

# WESTERN EXPRESS

RESEARCH JOURNAL OF EARLY WESTERN MAILS

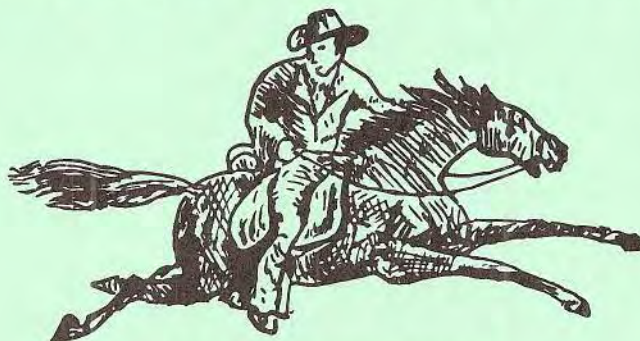
WHOLE NO. 117 VOL. XXIX, NO. 2 Western Cover Society  
Unit No. 14 — American Philatelic Society

APRIL, 1979

Winner of Large Silver Medals — ROCPEX '78 and CAPEX '78

Express  
Ocean Mail  
Overland  
Post Offices

Territorial  
Statehood  
Postal Rates  
Postal History



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Advertising rates, per issue: \$35.00, full page; \$17.50, half page; \$10.00 quarter page.

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

**EDITOR'S ARENA****ANNUAL  
BREAKFAST  
MEETING**

Carrying on a tradition of many years standing, the Annual meeting of our Society will be held in conjunction with WESTPEX, on Sunday April 29th, with breakfast being served at 10:30 A.M. at the Jack Tar Hotel, San Francisco. To insure a place for yourself at the Breakfast Meeting, it would be wise to send in your reservation and check for \$7.00 to The Secretary at 9877 Elmar Ave., Oakland 94603.

**INDEX FOR  
WESTERN EXPRESS**

As a Supplement to this issue of our quarterly you will find an Index to the articles, stories and other items that have appeared since January 1951 through the 27 years ending with the October 1978 issue. This is the work of our member J. David Baker. Readers may have noted that, with the July 1978 issue, we have noted this as "Whole Number 114" - or the 114th issue - and continued this consecutively thru the current issue, No. 117. This was in anticipation of the new Index. Dave has provided a chart (which precedes the Index) giving the whole number for each issue from No. 1 of January 1951 to date. It is suggested that members go back thru their file copies of WESTERN EXPRESS and add the corresponding Whole Number.

**TOMBSTONE, A.T.**

My apologies to Tucson. In the introduction to the illustrated letter from Tombstone, in the July 1978 issue, I noted that it was a letter donated by Mr. Moffat, "to the Western Postal Museum" (which was correct) "in Phoenix" (which was wrong) the Museum is "in Tucson".

**SECRETARY'S REPORT****Change of  
Address**

Richard Carlson, P.O. Box 2785, Springfield, VA 22152  
 William T. Crowe, 3404 Balboa St., San Francisco, CA 94121  
 Raymond Dopmeyer, P.O. Box 228, Willmar, MN 56201  
 Rick Horne, 4080 Bay St., Fremont, CA 94538  
 Clifford Horst, Jr. Box 3469, Chico, CA 95927  
 Jerry Lewin, 3544 Meder Rd. Shing Springs, CA 95682  
 Dennis Lutz, P.O. Box 2172, Minot, ND 58701  
 Francis J. Naber, 7749 Jay St. Pultneyville, NY 14538  
 Stanley Piller, 3320 Grand, Oakland, CA 94610  
 Joseph Rorke, M.D., Taliesin West, Box 4430, Scottsdale, AZ 85258  
 Seigle, Daniel R., P.O. Box 909, Radio City Sta, NY, NY 10019  
 Victor B. Smith, P.O. Box 230, Captain Cook, HI 96704  
 Ron Wilbur, 1433 Bach St., Carson, CA 90745

**New Members**

#709 Martin B. Fogel, 7002 Linda Vista Rd. Apt. 26, San Diego, CA 92111  
 (Collects Expresses)  
 #710 Richard Curtin, Suite 309N, 5199 E. Pac. Coast Hwy., Long Beach, CA 90804  
 (Collects Early California and California Expresses)  
 #711 Frank J. Liska, P.O. Box 4, Rockwall, TX 75087  
 Collects Expresses, Early Adv. Covers, U.S. Proofs)  
 #712 Kenneth D. Gilbert, 2692 Comstock Circle, Belmont, CA 94002  
 (Collects U.S. Classics, esp. 10¢ 1861)

**SECRETARY'S REPORT (Continued)**

<b>New Members (Cont)</b>	#713 Mark A. Anderson, 31073 Grennada, Livonia, MI 48154 (Collects Wells, Fargo & Express Co's of Calif., Territorials of Ind., AZ, and Alaska)
	#714 Collector's Club of Chicago, 1029 Dearborn St., Chicago, IL 60610
	#715 Barry Newton, Box 5152, Akron, OH 44313 (Collects General Westerns)
	Add to ROSTER of July 1978
	#690 Raymond Dopmeyer's interests are PH5, D & PH 12
<b>Resignations</b>	#3 Eugene Costales, #261 Duane Rosselot, #498 Guy Prescott
	#344 Sol Salkind, #630 James Schmitt
<b>Deceased</b>	#610 Alfred Schnaus

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

**1979 DUES** With the thought of saving postage for the Society, the 1979 dues notices were included with the mailing of the WESTERN EXPRESS. But with over 100 members unpaid as of February 10 it was obvious your Treasurer made an unwise move. (Could it be that we have members who don't rush to open their WESTERN EXPRESS when it arrives?)

The Society is grateful to those members who continue their Patron or Sustaining status, to those who moved up to one or the other, and to those who entered these ranks for the first time. See the accompanying list of these dedicated members of our Society.

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

Cash on hand, January 1, 1978 .....\$5,633.92

**RECEIPTS**

Dues - 1978	980.00	
Dues - 1979	<u>310.00</u>	1,290.00
Advertising		77.50
Sale of back issues of W/E		292.90
Interest on short-term savings	<u>292.77</u>	<u>1,953.17</u>
Total Funds Available		7,587.09

**EXPENDITURES**

Printing & Mailing Western Express		3,964.04
Secretary-Treasurer Expenses	<u>184.93</u>	<u>4,148.97</u>
Cash on hand, December 31, 1978		\$3,438.12

## PATRON AND SUSTAINING MEMBERS FOR 1979

### PATRON

J. David Baker  
David T. Beals III  
Henry Clifford  
William Crowe  
Raymond Epple  
Kenneth Greenberg  
Marc Haas

Dorothy Hotz  
Donald F. Katona  
John F. Leutzinger  
Robert Lewenthal  
G. Wm. Magladry, M.D.  
William T. McGreer  
Frank Q. Newton, Jr.

King Parker, Jr.  
Basil C. Pearce  
W. Scott Polland, M.D.  
Henry Spelman III  
J. Earle Stromberg  
E. Murray Todd  
Richard Wolfers

### SUSTAINING

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S.M. Arnold  
William Bauer  
Dr. W.B. Bilyeu  
Wesley Crozier  
J. Leonard Diamond  
Sheldon H. Dike  
John Drew  
C.C. Hart  
J.C. Hawley  
Rick Horne  
Joy Hutton  
Constant Johnson  
Trowbridge Leavitt

Bennett Levinson  
Howard Mader  
Stephen Miles  
Charles Molnar  
Clifford Moss  
Robert Myerson  
Ray Newburn, Jr.  
Ralzemonid Parker  
N. Leonard Persson  
Richard Poultridge  
W.R. Radford  
Helen Rhodes  
Joseph Rorke, M.D.  
H. Salley  
Oscar Salzar

Jerome Schwimmer  
Col. Fred Seifert  
William Semsrott  
Tracy Simpson  
Jack Stucky, M.D.  
Glenn Terry  
Elmer Tvedt  
Gordon Twedt  
Irwin Vogel  
Dr. Heinz von Hungen  
R.B. Wale  
C.A. Whittlesey  
Richard Wilkerson  
John Williams

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We buy and sell old U.S. and Confederate covers, manuscripts, books and documents.

