

OREGON TERRITORY MAIL

1847 TO 1859

COVERS

The Oregon Territory was created on August 14, 1848, and included what would become the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and a part of Montana. The first post offices were at Astoria and Oregon City and were authorized by the United States Government in 1847, but the earliest known mail dates from 1849. Additional post offices were established in 1849 at Portland and Salem. By the end of February 1853 there were 174 post offices, but on March 2, 1853 the northern portion of the Territory (north of the Columbia River) became Washington Territory which subtracted 14 post offices. Just before Oregon achieved statehood on February 14, 1859, there were 129 post offices in Oregon Territory.

This exhibit is arranged in chronological order by the date the post office was opened. The current county location is shown in parenthesis. Several post offices, which after 1853 were in Washington Territory, are shown where the post offices were established prior to its formation. It is not always (or even often) possible to represent these with pre-1853 covers.

Of the 174 post offices formed in the Oregon Territory, 17 are represented here. No material has been discovered from 78 of the post offices.

The most significant items are outlined in red.

POSTAL RATES

Until June 30, 1851

Transcontinental letter rate ½ oz. 40 cents
West-coast rate ½ oz. 12 ½ cents
Unsealed circulars to 1 oz. 3 cents

July 1, 1851 – March 30, 1855

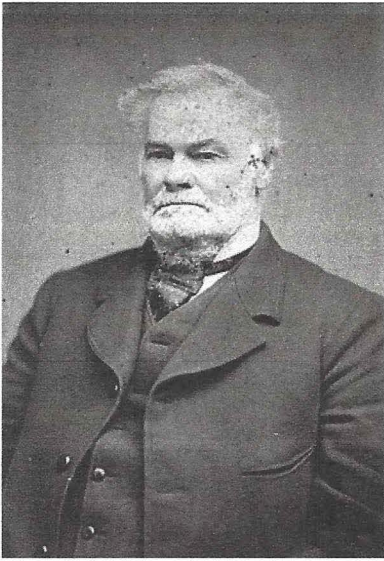
Transcontinental rate prepaid ½ oz. 6 cents
Transcontinental rate unpaid ½ oz. 10 cents
West-coast rate prepaid ½ oz. 3 cents
West-coast rate unpaid ½ oz. 5 cents

September 30, 1852

Unsealed circulars, prepaid up to 3 oz. 1 cent
Unsealed circulars, unpaid up to 3 oz. 3 cents

April 1, 1855 to Statehood

(All mail prepaid)
Transcontinental rate ½ oz. 10 cents
West – coast rate ½ oz. 3 cents



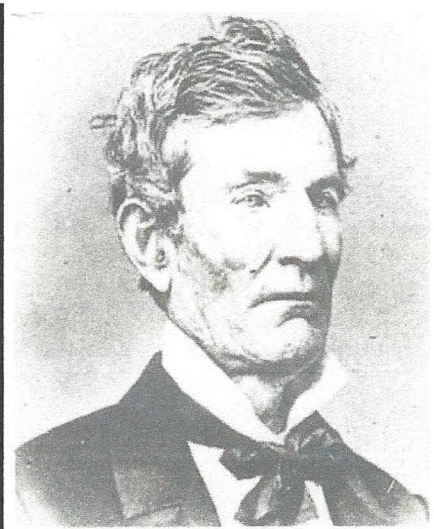
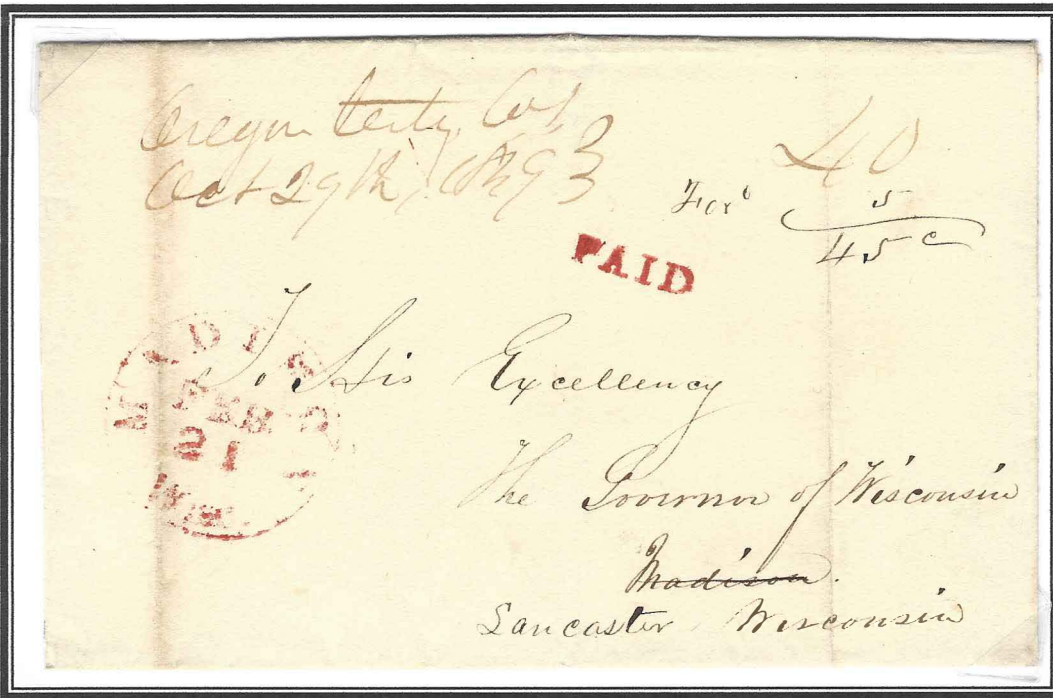
John Shively,
first postmaster
of Astoria, Oregon.
1847 to 1849



July 11, 1854, second hand stamp, "Due 5" in manuscript.
The prepaid transcontinental rate was 6 cents - here prepaid was only 3 cents. The addressee was charged half the 10 cent unpaid rate for transcontinental steamship via San Francisco, Panama, then by mule train to Aspinwall and finally by steamship to New York.



The first U.S. Post Office West of the Rocky Mountains was in John M. Shively's Home, Astoria, Oregon 1847. Mr. Shively was the first postmaster of Oregon territory.

