

Routing Directives Used on Western Mails

Mail to and from California during the years of 1855 to 1868 was sent by the directive written on the envelope. In the absence of a directive, the postmaster would use the current “default” that was in practice at that specific time. The default for mail being sent from San Francisco was “Via Panama” until 1860. On December 17, 1859 the Postmaster General instructed all postmasters to send transcontinental mail by the overland stage. This instruction was carried out within the next 2 months. The preferred method was the Butterfield Route through the south. This changed on July 1, 1861 to the Central Overland Route due to Southern interventions. At least two times, during 1862 and during a period of August to September in 1864, the default had to be adjusted due to Indian depredations. During the adjustments the mail was sent once again via Panama. The mail was sent overland from October of 1868 to May of 1869 connecting with the farthest western terminus of the railroad. In May of 1869 the default was changed to the railroad with the completion of the transcontinental line.

Directives could take the form of illustrations, handstamps, manuscript markings or imprints.



Illustrated Stagecoach Directive



Illustrated Steamer Directive



Imprinted Nicaragua Directive



Handstamp Directive

*Overland Mail
via Los Angeles
Saint Louis*

*"Golden Gate"
via Panama*

Nicaragua Route

Manuscript Directives

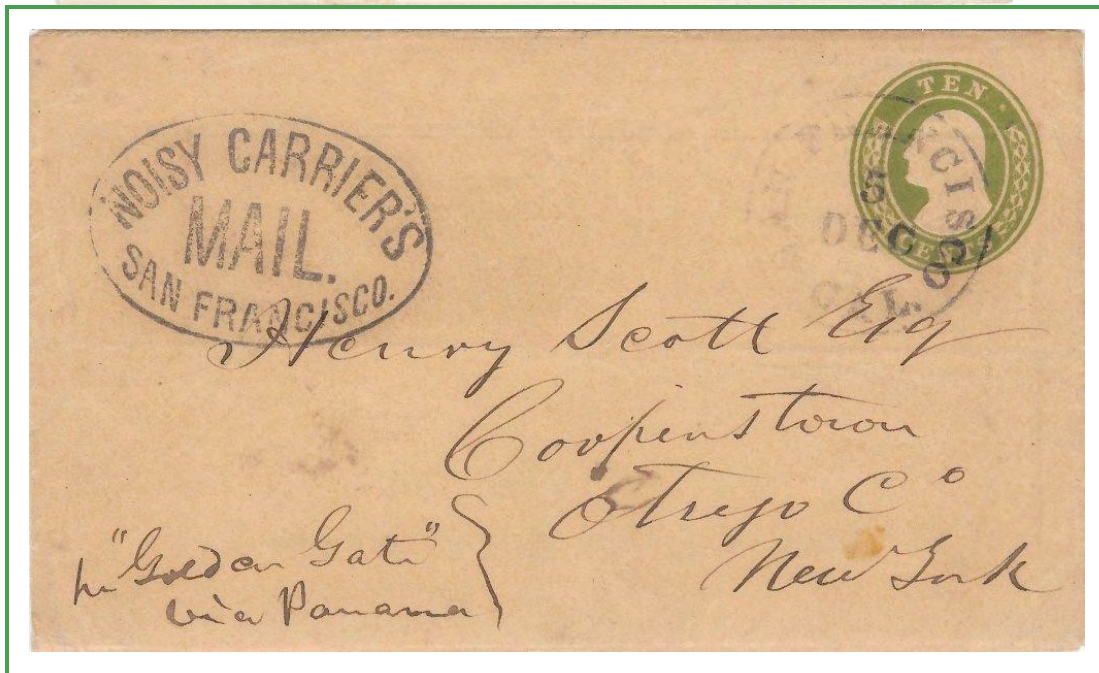
Via Panama - Directives

Mail was carried by the US Mail Steamship Co. (between NY and Chagres) and the Pacific Mail Steamship Co (between Panama and San Francisco). Carriage across the isthmus of Panama was by railroad. This was the default method of mail carriage until December 17, 1859.



#14 on San Francisco News Letter from San Francisco to New York, NY. Carried aboard Pacific Mail Steamship John L. Stephens on June 5, 1857. Ship designation for carriage via Panama. Unnecessary as Panama was the default route at that time.

