



LA POSTA

vol. XI, no. 3



LA POSTA

JUNE 1980

VOLUME 11, NUMBER 3 WHOLE NUMBER 63

SUSTAINING SUBSCRIBERS

AMERICANA STAMPS
JAMES G. BAIRD
WILLIAM H. BAUER
ANNA BUSHUE
RICHARD H. BYNE
GEORGE CHEREN
GILES R. COKELET
ROD CROSSLEY
CHARLES DEATON
SHELDON H. DIKE
ROBERT P. DODDRIDGE
ROBERT J. DRAKE
FREDERICK L. DUNN
RAYMOND EPPLER
INEZ C. FORD
E. B. T. GLASS
BERNARD GRIFFIN
RICHARD B. HALICK
ROBERT DALTON HARRIS
WILLIAM P. HOFFMAN
JAMES R. HOPKINS
JACQUE HOUSER
JAMES T. R. JOHNSON
OWEN H. KRIEGER
RICHARD A. LIS
DENNIS J. LUTZ
HOWARD A. MADER
WALLACE G. McDONALD
WILLIAM T. MCGREER

DANIEL Y. MESCHTER
STEPHEN F. MILES
ROBERT F. MILLER
TED & GRETCHEN MITCHELL
CHARLES F. NETTLESHIP, JR.
FRANK NORRIS
N. LEONARD PERSSON
ERNEST S. PEYTON
GENE PHILLIPS
ROBERT POTTS
RICHARD H. POULTRIDGE
JAMES H. RALEY
DAVID A. RAMSTEAD
WILLIAM F. RAPP
JOSEPH F. RORKE
FRED F. SEIFERT
W. W. SHIPLEY
DANIEL R. SEIGLE
DONALD T. SMITH
HENRY M. SPELMAN, III
JACK E. STUCKY
THEODOR P. A. TEICHGRABER
GLENN F. TERRY
MORT D. TURNER
WESTERN POSTAL HISTORY MUSEUM
WILLIAM H. WHITE
CHARLES A. WHITTLESEY
MILTON G. WICKER
JOHN H. WILLARD

AND JOHN H. WILLIAMS

IN THIS ISSUE:

	PAGE
NEW MEXICO POST OFFICES, PART XI: HIDALGO COUNTY BY RICHARD W. HELBOCK WITH RUTH DOLEZAL	2
THE POST OFFICES OF EL PASO COUNTY, TEXAS BY RICHARD WADSWORTH	8
A LETTER FROM SHUNGNAK BY BOB POTTS	12
EDITOR'S COMMENTS	16
THE POST OFFICES OF UTAH, PART VIII: SANPETE COUNTY BY DANIEL Y. MESCHTER	17

NEW MEXICO POST OFFICES
Part XI: HIDALGO COUNTY

By Richard W. Helbock with Ruth Dolezal

On February 25, 1919, the State Legislature created Hidalgo County, named after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican War. Only Harding and Los Alamos are of more recent origin. Hidalgo County was constituted from the southwest corner of Grant County, and consists of 3,447 square miles. Lordsburg was designated the county seat; a function it continues to hold.

The county's earliest history is vague because settlement of the area is recent. There are indications that a long-used Indian trail ran through the county centuries ago, and it has been established that Gila Apache war parties used the route on their raids into Mexico in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. It is also known that the Chiricahuas came into the western part of the county around 1700.

The trail was also considered important by the Spanish. In November of 1780, Governor De Anza led a sizable military expedition from Santa Fe to survey a more direct route to Arispe, in Sonora, which was the military capital of the internal provinces. This party camped in the Big and Little Hachet Mountains while attempting to quiet the Apaches in the area in order to make the road safe. However, their efforts in killing, capturing and driving away were short-lived, and the Apaches continued to be a threat to life and a barrier to settlement until the 1880's. Apparently the area interested the Spanish because of the copper, silver and gold deposits known to exist there. Some ores were extracted, but the Apaches made the enterprise impossible, and it was abandoned. Four other military expeditions travelled through the county area in the 1780's, but had little effect in controlling the Indians.

During the war with Mexico, two military expeditions passed through the county. In 1846, a party under Lt. W. H. Emory travelled along the Gila River on a military reconnaissance mission to California, discovering Indian petroglyphs while near the present Arizona border. That same year the famous Mormon Battalion, a part of Kearney's forces under the command of Philip St. George Cooke, went across the area after having turned south at Santa Fe to find a passable wagon road. Their journey took them through the Hachita Mountains, and they noted their wonder at Las Playas.

The treaty ending the war set up a new boundary between Mexico and the United States, and created a joint boundary commission to survey the line. When the surveying party attempted to determine that line on the ground, and to reconcile it with a map published in 1847 which was their official guide, they found that the map was highly inaccurate since it had placed El Paso too far north and east. This led to months to dispute and political maneuvers regarding the placement of the boundary. Finally, James Gadsden, a southern railroad official, was sent to Mexico to renegotiate the boundary entirely, making sure that the United States received an advantageous route for a transcontinental railway which would be entirely on United States territory, and having the authority to buy from Mexico whatever land was necessary to settle the issue.

The Mexican President, Santa Ana, finally agreed to cede to the United States a strip of what is now southwestern New Mexico and southern Arizona for \$10,000,000. The treaty, named for Gadsden, was signed on December 30, 1853, and the new territory acquired was added to Dona Ana County. The northern line of the New Mexico portion ran east-west just below present day Lordsburg. The railroad, for which the land had been purchased, remained only a plan for years, but a stage line did start operations through the area soon after the purchase.

