

WESTERN EXPRESS

RESEARCH JOURNAL OF EARLY WESTERN MAILS

WHOLE NO. 120 VOL. XXX, NO. 1

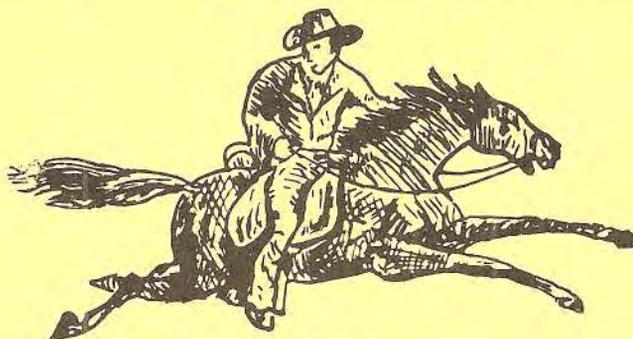
Western Cover Society
Unit No. 14 — American Philatelic Society

JANUARY, 1980

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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EDITOR'S ARENA

**OCTOBER 1979
WESTERN
EXPRESS
WHOLE No. 119**

Your Editor/Proof reader is embarrassed. Whole numbers were added to the Volume Number on our title page beginning with the July 1978 issue, in anticipation of conformity with our new INDEX set-up as provided by our late member J. David Baker. Then, only four issues later No. 116 crept in for No. 119. In Scott's Catalogue Vol. I, 1980 there is a beautiful double spread advertisement offering the Sir Rockland Hill new issues. Not that this justifies our error - just that I suppose there is a little satisfaction in that it can happen in the best of journals.

**MATERIAL FOR
WESTERN
EXPRESS**

You have heard this appeal before - in fact it seems to be the battle cry of all philatelic journals - but, we need more contributions from members. Surely you have a favorite cover, a special subject, or whatever, that you would like to expand upon. Why not use the pages of WESTERN EXPRESS to accomplish this? Rough copy is acceptable - we will have it "smoothed out" for publication.

Your Editor has guided WESTERN EXPRESS for several years and recently toyed with the idea of retiring from this post. But in so doing, we would like to gracefully pass the work on to someone who would carry on the traditional Society publication - and not be forced to retire because there is no material for publication! So take your pen in hand, open up that typewriter or dictate to your Secretary, or whatever, but send in some stories. Please!

**CHANGE OF
ADDRESS**

When you are making plans to change your residence, include in those plans a notice to your Society, so that WESTERN EXPRESS will reach you promptly. And also, so that your Society will not have the extra expense of the return of the magazine, as well as cost of postage to the new address. Last month the original postage was 53¢. The return or notice of new address that is supplied by the Postal Service is 25¢. Add the 53¢ to send to the new address and you have a total of \$1.31 to get your magazine to you. A postcard from you (10¢) would avoid this problem.

In connection with changes of address, here is a paragraph from POSTAL HISTORY, the Journal of the Postal History Society: "NOTICE TO MEMBERS - If a journal is returned to us because of your failure to send us a timely change of address notice, there will be a \$2.00 charge to cover expenses of remailing the Journal to you".

SESCAL '79

Members Jerry Schwimmer and Henry Spelman report that an informal luncheon meeting of about a dozen WCS members was held during Sescal '79. Let us hope that this is the initial step for an annual Southern California gathering. It is not too early to plan for SESCAL's 1980 show - and with more publicity - to make it a larger meeting of members and prospective members.

Regional meetings like this are an encouragement to our far-flung membership. The larger and established shows - such as ROMPEX, BALPEX, ARIPEX, etc. etc., could be the scene of a gathering of the local and visiting members of our Society. Such a program needs volunteers in the individual area to plan a short agenda, which might include a talk or display of a members collecting interests, and secure space for such a meeting or luncheon. Who will volunteer?

SECRETARY'S REPORT**NEW
MEMBERS**

- #727 Charles F. Boubelik, Box 1737, Boulder, CO 80306
(Collects Colorado and Utah)
- #728 John R. Daily, 53 Kenilworth Dr., Akron, OH 44313
(Collects Colorado - all towns, dates)
- #729 Edwin L. Chalfont, (Riviera Stamps) P.O. Box 6250, Santa Barbara, CA 93111
(Collects Calif., mainly 19th Century Santa Barbara City and County)
- #730 Russ E. Burdick, 186 Summit St., Auburn, CA 95603
(Collects Placer Co. area, particularly Auburn)
- #731 Darryl L. Templer, 5531 La Jolla Hermosa, La Jolla, CA 92037
(Collects Nevada towns, esp. Nye & Esmeralda Co.)
- #732 Richard B. Jordan, 1551 E. Shaw Ave., Suite 101, Fresno, CA 93710
- #733 S. Paul Schmidt (Cascade Stamp Co.) 15636 - 185th NE, Woodinville, CA 98072
(Collects Early U.S. stamps and covers)
- #734 Michael R. Wetzberger, 3219 Wellington N, Spokane, WA 99205
(Collects Western Express & Territorials)

RE-INSTATED

#543 - Terence Dodson, #649 - William Steinmetz

**CHANGE OF
ADDRESS**

Patrick H. Murphy, c/o Swinbak, 1545 Glenard #214, Denver, CO 80202
William Semsrott, 14 Algonquin Wood, St. Louis, MO 63122

**WCS
1980 DUES**

Individual dues notices were mailed to members the first of December, and at this writing there has not been time to note the returns, or lack thereof - so, the following item, culled from the March 1968 issue of POSTAL STATIONERY might not be inappropriate:

FORGET?

Forget the slander you have heard
Forget the hasty, unkind word
Forget the quarrel, and the cause
Forget the whole affair, because

Forgetting is the only way.

Forget the trials you have had
Forget the weather, if it's bad,
Forget the knocker, he's a freak,
Forget him seven days a week;
Forget the grey lines in your hair.
Forget you're not a millionaire,
Forget the coffee when it's cold,
Forget to scorn, forget to scold
Forget to even get the blues,

**BUT DON'T FORGET TO
PAY YOUR DUES**

LOS ANGELES COVERS

By Jerome Schwimmer

Wells, Fargo & Co.--The 1850's

A reconstructed portion of the front page of the April 22, 1854 Los Angeles Star is shown in Fig. 1. Among the Expresses, Adams & Co. was still riding high when Dr. H.R. Myles, Los Angeles' Wells, Fargo & Co.'s agent, announced in an advertisement in the Star that Leland & McCombe's Express in connection with Wells, Fargo & Co. would dispatch an Express regularly to all parts of California, Oregon, the Atlantic States and Europe in charge of a special messenger travelling aboard the steamer Fremont.



