

Overland Mails of the Westward Expansion: 1832 to 1869

This exhibit examines the overland postal routes that connected the expanding American West with the rest of the world. The 1803 Louisiana Purchase and the 1845-48 territorial acquisitions tripled the size of the United States, and moved its western frontier from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. Letter communications played a crucial role in enabling the consolidation of these new territories, but the Post Office Department waited until 1847 to establish the first western post office, and until 1850 to establish the first contract overland route into the new territories. Before that, private parties carried the small amount of mail sent. The period covered by this exhibit begins with the earliest known mail from the Rocky Mountains by fur traders in 1832, and concludes with the May 1869 completion of the transcontinental railroad.

Major Overland Postal Routes



Oregon mail routes were the first opened into the Rockies. Americans mainly used the Oregon Trail north of Salt Lake City, while Hudson's Bay Company used a route through southern Canada to Montreal (both shown in blue in the map below).



Utah mail routes connected Salt Lake City, Utah with Missouri and California, and followed the Central Route (shown in green below).



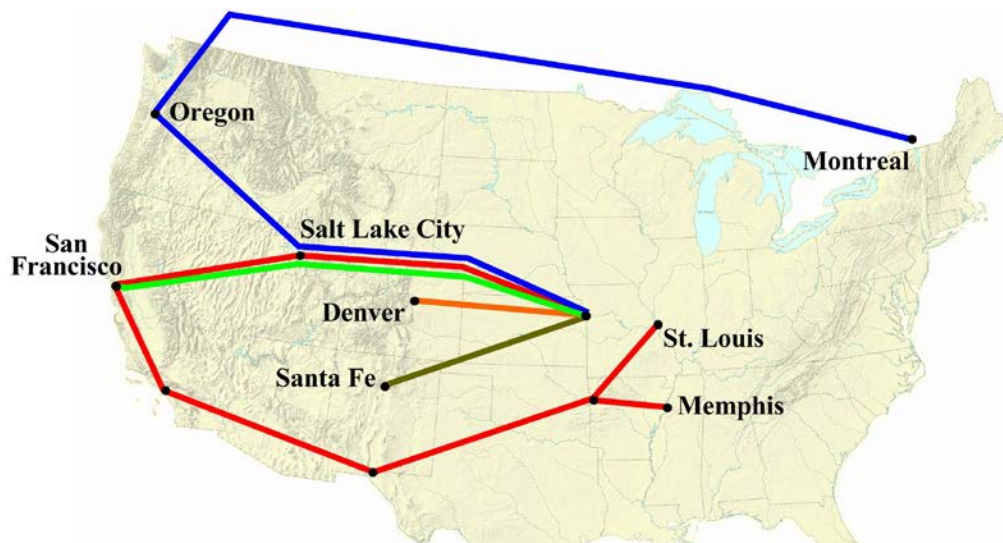
Santa Fe mail routes used the Santa Fe Trail to transport mail between New Mexico and Missouri (shown in olive below).



Colorado mail routes followed the Republican River and Platte River routes between Denver, Colorado and Missouri (shown in orange below).



California mail routes used the Central and Southern Routes (both shown in red). The Pony Express ran along the Central Route.



Presentation

The exhibit is organized by major route, distinguished by different color icons at the upper right. Pre-contract mail (wagon or canoe icon) on each route is covered first, followed by contract mail (stagecoach icon).

Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

Introduction: 1832 - 1851



The fur trade developed the early overland trails to Oregon. American trappers opened the Central Route via South Pass, and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) developed the Canoe Brigade route through southern Canada.

Pre-contract overland routes were superseded by the December 1848 steamship contract mail route between Astoria, Oregon and New York via Panama, and by the July 1851 overland contract mail route between Oregon and Salt Lake City.



"Fur Trade Rendezvous" by Alfred Jacob Miller



Dated June 21, 1834 at the Ham's Fork (Wyoming) Rendezvous - from Nathaniel Wyeth
Carried by Bonneville's fur trade caravan - left July 10 and arrived in St Louis in late August
Posted on September 1 - rated 25¢ due for over 400 miles to Massachusetts - forwarded twice

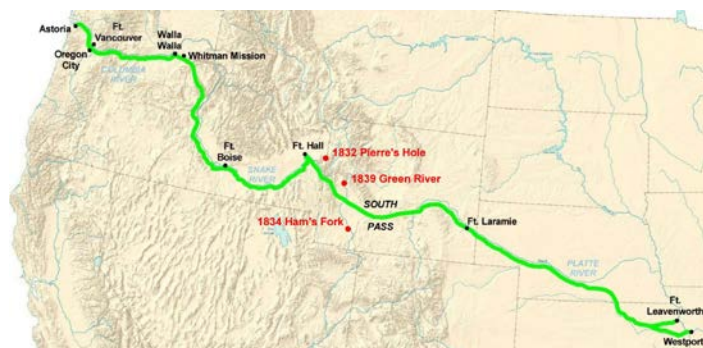
Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

Fur Trade: 1832 - 1840



Starting in 1825, annual fur trade rendezvous west of South Pass in the Rocky Mountains collected furs and brought supplies to the trappers. Exceptionally, caravans carried mail from a rendezvous.

Fur trade caravans left Missouri or the Northwest in the early spring and took about two months to reach the annual rendezvous. They stayed about two weeks and returned in the late summer.



Dated July 14, 1832 at the Pierre's Hole (Idaho) Rendezvous - endorsed "Fav. of Mr. Wm L. Sublette"

Carried by Sublette's fur trade caravan - left July 30 and arrived in St Louis on October 3

Posted on October 5 - rated 25¢ due for over 400 miles to Baltimore

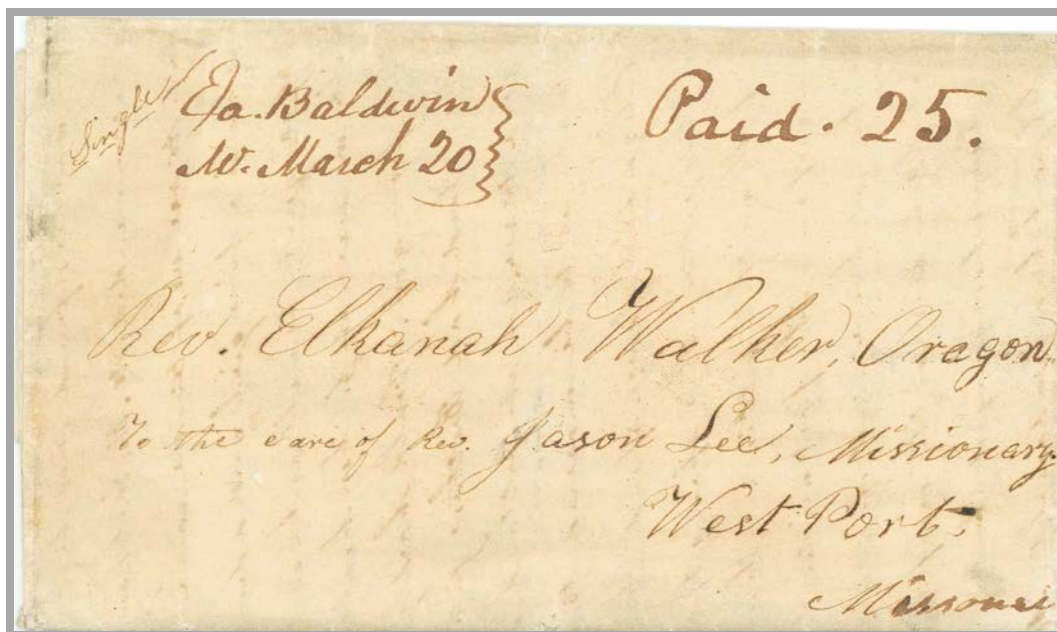
Earliest known letter from the Rocky Mountains

Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

Fur Trade: 1832 - 1840



When no post roads were available to a given destination, postmasters were authorized to use private parties to carry mail to that destination, and to compensate them with the amount of postage carried.



Addressed to Oregon on March 20, 1839 from Baldwin, Maine - prepaid 25¢ to Westport, Missouri

Entrusted by the Westport postmaster to the Munger/Griffin missionary party - left May 4

Arrived on July 5 at the 1839 Green River rendezvous with an American Fur Company caravan

Left rendezvous on July 10 with a westbound HBC fur brigade - received in Oregon on September 16

Only known westbound fur trade caravan letter



“Caravan en Route” by Alfred Jacob Miller

Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

HBC Canoe Brigade: 1833 - 1846



The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) developed their overland Canoe Brigade route to carry furs back to market and bring supplies to Oregon. They also carried some mail from or to Americans in Oregon. The June 15, 1846 Oregon Partition marked the end of this route for Oregon Territory mail.



Dated January 16, 1833 in Fort Vancouver, Oregon - endorsed "Fav. Of the Hon. Hudsons Bay Co."

Carried by HBC Canoe Brigade to Montreal, Canada - posted August 13 - prepaid 6p to the U.S. border

Marked "B" for steamboat to upstate New York - rated 18¾¢ due for 150-400 miles to Massachusetts

Earliest known letter from Oregon by HBC Canoe Brigade

Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

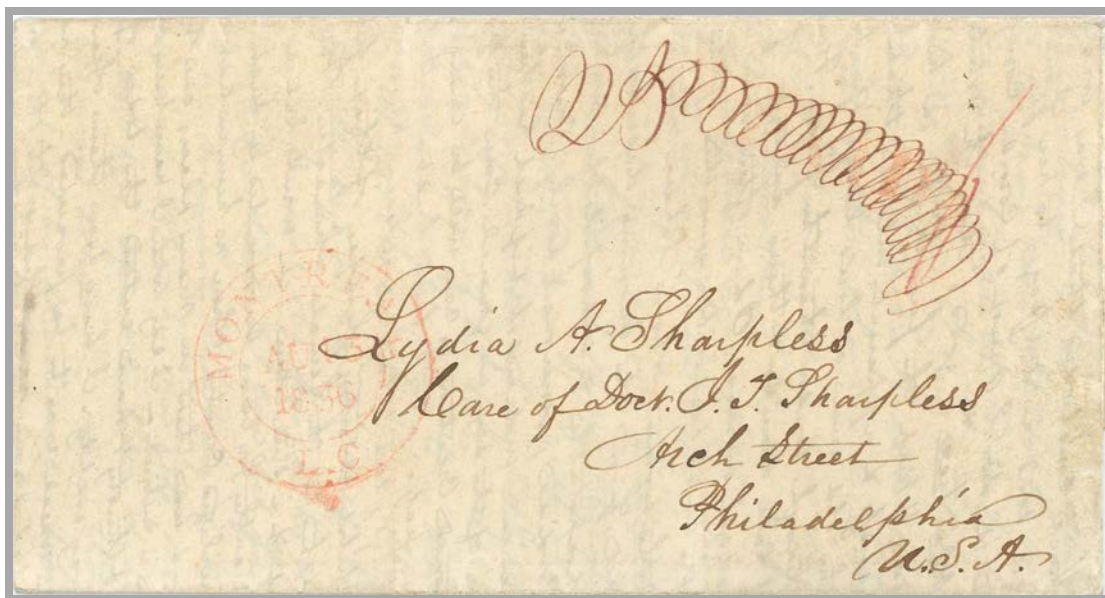
HBC Canoe Brigade: 1833 - 1846



Eastbound HBC Canoe Brigade trips left once per year from Fort Vancouver after the ice had cleared on the Columbia River, typically in February. They took about six months to reach the HBC headquarters at Lachine (Montreal), Canada.



“Shooting the Rapids” by Frances Anne Hopkins



Dated December 18, 1835 in Fort Vancouver, Oregon - from naturalist John Townsend

Carried by 1836 Canoe Brigade to Montreal - posted August 13, prepaid 6p to the U.S. border

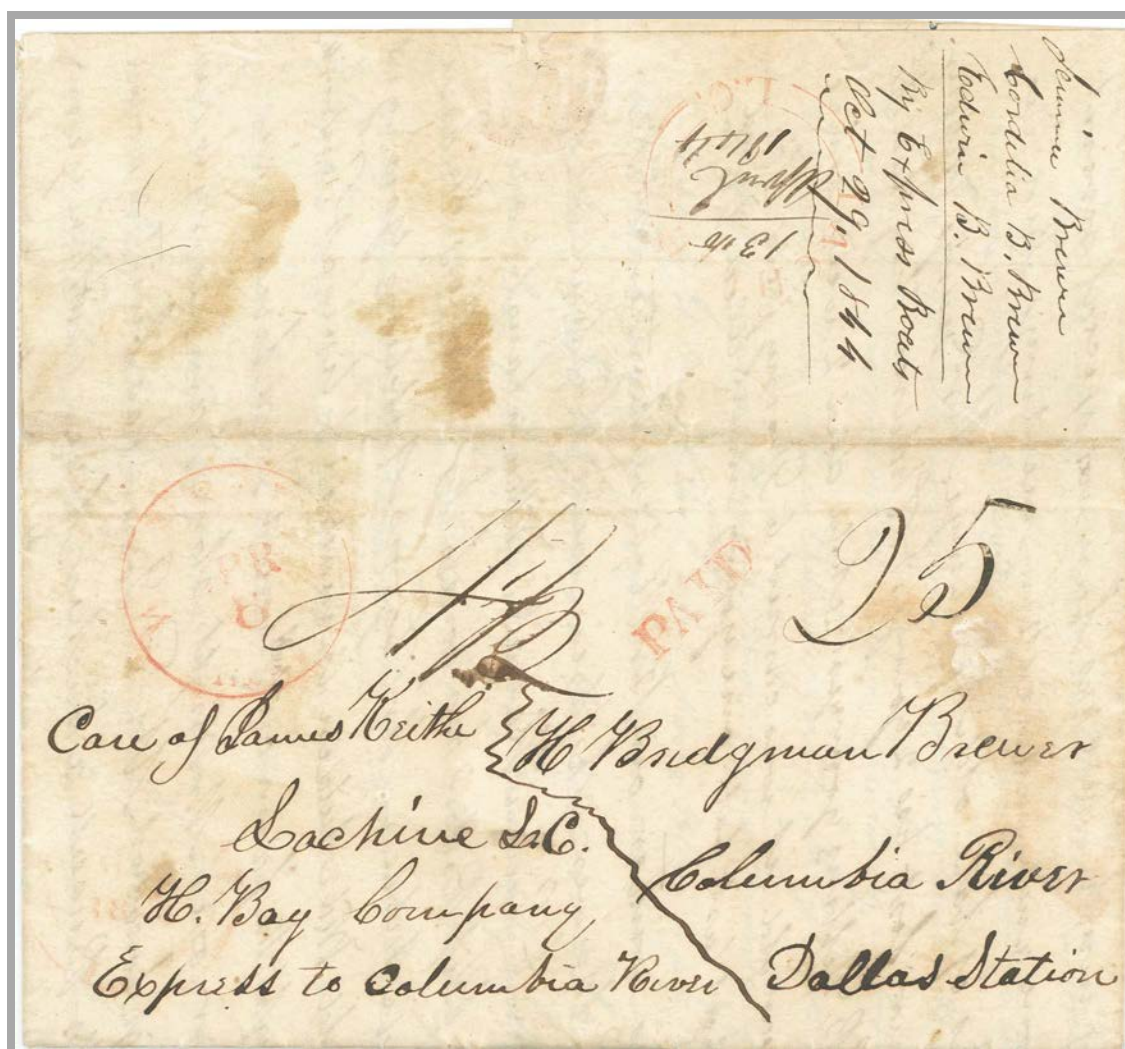
Entered U.S. mails in Vermont - rated 25¢ due for over 400 miles to Philadelphia

Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

HBC Canoe Brigade: 1833 - 1846



The yearly westbound HBC Canoe Brigade was scheduled to leave Lachine (Montreal) each spring and to arrive in Oregon six months later. Only parts of the journey were actually made in birch bark canoes.



Posted April 8, 1844 in Wilbraham, Massachusetts - prepaid 25¢ to the Canadian border

Endorsed to the care of the "H. Bay Company Express to Columbia River" at Montreal

Postmarked April 13 in Montreal with 4½p due - **carried by HBC Canoe Brigade to Oregon**

Arrived October 29, 1844 at Wascopam Mission "By Express Boat" per docket on back

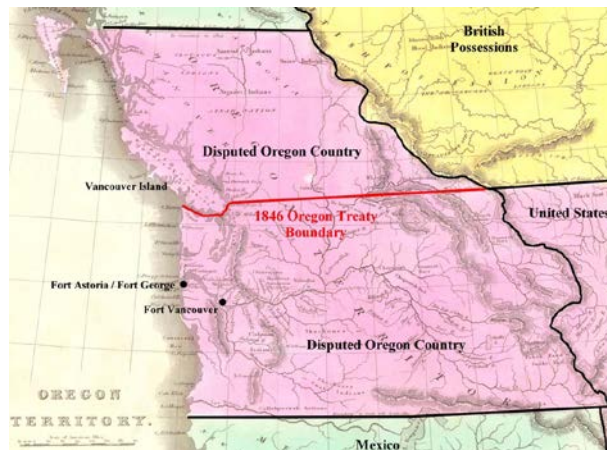
Only known HBC Canoe Brigade letter to Oregon

Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

HBC Canoe Brigade: 1833 - 1846



Great Britain and the United States agreed to divide Oregon along the 49th parallel on June 15, 1846. The HBC moved its operations to Vancouver Island, and their Canoe Brigade ceased to run from Oregon after 1846.



Dated February 9, 1846 near Fort Colville, Oregon - **last HBC Canoe Brigade from Oregon**

Posted October 27 at Lachine (near Montreal) prepaid 4½p to the U.S. border

Entered U.S. mails in Vermont - rated 10¢ due for over 300 miles to Massachusetts

Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

Overland Courier: 1840 - 1848



Settlers returning from Oregon became more numerous after 1840. They carried a few letters that were posted at one of the Missouri River border towns – Westport, Independence, Savannah or St. Joseph.



Dated February 23, 1842 at Waskopam Mission, Oregon - **carried overland to Missouri**

Initially endorsed to the HBC Canoe Brigade - entrusted instead to William Fowler

Posted December 7 in Westport, Missouri - rated 25¢ due for over 400 miles to Connecticut



"The Oregon Trail" by Albert Bierstadt

Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

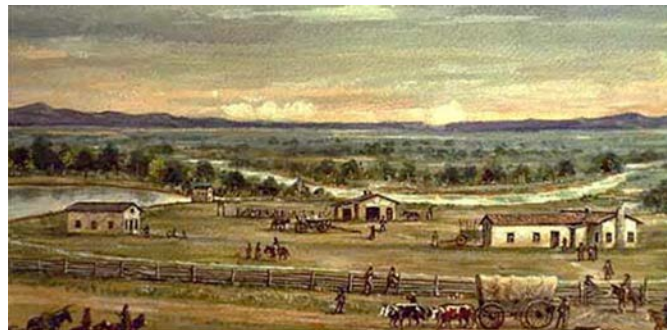
Overland Courier: 1840 - 1848



Oregon post offices were established at Astoria and Oregon City in 1847. After 1848, most Oregon mail was given to those post offices, and was sent by the steamship contract route from Astoria via Panama to New York.



Dated April 8, 1848 in Tualatin Plains, Oregon - **carried overland to Missouri**
Posted July 27 in Savannah, Missouri - rated 10¢ due for over 300 miles to New York
Letter describes the November 1847 Whitman Massacre near Fort Walla Walla



"Whitman Mission" by William Henry Jackson

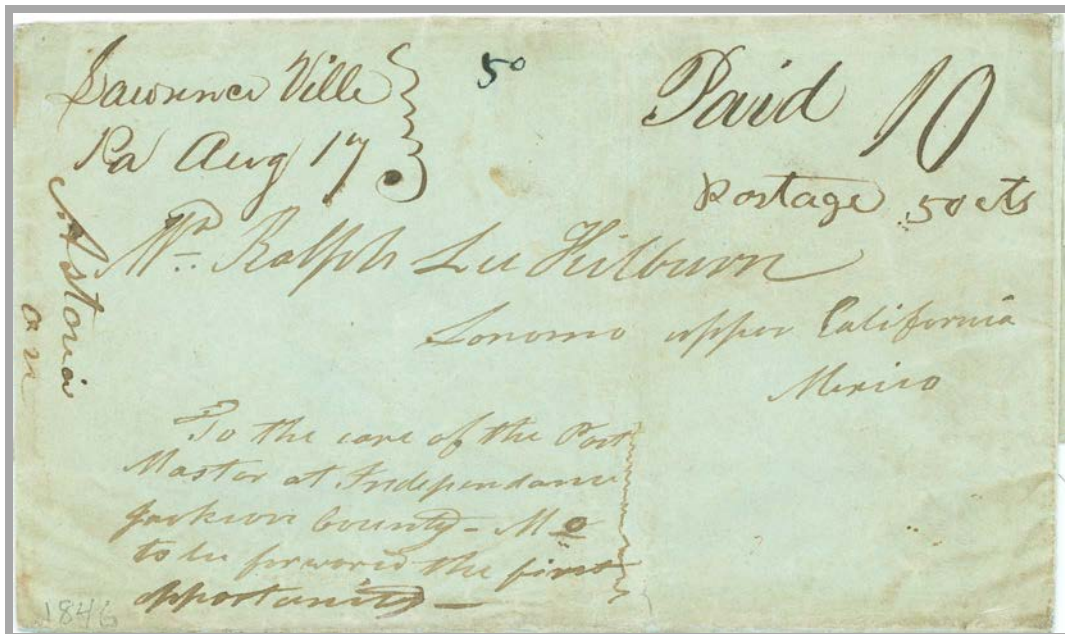
Oregon Contract Mail

First Contract Mail: April - September 1847



John Shively was appointed postmaster of Astoria, Oregon on March 9, 1847. He travelled overland via Independence, Missouri to become the first U.S. postmaster west of the Rocky Mountains.

The Post Office Department instructed the Independence postmaster to entrust any letters being held for the West Coast to Shively, and paid him the postage on those letters as compensation for this first contract trip.



Posted August 17, 1846 at Lawrenceville, PA - prepaid 10¢ to Independence, Missouri

Addressed to California, care of the Independence postmaster "to be forwarded the first opportunity"

Shively left Independence on April 28, 1847 and arrived on September 7 in Astoria, Oregon

Postmarked this letter "Astoria Ore" (at left) - sent by the *Whiton* to San Francisco on November 10

Charged 50¢ due (40¢ overland plus 10¢ to Sonoma in Mexican California)

Only known letter carried in the first contract mail to Oregon

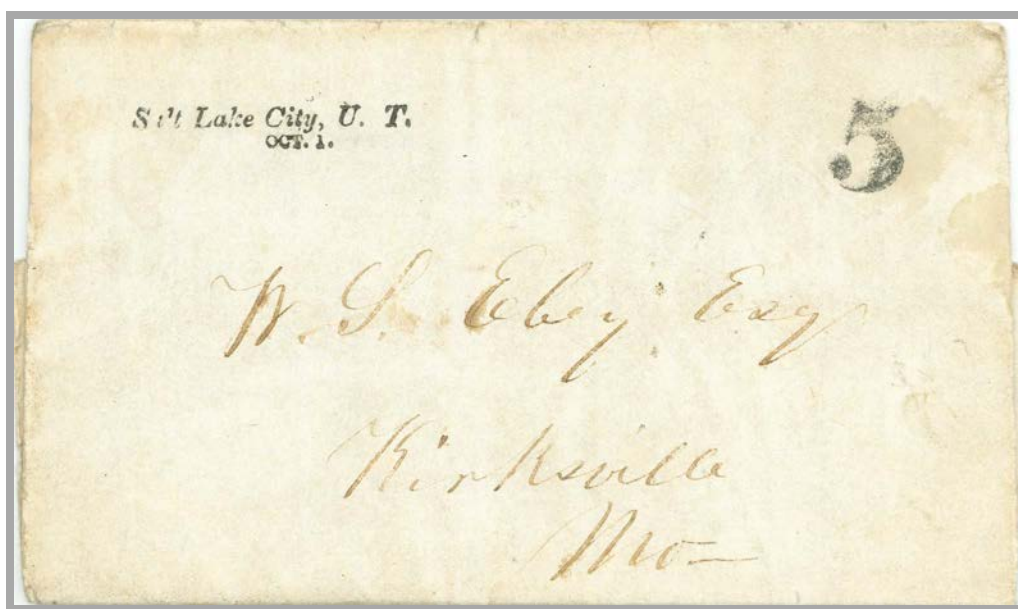
Oregon Contract Mail

Brown & Torrence Contract: July 1851 - June 1854



In March 1851, the Post Office Department advertised for bids on Route 5043 between The Dalles, Oregon and Salt Lake City. This was to connect with Woodson's Salt Lake City-Independence, Missouri contract route.

Brown & Torrence won the three-year contract. Trips every other month began from Oregon on July 1, 1851. It was not renewed after June 1854.



