

LA POSTA



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An Olympic Peninsula Saga

By

Jacque Houser

Postal history material can be found in the darndest places. Like the "Letters to the Editor" sections of the early newspapers.

A rather interesting review of the operation of the posts in Washington Territory in 1862 is afforded by a series of letters which followed an editorial comment appearing in the February 1, 1862 issue of "The North'West", published at Port Townsend, W.T. The insight provided on human nature indicates that people have not changed much over the past 140 years.

The editorial which precipitated this flurry of letters follows:

Newspaper Thieves

"Very many complaints have been made to us of the non-receipt of the North-West since our return to its control. We do up and send from the office weekly a package directed to Utsalady, containing several papers for subscribers at that place. This package has been sent regularly from the first establishment of the paper in July, 1860, with the exception of the few weeks of our absence, when Mr. Smith evinced his good will in striving to destroy our business by withholding the paper from our patrons. We are told upon good authority that the package never reaches its destination, but is broken open on the route, and sometimes one, sometimes another, and not unfrequently all the papers intended for subscribers at that place are stolen, so that for a month at a time, not a single "North-West" makes its appearance on Camano Island. This is not in obedience to the dictates of common honesty--it is the lowest and most abject degree of theft. If our mail facilities to that point cannot protect the citizens by a safe transmission of the property for which they have paid, it is high time the reasons were known. We do not know how many post-offices these packages must pass through, or who are the responsible post-masters on the route. We do know the bundle to be frequently intact when it leaves the beach, for we have often put it on board the ferry-boat, or seen our Postmaster put it in the mail bag. The evil therefore lies somewhere on Whidby Island, and measures will be adopted by which the criminal parties may be detected and brought to justice. If they are well-disposed toward the paper, and steal it to read because they cannot afford to pay for it, we will send it to them gratis upon the fact with their name being known. The taking of papers from a mail in transit, not only wrongs the subscriber, but it injures the publisher's business by affording reason to doubt his integrity, and prevents an increased circulation, because people will not

subscribe for a paper which its patrons do not receive. If this paper is stolen by its enemies through malice, we caution them against a persistence in their crime. We cannot afford to be thus robbed, and for their express benefit publish the law to which they are liable." The editor then quotes from applicable Postal Laws and Regulations.

The following week, in the February 8th issue, the editor of "The North-West" presented a short paragraph suggesting the cause of the mail delivery delays on Whidby Island. His comments follow:

"No Postmaster on Whidby Island.--Our article of last week relative to stealing newspapers has elicited the fact that there is no responsible person on Whidby Island empowered to open or transmit any mail matter. This is not as it should be. A large and populous county, with a representative in the Legislature, certainly should have some permanent mail facilities, and we hope the matter will not be suffered to rest until their mails are secure."

In his February 22nd issue, the editor continued his coverage of the mail delivery situation by announcing that a Postmaster had been appointed for Coveland, Whidby Island. The announcement states:

"Coveland Post-Office.--We are informed by R.B. Holbrook that Samuel Libby, Esq., has been appointed and his bond approved at Washington as Post-Master at Coveland, Whidby Island. We are glad of this, and feel now that our subscribers may receive their papers regularly. At the request of several from the neighborhood of Ebey's Landing, we shall hereafter send the papers direct to the Post-Office."

Then things began to happen. The March 8th edition carries two letters from the Postmaster at Oak Harbor, W.T. dated February 10th and February 17th addressed to Damon, the editor of "The North'West."

Oak Harbor Island Co., W.T.
Feb. 10th, 1862

Friend Damon, Sir:

I saw an article in the North'West, of the 1st instant, headed "Newspaper Thieves." I am glad that you have taken up the subject, and I hope and pray to Almighty God that you will follow it up until this wholesale business of stealing mail matter shall be brought to a close and the guilty parties to justice. For it is not only the Utsalady bundle of The North-West, but all the other packages, and not only The North-West, but all other newspapers and a great deal of other mail matter fails to reach this or the Coveland office. Newspapers subscribed for in this vicinity, as a general thing, not more than one-half, and in some instances not more than one-tenth reach this office; which is a great swindle, not only on the subscribers, but on the publishers also. If

the paper is paid for in advance, it is sure to be hard on the subscriber, if not paid for, then it is almost as sure to be hard on the publisher, for it is very hard to collect the bills; and not only that, but many more papers would be taken and paid for if they came regularly, for I often hear people say they would take newspapers and pay for them if they could get them; but as the mail facilities of Island County are, and ever have been, they will not pay their money for newspapers without any prospect of receiving them.

You say you do not know how many post offices these packages must pass through, or who are the responsible postmasters on the route. I will give you all the information on that point I have in my possession: If you deposit the package in the post-office at Port Townsend, it is in the course of time forwarded in an open bag, and frequently a flour or buckwheat sack, to Ebey's Landing, where it is emptied in a grog-shop at the Ferry House. There is no postmaster, assistant postmaster or clerk, and, as far as I am able to learn, they pitch in and help themselves, and newspapers are used very freely for covering bread and pies at that place. I have been informed that packages of The North-West marked "Oak Harbor" have been seen at the Ferry House at quite an advanced age.

