

Westwards to the Pacific

The United States and Manifest Destiny One Country stretching across the North American continent

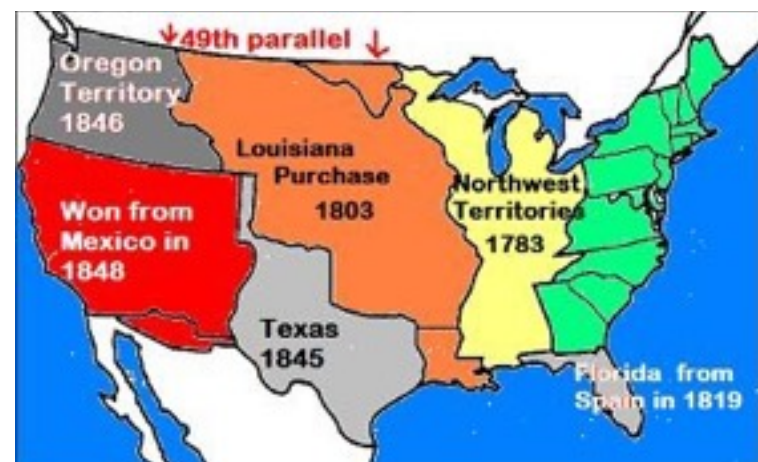
The goal of this one frame exhibit is to demonstrate with postal history how the present Western United States was originally part of New Spain, then Mexico, and ultimately the United States in the context of '*Manifest Destiny*', or '*Expansionism*'.

From its founding days in the late 1700's there was a sense that the young republic was destined to span the North American continent from Atlantic to Pacific. This sense of '*Manifest Destiny*' was the guiding principal driving U.S. expansion policy throughout the early 1800's culminating with the Mexican War of 1846-1848. With the 1803 Louisiana, and 1819 Florida purchases the fledgling country dramatically expanded its footprint.

Texas succeeded from Mexico in 1835, but remained independent until becoming a U.S. State in December 1845.

It took the 1844 election of 11th U.S. President James Knox Polk (who ran on an expansionist platform) to finally reach the Pacific. Polk settled the Oregon boundary in 1846, then turning his attention towards Mexico, gateway to the Southwest. Polk attempted to negotiate purchase of Alta California from Mexico, but in 1846 was rebuffed. An overriding factor driving expansion was to prevent other powers such as Great Britain from establishing a greater Pacific North American presence.

Mexico's center of politics and commerce lay far to the south in Mexico City. From the Spanish empire through Mexican Republic the literate population of Alta California, Tejas, and Santa Fé de Nuevo Mexico were few with long, tenuous lines of communication back to the Capital.



Map showing U.S. expansion by area and date

In contrast, there was increasing 'American' settlement in East Texas and along the Louisiana Purchase western borders encroaching on Mexican lands.

Written material from the Northern Spanish settlements (pre 1821) is sparse. Prior to the 1840's there was little correspondence generated. There are no known Russian items (Northern California) throughout the period. Several items are shown, some being discovery copies. Mexican era (1821-1846) writings are equally scarce.

This one frame exhibit is arranged chronologically from the Spanish Era through 1840's War Years, then by area. Material is more prevalent from the 1840's due to increasing population and commercial/political activity. Some items are matted on golden backing to highlight significance.. However, all items contribute to this exhibit. During the 1840's military activity was taking place in several geographic areas simultaneously, so the story and timelines can be a bit confusing.

Key Dates

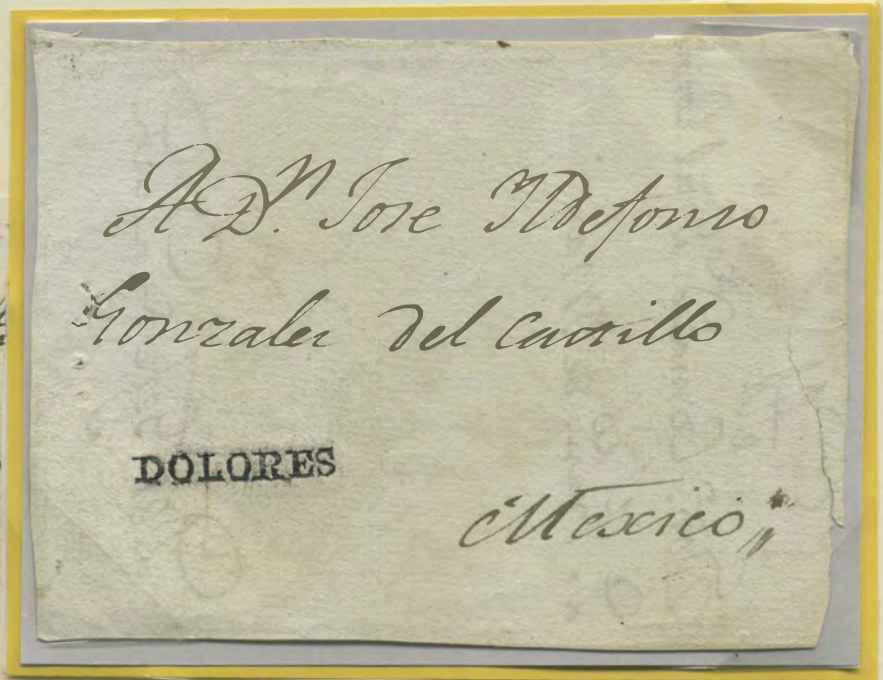
Exhibit Plan

Spanish Era (pre 1821)
Mexican Era (1821-1846)
Texas Republic (1835-1845)
Texas Statehood (post 1845)
War Years (1846-1848)
Post War (post 1848)

