

# WESTERN EXPRESS

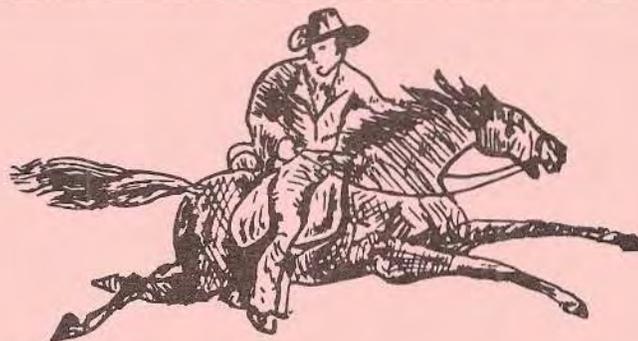
RESEARCH JOURNAL OF EARLY WESTERN MAILS

WHOLE No. 115, VOL. XXVIII, No. 4

Western Cover Society  
Unit No. 14— American Philatelic Society

OCTOBER, 1978

Express  
Ocean Mail  
Overland  
Post Offices



Territorial  
Statehood  
Postal Rates  
Postal History

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**EDITOR'S ARENA****CAPEX '78 AWARDS**

Eager to tell you that your "Western Express" had been awarded a large silver medal at CAPEX '78, the International show held in Toronto, a last minute one line addition was made at press time for the July issue. But that eagerness made for incompleteness. Many of our members were recipients of awards at CAPEX - all superior to that for "Western Express". To fill that gap, here is a belated list of those honored, either for stamps or for literature.

Large Gold, with special prize, to Creighton Hart for U.S. 1847's.

Gold, to: Charles Wunsch, for U.S. Stamped Envelopes  
George Turner, for Classic covers to 1870

Vermeil, to: Joseph Rorke, M.D., with felicitations, for Black Jacks  
Morrison Waud, for U.S. 3¢ Green  
Paul J. Wolf, for Black Jacks  
Morrison Waud, for U.S. Postage Dues  
Richard W. Helbock, (Lit.) Postmarks of Territorial Alaska.  
J. David Baker, (Lit.) Postal History of Indians

**CORRECTION**

Poor proof-reading changed the name of our new member in Auburn, California, and even the name of his stamp headquarters! Apologies from the Editor, So, page 2 of the July 1978 issue under New Members, should read:

#703 - Anthony J. Pollizzi (The Stamp Tree, Inc.), 701 High Street, 207c, Auburn, CA 94603. (Dealer-Auctions).

**S.F. BAY AREA WEEKLY LUNCHEONS**

The informal Friday luncheon-meetings continue at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel, Powell & Sutter Sts. San Francisco. Usually run from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It is a handy day and hour to keep in mind when you are vacationing in, or passing thru this area. Just recently one of our British members, Derek Bolton, en route to Japan, was welcomed with his charming wife, at one of these Friday luncheons.

**DONATION TO WCS**

Our special "thank you" goes to Reverend Constant Johnson who donated back issues of "Western Express" to the Society. These comprised Volume 1 thru Volume 5, or 1951 thru 1955. This series will not be broken up, but will be sold as one lot - probably as an auction item.

**DUE CREDIT**

The July *Western Express* properly credited the story "Ghost Towns - North San Juan" on page 16, to the late Ernest A. Wiltsee, but failed to note that this first appeared in the December 15, 1934 issue of STAMPS.

**NEW INDEX**

Member J. David Baker is working on a new index of *Western Express* which will embrace the twenty eight years of its existence. Dave has revised the concept of earlier indices and also provides the "Whole Number" for each issue, as a focal point for easier reference. (You will note that this issue and the previous one carried this individual whole number, along with the Volume number). The new index will appear during 1979.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT****NEW MEMBERS**

- #705 — Wesley A. Crozier, Box 241, Fairhaven, N. J. 07701 (who joins as a Sustaining Member)  
 #706 — J. V. Woollam, 3 South Hill Grove, Oxtou, Birkenhead, Merseyside, England.  
 (Collects Towns & territorials)

**RE-INSTATED**

- #413 — Douglas Gary, P. O. Box 457, Campbell, CA 95008  
 #645 — Charles Thurston, 1827 Washington Blvd., Kansas City, KS 66102

**ADDRESS CHANGES**

Jerry Clark, 4085 Faunce Way, Oroville, CA 95965  
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 William Semsrott, 14 Algonquin Wood, St. Louis, MO 63122  
 Mrs. Frederica Warren, 116 Plumb Point Loop, Aberdeen P.G. MD 21005

**ROSTER ERRATA**

Please make the following corrections in the ROSTER which accompanied the July 1978 issue.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| #663 — Mark Metkin<br>P. O. Box 3293, Moscow, ID 83843<br>(Sept. thru April)<br>5703 Cassia St., Boise, ID 83705<br>(May thru August)<br>(PH of 9, esp. 19th Century) | #692 — Gretchen Heather Mitchell<br>2269 Fink St., Los Angeles, CA 90068<br>(5, 8 prior 1900, E & G)   |
| #632 — Rick Horne<br>1355 - 27th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94122<br>(Dealer)  | #538 — Joseph F. Rorke, M.D.<br>Taliesin West, Scottsdale, AZ 85258<br>(A; Black Jacks on Western Covers)  |
|   | #665 — Joe R. Seacrest<br>1725 So. 33rd St., Lincoln, Nebr. 68506<br>(Great Plains Express, R.R. & Military<br>15 & 23; 11 & 15 ovpts. on cover) |



**POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN**

Chapter VII, Dolores County

Part Two

by Ray L. Newburn, Jr.

Map by William Bauer

Photography by James Young

**DISAPPOINTMENT**

ESTABLISHED APR. 19, 1919

Discontinued June 30, 1920

Disappointment was the second of three offices to be established along Disappointment Creek near the San Miguel County line. It was in the southeast quarter of section 32 of township 42N, range 14W\* at an elevation of about 7300 ft. (South Mountain Quadrangle, 1964).

No postmarks have been reported.

\*I'm indebted to Bill Bauer for this location from records in the national archives.