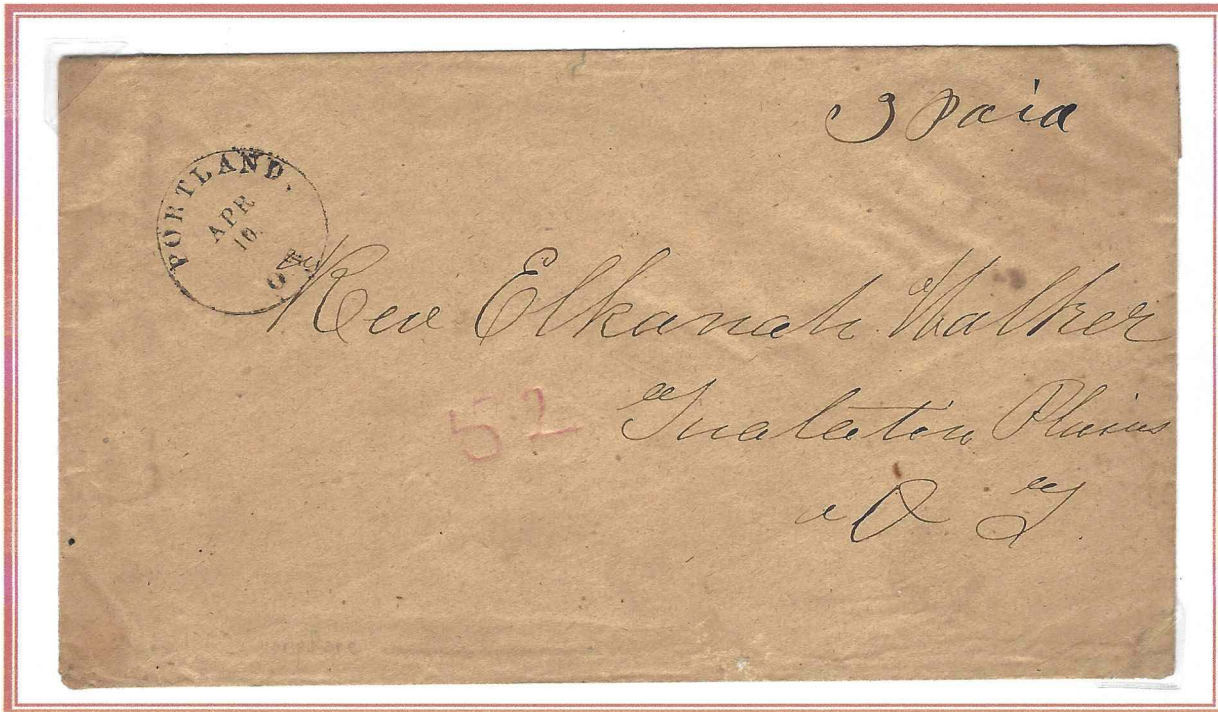


Wm. G. T. Vault second postmaster at Oregon City. In office from May 8, 1849 to November 7, 1849. Editor of Table Rock Sentinel in Jacksonville from 1858 to 1859.

October 29, 1849 manuscript cancels, with straight-line "PAID" 40 cent prepaid transcontinental rate with a 5 cent forwarding charge to the recipient of cover at time of delivery. Surcharge from Madison to Lancaster Wisconsin.



February 20, 1858 Oregon City handstamp, 24 cents paying the transatlantic rate to Ireland. Under the treaty of 1858. The red hand stamped marking is a 3cent credit to the United States as it was carried by Great Britain packet mail, so GB was paid 21 cents.



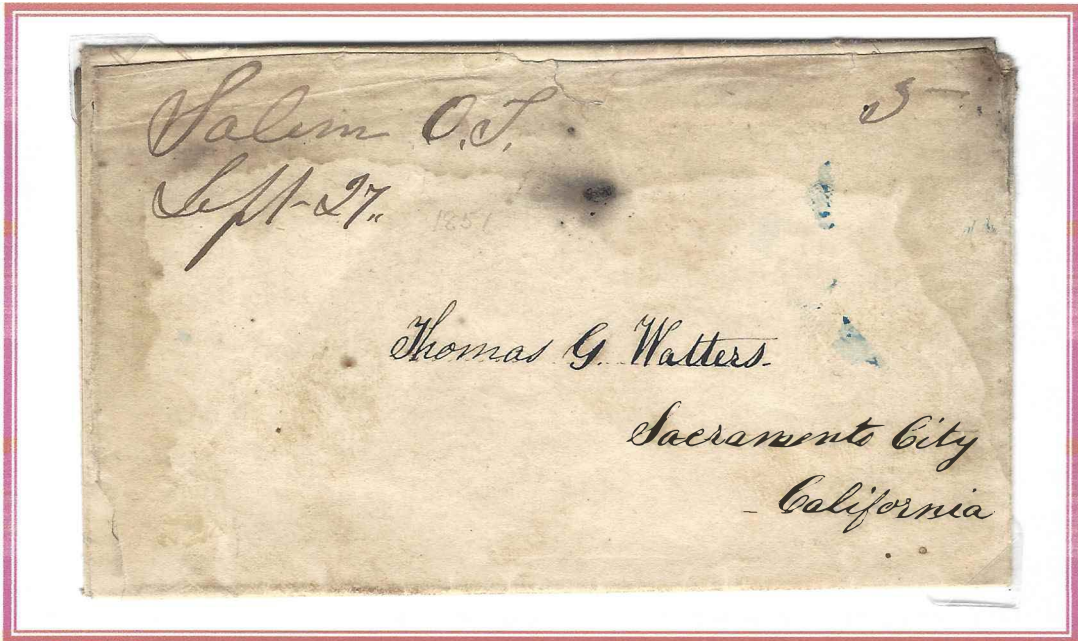
Use of this 21.5 mm handstamp is reported from 1851 to 1852.

April 10, 1852, first Portland O.T. handstamp, "3 Paid" in Manuscript prepaid west-coast rate for letter under ½ oz. travel under 3,000 miles. Cover was carried by stagecoach to Tualatin Plains (Forest Grove). Circular date stamp recorded used from December 1851 to May 1852.



Use of this 32.5 mm handstamp is reported from 1852 to 1858.

5 June (circa 1854), second Portland O.T. handstamp, 6 cent stamped envelope for prepaid transcontinental rate to Point Chester, New York. Cover was carried by ship via San Francisco, across Panama to New York, then by ground transportation for 33 miles to Port Chester, N. Y.



Manuscript marking or reported from 1850 to 1852.

Only 4 covers reported as having manuscript pen marking on them from the territorial period.

