

# WESTERN EXPRESS

RESEARCH JOURNAL OF EARLY WESTERN MAILS

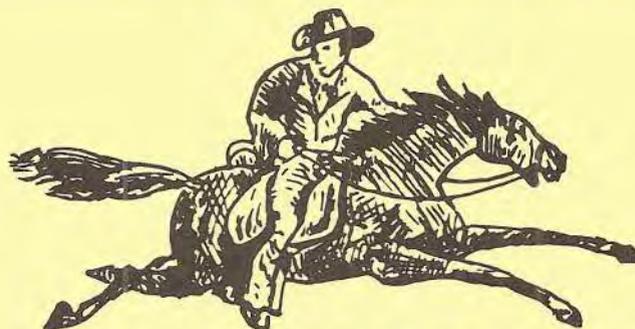
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WESTERN COVER SOCIETY  
Unit No. 14—American Philatelic Society

OCTOBER 1983

Express  
Ocean Mail  
Overland  
Post Offices



Territorial  
Statehood  
Postal Rates  
Postal History

## CONTENTS Page

Editor's Arena .....	1
Secretary's Report .....	2
California Expresses by Robson Lowe .....	3
"Por Fabor de Don Francisco O'Campo" by Kenneth S. Greenberg .....	9
Stagecoach Wreck by John S. Williams .....	11
Stalking Horse for the Pony by John M. Townley .....	13
Philatelic Californian Reprint of April 1897 .....	25
Advertisements .....	1, 2, 10, 24

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## EDITOR'S ARENA

**SESCAL '83****AND WESTERN  
COVER SOCIETY**

The annual exhibition sponsored by the Federated Philatelic Clubs of Southern California will be held October 14 thru 16 at the Ambassador Hotel, 3400 Wilshire Blvd. Los Angeles. The Western Cover Society has been assigned a spot on Saturday October 15 at 2:00 p.m. in the Press Room, for a general meeting and program. Prior to this there will be an informal luncheon at noon at the Ambassador in conjunction with members of the U.S. Classics Society. We hope to see many of our Southern California members at both of these gatherings.

**GOOD NEWS  
AND  
BAD NEWS**

The good news was the impressive list of new members (14) in the July issue of the Western Express. But the bad news was the depressing list of seventeen members dropped for non-payment of dues. We do not know the reason for so many leaving our ranks by the "back door". If it was because of change in collecting interests, then a note of resignation would be a more dignified exit. If it was because there was a feeling that the Society was not giving them enough for their dues — a letter telling what they felt should be offered could easily have set us on the path to fill the gap. So, let us hear from you — both the "good news" may be augmented and the "bad news" eliminated by a little "communication".

**REPRINTS**

In this issue we complete John M. Townley's story "Stalking Horse for the Pony", which first appeared in ARIZONA AND THE WEST, the quarterly journal of the University of Arizona. And Robson Lowe's "California Expresses", which first appeared serially in THE PHILATELIST, ten years ago, will also come to a conclusion with this issue of Western Express.

While it is desirable to fill our pages with the current efforts of budding authors reporting the progress in their studies of various phases of our many-faceted hobby, that desire needs cooperation. So, put the finishing touches on that story you have been hesitant about sending in and let us spread it over our pages for the edification of the rest of our members.

And a note from the rest of the members as to the advisability of including a limited number of "reprints" in Western Express, would be appreciated by your Editor.

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## SECRETARY'S REPORT

## New Members

- #817 — Leon Hyzen, P.O. Box 256, San Clemente, CA 92672  
(Collects U.S. Classics & covers. Esp. 24¢ 1861-67)
- #818 — Michael R. Fried, Box 817, San Leandro, CA 94577  
(Collects Fdwg. Agents, Cong. Free Franks, Alameda Co.)
- #819 — Bruce W. Hazelton, P.O. Box 67A, Cumberland, ME 04021  
(Collects Maine pmkd. covers prior to 1900, Allan Line)
- #820 — Rudolph Bentz, 3521 Arlington St., Laureldale, PA 19605  
(Collects Wells Fargo)
- #821 — James A. Schmidt, P.O. Box 777, Nyack, N.Y. 10960  
(Collects late 19th, early 20th Postal History)
- #822 — Dr. Kenneth S. Katta, 89 Seeley St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11218  
(Collects Western Express & Territorial Covers)

Changes of  
Address

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Thomas Pulley, 15170 W. Shaw Ave., Kerman, CA 93630  
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## CALIFORNIA EXPRESSES\*

By Robson Lowe

(Continued)

## THE NORTH WESTERN MINES

## Trinity County Expresses

The whole of this county is mountainous, the southern part being practically uninhabited with mountain ranges running diagonally from N.W. to S.E. the main range being the South Fork Mountains, the river with that name (being the south fork of the Trinity River) forming the western boundary of the county until the latter becomes a vertical N.-S. line on the map. At South Fork (now called Hyampon) the river divides, the South Fork running S.E. through Forest Glen; the other branch, Hayfork Creek, travelling east.

To the north lies the Klamath Mountains which contain the Salmon Mountains and Trinity Alps, the latter forming the county boundary, with Thompson Peak, 8900 feet, being the highest point.

The Scott Mountains, running from S.W. to N.E. form one side of the N.E. Boundary and the Trinity Mountains, running almost due south forms the eastern border.

The main route through the county lay from east to west. Leaving Shasta, the trail leads up through Horse Town and French Gulch, over the pass and then down to the county seat, Weaverville. On the banks of the Trinity River lie Lewiston, Douglas City, Copper City (now Junction City), Big Bar, Del Loma, Burnt Ranch and at Willow Creek, the river passes into Humboldt County.

The first express companies of which I have a record started in 1852 and ran from Weaverville to Shasta.

- 1852-53 *Rhodes & Lusk's Express*
- 1853-55 *Rhodes & Co.'s Express*
- 1855-57 *Rhodes & Witney's Express*
- 1855-58 *F. W. Blake & Co.'s Express*
- 1857-66 *Greenhood and Newbauer's Northern Express*
- 1866-67 *Weaverville & Shasta U.S. Mail & Express*
- 1867-68 *Tinnin and Owens' Weaverville & Shasta Express*

In the previous chapter, the formation of Rhodes & Lusk's Shasta Express was described. In 1852, F. W. Blake was their agent at Weaverville but in the Spring of that year he bought *Henkle & Co.'s Express* and went into business on his own. A few months later, this service ceased and Blake started a business under his own name in 1855, first connecting with Adams & Co. at Shasta, and after the failure of the latter, with Wells, Fargo & Co. In 1856 he was out of business again but in the following year he again ran a service which lasted until his retirement in 1858.



Greenhood and Newbauer bought out Rhodes & Witney's Express in 1857 and their frank had a spelling error Newbaner. They closed after nearly two years.

W. J. Tinnin and J. W. Owen started in business late in 1867 and closed in April 1868.

**CALIFORNIA EXPRESSES (Continued)**

New finds brought in a crop of new express companies in 1856 but most had closed by the end of the following year.

**From Weaverville to Canon City:**

- 1854 *Raveley's Express*
- 1856-57 *Sawyer's Express*
- 1857(?) *Buchanan & Co.'s Canon City Express*
- 1857 *Fisher's Express*
- 1858 *W. Linton's Weaverville, Trinity River and Canon City Express*

Little is known about the above and there is only a mention of S. W. Raveley whose service was advertised to serve Trinity River and Canon City and connected with Cram Rogers' Express (see Yreka, Siskiyou Co.) at Weaverville for Oregon Gulch, Pennsylvania Bar, Canon City, Jack-Ass Bar,

- to Cox's Bar and Manzaneta: 1856 *Orland Bennett's Express*
- to Ridgeville: 1856 *Joslin's Ridgeville Express*
- 1856 *Piper's Ridgeville Express*
- to Uniontown: 1856 *Raynes & Co's Express*
- down Trinity River: 1857 *Atkinson's Express*
- to Taylor's Flat: 1857(?) *J. G. Sanborn's Trinity River Express Co.*

No details of the above are known and all these small services quickly faded from the picture.

In 1866 some new discoveries at Hay Fork resulted in three new services starting from Weaverville via Douglas City.

- 1866-68 *Maynard's Hay Fork & Weaverville Express*
- 1867 *Hay Fork Express*
- 1867 *J. W. McLaughlin's Weaverville & Hay Fork Express*

Alas, the only item of interest I can find about Hay Fork is that it contains the Old Joss House, a place of worship for the Chinese mine workers, and that the houses have external spiral stair-cases made of iron.

There are two other expresses from Weaverville to mention

- to Lower Trinity River: 1865-66 *Weaverville & Lower Trinity Express*
- to Lewiston: 1867 *Weaverville & Lower Trinity Express*

It was in 1926, when exploring this area with Reg Crawhall, I came across a store-keeper who was the sole occupant of a building in a ghost-town west of Weaverville. This was possibly Canon City. However, to my joy, in response to my casual enquiry, the store-keeper had a trunk of letters (still in their original envelopes) which covered the 1852-70 period. Parker Lyon, Ernest Wiltsee and John Drinkwater had the pick, but I would like to see them again in the light of modern knowledge.

One more adventure happened on the same day. In the evening we went to a dance in a wayside hostelry in the hills where the somewhat heavy fantastic was tripped with a gorgeous vision of blonde innocence dressed in black. A few minutes later, we learned that on the previous Saturday, my partner's husband had been shot and killed by her lover, who had not yet been caught. We faded quietly away.

There are a few more expresses in this county and all ran to Weaverville in 1866-67. Two came from North Fork (probably Trinity Center).

- 1866 *North Fork, Weaverville & Douglas City Express*
- 1867 *North Fork & Weaverville Express*

The third came from Canon City

- 1866-67 *Thede's Canon River & Weaverville Express*

In another decade there was *Tillinghast & Major's Express* who for five years operated over a wide area. In 1875 they were operating two services, the Reading, Scott Valley and Yreka Stage Line and the Reading, Shasta & Weaverville Stage Line. Between 1876 and 1880 they served Reading, Shasta, Whiskeytown, Tower House, French Gulch, Trinity Center, Trinity Valley, Callahan's Ranch, Scott Valley, Etna, Fort Jones and Yreka. They also advertised a twice weekly service between Trinity Center and Weaverville. In 1885 John Major was postmaster of Redding, the name of that town by then having been altered from Reading for the second and last time.

This service served the three counties, Shasta, Siskiyou and Trinity, but the only covers carried that I have seen emanated from Weaverville so the record has been placed here.

**Del Norte County Expresses**

This small county in the north west corner of California is almost entirely mountainous. The Siskiyou Mountains rising to 7000 feet form its eastern boundary. Oregon lies to the north, the Pacific Ocean on the west and Humboldt County to the South.

There are two rivers. Smith River which has three branches, the Middle Fork running through a valley that travels almost due east and which it shares with the main road up to Grant's Pass and Jacksonville in Oregon.

**CALIFORNIA EXPRESSES (Continued)**

The Klamath River runs south east to Weitchpec (Humboldt Co.) where it forks, Trinity River continuing southwards and the main stream of the Klamath turning north-east to run into Siskiyou County by Happy Camp.

The only roads in Del Norte County were the one already mentioned, which ran from Crescent City, the county seat, north east to Oregon, and the coast road to Klamath along which there is such a fine view of the Californian redwoods.

Most of the express companies based on or serving Crescent City fall into two groups. Those that used the west coast steamers and those that travelled along Smith River Valley to and from Oregon.

**From San Francisco to Crescent City**

1853	<i>Leland &amp; Co.'s Express</i>
1853-54	<i>Leland &amp; McCombe's Express (John McCombe)</i>
1854	<i>Crescent City Express</i>
1854-55	<i>Leland &amp; McCombs' Express (D. W. McComb)</i>
1855	<i>Leland's Express</i>
1857	<i>Nichols' &amp; Co.'s Express</i>

George H. Leland started the first company and in August 1853 took in John McCombe as a partner. The business was divided into two parts, the Crescent City Express which operated inland, and by July 1854 had extended north east via Jacksonville in Oregon with its eastern terminus at Yreka. The main express business with the south was called Leland & McCombe's Express and used the steamers *Columbia*, *Arispe* and *Sea Bird* (among others) for their communications with San Francisco and San Diego. In December 1853 they were advertising their service from Crescent City to Port Orford, Gold Bluffs, Butlerville, Trinidad, Hardscrabble, Sailors Diggings, Bucksport and Union Town.

In 1854 a third partner joined the firm, D. W. McComb (no relation of J. W. McCombe) but soon after J.W. left for the east to form McCombe and McLaughlin's Express (see Siskiyou County Expresses). In October 1855 the partnership was dissolved and Leland continued on his own.

