

COLORADO POSTAL HISTORY

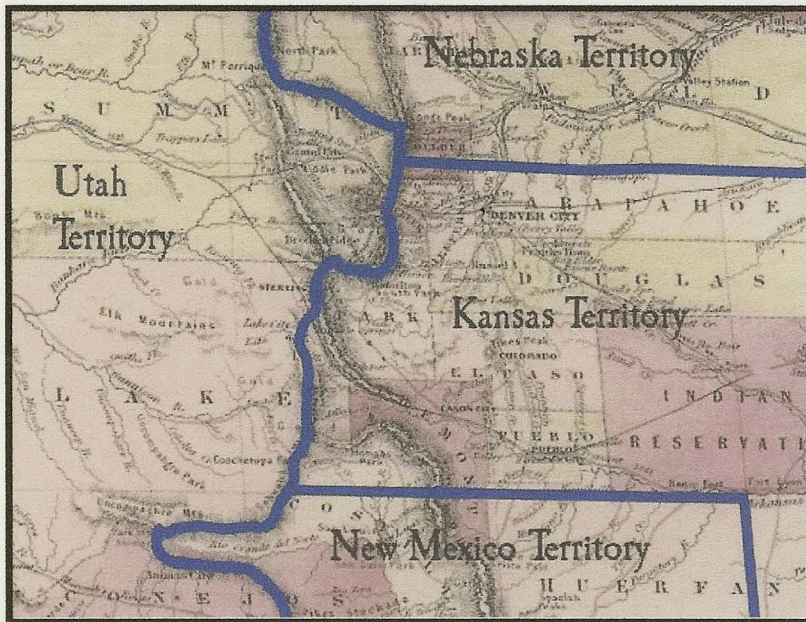
The purpose of this exhibit is to show the development of the mail service in Colorado from the earliest time when still part of the Unorganized Territory. Colorado Territory was made up from four large different territories and established by act of congress on February 28, 1861. The map outlines the four regions that became the Colorado Territory later admitted to the Union as a state on August 1, 1876.

Kansas Territory

Nebraska Territory

New Mexico Territory

Utah Territory



Colton Map ~ 1859

Courtesy of Richard C. Frajola

The vast area acquired at the time of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 was known as the Unorganized Territory. It was later divided into Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska territories. A major gold discovery in the western mountain region of Kansas in 1858-59 led to a large migration in search of the precious metal.

The four earliest settlements in the western Kansas Territory were Auraria, Denver City, Montana City and St. Charles. In a short time Denver City grew to be the larger trading area absorbing the other towns.

The earliest large gold discoveries were surface placer deposits found in late 1858 through 1859 located in Clear Creek and Gilpin County. The towns of Black Hawk, Idaho, and Mountain City were quickly developed as a mining centers. The area offered much gold to eager miners.

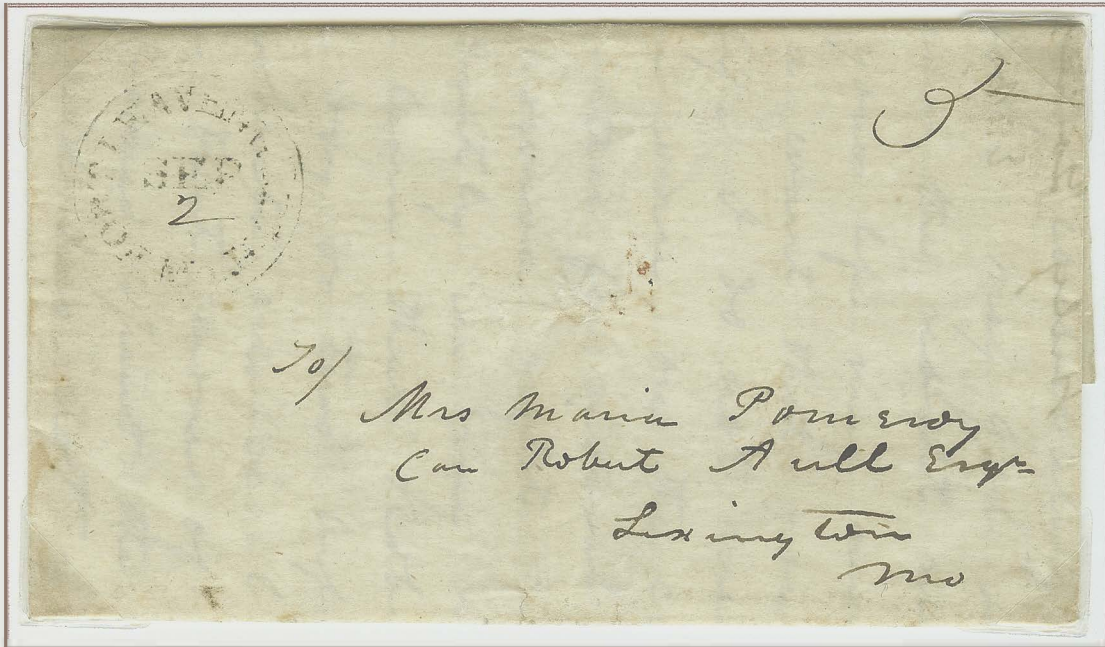
Two other major discoveries one in Boulder City district in the Nebraska Territory a short distance northwest of Denver City. The second further west over the Continental Divide in the Utah Territory on the Blue River, where the town Breckinridge was built. This rich gold discovery attracted many brave pioneers who crossed the high mountains opening up mines, and building towns to develop this virgin region on the Western Slope.

