

The Postal History of Alta California

While a Spanish colony, the Province of Alta California encompassed the present day states of California, Nevada and Utah as well as parts of four additional states. The Mexican Constitution of 1824 designated this area as Alta California Territory with Monterey as the capital. In 1836 Alta California (as shown on map in pink) was recognized as a department of Mexico and was granted some additional autonomy. The United States occupied much of the area during and following the Mexican-American War and a "state" of California was formally organized at a constitutional convention held in Monterey in late 1849. This provisional state of California, with boundaries as present, never became a territory of the United States. Instead, full statehood was granted by Congress on September 9, 1850, the same day Utah Territory was organized.

This exhibit is a survey of the postal history of the area during the period from 1810 until statehood in 1850. It is organized in roughly chronological order along the following outline:



1846 Map showing Alta California in pink

- 1. Spanish Colonial Period** - between 1768 and 1822 during which Alta California Province was administered as a colony of Spain
- 2. Mexican Period** - between 1824, when the area was first recognized by the Mexican constitution and August 17, 1846 when Commodore Robert Stockton proclaimed that California was part of the United States.
- 3. Military Government Period** - from August 17, 1846 until December 20, 1849 during which the area was governed by United States Military Governors.
- 4. Provisional State Period** - from December 20, 1849, when a state constitution was implemented and Peter H. Burnett became the first civil governor, and the official statehood date of September 9, 1850.

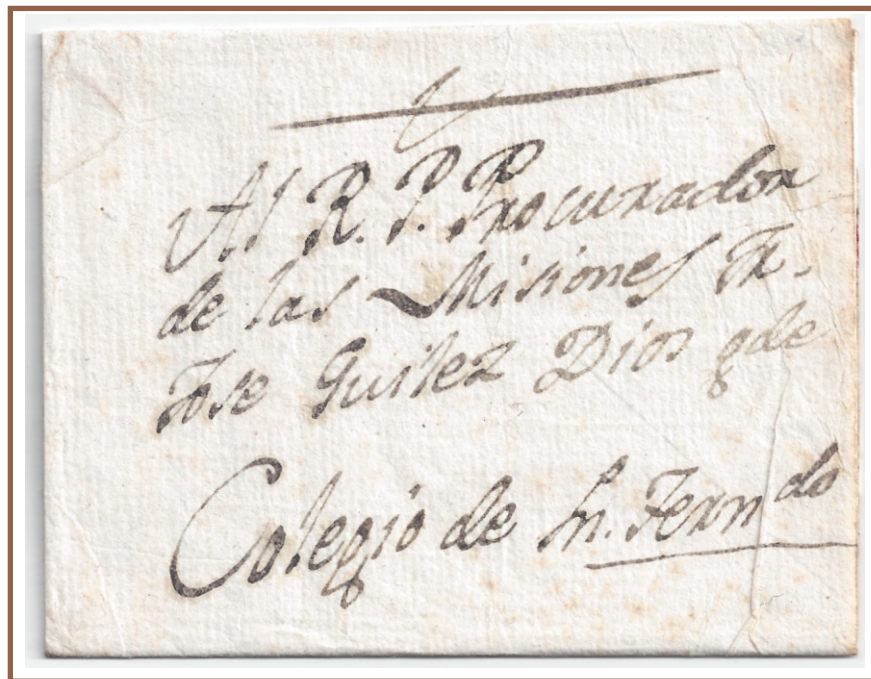
Highlights of the collection include several historically important letters. These include a Spanish Colonial period use from Mission San Jose in 1810; two letters relating to the aborted conquest of Monterey by the US Navy in 1842; an August 1849 letter from Sutter's Mill; a letter from a member of the Boundary Commission at Camp Riley, near San Diego, dated while setting the southern boundary of the state; and a letter from a delegate to the California Constitutional Convention written while in session in Monterey in 1849 and dated from the Convention Hall.

Important postal history artifacts include the only reported Mexican Period use of a postmark from what is now California; an 1847 letter from the USS *Congress* carried by Kearny's overland mail; the only reported letter carried by the intra-California military mail route; the earliest reported use of US stamps on a letter to California, the unique New York & Chagres route agent handstamp and two uses from Salt Lake City while part of California.

Spanish California

San Jose Mission - 1810

Mission de San Jose



27 May 1810 Mission San Jose, Spanish California, by ship to *Tepic* and overland to Mexico City, Mexico from Father Narcisco Durán to Supply Master (Procurador) Jose Guilez at College of San Fernando, Mexico
letter requests supplies needed for the mission and mentions sending tallow, **a rarity in private hands**

Narciso Duran

Father Narcisco Durán was a Franciscan friar and missionary born in Catalonia, Spain in 1776. After studying at the missionary College of San Fernando de Mexico, he served at the Mission San Jose until 1833. Under his guidance, Mission San Jose became one of the most prosperous missions in California.