The following companies also had their headquarters in Crescent City.

to Yreka:	1855	<i>Hart &amp; Co.'s Express</i>
to Jacksonville:	1857(?)	<i>Evans &amp; Co.'s Crescent City &amp; Jacksonville Express</i>
	1858-65	<i>Johnson's Inland Express</i>
to Klamath River Camps:	n/d	<i>Cornwall's Inland Express</i>
	n/d	<i>Cornwall's Express</i>
to various inland points:	1855	<i>Mann's Inland Express</i>
	1864	<i>Dugan &amp; Wall's Northern Express</i>

There may have been more than one Johnson as four different sets are given by different authorities—S.B., G.F., G.P. and Frank. At Jacksonville this service connected with Beekman's Express and with Dugan and Wall at Crescent City. In one of their announcements, mention is made of a stop to pick up mail and freight at Patrick's Ranch (now Patrick Creek), some forty-five miles from Crescent City.

All that is known about Dugan & Walls is that Richard Dugan and J. G. Wall went into partnership in January 1864.

**Humboldt County Expresses**

Like its neighbours, this county is mountainous. There are only two roads that concern this record, the coastal route from Klamath via Trinidad to Eureka (the county seat) where the road turns inland through Fortuna and Bridgeville to Forest Glen and Hayfork; and the eastern road from Eureka through Arcata (Union Town), Blue Lake, Willow Creek onto Trinity County and Weaver-ville.

In the fifties there was little need for express companies and the continuous mountain ranges made transport to the mining areas in Trinity County much slower and more arduous than the route up the Sacramento River.

In 1851 the only post office was at Trinidad. The coastal steamers travelling between San Francisco, Crescent City and Portland, Oregon, stopped at Humboldt Bay (for Eureka and Union City) and at Trinidad.

The first service of which there is a record was *Dodge & Co.'s California Express* which started in April 1851 with a service using the steamers to Gold Bluff, Humboldt and Trinidad.

In 1863 there was the *Humboldt & Red Bluff Express* but whether this ran eastward to the Red Bluff on the Sacramento River is not known.

About the same period there was *Deming & Wall's Union & Eureka Express* which served those two towns. It may have been connected with Dugan & Wall of Crescent City.

The other three services are but names and no date (but one) or data regarding their services are known to me.

*Eureka Express Co., Humboldt Express Co. 1854, Wyman's Express (Humbolt Bay).*

## CALIFORNIA EXPRESSES (Continued)

## Siskiyou County Expresses

With both Trinity and Shasta Counties along its southern boundary, most of Siskiyou County is mountainous. The Cascade Mountains cut the county vertically from north to south and include the 14,000 ft. Mount Shasta. In the centre lies Shasta Valley through which flows the Shasta River to rise in the Scott Mountains, not far from the source of the Sacramento. Northwest of Yreka, the county seat, rise the Scott Bar Mountains (6,200 ft.). Further west, still south of Humbug lie the Marble Mountains, while the western border with Del Norte County, and part of the northern border with the State of Oregon are set at the Siskiyou Range (5-7,000 ft.).

Yreka was the communications centre, lying on the main route from Sacramento to Oregon, the main road from Weaverville via Trinity Center and Etna, the road from Eureka via Somesbar and Etna, as well as the road from Crescent City that goes north through Oregon, Jacksonville and Medford before it turns due south. Another road of some importance followed the Klamath River from Somesbar through Happy Camp, Humbug, Horse Town (now Horse Creek) and Klamath before joining the road that leads from Oregon to Yreka.

Many of the services based in the south that served Yreka have been mentioned and the first based at Yreka was *Cram, Roger's & Co.'s Express* which ran from 1851-1855 over the road through Trinity Center and Weaverville to Shasta.

John McCombe and John McLaughlin operated the Jacksonville & Shasta-Yreka Line with the secondary title McCombe and McLaughlin's Express, from May 1854. In July, McLaughlin was killed as he fell off the coach and a wheel passed over his head. The business became McCombe & Co.

In August the route was altered to run from Callahan's (Ranch) to Yreka and on to Jacksonville. Later in the month, McCombe bought some Concord coaches and ran the *California & Oregon Stage Line*, connecting at Shasta with the California Stage Co.'s Line for Red Bluffs, Tehama, Marysville and Sacramento. Their agents were Wm. McTurk at Shasta, and H. Slicer at Yreka. The latter was to become an active partner in the Greathouse & Slicer Express. Wisely, McCombe sold his business to the Adams Express Co. and became their agent in the Humboldt Express Co. in November 1854.

Another service to Shasta went via Scott River in 1855, *Horsley & Brastow's Scott River Express*.

Another company, whose activities have been described in the Shasta County Expresses, was that operated by George L. Greathouse. Between 1855-57 *Greathouse & Slicer's Shasta and Yreka Express* ran a regular bi-weekly service, their agent at Yreka being William T. Hanford.

In August 1862, A. D. Crooks, whose earlier venture is described later, owned the *Yreka and Red Bluff Express*, travelling on the eastern route via Soda Springs, Portuguese Flat and Dog Creek.

Three years later, *Tucker's Siskiyou Express* ran to Shasta, the main office being in the vicinity of Yreka.

to Jacksonville: 1850 *Beekman's Express*

This service went to Oregon, later connecting with Portland and other large cities in that state. The latest date known to me is a franked cover embossed with the 1865 3c. At sometime the service was called *Beekman's Oregon Express*.

1855-56 *Brastow and Horseley's Express*

This company followed a different road as it called at Scott's Bar en route.

The one Oregon express which had its southern terminus in Yreka of which we have been able to find a record is *Hoffman's Express*, which ran from its base town, Jacksonville in 1851.

to Aetna (Etna) Mills: 1857 *Salmon River Express*

1866-69 *Sawyer's Bar & Scott Valley Express*

The last was run by J. D. Hickox.

to Humbug and Indian Creek: 1858-63 *Chase's Express*

Chase's office in Yreka was in the Wells, Fargo Building. In July 1859 his service was extended to Greenhorn and connected with Van Wyck's Express at Indian Creek. In 1863 he sold out to Charles W. Prindle.

to Humbug (now Hamburg)

1863-65 *Pfenninger's & Co.'s Express*

1864 *Monet & Co.'s Express*

1864 *Yreka & Humbug Express*

1869-71 *Humbug Express Co.*

1871 *Wetzel and Ringgen's Humbug Express*

Herman Pfenninger took over the line that had been run earlier by Chase. What happened to him in the years 1866-68 is not known but in 1869 he ran the Humbug Express Co., which one presumes was sold to Wetzel and Ringgen in 1871.

to Sawyer's Bar

1864 *Yreka & Sawyer's Bar Express*

1869-71 *Scott River, Sawyer's Bar & Scott Valley Express*

to Weaverville

1864 *Scott Valley Express*

to Klamath River

1865 *Prindle & Co.'s Express*

1865(?) *Rockfellow & Co.'s Express*

## CALIFORNIA EXPRESS (Continued)

Chas. W. Prindle had been employed by A. D. Crooks (see below) but the former bought out the latter in February 1860. Prindle was in partnership with Meamber in January 1860 in the Scott and Klamath River areas; but by May Meamber had left the business. In November 1861 Prindle took in Charles Travelli as a partner and in 1863 he bought Chase's Express (see above). In November 1864 Ben Jacobs and William Rinewald became partners but in June 1865 he was once more on his own. In 1866 he changed the name of his service to *Prindle & Jacobs Express*.

to Indian Creek: 1866-68 *W. Rinewald's Express*

Rinewald had been a partner of Prindle (see above)

to Scott's Bar: 1866 *H. C. Tickner's Yreka & Scott Bar Express*

## The Tickner Family

H. C. Tickner was one of a family of three brothers and one sister, all of whom at one time or other were in the express business. H. C. had been an expressman from 1862 and in June 1866 formed the company mentioned above. His service first ran via Indian Creek and he later extended it through Deadwood and Fort Jones, using the title *Scott River and Scott Valley Express*, a company that Tickner had bought from J. D. Hickox. In 1872 he (H. C. T.) sold out this service to Carlock and Ward, disposing of another route to the same firm in 1873, and in 1874 was Wells, Fargo's clerk at Yreka.

In May 1871, two of H. C.'s brothers, Walter A. and F. L. started *W. A. Tickner and Bro's Express* which ran from Yreka to Rough and Ready, which they sold in 1872 to Robert A. Ward. They also formed the *Scott Valley Express* which ran from Yreka via Fort Jones to Etna, later extending the service to Callahan's Ranch. This route was sold to A. B. Carlock in 1872.

In May 1871 (Wiltsee says 1870) Walter also ran the *Scott River Express* via Fort Jones, Oro Fino and Rough and Ready. In 1876 Walter ran the *Culverhouse Express* from Trinity Center, to the Cinnebar Mines.

In 1874, the sister, Lavinia was operating the same route for Carlock, from whom she had leased the business. Newspaper reports at the time record her excellent reputation as an expressman but no details of her earlier career are given.

In 1877, F. L. Tickner bought out *Dave Horn's Scott River State and Express Line* and two years later was also operating the *Scott Bar Express* to Yreka.

to Scott and Klamath Rivers: 1859 *Crooks Daily Express*

Owned by A. D. Crooks who advertised that he left the Yreka office of Wells, Fargo & Co. for the mining localities on the Scott and Klamath Rivers. In the following year, Crooks sold out to his employee Chas. F. Prindle.

to Fort Jones & Scott River: 1874-77 *Horn's Yreka, Fort Jones and Scott River tri-weekly Express*.

Nothing is known about the owner, Dave Horn, except that he sold out to H. C. Tickner.

## Carlock's Express

In January 1869 A. B. Carlock was the Wells, Fargo agent at Fort Jones. In August 1872 *Carlock & Ward's Scott Valley & Scott River Express* bought out H. C. Tickner's express of the same name (see above) and operated two routes, *Yreka to Etna* via MacAdams Creek, to *Fort Jones and Oro Fino*; at Fort Jones the express connected with another of the group, *Carlock's Scott River Express*. By April 1873, Ward had left and the business name was altered to the more simple *Carlock's Express*, and in 1873 the second of H. C. Tickner's expresses was acquired. In February 1874, Carlock leased his business to Lavinia Tickner.

There are two later express companies who had their main offices in Yreka. *Barton's Klamath River Express* was started in July 1873 by H. J. Barton, operating between Yreka and Oak Flat. In 1876 he operated the *Yreka, Scott Bar and Hamburg Express*. Later he ran over three other routes, to Fort Jones, Etna and Callahan's; to Cottonwood, Jacksonville and Portland (Oregon); to Shasta Valley, Butteville, Strawberry Valley, Soda Springs, Portuguese Flat and Delta, where he connected with the California and Oregon Stage Line going South.

In 1887 the *Yreka and Montague Express* was running to Oak Bar and Happy Camp.

## Scott Bar, Scott River, Scott Valley

The inter-marriage of the various services with one or more of these names can easily cause confusion and the fact that some services altered their route. The following lists will help to clarify the picture.

## From Scott Bar

to Yreka 1877 *Scott Bar Express* (F. L. Tickner)

## From Scott River

1856 *Rodger's Express Co.*

1856 *White & Crook's Scott River Express*

1871 *W. A. Tickner's Scott River Express*

1858 *Husband's Express* (also at Klamath River)

1863 *Crook's Express* (also at Klamath River)

1870 *Scott River & Scott Valley Express* (J. D. Hickox)

1877 *Scott River State & Express Line* (Dave Horn)

All that is known of these services is recorded under the details relating to A. D. Crook, also the Tickner family.

## CALIFORNIA EXPRESS (Continued)

1870(?) *Culverhouse & Craddock's Express*

This company was formed by Jerry Culverhouse and John Craddock who ran their service from Scott Valley, operating north to Fort Johnson and Yreka, south to Etna, Callahan's and Scott River and west to Sawyer's Bar and Somesbar. In 1873, H. C. Tickner, who had sold them two of his routes joined the business as an employee.

In March 1876, this express operated a service from Trinity Center to the Cinnibar Mines. By June of the same year, Culverhouse had moved to Yreka as superintendent of the *People's (or Scott Valley) Stage Line*.

Some time later, he and his then partner, Taggart, sold the *People's Northern Californian Stage Line* to John Majors, the owner of the Reading, Shasta and Weaverville Stage Line (see page 334).

The other services which include the name "Scott Valley", served the area but were based elsewhere. They have already been described.

From Salmon River (probably Sawyer's Bar)

to Weaverville: 1858 *Craven Lee's New Express*  
to Yreka: 1861 *Van Wyck's Express*

Another company of which there is a note is *Ritner's Salmon River Express*, but when and where it operated, is not known to me.



## From Indian Creek

to Yreka: 1857 *Indian Creek Express*  
1866 *Indian Creek Express Co.*  
to Weatherville: 1866 *Parker's Express*

## From Loon Creek

to ? 1869-72 *Loon Creek Express*  
to Idaho City: 1870 *Hunter's Miner's Loon Creek Express*

The first of these services was run by Henry H. Knapp. The second was started in May 1870 by I. M. Hunter and ran to Idaho City, Centreville, Placerville and Deadwood. In July, Hunter was bought out by Chas. J. Tassell who closed the business when the mines failed towards the end of the year. Presumably the miners had all come from Idaho.