Panama Directives

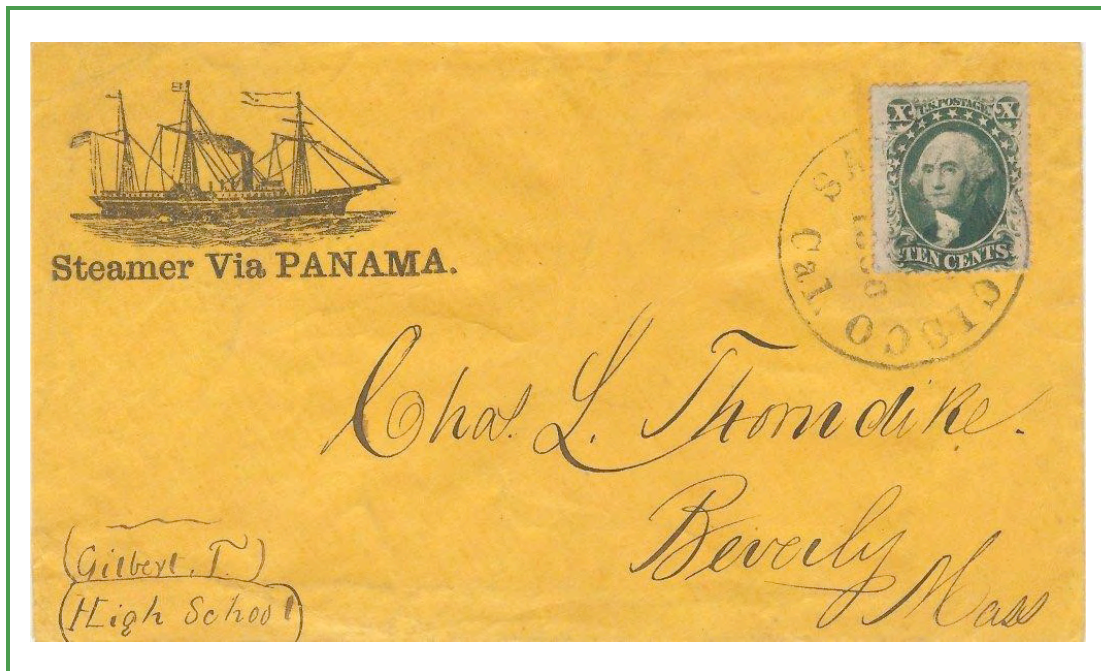


U18 with San Francisco Dec 5 (1856) ds. Oval "Noisy Carrier's Mail San Francisco" black hs. Sender's routing "per 'Golden Gate' Via Panama" in manuscript directive. This directive was unnecessary as the default route was Via Panama at that time. Fancy metallic letter enclosure.

Panama Directives

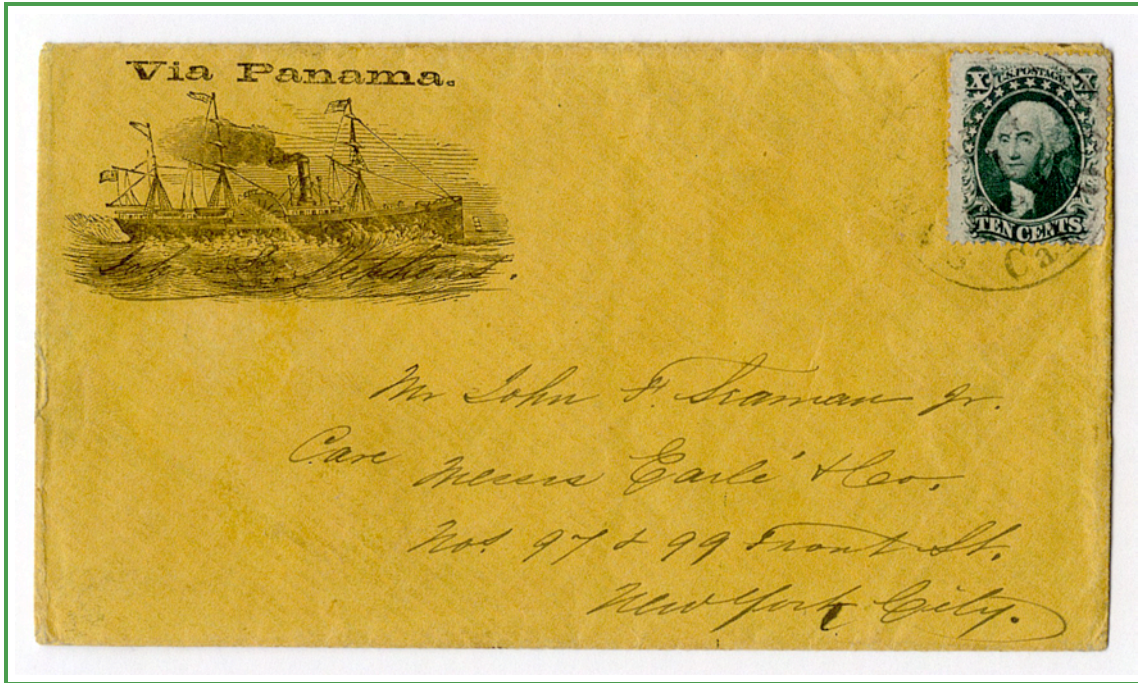


#35 tied by blue grid cancel with matching blue “Marysville Cal Jun 4 PAID By STAMPS” hs. Illustrated Steamship “VIA PANAMA” directive.



#35 tied by San Francisco 1860 datestamp addressed to MA. Illustrated “Steamer Via PANAMA” design. The default mail route was via Overland Mail at that time.

Panama Directives



#35 tied by San Francisco Cal datestamp. Fancy Via Panama Steamship design. Manuscript "John L. Stephens" Carried to New York City Via Panama by the steamship *John L Stephens*



#35 tied by San Francisco 1861 ds on R&B flag with eagle patriotic design to Boston Mass. Ms. "per Orizaba via Panama". Directed to go via Panama when the default route for mail was the overland route.

Panama Directives



Vertical strip of 3, types II-III-II tied by New York Ocean Mail Jul 6 (1858) cancels. Ms. “per Moses Taylor” instructing the post office to send the letter from New York to San Francisco via Panama by the US Mail Steamship Co *Moses Taylor*. East to west directives are far more scarce than west to east directives.