The Utsalady mail is carried to that place from Ebey's Landing by private carriers employed by Grennan and Cranney; it does not pass through any post-office on Whidby Island unless you call the Ferry House one. (A post office) The whole blame rests on the Postmaster at Port Townsend--so you can give him h-ll as much as you like. If he would send the mail to Coveland locked, the Oak Harbor and Utsalady mail would come from Port Townsend to this office in locked bags; here the Utsalady mail would be taken out of the mail bag and delivered to Grennan and Cranney's private carrier for that place. But, says the Major, how are the people in the vicinity of Ebey's Landing to get their mail, and how is Grennan and Cranney's carrier to take the mail at Coveland when he now takes it at Coupeville? You send it locked, Major, and I will fix that. Mr. Libby will open the mail bag at Coveland and send back by the carrier, out of the bag, the mail for distribution at Ebey's Landing, and as to G.&C.'s carrier, he says he would rather take the Utsalady mail at Coveland than at Coupeville. I would employ him to convey the Oak Harbor mail, and I will furnish a lock-bag for that purpose. I wrote to the Major on the 24th of September last, in relation to this matter, and reply I received the following:

Port Townsend, Oct. 12, '61

Sir:--Yours of 24 is just to hand, in relation to your mail. The mails come to this office very regularly now. I am satisfied that all your mail goes to your office.

The office at Ebey's Landing having no key, I am compelled to send the mail bag open. I have no spare bags, but if you can get two lock-bags, I will keep them and send your mail regularly, and locked, to your office. But the scarcity of

bags is the trouble now.

Respectfully yours,

J.J.H. Van Bokkelen,

Postmaster.

"He made the proposition to Mr. Libby, he sent one mail bag and he did keep it, and continued to send the mail in the old buckwheat sack as usual.

I have laid before you but very few of our troubles in this matter--but I must bring this scrawl to a close.

Yours, Respectfully,

C. Miller, Postmaster

"Editor North West--

Sir: I saw in the North-West of the 8th instant, an article headed 'No Postmaster on Whidby Island.' It read as follows: 'Our article last week relative to stealing newspapers has elicited the fact that there is not responsible person on Whidby Island empowered to open or transmit any mail matter. This is not as it should be. A large and populous county, with a representative in the Legislature, certainly should have some permanent mail facilities, and we hope the matter will not be suffered to rest until their mails are secure.'

The first sentence of the above is false, and your informant is either like many others who attempt to enlighten the public on matters on which they are totally ignorant themselves, or he is guilty of a base and malicious falsehood, he can take either horn of the dilemma he chooses. But for the information of your readers, I will briefly state the facts as they are:

In Sept., 1859, a memorial was forwarded to the Postmaster General praying for the establishment of a Post-office at Oak Harbor, and C.C. Phillips was recommended for Postmaster. Near the close of the late Administration in Feb., 1861, the office was established, and as Mr. Phillips had previous to that time received the appointment of Collector for Puget Sound District, I was appointed postmaster for Oak Harbor office; and I was empowered to act as soon as my bond and oath of office was executed and approved by the postmaster at Olympia, without waiting for a commission. I qualified and entered upon the duties of the office in May, 1861. It is true that I have been unable to contract for carrying mail on the terms prescribed by the Department--but I am fully satisfied that no mail matter has been lost or stolen between Coveland and Oak Harbor. Mr. C.C. Phillips, the late Collector at Port Townsend, is assistant postmaster and does the business of the office. We generally carry the mail between

this and the Coveland office.

At Coveland, there has been no postmaster for several years, but Mr. Libby has a small key and he has attended to the office to accomodate the people. In my last, I wrote to the Postmaster General in relation to this matter, and recommended the appointment of Mr. Libby, he being the only man that I knew who would serve in that capacity. His appointment reached him in June or July. He immediately executed his bond and oath of office and forwarded them to the Department--whether he has received his commission or not I am unable to say--but I received mine some five months ago. The Post-office Department is under obligation to carry the mail, locked, to the County Seat of each county in this Territory, and somebody receives pay for carrying it regularly to Coveland, the County Seat of Island county, I have no doubt; and why is it not done? Because contractors and postmasters do not do their duty.

The mail service on the Sound has been but very little benefit to the people of this portion of Island County. Those who send their letters by private conveyance to Port Townsend on Monday and have them mailed there, they will go up or down the Sound in a few hours--but if they are mailed at this or Coveland office, as many days and perhaps weeks will elapse before they reach Port Townsend. If the postmaster at that place will send our mails to Coveland in a locked mail bag, and the carrier will carry it through with dispatch and not leave it at the Ferry to be kicked about and opened at that, I think there would not be very much cause for complaint. Will you please give the above, or its equivalent, a place in the North-West and oblige me."

C. Miller, Postmaster.

Oak Harbor, Island Co., W.T.,

Feb. 17

To the second letter, the editor adds the following note:

"Mr. Libby is now a well-qualified and acting Postmaster."

The letters from Mr. Miller, Postmaster of Oak Harbor, were too much for the Postmaster of Port Townsend to accept. He dipped his quill in venom and dashed boldly into the fray. His first letter, dated March 17th, appears in the March 22, 1862 issue of the North-West:

"To: C. Miller, self-constituted Postal Agent for Whidby Island and adjacent Territory--

Sir:--Your letter in the North-West of 8th inst., relative to the manner in which I conduct my office in making up the mails for Whidby Island, has been read with attention.

It is quite elaborate, and business must be quite dull in your neighborhood when you can waste time in that manner, as it is useless. When I want advice or instructions, I will call upon a higher authority than you.

For your information, I would state that the Department has established a Post-Office at Ebey's Landing as well as at your place; and the citizens living adjacent to Ebey's Landing and at Coupeville and at Utsalady have for the last two years continually requested me to put up the mails for these various places separate from Coveland and Oak Harbor mails, and place them in the hands of Capt. Thos. Coupe, mail carrier, to be forwarded to their destination, as it gave them their mails at an earlier time than if sent to Coveland or your office; which request I have invariably complied with, as I have the right to forward all letters and papers in accordance with their directions, and Government recognizes those places as Post-Offices.

