

*Salt Lake City
July 16*

Chapter Five

Central Overland Mail, 1847-1850

In 1847, Mormons began the third great stage of the westward migration, as thousands travelled from starting points on the Missouri River to Salt Lake City. This followed the earlier westward migrations to Oregon and California, which were described in Chapters Three and Four. The resulting large settlement at Salt Lake City (in today's Utah) created a need for communication with both the United States and California, and the Central Route evolved to service this need. The eastern segment of the route was the Platte River Road, which ran between the Missouri River and Salt Lake City. Figure 5-1 shows this segment, which passed through Fort Kearny, Fort Laramie and South Pass to Salt Lake City.

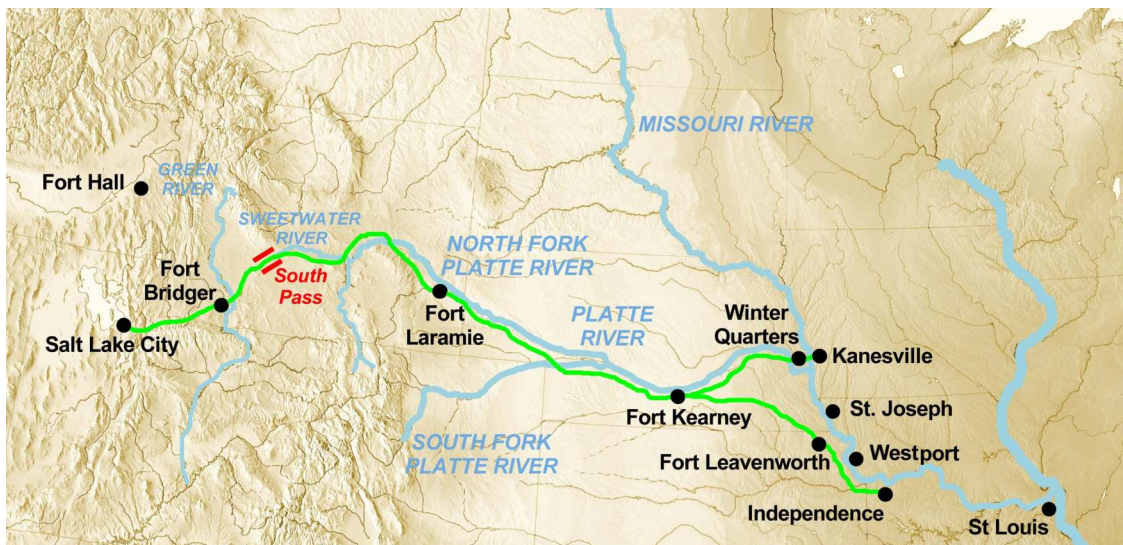


Figure 1-1. Map of the Platte River Road between Iowa/Missouri and Salt Lake City. The emigrant trails which evolved into mail routes are shown in green.

Westbound travelers typically began their journey from one of the principal Missouri River jumping off points at Independence, Westport, St Joseph, Kaneshville or the nearby Winter Quarters. All trails converged on the Platte River near Fort Kearney. West of Fort Kearney, the Platte River splits into north and south branches, and westbound travelers followed the North Platte to Fort Laramie and South Pass. The Platte River turns south just before South Pass, so travelers to Salt Lake City continued on via the Sweetwater River to the Green River and Fort Bridger. This trail became the mail route for correspondence between the Missouri River and Salt Lake City.

The Mormon Church Migrates West

In April 1830, disciples of Joseph Smith were organized as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in western New York State. Their different Christian beliefs, however, made them subject to continual harassment and violence, and many members moved westward to Ohio in search of a safe haven. From

5 - CENTRAL OVERLAND MAIL, 1847-1850

Ohio, they moved to Missouri in 1836, but were expelled by the Missouri state militia in 1838. They were able to re-settle in Nauvoo, Illinois from 1839 to 1845, and built their following there to 12,000 people. Concern over this concentration led to yet another expulsion in 1846, this time to Winter Quarters located just north of present-day Omaha on west bank of the Missouri River opposite Kanessville, Iowa (also called Kane, it was re-named Council Bluffs in 1852). By then, it had become clear to the Mormons that they were not welcome in the United States, so they began to look westward for a permanent settlement site.

As described in Chapter Four, Samuel Brannan was assigned the task of determining whether California might be an acceptable settlement site. He left New York City by sea on February 4, 1846 with 238 people,

and arrived in San Francisco on July 31. Along with members of the Mormon Battalion, they quickly became established in California, and Brannan concluded that California was the perfect spot for settlement - distant, lightly settled and commercially unattractive to American settlers. This was before the gold rush of two years later, however, so that assessment would prove to be dramatically incorrect.

On April 5, 1847, Brigham Young led the pioneer party of 143 people¹ westward from the Winter Quarters. They followed the north bank



**Brigham Young,
Leader of Mormon Church**

- Born in Vermont in 1801
- Joined the Mormon Church in 1832
- Founded Salt Lake City in July 1847
- Succeeded Joseph Smith as President in 1847
- Governor of Utah Territory, 1851-58
- Died at Salt Lake City in 1877

of the Platte River to avoid contact with travelers on the Oregon Trail, who typically used the south bank. The company reached Fort Laramie on June 1. During the last week of June, Brannan came east to meet Young near the Green River (in today's Wyoming) and tried unsuccessfully to convince Young that California was a better location for settlement.

On July 21, 1847, advance scouts reached the Salt Lake valley, and Young declared it to be their home three days later. By December of that year, 2,200 Mormons had made the trek to settle in the Salt Lake valley,² followed by 2,400 additional settlers in 1848. By the end of 1849, a total of 6,100 people had travelled to Salt Lake City.

Mail between Salt Lake City and the Missouri River

Within a month of their arrival, the Mormon settlers designated a small building in Salt Lake City as their post office and named it "The Great Basin Post Office." The Mormons had historically relied heavily on communication to connect their widely dispersed members, so the creation of a post office was one of their earliest priorities. Seventeen months later, in response to a petition from the Salt Lake settlers, the United States established the first official post office at Salt Lake City on January 18, 1849.