**DOVE CREEK**

Established Jan 16, 1959

Still operating

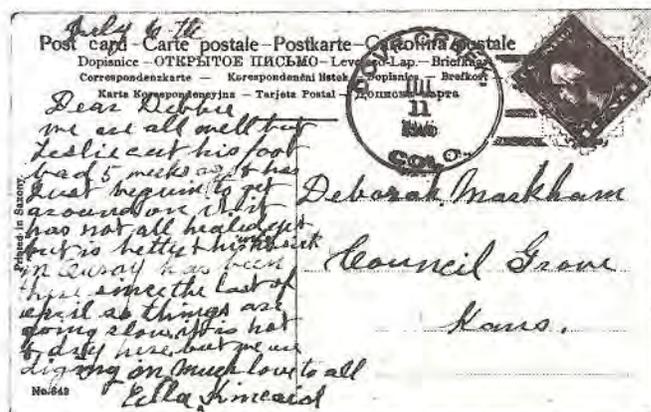
Dove Creek came into being at the northeast corner of the homestead area, at an elevation of 6450 feet, along the west side of the creek of the same name (Dove Creek Quadrangle, 1964). An early freighter on the Dolores to Monticello, Utah run named the creek for flocks of wild doves in its vicinity.<sup>150</sup> Brothers by the name of Stokes ran a small store there on the road beginning around 1912. In 1915 one R. Butt bought the store and built a large house nearby. The first post office was established in that store, with Butt as postmaster according to Freeman and C. A. Stokes as postmaster according to post office records.<sup>111</sup> At that time there was only one other house in the area, a log cabin used by local cowboys.<sup>154</sup>

Dove Creek grew steadily after a slow start to 120 in 1930, 418 in 1940, 702 in 1950 and 986 in 1960, but fell to 619 in 1970. It has two grade schools and a high school, municipal water and sewage systems, an airport, and modern electric and telephone systems. A general election in November 1944 resulted in the county seat being moved from Rico to Dove Creek, the move being consummated after some litigation. R. A. Butt's old house was used for a number of years as the county courthouse until a special building was constructed in the early 50's. The town has seven churches, a bank, a weekly newspaper, and TV brought by relay from Cortez in Montezuma County.

Mail to Dove Creek came by a route, initially 43 miles in length, from Dolores on the Rio Grande Southern Railroad.<sup>75</sup> By 1937 improved highways had shortened the distance to 40 miles.<sup>94</sup>

DOVE CREEK, COLO. (3) 1916/07/11 (see Fig. 61)

CI:P,1,0:320:T;M,D,Y;S:G;G:wide 4-bar



**Figure 61**  
It is "only" a 4-bar and double struck at that but is also the only postmark reported from the western half of Dolores County used during the first 50 years of Colorado Statehood!

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

## DUNTON

Established Aug. 9, 1892  
 Re-established Mar. 19, 1896

Discontinued Nov. 8, 1895  
 Discontinued Nov. 30, 1954

During the brief boom at Bowen in the early 80s one Horatio Dunton developed baths, hotel, and a store at the nearby hot spring 200 yards east of the West Dolores River. Here at 8900 feet elevation (Dolores Peak Quadrangle, 1953) he also furnished a saloon and card room. A wagon road was completed into the area in 1885.<sup>156</sup>

Apparently some time in the early 90s the Emma Mine was discovered a half mile south of the hot spring. By 1897 a mill and a smelter were under construction at Dunton. In 1901 a new 80 stamp mill was added to the 20 stamp mill. In 1902 it was reported that "the Emma group of mines was in active operation with a concentration mill of 125 tons daily capacity." The Emma continued intermittent operation through at least 1924 when Henderson's "Mining in Colorado" was assembled.<sup>89</sup> During the early 1920s the mine was run by Robert and Elizabeth Pellet, later of great importance in Rico.<sup>158</sup> Very limited production from one mine (the Emma?) is reported during the 30s and 40s.<sup>50</sup> In spite of the activity the 1900 census gives Dunton a population of only 21.<sup>149</sup> This production from Dunton is the only significant mining activity in Dolores County outside the immediate vicinity of Rico.

All postal route maps show Dunton on the west bank of the river, as do the highway maps, although the hot spring is on the east bank. And Horatio Dunton himself was the postmaster throughout the first period of the office (1892-5).<sup>111</sup> The mail came from Rico, initially by special supply<sup>117</sup> and then as a regular delivery.<sup>72-75</sup>

At least two Dunton covers not listed here have appeared in auctions in the past five years.

DUNTON COLO. (3) 1893/07/01  
 CI:P,I,0:270:T;M,D,Y;S:G;R:4-ring target

DUNTON COLO. (3) 1908/07/25  
 CI:P,I,0,:285:T;M,D,Y;S:G;G:oval grid

Various 4-bars were in use from 1932 through 1954.

## HERMITAGE

Established Oct. 17, 1904

Discontinued Jun. 29, 1907

Hermitage is shown on Nell's Map of 1906 at the junction of Dana Creek (now Groundhog Creek) and the West Dolores River.<sup>85</sup> It appears on the Postal Route Map for 1905 at the junction of Fish Creek and Little Fish Creek.<sup>13</sup> The Clason Highway Map of 1906 clearly agrees with the Postal Route Map, and there it is drawn on Map 7.<sup>43</sup> This site is in the middle of nowhere (Groundhog Mountain Quadrangle, 1964) in rough country, and one can only speculate that someone may have done a bit of mining in the area. The first postmaster was none other than Horatio Dunton.<sup>111</sup>

The mail came over a 12 mile route from Dunton.

No postmarks have been reported.

## JUAL

Established Jan. 28, 1918

Discontinued Sept. 14, 1918

Jual was located in the southeast quarter of section 11 in township 40N range 20W\* placing it between Monument and Coal Bed Canyons and right on the Utah state line. The only postmaster was Hazel M. Tucker,<sup>111</sup> and Freeman notes that one of the earliest homesteaders near Dove Creek was a Norris Tucker, seven miles southwest of town, which is the location of Jual.<sup>154</sup>