I think you can save yourself the trouble of interfering with the Utsalady mail, as Messrs. Grennan & Cranney are in the habit of selecting proper persons to attend to their mail matter, and don't desire this gratuitous service, so kindly tendered by you in your letter. If things don't suit you as they are at present, I would advise you to take a trip to Washington, and Uncle Abe will regulate them for you. Now, Post-Master Miller, don't the whole of this trouble arise from a disappointed and sour stomach? When you got the appointment of Post-Master, you thought that you had a lucrative appointment; but, like myself, you have found it an office without pay; plenty of labor, and curses of each and every one who does not receive a letter. Now attend to your business and keep out of the newspaper; make yourself more particularly acquainted with Postal Laws, keep cool, and don't give me h-ll as you say in your letter. Should you get in heat, I will send you some ice to cool you and keep it from striking in, as it is dangerous."

Yours,

J.J.H. Van Bokkelen, P.M.

Port Townsend, March 17, 1862

The contract mail carrier, Capt. Thos. Coupe, also found it necessary to defend his honor so we find also in the March 22nd issue a letter from him dated March 19, 1862.

"In your issue of the 8th inst., I notice an article over the signature of C. Miller, Post Master, Oak Harbor, Whidby Island, relative to the manner in which the mails are carried on the Island.

As the carrier of the mails between Port Townsend and Coveland, I will make the following statement in reply to his letter:

First--as to the Utsalady mail. Since seeing Mr. Miller's letter, I have called upon Messrs. Grennan & Cranney, and others living at Utsalady, to find whether they had any complaint or wished to have their mail forwarded in any different manner than the present route via Ebey's Landing and Coupeville to Utsalady. They replied that since I had carried the mail they had never been better accommodated, and that by Coupeville was the most convenient route for them to receive their mail, and P.M. Miller had better tend to his own affairs.

Second--In relation to the mail being carried in a flour sack, I deny that it has ever been done since I have been carrying the mail. Some few times, when there was a heavy paper mail, more than the lock bag would contain, the mail was forwarded in the regular canvas sack of the Post Office Department.

Third--The mail has never been, as he charges, opened in the middle of the grog shop floor at Ebey's Landing, as it is always taken behind the counter and assorted.

The Coveland and Oak Harbor mail has been for several months sent in a separate locked bag. Mr. Miller says it lays often several days and even weeks at the Ferry House. This I positively deny, as it is always carried the same day to Coveland and back to Ebey's Landing, and never, but in one instance, has it been neglected to be sent the next day to Port Townsend by the ferry boat, when said ferry boat could cross.

I would advise Mr. Miller, the next time he is anxious of appearing in public, to come a little nearer to the truth in his statements."

Yours Respectfully,

Thos. Coupe

Coupeville, March 19, 1862

We also find in the March 22nd issue, another viscious stab delivered by the Port Townsend Postmaster. This, incidently, is one of the earliest references to the failure of Mr. Parkinson to carry out the terms of his mail contract and his departure for British Columbia.

"In re. Whidby Island Mail/Van Bokkelen vs. Miller:

I have just learned that Mr. Parkinson, the Mail Contractor in route 12772, has left for British Columbia, throwing up his contract. Will Special Agent Miller inform me what is to be done with the mail till the Department relets the same, as the mail for his office will have to lay at this office till Government appoints some person to carry the mail on route 12772."

Would you not rather have it in a buckwheat sack when carried by parties receiving no pay than no mail at all?"

-- V.B.

The editor of The North-West finally decided that the "war" had gone on long enough and in the April 19th edition "pulled the plug." His comments follow:

"Whidby Island Mail Question--We are in receipt of two more long letters from Post Master Miller upon the above subject, responding to the letters of Messers. Van Bokkelen and Coupe, which we would publish did space permit. We have allowed several columns of our journal to be occupied in discussing its merits, and must therefore decline additional communications upon the subject, unless new matter is introduced, or they are paid for as advertisements. Official criminations and retorts frequently result in personal abuse, and we never allow anything of a vindictively personal nature to be printed on our press. The ventillation it has thus far undergone will, we believe, promote remedial measures as relates to mail facilities, and we therefore hope the controversy will cease before we may feel compelled to reject some violent rejoinder. Our columns are ever open to remedy public evils, but not to gratify private malice."

These letters, in spite of the obvious hyperbole present, form an interesting, and valuable, commentary on the conditions under which the Postal Service operated in Washington Territory in the third quarter of the 19th Century. It is significant to note that these "on-the-spot" reports do not substantiate the history of the Coveland Post Office as compiled by Guy Reed Ramsey¹ or Dr. Robert Landis.² Neither of these writers mention the period of no-service during early 1862 nor the appointment of Samuel Libby as Post Master in 1862. These letters also indicate that the Coupeville and Coveland offices operated simultaneously as early as 1862. We also note that Capt. Thos. Coupe was the contract mail carrier for Whidby Island. Perhaps further research will clarify some of these apparent contradictions.

¹ Ramsey, Guy Reed - Postmarked Washington. Jefferson, Clallam, and Mason Counties
The Depot, Burtonsville, MD 1978

² Landis, Dr. Robert - Post Offices of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Patrick Press, Portland,
OR 1969

THE POST OFFICES OF UTAH

By Daniel Y. Meschter

Part VII: Utah County

Utah County is second only to Salt Lake County in reflecting the impact of Mormon history, culture and economy on Utah. Geographically, Utah County encompasses the valley of Utah Lake. It is bounded on the east by the majestic Wasatch Mountains, and by the Oquirrh and Tintics on the west. The land east and south of the lake is well-watered and supports the dominantly agricultural economy of the county. West of the lake is the broad, but arid and inhospitable, Cedar Valley.

