

# WESTERN EXPRESS

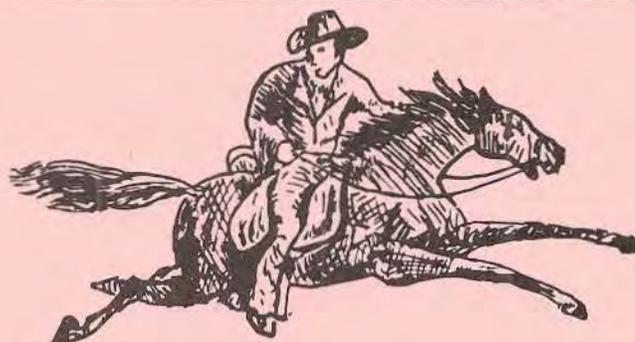
RESEARCH JOURNAL OF EARLY WESTERN MAILS

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Western Cover Society  
Unit No. 14 — American Philatelic Society

OCTOBER, 1977

Express  
Ocean Mail  
Overland  
Post Offices



Territorial  
Statehood  
Postal Rates  
Postal History

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Address all communications to Editor, Everett Erle, 9877 Elmar Ave., Oakland CA 94603

**EDITOR'S ARENA**

**TIMBROMANIA** A recent issue of the "American Philatelist" carried an account of an APS conference held at headquarters in State College, Pa. It was announced that Pennsylvania State University's WPSX-TV would be launching a public television special on stamp collecting. It would be produced under the title **TIMBROMANIA**. If successful it would be expanded to a 13-week series highlighting the drama of our hobby and with interviews with prominent collectors. We wish it success—but the name they chose! Wonder who was responsible for reviving this ancient term. I don't mind being referred to as "one of those stamp collectors", or even being elevated to the higher plane with the designation "philatelist", but I know I am going to object seriously, to be called a "Timbromaniac".

**DUES** Early in December notices for your dues for 1978 will be mailed to you—you may want to pay this year, for tax purposes. Fortunately there will be no raise in our membership dues—\$10 for regular; \$15 for sustaining and \$25 for patron.

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## A GROUP OF WESTERN EXPRESSES

by the late A. J. Hertz

### WESSON & CO'S EXPRESS

From the *Butte Record* of June 3, 1850 we find the following:

"The undersigned inform the public that they have established a weekly express service from Marysville to all parts of Butte and Plumas Counties and will attend personally to the forwarding of treasure, valuable packages, letters, etc., with security and dispatch and upon the most reasonable terms. Gold dust or coin forwarded to any part of the U.S. or Europe, insured. Bills of exchange on all the principal cities of the United States and Europe. Gold dust shipped to the mint in San Francisco and returns made. Collections made and funds remitted at current rates.

Letters and packages promptly delivered and all business pertaining to an express, which may be entrusted to their care, will be promptly executed on the most reasonable terms.

Wesson & Co."

### WESTERN STAGE COMPANY

From the *Yreka Journal* of June 11, 1887 we find:

"Dr. Warren of Western Stage Co. has stocked the road and now carries a daily mail from Willow Creek to Linkville, excepting Sunday. This will be a great accommodation to the people of Eastern Oregon, for easy communication with railroad and greater regularity of mail service."

And from the same paper for June 22, 1887:

"The Western Stage Co's stages now run regularly between Willow Creek, Calif. and Linkville and make good time, connecting with the trains. Charles Slade, Sell McCord and Charles Howard, act in the capacity of drivers and give the fullest satisfaction, manipulating the reins over first class four horse stock all the way. Eating stations have been established at Cooley's, at Lennox and Emmitt's, where the best of meals is served. The stage company is giving superior mail service."

From Alvin Harlow's "*Old Waybills*" we find on page 215:

"The new company (C.O.C. & P.P. Express) almost immediately began to feel the opposition of the Western Stage Company and Hinckley's Express. To meet the competition it cut the rate of a letter from 25 cents to 10 cents (always plus the government stamp) and on newspapers from 10 to 5 cents."

### WHITING & COMPANY

From the *Quincy Union* of February 27, 1864:

#### "EXPRESS CHANGE

Whiting & Co's. Express messenger will, from this date, carry the express matter over the Oroville Road and make the trip twice a week at present. "Buck" has kept the express running regularly during the past season and intends to keep up the regularity. It suits us."

**A GROUP OF WESTERN EXPRESSES (Continued)****WHITING & COMPANY (Continued)**

And from the same paper of April 16, 1864:

“We understand that Messrs. Whiting & Co. intend establishing an Express route from Quincy to Susanville and Honey Lake Valley, in a short time.”

And on April 30, 1864 we read:

“Wait for the Wagon

Buck Whiting has purchased a large 4 spring express wagon which he intends running between this place and Indian Valley.

P.S. As the express was going down grade near Indian Valley on Thursday last, with a load of passengers, it met a number of Indians who had been holding a family jubilee of some kind at that place, and the team got frightened, ran away and played general mash with the wagon. None of the passengers were injured.”

And the *Quincy Union* of July 22, 1864 gives us some sidelights on the operation of an express company:

“The Cassoways family were arraigned before his Honor Judge Safford, on Monday on the indictment of the Grand Jury for the robbery of Whiting’s Express. They asked and were granted until Friday to answer. They appeared before the Court yesterday and put a demurrer to the indictment, on the ground of insufficiency in certain particulars. The Court took the matter under advisement until 2 o’clock when the demurrer was sustained and the prisoners recommitted until the next term of the Grand Jury.”

The *Quincy Union* of September 3, 1864 says that “Whiting & Co. recently purchased one of Lilli’s Patent Burglar Proof safes with combination lock attached. The safe arrived here on Friday (yesterday) and was deposited in the office of the Company.”

And the final notice we have from the *Quincy Union* is dated October 1, 1864:

“Convicted

One of the Cassoways who was arrested on the charge of robbing Whiting & Co’s Express some time since, was tried and convicted by the county court of Butte, last week.”