In the period before the establishment of a U.S. post office, there were only a few overland trips that could carry mail, as listed in Table 5-1.

**Table 5-1. Trips between Salt Lake City and the United States, 1847 and 1848
Eastbound to the United States**

| Departed Salt Lake City | Arrived | Party | Notes |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Aug 2, 1847 | Sep 1847 at Winter Quarters | Ezra Benson | |
| Aug 26, 1847 | Oct 31, 1847 at Winter Quarters | Brigham Young | Young's return |
| Oct 8, 1847 | Dec 17, 1847 at Winter Quarters | Mormon Battalion | Carried 144 letters (Young's journal) |
| Jan 10, 1848 | May 11, 1848 at Linden, MO | Mormon Battalion | See Figure 5-2 |
| Mar 7, 1848 | May 16, 1848 at Kanesville, IA | Levi Hancock | SLC Mar 5, 1848 letter via Kane |
| July 9, 1848 | Aug 3, 1848 at Independence, MO | <i>California Star</i> Express | See Chapter 4, Aug 8 in St. Louis |
| Aug 9, 1848 | Oct 18, 1848 at Kanesville, IA | Benjamin Rolfe | Carried 63 letters, SLC Aug 8 letter via Kane |
| Oct 14, 1848 | Dec 20, 1848 at Kanesville, IA | Howard Egan | SLC Oct 13 letter via Kane Dec 20 |

Westbound to Salt Lake City

| Departed | Arrived | Party | Notes |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Apr 5, 1847 Winter Quarters | Jul 23, 1847 | Pioneer Party | Young's first trip |
| Jul 4, 1847 Winter Quarters | Sep 19, 1847 | First Migration | |
| May 26, 1848 Winter Quarters | July/August 1848 | Second Migration | |
| Jul 3, 1848 Winter Quarters | Oct 19, 1848 | Willard Richards | |
| Oct 14, 1848 Kanesville | Nov 30, 1848 | Allen Compton | Carried 227 letters (Young's journal) |

Figure 5-2 was written in Salt Lake City on January 9, 1848 and explains that, "I avail myself of this opportunity of writing to you by the mail which leaves tomorrow for the bluffs: this mail is carried by some of the soldiers of the Mormon battalion recently from the settlements of California." The soldier posted the letter at Linden, Missouri on May 11, where it was rated for 10 cents due to Indiana. This is the earliest reported use from Salt Lake City.

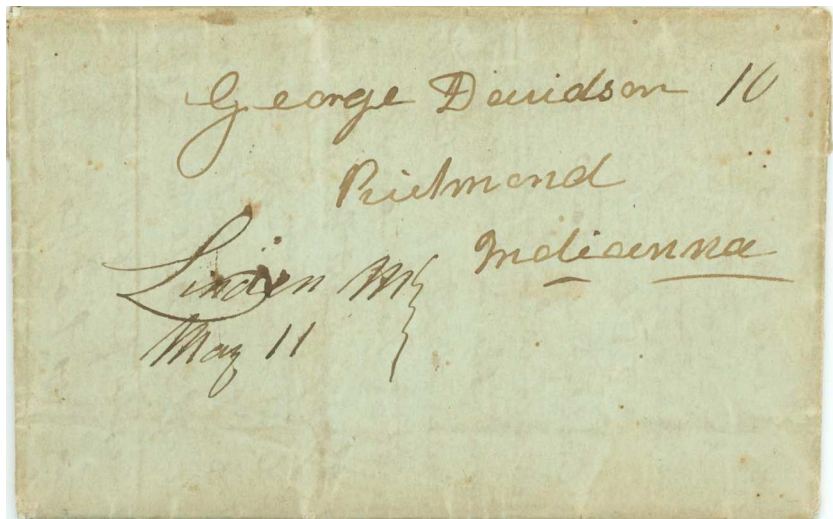


Figure 5-2. Letter datelined January 9, 1848 in Salt Lake City and carried by a returning Mormon Battalion soldier to Linden, Missouri.

5 - CENTRAL OVERLAND MAIL, 1847-1850


An August 8, 1848 letter from Salt Lake City³ describes the arrival of the first westbound mail two days earlier. This corresponds to the arrival of the Second Migration.

The Babbitt Special Contract Mails

The following announcement appeared in several newspapers across the country including the New Orleans Times Picayune of April 5, 1849:

MAILS TO THE PACIFIC - A post office has been established at the Salt Lake Valley, in California, and Joseph L. Heywood, formerly of Quincy, Illinois, appointed postmaster. Mr. Almon W. Babbitt, the contractor, will deliver the mail six times a year, and forward all mail matter, sent through by way of Kanesville, Iowa to Oregon and California. The first mail will go through the first of April.

This announced service was only partially implemented. There was no through mail to California or Oregon as no contractors were available to carry the westbound mail beyond Salt Lake City. Further, since

| | |
|--|---|
|  | Almon Babbitt, Mormon Expressman, 1812-1856 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joined the Mormon Church in 1833• Elected to Illinois House in 1844• Emigrated to Salt Lake City in 1848• Organized Salt Lake City-Missouri mail system in 1849• Requested territorial status for State of Deseret, 1849• Murdered April 1856 near Ft. Laramie |

no funds were allocated by Congress for the route between Kanesville and Salt Lake City, the post office relied on a "special" contract, with compensation to the carrier consisting of each trip's postal proceeds. For purposes of classification, "Babbitt Special Contract Mails" is used here to differentiate this service from the previous mails carried at the expense of the Mormon Church, and the later regular contract mails. Regular contract routes required a contract between the federal government and a mail contractor for a specific sum of money to be paid for a specific route service.