Mormon settlers moved south from Salt Lake City in early 1849, and established Fort Utah near the mouth of the Provo River in that year. This settlement was moved a few miles inland the next year and renamed Utah Lake. The first post office in the county was established here on March 26, 1851, on a mail route from Salt Lake City to other new settlements in the Sanpete and Sevier valleys further south. The name of the office was changed to Provo City two years later, and finally shortened in Provo.

Provo quickly became an active, thriving town that attracted other settlements to the east side of the lake along the mail route. Mail service was extended later in 1851 to American Fork, Payson and Springville. These communities were followed in short order by post offices at Lehi, Palmyra, Pleasant Grove, Summit and Taylorsville.

In spite of the Mormon's enlightened Indian policy, ill-feelings on the part of the Indians began to be directed toward the settlements in the Utah Valley and further south as soon as the Indians realized they were to be permanent. A series of raids and skirmishes culminated in the Walker War of 1853. The community of Springville was raided and a civilian sentry killed at Payson. A small settlement at Summit City actually had to be abandoned for a time. Summit post office was opened there when it was reoccupied in the Fall. The office later became known as Santaquin.

Cattle raising opportunities in the Cedar Valley attracted a small colony of settlers for whom an early post office was established in 1855. Postal service in the valley was extended to Camp Floyd in 1858, when the U. S. Army occupied it after the Mormon War of 1857. The Army abandoned Camp Floyd at the outset of the Civil War, and Fairview grew-up on its ruins a few years later.

The great Utah mining booms of the early 1870's spilled over the surrounding mountains into Utah County. In the northwest corner of the county, Deer Creek post office was at an early discovery site in the Silver Lake District. Some activity continued at the other mines in the American Fork District for many years, although none lived up to the expectations engendered by their proximity to the Cottonwood District, just over the divide in Salt Lake County. Carbonate post office served a brief revival around 1910, and Tyng probably served a more pro-

ductive effort during World War I.

The Tintic District in the southwest part of the county straddles the mountains between Utah and Juab counties. While the early focus was on the Juab side, one of the earliest smelters was at Homansville, and Dividend served the Tintic Standard, the greatest of the mines of the Tintic. Manning was at another mining development in the mountains further to the north.

The Utah Southern Railroad came to Utah County from Salt Lake City in the 1870's; but since its purpose was to serve the existing farming towns, no new post offices were needed along its route through the county.

The Rio Grande Railroad was a different matter. Its construction up Soldier Creek in 1881 was the beginning of a new outlet from Salt Lake City through eastern Utah and Colorado to eastern markets. The post office at Thistle was at the junction of a spur line into the Sanpete Valley by way of Clinton. Tucker and Colton also were established at stations along the route over the Wasatch Mountains. They were followed in later years by post offices at Castilla, Mill Fork and Soldier Summit.

Heavy industry caught up with Utah County at the beginning of World War II with the construction of the Geneva Steel works north of Provo. This mill was designed to smelt the long neglected iron ores in the southwest part of the state, and was part of our nation's effort to decentralize the steel industry. Orem, the most recently established post office in the county, serves a satellite community.

Provo retains its importance as a center of Mormon culture as the home of Brigham Young University. From a sleepy, church-oriented college before World War II, University President Wilkinson and his staff developed it after the war into one of America's great seats of higher education. Postwar growth has emphasized languages and communication sciences without surrendering the basic religious identity of the institution.

A total of 56 post offices are listed for Utah County including 11 name changes, and 13 offices that are still operating. The maximum number in operation at any one time was 25 from 1899 to 1901. Of the post offices not adequately located to show on the map, Perry probably was a small farming community in the vicinity of Payson. Quinton may have been a variant spelling of Clinton. No data has been found on the location of Nelson, and the locations assigned to Carbonate and Tyng is subject to revision. Although only one site is shown for Goshen, it is known that the townsite was moved a few miles in 1869.