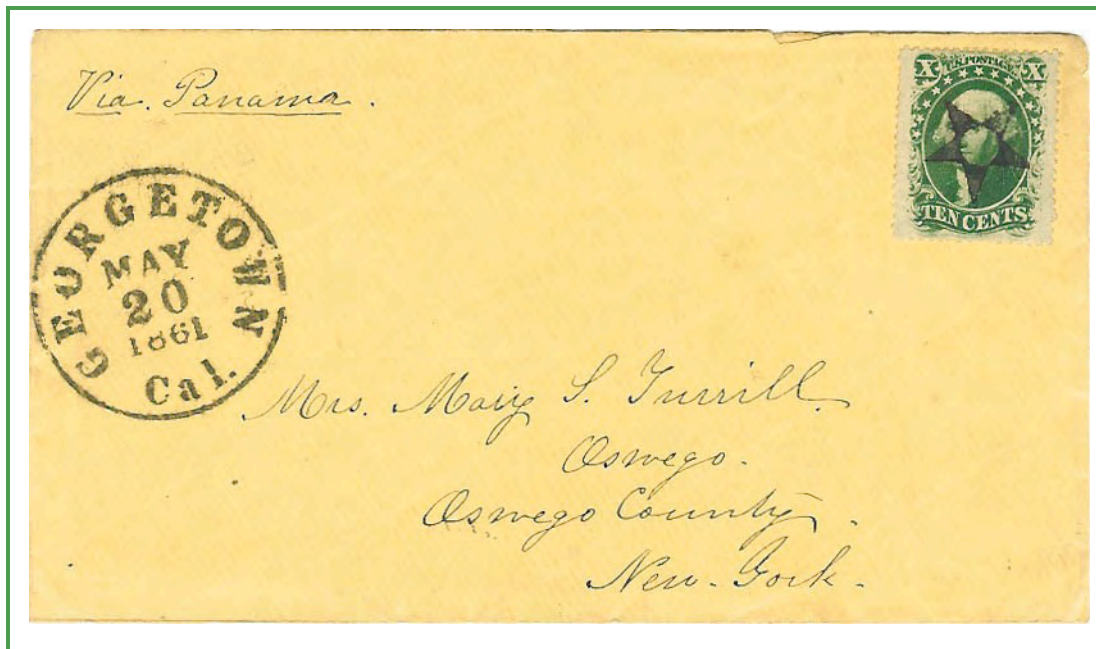


Horizontal pr of #32 (Type II) with selvedge with imprint & Plate No.1 tied by New York Nov 20, 1858 ds addressed to San Francisco. Ms. “Moses Taylor Nov 20th” directing the letter to be sent via Panama.

Panama Directives



#35 tied by San Francisco April 5, 1860 ds on Millett & Bangs Dealer in Boots & Shoes illustrated corner card. Ms. "Via Panama" directing the letter to be sent by steamship. The default method was via the Butterfield Overland Mail at that time.



#35 struck by Georgetown hollow star cancel on Terrill correspondence cover addressed to Oswego, NY. Matching black May 20, 1861 Georgetown Cal ds. "Ms. Via Panama" directing the letter to be sent by steamship rather than the default Overland Mail by the Central Route.

Panama Directives

Wells Fargo franked 6 cent entire with Scott #s 24, 26 & 35 paying the 2xs rate from California to New Jersey. Stamps and indicia cancelled by New York Sep 4 duplex ds. Wells Fargo blue "PAID" in oval. Ms. "p 'Sonora' August 10, 1861" indicating that the cover should be sent Via Panama rather than by the default overland mail route.



Panama Directives



#68 with SF Dec 31, 1862 ds and black cogwheel cancel on cover addressed to Providence, RI. California City Letter Express Co, 10c Blue (33L8) label. Ms. "Steamer" instructing carriage via Panama rather than by the Overland Mail Co on the central route.



#68 tied by cork cancel on blue folded letter from Shanghai, China to Iowa, USA. Black "U.S. Consulate General Nov 27, 1867 Shanghai double circle hs. Ms. "Via Panama" Very late directive for a letter to be carried via Panama .

Via Nicaragua - Directives

In 1848 Cornelius Vanderbilt began searching for a faster route to and from California that could compete with the Pacific Mail Steamship Co's Panama Route. Mail was carried between New York and Greytown (San Juan del Norte) on the East Coast. On the west coast, mail was carried from San Juan del Sur and San Francisco. Mail was conveyed between the two coasts by a combination of sea and land carriage across Lake Nicaragua. The Nicaragua Route was a non-contract route. Letter directed Via Nicaragua had to be delivered to the ship other than by a U.S. Post Office as they could not deliver letters to a non-contract carrier. U.S. Post Office markings would not be placed on covers until they reached the destination side of the voyage.



#14 tied by black "New York SHIP Sep 8 (1855)" ds. With California Penny Post Co 5c blue (34L4) local post adhesive on cover addressed to Dorchester, MA. "Via Nicaragua" black imprint. Blue "Gloucester Sep 10 Ms" ds with matching "MISSSENT" straightline in blue. Letter delivered to the Nicaragua line ship by the California Penny Post Co. and carried Via Nicaragua (non-contract route). It entered the U.S. mails in New York as an incoming ship letter.

Nicaragua Directives



U17a with printed Pacific Express “Rider with horse” PAID frank addressed to Boston, MA. Blue “Pacific Express Co San Francisco Nov 20” hs. Blue “Berford & Co. Atlantic & Pacific Express” oval hs. Ms. “Via Nicaragua” Letter carried by western express (Pacific Express) from San Francisco to New York via the Nicaragua Route (rather than the default Panama Route). Delivered to Boston by eastern express (Berford & Co.). This letter never entered the U.S. mails.



U17 addressed to Philadelphia, PA. Blue “Wells Fargo & Co Express San Francisco” oval. Black New York ds. Ms. “Nicaragua Route” Carried privately by Wells Fargo from San Francisco to New York. Placed into the U.S. mail in New York for delivery to Philadelphia. Carried by Nicaragua line non-contract steamship line.

