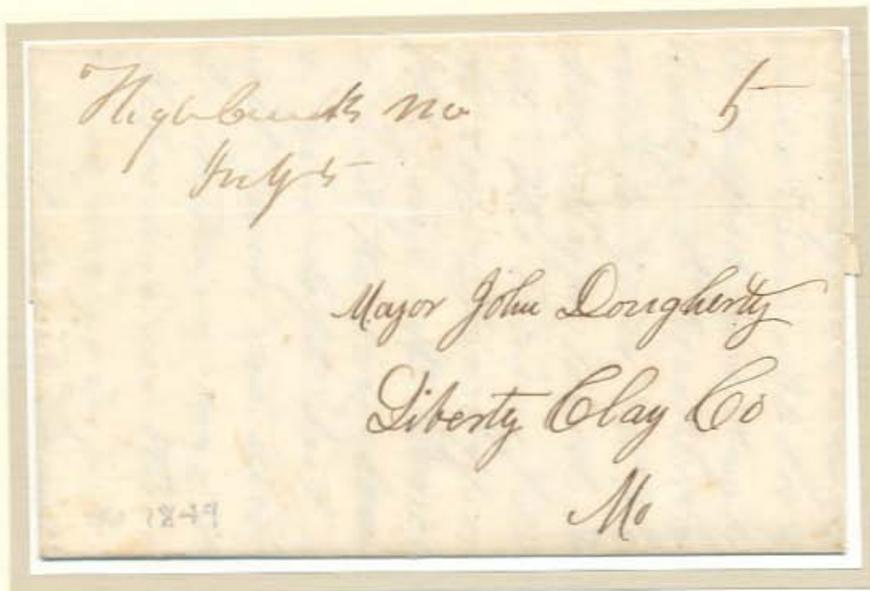


THE WESTERN MAILS



CHEYENNE & SIOUX ATTACK HUGHES WAGON TRAIN

This folded letter originated at Fort Kearny June 22, 1849. It was carried east by a private party & placed in the mails, as per postmark, at "High Creek, Mo July 5" (1849). It was rated "5" cents collect for under 300 miles to its destination - Liberty, Mo.

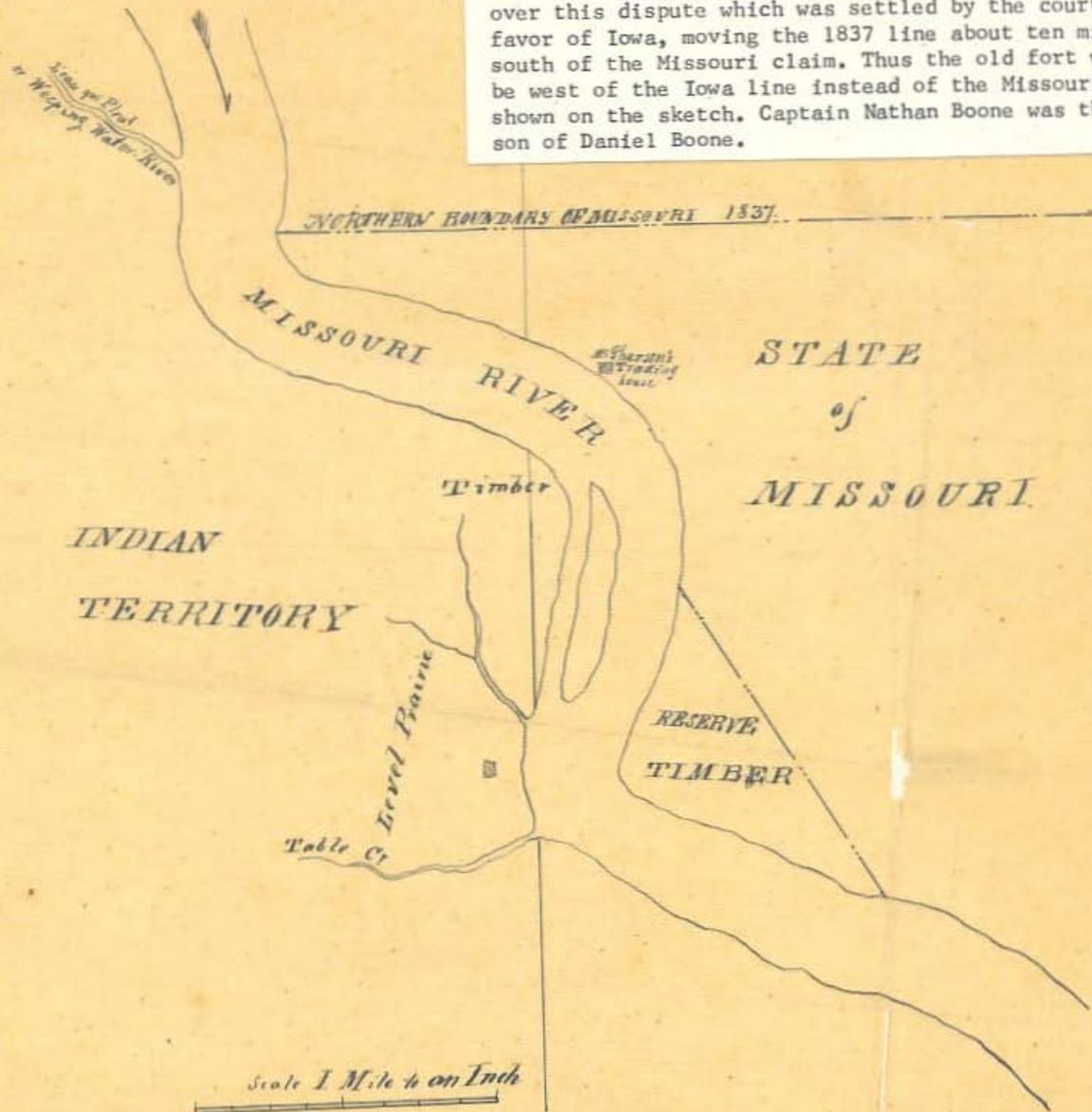
L.B. Dougherty, the sutler at Fort Kearny, writes to his father, Major John Dougherty, about the trade and affairs at the fort on June 22, 1849:

"I enclose you a list of articles needed in the store, now very much. Tinware princibly. We have sold all out, but a few useless articles, in the tin line, such as we may never sell. We have not taken in so much since you left as we did before in the same time, although it is pretty good business yet. But I think all the Emigrants have passed. So I suppose we will have nothing to do now but to wait on the government trains, which will be passing through all summer and perhaps there will be a good many returning from California towards the later end of summer. If we could but know wether there would be as great an emigration next year as there has been this or not, we could make our cash sales 5 times as great, by having the goods out here in time for them, but this is a considerable risk to run. We have deposited one thousand dollars with Capt Van Vleit for which we will get a check and send it by the first safe opportunity that offers. I cant trust it by mail. Bennet got in yestarday and told me of your arrival, and also of the robbery of the Hughes party, surely from his account a very green affair from his story they were carelled and able to keep the Indians off. We have been visited since you left by a party of Shiens (Cheyenne Indians) about 150 - I bought one of their horses for \$12 and sold it for \$25 in two days after I bought it. I have been speculating on some little things and made some \$20 or 40 off of my 50 - Mr. Tutt (sutler at Fort Laramie) passed here day before yestarday - he left 2bbl Whiskey 1 bbl Crackers and some cheese. He writes to you. Mr Reed has not arrived yet. Nor Major Wood though he is not far behind. The Train for Fort Hall left here today. The Officers are very kind and obliging. Mr Orncle is well and right - I have had the bowel complaint slightly since you left but nothing serious all well now. no sickness in the Fort at all. We have our house water proof - Our Robes are in the lower house on boxes - we are going to repack them soon and send most of them down with Mr. Reed. I dont know what we are to do when Mr Knowlton goes to Laramie to which place he starts the first of July..... Your son L.B. Dougherty



THE WESTERN MAILS

OLD FORT KEARNY. This original sketch shows the Iowa-Missouri border as it was claimed by the state of Missouri in 1837. The two states had a verbal war over this dispute which was settled by the courts in favor of Iowa, moving the 1837 line about ten miles south of the Missouri claim. Thus the old fort would be west of the Iowa line instead of the Missouri as shown on the sketch. Captain Nathan Boone was the son of Daniel Boone.



To accompany Report of Col. Kearny
and Cap. Boone of 25th April 1838

THE WESTERN MAILS

Sir
Franklin Howard Esq Denver 12/18 53

I enclose you a copy of substance
from H. Colburn Kearney instructing you to
open a Recruiting Postoffice in the town of St. Louis
and to Report to me for orders

I have only to say at present that you will
make a Report of the number of Recruits you may
have made, to H. Colburn's Kearney. ~~on the~~
Eight. Sixteenth. and Twenty fourth of each month
on the last of the month you will forward
a monthly Report to me at this place. as soon
a practicable when it is due

Yours
Wm. J. McKeen

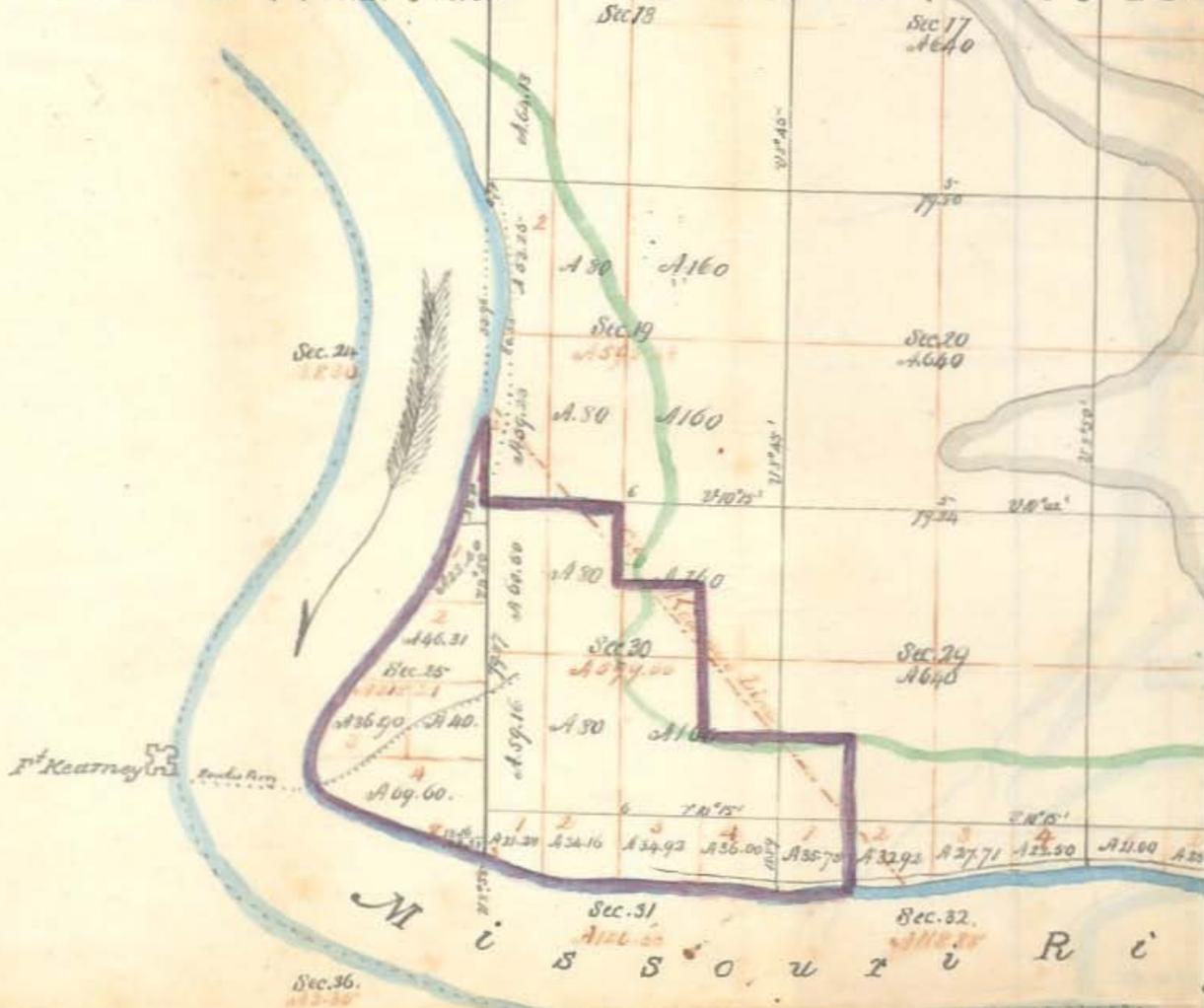
Very Respectfully
Yours &c
Nathan Boone
Capt. U.S. Dragoons