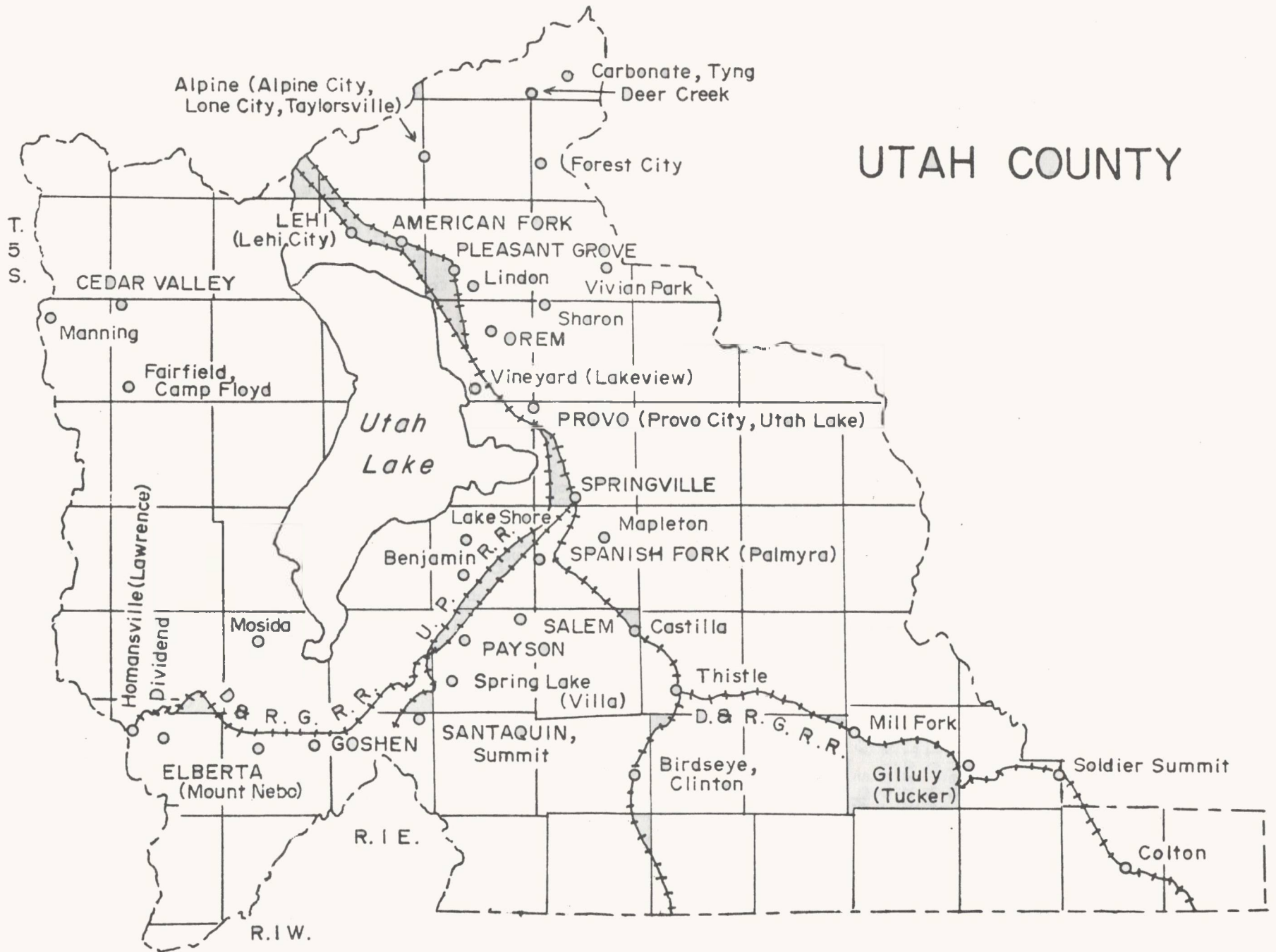
Soldier Summit is shown in the appointment records in adjacent Wasatch County from time to time. This probably was due to actual movement of the physical location of the post office back and forth across the county line. The office has been assigned to Utah County in this study due to its closer association with Utah County. A similar problem arises with respect to Homansville [Lawrence] on the Utah-Juab County line. It has been assigned to Utah County here on the basis of not entirely unequivocal map sources that show it on the east side of the top of the pass, and thus in Utah County. It probably was on, or close to, the later site of Robinson [Alma], which is assigned to Juab County.

UTAH POST OFFICES

Utah County

Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
ALPINE	30 Jul 1895		Was ALPINE CITY
ALPINE CITY	1 Aug 1857	31 Oct 1904	M. to AMERICAN FORK
AMERICAN FORK	19 Dec 1851	30 Jul 1895	Was LONE CITY
BENJAMIN	1 Aug 1892	Operating	N. ch. to ALPINE
BIRDSEYE	4 Jun 1930	29 Nov 1902	M. to SPANISH FORK
CAMP FLOYD	20 Sep 1858	31 May 1958	
CARBONATE	6 Mar 1909	27 Aug 1861	
CASTILLA	4 May 1904	12 Jul 1910	M. to AMERICAN FORK
CEDAR VALLEY	24 Jul 1855	31 Dec 1904	M. to SPANISH FORK
CLINTON	14 Feb 1881	Operating	
COLTON	7 Jul 1898	18 Jan 1890	M. to THISTLE
DEER CREEK	5 Dec 1882	14 May 1904	M. to THISTLE
DIVIDEND	19 Sep 1873	Unknown	after 27 Sep 1929
ELBERTA	14 Aug 1918	8 Dec 1875	
FAIRFIELD	18 Jan 1922	31 Aug 1920	M. to EUREKA
FOREST CITY	14 Feb 1908	30 Jun 1951	M. to EUREKA
GILLULY	29 Jan 1864	Operating	Was MOUNT NEBO
GOSHEN	7 Aug 1871	30 Sep 1919	M. to CEDAR VALLEY
HOMANSVILLE	11 Oct 1872	29 Aug 1872	
LAKE SHORE	3 Jan 1919	14 Aug 1876	
LAKEVIEW	8 Aug 1864	31 Jul 1920	Was TUCKER
LAWRENCE	12 Jul 1871	14 Feb 1867	M. to SOLDIER SUMMIT
LEHI	9 Jan 1873	Operating	
LEHI CITY	14 Oct 1873	3 Oct 1873	Was LAWRENCE
LINDON	15 Oct 1887	30 Aug 1887	M. to EUREKA
LONE CITY	7 Jun 1890	29 Nov 1902	M. to SPANISH FORK
MANNING	20 Dec 1872	31 Dec 1897	N. ch. to VINEYARD
MAPLETON	19 Apr 1904	9 Jan 1873	N. ch. to HOMANSVILLE
MILL FORK	15 Jan 1853	Operating	Was LEHI CITY
MOSIDA	28 Mar 1898	19 Apr 1904	N. ch. to LEHI
MOUNT NEBO	23 Dec 1854	29 Nov 1902	M. to PLEASANT GROVE
NELSON	2 Apr 1895	Was TAYLORSVILLE	
OREM	5 May 1890	N. ch. to ALPINE CITY	
PALMYRA	11 Jul 1910	M. to MERCUR	
PAYSON	29 Aug 1913	M. to SPRINGVILLE	
	7 May 1899	M. to TUCKER	
	24 Aug 1889	M. to ELBERTA	
	13 Nov 1943	N. ch. to ELBERTA	No papers
	28 Sep 1852	Operating	
	19 Dec 1851	27 Dec 1856	N. ch. to SPANISH FORK