LOS ANGELES COVERS (Continued)

By extraordinary good fortune, a cover survives which records this historic entry of Wells, Fargo & Co. onto the Los Angeles scene through cooperative arrangement with Leland & McCombe's Express, and it is shown as Fig. 2. The cover interestingly combines the manuscript "Los Angeles April 30th Wells Fargo & Co. Express 75 cts", and the handstamp "Collect" marking with the handstamp "Leland & McCombes Express San Francisco" and ms. "75¢ Paid" markings. The cover is offered as the earliest Wells Fargo express cover originating from Los Angeles.



Figure 2

The cover illustrated in Fig. 3, with attractive Wells, Fargo & Co. woodblock frank and early type Company Los Angeles cancel, represents scarce and early usage from Los Angeles.



Figure 3

LOS ANGELES COVERS (Continued)

Two additional Wells, Fargo & Co. Express covers from Los Angeles are shown in Figs. 4 and 5. Each bears Los Angeles Company cancel with "Express" in old English stype script. The cover in Fig. 4 is a 10¢ entire to Rhode Island paid "Through Our California and Atlantic Express," with 1856 docketing. The cover in Fig. 5 is addressed to San Francisco and bears the California and Coast Routes Company frank.

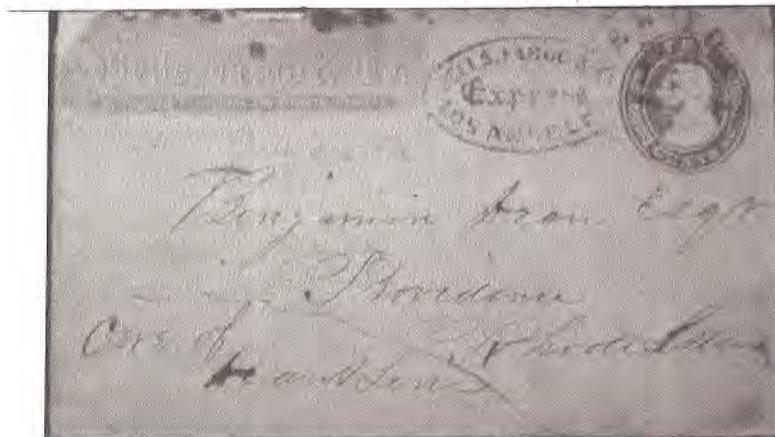


Figure 4

Wells, Fargo & Co. Express covers from Los Angeles in the 1850's are in the scarce category. They become more plentiful in the 60's as Los Angeles' commerce expanded, but they continue to be relatively elusive throughout the entire period of Company operation, as compared to those from the commercial centers of Northern California. Examples of a variety of types of franks, Company cancels and other markings appearing on Wells Fargo covers from Los Angeles in the later period commencing with the 1860's will be shown in later installments in this series.



Figure 5

NOTE: I am gratified to report that almost before the printer's ink was dry, responses were received to my request for reader help in trying to type the early Los Angeles postmarks. A San Francisco member and a Los Angeles members of WCS each offered their early Los Angeles covers for comparison. Public thanks are herewith offered.

ADVERTISEMENTS

U. S. COVERS

My stock of covers is strong in all periods from stampless to modern, Alabama to Wyoming.

What would you like to see?
References, please.

Henry M. Spelman, III
P.O. Box 645
San Anselmo, Ca. 94960

"THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING IS IN THE EATING"

For immediate action and everlasting satisfaction sell your collection to us

*Over thirty years of
Happy Relationships
with clients
is our best testimonial*

ROBERT A. SIEGEL
120 East 56th Street
New York, N.Y. 10022



THE MAIL POUCH
Covers for Collectors

TERRITORIALS
EXPRESS
COUNTY & POSTMASTER
FANCY CANCELS
ADVERTISING COVERS
R.P.O.
ALASKA

Covers sent on approval with references

WANTED TO BUY - U.S. COVERS

WANTED

New Mexico Postmarks prior to 1912.
Some duplicates for sale.

FOR SALE

Territorial P.O.'s of Colorado . . . \$1.00
Territorial P.O.'s of Arizona 2.00
Territorial P.O.'s of Florida 1.00
Arizona Territorial Postmark
Catalogue (With Dr. Kriege) . . 20.00
New Mexico Territorial Postmark
Catalogue (Out of Print)

Dr. S. H. Dike
1420 Carlisle Blvd. N.E.
Albuquerque, N.M. 87110

CONTENTS OF A LETTER
Submitted by C. Angus Parker

(This is the second in a series of three letters furnished WESTERN EXPRESS by member Angus Parker. / Ed.)

Dear Thomas and Ralph,

This as you may see is not intended for all eyes, neither must you take it to mean any other thing than it really expresses. I am afraid that in writing what may follow you may imagine that I feel as if I would rather be at home and that I begin to find out that California is not the *land for me.* No. My reasons are I want you (to whom I am indebted for being here.) to understand distinctly in what position I stand as Ralph said, I as "one of a Company" must report how the affairs of the foreign branch stand, whether in a prosperous state or otherwise and partly in case what I have said in some of my other letters may lead you to believe and worse than I admit. And lastly in case you may think I spend the money foolishly though I can scarcely imagine you would harbour that thought.

After all this preface let me turn to the real subject, you will naturally say, You have now been 3½ months in the country why have you not at least \$1000. You might have been making 15 at any rate on an average of 11 or 12 \$ a day all that time in San Francisco, why go to the mines. These I think are the two principle questions you could ask.

