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© THE CONFEDERATE OCCUPATION
OF NEW MEXICO TERRITORY,
1861 - 1862

By Gordon Bleuler

(This article was prepared as one of a series written by Gordon Bleuler for the TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY JOURNAL under the heading, "Texas Gems", and is the second of that series. Since the town marking and usage would be of considerable interest to collectors of New Mexico postal history, Mr. Bleuler has offered to allow its publication in LA POSTA. The original article is presented here with an augmentation, labeled Exhibit A, which describes and illustrates another Mesilla, N.M., Confederate occupation cover from the author's collection.)

In the early days of the Civil War the Territories of New Mexico and Arizona became the focal point of a grand military strategy which contemplated no less than the conquest of the entire Southwest for the Confederacy. On the face of it, the plan as envisioned looked promising. It was believed that since the southern half of California contained a large number of secessionists, it might be taken with very little bloodshed. It was thought that the Territory of Colorado might also be taken from the inside by its strong secessionist element. It was further believed that since the Mormons in Utah were hostile to the Federal Government, they might effectively block military assistance to California from the East once California was taken for the Confederacy. The Confederate planners believed that as soon as they achieved control of Colorado and California, they would have access to the gold production of those areas. They planned to use the gold to build and acquire a sufficient number of merchant and military ships to enable the Confederacy to nullify the blockade imposed by the Union around all southern ports. Of course it was only a dream -- but certainly a dream worth dreaming -- if the results could be accomplished with a relatively small number of men.

In the spring of 1861, H. H. Sibley, former major in the United States Army, resigned his commission and joined with the Confederacy. He was appointed a General in the Confederate Army, and it was he who was given the assignment to carry out the military conquest of the West.

Under date of August 1, 1861, John R. Baylor, Governor and Lieut. Colonel Commanding Mounted Rifles, Confederate States Army, issued the following Proclamation (in brief terms) to the People of Arizona:

In behalf of the Confederate States of America, the offices, both civil and military, heretofore existing in this territory, either under the laws of the late United States or the Territory of New Mexico, are hereby declared vacant; and, from the date thereof shall forever cease to exist. Further, that from the date of this proclamation the territory shall be under the constitution and laws of the Confederate States of America.

The town of Mesilla was designated as the seat of Government of this Territory.

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General Sibley opened his headquarters at a point called Camp Sibley, which was located some seven miles east of San Antonio, Texas, and began to assemble the men and units which were to comprise his command. Some 3,500 men were gathered and mustered-in during the months of July through September in 1861. Finally, in the latter part of October, the military units moved westward from San Antonio in the general direction of El Paso.

The Confederate column moved slowly westward into the harsh, barren and rocky terrain of western Texas. The men marched day after day, westward ...ever westward...a thin line which stretched toward the horizon. Rations were short and water extremely scarce. In the words of one soldier, "I want to say something to you about hard times. I had never saw hard times before I started on this march across the wild venomous country where there was no settlements. We have only drawn about two-thirds rations since we left San Antonio. We only eat twice a day and don't have plenty then."

Such roads as existed at that time were hard, rocky ruts which followed the course of least resistance toward the isolated forts forming a protective shield across the Texas frontier. It was necessary to ford the rocky streams and cross the dry river beds. Dust devils whirled occasionally across the horizon, and buzzards and hawks soared silently in widening circles in search of their prey. This was the land of rattlesnakes, gila monsters and scorpions -- all deadly adversaries on their home grounds.

On the sidelines, watching the increasing tempo of the dispute between the Union and the Confederacy, was the deadliest menace of all -- the Plains Indians. Following the opening of hostilities in April of 1861 with the firing on Fort Sumter in the East, the Union realized that the military units manning the forts across the entire frontier of Texas and the western territories were in exposed positions to military action from the Confederacy, particularly those in the Southwest. The loyal and experienced Union forces were thus withdrawn, and many of those Southwestern posts were subsequently taken over and manned by small units of Confederate cavalry.

The Plains Indians -- Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne and Arapaho -- soon realized the forts were unable to muster the men and arms necessary to maintain any effective control over their activities. The Indians thus became relatively free to follow their chiefs in preying on the outlying settlements, stealing livestock, taking hostages and burning and looting the property of the whites. These activities were seen as the Indians' only hope for survival in the lands of their ancestors.

It was late in 1861, November 30th to be exact, when the Confederate forces under General Sibley reached Fort Davis, Texas. After marching for over 40 days, they had covered almost 350 miles, and they were still almost 180 miles east of El Paso. There was a winter chill in the air as the days became shorter, but still they marched. They passed through the Davis Mountains, with peaks reaching six to eight thousand feet, El Lobo, the Quitman Mountains and Sierra Blanca, finally reaching El Paso del Norte late in December.

Early in January, 1862, General Sibley moved his forces out of El Paso, northward up the Rio Grande to Mesilla, New Mexico Territory, with the intention of conquering and occupying those lands westward to the Pacific Ocean. Sibley met no resistance in his march up the Rio Grande until his forces reached the Union stronghold of Fort Craig, located about 100 miles above Mesilla. There they encountered Union troops commanded by General Canby on February 21, 1862, near the village of Valverde located south of Fort Craig. The Union forces were defeated in this engagement, and General Sibley continued his movement northward with the major portion of his command to occupy Albuquerque and Santa Fe in the hope of capturing the Union supply depots in those towns. At the same time, he dispatched cavalry detachments westward to occupy Tucson and Yuma in the far western portion of Confederate Arizona Territory.

On reaching Santa Fe, Sibley was faced with the crucial decision of turning westward with his command toward California, or moving eastward to take Fort Union and then north to Colorado to bring that Territory under Confederate control. He believed that if he could occupy Fort Union with little resistance, he might be able to replenish his supplies and munitions from the depot at that fort, and also thus eliminate the threat of a Union attack on his rear when he moved the major portion of his command westward to California. Sibley chose to attack Fort Union.

The Union forces at Fort Union were small but well equipped. In recent days a number of Colorado miners had volunteered into the army, and had reached the post by forced marches after they had learned of the Confederate threat. Rather than wait for the larger Confederate force to envelope and overwhelm the fort, Major J. M. Chivington, commander of Fort Union, decided to move west and execute a surprise attack on Sibley's forces before they could leave Santa Fe.