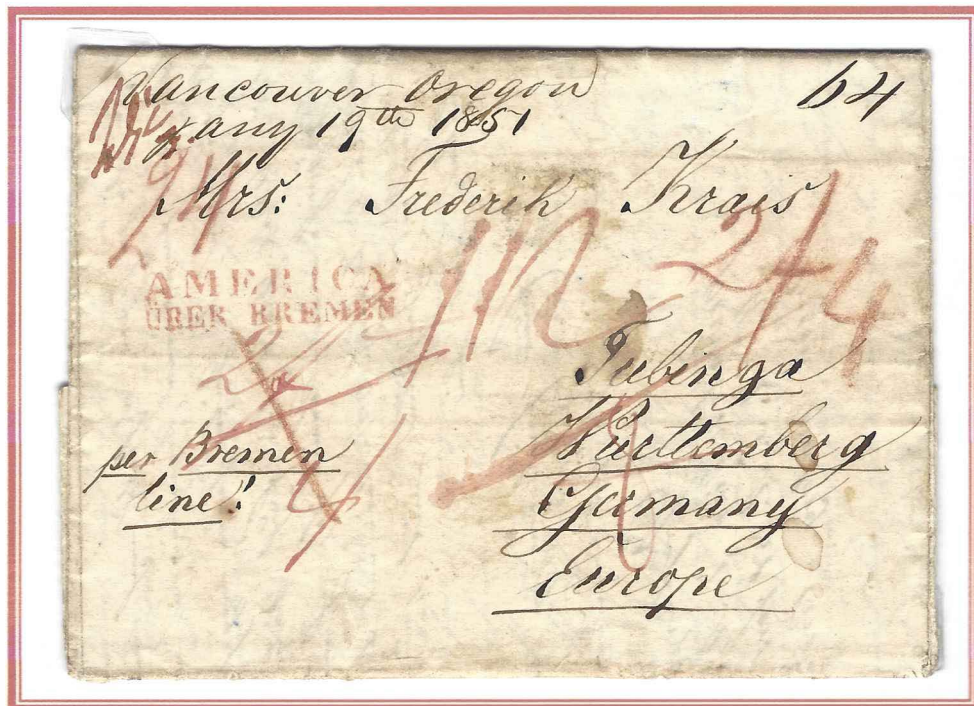
7 September (folded letter dated 1851), manuscript Salem O.T. "5" in manuscript for July 1, 1851 unpaid west-coast rate to Sacramento City, California. Cover carried by ground transportation to Portland than by Pacific steamship to San Francisco then by ground to Sacramento City.

Use of this 32 mm handstamp is reported from 1853 to 1860.



January 29,(circa 1853), first Salem O.T. handstamp in black ink, "PAID 3" handstamp July 1, 1851 prepaid west-coast rate up to 1/2 oz. to Silverton, Oregon. Cover carried by horseback or wagon.

(Steilacoom, on Puget's Sound, Oregon Territory 1 Jan 1851) Vancouver, Oregon Manuscript 19, Jan 1851 to Tübingen, Württemberg rated 64 cents for 24 cents Bremen packet rate from New York + 40 cents West Coast surcharge via San Francisco & Panama. Carried on Collin's "Pacific" from New York 3 April (closed bag via UK) "America". Über Bremen "transit & Tübingen backstamp. Family letter in old German. Cover was 3 months in transit from Vancouver to New York



1 of 3 recorded covers that were from Vancouver Oregon Territory.

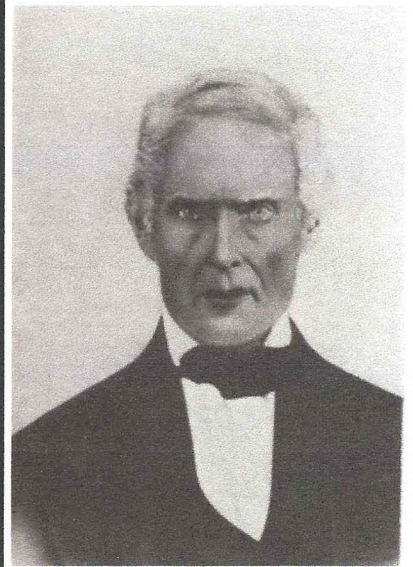
This is the only reported 64 cent rate cover as of this date.

Vancouver O.T. was in existence from January 8, 1850 to December 12, 1850.

"have not received my answer dated August 4, 1850 in reply to your letter dated March 1st, which I have received on July 26, 1850."

"our monthly wages since September last year have been double now and shall continue until the commencement of the new president of the United States on March 1, 1852, thus I have \$2 additional per month for a total of \$14."

"Gustavus Grab
Private soldier 1. Art. Regt. Comp. M.U.S.A. at Fort
Steilacoom,
Oregon Territory, North America



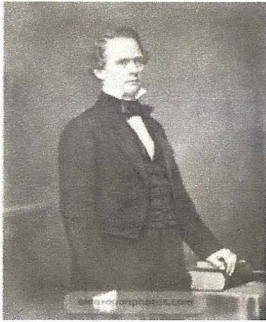
John Burkhart
first postmaster
at Albany, Oregon
1850 to 1853

August 2,(circa 1854), first Albany O.T. handstamp, Stamp "PAID" with 12 in manuscript paying the transcontinental double weight letter rate to Kenosha, Wisconsin. Sent by mail carrier to Portland, steamship via San Francisco, across Panama to New Orleans, then by ship up the Mississippi River.



Use of this 32 mm "OGN" Handstamp is reported from 1854 to 1858 when James H. Foster was in charge of the post office at Albany, Oregon.