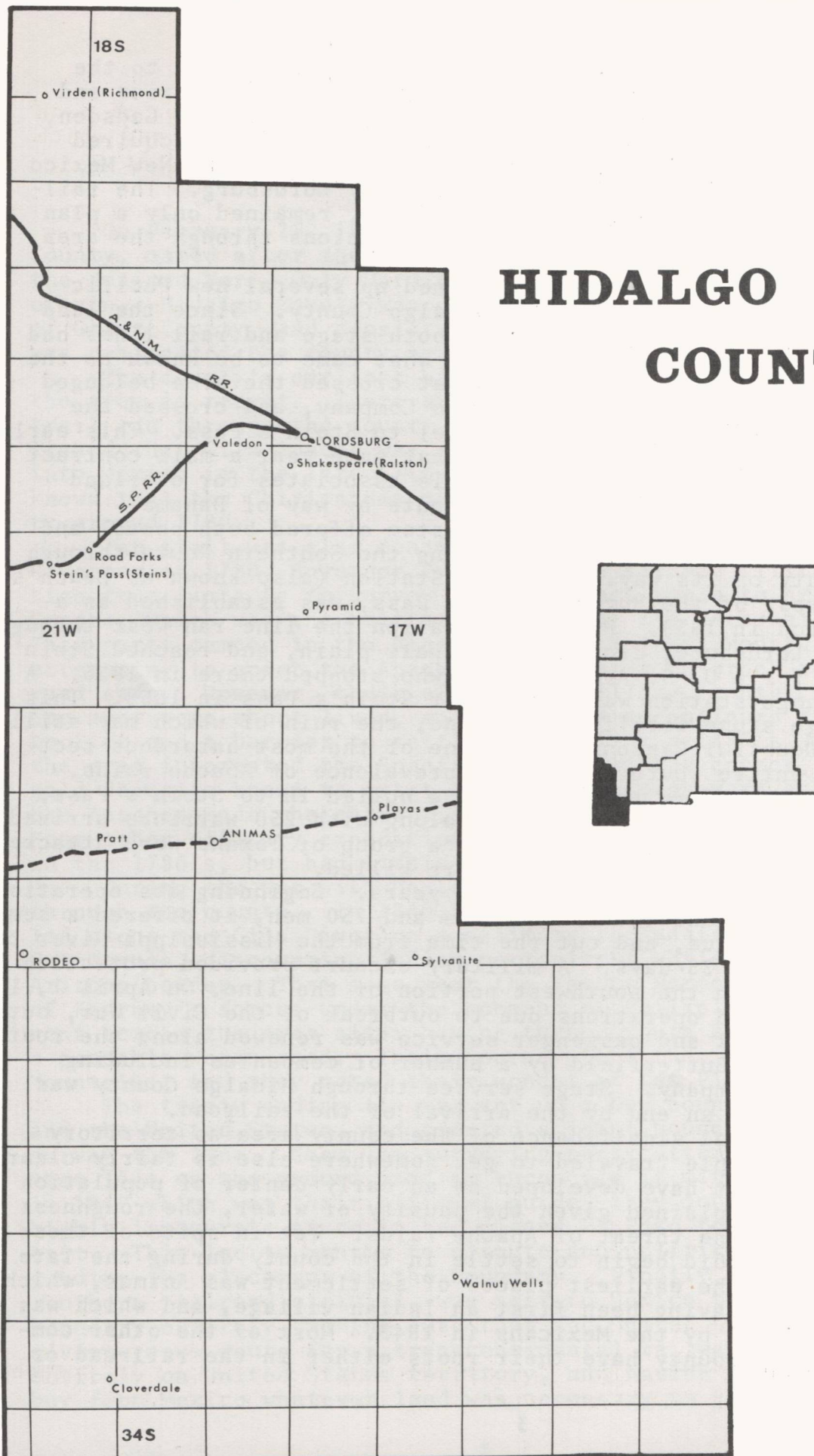
The California gold rush had opened up several new Pacific trails, one of which went through Hidalgo County. Since the land was fairly level and free from snow, both stage and rail lines had been proposed from time to time along what came to be known as the "Southern Route." The first stage that crossed the area belonged to the San Antonio and San Diego Stage Company, and crossed the county from Ralston (later Shakespeare) to Stein's Pass. This early line ceased operations in 1857, but that same year a mail contract was awarded to John Butterfield and his associates for overland delivery, replacing the earlier sea route by way of Panama.

The Butterfield Overland Mail System offered both postal and passenger service to California, taking the Southern Route through Hidalgo County on its way. Barney's Station (also known as Leach's Well), due west of the Burro Mountain Pass, was established as a change station in 1859. From this station the line ran west through present day Lordsburg, crossed the alkali plain, and reached Stein's Pass, named for a U. S. Army officer who stopped there in 1856. A meal and change station was erected at Stein's Pass in 1858. This stop, a large stone fortified compound, the ruin of which may still be seen in Doubtful Canyon, was in one of the most hazardous sections of the entire route due to the prevalence of Apache raids. Only a few days before the first stage pulled in to Stein's Pass, the Apache Chief, Mangas Coloradas, along with 250 warriors arrived, demanding 20 sacks of corn. In 1861 a group of Texans were attacked by Apaches at the station and two were killed.

The Butterfield line ran for 2½ years. Beginning its operations with 100 coaches, one thousand horses and 750 men, it offered a semi-weekly stage service, and cut the time from the Mississippi River to the west coast to 25 days. A military escort provided protection against Apaches in the southwest portion of the line. On April 1, 1861 the company ceased operations due to outbreak of the Civil War, but after the war mail and passenger service was renewed along the route pioneered by the Butterfield by a number of companies including Wells, Fargo & Company. Stage service through Hidalgo County was finally brought to an end by the arrival of the railroad.

The historical significance of the county area as territory through which people traveled to get somewhere else is fairly clear. That it should not have developed as an early center of population is also easily explained given the paucity of water, the roughness of the land and the threat of Apache raids. Yet in spite of these constraints, men did begin to settle in the county during the late 1800's. One of the earliest places of settlement was Animas, which shows traces of having been first an Indian village, and which was settled and named by the Mexicans in 1843. Most of the other communities in the county have their roots either in the railroad or

HIDALGO COUNTY



in mining.

The railroad, which had really motivated the addition of much of Hidalgo County to the territory of the United States, and which had waited nearly 30 years to extend itself across the country, finally arrived in the 1880's. The town of Lordsburg was founded in October 1880, when the Southern Pacific reached that location from the west. Railroad officials decided to construct a station and division point there, and they named it in honor of the engineer in charge of construction. The first inhabitants lived in tents, and depended on water brought to them in barrels from the north since there were no local wells. In 1884 the town consisted of one hotel, a few stores and saloons, and the railroad depot. In that year Lordsburg constructed the first school in the county area, and in 1887 the Lordsburg Liberal newspaper was founded.

Several other small communities such as Stein's and Lisbon were created by the arrival of the railroad, but the county's late 19th century boom days were due to the discovery of ores.

Early in the 1870's prospectors began finding significant deposits of copper, silver and gold. In 1870 silver was discovered in the Pyramid Mountains. Other discoveries followed in the Hachet Mountains giving rise to the Hachita Mining District, which produced copper, zinc, lead and antimony.

By far the most famous mining operation in the county was centered at Shakespeare, a few miles south of modern Lordsburg. For many years it had been known that ore was evident in the area, but the danger of Indian attack prevented any extensive mining operation. The place was known as Mexican Spring, and was a popular watering place for Indians and wagon trains alike. General Cooke and the Mormon Battalion refreshed themselves there in 1846. The first buildings were probably erected during the Civil War. In 1865, John Evenson, hired as a station master for the Kearns and Mitchell Stage Line, arrived to find a "fort" and some commissary buildings of an older stage line. The settlement was then renamed "Grant."

In 1869 a man named McPherson is reputed to have found masses of almost pure silver in the area, and by April 1870 a new town site had been laid out. This tale of discovery was published in an Arizona newspaper and created quite a stir, for the place attracted so many new residents that a vigilance committee was organized to keep order. By the end of 1870 the town had a new name -- Ralston -- after the president of the Bank of California, a backer of the new mining enterprise. Ralston post office was authorized on December 8th, thus becoming the first postal facility to be established in the county area. There was little trouble with Apaches, and since the diggings seemed promising, people flocked to the new town. Prosperity begot greed, however, and the community was soon ruined. Harpending, Arnold and Company, a major developer, became embroiled in a dispute over titles to town lots with its competitors. The company hired gunmen, and independent miners hurried over with their own claims to a probate judge in Pinos Altos, the nearest legal authority in the Territory. In 1871 the Harpending group further disgraced itself by its involvement in the Diamond Swindle. After having salted some of the mines with diamonds, the company began promoting a diamond boom. The hoax was soon discovered, and the town's inhabitants left in discouraged droves. Ralston post office was discontinued in October of that year, and by 1874 the population was nearly depleted.

In 1879, however, Col. William Boyle, a new developer, arrived and changed the town's name to Shakespeare in an effort to erase the stigma of Ralston's bad days. A gold and silver mining and milling company was opened, and a new boom period began. The Shakespeare Brigade was formed to fight the Apaches who were again giving trouble, but by 1881, things were quiet again and the mines were in full production. For several years Shakespeare enjoyed wild and widespread fame, but eventually the new community of Lordsburg on the Southern Pacific line to the north began to draw away business and Shakespeare began to decline. The post office was closed in 1885, and the depression of 1893 closed the mines and killed the town. Although some ore was found in Shakespeare during its heyday, it was said that the town and its mining district probably saw more mining companies, per ton of ore actually produced, than any other piece of ground in the world.