Chivington was too late with this movement however, and as the Union troops were almost halfway through Apache Canyon they encountered the advance units of the Confederate forces under Colonel W. R. Scurry which were already moving toward Fort Union. The two forces met on the afternoon of March 27, 1862, and a brief fight ensued. It was broken off in the evening as both sides waited for their main forces to arrive on the scene. Colonel Scurry's command of some 1300 troops were finally in place while the main forces under General Sibley were still some 20 miles to the west.

On the morning of March 28th Major Chivington along with Colonel Slough, who commanded the force of about 1300 Colorado volunteers, held a council with their officers. One of those invited to attend was Colonel Manuel Chavez, a colonel of the Second New Mexico Volunteers. When no plan had been submitted which seemed to have the possibility of defeating the superior Confederate forces, Colonel Chavez presented his plan. He indicated that he knew of a steep mountain pass which could outflank Apache Canyon, and he proposed to send a detachment of around 400 men to the rear of Colonel Scurry's forces and destroy their supply train while the remaining Union/Colorado units facing the Confederates in Apache Canyon fought a defensive engagement. The implications of his plan were clear. If the Union forces could destroy the supply train, wagons, mules, provisions and equipment, the Confederates would be in dire straits so far removed from their base of supply at Mesilla and El Paso. It was agreed by the Union officers that the plan set forth by Colonel Chavez offered the best hope of success, and that Major Chivington would lead the force of 400 men with the assistance of Colonel Chavez who would be their guide.

By nine that morning the battle opened in the Canyon between the two small armies. As they were heavily concentrated in the narrow defiles of the steep canyon walls, there was little chance for the development of flank attacks. Gradually the larger force of Confederate soldiers with their heavier fire power gained the upper hand, and the Union forces slowly gave ground. While the battle raged in the Canyon, Major Chivington and his men marched some eight miles through a side canyon and up the steep mountain slopes following a narrow, rocky path. After some five hours of marching, they reached the summit where they captured a Confederate sentinel, who had been unaware of their presence. Under questioning, the sentinel told Chivington that the Confederate camp, tents and supply wagons were some 1000 feet down at the base of the mountain at a place called Johnson's Ranch. Chivington ordered his men to remain out of sight and rest while he and Colonel Chavez reconnoitered the area to determine the next moves of their small force.

Chivington made his decision and he and his men began the hazardous descent down the precipitous slope of the mountain. Using ropes and belts, they slowly and cautiously made their way from ledge to ledge. Unfortunately, occasional rocks began to loosen and tumble down the steep slope, and they were soon discovered by the Confederate sentinels. The camp was alerted, and soon gunners were firing on the descending soldiers from all angles with bullets whizzing and ricocheting off the rocky canyon walls. The loud noises of firing and shouting by the soldiers caused such a commotion in the Confederate camp that the impression was created that Union forces had broken through Confederate lines and were overrunning the camp. Confederate supply train teamsters were terror stricken. Many seized the nearest horses and rode for safety, thus creating further panic with the wagons at the edge of camp.

Of the original 250 men that Colonel Scurry had detailed to defend the camp and wagon train, two companies of German troops had left without orders early in the afternoon to join the battle which left only about 100 men to fight off the Union force coming down the side of the mountain. Although this little group of men put up a fierce resistance, they were pitted against overwhelming odds as the Union soldiers reached the floor of the canyon. Soon all resistance ceased and the wagon train was at the mercy of the Union soldiers.

The wagon train of over 80 wagons was heavily loaded with food, baggage, medical stores, supplies, powder and ammunition. The soldiers overturned the wagons and put them to the torch. Soon the air was filled with smoke and flame, the smell of burning wood, leather and clothing. Whenever the flames reached wagons containing munitions and powder barrels, explosions and blazing debris filled the air. There were over a thousand horses and mules which were slaughtered by guns and bayonets. In the words of one soldier, "blood was everywhere." Chivington's victory was complete. As the shadows cast by the setting sun began to reach across the canyon floor, the Union detachment moved hurriedly back up the steep slope to make the difficult return march over the mountain to the safety of the Union lines.

News of the holocaust reached Colonel Scurry that evening, and he realized the magnitude of the disaster which had befallen his campaign. He requested an armistice to attend to the wounded on the battlefield, and at the same time gave the order for a hasty retreat. His men had only the ammunition and food they carried on

their persons, and they would soon be in difficult circumstances. The retreating Confederate force left some 200 of its wounded at a place called Pigeon Ranch.

It was a hasty, disorganized retreat back toward the larger Confederate force under General Sibley, but with a major share of the army's transport and supplies destroyed Sibley was virtually stranded in a hostile, barren country. The Confederate force began to disintegrate rapidly as small disorganized groups made their way hurriedly back down the Rio Grande Valley toward Mesilla. Union forces did not follow up their victory because Colonel Slough and Major Chivington were ordered by Colonel Canby, their superior, to protect Fort Union at all costs. This left them with no authority to pursue the Confederate force.

And so the dream ended, vanishing like the wisps of billowy clouds on a hot Southwestern summers' day. The hopes and dreams of the Confederacy to conquer the West disappeared with the defeat of Sibley's command at Apache Canyon. Virtually all that remains to enable us to remember such incidents in the flow of history are letters such as the one described below. Read the words of a poem written on the back of a Confederate Treasury note will sum it up even better!

Keep it! it tells our history o'er
From the birth of the dream to its last,
Modest, and born of the angel Hope,
Like our hope of success...it passed.

Show it to those who will lend an ear
To the tale that this letter can tell,
Of liberty, born to the patriot's dream
Of a storm-cradled nation that fell.

A few words in retrospect with regard to the Volunteers who had marched forth so bravely from San Antonio in October 1861, and straggled back in small groups following the debacle at Apache Canyon. These men had marched over 1600 miles across the most forbidding country imaginable under extreme conditions during the winter months. They marched across plains, mountains and semi-desert areas without proper food and clothing, transport or supplies. Those who made it had marched through "hell and back."

MAP ILLUSTRATION



1. From Soldier in the Field..North of Mesilla, New Mexico Territory (probably carried by military courier).
2. Location of Mesilla, New Mexico Territory, (Confederate States Occupation)
3. Homer, Angelina County, Texas (destination) (C.S.A. - Texas)
4. Second Usage: Nacogdoches, Texas (C.S.A.)
5. Second Destination: Rusk, Texas (C.S.A.)