Well in the first place I must give a reason for the second and I will do so for the first. I landed here big with the idea of making gold, intending to start in a few days. One of our party fell sick which delayed us. I got a job at \$12 a day as carpenter, the trade was new to me. I was newly off a 5 month voyage and consequently felt tired and sore with working always in dread of being put to things I knew nothing about. Saw men returning from the mines daily and going back in preference to San Fran, heard all sort of accounts, at last after being in San Fran a month was it any wonder I went up to the diggings after being there for nearly 2 month, working hard and only making a low average our provisions getting lower and the prospect of us agreeing paying a dollar a pound for everything, disagreeing amongst ourselves, hearing that the carpenters were getting from 16 to 18 \$ a day and knowing in a fortnight the roads would be shut up. With the prospect of having to travel 200 miles without cover and in rain is it any wonder I came down since I came down I went round the town once every day for 3 weeks and only got 3½ days work \$21 is it any wonder I have made no money. Now, View it if I had stayed in the town and wrought and got constant work (which I would not-) I could have had taken in every day \$1000 say in all making deductions for rain and food (as it rained here for a week at a time). 4 or 500 \$ I could have left. Well a thousand chances to one I would have taken it to the mines as the accounts here fit to take anyone away right off - I feel just now if I had not seen the diggings as I saw them (and I do believe them good) I would be off again so that the chances I have here this spring when all are going up. (Amongst the hundreds I have spoken to I have only met one who says he is not going to the mines) I consider it worth more than the 1000\$ on the other side. I have now what provisions will keep me from want or 3 months if I work none for the time besides money to buy needfuls if anything goes wrong. So that if I do not go down the coast. I am safe if I do in 1 month I will have 500\$ and be landed here at the best time or have the chance of getting a situation with a good sure salary allowance. -Now don't you think I have taken as wise a course as one inexperienced as I could - if I have not many hundreds older than I have gone wrong.. And instead of being in a hurry to get home, if no unforeseen accident calls me home. I am prepared and intent to stay here as long as I can make money. I like the place well and it agrees with me. One thing you may depend upon, I did not leave a comfortable home to lose any opportunity of making money, and this I believe to be the place for it for 2 years to come.

What is John doing. Is he still at home. Why not let him go to the States. That is the place. Tell me what he does or intends. Bye the by. I was thinking of becoming an American citizen. They enjoy many privileges and what need have I to care for England - I don't expect to make money there. If I could not make it here I would go to some other place and try there.

Vancouver island is thought to be worth something here by speculators. I believe there is plenty of coal, which is selling here at present at 30 \$ a ton 100 15 \$ a cord. 4x4x8.

I am well in health in every respect my breast is only sore of sitting long, but gets better at once, it is nothing.

I must conclude and I hope this may reach you safe. Our post office here is so badly conducted you have to wait for 2 or 3 hours for a letter or you'd lose your turn. Be sure and write every mail, always to the post office. I can get back letters. No letters are delivered. Private box 2\$ a month. -My own trade will be busy here now. I don't think I will go to the wood line any more. Good night. Jos Moore.

(Postmarks on this second cover include the ART 10 as on the first, but bears the alternative AMERICA marking (A & H's number 1987). It also has the framed three line receiving mark "GLASGOW/MAY 1850/8:30 A.M.")



London
1980

EARLS COURT, LONDON
MAY 6-14, 1980

LONDON INTERNATIONAL STAMP EXHIBITION

PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP CO.

A. Jay Hertz.

This company was started by William H. Aspinwall and others to run mail, by way of the Isthmus, to California. They secured the mail contract and then it was an easy matter to get most of the shipping along the Pacific Coast, going both ways. Alvin H. Harlow in "Old Waybills" has this to say:

"Upon taking over California from Mexico in 1847, Congress passed a bill authorizing the transportation of mail by way of the Isthmus of Panama to Astoria, Oregon. Under this law, William H. Aspinwall, a clever opportunist of the day, procured a mail contract a few months later and, in April, 1848, incorporated the Pacific Mail Steamship Company one of the greatest American shipping organizations."

By 1850, there were ads in many papers in the various cities of the West. In the **Stockton Journal** of Nov. 6, 1850, we see:

"The Pacific Mail Steamship Co., Steamer Tennessee, George A. Cole, Esp., Commander, will leave for Panama touching at Acapulco only, on Friday, Nov. 15, 1850, at 4 o'clock, P.M. Treasure for shipment received at the company's office on Wednesday, the 13th and Thursday, the 14th inst. The Tennessee will connect with the U.S. Mail Steamer Philadelphia to leave Chagres on arrival of the passengers and treasure. For particulars apply to

Robinson, Bissell & Co.,
cor. of Liedsdorf and Sacramento Sts.,
San Francisco.

From the **PANAMA STAR** OF April 21, 1851:

PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP CO.

The United States Mail Steam Packets

PANAMA, 1087 tons, Capt. E.G. Bailey;

OREGON, 1099 tons, Capt. C.P. Patterson;

CALIFORNIA, 1050 tons, Capt. T.A. Budd;

TENNESSEE, 1300 tons, Capt. G.A. Cole;

CAROLINA, 600 tons, Capt. R.L. Whiting;

UNICORN, 600 tons, Capt. J.Y. Nicholson;

are intended to form a semi-monthly line between Panama and ports in California, and a monthly line between San Francisco and Oregon.

ZACHRISSON, NELSON & CO.

Then from up in Canada, from the **British Colonist** of Jan. 8, 1859, we have the following:

"The Pacific Mail Steamship Co. are making vigorous efforts to have the mail contract renewed."

PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP CO. (Continued)

We now show an ad of ten years or more later to show that through the years, although they were quite successful, they continued to advertise. From **The Lower Californian** of Nov. 10, we find:

“Pacific Mail Steam Ship Company,
San Francisco to Magdalena Bay.

The magnificent steamers of this famous line, leave San Francisco on the 3rd and the 18th of each month. Arrive at Magdalena Bay on the 7th and 22nd - only 3½ days passage.

Returning, leave Magdalena Bay on the 8th and the 23rd....”

The advertisement in the **Stockton Journal** of Nov. 6, 1850 (see above) refers to the Steamer PHILADELPHIA, so it is appropriate to give this ad from the **Panama Star** of April 21, 1851:

Through Line For
CALIFORNIA & OREGON
Via Chagres Direct

The new and favorite steamships, CHEROKEE, 1,300 tons, Capt. A.H. Windle, and PHILADELPHIA, 1100 tons, Capt. R.H. Pearson, form the only direct line between New York and Chagres, and in connection with the United States Mail Steam Packets on the Pacific, a semi-monthly line through to San Francisco, and a monthly line through to Oregon. They leave New York and Chagres about the 13th and 28th of each month.