Hidalgo County has been far quieter in the 20th century. The last Apache uprisings were in the 1890's, and they now live peacefully on reservations. The "southern route" is traversed by Interstate 10, and, while it receives a large volume of winter traffic, it is merely one of several transcontinental routes. Rail traffic is heavy on the Southern Pacific line through Lordsburg, but the company has abandoned a second line which used to run east-west by way of Animas. Mining is still productive, with a largescale copper mine being opened near Animas during the 1970's, but the boom days are a thing of the past.

The county has seen change during the 20th century. In 1916 a group of Mormons fled the Mexican Revolution and settled in the Gila River valley near the site of an early-day agricultural community called Richmond. The Mormons named their community Virden, and it survives to this day as a peaceful little farm center of some 150 residents. Oddly, Virden never received a post office, and its mail, as well as most other services, are dispensed through Duncan, Arizona, located some four miles to the northwest.

Lordsburg was the first community in New Mexico to have an airport. Although the distinction of having the only airport did not last long, in 1930 the town had the best landing facility in the entire Southwest. Cattle raising has increased in the county and ranches are spread throughout the alkali flats in the northwest part of Hidalgo. Grazing capacities are light, varying from as high as 40 to as low as 130 acres per head. At the Aztec Mine in the Little Hatched Mountains, the only extensive calcite production in the state has been carried on. The county even has its own international port-of-entry at Antelope Wells on the Chihuahua border across from El Berrendo. The point is reached by a 46-mile stretch of dirt road from Hachita in southern Grant County, and is primarily a cattle crossing. Children from the area take a school bus to Hachita for their education, taking what is believed to be the longest school bus trip over a dirt road in the United States.

Hidalgo County, far in the southwestern corner of the state and away from the state's major centers of population and influence, remains relatively undeveloped. This lack of development is evidenced by the small number of post offices which have ever operated in the county, and the fact that today there are only three offices in operation: Lordsburg, Rodeo and Animas.

HIDALGO COUNTY POST OFFICES

Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
Animas	13 Jul 1909	Operating	
Bramlett	18 Feb 1911	29 Feb 1912	Mail to Animas
Cloverdale	22 Oct 1912	1 Sep 1943	Mail to Animas
Lake	28 Feb 1913	31 May 1915	Mail to Hachita
Lordsburg	17 Mar 1881	Operating	
Playas	18 Jul 1912	15 Oct 1917	Mail to Animas
Pratt	13 Oct 1905	15 Apr 1913	Mail to Animas
Pyramid	9 Nov 1882	25 Aug 1884	
	18 Jun 1891	24 Dec 1897	Mail to Lordsburg
Ralston	8 Dec 1870	3 Oct 1871	
Richmond	13 Dec 1875	5 May 1884	Mail to Lordsburg
Road Forks	1 Feb 1953	30 Apr 1955	Mail to Lordsburg
Rodeo	21 Apr 1903	Operating	
Shakespeare	27 Oct 1879	3 Dec 1885	Mail to Lordsburg
Steins	31 Jul 1905	15 Jan 1944	Mail to Lordsburg
Stein's Pass	9 Jan 1888	31 Jul 1905	N. ch. to Steins
Sylvanite	13 Nov 1908	30 Jun 1913	Mail to Lake
Valedon	21 Mar 1917	15 Jan 1932	Mail to Lordsburg
Walnut Wells	9 Aug 1913	31 Oct 1919	Mail to Hachita

IT IS WITH DEEP REGRET THAT LA POSTA NOTES THE DEATH OF TWO OF OUR COLLEAGUES FROM THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: DR. ROBERT LANDIS & GUY REED RAMSEY. BOB LANDIS AUTHORED THE POST OFFICES OF OREGON, WASHINGTON AND IDAHO. HE WAS AN EARLY SUBSCRIBER AND SUPPORTER OF LA POSTA, A SERIOUS STUDENT OF OREGON POSTAL HISTORY AND A GOOD FRIEND OF THE HOBBY.

GUY REED RAMSEY WAS A PRODIGIOUS AUTHOR OF POSTAL HISTORY RESEARCH, AND IS PERHAPS BEST KNOWN FOR HIS POSTMARKED WASHINGTON SERIES.

THE PASSING OF BOTH OF THESE GENTLEMEN LEAVES A SADNESS IN OUR HEARTS. THEY WILL BE SORELY MISSED.

THE POST OFFICES OF EL PASO COUNTY TEXAS

By Richard Wadsworth

(This is the conclusion of an article begun in LA POSTA, XI/2.)

HARDWICKE. Only general dates of operation for the post office are known.

Current County: ?

Post Office: Established November 13, 1908

Discontinued August 31, 1911

Postmarks: None known

HOT WELLS. Hot Wells was founded about 1912 as a tank town for the Texas & New Orleans Railway. The maximum population ever reached was about 25. Hot Wells lies in the absolute "middle of nowhere", southeast of Sierra Blanca in what is now Hudspeth County.

Current County: Hudspeth

Post Office: Established August 24, 1912

Transferred to Hudspeth County in 1917

Postmarks: None known during the El Paso County period.

ISER. Iser was another of the water tank "towns" founded along the Texas & New Orleans Railway. It, too, was established in 1912, and never saw a population greater than 25. The post office was below Fabens in what is now Hudspeth County.

Current County: Hudspeth

Post Office: Established October 12, 1910

Transferred to Hudspeth County in 1917

Discontinued March 30, 1918

Postmarks: None known during the El Paso County period.

ISLETA. Details provided under YSLETA.

Current County: El Paso

Post Office: Established January 29, 1857

Discontinued January 23, 1867

Re-established February 14, 1867

Discontinued May 8, 1868

Postmarks: None known with this spelling.

KENT. The town of Kent was founded in 1892 in the eastern part of El Paso County--what is now Culberson County. The function of the community was service to the railroad. There are still a few folks living in Kent, but the post office has been closed.

Current County: Culberson

Post Office: Established April 11, 1892

Discontinued January 9, 1893

Re-established June 20, 1893

Transferred to Culberson County in 1912.

Postmarks: Earliest known is a 28mm. cds used with a target killer. The earliest example is dated October 16, 1896. At the time, Kent's population was about 50.

LAVALLEY. No information has been found concerning the Lavalley post office other than that it was located a few miles west of Allamoore on the Southern Pacific Railroad.

Current County: Hudspeth

Post Office: Established November 24, 1909

Discontinued May 31, 1911

Postmarks: None known

LOBO. Lobo was a watering stop on the Texas & New Orleans located in southern Culberson County. Its post office was closed in 1942.

Current County: Culberson

Post Office: Established December 13, 1907

Transferred to Culberson in 1912.

Postmarks: None known from El Paso County period.

NEWMAN. The little community of Newman has recently been incorporated into the expanding City of El Paso. Newman lies along the New Mexico-Texas border on Highway 54, which runs north to Alamogordo, New Mexico. Newman post office was a rather recent creation.

Current County: El Paso

Post Office: Established December 8, 1922

Discontinued December 31, 1971

Postmarks: None known

PLATEAU. Plateau was founded as a railroad town in 1907. Named for the flat lands which surrounded it, the community reached a population of about 50. Plateau was located on the Southern Pacific, a few miles outside Van Horn.