UNORGANIZED TERRITORY

near Bents Fort on the Arkansas River

A folded letter from E. W. Pomeroy datelined Near Bents Fort, 31st July 1846 to his wife Maria at Lexington, Missouri. Pomeroy was a noted Santa Fe trader traveling with Colonel Kearny's "Army of the West" on the way to Santa Fe. The caravan camped eight miles east of Bents Fort. Mail at this time was carried by military express to Fort Leavenworth where it entered the mail on Sept. 2nd 1846 with "5" cent due. A unique cover and one of three known.

Dr Maria *Near Bents Fort 31 July 46*



Dateline 31st July near Bents Fort to Mrs. Maria Pomeroy, Lexington, Missouri postmarked at Fort Leavenworth, Mo. entering the mails on 2nd September, 1846

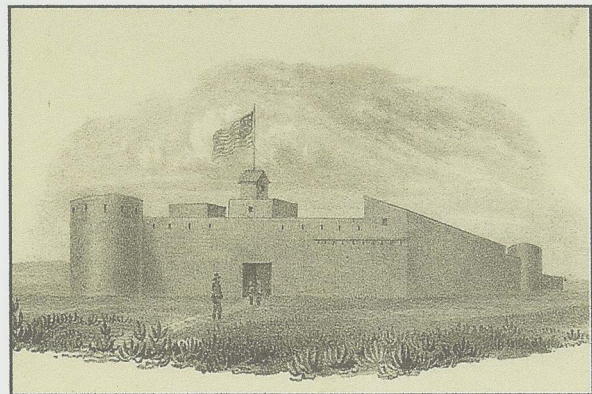
31 July, 46

Dear Maria

Col. Kearny arrived two days since with all the Army. Joseph Hamelin is only a few miles behind us and Rich say is without letters for us. James spent the night at the Fort and has not yet returned. Col. Owens has come in and reports James to be enjoying himself with the ladies (if they may so be called). The mail is about to close. The news from Santa Fe is that they place will probably surrender without a fight, nothing however is known upon which much reliance can be placed.

Truly your affectionate,

E. W. Pomeroy



Bents Fort on the Arkansas River

KANSAS TERRITORY ~ 1858

Gold is Discovered

Early letter reporting the discovery of gold

El Dorado, K. T. May 25, 1858

Dear Cousin Your letter arrived this afternoon, and as I felt like writing and thought I would see if you would answer it this time. It is real lonesome here. I suppose you have heard before this of the Gold being found near the Rocky-Mountains. One Train bound for that place has gone through here, and another expected daily, and others are getting groups from all parts of the territory I understand.

You ought to have been here to have see how "crazy" most all of the young men around here were to go., more especially those that couldn't and then I suppose the fever would have carried you off as it did a number from here. It seems very contagious and after the arrival of the Train spreads rapidly. If you come I suppose you will be for going to the Rocky-Mountains after Gold. Wont You?

I ain't quite sure, that all of us here will catch the "Gold Fever" and go to the Mountains in the Spring.

Your affectionate Cousin, Augustus Stewart



31 May 1858 Topeka, K. T. to Mr. Lewis D. Seeley, Flint, Michigan, large round date stamp with 3 cent dull red. Pen notation lower left El Dorado, May 26, K. T.