For freight or passage apply to 54 South St. N.Y. and to
ZACHRISSON, NELSON & CO., Panama

ii	STATE REGISTER.	[1851.
<p>PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP COMPANY.</p>		
<p>Incorporated in New York in 1848, with an original Capital of \$500,000, subsequently enlarged to the sum of \$3,000,000. The California, Oregon and Panama were the first steamers dispatched to the Pacific. The California arrived at this place on the 28th of February, 1849, the Oregon 31st March, 1849. The former was deserted by her crew—who went “gold hunting”—and was detained in port several months. The Oregon sailed on the 11th of April on her first return trip. The present Steamers owned by this mammoth company are the Golden Gate, Golden Age, John L. Stephens, Sonora, Northerner, Columbia, Republic, Fremont, Constitution, and the pioneer Steamers, California, Oregon and Panama. The Columbia is engaged in the Oregon trade, and has made 200 voyages without an accident. The Company have lost two Steamers, viz: the Tennessee in March, 1851, and the Winfield Scott, December, 1853, by shipwreck. Not a single life has been lost, however, by explosion or collision, which is certainly creditable to the prudent management of such a fleet of steamers. During the existence of the Company, they have safely conveyed from our shores the gold export of the country, to the enormous extent of from three millions to four millions of dollars per month.</p>		
<p>FOR NEW YORK & NEW ORLEANS, DIRECT, VIA PANAMA RAILROAD.</p> <p>CONNECTING WITH THE STEAMERS OF THE United States Mail Steamship Company, AT ASPINWALL.</p>		

CONTENTS OF A LETTER**Crossing the Isthmus**

Submitted by James Lester

Dear Sister:

I am running over with happiness, my heart is throbbing -- well nigh bursting, with the joy I experience I am almost home. Phew! you cannot begin to conceive my feelings, and never will till you have been imprisoned on board ship, till you feel a loathing for your food, your state-room, your clothes, and almost for your companions, and then to be suddenly removed to a neat little boat, where you can almost believe yourself in some oriental palace.

I wrote you from the Isthmus, that is from San Juan Del Norte, but as I was obliged to leave it on the Northern Light, I could not write much. When the tea bell rang at 6 o'clock, we were in sight of land, and such a gay set of passengers you can only imagine them. We green ones really thought we should put our feet on terra firma, instead of that the steamer anchored some way from shore and two small river steamboats came out and took us off.

Oh, such a change! The boats had berths for it may be 50 passengers, while we numbered hundreds, and then the berths were no better than boards, and no pillows. We had become accustomed to the heavy lurches of the ocean, and could sleep sweetly while we rolled from side to side, and sometimes awakened to find ourselves holding fast with both hands to keep in bed, but now how different!

I was one of the favored ones - for B secured me an upper berth and put me in - handed me a carpet bag for a pillow, which was filled with bottles, then left me to secure for himself a place on a trunk. Just imagine yourself to be a pint of liquor in a two-quart bottle, with somebody shaking you violently, and you will have our situation exactly.

We went 25 miles up the river, when a dense fog set in, which put a veto on our progress till nearly day. But Oh- such a sight as greeted our wandering eyes on the approach of day, for the river was deep and narrow, so we could have a near view of the shore. We had seen no green thing since the last sight of Staten Island, and such a undescrivable loneliness! We all had to relieve our overflowing hearts in various interjections, and you will find a good description of Isthmus scenery in your Arthur's Magazine, written by a Quaker.

We left the Northern Light the first day of November, and the 2nd at noon we were at the Castillo rapids. There we dined with the natives, which I'll describe in a future letter. We walked nearly a quarter of a mile while the baggage was drawn by mules on a railroad track. This short distance is all the rapids that steamboats cannot navigate.

We then took a steamboat that took us to Lake Nicaragua, which we reached at dark (Nov. 2nd) and there we changed to a lake boat on which I slept so good. The morning of the 3rd found us at Virgin's Bay (the head of Lake Nicaragua) and there a new change awaited us. The boat cannot go to the shore, and a pier is being constructed, which in future will obviate all difficulty, but at present we were taken off by row boats which carried 50 or 60 persons at a time.

We found a public house at that place kept by a Mass. lady, here we took carriages for the transit-route. There were nine in our party that formed a social or friendly acquaintance. Three newly wedded pair, a Dr., a young widow, and Sister Susan. We had a first class carriage, very nearly resembling Warner's stage, and four mules about the size of yearly calves, and they were harnessed so loosely that the leaders would often be on opposite sides of the road, and it seemed that our native driver had no command over them.

CONTENTS OF A LETTER (Continued)

The first half of the road was delightful, then we came to the **hills**, and let me draw a veil over a few miles of our journey, for never, **never** do I wish to endure such suffering again, and all through **fear**. I never knew fear before, and if I ever pass that way again, I'll walk three milés.

After three or four hours on the transit, arrived at its termination about 3 o'clock PM. We met a negro about one miles from the end of the route who informed us in pretty good English that "good accommodations would be found at the Pacific House." Arrived at the place and felt a momentary satisfaction as I looked at the place, for we were to spend the night there, and it was our first night on land. Indeed it was the only night on land since I left N.Y.

Well after taking a look at the interior of the building - I longed so much to go on the steamer Sierra Nevada which was laying out a half mile in the harbor. There was not a woman about the place and such **filth**, such food, such lodging. Heaven forbid I ever see it again.

The gents engaged a room for the ladies, "No. 16 Elegant Room". The floor was covered with dirt, thicker and dirtier than any barn floor at home, with six cots -- no mattresses or pillowcases, and but one sheet. (Bear in mind the heat was intense) I had got so nervous on the transit, that I was ready to fly. Mr. B. had purchased a hammock which he hung in the corridor just outside the window of our room, and begged to have my cot carried out beside him -- thinking I might feel safer near him. I put on my wrapper, mounted my cot so near B's hammock I could reach it with my hand, and tried to sleep.

Sleep! We were nearly settled when one of the gents came along and says, "Mrs. Beecher won't you step through the window and ask my wife for my pistol." - "Now what"? said I. "Only a man murdered a few rods off," said he. Beecher urged me to compose myself, said he would take care of me, I was safe, etc. etc., but I couldn't sleep so I told B to occupy the cot & went in and crawled into another cot bed with one of the ladies and we lay and talked until morning.

The murder proved a rumor, - next day was the Sabbath but we were carried to the steamer in rowboats and sailed at 3 o'clock PM. Kept near the shore most of the way to San Francisco, arrived there at 3 o'clock PM Nov. 16th having been 22 days and 22 hours from N.Y. One of the quickest, healthiest, and pleasantest trip ever made this way.

There was no sickness on board, except seasickness, which is only laughed at when over -- and I never saw a drop of rain but once, and that only a sprinkle on the Isthmus. There were two hard showers on the Pacific but both came at night. I saw two whales, small ones, and several sharks, besides pelicans, parrots, monkeys, etc.. We had a delightful trip, and I would not at all dread another such, with the exception of the first and last night on the Isthmus. Mr. B. has not lost a meal on the route and we all gained flesh.

Yours with love,
Marie

(The cover of the above letter bore the "STOCKTON, Cal./10 Paid" postmark dated "1855-Nov-19")

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN

Chapter IX, Montezuma County

Part One

by Ray L. Newburn, Jr.