Current County: Culberson

Post Office: Established May 27, 1907

Transferred to Culberson County in 1912.

Discontinued February 29, 1916

Postmarks: None known during the El Paso County period.

RALSTON. The site and function of Ralston have not been determined.

Current County: ?

Post Office: Established May 15, 1889

Discontinued May 4, 1891 (no papers)

Postmarks: None known

SAN ELIZARIO. This community predates the founding of El Paso by more than 50 years. San Elizario was founded in 1772 along the Rio Grande south of El Paso's southern boundary. The community was named in honor of Count Elzear, a French saint who fought against the Emperor Henry VII. San Elizario was selected as the original seat of El Paso County, and functioned thus from 1850-1876. There are currently about 900 residents of the community.

Current County: El Paso

Post Office: Established July 26, 1852 - May 20, 1854

Re-established April 17, 1855 - November 5, 1866

Re-established March 22, 1867 - July 1, 1879

Operated as ELIZARIO from 1881-1886

Re-established April 14, 1886

Currently operating.

Postmarks: Earliest reported is a 28mm. cds with target cancel.
It dates from May 12, 1890.

SAN JOSE. This post office was located near Ysleta, but no other information is currently available about the community.

Current County: El Paso

Post Office: Established October 26, 1894

Discontinued August 16, 1895

Re-established November 24, 1896

Discontinued February 6, 1899, mail to Ysleta

Postmarks: None known

SEVEN RIVERS. Seven Rivers, New Mexico, was in operation along the Pecos River at this time, and it may be that the office was listed in error along with the El Paso County offices. No information concerning a community of this name in Texas has come to light.

Current County: Unknown

Post Office: Established February 5, 1879

Discontinued June 6, 1879

Postmarks: None known

SIERRA BLANCA. Founded as a railroad junction town between the Southern Pacific and the Texas & New Orleans in 1881, Sierra Blanca has managed to maintain moderate size and is currently the county seat of Hudspeth County.

Current County: Hudspeth

Post Office: Established June 8, 1882 - November 17, 1882

Re-established January 14, 1885

Discontinued May 14, 1901, mail to Allamoore

Re-established June 13, 1901

Transferred to Hudspeth County in 1917.

Postmarks: The earliest known Sierra Blanca postmark is a 25mm. cds with attractive star-in-oval killer. It dates from August 18, 1888

SOCORRO (1). The first Socorro post office was actually in Ysleta, Texas. The name of this office was changed to match that of the community in 1874.

Current County: El Paso

Post Office: Established September 20, 1869 - January 6, 1870

Re-established March 17, 1873

Name changed to Ysleta March 10, 1874

Postmarks: None known

SOCORRO (2). The small village of Socorro is now incorporated into the City of El Paso. Its former limits now bound the southern edge of the city. Founded early in the 19th century, the village was originally a Piro Indian settlement called Nuestra Senora de la Concepcion del Socorro.

Current County: El Paso

Post Office: Established October 26, 1892

Discontinued December 15, 1915, mail to Belen.

Postmarks: None known

SOLITUDE. Solitude was a very short-lived post office, and no data about its community has been discovered. The office was located near Fort Hancock.

Current County: Husbeth

Post Office: Established May 18, 1903

Discontinued November 14, 1903, mail to Ft. Hancock

Postmarks: None known

TARVER. Probably located on the Southern Pacific at the far eastern edge of Culberson County, no additional information is available on Tarver.

Current County: Culberson (?)

Post Office: Established December 7, 1908

Discontinued November 30, 1910, mail to Toyah, TX

Postmarks: None known

TOBIN. Tobin was a small suburb located northeast of El Paso. The name survives in the form of Tobin Park Subdivision of the City of El Paso. The developer of Tobin conducted an unsuccessful campaign to attract residents for many years, but it was not until the 1950's that the community began to catch on.

Current County: El Paso

Post Office: Established July 15, 1908

Discontinued September 30, 1912

Postmarks: None known

TORNILLO. This community (pronounced Tor-nee-yo) was named for a small bushy tree with screw-shaped bean fruits. Founded about 1909 along the Texas & New Orleans Railway, Tornillo continues to exist as a small farm and ranch center.

Current County: El Paso

Post Office: Established March 27, 1909

Discontinued January 14, 1913

Re-established April 30, 1919

Operating

Postmarks: No early Tornillo postmarks have been identified.

VAN HORN. The town of Van Horn was named for J. J. Van Horn, a military hero and explorer of the Mexican War period. The original economic boost was based on farm and ranch service and its location on the railroad. Van Horn later became the county seat of Culberson County.

Current County: Culberson

Post Office: Established January 14, 1886

Transferred to Culberson County in 1912.

Postmarks: The earliest known is a black double ring bearing an El Paso County designation as part of the design. It measures 26mm. in diameter, and the earliest date is Feb. 17, 1888. Examples of this strike are known in magenta, and other postmarks from the El Paso County period are known.

VINTON. The village of Vinton was named for J. C. Vinton, a surveyor who worked on the railroad right-of-way in northwestern El Paso County. Founded in 1892, the community lies 17 miles from downtown El Paso, near the New Mexico State line.

Current County: El Paso

Post Office: Established November 1, 1892

Discontinued ?

Postmarks: None known

YSLETA. The Ysleta post office adopted this spelling in 1874. As noted above, there were other names at earlier times for the facility. The community is now incorporated into the City of El Paso, and the post office has become a branch of the El Paso office.

Current County: El Paso

Post Office: Established March 10, 1874

Currently operating as an El Paso Branch.

Postmarks: No early examples are known.

This concludes the listing of El Paso County post offices available to this author. It is known that post offices existed during the late 1930's at Smeltertown, La Tuna Prison and Biggs Airfield, but no data on these offices is available to me. Any information readers might have on these offices, types of postmarks not included, or similar postal history records of El Paso County would be deeply appreciated and make future articles more meaningful. Please contact either the Editor of LA POSTA or the author if you can contribute.

A LETTER FROM SHUNGNAK

By Bob Potts

Few non-Eskimos make their home in Alaska's beautiful Kobuk River Valley. The river towns of Noorvik, Kiana, Shungnak and Kobuk are all Eskimo villages which vary in size from 50 to 400 residents today. Kobuk is an Eskimo word meaning "big river", and, while the stream can not match the Yukon or Kuskokwim for size, the Kobuk drains the Baird and Schwatka mountains of the Brooks Range and flows 280 miles to empty into the Kotzebue Sound. Once more, it flows entirely above the Arctic Circle.

Explored for the first time in 1883-1886 by expeditions of the United States Navy and Revenue Cutter Service, the river attracted some attention during Alaska's mining booms of the 1890's. Shungnak was selected as a supply point for mining operations in the Cosmos Hills to the north in 1899. Early in the 20th century the community gained a trading post, school and Friends mission to become the primary settlement on the river. The United States government awarded Shungnak a post office with the appointment of Martin Moran as postmaster September 24, 1903. In 1910 there were 210 residents living in Shungnak, all but a handful of whom were Eskimo. By 1920 the total number of residents had declined to just 95.