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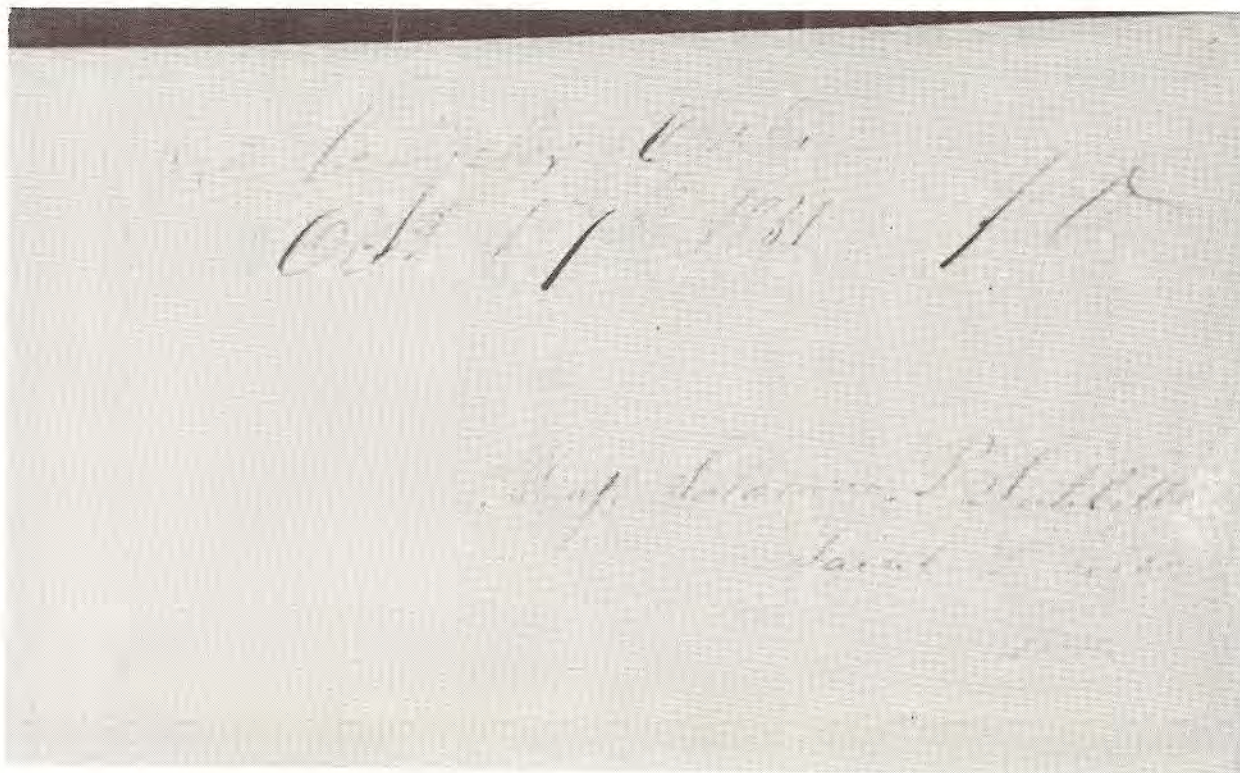
**LOS ANGELES - RARE AND UNIQUE**

By Jerome Schwimmer

New transcontinental postal rates replacing the 40 cents rate went into effect on July 1, 1851. The newly established rate for over 3,000 miles were 6 cents prepaid and 10 cents if mailed unpaid.

The two pictured covers nicely illustrate these rates used from Los Angeles. The earlier cover, dated Oct. 17, 1851, was sent unpaid and bears the manuscript 10 rate marking. The later cover, dated May 31 without year date shown, was prepaid and bears manuscript "Paid 6" marking.

The manuscript Los Angeles postmark was used from 1850 to 1854. The earliest known use of the manuscript postmark from Los Angeles is February 22, 1850. The two illustrated covers represent the second and third earliest known uses of the manuscript postmark from Los Angeles is February 22, 1850. The two illustrated covers represent the second and third earliest known uses of the manuscript postmark from Los Angeles. They also represent the two earliest known California Statehood covers from Los Angeles.

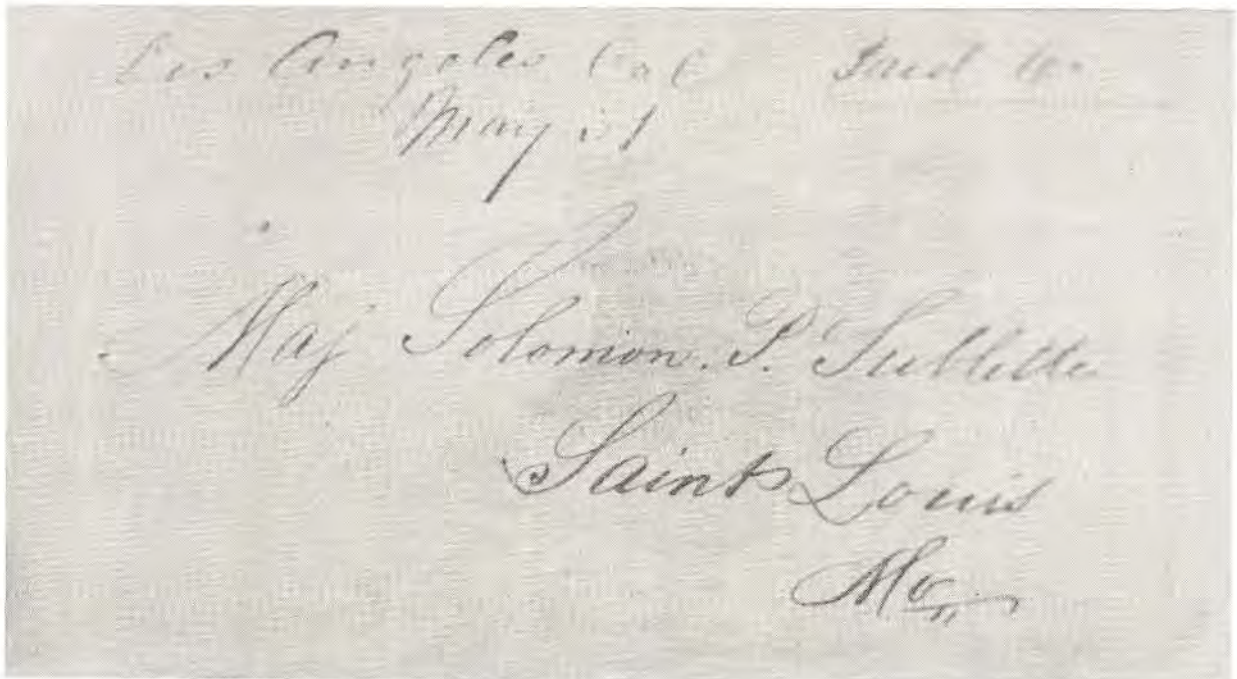


**LOS ANGELES - RARE AND UNIQUE (Continued)**

The existence of an 1854 cover with Los Angeles manuscript postmark is known to the author. It is assumed that other Los Angeles manuscript postmarked covers exist in other collections. Their identification in Western Express would be valuable in the compilation of the postal history of Los Angeles. Reader comment is invited and will be acknowledged in future columns with authorship credited, unless anonymity is requested.

The two illustrated covers are interesting for their common addressee. Each is addressed from Los Angeles to Major Solomon P. Sublette of the renowned family of mountain men and traders.

It is interesting to speculate with regard to the sequence of the two letters—why the first was sent unpaid and the second prepaid. Had the writer's confidence in the reliability of the Post Office Department increased to the point that he was willing to prepay the second letter, or was it just that his cash position had improved between the sending of the two?.