CAPTAIN NATHAN BOONE

Letter written from Franklin, Missouri to Lieut. Thomas J. McKeen regarding the establishment of a recruiting station in the town of St. Louis. Nathan Boone was the son of Daniel Boone and the father of Albert Gallatin Boone. He entered the army as a Captain of the Missouri Rangers in 1812 and rose to the rank of Lieut. Colonel of the 2nd Dragoons in 1853. Nathan Boone died January 12, 1857.

T. 68 N. R. 44. N. 5th Mer.™

T. 68. N. R. 43 W. 5th Mer



The purple lines show the limits of
 the timber reserve for Genl Kearney by
 order of the President of 9th of April 1846
 and the Commissioners instructions of June 10/46
 and Sept 20/54

THE WESTERN MAILS



Fort Leavenworth July 28th 1847

Dear Brother

This the first opportunity I have had since I left home of writing. I am now on my way to the rocky mountains to kill indians and hunt buffaloe. I took five dollars from the store when I started and took passage at Peoria for St. Louis - while going down the river I saw a steamboat burst and a woman & child fall over board. At St Louis I walked around a while with Howard a young man that came with me - the city was full of companies of horse and foot volunteers (soldiers) either for Oregon, Mexico city, Santa Fe, California or Chihuahua (pronounced Cheewawa). Howard and I joined a company called the Sublette Rangers - we have twenty eight dollars a month and out of our first six months pay a hundred and twenty dollars are deducted to pay for our horse and their saddles and bridles and our clothing - we have been marching for eighteen days through dust so thick that you could not see the third man that rode a head of you. Sometimes we would have to ride thirty miles before we could find any water for our horses or ourselves. we will start in a few days from the Fort to occupy a station somewhere in the mountains....when the war with Mexico (is over) I am coming back again. when discharged at the end of the war I am entitled to a hundred and sixty acres of land - I think I will take it somewhere in Oregon. I shall not be able to write home more or rather send a letter home more than once a year but when ever I get a chance I will be sure and give you a description of the country. here at the Fort the indians come into camp every day with moccasins and ponies to sell - Some of the ponies are not more than three feet and a half high....

William W. Ingraham

Postmarked: FORT LEAVENWORTH July 29.

THE WESTERN MAILS



Fort Kearney Nov. 13th 1847

I have another opportunity to write to you for the first time since I left Leavenworth. The next place that we stopped at after we left the Fort was Iowa Point. we stayed there for a week and I went to the church at the missions and heard the missionary preach to the indians in their own language, and deliver an address to the volunteers. While we were there an old indian died, and I went to the funeral. I never heard such a howling in all my life - they put him in his grave in a sitting position and put his bow and arrows and his spear in his hands, and those nearest the grave cut themselves with their knives and smeared the blood on a bunch of turkey feathers and tied it on a pole with a white rag. from there we marched to Fort Kearney, it was nothing but a solitary block house, but now we have built our winter quarters it has quite respectable appearance, our quarters are built of logs and covered with sod and dirt, with sod chimneys. About a week after we reached the fort thirty of our company were detailed to assist the quartermasters men in putting a bridge over the Ni-mahaw (river) for the purpose of bringing over the stores, while were gone about five or six hundred indians came down across the prairie much to the alarm of those remaining in the camp. some of the bravest men saddled their horses and prepared for flight. others more desperate loaded their rifles and got behind a pile of flour sacks and prepared to recieve them, but it happened to be a tribe of Otos driven down by the Sous coming to the fort for protection, they were attacked by the Sous while their warriors were on a hunt and there were but sixty effecient men in the village - some of their chiefs came up to our camp and had a long talk with the captain - they said that the Sous charged into their village on horseback and their warriors could scarcely keep them at bay while their women swam the Platte river with their children - many of the children were drowned in the river while they were tied to their mothers. they told of (a) young squaw that was surrounded in a wigwam - she killed several of the enemy before she was taken, which (was) done by setting fire to the house. The indians while they were at the fort raised such a yelling that we could hear them for five miles. Our company was ordered to go as a guard for the surveyor to Grand Island for the purpose of selecting a situation for another fort. our horses had to live on nothing but grass. the first day a horse gave out and he was just turned loose on the prairie until we came back. the second day we came to Salt creek and the next we came to a

THE WESTERN MAILS

lake - at the head of it, the lake was dry and the bottom of it was covered with a crust of salt a quarter of an inch thick. the second day after that we were met by a small party of indians a going to Santa Fe to steal horses - each of them had a laraette rope hanging in his belt. that night some more of them came into our camp. the captain made them a present of some cartridges, but they refused them because it was not enough. they pretended to be very angry and threatened us to bring down their warriors. the captain acted very coolly and issued some more ammunition to his men. So the red rascals thought proper to cool down a little. the next night two or three came in the camp to steal horses and were fired upon by the guard. We had a grand time hunting buffaloe - I had the (luck) of killing several. I should have killed more but I did not wish to injure my horse. more than a hundred (were) shot and left untouched on the field. We came down through Pawnee village and there we saw from fifteen hundred to two thousand little young indians, each with his bow and arrows and laraette. I saw a little indian not bigger than Dunk throw his laraette over the neck of a pony at full gallop. There is a rumour that we will be discharged in the spring, but I do not believe it is true....When you write direct your letters to "High Creek, Atchinson County, Missouri. Oregon Battalion. Company A. For the Army." I wish you would send me a paper now and then. I would like to know what is going on in the world. I feel the want of books very much. Tell Dunk the game is so thick at Grand Island that we were never out of sight of it. there were buffaloe, antilope, Elk, deer, wolves, hares, and whole acres of prarie dogs. the dogs live in the same holes with owls and rattlesnakes. We surrounded some deer one day and (one) of them jumped over the mules in the wagon and nearly knocked the driver off....I must stop writing now for two reasons. one is that I cant think of anything, or to say the other is another man wants the pen & ink.

Postmarked: FORT LEAVENWORTH MO Nov 23.

Jan 22nd 1848 Fort Kearney.

....I have recieved three papers and an almanac which were very acceptable to me as well as the whole company for I assure you they went the rounds....we are now very busy preparing another trip to the west. company A & C will be sent to fort Laramy (excuse me if I spell it wrong for I have no map) at the foot of the mountains. the others poor fellows will have to build another block house and winter quarters at Grand Island. You ask for a description of Fort Kearney. It lies two miles west of the western line of Iowa on the west side of Table Creek about sixty miles from the Little Nemahaw (Nemaha River). All the south and west side is one continued prarie twenty and somtimes thirty miles between the watering places. no timber except in the hollows where there is water. on the north side of the Fort is the Missouri river on each side of which and on an Island in the middle there is plenty of timber abounding in game of all kinds - I never go in the woods but Iam nearly deafened with the screeching of paroquets and croaking of ravens. On the other side of the river are numerous shantees - grog shops an grocery stores on a small scale, got up since the battalion arrived. as you go down the river there is a vast bottom covered with grass tall enough to hide a man on horseback, extending six miles from the river, beyond which are emmense cliffs of sand that have the appearance as cliffs of rock (sandstone). they are two or three hundred feet high and make a very splended appearance. you must excuse me for making so many mistakes for there is two men practising on the fiddle in the house and make such a din that I can not hear myself speak. on the south side of the river towards the north the bluffs are nearer the river. the north side of river up

Jan 22nd 1848. Fort Kearney.

Dear Ned

I was very glad to receive a letter from you for everybody received letters and received none. I have been quite well with the exception of a slight headache and fever which I cured by a dose of Epsom salts. I have received three papers and an almanac which were very acceptable to me as well as the whole company for I assure you they went the rounds. I was very sorry that you got hurt and extremely glad that were well again. As for the rumour it has like all others had its day. we are now very busy preparing another trip to the west. company A & C will be sent to fort Laramy (excuse me if I spell it wrong for I have no map) at the foot of the mountains. the other poor fellows will have to build another block house and windmills at Grand Island. You ask for a description of Fort Kearney. It lies two miles west of the western line of Iowa on the west side of Table Rock about sixty miles from the Little Nemahaw. all the south and west side is one continued prairie twenty and sometimes thirty miles between the watering places. no timber except in the hollows where there is water. on the north side of the Fort is the Missouri river

W. W. Ingraham
44 Kearney Jan. 22 1848

Highland me
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Eduard. R. Ingraham.

Kickapoo.
Poria Co.
Illinois.

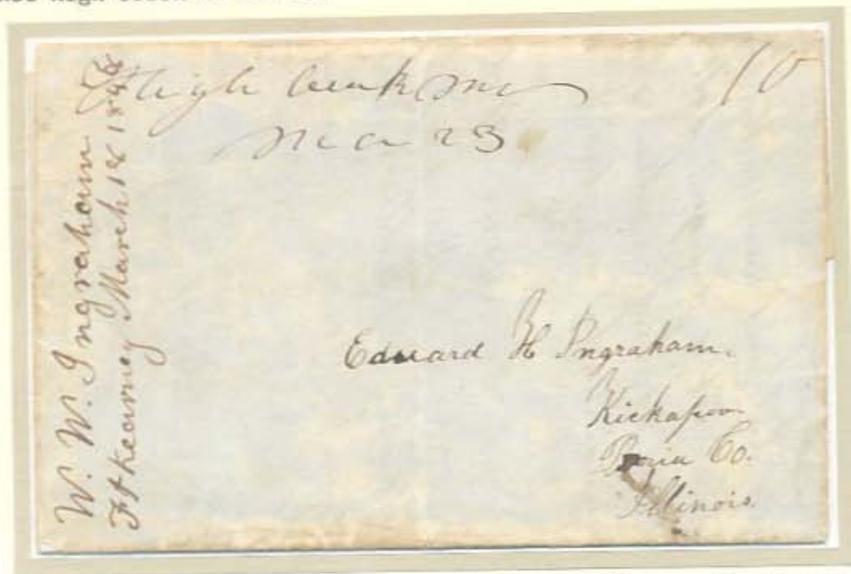
adv
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adv



THE WESTERN MAILS

the stream I have not explored. the men have wolf traps set around in the woods and every two or three days they bring home a wolf & the whole battalion from the colonel down form in a large ring and put the wolf setting on the young dogs to train them up in the way they should go. some times they have two or three so that when one is worried nearly to death they bring in another while it is resting. a regular amphetheatre. every day we have to drill for two hours on foot in the rifle drill, acting as skirmishers, or running in single file at double quick time. on sunday we have another drill a horseback, where we have to dismount and act as shirmishers. Tis a very fine scene when well performed. Two or three Mexicans have been here to see us from California. they had on hats with a crown a foot high. long coats and spurs with the rowels two inches in diameter. their saddles were very heavy and made of wood with a square piece of sole leather spread on the top and a large pair of wooden stirrups with a round flap of leather in front to keep the mud from the shoe. Tell Dunk when I come home I will fetch him a pony the smallest I can fins, but I have not found a buffaloe's nest yet.- though I intend to look for one.....