Leaving the Express but following Buck Whiting, the *Plumas National* of May 16, 1868 has this announcement:

“Local Matters. Appointment

F. B. Whiting, Esq. of this place has received the appointment of under Sheriff, since M. B. Branford resigned.”

Finally, in the same paper under date of September 16, 1871 we read:

“Local Matters. Many Thanks

We are indebted to our polite and gentlemanly County Clerk, Mr. F. B. Whiting for a copy of the official vote of the County. No more competent officer or more accommodating man has ever been in the clerk’s office than “Buck” and that accounts, in a measure, for the big vote he invariably receives, when his name is before the people.”

**A GROUP OF WESTERN EXPRESSES (Continued)**

**WHITTLE'S EXPRESS**

From the *Yreka Union* of April 15, 1876 we have the following information:

“News. Express to Linkville

Bob Whittle, while carrying the U.S. mail on the new route established between here and Linkville, will also run an express for passengers and parcels, which will be a great accommodation to the settlers on the route. Persons from the lower part of the state going to the Klamath Lake country will save two days by going by this route, and have much pleasure traveling. Persons at Linkville or at other parts of the route can get most any article they may want in this city and as cheap as they can get anywhere.”

**WORTHINGTON & SIOUX FALLS STAGE LINE**

The *Sioux Falls Pantagraph* of July 10, 1872 carries this ad:

“Worthington and Sioux Falls Tri-Weekly Stage Line, Leaves Worthington Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 7 A.M. and arrives at Sioux Falls the same evening.  
Leaves Sioux Falls, Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 7 A.M. and arrives at Worthington the same evening.

HAWES & BELLEFILED, PROPS.”

At this time the Dakotas were considered to be in the middle West and it was in the new Sioux country that gold had been found. It was a hard country to travel through—even more difficult to find ads!

**YOACHAM'S EXPRESS**

From the *Columbia Gazette* and *Southern Mines Advertiser* of Columbia, Cal. we find, under date of April 5, 1856:

“Yoacham's Express

Daily from Big Oak Flat and Carote, via Jacksonville and intermediate places to Sonora, connecting in Sonora with Wells, Fargo and Co's Express for all parts of California and semi-monthly to Oregon, the Atlantic States and Europe.

The delivery of letters, packages, papers, etc. entrusted to us will be faithfully attended to.

Drafts procured at Wells, Fargo & Co.

Collections made and gold dust forwarded to the San Francisco mint and prompt returns made.

Office in Sonora at Wells, Fargo & Co's. Express office.

Sonora March 26, 1856 A. C. Yoacham”

**ABLE & TURNER MAIL LINE**

From the *Yreka Journal* of April 19, 1876:

“Energetic Mail Carriers.

Messrs. Able and Turner, who carry the mail from Etna to Salmon River, are deserving of the greatest credit for their indomitable energy in carrying the mail over the snow covered Salmon Range the past winter, having missed but one trip during all the heavy storms. They are now carrying the mail on time, traveling the 28 miles on snowshoes and packing 60 lbs. of mail matter, more or less, each day, and going but a short distance on mule back, as the snow is lower down and deeper than ever before known.”

## A GROUP OF WESTERN EXPRESSES (Continued)

**ALLMAN'S EXPRESS**

From the *Montana Post* of November 24, 1866:

"Helena locals. John Allman, the pioneer stage man of California, is now putting on a line of semi-weekly coaches from Hell Gate to Wallula, for which road he has the contract to carry the U.S. Mail. John's reputation as a stage man is so well established, that we feel satisfied of promising the public, for him, a faithful and accommodating servant."

**ALLMAN & PECK'S EXPRESS**

From the *Sacramento Union* of June 11, 1860:

"Stage Line for Russian River.

A daily line of stages are now running between Napa and Healdsburg, connecting with the Benicia Line of stages. Passengers leaving Healdsburg at 5 A.M., pass by the White Sulpher Springs, St. Helena Hot Springs and The Geysers and arrive in Napa at 12 M. and Benicia at 5 P.M. in season to take either the up or down boat, thus enabling passengers to reach San Francisco, Sacramento or Stockton in one day. Travelers between the above places can save two days time and about \$12 by taking this line.

Allman & Peck, Proprietors."

**ARNOLD'S STAGE LINE**

We get the story of this company from the History of Alpine County, Pg. 12:

"Transportation Facilities, in the region (Alpine) being less than satisfactory, Benjamin R. Arnold, a native of Deep River, Conn. established a good stage route between Lakeside and Alpine. The new stage drawn by four horses, met the train at Lakeside each day. This stage route is remembered as one well kept up in every way, including the proper care of horses, vehicles and the road. With the transportation problem so much improved, many people came to Alpine for their health, pleasure and to find homes."

**AUBURN & NORTH FORK EXPRESS**

From the *Sacramento Transcript* of August 16, 1850:

"Auburn & North Fork Express Line have stages to run from Sacramento City to Auburn or any other point on the North Fork of the American River.

L. Thorp."

And from the *Alta California* of August 20, 1850:

"Auburn & North Fork Express

The proprietor, having fitted up two first rate horses and coaches to run from Sacramento City to Auburn and any other point on the Northern Fork of the American River. . . bids for your patronage.

L. Thorp."

**BLACK JACKS WEST**

by Paul J. Wolf

**ATCHISON, KANSAS**

This Black Jack cover has a hotel corner card, from Atchison, Kansas, postmarked Atchison, Mar 22, NYD. The franking is the usual convenience overpayment of two Black Jacks, here rather carelessly applied, one being inverted.

There are contents, a letter on the letterhead of the Butterfield Overland Despatch Co., so it appears likely that the sender took advantage of the opportunity to use a hotel envelope, a practice still in frequent use! Matter of fact, it appears that the letter is on borrowed stationery as well! Fortunately, however, the letter gives the year date 1866.