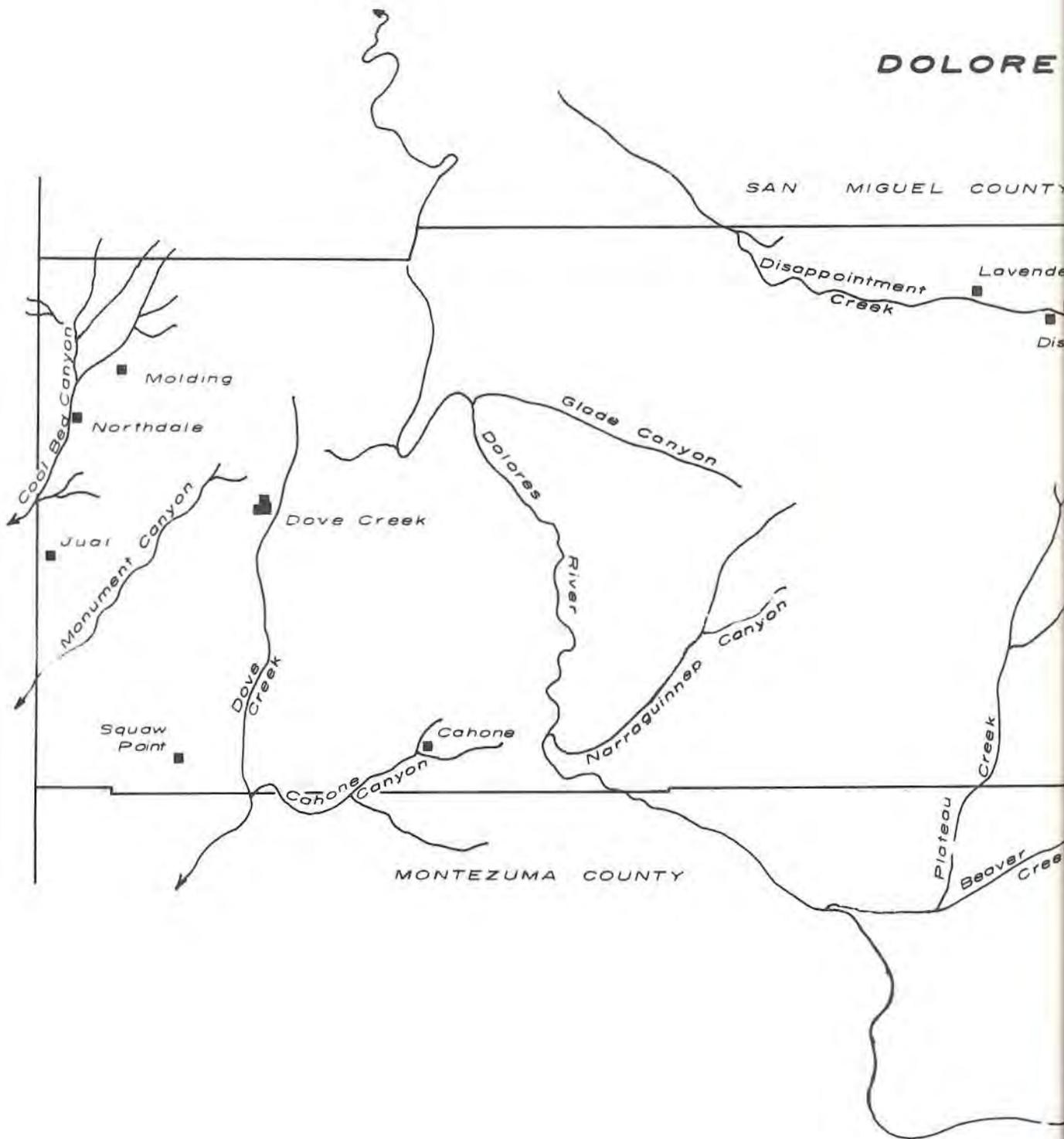
No postmarks have been reported.

<sup>154</sup>Location from the national archives, courtesy of Bill Bauer

UTAH

DOLORES

SAN MIGUEL COUNTY

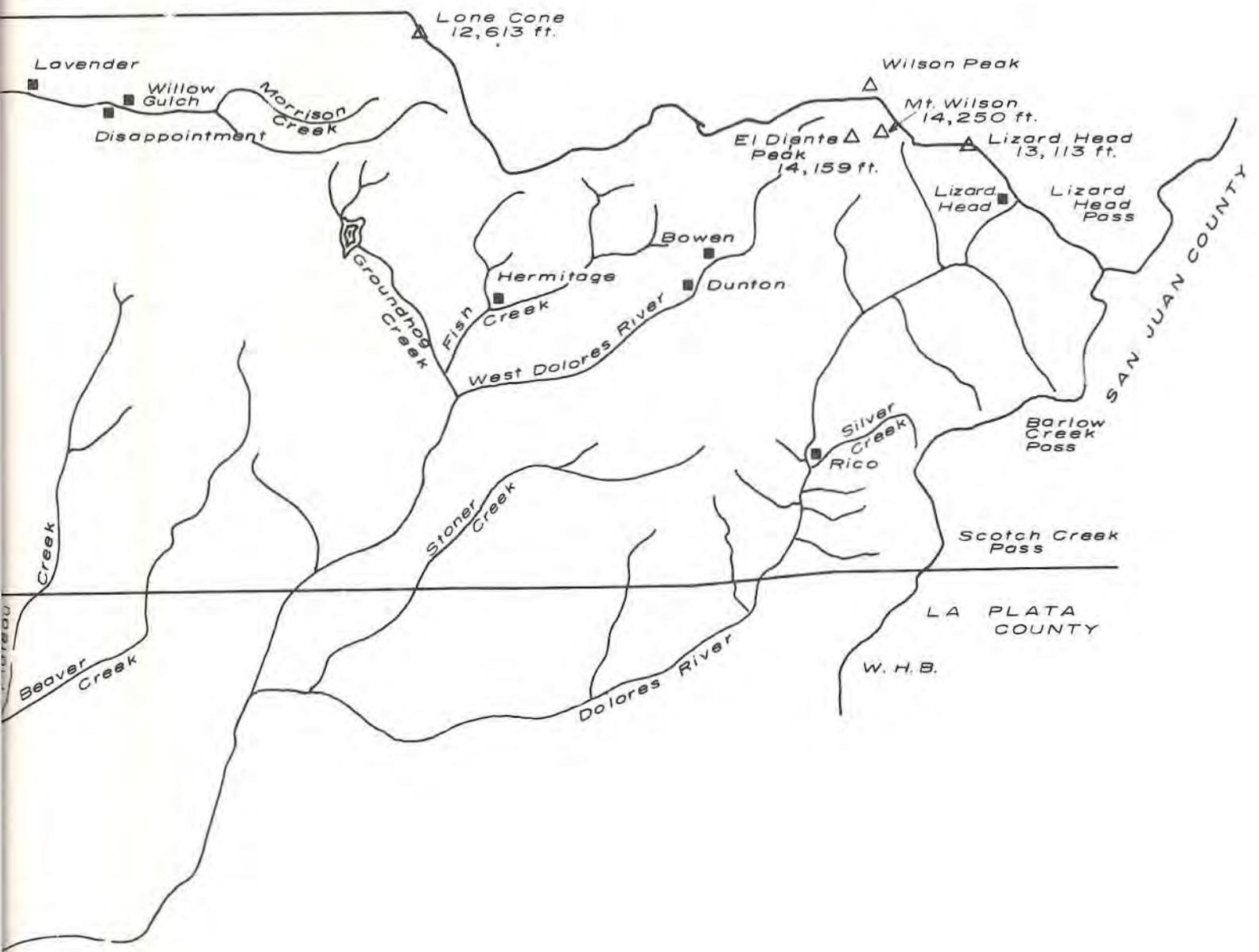


MONTEZUMA COUNTY

# DOLORES COUNTY



COUNTY



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

## LAVENDER

Established Aug. 10, 1888  
 Re-established Nov. 5, 1913

Discontinued Dec. 31, 1909  
 Discontinued Feb. 27, 1915

This is the first and longest lived of the three Dolores County offices along Disappointment Creek. It appeared on road maps as late as 1920<sup>131</sup>, although the population was given as 10 in the 1900 census.<sup>149</sup> This was grazing land during the period the post office existed, and it must have been a stopping point for mail, supplies, etc. The source of the name is pure speculation. Edgar Lavender, stepfather of historian and author David Lavender, was a pioneer cattleman in western San Miguel County. Perhaps he or others of that family supplied the name. Any real information would be much appreciated.