COVER DESCRIPTION:

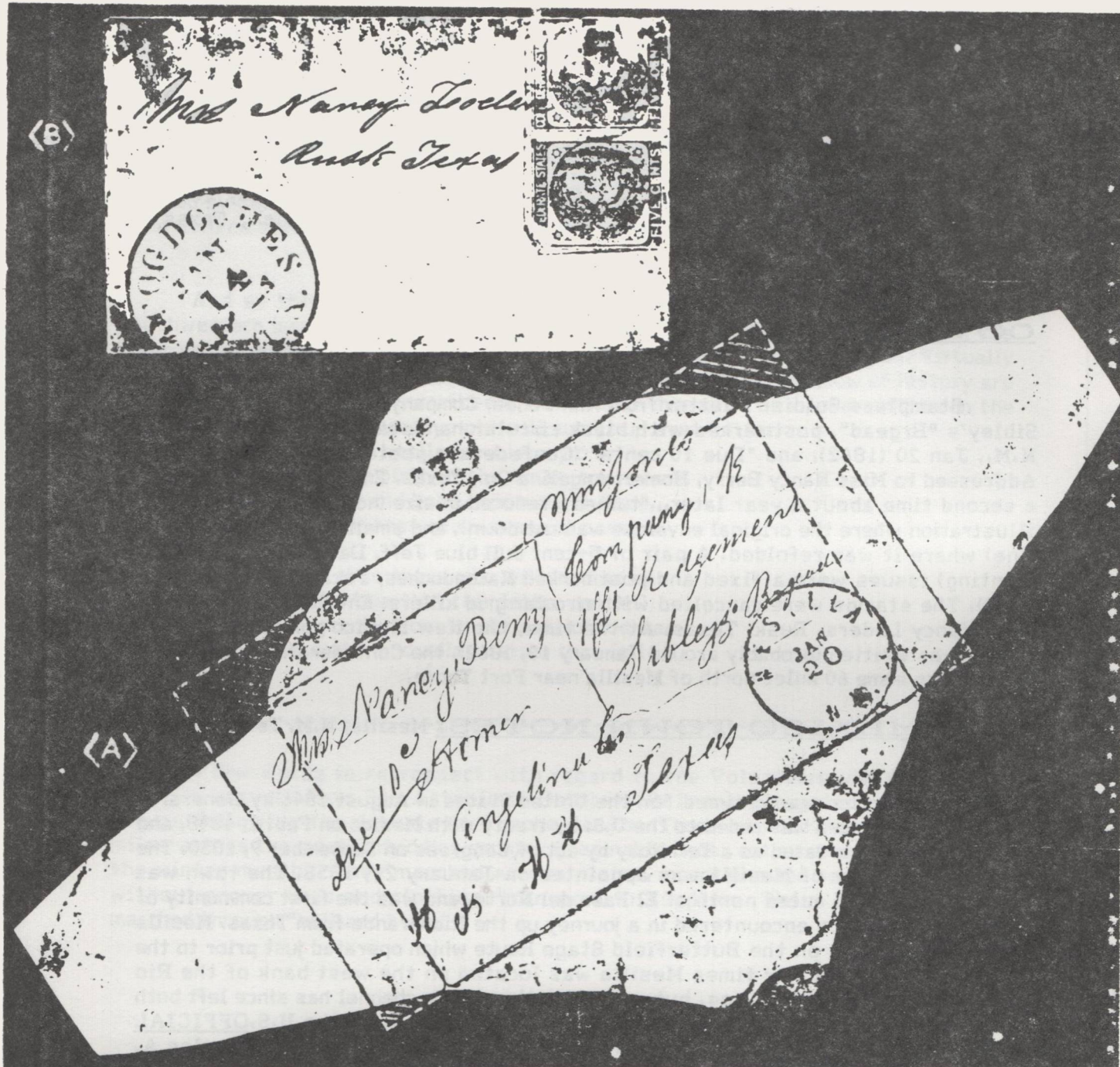
Stampless Soldier's letter from Wm. Jones, Company - K, 1st "Redgeement", Sibley's "Brgead", postmarked with black circular handstamp marking of Mesilla, N.M., Jan 20 (1862), and "Due 10 cents" (Confederate postal rate) in manuscript. Addressed to Miss Nancy Berry, Homer, Angelina Co., Texas. Envelope was then used a second time about a year later..."turned", reduced in size (note cross-hatching on illustration where the original envelope was cut down), and smaller size (note dashed line) where it was refolded. A pair of 5-cent dull blue Jeff. Davis (Richmond local printing) issues were affixed and postmarked Nacogdoches, Tex., Jan 14 (probably 1863). The stamps were cancelled with circular grid killers. Envelope addressed to Mrs. Nancy Lodgers, Rusk, Texas. At the time, the New Mexico portion of the the letter was written (probably around January 13, 1862), the Confederate forces under Sibley were some 60 miles north of Mesilla near Fort Thorn.

NEW MEXICO TOWN NOTES: Mesilla, N.M. Territory

New Mexico was claimed for the United States in August 1846 by General S. W. Kearny. The area was ceded to the U.S. by treaty with Mexico on Feb. 2, 1848, and New Mexico was created as a Territory by act of Congress on September 9, 1850. The first postmaster of Mesilla was appointed on January 21, 1858. The town was situated about 45 miles north of El Paso del Norte, and was the first community of size in New Mexico encountered in a journey up the Rio Grande from Texas. Mesilla was a way station on the Butterfield Stage Route which operated just prior to the Civil War. In Civil War times Mesilla was located on the west bank of the Rio Grande, opposite Las Cruces, but a shift in the river's channel has since left both Las Cruces and Mesilla east of the Rio Grande. A note from the U.S.OFFICIAL REGISTER of Sept. 30, 1859, indicates the Mesilla postmaster was Charles A. Hoppin, and that he paid \$14.94 for the preceeding fiscal year.