UTAH COUNTY



UTAH POST OFFICES

Utah County

Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
PERRY	2 Oct 1884	8 Dec 1885	
PLEASANT GROVE	10 Dec 1852	Operating	
PROVO	14 Dec 1904	Operating	Was PROVO CITY
PROVO CITY	14 Jul 1853		Was UTAH LAKE
		14 Dec 1904	N. ch. to PROVO
QUINTON	19 Apr 1911	15 Jan 1912	M. to THISTLE
SALEM	1 Mar 1872	29 Aug 1876	
	2 Aug 1877	6 Sep 1877	
	20 Sep 1880	Operating	
SANTAQUIN	5 Jun 1856	Operating	
SHARON	28 Jan 1898	6 Dec 1902	M. to PROVO CITY
SOLDIER SUMMIT	28 Mar 1903	1 Jul 1903	Rescinded
	30 Apr 1907	14 Oct 1916	M. to COLTON
	26 Jul 1918	31 Aug 1964	M. to PROVO
SPANISH FORK	27 Dec 1856	Operating	Was PALMYRA
SPRING LAKE	6 Mar 1872	11 Aug 1876	
	16 Feb 1877	10 Apr 1882	M. to SANTAQUIN
SPRING LAKE VILLA	24 Jan 1863	20 Jun 1866	
SPRINGVILLE	19 Dec 1851	Operating	
SUMMIT	23 Nov 1853	4 Nov 1854	
TAYLORSVILLE	15 Jun 1854	23 Dec 1854	N. ch. to LONE CITY
THISTLE	11 Feb 1881	20 Aug 1886	M. to SPRINGVILLE
	26 Mar 1887	18 Apr 1969	
TUCKER	28 Nov 1881	20 Nov 1890	M. to COLTON
	5 Feb 1891	3 Jan 1919	N. ch. to GILLULY
TYNG	5 Oct 1916	30 Apr 1919	M. to AMERICAN FORK
UTAH LAKE	26 Mar 1851	14 Jul 1853	N. ch. to PROVO CITY
VINEYARD	31 Dec 1897		Was LAKEVIEW
		6 Dec 1902	M. to PROVO CITY
VIVIAN PARK	12 Apr 1916	31 Mar 1925	M. to PROVO

NEW MEXICO POST OFFICES
Part X: CURRY COUNTY

By Richard W. Helbock with Ruth Dolezal

In response to the growth of population along the eastern side of New Mexico, the Territorial legislature created several new counties during the last decade of the 19th century and the first one of the present century. Curry County was the last of these eastern counties formed, its organization coming in 1909, when parts of Quay and Roosevelt counties were taken to make it up. It was named for George Curry, who at the time was Governor of the Territory. In 1910, after a long-winded contest with Melrose, Texico, Claud, Grady and Havener, the town of Clovis was made the county seat. The late influx of settlers to this fairly flat area of the Territory was caused by the Homesteading Act and the expansion of rail service.

Although the occupation of Curry County by white men did not begin until nearly the end of the 19th century, the area seems to have been familiar to other men in earlier days. Clovis man, dating back some 12,000 years, and Folsom man, as old as 9,000 years, were both present in what is now Curry County, leaving traces from the days of the earliest known human habitation in the new world. In later times Comanches most likely came through the country enroute to central New Mexico during the Spanish and Territorial periods.

The earliest white settlers in Curry County were ranchers who raised their stock on the great unfenced expanse of the Llano Estacado. In about 1882 the Horn Ranch was established some 10 miles south of modern Melrose. Timbers used in the construction of the ranch building came from the old officers' quarters at Fort Sumner. In 1883 the Horseshoe Ranch began operations with 8,000 head of cattle driven over from Sweetwater, Texas. The 3T Ranch, the Brown Ranch and the Chenault Ranch were other early cattle concerns in the county area. The human population during this ranching period was nearly non-existent, since the only inhabitants were those cowboys needed to supervise the herds. The 3T Ranch, whose stone headquarters dates from about 1890, had one of the first windmills, a significant marker on the open land, and the source of water for the few surrounding settlers who came in to haul it away in wagons. Another early feature of human occupation appeared about 1885, when the Capital Reservation Land Company of Chicago fenced off its huge Texas holdings with barbed wire. Part of this fence went along the New Mexico-Texas line, dividing the edge of what was later to be Curry County from the plains to the east.

For a while the area was the easygoing, isolated domain of a few large ranches, until gradually increasing numbers of "nesters" and claim holders caused the land to be broken into holdings the size of sections (one square mile). Much of the ground, however, proved to be untillable so that after many of the smaller claims were patented, the land was sold back to the ranchers who had grazed it originally. Cultivation did prove possible in the northeast part of the county and early farming began there. Some of the first homesteaders picked cotton under the eastern caprock in early autumn, after which they returned to their dugouts or shacks to spend the