Brigham Young's journal⁴ entry of February 28, 1849 (the date the news reached Kanesville) reported that:

This winter the Federal Government established a post office at Great Salt Lake City and appointed Joseph L. Heywood, postmaster, and also instituted a bi-monthly mail between Kanesville and Great Salt Lake City. Almon W. Babbitt engaged to carry the mail at his own expense and charges the net proceeds.

The church journal entry mentions bi-monthly mail, while the newspaper announcement states six times a year. The known trips correspond to six times a year as shown in Table 5-2. The six mails in 1849 all took place between the spring and the fall, and no winter trips were undertaken.

**Table 5-2. Babbitt Special Contract Mail Trips, March 1849 to August 1850
Eastbound to the United States**

| Departed Salt Lake City | Arrived at Kanesville | Mail Party | Notes |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Mar 1849 | May 16, 1849 | Almon Babbitt | First trip |
| Apr 14, 1849 | May 27, 1849 | Allen Compton | |
| May 4, 1849 | Jun 22, 1849 | Deseret Territorial Memorial | Carried 31 letters (Young's journal) |
| Jul 27, 1849 | Sep 3, 1849 | Almon Babbitt | See Figures 5-3 and 5-4 |
| Sep 10, 1849 | Dec 7, 1849 | | Dec 12 1849 at St. Louis |
| Oct 19, 1849 | Dec 10, 1849 | John Taylor | See Figure 5-5 |
| Apr 18, 1850 | Jun 10, 1850 | Robert Campbell | |
| May 1850 | Jul 8, 1850 | | SLC Feb 14 letter via Kane |
| Aug 2, 1850 | Sep 12, 1850 | John Green and B. Holladay | See Figures 5-6 and 5-7 |

Westbound to Salt Lake City

| Departed Kanesville | Arrived Salt Lake City | Mail Party | Notes |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Feb 1849 | Apr 9, 1849 | Allen Compton | |
| May 15, 1849 | Jul 29, 1849 | Howard Egan | |
| May 21, 1849 | Jul 1, 1849 | Almon Babbitt | Met St. Louis wagons enroute |
| Jul 1849 | Sep 19, 1849 | Campbell & Patten | |
| May 1, 1850 | Jun 8, 1850 | Thomas Williams | "First news from the States this season" ⁵ |
| Jul 6, 1850 | Aug 15, 1850 | Orson Hyde | |

On April 12, 1849, Thomas Bullock, the auditor of Church tithing accounts and probable acting Postmaster, recorded an accounting⁶ for the April 14 eastbound mail trip from Salt Lake City. He identified the men in Captain Allen Compton's party and listed an account of mails sent (in waybill form) as:

| | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|----------|
| For the States | 126 paid letters | \$63.00 |
| Europe & C. | 24 paid letters | \$12.00 |
| Kanesville | 80 paid letters, 170 unpaid, 10 free | \$40.00 |
| Mount Pisgah | 4 paid letters | \$ 2.00 |
| Way Mail | 1 paid letter, 7 unpaid | \$.50 |
| Totals: | 235 paid letters, 190 unpaid letters | \$117.50 |

Bullock's entry also listed the number of letters carried by four of the men in the mail party: Compton (425), Johnson (54), Casto (11), and Huntington (12). The 425 letters carried by Compton matches the total listed in the waybill, so the others apparently carried letters on their own account.

The waybill shows that the amount collected per prepaid letter was 50 cents. At that time, the postal rate for over 300 miles was 10 cents.⁷ Thus, it appears that Babbitt charged a 40 cents fee for each prepaid letter

5 - CENTRAL OVERLAND MAIL, 1847-1850

in addition to the postal receipts associated with each trip. It is not clear if he collected a fee for each unpaid letter, and may have only received the amount of postage on such letters.

The earliest recorded letter posted from the Salt Lake City post office is shown in Figure 5-3, and was carried by Almon Babbitt under the terms of his special contract. The letter was datelined July 5, 1849 by Ursulia Hascall, who acknowledged receipt of letters dated January and February 1849 by "the mail which came in July 1" (the May 21 Babbitt trip from Kanesville). She also observed that, "the last letter we had (before that) was October 1847^s the mail will now be more regular, but it is impossible to pass through the Rocky Mountains in winter without people and animals both perishing." Ursulia was a Mormon convert from Massachusetts who left Nauvoo, Illinois on May 30, 1846 for Winter Quarters, Nebraska. She then took part in the First Migration, which left Winter Quarters on July 14, 1847 and arrived in Salt Lake City on September 19 of that year.

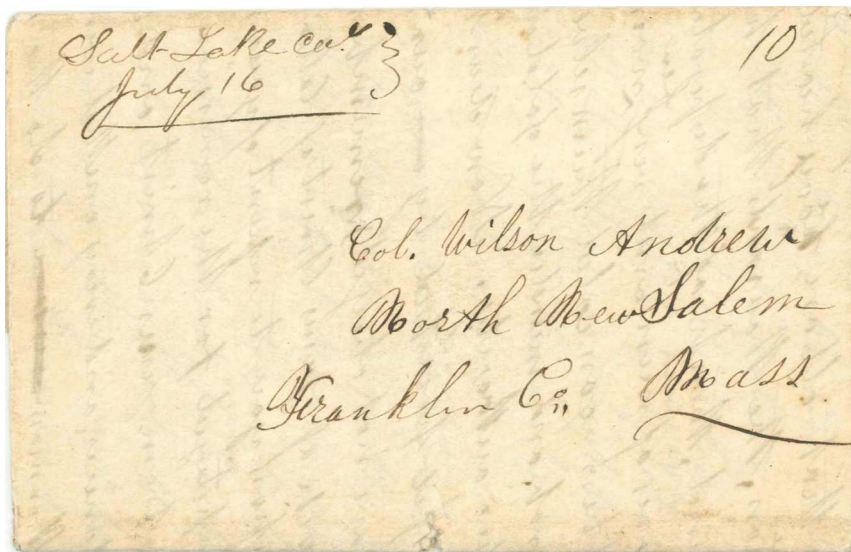


Figure 5-3. Letter datelined July 6, 1849 in Salt Lake City and carried by the Babbitt special contract mail to Kanesville, Iowa.