At first mail came to Lavender over a 40 mile special supply route from Dolores.<sup>71</sup> By 1892 a regular route of 30 miles from Naturita was used.<sup>117</sup> This continued until sometime after 1901 when Norwood became the mail source.<sup>72, 73, 74, 119</sup>

No postmarks have been reported.

## LIZARD HEAD

Established July 23, 1892

Discontinued Oct. 31, 1895

Lizard Head was a station on the Rio Grande Southern Railroad right at the summit of Lizard Head Pass. There at 10,220 feet (Mt. Wilson Quadrangle, 1953) they built a wye completely protected by snowshed and a depot on the Dolores County side of the pass.<sup>127</sup> The pass took its name from the nearby 13,113 foot peak of that name, which does look a bit like a lizard rising up to look around and which is an outstanding landmark for miles around.<sup>157</sup>

The post office served by the railroad had no obvious excuse for its existence, with San Bernardo only six miles away, except to serve the local railroad hands.

No postmarks have been reported.

## MOLDING

Established Sept. 16, 1919

Discontinued Feb. 29, 1924

This office was about five miles northwest of Dove Creek in the southeast quarter of section 8 in township 41N range 19W.\* With Northdale less than two miles to the southwest, it is surprising it was established in the first place.

No postmarks have been reported.

\*Again my thanks to Bill Bauer.

## NORTHDALE

Established May 23, 1918  
 Re-established Dec. 17, 1920

Discontinued Aug. 19, 1920  
 Discontinued Oct. 1946

Northdale was just seven miles up the highway from Dove Creek on the road to Monticello, Utah, another post office serving the local farmers. Mail was delivered from a route from Dove Creek to Monticello.<sup>94</sup>

One postmark has been reported.

NORTHDALE, COLO. (3+) 1929/11/28  
 CI:P,I,O:320:T;M,D,H,Y:S:R;G:wide 4-bar

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

### RICO

Established Aug. 25, 1879

Still operating,

After sporadic activity from 1869 into 1877, intense prospecting resumed during 1877 and 1878 in the Pioneer Mining District, and rich silver ore was discovered in the spring of 1879. After discussing at least 11 different names for the town, Rico, Spanish for rich, was adopted. In January 1880 an area one mile long and a half mile wide, mostly on the east bank of the Dolores River, was surveyed and became the official townsite.<sup>155</sup> The town benchmark is at an elevation of 8827 feet, but elevations within the city limits range from 8675 feet to 9125 feet (Rico Quadrangle, 1960).

The top mines of the Pioneer District lie on Newman Hill, a part of Dolores Mountain which adjoins the town on the east, and on CHC Hill and Nigger Baby Hill, parts of Telescope Mountain to the northeast. Silver Creek separates the two mountains, supplies water for the town, and joins the Dolores River within the city limits.

Rico has had a large number of ups and downs, being totally dependent upon mining. The first up was a good one, with the population reaching about 1250 by the end of 1879. Machinery for the first big smelter, the Grand View, arrived July 4, 1880. It had traveled 66 days by wagon from the railhead at Alamosa via Pagosa Springs, Animas City, Mancos, and the Dolores River Canyon. The smelter began producing bullion in November.<sup>155</sup> The Dolores News, Rico's first newspaper, appeared August 21, 1879, the first issues printed in Silverton, since editor John Curry was also editor of that town's pioneering La Plata Miner. The News continued through various mergers and title changes until Dec. 12, 1908.<sup>60, 151</sup> The years 1879 and 1880 saw formation of a volunteer fire department, a militia to protect the town from Indians (following the Meeker massacre in northwestern Colorado), and a literary association. City officers were elected Dec. 5, 1879, including a marshall who with the help of one deputy kept the town reasonably peaceful. County officials also took up their jobs when Rico became county seat of the new Dolores County in February, 1881.<sup>155</sup>

Because of the severe transportation problem, Rico did not develop as rapidly as its boosters hoped. Then silver prices began to slide. By the 1885 special census the population was down to 894<sup>105</sup> and continued to drop to about 400. In 1887 the Grand View Mine, which had averaged 170 ounces of silver per ton of ore, shut down. Then that same fall David Swickhimer made a big strike in his Enterprise Mine on Newman Hill. This was a classic story of putting everything into a mine development, renewing work with money his wife won on a lottery ticket, and finally, in one last chance with money left for only one more shift, the great discovery. After producing \$800,000 the Swickhimers sold out for \$1,250,000 in 1891. Unfortunately in what is also a classic tale, the Swickheimers divorced. Laura lost her money in the failure of the Tabor Block in Denver in 1893, while David lost his in the failure of his Rico bank in the panic of 1907. He insisted on paying off all his depositors with his own money.<sup>155</sup>

Rico grew back to perhaps 2000 people in the early 90's (some say 6000). An electric light plant began operation in April 1890. A new 62 room hotel, the Enterprise, opened that summer (see the corner card of figure 59 in Chapter VI). The railroad arrived in October 1891. Many other mines and mills were extensively developed including the Rico-Aspen, the Blackhawk, the Falcon, the Atlantic Cable, the Yellow Jacket, and others.



Figure 62

This is the early type Rico town and county marking, used in 1879 and 1880 when Rico was still in Ouray County. Note the apparent double outer circle with scalloped, fancy outer edge.

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

Then the repeal of the silver purchase act in 1893 and the increasing depths of the mines started a new decline Rico was back down to 811 in 1900 and 364 in 1910.<sup>56</sup> The period from 1900 to 1920 was one of consolidation and bankruptcy, reorganization and new bankruptcies. Through 1920 the Rico mines produced just over \$14,600,000 in silver, gold, copper, lead, and zinc, with almost two-thirds of the value in silver. This is small compared to San Miguel, Ouray, San Juan, and Mineral Counties but larger than Hinsdale or La Plata Counties.<sup>89</sup>



**Figure 63**  
 This May 26, 1880 strike appears to differ from that in Figure 61 in having a single, heavy outer circle. But, it could be just a heavily inked, later (more worn) use of the same device. I can say only that the strikes I have seen are consistently different in the two periods.