Map by William Bauer

Photography by James Young

There is a general agreement that John Moss, founder of Parrott City (See Chapter VIII), gave the name Montezuma Valley in 1873 to the broad valley drained by McElmo Creek. In that period it was commonly believed that the builders of the great Anasazi ruins of the southwest were early Aztecs, so the selection of the last great Aztec emperor's name is not surprising, even though the greatest ruins on Mesa Verde had not yet been discovered. ⁵⁴ When a separate county was created out of the western half of La Plata County in 1889, the name Montezuma was again selected. Whether it should be said that the county was named for the valley or directly for the emperor is perhaps a fine point.

Unlike the counties discussed previously, the area encompassed in Montezuma County has never been mining country. It began with ranching and farming, which remain important to this day. Orchards were first planted in the 90s. Timbering became important near the turn of the century. After Mesa Verde Nat'l. Park was established in 1906 tourism began to grow, slowly at first with 1032 tourists in 1915, almost 5000 in 1922, and 186,3000 in 1956. Only two or three mines have ever paid, and the best of these was the Red Arrow, not discovered until 1933, which produced perhaps two-thirds of the roughly \$500,000 total output of all Montezuma County mines. ^{50 154}

La Plata County interests were chiefly in mining and the big population center of Durango. It is not surprising that agricultural interests in the western part of the county, who got little in return for their taxes, would begin to think in terms of a county of their own. Approved in the Colorado General Assembly April 16, 1889, Montezuma County claimed the 2,095 square miles of La Plata County west of the ridge dividing the watersheds of the Mancos and La Plata Rivers, making it slightly larger in area than the remainder of La Plata County and the largest of the present day counties of the San Juan Country. About 1972, however, the corner of the county west of Cross Canyon, an area of 35 square miles which is completely inaccessible except through Dolores County, was removed and attached to Dolores County. Montezuma remains the largest county in the San Juan. Its highest point is 13,232 foot Hesperus Peak at the headwaters of the Mancos River. ¹⁵⁴ Its lowest point is 4550 feet on the San Juan River where that body crosses the tip of Montezuma County near the Four Corners, the point common to Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico.

The physiography of Montezuma County is comparatively complex. The eastern and southern parts of Montezuma County are drained by the Mancos River, a tributary of the San Juan. Montezuma Valley in the center of the county drains westward via McElmo Creek, another San Juan tributary. The north and north-east are drained by the Dolores River, which flows north to the Colorado River. The northwest is drained by a series of canyons, some flowing into McElmo Creek and others via Cross Creek into Montezuma Creek in Utah and eventually the San Juan River. Reference to Map 9 (in Part II) should make this easier to visualize. The various watersheds are separated only by low divides rather than the precipitous mountains more common to other parts of the San Juan. Instead many of the rivers have cut deep canyons, sometimes leaving isolated mesas such as the famous Mesa Verde.

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)

The first permanent dwelling in what was to become Montezuma County was built by members of the Moss party in 1875 a few miles northeast of the later town of Mancos. ¹⁸⁶ By 1885 there were 200 people in Mancos. ¹⁰⁵ Many of these were Mormons of the famous "Hole-in-the-Rock" creating group. This party out of Cedar City, Utah had built their own passage for their wagons to cross the Colorado River gorge in order to get to Bluff City (Bluff), Utah near the Colorado line. When there wasn't enough good farmland there, many moved further east into the valley of the Mancos. ¹⁵⁴ The first post office in Montezuma County was established at Mancos, February 19, 1877.

Mancos Valley settlers began grazing cattle in the Dolores Valley almost immediately, and by 1877 the Dolores Valley had its first permanent settlers. The first post office, named Dolores, was established on the Crumley ranch about two miles east of contemporary Dolores on April 5, 1878. A town soon began to grow up about five miles below the ranch where the river makes a broad turn to the north. Named rather naturally Big Bend, the town had 50 people by 1885 as well as the Dolores post office. It was only after the Rio Grande Southern began the town of Dolores in 1891 that the post office was moved back upstream and actually had a town of the same name to go with it. ^{105 154}

The first store in Montezuma Valley was opened at Mitchell Springs, a mile south of modern Cortez, in 1884. The first post office in the valley, called Toltec, was established there on Jan. 26, 1887. By that time Cortez had been laid out just to the north, however, with the first business opening that same month of January, 1887. Five months later Cortez had a post office, and Toltec soon ceased to exist. ¹⁵⁴ There were only ten white people in all of Montezuma Valley in 1885. ⁵⁴ In 1889 Cortez became the first and only county seat of the new county and Montezuma Valley began to rapidly overtake the valleys of the Mancos and Dolores in population.

The reason for the rapid growth of Montezuma Valley was water. The Valley had no running streams most of the year and few springs. Some cattle were run on the open range eating native grasses. Sheep did rather better. Then in 1885 the Montezuma Valley Water Supply Co. was formed for the purpose of bringing water from the Dolores River by tunneling under the divide separating valley and river. The 5400 foot bore was completed in 1889, its intake at Big Bend its outflow down Hartmann Draw near Mildred. In 1887 the "Dolores Number Two Land and Canal Co. began a second canal and flume system carrying water through a 4000 foot cut 40 feet deep into an elaborate irrigation system serving the area north and west of the tunnel system. It was not completed until about 1907. Unfortunately many areas were not ready to use the water after it was available, and the water companies went through a long series of receiverships, reorganizations, sales, etc. until things finally settled down in 1920. ¹⁵⁴

Not all of Montezuma County is available for ranching and farming by any means. The treaty of 1880 left the Southern Ute Indians a strip of land across the bottom of La Plata County. The Weeminuche band of Utes moved into the area that became the southern part of Montezuma County, and a sub-agency was established at Navajo Springs (soon moved to Towaoc). ¹² The Ute reservation today occupies 644 square miles, while there are 80 square miles in Mesa Verde National Park. National Forests take up 207 square miles of mountainous country to the north and east. ¹⁵⁴

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)

Roads and transportation were a major problem in such a "remote" area as Montezuma County. The earliest "roads" weren't much. The road laid out from Big Bend to Rico in 1881 or 82 crossed the Dolores River 56 times in less than 50 miles, and in those days crossing meant fording, not a bridge. One complaint against La Plata County in 1889 was the virtual nonexistence of roads in the west. As Freeman puts it, "the people of the county paid for roads that they never did get, so the county began life in the mud." Wooden bridges over the larger streams and some culverts and drainage ditches constituted the total of 19th century road improvements. A hard rain or the spring thaw stopped all travel for a time as the road surfaces turned to deep mud. Winter snow removal was unheard of, of course. ¹⁵⁴