KANSAS TERRITORY ~ 1858

Gold is Discovered

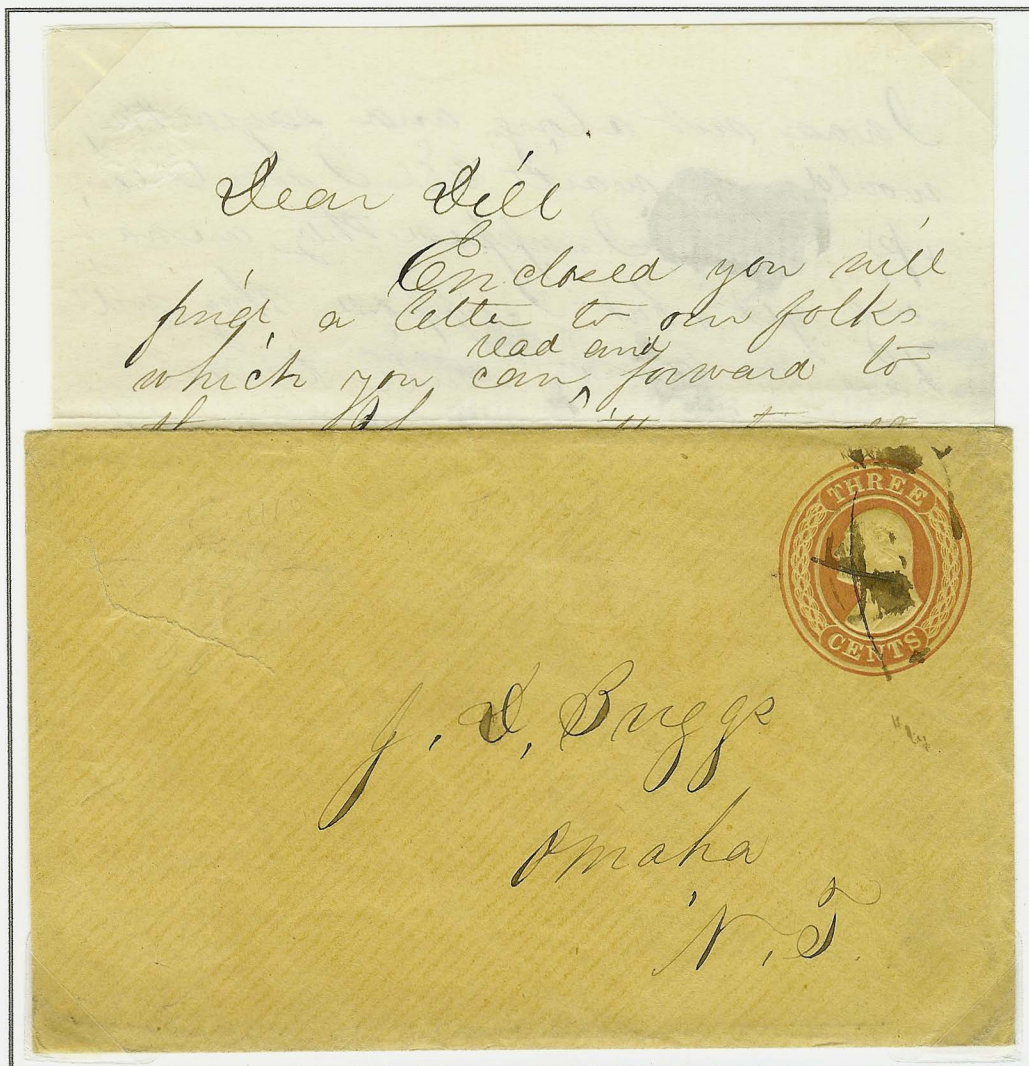
Letter from Cherry Creek Mines

Letters mailed during the early gold rush days was often hand carried east by travelers going home. It appears from early records that W. D. McLain, and his group arrived at Cherry Creek area around 2nd of November 1858. The group started its journey west from near Omaha. He traveled with a small group of men that may have included the "Steinberger Boys", and after arriving at Cherry Creek settled at Sander's Ranch 15 miles below Cherry Creek for the winter of 1858. "Will does request that his friend Briggs direct his letters to "Cherry Creek Quarter, Via Fort Laramie."

Dear Dell, Enclosed you will find a letter to our folks which you can read and forward to them. Sweeney and Rube Wood come up to Florence after me I saw them but they did not see me. I took over the hill and went out the first. Then Pappillion stayed all night at the old Mrs. Kelley and went on to Fremont and Elk Horn City in the morning with Steinberger boys.

Will have to close now, give my love to Dr. Seymour and Sady and all my friends.

Fondly yours, Will (McLain)



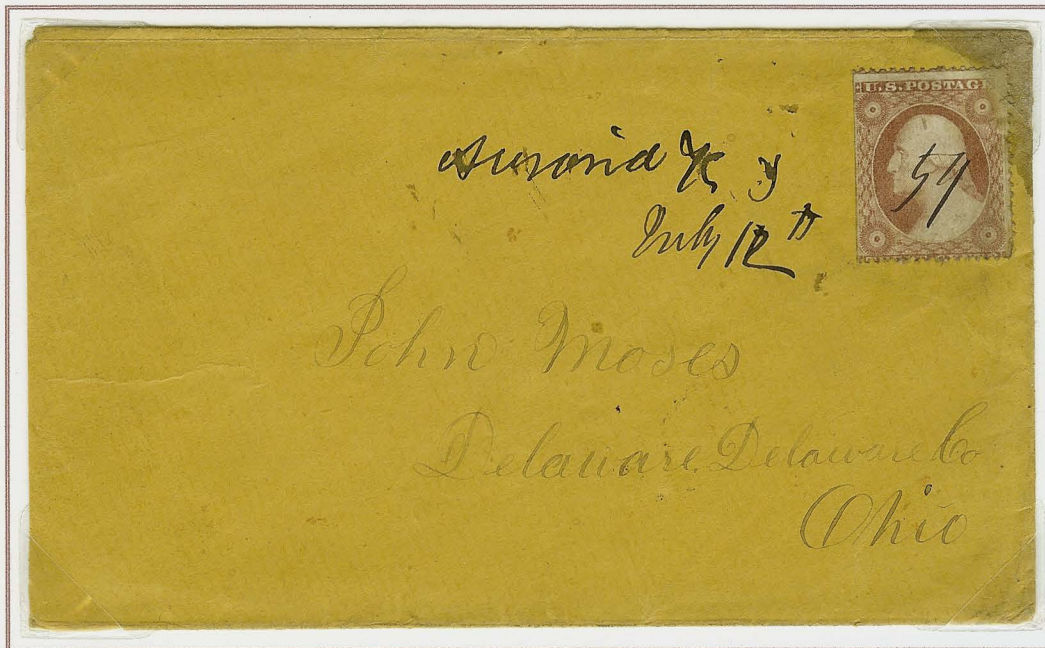
Early undated letter to J. D. Briggs, Omaha, N. T. Nebraska Territory (1858) with manuscript pen cancel on three cent red Nesbit entire. During the early days before mail service was established Will Smith operated an express mail service between the Cherry Creek mines and Fort Laramie, Nebraska Territory.

KANSAS TERRITORY ~ 1859

Gold Is Discovered

The settlement of Auraria was located on the west bank of Cherry Creek. The first party of prospectors in the area was led by Green Russell traveling from Auraria, Georgia via Bents Fort in the summer and fall of 1858. The Russell party soon made several placer gold discoveries at Little Dry Creek a branch of Cherry Creek. This led to more discoveries further west bringing on the great Gold Rush to the Rocky Mountains in 1859.

Auraria, K. T.



12 July 1859 Auraria K. T. letter to John Moses, Delaware, Ohio, with manuscript postmark with additional "59" on 3 cent dull red. One of only four known covers.