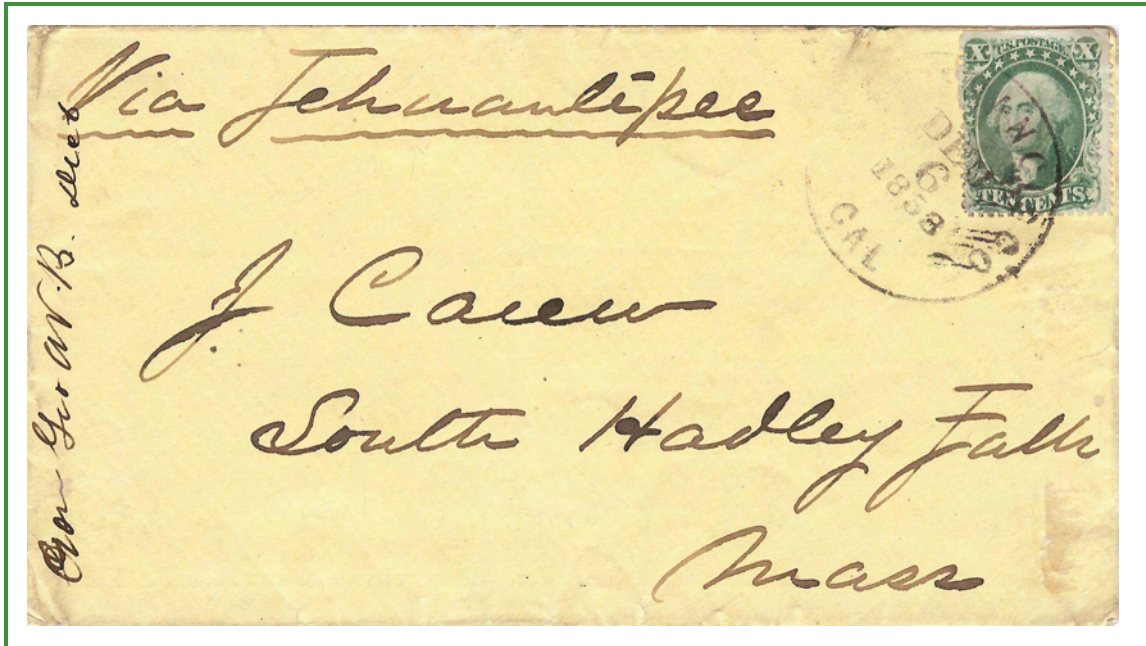
Tehuantepec Route - Directives

Pressure from the west coast for a speedier mail service prompted congress to pass an act on March 3, 1855 authorizing a route from New Orleans through the Isthmus of Tehuantepec to San Francisco. On June 8, 1858 a 1 year contract was signed between the PMG and the "Louisiana Tehuantepec Company". Service to commence between 10/1/1858 and 11/1/1858 terminating on 9/30/1859. The actual service began on 10/27/1858. Mail was conveyed by steamship between New Orleans (USA) and Minatitlan (Mexico) on the eastern side. On the western side between San Francisco and Acaapulco (State of Guerrero) mail was conveyed aboard steamships of the Pacific Mail Steamship Co. The Tehuantepec Route was a U.S. mail contract route. Letters had to be marked "Via Tehuantepec" in order for them to be sent via Tehuantepec rather than the default "Via Panama" at that time. Letters marked as such would be sent by the U.S. post office via the Tehuantepec Route.



#31 (Type I) tied by Vancouver, W.T. (Washington Territory) Jul 7 (1859) ds with ms. "Via Tehuantepec addressed to Annapolis, MD. Letter entered the U.S. mails in Vancouver and was sent by the Tehuantepec contract route rather than the "Via Panama" route which was the default carriage at that time. This territorial "Via Tehuantepec" cover is the only known west to east Tehuantepec cover not originating from California.

Tehuantepec Directives



#33 (Type III) tied by San Francisco Cal Dec 6, 1858 ds addressed to South Hadley Falls, MA. Ms. "Via Tehuantepec" directive indicating carriage by the Tehuantepec Route rather than by the default Panama Route.

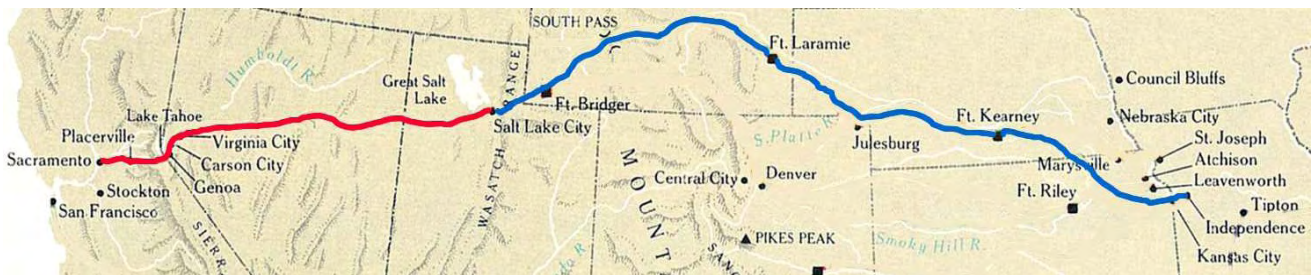


#33 (Type III) tied by indistinct town cancel with April (1859) ds addressed to Big Bar, CA. Ms. "Mail Via Tehuantepec" directive indicating carriage by the Tehuantepec Route to California. One of five recorded east to west Tehuantepec Route covers.

Chorpenning/Woodson Overland Mail - Directives

Mail sent by the Chorpenning/Woodson Route was really sent by 2 different mail routes with 2 different contract carriers. Woodson was the original contractor who in 1851 carried mail between Independence MO and Salt Lake City. This contract changed hands with new contractors until May 1859 when the contract was annulled. Chorpenning was the winning bidder in 1851 for the contract to carry mail between Sacramento CA and Salt Lake City. In 1853 Chorpenning went to Washington and received a concession that would allow him to carry the mail via San Pedro during the winter. At all other times he would carry it by the Sacramento and Placerville route. Chorpenning held the contract for this route until its annulment in February of 1860.

Mail carried over the Chorpenning/Woodson routes had to be marked for U.S. post offices to send the mail over this central routing. Markings could either be by illustrated design or by manual directive. During the period of these 2 routes operation the default method of mail carriage was by ocean steamer via Panama.



#33 (Type III) pen cancelled on 6 horse stage coach illustrated directive cover "OVERLAND VIA PLACERVILLE & SALT LAKE" design with directive. Sent from Timbuctoo, CA to Carver's Harbor, ME by the Chorpenning/Woodson Route. Upon reaching Carver's Harbor the cover was forwarded to Belfast, ME with "Due 4" ms notation. Carver's Harbor is an island off the coast of Maine. Forwarded charge of 3 cents plus ferriage charge of 1 cents resulted in a 4 cent due the recipient in Belfast.

Chorpenning/Woodson Railroad Propaganda Directives



#33 (Type III) tied by “Folsom City, Cal Jun 14” black ds on “Overland via PLACERVILLE” Chorpenning/Woodson route design. Addressed to Marshall, MI Folsom City is located between Sacramento and Placerville putting in close to the overland mail route travelled by Chorpenning. Only recorded example of this overland mail directive.