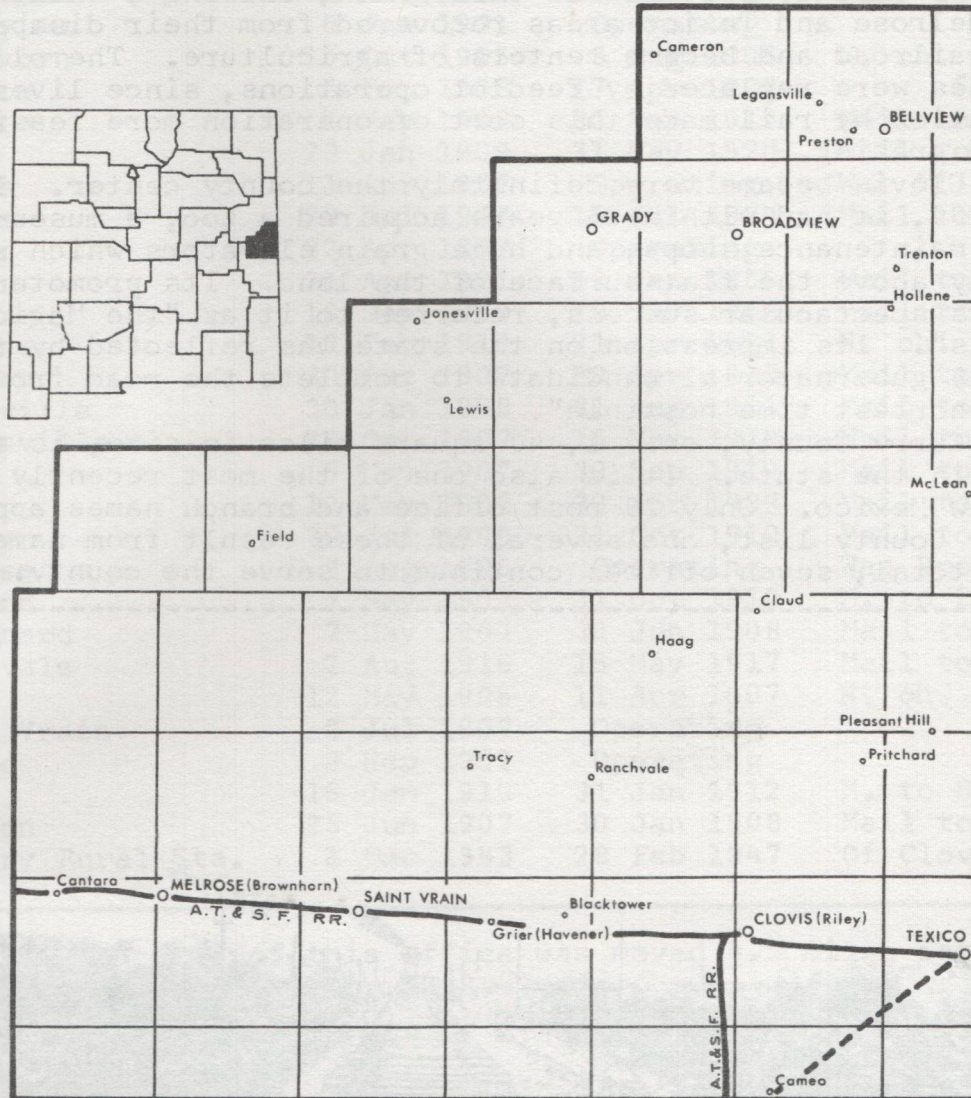
winter harvesting firewood and posts from the brakes. Some of these homesteaders met with unpleasant surprises when they arrived back at their temporary quarters, for the practice of shack-stealing enjoyed notoriety during this time. A gang of men made their living by loading on wagons the light frame shacks of absent homesteaders and carting them off to sell to newcomers. This unfortunate enterprise only added to the other hardships of the Curry County pioneers, who, in addition to having to locate one of the few windmills on the horizon in order to get water, had to wait for supplies to be freighted in from Las Vegas by ox or mule team.

The earliest community in the county seems to have been Melrose, originally called Brownhorn after the names of two nearby ranchers. It was established before the turn of the century as a ranching center. Melrose post office was established in 1903. Bellview, first called Preston and later Legansville, was settled by ranchers in 1905, making it another of the earliest villages. Wagons and horses had brought in these first cattlemen and settlers, but the large numbers of settlers who really developed the area owed their presence to the railroad, which not only made the county a reality, but which forms the central historical theme.

In 1890, the Pecos Valley and Northeastern Railroad, backed by J. M. Hagerman, laid its tracks from southeastern New Mexico to Amarillo, Texas. A siding was constructed on the site of what was later to become Texico. Soon afterwards, the line was acquired by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway, which was in the process of more ambitious rail expansion. Carloads of emigrating homesteaders rode the tracks into eastern New Mexico, and as they settled they began to count on the railroad to make them prosperous. Aside from the noisy dispute over the location of the county seat, the other popular controversy of early Curry County history was where the division point of the Santa Fe Railroad was going to be built. When the Belen cut-off was constructed, railroad officials first proposed Melrose as the site of the division shops, and began planning a roundhouse and "Y". This led to a surge of expansion in Melrose as expectation of prominence rose. Just previously, Texico had entertained the same hope as rumors of the new cut-off spread, leading residents there to assume that Texico might be favored with the division point. The town did benefit temporarily from railroad construction and was jammed with settlers, land speculators and railroad workers, but slumped when the final decision about the maintenance shops was made. The village of Grady, founded in 1906, had also counted on having a railroad center, so much so that its residents had subscribed land and money to finance it.

A small depot named Riley Switch, consisting of a station and a post office housed in two converted box cars, seemed the most favorable division point, and to the consternation of residents elsewhere, especially those in Melrose, the final decision was made. The railroad was even threatened with an injunction to prevent it from relocating its shops, but track relocation was carried out quickly one weekend. Riley Switch, given new prominence, was renamed Clovis in 1907, and its future was virtually assured. In response to the regular passenger service through town, the Gran Quivira, a Fred Harvey house, was opened. It still stands as an important historic reminder of those days when the railroad was king.