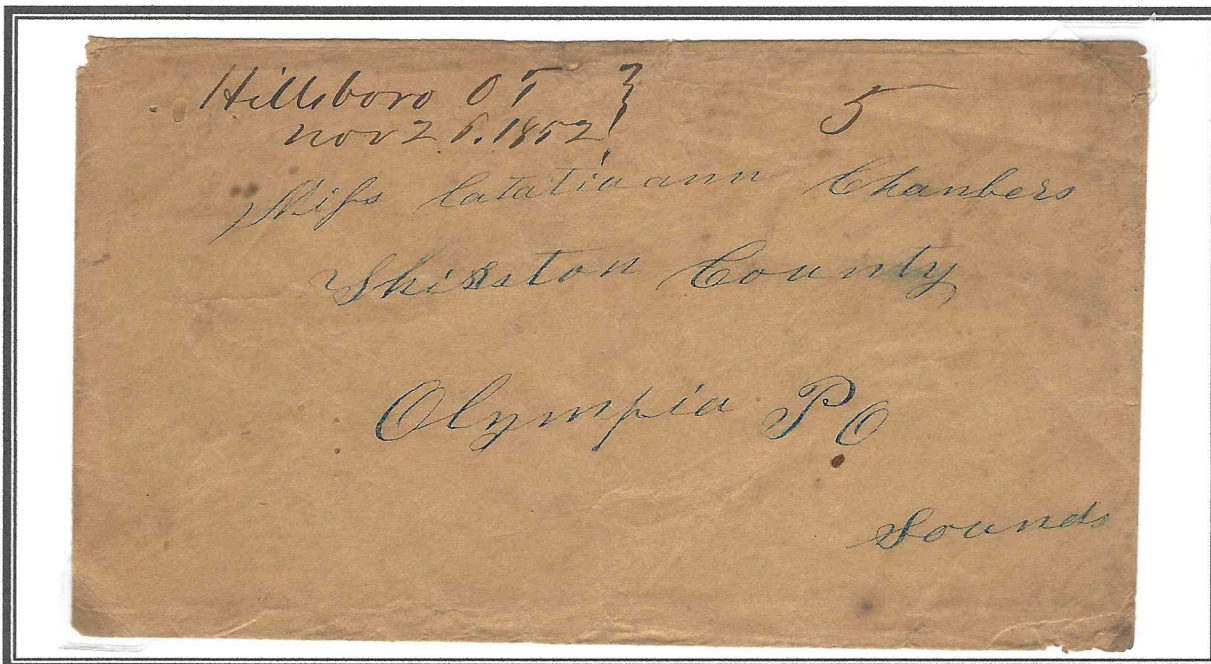
October 18,(circa 1854), first Albany O.T. handstamp with stamp "5" for unpaid West-Coast rate to Jacksonville O.T. Carried by mail contract down the valley by the way of the 1853 Military road, surveyed by Brevet Major B. Alvord.



Joseph Lane
First Governor of
Oregon Territory.



December 27, 1850, first Hillsborough handstamp, manuscript "Paid" with no rate markings. This is the first county marking used out of Oregon. Use of this handstamp is reported from August 09, 1850 to April of 1852.



November 26, 1852, Hillsboro O.T. in manuscript 5 cent paying collect west-coast rate to Olympia O.T. Hillsboro sometimes used the spelling "Hillsborough" up to 1865. Cover carried by Stagecoach line out of Portland to Olympia.



Olympia's first Postmaster, Michael T. Simmons. 1850 to 1853. Total compensation for the year of 1852 was \$118.06.

February 1852, Olympia O.T. in manuscript 2 – 3 cent stamps paying the July 1, 1851 transcontinental rate to Illinois.

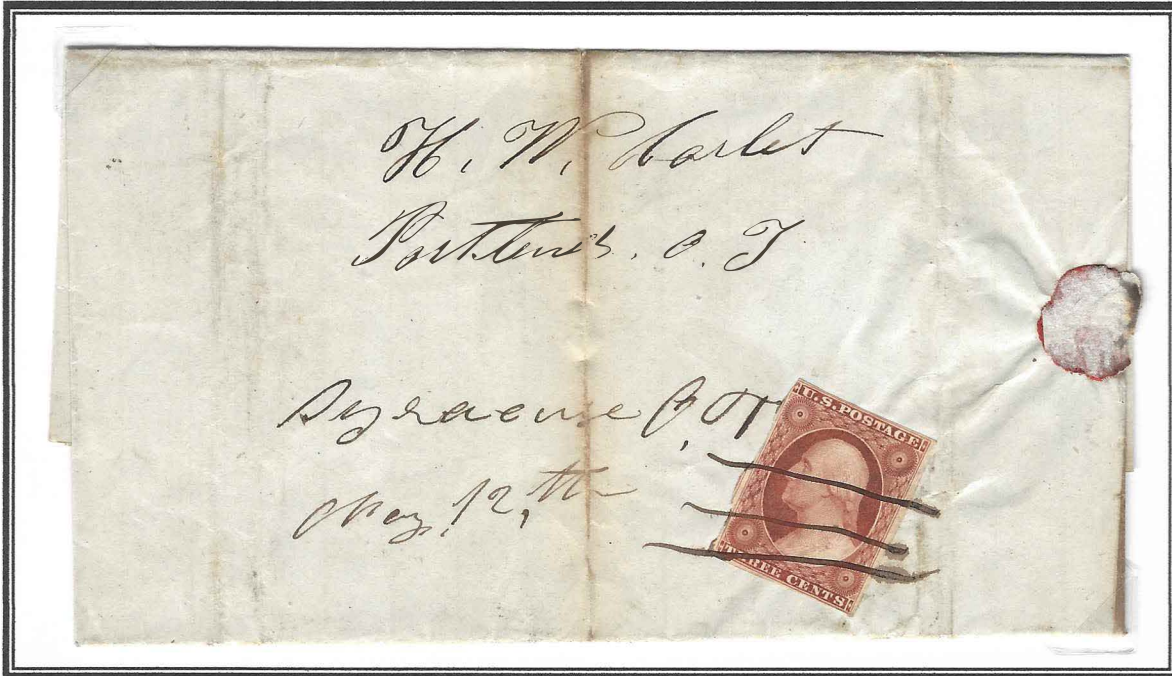


Cover in transit 3 months, 4 days.

October 18, 1852, first Olympia O.T. handstamp, prepaid 26¢ for British Open Mail rate to France. Sent by steamship "Columbia" to San Francisco, transferred to steamship "John L. Stevens" to Panama, crossing the Isthmus to Aspinwall, transferred to steamship "George Law" to New York, steamship "Atlantic" to Great Britain, which processed the cover for 1 schilling, 8 pence to France.

SYRACUSE (Linn)

EST. 4 OCTOBER 1850



One of two known covers from this short lived post office have been recorded to date. The office was established on October 4, 1850. The name was changed to Santiam City on July 27, 1852.

May 12, 1852, Syracuse O.T. in manuscript 3 cent stamp on folded letter, paying prepaid west-coast rate to Portland, O.T. The community of Syracuse was located about 2 miles west of the town of Jefferson, Oregon where I-5 crosses the Santiam River.

SAINT HELENS (Columbia)

EST. 4 NOVEMBER 1850

Postmasters during the territorial period:

Benjamin Dunkill
Nov. 1853 to July 1856,

Seth Pope
July 1856 to Sept. 1859.

Less than four covers have been reported using this circular handstamp.