## From Rough &amp; Ready

to Sawyer's Bar: 1870 *R. P. Taylor's Rough & Ready & Sawyer's Bar Express*

Where was Rough and Ready? The service can only have travelled on the Somesbar-Etna road and presumably was near the latter.



“POR FAVOR DE DON FRANCISCO O’CAMPO”

By Kenneth S. Greenberg

During the early 1850’s when prospectors were still scouring the Sierra foothills in search of gold, Don Francisco O’Campo carried a letter as a favor to someone by horse from the sleepy pueblo of Los Angeles to one Dona Ysidora Coutts at Rancho Guajome in San Diego County, a distance of 116 miles.

We do not have the letter and the writer is unknown, but the cover, lined with cloth, and illustrated herein, is addressed to Senora Dona Ysidora B. de Coutts, Guajome, and bears the inscription “por favor de Don Francisco O’Campo.” Presumably he carried and delivered the letter as requested.

Francisco O’Campo was a man about town and a gambler, whose adobe home faced a large patio that fronted the Pueblo Plaza in Los Angeles from the south.

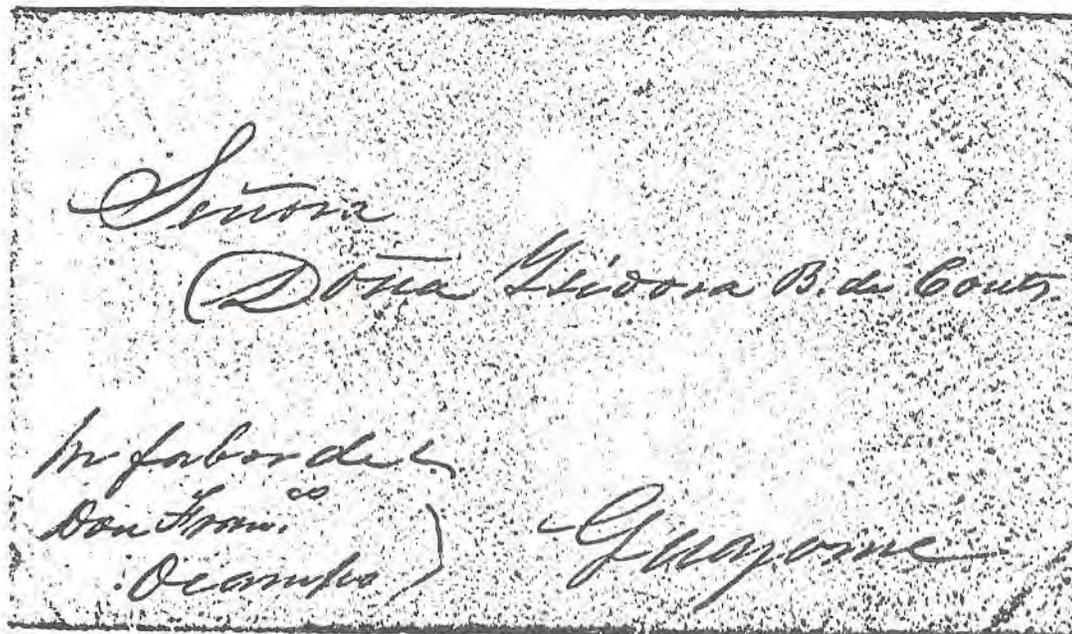
Nearby, across “Calle de los Negros” was “La Prieta” a house of prostitution and “La Aguila de Oro” — The Golden Eagle, a gambling house and saloon, where outlaws and prostitutes caroused. Open doors invited and harboured the human dregs that drifted down from the northern mines and up from the border to prey on the gullible citizens who dared enter the bedlam of “Nigger Alley.” (Historical Society of Southern California Vol. XXVI - 1944 - by Ana Begue De Packman.)

In the early 1850’s the Pueblo of Los Angeles boasted a population of three thousand, of which twenty-five hundred were Spanish speaking and the balance spoke various tongues.

Ysidora Coutts was the daughter of Juan Bandini, a native of Peru, whose daughters were noted for their beauty. Ysidora married Col. Cave J. Coutts and Arcadia Bandini married Abel Stearns, a wealthy merchant.

Guajome, an Indian word meaning “Frog Pond,” was a part of the original mission lands of San Luis Rey. In 1845 it was granted to two Indians by Pio Pico, California’s last Mexican governor. They sold it to Abel Stearns for \$550.00, and Ysidora received the ranch land as a wedding gift from her prominent and wealthy brother-in-law when she married Cave J. Coutts. There he constructed a 20-room adobe for his bride.

During the early 1850’s mail was regularly carried on horseback from Los Angeles to San Diego, a distance of 154 miles. Judge Benjamin Hayes (Pioneer Notes) who often travelled the route while circuit riding to hear cases, makes the comment that “I carried a double-barrel shotgun and a bowie knife, a precaution considered proper in the disturbed state of Los Angeles County, though highway robbery seldom occurs, and ‘Robbers and assassins flooding the county,’ is a common exaggeration.”



“POR FAVOR...” (Continued)

Nevertheless, to travel alone on horseback from Los Angeles to Rancho Guajome in the 1850's must have been a lonely and dangerous enterprise, lasting probably three days, and the likely route travelled by Senor O'Campo is indicated below.

From Los Angeles to:

Monte	12 miles
San Gabriel River	2 miles
Workmans	6 miles
Ricardo Vejar's	6 miles
Chino	12 miles
Santa Ana River	8 miles
Temescal Rancho	9 miles
Lagunita	15 miles
Willows	11 miles
Temecula	10 miles

From Temecula to Rancho Guajome 25 miles

Monte at that time was a small settlement, Temecula little more than an Indian Village, and rancho adobes were few and far between.

It is said that Rancho Guajome was an oasis in the desert. The 20-room adobe ranch house had a roof of red tiles and tree shaded courtyards surrounded by rooms that included a jail, major domo's quarters, bakery, candlery, kitchen, children's school room, servant's quarters, bedrooms, parlor, dining room, and marvelous hospitality was given to weary travelers.

This historic ranch house built 130 years ago is being restored by the San Diego County Parks Department.

The Cout's correspondence was acquired by Huntington Library some years ago.

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### STAGECOACH WRECK

By John H. Williams

The weather was wet and bone-chilling cold on February 1, 1893, as the mail stage left Eureka in Northern California heading south toward Ukiah. Stage driver Carter was tough and experienced but still the nearly 200-mile journey through heavy rains, across swollen creeks and washed-out roads would be an ordeal. Braced with a strong cup of coffee, his collar up against the driving rain and cold, he took the reins.

The first day would include mail stops at Kneeland, Yager, Bridgeville and Harris. Carter would change horses at Bridgeville and again at Harris where he could catch a few hours of welcomed sleep and continue in the morning. Mail from South Coast towns, of Capetown, Petrolia, Briceland, Larabee and Garberville came by stagecoach to Harris connecting with the Eureka to Ukiah stage. Carter would carry these on to Ukiah.

The morning of February 3, 1893, Carter was loaded and with fresh horses continued his journey to Ukiah where mail was transferred to the North Pacific Railroad. At this time, Ukiah was its northern-most terminus. Carter's first stop would be Cummings, 26 miles south of Harris. Creeks were high, but the coach crossed them with little problem. The next leg of the trip, Cummings to Laytonville, had Carter concerned. Ten Mile Creek, a few miles south was difficult to ford, even under ideal conditions. Anticipating a rough crossing, but hoping for the best, he drove the team on. The creek was dangerously high, and Carter pulled to a stop to survey the fast and muddy stream. The horses pounded the mud nervously, straining against Carter's iron-grip on the reins. It looked bad, but he'd seen worse. Loosening his grip on the reins, yelling encouragement to the horses, he eased the heavy coach into the churning creek. The dark water rose to the coach bottom quickly and soon lifted it afloat. Cursing to himself, but still determined, Carter whipped the horses on, hoping they could hold against the powerful currents that were pulling the coach downstream. Fate wasn't with Carter that day. As the coach moved downstream, it struck a rock and began to overturn. The handwriting was on the wall, and Carter jumped. The coach now on its side and moving faster, pulled the horses under, and they were drowned. Carter watched from shore as the coach was wrecked, mail spilled into the water and was lost. He hiked into Laytonville and reported the accident. It wasn't until a week later that the creek subsided and the mail was found. Water soaked and damaged, the mail was taken to Ukiah, placed aboard the train and delivered to Samuel Flint, Division Superintendent at San Francisco. Sam had damage labels prepared and affixed to each piece of mail, then sent them on their way.

This story is a bit of fiction based on fact. It must have happened about that way. Figure 1 is the only stagecoach wreck cover I have ever seen. Figure 2 is a newspaper clipping taken from the Mendocino Dispatch Democrat in Ukiah dated Fbruary 10, 1893.

If not delivered within 10 days, to be returned to

**NOTICE!**

This piece of mail was inclosed in pouch that was lost by the upsetting of the south bound stage while crossing a ford between Cummings and Laytonville, Cal., post offices on Feb. 3, 1893, the pouch being recovered on Feb. 10th, having been submerged during the intervening time.  
SAM'L FLINT, Superintendent,  
Railway Mail Service.



*Mercus. C. Foley*  
*Dealer in Hardware*  
*Agricultural Implements and Machinery*  
*San Francisco*  
*Cal*

**A Stage Accident.**

The overland stage met with a bad accident at Ten Mile Creek, several miles north of Laytonville last Friday night. The heavy rain had swollen the creek until it was a torrent, and in crossing it the stage was carried away by the current. Driver Carter managed to get to shore all right, but the two horses, stage and all the mail were swept down the stream. The horses were drowned the stage was wrecked and the mail from Eureka and way postoffices was lost. The remnants of the stage were taken out of the stream on Monday, but the mail has not yet been recovered.

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**(Continued) STALKING HORSE FOR THE PONY EXPRESS***by JOHN M. TOWNLEY***CHORPENNING MAIL**

At Placerville, Dr. Chorpenning arranged for the first mail departure on July 5 and then crossed the Sierra Nevada to inspect the Humboldt stations. He returned to California in mid-month and gathered stock and supplies for the middle portion of the route, from Lassen Meadows to Wells. Hunt, meanwhile, completed similar arrangements farther east. Frank Chorpenning's initial plan called for stages to leave Placerville and Salt Lake City simultaneously each week for Gravelly Ford. After exchanging mail sacks at the ford, each coach would return to its base.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the hurried and haphazard arrangements, Chorpenning's first weekly mails crossed the 700-mile wasteland without incident. On July 5, Agent Charles Newman and an escort of four riders left Placerville with eighteen pounds of mail on board a Concord coach drawn by four mules. At Gravelly Ford, Newman's party met Jefferson Hunt with mail and passengers from Salt Lake City. After exchanging mail sacks and passengers, the westbound mail proceeded to Placerville under Robert Clift. Clift and his weary escort reached their destination at eleven p.m. on July 19, amidst "cheers of the citizens." A brass band concert, speeches and toasts from the balcony of the elaborate Cary House, and a balloon ascension celebrated the arrival of the mail. A more subdued scene prevailed at Salt Lake City, where Hunt had left on July 13 with thirty-five pounds of post and returned from the Humboldt on the twenty-second. Hunt used a single team to complete the round trip. As weekly traffic became routine, the line was divided into two divisions. Crandall operated mail service west of Gravelly Ford, while Hunt supervised the eastern segment.<sup>30</sup>

Rightmire, on his trips to the Humboldt in June and July, had attempted to conciliate Indian bands along the mail route. Nevertheless, troubles erupted anew during late summer with the Shoshonis and Paiutes. On the night of August 20, Indians drove off stock from the camp of John Mayfield and escort near the first (Elko) crossing of the Humboldt. Mayfield's party, who were carrying the westbound mail from Utah, abandoned their wagon and shouldered the mail sacks as they backtracked east along ridges bordering the trail. An imminent attack, however, forced them to abandon the post before they reached Goose Creek. They finally returned to Salt Lake City on August 28.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Placerville *Mountain-Democrat*, July 10, 1858; San Francisco *Herald*, July 16, 1858; Sacramento *Bee*, July 20, 1858.

<sup>30</sup>Sacramento *Union*, July 10, 21, 1858; San Francisco *Herald*, July 21, 23, 25, 1858.

<sup>31</sup>Placerville *Mountain-Democrat*, September 11, 1858; San Francisco *Alta California*, September 6, 1858; Sacramento *Bee*, September 4, 1858. *Journal History*, August 28, 1858, LDS Library-Archives. A different version of the attack is in San Francisco *Alta California*, October 29, 1858. The Indians claimed that long-overdue trade goods were the major reason for hostility.