CURRY COUNTY



After the hurly-burly of speculation concerning the railroad died down, and after the pressure for the creation of a new county had been satisfied, the area settled into a period of steady growth. Agriculture began to catch on as the prominent county industry. Sorghum and other grains, as well as broomcorn, yielded good crops, and when "Cyclone" Jones brought in an impressive harvest of wheat, other farmers quickly switched to this grain, causing a wheat planting boom. The Melrose and Texico areas recovered from their disappointment over the railroad and became centers of agriculture. The old sprawling ranches were replaced by feedlot operations, since livestock transportation by rail made this sort of operation more feasible than open range grazing.

Clovis became very definitely the county center. Incorporated in 1909, it had within 25 years acquired a zoo, a museum, large railroad maintenance shops, and huge grain elevators which rose impressively above the flat surface of the land. Its promoters, pointing to its spectacular success, referred to it as "the Magic City of the Plains". Its impression on the state was reflected by the pledge of a 1926 gubernatorial candidate to complete the road from Vaughn "in the shortest time possible".

Curry County, only 1,440 square miles in size, is the third smallest in the state. It is also one of the most recently settled areas in New Mexico. Only 29 post office and branch names appear on the Curry County list, and several of those result from name changes. Of that total, seven offices continue to serve the county.



CURRY COUNTY POST OFFICES

Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
Bellview	11 Oct 1912	Operating	
Blacktower	31 Jul 1905	31 Jul 1912	Mail to Havener
Broadview	6 Jan 1931	Operating	
Brownhorn	16 Oct 1905	8 Aug 1906	N. ch. to Melrose
Cameron	6 Feb 1908	17 Apr 1939	[1]
Cantara	1 May 1908	30 Sep 1912	Mail to Melrose
Claud	23 Jan 1909	31 May 1920	Mail to Clovis
Clovis	11 Apr 1907	Operating	Was Piley
Field	23 Jul 1907	15 Jul 1924	Mail to Melrose
Grady	22 Apr 1907	Operating	
Grier	21 Apr 1921	13 Jan 1956	Mail to Clovis
Haag	16 Sep 1909	15 May 1913	Mail to Clovis
Havener	10 Feb 1910	21 Apr 1921	N. ch. to Grier
Hollene	30 Aug 1907	30 Apr 1953	Mail to Clovis
Jonesville	30 Jan 1908	31 Aug 1911	Mail to Pleano
Legansville	26 Oct 1907	15 Mar 1914	Mail to Bellview
Lewis	6 May 1907	30 Sep 1910	Mail to Jonesville
McLear	10 May 1907	30 Apr 1909	Mail to Hollene
Massey	30 Jul 1909	31 Oct 1910	Mail to Ard
Melrose	8 Aug 1906	Operating	Was Brownhorn
Preston	7 May 1907	31 Oct 1910	M. to Legansville
Pritchard	7 May 1907	30 Jun 1908	Mail to Texico
Ranchvale	2 Aug 1916	15 May 1917	Mail to Clovis
Riley	12 May 1906	11 Apr 1907	N. ch. to Clovis
Saint Vrain	2 Jul 1907	Operating	
Texico	9 Sep 1902	Operating	
Tracy	16 Jun 1910	31 Jan 1912	M. to Saint Vrain
Trenton	25 Jun 1907	30 Jan 1908	Mail to Hollene
Victory Rural Sta.	1 Dec 1943	28 Feb 1947	Of Clovis

[1] The site of this office was moved 4.5 miles into Quay County on 17 Apr 1939.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Good news, fellow postal history enthusiasts, Robert Dalton Harris sends word that P.S.: a Quarterly Journal of Postal History will soon be published again. P.S., as many will recall, first appeared in 1977, with four numbers being published in the volume. Each number was the result of the sole efforts of R. D. Harris, and the publication received high critical acclaim. A book review, a reprint of generally inaccessible postal history material and an original article made up the text of each issue. Harris, who will be assisted in the new venture by Diane DeBlois, promises that the resumption of publication will follow the original format. Topics to be taken up in the near future will include the aesthetics of cover collecting, the whimsy of cover art and the popularization of postal history. For a truly interesting, useful and fun publication, I recommend you subscribe to numbers 5-8 of P.S. To do so send \$5 to Robert Dalton Harris, aGatherin', P.O. Box 175, Wynantskill, N.Y. 12198. Bob reports that Volume One, the 1977 volume, is still available for \$10 at the same address.

As we move into 1980's first month, the future of LA POSTA does not look as doubtful as it did in November. Chuck Whittlesey has sent along two more Oregon counties for the 19TH CENTURY OREGON POSTMARK CATALOG, and has three more in the final stages of preparation. Dan Meschter has provided us with additional counties in his outstanding UTAH POST OFFICES. Edith Doane, who is now relocated in Massachusetts, writes of her intention to resume the popular series on DOANE NUMERAL CANCELLATIONS used in the West. Richard Wadsworth, an author new to our pages, has submitted the first of a series of articles dealing with the post offices and postal markings of El Paso County, Texas. And we have other projects at various stages of completion, including Charlie Towle's New Mexico RPO study. There is, however, ample space available in the current volume for more research reports. If you've been thinking of a pet project, or would simply like to try your hand at sharing information in print, please contact me. I'll do everything I can to assist you in "breaking into print," as the saying goes.

The editorial offices, i.e., my poor, weather-beaten typewriter and I, have moved. We are now, temporarily [for the next six months] holed-up in a 3-room apartment at 505 West Griggs Street in "downtown" Las Cruces. Please note the change, for the post office is not particularly observant of forwarding mail from my former address.

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