1903	15 Aug 1912	Mail to Tucumcari
Murdock	23 Sep 1907	15 Jun 1917	Mail to Forrest
Nara Visa	2 Feb 1902	Operating	
Norton	9 May 1907	30 Apr 1942	Mail to Tucumcari
Obar	9 Sep 1908	31 Jan 1953	Mail to Nara Visa
Ogle	28 Dec 1906	31 Mar 1913	Mail to Montoya
Orton	4 Jan 1908	5 Sep 1911	Name ch. Lucille
Perry	29 Jul 1907	9 Sep 1908	Name ch. Obar
Plain	25 Jun 1907	1 Jan 1933	Name ch. Forrest
Plaza	1 Aug 1908	30 Jun 1911	Mail to Tucumcari
Pleano	10 May 1907	15 Jan 1914	Mail to Plain
Porter	4 May 1908	31 Dec 1915	Mail to Revuelto
Prairie View	4 May 1908	27 Feb 1915	Mail to Puerto
Puerto	16 Nov 1901	15 Jun 1918	Mail to Plain
Quay	23 Feb 1904	Operating	
Ragland	6 Jun 1908	31 Oct 1917	Mail to Tucumcari
Rana	16 Apr 1908	15 Jan 1925	Mail to Logan
Red River Springs	6 May 1878	6 Oct 1884	Name ch. Hogadero
Revuelto	18 Dec 1897	30 Sep 1916	Mail to Lesbia
Rice	4 Jun 1907	6 Jun 1908	Name ch. Hudson
Rock Island	1 Mar 1909	31 Aug 1915	Name ch. Glenrio
Roosevelt	30 Oct 1906	31 Jan 1919	Mail to McAlister
Rountree	8 Oct 1901	4 Nov 1902	Name ch. Montoya
Rudolph	8 Jun 1908	2 Aug 1910	Name ch. Castleberry
San Jon	12 May 1906	Operating	
Tipton	13 Mar 1909	15 Jul 1913	Mail to San Jon
Tucumcari	27 Jan 1902	Operating	Was Douglas
Vigil	21 Apr 1882	17 Jul 1882	Mail to Ft. Bascom
West	14 Aug 1908	30 Sep 1925	Mail to Montoya
Woodrow	18 Jun 1913	15 Apr 1916	Mail to Tucumcari