## STALKING HORSE FOR THE PONY (Continued)

Indian raids and harrowing winter experiences in the Goose Creek country gave a keen edge to arguments for abandoning the Salt Lake Cutoff in favor of a more direct and less hazardous route. John C. Frémont and Lansford W. Hastings had first blazed well-publicized paths across the Great Salt Desert in 1845 and 1846. In October of 1853, T. L. Gray and party left the emigrant trail at Humboldt Wells, traveled south around the Ruby Mountains, then crossed west to the head of Carson Sink. Later that year, Jack Redden opened a promising path across the Salt Desert, south of the Frémont and Hastings routes, and in May of 1854 Lieutenant E. G. Beckwith led a party from Salt Lake City across Skull Valley and over the Redden Trail. The following September, John Reese retraced Beckwith's route and reported on its merits to church authorities. On his return trip, Reese passed south of Carson Lake on the approximate line later adopted by the Chorpenning mail, Pony Express, Overland Telegraph, and Overland Stage Line.<sup>32</sup>

In 1855, Howard Egan adopted the Beckwith-Reese corridor for his Pacific Express Company. In July he traveled from Sacramento to Salt Lake City in seventeen days, and in September he completed the trip in only eleven days. Other guides and expressmen, including Enoch Reese, utilized the new trail, cutting time for well-mounted parties to two weeks. The route, however, had shortcomings. An LDS expedition in 1856 discouraged wagon traffic on any but the emigrant trail, and in 1857 Allen and Oliver Huntington, who had been with Reese's 1854 expedition, had considerable difficulty recrossing the Beckwith-Reese track as surface water had virtually disappeared during the dry year.<sup>33</sup>

Although explorers and express riders had found shorter routes across the Great Salt Desert, it was left to the Chorpennings to prove their suitability for wheeled traffic. In early August of 1858, Frank Chorpenning mentioned to newspaper reporters the possibility of a shorter passage between Placerville and Salt Lake City. Evidently, Utah couriers had mentioned to him the several routes pioneered in the mid-1850s between Carson Sink and Zion. On August 24, Daniel Taft (Tafft?), a senior carrier for General Hunt,

<sup>32</sup>San Francisco *Alta California*, October 31, 1853; Salt Lake City *Deseret News*, November 31, December 7, 1854. *Journal History*, November 26, 27, 30, and December 31, 1854; Oliver B. Huntington, "Guide to Carson Valley, 1854," typescript, both in LDS Library-Archives. John Frederick Bluth, "Confrontation with an Arid Land: The IncurSION of Gosiutes and Whites into Utah's Central West Desert, 1800-1978" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1978), 32. Morgan, *The Humboldt*, 223-24; Patterson et al., *Nevada's Northeast Frontier*, 86-87. Exploration of a direct mail-stage line from Utah, across central Nevada, to the Sierra Nevada is summarized in John M. Townley, *The Rush to Reese* (Reno: University of Nevada Desert Research Institute, 1982), *passim*.

<sup>33</sup>Sacramento *Union*, July 4, September 10, and October 1, 11, 1855; San Francisco *Alta California*, July 7, 1855, and December 15, 1856; Salt Lake City *Deseret News*, September 19, October 10, 1855. *Journal History*, August 3, 1856, LDS Library-Archives. Bluth, "Confrontation with an Arid Land," 44-46. Moody, *Stagecoach West*, 95.

## STALKING HORSE FOR THE PONY (Continued)

accompanied by Allen Huntington—a veteran of several crossings—and Peter Crownower, left Salt Lake City to map the Beckwith Trail to Ruby Valley. The party then descended the South Fork of the Humboldt and reached the main channel on September 5. Taft reported favorably on the new route.<sup>34</sup>

Before Frank Chorpenning could act on Taft's information, George Chorpenning disembarked at San Francisco during the third week in September, after an absence of over five years. While in Washington, he and California Senator David C. Broderick had decided to inspect personally the line from the California Mother Lode to Missouri. Broderick was a strong proponent of federal support of mail, telegraph, and ultimately railroad communication between the East Coast and California. Chorpenning and Broderick hoped that their overland trip would demonstrate to the Eastern press the practicality of the central route and afford an opportunity to lobby for California's long-sought daily mail.<sup>35</sup>

For Broderick, the journey turned into a nightmare. The lavishly supplied party left Placerville about October 3 and traveled only a few miles when the "new and elegant wagon purchased for the occasion in Sacramento" overturned at Silver Creek. Crowded into an uncomfortable mail wagon, Broderick developed a severe case of neuralgia, which abysmal conditions at the stations only aggravated. To favor the ailing guest of honor, Chorpenning sent the mail ahead by special courier while he and the other passengers moved forward at a snail's pace. After more than two weeks on the road, Chorpenning and Broderick finally arrived on October 18 at Salt Lake City, where they enjoyed five days of celebration. Despite his painful ordeal, Broderick steadfastly supported Chorpenning and the overland daily mail concept.<sup>36</sup>

A practical result of Chorpenning's trip over the central route was the realization of its complete inadequacy for passenger traffic. Stations consisted of brush or canvas shelters little more substantial than wickiups, totally lacking in amenities and staffed by the dregs of Utah and California's floating population. The bill of fare defied description and at times consisted only of whatever game flourished locally. Schedules depended on the availability of mules at remount camps. If teams could be rotated regularly, the stage rolled unceasingly; if not, the driver halted to rest whenever and wherever the mules gave out. Chorpenning was greatly irritated when his and

<sup>34</sup>*Sacramento Union*, October 11, 1858; *San Francisco Alta California*, October 8, 1858; *San Francisco Herald*, October 4, 1858.

<sup>35</sup>*Placerville Mountain-Democrat*, September 25, 1858.

<sup>36</sup>*Sacramento Bee*, October 5, 1858. Accounts of the trip are in *San Francisco Herald*, October 14, 19, 1858; *Sacramento Bee*, October 19, 1858; *Sacramento Union*, October 19, and November 4, 10, 1858. Also see *Journal History*, October 18, 1858, LDS Library-Archives. While he prepared for the journey, Chorpenning was sued for \$50,000 in damages by a Mr. Swann who charged that he had been defrauded of his interest in the mail contract. *Sacramento Union*, October 4, 1858.

## STALKING HORSE FOR THE PONY (Continued)

Broderick's fellow passengers promptly reported to the press the lack of essential conveniences along the line. Both Chorpenning brothers toured the stations in late October, firing impossible employees and improving the larder for man and beast. They also ordered building materials to improve the makeshift shanties before the onset of winter. Stationmasters, meanwhile, cut hay for the coming cold months.<sup>37</sup>

Indian attacks and the approach of winter caused the Chorpenning brothers to relocate the eastern division along the line surveyed earlier by Taft. While the weekly coaches continued their regular crawl over the old emigrant road, George Chorpenning—acting upon Taft's favorable evaluation of the Beckwith Trail—left Salt Lake City on October 30, 1858 to establish a new trace. The coaches ordered from New Hampshire had arrived overland a few days earlier with trade goods for a planned post at Gravelly Ford. In only three weeks Chorpenning laid out the route, and on November 21 he dispatched a column of fifty wagons and over 300 animals southwest from Temple Square along the new cutoff. Weekly coaches would thereafter be rerouted south from Granite Pass, bypassing the snow-clogged northern valleys. Chorpenning allowed the trail-breaking expedition only an eight-day head start when, on November 29, he sent the first stage west over the Ruby Valley shortcut. The stage lost directions and its team and arrived in Placerville on December 19, a week late.<sup>38</sup>

Chorpenning spent the holiday season transferring the upper Humboldt stations south and awaiting the Sacramento-bound courier bearing President James Buchanan's annual message to Congress. Earlier, he had joined with Hockaday & Company—the mail carriers between Missouri and Utah—to make a one-time westerly passage of the plains with the president's message. Together, the express companies hoped to beat the Butterfield stage and the Pacific steamer to California and thereby demonstrate the superiority of the central route. Unfortunately, the Buchanan Administration learned of the plan and gave Butterfield advance copies of the address, while withholding for several days the copies for Chorpenning and Hockaday. Although Chorpenning and Hockaday's pony express covered the distance between St. Louis and the Pacific Coast in less time than Butterfield, they could not overcome the stage company's head start. Still, the precedent of using horses and riders for a fast express system was not lost on freighting entrepreneur William Russell, who eighteen months later exploited the concept to the ruin of both Chorpenning and Hockaday.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>San Francisco *Alta California*, December 25, 1858.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, November 18, and December 9, 21, 1858.

<sup>39</sup>Hamlin, "Chorpenning's First Overland Pony Express," *PE*, XXVII, 4; Clifford (comp.), *Brief History*, 9.

## STALKING HORSE FOR THE PONY (Continued)

Chorpenning, however, had little time for remorse. During December, he wrestled with a lost mail party on the Granite Pass route and the killing of an employee over a friendly card game at Humboldt Sink station, and then faced a Christmas dinner amounting to "the hind leg of a dog and a few biscuit." Nevertheless, mail operations had improved. Permanent, although far from elaborate, structures had replaced rag shanties along the route. Each station near arable land had received a plow or other farm implements for cultivation of food and forage, and stationmasters had been instructed to keep accurate accounts of costs and income. Even the usually hostile California press admitted that "mortal man could not do more than the Major [Chorpenning] is doing to get things right."<sup>40</sup>

Also in late 1858, Chorpenning attempted to dispel the prevalent attitude among congressmen and the postmaster general that scheduled service was impossible over the Sierra Nevada in winter. Accordingly, he negotiated a \$2,000 contract with John A. "Snowshoe" Thompson to maintain the road through the Genoa-Placerville passes. A longtime associate of Chorpenning, Thompson had carried mail to Carson Valley between 1854 and 1858. In 1858-59, he used snowplows and sleighs to conduct regular weekly crossings of the Sierra Nevada. When storms closed the passes to sleighs, ski couriers carried the mail across the mountains. To the surprise and disappointment of Chorpenning's rivals, the Sierra Nevada posed no insurmountable obstacle during a particularly miserable winter.<sup>41</sup>

As soon as the mail route had been relocated to Ruby Valley, and while Thompson was battling the Sierra Nevada blizzards, Chorpenning suddenly left Salt Lake City on January 5, 1859 for Washington to lobby for protection of his contract. Broderick might have prompted Chorpenning's hasty departure with word of a growing threat from political figures in California who sought the mail contract. Doubts over the contract's permanence were rife, even among the most steadfast of Chorpenning's supporters in Salt Lake City. Brigham Young, on January 13, expressed his opinion that Chorpenning would lose the mail route in favor of a southern route which would be "a great auxiliary towards acquiring more territory from Mexico."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Salt Lake City *Valley Tan* (Utah), December 17, 1858; San Francisco *Alta California*, December 25, 1858. The Sacramento *Union*, March 29, 1859, contains a list of stations between Salt Lake City and Placerville. An account of travel over the Ruby Valley-Pine Valley-Gravelly Ford line is in Horace Greeley, *An Overland Journey from New York to San Francisco in the Summer of 1859* (New York, 1964), 219-39. This book was edited by Charles T. Duncan.

<sup>41</sup>Contract negotiations between Chorpenning and Thompson are described in Sacramento *Union*, December 18, 1858. For Thompson's earlier association with Chorpenning, see *Chorpenning vs. U.S.*, 10; Helen M. Branard, *The Chorpenning Claim* (n.p.: M'Intosh, 1871), 6; and Hafen, *Overland Mail*, 65. Descriptions of winter conditions in the Sierra Nevada are in Sacramento *Union*, December 18, 1858; San Francisco *Herald*, December 20, 1858; San Francisco *Alta California*, December 20, 21, 1858; and Placerville *Mountain-Democrat*, December 25, 1858.

<sup>42</sup>Nevada City *Nevada Democrat* (California), March 9, 1859. Journal History, January 13, 1859. LDS Library-Archives.

**STALKING HORSE FOR THE PONY (Continued)**

An equally pressing reason for Chorpenning's trip east was a delay in quarterly payments on the mail contract. When both House and Senate adjourned in June of 1858 without agreeing on a postal appropriation bill, the postmaster general was forced to issue letters of obligation to contractors, in lieu of the customary treasury warrants. These letters of obligation were of dubious authority, and most contractors could only offer them as security on loans from skeptical bankers. Chorpenning, his credit extended to the point of bankruptcy, adopted this course in the first weeks of 1859 when creditors and unpaid staff clamored for payment of bills due since summer.<sup>43</sup>

Fortunately, the post office forwarded payment in late January, and on February 12 Frank Chorpenning announced the receipt publicly to stave off liens and attachments. The *Sacramento Union* noted the improvement in Chorpenning's financial stability and took an offhand swipe at the firm. The money, it predicted, would enable the company "to settle up all demands, add to their stock of horses and coaches, and infuse a little more energy into the management of the line." But the *Union* went on to predict that other California parties were "likely to become interested in the contract." In that case, "the tendency will be to strengthen the confidence of the public in the ability of the contractors to develop the advantages of the central route." "So far," the paper concluded, "the management has not been satisfactory."<sup>44</sup>

The *Union* statement hinted at several intrigues to remove Chorpenning in favor of Lewis Brady. Ben Holladay—and perhaps Russell, Majors and Waddell—also hovered in the wings awaiting termination of Chorpenning's contract. Moreover, even as Chorpenning in Washington attempted to outmaneuver his would-be replacements, the two divisions of his line, west and east, became polarized in loyalty to their absent employer. The Californians under Jared B. Crandall, who operated the western division from Placerville to Gravelly Ford, grew uneasy over irregular paydays and rumors spread by Chorpenning's rivals. East of the Humboldt, the line functioned effectively under Howard Egan, whom Chorpenning had hired just hours before leaving Salt Lake City in January, and manned by LDS riders and stationkeepers. The authority of the church kept the eastern half of the line loyal and operational.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup>*Congressional Globe*, 35 Cong., 2 Sess., 3035–39.