**PIONEER EXPRESS SERVICE  
TO LA PAZ, BAJA (LOWER) CALIFORNIA**

by  
Jack Greenberg

“In 1862 some valuable silver mines were discovered in the jurisdiction of San Antonio, that had a favorable influence on the peninsular economy. At that time the formal exploitation of the mine EL TRIUNFO was organized, a mine that was famous for its output ever since the colonial era. The name of the mine in this case supplanted the original name of the pueblo, which was Casitias. After the work started, there came a time when it was called the BONANZA or boom.”



Figure 1

A sketch of the Pueblo  
of SAN ANTONIO, 1866

“The news of this bonanza had repercussions among the miners in Upper California, and they arrived in hordes. Some came as workers, others as prospectors or explorers, and many, the greater number, on seeing the possibility of making money illegally through the organization of mining societies in the United States, for the exploitation of capital, but in reality, this was not to start work, but to trick American stockholders who genuinely believed the publicity that the so-called enterprises gave out, particularly in the Port of San Francisco.” So says Sr. Pablo L. Martinez in his history of Lower California. Mr. Martinez must be excused for the anti-Yankee and anti-Capitalist sentiments which permeate his otherwise useful works. (a)

In 1866 the eminent traveler, J. Ross Browne journeyed to Lower California in the employ of a group of “wealthy New York capitalists” to evaluate a Colonization and Mining grant, received by his employers from the Mexican Government. His observations are further enlightening;

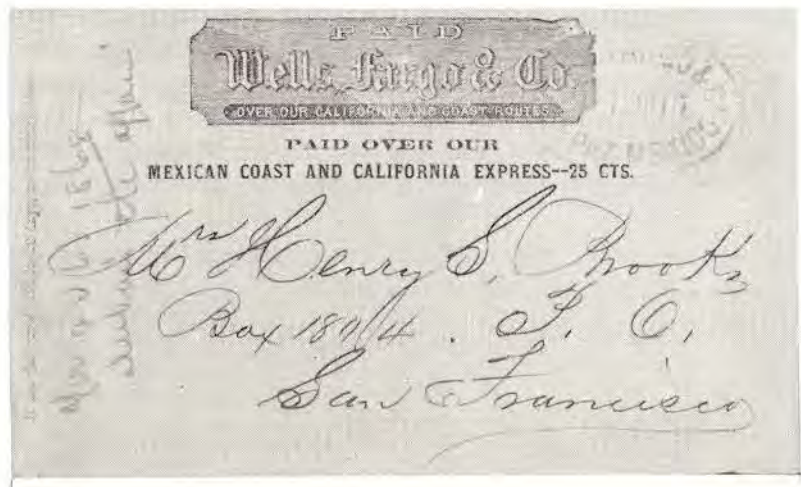
**PIONEER EXPRESS SERVICE (Continued)**



**Figure 2**  
J. Ross Browne, ca 1866

“Five miles from San Antonio, in a pleasant little valley.... lies the Triunfo range of mines. It is a demonstrated fact that the ores range from \$70 to \$120 (per ton) all the way down to a depth of four hundred feet. A good wagon road has been opened from the mines down to La Paz, chiefly through the instrumentality of Mr. Brooks.” [Henry S. Brooks, Superintendent of the Triunfo mines.]

**Figure 3**  
Mexican Wells Fargo cover sent by Henry Brooks to his wife in San Francisco during his tenure.



**PIONEER EXPRESS SERVICE (Continued)**

“The town of La Paz is pleasantly situated on an arm of the bay of that name. The population is about 800. By decree of May 11, 1861....no foreign goods can now be landed at any other point of the peninsula; in consequence of which, great inconvenience is expressed by the people living at San Jose and Cape St. Lucas. The ports of Mulege, Loreto, San Jose and San Inentia are open to the coasting trade. Several excellent store-houses and commodious residences have been built in La Paz since 1860. Commerce with Mazatlan is carried on by means of a schooner.” (b)



Figure 4  
La Paz in 1866

The Baja peninsula had always been a desolate and inhospitable land. Commercial activity had been very limited and contact with the outside world, let alone the rest of Mexico, was sporadic at best. Probably seventy percent of the population of the peninsula prior to 1872, was concentrated within a radius of one hundred miles of La Paz.

With the silver strikes of 1862, growth was dramatic. The population of the entire peninsula had dropped from a high of 12,000 inhabitants in 1852 to a low of 7,845 in 1862. In 1869 the total stood at 21,645, an increase of almost 300%!(a)

Prior to 1861 there was insufficient commercial activity to attract, let alone merit, express service between the ports of La Paz and San Francisco. When the steamship SANTA CRUZ commenced service to the Mexican coast in the Spring of 1859, the only ports of call she advertised were Mazatlan and Guaymas. We know, however, from a bill of lading (c), dated at Cape San Lucas on January 10, 1860, that she would call Baja ports given sufficient inducement.

PIONEER EXPRESS SERVICE (Continued)



Figure 5  
 A Bill of Lading, the only surviving document of the SANTA CRUZ's brief service on the route.

The first express known to operate from San Francisco to La Paz was PETERSON'S LOWER CALIFORNIA EXPRESS. Service probably commenced between the fall of 1861 and March 3, 1862; the date of the earliest known cover.

The information surviving his brief period of service is slight, indeed. No newspaper or directory advertisements have come to light. We do not know what offices or routes he may have operated in Lower California. We do not even know his first name! We know that he connected in San Francisco and La Paz with Wells, Fargo, and may have utilized that company's Mexican Coast Messenger to transport his express between those two ports. We know from his frank that he maintained an office in San Francisco at H. Payot's Bookstore, 640 Washington Street.

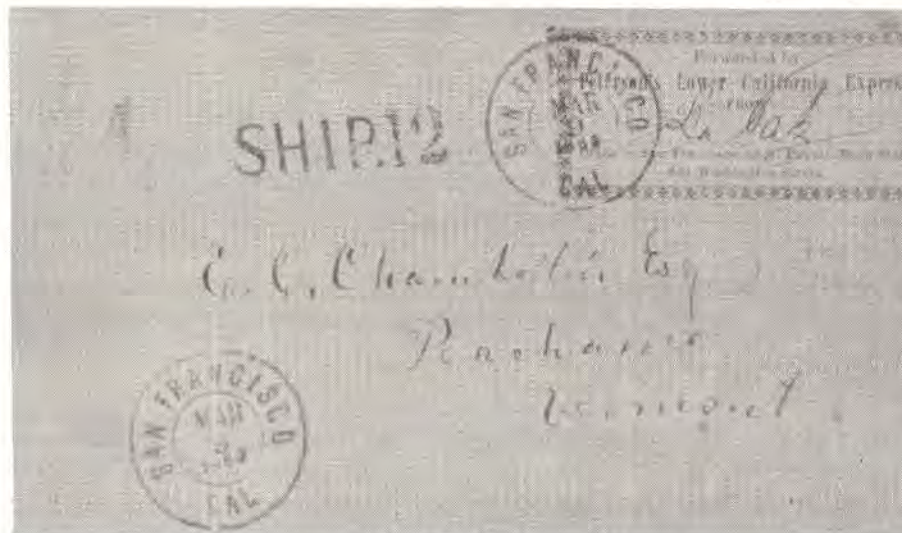


Figure 6

**PIONEER EXPRESS SERVICE (Continued)**

The Three surviving covers from this rare express give us the majority of our information.