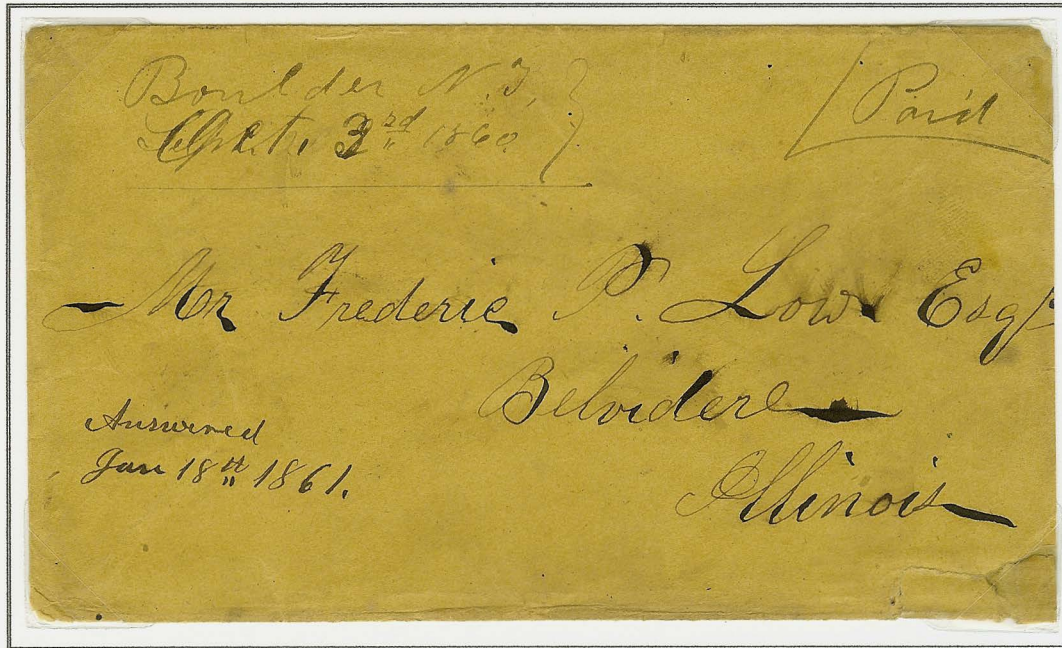
2 August 1859 Auraria, K. T. letter to Jas. F. Rusling, Esq., Williamsport, Pennsylvania, straightline typeset postmark with Paid 3 Fwd to Trenton, N. J. with additional 3 cent Fwd fee

NEBRASKA TERRITORY ~ 1860

Gold Is Discovered

Boulder, N. T.

The first settlement in Boulder County was at the mouth of Boulder Canyon known as Red Rocks by gold seekers in October 1858. A. A. Brookfield, organized the Boulder Town Company on February 10, 1859 at that time Boulder City was located in the Nebraska Territory. The name changed to Boulder when the post office opened on April 22, 1859. The mining area continued grew, and on February 28, 1861 Congress passed a bill that brought Nebraska Territory area into the newly created Colorado Territory.



3 October 1860 Boulder, N. T. to Frederic P. Low, Esq. at Belvidere, Illinois, with manuscript cancellation and pen "Paid" notation. Mr. Low notes that he "Answered the letter on Jan. 18, 1861". One of only four recorded uses from the Nebraska Territory. Illustrated in Jarrett's Colorado book.



Boulder City ~ Nebraska Territory

NEW MEXICO TERRITORY ~ 1860

Gold Is Discovered

Fort Garland, N. M.

Fort Garland was established in 1858 in the New Mexico Territory in the San Luis Valley west of La Veta Pass on the edge of the Sangre de Cristo mountains. The post office opened February 25, 1862 mail prior to that time mail was transported to Taos by military courier. The soldiers main duty at the fort was protection of local farmers and ranchers from marauding Ute and Apache Indian tribes in the valley.



19 September 1860 Fernando de Taos, N. M. Letter to Henry W. Dinman, Esq. Bristol, Rhode Island with two 3 cent dull red overlapping with black "Fernando de Taos, N. M" postmark. Docket on Sept. 14 , 1860 by Charles H. Alden, Army Surgeon and artist stationed at Fort Garland



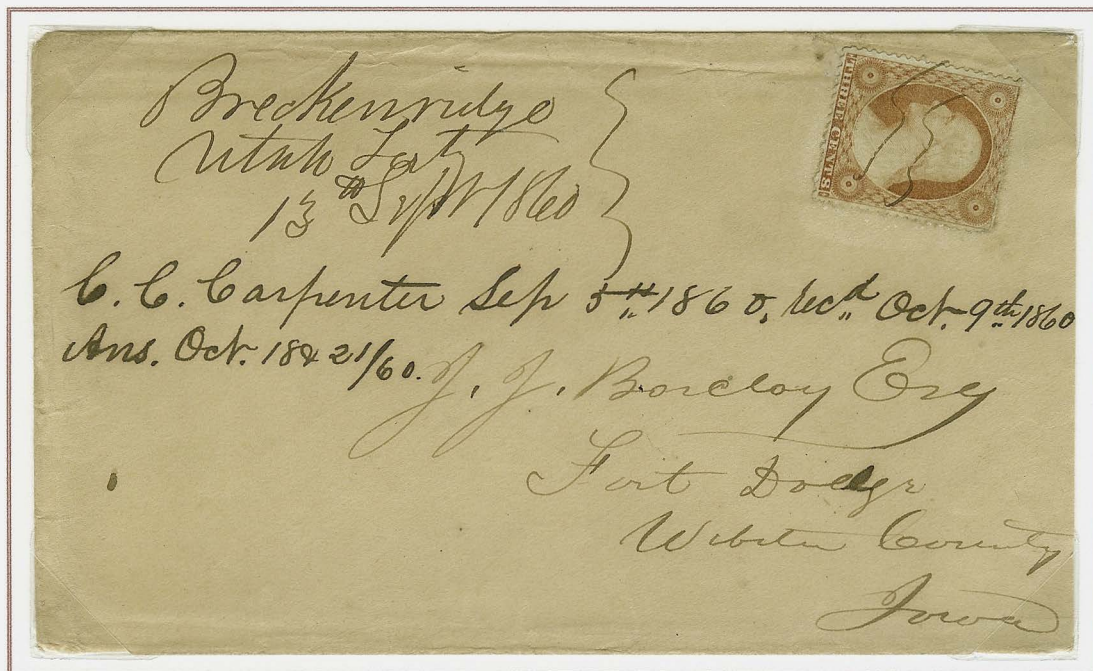
Incoming letter from Pendleton, South Carolina to Lient. Ben F. Sloan via Santa Fe to Fort Garland, New Mexico