TEXAS TOWN NOTES: Homer, Angelina County

The town became the county seat of Angelina County in 1858. The post office was established in that year, and remained in operation until 1924. When the Houston, East and West Texas RR. laid its line some six miles northwest of the town, most of the population at Homer moved to Lufkin. The county seat was also shifted to Lufkin in 1892, leaving Homer to wither on the vine. Homer Post Office



Cover Illustration: Points of Interest

- (A) 1. New Mexico (Territory)...Confederate Usage...Due 10¢
- 2. Endorsement: Soldier in (Gen.) Sibley's Regiment.
- 3. Letter Destination: Homer, Texas (Confederate States of America)
- (B) 4. "Turned" Cover: Reduced in size (note cross-hatched area on illustration).
- 5. Pair 5¢ blue Confederate Local Printings affixed and postmarked Macogdoches, Texas.
- 6. Second Destination: Rush, Texas. (Confederate States of America)

was established under the Confederacy July 12, 1861, with S. W. McGowan as postmaster. McGowan was succeeded in that post by W. W. Gunn (Sept. 17, 1862); Hiram Bolt (Sept. 1, 1864); L. C. Kirkpatrick (Apr. 12, 1865); and, Edmond Steiness (May 8, 1865). The 1865 appointments were made after the surrender of General Lee, but the word had not reached Texas.

Nacogdoches, Nacogdoches County

The town was named for the Nacogdoches Indians who originally inhabited the area dating back several centuries. The area was visited by the La Salle Expedition in 1687, and in 1716 a Spanish mission called Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe de los Nacogdoches was founded by Domingo Ramon. The town has figured in many of the important events of Texas history, and a post office existed there during the Spanish period, the Republic and from statehood. The Nacogdoches post office of the Confederacy was established July 12, 1861, with Fred Voigt postmaster.

Rusk, Cherokee County

Rusk was named for Thomas J. Rusk, who was quite active during the Republic era. It was selected as the county seat of Cherokee County in 1846, although only one family lived there at the time. The town grew rapidly, and in 1848 the Cherokee Academy was sited there. Rusk Post Office was established in 1847, and remains in service. The Confederate post office was established with the appointment of D. B. Martin on July 17, 1861. He was succeeded by Pearsall Thompson (Apr. 26, 1862) and M. G. Hines (Jan. 27, 1864).

COMMENTS:

The "turned" cover illustrated, with its handling by the Mesilla, New Mexico Post Office during the Confederate Occupation, is one of but a few known examples from this ill-fated campaign. It was found by the author in a small correspondence which turned up locally some 25 years ago.

Reflecting as it does Confederate New Mexico occupation usage, "turned" usage and Confederate Texas usage, it is a classic postal history cover. Note if you will the cross-hatched outline on the illustration shows where the envelope was re-cut and then refolded on the "dash" lines. You will then see the "thin line odds" by which all of the markings were left intact even after folding...everything was there. As a point of interest, the Dike Catalog of New Mexico Territorial Postmarks assigns this marking a top rarity rating of "9".

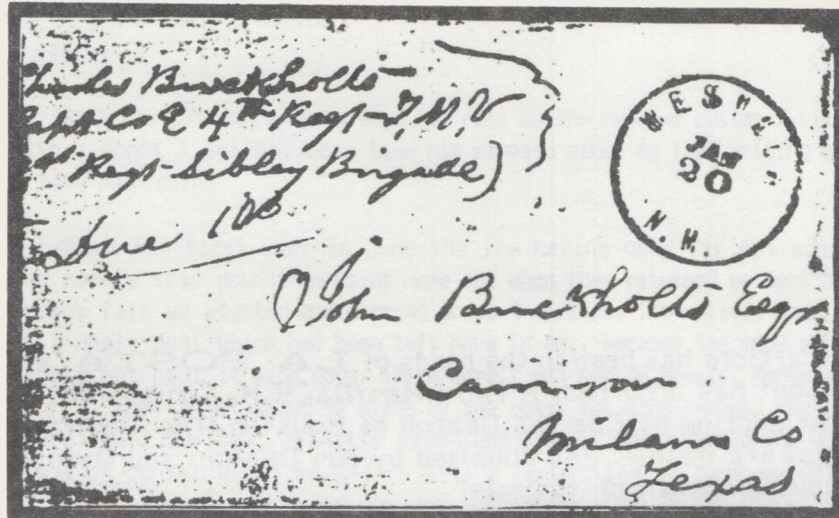
Imagine the thrill of looking inside an envelope which on the face appeared to be an interesting Texas Confederate cover, and, noting in the lower inside corner a postmark which when deciphered read "Mesilla, N.M., Jan. 20th...with "Due 10 cents" in manuscript. This envelope was found only three months after the author had turned up the original discovery postal history cover from Mesilla, N.M. (Confederate usage) in a box of old stampless covers of a small dealer. (See Exhibit A) Each of these covers bears the same month and day of Jan 20 (1862), but were from different correspondences. It might be said that "lightning" had indeed struck twice in the same place.

Even though this cover is a Confederate postal history rarity, the town marking was not listed in the Dietz Confederate Catalog of 1959 because "Soldier's Letters" and "Due" markings were not considered for catalog purposes. For that matter, no mention is made of Sibley's Campaign and Occupation of New Mexico and Arizona, nor was mention made of the Confederate Governments' efforts in the territories west of Texas. Yet, here is documentation that a Confederate post office operated -- either officially or unofficially under the CSA Postal Administration, or under Confederate Military Administration -- in New Mexico in 1861 and 1862.

As you can see, it is rather difficult for me not to be overly enthusiastic about such an item, for it is truly a major Confederate postal history cover, and, with the additional factors of "turned" usage and Texas Confederate second usage, it is another exciting Texas Gem.

EXHIBIT A

The following is a description of the initial cover postmarked Mesilla, N.M., which was found by the author. This cover is mentioned in the "Comments" portion of the preceding article. The cover is a folded blue lettersheet from Capt. Charles Buckholtz, Co. E, 4th Regt., T.M.V. (Texas Mounted Volunteers), 1st Regt - Sibley Brigade, postmarked Mesilla, N.M., Jan 20 (1862) with manuscript "Due 10 cents", and addressed to John Buckholtz, Esqr., Cameron, Milam County, Texas.