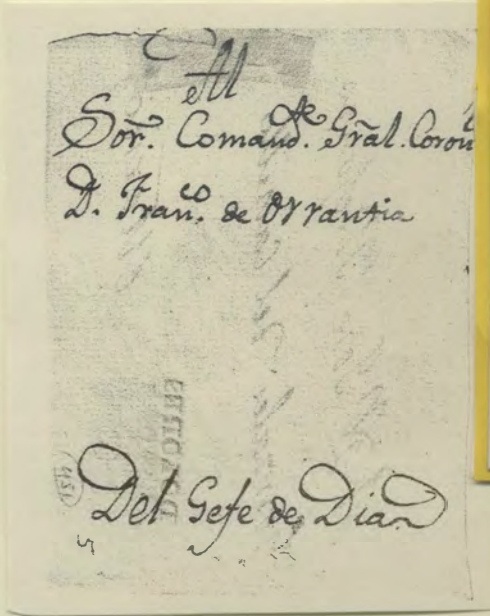
- Mexican Independence: 1821
- Texas Succession: 1835; Statehood: 1845
- Polk's Presidency: 1845-1849
- New Mexico Annexation: 19 vs. 22 August 1846
End Provisional Gov't: 9 September 1850
- California Annexation: 13 January 1847
Gold Discovered: 24 January 1848
Statehood: 9 September 1850
- Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo:
Signed: 2 February 1848
Ratified: 30 May 1848
News reached Calif.: 7 August 1848
- Gadsden Purchase: 1853

Few European settlers in area, Most of the literate were Military, Church, or Government.

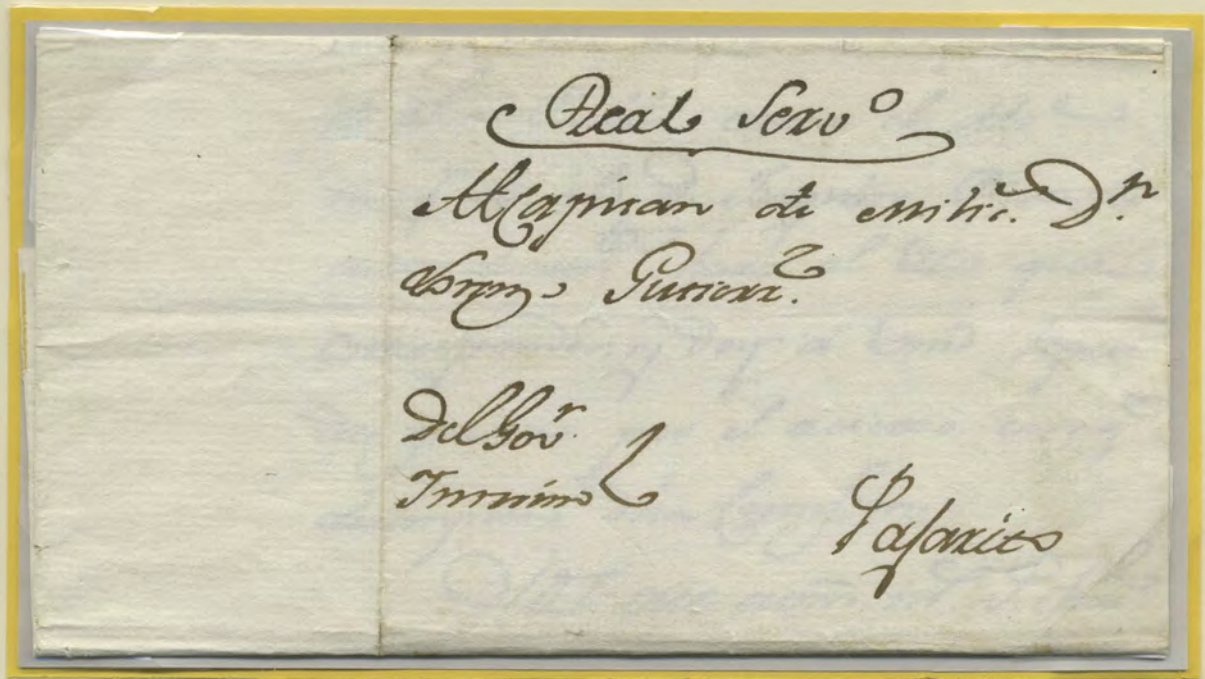
Dolores,
Tejas
ca. 1800



From Commanding General to Mexico City
Dolores probably located near Nacogdoches, Texas
Discovery copy of DOLORES handstamp



Santa Fé,
Nuevo Mexico
11 May 1811



Addressed to Territorial Governor at *Pajarito*,
a hacienda located on the Rio Grande south of Santa Fé

Discusses visiting Zuni (Indian) Puebla
One of the earliest known examples of New Mexico mail

MEXICAN ERA (1821-1848)

COAHUILA Y TEJAS

Mexican State of *Coahuila Y Tejas* located in Northern Mexico. *Coahuila* remains a Mexican State with Capital at Saltillo. Tejas is now the U.S. State of *Texas* (independence from Mexico 1835, becoming a U.S. State in 1845).

Saltillo
ca. 1820's



Official (S. N. L.) [Servicio Nacional] from Mounted Cavalry at Saltillo addressed to unit at Bejar (now San Antonio).

Official Seal of Commanding General for Mexican State of COAHUILA Y TEJAS

Saltillo
21 March
1832



Sello 4.^o una quartilla.
 Habilitado provisionalm.^{te} p.^a la Comisaria Subalterna interina del
 Puerto de Monterey de la alta Calif.^a p.^a los años de 1830. y 1831.
 Echeandia
 Casariñ