#35 (Type V) tied by “Sacramento Cal Sep 20, 1859” ds addressed to Liverpool, NY. “PER OVERLAND MAIL STAGE VIA PLACERVILLE In hope of the the....” Illustrated railroad propaganda cover directing the letter to be sent by the Chorpenning/Woodson overland mail central route.

Chorpenning/Woodson Manuscript Directives



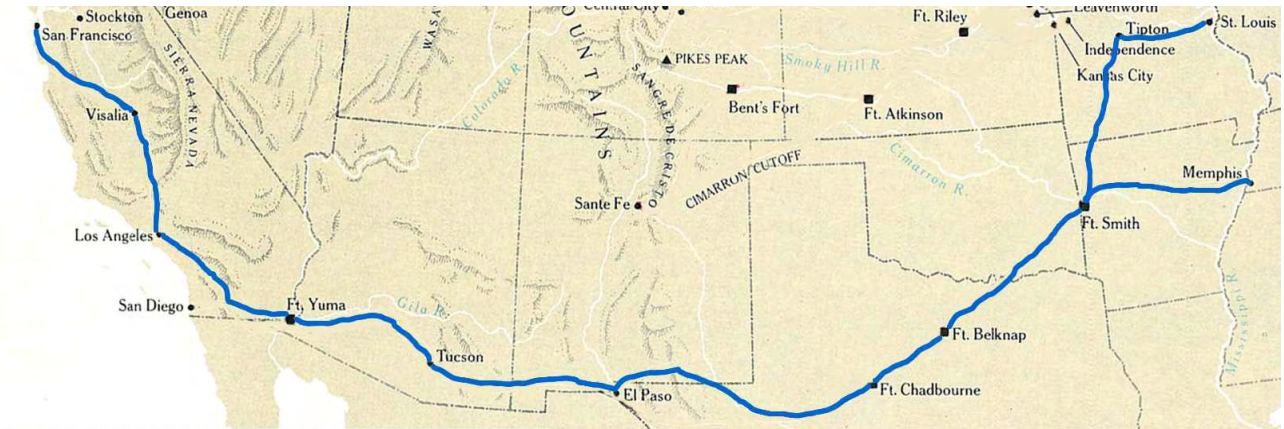
#32 (Type II) tied by Sacramento, Cal ds addressed to Fort Leavenworth, KS. Ms “via Overland Mail” Reposted at Fort Leavenworth (Sep 12 ds) and forwarded to Lecompton, KS. MS “for 3” September 16, 1858 docketing. Cover carried by Hockaday on the along the Woodson Route from Salt Lake City to Independence, MO.



U16 tied by Marysville blue star cancel. Indistinct Jun 11 Marysville ds. Manuscript “Overland via Placerville” directing the post office to send the letter via the Chorpenning/Woodson route rather than the default (ocean carriage via Panama).

Butterfield (Southern) Overland Mail - Directives

For years prior to the Butterfield Overland Mail in 1858, there had been a strong groundswell for better mail service to the west coast. On March 3, 1857 Congress passed a Post Office route bill authorizing overland mail carriage. Mail carriage on the southern overland mail route began on Sept 15, 1858 and continued until March of 1861. From Sept 15, 1858 until late December 1859 the default route was still by ocean mail via Panama. On December 19, 1859 the Butterfield Mail route became the default route for western mail. This continued until the route was relocated in March of 1861 to the central route. Directives used for Butterfield mail were required until late 1859. After that time, mail would be sent by Butterfield mail when no directive was applied.



#35 (Type V) on hand colored 4 horse stage coach illustrated directive design “OVERLAND VIA LOS ANGELES” Red “Honolulu Postage Paid Jan 24 (1860) ds. Red “San Francisco Feb 13 1860 Paid” ds. Red “2” Rare Overland Mail by Butterfield Route originating in Hawaii. Butterfield directive was not necessary in February of 1860 as it was now the default route.

Butterfield Mail Illustrated Stagecoach Directives



#35 (Type V) and 2 copies of #26 on 6 horse stage coach Hutchings & Rosenfield "FROM SAN FRANCISCO VIA LOS ANGELES" illustrated 6 horse Butterfield Route directive cover. San Francisco Aug 5, 1859 ds. tying stamps. Rare stagecoach cover to foreign destination.



#San Francisco City Letter Express blue hs with matching "PAID" on illustrated 4 horse "The Star of The Union-California Overland Via Los Angeles U.S. Mail" directive cover. #35 (Type V) tied by San Francisco Jan 6, 1860 ds. Sent by Butterfield Overland Mail from San Francisco to Dewitt, New York.

Butterfield Mail Illustrated Stagecoach Directives



#35 (Type V) on 4 horse stagecoach “San Francisco Via Los Angeles U.S. Mail-St. Louis – New York” illustrated directive cover. Letter sent via Butterfield Route from Angels Camp Cal (Feb 30) To West Brattleboro Vermont.



#35 (Type V) on 4 hand colored 4 horse “OVERLAND—via—LOS ANGELES” illustrated Butterfield Route directive cover. Blue Marysville star cancel with matching “Marysville Aug 4 PAID BY STAMPS” ds.

Butterfield Mail Illustrated Stagecoach Directives



#35 (Type V) on 4 horse stagecoach "San Francisco Via Los Angeles U.S. Mail-St. Louis – New York" illustrated directive cover. Letter sent via Butterfield Route from Angels Camp Cal (Feb 30) To West Brattleboro Vermont.



#35 (Type V) on 6 horse stagecoach illustrated directive "OVERLAND MAIL TO ALL PARTS OF THE UNION". Stamp tied by "San Francisco Cal Jun 2, 1860" circ. ds. Red straightline "ADVERTISED" hs. Cover directed to be carried by Overland Mail even though it was the default carriage at that time.

Butterfield Mail Railroad Propaganda Directives



#35 (Type V) tied by "San Francisco Cal. Oct 10, 1859" circ. Ds. On yellow cover to Amesbury, MA. "PER OVERLAND MAIL VIA LOS ANGELES IN HOPE OF THE" illustrated railroad propaganda and advertising cover. Directive indicating that the letter should be sent by Butterfield Overland Mail rather than by the default Panama Route. Back of envelope with an all over advertising design for the "WHAT CHEER HOUSE" in San Francisco.