Enclosure headed "In Camp New Mexico, January 13, 1862" reads as follows:
We are near Ft. Thorn about 60 miles above Mesilla and 90 miles below Ft. Craig where are some 3,000 of the enemy. Today five Co's go on a reconnaizance to that point. My Co. is not one of them. When they return I expect we are to move upon it. The 2nd Regt is below us 30 or 40 miles. We are surrounded by the Indians. Night before last a picket-guard killed one of them. Last night I commanded a picket of 16 men. We lay in a Kenyon a mile from Camp, but we saw none. Below El Paso I had one horse stolen and above 25 miles I have had 14 stolen, and at this camp...one. Sixteen in all. Other Co's lost also. One had 23 stolen. The men have been very careless but have now become very careful. We are well armed and have sufficient ammunition. Not one man yet lost and no casualty among the men since the accidental shooting of Wm. I. Springer through the hand. The Company are now doing well. All seem cheerful and happy and eager for a fight, and they will do themselves and their country credit, you may depend upon it. I believe I have as brave a Company of men as any Captain ever commanded. I have a fine orderly Sergeant now. He is Gorn Williams and is a gentleman and good officer every inch of him. He and his brother John are the only ones who make music for us. They fiddle and the boys dance. The men who had horses stolen by the Indians are as follows. I.G.H. Abel, Winfred Bailey, W.C. ..., I.S. ..., Richard Corday, E.S. Van Cleve, W.M. Newson, I.S. Ritchie, S.E. Long, G.I. Olive, Daniel Eckman, Mat Logan, VamasBailey, A.I. Bigham, C.C. Sage, Thomas B. Fisher. I have enjoyed the service hugely thus far, Your brother...Charles Buckholtz

One final note! Charles Buckholtz was killed in the fierce fighting at Glorieta Pass in late March of 1862. Only four of his company survived. Accounts of the survivors attest to the gallantry and leadership of Charles Buckholtz. Before the Battle of Glorieta, and while the men were encamped nearby, a Catholic priest from Santa Fe had visited with the men of Sibley's Brigade and formed a pleasant acquaintance with Charles Buckholtz. After the battle, the priest removed the bodies of Buckholtz and two other officers from the battlefield, furnished coffins for their burial in Santa Fe and marked their graves.

UPDATE:

Since this article has been in the hands of **LA POSTA's** Editor, a related development has occurred. A third Mesilla, N.M. Confederate Occupation cover was sold at auction by Charles Deaton of Houston. The illustration of this cover, which appears below, was supplied by Mr. Deaton, and Gordon Bleuler forwards the following account of the sale!

Bidding started at 2nd high bid at \$2,600. There were then two bidders at the sale; one on the long-distance telephone against the book. Bidding continued up to \$4,000, when the book dropped out. Bidding then continued to \$4,500, when one of the floor bidders dropped out. The second floor bidder continued to \$4,800 before dropping out, and the cover was sold to the telephone bidder for \$5,000 (I believe), plus 10% buyers fee, plus state and city taxes which would run the total to over \$5,800.



A LETTER FROM ARCTIC ALASKA

By Robert Potts

The following letter was written during the summer of 1912 by Raymond Bates to his parents in Nebraska. It is a particularly rich account of life and times in early Arctic Alaska, and I am pleased to share its contents with **LA POSTA** readers:

Kivalina, Kotzebue P.O., Alaska, July 18,

'12

Dear Parents;

While we are waiting to send out mail by the revenue cutter I will regale you with a short ? letter. Some time has elapsed since my last writing also some things have been doing

About the first week in June the ice having gone far out some of the natives made a trip down from Point Hope and when they returned we went also. The wind being fair we started one morning about 4 o'clock. The natives had come down to get a whale boat which had been left here in Apr. because the snow got so soft they could not haul it with dogs. There were 2 men beside myself, Margaret and an Eskimo girl. When we got about 40 miles up the coast the wind changed and we had to go ashore, haul our boat upon the beach and go into camp. Beside the whale boat there was an oomiak which we had in tow. I am getting to have quite a bit of respect for an oomiak. This one was very accomodating for hardly had we gotten on the beach when it began to blow and snow, and we being very tired and sleepy were very glad to turn it up on edge, place the sail from the whale boat over it and get inside of this improvised tent and take a good nap. The native is always at home in his oomiak. If I have not told you before, I will explain now that an oomiak is a boat ranging in size from 10 ft. to 35 ft., and of about 5 ft. width across the top, seldom being more than 18 inches wide across the bottom. The sides are very slant, and you might think this a very tippy boat, but when loaded it rides better than a whaleboat. The frame is made of birch wood bound together with thong, and over the frame is sewed the skins of the bearded seal. The men make the frame and it is the work of the women to sew on the skin. Their boats are watertight and as much as 5 tons may be carried in them. Taking on practical civilization, the native has fitted his boat to sail and it works very well. The size of an oomiak is not spoken of in terms of linear measure, but its size is indicated by the number of skins used in covering it. Thus we hear of a 5-skin oomiak, or a 9-skin oomiak. As these boats are very light draught, they cannot be much used in cases where the wind is contrary because they make too much leeway. A new oomiak is a very oderiferous creature. Fortunately our boat was an old one.

After a refreshing sleep the wind still being unfavorable, we went to an Eskimo camp a short distance away to while away the time. This Eskimo camp was only a small tent. While there, they prepared a dinner, and as we sat down to eat it I sat with my feet out the doorway when suddenly something bit my foot. My first thought was that somebody was playing a joke on me, but I saw that everyone was in the tent. Then my foot was bitten again, and upon looking out I saw a fox. He was a wild one, but did not seem afraid of us. We all went out to see it and one of the natives gave it a piece of muktuk (muktuk is the skin of the whale much used for food). It ate some of the food, and buried the remainder much as a dog would have done. Margaret took him up in her arms and I took a picture of it. After she put it

down it stayed around for quite a while, but finally trotted off down the beach.

In the evening, the wind still being unfavorable, we tired of staying there, and launching the boats put out a tow line and having one dog with us hitched him to it and proceeded up the beach. About 11 o'clock we came to Cape Thompson, a high wall facing the sea for about 7 miles, altitude 500 ft. This cape holding off the wind, the ice had not gone away, and we had to put out to sea about 3 miles to get around the ice. Later we found a rift and made our way to shore again. Here we stopped and cooked a meal. The natives have no regularity, but eat when they get hungry, and likewise sleep when they can stay awake no longer. They rather laugh at the white man for his regularity, and say he is not strong. I convinced some of them, however, that the white man can stay awake about as long as the Eskimo when it comes to a pinch. On the way home we had only 3 hrs. sleep out of 60, and everybody was very sleepy. In fact the man at the helm, who was considered the strongest, got so sleepy that he would dose and let the boat go around at will. He could not stay awake. I asked him to let me take the helm, and he very gladly consented. In about 2 min. he was fast asleep, and remained so until I sent the boat on the beach at home, and then I had to shake him to wake him. He made camp and fell to sleep again, but they were all amazed to find that I did not go to sleep till evening. The Eskimo, despite his opinion to the contrary, is inferior in endurance.