Postmarked High Creek Mo Jan 27.



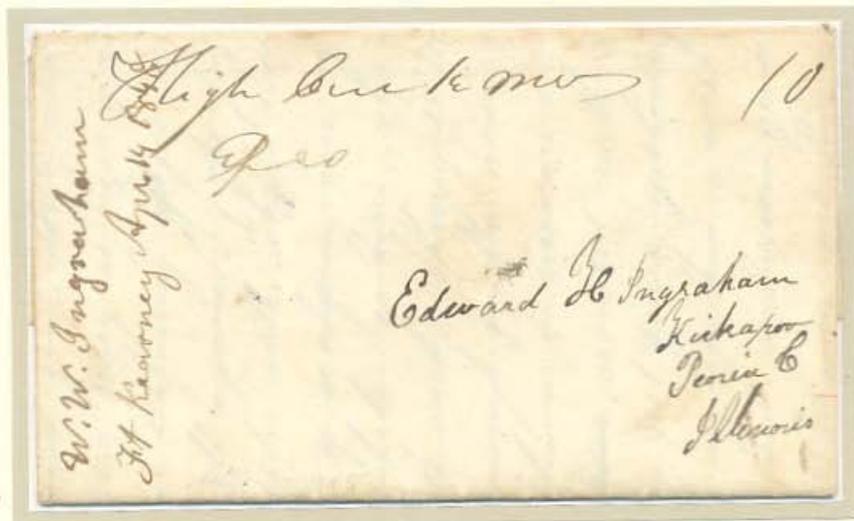
Fort Kearney March 18th 1848

....We have had very little snow and cold weather this winter. There has been great excitement in the Fort for the last two weeks, one of the sargents wrote to a member of congress stating how the officers were conducting themselves - that the colonel and staff continually got drunk, and that the quarter master refused the troops lumber for their quarters and sold it to the Mormons that moved into the camp, and many other grieveances to numerous to mention. one of the lieutenants went to his trunk (sargent's) while he was absent on a furlough an took from it a copy of this letter and some of his private letters and read them - the sergeant on his return finding them gone, hearing the officer had taken them, went to the officer and called him a d___d thief. the officer reported him to the colonel, and also reported a private for selling whiskey in the camp. petition afer petition were sent to the colonel to let them go, for he put them both in irons, but the colonel would let only the private go and kept the sergeant under guard. it came very near raising a mutiny for the sergeant had many friends. It has caused the men to dislike the officers throughout the whole battalion. The sergeant aided by his friends got off his irons and deserted last night with three privates. what the sergeant

THE WESTERN MAILS

wrote in the letter was true and the colonel cannot prove to the contrary. Our future movements are entirely in the mist. Sometimes (we) are to be disbanded and sometimes we are to continue our rout but I think we will be sent back before the first of July. if we do I shall be glad of it, for in the state that the company is in I have no desire to go further - the officers and men can put no confidence in each other. We were paid our four months wages the day before yesterday and now there is nothing but gambling and racing (horses) going on. particular to say there has been no less than twenty races to day & it is not dinner time yet. We were called out yesterday and the adjutant announced to us the death of John Quincy Adams made a semipathetic speech, and the artillery fired twenty four guns. the orders from Washington were to haul the flag half way down the staff, but as we have not an American flag in the garrison that ceremony was omitted. Tell father that when we are disbanded I (think) I shall take his advise and go south and try what is to be done in Mexico. The river is open and the captain and eighteen privates went down in a large boat brought up by the regulars before we came up here. There is a man who has joined our company since we came here that has been some years with the Pawnee Indians. he went out to farm for them and was paid by the government. he gave me a discription of their battle with the Sioux, the Siouxs came down on horses. they dismounted and came up within fifty yards of the pawnees and halted. then the arrows flew in clouds. every now and then an indian would run across to the other side and endeavour to kill someone of them. they would rush on him and kill him, but if he should happen (to) kill any one and get back safe he would be considered one of the greatest braves in the nation. after they had fought for a while in this manner they rushed together like a swarm of bees and very soon they (that is the pawnees) fled and ran directly towards the whites who took to their heels and run to the horse pen - took their horses and were soon out of danger....

Postmarked: High Creek Mo Mar 23



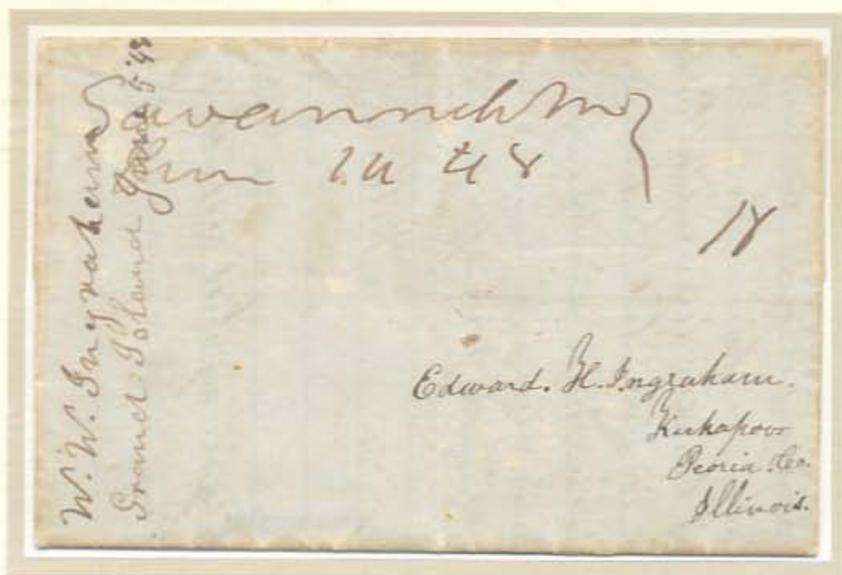
Fort K. April 14th 1848

....Spring is setting in very fine. the (grass) is long enough for the horses to live upon without corn - the plum trees are in bloom and Table creek is crowded with ducks. The river has raised six feet since yesterday. I think there will be a boat up in less than a week. there is news from Chihuahua that a Mexican general was marching to Santa Fee with 1500 men, and there was only two companies of dragoons in the place to protect it. it is thought by some that we will be sent down there as soon as the first boat comes up the

THE WESTERN MAILS

river - we that is our company will be sent out to find the best crossing at Salt creek. I shall be glad of it for I am heartily tired of the Fort and long to be on the Prarie. The other day the head bugler had the imprudence to play the rogues march when our company came on dress parade - we immediatly halted and charged at him and would have probably hurt him had he not stoped and the officers interfered. he owed some of the company a grudge for not paying their bills for a ball he had given. after dark thirty men from the company went down to his quarters and rode him on a rail to the creek, and ducked him in the deepest hole they could find....Tell Dunk as soon as I get to salt creek I will look for a buffaloe's nest, as there is none this side of there, and is 80 miles from here. we have been to fish in the river - I saw one the other day that was four feet and a half long. it was a catfish. as soon as Dunk takes possession of the Island (for no one claimes it now) he can fish on the river sid of it and shoot the ducks & geese as they swim by.

Postmarked: High Creek Mo Ap 20.



Grand Island June 5th '48

I recieved your letter dated April 15th just before we started from Fort Kearney and in the hustle of preperation I had not time to answer it. we had a very pleasant time a coming up here - only one storme hard enough to wet us through the tent. We found the Pawnees very much humbled since last fall. they haveing lost many of their warriors in a battle with the Sioux and another with the Foxes & Chippawas - they were nearly starved to death not daring to go thirty miles from home to hunt. the Col(onel) gave them some provision & ammunition. they would not trade for anything but somthing to eat. The land on the banks of the Platte (river) is level for eight miles from the water to the bluffs and contineues so from the mouth to the foot of Grand Island where the bluffs come to the river for about ten or twelve miles when it spreads out again still wider. The other day I went back with a comrade to find a horse he had lost the night before. we started in the morning without any provisions thinking the horse was but a few miles back but we rode on till night and were obliged to (camp) on the banks of the river. the wolves & wild cats came round after dark and frightened our horses so that we had to get up every few minutes to quiet them. we had nothing but our pistols and could not kill any game - we had nothing to eat for two days and a

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hundred and sixty miles (but) a piece of salt pork and a hard biscuit - when we came in camp (which) when we came in camp tasted better than roast beef and plum pudding. I am afraid we will have to stay here all winter and not be sent further. the buffaloe have not got north as this yet but I hear they are within two days march. a large train of emagrants came by the other day but I did not know any of them, but there are many more coming behind and some they say from Illinois so I expect I shall see somone that I know yet before they are all past - The emegrants intend if we go with them to go to Oregon - if not they will go to California. I hear that a man had his daughter stolen from him by the Indians & an express has been sent from Oregon to Washington requesting troops for protection. it takes Congress so long to make up their minds whot to do, that the orders will not come till next winter, when we will have no grass for our horses to live on during the march....(At this point Ingraham describes his horse. Thinks he will make a good farm horse because he has collar marks on his neck which indicates that he may have been a work horse at one time) he is a big headed, long legged, bony looking thing but he will travel 15 miles at a sweeping gallop without failing, for I have tried him....There is always plenty of news in the camp but it is always false, the other evening we heard a shouting in another company, and upon enquiry we found that the news there was that we were to be disbanded immediatly, but it was not so. a man had come in it is true but he was aninvalid officer from Mexico sent out as a forage master....

Postmarked: Savannah Mo June 16 48.



June 28th Grand Island 1848

The mail yestoday brought the news of peace.(Mexican war) the men got so excited that they could not stand it - Some twenty or thirty whose curiosity was very great mounted their horses and rode twenty miles down the river to meet the express. at night the peace was celebrated with a torch light processjon. the opinion of the Colonels that we will return home in two months from this time, but we must wait until another battalion comes here to take our places. the other day four hundred Chayennes came in the camp to trade. they are the finest nation of Indians that I have seen yet. they were going down to fight the Pawnees. when they left us they took five or six horses. the next day the Colonel sent a hundred and fifty men in pursuit of

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them - I volunteered to go but I was sorry for it afterwards. we followed them four days but could not catch them - we found two old Pawnee's squaws that they had killed and scalped. our leader (the captain of company D) was a fool. he got lost in the prarie and in spite of all remonstrance he would take us on a northeast course, although men that had been there to hunt antelope told him that the camp was but twenty five miles to the north of us. So by his selfconceitedness we had to live six days on two days rations of bread and drink water such as you will find in a cistern (a) month after it has rained. I wish that you was here to take a hunt for the antelopes. it is capital sport. in the first place we ride six or eight miles into the prarie where the antelope are very thick and then picquette (picket) the horses and lay down - in a few minutes the antelopes will come around close to you - then run around (and) come closer and stop and look. when they come near enough, shoot, and if you do not kill it dead, just mount your horse and run it down. but it is udeless to chase one that is unhurt, for they run like the wind.....