<sup>44</sup>*Genoa Territorial Enterprise* (Nevada), February 12, 1859; *Sacramento Union*, n.d., quoted in *San Francisco Herald*, January 31, 1859.

<sup>45</sup>*Sacramento Union*, March 9, September 19, October 7, 1859; *Sacramento Bee*, October 14, 1859; *San Francisco Herald*, October 9, 1859. Journal History, July 26, 1893, LDS Library-Archives.

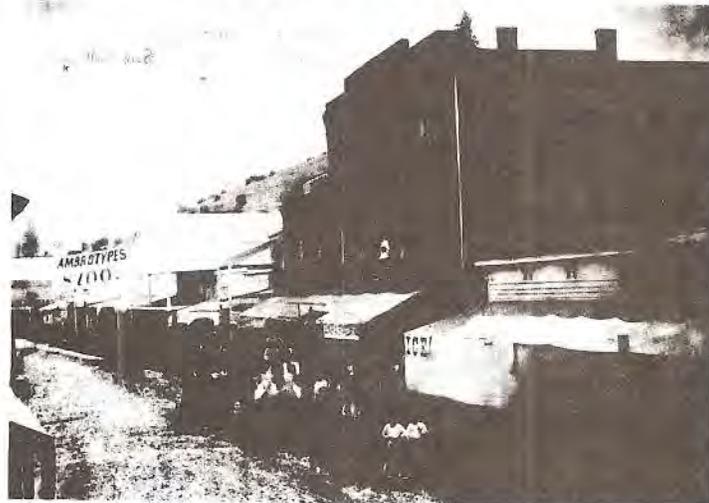
## STALKING HORSE FOR THE PONY (Continued)

As the western division wavered, Egan sought to abandon the Humboldt for a direct westerly road from Ruby Valley to Genoa. It is not known whether Chorpenning had ordered the change prior to his trip east, or whether it was Egan's own decision. But while the mails routinely passed over the Humboldt route, Egan persistently explored the country southwest of Overland Pass. The western division also took part in the search in early February, when a party explored the "Reese Route" from Carson Valley, via Walker River, to Ruby Valley. Finally, on March 9, the Sacramento *Union* reported that Egan had found a cut off, bypassing the "much dreaded" Forty Mile Desert. Egan immediately put men to work grading the new route via Reese River and Sand Springs Pass, and the *Union* predicted that by "next summer passengers will find this as comfortable and pleasant a road to travel as almost any other land route of the same distance not 'navigated' by railroads."<sup>46</sup>

Winter travelers over the Gravelly Ford road—among them the new territorial Indian agent, Major Frederick Dodge—also urged



(above) Salt Lake City post office.—Special Collections Department, *Salt Lake City Public Library*. (below) Placerville, California, was the western terminus for the Chorpenning mail after 1858.—*Bancroft Library*.



<sup>46</sup>Journal History, July 26, 1893, LDS Library-Archives. Sacramento *Union*, February 7, March 9, 1859.

## STALKING HORSE FOR THE PONY (Continued)

the company to eliminate entirely the long and disagreeable Humboldt trace. Frank Chorpenning responded in March of 1859, when he dispatched crews east over Egan's route from Carson Lake, building stations and improving mountain passes. As work continued into summer, Captain James H. Simpson and John Reese explored a still shorter route from Camp Floyd, south of Salt Lake City, to Genoa. Egan later that summer surveyed the Simpson cutoff with a herd of 2,500 cattle belonging to Ben Holladay. Shortage of capital and lack of credit, however, delayed relocation of the mail line until November of 1859.<sup>47</sup>

During the final year of his contract, Chorpenning stood virtually alone against a crescendo of crises, each more damaging than the last. After reaching Washington in February of 1859, he rectified the difficulties of payment from the Treasury Department. Postmaster General Aaron V. Brown verbally assured Chorpenning that his annual fee would be increased from \$130,000 to \$190,000, which would cover most of the company's outstanding debt. Unfortunately, Brown died in March and his successor, Joseph Holt, assumed a conservative position on mail service. Holt advised Chorpenning (probably in May of 1859) that deliveries would be reduced from weekly to semi-monthly and the fee cut to \$80,000 per year. Although Chorpenning successfully pressured Attorney General Jeremiah Black to forestall action on the contract reduction, he was unable to avoid a more serious calamity. The spring 1859 session of Congress adjourned without making the usual postal appropriation, again leaving contractors without recourse for payment. As in 1858, the postmaster general could only issue letters of obligation. Congress's inaction led directly to Chorpenning's failure in 1860.<sup>48</sup>

After six months of arrears, the sheriff of El Dorado County, California, on October 6, 1859 attached stock and other property of the Chorpenning mail company at Placerville to satisfy the claims of employees of the western division and other creditors. At a sheriff's sale on October 9, Lewis Brady—owner of the Pioneer Stage Line—bought virtually all of the confiscated property. When Chorpenning's agent failed to arrive at Placerville at the appointed time on October 11, Brady called for the mail at the post office and started over Simpson's route to Salt Lake City. Egan's men, meanwhile, waited in ignorance beyond Gravelly Ford for mail and the weekly coach.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Journal History, July 22, 1859, LDS Library-Archives. Salt Lake City *Valley Tan*, March 15, 1859; *Sacramento Bee*, February 10, September 23, 1859; *Sacramento Union*, August 25, September 20, 1859. Barbara Beeton, "James Herve Simpson in the Great Basin," *Montana*, XXVIII (January 1978), 28-43.

<sup>48</sup>Journal History, July 22, 1859, LDS Library-Archives. McBride, "Utah Mail Service," 77-78. *Congressional Globe*, 35 Cong., 2 Sess., 1677; "Report of the Postmaster General, 1859" in *Senate Executive Document 2*, 36 Cong., 1 Sess. (Serial 1025), 1388, 1420. Hafen, *Overland Mail*, 131-35; Banning and Banning, *Six Horses*, 185-86.

<sup>49</sup>*San Francisco Herald*, October 9, 22, 1859; *Placerville Mountain-Democrat*, October 15, 1859; *San Francisco Alta California*, December 3, 1859.

## STALKING HORSE FOR THE PONY (Continued)

Brady's initial passage to Utah was a near disaster. By the time he met Egan at Ruby Valley, his wagon was in shambles. Egan offered to carry the mail the rest of the way, but Brady refused. He did, however, accept the loan of fresh stock and finally reached Salt Lake City far behind schedule. Although the Salt Lake City postmaster refused to turn over the mails, Brady apparently made at least three deliveries of mail from Placerville to Zion.<sup>50</sup>

Chorpenning's Utah agents, meanwhile, continued to erect new stations along the Simpson Trail, determined to carry the mail from Salt Lake "whether they took it back or not." In early November, Egan left Salt Lake City to reestablish stations on the western division along the Simpson trace. On the first mail delivery over the new road, he reached Ruby Valley from Salt Lake City in five days. Egan also stationed a representative at Placerville to call for the eastbound mail. The postmaster, however, continued to honor a contract that he had made illegally with Brady in October.<sup>51</sup>

In California, Brady and the press made a concerted effort to undermine the Chorpenning contract. While Brady actively recruited Chorpenning's employees, local newspapers attempted to convince the public that a change in contractors was needed. Winter and Indian hostilities, however, frustrated Brady's attempt to seize the Chorpenning route. By late December, he decided that his grab for Chorpenning's service was a lost cause and withdrew from the contest. The Placerville postmaster, nevertheless, refused the mails to Egan's crews until the postmaster general in March of 1860 directed him to ignore his bogus contract with Brady. From March until May of 1860, Egan carried the semi-monthly mails without dispute.<sup>52</sup>

News of the attachment of Chorpenning's property at Placerville destroyed his credibility in Washington. In November of 1859, Postmaster General Holt solicited new bids on semi-monthly mail service over the Placerville-Salt Lake City route. Ads for the service, which would begin in May of 1860, appeared in California newspapers in early January. In Salt Lake City, the *Deseret News* characterized the obvious effort to dislodge Chorpenning—whose contract still had two years to function—as "peculiar wire-pulling" and "malicious and unlawful interference." The paper reiterated, however, that the church had no formal association with Chorpenning

<sup>50</sup>Salt Lake City *Deseret News*, November 23, December 21, 1859; Sacramento *Union*, November 23, 1859; San Francisco *Alta California*, January 7, 1860.

<sup>51</sup>San Francisco *Alta California*, February 15, 1860; Salt Lake City *Deseret News*, November 23, 1859; Placerville *Mountain-Democrat*, March 10, 1860. A rare account of travel over the final Chorpenning route through central Nevada is in Richard F. Burton, *The City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California* (Reprint ed., New York, 1963), 497-557. This book was edited by Fawn M. Brodie. It was originally published in 1861.

<sup>52</sup>Salt Lake City *Deseret News*, December 20, 1859; Salt Lake City *Mountaineer*, January 7, 1860; San Francisco *Alta California*, February 15, 1860; Placerville *Mountain-Democrat*, March 10, 1860.

<sup>53</sup>Salt Lake City *Deseret News*, November 16, 23, 1859; Sacramento *Bee*, October 29, November 19, 1859; San Francisco *Alta California*, November 3, 1859.

## STALKING HORSE FOR THE PONY (Continued)

and only sought dependable mail service, regardless of carrier. California newspapers, on the other hand, stepped up their charges of inefficiency and mismanagement, and expressed an outdated, but still popular, vision of a daily mail connection to the Middle West.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, on May 11, 1860, Holt annulled Chorpenning's contract on grounds of "bad management and failure on the part of the contractors to provide requisite means to carry out their agreement." The decision ignored the fact that Chorpenning had faithfully delivered the mail, even though he seldom met the contract deadlines. Chorpenning later insisted that unnamed Californians, who had unsuccessfully offered to buy his contract for a \$50,000 bonus in 1858-59, had joined with Postmaster General Holt to delay contract payments and force the company into bankruptcy. Whether such a conspiracy existed cannot be proven.<sup>54</sup>

Russell, Majors and Waddell's pony express company became the immediate beneficiary of Chorpenning's demise. On the same day that Chorpenning's service was terminated, William Russell signed a contract with the post office on behalf of Russell & Jones Company, a subsidiary of Russell, Majors and Waddell. Russell agreed to provide the same semi-monthly service at \$30,000 per year—\$47,000 less than Chorpenning. The new contractor immediately seized the stations, stock, and equipment along Chorpenning's mail line. From May of 1860 until the termination of the Pony Express in October of 1861, both Russell & Jones and the U.S. mail utilized the stations and route established by the Chorpenning mail between Placerville and Salt Lake City. Subsequently, the Union Telegraph and the Overland Stage Company also adopted the trail blazed by the Chorpenning mail carriers.<sup>55</sup>

George Chorpenning remained in the East following the revocation of his mail contract. He helped raise two Maryland regiments of

<sup>54</sup>San Francisco *Alta California*, June 13, 1860. Francis Wade Hughes, *The Case of George Chorpenning: Argument by Francis Wade Hughes Before the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives... March, 1880* (Washington, D.C.: L. G. Stephens & Son, Printer, 1880), 32, 61-62; John A. J. Creswell, *The Chorpenning Case* (Washington, D.C.: Union Republican Congressional Committee, [1872]), 13-15.

<sup>55</sup>Richard E. Fife and John W. Headley, *The Pony Express Stations of Utah in Historical Perspective, 1979* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Utah Cultural Resource Series, Monograph 2, 1979), 1; and Glenn D. Bradley, *The Story of the Pony Express* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1913), 22, make the undocumented claim that Russell & Jones bought out the Chorpenning mail. *Chorpenning vs. U.S.*, 37, emphatically denies that this was the case. See also Bluth, "Confrontation with an Arid Land," 60; and Mildred Haven Vernon, "The Daily Overland Mail to the Pacific, 1861-1869" (M.A. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1923), 24. Roy S. Bloss, *Pony Express: The Great Gamble* (Berkeley, California: Howell-North, 1959), 28, suggests when the Pony Express established its route in February and March of 1860, it "borrowed or appropriated" many of Chorpenning's stations. In a letter of April 16, 1861 to the Salt Lake City *Deseret News*, W. H. Shearman clearly stated that the Pony Express simply helped itself to Chorpenning's assets. Shearman's persuasive and pungent letter is quoted in Journal History, April 16, 1861, LDS Library-Archives.