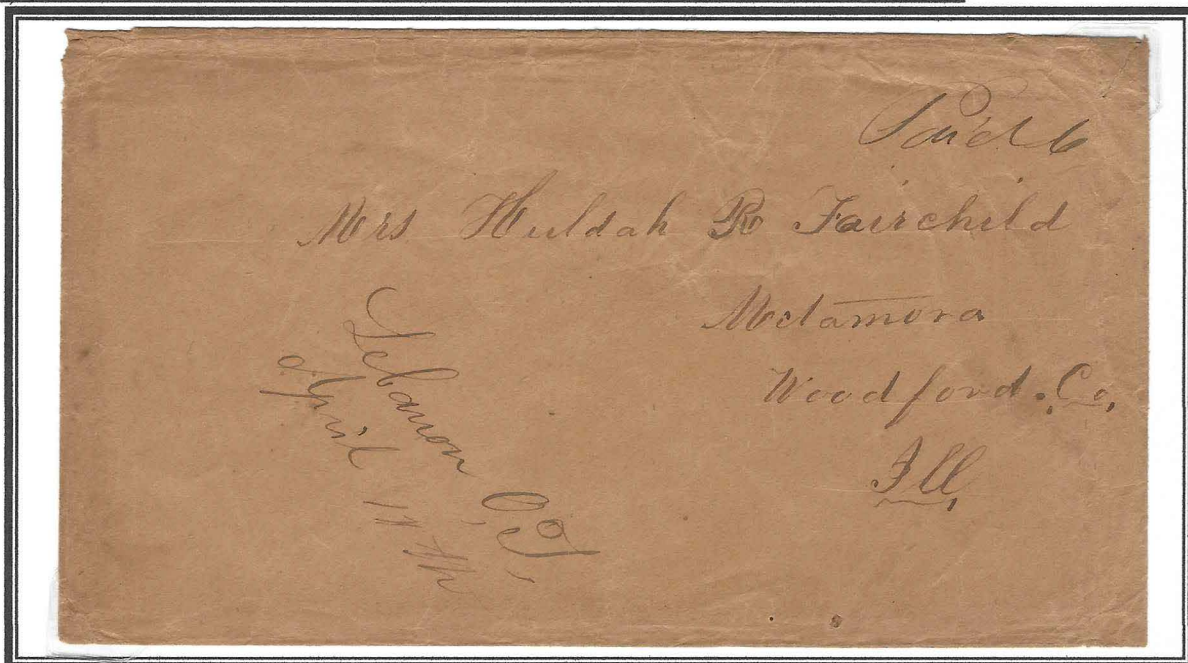


25 June 1854, second Saint Helens O.T. postmark, handstamp "10" in circle with "PAID" handstamp for prepaid transcontinental rate to Vermont. Sent by steamship via San Francisco to Panama, then by mule train to Aspenwall, Pamama. It was returned to a steamship to New York, sent finally by train to Westfield, Vermont.

LEBANON (Marion)

EST. 5 JUNE 1851

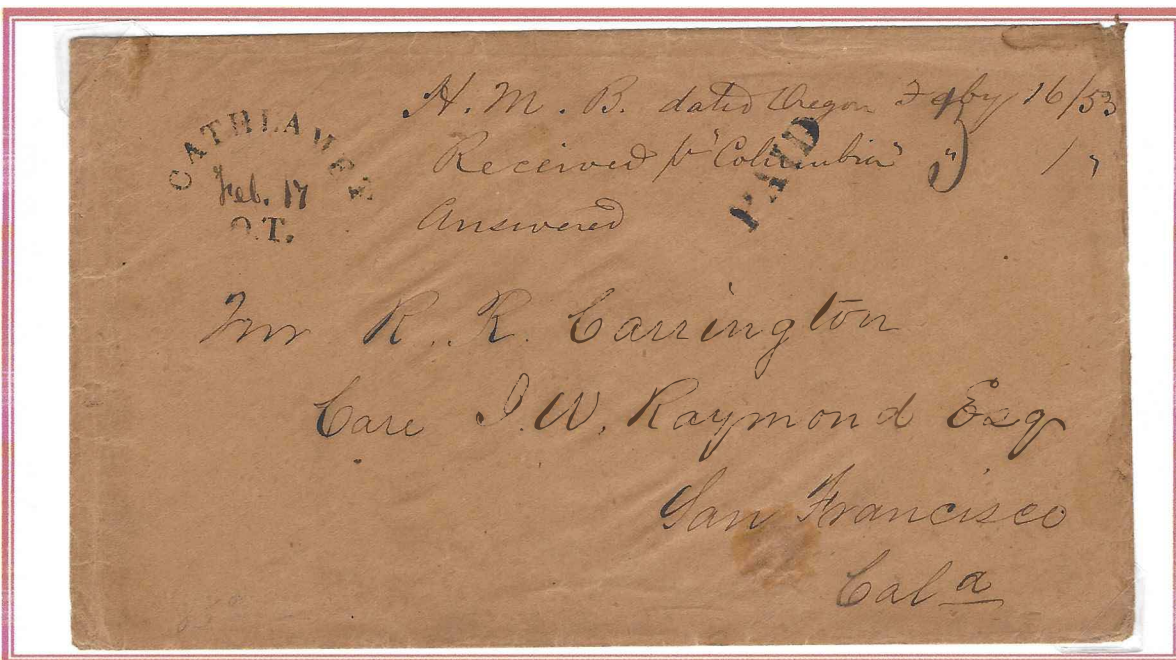
This is not the Lebanon in Linn County that is still in operation. It is a post office that was located 12 miles east of Salem, Oregon. The office was opened on June 5, 1851 and was closed down on June 21, 1858.



April 18, (circa 1853), manuscript Lebanon O.T. "Paid 6" in manuscript for transcontinental rate to Illinois. It traveled Salem to Portland, to San Francisco, to Panama, by mule train across Isthmus route. It was sent then by steamship to New York, than by contract mail carrier to Connecticut.