Another letter⁹ carried in the same July 1849 mail was datelined "Great Salt Lake City Upper California July 14th 1849" and postmarked on the same day as the Hascall letter in Figure 5-3. William Sucree wrote to his children in Indiana that, "you been write to us now and it will come direct as there is a post office established here and contract for the mail through to the bay once in three months." This apparently refers to a mail arrangement between Salt Lake and California.

Both letters received manuscript "Salt Lake Cal. July 16" postmarks in the hand of Thomas Bullock. They indicate that the Salt Lake City post office was part of California for postal purposes. Neither of the July 16, 1849 letters show indication of any express fees and both were rated for 10 cents postage due in Salt Lake City, reflecting the over 300 miles rate for domestic mail. As shown in Table 5-2, Babbitt left Salt Lake City with this mail on July 27 and arrived in Kanesville on September 3.

A way letter collected enroute by the Babbitt party on the same trip is shown in Figure 5-4. This letter was datelined on July 27, 1849 by Chauncey Swan, who wrote that, "Here I am in Mr Switzers tent writing, three miles west of the great south pass of the rocky mountains...I am in Orrigan and within 25 miles of California. I expect to be at Salt Lake by the 15th of August...My hopes are strong of being at Suters fort in California by the first day of October." He closed by saying, "it is getting late and I expect Mr. Babbitt along with the Mormon mails." Babbitt collected this letter during his July 27 mail-carrying trip which arrived in Kanesville on September 3. The letter was postmarked "Kane Iowa" three days later and assessed 10 cents postage due, for the postage from South Pass to Iowa City. The sender endorsement of "paid" was also lined through by the postmaster, which suggests that Babbitt collected an additional express fee (probably 50 cents) before the letter was posted. The other sender endorsement,

"Comp(limen)ts of Dr. McCormick" refers to a fellow member of Swan's party who had contemplating a return to the States but instead continued onward to California.

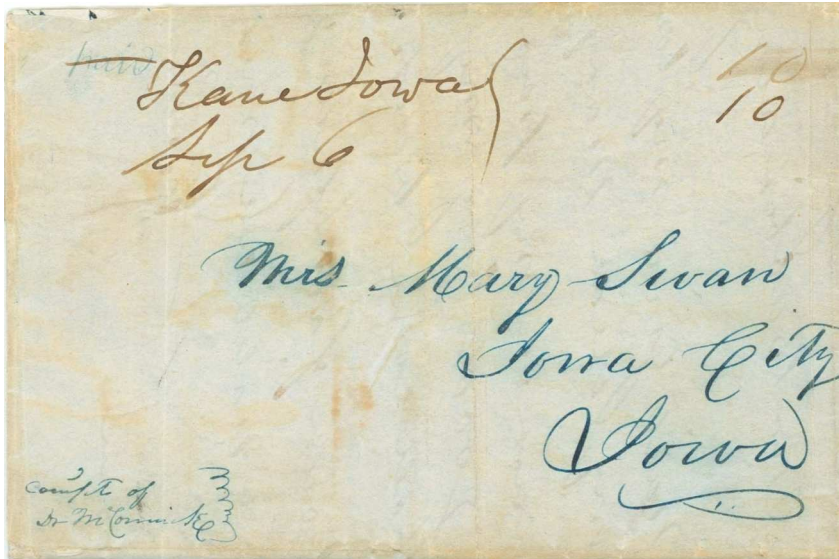


Figure 5-4. Dated July 27, 1849 in Pacific Springs and carried with Babbitt special contract party via Kanesville, Iowa on September 6.

Figure 5-5 illustrates an October 1849 prepaid letter carried by Babbitt's special contract mail service. This letter was written on September 22, 1849 in Salt Lake City by a gold miner passing through enroute to California. He wrote, "I intend staying at this place until spring than I am going on to the gold diggins...600 miles from this place there is a range of mountains called the ser-en-a-vade there is where fremonts men perished in the snow." His letter received a manuscript October 11 "Salt Lake Cal." postmark and was marked "Paid 10" cents to Missouri. As noted above, the sender also paid an additional 40 cents for the Babbitt special contract service, although that was not noted on the letter. The John Taylor mail party, carrying the Babbitt mails, left on October 19 and arrived in Kanesville on December 10.

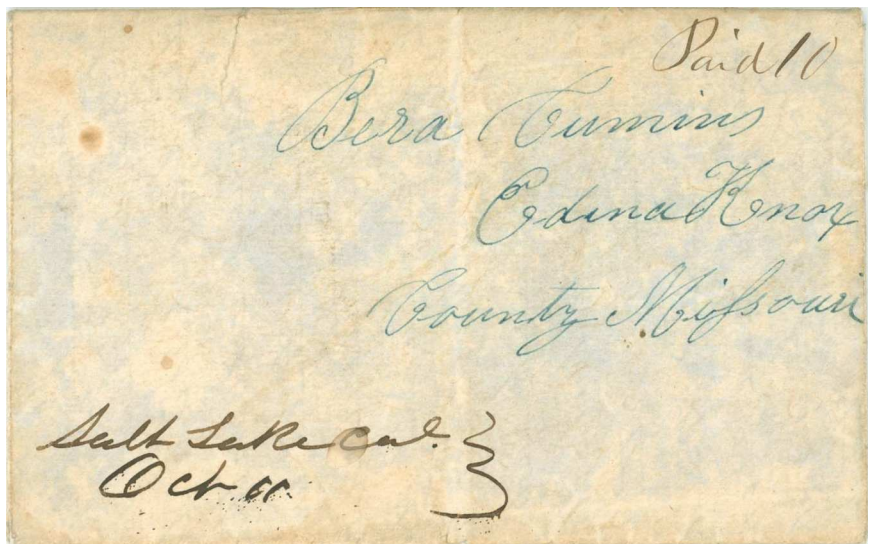


Figure 5-5. Letter dated September 22, 1849 in Salt Lake City and carried by the Babbitt special contract mail to Kanesville, Iowa.