Cape Thompson is one of the greatest rookeries in the world, being excelled only by Cape Lisbourne about 75 miles further up the coast. The walls are perpendicular for 500 ft., having narrow shelves almost level running along its face. As we neared the cliff we could see what at first appeared to be white moss or flowers adorning the whole face of the rock, but on nearing it we found that the white appearance was due to the myriad of ducks sitting on the shelves. These ducks, or Otpollok as the Eskimo calls them, are a water bird about the size of a mallard having a dull black back and white breast. They lay two eggs in a season, depositing them on the shelves of the cliff. These eggs are very good eating, and are about twice the size of a hen egg. The bird himself is very tough, and not much relished by white men, though the natives regard him as a great delicacy.

Having a 22-rifle with me, I raised it and fired. The effect was immense. Immediately the clamor that was almost deafening ceased, and there was a great rush of wings and the sky was darkened by a thousand birds put to flight. And yet, after all this the cliff was still white with the birds that had been brave enough not to leave their nests. I fired again and again, always with the same effect, but the cliff still remained white.

In the shadow of this cliff we camped about 11 o'clock, as I said about a page back, cooked our supper by the light of the midnight sun and ate it to the tune of the Otpollok or crow-bill duck. It was here to in this romantic spot that I first tasted seal-oil. To please the native you must learn to eat his food. This is not by any means a gustatory ecstasy, but seal oil is an especial dish with the native, and these natives being especially clean I did not hesitate trying and to my surprise I found that its most objectionable feature in the odor, the taste being somewhat bearable if one is hungry. Before I leave Alaska, I expect to be able to eat anything from barbed wire to guttapercha.

There being no wind under the cliff, we had to row for about 10 miles, and when we had gotten on the other side of the cape we found the ice had not left the shore yet so we had to go out around it. Getting away from the cape we found some wind, and sailed to Point Hope by noon. We landed on the ice about 3 miles from shore, and walked to the beach. Starting Sat. morning at 4 o'clock, and arriving at Pt. Hope Mon. noon, we completed a journey of 85 miles.

Pt. Hope is a low sandbar projecting out seaward about 15 miles, in no place being more than 15 ft. above tide. On the very tip of this point is the native village of Tigara, once a village of 2,000, but by war and pestilence reduced to 200. They are now in the care of an Episcopal mission, the building being about one mile from the village. This year the mission is in charge of one Mr. Goodman from New York City, who lives there with his nephew, a boy of 15 yrs., who has never before been outside of a few streets in the great city. He indeed is a caution, and the brunt of a great many jokes on account of his verdant ways.

Three miles further down the cape is a store owned by a man from Nome named Mr. Rank, a single young man once a banker in Portland. Half mile further is the home of Mr., or "Jim" as he is called, Jim Allen, an Irishman once a sailor and now a squawman. His business is whaling. This spring he caught two quite large whales, which will probably net him \$1000. With him was living an old shipmate, now a miner, but who came up to visit Jim during the whaling season. His name is Thompson. Also living at the same house was a Mr. McIntosh, who is developing a coal mine at Cape Lisbourne. He came up from Nome this spring, but not being able to go further on account of the ice, he staid with Jim.

Half mile further from the point lives a man from Portugal, also a squawman, and noted as a climber of cliffs. He it is who furnishes the vicinity with eggs of the crow-bill duck. Also he is a whale man. Nearby is the home of another whale man, once a sailor and now a squawman, a negro from Jamaica named Tom George. Poor Tom has a cancer in his mouth, and had to go to the hospital this spring. Five miles from the Point is the gov'm't school, where we staid with the teacher and his wife. They too are young people. A mile further down the cape is the home of Mr. Tuckfield, "Little Joe" as he is called, being small of stature. He is an Englishman, and was a sailor. Now he is a squawman, and a whaleman.

So you see Point Hope is quite cosmopolitan. There are no permanent resident natives near the school house, but in the spring during the whaling season there is a village on either side of the school house, one called Jabbertown where the natives from Kotzebue gather, and the other called Beacon Hill where the natives from Noatak and Kivalina live. Kivalina people wre once Noatak people, but the Noataks having no claim to the coast country had a war with the Tigaras, and got the land now known as Kivalina. Part of the people remained here and made a village. The two villages are much related, hence they unite forming one village when they go to Point Hope for the whaling season.

As part of the entertainment for our benefit, there was a hoola-hoola, or native dance, given at the school-house. It lasted from 10 in the morning till 12 at night. After the dance the boys played football till morning. The Jabbertown and Beacon Hill boys united against the Tigara boys. This game is not at all like college football. The boys kick the ball in the direction of home. The side succeeding in getting the ball clear home has won. In this case the Jabbertown boys won. The Tigara boys say, however, that they were jobbed. At the beginning some of the Jabbertown boys went to bed and got some sleep, then came on latter all fresh for the game. Later, as we staid at the Point, there was a children's hoola-hoola, which was quite entertaining. One Sun. the missionary invited all the white people to listen to a sermon, and we went to the mission in a whaleboat. We heard a very good discourse. At this mission they have choir boys and girls, just as they do outside. As I sat listening to the discourse, I thought of a certain bbl. of bottled beer on the wrecked Redfield last fall. It was consigned to the speaker.

While at Point Hope the oogryk came, and we got to see some both dead and alive. They are commonly known as the bearded seal. They look like a seal only much larger. They weigh about 400. The meat tastes like beef. The skin is used to cover oomiaks, to make soles for mukluks and for making rope. We had quite an enjoyable time while there, and so staid a month. Then the ice having broken from the shore, and the wind being favorable, we started for home shortly after the 4th of July.