Postmarked: High Creek July 6



Grand Island, July 12th '48

....We (that is the Battalion) have enjoyed very good health, but within the last month there has been two cases of the small pox, and the poor fellows from neglect are in a very miserable condition. they are moved at a distance from the camp, that the companies may not be infected with it. I was vaccinated at Fort Kearney with the rest of the Battalion and twice before so I do not think there is any danger of my catching it. The wolves have become very troublesome latly - they are no longer contented with the buffaloe skin lariettes with (which) the horses are picquetted but they take the horse and all. several (horses) have been killed and many bad(ly) torn. To day there came by a small party of men from Oregon on their way to the states - one or two came from the salt lake, where the Mormons are all moving to. he discribes the contry there as like the floor of a brick-kiln, destitute of vegetation. As to the time that we shall be disbanded that is mighty onsartan. in the first place the Indians will be here at the full of the moon to receive the pay for the land bought here of them and then we are to send them over the river, which I think they will be but little

THE WESTERN MAILS

inclined to do, when they get the guns they are to have for the land. and further there must be other troops sent here to relive us. there is too much government property here to be left without a strong guard. A company is to be formed in St Louis for that purpose. So I think we will not be disbanded before September. We will be disbanded at Fort Leavenworth & there I shall cut across the country through Quincy to Peoria which I think is the best way as (I) shall have a horse to ride home on and I want to look at the land in Misouria. The Soix have robbed, and burned the Pawnee Town during the absence of its inhabitants. there holes for hiding property are broken open. and pack saddles, buffaloe skins, and other indian property lay all around. We do not get the mail very regular - some times once in two weeks, & sometimes not so often....The climate here is very singular, in the morn ing it is as cold as winter, and at noon it is hot as the hottest summer. nothing keeps us in health I think but bathing so often in the river....

Postmarked: High Creek July 20. All of the letters are rated 10 cents.



Fort Kearney March 31st 48

Dear Sister

....I am a volunteer in Capt Stuards (Stuarts) Co, in the Oregon Batalian. This Batalian was got up on purpose to Build Forts on the Oregon rout for the safety of the emagrants as the Pawnee Indians has for some years Been in the habit of robing the emagrants - But this Batallian Inlisted during the Mexican war And from the signs of the times at presant it is thought that we will not leave this place until we are disbanded - our wages amounts to about twenty two or three dollar per month - we are allowed eight dollars our selves and we are allowed twelve for our horses and forage found and at sutch times as forage can not be had our horses draws sixteen per month - Besides we are allowed three dollars per month extra for clotheing - The pay Master was up about a couple of weeks ago and paid us up to the first of March.

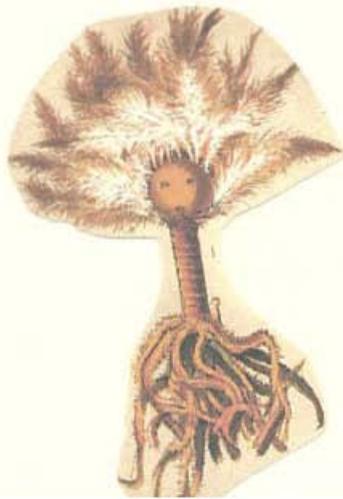
THE WESTERN MAILS

...We reached this place about the middle of September and out of over six hundred men there has been only four deaths and one of them caused by accident. Now I will give you a brief account of a trip that we had up the river last some two hundred and fifty miles above here - There had been some three or four fir traders murdered and robed by some of the Scioux indians - Colonel received an order to send three hundred men to the Scioux village and take those murderers and provided they would not give them up the order was to take the Chiefs them selves - So we left here about middle of October with two heavy pieces of artilery - we got along tolerably fair for some four or five days until we got above the great Morman Camp or the high Camp of Israel as they call it - above there the Prairie was principally all Burnt off so it was only occasionally that we could find grass and as we was above the white settlment there was no corn or oats to be had - So the Artilery horses and the mewls whitch halled the provision wagons soon began to fail - So we had to travil slow and cut down cotten wood trees for our horses to feed - But after we Crossed little Scioux river the way we had plenty of game was a sight - The averag number of deer killed and wounded from there to Fort Vermillion (fur trade post) was from twenty five to thirty per day besides a considerable number of Badgers wild Turkeys and some Elk and Antilope - And we saw four Buffalo at a distance - we was just comeing into the Buffalo range - Now I must leave of the game subject and proced to give you an account of the Scioux War. After fifteen days march we came in Sight of fort Vermillion So there was given for every man to have his Musket and Pistles well loaded - So we Marched in with as mutch Splendor as circumstances would admit of - And so when we got there, wat should we find but four or five old French men and three or four old lame Squaws. Thus ended the Scioux war or the Badger hunt as it is stiled. So we marched back and reached this place about the middle of Nov. We have the easyest kind of times. When you write direct your letter to Fort Kearney High Creek Atchison Co.Mo....

James C.Lourey

No postmarks.

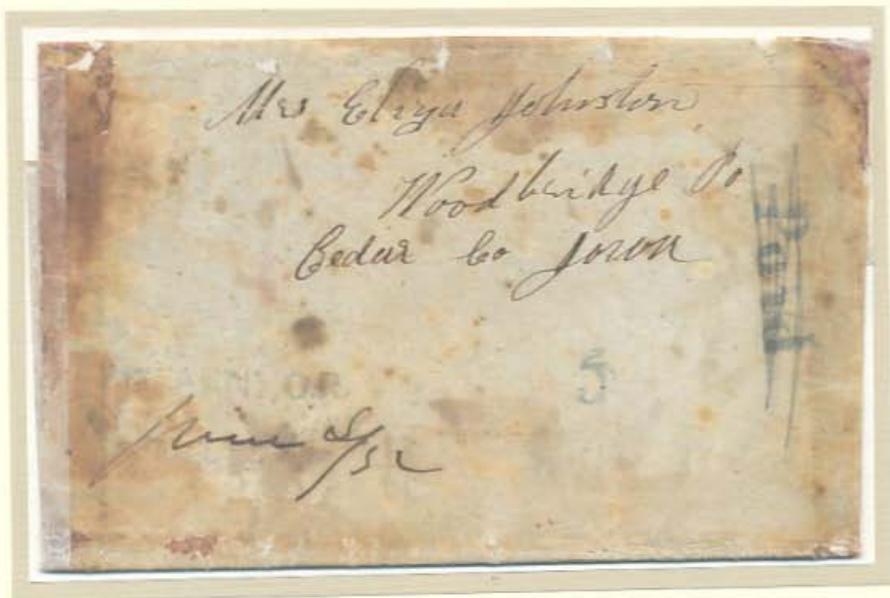
Fort Vermillion was located near Vermillion, South Dakota just below the mouth of the Vermillion river on the Missouri. Old Fort Kearny didnot have a post office.



THE WESTERN MAILS

DISCOVERY OF THE FORT KEARNY O.R.

In 1957 a book collector sent the writer a tattered and soiled folded letter bearing a faint strike of a fancy oval postmark(Fig 1). The design of a spread Eagle was very weak but the straightline Ft KEARNY O.R. was plain and there is no doubt about the "O.R.". In April of 1859 the late Ed Payne reported and illustrated the reconstructed postmark in WESTERN EXPRESS(Fig 2). He called it "a startling discovery by Floyd Risvold". In 1957 this writer spent a weekend with the late Corwith Wagner, about three weeks before he died, and showed him the discovery cover. When I first told him about the O.R. postmark he could hardly believe it but when he saw the cover he said "this has merit". Many years later I was shown a photo copy of another cover which confirmed my cover(Fig 3). Since that time two other covers have made their appearance. Presently there are two stampless and two bearing the 3¢ 1851 stamp. Three of the covers were postmarked the same day - June 5 1852 and the one in Fig 3 - June 22 1852. The postmark of June 22 is in black and the other three are in blue. SEE opposite page for Fig 3.



The folded letter in Fig 1 was written by John Johnston to his wife in Woodbridge, Iowa from "Fort Carny indian territory June the 4 1852". He is on his way to California and writes in part "...we are 250 miles from the Bloofs - our cattle are better now than when we started - we had no troble withe the indians yet. Peter Dilts has had very bad luck on the 23 night of May he had 3 head of his best oxon stolin by the indians - the indians had 8 or 10 miles the start - 8 of the men folowed until 2 oclock and found the Cattle Dead and skined...we have just came to the St Jo rode - the rode is just lined with teams - there has been a few cases of colerea...there is not one man in this company if he had not started he would not....John Johnston"

THE WESTERN MAILS



Fig 3

Fig 4

Fort Kearny O.R.
Clackamas Co
April 30th 1831

Fort Kearny O.R.N.T.
May 3rd 1851

Fig 5

FORT KEARNY O.R. (Oregon Route). The post office was established July 7, 1849 in what the Post Office Department called for county location "Indian Country". This was the second Fort Kearny built in unorganized territory. It was first named Fort Childs but on December 30, 1848 it was changed to Fort Kearny after Brig. Genl. Stephen Watts Kearny. It was located near the head of Grand Island on the south side of the Platte River about eight miles S.E. of Kearney, Neb. Like forts Laramie and Bridger it was a way station on the Oregon & California roads in the westward tide of empire. On May 17, 1871 it was abandoned by the military and on April 14, 1873 the post office, which was located in the fort, was discontinued. The type I postmark shown above was spelled correctly but types II, III and IV were changed to KEARNEY to conform with the present city of KEARNEY. The first postmaster was Lewis B. Dougherty, the sutler at the fort, and in one of his letters he datelined it "Fort Kearny O.R./Clackemas Co." and in another letter "Fort Kearny O.R.N.T. In the 1851 "Table of Post Offices it is listed as "Indian Country, Nebraska". From this and other evidence it has been determined that O.R. stands for OREGON ROUTE. SEE Figures 4 and 5 above. Nebraska didnot become a territory until 1854.

The cover above contains a letter datelined "Fort Kearney June 15th/52" in which Edgar G. Smith writes to his parents: "...We see some Indians, plenty of adventure and a good deal to amusement - We have joined a party of two waggons from New York state, six men and two ladies, they have cows... I will write you at length from Fort Laramie about the fourth of July..."

THE WESTERN MAILS



CITY OF LOUISIANA. Side-wheeler of 564 tons. Built at Madison, Indiana in 1857 for the Keokuk Packet Company. Operated in the Upper Mississippi trade until she was lost in 1860.

The cover is postmarked at Warsaw, Illinois the first part of July 1860. It was addressed to a Mr. J.F. Fleming at Fort Kearny, K.T. with a notation to forward to Denver City if not called for. At Fort Kearny the one cent stamps were added and the cover was forwarded to "Denver City, Jeff" (Jefferson Territory).