Notices in the Deseret News in 1850 confirm the charges for the Babbitt special contract mail. The July 27, 1850 Deseret News reported that, "A mail is expected to leave for the States, about the 27th of July. Single letters to any part of the States, 50 cents." The July 27, 1850 mail trip actually left Salt Lake City on August

5 - CENTRAL OVERLAND MAIL, 1847-1850

2, and carried the letter shown in Figure 5-6. This letter was written at Fort Hall (northwest of Salt Lake City in today's Idaho) on July 20, 1849. The writer was enroute to California and reported that, "We have just arrived here and as an opportunity is now offered to send letters to the States by the Government Express I hasten to inform you of my whereabouts." This express was probably carried by military officers returning to the East, and they left this letter at Salt Lake City, where it languished for nearly a year.

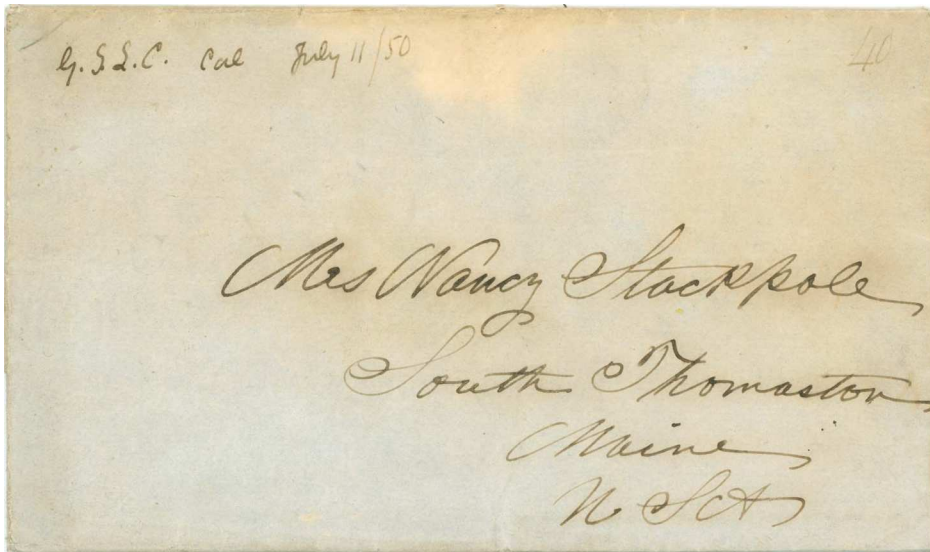


Figure 5-6. Letter datelined July 20, 1849 at Fort Hall and posted in Salt Lake with July 11, 1850 postmark. It was carried by Babbitt special contract mail party via Kanesville, Iowa.

It was finally postmarked "G.S.L.C. Cal" (Great Salt Lake City, California) in manuscript on July 11, 1850, probably by acting postmaster Willard Richards. Richards uncharacteristically rated this letter for 40 cents due, perhaps reflecting the transcontinental rate from California. It is unclear whether he had received instructions from Washington to charge 40 cents on mail to the East, or if he simply made a mistake. The letter was then given to John Y. Green and B. Holladay,

who were operating under the Babbitt special contract. They left Salt Lake City on August 2 and arrived in Kane on September 12.

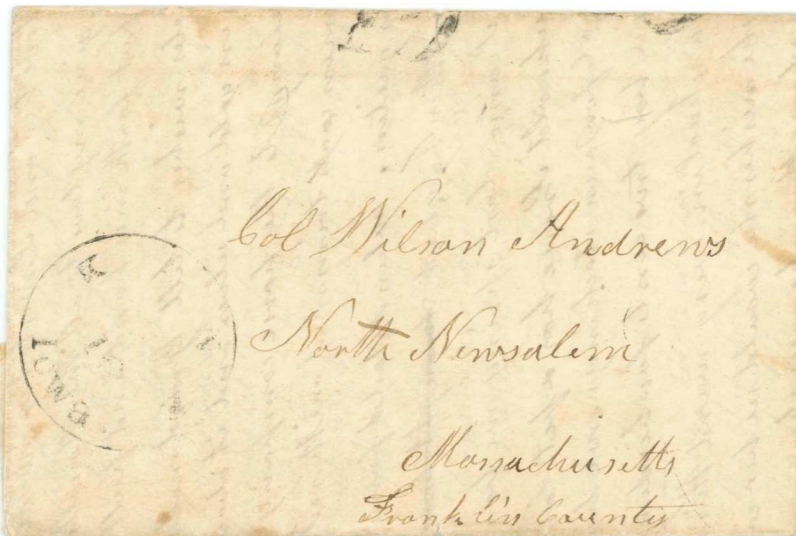


Figure 5-7. Letter datelined July 27, 1850 at Salt Lake City and carried by Mormon express via Kanesville, Iowa on September 16, 1850.

The letter in Figure 5-7 was carried in the same mail, but did not pass through the Salt Lake City post office.

This letter was written by Ursulia Hascall at Salt Lake City on July 27, 1850. It received a Kane, Iowa postmark of September 12 and was rated for ten cents postage due to Massachusetts.

As described in Chapter Seven, the post office route contract with Samuel Woodson superseded the Babbitt service.

The first eastbound Woodson mail departed from Salt Lake City on September 11, 1850, but the Babbitt mail to Kaneshville may have made one additional trip in September 1850. An August 31, 1850 Deseret News notice reported that, "All who wish, can send letters at the usual rates, 40 cents, single letter, to Kaneshville; 50 cents to any Post Office in the States, to be prepaid invariably. Those prepaying 40 cents will make their own change. Letters to England 65 cents or 40 cents to Kaneshville; and the 25 cents may be paid in England."