The first cover is dated "March 9, 1862", by two strikes of the double circle San Francisco hand stamp then current. It also bears a straight-line "SHIP 12". It also has the Peterson Express adhesive label, and in the blank space is written "La Paz." (Blank space would indicate he serviced or intended to service other areas! Interesting.) It was apparently handed by Peterson to a ship's officer for transportation to San Francisco, where it was placed in the mails for forwarding to Vermont. It appears that this cover was treated as in-coming ship's mail and was dropped at the San Francisco post office by the ship's purser with other foreign mail that was aboard. The ship was not a mail contractor as the Captain was paid two cents for carrying the letter, which a mail contractor would not have been entitled to. (Figure 6)

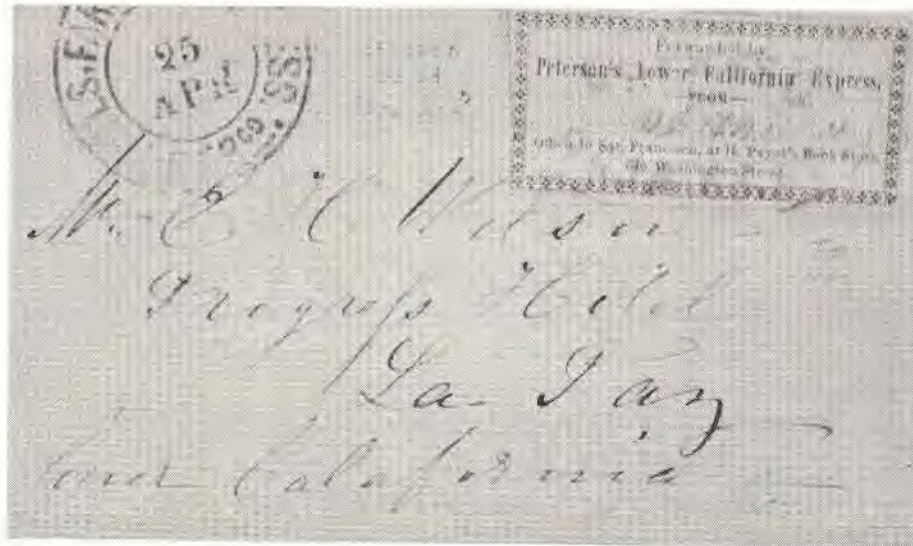


Figure 7

Our second cover is dated August 25, (1862 or 1863), by a double circle WELLS, FARGO & CO.'s EXPRESS, S. F.Rco handstamp, which enjoyed general use during the 1860-1864 period. A Peterson Express adhesive frank is attached and is tied by a red oval handstamp of "EXPRESO DE BAJA, CALA." Under the adhesive frank is a Wells, Fargo oval "PAID" handstamp. In the space for "Express From" is written San Francisco. This cover was turned over to Peterson and the frank and handstamp were added later; probably in Lower California. This cover indicates that Peterson connected with Wells, Fargo. (Figure 7)

**PIONEER EXPRESS SERVICE (Continued)**

Figure 8

The third cover is dated "June -, 1863," and is described in the catalogue of the Wiltsee Collection (c) as "La Paz, Baja, California to San Francisco (June) 1863. Red oval Handstamp, "Expreso de La Baja, Cala. " This is the latest date known for this express. (Figure 8)

When Ben Holladay's Mexican Steamship Line commenced service to the Mexican Coast, business opportunities in La Paz were so indifferent that he did not even mention service to that port. In his ad in the Daily Alta California for April 12, 1861 his destinations are listed as SAN BLAS, MAZATLAN, and GUAYMAS, touching at CAPE SAN LUCAS, added as an after thought. The first mention of La Paz does not appear until, September 1863, when the San Francisco City Director for 1863-1864 carried the notice;

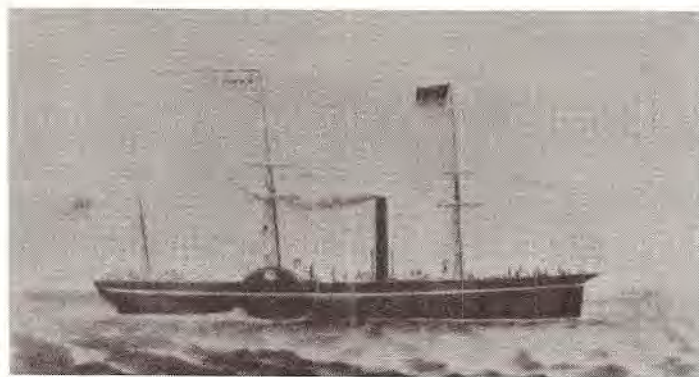
**CALIFORNIA, OREGON & MEXICAN STEAMSHIP LINE**

**STEAMER OREGON - for Cape St, Lucas,  
Mazatlan, Guaymas and La Paz, Monthly**

**Ben Holladay, Proprietor  
S.W. Corner of Front & Jackson Sts**

Figure 9

**The Steamer OREGON as she  
appeared shortly before she was sold  
to Holladay in 1861.**



**PIONEER EXPRESS SERVICE (Continued)**

On December 31, 1863, the corporate officers of Wells, Fargo & Co. met. In the minutes of that meeting we find the following; "Earnings on foreign express, \$1,200. Payment for privilege of Catorson Express Route through Lower California, \$1,000. Offices; Mazatlan, Guaymas, La Paz, Mexican Coast (Route)." Of course "Catorson" is the result of someone's poorly written report of the successful purchase of "Peterson's Lower Cala. Express. Foreign express refers to the Company's Mexican operations.

On further review of the Corporate minute books a fragmentary picture is revealed which, creates more questions than it answers.

The entry for the year ending December 31, 1860 informs us that an office was opened at Guaymas, and the earnings for the Foreign route were \$2,785.00. I have not been able to find any advertisements for this year and the minute books do not mention the company's activities on the Mexican Coast during the year of 1859, although we know of the ad during May of that year. (c)

The entry for the year ending on the last day of 1861 tells us that the office at Mazatlan was opened, and that the earnings for the route were \$8,900.00, a substantial increase. No ads have been found for this year.

On the last day of 1862 we are informed that no additional offices were opened and that the earnings were \$2,750, a sharp decline. No ads exist, and as we know, in 1863 the earnings declined to less than one half of those in 1862.

We do not know why the Mexican Coast route, after such a promising beginning in 1860-1861, is obviously in financial difficulty only two years later. Mexico, of course, is still locked in the clutches of political turmoil, about to be occupied by the French, but this state had existed since the war with the United States and was a factor that the Company must have considered before entering the trade. What ever the reason, it is obvious that the Company needed the revenue from Peterson's Express to help prop up a financially weak business venture, so much so that it paid five-sixths of its Mexican Coast earnings for 1863 to acquire it.



**Figure 10**

This sadly abused cover is the earliest usage of a Mexican division frank, known to the author. It is dated by its enclosure.

**PIONEER EXPRESS SERVICE (Continued)**

The earliest Wells, Fargo & Co., La Paz cover that I have seen is dated August, 10, 1864, barely a year after the acquisition must have been made. It is franked with a U35 stamp and bears an M-1 frank, again the earliest usage seen. All Mexican Wells, Fargo covers seen that have pre-dated this one have been on frank-less envelopes, or have borne the common type "E" or type "F" frank, which were in use for so many years.

In 1864 Benijo Juarez granted a Concession to Jacob P. Leese, which embraced virtually two-thirds of Lower California. Leese, lacking the capital to meet the conditions of this contract, sold his interests to a group of New York Capitalists who formed a corporation with a capital of twenty-five million dollars christened "The Lower California Company". J. Ross Browne, whom we referred to earlier, was commissioned to report on this holding.

A great deal of promotion of this project probably was responsible for the growth of population on the peninsula reported between 1862 and 1869. The following Advertisement from **The Daily Times**, of San Francisco, April 15, 1867, will serve to illustrate;

**"HO ! FOR LOWER CALIFORNIA"**

The trustees of the peninsula Plantation and Homestead association have nearly completed their arrangements for shipping to the colony established by them, near Mulaha (Mulege) on the gulf of lower California, provisions, farming implements, etc., for the use of the colonists, desirous to increase as much as possible the number of settlers on said lands, are offering unusual inducements to persons wishing to become interested with them. For further particulars, apply at the office of the association, 706 Montgomery Street.



Figure 11

An indication of the deflated dreams of a group of deluded colonists. Drawn in 1866.

**PIONEER EXPRESS SERVICE (Continued)**

Another newspaper excerpt;

“Some notation of the power and resources of the Lower California Company may be formed by the names of a few of it’s members and directors;

General B.F. Butler, August Belmont,  
W.G. Fargo, Caleb Cushing, C.K.  
Garrison, Ben Holladay.....”

