



Lot 15

THE ROWELL-FISKE MIXED-FRANKING COVER TO PERSIA

The Only Hawaiian Missionary Mixed-Franking Cover to Persia

Lot 15

1852, 13¢ Blue, “H.I. & U.S. Postage” (4). Type II—the righthand position in the setting of two, showing missing period after “U”—large margins except barely in along part of upper left frameline, small repair at top right, uncanceled, red “Honolulu * U.S. Postage Paid * Nov. 29” (1854) circular datestamp, at the Honolulu post office the 13¢ Missionary stamp was covered by a horizontal pair of **United States 1851 3¢ Rose Red (11A)**, large margin at top to slightly in, top right corner repaired, tied by “San Francisco 1 Jan.” (1855) circular datestamp on blue cover **to Fidelia Fiske in “Oroomiah, Persia”** (Urmi, in modern-day Iran), addressed to “*Oroomiah, Persia, Care of Missionary House, 33 Pemberton Square, Boston, Mass. U.S.A.*”, prepaid to Boston, sent outside the mails to Persia, receipt docketing “*Mrs. Rowell Oct. 20-Nov. 15 54. Ans. Sept. 20 55*”, the stamps have been lifted and reattached with the 13¢ Missionary moved below the paste-over pair

A SPECTACULAR HAWAIIAN MISSIONARY COVER ADDRESSED TO FIDELIA FISKE, WHO WAS ONE OF THE FIRST MISSIONARIES TO WORK AMONG THE NESTORIANS IN PERSIA. APART FROM THE UNIQUE DAWSON COVER, THIS MIXED-FRANKING COVER TO PERSIA IS ARGUABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT HAWAIIAN MISSIONARY COVER EXTANT. IT IS THE ONLY MIXED-FRANKING MISSIONARY COVER ADDRESSED TO A COUNTRY OTHER THAN THE UNITED STATES OR HAWAII. ONLY ONE OTHER MISSIONARY COVER TO PERSIA IS RECORDED, AND IT HAS NO UNITED STATES STAMPS.

The postage rate that applied to this November 1854 letter was 5¢ Hawaiian, 6¢ U.S. postage and 2¢ ship letter fee. The Missionaries had been superseded by the Kamehameha III issue, but the two issues were used concurrently. The short-lived practice of applying U.S. stamps (6¢ postage) over the 13¢ Hawaiian stamp was likely intended to avoid confusion over whether or not U.S. postage had been prepaid. The postmaster in Honolulu affixed the U.S. stamps to cover up the Hawaiian postage, and the letter was postmarked in San Francisco without applying a “Ship” or rate mark. The 2¢ ship fee was credited to San Francisco in the regular accounting. Fred Gregory records eight paste-over frankings: two with the 1853 Kamehameha III Issue and two with 13¢ Missionary stamps.

This letter was part of a group discovered in May 1938 in a sea chest in the basement of a library in Shelburne, Massachusetts, which was sold to Spencer Anderson.

Ex Adm. Frederic R. Harris, Maurice Burrus, Hon. J. William Middendorf II, Philip G. Rust, Leonard Kapiloff, Stanley M. Piller and Guido Craveri/Tito Giamporcaro.

Siegel Census No. 4-II-COV-197. Gregory Census No. 13¢ ‘52-9 (Figure 15-65). With 1963 and 1993 Philatelic Foundation certificates. Estimate \$150,000-200,000

The Journey from Waimea to Oroomiah, Persia, in 1854

The docketing identifies the sender of this cover as Mrs. Malvina Chapin Rowell (1816-1901), the wife of the Reverend George Berkley Rowell. Mrs. Rowell was educated at Mount Holyoke Seminary. The Rowells arrived with the tenth company of missionaries in September 1842 on the *Sarah Abigail* from Boston. They lived at Waioli until 1846, and then moved to Waimea, Kauai. Reverend Rowell died in 1884, and in 1893 Mrs. Rowell relocated to California.