The State Highway Commission Map of 1916 shows three roads in Montezuma County as part of the system of state primary roads. State Highway 14 ran from Durango through Mancos to Cortez and on down McElmo Canyon to the Utah line. A highway numbered 45 ran from Cortez to Dolores and on north across Dolores County to the vicinity of Norwood in San Miguel County. Another branch also numbered 45 ran from Dolores up the river to Rico and Vance Jct. near Telluride. All three were dirt. ¹⁶⁶ The first gravel surface was laid in the town of Mancos in 1923 and that winter the first snow removal was undertaken on the Mancos-Cortez road. In 1925 seven miles were graveled from Mancos east toward Durango and five miles west toward Cortez. That year the route from Durango to Mancos to Cortez and then northwest to Dove Creek and the Utah line was made a national highway, US450 (later US 160). It wasn't until 1936 that the first oil surface was laid, however. ¹⁵⁴

What Montezuma County did have was a railroad, the Rio Grande Southern Railroad, which reached Mancos from Durango in November 1891. The tracks reached Dolores on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 26, 1891, and connected with the rails being laid south from Rico about halfway between Dolores and Rico on December 19, 1891. Obviously the grading and bridges had been completed earlier. The railroad built out of Mancos over Millwood Pass and down Lost Canyon Creek, to tap the timber in the area it is thought. In the long run this was a mistake. An extra 10 miles of track could have brought the railroad to Cortez and the surrounding agricultural region and avoided a steep climb over the pass, while the timber soon ran out. As it was, when a railroad was built into Pagosa Springs in 1899 Cortez became the only county seat in the San Juan without a railroad and one of very few in the state. ¹¹⁶

Timber was important, however, especially in mining country for timbering the mines. Lumber was needed to build the boomtowns, and even the railroad itself was a considerable user. Railroad ties don't last forever, and many bridges were wooden in early days. With the construction of the Rio Grande Southern in 1890 and 91 lumbering began all along the railroad. Some of the larger companies even built logging railroads, joining the RGS. From late 1902 into 1906 A.A. Rust operated a logging railroad joining the RGS about 4½ miles above Dolores. Its total trackage was perhaps five miles. The Montezeuma Lumber Co. Railroad began building out of Glencoe in 1906 and may have operated as much as 25 miles of track before it moved out and on to New Mexico in 1914. Most extensive of all were the rails of the Dolores, Paradox, and Grand Junction Railroad, later the Colorado and Southwestern Railroad, which operated over 60 miles of track between Dolores and points north. Although incorporated in 1913, there was no construction until 1924. By the spring of 1925 they had three locomotives and 41 miles of track. In spite of the name they were never officially a common carrier, although they may have acted as one from Dolores to the sawmill town of McPhee. The railroad was dismantled in 1948. ^{187 93}

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)

There were other means of communication, of course. A telephone line was completed into Mancos in 1903 from Durango and a town system put into operation in 1904. This was extended to Cortez in 1905 and on to Dolores in Dec. 1908. And, there was the postal system. ¹⁵⁴

Prior to 1877 the mail was brought from Parrott City whenever anyone happened to be going that way. Thereafter there was a formal mail carrier, but that doesn't mean the mail always got through. The roads being what they were (or weren't), the mail was carried on horseback whenever possible and on snowshoes when it wasn't. One mail carrier froze to death in a heavy snowstorm in Thompson Park during the winter of 1880-81. He was only a few hundred yards from an inhabited residence too. ¹⁵⁴ The mail continued to come to Mancos from Parrott City through 1883 and with the latter in decline began coming from Fort Lewis by 1885. It was then carried from Mancos to other towns farther west. ^{33^a 69 70 71 114} After the Rio Grande Southern arrived in Dolores in 1891, all mail distribution to offices not on the railroad was made from there, at least through 1917. ^{117 72 73 74 75 119} By 1937 there was direct service seven days a week from Cortez to Mancos, however. ⁹⁴ A number of R.P.O.s operated through Montezuma County as discussed in Chapter VII. Apparently no Montezuma County town was ever the terminus of an RPO, however.

A number of 19th century postmarks are known from the three largest towns of Montezuma County, Cortez, Dolores, and Mancos. The smaller towns are distinctly difficult before 1930. Since the total population of the county was 3,058 in 1900 and 5,029 in 1910, that isn't too surprising. ⁵⁶

ACKMEN

Established Nov. 5, 1917

Discontinued May 31, 1941

Ackmen was the second settlement to come into being as Montezuma County homesteads were taken up to attempt dryland farming beginning about 1913. After a few years two or three small businesses and a post office were established. ¹⁵⁴ There are two versions of the origin of the name, one that there was an early settler of that name. The other account states one letter was taken from each of six suggested names. Many local residents have always called the town Sandstone for some nearby sandstone cliffs. ¹⁸⁸

As was true for most homestead towns, the "residents" were actually scattered all over the countryside. The "business district" was roughly two miles south of Pleasant View at an elevation of about 6900 feet. (Pleasant View Quadrangle, 1965.) The town even managed to support a weekly newspaper, the Pioneer Chieftain, from 1920 into 1923. ⁶⁰ When US160 was realigned and surfaced beginning in 1936 Ackmen found itself a mile off the highway, a significant difficulty for the few businesses. A new town was laid out on the highway and named Pleasant View, and all the businesses soon moved there including the post office. ¹⁵⁴

Mail came to Ackmen on a route from Dove Creek to Dolores via Cahone, Ackmen, Yellow Jacket, and Lewis. ^{75 94} The earliest postmark reported is a 1932 4-bar.

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)

ARLOA (Glencoe)

Established Mar. 12, 1903

Discontinued Apr. 15, 1914

In Nov. 1902 new owners of the Montezuma Lumber Co. moved their sawmill from Gradens to a new site in Lost Canyon Creek they called Glencoe. The location was in section 22 of Township 37N Range 14W at an elevation of 7300 feet (Dolores East quadrangle 1965). There was a Glencoe in Calaveras County in California at that time, so the postal service apparently picked the name Arloa for the office, origin unknown.

By the end of 1906 the lumber company was busy building their railroad out of Arloa to tap the huge stands of timber on Haycamp Mesa to the north and east. The mill at Arloa had a daily output of 70,000 board feet of lumber. Its principal products were flooring, siding, moulding, mine timbers, and boxes. When the timber ran out in 1914, the company moved to New Mexico. ^{127 187}

Mail came to Arloa courtesy of the RGS. Unknown for years, a large number of Arloa postmarks turned up a few years ago in the Smallwood correspondence.