## STALKING HORSE FOR THE PONY EXPRESS (Continued)

volunteers and served briefly as a major during the Civil War, but resigned his commission to remain in Washington and prosecute his claims against the government. Congress in 1870 awarded Chorpenning \$443,010.60, but payment was soon revoked. The case was presented to Congress again in the late 1870s, but it remained unsettled at the time of Chorpenning's death on April 3, 1894. Not a single major newspaper in the Western states noted his passing.<sup>56</sup>

Chorpenning's efforts to establish a central overland mail service have generally been discounted as endeavors "of a ruder type," when compared with the Pony Express. Although he established the first scheduled mail service over what later became the preferred route for the telegraph, Overland Stage, and railroad, that service rarely met the terms of his contract. Nor was he the perpetually questing frontiersman that he later projected to Congress. Subcontractors conducted the actual operation of the mail line, while Chorpenning spent most of his time as a comfortable habitué of Washington, D.C.<sup>57</sup>

Whether the loss of his contract in 1860 was the result of the machinations of ruthless competitors, or simply a classic case of undercapitalization, Chorpenning made a genuine contribution to opening transcontinental communication. He instituted, and for nine years maintained, regular mail delivery between California and Salt Lake City; he introduced wheeled transportation to the western section of the overland mail; and he reoriented the Utah-California route to a shorter, safer, and more dependable trace. Like many other entrepreneurs, Chorpenning saw opportunity on the Far Western frontier and was willing to gamble. His ultimate failure appears as yet another example of an ambitious man's reach exceeding his grasp.

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<sup>56</sup>Hafen, "Chorpenning," *DAB*, IV, 91-92. "Report of the Postmaster General in the Matter of George Chorpenning," *House Miscellaneous Document 66*, 41 Cong., 3 Sess. (Serial 1463); "Report on Joint Resolution authorizing the Postmaster General to adjust the Accounts of George Chorpenning," *Senate Report 346*, 41 Cong., 3 Sess. (Serial 1443). Congress's handling of the Chorpenning claim produced charges of corruption and a call for reform of the system of awarding damages. "The Chorpenning Claim," *The Nation*, XV (October 10, 1872), 228-29. Chorpenning eventually sold his claim to James Montgomery, who in turn attempted to sell shares. *New York Times*, December 30, 1892.

<sup>57</sup>Banning and Banning, *Six Horses*, 173.



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A MONTHLY PHILATELIC MAGAZINE.

VOL. 3.

OAKLAND, CAL., APRIL, 1897.

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## A SKETCH OF THE PONY EXPRESS.

THE Pony Express! That pulse of the nation that carried the messages of vital importance from state to state, that bound the frontier to the Golden West. Who of those days will ever forget the intrepid rider, braving all peril, forgetful of self, intent only on the speedy delivery of his precious mochilla to the next hardy horseman, riding hard and fast over mountain and plain, through scorching desert, through icy snow, through sunshine and rain, past friend, away from foe, intent only on reaching the end of his beat, safe ride, safe delivery. Fresh rider, fresh steed, ever onward, carrying those messages that built the great West.

Forty fearless horsemen in saddle, riding west, as many more riding east, a relay race that ended only after being maintained for two long years, a faster messenger then taking their place, the telegraph line being completed across the continent, and forming that glittering girdle that now binds the East to the West in an embrace never to be broken!

Stop a minute in this busy life we lead, where with the aid of steam and electricity all parts of the world are brought within easy and quick communication, and for a few moments look back to the time when the hardy pioneer counted the weeks and months before he could hear from the dear ones in the States, the anxious days that must pass before the steamer arrived at Frisco, that long journey *via* Panama. But busy brains conceived the idea of a Pony Express crossing the continent, establishing a regular service between St. Joseph, Mo., and San Francisco, Cal., that should carry those papers of importance from sender to receiver in an average of ten days, from point to point. Think of it, 2,000 miles on horseback, across a country overrun with hostile Indians, destitute of all cultivation, through a region so wild, so desolate, so little known!

It was in 1859 that the adoption of the

Pony Express across the continent was advanced, and the first actual work performed towards establishing the line. The route, briefly stated, was due west from St. Joseph to Fort Kearney, up the Platte to Julesburg, where it crossed; thence by Fort Laramie and Fort Bridger to Salt Lake City, *via* Camp Floyd, Ruby Valley, the Humboldt, Carson City, Placerville, and Folsom, to Sacramento and to San Francisco by boat.

The Pony Express was not an experiment at this time, as it had been successfully used on the California routes of Wells, Fargo & Co. since 1855, both for the carrying of mail and express matter.

During the winter of 1858-59 agents were at work advancing both from the west and the east, establishing the stations where relays of ponies and supplies were to be kept awaiting service. These relay stations were first established about twenty-five miles apart, but as the system was perfected, during operation, the distance was shortened considerably. The horsemen covered a beat of about fifty miles, changing ponies many times during their relay.

The intention of the Pony Express was to carry letters only, and not more than ten pounds of these at a trip. It was decided that the safest and easiest mode of carrying the mail was to make four pockets, one in each corner of the mochilla (pronounced *mocheyya*), a covering made of heavy leather, for the saddles, and used generally by the expert Mexican and Spanish riders. The mochilla was transferred from pony to pony, and went through from San Francisco to St. Joseph, the pockets containing the mail being locked, and opened only at military posts *en route*, and at Salt Lake City.

These precious letters were wrapped in oiled silk to protect them, but even this precaution sometimes failed. Rivers had to be crossed; no time could be lost on account of floods, so horse and rider would swim together.

## PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN (Continued)

144

## THE PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN.

The following quotation from Mark Twain's "Roughing It," though not exact in all the minor details, tells the story in his usual happy manner.

"There was no idling time for the pony rider on duty. He rode fifty miles without stopping, by daylight, moonlight, starlight, or through the blackness of darkness, just as it happened. He rode a splendid horse that was born a racer, and fed and lodged as a gentleman. He kept him at his utmost speed for ten miles, and then as he came crashing up to the station where stood two men holding fast a fresh, impatient steed, the transfer of rider and mail bag was made in the twinkling of an eye, and away flew the eager pair, and were out of sight before the spectator could hardly get the ghost of a look. Both rider and horse went 'flying light.'

"The rider's dress was thin and fitted close; he wore a roundabout and a skull cap, and tucked his pantaloons into his boot-tops like a race rider. He carried nothing that was not absolutely necessary, for even the postage on his literary freight was worth five dollars a letter. He got but little frivolous correspondence to carry; his bag had business letters in it mostly. His horse was stripped of all unnecessary weight, too. He wore a little wafer of a racing saddle, and no visible blanket. He wore light shoes, or none at all. The little flat mail pockets strapped under the rider's thighs, would each hold about the bulk of a child's primer. They held many and many an important business chapter and newspaper letter, but these were written on paper as airy and thin as gold-leaf, nearly, and their bulk and weight were economized. The stage-coach traveled about 125 miles a day (twenty-four hours), the pony rider about 250 miles."

It may be as well to glance at some of the early history of the express and mail transportation of the West.

Wells, Fargo & Co. was organized in March, 1852, under the general incorporation laws of New York, the objective point of its work being the Pacific Coast. In connection with the ordinary express business, a system of letter carriage and distribution outside of the mails was established, a novelty that at once caught the popular favor, and it contributed much to the convenience of existence in out-of-the-way mining camps, and was recognized by Congress in the passage

of section 3993, Revised Statutes, of the United States. In October, 1855, the letter-carriage system was largely extended, and was placed in full accord with the legal requirements. Prior to this time there had been much unwarranted antagonism by the government postal officials. It was at this time that the change was made from the hand stamp of the express company, indicating the prepayment of charges on letters, to the official imprint of the company, now known as the frank. These were sold at a slight increase over the original cost.

To execute this branch of the service under all circumstances and all conditions of weather, with the promptness, celerity, and despatch for which a reputation had to be acquired, the use of pony riders, and runners on snow-shoes, was frequently resorted to, when other modes of travel were impracticable.

In 1858 a contract for a term of years (under the name of the Overland Mail Co.) was made with the government, for the transportation of first-class mail matter overland from St. Louis to San Francisco, by the southern route, through southwestern Missouri, Indian Territory, New Mexico, Arizona, and Southern California. The service was to be semi-weekly, and the time of trips between destinations, twenty-five days. This southern route, as outlined, was operated from the first of September, 1858, to about April, 1861, when it was discontinued, owing to the breaking out of the rebellion. It was arranged with the Postmaster-General to have the service re-established for the balance of the contract time, on what was known as the Central or Pony Express route, the time of the trip being reduced to seventeen days. Under the former contract mail of the first class only was carried; under the new contract, both letters and papers were to be transported. Wells, Fargo & Co. were required to continue the Pony Express service until the completion of the telegraph line, about Oct. 24, 1861.

Formerly many small companies, operating under various names and for varying distances, covered parts of the route operated by Wells, Fargo & Co., as the Pony Express route. These were ultimately joined into the one concern, and in 1866 Wells, Fargo & Co. controlled all the important lines between the Missouri River and the Pacific Ocean, carrying

## PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN (Continued)

THE PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN.

145

mails under their franks, to all parts of their system, until April 30, 1895, at which time letter-carrying was abandoned, except in the Republic of Mexico.

The Golden West owes much to the memory of those indomitable men, who conceived and established the Pony Ex-

press and kindred services, and by their energy aided so much in the growth of this country. To those hardy horsemen, who rode so well, a monument of fame should be erected, for the pony and his rider will always be dear to all true sons of the Golden West.

B. H. HENDERSON.

## REMINISCENCES OF THE PONY EXPRESS SERVICE.

Compiled by Capt. Jas. Otley Bradford.

THE Pony Express was the forerunner of the mail coach and railroad.

In 1859 there was not a foot of railroad west of the Missouri River, the most western terminus being St. Joseph, Mo., and the only means of transportation from the manufacturing and money centers of the Atlantic Coast was by rail to St. Joseph and thence by mule, horse, or ox team across the plains some 1,300 miles to the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and thence through mountain passes and over dangerous, precipitous mountains 700 miles further to Sacramento. Between California and the Missouri River is 2,000 miles, 1,700 miles of which was at that time through an arid region inhabited by great bands of warlike, roving Indians, and millions of buffalo. The trail was marked for hundreds of miles by the mounds above the bodies of people who had been killed by the savages or died in illness along the way. The average time spent in going from St. Joseph to California was two months and a half.

At the time referred to there were several stage lines across the plains.

In the winter of 1859-60 Senator W. M. Gwin, Alexander Majors—the pioneer freighter of the plains—and Daniel E. Phelps, who had been manager of one of the stage lines for several years with profit, met at Washington, and, receiving assurance from business men in New York and Boston, and the United States Government officials, that a fast express line from the Missouri River to California would be patronized by them, decided upon a Pony Express. A company was incorporated, in spite of the ridicule that many a plainsman cast upon the enterprise for its lack of practical sense. In May Senator Gwin and Alexander Majors furnished the capital, and issued orders to start the enterprise at once. Agents were sent out to buy along the frontier and in Texas 600 bronchos, combining fleetness, toughness, and endurance, and

the animals were ready by the September following. Seventy-five men were engaged as riders, none of them weighing over 110 pounds, and a few not over 100 pounds. The riders were selected from the young men on the plains, on account of their bravery, capacity to suffer long privations from food and drink, and ability to ride in the saddle for 150 and 200 miles at a stretch without rest if necessary. They were also chosen for their shooting abilities, and knowledge of the craft and mode of attack of Indians. The pay was fixed at \$125 per month, but a few riders, like Wm. F. Cody—now famous as Buffalo Bill—and Dan Westcott, who were assigned to ride through regions infested by Comanches and Cheyennes, the worst savages on the plains of Nebraska and Colorado, received \$150 for their extra hard riding and taking their lives in their hands almost daily.

Relay stations were established along the 2,000 miles' trail from the Missouri River, and bronchos and several men equipped with rifles and pistols, were stationed at each. Between Salt Lake City and Sacramento, where the trails were even more lonely than on the staked plains, and where hostile savages were numerous, relay stations were established every forty miles.