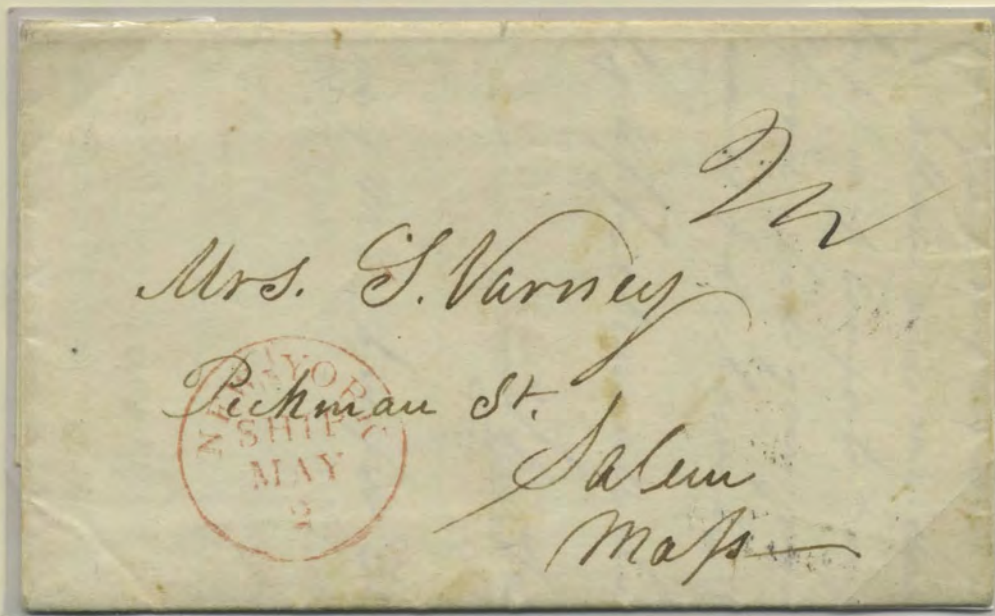
Alta California (Capital: Monterey) was so sparsely settled, and distant from the seat of Government at Mexico City that it was designated as a ‘*Territory*’ at Mexican Independence (1822). In 1836 it was reclassified as a ‘*Department*’.

Need for Revenue Stamped Paper was so limited (est. M\$200/year; 1826-1830), and replacement supplies so difficult to obtain that need was satisfied by creating manuscript documents as substitutes for official printed embossed ones. Alta California’s first printing press only arrived at Monterey during 1831, just after this document was prepared.)

1830-31 Handwritten Provisional Papel Sellado signed by Alta California Governor Jose Maria Echeandia, countersigned by Monterey Comisario Subalterno (Customs Officer) Manuel Jimeno Casariñ

From Whaling Vessel ‘Monsoon’ on voyage to Hawaii and South Pacific

San Diego
 2 March 1841



Forwarded at **Mazatlan** (W. W. Scarborough & Co.) 11 May, 1841. Carried across Mexico; entering mails at **Vera Cruz**, then via **New York** (2 May) to **Salem, Mass.**

**Texas-Santa Fé Expedition (June 1841)
Initial Texan attempt to annex New Mexico**

Considered by many to be the key event leading to war

Puebla
19 June 1842
Out of Mails

New Orleans
5 Sept. 1842
25c > 400 mi
+2c SHIP
27c

New York
29 Dec. 1842
18 3/4c Fwd
150-400 mi
45 3/4c due



Texas Republic President **Mirabeau Lamar** wanted greater control of Santa Fe trade. A poorly prepared 300 man army departed **Austin, Texas** 19 June 1841 for **Santa Fé, New Mexico**. Entire group captured by Mexican Army at Santa Fé on 5 October, then marched 2000 miles south to Mexico City and imprisoned as **POW's** at **Perote** (near Puebla). After negotiations they were released at **Puebla, Mexico** 13 June 1842. Most returned to the U.S. and Texas by ship from Vera Cruz to New Orleans.

Robert A. Phillips to his father in New York informing him of release from prison and journey home.



Republic of Texas and Disputed areas (yellow & green) located between U.S. Louisiana Purchase (tan) and Northern Mexican territories of Coahuila, Chihuahua, and Nuevo Mexico (orange).

Most 'anglo' settlement initially in East Texas (yellow), Northern part of Mexican State of 'Coahuila y Tejas' (green) to immediate west.

Eastern Nuevo Mexico was western part of disputed area. Rio Grande formed border, Santa Fé located on river.

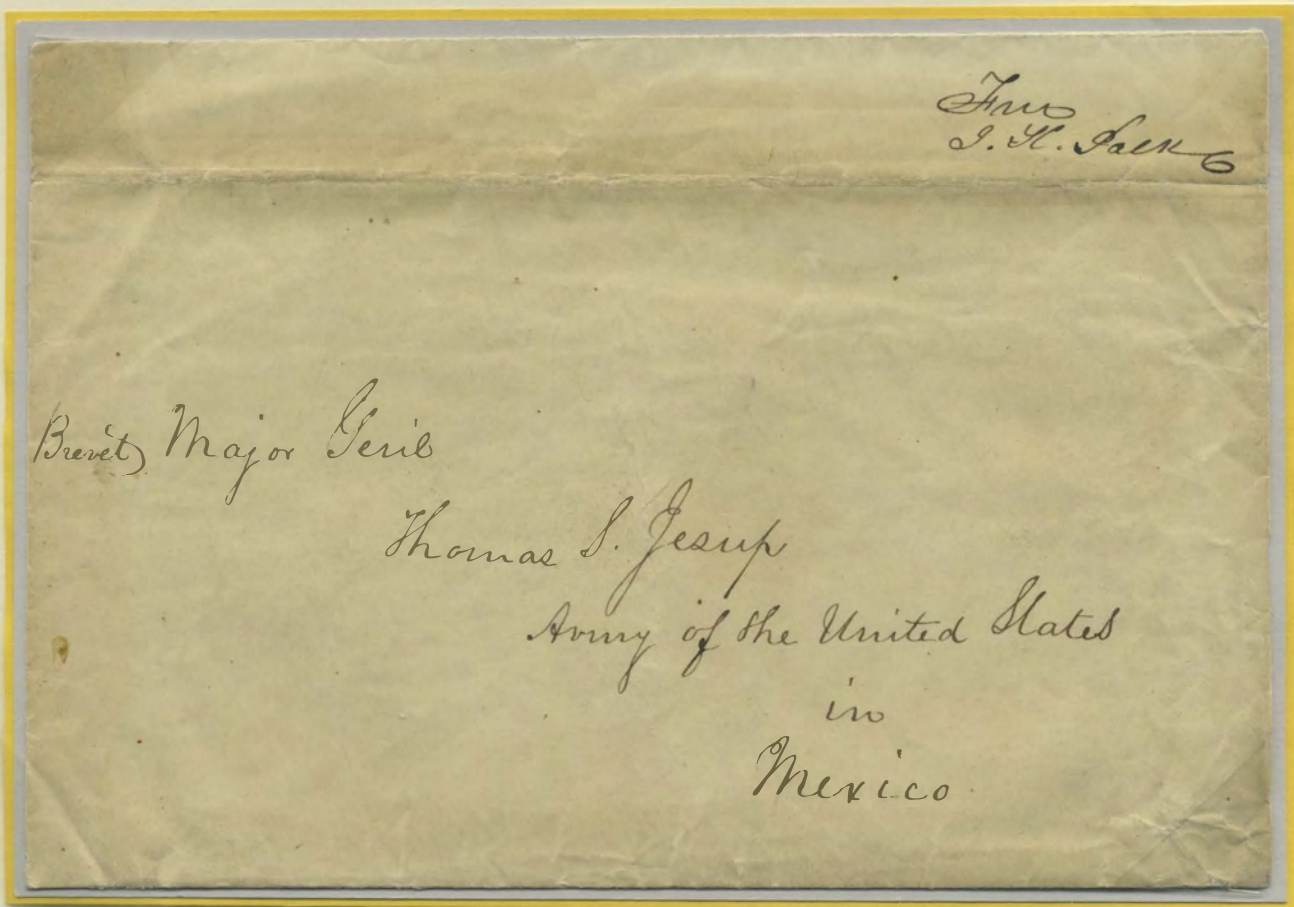
TEXAS STATEHOOD (post 1845)