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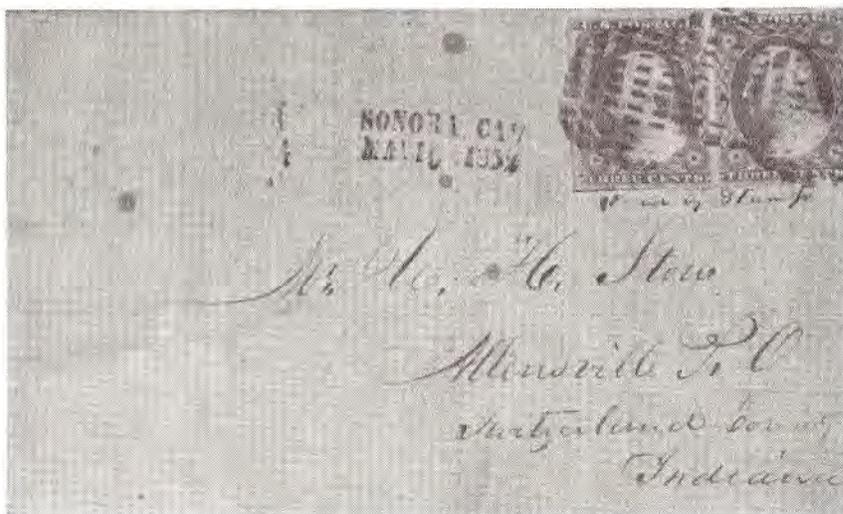
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### THE STOW CORRESPONDENCE FROM CALIFORNIA IN THE EARLY 1850s

by J. David Baker

Some years ago I visited a small stamp exhibition in Centerville, Indiana, and met a young man in his early teens by the name of James Stepleton who said he had some early California family correspondence. Seeing my interest, he offered to send me photographs. The three photographs accompanying this article are part of the correspondence to which he was referring.

Each of the California covers was addressed to a Mr. U. H. Stow, Allensville, Switzerland County, Indiana. The first cover bears a pair of 3¢ '51s, postmarked by a straight line, Sonora, California, May 10, 1852. Jim reported that this letter was written May 3, 1852.



The correspondence contains three Sonora double circle marks on covers bearing horizontal and vertical pairs of 3¢ 1851. The earliest is November 26, 1852; another is April 4, 1853; and a third is dated July 29, apparently 1853.

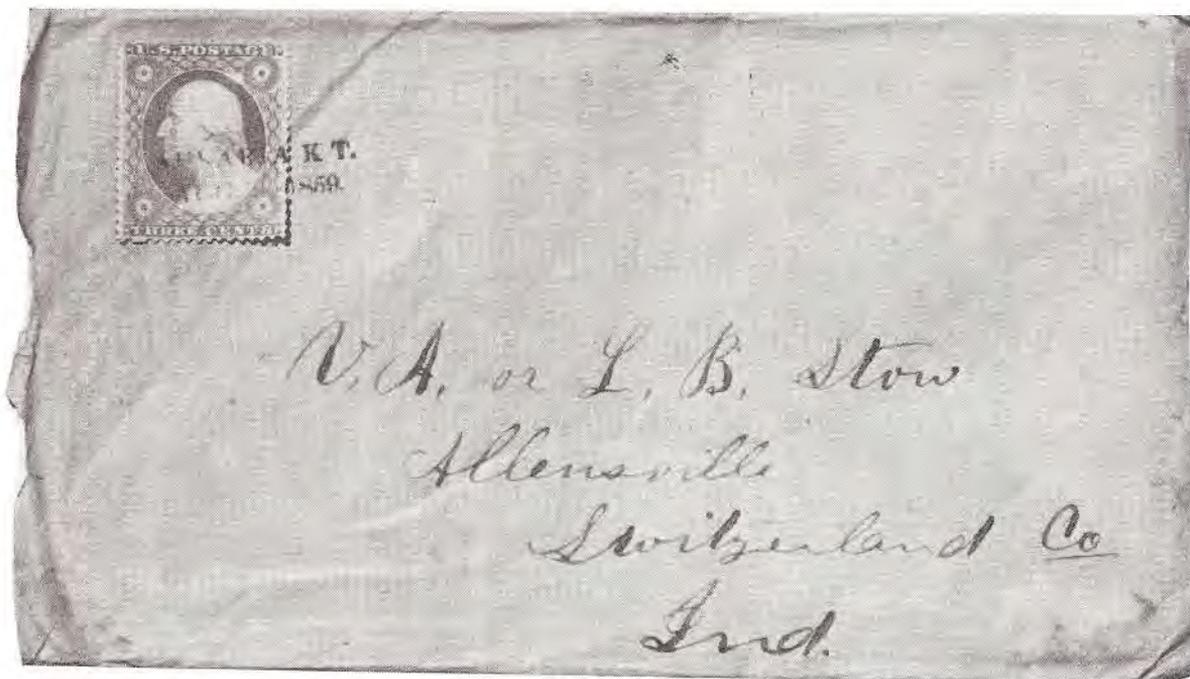


**THE STOW CORRESPONDENCE (Continued)**

Jim commented about his relationship to the Stows as follows: "U. H. Stow was my grand-great-grandfather (on my father's side of the family). L. B. Stow was one of his sons and therefore my great-great-uncle. The Stows were important landholders and farmers in Switzerland County in the 1850s, '60s, and '70s. Throughout this time they hired many men to work for them. When these men left they would continue to keep in touch by writing. Other letters came from relatives, such as C. C. Hyde, a cousin who lived in Kansas and sent the Auraria cover (still to be described). Still other letters came from friends, neighbors, and business associates. The Sonora letters came from a David Deal, apparently an old friend."

The Auraria K. T. straight line 1859 ties a 3<sup>c</sup> 1857 to a cover addressed to V. A. or L. B. Stow, Allensville, Switzerland, Co., Ind. This postal marking is clear enough that there is no doubt as to the post office, the month and year. The day marking is hard to see and possibly is "10".

The writer has not seen Jim Stepleton since that time but knows that these covers still remain in his collection—a nice start for a budding Western collector.



**CENTRO**  
**Los Angeles County Ghost**

by Kenneth Greenberg

Of the myriad Los Angeles County ghost towns which suddenly appeared and as quickly disappeared during the great land boom of the 1880's, probably none has left less of an imprint on written history than "Centro".