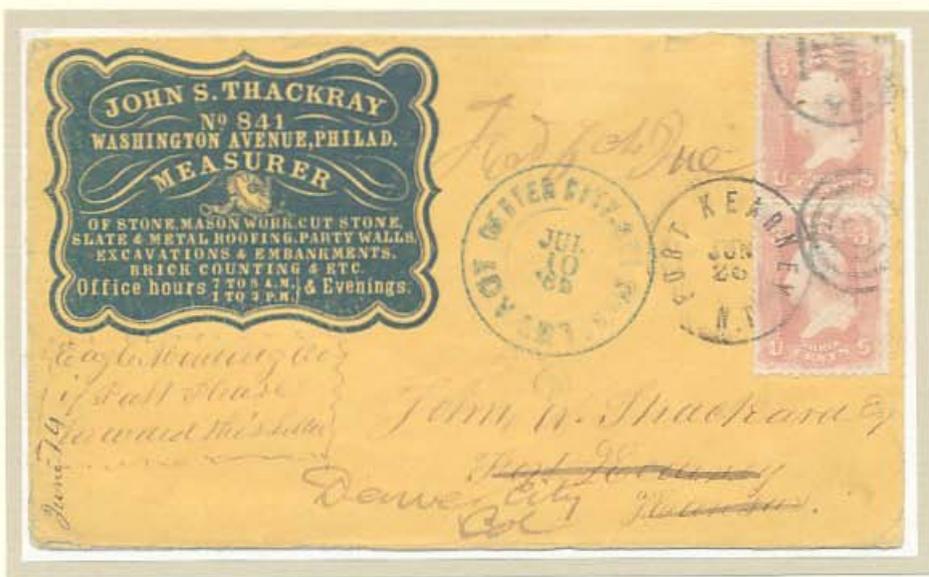
The one cent stamps have been moved in order to show the corner card of the boat. The stamps were tied by an indistinct postmark of the Fort Kearny Post Office.

THE WESTERN MAILS



FORT KEARNEY

The cover above bears the type II postmark dated April 1860. The cover below originated at Philadelphia, Penn. June 10, 1865 and was forwarded 6¢ due from FORT KEARNEY on June 26th to Denver City. Here it was ADVERTIZED and delivered?? It bears the type III handstamp of FORT KEARNEY, N.T.



1849



In good order and condition, by *Maj. Geo. Dougherty*
 on account and risk of whom it may concern, on
 board the good Steam Boat, called the *Hay du* whereof
 *Fishback* is Master for the present voyage.
 now lying at the Port of **FORT LEAVENWORTH,**
MO., and bound for *Fort Kearny* the following pack-
 ages or articles, marked or numbered as below, which are to be deliver-
 ed, without delay, in like good order, at the Port of *Fort Kearny*

....., (the dangers of the river, and fire, only, excepted,) unto
 or to *his* assigns, he or they paying freight for said goods, at the rate of *10¢ per 100 pounds*.
paid at St. Louis by R. T. Campbell.

In Witness Whereof, The Master or Clerk of said Steam Boat, hath affirmed to *Three* Bills of Lading, all
 of this tenor and date, one of which being accomplished, the others to stand void.

Dated, at **FORT LEAVENWORTH,** this *29th* day of *August* 184*9*.

MARKS.	ARTICLES.	WEIGHT.
<i>W. Fort Kearny</i>	<i>X1 Iron Safe</i>	<i>150.</i>
<i>L.P. Woodbury</i>	<i>10.012 * Shot Lead per 24 Cases</i>	<i>10.002.</i>
<i>W. a.c.</i>		
<i>Fort Kearny</i>	<i>X 50 Bags Coffee</i>	
	<i>X 79 Bags Soap</i>	
	<i>X 18 Bbls Salt</i>	
	<i>40. " Dried Apples</i>	
	<i>X 50 Kegs Rickles</i>	
	<i>X 71 Bbls Sugar</i>	
	<i>X 50 Cases Candles</i>	
	<i>X 15 1/2 Bbls Molasses</i>	
	<i>X 15 Bags Dried Peaches</i>	
	<i>X 10 1/2 Bbls Low Brand</i>	

No 7

Fort Laramie May 28th/49

Dear Marsh

By the rule of progression it is your turn to receive from your brother ~~and~~ an affectionate epistle intended to relate to you the adventures and trials of the aforesaid brother I wrote to McCould from about sixty five miles this side of Fort Garney Up to that time we had had pretty good times It had not rained up to that time enough to soil ~~one thing~~ the roads had been splendid and every thing was right But ~~where~~ ^{it} on the fifteenth it commenced raining and rained steadily all all day On the fourteenth we had reached what is called the junction where the North and South forks of the Platte come together and form the river Platte The water was so high that we were obliged to go up the South fork about six miles to cross So the rain forced us paddling up the South fork This night we had wood and got along tolerably well The next morning found it pelting away right We were fearful the river would rise so we could not cross so we were obliged to travel About ten it cleared away and at eleven we reached the

of - We went back into the bluffs - They have mules and we horses - We soon started some Buffalo but our horses could not go it - The hills are about one hundred feet high and as steep as the copperas banks - They [traders] went on the canter and gave out in less than an hour - They came in about three with two buffalo - They gave us one so we have had fresh meat nearly ever since - We have seen thousands of Buffalo - One morning seen big fellows run within one hundred yds of us - They got about five pound of lead in them but We fired as usual to high - We have been shooting them about the middle of the body - The Traders told us we should fire very low down - We see scores of deer and antelope every day - The distance here deceive us very much - I have seen bluffs apparently not more than half a mile of [f] and could see stones not bigger than your hat distinctly yet they were three miles of [f] - Give my love to the folks and to the Boys - I have not time to name them - yours/A.C.Moses"

*Joshua D. Breyfogle kept a Diary, April 2, 1849 to December 7, 1850. He, along with Moses and the others mentioned in the letter, was a member of the Delaware Mining Company, which started from Delaware, Ohio on April 2nd. The Delaware Company was in the first wave of the emigration, reaching Fort Laramie on May 27, 1849. The late Dale Morgan told this writer that the Moses letter was the earliest he had seen - that is for the season as most letters, by 49'ers during the first 5 years, were written in June or later, for any of those years. Most letters were written from and between St. Joseph, Fort Kearny and Fort Laramie. Very few after that because the rush was on to get across the Rocky Mountains, the desert and the high Sierras before the deep snows closed the passes.

THE WESTERN MAILS

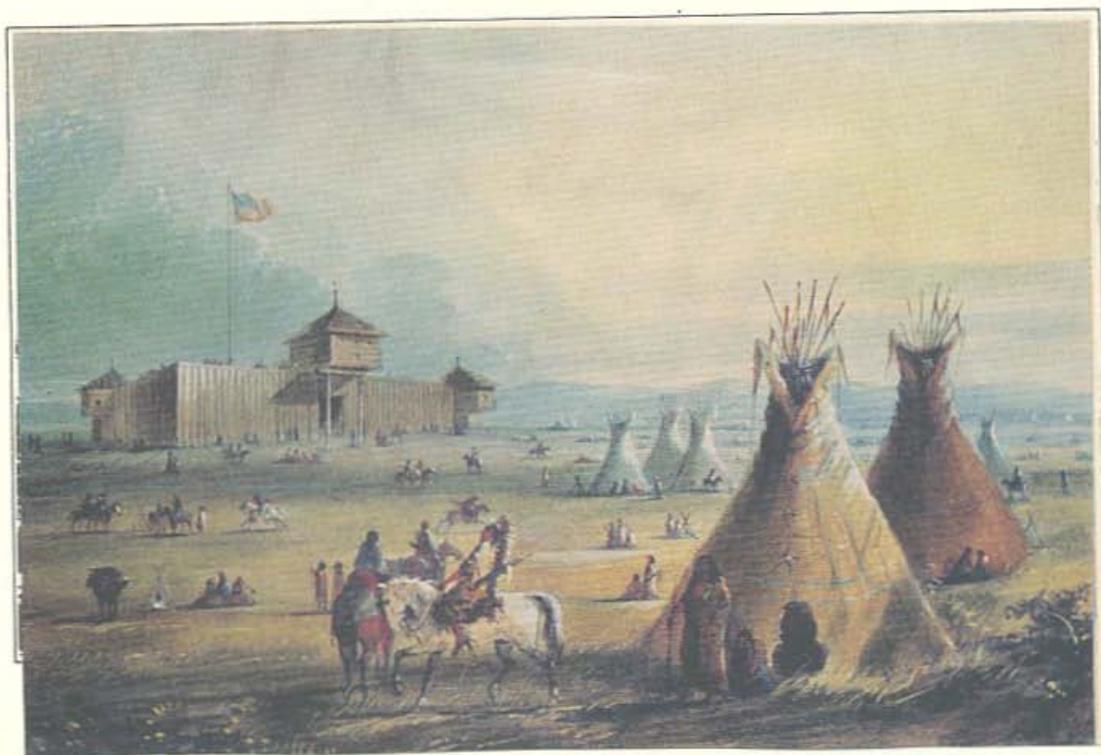
Ft. Larrimie June 26 ¹⁵⁰



THE TIDE OF EMPIRE PASSES FORT LARAMIE

FORT LARAMIE June 26, 1850. Lorenzo Custer writes to his wife from the fort on his way to the California gold fields: "Ft. Larrimie is pleasantly situated on the south side of the Platt between the Platt & Larrimie rivers about one mile from the junction - the ft is built of Sun Burnt Brick & garrisoned by 160 soldiers. Some very good houses are being built this season for the accomodation of the Officers. Sick Emmigrants are taken into the Hospital & cared for until they are well & able to go ahead or dead and burried (free of charge) - they register all the names of emigrants - the number of horses Oxen etc - there has passed this place up to the 23 June 34,753 men - 583 women - 753 children - 8,168 wagons - 21,435 horses - 7,206 mules - 24,796 Oxen - 3,855 cows. There has been 2 deaths on the north side of the river - the route I traveled and 155 on the south - mostly with Diarea or Colera - the government takes out letters to the States free of charge. I feel as sanguine of success as ever and expect to be in the diggings in 50 days. I have lots of Provisions - have sold some & shall sell more or throw them away - My teams are in good condition & my cows give plenty of milk" This letter shows the real impact of the overland migration to California up to the middle part of 1850 - the peak year. A daily journal was kept at the fort which recorded the names of all the emigrants and their stock and equipment though the journal has never been found. It was literally bumper-to-bumper traffic along the North Platte Valley. The cover was carried to Independence, Missouri where it was postmarked in red as illustrated above. Although Custer says that the government carries letters to the states "free of charge", it would only be to Independence where it was rated 10 cents in red - collect.

THE WESTERN MAILS



THE QUEEN OF THE WESTERN FORTS

FORT LARAMIE is located about one mile from the junction of the Laramie and North Platte Rivers in what is now the state of Wyoming. The Laramie River was named for a Canadian trapper, Jacques LaRamee, who had been killed by Indians near the river in 1821. Although the fort was known by two other names, it was mostly referred to as "the fort on the Laramie" or **FORT LARAMIE** as it officially became when the army took over in 1849. In 1834 William Sublette and Robert Campbell constructed the first fort on the site and named it **FORT WILLIAM** after Sublette. It was a log-stockade built to serve the Indian and the fur trade. The following year, they sold out to Jim Bridger, Thomas Fitzpatrick and Milton Sublette, who in turn, sold the fort to the American Fur Company in 1836. In 1841, because of deterioration, the log fort was replaced with a more permanent adobe-walled post and renamed **FORT JOHN**.

Up to 1849, the fort served as a supply depot for the fur brigades enroute to the annual Rocky Mountain Rendezvous; the missionaries and the emigrants bound for the Oregon Country; and the Mormons heading for their future kingdom on the shores of the Great Salt Lake. On June 26, 1849, the fort was purchased by the U. S. Government as a military post to guard the Oregon and California Trails because of the discovery of gold in California. It continued as a military post until March 2, 1890. The land and buildings were sold to the traders and the homesteaders who eventually dismantled most of the buildings for the lumber. In 1937 the state of Wyoming purchased the site and donated 214 acres of land and the remaining buildings to the Federal Government. Today **FORT LARAMIE** is a National Monument open to the public.