POLK ELECTED U.S. PRESIDENT

James Knox Polk (elected November 1844) sworn in as 11th U.S. President 4 March 1845 with mandate to fold Texas and Alta California into the United States. He successfully completed negotiations with Great Britain to partition the Pacific Northwest into today's U.S. states of **Washington** and **Oregon**, and the Canadian Province of **British Columbia**.

In 1845 he dispatched **John Slidell** to negotiate with the Mexican Government for both purchase of **Alta California** and to delineate the Mexican border at the **Rio Grande** (Rio Bravo del Norte). Slidell was unsuccessful in his negotiations, returning to the U.S. March 1846.

Official 'Free' Letter (undated) from President **James K. Polk** to Brigadier General **Thomas S. Jesup** Quartermaster General serving in Mexico from 1846-1848



Polk served only a single term as President (March 1845-March 1849); died 15 June 1849 at age 54
One of the scarcest Presidential Free Franks

Texas Statehood Timeline

1 March 1845: U.S. Congress Joint Resolution: annex Texas

4 July 1845: Texas Constitutional Convention:
accepts U.S. annexation

13 October 1845: U.S. annexation of Texas approved by
Texas electorate

29 December 1845: Texas admitted to U.S. as 28th State

19 February 1846: Official transfer of Government

13 May 1846: Declaration of war between U.S. and Mexico

2 February 1848: Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ending war
with Mexico and formally settling border at Rio Grande

First shots of War; a.k.a. 'Thornton Affair'

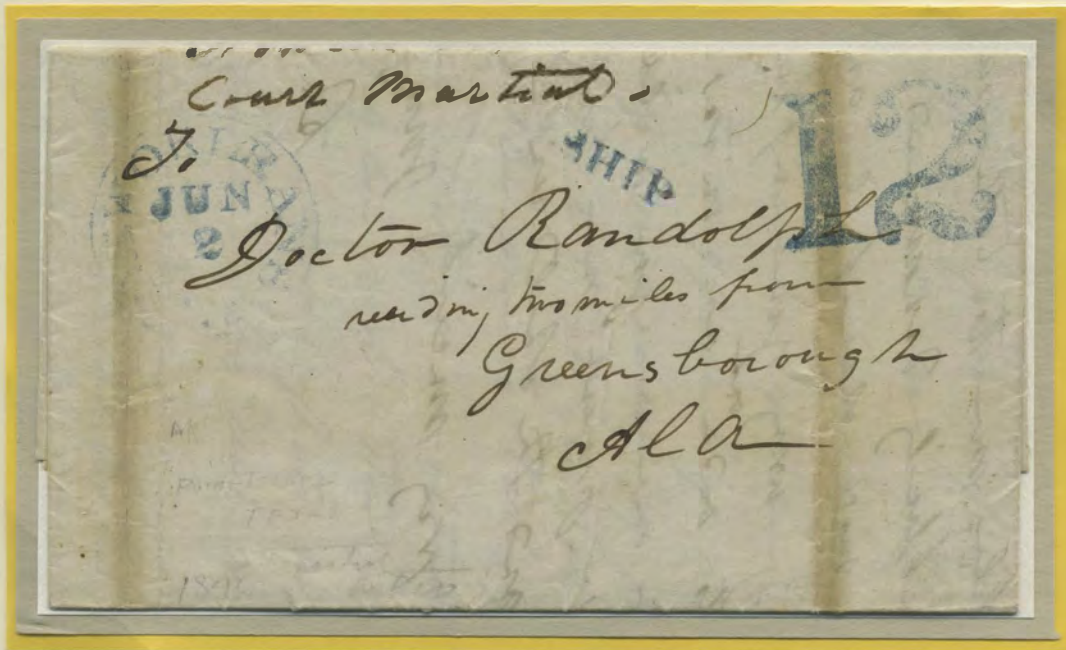
Captain **Seth B. Thornton** ordered by General **Zachary Taylor** to scout for, but not to engage possible Mexican incursion north of Rio Grande. His command encountered Mexican Dragoons at **Carricitos Ranch** (30 miles upriver from U.S. camp) 25 April 1846. After a gun battle with severe Mexican loss of life Thornton and his men were taken prisoner. They were exchanged after negotiation, with Thornton being charged with disobedience and placed under arrest by General Taylor. Taylor advised Washington of the hostilities and that a '*state of war*' now existed.