Robert L. Pellet leased several of the better mines during the 1920s and 30s and kept them operating at a profit. The population rose again, perhaps as high as 2500. Mrs. Pellet entered politics and became the state representative from Dolores, Montezuma, and San Miguel Counties. Fascinating details of that period can be found in Elizabeth (Betty) Pellet's autobiography.<sup>158</sup> By 1945 total production from Rico had risen to over \$27,000,000 or nearly double that produced by 1920.<sup>50</sup> Operations in Rico since 1950 have been limited and sporadic. The last rail cars of ore left Rico on Nov. 19, 1951. The first rails were pulled three miles north of Rico on Sept. 2, 1952, and scrapping of the Rio Grande Southern was completed by the spring of 1953.<sup>127</sup> The population was 353 in 1960 and 275 in 1970. Unlike Lake City, Silverton, Ouray, and Telluride, Rico has developed no tourist trade, and where the former are far better looking and healthier communities than 30 years ago, Rico has only gone downhill, and there isn't much farther to go!



**Figure 64**  
 This is typical of the simple cds type markings used in Rico for many years. The many types vary slightly in size and spacing of letters.

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

The postal routes into Rico were discussed in the introduction to this chapter. Postmarks from Rico are very easy to acquire except for the early town and county markings, and seven of those have been reported to date, so they are not notably scarce.

RICO, OURAY CO., COLO. (4) 1879/12/02-1880/03/28 (see Fig. 62)

CI:T,2,0:315-300:(T,CNTY);M,D;S:G,G:maltese cross

In pale magenta Dec.-Feb., black in Mar.

RICO, OURAY CO., COLO. (4) 1880/05/26-1880/06/19 (see Fig. 63)

CI:H,1,0:320:(T,CNTY);M,D;S:G,G:maltese cross

It is conceivable that this is a worn state of the previous strike.

RICO COLO. (3) 1882/04/10-1883/04/15

CI:P,1,0:270:T;M,D;S:G,R:various corks

RICO COLO.<sup>1</sup> (3) 1885/02/17-1887/05/17 (see Fig. 64)

CI:P,1,0:270:T;M,D,Y;S:G,R:various corks

RICO COLO.<sup>2</sup> (3) 1890/01/23-1893/01/31

CI:P,1,0:275:T;M,D,Y;S:G,G:various corks

RICO COLO 1893/07/20

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

RICO COLO<sup>3</sup> (3) 1894/11/02-1897/02/21

CI:P,1,0:270:T;M,D,Y;S:G,G:cork

RICO COLO<sup>4</sup> (3) 1899/05/02

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

Spread between furthest points of R and O in Rico is 1)140 2)130 3)110 4)120

RICO COLO (3-) 1910/08/02

CI:P,1,0:290:T;M,D,H,Y;S:G,G:grid

**SQUAW POINT**

Established Nov. 3, 1920

Discontinued May 25, 1926

Squaw Point was on the plateau overlooking Squaw Canyon, eight miles south-southeast of Dove Creek, 12 miles by the road over which the mail came. This office again served the local farmers.

No postmarks have been reported.

**WILLOW GULCH**

Established Mar. 21, 1925

Discontinued Dec. 31, 1927

Willow Gulch was the final office established on Disappointment Creek, this time at the point where Willow Gulch empties into it at 7400 feet elevation (South Mountain Quadrangle, 1964). The postal records say it was *established* in 1928, an obvious incorrect entry. The office is in the Postal Guide dated July 1925 but not that for July 1924, so Mar. 21, 1925 is very probably correct.

No postmarks have been reported.

## MISQUITOVILLE, HUMBOLDT BAY, CALIFORNIA

From the collection of John Williams

The San Francisco, Jan. 1, postmark on this cover does not show up in the illustration, since it is in orange. There is also a light strike of a black PAID, together with the usual "40" of the period. Destined for Quebec, the cover bears the Montreal, L.C. date-stamp of Feb. 13, 1851. and a backstamp of Quebec, L.C. of two days later. The manuscript due marking of one shilling three pence was probably applied at Montreal.



The long and very descriptive letter follows:

Humboldt Bay, California  
Misquitoville 12 December 1850

Dear Charley

I am sorry to say that I have not heard from you except once since I arrived in California and that but a very short note, however I am in hopes that there is one from you in the package of letters gone on to Oregon by the steamer Sea Gull which had passengers for here but did not call in here, I suppose the breakers being too high. Mr. Chalmers (my partner) being in San Francisco, and this steamer starting five days before him, he knowing that I was anxious to hear from Quebec. Gave them to one of the passengers, who lived in Eureka to give them to me, but nothing has been heard of either the former or latter. I have received no news from Quebec except what Ross wrote me before he left California. If there are no letters from you for me by this steamer, and none from you when Mr. Chalmers returns after going down with this vessel which we are loading, I will write you no more. Untill I do hear from you. - What is Ross doing has he gone home? Or has he stopped in the States. He merely writes to me that he has started for the States but whether he is going to remain there or not, I cannot tell. He made a slight hint about your taking to yourself a young lady for a companion & if it is the one he mentions or hints at, I wish you every good luck and happiness. Give my best respects to her who ever she may be, should it be any lady I do not know, yet I still hope to make her acquaintance at some future period. But to the business first of my letter, in my preceeding letters (2) I stated that we had loaded the Bright Fawn with piles, but an accident happened which made a difference to us of about two hundred dollars each, in going out of the bay, there being not much wind, but the sea breaking rather high, *the Capt. ordered the whale boat out with five hands, but the tide setting the vesel onto the breakers she stuck fast and remained seven hours, but got off again when the tide rose. From the sea breaking over her the cabin windows were broken & she took in five feet of water in her hold, when she floated off, whilst they were fast in the breakers the Capt. ordered the whale boat alongside, which I am sorry to say was capsized and four were drowned out of the five.* The other drifted to sea on the bottom of the boat, in which perilous situation he remained a night and a day without anybody being able to go to his assistance. When he was drifting to the southward of the entrance of the bay, the tide setting in, the current took him once more on the breakers and washed him off the bottom of the boat, split the boat in two and after being severely brused