The Shungnak post office was discontinued March 31, 1913, perhaps as a reflection of the decline in population, perhaps because

Mr. Moran chose to go elsewhere and there was no one willing to take his place. At any rate, on June 27, 1914, the office was re-established by the appointment of Fred M. Sickler as postmaster, and it is from the pen of Florence Sickler, the postmaster's wife, that we are able to catch a glimpse of life along the Kobuk in early 1915. Mrs. Sickler's letter to her friend in Fort Bragg, California, follows:

Shungnak, Alaska
March 8, 1915

My Dear Miss Bates:

Your letter was certainly one great surprise. I had given up ever hearing from you again, as Mr. Shields did not know where you were last summer when I saw him at Kotzebue.

Sure, and we have got one fine little girl. She is a year and a half old now, and is a merry little lassie alright, and so full of mischief she can't stand still. If you don't think she is nice, come up and take a look at her.

We have had sorry news from Pt. Hope this winter. Mr. Rank was lost out some place in Bering Sea with his boat and crew. It is thought that he was caught in the ice as there was terrible storms at that time, and the pack ice came early. I think it is just terrible, and can hardly believe it. Whiskey is mostly to blame, I guess, as they say he left home dead drunk. I hope he could get on the ice before his boat was broken up, but we may never know the truth of it.

I suppose you remember the trouble we had with Pt. Hope Peter, his wife and Ella? Well last summer they took Pete on the Cutter to Barrow and fined him fifty plunks, but as soon as the U.S. Smoke disappeared around Cape Thompson he took Ella back, and kicked Mary out again. Ella had another baby that looked like Rank, but Pete named it after his mother, and this winter they had another that looks like Pete alright. Just after x-mas Peter's wife Mary and Polly the little girl that I kept a while up there, started for the store, but got lost in a blizzard and never came back. They were probably frozen to death and buried under the drifting snow--perhaps will never be found. I suppose that will end the trouble now, and Pete and Ella can get married.

Do you remember Pt. Hope Ruth who was Kivalina Ida's friend? This winter Ruth went crazy and shot and killed herself with a thirty-thirty rifle. I guess thats all the tragedys of Pt. Hope. Charley Jensen married a Pt. Hope girl. Edith Pokotorn has a baby about a year and a half old. Joe Sage is about cured of his sores, but the Kotzebue doctor says he will never leave his sled. Little Raleigh is helpless now, and Ethel Sage has those sores too. Joe Ferrieras have a boy baby this winter, and Jim Allens have another girl. Mr. Dean is clerk at the Nome Court. Maguires were transferred to Cape Prince of Wales last summer, and people by the name of Reprogger are there at Kivalina this winter. Mrs. Maguire and James are going out this summer I believe to put James in school, then Mrs. Maguire will come back. Sunshine Tuckfield has a baby or two, and so has Fay & Benjamin. Little Joe Tuckfield is still fat and sassy at Pt. Hope. I hear from

NORTHWESTERN ALASKA

AFTER A 1917 POSTAL ROUTE
MAP

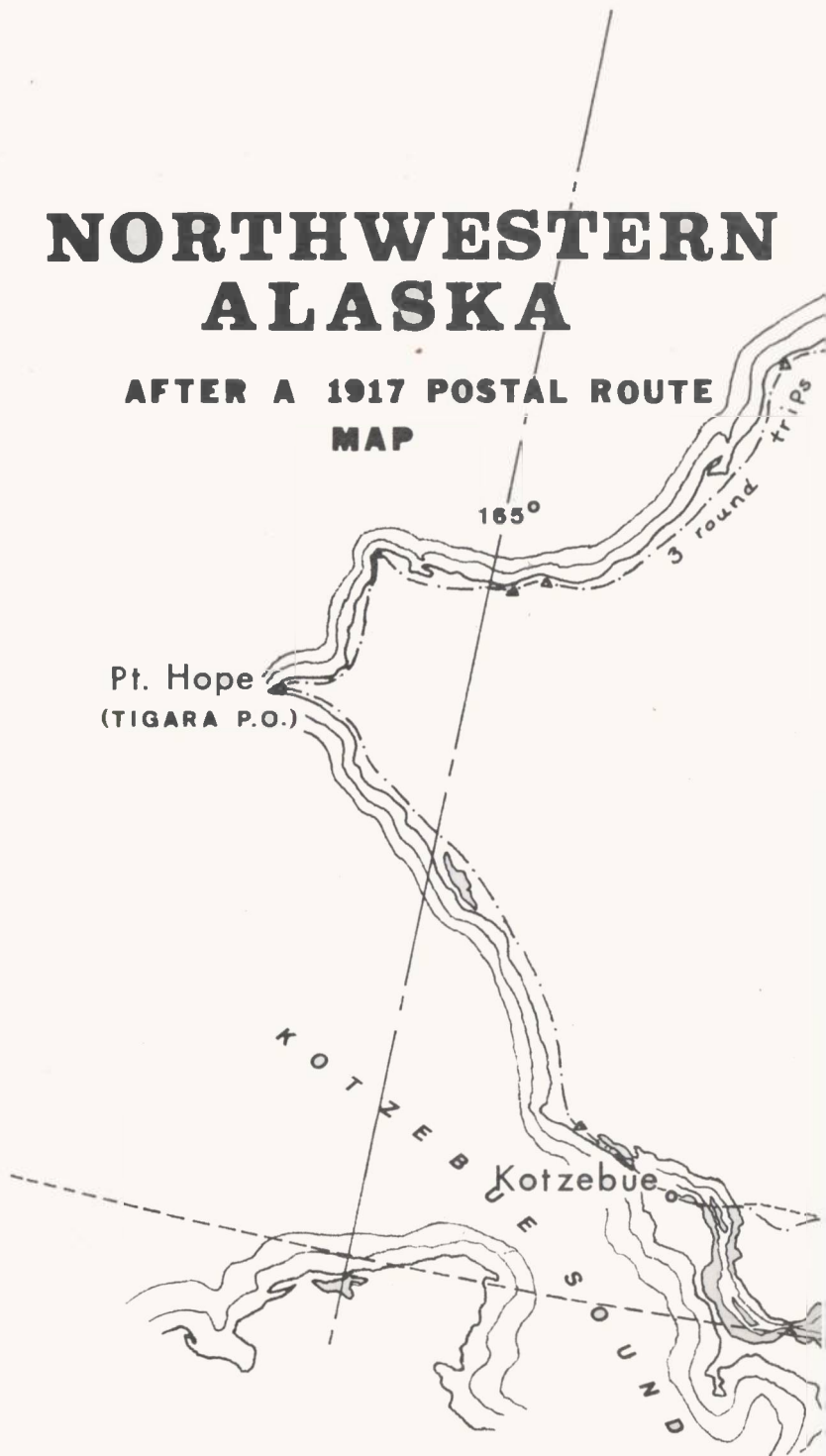
Pt. Hope
(TIGARA P.O.)