UTAH TERRITORY ~ 1860

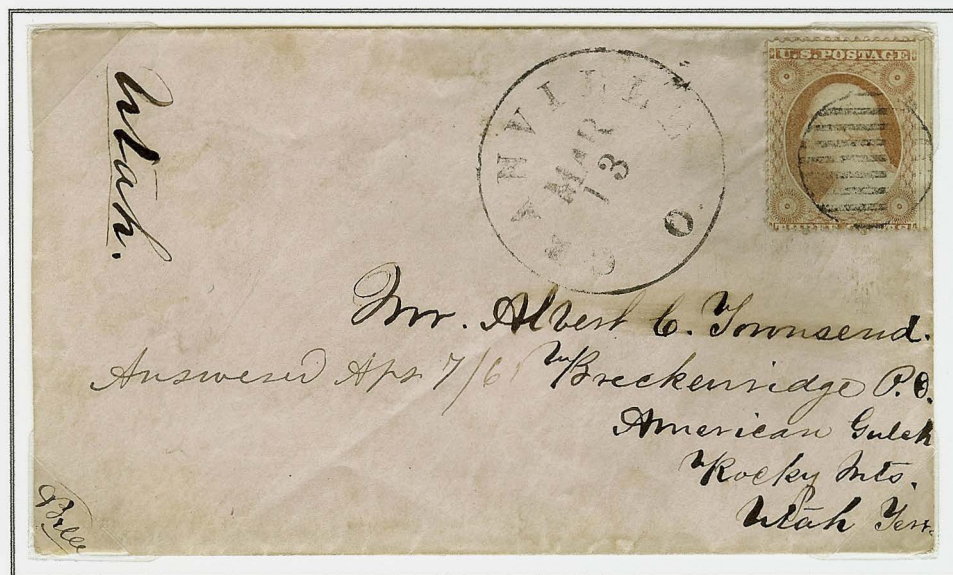
Gold Is Discovered

Breckinridge, U. T.

Gold was discovered in Spring of 1859 on the Blue River west of the Continental Divide in the Utah Territory. This was one of the first major discoveries on the western slope where the town of Breckinridge soon was built. The community was named for John C. Breckinridge, Vice President, and a man with strong Southern sympathies. When the Civil War broke out 1861 pro-Union citizens changed the name to Breckenridge changing "I" to "E". The Northern population had little sympathy for the Southern Confederacy in this mining town.



13 Sept 1860 Breckinridge, Utah Territory letter to J. J. Barclay, Esq., Fort Dodge, Iowa with manuscript postmark and 3 cent dull red with pen cancel. The post office opened January 18, 1860. One of only two known covers.



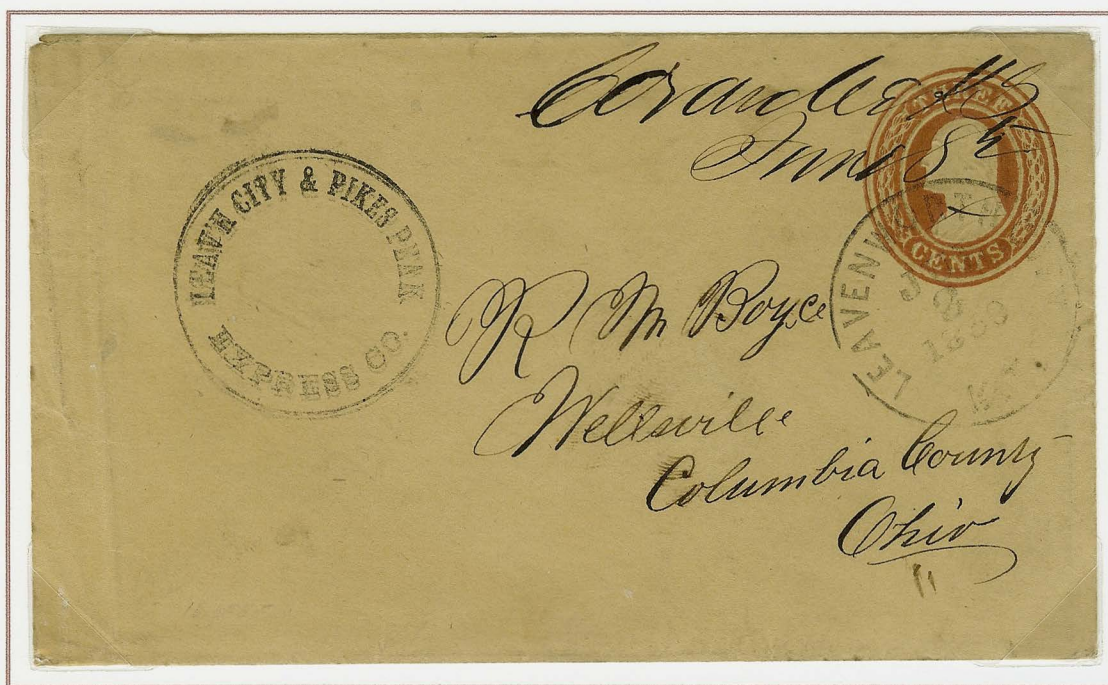
Incoming Letter to Mr. Albert C. Townsend at Breckenridge P. O., American Gulch, Rocky Mts. Utah Terr.