ARLOA COLO. (3½) 1909/04/09

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

ARLOA COLO (2½) 1910/04/13-1912/06/18

CI:P,1,0:315:T;M,D,H,Y;S:G;G:narrow-4-bar

ARRIOLA

Established Dec. 18, 1894

Discontinued June 15, 1904

Re-established June 20, 1908

Discontinued Sept. 1933

Arriola is an irrigated land farming community at 6400 feet elevation seven miles northwest of Cortez on highway 160 (Arriola Quadrangle, 1965). The name was that of an early Spanish general, chosen for unknown reasons. ¹³³ Settlers began moving in as soon as it appeared there would be water. The No. 2 canal system didn't actually become operational until 1907, however, and the first post office discontinuance makes one suspect that some farmers gave up waiting. The post office was finally replaced by rural free delivery service out of Cortez.

The population of Arriola was 22 in 1900, rising to 52 in 1910. ^{44 149} It is still a prosperous farming area, but improved roads and transportation have tended to move most business to nearby Cortez. Until sometime after 1911 mail came to Arriola by a special route out of Dolores. ^{117 119} By 1917 there was a route from Dolores through Lebanon to Arriola and on to Raneraye. ⁷⁵

ARRIOLA COLO. (3) 19?/06/22*-1918/02/15

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

*on 2¢ Perf 12 Panama-Pacific

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)

BEARCREEK

Established Mar. 11, 1899

Discontinued Mar. 31, 1900

Re-established Apr. 13, 1907

Discontinued Dec. 14, 1918

The Rio Grande Southern Railroad had a 16 car passing track and a stockyard at Bear Creek which was on the north side of the Dolores River just below the point where Bear Creek empties into it. ¹¹⁶ The elevation there was 7900 feet (Wallace Ranch Quadrangle, 1963). Vanderwilt also records a Bear Creek mining area a few miles up the Creek, with small ore bodies and no reported production. ⁵⁰ Postal route maps show the office right on the railroad, apparently at the railroad facilities. ⁷⁴ ⁷⁵ Although two words everywhere else, the postal department used only one for the name.

BEARCREEK (3 -) 1907/11/19

CI:P,1,0:310:T;M,D,Y,H;S;G;G:narrow 4-bar

CORTEZ

Established June 21, 1887

Still Operating

Cortez had its beginning when the Montezuma Valley Water Supply Co., which was planning an irrigation system from the Dolores River (see chapter introduction) laid out a town in 1886 on land owned by the company manager. When the first load of lumber arrived to start the new town in the fall, the delivery people didn't know where to dump it. There were streets laid out but no names and not a single building. ¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, that 6200 foot site a mile north of McElmo Creek (Cortez Quadrangle, 1965) grew into the premier town of Montezuma County. James Hanna, who owned the townsite, decided to name it for Montezuma's Spanish conqueror, Cortez. ¹⁶⁹

Within the first year there were several stables in Cortez, since the primary business at that time was building the tunnel and canals to bring water. One was run by Pearly Wasson who ran the stage and mail into Cortez and who soon became the first county sheriff. At first all water had to be hauled in from Mitchell Springs, and tales are told of paying 5¢ a glass for it. A 40 foot deep well proved dry. Flowing water finally arrived from the canal system on Independence Day of 1890. ¹⁵⁴

One Dr. Bernard J. Byrne (post office records) or Byrns (Freeman) built a house, put in the first drug store, and became the first postmaster of Cortez, with the post office in his drug store. He had previously been the first postmaster in Toltec, arriving there from Fort Lewis the previous year. Three wagon loads of goods brought in by the Thompson brothers served to supply the first grocery, dry goods, and clothing store. ¹⁵⁴ A weekly newspaper, the Montezuma Journal, began appearing in 1888 and continues to this day though with a few brief interruptions in early years, a merger in 1919, and a name change in 1931. ⁶⁰ The first school opened in August 1887, the first church in 1889. The population of Cortez grew from 125 in 1900 to 565 in 1910, 541 in 1920, 921 in 1930, 1,778 in 1940, and 2,651 in 1950. The decrease in the late teens was apparently caused by water problems as mentioned in the introduction. ¹⁵⁴ The 1970 population was 6,032.

The law creating Montezuma County in 1889 designated Cortez as the county seat. Mancos in particular was irritated, being much older and larger than Cortez at that time. There was continuing agitation to move the seat to Mancos, rivalry between Cortez and Mancos becoming a rather permanent county fixture. ¹⁵⁴ ¹⁸⁶ Exactly how the initially smaller Cortez managed this is not clear.

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)

Cortez was incorporated as a town on Nov. 10, 1902. The telephone system begun in 1905 reached on to Bluff and Monticello, Utah in late 1909. December 1909 also saw operation of the first pressure water system with fire hydrants to protect the town. April 1911 brought the first movie theater, which must have had a hand cranked projector with carbide lamp or something similar since the first power plant wasn't built until 1922 or 1923. Today the town has airline service, a radio station, cable television, and a great many motels and restaurants for all the visitors to Mesa Verde. ¹⁵⁴

Before 1891 the mail for Cortez came from Mancos and was sent on from there to Dolores and to points beyond. ⁷¹ After the RGS arrived in Dolores, the mail came from Dolores, directly most of the time but including a stop in Mildred while that office existed. The 1917 route map has the notation 7¹aw (seven times a week) on the route. ^{72 73 74 75 117 119} Only after the road to Mancos improved and the railroad service began to deteriorate did much of the mail come again from Mancos. ⁹⁴ Cortez served as a further distribution point for towns to the south and west. A rural route out of Cortez was set up to serve nearby patrons in about 1933. In 1956 there was still one rural route 45½ miles in length out of Cortez plus seven star routes (one an air star route terminating in White Canyon, Utah). ¹⁵⁴

CORTEZ, COLORADO. (3½) 1890/11/20 (see Fig 82)

CI:P,1,0:265:T;M,D,Y;S;G;G:target (2 fat circles)