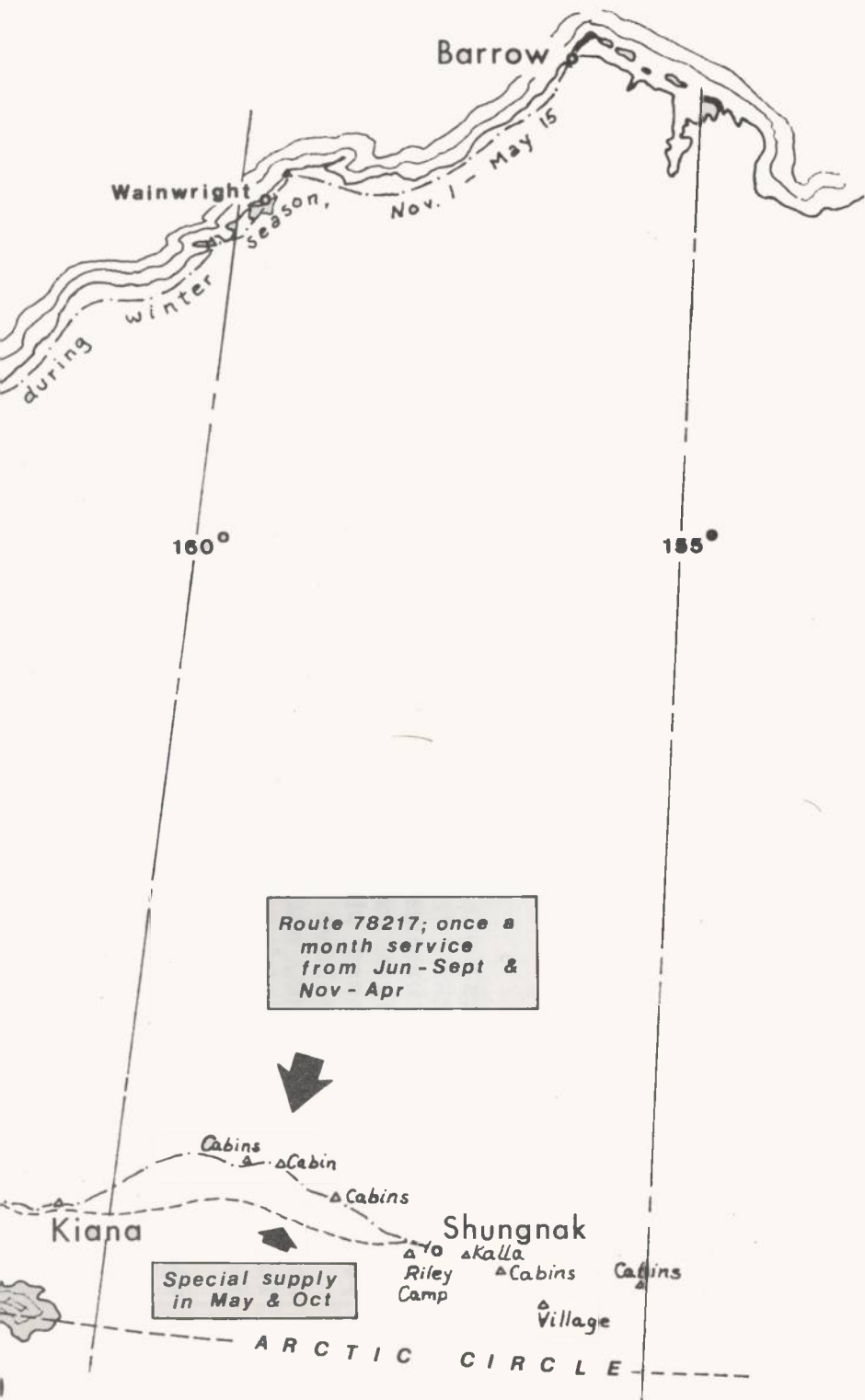
165°

3 round trips

KOTZEBUE
SOUND

Kotzebue





him occasionally. We hear once in a while from Dr. Goodman and Howard. Howard has a fine position as singer in one of the New York Cathedrals. He is also studying wireless telegraphy.

Poor Al Thompson! Margaret, have you no mercy on the poor man -- why don't you come up and take care of him? He is here on the Kobuk and so lonesome. He asks me, every time I see him, where you are. Now, with your permission, but not waiting to get it, I am going to tell him your address. Do you object? He sent me a box of candy a short time ago with his hand made photograph on the card, and no name. He has good ground in the mining claims at Kiana, so when you make your next application for an Alaska school, please apply for Kiana on the Kobuk, and we will be within two days journey of each other, and in the finest country in the world. There is no end to the forests here and at Kiana, and we have fine gardens. We raised a ton and a half of vegetables last summer--potatoes, turnips, cabbage, carrots and lots of other truck. We turn up our noses when we smell beans cooking now! And fish, rabbits, ptarmigan, moose, caribou and mountain sheep for the hunting of them. And bears too -- big black and brown grizzly bears that make a track like a pie plate. I know, for I found some last summer back of the lake -- and believe me, there were some other tracks for the village that could be found about ten minutes after, and only hitting the high places too!

You must have had an exciting trip out. Well my time is coming someday not soon tho', I hope. I am hopelessly tied to the Kobuk, and don't want to ever leave, only for a visit home.

Please don't be shocked when I tell you that I make all my own and Elizabeth's seal and deer skin boots--and we wear them out fast too. Now I am engaging at the task of making a salmon net in my spare time, and expect to get enough salmon for my dogs next winter. Old Muktoruk is still with me, and is as happy a dog as ever lived to be back on the Kobuk. We had a terrible trip down from Pt. Hope. I have sworn off on salt water traveling in whale boats. We had to camp two days in the rocks at Cape Thompson, and then barely missed capsizing several times when those "woolies" would come down on us. Elizabeth was born just three weeks after we got here. I had no doctor or not even a woman with me when she was born, just Mr. Sickler. The natives were all up at the fishing camp, about 11 miles above here. I had no trouble.

Bert Merrill & Annie have twin girls, about 2 months older than Elizabeth. I guess she behaves herself now, or she gets a black eye. I think I am about run down. Will continue this in my next.

When I hit Fort Bragg we will have a grand old potlach and a hoola hoola-ah-may Kobuk muk-yuk pechuk, ala ka; muk tuk-to ok-tutine? wanga muktuk to ok tunga.

Florence Sickler

The POD records indicate that Mr. Sickler remained postmaster at Shungnak until April 1920. Unfortunately, there is no other information available to indicate whether or not Mrs. Sickler was able to fulfill her desire to remain on the Kobuk.

During the 1920's river erosion had so weakened the site of the village, that it was determined to relocate the community to a site located some 10 miles downstream. The name "Shungnak" was carried to the new site, as was the post office. Some families, however, chose not to relocate, and a few that did, decided to return to the old site. In order to provide continuing postal service at the old location, a new post office was acquired. It was named Kobuk. The Shungnak post office was discontinued in September 1934, but it was re-established in April 1946, and today both the Shungnak and Kobuk post offices serve residents of the Kobuk River Valley.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

GREETINGS OF THE SUMMER, FELLOW POSTAL HISTORIANS! WORD HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM ALAN H. PATERA, ONE OF OUR NEWER LA POSTA SUBSCRIBERS, BUT BY NO MEANS A NEWCOMER TO THE FIELD, OF A SERVICE HE HAS VOLUNTEERED TO PERFORM FOR LA POSTA SUBSCRIBERS. ALAN LIVES IN THE WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA, AND AS MANY OF YOU KNOW IS THE GUIDING HAND BEHIND "THE DEPOT." AS A PROFESSIONAL GEOGRAPHER, ALAN HAS A BURNING INTEREST IN THE "WHERE" OF PLACES, AND HE HAS DEVELOPED AN INTIMATE FAMILIARITY WITH THE "GEOGRAPHIC SITE REPORTS" SERIES OF POSTAL INFORMATION. ALAN STATES THAT HE WILL RESEARCH ANY REQUESTED POST OFFICE FROM ANY STATE, AND SEND PHOTOCOPIES OF THE GEOGRAPHIC SITE REPORT INFORMATION FOR THAT OFFICE FOR A FEE OF ONLY 25 CENTS PER OFFICE. ADDRESS YOUR REQUESTS TO: ALAN H. PATERA, 505 LINCOLN AVE., TAKOMA PARK, MD 20012. THE GEOGRAPHIC SITE REPORT SERIES APPEARS TO HAVE SOME OMISSIONS, AND ERRORS OF OTHER TYPES, BUT IF YOU ARE CURIOUS ABOUT THE "WHERE" OF A POST OFFICE, WRITE ALAN.