In Walter N. Frickstad's "A Century of California Post Offices," the following listing appears at the bottom of page 71:

"CENTRO 31 DEC 1885 12 JAN 1888 TO GLADSTONE,"

and then on page 74:

"GLADSTONE FR CENTRO 12 JAN 1888 31 AUG 1892 M AZUSA"

Aside from the meager information referred to above, this writer's attempts to obtain further history concerning Centro, drew an absolute blank.

The name "Centro" did not appear in any book, periodical or newspaper to which this writer referred for historical information concerning the San Gabriel Valley in the 1880's.

"The Boom of the Eighties in Southern California," by Glenn S. Dumke, published by Huntington Library, 1963, the premier history on the land boom of 1880's, does not list the name "Centro" in its index.



A cover in this writer's collection (pictured above) was clear evidence of Centro's existence during the 1880's in the San Gabriel Valley.

**CENTRO—Los Angeles County Ghost (Continued)**

Thanks to an obscure article entitled "Rise and Fall of the City of Gladstone," by C. C. Baker, which appeared in a publication of the Historical Society in 1914, the history of Centro was revealed.

In that article we are advised that the name Gladstone was given by its promoters to the vicinity of the old post office of Centro.

We are told that in 1878, Dr. E. E. Dunkenson opened the first store in Centro, and covered the neighborhood with a peddler's wagon. He remained there until 1880.

E. M. Haskell opened the next store there in the fall of 1882, and on December 31, 1885, received his commission as the first postmaster of Centro. Mail at that time was supplied, as was the entire district, by star route, service daily from Puente on the Southern Pacific.

In the meantime there had appeared two blacksmith shops, a cutlery factory, a shoe shop, a harness shop, a chinese laundry and the Centro Hotel, locally known as the Pull Tight Hotel, under the management of W. P. Barnes and John Malone. "Centro's prosperity had arrived", asserted the author of that article.

Centro's prosperity was very short lived, however, because it was swallowed-up by the new boom town called Gladstone in 1887, even before the name of the old Centro post office was changed to Gladstone on January 12, 1888.

Gladstone, located between Glendora and Azusa, was bypassed by the new Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railroad upon its completion in 1887. Glendora and Azusa had the railroad, while Gladstone was left two miles south of it, and as a consequence was destined to disappear in the 1890's.

The cover pictured above may be a unique surviving example of the postal history of the ghost town known as Centro.



## POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN

### Chapter VI, San Miguel County Part One

by Ray L. Newburn, Jr.

Map by William Bauer

Photography by James Young

As noted in the introduction to Chapter V, the creation of San Miguel County was accomplished with less trouble than the naming. On February 27, 1883, Uncompahgre County was carved out of Ouray County, leaving behind an area whose boundaries were those of modern San Miguel County but still called Ouray County. Three days later the name of Uncompahgre County was changed to Ouray and Ouray County became San Miguel.<sup>19, 54</sup> The area that is now San Miguel County thus lay successively in Lake, La Plata, San Juan, and Ouray Counties before acquiring its modern boundary and name. The first post office, also called San Miguel, was not established until July 16, 1877, six months after the creation of the original Ouray County. The name San Miguel, Spanish for St. Michael, was taken from the chief mountain range and river of the county, which in turn received their names from the 18th century Spanish explorers.<sup>54</sup>

Of moderate size, 1310 square miles<sup>56</sup>, San Miguel County nevertheless exhibits great extremes of topography from 14,017 foot Wilson Peak in the San Miguel Range on the Dolores County line to a mere 5,300 feet where the Dolores River runs north into Montrose County. It is a land of rugged peaks, deep canyons, and a few relatively flat valleys suitable for ranching and farming. Even down in the valley at the county seat Telluride the elevation is 8800 feet, and the mean annual snowfall is 165 inches.<sup>130</sup> For almost a century this was chiefly mining country, but today tourism and skiing are major activities. The mines and most of the population have always occupied the eastern quarter of the county, the towns of consequence being built along the forks of the San Miguel River and their tributaries. In the western half of the county only Egnar ever reached even 100 population.

The first prospectors probably entered San Miguel County in 1874, although the Walton expedition of the St. Louis Fur Co. had spent some time near Trout Lake and continued across the county northward as early as 1833. Placers along the San Miguel River, which never did yield much gold, led a search for lodes in the nearby mountains. There in Marshall Basin, two miles northeast of modern Telluride, one John Fallon located the Sheridan (now usually called Smuggler) Vein in August 1875. That same year he shipped one ton of ore worth \$2000 to the smelter in Alamosa.<sup>54, 89</sup>

From these small beginnings grew mines that caused San Miguel County to rank third in Colorado in mined wealth up to 1945. Only Lake County (Leadville) and Teller County (Cripple Creek-Victor) were more productive. About 90% of the San Miguel County values came from the Telluride District (really the northern part of the Upper San Miguel District) and the great mines of Savage Basin, Marshall Basin, and the Liberty Bell Group.<sup>2, 50</sup> These will be discussed in more detail under the Telluride, Pandora, and Smuggler town histories. Mining activities continue in the district today through the Meldrum tunnel workings of the Idarado Mining Company.