## MISQUITOVILLE (Continued)

he was thrown by one of the breakers upon the sand from whence he managed to crawl to one of the fires, which had been made as signals along the shore. After the Bright got back safe into the bay yet altho she had thumped very hard on the breakers, when she was pumped out, they found that she was as tight as a bottle. So she must have been a very strong vessel. But the captain being a very timid man staid there nearly three weeks waiting as he said for a chance to get out, which made a (3) vast difference in the price of the piles, as the vessel that was loading at the same time and got out the day after our vessel was in the breakers, sold his at seventy cents per running foot, which after deducting thirty cents per foot pay would leave fifty cents per foot clear, whilst we had to sell ours the very same quality & lengths at forty cents per foot gross. Deducting the same freight would only leave twenty cents just half & that was all occasioned by his stopping so long in the bay after he was loaded. We have now loaded Bright Emma of 150 tons with piles & square timbers on our own account, she is now finished & is taking in her water She will have about six thousand feet piles besides the square timber If this cargo gets safe I calculate on having a few dollars. We have nearly half a cargo ready for another vessel which Mr. Chalmers intends to bring up & then I think I will *vamoose the ranche* also leave the camp and try my fortunes somewhere else, I think (between you and me) I will buy a share of a vessel & run her somewhere down the coast. But mind you that is *entre nous*, - *as I am heartly tired of living in suspench not knowing at what moment the Indians might attack us. But we have a very comfortable log house, with an open fire place, & maybe we dont keep a tremendous fire at night, the fire place is built round with mud about eighteen inches thick and the seams of the house are also all plastered with it. All we do after our work is over is play cards and smoke our pipe segars* being altogether out of the question We are not at all (4) particular about pipes, they being very high here from twelve & half cents to twenty, for a common clay pipe, & a dollar apiece for a half pound plug of tobacco. The weather here has been very good except lately, when we can only work three days out of the week, because when it rains it comes down in torrents. However the last week has been very fine, clear frosty nights, and beautiful warm days. It is miserable to have to stop in the house in rainy weather, nothing to do but smoke, only think it rained so hard *for three days and we had no tobacco*, on the fourth altho it still continued to rain still we started and went three miles in a canoe and got some, being tired of *smoking black tea the only substitute we could think*. - Game of all sorts has been very abundant, untill the hard frost set in a few nights ago, when it drove a great many of them away, we killed so many geese & ducks, that we each obtained a feather pillow, it was a great farce to see who would get the pillows first, so whenever we had feathers enough for one, we used to draw for them by tickets. One prize and the rest blanks. It was very comfortable to have a nice pillow under your head when for the last six months all the pillow I had was either my coat or if it was too cold for that my boots would answer the same purpose only they were a little harder. However, I am quite accustomed to hard beds and pillows having no other bed but the ground, for a long time, and since that time fir branches, but as they dry, they get mighty hard, and the branches once wet, it takes too long to dry them so that we do not change (5) them very often. Elk and small red deer are very abundant, we have seen fresh tracks and indeed were quite close to one the other day, but not having a gun, therefore did not kill him, We have been out once or twice but have not been fortunate as yet to kill one. There was one killed a short time ago a camp above us, and they gave us one of the quarters. He was very fat and eat very tender, - Fish abounds in great variety here we used to get a fish about the same size and weight as a salmon also the same color, the only difference was that they had hooked mouths, something like a bird. We used to get them from the indians, give them biscuit, beads or an old shirt. *About a month ago they killed a white man about six miles from here. They musterd a party of twenty & went down to Elk River and killed eleven of them*, we had five ranches along side of us with about a dozen Indians, they used to come up every day and we used to give what was left from dinner & allow them to warm themselves by the fire, *but they soon got so saucy bringing their squaws and papooses or children & they all looked like so many pigs being all naked except the squaws who wear a small piece of deer skin from their thighs to their knees It is astonishing to see how they go about naked when there is ice three quarters of an inch thick on the small ponds of fresh water, Let it be ever so cold they bathe every morning. But in five minutes more, they are as dirty as ever*, we now do not let them come farther than the door, let it rain ever so hard or be ever so cold, *as give them an inch and they will take a M.* Three days ago they have removed all (6) their camps & went to the other side of the

## MISQUITOVILLE (Continued)

bay, the excuse they gave was that there was better fishing there, but I think they were afraid of being shot, as since the murder no indians was allowed to enter any of the three towns on the bay & ours was the only white mens camp that they visited even to trade, as they would shoot them down like dogs after that man that was inhumanly murdered, after killing him with arrows, when the other two white men were from their camp, afterwards they smashed in his skull & literally almost cut him to pieces with his own axe, He had seventeen marks of the edge of the axe on his body and legs, He was nearly made *mince meat* of. I do not think that they will trouble us much as we have four double barreled guns in the house two rifles, a revolver, & two pair of pistols. & plenty of ammunition & they know that very well, as they are on pegs opposite the door, ready loaded and capped all ready to do their duty - I shall just give you a slight idea of what we have to pay for provisions in this ere bay - Flour of which we use nearly fifty pounds a week is \$15 pr. 100 lbs, pork \$40 per bbl. - sugar forty cents per lb, green coffee sixty cts per lb, molasses \$3 per gallon, salt butter \$1.50 per lb, strong boots up to your knee \$15, beans seventeen cents pr. lb, salt mackerel half a dollar a piece, & now for ammunition powder \$1 pr. lb, shot 37½ cents & caps \$1 per box of 250, clothes of all sorts are very high only think of twenty dollars for a coarse pair of woollen trousers, which you would buy with ease for about two dollars, but thank goodness I do not want those articles, I have never enjoyed better health than the time I have been in California never having been more than three days sick & that was with the dysentery on (7) the road to the mines, since then, I have not known a single days sickness, so that knocking about seems to agree with me but I would sooner be in another situation and enjoy society a little, especially the *ladies*. one of whom I have not seen for a long, I think it would *be a case for sore eyes* to see *one*, I think that I may winter here, or at least stop untill I get out another cargo & then slope to more neighborly race of beings, than are here. Because although, I might save a few hundred dollars here, yet what sort of a place do you call this when your life is in danger every hour & obliged to go armed, if you go any distance from the camp. I would sooner make half the money somewhere else than live in suspense. & no society of any sort, I can wash, darn, and mend clothes pretty well, as well as cook. & am begining to use to use the axe a little better than when I first entered the woods, rafting is the most disagreeable part of the business, as you know what (??) raft timber & tow them two miles with a boat, in all sorts of weather, as whether it rains or not if we have a ship loading we must keep her going, - I now finish this long epistle hoping that I shall soon receive as long a one from you with all the news from old Quebec, if Ross is with you remember me to him - Tell him I have told Chalmers to inquire if there any letters in the post office for him. If there are I shall either send them by way of the Quebeckers going home or I shall keep them untill I hear from you, what I am to do with them as there is no use sending the letters straight back where they came from, & incur another postage, unless they are of particular value at the moment, as I expect to be back myself one of these fine days, or whenever I have a letter going & it does not incur any more postage, I could enclose one at a time. Remember me Welch, & rest the fellows, about the lower town, & to all the good folks in your domicile, to the family at Belvidere also to Edward Atkinson his mother & sisters and to Mrs. Dane & her family, & altho it is not either Christmas or New Year, yet still before this arrives it *will* be, I wish you & all the good folks I have mentioned a *very Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year*. And that *you & they all* may live to enjoy *many* of them & also hope that I will see some of you before many pass. Tell Edward Atkinson that I shall write him the next vessel that goes down & let him know how I am getting along & that altho he may have forgotten me, I have not forgotten him & his kindness to me - So I shall now say farewell and remain your sincere friend.