KANSAS TERRITORY ~ 1859

Gold is Discovered

Coraville, K. T.

Coraville was not a town only the name of a Post Office established on March 22, 1859. Mail served began in June from the office located in the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express building on Blake Street in Denver City. Post office lacked a regular mail contract being excluded from the Leavenworth to Salt Lake City route. Three mail shipments were carried by express before the express agent realized the company was not being paid for the service.



8 June 1859 Coraville, K. T. letter to R. M. Boyce, Wellsville, Ohio, with manuscript postmark tying 3 cent red Nesbit entire with receiving Leavenworth City date stamp on July 8, 1859. The entire carries a frank by the Leav'n City & Pikes Peak Express Co.

The company formed by William Russell and John Jones in February, 1859 operated between May 7 and July 19, 1859. The company failed after making only seventeen trips, which took 30 days covering over 600 miles on the difficult Republican River route. Later it was the company was reorganized with name changed to Jones & Russell Pike's Peak Express.



Stage Coach on the Trail

KANSAS TERRITORY ~ 1860

Gold Is Discovered

Denver City, K. T.

Golden Gate, August 26, 1860

"Sir I received your letter yesterday and was glad to hear that your home all well for you was good as dead when you left hear you was so badly scared but let that pass. We are all doing well. The mines is proving good as expected this summer their is now over 100 quartz mills in the mines some of which a doing well. Prospectors are fetching news of finding some good mines across the snow range."

Yours truly, J. P. Gard

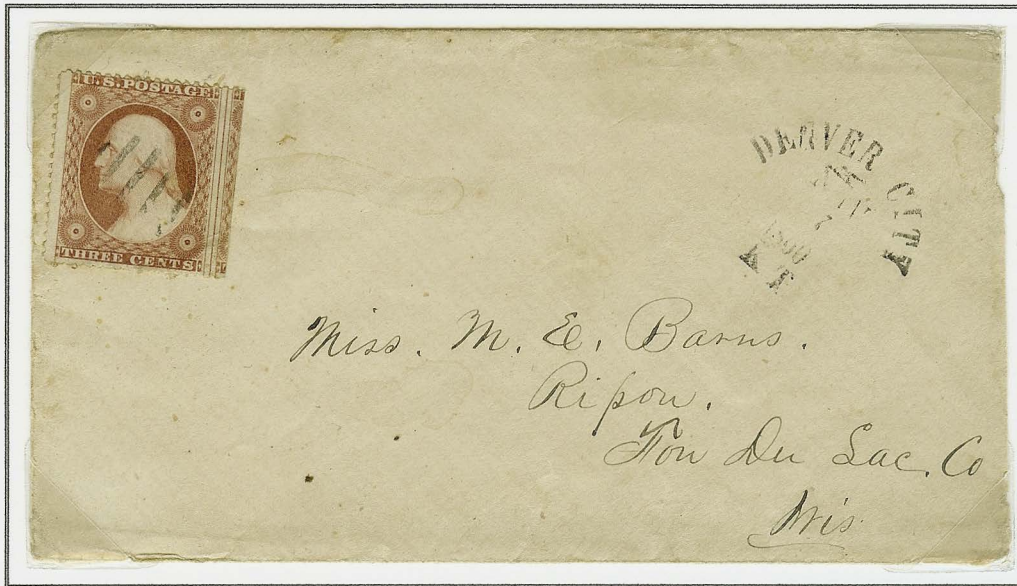


30 August 1860 Denver City, K. T. letter to John Ekenbarger, Decatur, Michigan, with rimless Tombstone (Type 1) postmark san-serif. J. P. Gard writes from Golden Gate west of Denver City stating he is now in the Jefferson Territory. He sends encouraging mining news to his friend John.

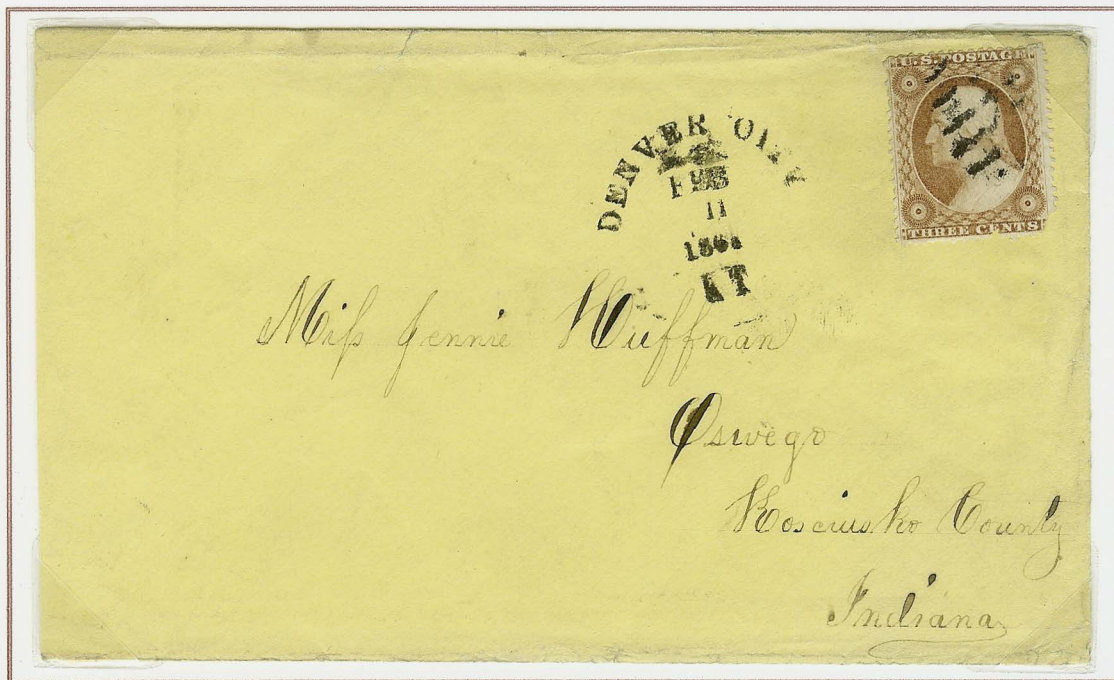
KANSAS TERRITORY ~ 1859

Gold Is Discovered

Denver City, K. T.