We went with a native named Mon-ek-suk, or "Money-chuck" as the whalemén call him, in a 30 ft. oomiak. There were Margaret, Mr. Thompson and myself besides the native's family and 9 dogs. We started at noon and by eve we were down to the Cape Thompson. Here by four o'clock we came to where the crow-bill ducks abound, and having 1000 cartridges with me, I opened fire with the 22. There was scarce any wind and the boat moved slowly so that I could stand on deck and shoot up in the cliffs and the children ran along the beach and gathered the game as it fell. By 9 o'clock I had 100 ducks, and the natives objected to carrying any more so I had to quit. We got some good pictures of the Cape too.

After rounding the Cape about 10 miles we pulled up on the beach and had a sleep. The sun was shining, the air was warm, but mosquitoes were thick as lice in an Eskimo's sleeping bag. The next morn at 8 A.M. we were at Kivalina. The season at Kivalina is about three weeks ahead of that north of Cape Thompson. We called this Mr. Thompson's hen roost. As we were nearing home we said as usual that we would never go again as we were all tired out, but it was just two days till we were on another journey. This time we formed a party of four, Mr. Thompson and myself, who were to prospect, Margaret, who was to cook, and a native boy for roustabout. We hired an oomiak and two dogs to pull it. We proposed going about 40 miles up a river here where prospectors have never taken a pan, but men passing through it in winter have thought it a good place to try because colors, a few fine ones, have been found near the mouth of the stream.

Our trip was not successful, however, when we had gone about 12 miles the stream got too steep, and having worn several holes in our oomiak from dragging it over riffles we abandoned the journey and came home. One might make trip in a smaller boat by a lot of exertion. Only 12 miles up the river we found small colors in the bars. Margaret shot some ptarmigan and plover, and I shot some duck and a loon and caught some grayling. Next spring if I feel well enough, I want to make another trial at that trip. The indications are certainly good. Mr. Thompson soon after departed for Squirrel River, where he has a road house and some claims. He is an old friend of Mr. Ruhl's, and worked with him at Cold-foot.

Since then we have been cleaning up and getting ready for the coming of the Revenue Cutter. We have all the reports made out, and the house painted up and about everything in readiness. This morning, what we suppose to be the early boat came in as close to shore as she dared, but the surf being high she went on up the coast (Jul. 31). She will probably go on to Barrow now before coming here. During the past 10 days the wind has blown a gale almost constantly, and the sea has been high. We are almost out of sugar, and our butter is all gone. We have some crow-bill eggs and flour and other things so we will not starve, but what will we feed those men on the cutter, says Margaret.

The cold gray dawn of the morning after -- last evening or Aug. 6, the Cutter came, and of all visits that was about the briefest -- 2 hrs. at the most, and half of the Supt's. time was taken up by the natives. We were much disappointed by the non-appearance of Mr. Shields. Of course Mr. Evans is alright, but he is so quiet and only tells what is necessary without any trimmings. Shields is very sociable, and appreciated the fact that we who hear nothing from one year's end to

another but Eskimo gossip like to hear, yea are veritably bursting to hear, of what is going on in the world. We had everything in readiness from top to bottom and from A to X or possibly Z, but I do not know if Mr. Evans noticed whether things were right or not. It is quite likely that I never will know. Silence is golden and nobody likes a hot air peddler more than I, but hang a man that keeps a padlock on his voice-box when a few encouraging words would work magic and be almost as beneficial as a tonic. When Shields was here in the winter, he had something complimentary to say where he could find the opportunity and he gave us some good advice. When he went away we felt like going at the work harder than ever. When Evans went we felt like he had left an ice berg on the front porch -- we don't know if we suited him or not. Well it makes little difference as we did our best, and that must do whether it suits or not. When the news was wired to Nome office that we were to be transferred to Wainwright, Shields dropped us a little note to that effect. It got here day before the Cutter arrived. When Evans came on shore I asked no questions, and just waited to see how long he would wait to tell us the news. He told us the last thing before he left that we had been transferred to Wainwright with a raise in salary, and then waited a while and then finally said the raise amounted to \$50 a month. Of course I was pleased with the raise, but I asked no questions about it and said neither yes, I or no -- I thought it a good plan to fight a man with his own weapons.

Our transfer includes transportation too. Wainwright is about 24 hrs. from the jumping-off place -- Point Barrow. Now what do you think of our going off to an out-of-the-world place like that? We are said to get four mails during the coming winter. The winter there begins earlier and ends later than here, but as far as being lonesome why any place up here is as lonesome as it well can be, and with an increase in salary why we can keep from being quite so lonesome for another year at least. Our supplies, which we sent outside for, have gone on ahead of us to Wainwright, and we have the bills. Our grocery bill amounts to almost \$200, and we expect to live in luxury.

Aug. 5 we received a sack of mail. Think of a sack jammed full of mail all for us. We opened the letters according to date beginning with the earliest ones and reading down to the latest. I read steadily for three hrs. There were 6 letters from home, 5 from Portland, one from Donna B. Goodwin of St. Louis, Mo., and numerous business letters. Yesterday the Cutter brought two more letters from home and two from Portland, with more business letters. Now we are about snowed under writing answers and the mail goes back today. I think we will have the sack about full again. I don't think it will be of any use to write oftener than once a month to us. We are anxious to hear what you intend to do, also about the fall election, as, if a Dem. Party comes into power, probably Mr. Shields will drop out of the office at Nome. He received his appointment from Washington. We will be sorry to lose him, and may quit at the end of this year if he does. The school yr. with the Gov. you know is from Jul. 1 to Jun. 30. We got the kodak supplies all O K. I am sending you some pictures on this mail. Hope to get some good northern pictures on this trip, as the ones last fall were failures. Your last letter was dated Jul. 2nd. At Wainwright I am to have oversight of a coal mine as well as a school and reindeer herd about the same as Kivalina. It is said to be a good place and a responsible position, but mind we stay only one year at the salary -- only a good raise will tempt us to stay longer. Must close, I know there are many things you wish to know that I have not written. I have sent to Kotzebue for a launch to transfer us.

Love, Son, J. A. Bates

The letter was mailed in an envelope bearing a Kotzebue postmark of August 10, 1912. A pencil notation indicates that it was received in Hastings, Nebraska, September 4, 1912. No further records are available concerning the activities of Mr. Bates in Arctic Alaska, although it is known that Woodrow Wilson was elected President in the November 1912 election.