In November 1854 Mrs. Rowell sent this cover and its contents (no longer present) to Fidelia Fiske, her fellow alumnus from Mount Holyoke and a missionary colleague. Miss Fiske travelled to Urmi (Oroomiah) in 1843 to join the missionaries, including her father, who were working among the Nestorians, a religious group whose ancient views of Christ

continued

were regarded by other Christians as heresy. Urmi is located on the plains east of Kurdistan in the northwest region of Persia. It was the site of a female seminary, of which Fidelia Fiske became the first principal.

Pacific Mail Steamship Company,
FOR NEW YORK AND NEW ORLEANS,
VIA PANAMA.

The new and elegant Steamship
GOLDEN AGE,
3000 tons,
JAS. T. WATKINS, Commander,
Will leave Vallejo street wharf, for Panama,
with the Mails, Passengers and Treasure,
On **MONDAY, Jan. 1st, at 9 A.M.**

FORTY MILES BY RAILROAD.

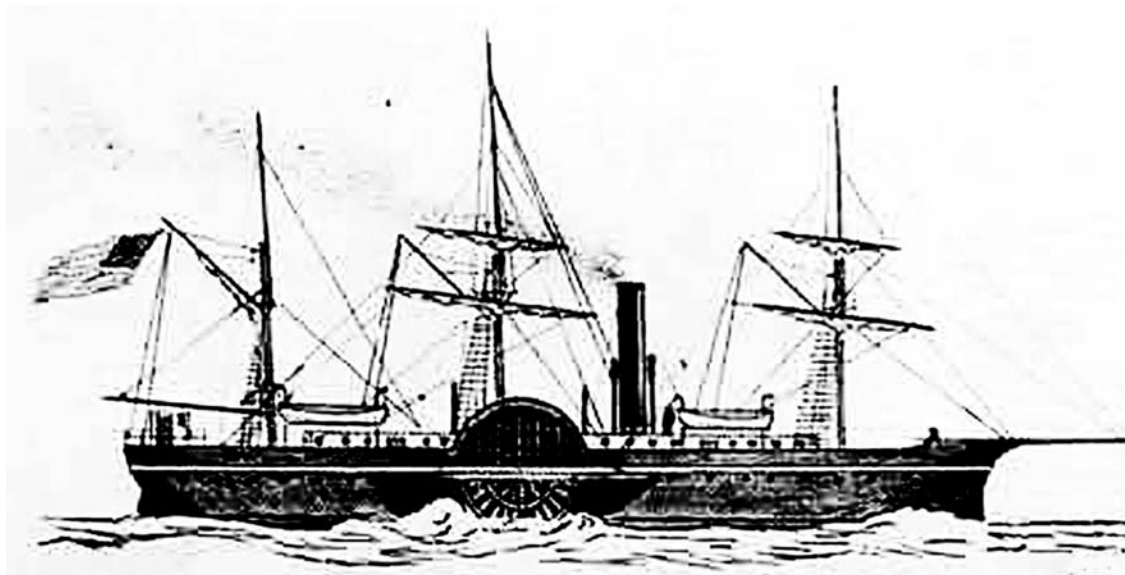
Passengers will be provided with **THROUGH TICKETS,**
covering the Isthmus expenses.
Treasure for shipment will be received at the office of the
Company until midnight on Saturday 30th inst.
For freight or passage apply to
A. B. FORBES, } Agent.
W. F. BABCOCK, }
Cor. Sacramento and Leidesdorff streets.

The steamship **SONORA** will succeed the **Golden Age,**
leaving on the 16th Jan. 1855. d27

Advertised departure of the PMSC *Golden Age*
on January 1, 1855, in *Daily Alta California*

The cover from Mrs. Rowell was addressed to the missionary house at 33 Pemberton Square, where arrangements were made for letters to be carried back and forth by missionaries travelling between the United States and foreign countries.