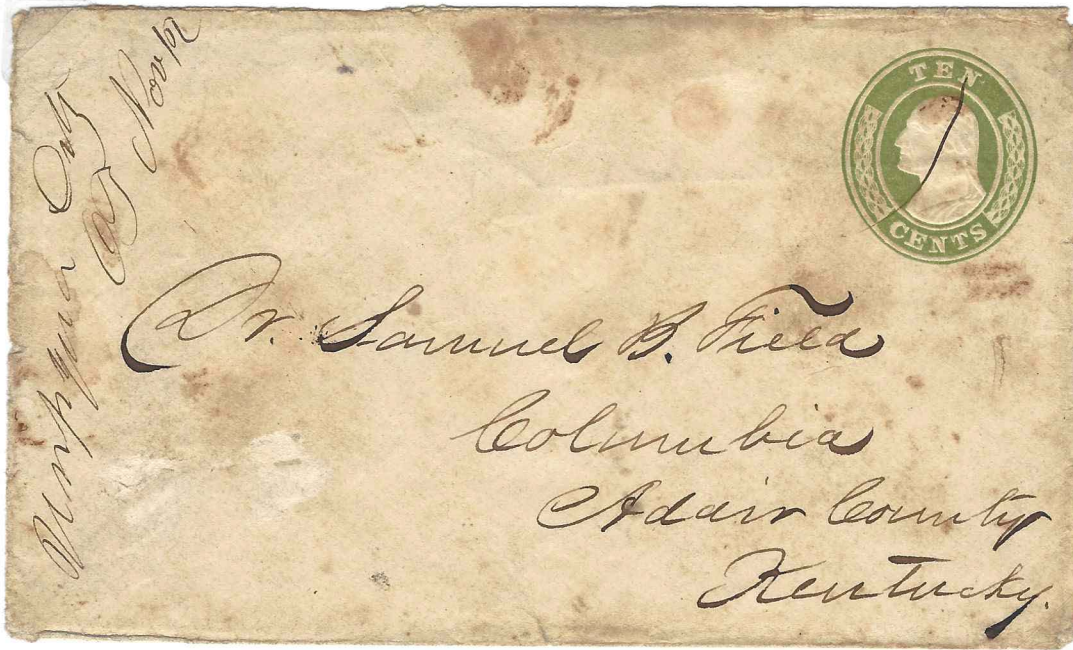
CATHLAMET (Wahkiakum)

EST. 8 AUGUST 1851



Only two known covers from this short lived post office have been recorded to date. The office was established on August 8, 1851. The post office became part of the Washington Territory on March 2, 1853.

February 17, 1853, Cathlamet O.T. handstamp with manuscript "Feb 17" and handstamp "PAID" with manuscript "3" for West-Coast rate to San Francisco. Cathlamet, local on the north side of Columbia River, became part of W.T. in March of 1853. Cover was carried by the steamship "Columbia" to San Francisco.



The post office was established on Sept. 24, 1851 and discontinued on March 19, 1869. The post office was located at Fort Umpqua, a military reservation.

November 12, 1856, manuscript Umpqua City O.T. 10 cent Nesbitt paying for transcontinental rate to Kentucky. This post office was located west of Reedsport on the west side of the Umpqua River at Fort Umpqua.

Use of this 32 mm handstamp is reported from 1856 to 1857.



August 26, 1856 in manuscript, Umpqua City O.T. first handstamp 10 cent Nesbitt envelope paying for transcontinental rate to Columbia, Kentucky. Stamp canceled with year "1856" date stamp. San Francisco to Panama, by mule train across Isthmus route. It was sent by steamship to New York, than by train to Kentucky.



Winchester, O. T. was established on Nov. 3, 1851. The name was changed to Wilbur, Oregon on Dec. 14, 1860.

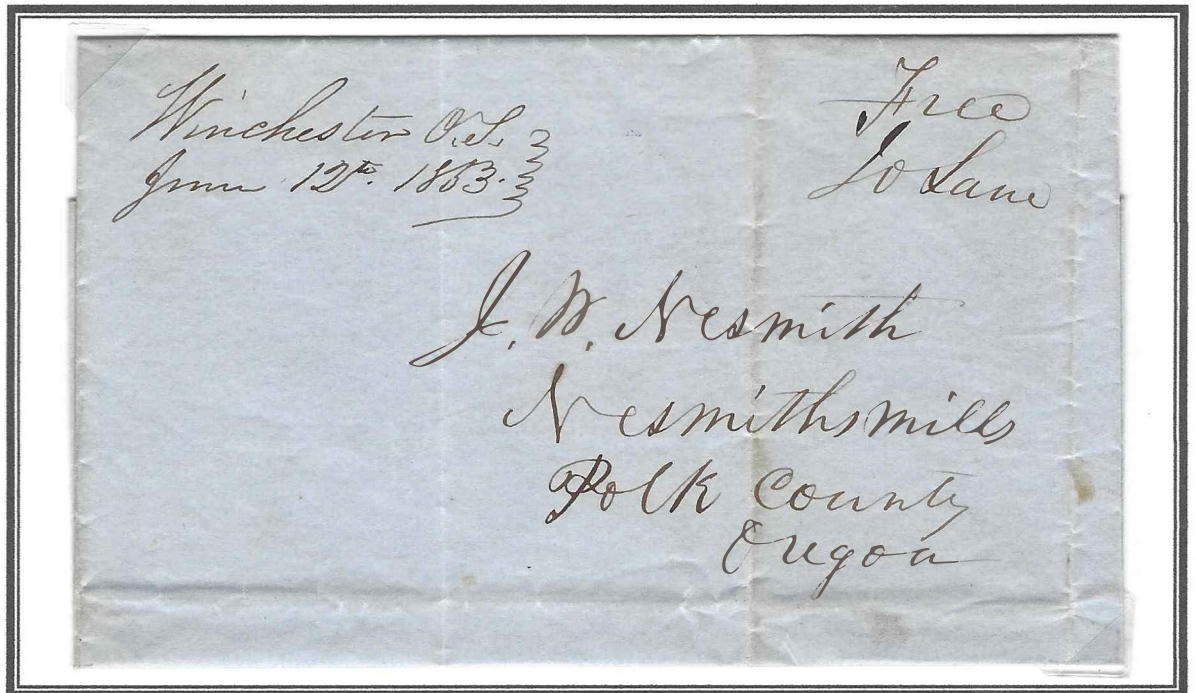
Only 2 covers using this 37.5 mm handstamp have been reported during territorial times.

August 25, (circa 1857), Winchester O.T. first handstamp with 10 cent stamp for transcontinental rate to New York. Winchester to Portland via San Francisco to Panama, by mule train across the Isthmus route, then onto steamship to New York, finally by contract mail carrier to City.

Postmasters during the territorial period:

Addison Fint
Nov. 3, 1851 to
June. 14, 1854.