More than 90% of the remaining 10% of San Miguel County production came from the South Telluride Area (southern part of the Upper San Miguel District), especially the Alta Mines (see Sultana), and the Iron Springs Mining District centered on the Howard Fork (see Ames, Ophir, and San Bernardo). Most of the final 1% came from the Silver Pick Mine near Wilson (see Wilson) in the Mount Wilson District.<sup>2</sup>

By 1890 San Miguel County already had reached a population of 2,909.<sup>54</sup> It suffered in 1893, as did all mining areas following repeal of the Sherman silver purchase act, but there was also gold in

**POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)**

San Miguel County. Large syndicates soon got control of the really good properties and spent the money necessary to operate efficiently. The 1900 population of the county was 5,379, and it was still 4,700 in 1910.<sup>56</sup>

In the early years San Miguel production lagged because of the acute transportation problem. Estimates of total production for 1875 through 1881 range from about \$50,000 to \$140,000.<sup>50</sup> In 1881 our old friend Otto Mears built the Dallas and San Miguel Toll Road, incorporated May 31 and completed in mid September, with maximum grades of 10%.<sup>101</sup> Meserole and Blake ran a stage line over this road, selling the route to J. L. Sanderson and Company effective July 1, 1882.<sup>36</sup> In 1882 David Wood (see Chapter V, especially Dallas) built his wagon road which ran directly from Montrose across Horsefly Mesa to Leonard and then to Placerville and Telluride, carrying most of the supplies in and the ore out.<sup>4, 126</sup>

Two major mail routes were set up for San Miguel County which persisted in various guises until the coming of the railroad. The northern route originated in Ouray and reached San Miguel via Dallasville and Alder Creek (skipping Placerville) in 1879 and 1881,<sup>33a, 114</sup> and via Aurora and Placerville in 1883.<sup>69</sup> Shortly after this David Wood began bringing the mail direct from Montrose.<sup>70</sup> When the Denver & Rio Grande built their branch line into Ouray in 1887, the mail route was moved south to begin at Dallas.<sup>71</sup> The end of the route soon became Telluride, as that city far outgrew San Miguel.

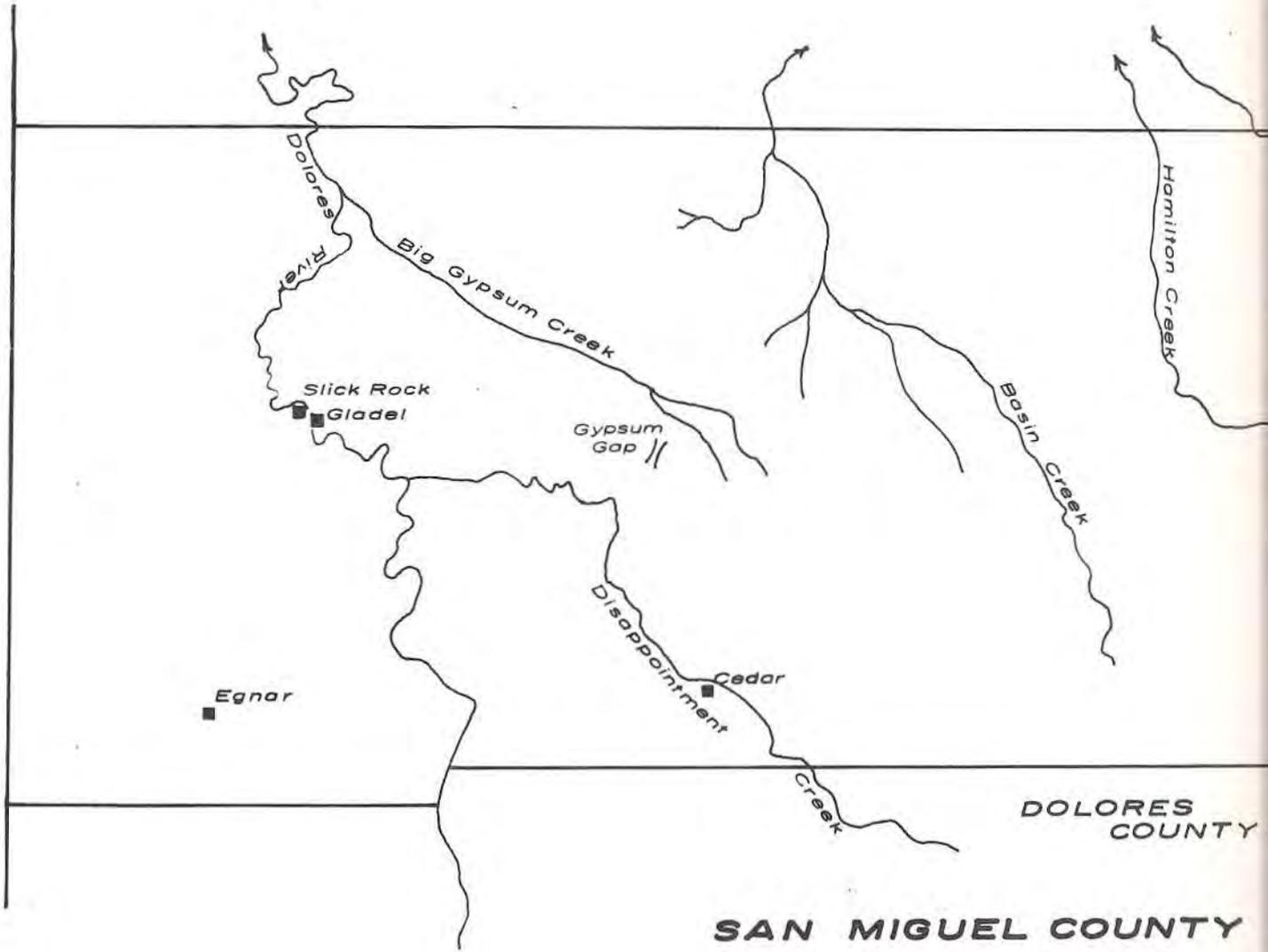
The secondary route into San Miguel County came over Ophir Pass from Silverton. Some time between 1883 and 1885 winter service was discontinued, and the route ran May 1 through Oct. 31, until being discontinued altogether with the advent of the Rio Grande Southern Railroad.<sup>33a, 114, 69, 70, 71, 117</sup> Service via this southern route was twice a week in 1880, leaving Silverton on Monday and Friday and San Miguel on Tuesday and Saturday. Northern route mail left Ouray on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and San Miguel on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. This was soon up to six days a week on the northern route.<sup>32, 37</sup>

There were other postal routes in San Miguel County, of course. The first mail route into Rico (see Chapter VII) was a stub line out of Ophir, and a route ran out of Placerville to Saline, Utah 246 miles away. Most of the towns of western San Miguel County and western Montrose County were served by routes out of Placerville. The details are covered with the individual towns.