On the first Monday in April—3d of the month—1860, the Fast Pony Express was opened for business. At noon on that day Henry Wallace set out from St. Joseph, carrying a message of congratulation from President Buchanan to the Governor of California, the words being telegraphed that morning from Washington, D. C., to St. Joseph. A bundle of the latest Chicago and New York papers, a packet of bank drafts and important business letters to miners and business men in San Francisco, filled the first rider's leather pouch. The whole population of St. Joseph turned out to witness Wallace's departure. At exactly noon a gun was fired as a signal to start, and

## PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN (Continued)

146

## THE PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN.

amid cheers of the people he leaped into his saddle and set off toward the setting sun. Every twenty miles he had a relay of horses; two minutes were allowed him to change horses at the station and provide himself with refreshment. It was 100 miles to the end of his stretch. The packet with which Wallace left St. Jo arrived at Sacramento April 13, at 9 A. M., ten days in transit.

On the same day, April 3, 1860, the first Pony Express rider set out towards the east, from Sacramento, at that time a good-sized village. John Roff was the first rider. He was considered one of the best rough riders in the state. Sacramento made a gala day of the event, cannon firing salutes, while the local orators indulged in speeches to large audiences, the people from the surrounding country having flocked to town.

Promptly at noon Roff received the signal to start, and, with his leather pouch of mail and light packages across his back, went flying out of town. He covered the first twenty miles in fifty-one minutes, changed horses and was off again in ten seconds more. At Placerville, sixty-seven miles east of Sacramento, he finished his stretch in two hours and forty-nine minutes. At Placerville another rider took the pouch for a ride of seventy-two miles up the western slope of the Sierra Nevadas. The pouch leaving Sacramento in the hands of Roff reached St. Jo in eleven and one-half days. The riders through the Sierras usually had to battle with great snow banks and wind their way along narrow mountain trails, along great precipices, but their average time was ten miles per hour. From Placerville the stretch was seventy-two miles to Fort Churchill, then another stretch of 120 miles to Smith's Creek, and it was made by six relays of horses, and generally in from nine to ten hours.

Every day except Sunday for two years a rider left St. Jo at noon, and Sacramento at 8 A. M. On Oct. 24, 1861, the first transcontinental telegraph went into operation, and the Pony Express service came to an end. The enterprise was a success after the first few months, and showed Congress and the capitalists clearly the extraordinary demand there was for quick communication between the Atlantic and Pacific seaboards. The business men of both coasts were liberal patrons of the Pony Express. By the use of the telegraph to St. Jo a message could be placed in Sacramento in

from 11 to 12 days, and when the trail was in fairly good condition, in nine and a half days. The fastest time ever made was in December, 1860, when President Buchanan's last message to Congress reached Sacramento in eight and a half days from Washington. The news of the attack upon Fort Sumter came through in eight days and fourteen hours, and from that time on the California business men and public officers paid a bonus to the Pony Express Company to be distributed among the riders for carrying war news as fast as possible.

The Pony Express Company received \$300 extra for its riders for bringing a bundle of Chicago papers containing the news of the battle of Antietam a day earlier than usual to Sacramento in 1861. A gold watch was given to the rider in the mountains (California Division of the Pony Express line) who made the best time in carrying Lincoln's inaugural speech over his stretch. The charge for transporting messages and papers from St. Jo to Sacramento were \$5.00 an ounce. Not more than ten pounds was carried by a rider. I can give but a partial list of pony riders, it being impossible at this date to remember all those true men, some of whom are living, and some beneath the dust of the trail: Henry Wallace, John Roff, W. A. Oates, I. G. Kelley, T. R. Miller, Frank Low, Erastus Eagan, James White, John Fisher, Sam Gilson, William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill), Dan Westcott, Bob Ellison, Peter Vincent, Robert Hesketh (Pony Bob).

The original incorporators of the Pony Express were laughed at whenever their business was mentioned, and among those who lacked faith in the enterprise it is said was Mr. C. P. Huntington, now president of the Southern Pacific. A writer, who is probably one of the few men now living who had much to do with the establishment and management of the Pony Express line, has stated (*N. Y. Sun*, November 8, 1896) that "he," Mr. Huntington, "called me into his hardware store at Sacramento in the spring of 1859, and asked me how I had lost my wits, and he added that it was constructive murder to send out lone horsemen to ride through the 2,000 miles to the Missouri River, because not one in five could get away from the Indians. When the express line was open, however, the hardware firm of Huntington & Hopkins used to pay us from \$250 to \$300 a month for doing business for them."

## PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN (Continued)

## THE PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN.

147

The same writer is reported to have also stated as follows: "It took \$27,000 to build relay stations and lay out and construct trails across the mountains. No one knows what hard work we had to perform to make the passes in the mountains 7,000 feet above sea level, passable for our riders. We had to haul lumber through snow and ice on the backs of donkeys five or six miles for our relay stations. We were constantly worrying at news our riders brought us of devilry by the Utes and Piutes to our stations and riders. We had horses stolen and shot at night many a time, and twice in Nevada we had the men at the relay stations killed and the places robbed of everything. As I look back on that day, I wonder how we ever managed to induce any one to take the awful risks our riders did day and night in that country. It is a wonder that they were not all killed, as Mr. Huntington predicted. I believe we lost but five riders altogether by Indian attacks on the western part of the Pony Express line, during the two years of its operation. Two more men lost their lives by exposure in the snow banks and ice in the upper mountains."

Referring to the dangers and hardship of the men it is stated that the most remarkable pony rider was William F. Cody, who has since become famous as Buffalo Bill. He was a stripling when a rider for the Pony Express, not weighing

over 105 pounds. He was known all over the plains even then as the toughest rough rider in the west. His regular ride was 112 miles every other day through Nebraska. One day when he had dashed over his stretch, he found that the relay station had been attacked by the Cheyennes, and the two station men dead. Bill saw indications that the Indians were some forty miles ahead, but that did not deter him a moment. He mounted a fresh broncho and rode on for another night and part of that day. He rode 284 miles without stopping to rest for more than the regulation two minutes at a change of horses. He averaged sixteen miles an hour from first to last. Bill received a watch from the Pony Co. for his services.

The most exciting experiences during those days was in the fall of 1861, when the Piute Indians, the most tractable and yet most cruel savages in the West, went on the war-path on account of some grievance against the Government Indian Agents. They were out for the blood of any white man they could murder secretly. Half the experienced broncho riders in Nevada and Utah quit work immediately after the men at one of the relay stations had been killed and scalped, but they either soon returned to duty or their places were filled by willing men, so that the service suffered but little interruption.

## THE STAMPS OF THE PONY EXPRESS AND THEIR REPRINTS.

## THE STAMPS.

EVERY community has some cherished spot or special event that recalls with its associations a marked historical epoch of its life, and its fame is ever refreshed and kept alive by the members of the community. What is true in general life is likewise true in philately. The postmaster's provisionals of New York, St. Louis and other cities, the confederate locals, are looked upon as the *sine qua non* among collectors of those cities, and a silent and steady search is constantly going on for these treasures.

In the West there are no stamps outside of the regular issues of our country that hold so sacred a place in the hearts of all collectors as the stamps of the Pony Express, issued by Wells, Fargo & Co.

They at once recall the stirring scenes of early pioneer life, that seem like fairy tales to the present generation.

Although issued by a private corporation they were sanctioned by Congress, and were in use throughout a large territory, not only the entire Pacific Coast, but reaching as far East as St. Joseph, Missouri, and its feeders comprising all large cities of this country and Europe.

They recall the exciting times attending the discovery and development of the world-renowned Comstock lode. They exemplify the spirit of the times, "Get there at any cost!" The high values speak of the cost necessary to rush the letters through; the rider in the center shows the means.

The shortening of time necessary to forward a letter from San Francisco to the states, was of vital importance to the rapidly-growing camps in the West. The long and tedious Panama route was pronounced too slow; hardy and daring riders were found to carry important

## PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN (Continued)

148

## THE PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN.

mail from station to station across the continent. But not only rapidity but safety was necessary, as great enterprises and immense sums were at stake. It is here that the great express company of the Pacific Coast, Wells, Fargo & Co., and its connections, found its true function. They established routes all over the coast, using franked envelopes for their service. In the early part of 1860 they organized a special service across the continent for the more rapid forwarding of mail intrusted to their care. This was in addition to the regular but slower transportation of mail matter by the stage-coaches. Their service was independent of, but really auxiliary to, the U. S. mail. In order to provide means of prepaying the charges on the letters, a set of stamps was issued, the now famous Pony Express stamps.

The charges, as sanctioned by Congress, were \$5.00 per ounce for the through trip from Sacramento to St. Joseph, with proportionately lower rates for intermediate points. At the terminal point, St. Jo, the letters were placed in the care of Uncle Sam to be forwarded by him to their destination through the regular mails, and *vice versa*.

Among the heaviest patrons of the Pony Express were European commercial houses who had agencies or branches in Japan and China.

On completion of the overland telegraph line, Oct. 24, 1861, the transcontinental Pony Express service was discontinued, but numerous branches were maintained for several years afterward, notably between Folsom and Virginia City.

The stamps themselves are well known to most collectors, but a general description will not be amiss. There were five values issued, in the following colors:—

1. 10c, dark brown.
2. 10c, chocolate.
3. 25c, pale rose to carmine rose.
4. 25c, blue.
5. \$1.00, carmine rose.
6. \$2.00, green.
7. \$2.00, red.
8. \$4.00, green.
9. \$4.00, black.

They are rectangular stamps with a central ornamental panel showing the pony rider and the inscriptions above and below on a background of fine lines.

The design of the dollar values consists of a central panel containing the picture of the horseman riding at full

speed; at the top in white fancy block letters, the words "PONY EXPRESS," without period, and below in plain colored block type WELLS, FARGO & CO. The value is expressed by a numeral above the horseman and the word DOLLAR or DOLLARS in a small panel underneath. There are small scrolls of flowers in the corners.

The design of the 10-cent and 25-cent stamps is slightly longer than that of the dollar values, but is very similar. The words PONY EXPRESS are in plain white block letters with a period.

The value; 10 cts.— $\frac{1}{2}$  oz.—and 25 cts.— $\frac{1}{2}$  oz.—respectively, is placed below the horseman. Below the panel containing the horseman the inscription reads: "IF ENCLOSED IN OUR FRANKS WELLS, FARGO & CO."

The stamps were printed by Messrs. Britton and Rey in 1860 and subsequently as demand called for further supplies. Mr. J. J. Rey was the original designer of the stamps, though undoubtedly the general idea was given by the officers of Wells, Fargo & Co.

The original design, as worked out on the lithographic stone, consisted of the \$1.00 stamp complete, but with the value in plural, the 10-cent stamp complete without the horseman, and the numbers 25, 2, 3 and 4 for insertion. Though a \$3.00 stamp was thus prepared for, none of this value were ever printed. This stone is still in existence and now forms part of the exhibit of Wells, Fargo & Co. at the museum in the Golden Gate Park.

The stamps were printed in sheets  $8\frac{1}{2}$  by  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches and containing 40 stamps in 5 horizontal rows of 8, but in two different arrangements for the several values. The 10-cent and 25-cent values were printed in 4 panels of 10 each  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch apart and the dollar values in 2 panels of 20 each  $3\text{-}16$  inch apart. The distance between the stamps themselves varied but slightly, being about  $1\text{-}16$  inch apart, both vertically and horizontally.

Messrs. Makins & Co. kindly placed at my disposal their entire stock of these stamps, including several entire sheets of the 25-cent and \$1.00 values, for which I extend my best thanks.

As stated above, the original design consisted of the \$1.00 stamp. Impressions were taken from this and transferred to another stone to make up the full working plate of forty. To produce the two and four dollar values the numerals were changed by transferring these

## PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN (Continued)

## THE PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN.

149

numerals. For the one dollar value, however, the "S" of dollars was likewise removed; in doing this the end of the "S" was left, making an irregular period. In fact, on some specimens faint traces of the "S" can be seen.

The transfers were all destroyed when the necessary number of stamps had been struck off and the stones used for other purposes. It was just a piece of good luck that the original design was placed alongside of others which were occasionally used, else this might have disappeared likewise.

## The Reprints.

Up to the end of March it was supposed that the original dies or plates of the Pony Express stamps had been destroyed, so completely had they been lost track of. At this time, however, a request was made of Wells, Fargo & Co. (to Mr. Aaron Stein, assistant to President John J. Valentine), for the colors of the Pony Express stamps. The idea, as stated at the time, was to supply a young nephew of one of the partners with a set of the stamps and to help his collection along by providing a few extras for exchange.

This was the first intimation that the original stone was still in existence and was in the possession of Messrs. Britton & Rey, who printed the original stamps.

The request for the colors of the stamps created considerable surprise and was the first notice of the intention of reprinting the stamps.

The request was complied with, Mr. Britton being referred to Geo. V. Leroi, clerk in the president's office. The various denominations and their colors were explained to Mr. Britton, who made a memorandum of the same. A few days later Mr. Britton again called on Mr. Leroi, and asked to examine some of the Pony Express stamps, at the same time showing a black proof copy of the original die, asking if it were all right. After further conversation a request was made for a set of stamps to take along to be used as color models by the lithographer.