President Polk used this event as justification to have the U.S. Congress to declare war with Mexico 13 May 1846.

Point Isabel
20 May 1846

New Orleans
2 June 1846

'SHIP 12'
(10c > 300 mi
+ 2c ship)



Written by **Seth B. Thornton** to family friend post arrest concerning his situation. He was later exonerated of all charges, dying in battle on the approaches to Mexico City April 1847.

Polk was elected in 1844 on a platform of *expansionism*, or **Manifest Destiny**: The United States was destined to stretch across the continent. Diplomatic relations with Mexico were broken off early 1846 soon after Texas Statehood declared, and negotiations to purchase Alta California were rebuffed; he was looking for justification to declare war.

Contemporary map of South Texas printed in New Orleans in 1846. Double page used as lettersheet from map's publisher looking for new mapmakers/printers "as present person is leaving for better western lands...."

Then Mexican lands held great promise for emigrants arriving from the United States!

New Orleans 25 July (1846) CDS & 'PAID' to Essex County, NJ

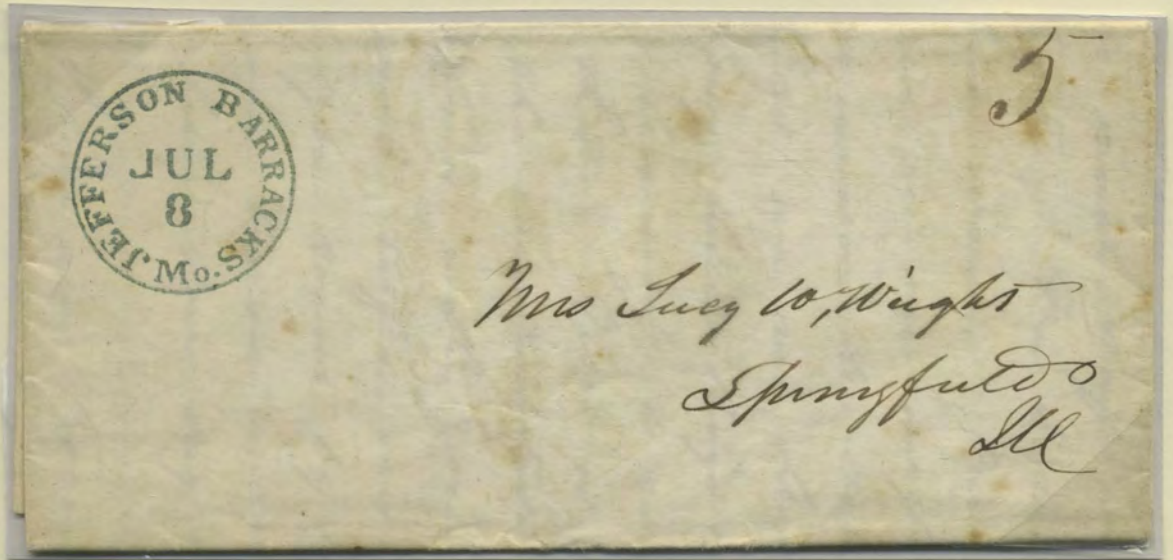


Polk was elected President on a platform of western expansion. There was a large groundswell of public support for the military and western settlers. Land bounties for enlisting helped seal the deal for many. Initial 12 month volunteers were called out under the Act of 13 May 1846. Additional callouts occurred over the ensuing 2 years until hostilities ended early 1848.

Jefferson
Barracks,
Missouri

8 July
1846
(green)

5c (due)
< 300 mi.



Jefferson
Barracks,
Missouri

27 October
1846
(black)

10c (due)
>300 mi.
related to
5c; +2c
ADVERTISED
= 7c (due)



Rates as per Act of 3 March 1845: 5c < 300 miles; 10c >300 miles; +2c Advertised; +2c 'SHIP'

Ability to obtain 'land grants' of bounties for service allowed many to relocate to less populated areas. There was a popular 'mystique' about western and former Mexican lands. Jefferson Barracks (located in former Louisiana Purchase area) along with Fort Leavenworth accessible to routes leading west. Military mails from the West often entered regular mails U.S. at these points.

MEXICO (post 1821)

MAZATLAN/PACIFIC COAST

Though **Mazatlan** (Sinaloa) and **Baja California** remained as part of Mexico post war, the U.S. Navy enforced intermittent port blockades throughout the war years. British and other foreign vessels were allowed access throughout. *The main military goal was to prevent the British from getting a foothold in the area.* These ports were also important as the main trade routes to **Hawaii** and the Orient followed the winds northwards along the Pacific coast before ships headed westward at more northerly latitudes. Eastbound mails to the U.S. from Hawaii and Pacific whalers also crossed Mexico from Mazatlan to Vera Cruz to avoid the long voyage around Cape Horn.

Hawaii - Mazatlan - Vera Cruz - New Bedford

'Woahu'
26 October
1846

Ship
Gratitude
(R.S. Wilcox)

Vera Cruz
30 January
1847

FRANQUEDO
1R (local rate)

'SHIP'
10c + 2c
12c (due)



U.S. Sailor on blockade duty at Mazatlan
“...since 9th of December [1845] we have been anchored at this place....”