AN ADDENDUM TO THE CATALOG OF NEW MEXICO RAILWAY POSTAL MARKINGS

By Charles L. Towle

Route 27 - Addition and changes - to follow immediately after timetable listing:

The construction progress, mail contracts and mail agent operations on the Santa Fe Branch of the Denver and Rio Grande offer a real puzzle to the collector. One reason for this is that the goal of construction changed midway in the period from Mexico City extension to the Durango line.

Opening of post offices along the line followed closely after the commencement of train service to a particular station. Service was commenced to No Agua 6/30/80; to Tres Piedras 7/18/80; to Servilleta 8/10/80; to Caliente (Taos Jct.) 8/30/80; to Barranca 11/19/80; to Embudo and Alcalde (Claro) 11/30/80; to Chamita 12/1/80; and to Espanola 12/30/80. At two stops there were older post offices located on the other side of the river. Both apparently were used as designations for post office route agencies. San Juan, opposite Chamita, had a post office opened Feb. 25, 1870, and closed Jan. 27, 1881 -- the opening day of Chamita. Santa Cruz, across river from Espanola, had a post office opened Sept. 5, 1878, and closed May 31, 1882 -- 14 months after Espanola opened.

While progression of route agent runs on this line are most difficult to date exactly, the evidence is that the order was something like this:

<u>Period</u>	<u>Route Agent</u>	<u>Markings</u>
7/1/77 - 7/4/78	Denver & Fort Garland Agt.	Colorado Mrks. 955-A-1 and 955-A-2
7/4/78 - 4/-/80	Denver & Alamosa Agt.	Colorado Mrks. None known
4/-/80 - *	Denver, Pueblo & Conejos Agt.	Colorado Mrk. 955-D-1
* - 12/30/80	Denver & San Juan Agt.	Colo. & NM Mrk. 955-E-1
12/30/80-7/28/81	(Possible) Pueblo & Santa Cruz Agt.	Colo. & NM Mrk. None known
7/28/81 - - - - -	Pueblo & Durango Agt.	See Section 26
7/28/81 -	Antonito, CO and Espanola, NM became closed pouch operation	
	91.6 miles with three round trips per week.	

Note; * = Point at which Denver & San Juan Agt. commenced operation is not yet understood. A usage of as early as 10/1/79 has been recorded. Since San Juan was the only post office open down the Rio Grande Valley, there is no doubt this was intended as a terminal point, but frequently terminal names were employed for the agent run before construction reached such point.

All service ceased and the line was abandoned in 1941, with the tracks being removed in 1942.

Route Chronology

<u>Period of Use</u>	<u>Termini</u>	<u>Dist.</u>	<u>Rte.</u>	<u>Markings</u>
*7/18/80-7/28/81	Denver, CO - San Juan, NMT	365	27A	27-a-1
-----	(Pueblo - Santa Cruz)	250	27A	No rept.
7/28/81 -2/21/87	Closed Pouch Service	91.6	27A	-----
2/21/87-12/14/89	Antonito, CO - Santa Fe, NMT	125.6	27A-B	27-b-1
12/14/89-2/20/90	Antonito, CO - Espanola, NMT	91.3	27A	27-c-1 & 2
2/20/90 -8/30/41	Antonito, CO - Santa Fe, NM	125.6	27A-B	27-d-2

Markings Listings

<u>Illus. #</u>	<u>USTMC Cat. No.</u>	<u>Designation</u>	<u>Diam. (mm)</u>	<u>Val.</u>	<u>Notes</u>
27-a-1	955-E-1	Denv. & San Juan Agt.	26½	6	Note *
27-b-1	961-C-1	Anton. & Santa Fe R.P.O.	26	6	
27-c-1	961-A-1	Antonito & Santa Fe R.P.O.	27½	4	1896, 1902, Dir.
27-c-2	961-A-2	Antonito & Santa Fe R.P.O.	30½	4	1912, 1920, Dir.
27-d-1	961-B-1	Antonito & S. Fe R.P.O.	29½	4	T.N.
27-e-1	-----	Antonito & Santa Fe R.P.O. J.E. Wood	27½	---	Blue Clrk's mark

Route Markings Illustrations

27-a-1



Change key numbers on the other markings listed under Section 27.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Greetings **LA POSTA** readers! The autumn of 1981 is nearly upon us, and there are some interesting postal history projects under way. First, a progress report for those of you who have made such time-consuming and helpful contributions to the Doane Cancellation study. The survey carried out last spring brought a hearty response from over 40 students of postal history who were known to have specialized collections covering one or more of the Western states. The information was recorded on computer storage disk as it came in, and a set of files was thus developed which could be constantly updated as new information was added. The coverage of some states is believed to be better than of others. For example, in Arizona and New Mexico where we have postmark catalogs by Doc Dike and Owen Kriege, the Doane coverage should be quite good. On the other hand, in California we have a state with four or five times the number of post offices of other typical Western states, and collecting tends to be along county lines. To sum up, the files are still being updated, and I am hoping for a December publication date. If you can add new dates or towns to the lists of any Western state, please drop me a line soon. I will send you a print-out for any particular state as it now stands, if you send me a #10 SASE.

Charles Towle's NM Railway Postal Marking Catalog was well received by subscribers. Several people wrote to say how much they enjoyed the study, and the 100 extra copies which were printed are almost completely gone. I would like to point out that a companion volume, Post Offices of New Mexico, is now available from your Editor at \$8.00 a copy postpaid. This 70 page soft-bound report lists New Mexico's post offices with dates of operation both alphabetically and by county. There are also sections listing the Branches & Stations of New Mexico, and a series of maps detailing the evolution of New Mexico counties.

Our next issue of **LA POSTA** will contain an interesting and detailed article by Frank Norris on the postal history of Los Angeles and another in Dan Meschter's excellent series on the Post Offices of Utah. Frank's article is a bit of a departure for us in that we do not publish very many California articles, and we have never before published a postal history dealing with a major urban area. The Los Angeles bi-centennial year seemed to be a valid excuse to break tradition, and I'm sure you will agree with me that Frank has found a unexpected richness in the postal history of Los Angeles.

LA POSTA has a new mailing address, and I'd like to apologize for any delays in correspondence which resulted from my relocations over the past summer. The address below will remain valid for at least nine months

Richard W. Helbock, Editor, P.O. Box 3557, Las Cruces, NM 88003