Needless to say, this fortunate boom must have solved all of Wells, Fargo’s problems with regard to the profitability of the Mexican route. In fact, with the owner of the only Steamship Line, and one of the directors of the only Express Company operating to the ports of the North West Coast of Mexico, as officers of the new company, the transportation and express questions must have been cut and dried!

Few other facts of significance are known about express operations to and from Baja California before the decade of the seventies so we shall close with the following advertisement of Wells, Fargo’s, in spanish, (c) from the newspaper “LA BAJA CALIFORNIA”, of La Paz, September 1869;

**EXPRESS.**

*NEWS!*

**EXPRESO ENTRE CALIFORNIA  
Y  
MEXICO.**

**W. FARGO & CO.**

Se pone en conocimiento del publico, que en lo sucesivo el expreso sera despachado cada 40 dias de ordinario por el vapor de la compania de Norte del Pacifico a cargo de un mensajero especial, se entendera en lo general con su sueldo y prontitud todo negocio relativo a expreso.

**EXPRESO DEL CABO DE SAN LUCAS  
A LA PAZ.**

Las salidas del expreso a caballo para el interior, Cabo San Lucas, Mazatlan, Guaymas, San Francisco, Estados del Atlantico y Europa, seran por ahora en las fechas que se indiquen.

**SALIDAS** — Para los puntos indicados. Setiembre 29  
**ENTRADAS** — S. Lucas Noviembre 18 y a la Paz, el 29

Las cartas, factos etc. etc. remitidos de San Francisco para el cabo de San Lucas o vice versa seran entregada con prontitud en Mazatlan, Guaymas y la Paz.

This is the only advertisement of the companies activities in lower California, known to survive.

**PIONEER EXPRESS SERVICE (Continued)**

The following is a translation of this advertisement.

EXPRESS  
EXPRESS BETWEEN CALIFORNIA  
AND  
MEXICO  
W. FARGO AND CO.

They wish to bring to the notice of the public that successively their express will be dispatched every forty days, ordinarily, by the steamship of the North Pacific in care of a special messenger, who's understanding is thorough, and will tend promptly to all business related to express.

EXPRESS FROM CAPE SAN LUCAS  
TO LA PAZ

The express departs by horse for the interior, Cape San Lucas, (and then from Cape San Lucas to) Mazatlan, Guaymas, San Francisco, The Atlantic States and Europe, for now, on the date indicated;

LEAVING - for those points indicated September 29, (1869)

ARRIVING - (at Cape) San Lucas September 18, and La Paz on the 20th.

Letters, parcels, etc. etc. remitted from San Francisco for Cape San Lucas, or vice versa, or Mazatlan, Guaymas, or La Paz, will be delivered promptly.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- (a) A HISTORY OF LOWER CALIFORNIA (The only complete and reliable one) by Pablo L. Martinez, 1960, published by Editorial Baja California Mex. D.F.
- (b) EXPLORATIONS IN LOWER CALIFORNIA J. Ross Browne, Harper's New Monthly Magazine, October 1868; No. CCXXI Vol. XXXVII, Pages 577-591, November 1868, Pages 740-752, December 1868, Pages 9-23. Reprinted Arizona Silhouettes, Tucson, Arizona 1952
- (c) All material thus referenced is in the collection of the Wells, Fargo Bank History Room, 420 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, and the author wishes to thank them for their many kindnesses and patience.  
A special thanks is due to Basil C. Pearce who is the patron saint of philatelic and historic research of the West.

**POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN**

Chapter VIII, La Plata County

Part Two

by Ray L. Newburn, Jr.

**BREEN**

Map by William Bauer  
Established July 19, 1901

Photography by James Young  
Discontinued 1954 or 1955

When the troops left Ft. Lewis in the fall of 1891, the fort post office was moved upstream to the new town of Hesperus. In 1892 an Indian school was established in the old fort buildings. The Indian children didn't want to go to school and soon burned most of the buildings. An epidemic followed, and the school closed for a time. It later reopened and ran successfully until 1910 when schools were established on the new reservation. A post office was established for the school under the name of Dr. Thomas Breen, who was its superintendent, and Bessie Breen (his wife?) became the first postmaster.<sup>111 169 170</sup>

Breen post office originally lay on the fort grounds on the west bank of the La Plata river a short distance below the school (Red Mesa Quadrangle, 1913), elevation 7450 ft.<sup>85</sup> Later the post office was moved to a point two miles below the school and to the east bank of the river at 7340 ft. (Kline Quadrangle, 1968.). This occurred some time during the 30s, if road maps are to be trusted, and presumably was an indication of the relative importance and convenience of local farmers and tradespeople vs. the Ft. Lewis Agricultural School which followed the Indian School in 1911. The school had only 75 college level students in 1930-31.<sup>171</sup>

Mail came to Breen from the Rio Grande Southern Railroad at Hesperus. In 1905 a route ran from Content to Hesperus via Breen.<sup>73</sup> In 1911, 1917, and 1937 the route ran from Red Mesa to Hesperus via Kline and Breen. In 1917 the distance was given as 6½ miles from Hesperus to Breen, in 1937 8½ miles, another indication of the move.<sup>74 75 94</sup>

BREEN, COLO. (3) 1904/06/16 - 1904/06/23

CI: P,1,0:285:T;M,D,Y;S:G;G:target

The two copies seen were struck in blue.

A standard 4-bar was in use in the 1930s.

**CASCADE**

Established June 14, 1880

Discontinued April 22, 1881

Re-Established May 11, 1881

Discontinued July 24, 1882

Croft describes Cascade as a "a lone post office and stage station, on the summit of Cascade Hill."<sup>32</sup> This would place it at about 8400 feet elevation and 600 feet above the Animas River via two miles<sup>114</sup> of switchbacks by trail. The "trail" was the main road from Silverton to Animas City and Durango before arrival of the railroad, and Cascade was the point where teams were switched after the long climb out of the canyon. This office should not be confused with the later Cascade Siding on the railroad or the town in Ute Pass near Colorado Springs. This office closed shortly after the railroad reached Silverton.

Mail came to Cascade via the Silverton-Animas City stage line described in the introduction to this chapter. No postmarks have been reported.

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

Established May 9, 1905

Discontinued June 30, 1912

When the "Ute Strip" was opened to settlement in 1899 a number of homes strung out along the west side of the Animas River about 12 miles south of Durango (by modern road) came to be called La Posta and a number of homes on the east side Sunnyside. The towns were largely Spanish-American in population, with a few Indian families present. For unknown reasons the post office granted La Posta in 1905 was named Castelar. Castellano is Spanish for Castilian, Castile being the part of Spain which contributed the language usually taught in schools. Since La Posta was Mexican settlement, there may be a connection.

Since there was no bridge at Castelar, mail for Sunnyside was pulled across the river by a wire and pulley system. When the Farmington branch of the Rio Grande built down the east side of the river, the post office was moved to Sunnyside but still called Castelar. Now the cable and pulley system carried the mail the other way.<sup>172</sup>

La Posta had been on the mail stage road from Durango to Farmington, its name derived from the fact that it was originally only a stage stop on that route. It dwindled relative to Sunnyside after the railroad came until a bridge was built in 1914. It still appears on topographic maps (Basin Mtn. Quadrangle, 1968, elevation 6140 ft.), while the name Sunnyside remains on a mesa and a school (Bondad Hill Quadrangle, 1968). Castelar appears only on the old 1908 Ignacio Quadrangle.<sup>172</sup>

Mail for Castelar came by horseback up the road from Elco until the railroad arrived, then by rail.<sup>74 172</sup>

CASTELAR, COLO (2½) 1910/04/08

CI: P,1,0:325:T;M,D,H,Y;S;G;G: narrow 4-bar with numeral 1

**COLUMBUS**

Established Nov. 15, 1894

Discontinued July 30, 1897

Re-Established June 22, 1898

Discontinued Apr. 30, 1903

Columbus was located on the north side of Texas Creek at its junction with the Los Pinos River, elevation 7280 feet (Rules Hill Quadrangle, 1964). The name still appears on this modern topographic map as does the name Columbus School on the old 1908 Ignacio Quadrangle. Columbus was roughly halfway between Bayfield and Vallecito, at a point where roads connected the upper Los Pinos River valley to the upper Florida River valley. It appears to have been little more than a convenient location for a store, a school, and a post office.