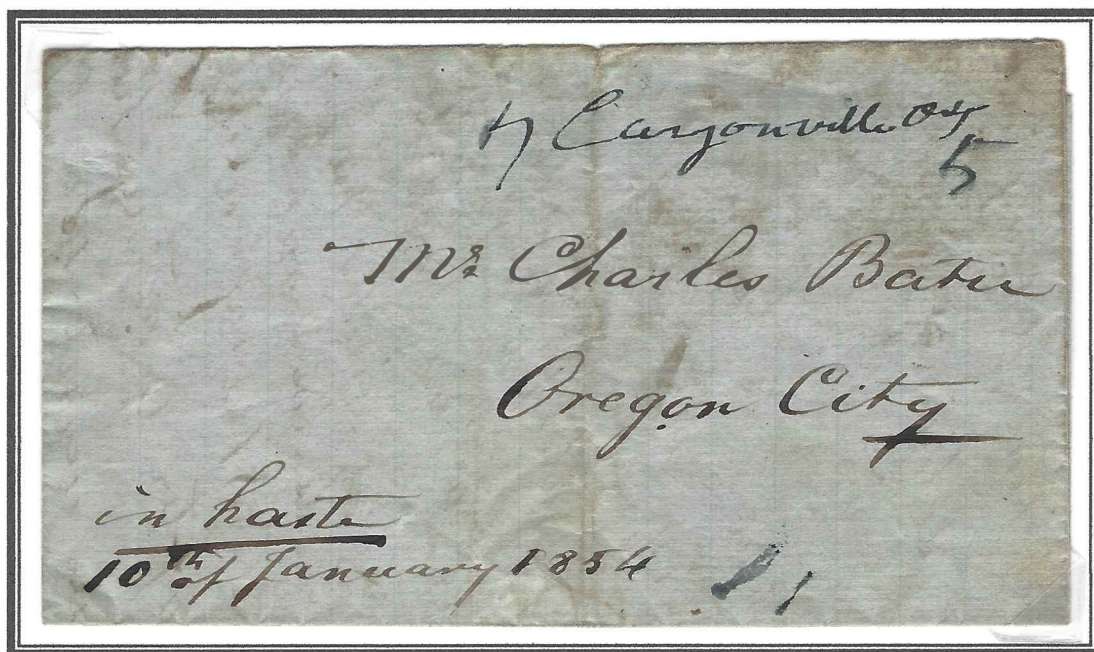
Thomas Smith
June 15, 1854 to
June 25, 1860.



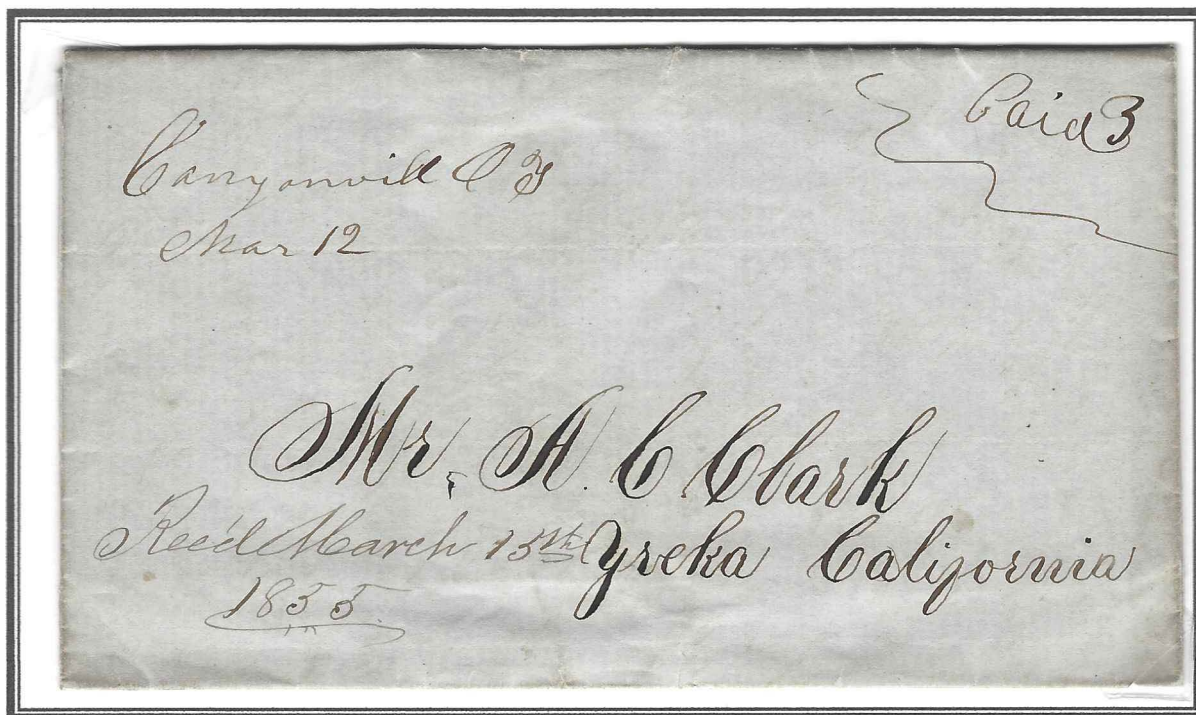
June 12, 1853, Winchester O. T. manuscript cancel with "Free" rate marking by Joseph Lane, Oregon Territory's Delegate in Congress at this time.

Only four covers from North Canyonville are recorded in the territorial period.

The postmaster's compensation for the year of 1854 was \$35.81.

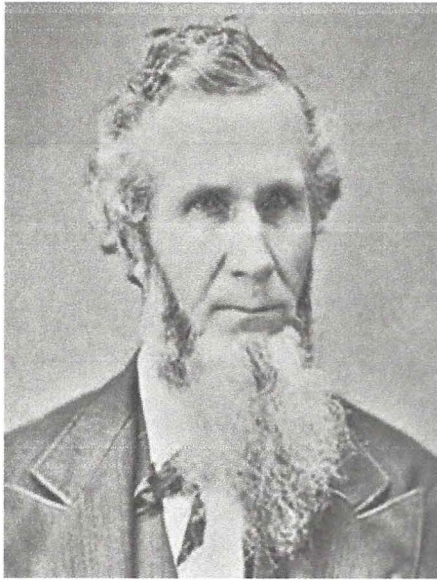


January 10, 1854, N Canyonville O.T. in manuscript "5" for local unpaid rate to Oregon City under the postal rules of July 1, 1851. This cover was carried by contract messenger to Oregon City.