Mazatlan
31 March
1846

New Orleans
5 May
1847

'SHIP'
12c (due)



Colonel Stephen W. Kearny and the Army of the West departed Fort Leavenworth late June 1846 arriving Santa Fé 18 August, and annexing New Mexico to the United States 19 August 1846 Charles Bent installed as first US Governor of New Mexico at Santa Fe on 22 August 1846 (Some sources state that New Mexico formally annexed by Kearney on 22 August, not August 19)

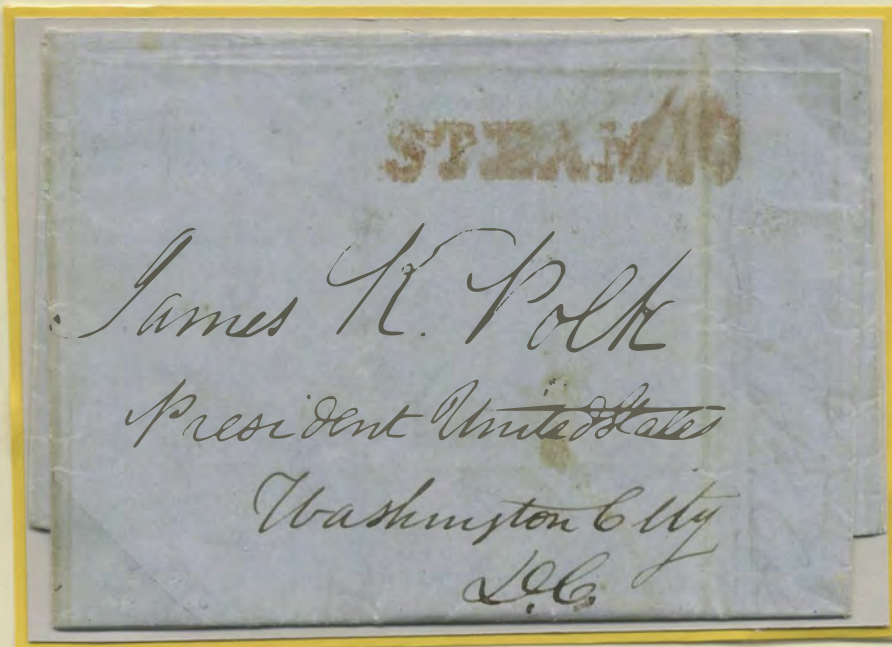
Earliest known letter from Santa Fé under US administration

Camp near Santa Fé
22 August 1846

Military courier
St. Louis;
STEAM 10
>300 miles

Washington, DC
3 October 1846

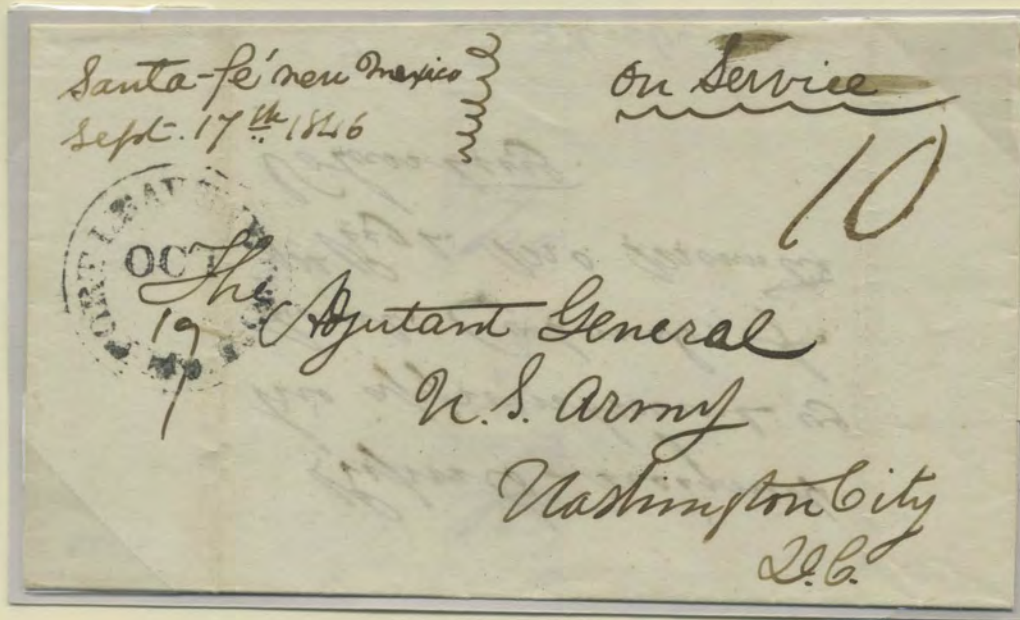
Officer accepting
appointment



First return trip from Santa Fé to Missouri

Departed Santa Fé 22 August 1846, arrived 19/20 September
Entered US Mails in Missouri (STEAM 10)
Addressed to President Polk; should be free as per Act of 3 March 1845

Official mail carried by military courier to Ft. Leavenworth



Santa Fé
17 Sept. 1846

Via Fort
Leavenworth
17 Oct. 1846
and St. Louis

Washington DC
2 Nov. 1846

"on service"
War Dept.
debited 10c

Kearney split his forces into 3 main groups under separate commanders to accomplish several objectives:

Kearney: West to **California** 25 September 1846

Doniphan: Local support, then South to **Chihuahua** 14 December 1846; later rejoining Taylor's Army at **Saltillo**

Price: arriving **Santa Fé** 2 October; remained at Santa Fé to support local government

Kearney's column to California

120 miles from
Santa Fé
(near Socorro)
2 October 1846

Entered mails at
Fort Leavenworth
4 November 1846

10c >300 miles
Fort Leavenworth
to New York



Force to California originally consisted of 300 dragoons and a small wagon train. Majority of troops returned to Santa Fé while remainder continued west to California

Donaphin's column to Chihuahua



Southwest of
Santa Fé
19 October 1846

Entered mails at
Independence
Missouri
4 December 1846

5c <300 miles
(~30 miles to
Clay County)

Doniphan's 'Chihuahua Rangers' departed Santa Fé mid December 1846 for Chihuahua via El Paso, capturing the city 2 March 1847. Their goal of securing NW Mexico for the U.S. was hampered by long supply lines and poor communication. They departed Chihuahua in stages, the last on 23 April 1847 to rejoin Taylor's forces at Saltillo.



Little mail from members of the Chihuahua expedition survives. This is 1 of 2 known U.S. soldier's letters written on the Governor of Chihuahua's purloined private stationery

"Leave 1st April for the south and there will be no more mails sent to the States."