Estill Express

A private letter mail express between Westport, Missouri and Pacific Springs (three miles west of South Pass) was organized by Colonel James M. Estill of Westport. He formed J.M. Estill & Co. to travel rapidly westward along the Platte River Road to Pacific Springs, collecting eastbound letters from the westbound travelers and delivering them back to Missouri for 50 cents each. His service was advertised in both Salt Lake City and Missouri. The May 7, 1850 St Louis *Daily Missouri Republican* reported that:

The mail will leave the frontiers on the 15th, relays of horses have been stationed at various points along the route, and it is intended to push this Express forward, so as to pass all of the emigrants and other trains on the route for California. This will enable persons who wish to communicate with their friends, to do so, and will probably be the last opportunity they will have, before their arrival in California. When the Express reaches the Pacific Springs, which will be in advance of any of the emigrant trains, another Express will be sent back to the State, bringing with it all the letters which emigrants on the route may send home. All letters sent to persons in California will be forwarded by one of the partners of the concern, and delivered according to direction...Every letter sent by this line must be delivered, postage paid, and accompanied by fifty cents - compensation to the express - double letters in proportion.

Estill & Co. apparently made only one trip to Pacific Springs, leaving Westport on May 21, 1850 and arriving around July 15.

His return trip reached Weston on August 15, with a reported 4,000 letters. Even so, very few letters carried by this express are known to have survived. Figure 5-8 illustrates a letter addressed to New Jersey.

Estill collected this letter on the trail and endorsed it "Estill & Co. Express" on the front. It was apparently double-weight, since a \$1 charge is indicated on the front. It was

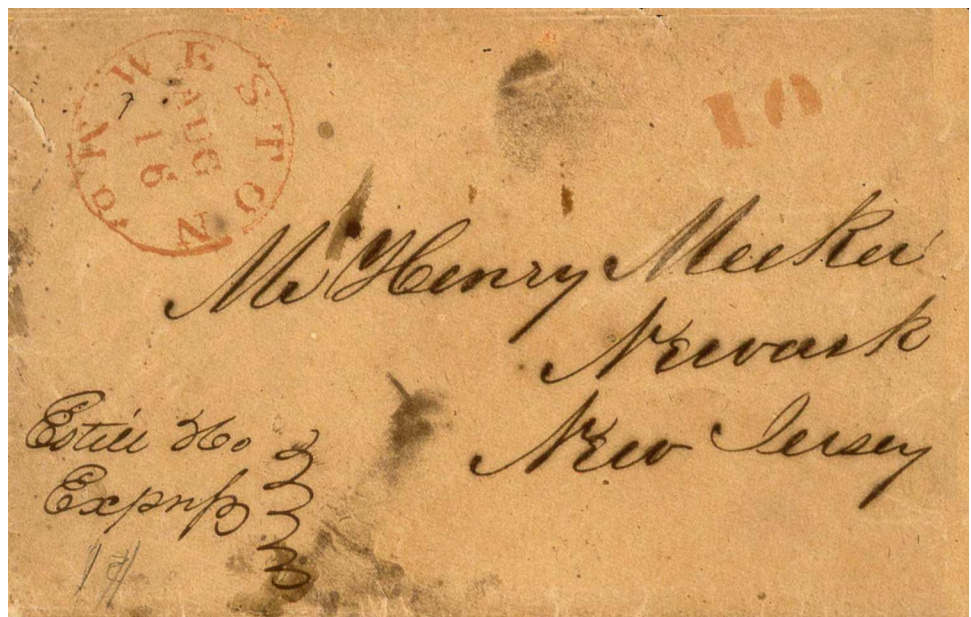


Figure 5-8. Letter written on the Platte River Road and given to Estill & Co. Express for transmission back East (courtesy of Ken Stach).

5 - CENTRAL OVERLAND MAIL, 1847-1850

carried to Weston, Missouri where it was posted on August 16 with ten cents postage due to New Jersey. This envelope also confirms the date of Estill's departure from Weston. It carries a note on the reverse that, "I have learned by the Gentlemen in Estalls Express mule train which left Weston on the 21st May that there is considerable sickness among the emigration behind."

Trail Mail on the Platte River Road

Travelers along the Platte River Road also found other ways to send letters. Travelers in the opposite direction were often willing to carry letters, but eastbound travelers were scarce before 1850. In May 1848, Fort Kearny was established next to the Platte River (see Figure 5-1) to protect the travelers along the Platte River Road. Before the U.S. post office was introduced there on July 7, 1849, some mail could be carried by military couriers between Fort Kearny and Fort Leavenworth on the Missouri River. Figure 5-9 illustrates such a use.



Figure 5-9. Letter datelined May 21, 1848 and carried by military express from Fort Kearny to Fort Leavenworth on June 14.

This letter was datelined "on the plains May 21st 1848" from an immigrant to California who explained that, "I have an opportunity to use the influence of one captain (who was an officer at this post last year) to get a letter conveyed. I gladly embrace this opportunity but were it not for this chance I could not write as there are so many persons wishing to send letters that it would be impossible for the Quartermaster to get them all in the mail." The fort's quartermaster marked this letter "Fort Kearny Oregon Route" and placed it with the military dispatches for Fort Leavenworth. At Leavenworth, it was placed in the mails on June 14 and rated ten cents due for the postage to Illinois. This is the earliest possible postmark from Fort Kearney.

Figure 5-10 shows the back of an interesting June 1849 letter to New York City that was collected along the Platte River Road and brought back to Missouri, probably by army personnel from Fort Laramie.