Dateline September 13, 1851 at Fort Boise, Idaho - rated 5¢ due to Kirkville, Missouri

Picked up during the second contract trip - left Oregon September 3 and reached Salt Lake on September 30

Postmarked "Salt Lake City, U.T." - Woodson departed October 1 and arrived October 30 in Independence

One of two known letters carried under this mail contract

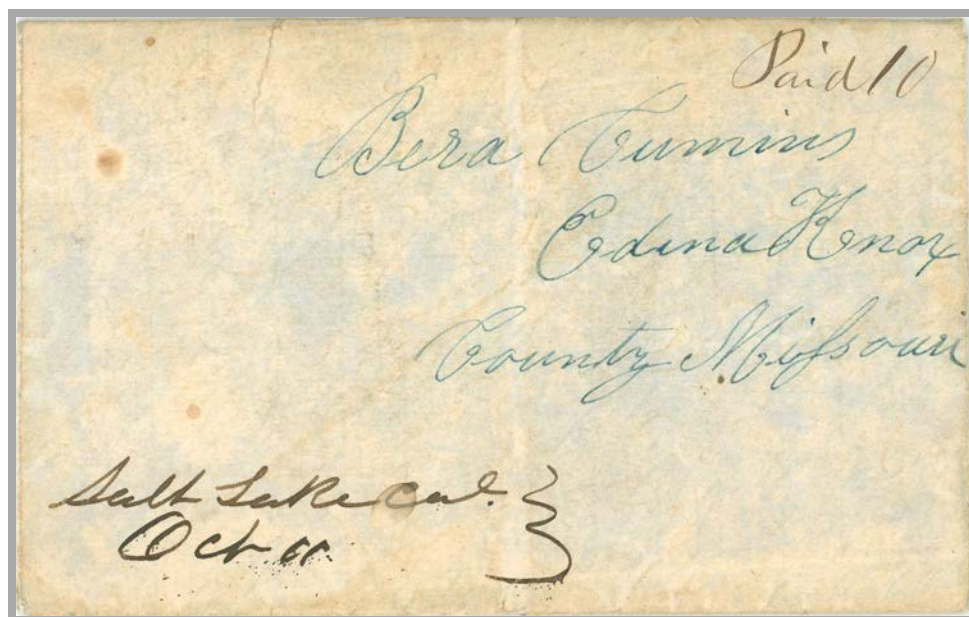
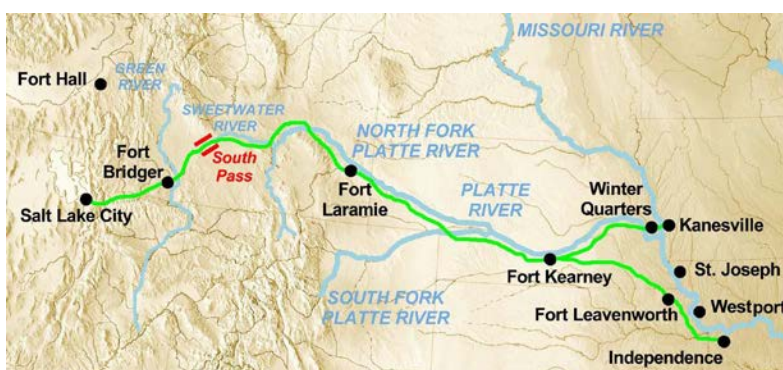
Utah-Missouri Pre-Contract Mail

Introduction: August 1847 - August 1850



Mormons established Salt Lake City in July 1847. They used the old fur trade and Oregon migration route to carry the mail.

Initially, they relied on irregular private couriers between Salt Lake City and Kanesville, Iowa. Starting in March 1849, an organized system of Mormon couriers serviced a special mail contract with the recently-established Salt Lake City post office.



Postmarked "Salt Lake Cal." on October 11, 1849 - prepaid 10¢ postage to Missouri

Carried by Mormon courier John Taylor under special trip contract with post office

Left Salt Lake City on October 19 and arrived in Kanesville on December 10

Utah-Missouri Pre-Contract Mail

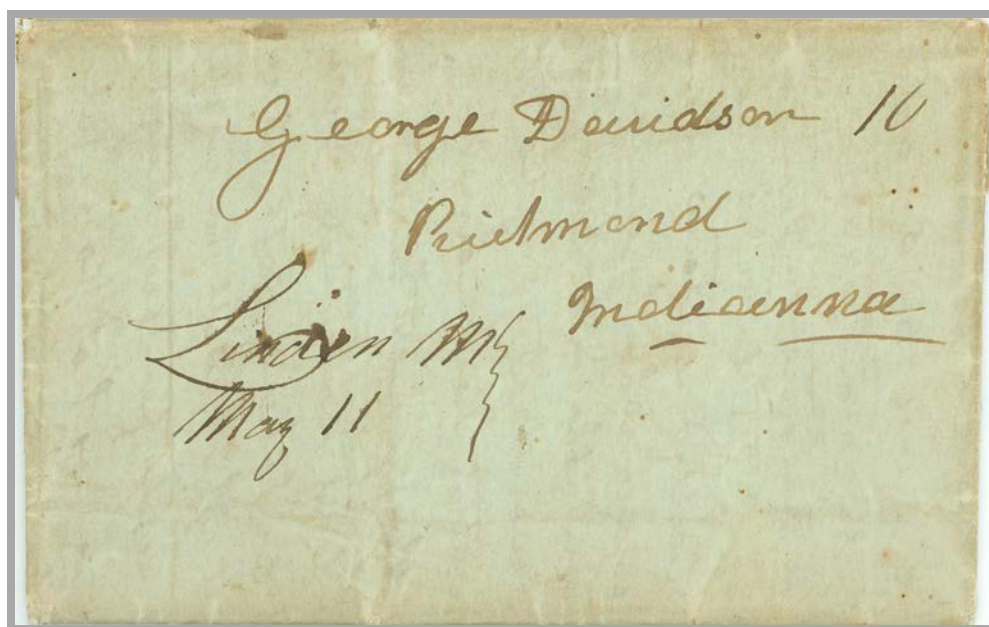
Private Courier: August 1847 - October 1848



Before the January 18, 1849 establishment of the U.S. post office at Salt Lake City, mail trips were infrequent and irregular. Letter writers had to rely on travelers returning to Missouri or Iowa.



“Overland Party” by David Wright



Datelined “Great Salt Lake City: January 9th 1848” - posted on May 11 in Linden, Missouri

“**This mail is carried by some soldiers of the Mormon Battalion** recently (arrived) from California”

Rated 10¢ due to Richmond, Indiana

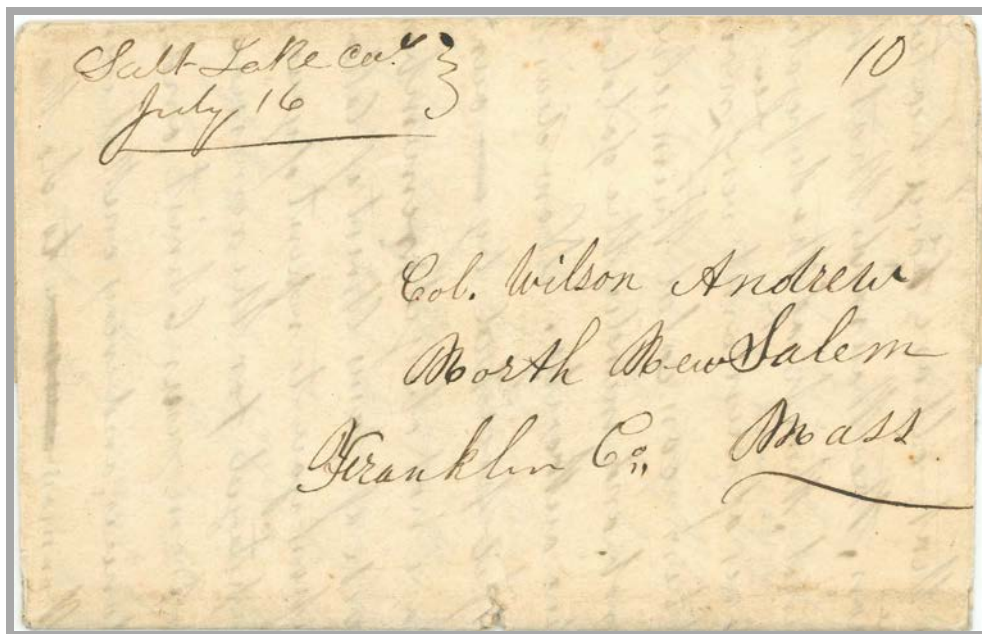
Earliest known letter from Salt Lake City in private hands

Utah-Missouri Pre-Contract Mail

Mormon Courier: March 1849 - August 1850



Mormon couriers carried both post office and private mail for 50¢ per letter. They also received the amount of postage on post office mail.



Postmarked July 16, 1849 in Salt Lake City - carried by Mormon courier Almon Babbitt to Kane, Iowa
Left July 27 and arrived September 3 - **earliest known letter from the Salt Lake post office**

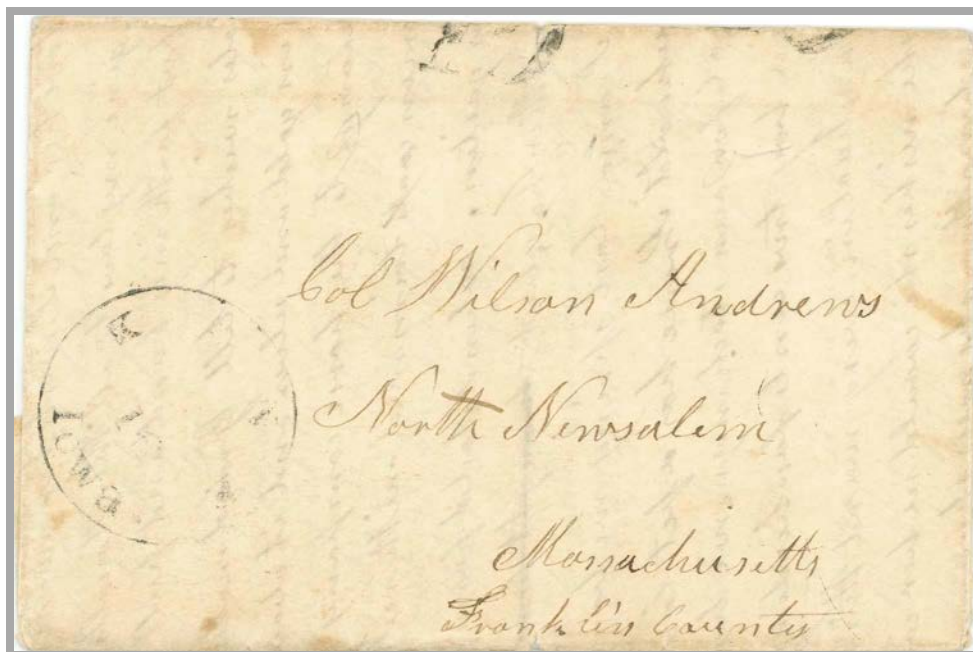


Dated near South Pass (Wyoming) on July 27, 1849 - **collected enroute by Almon Babbitt**

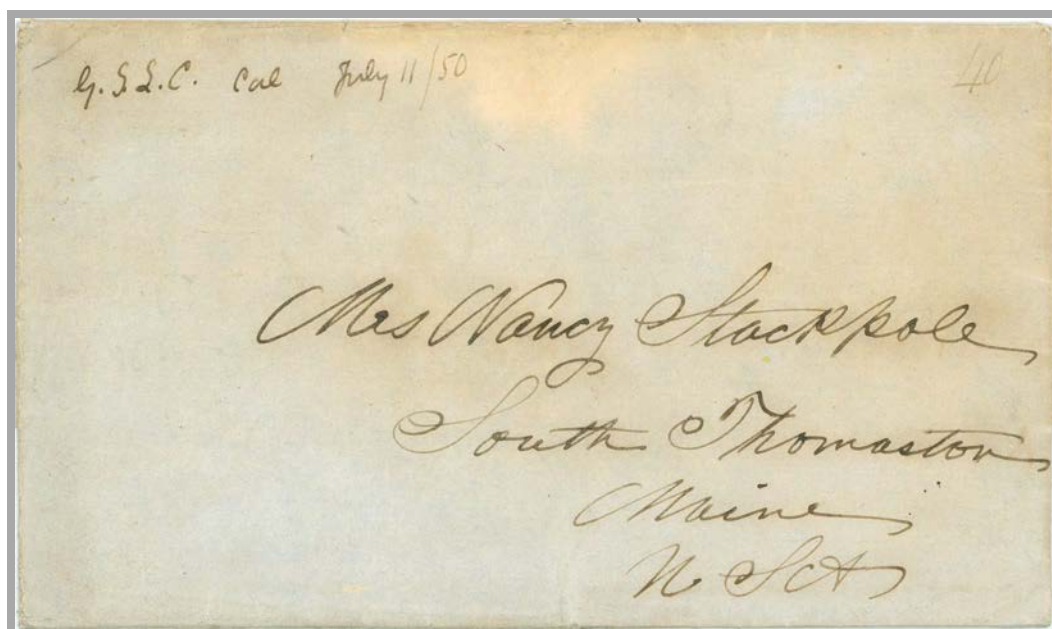
This privately-carried letter was postmarked on September 6 at Kane, Iowa - rated 10¢ due

Utah-Missouri Pre-Contract Mail

Mormon Courier: March 1849 - August 1850



Datelined "Great Salt Lake City July 27 1850" - **carried privately by John Green**
Left August 2 and arrived in Kane, Iowa on September 12 - postmarked there on September 16



Postmarked Great Salt Lake City Cal. on July 11, 1850 - **carried by Mormon courier, John Green**
Salt Lake City post office fell under jurisdiction of California - rated 40¢ due to Maine

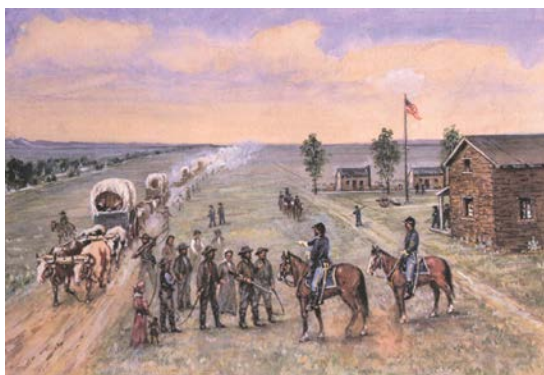
Utah-Missouri Pre-Contract Mail

Military Courier: May 1848 – August 1850



Fort Kearny was established in May 1848 on the south bank of the Platte River to protect the growing migration to the West.

Initially just a military post, its couriers could carry mail to Fort Leavenworth, Missouri for entry into the U.S. mails.



“Fort Kearny” by William Henry Jackson



Dated May 21, 1848 “on the plains” by an immigrant to California

Entrusted to Fort Kearny quartermaster - marked letter “Fort Kearny Oregon Route” in red

Carried by military courier to Fort Leavenworth - postmarked June 14 - rated 10¢ due

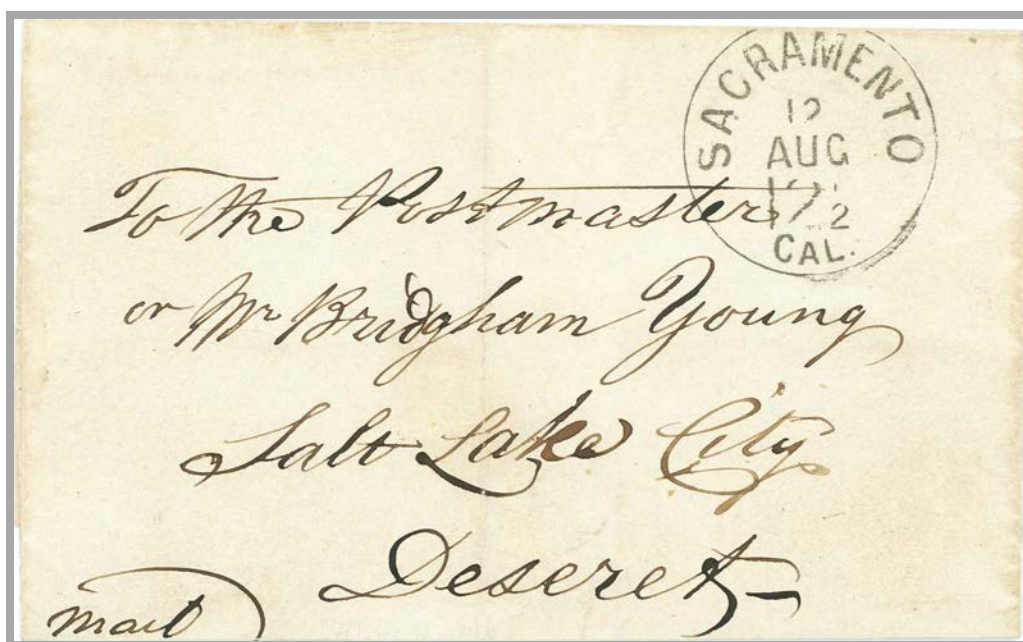
Utah-California Pre-Contract Mail

Mormon Courier: August 1847 - May 1851



Mormon couriers also carried mail on a few trips between Salt Lake City and California. After post offices were established in California in 1849, postmasters there could grant special trip contracts to these couriers for the amount of postage carried.

The May 1851 start of the Chorpenning contract service between Sacramento and Salt Lake City superseded these trip contracts.



Postmarked August 12, 1850 in Sacramento, California - addressed to Salt Lake City, Deseret

Sacramento integral post mark indicates 12½¢ due for August 1848 local West Coast rate

Entrusted by postmaster to Amasa Lyman party - left August 16 and arrived September 29

Only known letter carried by a Mormon courier to or from California

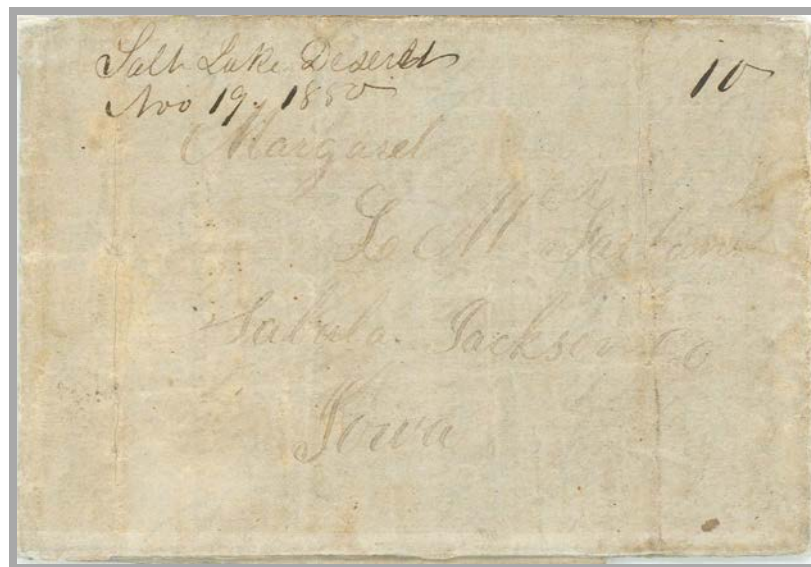
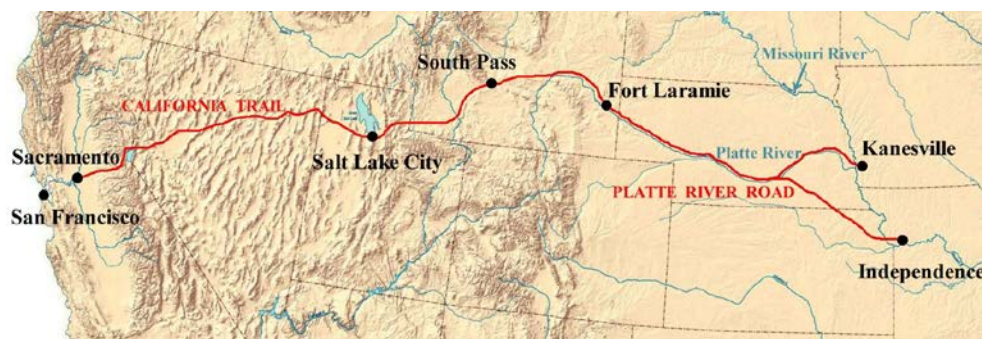
Utah Contract Mail

Introduction: August 1850 - June 1861



The first post office route contract on the Central Route began on August 1, 1850 between Salt Lake City and Independence along the Platte River Road. This was followed on May 3, 1851 by a contract between Salt Lake City and Sacramento along the California Trail.

This series of contracts along the Central Route ended with the July 1, 1861 start of the daily transcontinental overland service.



Postmarked November 19, 1850 in "Salt Lake Deseret" - rated 10¢ due to Sabula, Iowa

Left on November 22 with third Woodson trip - forced back due to heavy snows

Finally left on May 1, 1851 and arrived in Independence on May 31

Earliest known contract mail letter from Salt Lake City

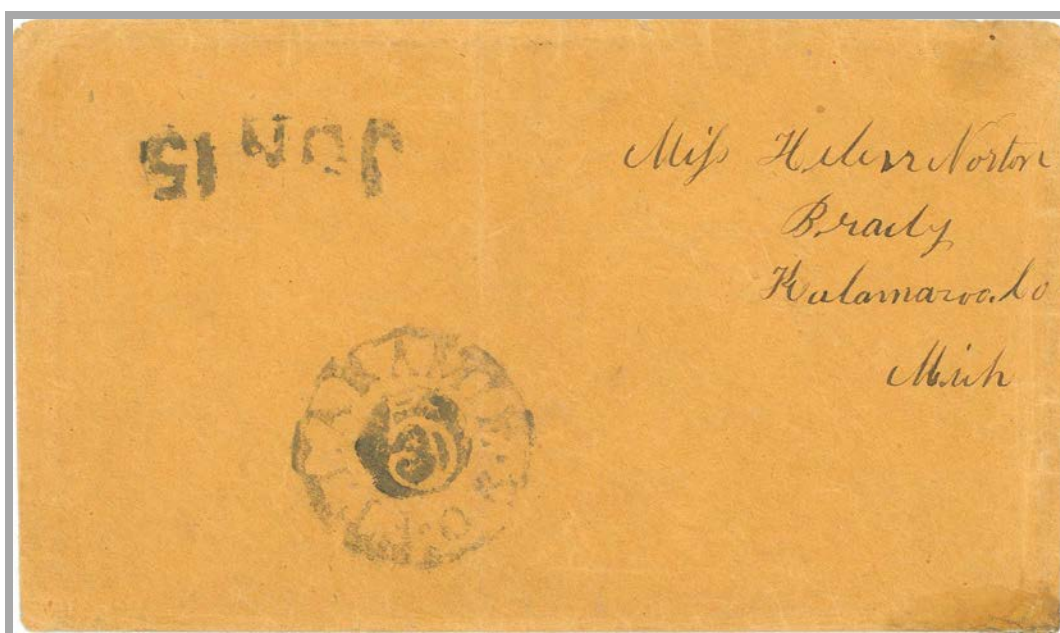
Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Woodson Contract: August 1850 - June 1854



Samuel Woodson's four-year monthly contract for Route 4965 between Salt Lake City and Independence, Missouri began operations from Independence on August 1, 1850 and from Salt Lake on September 11.

He had great difficulty adhering to the 30-day schedule during the winter months, so much mail was delayed or sent via California and Panama to New York. Route 4965 was not renewed after June 1854.



Postmarked June 15, 1852 at Fort Laramie, Oregon Route - rated 5¢ due to Michigan

Hand-carved Fort Laramie O.R. postmarks - 5 due positioned in the middle of the postmark

June 1, 1852 mail left Salt Lake City 12 days late - reached Fort Laramie around June 23

Woodson mail carrier collected this letter enroute - reached Independence around July 8



Fewer than ten "Fort Laramie O.R." postmarks are known

Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Woodson Contract: August 1850 - June 1854

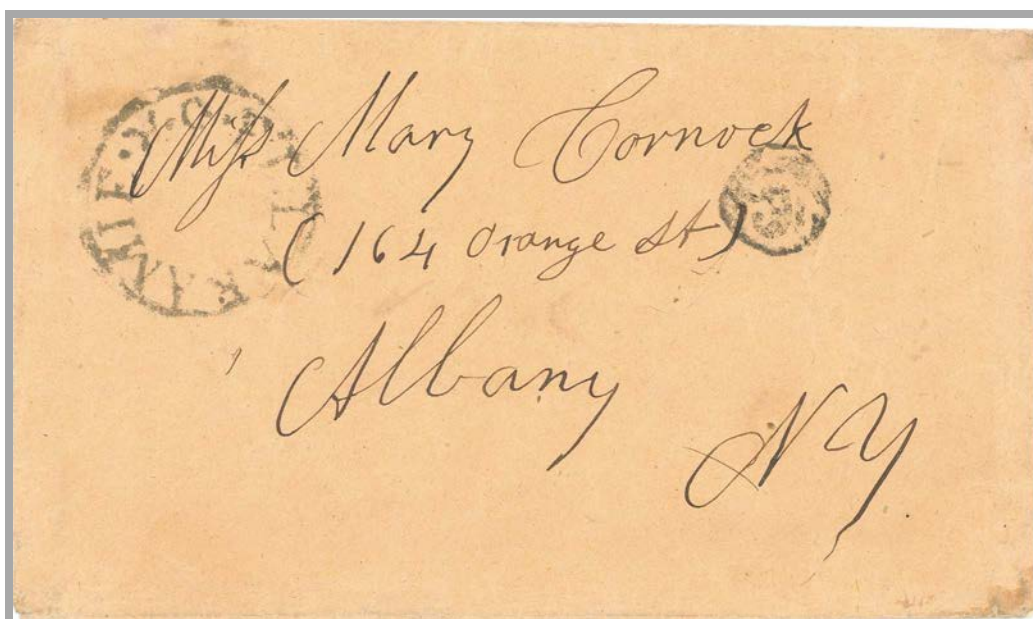


Fort Laramie was located along the Platte River Road. Its designation was "Oregon Route" until 1853, when it became part of Nebraska Territory.



Postmarked July 15, 1853 in Fort Laramie, N.T. - prepaid 3¢ due to New York City

From private in 6th U.S. Infantry - later killed in August 1854 Grattan Massacre



Dated July 5, 1852 near Fort Laramie, Oregon Route - rated 5¢ due to Albany

Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Woodson Contract: August 1850 - June 1854



“Oregon Route” was a postal designation for the Platte River Road. Post offices along the route used “O.R.” in their postmarks. Mail to the Oregon Route was often mis-directed to Oregon.