Mail arrived via a local route from Los Pinos, later Bayfield, eight miles down the river.

COLUMBUS COLO. (3) 1900/08/22

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

**CONTENT**

Established Sept. 21, 1901

Discontinued Oct. 15, 1913

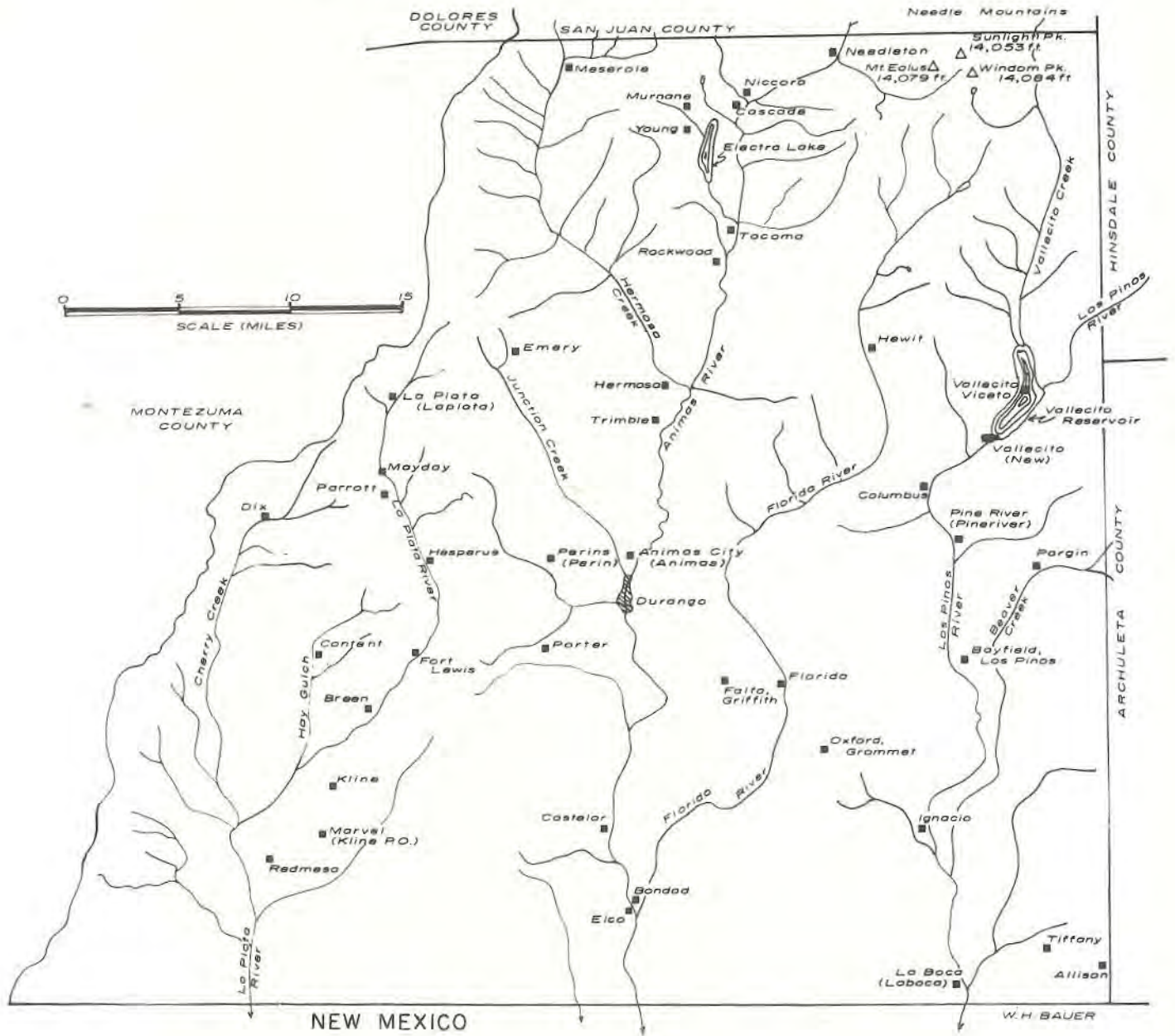
Located in Barnes Canyon just off of Hay Gulch, roughly five miles straight west of Ft. Lewis, elevation 7125 feet, Content remains a ciper at the moment (Red Mesa Quadrangle, 1913; Mormon Reservoir Quadrangle, 1968). Not on any through road nor in farming country, the best guess is that it was a small mining community, possibly coal. Any information would be appreciated.

In 1905 there was a star route from Content through Breen to the railroad at Hesperus.<sup>73</sup> Later there was a short route just from Content to Breen.<sup>74</sup>

CONTENT COLX (3) 1910/03/22

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

# LA PLATA COUNTY



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

Established Apr. 8, 1890

Discontinued May 14, 1895

Re-Established June 6, 1895

Discontinued Sept. 29, 1900

Re-Established July 20, 1907

Discontinued Dec. 14, 1907

Dix was a small settlement in the upper end of Thompson Park on the main road from Durango to Mancos and Cortez. Modern US160 passes through the 8560 foot high townsite (La Plata Quadrangle, 1895; Thompson Park Quadrangle, 1963). Thompson Park's first settler, George Thompson, appeared with a large herd of cattle in 1879. He was followed by a number of homesteaders who turned to farming and cattle raising, which pursuits continue to this day. And by one George Dick "who had a little stock of groceries and whiskey, on the main road." Dick became the first postmaster and gave the office his name.<sup>154</sup>

The Rio Grande Southern right-of-way passed 1½ miles by road from Dix and 700 feet higher. Mail was dropped off there at Dix Station for transport to town.

No postmarks have been reported from Dix.

**DURANGO**

Established Nov. 19, 1880

Still Operating

Creation of Durango by the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad was described in the chapter introduction. Former territorial governor A.C. Hunt, a railroad stockholder, had recently visited Durango, Mexico, and apparently suggested the name.<sup>150 163</sup> The governor's son, Bruce Hunt, offered a large stock of furniture for sale in October 1880 as the first goods sold in the town, just one month after the first survey stake was driven. Residences were largely tents initially, many occupied by the railroad builders.<sup>163</sup> The end of 1880 saw four newspapers in Durango, two of them dailies, while 1881 brought no less than five dailies, two with weekly companions.<sup>60</sup>

The speed with which Durango grew was phenomenal considering the railroad hadn't yet arrived. Mrs. Ayers quotes a list of businesses from an April 1881 copy of the Durango Record as follows: 6 dry goods and general stocks, 3 drug stores, 4 hardware stores, 3 grocery stores, a furniture store, 5 lumber companies, 4 brickyards, 12 real estate firms (also dealing in mines), 4 livery stables, 6 hotels, 12 restaurants, 6 lodging houses, 4 bakeries, 6 meat markets, 3 fruit and confectionery stores, 3 saddle and harness shops, 3 blacksmith shops, 3 paint stores, 2 tailor shops, 2 shoe stores, 4 news depots and cigar stands, 3 barber shops, 3 stage and express companies, 2 wholesale liquor stores, 25 saloons, 4 jewelry stores (!), a dressmaker, a millinery store, 2 theaters, and the First National Bank.<sup>163</sup>

Mail initially came from Animas City and was dumped into a crackerbox in Harry Schiffer's store for everyone to look through. The first quarter of 1881 saw the Durango office do \$633.65 worth of business, so Durango soon had a separate rented post office, a postmaster, AND an assistant. The rule requiring a year to pass before money orders could be issued was waived, and on July 1, 1881 Durango became a second class post office and M.O.B.<sup>162</sup>

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

Everything grew rapidly in Durango, The Episcopalians held the first church service in a hotel in early January. Their own church opened Feb. 27, 1881, and in May they announced the first service with their new organ. By April, Congregational, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Catholic services were also being held. School was first held in the Episcopal church, but a four room schoolhouse was ready for use in February 1882. The first baby was born Jan. 31, 1881 and recieved gifts from all the businesses in town (including two building lots and a horse and saddle).