Butterfield Mail Railroad Propaganda Directives



#31 (Type I) on railroad propaganda cover with “PER OVERLAND MAIL STAGE, VIA LOS ANGELES IN HOPE OF THE” Butterfield Overland Mail directive. “San Francisco Jul 22, 1859” ds. Addressed to Defiance, OH. The Panama Route was the default at that time.



#31 (Type I) 2 copies, tied by “San Francisco, Cal. May 9, 1859” circ. ds. on a railroad propaganda cover with “OVERLAND MAIL, VIA LOS ANGELES” Butterfield Route directive. Directive instructing post office to send the letter by Butterfield Overland Mail rather than by the default Panama Route.

Butterfield Mail OVERLAND Handstamp Directives

4 different types of OVERLAND straightline handstamps were used to mark mail for carriage on the Butterfield Overland Mail route. San Francisco used 2 different handstamps of which the dropped “LAN” version is the rarer with 10 covers known. Sacramento and Nevada City had their own versions of the straightline “OVERLAND” handstamp with 6 and 2 known covers respectively.



#35 (Type V) strip of 3 with #27 paying the 35 cent PCM rate to Switzerland. “San Francisco Oct 5, 1860” cds. San Francisco “OVERLAND” dropped “LAN” straightline handstamp used for marking mail intended for the Butterfield Overland Route. Very rare foreign destination letter with the San Francisco Overland hs. 1 of 2 known from this correspondence.

Butterfield Mail OVERLAND Handstamp Directives



#35 (Type V) tied by "Nevada City Cal Jun 15, 1860" ds on cover to Norristown, PA. Nevada City "OVERLAND" straightline indicating that the cover was to go by Butterfield Overland Mail. The Butterfield Route was the default route at this time. One of two known Nevada City "OVERLAND" covers known.



U18 with "Sacramento City Nov 15, 1859" ds addressed to San(d)bornton Bridge, NH. Sacramento style "OVERLAND" straightline indicating that the cover should be sent by the Butterfield Overland Mail Route.

Butterfield Mail Imprinted Directives

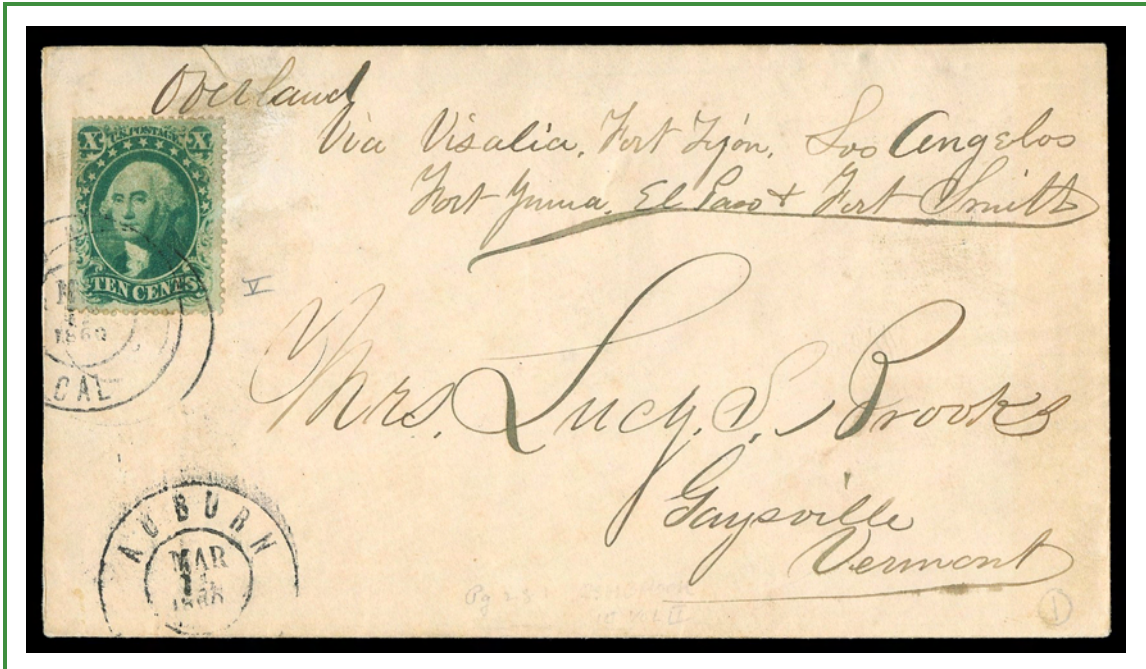


U16 tied by "San Francisco Cal May 27, 1859" ds. "OVERLAND VIA Los Angeles" 3 line imprint directing the letter to be sent by Butterfield Overland Mail on the southern route. Rare Butterfield directive cover to Cornwallis, Nova Scotia.



U15 tied by black "Stockton, May 3 Cal" ds addressed to Dover, MA. "OVERLAND VIA Los Angeles" 3 line imprint directing the letter to be carried by the Butterfield Overland Mail Route.

Butterfield West-To-East Mail Manuscript Directives



#35 tied by “Auburn Mar 12, 1860” ds addressed to Gaysville, VT. Unusually extensive manuscript directive for the Butterfield Overland Mail “Overland, Via Visalia, Fort Tejon, Los Angeles, Fort Yuma, El Paso + Fort Smith”. By March of 1860 the Butterfield Overland Mail Route was the default route for western mail. Some post offices may still have been unaware of this change by March of 1860.



#35 tied by indistinct San Francisco ds addressed to Utica, NY. “PACIFIC AND ATLANTIC TELEGRAPH” advertising cover with manuscript “Via Overland” directive indicating that the letter should be carried on the Butterfield Overland Mail Route.