Dated June 22, 1852 by **Fort Kearny O.R. fancy postmark** - prepaid 3¢ postage to New Jersey
Picked up enroute by the Woodson mail carrier on July 1 - arrived in Independence around July 8



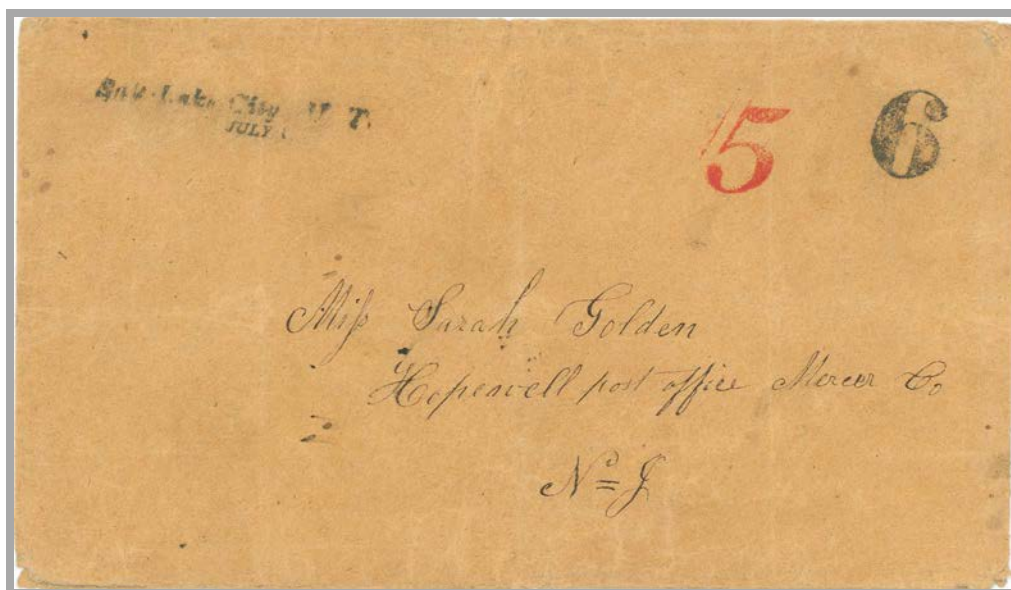
Only four covers with this postmark are known

Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Woodson Contract: August 1850 - June 1854

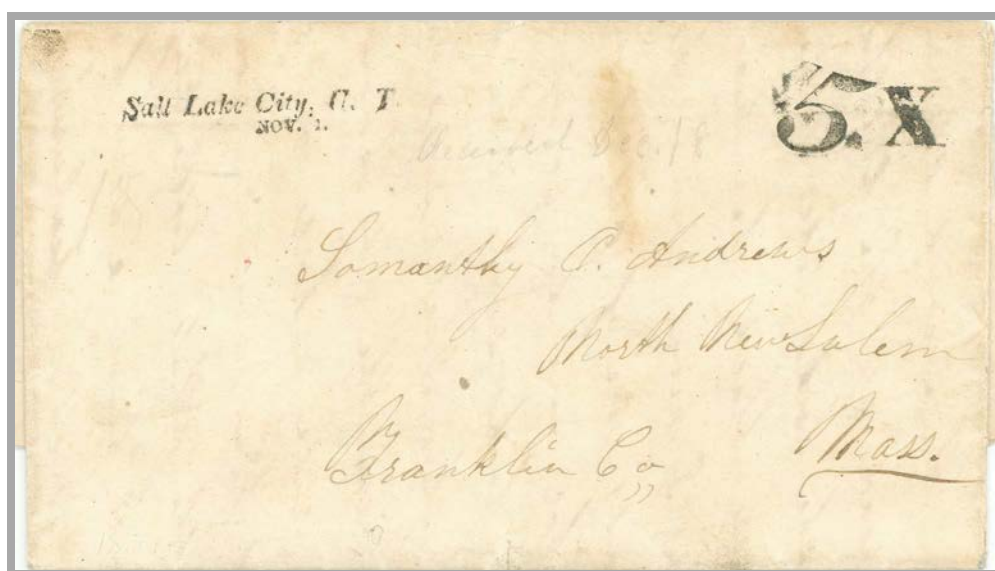


The Salt Lake City post office used manuscript postmarks until July 1, 1851 when a straight-line marking was introduced. It was in use for only five months.



Postmarked July 1, 1851 in Salt Lake City U.T. - incorrectly rated 6¢ due to New Jersey

Left July 1 with 10th Woodson trip which arrived on July 24 - re-rated to 5¢ due



Postmarked November 1, 1851 in Salt Lake City U.T. – re-rated 10¢ due to Massachusetts

Held until January 1 due to impassable mountain snows - finally arrived January 31

Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Magraw Contract: July 1854 - November 1856



Unsatisfactory performance by Woodson led to the cancellation of Route 4965. William Magraw received a new four-year contract for re-designated Route 8911 between Salt Lake City and Independence.

His monthly service began on July 1, 1854 but was disrupted by the 1854-56 1st Sioux War. Weather also caused many mails to detour via California.



Postmarked September 1, 1855 at Salt Lake City, Utah Territory - prepaid 24¢ to Scotland

Left Salt Lake City on September 1 and arrived in Independence on September 30

Collins steamship *Pacific* left New York on October 17 - arrived in Liverpool on October 28



"Stagecoach" by Herman Hanse

Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Kimball Contract: November 1856 - June 1857



Magraw's contract was annulled on August 18, 1856. Hiram Kimball was awarded the new four-year contract for Route 8911 on October 16, 1856.

Kimball's monthly service began on February 1, 1857 but was annulled on June 24, 1857. The Salt Lake City postmaster used single-trip contracts to move the mail from November 1856 to January 1857.



Postmarked "Salt Lake City Utah T." on November 1, 1856 - **prepaid 24¢ postage to Russia via England**

Postmaster contracted with Feramorz Little and Ephraim Hanks to carry the November-December mails
Left December 10 and arrived on February 27, 1857 after an **arduous 79-day trip through mountain snows**

Havre liner *Arago* left New York on April 4 and arrived in Liverpool on April 17 - marked "U.S. Packet"



"Ephraim Hanks in Snowstorm" by Clark Price

Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Miles Contract: October 1857 - June 1858

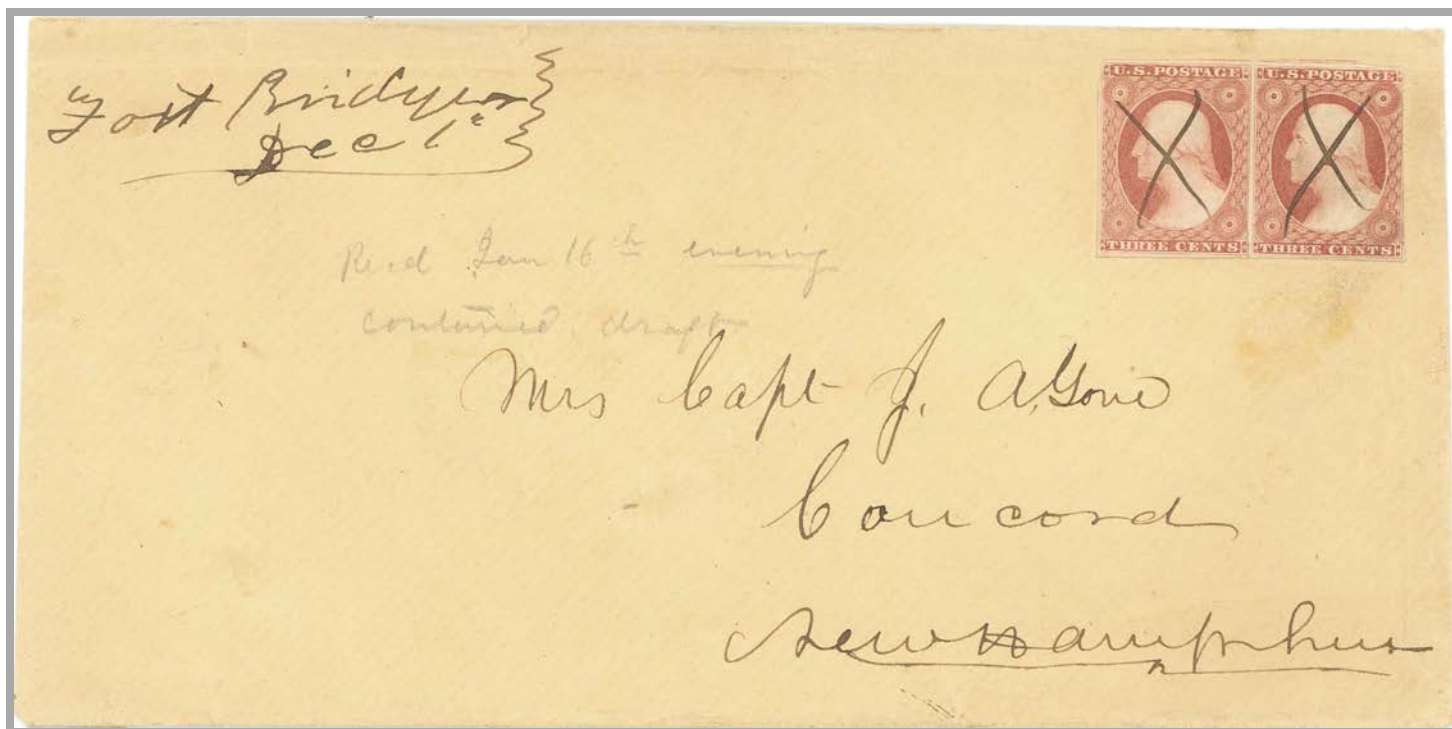


Federal troops left Fort Leavenworth in May 1857 to suppress a perceived Mormon rebellion. Stopped by mountain snows, they built Camp Scott near the site of destroyed Fort Bridger in November 1857.

The army stayed at Camp Scott until March 1858, and used Fort Bridger postmarks starting on December 1, 1857. A straight-line postmark was introduced in March 1858, replacing the manuscript variety.



Camp Scott



Postmarked December 1, 1857 at Fort Bridger - prepaid double-weight 6¢ postage to New Hampshire

From Captain Jesse Gove, of the 10th Infantry Regiment in the 1857-58 Utah Expedition

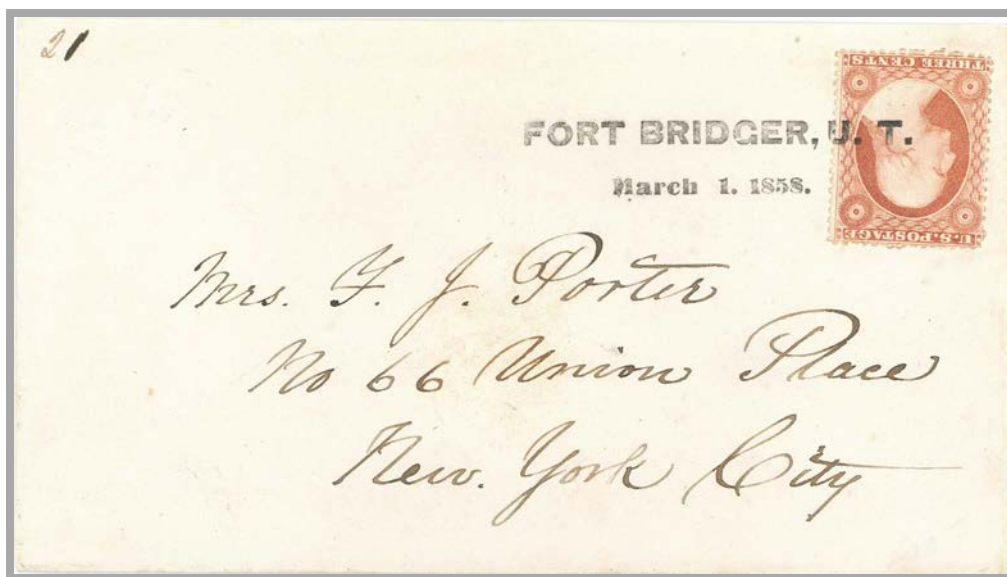
Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Miles Contract: October 1857 - March 1858



Stephen Miles was selected to complete Kimball's monthly contract for Route 8911, effective October 1, 1857 to June 30, 1858. On March 31, 1858, it was terminated early to be replaced by a weekly contract.

The 1857-58 Utah Expedition disrupted Miles' service. All mail to Salt Lake City was diverted from June 1857 to June 1858, so Miles delivered to the army's Camp Scott, which used Fort Bridger postmarks.



Postmarked March 1, 1858 at Fort Bridger, Utah Territory - prepaid 3¢ postage to New York City

From Captain Fitz John Porter, adjutant to the commander of the 1857-58 Utah Expedition

Porter later commanded the 5th Corps of the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War

One of five known Fort Bridger straight-line postmarks

Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Hockaday Contract: May 1858 - June 1861



John Hockaday replaced Miles as the contractor for Route 8911. Service was weekly from May 1, 1858 to June 30, 1859 and semi-weekly after that. Hockaday carried mail to or from towns along the Central Route.



Postmarked December 26, 1858 at Fort Laramie, N. T. - sent "FREE" from 4th Artillery officer
The Salt Lake mail left December 25 - picked this letter up enroute - arrived in St Joseph January 15



Postmarked August 17, 1860 at Camp Floyd, Utah Territory - prepaid 3¢ postage to Fort Laramie

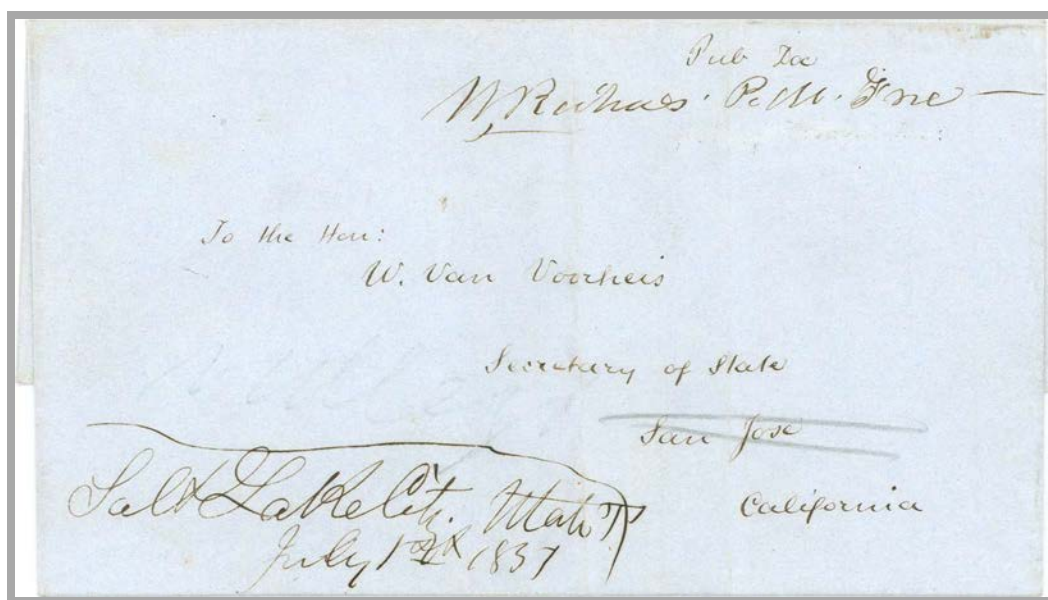
Utah-California Contract Mail

Introduction: May 1851 - June 1861



The first post office overland contract route to reach California began operations on May 3, 1851 between Sacramento and Salt Lake City along the Central Route. An alternate southern route via Los Angeles was also used later because of weather delays.

This series of contracts between California and Utah ended with the July 1, 1861 start of the daily transcontinental overland service.



Postmarked July 1, 1851 in Salt Lake City, Utah Territory - sent free on post office business

Left July 1 with 1st Chorpenning westbound trip - harassed by Indians in Carson Valley

Arrived in Sacramento around August 3 - forwarded to Vallejo on August 4 per docket

Earliest known westbound contract letter from Salt Lake City

Utah-California Contract Mail

1st Chorpenning Contract: May 1851 - June 1854



George Chorpenning was awarded the 4-year monthly contract for Route 5066 between Sacramento and Salt Lake City. Service began on May 3, 1851 from Sacramento and July 1 from Salt Lake City.

Chorpenning's contract was transferred to William Blanchard in March 1853 for non-performance, but reinstated in June 1853.



Left Honolulu, Hawaii on May 1, 1851 on the *Cheerful* - arrived June 1 in San Francisco

PMSS steamship had left May 31 - postmaster marked it "overland" and 80¢ due on June 1

Left Sacramento June 2 in 2nd Chorpenning eastbound mail - arrived July 2 in Salt Lake City

5th successful Woodson mail trip left Salt Lake on July 2 and arrived July 24 in Independence, MO

Earliest known transcontinental letter over the entire Central Route

Utah-California Contract Mail

1st Chorpenning Contract: May 1851 - June 1854



Lt. John Grattan led Company G of the 6th Infantry from Fort Laramie to a confrontation with Sioux Indians near the fort. His command of 29 men was wiped out on August 19, 1854. The “Grattan Massacre” ignited the 1854-56 First Sioux War.



Postmarked March 26, 1854 at Morpeth, GB - addressed to Oregon Route, but mis-directed to Oregon

Prepaid 2/4 - carried by RMSP and PMSC steamers via Panama to San Francisco on May 16

Postmarked June 1 in San Francisco for Chorpenning mail - arrived mid-August at Fort Laramie

Addressed to soldier in Company G of the 6th Infantry - **letter marked “Sent Back to England”**



“Fort Laramie” by Alfred Jacob Miller

Utah-California Contract Mail

2nd Chorpenning Contract: July 1854 - June 1858



Chorpenning's monthly contract was renewed on July 1, 1854. This contract was shifted to the southern route via Los Angeles and re-named Route 12801.



Postmarked November 3, 1855 in Honolulu, Hawaii - *Yankee* to San Francisco on December 1
Left Los Angeles in December 5 Chorpenning mail - arrived December 30 in Salt Lake City



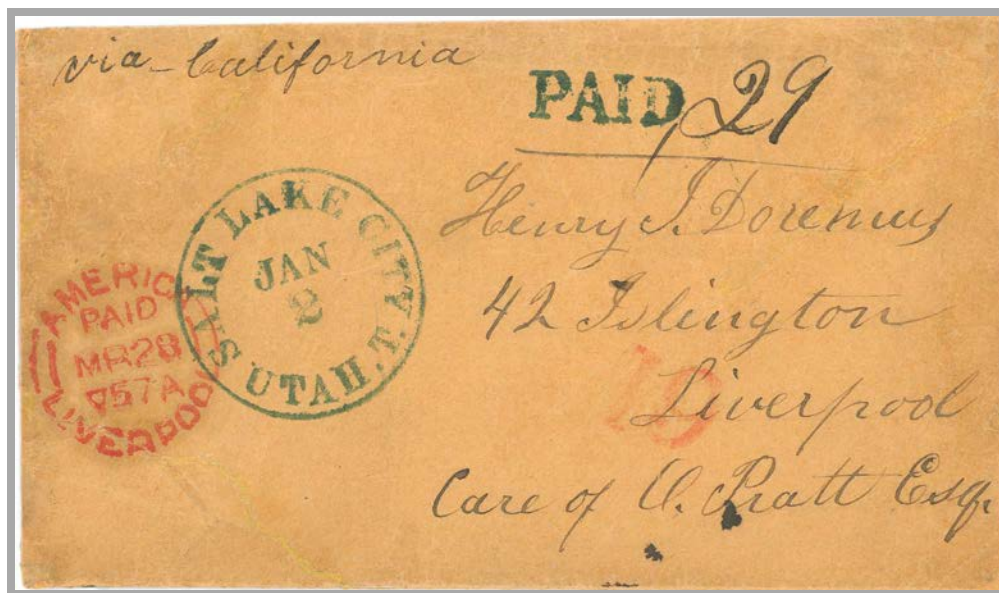
Postmarked February 1, 1856 in Salt Lake City for Chorpenning mail to Los Angeles on February 27
American clipper ship *Resolute* left San Francisco on March 25 and reached Honolulu on April 14

Utah-California Contract Mail

2nd Chorpenning Contract: July 1854 - June 1858



The Salt Lake City-to- Independence mails were severely disrupted by weather during the winter months. Consequently, some of that Independence mail was endorsed to be carried by Chorpenning to California and then to New York via Panama by contract steamship.



Postmarked January 2, 1857 in Salt Lake City - prepaid 29¢ and **endorsed “via California”**

Left in January 5 Chorpenning mail and reached Los Angeles on February 1

PMSC steamer *J.L. Stephens* left San Francisco on February 20 for Panama

Connected with USMSC steamer *George Law* at Panama for New York on March 16

Cunard steamer *Persia* left on March 18 - arrived in Liverpool on March 28

January 7 Independence mail was forced to return to Salt Lake City

Utah-California Contract Mail

2nd Chorpenning Contract: July 1854 - June 1858



Some Salt Lake City-to-Independence mail was diverted to California when the winter snows closed the eastbound route. The Salt Lake City postmaster created a short-lived 9 cents “phantom rate” for this mail, consisting of the 3 cents rate to California plus the 6 cents transcontinental rate to New York.



Postmarked January 5, 1855 in Salt Lake City and endorsed “Via California”

Prepaid “phantom” 9¢ rate (3¢ rate to California plus 6¢ transcontinental rate to New York)

Carried in Chorpenning mail which left on January 5 and arrived in Los Angeles on February 3

PMSC steamer *Golden Age* left San Francisco on February 16 for Panama

Connected with USMSC steamer *Illinois* at Panama for New York on March 12

Fewer than five 9¢ “phantom rate” covers are known

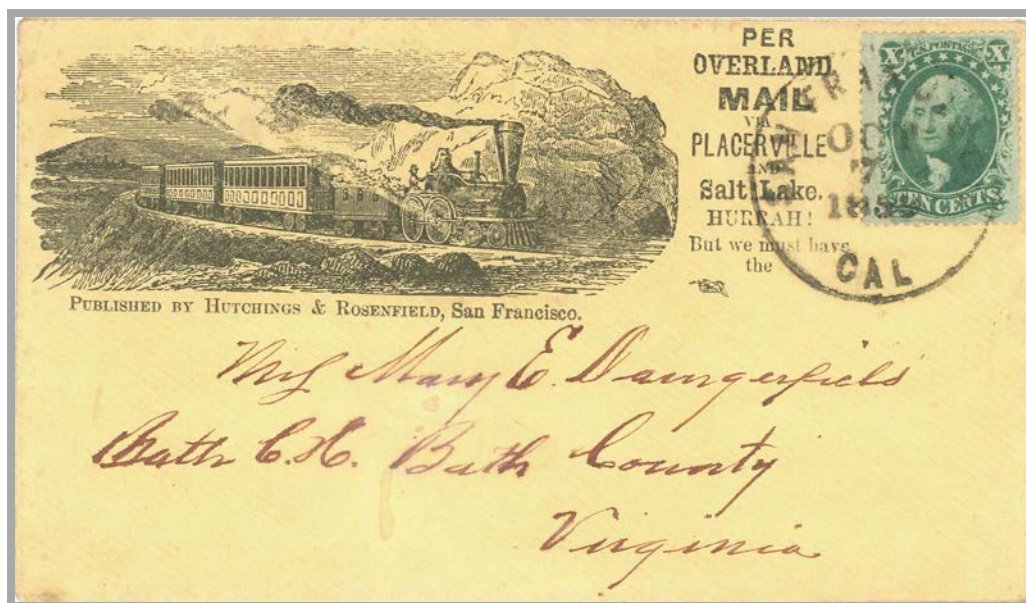
Utah-California Contract Mail

3rd Chorpenning Contract: July 1858 - May 1860



Chorpenning was awarded a new weekly contract which returned to the Central Route. Route 12801 began operations on July 4, 1858 from Salt Lake City.

Newspapers described the combination of Route 12801 with Route 8911 (between Salt Lake City and St Joseph) as a 34-day transcontinental route, so illustrated envelopes endorsed to the composite route began to appear.



“Via Placerville and Salt Lake” envelope postmarked October 7, 1859 in San Francisco - prepaid 10¢

Chorpenning failed to pick up this mail at Placerville - triggered the process of his termination

Carried by an October 12 Pioneer Stage Co. coach from Placerville to Salt Lake City on October 21

Carried by the October 21 LPPE coach from Salt Lake to St Joseph, Missouri on November 11

Illustrated envelope with propaganda for the transcontinental railroad

Utah-California Contract Mail

3rd Chorpenning Contract: July 1858 - May 1860



Chorpenning's failure to carry the mails starting in October 1859 led to the annulment of his contract for Route 12801 on May 10, 1860. The Placerville postmaster resorted to trip contracts for the October-May mails to Salt Lake City.



Postmarked December 21, 1859 in Oroville, California - prepaid 10¢ transcontinental postage
Pioneer Stage was given a trip contract to carry the December 28 mail halfway to Salt Lake City
Connected with Chorpenning agent who took the mail to Salt Lake City on January 9
Carried by the January 13 LPPE coach from Salt Lake to St Joseph, Missouri on February 4

“Overland via Placerville & Salt Lake” illustrated stagecoach envelope

Utah-California Contract Mail

3rd Chorpenning Contract: July 1858 - May 1860



The Federal Utah Expedition moved through Salt Lake City in June 1858 and established nearby Camp Floyd on November 9, 1858.

Camp Floyd used manuscript postmarks until mid-February 1859 and a rimless “tombstone” postmark in March-August 1859.



Camp Floyd



Postmarked “Camp Floyd, U.T” in manuscript on February 7, 1859 - **endorsed “Via California”**
Held for insufficient postage - additional 17¢ paid in cash - **April 18 “tombstone” postmark applied**
April 18 Chorpenning coach collected this letter in transit - arrived in Placerville on April 30
PMSS steamer *Golden Gate* left San Francisco on May 5 - **arrived in Panama on May 15**
U.S.S. *Decatur* (addressee) had left Panama on March 23 - forwarded back to San Francisco

Utah-California Contract Mail

3rd Chorpensing Contract: July 1858 - May 1860



Lieutenant James B. McPherson served in California before rising to the rank of Major General in the Civil War. He was the highest ranking Union officer to die in combat.