17 November 1860 Denver City, K. T. letter to Miss M. E. Barnes, Ripon, Michigan, with rimless Tombstone (Type 2) postmark in small serif style, with 3 cent dull red, and large gutter margin with grid cancel. Datelined Missouri City Nov. 10, 1860 by her brother M. Barnes who was a cook at the mining camp.

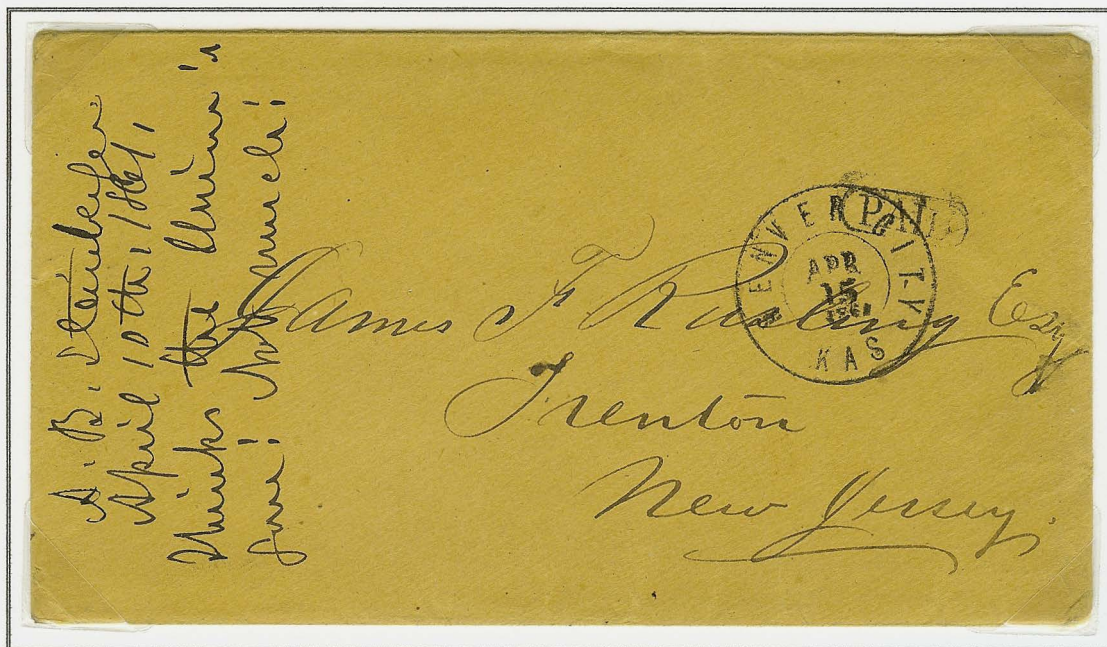


11 February Denver City, K. T. in the "Unorganized Territory" letter to Miss Jennie Huffman, Oswego, Indiana, with rimless Tombstone (Type 3) postmark in bold type serif style with 3 cent dull red and grid cancel. This short time use of the postmark was only used after Kansas became a state on January 29, 1861, and before the declaration of Colorado as a Territory on February 28, 1861.

KANSAS TERRITORY ~ 1859

Gold Is Discovered

Denver City, Kas.



15 April 1861 Denver City, Kas letter to James F. Rusling, Trenton, New Jersey, with double circle date stamp and oval "Paid". Rusling notes Steinberger wrote April 10th 1861, and "Thinks the Unions Gone! Not Much!"



2 July 1861 Denver City, Kas letter to Col. J. B. Patterson Oquawka, Illinois with 3 cent dull red and double circle date stamp 9 cent overweight rate. Rocky Mountain News corner card, and pen notation "Per C O C & P P. Express". This postmark was used for short time after the creation of the Colorado Territory.

KANSAS TERRITORY ~ 1859

Gold is Discovered

Golden City, K. T.

Golden City was established early in the gold-rush town and quickly became a leading economic and for a short time a political center of the region. By the end of 1860 the town had been by popular vote elected the seat of Jefferson County was considered the location of the provisional government of the Jefferson Territory. The town built right at the foothills was much closer to the mines than Auraria or Denver City. The Jefferson Territory never lasted a short time as the major political power shifted to Denver City.



26 June 1860 Golden City, K. T. letter to Mrs. Julie Blankenship, Upper Alton, Illinois, with manuscript postmark and 3 cent dull red with heavy stroke pen cancel. The only recorded postmark from Golden City while in Kansas Territory.



Golden City on Clear Creek ~ Circa 1860's

KANSAS TERRITORY ~ 1859

Gold Is Discovered

Hamilton, K.T.

Hamilton was one of the three major placer mining towns in the South Park area along with Fairplay, and Tarryall. The gold placer mines were very rich during the first few years after the discovery, however, in the 1870's dredging equipment was brought in to mine for the finer gold at depth. The post office opened July 26, 1860 and operated till 1881. South Park area was home to the Ute Indian tribe who were peaceful at this time and caused few problems for the mining communities.