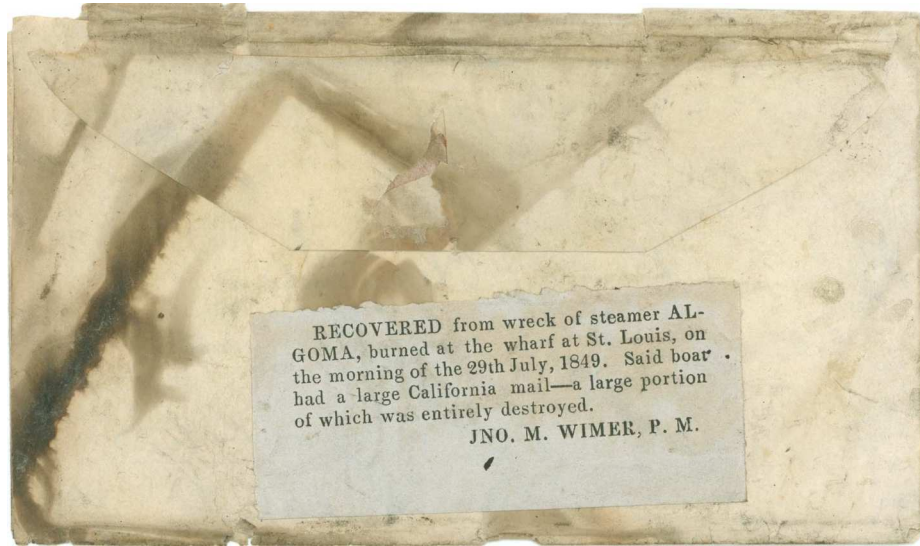


Figure 5-10. Letter docketed "McColl 1849" and probably carried by military express from Fort Laramie to the Missouri River in July 1849.

This envelope was delivered to the steamship *Algoma* on the Missouri River. It was marked "STEAM 10" due in red by the ship purser and carried to St Louis. Unfortunately, the *Algoma* was burned and sank at the wharf in St Louis on July 29. Some of the mail was recovered and forwarded with the post office label illustrated in Figure 5-10. This accident was widely reported, and the August 16, 1849 *Arkansas Weekly Gazette*, quoting from the *St Louis Republican*, gave one account:

The two bags of letters brought down in the *Algoma*, and which were supposed to have been lost in the fire, were found yesterday in a damaged condition. There are several thousand letters. . . Capt. A.J. Eaton, the mail agent has taken possession of them, and is endeavoring to dry them. . . One of our letters was delivered to us yesterday - a good deal burned, and scarcely in an intelligible shape. We gather from it that it was written 60 miles beyond Fort Kearney, on the 4th of July.

Other *Algoma* accounts include reports of letters dated June 19 at Fort Laramie.

Westbound travelers along the Platte typically stopped at Fort Laramie, which was located on the south bank of the river. This meant that they had to cross the North Platte at some point before South Pass. Brigham Young saw an opportunity while crossing the North Platte in 1847, and established the Mormon Ferry near today's Casper, Wyoming. For a fee, the Mormon Ferry carried travelers across the river during the May to September active emigration period, from 1847 to 1852.

Figure 5-11 is headed "Platte River Ferry 125 miles from Fort Laramie" and was written around May 9, 1850. The 1850 date is confirmed by the ten cents due rate on the cover and a reference in the letter to D.S. Norton, who travelled from Mount Vernon, Ohio to California in 1850. The writer of the letter explains that, "I have just been informed by the Captain of this Ferry that he would carry letters back to the States (note: at this point the phrase "at no charge" has been crossed out) as soon as Emigration was past." He also explains that he left Fort Laramie "on the 5th" (of May) and hopes to be in California by mid-July. The emigration ended sometime in September, and the captain of the ferry (Thomas Crover) arranged to have the letter carried back to St Joseph, where it was posted on November 8.

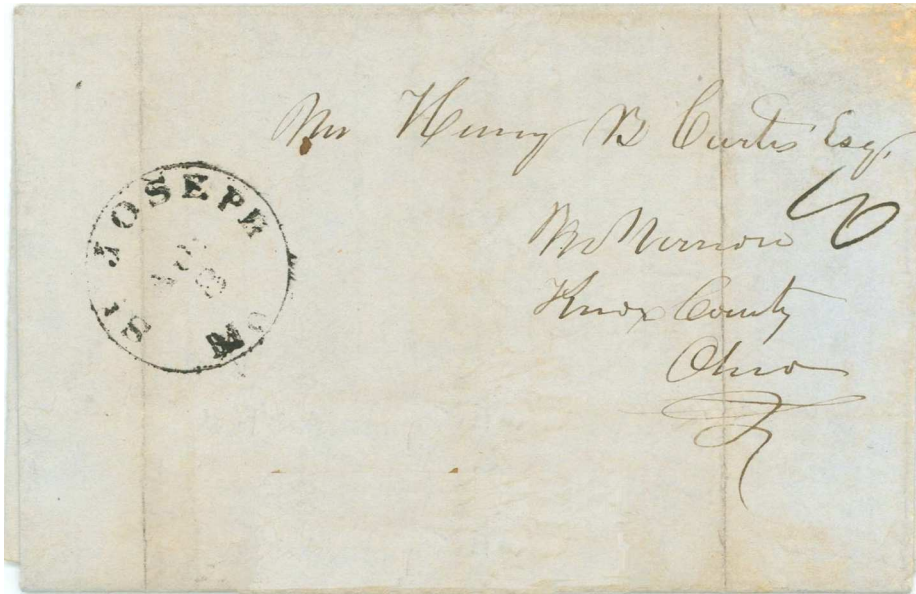


Figure 5-11. May 9, 1850 letter written at the Platte River Ferry and given to the captain of the ferry for transmission back East.

Mail between Salt Lake City and California

Figure 5-12 shows the western segment of the Central Route, consisting of the two principal trails from Salt Lake City to Sacramento and Los Angeles.



Figure 5-12. Map of the principal trails between California and Salt Lake City.

Prior to May 1851, post office special trip contracts were required to move the mail between California and Salt Lake City. The need for these was accentuated by the public notice of the Babbitt transcontinental mail service that had appeared in many eastern newspapers. An example was the April 6, 1849 *Liberty Missouri Weekly Tribune* which reported that, "The contractor, Almon W. Babbitt, will deliver the mail matter sent through, by way of Kaneshville, Iowa, to Oregon and California." While Babbitt readily engaged in carrying the mail between Kaneshville and Salt Lake City, onward delivery from Salt Lake City to California required a separate trip contract negotiated by the Salt Lake City postmaster. Table 5-3 lists the possible mail-carrying trips between Salt Lake City and California from August 1847 to April 1851.