Postmarked January 12, 1859 in Fort Laramie, N.T. - **addressed to Lt. James McPherson**
Carried on coach which left St Joseph on January 1 and arrived in Salt Lake on January 20
Chorpensing coach left January 24 and arrived in Placerville on February 5 - prepaid 10¢

Utah-California Contract Mail

3rd Chorpensing Contract: July 1858 - May 1860

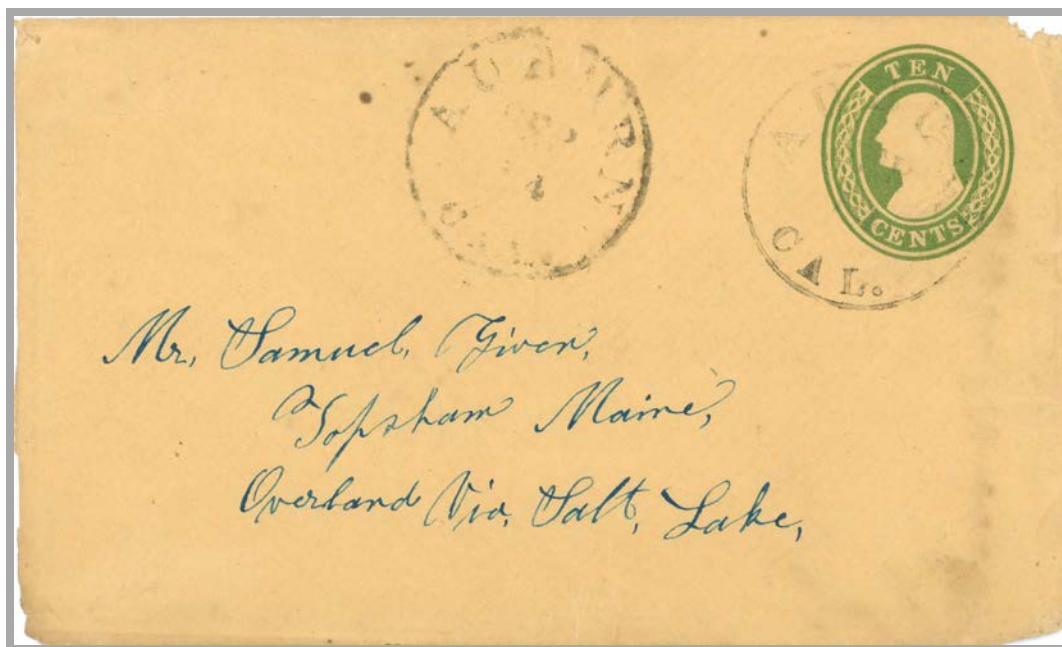


Endorsements to the Chorpensing route were “via Salt Lake” or “via Placerville.” It was shorter than the Butterfield route, so 3¢ frankings were sufficient from most of the Midwest.



Postmarked December 22, 1859 in Lincoln, IL - prepaid 3¢ - **endorsed “Overland”**

Left St Joseph on January 3, 1860 for Salt Lake - reached Placerville around February 10



Postmarked September 14, 1858 in Auburn, CA - prepaid 10¢ - **endorsed “Overland via Salt Lake”**

Left September 18 from Placerville for Salt Lake City - reached St Joseph around October 31

Utah-California Contract Mail

COCPPE Contract: June 1860 - June 1861



Chorpenning's 3rd contract was annulled for non-performance, and the bi-weekly contract for Route 12801 between Placerville and Salt Lake City was re-let without bid to the Central Overland California & Pike's Peak Express Company on June 1, 1860. COCPPE had previously bought Hockaday's contract for Route 8911 in May 1859, so they controlled the entire length of the Central Route.

The 1858 Butterfield contract carried virtually all contract overland mails, so COCPPE only serviced mail between intermediate points along the Central Route.



Postmarked February 3, 1861 in Georgetown, California - franked double-weight 20¢ to Colorado

Endorsed "Overland via Central route" - COCPPE coach left Placerville on February 13

Connected at Salt Lake City on February 22 with COCPPE coach to Fort Kearny around March 9

Carried by Western Stage coach to Denver around March 20 - delivered locally by Hinckley Express

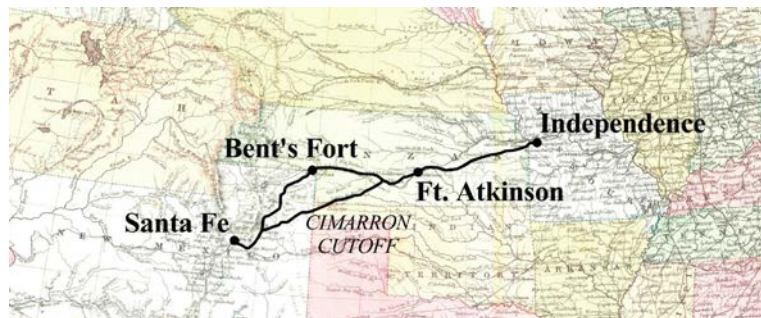
Santa Fe Pre-Contract Mail

Introduction: July 1846 - June 1850



In a major action during the Mexican-American War, Kearny's Army of the West left Missouri on June 26, 1846 and captured Santa Fe, New Mexico on August 18. His forces occupied Santa Fe and also moved south to Mexico and west to California.

Military and private couriers carried mail from these dispersed forces to Fort Leavenworth, near Independence, Missouri. They were superseded by the July 1850 contract mail route between Santa Fe and Independence.



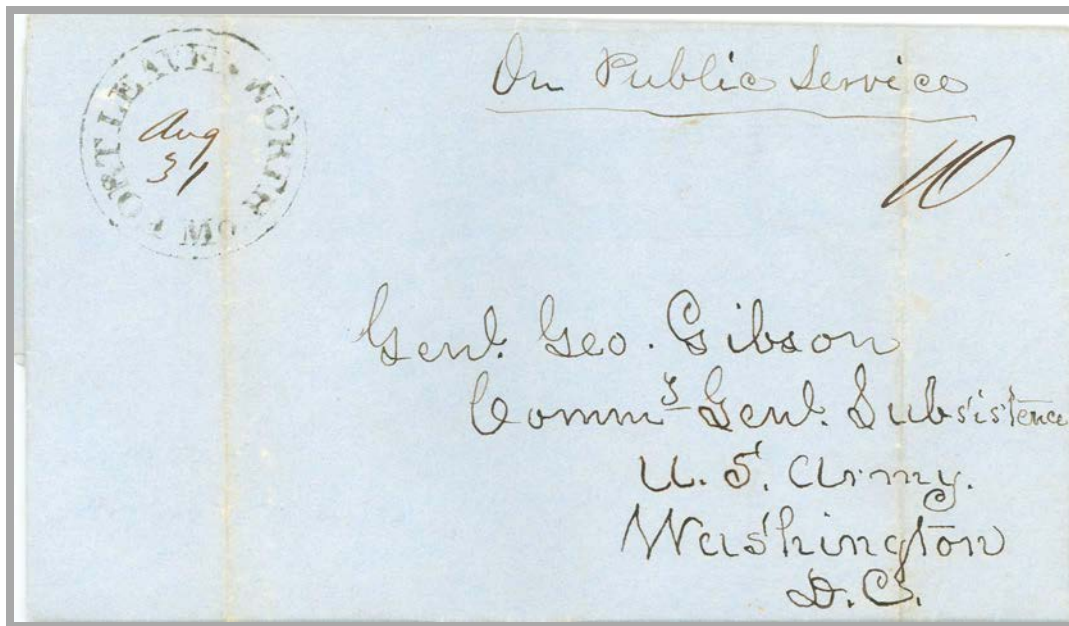
Postmarked "Santa Fee" on November 20, 1848 in red by military quartermaster
Military courier Mr. Newman left on November 20 - bad weather forced him to return
Left again on December 20 and arrived in Fort Leavenworth on February 1 - 10¢ due

Santa Fe Pre-Contract Mail

Military Courier: July 1846 - June 1850



The Army of the West passed through Bent's Fort in late July 1846 and reached Santa Fe three weeks later. Shortly after that, a third of the force left for Chihuahua, Mexico and another third (under Kearny) left for California.



Datelined near Bent's Fort on July 31, 1846 - from Lt. Grier of Kearny's 1st Dragoons
Carried by military courier to Fort Leavenworth - postmarked there on August 31 - 10¢ due



"Western Troopers" by Melvin Warren

Santa Fe Pre-Contract Mail

Military Courier: July 1846 - June 1850



The Army of the West's 1st Missouri Mounted Volunteers defeated a much larger Mexican army at Chihuahua on February 28, 1847. They captured most of the enemy's supplies.



Datelined in Chihuahua, Mexico on March 6, 1847 - from Lt. Hinton of the Missouri Horse Guards

Carried by military courier to Santa Fe - then by private courier to Independence, Missouri

Postmarked in Independence on May 25 - 10¢ postage due to Ohio



Letter written on captured letterhead of the Governor of Chihuahua (67% size)

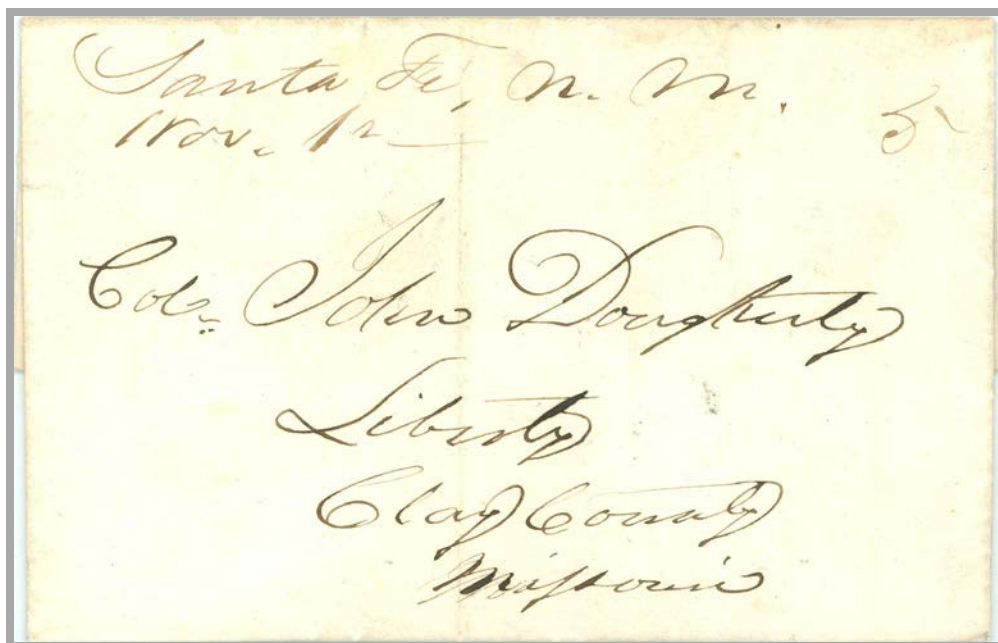
Santa Fe Contract Mail

Introduction: July 1850 - June 1870



The first post office route contract into the West began on July 1, 1850 between Independence, Missouri and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

This series of contracts along the Santa Fe Trail continued beyond 1869 until the Santa Fe railroad was completed in 1882.



Postmarked in Santa Fe on November 1, 1851 - rated 5¢ postage due to Liberty, Missouri

Carried by the 15th stagecoach from Santa Fe to Independence around November 30



Stagecoach at Santa Fe

Santa Fe Contract Mail

Waldo Hall Contract: July 1850 - June 1854



Waldo Hall & Co. won the monthly contract for Route 4888 between Independence and Santa Fe. Service began from Independence on July 1, 1850 and from Santa Fe on August 1.



Postmarked in Jerseyville, Illinois on March 20, 1851 - rated 10¢ postage due to Santa Fe
Addressed to "Capt. Sitgreaves exploring party" at Santa Fe - Texas address corrected
Sitgreaves' scientific and military expedition left on August 15, 1851 for Fort Yuma, California.

Carried by the April 1 stagecoach from Independence to Santa Fe on April 30

Fewer than five letters are known to Santa Fe in this period

Santa Fe Contract Mail

Hall Contracts: July 1854 - June 1858



Jacob Hall and John Hockaday won the new monthly contract between Independence and Santa Fe for re-numbered Route 8912 from July 1, 1854 to June 30, 1858. Trips left on the first of each month until increased to twice-monthly on July 1, 1857



Postmarked in Santa Fe, New Mexico on December 1, 1855 - Prepaid 3¢ postage
Monthly stagecoach left on December 1 and reached Independence on December 26

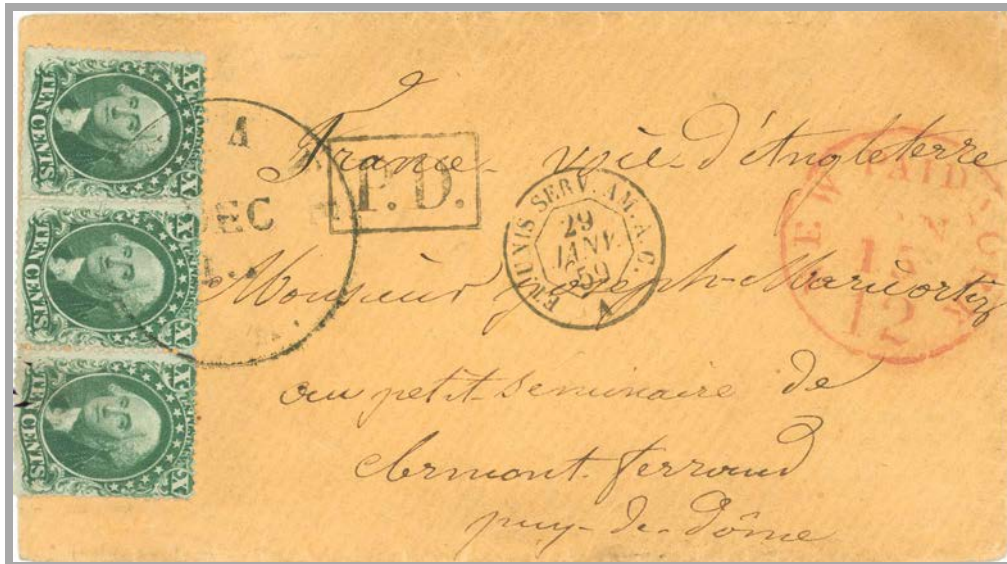
Contractual trip times were reduced to 25 days each way

Santa Fe Contract Mail

Hall and Cottrell Contracts: July 1858 - June 1866



Hall & Porter won the third contract for weekly service on re-numbered route 10532 from July 1, 1858 to June 30, 1862. Cottrell Vickroy & Co. won the fourth contract for weekly service on Route 14465 from July 1, 1862 to June 30, 1866.



Postmarked in Santa Fe, New Mexico on December 13, 1858 - prepaid double-weight 30¢ to France

Left on December 13 Hall & Porter coach to Independence on January 2 - left NY on January 15



Postmarked in Fort Union, New Mexico on June 14, 1864 - prepaid 3¢ transcontinental postage

Carried by weekly Cottrell & Vickroy coach from Santa Fe to Kansas City

Santa Fe Contract Mail

Sanderson & Barlow Contract: July 1866 - June 1870



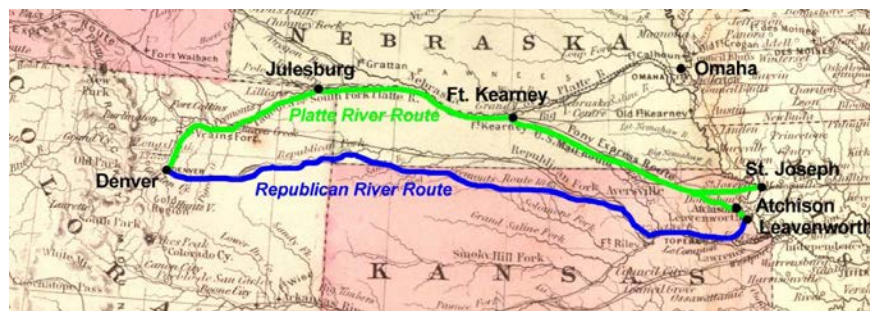
Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

Introduction: July 1858 - June 1861



The 1858-61 Colorado gold rush created the need for a mail delivery system. Initial efforts were disorganized and relied on individual couriers.

The Leavenworth City & Pike's Peak Express began an organized private express service in April 1859 along the Republican River Route between Leavenworth, Kansas and Denver. Its successor, Jones & Russell's Pike's Peak Express, began using the Platte River Route in July 1859, as did the Central Overland California & Pike's Peak Express (COCPPE) in February 1860.



Postmarked June 28, 1860 by the COCPPE in Denver - carried by their express to Missouri

Postmarked July 5 in St Joseph, Missouri - prepaid 3¢ postage to Ohio

Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

Private Courier: July 1858 - March 1859



Early mail from the Denver region relied on travelers who were returning from the Pike's Peak gold mines. They typically travelled to Fort Laramie, Fort Kearny, or to towns along the Missouri River.



Datelined "South Platte Near the Rocky Mountains" on October 28, 1858 - prepaid 3¢
"An officer of the army at Fort Kearny who came out with us returns tomorrow"
Postmarked on December 4 in Pacific City, Iowa - on the Missouri River near Omaha
From "Pinky" Stout - arrived in Denver on October 24, 1858 with the J.H. Dudley party

Earliest known letter from the Denver gold mining region

Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

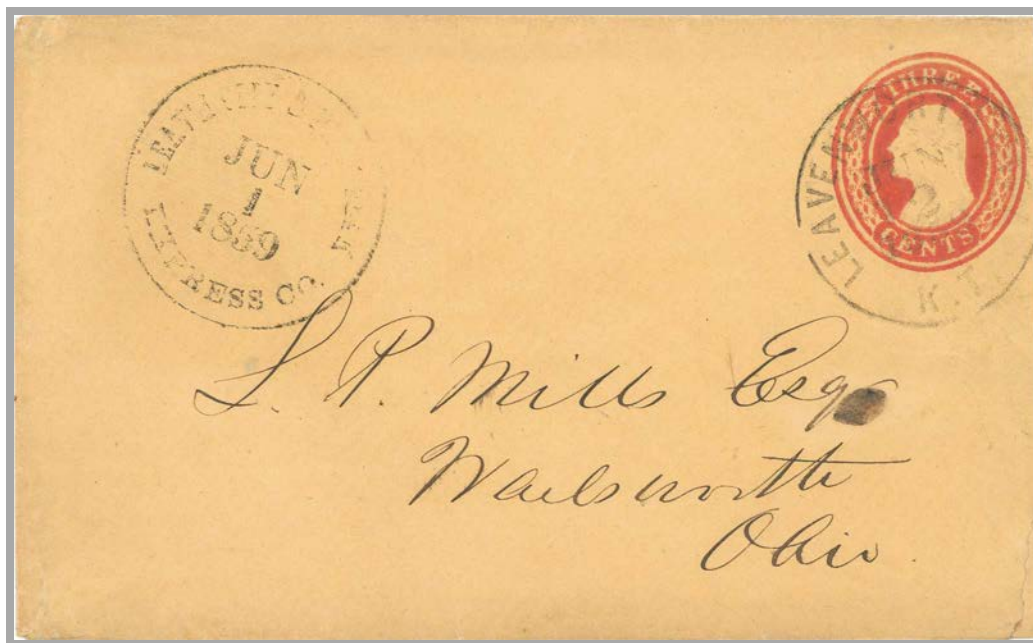
LPPE: April 1859 - June 1859



The Leavenworth City & Pike's Peak Express (LPPE) began operations from Leavenworth on April 18, 1859 and from Denver on May 10. It operated under that name for three months, so only 16 covers with LPPE markings are known.



Postmarked April 15, 1859 in Stouts, OH - prepaid 3¢ and endorsed via Fort Laramie
Routed instead to 3rd LPPE westbound trip - **earliest known westbound letter**



Postmarked June 1, 1859 by LPPE in Denver City - postmark with year-date used in Denver
Carried on 7th LPPE eastbound trip - postmarked Leavenworth City K.T. on June 12

Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

JRPPE: July 1859 - May 1860



The Jones & Russell's Pike's Peak Express (JRPPE) was the new name adopted by the LPPE in July 1859, so new markings were prepared.



Postmarked December 29, 1859 by JRPPE in Denver - prepaid double-weight 6¢

Entered the U.S. mails in Leavenworth City, Kansas Territory on January 6



Postmarked May 3, 1860 by JRPPE in Denver - prepaid 3¢ - entered mails at St Joseph on May 10

Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

COCPPPE: May 1860 - June 1861



The Central Overland California & Pike's Peak Express (COCPPPE) absorbed the assets of the defunct LPPE in February 1860. Its markings came into use starting in May 1860. Oval markings were prepared for Denver, Leavenworth City and St. Joseph. Labels were occasionally used to advertise the service.



Postmarked October 30, 1860 by COCPPE in Denver - **advertising label attached**

Entered U.S. mails in Leavenworth City on November 6

One of four COCPPE labels known tied to a cover

Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

COCPPE: May 1860 - June 1861



The Central Overland California & Pike's Peak Express (COCPPE) charged a 25¢ express fee for letters. Occasionally, an undated COCPPE frank was used to indicate that the fee had been paid.



Postmarked June 14, 1860 by COCPPE in Denver - undated frank for 25¢ express fee
Entered the U.S. mails in St. Joseph, Missouri on June 23 - prepaid 3¢ postage to Iowa



Pike's Peak by Albert Bierstadt

Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

COCPPE: May 1860 - June 1861



Postmarked November 13, 1860 in Brownsville N.T. - prepaid 3¢ - endorsed via St Joseph
November 17 St Joseph COCPPE marking - westbound mail is rarer than eastbound



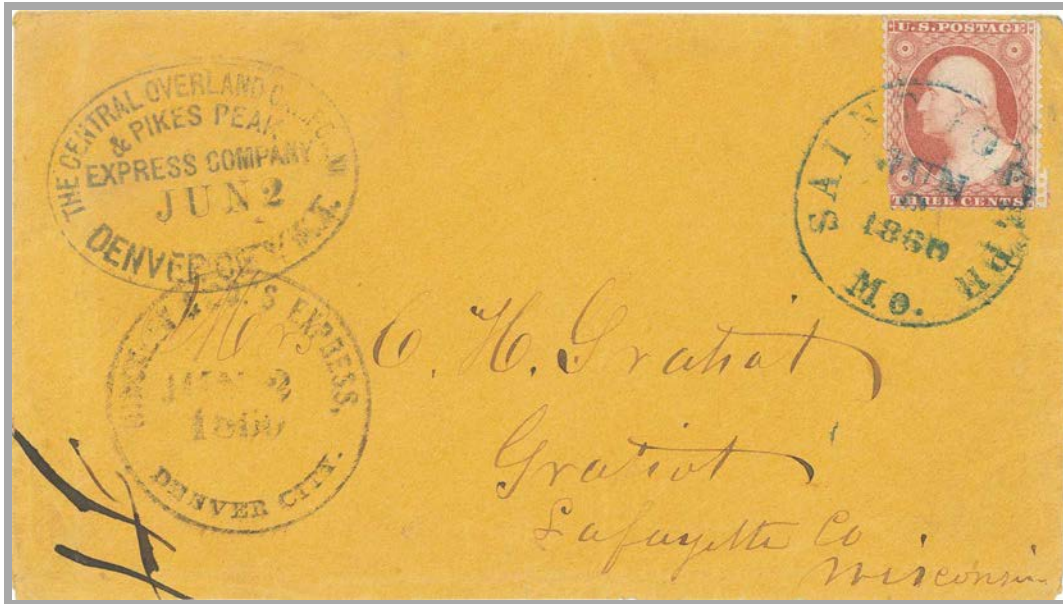
Postmarked July 31, 1860 by COCPPE in Denver - entered U.S. mails August 9 at St Joseph
Carried to California in Butterfield coach from St Louis - 7¢ additional postage charged

Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

Hinckley: May 1860 - May 1861



Hinckley & Co. entered the market in May 1860 to carry mail from the mines and to connect with COCPPE at Denver. They entered into full competition with COCPPE in September 1860, but were purchased by COCPPE in May 1861.



June 2, 1860 Hinckley and COCPPE conjunctive use in Denver - entered mails at St Joseph on June 8



Postmarked November 13, 1860 by Hinckley in Denver - prepaid 3¢ to Superior, Wisconsin
Frank for 7¢ express fee - entered the U.S. mails at St. Joseph, Missouri on November 22

Colorado Contract Mail

Introduction: June 1859 - June 1861



In January-March 1859, U.S. post offices were established at Auraria and Coraville. Coraville was discontinued in June 1859 and Auraria was re-named Denver City on February 11, 1860 although the earliest known Denver postmark is August 16.

After two unsuccessful efforts in June 1859 and July-August 1859, the Post Office Department contracted with the Western Stage Company in August 1860 for weekly service on Route 15151a between Denver and Fort Kearny, Nebraska. Western was not able to fulfill its contract until September 1860, so COCPPE fulfilled the contract on a trip-by-trip basis from August 10 to September 13.



Postmarked August 9, 1860 in Stillwater, Minnesota - prepaid 3¢ postage to Denver

Carried in contract mail to Denver on August 29 - **“tombstone” arrival postmark**

Carried by COCPPE stagecoach under a trip contract with post office

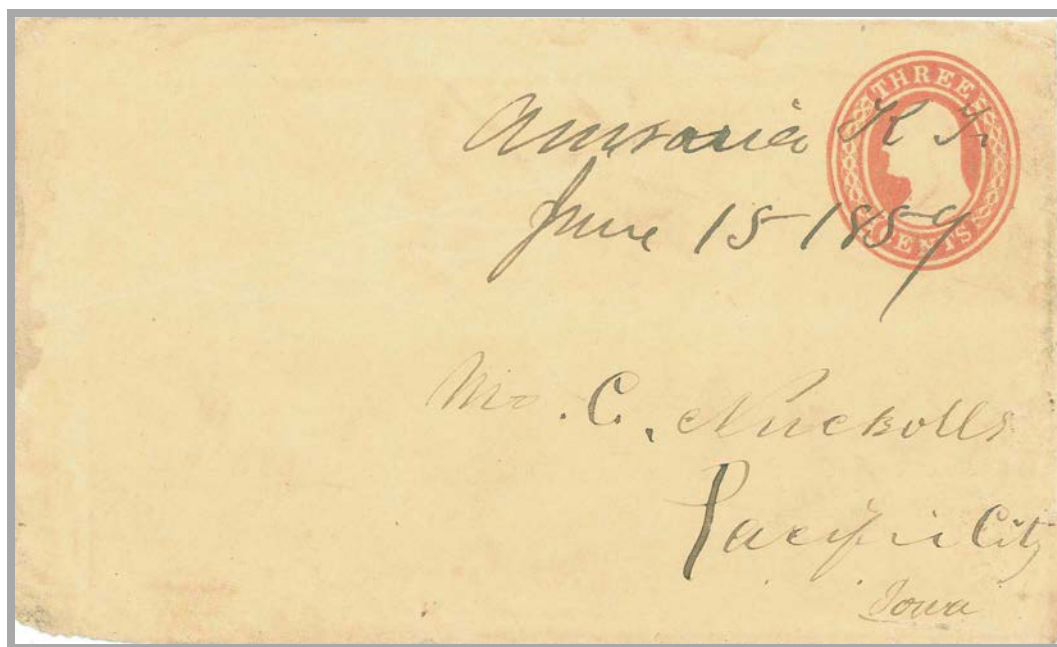
Third westbound contract mail to Denver

Colorado Contract Mail

COCPPPE “Phantom” Contract: June 1859



The COCPPE bought the Hockaday mail contract between St Joseph and Salt Lake City on May 11, 1859. Their Denver agent misunderstood this to include the Julesburg-Denver segment, and sent three “contract” mails to Leavenworth from June 11 to June 22. Letters were carried for only 3¢ U.S. postage, but the error was soon corrected, and the 25¢ express charge was reinstated.