Chihuahua
28 March 1847

Independence
Missouri
15 June 1847

10c + 5c
>300 miles +
Fwd <300 miles
= 15c (due)

(Forwarded
<300 miles
from Pomfret
to Lime Rock
Connecticut)



Map showing Kearney's route to California, and Doniphan's march to Chihuahua, and onwards to Saltillo in relation to Texas and Northern Mexico



WAR YEARS

NEW MEXICO CONSOLIDATION

First New Mexico Governor (**Charles Bent**) appointed by Kearney 22 August 1846. Santa Fé became staging post for further westwards exploration/expansion. U.S. Army under Col. (later Brig. General) **Sterling Price** remained in Santa Fé to ensure order and provide support. Both military and civilian traffic continuously increased along Santa Fé trail and other routes resulting in greater mail volumes. New Mexico provisional government in place through 9 September 1850.

Santa Fé
6 October 1846

Fort Leavenworth
4 November 1846

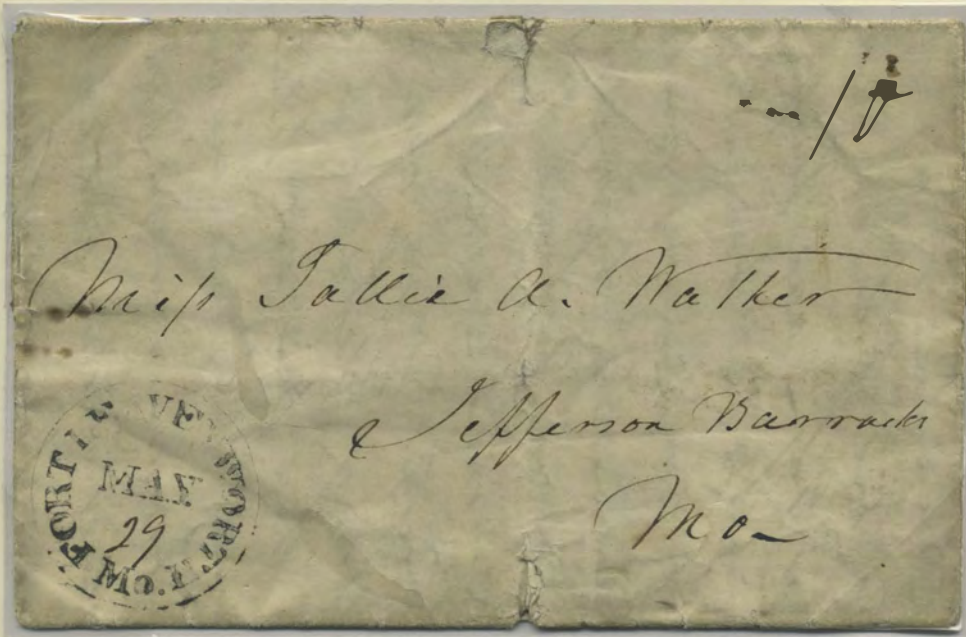
*5c <300 miles
to Clay County*



Santa Fé
29 April 1847

Fort Leavenworth
29 May 1847

*10c >300 miles
to Jefferson
Barracks*



Eastbound mails from the West were routed through Fort Leavenworth, Independence, or even St. Louis depending on whether they were carried by military or civilian trains. Postage often calculated from point of entry into U.S. mails, not western origin.

None of these items can be considered 'common'.

San Diego, southernmost major settlement of Alta California, first occupied by U.S. Navy 29 July 1846. Kearny's Army of the West arrived from Santa Fé 15 December 1846, thus fulfilling Polk's goal of **Manifest Destiny**; A nation spanning the continent. A contingent of **Mormon Battalion** troops also arrived 29 January 1847 via Santa Fé.

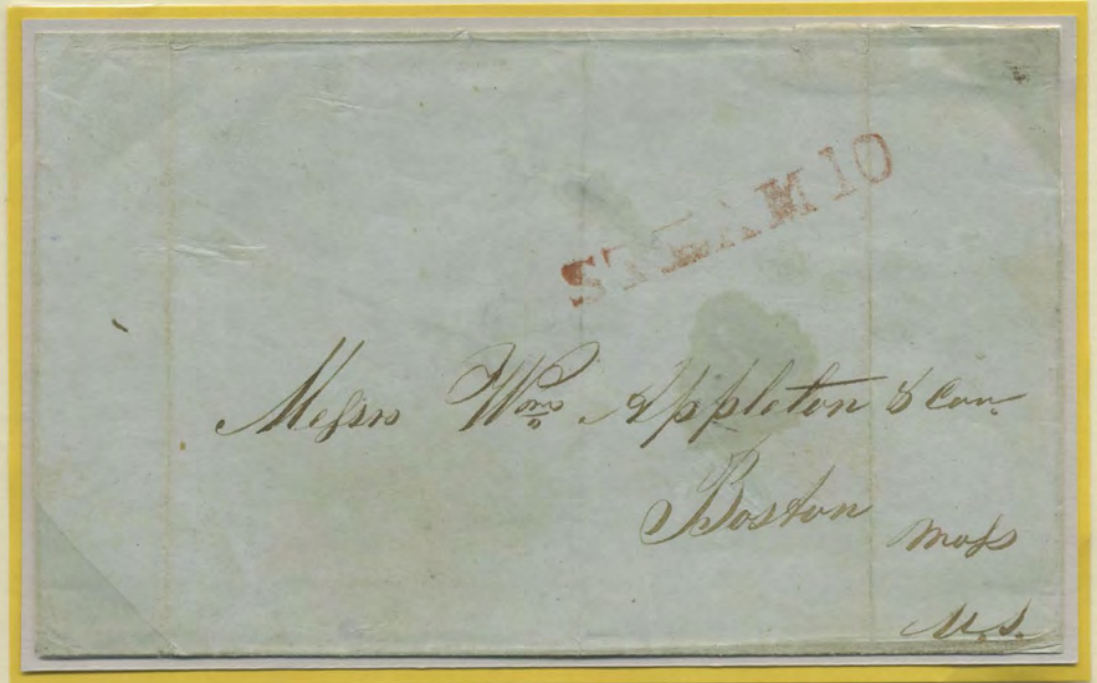
One of 5 known letters carried to St. Louis on Kearney's overland mail of 1847
From Capt. James Hall, Ship 'Barnstable' probably via Monterey into Kearney's care