FORT LARAMIE JUNE 9th, 1849.

Dear John Upon my arrival at the Fort last evening I learned that a mail would be sent to the states in about a week and that by the payment of 25 cts I could send a letter, and this being the only opportunity I will probably have until I reach California I gladly embrace it. Well I have now learned from experince the truth and falseity of the various storeis in reference to a life on the planis, a nomidac life, where man subsists without wood and on water unpure and often offensive, where an intermmable waste streches out before the eye on which the Wolf the Antelope the Buffalo and other wild animals are the only living tenants. I have now traveled about 700 miles from St. Joseph and am now 1200 from home. The road the greater part of the way been excellent as smooth as a turn pike and almost as level as the bosom of the mighty deep, and had we traveled as rapidly as some trains have we would now have been through the South Pass in the Rocky Mountains, but we have kept a slow pace - have lay up often, two or three days at a time and about 15 days in all since leaving the Frontier. From this cause 700 Teams have gone ahead of us and some of them are by now 300 miles in advance. I am fully convinced however that these teams that are going so rapidly must fail and be left many of them to do as best they may. Even our Oxen have sore feet worn to the quick and those, who have traveled so rapidly will fare worse, while we have been moving along at the rate of 15 miles daily and often stopping a day teams have past at the rate of 25 & 30 miles a day the oxen poor and in a few weeks we have again passed them. Well if they give out this soon in traveling along the Platte [river] where the pasture is excellent (for its better than ever known by our Guide) how can they get through that part of the road from this to the head of Marys River where the grass will hardly sustain a sheep. Here we struck the Black Hills, and for a considerable distance there is scarce any feed but our Oxen are in good order - I may say fat and I apprehend no danger other than soreness of feet which is so very common to Oxen on a trip of this kind and which renders them unfit for use for a long time. Our team is yet perfect except some of the oxen have sore necks and this does not prevent them working - Our wagon is good having never broken a nail and our stock of provisions is amply sufficient I think to last us till the 1st of October or longer. Tis really alarming to see the state of things which exist now on the route to the gold region, and certainly a scene like the one presented on the road from St. Joseph to the South Pass has never before been witnessed. As I have before said there are about 700 teams ahead of us and tis thought that on the roads leaving the Missouri below the mouth of the Platte there are 4000 teams behind us, making 4700, then these and those who are on the Morman, or Council Bluffs road, which will swell the number to five thousand teams. These teams will average 4 or six persons to the wagon making over 20.000 souls. There are then on pack mules about 1000, at least, making 21,000 emigrants on the plains this season - Many of them have already lost their oxen their mules their wagons and have been forced to throw their provisions overboard and many have abandoned their wagons and left them standing solitary on the road while others have chosen to illuminate the solitudes of the wilds and have kindled a fire and consumed them, this is really true. Then to see the waste; all along may be seen piles of bacon, meal flour beans trunks boxes chairs &c &c which have been disposed of thus to relieve the persons to get along. I apprehend many must perish on this route, for it is scarcely possible for the teams in the rear of this emmence multitude to find sufficient grass to keep their teams alive and when fall those who depend on them must fall likewise. The teams in our company are some of them very heavy loaded but to day great will be the change wrought - wagon lodes will be cut off - boxes throwm out irons thrown away and bacon & other provisions must go - also we must lighten or fail - This is the conclusion and is being gone into and today the Captain ordered the train to not to allow those who wished to make alterations, Our wagon is light and we have a load of about 1500 with which our oxen walk along with ease and we were fortunate in not buying as part of luxuries and unnecessaries which many are now glad to dispose of, but of this enough

THE WESTERN MAILS

Fort Sacramento June 7th 1849

Dear John

Upon my arrival at the Fort last evening I learned that a mail would be sent to the states in about a week and that by the payment of 20^{cts} I could send a letter, and this being the only opportunity I will probably have, notice I reach California I gladly embrace it.

While I pass now learned from experience the truth and fatality of the various stories in reference to a life on the wild plains, a nomadic life, where man subsists without wood and on water surplus and often, effluence, where one interminable stretch out before the eye on which the Wolf the Antelope the Buffalo and other wild animals are the only living tenants.

I have now traveled about 700

[He then says that he is in excellent health and mentions several persons he has met on the trail] We crossed the River last night by raising wagon body but those who crossed this morning had to ferry and about 100 wagons are now waiting to cross besides a company of 200 pack mules, and 60 men who have a guide Bryant the author of "What I saw in California"* The peaks of the rocky mountains are in sight rising high, and this is a beautiful spot had I time I could give you incidents which might be interesting. My love to all.....Charlis "

Letter is addressed simply to John and no last name of the writer, but from the contents of the letter, he is probably from Mt. Pleasant, Illinois, because he does mention that he got a letter along the trail from a party of "Illinoisians from Mt. Pleasant".

*Edwin Bryant, New York, 1848. Bryant first went to California in 1846. He was one of the notables who guided a pack train in 1849. James A. Prichard, in his Diary of 1849, records that "E. Bryant's pack train came up with us" on July 15th. (Edited by Dale L. Morgan, published by Fred Rosenstock, Denver, 1959).

A great letter on the complex problems of crossing the plains and the mountains in the first year of the gold rush.

THE WESTERN MAILS



2,000 MILES WITH OX TEAMS AND 137 HEAD OF CATTLE

Daniel Miller writes to his brother from: "Petaluma/Sonoma County/California" on April 15, 1852: "I need not pretend to narrate to you Dangers, Toils, perplexities and hardships of the trip of over 2,000 miles with Ox teams and a herd of cattle. We started with 137 head of cattle, got here with 94, but as our cattle got lame and weak we would sell them to trading posts on the way — that we did not lose entirely more than some 4 or 5 head except 8 head that either strayed or more likely were stolen by the Mormons in the great Salt Lake valley. We have been in the valleys contiguous to San Francisco for upwards of two months — we had great difficulty in finding a suitable vacant situation to herd our cattle on and in wandering and hunting have at length stopped in a small valley in the mountains $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Petaluma valley and some ten miles from the town of Petaluma, situated at the head of ship or boat navigation on an inlet of the great Bay of San Francisco and about 60 miles (by water) to the later City." Miller describes the high cost of living in the California of the Gold Rush. He is pleased with the prices that are being paid for cattle and states, "I have just sent back to Mo (Missouri) ... for \$2,000 worth of cows & heifers more — our cattle live, and do well here all the year without feed". Miller regrets the loss of three children enroute to California — "Our daughter Eliza ... we lost the day we started ... we lost, near courthouse rock, on the great Platt (river), our infant child Emma, of Diarea, and at the sink of Stony creek some distance west of the great Salt Lake Valley, we lost our Daughter Margaret of Mountain fever ... nearly all the county is claimed by grants made by the Mexican Government so that we are all improving on uncertainty ... As to the gold digging on the various rivers and streams, you will take little intres(t) in — tens of thousands of persons flock here from every part of the Globe and mingle together in search of the precious metal. Gold is found over a vast extent of country, many hundreds of miles. Some are fortunate, whilst a much larger number are not so. The wreckless gamblers are here in great numbers, and many unbethoughted young men get together many thousands Dollars worth of Dust, get a Dram (of whiskey) ahead, and their gold dust disappears in a few hours at the gambling tables." Cover above is postmarked at SAN FRANCISCO/CAL, rated 10 cents via Panama.



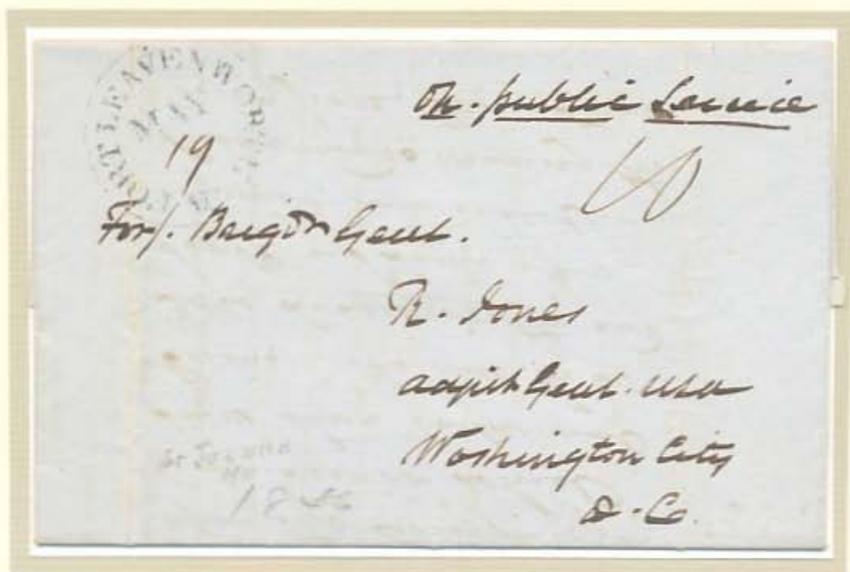
Fort LARAMIE, 1842
From a sketch accompanying Fremont's report

Fort. Larimer May 24 1850

My Dear Wife I arrived here yesterday noon
in good health John is also well we have
had pleasant weather most of the time since
we left Council Bluffs. we have had no rain
of consequence since we left home we are now
822 miles from the Bluffs and about 782 from
home and about one third of the distance on our
way to the mines we have seen a long and tedious
road to this place and the worst and longest
part to go I am not discouraged but shall
keep trying as long as possible

John and myself left the good company that we
started with the morning of the 7th of this month
altho they have taken over fifty dollars from me
I am not sorry that I left them they say that
they will pay me some day if I had the money
it would see me some good horses & provisions are
to be had here but the price is above my price
I am traveling in company with two other teams
called Lord Boyron company from Nebraska County
I fell in their company soon after I left my old
friends and altho I was without tent cooking
utensils and a scanty supply of provisions they
invited me to join them share their tent with
me and have treated me as a brother

THE WESTERN MAILS



RECOMMENDATION OF NAMING FORT KEARNEY.

"St Joseph, Mo May 1st 1846

"General The report of Lt. Ridgely [Samuel Chase, died 7-6-1859], on the charges, preferred against Captain Trenor [Eustace, died 2-16-1847], 1st Drag[oons] by Major Wharton [Clifton, died 7-13-1848] of the same Regt, was received to day, by me, at this place, on my way to Table creek, with Col Kearney [Stephen Watts, Major General, died 10-31-1848], Maj. Wharton & the detachment of troops, intended, for the new post. We are now, about one hundred & twenty miles below that point, but hope to reach it, in two days. From thence, I return, immediately, to Fort Leavenworth, and shall, at once proceed to Fort Scott. unless I should find at Fort L. that my presence is required, at St Louis. We have just heard, of the unfortunate & melancholy, collision of the American & Mexican troops*. On my return to St Louis, the charges, against Capt Trenor, with additional, specifications, will be forwarded to Genl. Gaines [Edmund Pendleton, died 6-6-1849*]. I respectfully suggest, that the new post, may be called Fort Kearney, in Honor of the gallant Colonel, who has the construction of it. His name, among the Indians, on this Frontier, is a Honor in itself; and I know of no officer in the Army who Deserves, more justly, this small mark, of Honor and respect.
 To/Brig Genl/R. Jones [Roger]/ Adjutant Genl. U S A/Washington City D. C. " Geo. M. Brooke/Brig Genl. U S A/ 3d Dept.