Postmarked June 15, 1859 in Auraria, Kansas Territory (Denver) - prepaid 3¢ postage to Iowa

COCPPPE coach left Denver on June 17 and arrived in Leavenworth on June 30

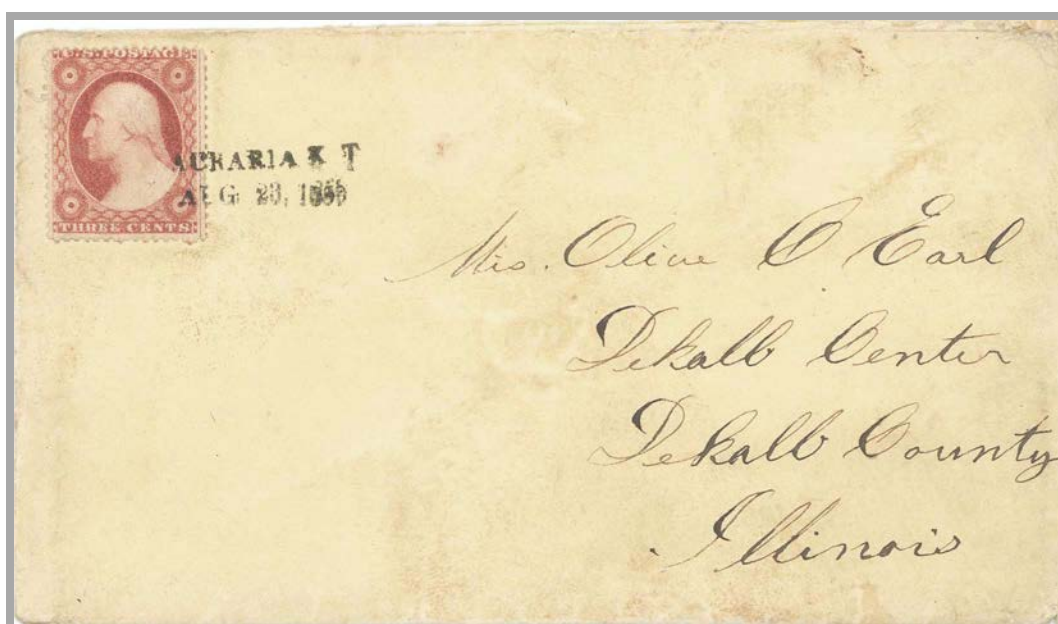
Earliest of three known Auraria postmarks

Colorado Contract Mail

Willis Contract: July-August 1859



The Auraria postmaster contracted with Mr. Willis on July 12, 1859 to carry a weekly mail between Denver and Fort Kearny, Nebraska. The letter charge was 3¢ per half ounce, all of which was paid to Willis as compensation. This contract was terminated for poor performance on August 27.



Postmarked August 23, 1859 in Auraria, Kansas Territory (Denver) - prepaid 3¢ U.S. postage to Illinois

Carried in the last Willis contract mail to Fort Kearny - **one of 12 known straight-line postmarks**



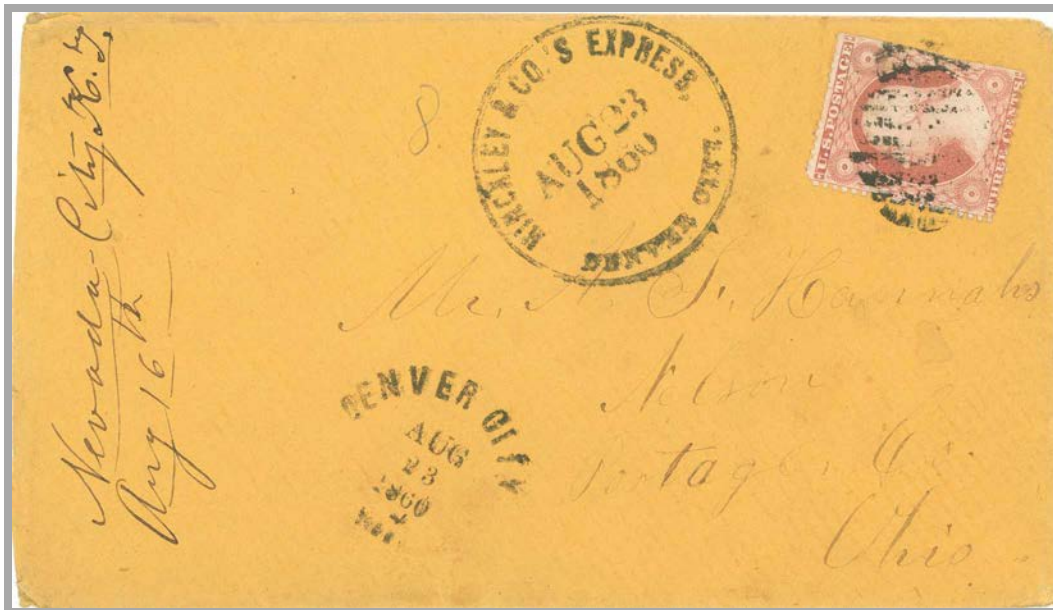
Auraria in 1859

Colorado Contract Mail

Western Stage Contract: August 1860 – June 1861



The Post Office Department awarded the weekly contract for Route 15151 between Julesburg and Denver to E.F. Bruce on June 16, 1860. Bruce was unable to perform, so a modified contract for Route 15151a was re-let to the Western Stage Co. on August 29. The first U.S. contract mail arrived in Denver on August 10 under a temporary contract with the COCPPE.



Carried privately from Nevada City, Kansas Territory on August 16, 1860 by Hinckley & Co.

Postmarked August 23, 1860 in Denver City - prepaid 3¢ U.S. postage to Nelson, Ohio

Carried by the COCPPE under a temporary contract with the Post Office Department

Earliest known Denver “tombstone” postmark

California Pre-Contract Mail

Introduction: July 1846 - March 1849



Emigration to California began to build in 1846 and exploded with the gold rush in 1849. Overland mails began after the U.S. gained control of California in July 1846, and virtually ended with the March 1849 start of the contract mail by steamships via Panama.

Two routes were used. The first followed the Central Route via South Pass and the second connected Los Angeles with Santa Fe via the Old Spanish Trail.



Dated May 18, 1848 in Monterey, CA - **carried by Chouteau via Los Angeles** and Santa Fe

Postmarked October 11 in St Louis, Missouri - 10¢ postage due to Massachusetts

California Pre-Contract Mail

Kearny Overland Mail: June-August 1847



General Kearny returned overland from California with a mail. He left Monterey on May 31, 1847 and arrived at Fort Leavenworth on August 22.



Dated April 30, 1847 in San Francisco - carried to Monterey in May 3 bi-weekly regional mail
Mailed August 23 on steamer *Amelia* to St Louis - postmarked there on August 26 with 10¢ due



Dated May 2, 1847 in San Francisco - postmarked at Fort Leavenworth on August 31 with 10¢ due
From sergeant in NY 1st Volunteer Regiment - carried in military dispatches to Fort Leavenworth

California Pre-Contract Mail

Stockton Overland Mail: June-October 1847



Commodore Stockton stepped down from his California command in January 1847 and returned overland via South Pass. His party left Monterey on June 20 and reached St Joseph, Missouri on October 26.



Dated March 24, 1847 on the USS *Congress* (Stockton's former flagship) in San Diego harbor
Missed March 26 sailing of USS *Savannah* from San Diego - sent to Stockton at Monterey, California
Postmarked October 30 in St. Joseph, Missouri with 10¢ due - **only letter known from this mail**



"USS Congress" by Tom Freeman

California Pre-Contract Mail

Desert Dispatch: 1854 - July 1857



Early mail reached Fort Yuma, California overland from San Diego via the "Desert Dispatch," a military courier service across the Colorado Desert. This route was a necessary precursor to portions of later southern overland contract routes.



Posted September 14, 1855 at West Point, NY - prepaid 10¢ and **endorsed "Via San Diego"**

USMSC *Empire City* and PMSS *Golden Gate* from NY on September 20 to San Francisco on October 16

Coastal steamer to San Diego and then overland via the "Desert Dispatch"



Posted June 19, 1855 in Philadelphia - sent to the care of the quartermaster in Benicia, California

Forwarded on July 31 by Lt. Hardie to Fort Yuma via San Diego - paid additional 3¢ postage

California Contract Mail

Introduction: July 1857 - April 1861



Due to unsatisfactory experiences in 1850-56 with contract mails on the central overland route via Salt Lake City, virtually all contract transcontinental mails were carried by steamships via Panama from 1849 to 1859.

Strategic interests led the Post Office to sign significant contracts for overland mail via more reliable southern routes in 1857-58. The southern overland route via Los Angeles became the default for transcontinental mails on December 17, 1859.



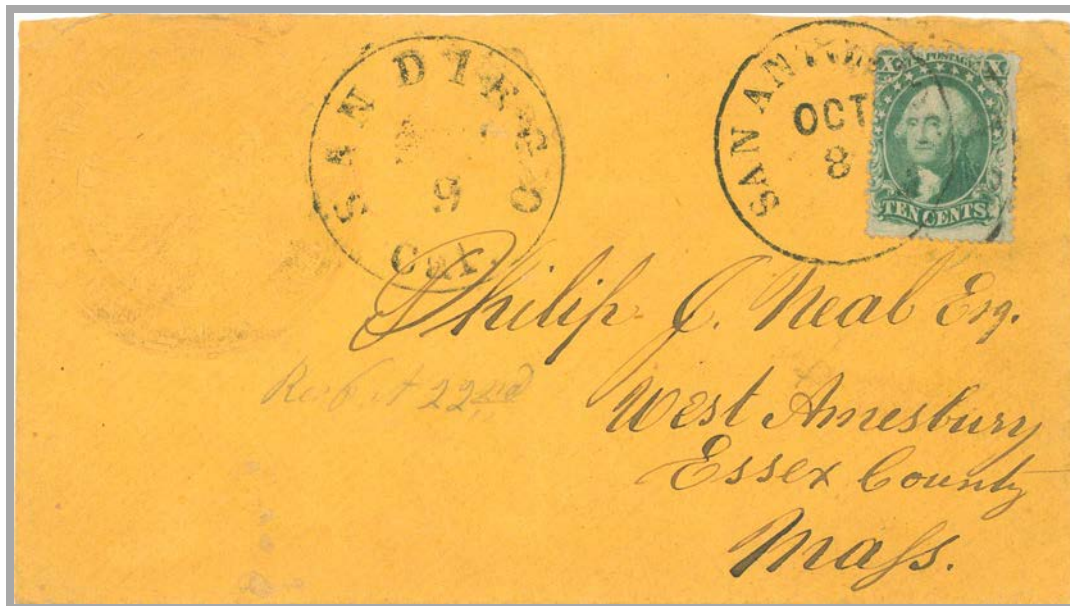
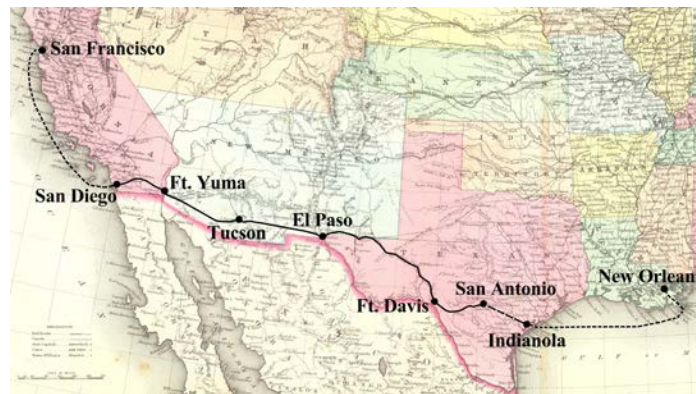
Postmarked October 26, 1860 in San Francisco - franked 10¢ for over 3,000 miles
Butterfield stagecoach left on October 19 - **type 2 San Francisco "Overland" handstamp**

California Contract Mail

“Jackass Route” Contract: July 1857 - March 1860



In August 1856, Congress authorized a twice-monthly contract for Route 8076 between San Diego, California and San Antonio, Texas. Service began on July 9, 1857 along a southern route via Fort Yuma and El Paso. Mules were used on the San-Diego-Yuma segment, giving rise to the “Jackass” moniker. The start-up of the Butterfield route over much of the same route led to a curtailment of this route, effective April 1, 1860.



Postmarked September 9, 1857 in San Diego - postage prepaid by 1857 10¢ type III stamp

Mail party left San Diego on September 9 and arrived in San Antonio on October 6

Postmarked again for October 8 San Antonio departure to New Orleans - arrived October 22

One of two known letters carried over the entire route

California Contract Mail

“Jackass Route” Contract: July 1857 - March 1860



The El Paso-Fort Yuma portion of the route was discontinued on October 27, 1858, and then the San Diego-Fort Yuma segment was discontinued on April 1, 1860, effectively ending the “Jackass” route.



Postmarked February 16, 1859 in Sacramento, California - 3¢ postage overpaid by 10¢ stamp

Carried on Butterfield route to El Paso and then on the “Jackass” route to San Antonio



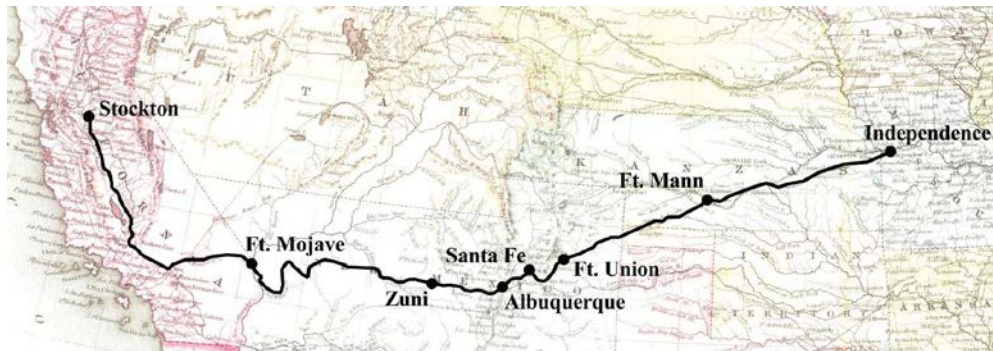
Postmarked February 5, 1860 in Jackson, California - endorsed “via San Antonio and El Paso”

California Contract Mail

Stockton Contract: October 1858 - June 1859



The Post Office Department signed a monthly contract with Jacob Hall for Route 15050 between Kansas City, Missouri and Stockton, California. Service began on October 1, 1858 along a southern route via Santa Fe. Service was not satisfactory, so the contract was annulled effective July 1, 1859. The six successful trips carried a total of three letters.



Postmarked January 21, 1859 in Dutch Flat, California - endorsed "via Stockton" and prepaid 10¢

Mail party left Stockton on February 1 and reached Kansas City around March 29

Only known letter carried on this route

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Congress authorized a twice-weekly transcontinental overland mail between St. Louis and San Francisco via Texas and Los Angeles on March 3, 1857. Route 12578 replaced the via Panama route as the default for contract transcontinental mails on December 17, 1859.

John Butterfield's Overland Mail Co. won the contract, and the first departures were on September 16, 1858. Civil War disruptions in Texas and Arkansas ended operations on the route in April 1861.



Postmarked February 1, 1860 in Auburn, California - franked 10¢ transcontinental postage

Endorsed "Overland via Visalia, Fort Tejon, Los Angeles, Fort Yuma, El Paso & Fort Smith"

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Illustrated envelopes were used to direct mail overland via Los Angeles. Many different stagecoach designs were introduced.



Posted November 14, 1859 in San Francisco - franked by 1859 10¢ type V



Posted June 24, 1859 in San Francisco - franked 10¢ in 1857 Issue stamps

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861

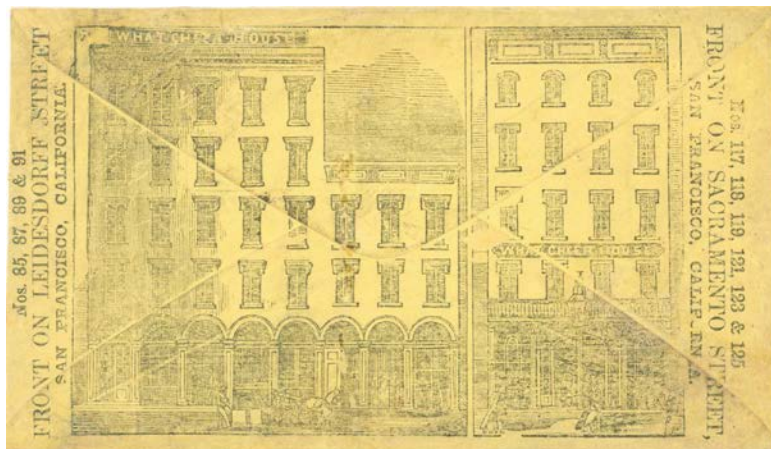


Illustrated envelopes with overland directives were also printed with railroad designs. These were used as propaganda to promote the transcontinental railroad – which was not completed until 1869.



Postmarked on September 23, 1859 in San Francisco - franked by 1859 10¢ type V

Left on September 23 coach - arrived 23 days later in St Louis, Missouri



“What Cheer” House advertising on the reverse (75% size)

Fewer than five covers known with this railroad design

California Contract Mail

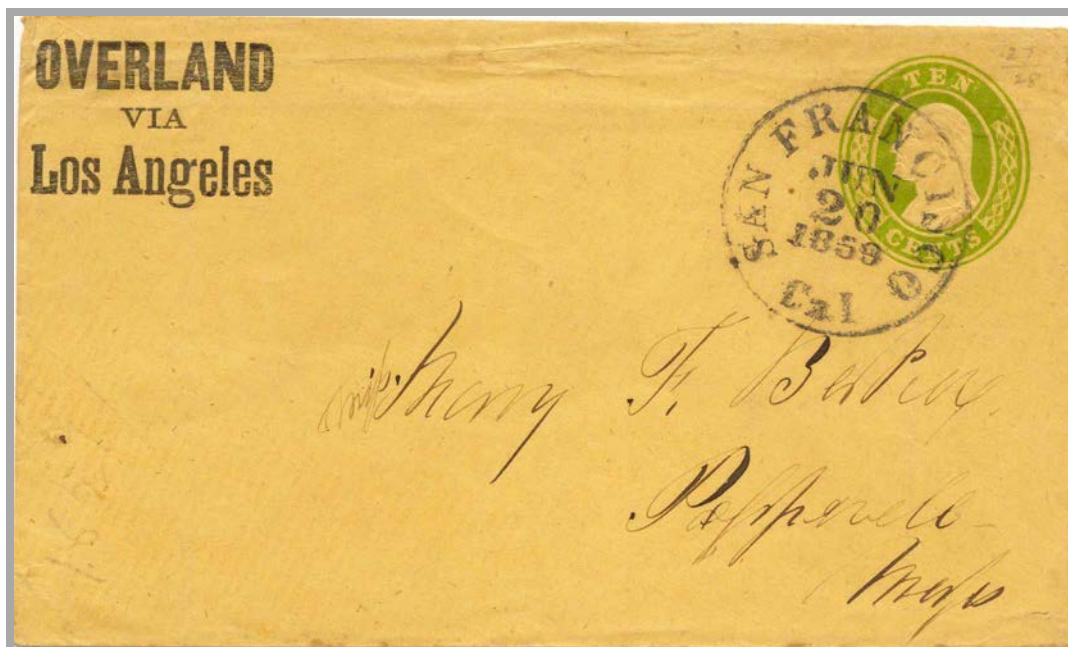
Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



The post office designated the Butterfield route as the default for transcontinental contract mail on December 17, 1859. This order was implemented in California on January 23, 1860.



Posted August 19, 1859 in San Francisco - franked by 1857 10¢ type III



Posted June 20, 1859 in San Francisco - franked 10¢ transcontinental postage to Massachusetts

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



“Via Los Angeles” endorsements were not necessary for the Butterfield service after the December 17, 1859 Post Office overland default order.



Posted March 31, 1860 in Bordeaux, France - triple-weight postage paid by 1859 80c stamps

Havre Line steamer *Arago* left Southampton on April 4 and arrived in New York on April 18

Butterfield stagecoach left St Louis on April 23 and arrived in San Francisco on May 14

“Malle Overland via Los Angeles” endorsement

Overland route directives on foreign mail are uncommon

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



April 1855-February 1861 postal rates were 10¢ per ½ oz. over 3,000 miles and 3¢ for shorter distances. The Butterfield route was 2,800 miles, so mail to intermediate points was charged 3¢.



Postmarked on October 19, 1860 in San Francisco - prepaid 3¢ for less than 3,000 miles
Butterfield coach left on October 19 - arrived in Mesilla, New Mexico around October 30
Carried to nearby Fort Craig but forwarded on November 8 with 3¢ due to Virginia
Caught the Butterfield coach at Mesilla on November 9 - reached St Louis on November 19

Earliest of four known Fort Craig postmarks

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Postmarked May 21, 1860 in San Francisco - franked by 1859 10¢ type V

May 21 stagecoach arrived in St Louis on June 11

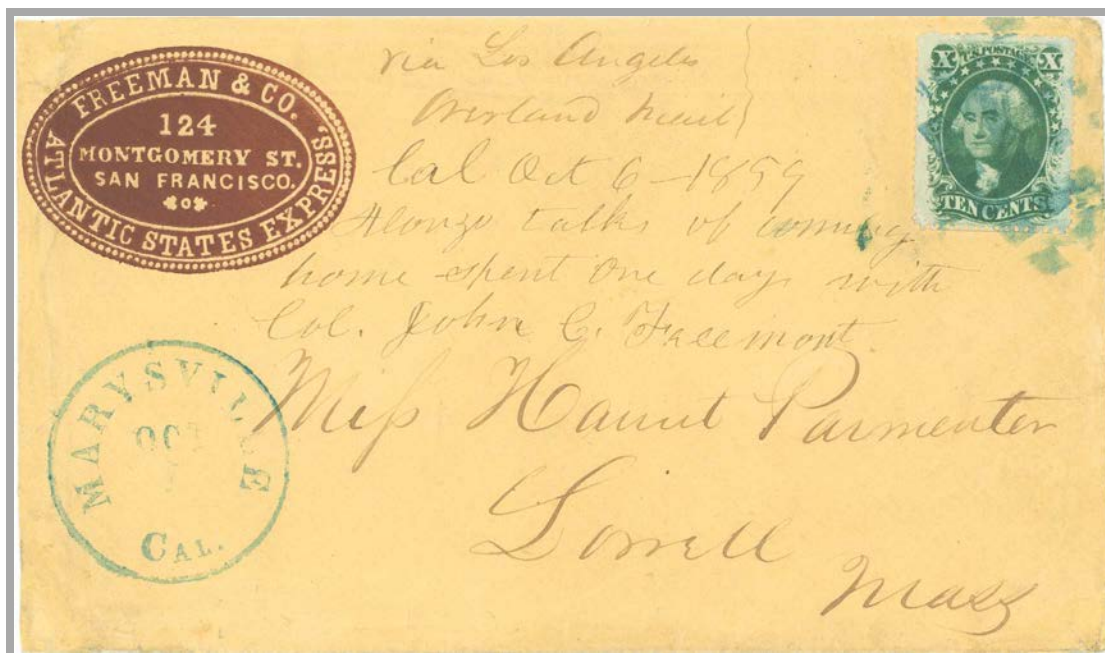


Postmarked December 2, 1859 in San Francisco - prepaid double-weight 20¢ postage

Forwarded with additional 6¢ postage from Factoryville, New York on January 2

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Carried by Freeman & Co on October 6, 1859 to Marysville - postmarked there on October 7
October 10 stagecoach from San Francisco - arrived in St Louis on October 31



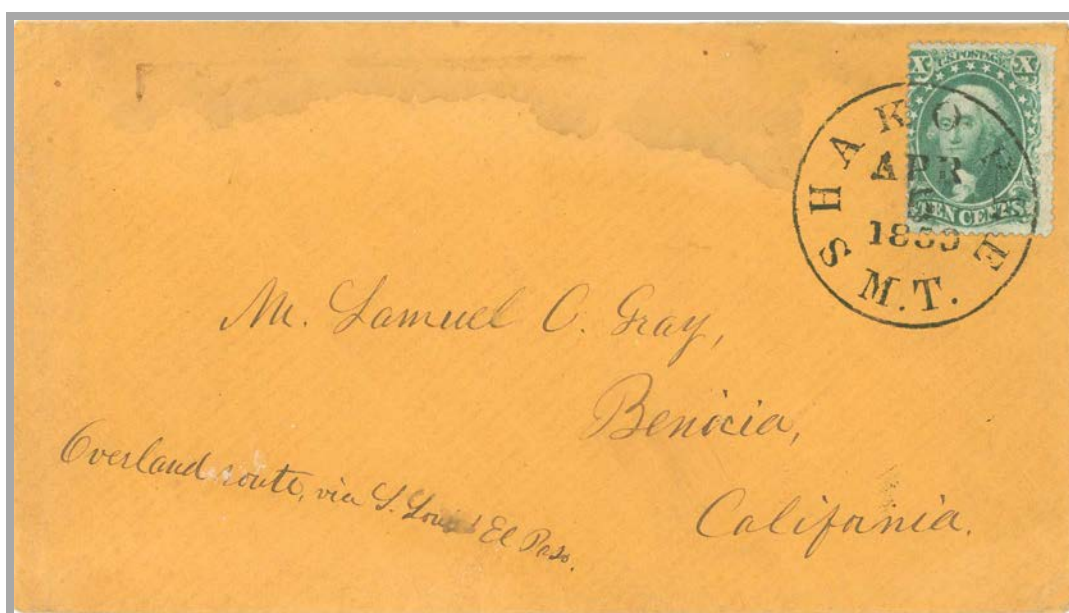
Postmarked June 26, 1860 in Downieville - 1859 10¢ type V stamp cancelled by star
June 29 stagecoach from San Francisco - arrived in St Louis on July 23

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Much less westbound Butterfield mail is known than eastbound, probably because the service was more broadly advertised in California than in the East.