The Rio Grande Southern Railroad (RGS) began grading west from Ridgway on April 14, 1890 (see Chapter V). On Oct. 10, 1890 trains began operating to Placerville. On Nov. 23 the rails reached Telluride, with service starting Nov. 26.<sup>116</sup> A little over seven months had seen the construction of 40 miles of mountain and canyon railroad. The Montrose & Telluride R.P.O. soon came into being, operating in 1891 and 1892. With the completion of the RGS through to Durango in Dec. 1891, the short two railroad R.P.O. was dropped. During 1892 the Ridgway & Rico R.P.O. saw service, shortly to be replaced from 1892 into 1917 by the long-lived Ridgway & Durango R.P.O. This was superseded by Ridgway & Telluride from 1917-1927 (and 1931-33). From 1927 to 1931 the route was Salida & Telluride.<sup>41</sup>

In 1931 the RGS began using their famous rail busses, which soon came to be known (usually in the singular) as the Galloping Geese, for all light loads. The Geese were highly modified Buick or Pierce Arrow passenger cars in front, attached to some form of rail car in the rear, all on railcar wheels. They were powered by the original Buick or Pierce engines, except goose number 7 wound up with a 1936 Ford V-8 in its Pierce body. Pictures show these carrying "U.S. MAIL" in large letters on the side.<sup>127</sup> There was even a two railroad R.P.O., Grand Junction & Durango, carried on one of these from 1935 into 1939.<sup>41</sup> The Geese carried the mail whenever the tracks were clear until April 1, 1950. Without the mail contract the railroad soon had to give up, with

PLATE



**SAN MIGUEL COUNTY**





W. H. Bauer

**POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)**

permission to suspend operations Dec. 17, 1951 and permission to abandon Apr. 15, 1952. Actually trucks carried the mail in from Vance Jct. or Bilk (a stop a mile northwest of Vance Jct.) to Telluride from the late 30s on.<sup>127</sup>

As elsewhere in the San Juans the weather was the biggest problem in delivering the mail. The story is told of Swan Nilson caught in a snowslide on Ophir Pass Dec. 23, 1883. There was a fierce storm under way, and he was warned not to attempt the trip, but he wanted to get through with the Christmas mail. His body and the mail were finally found Aug. 13, 1885.<sup>128</sup> This may well be the reason winter deliveries were discontinued over the southern route to San Miguel County at that time.

Snow was the annual problem on all San Juan railroads, snow in general and snowslides in particular. On Mar. 3, 1912, five slides ran near Ames, cutting off Ophir from Telluride. While still at work trying to clear these the railroad had its Telluride branch severed from the main line by a rock slide on March 6 followed by snow and more slides on March 8 near the same spot. Also on March 8, eight more slides covered the main line between Trout Lake and Vance. Heavy snow continued and soon trains were stuck at Dallas Divide and at Cima Summit west of Durango. It was March 22 before the entire line was open again. The post office department began threatening in the 1920s to cancel the RGS mail contract because of the winter delays.<sup>127</sup>

Rain could be just as bad. Heavy rain in early Sept. of 1909 caused two dams to burst on the South Fork. The resulting flood on Sept. 5 and 6 took out not only bridges but most of the track and the grade as well between Vance and Placerville. The line was reopened from the south to Vance on October 25, but the section from Vance to Placerville wasn't reopened until Dec. 17, more than three months after the flood!<sup>127</sup>

In the earliest years the primary "road" into San Miguel county was that over Ophir Pass from Silverton.<sup>22</sup> In 1881 Crofutt referred to Ophir Pass as a "horrid trail".<sup>32</sup> He made the same reference in 1885,<sup>37</sup> but Otto Mears toll road over Dallas Divide had been the primary route for four years by then. From the south the earliest explorers had come up the Dolores River and over Lizard Head Pass to the Lake Fork and South Fork of the San Miguel River, but this was the long way around, the back entrance. Even after the railroad came to San Miguel County the Dallas Divide road condition was adequate for one of the first cars in the area to drive from Montrose to Telluride in one day, albeit a very long day with Telluride arrival at midnight.<sup>129</sup>

The first few miles of paved road appeared in San Miguel county in 1940, reaching Telluride in the mid 50s. Paving was extended over Lizard Head Pass all the way to Rico by 1967. Ophir Pass was reopened as a jeep road following World War Two, being put in perhaps the best condition in its history. Many early road maps show it as an auto road (for example 43, 44, 53), but since 1940 it has been labeled impassable, if shown at all. This doesn't stop people from trying to drive it. The Silverton Standard for September 7, 1962, under the heading "Jeeping by Cadillac" notes that a 1961 Cadillac in fact was observed on Sept. 1 making it all the way from Ophir to Silverton "but not without inflicting heavy body scratches, a bent and slightly punctured oil pan." (A jeep driver with whom I crossed Ophir Pass a few days after Sept. 1 said he saw the car near the top of the pass with two badly crumpled fenders among other damage.) So much for modern times.

**ALDER CREEK**

Established Dec. 31, 1878

Discontinued Sept. 6, 1880

Alder Creek arose as a result of placer mining along the creek of that name. It appears to have been located about three miles above the confluence of Alder Creek with Leopard Creek, probably on the north side of its namesake. This is the location of the latter-day Hastings Ranch and is accessible by a dirt road, often called the Last Dollar Road, which appears to be identical or nearly so to the original mail route to San Miguel. It received its mail daily as the first stop on the Ouray to Rico route, which ran twice as often as the separate Ouray to San Miguel service (which says a great deal about the relative importance of Rico in Dolores County and San Miguel in 1879).<sup>32</sup>

No covers have been reported from Alder Creek

## POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)

## AMES

Established Dec. 20, 1880  
 Re-Established Oct. 24, 1881  
 Re-Established Oct. 6, 1900

Discontinued Apr. 15, 1881  
 Discontinued Aug. 6, 1900  
 Name-Changed June 3, 1922