Table 5-3. Overland Trips between Salt Lake City (SLC) and California - 1847 to 1851
Westbound to California

| Departed Salt Lake City | Arrived in California | Notes |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Aug 9, 1847 | Oct 1847 at Monterey | Capt. James Brown party |
| Nov 18, 1847 | Jan 7, 1848 at Los Angeles | Hunt & Rockwell party |
| Mar 12, 1848 | (unknown) | Levi Riter (with Epistle) |
| Apr 12, 1849 | May 25, 1849 at Sacramento | Lyman & Rockwell party |
| Oct 8, 1849 | Dec 22, 1849 at William's Ranch | Rich & Pratt party |
| Nov 18, 1849 | Jan 15, 1850 at Los Angeles | Egan party |
| Jul 7, 1850 | Aug 27, 1850 at Sacramento | Goodale (?) |

Easbound from California

| Departed California | Arrived Salt Lake City | Notes |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Aug 27, 1847 from Sacramento | Oct 11, 1847 | Mormon Battalion |
| Oct 1847 from Monterey | Nov 16, 1847 | Capt. Brown party |
| Feb 5, 1848 from Los Angeles | May 1848 | Jefferson Hunt party |
| Apr 12, 1848 from Los Angeles | Jun 5, 1848 | Orrin P. Rockwell party |
| Apr 15, 1848 from Sacramento | Jul 9, 1848 | Nathan Hawks (" <i>Star Express</i> ") |
| Jul 2, 1848 from Placerville | Sep 25, 1848 | Mormon Battalion |
| 1848 from San Francisco | Sep 28, 1848 | Addison Pratt party |
| 1849 from (?) | Nov 1849 | Supply Train |
| 1850 from Los Angeles (?) | Sep 10, 1850 | John Barnard party |
| Aug 16, 1850 from Sacramento | Sep 29, 1850 | Amasa Lyman party - Figure 5-13 |
| Sep 5, 1850 from Sacramento | Oct 12, 1850 | Rockwell party |
| Sep 26, 1850 fom Middle Fork | Nov 12, 1850 | General Rich Party |

Figure 5-13 illustrates an eastbound letter sent from Sacramento to Salt Lake City. This letter was mailed at the Sacramento, California post office and postmarked on August 12, 1850 with 12½ cents intra-California postage due. As there was no regular contract mail service available, the Sacramento postmaster entered into a trip contract with a member of the Amasa Lyman party (see Table 5-3) to carry a mail to Salt Lake City for compensation amounting to the value of the postage on the letters carried. The Lyman party left Sacramento on August 16, and arrived in Salt Lake City on September 29, 1850.

The last line of the address shows "Deseret" as part of the location. In March 1849, the Mormon government in Salt Lake City proposed that the territory between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada Mountains be added to the United States as the State of Deseret. This provisional state existed for about two years and was never recognized by the U.S. government. The United States initially considered combining the states of California and Deseret, but instead created Utah Territory on September 9, 1850. The news of this, however, was not received in either Utah or California until months later, so postmarks with the Deseret designation are known until June 1851.

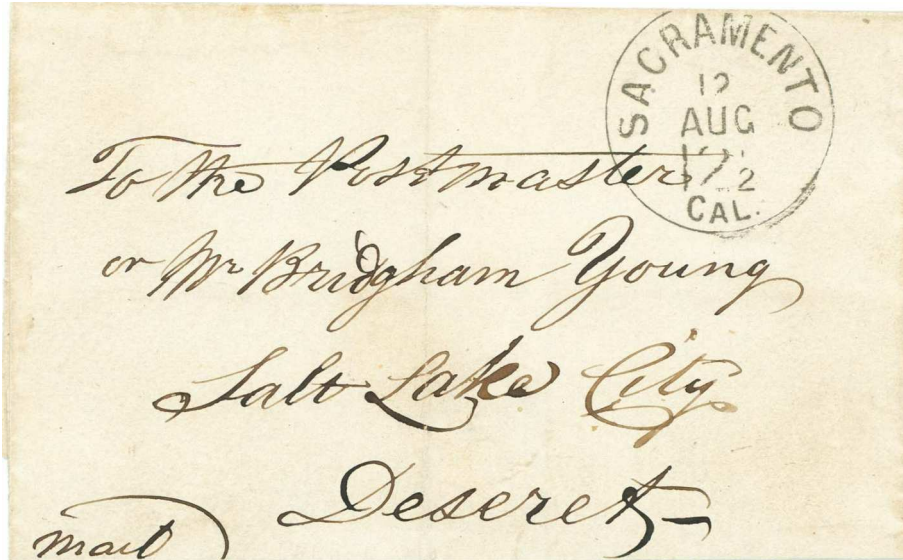


Figure 5-13. Letter posted on August 12, 1850 in Sacramento, California and carried by Mormon express to Salt Lake City.

The commencement of the U.S. postal contract routes between Salt Lake and Missouri (August 1850) and between Salt Lake and California (May 1851) brought this period to an end.

Endnotes

1. Bancroft, *History of Utah*, 1540-1886, page 253.
2. Unruh, *The Plains Across*, pages 119-120.
3. Lot 577 in the October 23, 1857 John Fox auction.
4. Harwell, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1847-1850*, page 163.
5. Described as the "First authentic intelligence from the States this season," in the September 28 1849 *Deseret News*.
6. Whall, *The Salt Lake City Post Office*, p39
7. August 14, 1848 Post Office Act, Sec 3
8. Probably carried by Willard Richard's party, per Table 5-1.
9. Lot 563 in the Spink January 2010 auction of Floyd Risvold's collection.