Postmarked on April 5, 1859 in Shakopee, Minnesota - prepaid 10¢ transcontinental postage
Endorsed "Overland route via S. Louis & El Paso" - took April 11 stagecoach from St Louis
Arrived in San Francisco on May 4 after a 23 day trip

Early westbound Butterfield route cover

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Civil War depredations closed the Butterfield route in early 1861. The last eastbound coach left on April 1, and the last westbound coach left St. Louis on March 21.



Postmarked on February 11, 1861 in Sacramento - prepaid double-weight 20¢ postage
February 15 stagecoach from San Francisco - arrived in St. Louis on March 12



Butterfield stagecoach

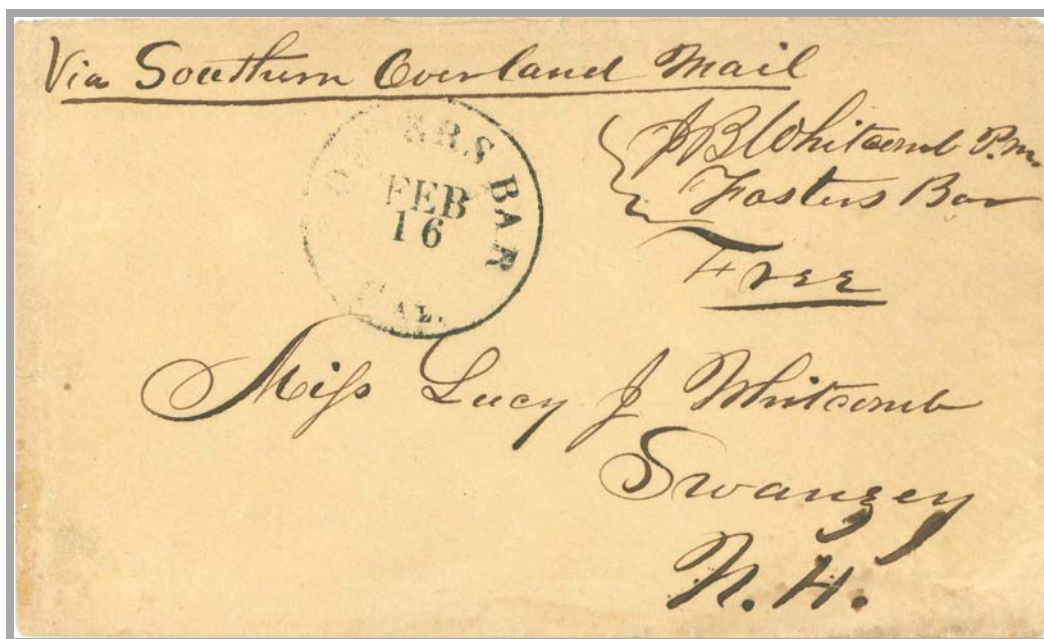
California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Postmarked in San Francisco on March 11, 1859 - prepaid 3¢ to St. Louis

Endorsed "Via Los Angeles Overland" - March 11 coach arrived in St Louis on April 4



Postmarked February 16, 1859 in Fosters Bar – **postmaster's free frank**

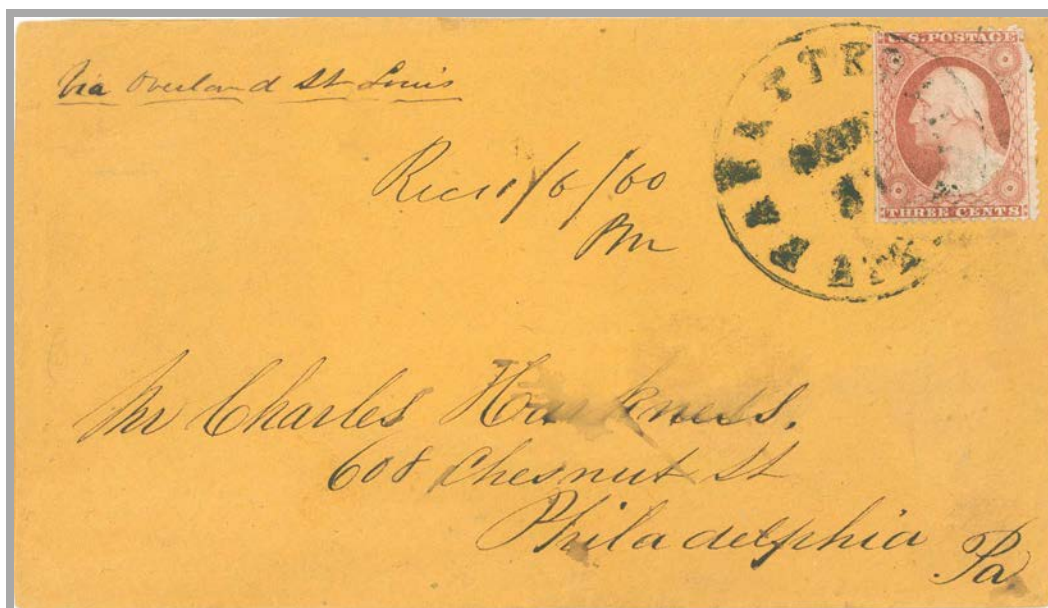
Endorsed "Via Southern Overland Mail" - early Butterfield route cover

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Some Butterfield mail was carried over short portions of the route. Fayetteville is near Fort Smith, Arkansas, where the route bifurcates to St. Louis and Memphis.



Posted on October 31, 1860 in Fayetteville, Arkansas - **endorsed "Via overland St Louis"**

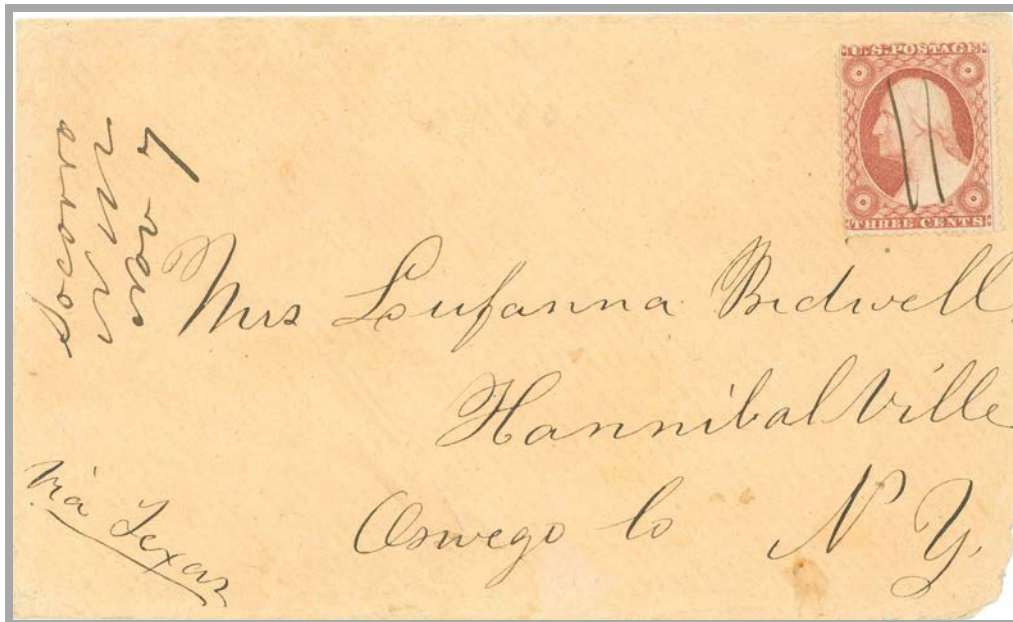
October 12 stagecoach from San Francisco passed through Fayetteville on October 31

Arrived in St. Louis around November 3 - reached Philadelphia on November 6

3 cents short distance rate to Philadelphia

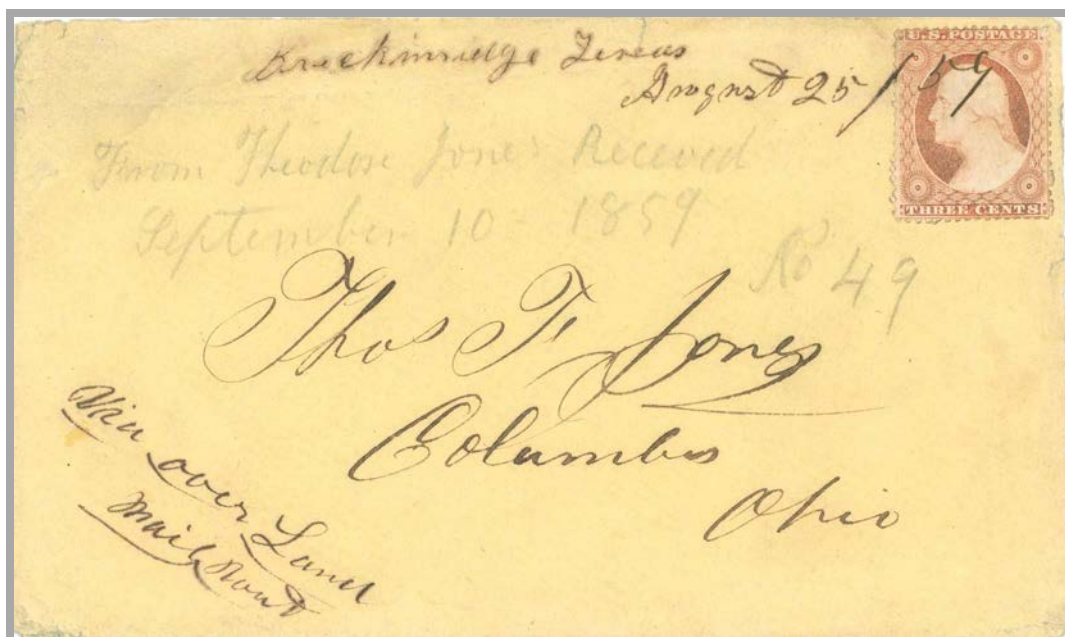
California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Postmarked in Socorro, New Mexico on November 7, 1860 - prepaid 3¢ to NY

Endorsed "Via Texas" - carried on **Butterfield branch line between Santa Fe and El Paso**

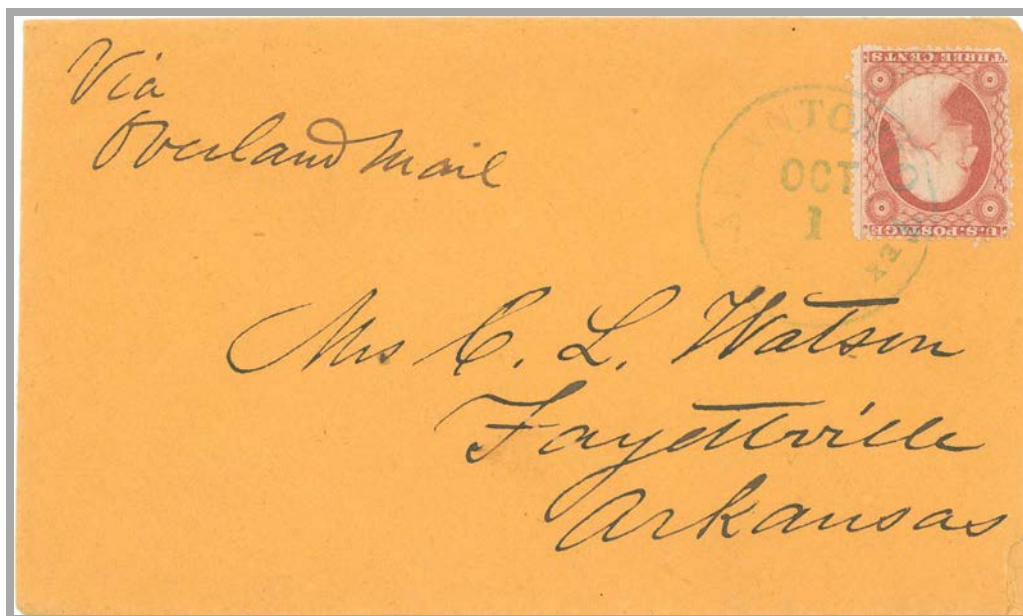


Postmarked August 25, 1859 in Breckinridge, Texas - prepaid 3¢ to Ohio

Endorsed "Via over Land mail route" - met coach on August 27 at Fort Chadbourne

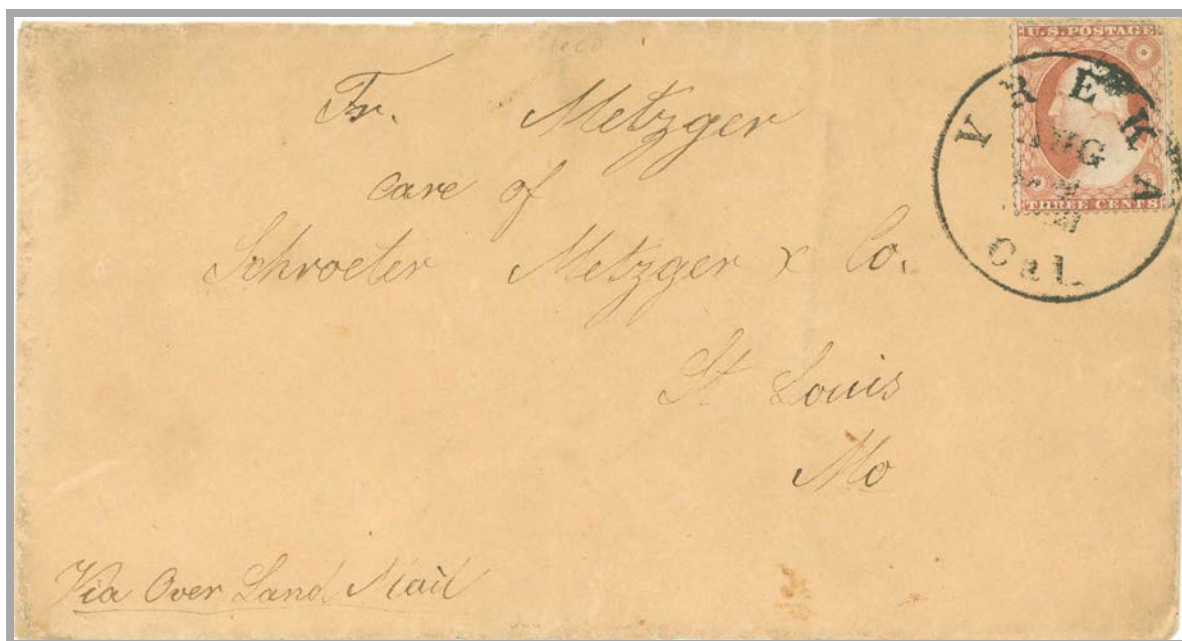
California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Postmarked in San Antonio, Texas on October 1, 1859 - prepaid 3¢ to Arkansas

Endorsed "Via Overland Mail" - short trip on Butterfield route



Postmarked August 24, 1859 in Yreka, California - prepaid 3¢ to St Louis

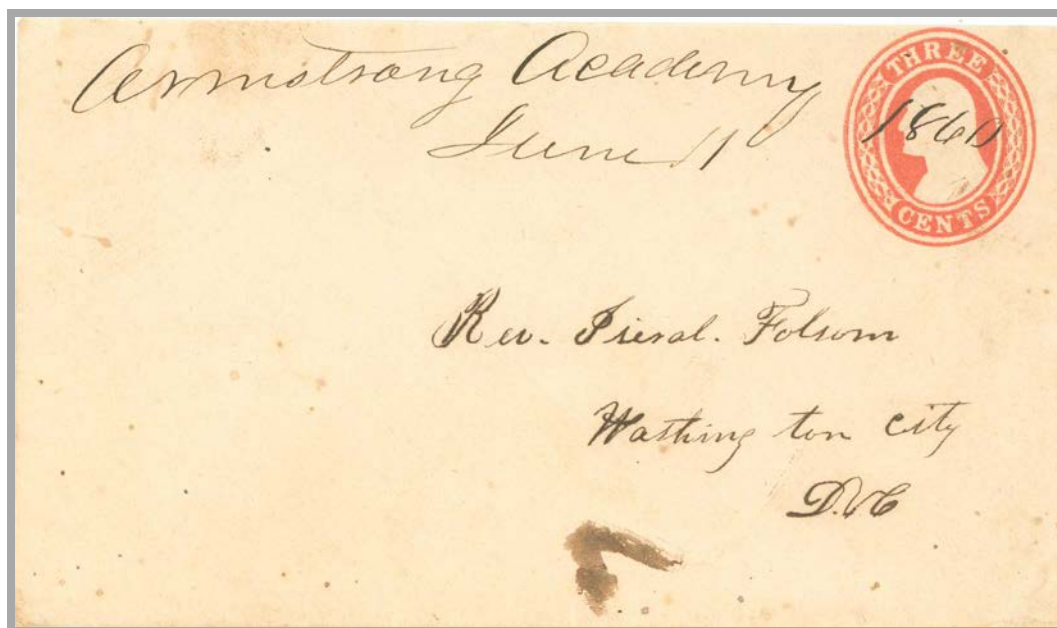
Endorsed "Via Over Land Mail" - August 26 stagecoach from San Francisco

California Contract Mail

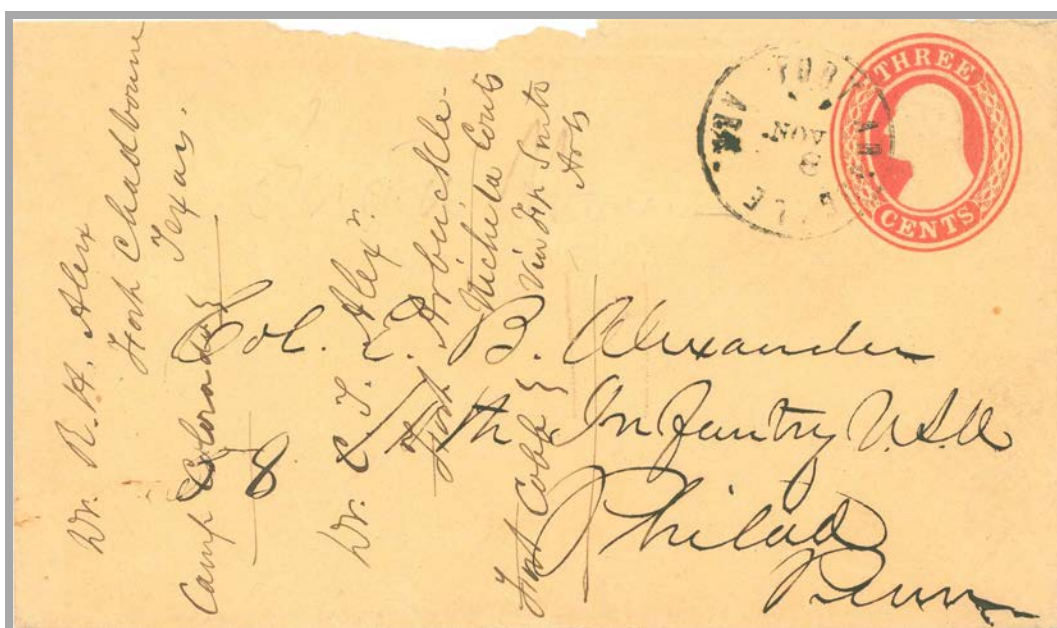
Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



The Butterfield route ran through the Indian Territory, whose post offices were under the administrative control of Arkansas.



Postmarked in **Armstrong Academy, Choctaw Nation** on June 11, 1860 - prepaid 3¢



Postmarked November 8, 1859 in **Fort Arbuckle, Chickasaw Nation** - prepaid 3¢

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Some directional endorsements to the Butterfield route were applied as handstamps on transcontinental letters.



Posted on December 3, 1859 in Camptonville, California - prepaid 10¢ postage

Red oval directive handstamp “OVERLAND VIA LOS ANGELES”

December 5 stagecoach from San Francisco arrived in St. Louis on December 26

Fewer than five covers known with this handstamped marking

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861

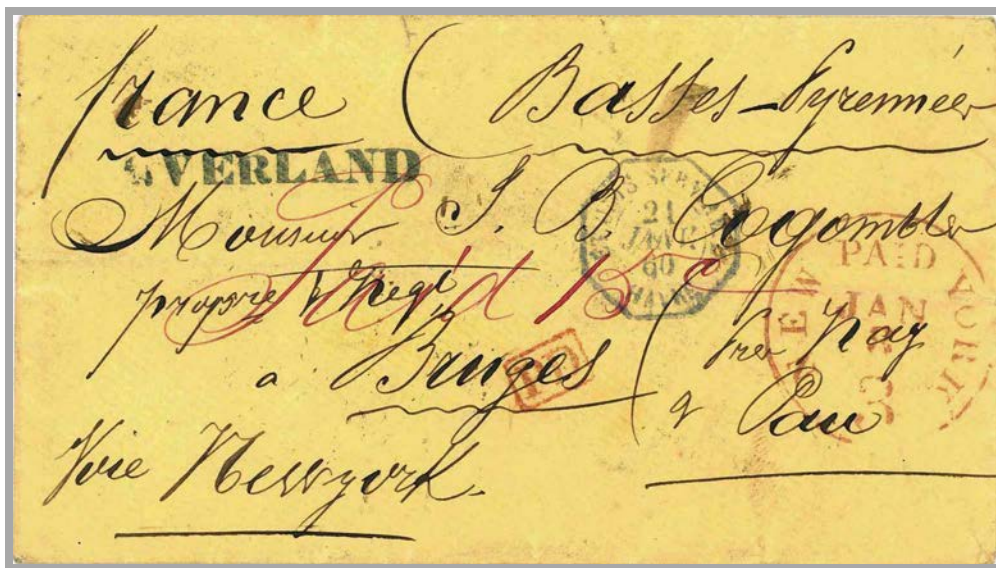


In October 1859, San Francisco introduced a straight-line "OVERLAND" routing handstamp for mail received too late to catch a PMSC sailing. This "dropped R" type was used until April 1860.



Posted October 4, 1859 in Don Pedros Bar - too late for October 5 steamer to Panama

Earliest use of "OVERLAND" handstamp - stagecoach left S.F. on October 7



Posted in a California mining town in early December 1859 - 15¢ postage to France paid in cash

Routed to December 9 Butterfield stagecoach - left NY January 8 on Havre Line steamer *Arago*

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



San Francisco used the Type 2 “dropped L” OVERLAND handstamp in September-October 1860. It was used as a “Too Late” marking for Butterfield mail.