F. E. R. Leaycraft

P.S.

The Pentlands wish me to mention that all the things they have of Ross in their examination were a silver watch & a black pair of trousers Bible & prayer book & a few other books. They desire to be remembered to you and all your relations should you see any of our folks, you can tell them that I have written them by the same vesel by the Jamaica. If this arrives before them you can tell them how I am getting along, but say nothing about *the ship* to any person *Mums the word*



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## BLACK JACKS WEST

by Paul J. Wolf

A great rarity has been made available to us through the interest and courtesy of Jerome Schwimmer, of South Pasadena, California. Mr. Schwimmer, a long-time member of WCS, collects Los Angeles covers as a specialty, and a couple of years ago became aware of the existence of a Los Angeles Black Jack cover! The owner of the cover resisted the advances and blandishments proffered, and it took over 15 months before he finally gave in, and parted with his treasure.

The cover is franked with a single Black Jack, which indicates Second Class usage, since the town to which it is addressed, San Buenaventura (now known as Ventura) is some 62 miles from L. A. The postmark, which amply ties the stamp, does not carry a year date.

According to Mr. Schwimmer, the population of Los Angeles in 1850 was 1610, in 1860 it had grown to 4399. Not much of a population to originate mail!

After some 15 years of looking, Mr. Schwimmer says that his Black Jack cover is the only one he has ever seen or heard of, and is probably unique.

A further sidelight is the name of the addressee. He was a member of a well-known French noble family, and it would be interesting to know what he was doing in Southern California. There are a number of covers addressed to him still surviving. Could he have been a ne'er-do-well younger son, a "Remittance Man," paid an allowance by his family on condition that he stay as far away as possible?



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## THE COAST PERIOD OF WELLS, FARGO & CO'S MEXICAN EXPRESS

Being a concise history of the activities of that great Express company and those carriers who brought it to the West Coast of Mexico, the Gulf of California and the Baja Peninsula from 1859 to 1882

by Jack Greenberg

### INTRODUCTION

"Express", as defined in the dictionary, is "a regular and systematic method of conveyance for passengers, mails, and goods of small bulk." It has always struck me that this description more accurately defined the activities of the carrier, over whose routes the express company operated, than the activities of the express company itself. One might further state the obvious fact that the activities of the carrier and that of the express company are inseparably intertwined.

This inseparability of activity is nowhere more apparent than along the Mexican Coastal routes of Wells, Fargo. Without regularly scheduled and rapid steamer service, it would be impossible for an express company to be able to assure a shipper when, if ever, his consignment would reach the person to whom it was directed. Thus it becomes apparent that the history of an express company is also the history of its carriers.

The transportation of goods over hundreds of miles by land, through the deserts of Southern California, Arizona Territory, and Sonora Mexico, inhabited by hostile Indians and Mexicans who had not forgotten the humiliations suffered in the aftermath of the war with the United States, was a virtual impossibility. There was only sporadic intercourse with this area prior to the initiation of scheduled steamer service by the pioneer steamship SANTA CRUZ in the Spring of 1859.

Port to port steam service was not the only consideration with regard to the carriage of express on the West Coast of Mexico. An equally important consideration was the transportation of those goods from the port of debarkation to the hands of the consignee in the interior. The means of this conveyance was totally absent at the genesis of express service. As this demand was recognized, it was quickly met by the establishment of DILIGENCIA (the Mexican version of the stage Coach) lines to the interior for the transportation of light freight and passengers. Pack trains and teams and wagons were utilized to transport freight of a bulkier nature, and sailboats were used to meet the need where overland transportation was not practical.



**WELLS, FARGO & CO's MEXICAN EXPRESS (Continued)**

For over twenty years, Wells, Fargo & Co's Express restricted its activities to shipping to only three ports from their office in San Francisco; La Paz, on the Baja Peninsula, and Mazatlan and Guaymas on the Mexican Mainland Coast. Traffic was very light during this period and was of such miniscule financial importance to the Company that few references to it have survived in the official records.



As long as the Gold Rush was in a state of excitement in Upper California there was little or no interest in the mineral resources of Lower California or in the West Coast States of the Mexican Mainland. In the later fifties, especially in the wake of the Fraser River "Gold Bust", hard times settled over Upper California.



**WELLS, FARGO & CO's MEXICAN EXPRESS (Continued)**

It took longer hours and greater effort to earn a living. The boom day wages of the earlier half of the decade declined as the demand for labor, in a sluggish economy, slipped far below the supply. Men became restless and traveled ever farther afield in a search for new bonanzas. The rich mines of Nevada were discovered and a sudden increase in interest was noted in the supposedly rich deposits of Gold and Silver buried in Arizona Territory, the Mexican States of Sonora, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, and Baja California.

This increased interest could be measured by the rising number of windjammers, advertising themselves as "A-1 CLIPPERS", sailing from San Francisco to the ports of Guaymas, San Blas, Mazatlan, La Paz, and the mouth of the Colorado river.

There was very little interference with this activity, by the Central Government of Mexico, as the war with the United States ushered in an era of un-remitting political turmoil, which finally terminated in 1876 with the rise to power of Porfirio Diaz; a period of over thirty years.

During these three decades the Central Government had virtually no influence on the west coast of the nation. Local "Jefes Politicos" (political bosses) granted favors, disposed of public lands, granted charters and generally ruled as if the Central Government never existed. Whatever taxes were collected under the national laws, for the benefit of the Federal Government, were not exactly kept in trust pending safe and sure conveyance to the Capital.



After the consolidation of power under the regime of President Diaz, many of the charters and concessions granted by local officials to unsuspecting foreigners, and paid for in gold, were repudiated by the Central Government as being invalid in their conception. Then these were re-granted by the Central Government to the same or other foreigners for an additional payment in gold.

As early as 1879 President Diaz began to issue concessions to Foreign Capitalists to construct railroads throughout the country, ushering in a new era of progress and prosperity. Wells, Fargo, remembering well the painful and expensive lesson learned at the hands of the Central Pacific Railroad interests, opened offices at an incredible rate all over Mexico. Many of these were opened months in advance of the rails. By the turn of the century the company virtually dominated the express business in Mexico.

**WELLS, FARGO & CO's MEXICAN EXPRESS (Continued)**

This is a fascinating story of an American enterprise that made it big in a foreign land. This was perhaps the precursor of the wave of American industry and energy which led America to be the dominant force in the world of the twentieth century.