OWEN KRIEGE SENDS WORD THAT THE THIRD EDITION OF THE ARIZONA TERRITORIAL POSTMARK CATALOG IS NOW AVAILABLE. ALMOST 200 NEWLY LISTED POSTMARK TYPES ARE INCLUDED. OVER 300 NEW ILLUSTRATIONS ARE ADDED. AND THE PRICING SYSTEM HAS BEEN COMPLETELY OVERHAULED IN AN ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH A PRICING GUIDE WHICH MORE ACCURATELY REFLECTS THE RELATIVE VALUE OF ARIZONA TERRITORIAL POSTMARKS IN TODAY'S MARKET.

IN SPITE OF INCREASED PRINTING AND MAILING COSTS, THE PRICE OF THE 3RD EDITION REMAINS THE SAME AS THE 2ND EDITION. COPIES OF THE NEW CATALOG MAY BE ORDERED AT \$20.00 POSTPAID FROM OWEN H. KRIEGE, 98 BEECH WOODS DRIVE, MADISON, CT 06443.

OUR GOOD FRIENDS, GRETCHEN AND TED MITCHELL, WERE THE VICTIMS OF A TERRIBLE BURGLARY ON MAY 6TH. THE ENTIRE STOCK OF THE LOS ANGELES STAMP COMPANY WAS STOLEN, CONSISTING OF OVER A QUARTER MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF HAWAIIAN AND UNITED STATES STAMPS, POSTAL STATIONERY, POSTAL CARDS, POSTAL HISTORY AND REVENUES. A DETAILED LIST OF THE STOLEN MATERIAL MAY BE OBTAINED BY WRITING TED AND GRETCHEN AT 6269 SELMA AVE., LOS ANGELES, CA 90028. IF YOU ARE APPROACHED TO BUY MATERIAL THAT APPEARS SUSPICIOUS, PARTICULARLY HAWAIIAN ITEMS, PLEASE CALL THE MITCHELLS AT (213) 467-2215. IT WAS MOST PLEASING TO LEARN OF THE AREST OF A SUSPECT INVOLVED IN THE MCBRIDE AUCTION THEFT, AND THE PARTIAL RECOVERY OF THAT PROPERTY. LET US BE DILIGENT, AND, HOPEFULLY, BRING ABOUT SIMILAR RESULTS IN THIS LATEST AFFRONT TO OUR CLAN.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 20)

THE POST OFFICES OF UTAH

By Daniel Y. Meschter*

Part VIII: Sanpete County

The Sanpete Valley was one of the earliest objectives of Mormon colonization in Utah. In the fall of 1849, Isaac Morley, one of the Church's earliest converts, led a colony of some 225 settlers more than 100 miles south from Salt Lake City to the banks of the San Pitch River where he laid out a new city and built a grist mill.

The colony proved to be prosperous and self-supporting, although the narrowness of the valley between the mountain ranges to the east and west tended to limit population growth to what the more easily irrigated land along the streams could support. Never-the-less, the General Assembly of the State of Deseret recognized the Sanpete valley settlement with one of the original Utah counties it erected in 1850.

Sanpete was derived from a corruption of the name of the Indian chief, Sanpitch. The two word variant--San Pete--was used at first. The Utah Legislature settled on the one-word version in 1862; but both forms have been used interchangeably from time to time.

Mail service from Salt Lake City was started in early 1851 on a route by way of Utah Lake. The first post office in San Pete County was established as Lecompte Valley on March 26, 1851, with the colony's leader, Isaac Morley, as postmaster.

Brigham Young took a great personal interest in the new settlement. He seems to have had a financial interest in Morley's grist mill, and it is said that he actually built an adobe house in Manti with his own hands, a house that remained a local curiosity for many years. It was he who suggested the name Manti for the new settlement after one of the cities spoken of in the Book of Mormon. Thus, Lecompte Valley was changed to Manti on September 22, 1851. Morley continued as postmaster until October 1852.

The post office established on October 13, 1851, called Sanpete is something of a mystery because Isaac Morley was listed as its postmaster for a year while he also was serving as the postmaster at Manti. One guess is that Sanpete was entered in the postal records as an alternative name for Manti. Another is that Sanpete might have been a predecessor of the next important settlement at Ephraim (Canal Creek), located seven miles upstream from Manti, and close enough for Morley to have served in both places.

The economy of Sanpete County has been based almost entirely upon agriculture throughout its history. Hopes for an important coal mining industry in the mountains in the northeast part of the county did not materialize to any great extent, and a branch line of the Rio Grande Railroad up Thistle Creek from the north and down

* Mr. Arthur E. Rupert, an authority on rural branches and CPOs, has contributed his research data to this study.

the San Pitch River had relatively little impact.

Early growth was slow. It was not until 1859 that the next post office after Ephraim was established at Moroni, and 1860 at Fountain Green. The construction of the major irrigation works enlarged the amount of land available to farmers, and new settlements justified six more post offices during the 1860's. Even today, the total population of the county at slightly more than 10,000 is less than most small cities elsewhere.

A total of 28 post offices are listed in Sanpete County. This list includes six name changes. The fact that 15 offices are still in operation is indicative of the economic and social stability of the county. Even more remarkable is that the only post office to be opened in the present century was the short-lived one at Clarion. All of the operating post offices date back to the 19th century. The maximum number of offices in operation was 18 from 1898 to 1912.