Ames is located at an elevation of 8700 feet where the Howard Fork joins the Lake Fork to become the South Fork of the San Miguel River. It lay on both sides of the Howard Fork, tending to migrate to the south side as time went on. It started as a small mining camp<sup>37</sup> and briefly had a smelter in 1883 which attempted to handle ore from the nearby mines.<sup>89</sup> Ames even benefitted from a Mears toll road. The San Miguel and Rico Toll Road Company was incorporated on May 31, 1881, to reach Rico, but in fact only six miles of road were built, completed from near latter-day Vance Jct. to Ames in the summer of 1882.<sup>101</sup> And it had a newspaper, The Ames Argus, during 1883-84.<sup>60</sup>

Ames is most famous for its pioneer hydroelectric plant on the south side of the Howard Fork. Lucien Lucius Nunn was, among other things, manager of the Gold King Mine, 2½ miles away and 3000 feet higher than Ames. It cost \$2500 per month to haul coal to the mill, located at the mine entrance. He contracted with George Westinghouse for an experimental a.c. electrical system, and on June 20, 1891 the plant at Ames transmitted alternating current to the mine and mill, the first time such a system had been demonstrated. His costs dropped to \$500 per month for power.<sup>127</sup> Nunn's plant was enlarged and later supplied power to Telluride and most of the larger mines in the area. The facility is still in use.<sup>4</sup>

When the Rio Grande Southern built through the area in 1891, Ames was 400 feet below the tracks. A station was built a mile up the Howard Fork to serve Ophir, Ames, and the local mines. Many businesses soon grew up around Ophir Station and at some point the Ames post office was moved there. See (New) Ophir. The Telluride Quadrangle of 1904 shows the community of Ophir Station (Ames P.O.). In fact the move probably occurred soon after the railroad arrived in 1891. The postal route maps of 1889 and earlier show the distance from Ames to (Old) Ophir as 4 miles while those of 1892 and after show it as 2½ miles, a change appropriate to the move.

During the earliest period mail came to Ames via the Placerville to Ophir route.<sup>114</sup> By 1883 Ames was on the Rico to Placerville run,<sup>69</sup> in 1885 Placerville to Rico.<sup>70</sup> In 1889 there were individual postal routes Rico to Ames, Ames to Telluride, and Ophir to Ames. Ophir in turn was still receiving the mail from Silverton.<sup>71</sup> Then came the railroad.

The 1885 population of Ames was 100.<sup>105</sup> By 1900 this had dropped to 34, as most of the people not associated with the power plant moved to Ophir Station.<sup>85</sup> Ames markings are not particularly scarce, the most common markings being the manuscript used during the period the smelter was operating and the 4-bar (which is really Ophir Station).

Ames 1882/12/22-1883/06/25  
 Manuscript in blue black to black ink

AMES COLO. (3) 1884/06/06-1886/07/22 (See Fig. 48)  
 CI:P,1,0:270+:T;M,D,Y;S;G;G:target

AMES COLO. (2½) 1894/12/08-1898/01/17  
 CI:P,1,0:270:T;M,D,Y;S;G;R:  
 struck in bright purple 1894, black in 1898

AMES, COLO. (2½) 1907/12/26-1911/06/28  
 CI:P,1,0:310+:T;M,D,H,Y;S;E;G:narrow 4-bar

## POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)



Figure 48

From the period when the Ames post office was still in Ames, this postmark is much less common than that of the earlier manuscript type.

## CEDAR

Established Apr. 7, 1892  
Re-Established Nov. 2, 1923

Discontinued Jan. 15, 1921  
Discontinued Dec., 1943

Cedar lies in Disappointment Valley at an elevation of 5900 feet. It is in Range 16W Township 42N just south of Disappointment Creek.<sup>131</sup> A few buildings or ruins thereof still show on the Dawson Draw Quadrangle, 1964. It is thought the name came from the scrub cedar prominent in the area.<sup>112</sup>

Cedar was never more than a post office and supply point for several hundred square miles of range land. Its population in 1900 was 10.<sup>85</sup> By the late 30s the population was exactly one!<sup>112</sup>

The mail route into Cedar was a real dilly. Leaving the train at Placerville it went 40 miles through Norwood to Naturita in Montrose County. From Naturita there was a 35 mile route clear across San Miguel County to Lavender in Dolores County. Finally there was a third route of about 13 miles from Lavender to Cedar. This persisted from 1892 through 1901.<sup>72, 117, 119</sup> By 1905 the mail came about 32 miles from Norwood to Lavender and then on to Cedar, as it did still in 1911 even though the Lavender office was closed from Dec. 31, 1909 through Nov. 5, 1913. After the Lavender office closed for good in 1915, Cedar was served by a route direct from Redvale 38 miles away.<sup>75</sup> This was still true in 1937.<sup>94</sup>

No early postmarks have been reported, the "earliest" on record being a 1931 4-bar.

## DALLAS DIVIDE

This office is carried in post office records part of the time in Ouray County and part of the time in San Miguel County. It was covered in Chapter V, Ouray County.

**POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)****EGNAR**

Established May 28, 1917

Still operating

Egnar is another ranching country office, its name being range spelled backward.<sup>77</sup> It lies along state highway 80 in Range 19W, Township 42N at an elevation of 7325 feet (Egnar Quadrangle, 1949). Egnar came into being when the local range land was opened to homesteading. The population of the area reached about 100 in the 30s.<sup>77</sup> It probably remains close to that today, if you make the non-existent "city" boundary large enough.

Mail comes to Egnar via a short route from Dove Creek in Dolores County.<sup>94</sup>

The earliest postmark reported to date is a 1938 4-bar.

**FALL CREEK**

Established Aug., 1933

Discontinued Dec., 1943

Although outside the time frame of major interest, Fall Creek is mentioned for completeness sake. It lay on the north side of the San Miguel River opposite the point where Fall Creek enters it, at an elevation of 7475 feet (Little Cone Quadrangle, 1953).

No postmarks have been reported.

**FOLSOM**

Moved from Telluride Aug. 17, 1880.