A small frame containing a set of German counterfeits retained in the office for comparison was examined. As the colors approximated those of the originals, and, moreover, this set was in the best form for handling, it was taken along.

Upon close examination the original design on the stone showed considerable wear and had to be retouched before satisfactory transfers could be made.

The reason for this was the presence of several other designs on the same stone. It is a regular custom among lithographers to group a number of small designs on the same stone. In the case before us a vignette that was frequently used occupied the place next to the design of the Pony Express stamp, and the stone was subjected to considerable wear and tear.

A transfer was made of all the values to one stone, making up a working plate of twenty stamps, being four of each value. The reason for placing all values on the same stone was one of economy, for it is easier and cheaper to use several colors on the same stone than prepare separate stones for each value. The order of the values from left to right was \$4.00, \$2.00, \$1.00, 25c, 10c.

The plate thus prepared was used to print the several stamps in their proper colors. Of course all values were printed in all the colors; and it could not be otherwise, seeing that the plate contained all the values. From each sheet printed in black, brown, blue or light red but a single vertical strip of four stamps was available, while those printed in green and dark red furnished two strips, or eight stamps each. The remaining parts of the sheets, for they were all cut, are "freaks," as they have been dubbed, and are of comparatively little philatelic value except in so far as they demonstrate the make-up of the plate.

One point of interest they do show, however. They prove that the black and the blue stamps were printed before those in the other colors. The original design is that of the one-dollar stamp with the value in the plural. In the transfers, the word "DOLLARS" remained unchanged for all the dollar values, making an error, 1 DOLLARS. The "freaks" in black and blue show this, but those of the other colors do not. The erasure of the letter "S" of DOLLARS in the one-dollar stamp was not made until the impressions in black and blue had been struck off.

The reprints were printed on thin, white, wove paper in sheets 5½ by 5½ inches in size, the impression covering a space of 4½ by 4½ inches.

The stamps are differently spaced than the originals, being placed farther apart.

(Continued)

150

## THE PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN.

The vertical spaces between the stamps are  $2\frac{1}{2}$  mm., and the horizontal spaces are 2 mm. for the dollar values and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  mm. for the 10c and 25c values.

As stated above, the original design showed considerable wear and was retouched before the transfers for the new working plate were taken. Before going into these details it may be well as an introduction to briefly compare the paper and the colors of the originals and the reprints.

The paper of the originals is a rather heavy, stiff, white, wove paper, while that of the reprints is of very much lighter weight, and softer in quality.

In regard to the colors it will surprise no one that they are not exactly matched if they will recall the fact related above that a set of German counterfeits was used as a model. In fact, some trouble was taken to match to colors of the models. The following tabular statement will form the best comparison of the colors of the originals and the reprints.

ORIGINALS	REPRINTS
10c Chocolate, deep brown.	Dark bistre.
25c Deep blue.	Blue approaches genuine pretty closely but is not quite as deep.
25c Pale rose to carmine rose.	Brownish red.
\$1.00 Light red.	Pale vermilion red.
\$2.00 Green.	Grayish green.
\$2.00 Carmine rose.	Brownish red.
\$4.00 Green.	Grayish green.
\$4.00 Deep black.	Black but the impression is lighter, giving it a grayish cast.

The retouches of the original die have made such marked differences that any one once knowing them can never fail to recognize the reprints.

In enumerating these differences we will first give those common to all the values, then those characterizing the dollar values, and lastly those distinguishing the two lower values. The first group of points will naturally concern more particularly the picture of the horseman in the center of the stamps, while the others will bring out the other details.

1. The horse's mouth is wide open, gaping, in the reprints, and there is no shading in front of the horse's nostrils.

In the originals the horse's mouth is slightly open but not gaping, and the

shading in front of the nostrils shows the heavy breathing of the running horse.

2. In the reprints the shading between the horse's fore legs consists of horizontal lines with some diagonal lines, four or five—whereas the original stamps show horizontal shading only.

3. The right fore foot of the horse is entirely separate in all the reprints, owing to a defective transfer. In the originals there is no such separation.

4. One of the horse's ears stands up very remarkably in the reprints, while the original stamps show the horse's ears laid back close to the head, as is natural for a running horse.

5. The hat of the rider is not shaded in front, leaving a white spot; on the originals the hat is finely shaded.

6. There are a number of other minor differences in the drawing of the horse and rider and in the shadow below that are scarcely prominent enough to warrant separate description.

7. A small period has been added to all the dollar values to the right and slightly below the "S" of DOLLARS. In the originals and reprints the one dollar stamp has an irregular period formed from the end of the letter "S."

8. The scrolls at the four corners of the central panel, containing the horseman, are returned but not shaded in the reprints, while in the originals they are heavily shaded, making them quite prominent.

9. In the reprints the small scroll after the word "DOLLAR" or "DOLLARS" forms a complete loop, the line forming the scroll crossing the lines of the shading. In the originals the lines of shading of the scroll are not thus crossed.

10. In the background above the horse's head and to the left of the number expressing the value, the original stamps have an extra line following the outline of the panel approximately. The reprints do not show this line.

11. At the corner of the panel to the left of the spot described in the last item the reprints show the outline of the panel with a double line, one projecting into the panel. In the originals there is but a single line in this spot.

12. In the 10-cent and 25-cent values there is a small scroll just above "E" of WELLS, FARGO & CO. In the reprints this touches the "E," while in the originals it is above and free from the "E."

13. The large ornamental scrolls above "W" & "CO." of WELLS, FARGO &

## PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN (Continued)

## THE PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN.

151

CO., touch the frame of the stamp or at least approximate it very closely, whereas in the originals they are from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  mm. away from the frame.

14. In the 10-cent and 25-cent values the reprints show the curved line above "OZ" broken and partly displaced by the shading under the horse. The curved line is continuous in the originals.

15. In the same stamps the letter "F" of "IF" is complete in the reprints and cut off at the middle cross-bar in the originals.

16. In the reprints of the 10-cent and 25-cent stamps the background above "PONY EXPRESS" is perfectly plain, while the originals show the lines of the background broken, forming fine white irregular scrolls in the corners.

17. The reprints show the horse's right hind foot very plainly in all the values, whereas the originals show it distinctly in the dollar values only and but traces in the two lower values.

The last three items are of particular interest in so far as they show the remarkable fact that the reprints give the details of the original design with greater accuracy than do the original stamps themselves.

This fact was brought out by an examination of an original proof taken when the design was first made. This proof is in the possession of Messrs. Britton & Rey, and is kept as part of their records.

This proof shows the background above "PONY EXPRESS" to consist of very fine unbroken lines. The "F" of "IF" is complete, and the right hind foot of the pony is plain and distinct.

That the original stamps differ from the old proof is due to defective transfers used in making up the plates for printing the stamps. It is not surprising that the fine lines of the background in the upper corners of the 10-cent and 25-cent stamps were not transferred intact, and a close examination reveals the fact that the white scrolls differ from each other in some detail in every stamp of the sheet.

At this late date it is practically impossible to obtain any figures as to the total number of stamps issued thirty-seven years ago, but judging from the frequency with which a few values are met with, their number must have been considerable. A quantity turned up a year or two ago that gave rise to some talk about reprints, but on investigation they proved to be remainders found in

large offices like City of Mexico, Salt Lake City, and others. Up to the present year, no reprints were made.

The number of the reprints printed during April, 1897, is very limited, and we have taken special care to verify the figures given below, both by counting the stamps as well as counting the freaks, thus enabling us to complete the sheets. We have furthermore kept a record of the possessors of these sets.

	Sheets.	Stamps.
10-cent brown	23	92
25 " red	33	132
25 " blue	29	116
\$1.00 red	28	112
\$2.00 green	27	108
\$2.00 red	33	132
\$4.00 green	27	108
\$4.00 black	29	116

The subjoined letter from Mr. Jos. Britton needs no further explanation.

SAN FRANCISCO, May 12, 1897.

To "Philatelic Californian," City—

The occasion of our printing the pony stamp came about in this way. Our boy at home caught the stamp-collecting complaint, and, remembering that we printed all stamps issued in the early days of California, I thought I would see if I could find any impressions of our work. Some stamp fiend, however, had stolen such as we had had in our specimen books; then I looked for plates from which they had been printed; but only so far have found the Pony Express stamps. I then had transfers made, and about one hundred stamps of each denomination printed. In using in the course of our business the other engravings on this plate, the engraving of the pony stamp had been very much worn, and some of the finer work almost obliterated; so we had work to do to restore these injured parts. We did not have an original impression, so made some few errors. Had I known the importance that collectors gave to stamps (we had so little work to do), we could easily have avoided these errors; nevertheless, this restoration I find has interested philatelic circles, and to give assurance that

(Continued)

152

THE PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN.

there will be no more printed, I have placed the engravings in Wells, Fargo Memorial Museum. Yours truly,

JOSEPH BRITTON.

The stone bearing the working plate made up of the transfers has been polished off, the impression removed, and is now ready for any work suited to its size.

Should any further details of the re-printing or other information concerning the stamps turn up, we shall bring it out in our next issue. A. H. WEBER.

FOR any further information in regard to the Pony Express reprints and freaks, address the PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN, box 2537, San Francisco, Cal.

**Overland.**

A TREELESS stretch of grassy plains,  
 Blue-bordered by the summer sky;  
 Where past our swaying, creaking stage,  
 The buffaloes go thundering by,  
 And antelope in scattered bands  
 Feed in the breezy prairie lands.  
 Far down the west a speck appears,  
 That falls and rises, on and on,  
 An instant to the vision clear,  
 A moment more, and it is gone,  
 And then it dashes into sight,  
 Swift as an eagle's downward flight.  
 A ring of hoofs, a flying steed,  
 A shout—a face—a waving hand—  
 A flake of foam upon the grass,  
 That melts—and then alone we stand,  
 As now a speck against the gray  
 The pony rider fades away.  
 —Ernest Mc Gaffey.

THE PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN.

APRIL, 1897.

**BARGAINS IN**

**WELLS, FARGO & CO.'S STAMPS**

10c chocolate, used .....	\$ .40
25c blue, used.....	1.25
25c red, unused.....	.15
25c red, fine pair, unused.....	.30
\$1.00 red, unused.....	.40
\$1.00 red, fine pair, unused.....	.75
\$2.00 green, unused.....	1.00
\$2.00 green, fine pair, unused.....	2.00

Price for a complete sheet of either 25c or \$1.00 red on application.

**MAKINS & CO.**

506 Market St., San Francisco, Cal. 1318 Market St., Oakland, Cal.

PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN (Continued)

THE PHILATELIC CALIFORNIAN.

153

The Philatelic Californian.

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Associate Editor.

WM. N. RIDDELL . . . . . 726 Ashbury Street, S. F.

BLYTHE H. HENDERSON . . . . . Business Manager  
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APRIL, 1897.

Editorial.

"REPRINTS OF THE PONY EXPRESS!" This is the startling theme of our present number. We have purposely delayed the issuance of this paper, in order to be able to lay before our readers a complete story, together with all the incidents of the case.

Word reached us almost at the very conception of the notion of reprinting the stamps; and though it is a difficult matter to penetrate the affairs of a private firm, we must say we met with a generous response from the gentlemen when we had sufficient facts to show that such reprints were being made.

Messrs. Britton and Rey not alone gave all the facts connected with the issue of the reprints, but explained many a little detail connected with lithographic work that was of great assistance. We have carefully watched and noted all the details that could be of interest to the philatelist; and with the facts as complete as possible, we now present them to our readers.

Although the story of the Pony Express has been written up at various times and at variable lengths in publications of all kinds, philatelic and general, the news of the reprinting of the stamps revived the interest in the doings of by-gone days, and a general review was most desirable.

The officers of the Wells, Fargo & Co. have generously placed at our disposal all the historical material they have been gathering for years, and from the same the story of the Pony Express has been collaborated.

Mr. Aaron Stein, in referring the matter of colors and printing to Mr. Leroi, has conferred a favor, as matters turned out, on all philatelists. The loan of the counterfeit set has preserved the integrity of the original print. Capt. James Otey Bradford, the historian of the Wells, Fargo Co., has opened his storehouse of valuable information, thereby allowing us to obtain many data that would otherwise have been almost impossible to find. He has been collecting for years all relics of pioneer days, that are in any way connected with the company. From its beginning to the present time, the company has been intimately connected with the progress of the Pacific Coast, to which it has largely contributed.

We tender our heartiest thanks for the kind and generous assistance the gentlemen have extended to us.

In the San Francisco *Call* of May 9 a statement was made in regard to the Pony Express reprints. It was stated that the young man for whose benefit the stamps were reprinted, had tried to pass the reprints as the genuine stamps, upon a number of the dealers in this city. This statement was erroneous, as he did not attempt to pass the stamps as the genuine ones, but represented them as they were, the reprints. This was done so that he could determine the relative value of the reprints as compared with the genuine.