CORTEZ COLORADO (3) 1894/02/28-1894/03/07

CI:P,1,0:290*:T;M,D,Y;S;G;G:4 circle target

*slightly flattened, measures 300 vertically

REGISTERED CORTEZ COLO. (6½, 5½) 1895/09/27

SL:3:470;400:REG;(M,D,Y);(T,S):R;G:in purple

regular town marking and killer also used

CORTEZ COLO. (3) 1895/09/27-1896/04/27

CI:P,1,0:275:T;M,D,H,Y;S;G;G:4 circle target

CORTEZ COLO. (3) 1899/11/16-1909/12/02

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

CORTEZ COLO. (2½) 1916/06/27

CI:P,1,0:295:T;M,D,H,Y;S;G;G:oval grid

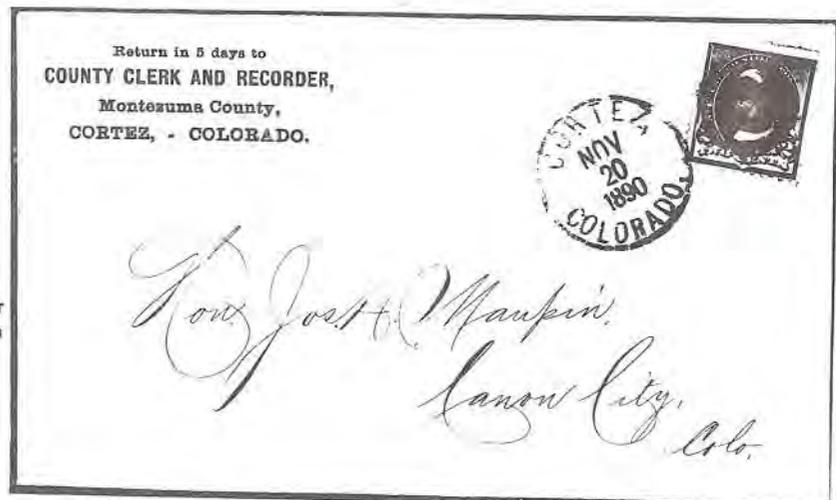


Figure 82

The earliest strike reported from Cortez, this cover also has a lovely early county corner card and an unusual killer.

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)

DOLORES (Big Bend)

Established Apr. 5, 1878

Still Operating

The first settlers known to have inhabited the Dolores River Valley in what became Montezuma County were William Quick and George, William, and Richard May in 1877. William May became the first postmaster of Dolores when that office was established and is well known for his town and postmaster marking (see Fig. 83). The site of the office is said to have been the Crumley ranch, a local gathering place until the town of Big Bend grew up in about 1882 on the outside of the big bend to the north in the Dolores River and five miles to the west of the ranch. William Darrow started the first store in Big Bend followed shortly by William Ordway and by Mr. & Mrs. George W. Morton. The latter bought 40 acres of land from William May, built a store and a home, and soon acquired the post office as well (on Nov. 20, 1882 officially). In 1886 William Ordway became the third postmaster in his store. ^{111 154}

The first school was started in Big Bend in 1883. In 1886 Andrew and John Harris moved their store over from Toltec and even started the J.J. Harris and Co. bank. Range cattle were the most important business in the area with farming largely limited to raising some cattle fodder. The cattlemen did very well, and it is *claimed* that for a brief time the small Harris bank had the highest per capita deposits of any bank in the United States! ¹⁵⁴

When it became reasonably certain that the Rio Grande Southern Railroad would be built, the Harris brothers bought a homestead belonging to one Sherman Phelps at a convenient site for a new town on the railroad. They were associates of the railroad's attorney, and there were no objections to the site. The Harris brothers immediately built a large brick building in the new townsite and moved their businesses into it. William Ordway soon built a new building in the new town and brought the post office along with him. ¹⁵⁴ And so finally in 1891 or 1892 the post office was in a town of the same name, a town located on the north shore of the Dolores River just above Lost Canyon Creek at 6936 feet elevation (Dolores West Quadrangle, 1965). The name had been appropriate to all three of its locations, of course, all being right on the river.

Big Bend had had a population of 50 in 1885. ¹⁰⁵ The businesses soon all moved to new Dolores, but the ranchers remained on their ranches, and the town grew slowly at first. A school was opened in 1895. A weekly newspaper began publication in 1896, quitting after a few months, but another, the Silver Star (Dolores Star after 1901), began in April 1897 and continues to the present time. Incidentally the Harris Bank also continues, having ridden right through the depression unscathed! ¹⁵⁴

Dolores acquired its first doctor in 1897, also a lumber yard. In 1900 the railroad finally built a decent depot, and in 1901 the town got a hotel. Besides the railroad, Dolores had stages to Cortez daily except Sunday, to Arriola Tuesdays and Saturdays, to Monticello, Utah three times a week and to Lone Dome and Formby once a week. The 1900 population was 108. ¹⁵⁴

Dolores continued to prosper, with the population rising to 320 in 1910 and 465 in 1920. Telephones arrived Dec. 23, 1908. A pressure water system was voted in 1910, to be completed by June 1911, but actually going into use July 20, 1912. The first motion picture also was shown in 1912. The first electric power plant was built in 1921. In 1916 Dolores even tried to capture the county seat from Cortez but with little support outside the immediate area. The town continued to grow with a second bank in 1910, new schools, new churches, new businesses. In 1940 population was 804 and has remained roughly constant since then. ¹⁵⁴

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)

With improved highways the eventual loss of the railroad isn't surprising. A totally new road up the canyon to Rico was begun in 1913 and continued for many years. Graveling was started on the Dolores-Cortez road in 1924. A road up the West Fork to Dunton was begun in 1925. And on Dec. 20, 1950 an abandonment order was signed for the Rio Grande Southern Railroad which had brought the town into being 60 years earlier. ¹⁵⁴

The mail for Dolores came from Mancos until the late 80s, then from Cortez until the railroad arrived. At that time Dolores became the major distribution point for all of Montezuma County not on the railroad. ^{69 - 75 114 117 119}

DOLORES, COLO. WM. M. MAY, P.M. (2½) 1881/07/14-1881/07/26
CI:H,2,0:320,295:(T,S);M,D,Y;PM;R;G:target (4 circle) or no killer
postmark & killer (when present) in magenta (See Fig 83)

DOLORES COLO. (3+) 1888/10/29
CI:P,1,0:260:T;M,D,Y;S;G;R:cork crossroads (See Fig. 84.)

DOLORES COLO 1889/08/18-1894/11/08
CI:P,1,0:275:T;M,D,Y;S;G;R: cork

DOLORES COLO 1902/06/12
CI:P,1,0:250:T;M,D,Y;S;G;G:target

DOLORES COLO. (2½) 1902/08/14
CI:P,1,0:275:T;M,D,Y;G;R:target
This *may* be the same strike used in the 90s

DOLORES, COLO. (2½) 1918/04/18
CI:P,1,0:290:(T,S);M,D,H,Y;X;G;G:
Used on back of registered cover in black, sent from Dolores
Stamps on front cancelled with oval grid. Mark at bottom of cancellation
(indicated above by x) is not legible.

Figure 83

Postmaster William M. May was well known in the early history of Dolores and was the only postmaster at the first location of the office.



POSTAL HISTORY OF THE COLORADO SAN JUAN (Continued)



Figure 84

This strike is one of William Ordway's and the only one known to have come from Big Bend, the second location of the Dolores post office.

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