San Diego
20 May 1847

Monterey
31 May 1847

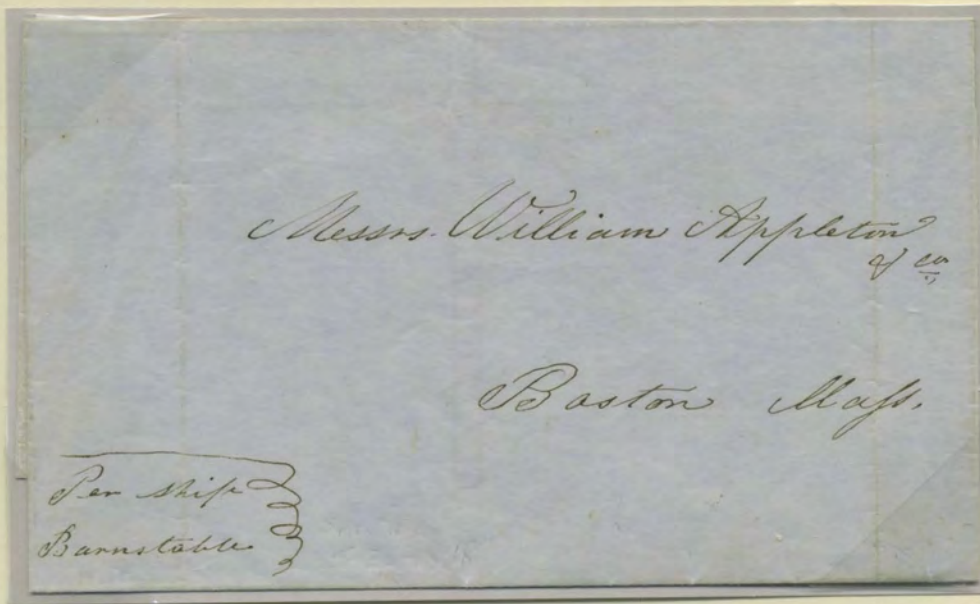
Sutter's Fort
15 June 1847

St. Louis
26 August 1847
STEAM 10



San Diego
30 May 1848

'Per ship
Barnstable
Out of mails
to **Boston**



'**Barnstable**', owned by William Appleton & Co. engaged in hide and tallow trade. It made several voyages along Alta California coast before returning to Boston via Cape Horn June 1848. On it's final May 1848 stop at San Diego it carried supplies for the **Mormon Battalion**.

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed 2 February, ratified 30 May 1848

Ended hostilities between U.S. and Mexico

U.S. paid Mexico \$15 million reparations, set aside another \$3.25 million to cover U.S. citizen's claims against Mexico

Recognized Southern Texas border at Rio Grande, Land borders west to Pacific including San Diego Bay

Mexico ceded territory encompassing all or parts of present day California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah to U.S.

Mexico to 'San Francisco/Alta California' post war/pre California Statehood

San Blas
20 December
1949

40c (due)
to/from
Pacific port

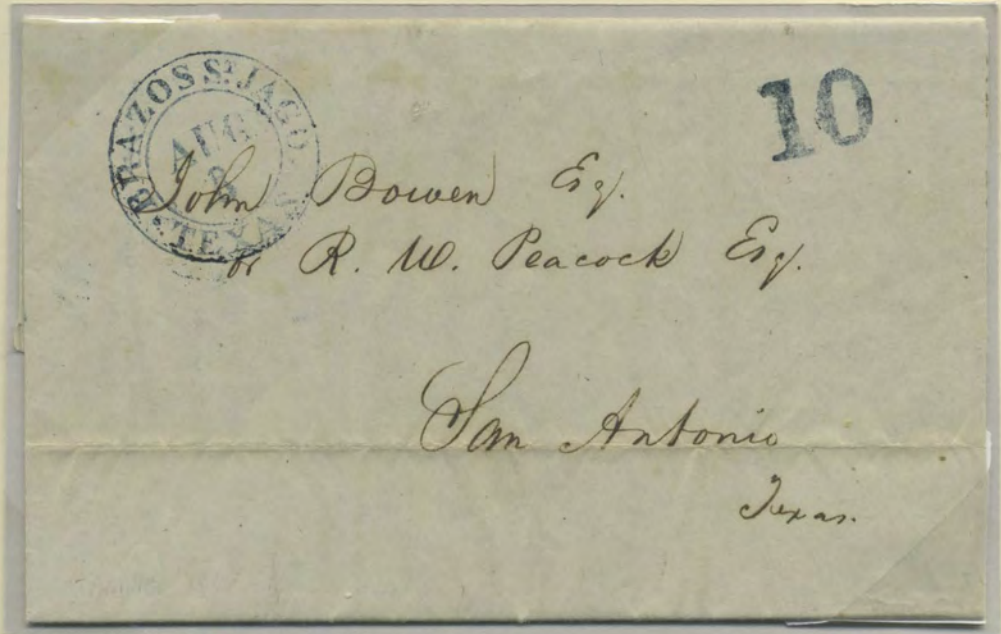


Mexico Gulf Coast to San Antonio via U.S. office at Brazos post war

Tampico
18 July 1848

Brazos, Texas
3 August 1848

10c (due)
>300 miles



*Gold discovered at Sutter's Mill 24 January 1848 setting off 'gold rush' which led to massive Western migration
Note that Southern border of Arizona and New Mexico was later adjusted southwards as per 1853 Gadsden Treaty.*