Butterfield Mail East-to-West Manuscript Directives



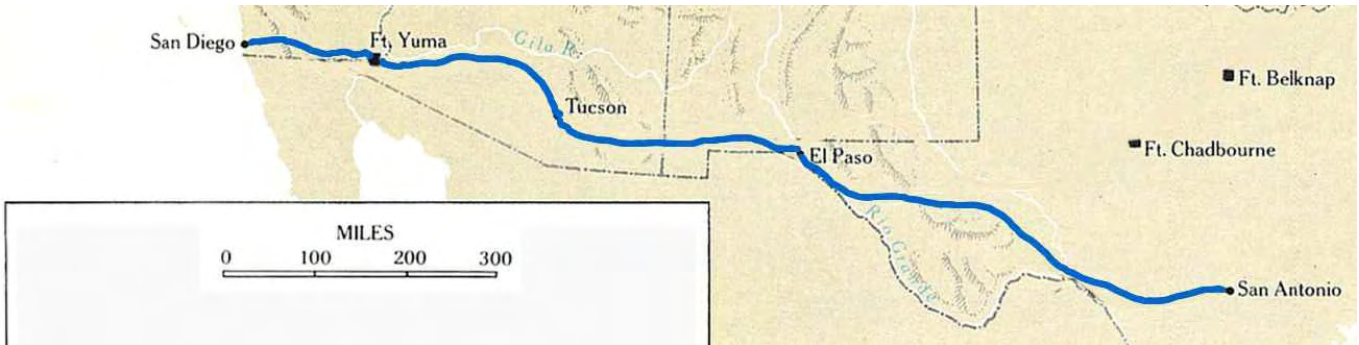
#35 tied by "Canajoharie, NY Sep 5, 1860" ds addressed to Marysville, CA. East to West Butterfield Mail directives are extremely rare. "Overland" manuscript directive instructing the post office to send the cover by Butterfield Overland Mail. This was totally unnecessary as the Overland Mail was the default carriage route at that time.



#35, 2 copies, tied by indistinct Missouri ds. Addressed to San Francisco, CA. Ms. "Overland Mail Via St. Louis" directive. Only known double rate east to west Butterfield Mail directive cover known.

Via Jackass Route - Directive

US Postal Route 8076 called for mail stage service from San Diego via Fort Yuma, El Paso to San Antonio. The segment between Fort Yuma and San Diego was not possible by stage and was instead carried by mule. The route was to commence on July 9, 1857. Mail sent by this route had to be endorsed as such since this route was never a default method for mail carriage.

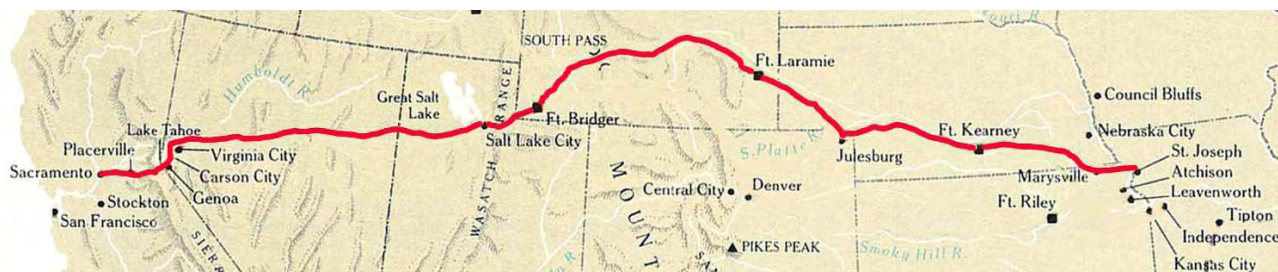


Via San Diego and San Antonio manuscript directive on "Alta California Newspaper Office" pre-printed cover. Carried on the "Jackass" route from the editor of the Alta California newspaper to the editor of the Picayune Newspaper in New Orleans. San Francisco Cal Nov 21, 1859 ds tying #33. Original enclosure requests that a weekly newsletter be sent from New Orleans to SF by Jackass mail in order to save 3 days time over the Butterfield Mail. Only known 10 cent adhesive Jackass

Via Pony Express - Directive

Mail carried by Pony Express went through 3 distinct phases that comprised combinations of both public (contract) and private (non-contract) carriage. At no time was it ever the default route for western mail carriage. It therefore required a directive (and additional funds as a premium service) for letters to be conveyed to and from the west coast.

<u>Phase</u>	<u>Phase 1</u>	<u>Phase 2</u>	<u>Phase 3</u>
Date Range	4/30/60 - 4/14/61	4/15/61 - 6/30/61	7/1/61 - 10/24/61
Management	COC & PPE	Wells Fargo & Co	Wells Fargo & Co
Mail Service	Private Mail Service	Partially Subsidized	Private Mail - SF to Placerville Govt Mail - Placerville to St. Joseph



#35 (Type V) on blue folded letter tied by green cancel with matching green “Saint Joseph MO Mar 20” ds. Blue “PONY EXPRESS SAN FRANCISCO MAR 6” running Pony hs and matching COC & PPE blue oval hs. Ms. “Pony Express March” directive. This cover was carried Mar 6, 1861 during Phase 1 of the Pony Express. This letter was carried privately out of the mail by the COC & PPE and entered the U.S. mails at St. Joseph, MO.