Durango continued to grow as a center of commerce and smelting for southwestern Colorado. By 1885 its population was 3,000 <sup>105</sup>, in 1900 it was 3317, in 1910, 4686.<sup>56</sup> The 1970 census gave Durango a population of 10,333. Today, of course, there is no smelting in Durango, but each summer sees hundreds of thousands of tourists riding the narrow gauge to Silverton and visiting the Mesa Verde National Park cliff dwellings, while skiing is becoming a business factor in the winter.

Most Durango postmarks are similar, simple circular date stamps and very easy to acquire. Only the very early type-set straight line is scarce and unusual. There are many interesting corner cards to be had from so large a business city, however.

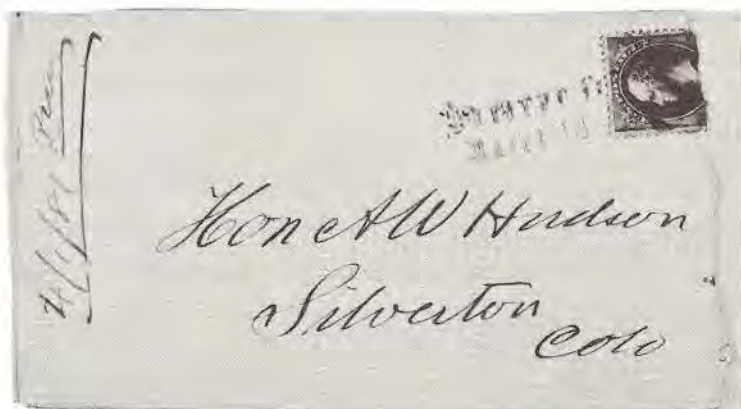


Figure 69

This is the Durango "straight line", apparently made up from handset type. Earliest reported use is three months after the office was established. Is there an earlier manuscript marking out there somewhere?

Durango Col. (4½, 3½)\* 1881/02/19-1881/04/27 (Fig.69)

SL:2:390;variable:(T,S);(M,D,Y):R;R:type cap. D

\*upper case letters 4½ mm high, lower case 3½ mm seen Feb. 19 and Mar 25 in purple Mar 30 and Apr. 27 in black

DURANGO COLO. (3) 1882,03/01-1883/08/09

CI:P,1,0:270:T;M,D,Y;S:G;G\*: various

\*A fancy R type was used for the year date in an Oct. 4, 1882 example

ADVERTISED DURANGO COL'O.(3,2½ +) 1883/02/17-1883/02/24

CI:P,1,1:295,180:ADV;M,D,Y;(T,S):R;G:

DURANGO COL. (3) 1883/08/30-1884/10/20

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

DURANGO COL. (3½) 1885/07/24-1886/07/25

CI:P,1,0:270+ :T;M,D,Y:S:G;G: wide neg. crossroads

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

DURANGO COL. (3½) 1886/11/30-1886/12/16 (Fig. 70)

CI:P,1,0:265:T;M,D,\*Y;S;G;G: crossroads

\*also seen D,M,Y

Figure 70

This typically clean "Consumers Boot and Shoe" cover is registered, as usual for the correspondence. It shows one of several hotel corner cards available from the metropolis of the San Juans.



DURANGO COLO. (3) 1887/08/31

CI:P,1,0:270+:T;M,D,Y;S;G;G: narrow crossroads

DURANGO COLO. (3) 1888/10/12-1891/08/25

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

DURANGO COLO 1889/06/12

CI:P,1,0:240:T;M,D,Y;S;G;R: crossroads

DURANGO COLO. (2½) 1892/09/20

CI:P,1,0:285:T;M,D,Y;S;G;G: blob

DURANGO COLO. (2½) 1895/01/22-1896/01/30

CI:P,1,0:275:T;M,D,H,Y;S;G;G: wide 4-ring oval

DURANGO, COLO. REC'D. (2½-) 1898/05/08

CI:P,1,0:285:(T,S);M,D,H,Y;REC'D;G;G:

DURANGO, COLO. (2½-) 1898/07/16-1899/03/25

CI:P,1,0:245:(T,S);(M,D),H,Y;G;G: barred oval with 1 in circle

DURANGO, COLO. (3) 1900/04/06-1920/01/08\*

CI:P,1,0:255:(T,S);(M,D),H,Y;G;G: barred oval with 1 in circle

\*This span of 20 years almost certainly includes several very similar devices

REGISTERED DURANGO COLO 1901/08/03

FY:P,1,0:380x300:REG;(M,D,Y);(T,S):R:

shield outline

RFD DURANGO COLO 1902/07/17

SL:4:370x170:RFD;T;(M,D,Y):S;G;G: purple RFD cancel

DURANGO, COLO. (3) 1908/11/11-1920/11/22\*

CI:P,1,0:220:T;(M,D),H,Y;S;G;G: flag

\*Langford states this was first used in 1906 and that a different die was substituted in 1914.<sup>173</sup>

DURANGO, COLO (2½) 1911/04/08-1913/10/09\*

CI:P,1,0:220:(T,S);(M,D),H,Y;G;G: flag

\*Langford states this was first used in 1909. A similar die was used from 1913 thru 1925. A similar die with the slogan Mesa Verde National Park was in use in 1920-22.<sup>173</sup>

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

Established July 28, 1905

Discontinued May 31, 1914

Five miles south of Castelar lay its virtual twin, Elco. There on both sides of the Animas River, 3½ miles above the New Mexico state line at 6025 ft. elevation, was another "Ute Strip" settlement, called Elco on the west side of the river and Bondad on the east side (Ignacio Quadrangle, 1908; Long Mountain and Bondad Hill Quadrangles, 1968). The post office was established on the west side on the old road, although in a few weeks the railroad built down the east side, and most of the homesteads were on Five Mile Mesa to the east.<sup>172 174</sup> Modern highway maps refer only to Bondad, which incidentally is Spanish for kindness or goodness.

Mail came to Elco by rail within a few weeks after its establishment. Although discontinued by then, the 1917 Postal Route Map refers to "Elco (Bondad Sta.)".

No postmarks have been reported from Elco.

**EMERY**

Established Feb. 5, 1892

Discontinued Nov. 11, 1897

Emery served the mines at the upper end of Junction Creek. The office apparently took its name from its postmaster, Emery Brown. The "town" was established at an elevation of 10,400 ft. on the only relatively flat land for miles around (Ignacio Quadrangle, 1908; Monument Hill Quadrangle, 1963). This was at the head of Leavenworth Gulch, just over a mile from the Flagler fork of Junction Creek, and immediately adjacent to the Checkmaker and Oro Fino Mines. The best mine in the area proved to be the Neglected, a half mile south, but Emery had been discontinued before the big years of the Neglected in 1902, 1903, and 1904.<sup>89</sup>

The mail came to Emery by way of a 16 mile "special supply" route out of Durango.<sup>72 117</sup> No postmarks have been reported.

**FALFA**

Name changed to on Nov. 19, 1924

Discontinued Nov. 30, 1954

This office originally opened Dec. 2, 1909 under the name Griffith (see same). There is general agreement that Falfa is a shortened Alfalfa, for an important crop in this farming area.<sup>133</sup> There was a long-lived Los Animas County post office named Alfalfa, discontinued less than a year earlier, that apparently prevented use of the full word, but just why the name was changed "after considerable argument" from Griffith is not clear.<sup>175</sup>

Details on this town will be found under Griffith, since our period of primary interest ends in 1926. Mail was dropped off the railroad through 1937, but very shortly after that it began coming by bus and/or mail truck from Durango.<sup>94 175</sup> The area is now an R.F.D. route out of Durango.<sup>176</sup>

The earliest postmark reported is a 1938 4-bar.