7 February (1861) Hamilton, K. T. Unorganized Territory letter to L. S. Briggs at Golden City with single circle date stamp and matching oval "Paid" frank used for a short period of time before Colorado became a territory when Kansas Territory became a state on February 28, 1861.



Early Days in Hamilton ~ Kansas Territory

KANSAS TERRITORY ~ 1859

Gold Is Discovered

Missouri City, K. T.

Missouri City located in Gilpin County near Black Hawk and Mountain City was the location of several rich gold discoveries leading to development of hard-rock lode mining. The post office opened March 24, 1860 lasting a short time closing in January 1863. Mail was then sent through the Black Hawk post office. Mr. C. P. Garbet writes to his friend in Minnesota from a newly established mining camp being developed in the Fall River area on upper Clear Creek. He states that "Sheldon" will carry the letter to Missouri City for posting a distance of 20 miles.

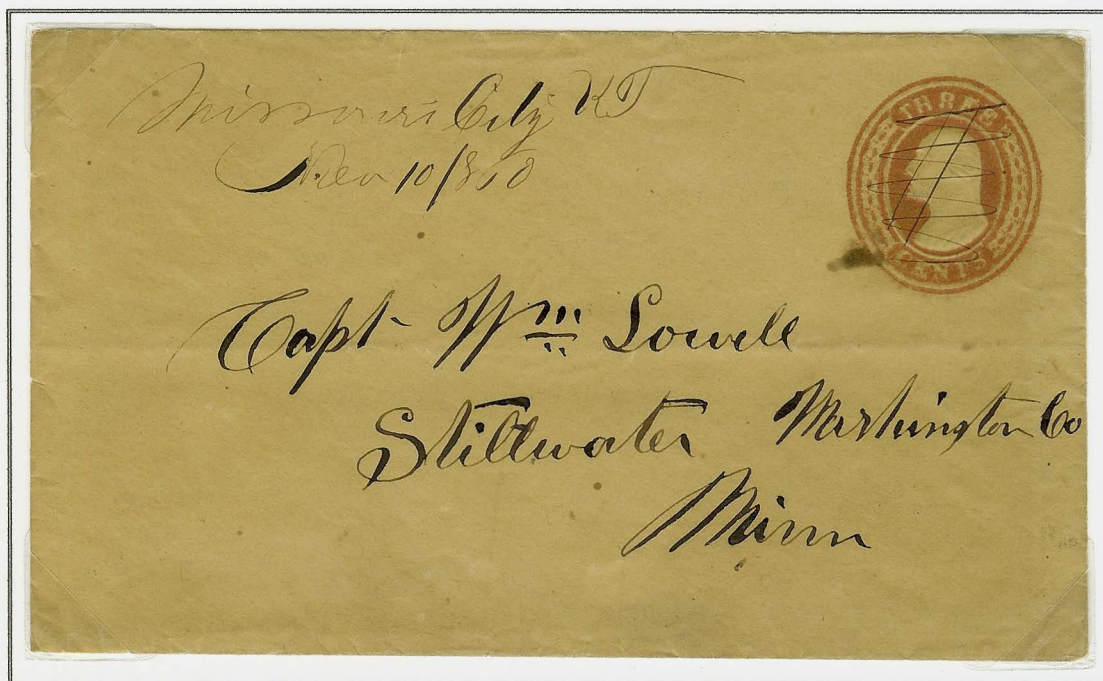
Glenaroe, City, Nov. 6, 1860
Lincoln District on Fall River

To Capt. William Lowell, Dear Sir

In accordance with my promise to take this opportunity to inform you of matters and things here.. Since you left in establishing the Boundaries of this district and framing a code of Law. I have been elected Judge of the Miner's Court. We have made some new discoveries of Lead which I think is good. I have also secured a water claim on Fall River. It is number 3 below the old recorder's office, also found a vacant claim to take up. It is a 1000 dollar to us. We find it pretty hard here for us to get provisions.

I have a letter for Sheldon to take, and he will leave tomorrow, our town is improving very fast 60 lots have been taken and building going up rapidly we will have fifty houses here before spring. I am sinking on the Summit Lode. They are taking out very rich quartz at the depth of 14 feet. Most of us are now working our claims. Weather is very mild yet.

Yours C. P. Garbet



10 November 1860 Missouri City, K. T. letter to Capt. William Lowell, Stillwater, Minnesota, with manuscript postmark on 3 cent red Nesbitt entire with pen stroke cancel. One of a few known covers from this mining post office. Illustrated in Jarrett's Colorado book.

KANSAS TERRITORY ~ 1859

Gold Is Discovered

Tarryall, K. T.

The Tarryall and Hamilton area were among the earliest gold discoveries in the South Park region. Prospector's began arriving in 1859 over the Ute Pass. The two towns were situated on Tarryall Gulch only six miles east of the Continental Divide. The post office opened on Jan. 4, 1860. The early miners staked out much of the land and as result the latecomers called Tarryall "Grab All".



1 November 1860 Tarryall, K T letter to J. H. Dix, Wilmington, Windham County, Vermont, with manuscript postmark and 3 cent dull red with large "X" pen cancel. The earliest recorded of two known covers.

Deadwood (Gulch) Oct. 26, 1860

"Dear Parents and Brothers, We have U. S. Mail brought to this part of the world once a week coming on Tuesday departing Thursday. I am at the office when it opens. I expect after the snows fall there will be no coming here with teams, but we can get out on snowshoes. Their will probably be a large immigration here in the spring as there are plenty of fools. Write soon. H. F. Dix,



Main Street Tarryall ~ 1860