Pony Express Directives



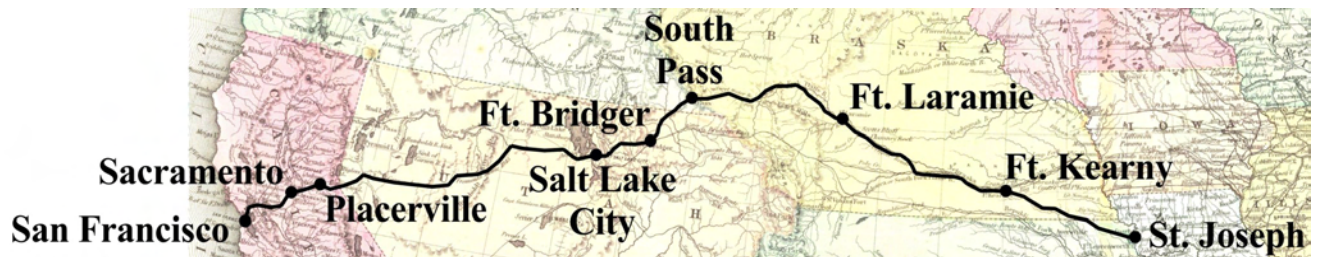
U16 with preprinted “FROM THOS. S. FISKE & CO., Sacramento” addressed to New York, NY. Blue “PONY EXPRESS MAY 26 SACRAMENTO” tying \$2 red Pony stamp. Green “ST. JOSEPH Mo Jun 6” ds. This cover was carried May 26, 1861 during Phase 2 of the Pony Express by Wells Fargo & Co. with partial subsidies by the U.S. Mails. Ms. “Per Pony Express” directing carriage by this premium service.



U41 with Wells Fargo Type 2 frank tied by “New York Sep 7, 1861” ds addressed to Salt Lake City, U.T., Black Sep 25 SJ-COCPP/PE hs. East to West Pony Express cover carried by Wells Fargo & Co during Phase 3 of the Pony Express. This cover was carried entirely under government contract. Preprinted “Agent of Pony Express” directive instructing the post office that this letter was to be carried by the Pony Express rather than by the default overland mail route.

Via Overland Mail Company - Directive

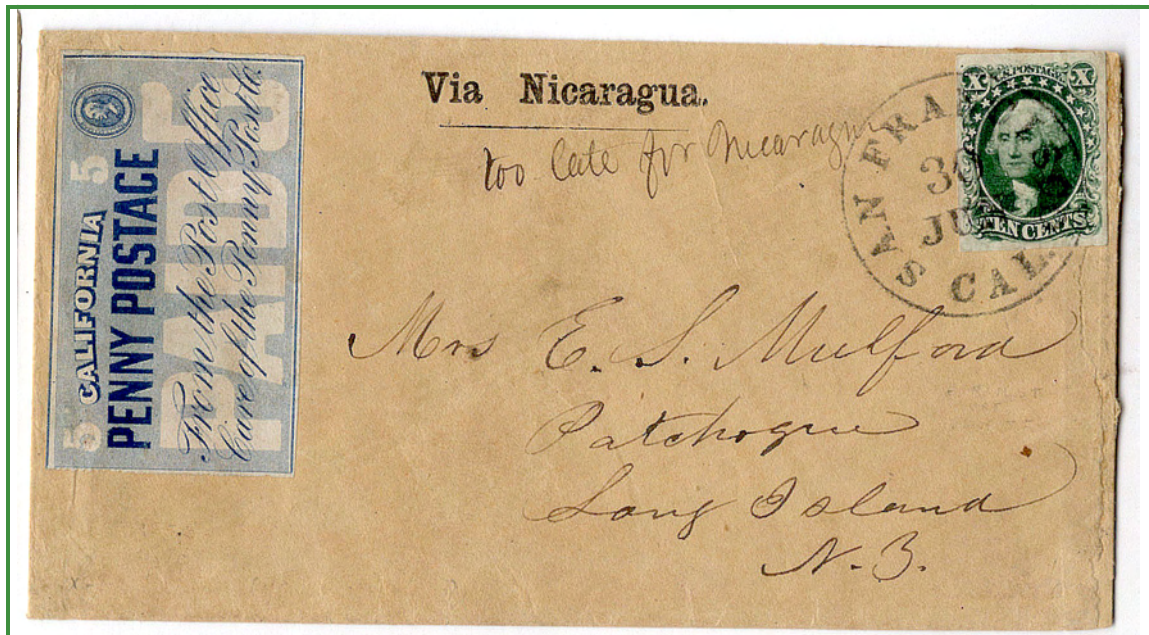
In March of 1861, secessionists had halted the Overland Mail's southern mail route. A new bill was passed and the Overland Mail Co. was awarded a new extension on their contract if they moved to the central route. On March 12, 1861 the Overland Mail Company accepted the modifications to its contract as per the Post Act of Mar 2. In addition to running a Pony Express, the contract called for a daily mail service from St. Joseph or Atchison to Placerville and Sacramento. Said mail to include the entire letter mail to San Francisco, with paper mail from New York to San Francisco to be delivered by steamer. Compensation for the whole service to be \$1,000,000 per annum to take effect before July 1, 1861 and expire July 1, 1864. The contract allowed the Overland Mail Company to subcontract for sections of the route. The COC & PPE Co. leased the section between Salt Lake City to St. Joseph and Atchison. This mail service was the default carriage service for mail to and from the west coast during this period. As such, directives were not required and are rarely found on letters.



#35 (Type V) tied by "San Francisco Aug 13, 1861 Cal" ds on "OVERLAND U.S. MAIL— THE STAR OF THE UNION - California" illustrated directive cover to Oswego, NY. This letter was carried under the contract awarded to the Overland Mail Company. The design on this cover was prepared for use with the Butterfield Mail Route (see pg 18). The words "VIA LOS ANGELES" have been erased from the body of the stagecoach on this cover so that the resulting image directs the letter to be sent "OVERLAND U.S. MAIL" while omitting the reference to the old southern route through Los Angeles.

Directives Ignored

While the majority of letters were sent via their directives we occasionally find letters where the directives were ignored.



#14 tied by "San Francisco Jun 30" (1855) ds. Addressed to Patchogue, NY. California Local (34L4) adhesive with "Via Nicaragua" black imprint. Ms. "too late for Nicaragua" Letter was too late for the ship via Nicaragua and was sent via Panama.



U40 with black "Langton's PAID Pioneer Express" frank. Blue "Langton's Downieville Pioneer Express" oval hs. Black "Atchison KS Sep 21" ds. Ms. "per steamer". Letter was sent via Overland Mail entering the U.S. Mail at the eastern terminus in Atchison KS. The directive was ignored and the letter was sent by the default route (Overland Mail).