*On April 25, 1846, Captain Seth Thornton's dragoons were ambushed by the Mexicans, which resulted in a declaration of war by the United States against Mexico. SEE Seth Thornton letter in this collection.

THE WESTERN MAILS



O.R. - OREGON ROUTE

FORT KEARNY *** FORT LARAMIE

The late C. Corwith Wagner of St. Louis began collecting covers in 1932 and towards the end of that year he discovered the first cover bearing a postmark of FORT LARAMIE with the designation O.R. In a long letter, to Harry L. Fine in 1956, he wrote: "In the early 1930's I turned up a folded letter written from Fort Laramie in June 1851 with the Ft. Laramie O.R. postmark. It took me several years to fix with certainty what the "O.R." stood for. As the "O" was not clearly struck it was at first "assumed" that the "O" was a "C" and that it meant "Central Route". Then another cover turned up and it was discovered that the "C" was an "O" and that "O.R." meant "Oregon Route". It was then discovered that the Postal Guide for 1851 listed Fort Laramie in the Territory of Oregon and located it in Clacamas county. Further investigation disclosed that it was "attached to Clacamas county, Oregon" by the Post Office Department for "administrative purposes" and that the "O.R." stood for Oregon. By 1859 there were a number of Oregon towns using the O. R. in their postmarks." For example see CORVALLIS O.R. This Oregon town was not on the Oregon Route.

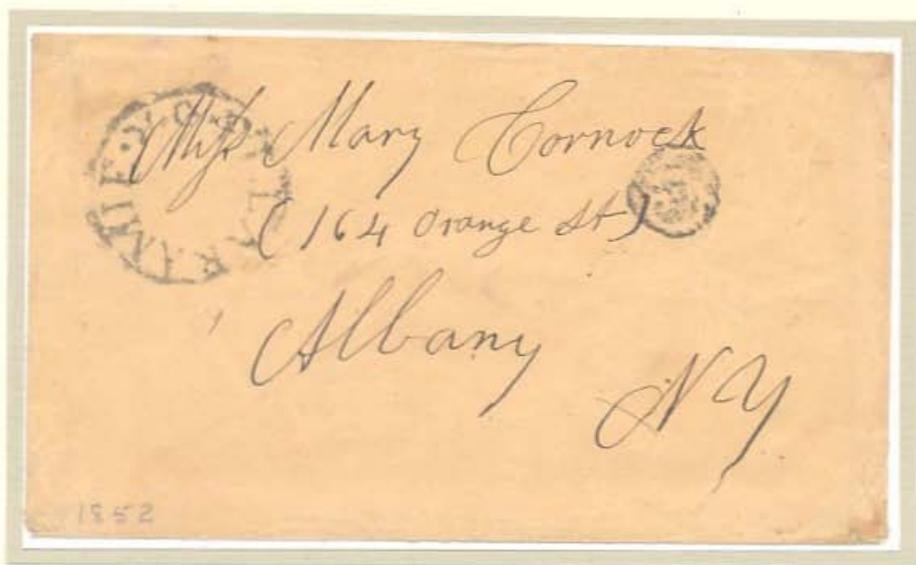
In 1957 this writer made, what the late Ed Payne called "a startling discovery", of a folded letter bearing a fancy oval postmark of Ft KEARNY O.R. dated June 5, 1852. The marking is in blue ink. In recent years three more covers have been recorded - 1 stampless and 2 with the three cent 1851 stamp.

Previous to the establishment of the Nebraska Territory in 1854, all the land west of the Missouri river was unorganized and frequently referred to as the "Missouri Country" or "Indian Country or Territory". After 1854 both forts were in the Nebraska Territory. There are several letters in the Risvold collection which bear datelines "Fort Laramie O.R. or Oregon Route". On March 10, 1853 the Missouri Republican under "MAIL FOR FORT LARAMIE" printed an article in reference to the trouble the "Oregon Route" designation was causing in the routing of mail at that time. "Great numbers of letters intended for emigrants to Oregon and California, while on the route never reach their destination, in consequence of the wrong direction given to them. The Post Office Department itself seems to know nothing about it, for in the Official Register it is put down "Fort Laramie, Clackamas, Oregon." Generally, however, the mistake is committed in directing letters, "Fort Laramie, Oregon route." In the haste with which these letters are distributed at the various offices in the United States, the eye catching word "Oregon", it is at once supposed that it is to be sent by the California steamers (via Panama) and off it goes in that direction. To ensure its getting to "Fort Laramie", nothing more is necessary than to direct it "Fort Laramie, via Independence, Mo."

Before Wagner passed away in 1957, most students and collectors had come to the conclusion that O.R. stood for OREGON ROUTE.

15-18

THE WESTERN MAILS



FORT LARAMIE The Type I postmark was a crude device probably carved out of wood or cork. All the impressions indicate this. The marking comes with or without a manuscript date in the center and with a colorless numeral 5 as on the cover shown *below*. The cover shown above bears this very same numeral 5 struck outside of the marking. The letter contained in this cover is dated at "Nebraska Territory Eight Miles above Ft. Larrimie July 5th 1852". Cover *below* was probably used in 1852.

JUN 15



THE WESTERN MAILS



The FORT LARAMIE POST OFFICE was established on March 14, 1850 in what was then unorganized territory. The Post Office Department had attached it to Clackamas County, Oregon, apparently, for administrative reasons. Its first postmaster was John S. Tutt the sutler at the fort and a partner of John Dougherty the sutler and Indian agent at Fort Leavenworth. On May 30, 1854 Fort Laramie became part of the newly formed territory of Nebraska. Thence was successively in Idaho Territory from March 3, 1863 to May 26, 1864; Dakota Territory from May 27, 1864 to July 29, 1868; Wyoming Territory from July 30, 1868 to July 10, 1890 and finally in the State of Wyoming to the present day. It is Wyoming's first post office located in Goshen County.



FORT LARAMIE NOVEMBER 15, 1851.

The folded letter shown above bears the Type I handstamp of Fort Laramie, as well as the manuscript postmark and free frank of John Tutt the first postmaster. No postmarks are known previous to July 1, 1851. In the letter Tutt writes to his partner about the business affairs at the post: "I have sold to the traders \$6000.00 of goods at 25% on cost & 10 cents per pound on freight... I think we may have some military in Mormon line next year - If so and you are willing (if we see no hopes for this post) we will sell and quit... The officers, Parson & men are well... The winter, with its windy and driving wet snows has just set in... Johnson is going down [to Saint Louis] on the 15th with the Salt Lake mail... There are plenty of Indians in 2 days; but they will not make many robes. Lots of traders this year - our robes brought 2.85 & beaver 2.50..." Kit Carson and William Bent from Bent's Fort on the Arkansas had been there and traded with Tutt the year before.

THE WESTERN MAILS



FORT LARAMIE 1853

The cover above bears one of the very few early manuscript postmarks of the 1850 period. The postmaster rated it "5" cents collect to St. Louis - "Fort Laramie Jan 30". In the letter Joseph Bissonnette wants Thomas Pim to come up and work as book-keeper for the new bridge they are erecting across the North Platte River. He writes: "...see Mr Richard in St. Louis; and if dont agree with Mr Richard come up any how in my own account. I have taken 7 partners with me in the Erectoon of that Bridge..."

Joseph Bissonnette was born in St. Louis in 1818. Eighteen years later he entered the fur trade and married an Oglala Sioux squaw who bore him seven children. His second wife was a Brule Sioux who produced fourteen! In 1842 he became a trader for Sybille & Adams at Fort Platte which was located "next door" to Fort Laramie. Because of his marriage into the Sioux tribes he became an important trader as well as a guide and interpreter to the Fremont and Kearny expeditions. In 1843 Bernard Fratze & John Cabanne bought Fort Platte only to abandon it in 1845. Bissonnette took the trade goods and moved to a point eight mile east of Fort Laramie and erected Fort Bernard. Here he was to become acquainted with John Richard and six others in building the bridge mentioned in the letter above. Although Bissonnette lost his tradership, because he sold liquor to the Indians, he continued to live in the Fort Laramie - Deer Creek area. By 1880 he had moved to Wounded Knee Creek, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, where he died from natural causes in August 1894 - almost 3 years and 8 months after the tragic massacre of the Indians and their families at Wounded Knee!

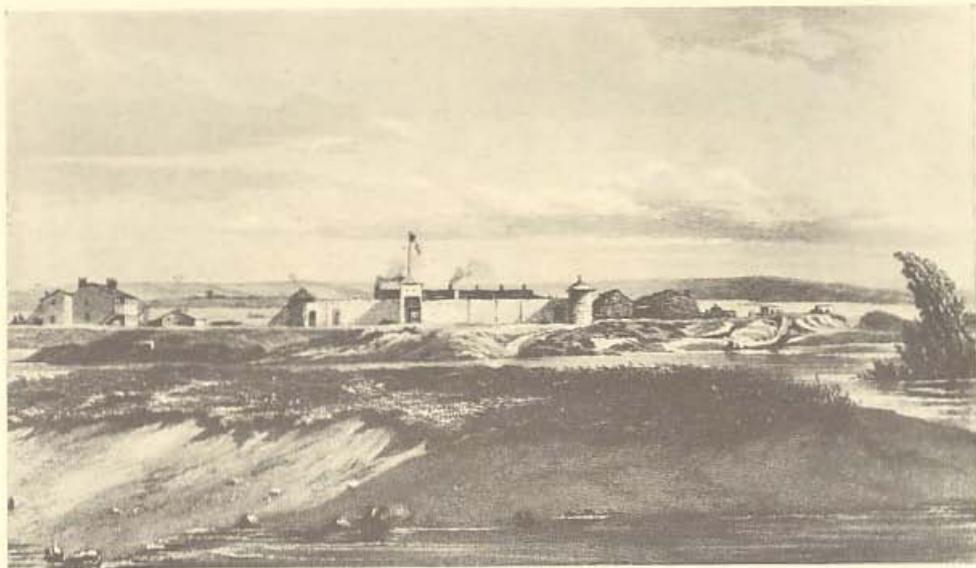
*Fort Laramie
Jan 30*

15-21

THE WESTERN MAILS



FORT LARAMIE This is the Type II postmark probably used in 1853. It is one of two recorded examples with both struck in blue and no territorial designation.