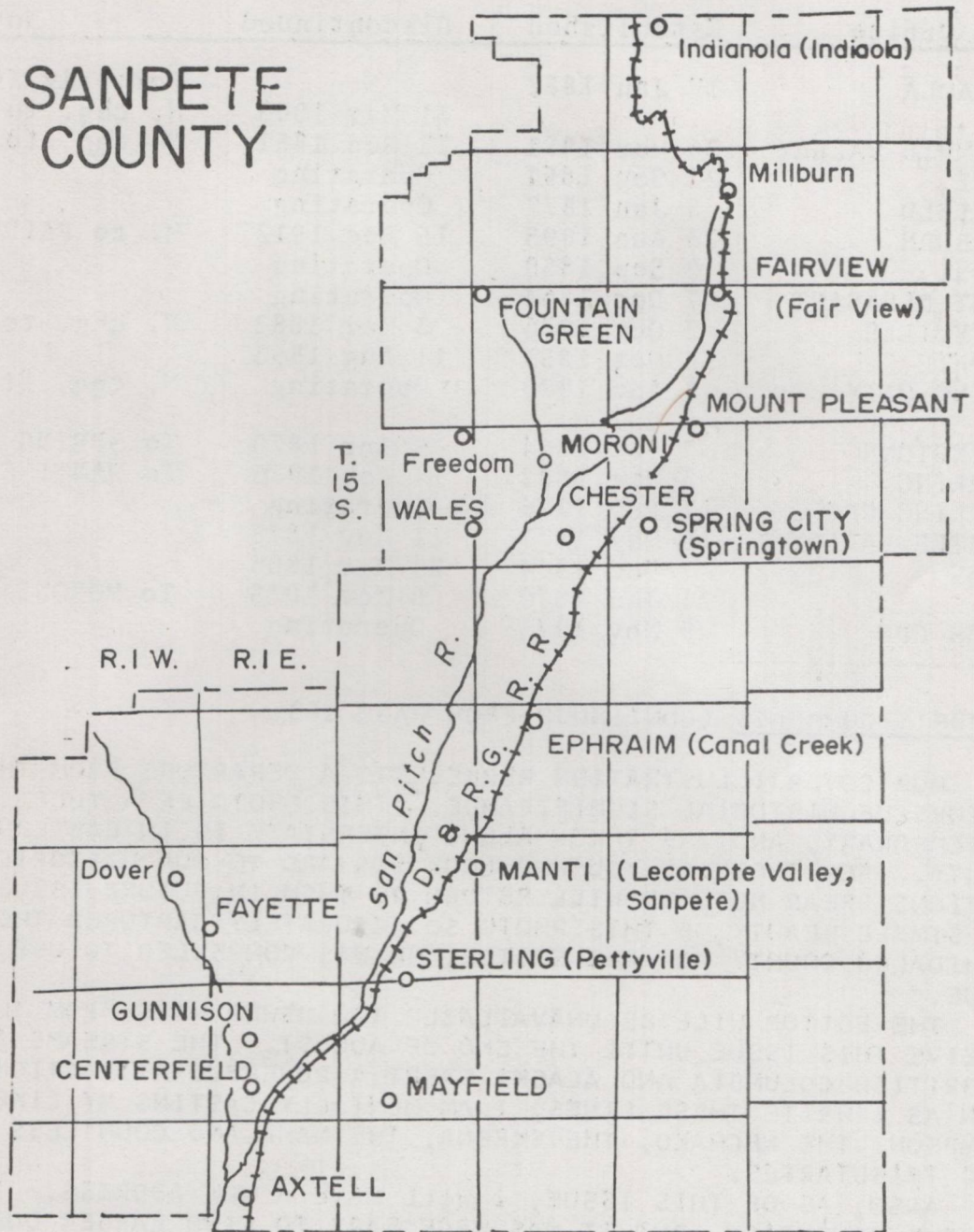
Aside from the uncertain Sanpete post office, only the post offices at Thistle Valley and Clarion have not been located on the map. Thistle Valley probably was on Thistle Creek in the north end of the county at or near the later site of Indianola. Clarion most likely was a small farming community in the vicinity of Gunnison.

UTAH POST OFFICES

Sanpete County

Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
AXTELL	26 Jul 1893	Operating	
CANAL CREEK	16 Jan 1854	11 Nov 1856	N. chg. to EPHRAIM
CENTERFIELD	17 Jun 1898	Operating	
CHESTER	10 Aug 1876	31 Aug 1887	M. to SPRING CITY
	14 Apr 1888	10 Jul 1890	No papers
	14 Aug 1890	25 Aug 1967	To Rur. Br. of MORONI
CHESTER R.B./CPO	26 Aug 1967	Operating	
CLARION	23 Apr 1915	29 Apr 1916	M. to GUNNISON
DOVER	15 Apr 1879	26 Jan 1880	
	24 Feb 1880	20 Mar 1895	M. to FAYETTE
EPHRAIM	11 Nov 1856	Operating	
FAIR VIEW	7 Dec 1864	28 Jul 1894	N. chg. to FAIRVIEW
FAIRVIEW	28 Jul 1894	Operating	
FAYETTE	7 Dec 1864	25 May 1868	
	4 Apr 1872	20 May 1966	To Rur. Br. of GUNNISON
FAYETTE R.B./CPO	21 May 1966	Operating	
FOUNTAIN GREEN	12 Jan 1860	12 Nov 1860	
	2 Mar 1861	Operating	
FREEDOM	14 Apr 1898	15 Jun 1914	M. to MORONI
GUNNISON	7 Dec 1864	Operating	
INDIANOLA	14 Feb 1881	16 Jan 1882	
	31 Mar 1905		N. chg. from INDIAOLA
		31 Jan 1948	M. to FAIRVIEW

SANPETE COUNTY



UTAH POST OFFICES

Sanpete County

Post Office	Established	Discontinued	Notes
INDIAOLA	19 Jan 1882		Formerly INDIANOLA
		31 Mar 1905	N. chg. to INDIANOLA
LECOMPTE VALLEY	26 Mar 1851	22 Sep 1851	N. chg. to MANTI
MANTI	22 Sep 1851	Operating	
MAYFIELD	5 Jan 1877	Operating	
MILLBURN	23 Aug 1895	15 Dec 1912	M. to FAIRVIEW
MORONI	9 Sep 1859	Operating	
MOUNT PLEASANT	7 Dec 1864	Operating	
PETTYVILLE	2 Oct 1876	3 Mar 1882	N. chg. to STERLING
SANPETE	13 Oct 1851	11 Aug 1853	
SPRING CITY	8 Apr 1870	Operating	N. chg. from SPRING-TOWN
SPRINGTOWN	7 Dec 1864	8 Apr 1870	To SPRING CITY
STERLING	3 Mar 1882	14 Feb 1976	To MANTI CPO
STERLING CPO	14 Feb 1976	Operating	
THISTLE VALLEY	16 May 1877	11 Nov 1878	
WALES	7 Dec 1864	20 Apr 1866	
	24 Jan 1870	8 Nov 1975	To MORONI CPO
WALES CPO	8 Nov 1975	Operating	

EDITOR'S COMMENTS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16)

OUR COVER ILLUSTRATION REPRESENTS A DEPARTURE FROM THE USUAL PICTURE OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE. THIS PHOTO OF A YUCCA CACTUS IS CONTEMPORARY, AND WAS TAKEN ALONG INTERSTATE 10 IN EASTERN HIDALGO COUNTY. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO LOOK FORWARD TO OUR HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS, FEAR NOT, WE WILL RETURN TO THEM IN FUTURE ISSUES, BUT THE SIMPLE BEAUTY OF THIS PHOTO SO ACCURATELY CAPTURED THE EMPTINESS OF HIDALGO COUNTY FOR THE EDITOR, HE WAS COMPELLED TO USE IT ON THIS ISSUE.

THE EDITOR WILL BE UNAVAILABLE TO ANSWER MAIL FROM THE TIME YOU RECEIVE THIS ISSUE UNTIL THE END OF AUGUST. THE STREAMS AND LAKES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AND ALASKA EXERT A POWERFUL ATTRACTION, AND, EVEN AS I WRITE THESE LINES, I AM MENTALLY CASTING MY LINE INTO THE THOMPSON, THE NECHAKO, THE SKEENA, THE NAHA AND COUNTLESS CLEAR RUNNING TRIBUTARIES.

ALSO, AS OF THIS ISSUE, I WILL HAVE A NEW ADDRESS. I'M SORRY FOR THE CONFUSION, BUT IT WAS NECESSARY TO FIND LARGER QUARTERS, SO AS OF JUNE 1ST I WILL BE RESIDENT AT A SMALL OLD ADOBE HOUSE LOCATED AT 424 MC CLURE ROAD, LAS CRUCES, NM 88001.

UNTIL AUGUST, HAVE A MOST PLEASANT SUMMER

RICHARD W. HELBOCK, EDITOR, 424 MC CLURE ROAD, LAS CRUCES, NM 88001