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

## FLORIDA

Established Aug. 8, 1877

Discontinued Mar. 31, 1881

Florida, Spanish adjective for flowery (fem), took its name from the river on whose banks it lay at an elevation of 6725 ft. (Ignacio Quadrangle, 1908; Gem Village and Loma Linda Quadrangles, 1968). Crofutt describes it as "in a beautiful little valley where vegetables are grown successfully and large quantities of grass is (sic) cured for hay. The place consists of a post office and wayside ranch on the wagon road from Animas City to Pagosa Springs."<sup>32</sup> Since the location was at the road crossing of the Rio Florida, one suspects money was to be made hauling wagons across the river as well. The post office closed just before the railroad arrived, crossing at the same place.

The Florida Mesa between the Animas and Florida Rivers continued to develop as a farm area. The La Plata Coal Mine midway between Florida and Durango was developed in the late 1880's and even had its own 3.8 mile branch railroad off the main line from 1890 to 1900.<sup>93 175</sup> Yet no post office succeeded Florida on or near the mesa until after the turn of the century. Florida is noted on topographic maps to this day.

Florida was a regular stop on the main Pagosa Springs to Animas City run that brought the mail to the entire southern San Juan. No postmarks have been reported.

## FORT LEWIS

Established Oct. 5, 1880

Discontinued Oct. 10, 1891

Fort Lewis was moved from Pagosa Springs to the La Plata River in July 1880 under circumstances discussed in the chapter introduction. The hundred wagons making the move even carried a complete sawmill with which to cut lumber for the fort buildings. By Feb. 19, 1881 the "Durango Record" described the fort as "quite a little village of 17 or 18 different houses arranged around the parade (ground) for the most part."<sup>170</sup>

The fort was named for a Lieutenant Colonel Lewis who was killed by Cheyenne Indians in 1877, the year the fort was originally established at Pagosa Springs.<sup>138</sup>

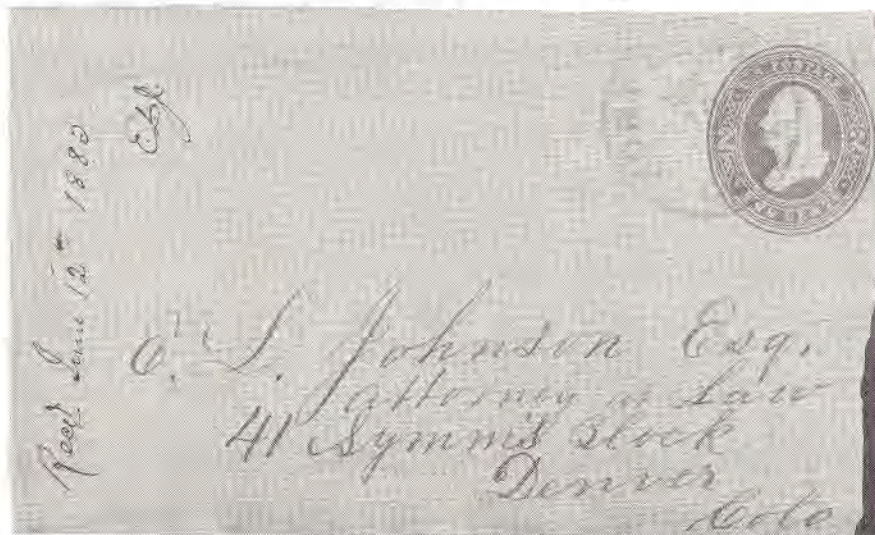


Figure 71

This maltese cross killer is partially off at the upper right, but the postmark stands out boldly. Photographs of earlier, cleaner strikes were not available. (Photography by David Jarrett)

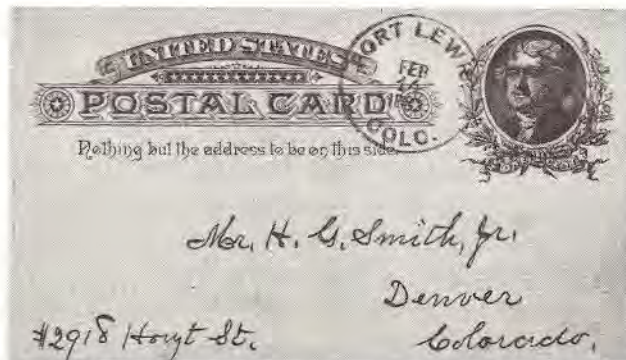
**POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)****FORT LEWIS (Continued)**

Fort Lewis Reservation was apparently about four miles on a side, <sup>149</sup> with the main buildings located on the banks of the La Plata River at elevations near 7620 ft. (Red Mesa Quadrangle, 1913; Kline Quadrangle, 1968). One of the largest parade grounds in the country was on the west bank with the officers houses on its west side. North of the parade grounds were the head-quarter's office, sutler's store, theater, dance hall, commisariat, etc. The barracks were on the east side of the river, with the stables between them and the river. <sup>170</sup>

Relations between the white settlers and the Southern Utes in the area west of Fort Lewis were not always good. Various episodes during the period 1881-1885 include the Monument Creek killings, the White River Canyon fight, and the Beaver Creek massacre, all discussed in some detail by Rockwell.<sup>12</sup> Chief Ignacio of the Weeminuch band of Southern Utes finally managed to bring peace to the area. Things were sufficiently quiet in southwestern Colorado by 1891 that the troops were withdrawn in the fall. The reservation later became an Indian school, then an agricultural college, and finally an agricultural research station (see Breen).<sup>170</sup>

Figure 72

Here is a very nice strike of the first single circle type of Fort Lewis. The card is apparently from civilian to civilian, informing that some requested circulars have been sent under separate cover. Not very earth-shaking, but I am glad the card was mailed.



After paying tolls to Otto Mears for a time, the army bought his Durango to Ft. Lewis road in 1882. Mail came over this road directly from Durango, while routes went beyond to Parrott City, to Mancos, and to other points west. There were always several hundred troopers at Ft. Lewis writing letters back home. As a result Ft. Lewis postmarks are among the more common markings from La Plata County in the 19th century.

FORT LEWIS, COLO. (3) 1881/05/22

CI:P,2,0:280,265:T;M,D,Y;S:R;G: target

FORT LEWIS COLO. (3½) 1884/06/23-1885/06/10 (Fig. 71)

CI:P,2,0:320,305:T;M,D,Y;S:G;G: maltese cross

recorded postmarks are struck in blue

FORT LEWIS, COLO. (3) 1887/02/14-1887/07/08 (Fig. 72)

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

recorded postmarks are struck in blue

FXXX LEWIS, COL (3) 1890/02/19

CI:P,1,0:265:T;M,D,Y;S:R;G:

A card headed Fort Lewis via Hesperus and dated 1898/06/03 is known.

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

Established Dec. 2, 1909

Name changed Nov. 19, 1924

Located in the middle of Florida Mesa three miles east of the Animas River and a mile south of modern highway 160 at an elevation of 6900 ft. (Loma Linda Quadrangle, 1968), Griffith was in the midst of perhaps the best farmland in La Plata County. The town was named for Dr. D.W. Griffith, a retired army surgeon who practiced medicine for several years in Durango and then took up the first homestead on Florida Mesa. He was one of the men responsible for the first irrigation ditch on the mesa.<sup>176</sup>

Before the post office was established at Griffith, "mesa residents got their mail from Durango when they went after it." After the post office was opened in Jim Laughren's general store, mail came to Griffith by train. One William Morrison soon became the mail carrier for the mesa, a job he held for over 35 years. His method of transportation depended upon the weather. In good weather an ordinary car would suffice, but in bad weather when the roads were pure mud or covered with deep snow, Morrison sometimes drove a high wheeler (a car on high buggy type wheels) or a tractor or rode a horse. When the snow was deep he often drove a makeshift sleigh consisting of "a little house on runners with a coal stove inside" pulled by a mule team.<sup>175 176</sup>

In 1924 the name of this office was changed to Falga (see same). No postmarks have been reported from Griffith.

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- (174). Rhodes, E., "Bondad," in "Pioneers of the San Juan country, Vol. IV," Big Mtn. Press, Denver, 1961.
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