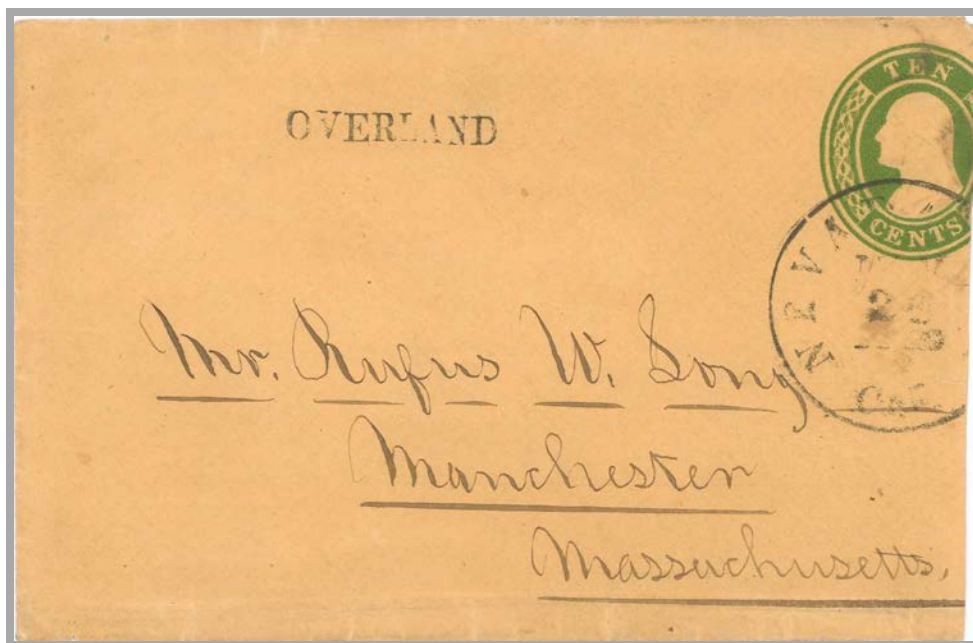
Postmarked September 24, 1860 in San Francisco - 35¢ postage to Switzerland via Aachen
San Francisco Type 2 “OVERLAND” handstamp - Inman Line from New York to England



Cover front posted September 1860 in Victoria, V.I. - 5d colonial and 15¢ US postage paid at Victoria
September 27 San Francisco postmark - **fewer than ten type 2 “OVERLAND” handstamps known**

California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Posted November 26, 1860 in Nevada City, California - franked by 1855 10¢ Nesbitt entire

Fewer than five Nevada City “OVERLAND” markings are known, used June-November 1860



Posted October 10, 1859 in Sacramento - transcontinental postage paid by 1857 10¢ type III

Straight-line “OVERLAND” Sacramento routing handstamp - fewer than ten examples known

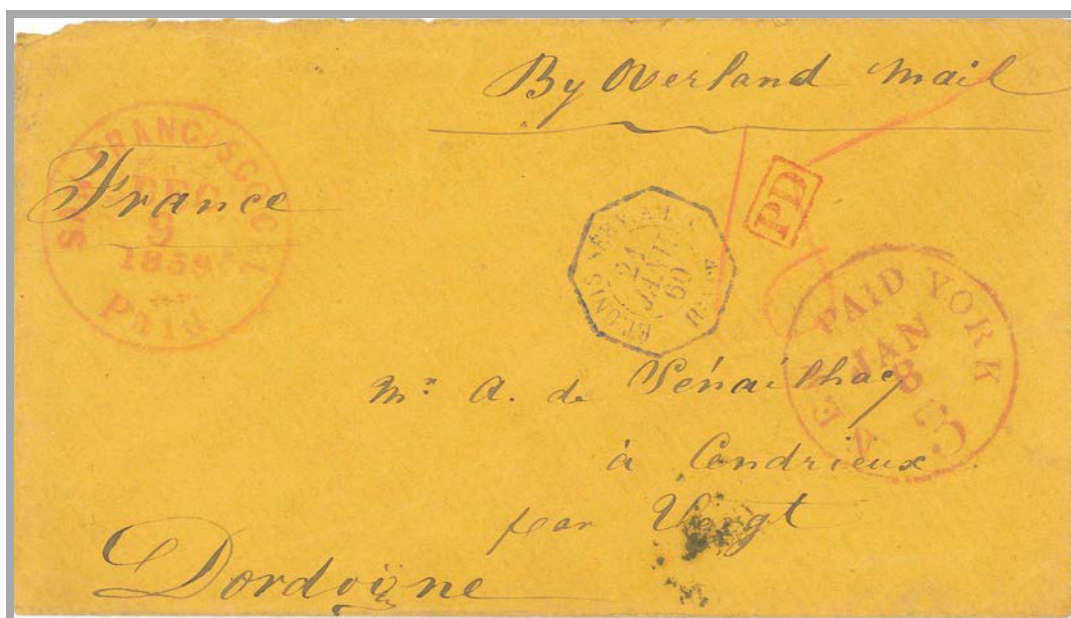
California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Posted March 16, 1860 in San Francisco - sent unpaid at 15¢ rate to France per boxed "15"

Endorsed "Overland Mail via Los Angeles" - left NY April 11 on Cunarder *Arabia*



Posted December 9, 1859 in San Francisco - prepaid 15¢ to France

Endorsed "By Overland Mail" - left NY January 8 on Havre Line steamer *Arago*

California Pre-Contract Mail

Pony Express Introduction: April 1860 - October 1861



In 1860, the Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Co. (COCPPE) controlled the secondary Central Route overland mail contracts via Salt Lake, but wanted to obtain the lucrative contract owned by Butterfield on the Southern Route.

COCPPE started the transcontinental Pony Express between St Joseph, Missouri and San Francisco to prove the superiority of the Central Route for the main transcontinental mail contract. Their pony express operation fell into four distinct periods.



June 1860 red New York “California Pony Express Paid” postmark - 10¢ U.S. postage paid

\$5 per ½ oz. express fee paid per faint manuscript “5.00” - forwarded privately to St Joseph

St Joseph Running Pony postmark for June 10 departure - arrived in San Francisco on June 25

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1860 - August 1860



The COCPPE privately operated a weekly service between St Joseph and San Francisco during the first period of the Pony Express. Transit times ranged between 10 and 13 days, unless disrupted by Paiute Indian attacks.

Operations began on April 3, 1860 with departures from San Francisco and St. Joseph. Express fees were \$5 per ½ ounce, but were reduced in August.



First trip departed from San Francisco on April 3, 1860 - arrived in St Joseph on April 13
\$5 per ½ oz. Pony Express fee paid per black April 3 San Francisco Running Pony marking
10¢ U.S. postage paid - post office carried the letter from St Joseph to New York on April 17

One of two known covers carried on the first eastbound trip

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1860 - August 1860



The first westbound Pony Express trip left St Joseph on April 3, 1860 and arrived in San Francisco on April 14. Letters were sent under cover from the East to St Joseph and never directly entered the U.S. mails.



Sent under cover from the East to St Joseph - pencil "Paid 5.00" express fee paid
First Pony Express trip left St Joseph on April 3, 1860 per black St Joseph COCPPE mark
10¢ US transcontinental postage paid even though the post office did not handle this letter

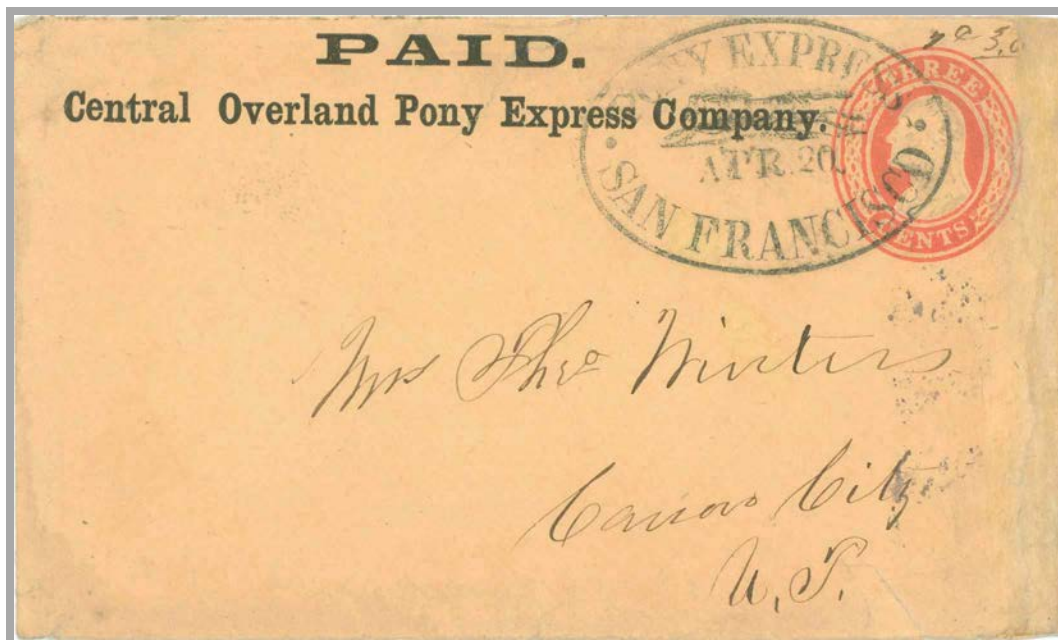
Only known cover carried on the first westbound trip

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1860 - August 1860



A special “short distance” rate of \$3 per ½ ounce was in effect during the first period for mail addressed to points between San Francisco and Salt Lake City.



3rd eastbound trip left San Francisco on April 20, 1860 - manuscript “3.00” express fee paid

Addressed to Carson City, Nevada - “short distance” rate applied

3¢ U.S. postage paid - **only known example of the \$3 “short distance” rate**



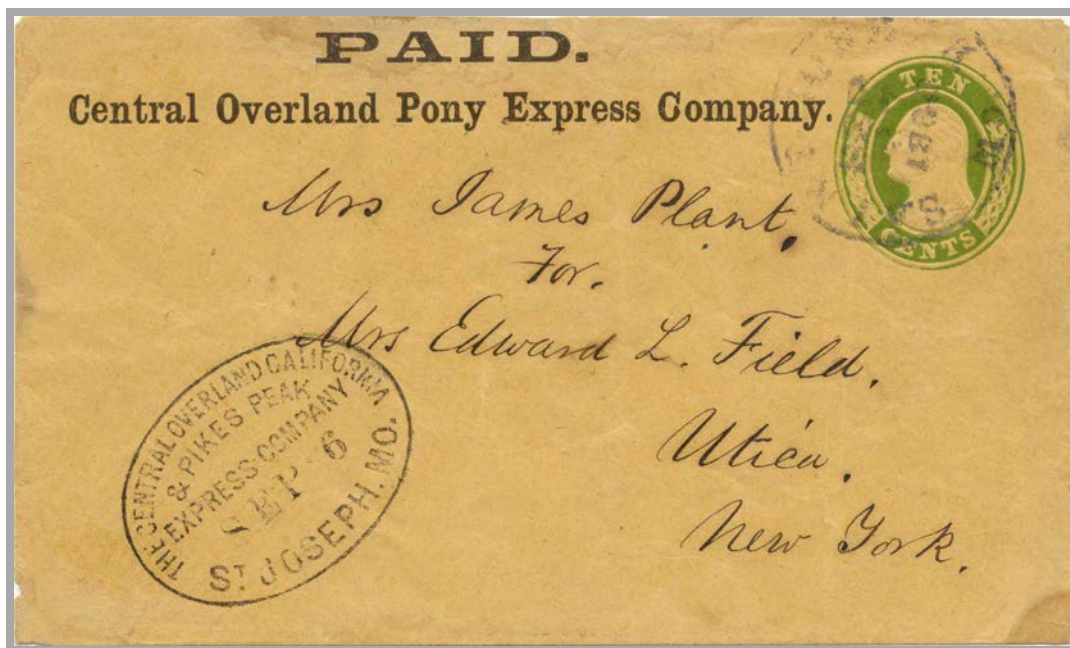
“The Pony Express” by Frederic Remington

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



The second period began with a reduced rate of \$2.50 per ¼ ounce on July 31, 1860 in the East and on August 15 in the West. The twice-weekly service was still operated privately by COCPPE in 10-15 days between St Joseph and San Francisco.



The Central Overland Pony Express Company (COPEC) was a subsidiary of the COCPPE
COPEC frank indicates that the \$2.50 express fee was paid at a way station along the route
September 15, 1860 trip from San Francisco arrived in St Joseph on September 26
10¢ U.S. overland postage prepaid - postmarked on September 27 in St Joseph

Fewer than ten letters with COPEC franks are known

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



The carmine St Joseph Running Pony datestamp is known used in both directions from August 12 to September 13, 1860. Ten examples are known.



"Pd \$5.00" indicates double-weight express fee - sent under cover from the East to St Joseph
Pony left St Joseph on September 6, 1860 - only 3¢ postage was needed from St Joseph to California

Only four westbound carmine Running Pony markings are known

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



Collected August 19, 1860 at Placerville, California way station - manuscript "Paid \$2.50"
August 18 trip from San Francisco arrived in St Joseph on August 30 - 10¢ U.S. postage paid
Carmine August 30 St Joseph Running Pony postmark - postmarked next day in St Joseph



Letter front (90% of original)

Only six eastbound carmine Running Pony markings are known

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861

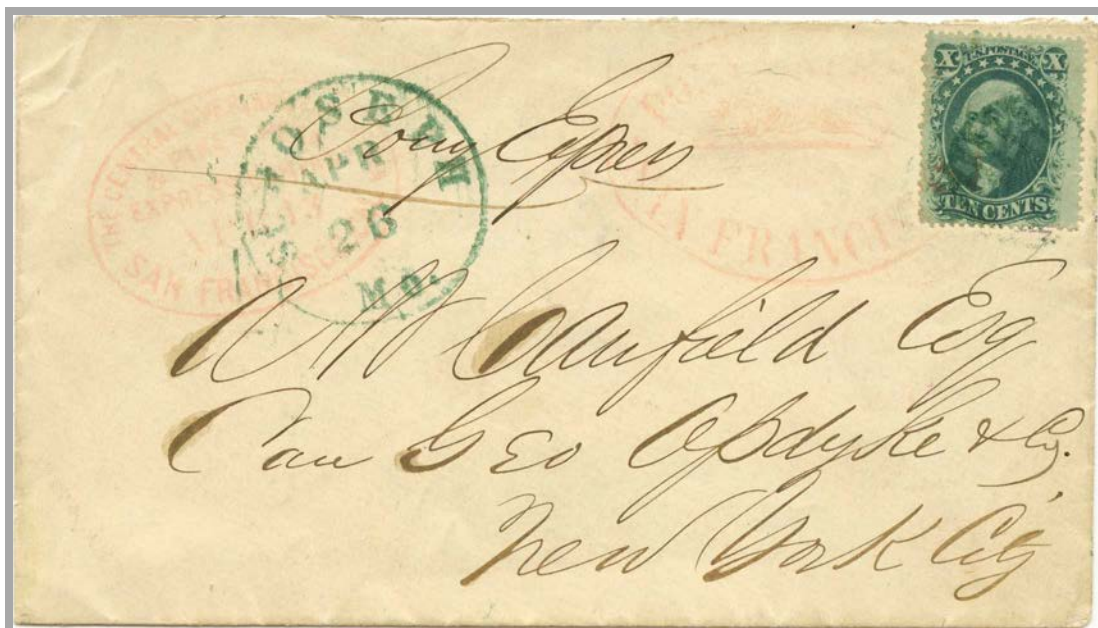


The San Francisco Running Pony marking was used as a departure datestamp, and to indicate that the \$2.50 express fee was paid. It is known in black, red and mainly in blue.



Blue September 29, 1860 San Francisco Running Pony datestamp - 10¢ U.S. postage prepaid

Arrived October 10 in St Joseph per oval COCPPE marking - postmarked the next day



Dateless Red Running Pony used briefly in March-April 1861 - **only five examples known**

Red San Francisco COCPPE mark shows April 13 departure - postmarked 13 days later in St Joseph

California Pre-Contract Mail

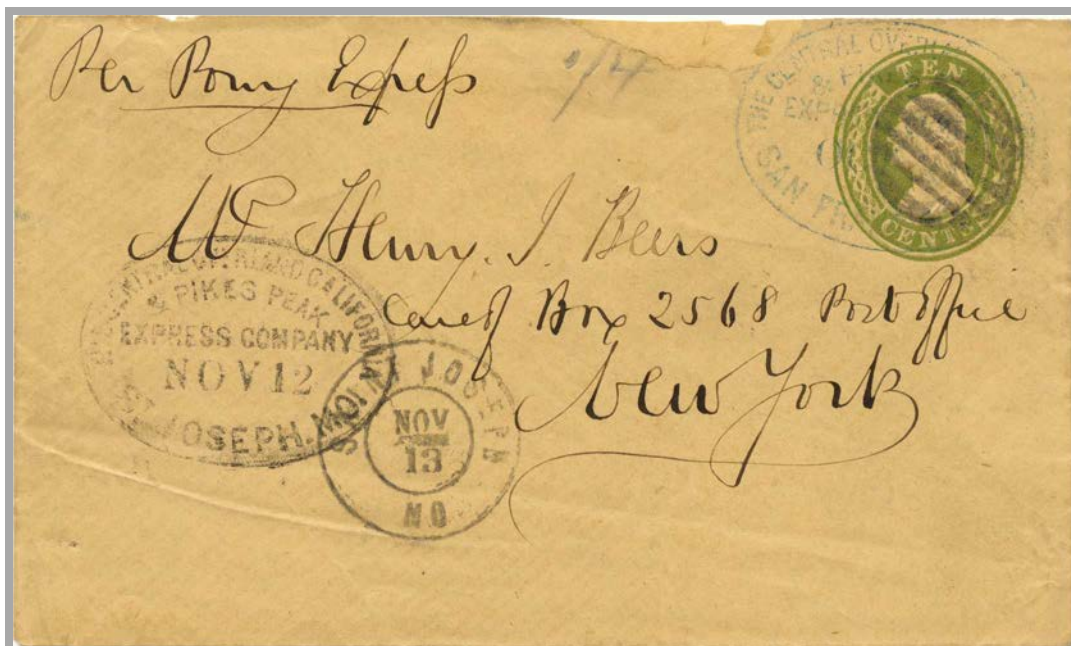
Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



San Francisco also used a “Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company” (COCPPE) mark, known both dated and undated.



Undated San Francisco COCPPE mark used with blue January 12, 1861 Running Pony mark
Manuscript “1/4” indicates weight for \$2.50 express fee - postmarked February 2 in St Joseph



October 31, 1860 San Francisco COCPPE mark - November 12 St Joseph COCPPE arrival mark

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



From June to November 1860, New York used a red "California Pony Express Paid" (CPE) marking to indicate payment of the \$2.50 per ¼ oz. fee. Fewer than fifteen examples are known.



Red CPE marking applied in New York City - 3¢ U.S. postage for St Joseph-San Francisco distance
September 27, 1860 St Joseph Running Pony departure mark - arrived October 7 in San Francisco



"5.00" for double-weight express fee - departed St Joseph on October 11, 1860

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



St Joseph, Missouri replaced its Running Pony marking with a double oval COCPPE marking in late December 1860.



\$2.50 express fee paid per "Paid JTC" - **U.S. free frank for California Senator Gwin** in Washington, DC

St Joseph Running Pony mark for December 13, 1860 departure - arrived December 29 in San Francisco



Departed St Joseph on March 10, 1861 - express fee paid per "2.50" - 10¢ U.S. postage prepaid

Arrived March 23 in San Francisco - **postmarked March 25 for transmittal to Oregon**

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



Only six Pony Express letters sent to foreign destinations are known: two to Great Britain, one to France, one to Germany, one to Switzerland, and one to Prince Edward Island.



April 13, 1861 red San Francisco COCPPE datestamp and undated red Running Pony marking

Posted unpaid on April 26 at St Joseph - 24¢ rate to England did not require prepayment

April 30 New York debit to England for 5¢ postage - Cunarder *Niagara* left Boston on May 1

Arrived in Liverpool, England on May 13 - one shilling due from recipient



Only five red San Francisco Running Pony markings are known

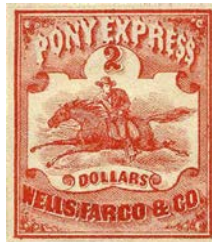
California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1861 - June 1861



The Post Office was persuaded by the success of the Pony Express to move the daily overland mail contract to the Central Route on March 2, 1861 but awarded it to the Overland Mail Company, effective July 1. COCPPE became a sub-contractor, so the Pony Express was operated jointly in the third period.

This transitional period began on April 1, 1861 (April 15 in the West) with a reduced rate of \$2 per ½ ounce. Special adhesives for this were printed by Wells Fargo & Company, which had begun to administer the service.



Blue San Francisco Running Pony mark for May 11, 1861 departure - \$2 Pony Express stamp

Prepaid 10¢ U.S. transcontinental postage to Boston - postmarked on May 24 in St Joseph

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1861 - June 1861



Wells Fargo prepared franked envelopes for the \$2 rate. These type I franks were used for some westbound mail, and only two are known.



Franked envelope paid \$2 express fee - U.S. postage paid by restored 10¢ Nesbitt entire
May 7, 1861 “New-York California Pony Express” mark - left St Joseph on May 12



\$2 express fee paid in Washington, DC per “2.00” - left St Joseph on April 18, 1861
Sent under cover to St Joseph - only 3¢ U.S. postage needed from St Joseph to San Francisco

California Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861



The July 1861 daily overland contract included a provision to continue the Pony Express until the completion of the overland telegraph. The service in this fourth period was operated by the Overland Mail Company under contract to the Post Office Department until terminated on October 26.

Wells Fargo introduced a new \$1 per ½ ounce rate on July 1, 1861 for the pony service between Placerville, CA and St Joseph, and issued new adhesives. Wells Fargo also offered an additional 10¢ express service between San Francisco and Placerville, connecting with the Pony Express.



10¢ entire with red Wells Fargo frank sold for 20¢ - express fee to Placerville plus U.S. postage
Blue San Francisco Running Pony datestamp for August 3, 1861 departure - red \$1 WF stamp
Pony Express arrived on August 14 in St Joseph - postmarked August 18 in New York City
Forwarded on August 20 from Westfield, MA with an additional 1857 3¢ stamp

Fewer than ten Pony Express covers are known with 3¢ stamps

California Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861



The eastern terminus for the Pony Express was changed from St Joseph, Missouri to Atchison, Kansas on September 23, 1861.



\$1 stamp on **Wells Fargo over Freeman & Co. frank** - July 17, 1861 Marysville datestamp
Connected with Pony Express at Sacramento - postmarked July 29 in St Joseph - envelope restored



Originated October 3, 1861 outside of San Francisco - October 5 San Francisco Running Pony mark
\$1 stamp on 10¢ star die entire with Wells Fargo red frank - **postmarked October 19 in Atchison**

California Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861



Only five Pony Express letters originating from foreign countries are known: one from Cuba, two from England and two from Hawaii. All were sent under cover to forwarders in the U.S.



Datelined "London 3rd July 1861" - sent under cover to forwarder in New York City
Given to Pony Express agent who applied **July 20 "California Pony Express" marking**
10¢ postage added - sent in express package to St Joseph - postmarked there on July 28
Pony Express left St Joseph on July 28 and arrived on August 8 in San Francisco



"California Pony Express New-York" mark was used December 1860-August 1861

California Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861



Wells Fargo prepared special franked envelopes for the July 1861 \$1 rate. These type 2 franks were used to send letters to St Joseph in the US mails.



Franked envelope paid \$1 express fee - U.S. postage paid by 10¢ “Watermelon” entire
Postmarked August 15, 1861 in New York - Pony Express left St Joseph on August 18



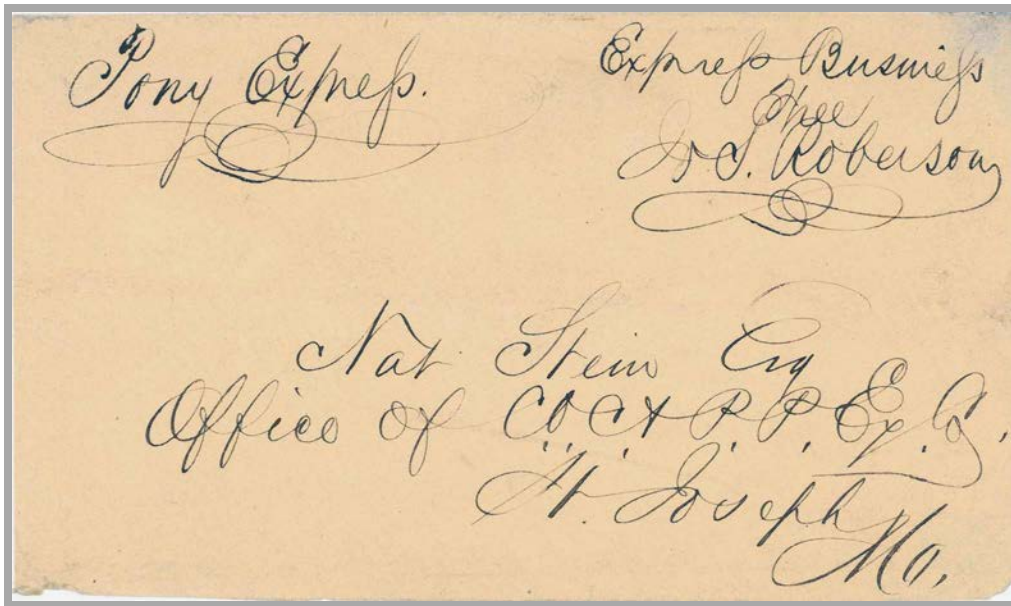
Posted in New York on October 5, 1861 - addressed to Pony Express Agent at St Joseph
October 10 St Joseph “double oval” pony express marking - arrived October 22 in Sacramento

California Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861

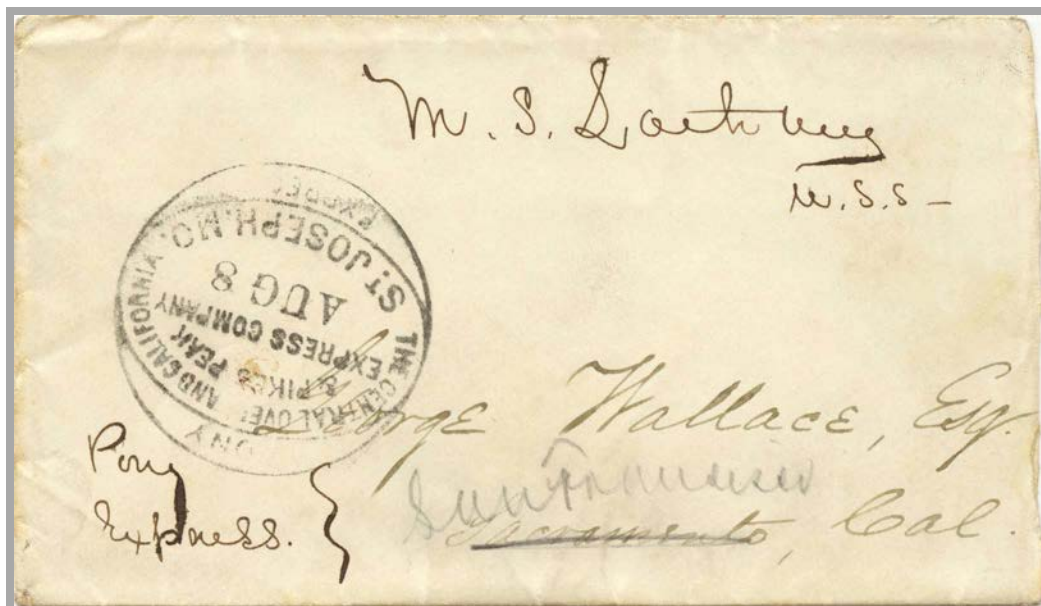


Pony Express letters on company business and from U.S. senators were carried free of any express or postal charges.



Dated "Fort Bridger July 10. 1861" - endorsed "Express Business Free"

Written by COCPPE agent Joseph Roberson on first daily overland stage from California



Dated "Washington D.C. 31st July 1861" from California senator Milton Latham

August 8 St Joseph "double oval" marking - no indication that any fee was paid

California Pre-Contract Mail

Nevada Pony Express: August 1862 - March 1865



Wells Fargo introduced a daily pony express service between San Francisco and Virginia City, Nevada on August 8, 1862. Express fees were paid by special adhesive stamps on Wells Fargo 10¢ franked envelopes (which included 3¢ U.S. postage).