As the express business in the United States declined, finally to terminate in a forced merger, during the first world war, Wells, Fargo & Co's Mexican Express went on to retain its identity. The Company survived the nationalization of the railroads during the revolutionary period of 1910 through 1914, and continued to operate as a very much living entity until its official demise, by choice, in 1964. Thus ends the saga, one hundred and five years after its beginnings, and almost fifty years after the demise of the parent company in the great merger of 1918.

**AUTHOR'S NOTES**

The railroad era of Mexican transportation caught the public fancy north of the border, and as a result, there is a great deal of source material. Many "Roving Journalists" wrote of their travels in Mexico between 1880 and 1910. Travel on the railroads played a large part in their tales. Travel guides began to appear in 1883 and were faithfully up-dated every couple of years. Yankee excursions over Mexican Rails were quite popular during the decade and a half preceding the new century.

When it comes to the coastal period from 1859 until 1882, we really have to work for our information. The official records of Wells, Fargo & Co. are very sketchy. The newspapers and City Directories of the day, and those mostly from San Francisco, remain the only real source of information with regard to this period.

As most of the articles which will become chapters of this story are still in the formative stages, the author would welcome any information or suggestions from our readers which will help this effort to become of greater value.

It is to be hoped that others who share an interest in this subject will be stimulated to do research and to report their findings here in the pages of WESTERN EXPRESS.

It is also hoped that others having acquaintances interested in this subject, will invite them to join the Western Cover Society.

Readers having Mexican Wells, Fargo covers about which they have questions, are invited to send pictures to the author. I will be happy to share my knowledge with them.

## A GROUP OF WESTERN EXPRESSES

by Dr. A. J. Hertz

### McPIKE & STROTHER'S EXPRESS

This express originated in St. Louis, Missouri and operated a wagon train from Missouri to California. They brought the pioneers by the overland route. The *Missouri Republican* (St. Louis) for January 21, 1850 carried this item:

"Notice to California Emigrants. McPike and Strother's Express Line for California. The undersigned are now in St. Louis, making their outfit, securing carriages, etc. They can be found at the Miles House on Broadway where those wishing to procure tickets will please call before Tuesday evening Jan. 22nd, as we will leave Wednesday, positively.

McPike and Strother"

The fee for delivering an individual to California was \$200 and the trip took two months or more. A second advertisement was placed in the *Republican* of March 19, 1850, as follows:

"\$10,000 Reward. McPike & Strother's Express Line for California, will leave Bowling Green, Pike Co. Mo. on the first of April next and St. Joseph on the 25th of the same month. Our outfit is equal to any that will cross the plains this season; we expect to make the trip in 65 or 70 days at most. Passage through \$200. Those wishing to take a seat can do so by calling at Barnum's City Hotel; we have room for 30 or 40 more.

McPike & Strother's Proprietors".

It took a third item in the *Republican* (March 29, 1850) to fill the ranks of the party and get it on its way. We read:

"McPike & Strother's Express Line for California will leave Bowling Green, Pike Co. the 25th of April, 1850. We are prepared to haul feed on the way until the grass is sufficient for the teams.

We would say to all who wish a quick and comfortable passage to go with us, as we can take a few more. Our outfit cannot be beat by any that will cross the Plains. For further particulars and tickets apply to Osborne & Dougherty, cor. of St. Charles and 5th Sts., St. Louis, Mo.

McPike & Strother"

### MARTIN'S EXPRESS

From the *San Andreas Independent* of August 1, 1857, we find the following:

"Weekly Express

From Angel's to Vallecito, Douglas Flat, Murphy's,  
Albany Flat, Carson's Creek, Smith's Flat and French Camp.

Frank A. Martin is now running a weekly express starting immediately after the arrival of the Stockton stage, so as to deliver San Francisco and Sacramento letters the same day they arrive at Angels. Subscribers can be furnished regularly with any daily or weekly paper published in the State.

Office at Lake Hotel, Angels, where may be found San Francisco and Sacramento papers.

Angel's Camp, July 27, 1857

Frank A. Martin, Proprietor"

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

Merchants Exchange of San Francisco was started by two men, Sweeney and Baugh, who were forwarders in the early hectic days of the gold rush. They had a private mail bag which they sent by private or regular boat. Their idea was later carried out by Sullivan, Leland, Noisy Carrier and others, all newsmen. Sweeney & Baugh were not.

Their exchange was a meeting place for merchants. Here newspapers, shipping news, fiction and mercantile information would be found and utilized. They also had their letter bag.

In present times where any drug store can supply one with stamps, mailing is no problem. But in 1849 any help or offer to forward mail was accepted gratefully. Merchants Exchange offered that service.

Men who lived in San Francisco had to join for at least six months. Transients, miners or business men passing through, or remaining for a short time, could pay by the week. Ink, paper and a quiet place to write were furnished and in those boisterous time a quiet place was greatly appreciated.

From the *Alta California* of November 22, 1849:

“Merchants Exchange. San Francisco. The subscriber has completed a large hall in the second story of the building recently erected by him on Washington St. and proposes to open it on the 20th inst. for the use of the merchants of San Francisco and business men generally. Newspapers from all parts of the world will be kept on file and the shipping news collected daily. No efforts or expense will be spared to gather such mercantile information and news of the day, as the present wants of the business community demands. Half yearly subscription received from residents. Transit parties can subscribe by the week. Persons from the mines, visiting San Francisco, may thus have access to the news of all quarters and in addition, accommodations for writing letters will be furnished. Letter bags, for the various mail, will be kept at the office of the Exchange.

Edward E. Dunbar”

That Sweeney and Baugh were in touch with the mines is gleaned from the fact that their Mr. Dunbar appeared for them at the Stockton mines. From *Pacific News* of December 1, 1849:

“Item. Latest news from the Stockton mines. We have been permitted by the kindness of Mr. Dunbar of the Merchants Exchange to copy the following items from their News Book . . .”

In the San Francisco *Daily Herald* of July 1, 1850:

“News item. Merchants Exchange Mail Bag. A mail will be dispatched from the Merchants Exchange by Steamship California for the Eastern States, Europe and South America, at 3 P.M. this day.”

And from the *Herald* of August 15, 1850:

“Mail bag at the Merchant’s Exchange. We are requested to state that the mail bag will be kept open at the Merchants Exchange today, till the departure of the steamers. Letters and papers will be received to 3 o’clock P.M.”

The last item is from the *Daily Public Ledger* of March 31, 1851:

The Exchange uses an oval handstamp on the mail it forwards, and is stamped in red ink. It reads: “Merchants/Exchange/San Francisco” — the top and bottom words being curved, following the lines of the oval. Underneath is a small PAID which is usually followed by a script 40.”