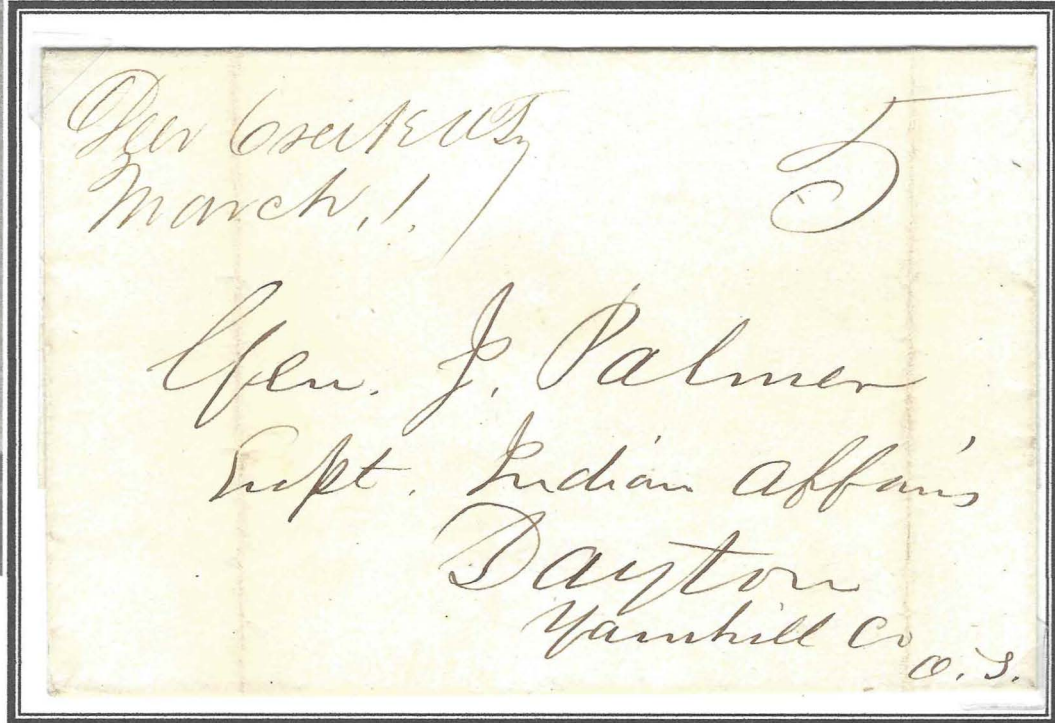


There are no know reported circular postmarkings for North Canyonville. The earliest handstamp to be listed was for June 9, 1860.

March 12, 1855, Canyonville O.T. in manuscript with "paid 3" in manuscript for prepaid west coast rate to Yreka, California. Cover traveled by contract messenger to Yreka. The "North" was dropped from the name in 1892.



Joel Palmer



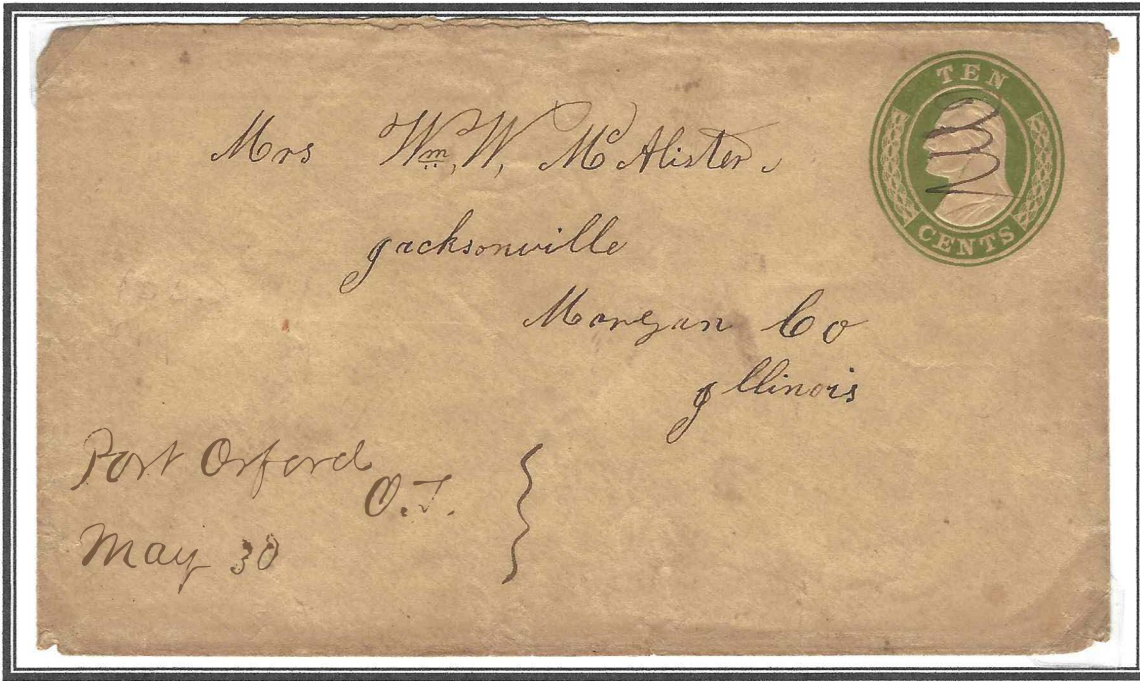
March 1, (circa 1854), Deer Creek O.T. in manuscript "5" cent unpaid rate west-coast mail to, Joel Palmer, Head of Indian Affairs. Joel Palmer was in the territorial House of Representatives and speaker of the house. In 1864 Mr. Palmer was elected to the State Senate. Deer Creek (1852 – 1857) was changed to Roseburg(h) in July of 1857.



Only 3 reported covers using this 33 mm circular handstamp during the territorial period.

William T. Perry was the first postmaster and his compensation for 1856 was \$132.36.

1856, Deer Creek O.T. first handstamp with 10 cent stamp used for transcontinental rate to Elkhorn, Minnesota. Deer Creek to Portland via San Francisco to Panama, across the Isthmus by mule train, loaded onto a steamship to New York, then by train to Minnesota.



Less than 6 Port Orford covers are reported during the territorial period with a manuscript cancel. It was only used during the first year of operation by the postmaster R. H. Smith.

May 30, (circa 1855), Port Orford O.T. in manuscript on a 10 cent Nesbitt envelope paying the transcontinental rate to Jacksonville, Illinois. Sent by steamship via San Francisco to Panama then by mule train to Aspenwall, Panama, onto a steamship to New York, finally by train to Illinois.



This 37 mm handstamp is reported only in 1856.

14 February (circa 1856), 2nd Port Orford O.T. handstamp with a manuscript 10 cent and stamp "paid" for the transcontinental rate to Cushing, Me. Cover marked "overland" which means that it travel by steamship to San Francisco overland to Los Angeles, over the southern route (Mormon Trail) to Salt Lake City then to St Joseph, Missouri and on to New York.