Given to Wells Fargo & Co. in Virginia City, Nevada Territory on September 7, 1862
10¢ pony express stamp added to Wells Fargo franked envelope with 3¢ U.S. postage
10¢ stamp was used from August 1862 until February 1863, when rates increased to 25¢

10¢ brown is the rarest of the Virginia City Pony Express stamps

California Pre-Contract Mail

Nevada Pony Express: August 1862 - March 1865



The Virginia City Pony Express used 10¢ imprinted envelopes as paste-backs for over-sized mail from San Francisco. Fewer than ten are known.



10¢ blue imprint used as paste-back from San Francisco on March 29, 1863



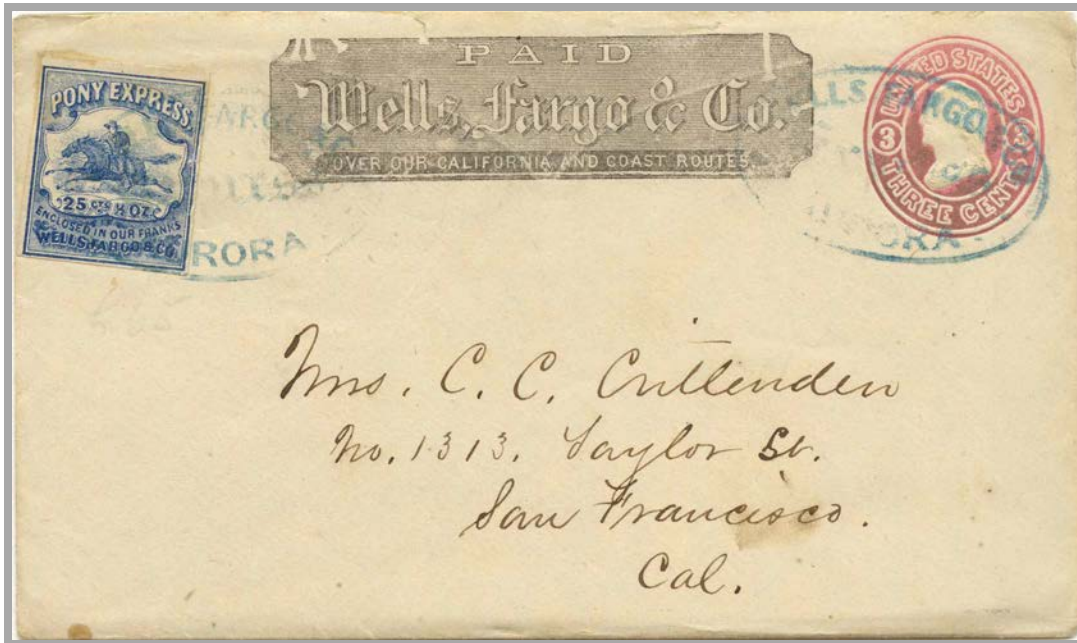
10¢ red imprint used as paste-back from San Francisco on April 21, 1863

California Pre-Contract Mail

Nevada Pony Express: February 1863 - February 1864



In February 1863, the Virginia City Pony Express rates were increased to 25¢, in addition to normal 10¢ Wells Fargo express fees.



Dateline in Aurora, Nevada Territory on April 24, 1863 and given to Wells Fargo pony express
25¢ blue pony express stamp was used from February 1863 to February 1864 - replaced by 25¢ red



Carried by Wells Fargo pony express from San Francisco to Gold Hill on June 1, 1863
10¢ Wells Fargo entire included 3¢ U.S. postage, even though post office did not handle the mail

California Pre-Contract Mail

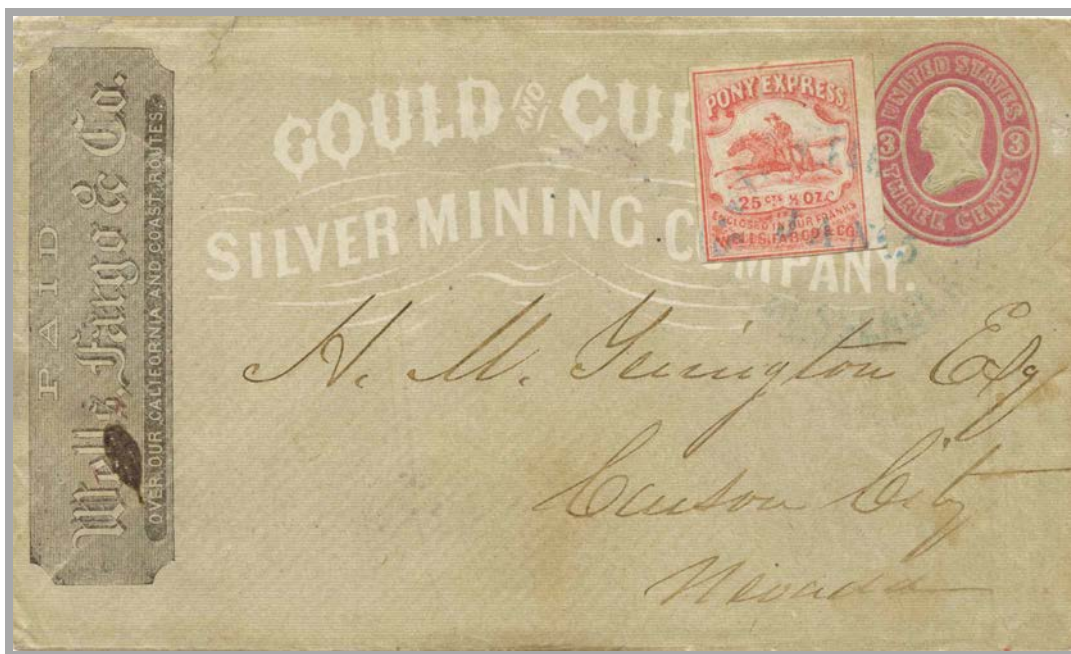
Nevada Pony Express: March 1864 - March 1865



The Virginia City Pony Express 25¢ red stamp was used from March 1864 to March 1865. There was no service from August to December 1864.



Carried by Wells Fargo pony express from Virginia City, N.T. on February 9, 1865 to San Francisco



Dated "San Francisco Jan 25 1865" - carried by Wells Fargo pony express to Carson City

Wells Fargo sold **franked all-over advertising envelopes** for an extra penny, or 11¢ each

California Pre-Contract Mail

Nevada Pony Express: March 1864 - March 1865



Wells Fargo's Virginia City Pony Express was intended for mail between San Francisco and Nevada Territory. It could also be used as the first leg of an overland trip to the East.



Entrusted to Wells Fargo in San Francisco on February 3, 1865 - **addressed to Philadelphia**

Carried by Pony Express to Virginia City - then forwarded overland via Austin, N.T. on February 6

The 25¢ stamp paid for expedited delivery over the western leg of the trip to the East

Only known transcontinental Virginia City Pony Express cover

California Pre-Contract Mail

Langton's Nevada Pony Express: July-August 1864



Langton's Pioneer Express operated a pony express service into the Humboldt district from July 5 to August 13, 1864. The extra fee was paid by a 25¢ adhesive stamp on a Langton franked envelope incorporating 3¢ U.S. postage.



Carried by **Langton's Pony Express** from Unionville, Nevada Territory to Bidwell's Bar, California

25¢ brown Humboldt Express stamp added to Langton's franked envelope with 3¢ U.S. postage

Fewer than ten 25¢ Humboldt Express stamps are known on cover

Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



Civil War disturbances along the Butterfield southern overland route caused the Post Office to move the default transcontinental mail contract to the central overland route on March 2, 1861. It was re-numbered Route 10773.

The Overland Mail Company (formerly Butterfield) operated this daily mail contract between Placerville and St Joseph, starting on July 1, 1861. It ended with the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869.



Datelined "London 19 Octr 1861" and posted on November 3, 1861 by New York City forwarder

Prepaid 11¢ (10¢ overland postage plus 1¢ carrier fee) - **1861 Issue 10¢ type I First Design**

Endorsed to Pony Express which ended in October, so re-endorsed "Overland via St Joseph"

Arrived in San Francisco on December 5 per docket

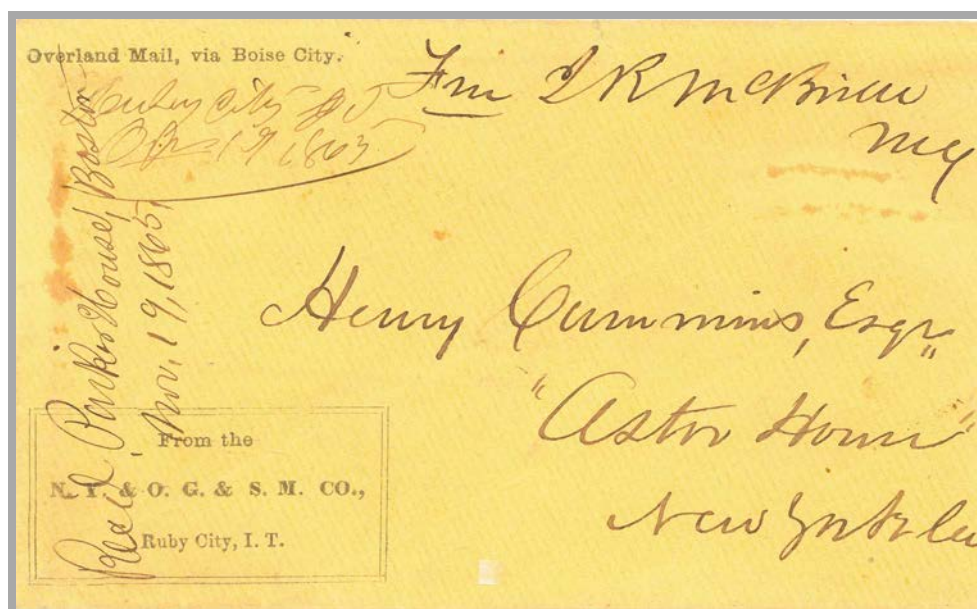
Scheduled 20-day trip, or 23 days during the four winter months

Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



Ben Holladay's Overland Mail & Express Co. was awarded the contract for Post Office Route 15022 between The Dalles, Oregon and Salt Lake City via Boise City and Fort Hall. Thrice-weekly service was from July 1, 1864 to June 30, 1868. This was used as a northwest feeder line which connected with the OMC daily overland stagecoach at Salt Lake City.



Postmarked October 19, 1865 in Ruby City, Idaho Terr. - **endorsed Overland Mail, via Boise City**
Carried by Holladay from Boise City to Salt Lake City - connected there with the daily overland stage
Postmaster free frank to New York City - from the New York & Owyhee Gold & Silver Mining Co.



"Stagecoach" by Oscar Berninghaus

Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



Illustrated stagecoach envelopes were used on the Central Route, and sometimes consisted of modified “Via Los Angeles” envelopes.



Posted on July 18, 1861 in Georgetown, California - franked by 1859 10¢ type V
Design modified for Central Route by removing “Via Los Angeles” from stagecoach door



Posted December 16, 1861 in San Francisco - franked by 1859 10¢ type V
Old Butterfield illustrated envelope modified by crossing out “via Los Angeles”

Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



The first Overland Mail Company trips left Placerville, California and Atchison, Kansas on July 1, 1861.



Posted prepaid in Buenos Ayres on April 27, 1861 - via Spain to London on June 14

Inman steamer *Etna* left Liverpool June 19 and arrived in New York on July 1

4th OMC stagecoach from Atchison on July 4 - postmarked on July 23 in San Francisco



Postmarked June 29, 1861 in San Francisco - unpaid 30¢ double-weight postage to France

First eastbound OMC stagecoach from Placerville on July 1 - arrived in Atchison on July 20

Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



San Francisco applied the 10¢ incoming steamship rate to mail from British Columbia and Hawaii from August to November 1864. They used a special “FOREIGN” postmark to explain the extra charge.



Prepaid 5¢ Vancouver Island colonial postage per blue Victoria “long oval” in August 1864

Sent overland from San Francisco on September 3 - rated “FOREIGN” and “DUE 7”



Posted August 27, 1864 in Honolulu - 5¢ Hawaiian and 6¢ U.S. mixed franking

Sent overland from San Francisco on September 23 - rated “FOREIGN” and “DUE 4”

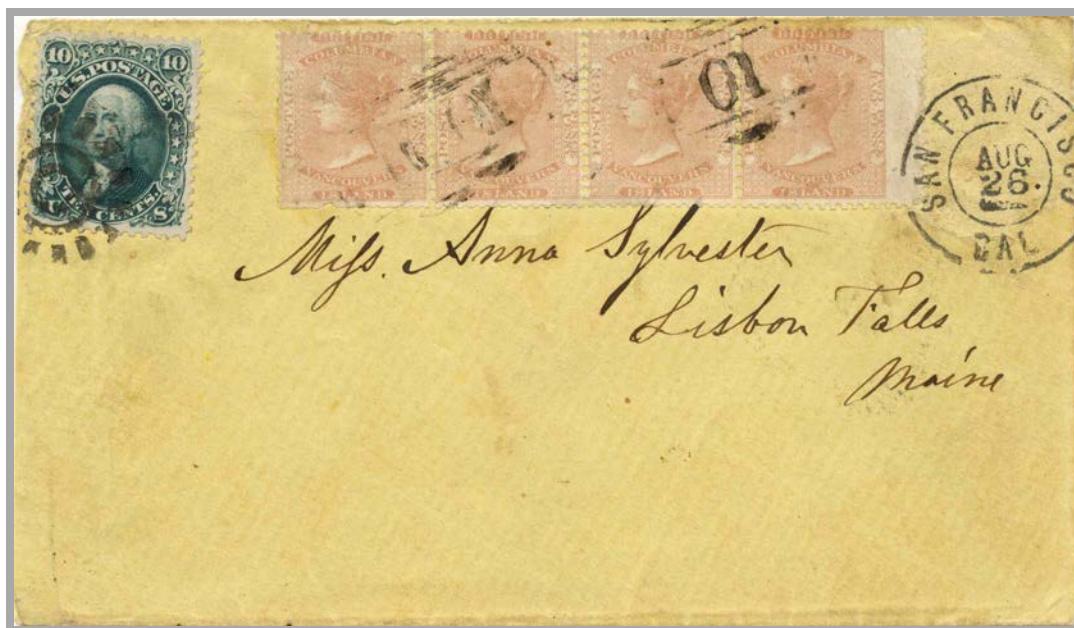
Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



Posted July 1867 in Williams Creek, British Columbia - **25¢ B.C. and 10¢ U.S. mixed franking**

Sent overland from San Francisco on July 19 - arrived August 14 in Aylmer, Upper Canada



Posted August 1867 in Williams Creek, British Columbia - **25¢ B.C. and 10¢ U.S. mixed franking**

Sent overland from San Francisco on August 26 - BC&VI 2½d stamps used provisionally as 6¼ cents

Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



Posted August 4, 1863 in Paris, France - franked by 1862 80c - Inman steamer *City of Washington*
Overland to Utah on September 3 - **forwarded overland to San Francisco with 1861 3¢ stamp**



Carried by **Rockfellow's Express in July 1863 from Boise mines** to Wells Fargo at Walla Walla, WA
Expedited overland by Wells Fargo via New York to Paris - posted unpaid on September 1
Cunard steamer *Asia* from New York on September 1 - 3¢ debit to France - 8 décimes due

Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



Posted March 1862 in Hope, British Columbia - **2½d B.C. and 15¢ U.S. mixed franking**
Pre-purchased Victoria 5¢ frank not valid in Hope - overland from San Francisco on April 14
Chicago Ill Paid 15 transit mark - addressed to Toronto, Canada West



Posted May 19, 1866 in Honolulu - sent overland from San Francisco on June 11
10¢ Hawaiian franking prepaid 5¢ Hawaiian and 5¢ U.S. postage - 5¢ U.S. stamp added in S.F.
Only known multiple of the Hawaii Inter-Island 5¢ stamp

Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



During the 1862-67 invasion of Mexico, French army units at Hermosillo, Mazatlan and Durango routed their mail via San Francisco.



Posted on September 27, 1865 at Bureau K near Hermosillo - overland from SF on October 18



Posted on February 20, 1865 at Bureau F near Durango - overland from SF on March 3

A black and white illustration of a horse-drawn carriage. The carriage is a boxy, enclosed vehicle with large spoked wheels. It is being pulled by a team of four horses, two in front and two behind. The horses are depicted in profile, facing left. The carriage has a driver's seat at the front. The entire scene is set on a simple ground line.

Blockade run mail from the Confederacy was typically sent inside of another envelope to a forwarder in Nassau, Bahamas. That forwarder would typically mail the letters either paid or unpaid to their destinations.



Rated for 5¢ due (2¢ ship fee plus 3¢ inland) in New York on August 2 - sent overland to San Francisco



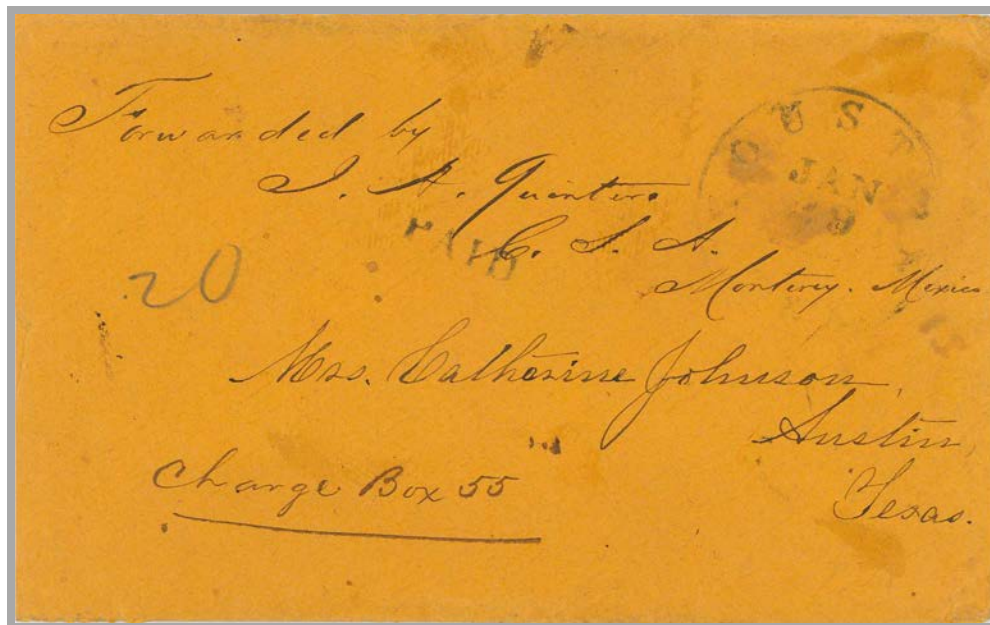
“Blockade Runner Loading Cotton” by William Muller

Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



The Civil War blocked the use of the OMC route for mail from California to the seceded southern states. Mail had to be routed via Mexico to a blockade runner from Matamoros to Galveston, Texas.



Datelined Santa Clara, California on September 27, 1863 - forwarded via Mazatlan to Monterey, Mexico

Forwarded by CSA agent Jose Quintero to Matamoros - placed on blockade runner to Galveston, Texas

Postmarked on January 29 in Houston and rated for double-weight 20¢ CSA postage paid

Send letters to J A Quintero, Monterey Mexico, instructing him to forward to Col. A. J. Grayson at Mazatlan who will forward them to Cal.; at the same time enclosing 25 cents to pay postage.

Put your letter into an envelope, seal it, and direct it to your friend in Cal, just as it it were to go by the ordinary mail; then put that into another, & direct it as above.

Enclosed instructions for return mail (67% size)

Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



Posted January 31, 1866 in Nice, France - franked by 1862 Issue 40 centimes pair
MISSSENT TO SAN FRANCISCO on March 26 - returned to Massachusetts via New York



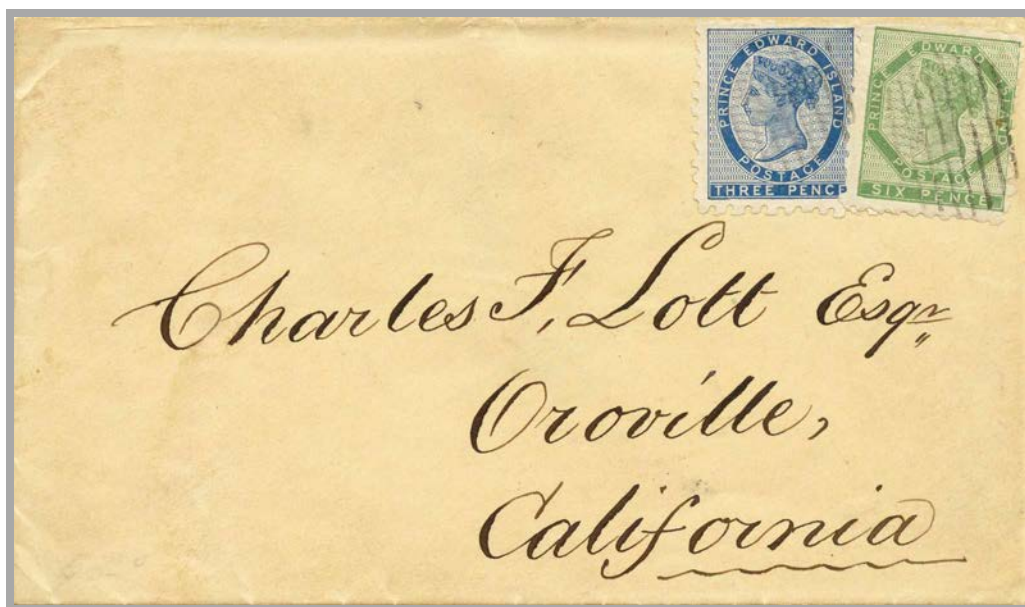
Posted May 1, 1866 in Mexico City - franked by 1866 "Eagle" Issue half reale and 2 reale stamps
10¢ non-contract steamship rate charged on May 18 in New York - routed overland to California

Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



Posted January 6, 1866 in London, Canada - franked by two 1859 5¢ “Beaver” stamps
10¢ rate for **closed overland mail to Victoria, V.I. via San Francisco**



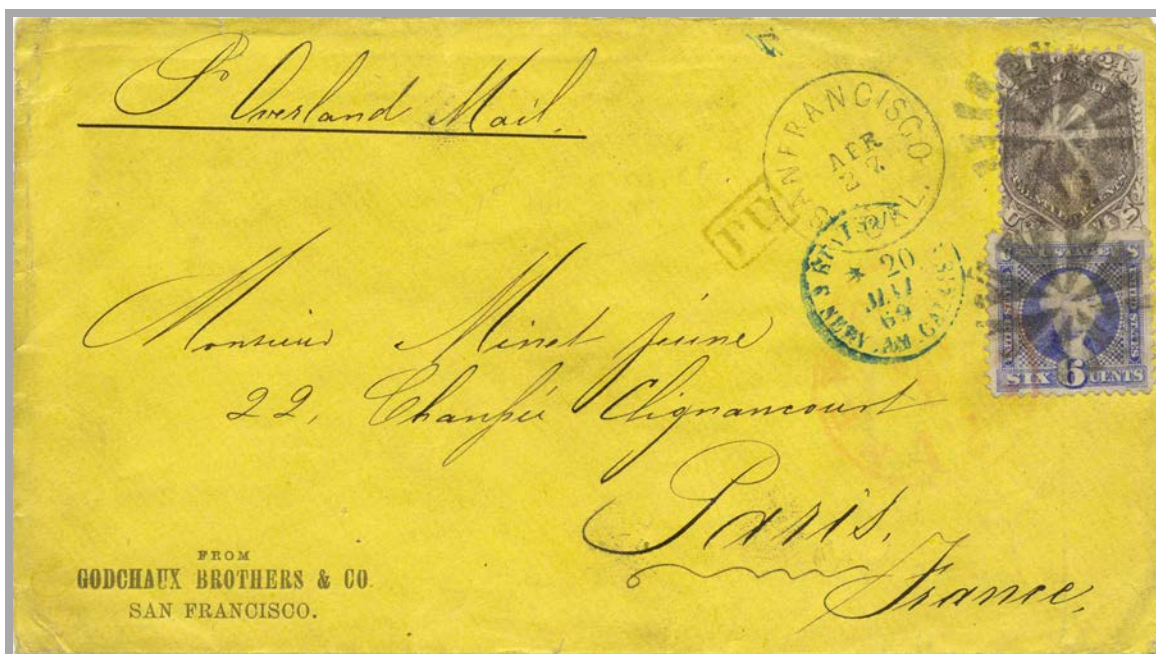
Posted June 12, 1863 in Prince Edward Island - franked by 1861 Issue 3d and 6d stamps
Fewer than five 9 pence frankings to California are known - rate included 5¢ surcharge

Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



The Central Pacific Railroad Company of California built the transcontinental railroad from the West, and the Union Pacific Railroad Company laid the tracks from the East. The OMC carried the mail between the two approaching railheads, and transit times gradually shortened.

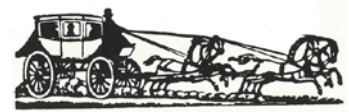


Posted double-weight on April 27, 1869 in San Francisco - 1867 24¢ "F" grill and 1869 6¢
North German Lloyd steamer *Bremen* left New York on May 8 and arrived in England on May 19
Railhead gap was 23 miles apart - 11 days total transit time to New York

Earliest known use of the 1869 Issue from California

Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



The railheads of the transcontinental railroad met at Promontory Point, Utah on May 10, 1869 and the last spike was driven at 1pm. This marked the end of the OMC transcontinental mail contract.



Posted unpaid on May 6, 1869 in San Francisco - Central Pacific train left Sacramento on May 7

Reached Promontory Point on May 9 at 11pm - carried 9 miles by OMC around the ceremony

Nine days transit time from San Francisco to New York



"The Last Spike" (A.J. Russell photograph)