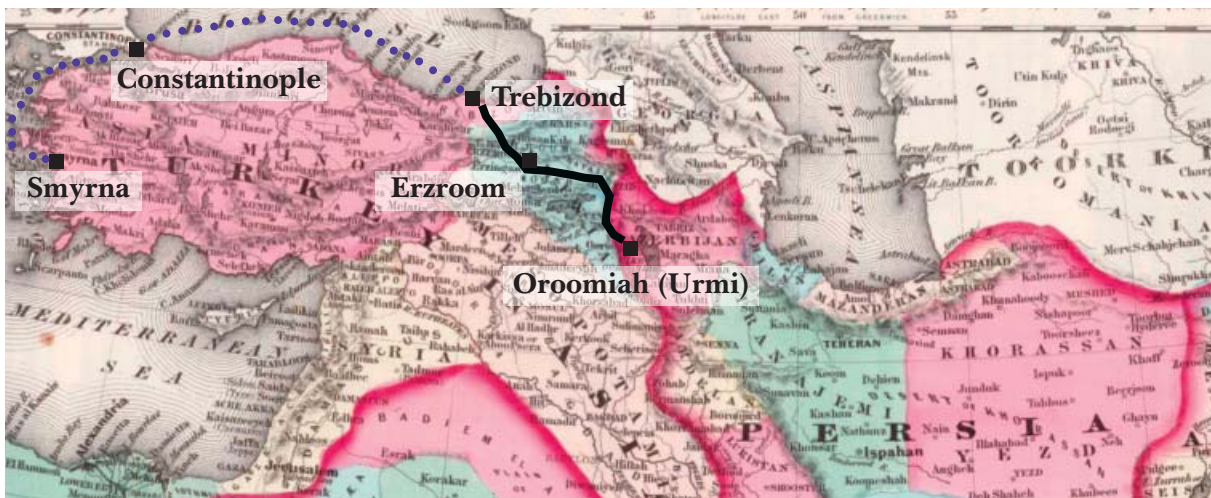
The cover was carried from Honolulu to San Francisco on the American schooner *T. H. Allen*, which departed on December 3, 1854, and arrived on December 26. The San Francisco post office cancelled the pair of 3¢ stamps, which were affixed over the Hawaiian Missionary stamp, with the datestamp dated January 1, 1855, the date of the next scheduled Pacific Mail Steamship Company departure. The PMSC *Golden Age* left on schedule and arrived in Panama about 13 days later. After crossing the isthmus, the cover was carried from Aspinwall on the U.S. Mail Steamship Company's *George Law*, which departed on January 15, 1855, and arrived in New York on January 28 after stopping at Havana.



U.S. Mail Steamship Company steamer *George Law*, renamed *Central America* in 1857

The *George Law* was a 2,141-ton wooden sidewheel steamer launched on October 28, 1852, for the U.S. Mail Steamship Company. She started the New York-Aspinwall route in October 1853. In 1857 the steamer's name was changed to the *Central America*, and soon after she gained infamy when she sank at sea in a hurricane during a voyage from Havana to New York. Hundreds of lives and more than ten tons of California gold were lost, contributing to the Panic of 1857 (the gold was salvaged in 1987).

After the journey from Hawaii to Boston, this letter was carried outside of the mails by vessel across the Atlantic and into the Mediterranean Sea. The journey is described in *Faith Working By Love*, a memoir of Fidelia Fiske's life by Rev. Daniel T. Fiske (published in 1868).



Map showing the water route (.....) and land route (—) from Smyrna to Oroomiah (Urmi)

The ocean voyage brought the missionaries and mail to the port city of Smyrna, Turkey. From there they travelled north across the Aegean Sea to Constantinople, and, after a stop, they continued on the waters of the Black Sea to Trebizond in northeast Turkey.

At Trebizond the missionaries prepared for the arduous land journey to Urmi, a distance of approximately 400 miles. Caravans of twenty horses crossed the plains and mountain passes, covering about fifteen to twenty miles per day. About midway, the caravan rested at Erzroom, where other missionaries were situated.

Then came the last leg of the trip, the dangerous trek across the Kurdish region, which required another two weeks and exposed the missionaries to attacks from hostile Kurds. Upon reaching Urmi, the villages of the plains could be seen from the surrounding mountains. Fidelia Fiske received this letter and, according to docketing in her hand, answered it on September 20, 1855.



Fidelia Fiske



The female seminary at Oroomiah where Fidelia Fiske was principal