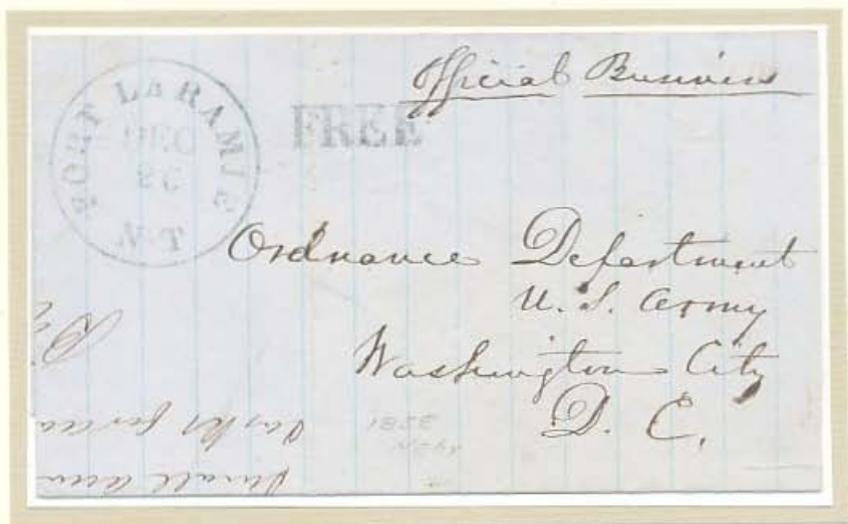
FORT LARAMIE, 1853

15-22

THE WESTERN MAILS



FORT LARAMIE, NEBRASKA TERRITORY The covers on this page bear the Type III postmark which comes in blue and black. Cover shown *above* is from a soldier stationed at the fort and is dated at "Fort Laramie, O. R. June 20th 1853". He writes to his brother in German and gives an inventory of his property in case of his death: "On the 15th of this month at night we were sent under danger of life in a small canoe across the extremely swollen Platte River against about 2,000 Sioux Indians who had fired on one of our noncommis'd officers. Upon arrival in their camp they resisted us by not giving away the guilty and so 5 had to pay with their lives and about 4 with deathly wounds for it - we made 2 prisoners. We were about 30 soldiers and 1 officer. Since then we expect any moment a counterattack of the Indians and are ready". Fort Laramie never was under serious attack from the Indians at any time. Cover *below* is on official business and is dated December 26, 1858.



THE WESTERN MAILS



FORT LARAMIE, NEBRASKA TERRITORY The cover shown *above* originated at Fort Laramie and apparently it was missent to Benicia, Cal. It bears the Type III postmark. Cover *below* bears a 12 cent 1861 postage stamp and the Type IV postmark. There are no year dates on either cover.



Clerk of Court of Common Pleas,

Clark County,
Springfield P. O.,
Ohio

15-24

THE WESTERN MAILS



FORT LARAMIE, DAKOTA TERRITORY The cover shown *above* bears the Type VII postmark and the cover *below* Type VIII. During the 1860's the postmaster used whatever handstamp he picked up with no regard to the territorial designation of the postmark. Thus in order of usage they are mixed up.



THE WESTERN MAILS

Ft Laramie Idaho Ter
June 28th 1864

Dear Sirs

I was sadly disappointed on arriving here and not finding a letter from you I wanted to hear from home so much we have all been well since we started and are getting along fine.

Bar

say

letter

she

to be

her

she

she

has

now



Miss Ann W Woodruff
Newton
Jasper Co
Iowa

FORT LARAMIE, IDAHO TERRITORY Although this cover is postmarked Fort Laramie, N. T., the letter is datelined "Ft Laramie Idaho Ter/June 28th 1864". The fort was in Idaho Territory from March 3, 1863 to May 26, 1864, but apparently they used the N. T. postmark during that period, because no Idaho postmarks are known. The writer is on his way to Idaho: "There is a heavy emigration on the road mostly for Idaho. I do not anticipate any trouble from the Indians although they are pretty saucy and have committed some deperdations along the road... Write to me at Virginia City, Idaho".

M. Laramie D. T. July 24th 64

Territory of Idaho
M. Laramie D. T.

Personally appeared before me John G. Revis 1st Lieut & Adj 11th Regt Ohio Cavalry Assistant Provost Marshal for Fort Laramie Idaho Terr and vicinity John B. C. Coulomb a citizen of Idaho Territory, residing near Scotts Bluffs Id. Terr who being duly sworn by me deposed and said - That he resides near the Agency of Major John Love, Indian Agent for the Upper Platte Agency. That during the month of October 1863, he hauled from the ranch of Mr. Jas. Bordeaux a resident of Idaho Terr; Fifty-two (52) kegs of powder, each containing about twenty-five (25) lbs; Twelve hundred pounds of One half ounce balls; Twelve boxes of Tobacco, each containing one hundred (100) lbs; Twenty two barrels of sugar; One (1) Case of Vermillion, weighing about Sixty-six (66) pounds; Five (5) pieces of Cloth Twelve bales of (12) Shirts; each bale containing about one dozen (12); About, One hundred & fifty (150) Sacks of Flour; Twenty boxes (20) of half does; a large quantity of Blankets, Calico, Red ticking, Brown Sheetting; Two Riddles (2); Eleven Shot-



OLD FORT WALLA-WALLA, COLUMBIA RIVER, WASHINGTON TERRITORY.

Fill up the other side of
 ink address on this side.
 once compare entries
 letter received; stamp
 return it to the mailing

A penalty of \$300 is imposed by law for using this card on *official business.*

Post Office Department.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

Post Office at

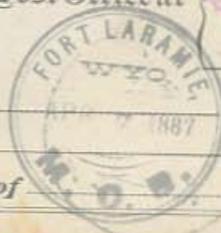
RETURN TO:

Postmaster at _____

County of _____

State of _____

Always have stamp of Post Office



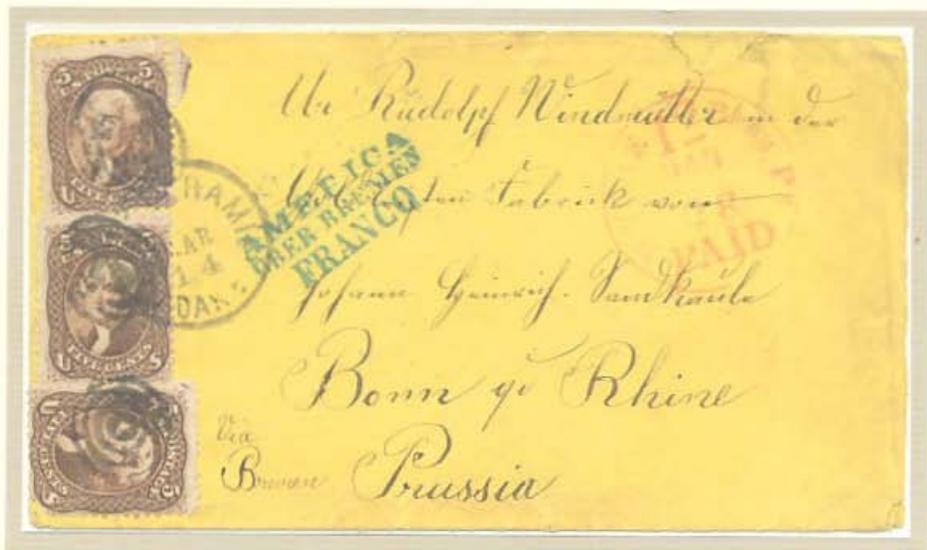
and date of receipt.

27A

THE WESTERN MAILS

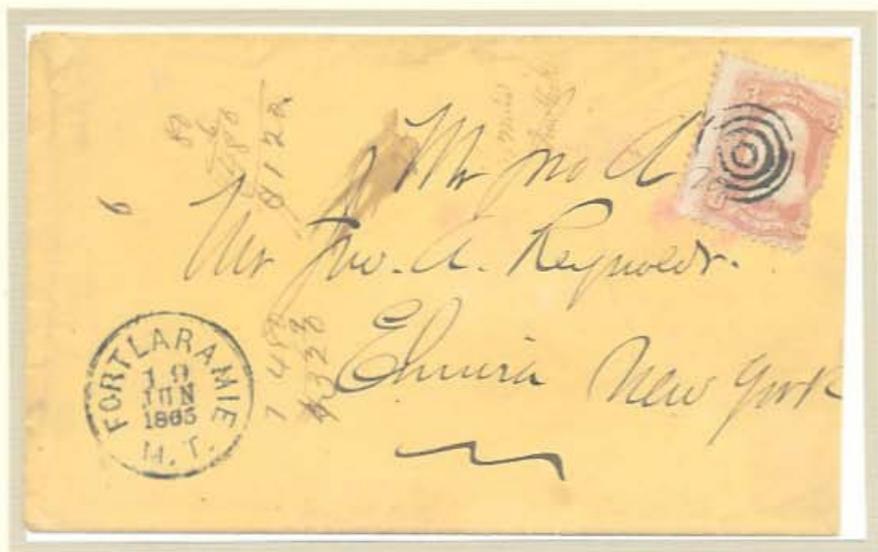


Fort Laramie, Idaho Territory, from a painting on linen signed by Charles Frederick Moellmann, who enlisted in Company G, Eleventh Ohio Volunteer Cavalry.
Courtesy of the Western Heritage Research Center, University of Wyoming.



FORT LARAMIE, DAKOTA TERRITORY This cover shows a rare usage of the 5 cent stamps of the 1861 issue from Fort Laramie to Germany. The three stamps are tied by the Type IX postmark with no year date but in the 1860s. The U. S. rate was 3 cents plus the German rate of 12 cents via Bremen Packet from New York as per the red postmark dated March 28th.

THE WESTERN MAILS



FORT LARAMIE, M. T. The M. T. in the postmark has caused much speculation as to its meaning. The 1865 U. S. Register lists Fort Laramie in Dakota, Idaho and Montana Territories. There are several covers known of the two types shown on this page. The one *above* is Type V and *below* Type VI. There is a spread of at least six years between the dates of the two covers - June 19, 1865 and January 27 (1870). The 3 cent stamp on the cover below was not issued until March 1870. The cover was purchased by Corwith Wagner from Dr, Carroll Chase who could not explain the usage when the fort was in Wyoming Territory. Apparently someone in the Post Office Department ordered the cancels without checking and the postmaster at the fort used them without question.



THE WESTERN MAILS



FORT LARAMIE, WYOMING TERRITORY The cover shown *above* bears the Type X postmark of Fort Laramie dated December 4, (1868). The photograph *below* is a general view of the fort about 1868.



THE WESTERN MAILS



FORT LARAMIE, WYOMING TERRITORY The cover shown *above* bears the Type XI postmark of June 22 (1876). Cover is addressed to an officer on General George Crook's Yellowstone Expedition in 1876. It is postmarked five days after Crook's defeat by the Indians on the Rosebud and three days before Custer's defeat on the Little Big Horn in Montana Territory June 25, 1876. Crook had left Fort Fetterman on May 29th with fifteen troops of cavalry and five companies of infantry. The cover *below* bears the Type XII postmark with no year date. Probably used in the 1870 period.



Fort Laramie (15)
April 24th 1874

General O. O. Oord
Omaha

Dear General

I telegraphed my arrival at this Post on the 20th last Monday, reporting all quiet at the Agencies, and asking if I could be authorized to make arrangements to carry the mails from the Agencies to this Post at \$800 per month, also if you had any instructions for me. I presume the latter would be difficult, until the authorities at Washington determine what course to pursue regarding the removal of the Agencies, pending the decision of this question I have not thought it worth while to remove the Camps particularly as the Agents (Notwithstanding they report the Indians are all friendly) are very much opposed to have the troops go from the immediate vicinity of the Agencies, I return next Tuesday morning and will go to Spotted Tail Agency with the view of removing that Camp to some more suitable point, I hope some Con-Clusion will be arrived at soon, although we

Supplied with rations & forage to 31st May,
yet it may take much longer to get any definite
instructions. Grazing will be good on White
River by May 10th. Wood & Hay can be had
I think at reasonable prices if Contractors can
have time to make their preparations, but
the difficulty is that we cannot tell if we
shall require it where we now are, in the
 midst of these uncertainties I fear the time
will pass away leaving the troops that
may have to remain there poorly provided for
next winter.

Very Truly Yours,
John Smith