Returned to Telluride Dec. 13, 1880

In the early days along the San Miguel it wasn't quite clear which town or towns would dominate the scene. Just 22 days after a post office opened in Telluride, it was moved upstream to Folsom. Four months later it returned. The exact location of Folsom is unclear. Crofutt refers to it as two miles east of San Miguel, which would place it between Telluride and Pandora. Nell's 1881 map in Crofutt shows it on the east side of Marshall Creek at its confluence with the San Miguel, or about a mile east of Pandora and four miles east of San Miguel.<sup>32</sup> This is also the location shown by Eberhart, who writes of the town being platted near the Folsome and Company mines on Bridal Veil Creek.<sup>98</sup> And there at an elevation of 9000 feet we shall leave it.

No postmarks have been reported from Folsom.

**GLADEL**

Established Dec. 14, 1922

Discontinued May 31, 1929

The site of Gladel lay in Range 18W Township 44N, I am reasonably certain. On highway maps of the period it "wandered" considerably. All show it on state highway 80, but some show it immediately on the east side of the Dolores river, while others place it just north of the junction of Disappointment Creek with the Dolores river, a site about two miles east of the first. (See the Hamm Canyon Quadrangle, 1960). My only excuse for mapping it at the first site is that Gladel has reappeared in the 70's even farther west, on the west side of the Dolores River in fact (see Slick Rock).

I know nothing of substance about this office, and no postmarks have been reported. Information would be appreciated.

## POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)

## HASKILL

Established Feb. 10, 1888

Discontinued Feb. 28, 1907

Haskill is another obscure town whose exact location varies from map to map. It was located just south of McKenzie Creek (formerly Big Canyon Creek) and 4½ miles almost straight north of Leonard.<sup>43, 44, 91</sup> The modern topographical map of the area (Placerville Quadrangle, 1953) shows Haskill Hill, with a very steep dirt road climbing it from Leopard Creek near Leonard. This was probably a part of David Wood's Wagon Road to Montrose, which apparently passed near or through Haskill. I have seen no reference to mining in that area, and the country is flat enough for ranching. There has been timbering in the area.

The mail arrived via an eight mile route from Placerville until the Leonard post office was established in 1900. Then it came via a 4½ mile route from Leonard.

One type of postmark has been reported from Haskill.

HASKILL COLO. (3) 1895/08/21-1896/08/02

CI:P,1,0:280:T;M,D,Y;S;G;R:

## ILLIUM

Established Feb. 10, 1891

Re-Established Aug. 1, 1910

Discontinued Jul. 20, 1894

Discontinued Nov. 30, 1917

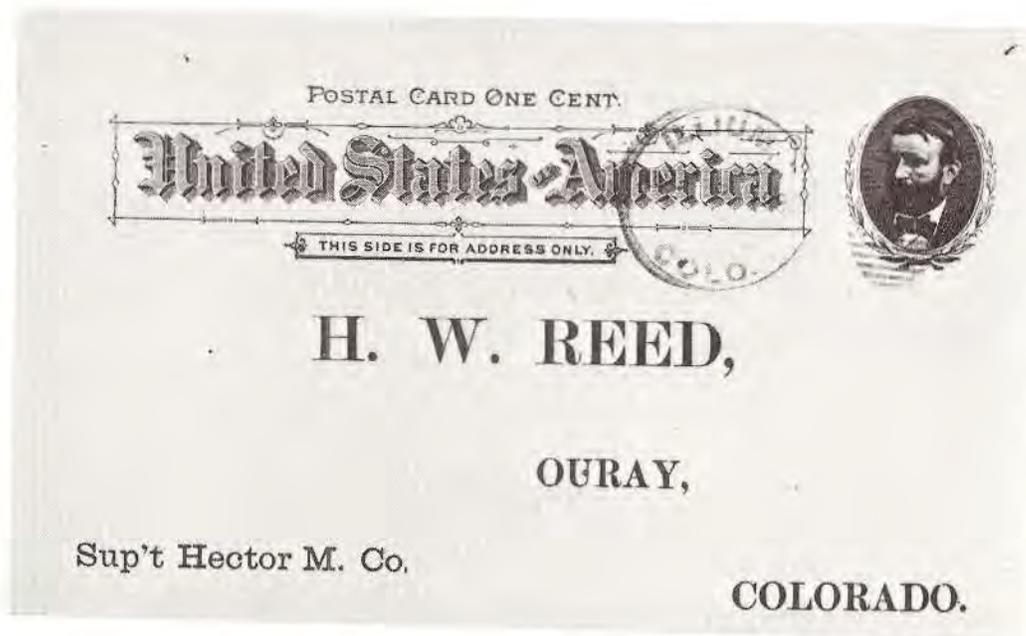


Figure 49

This postal card carries the only postmark from Illium reported to date.

**POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)**

Illium is another town that apparently "migrated a bit". The railroad facilities there were built only 0.4 mile above Vance Jct., where the Telluride Branch left the main line, and were largely on the west side of the San Miguel River. A bit later L. L. Nunn's Telluride Electric Light and Power Co. (see Ames) built their second plant at Illium on the east side of the river, which site at 8100 feet is called Illium on the modern Grey Head Quadrangle (1953) and on Map 6. The Telluride Quadrangle of 1904 shows Illium right in the middle of the Illium loop, a site which the railroad called Anderson, about 0.5 mile to the south. The loop of track was created as the railroad climbed south, crossed the river, and then climbed north up the Keystone grade to get out of the San Miguel river canyon.

It is interesting to note that the post office at Vance operated for virtually the entire period between the two lives of the Illium post office. The postal route map for 1897 shows Vance and nearby the words Illium (n.o.), which I suppose indicates Illium not operating. It is definitely not n.c., name change. Exactly where was the Illium post office? I wish I knew! Eberhart says the name was taken from Homer's Illium or Troy.<sup>98</sup> Who was the classicist in this hardbitten country and era?

Only one postmark has been reported.

ILLIUM, COLO. (3) 1893/08/03

CI:P,1,0:290:T;(M,D,Y);S;G;G:oval grid (See Fig. 49)

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