Mexican California Monterey Postmark - 1834

**FRANCO ALTA
CALIFORNIA**



17 June 1834 Monterey, California to San Diego, "FRANCO ALTA CALIFORNIA" postmark
letter from Governor Jose Figueroa to Ferdinand Deppe

Substantive settlement of Mexican California had to wait for the August 1834 decree by Alta California Governor Figueroa that secularized the Franciscan Missions, and opened up large portions of the desirable coastline property to settlement.

This letter was written in Monterey on June 17, 1834 by California Governor Jose Figueroa to Ferdinand Deppe in San Diego. Figueroa was governor of Alta California from January 1833 until his death in September 1835. In his additional capacity as commander of the California military forces, he handstamped the letter with his administrative "Comandancia General de la alta California" cachet and entrusted it to the Mexican post.

This is **the only reported example of the earliest handstamped postmark** known applied in present day California. Other Mexican era letters bear only rate markings.



Ferdinand Deppe, the addressee, was a German naturalist working as a supercargo (owner's agent) for a fleet of ships engaged in trading between Mexico and the California coast. In his spare time, he collected horticultural specimens and sketched the California countryside. At left is an oil painting that he did in 1832 of the San Gabriel Mission (near Los Angeles).

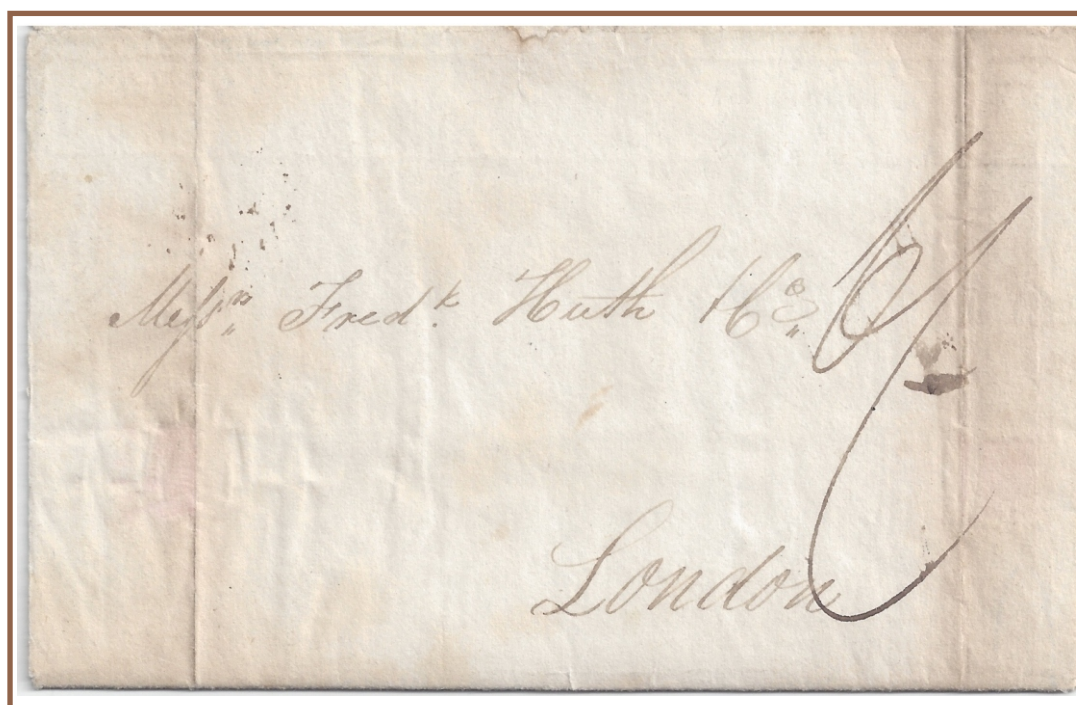
Mexican California

Santa Barbara to England - 1830

This letter was carried by ship from Santa Barbara to Mazatlan, Mexico, and then overland to Vera Cruz, where it caught the British ship *Princess Elisabeth* on June 14. It then travelled via Kingston, Jamaica to Falmouth, England. It was postmarked at the London Foreign Post Office on August 2 and charged six shillings, representing double two shillings one pence packet postage from Vera Cruz plus double 11 pence inland postage from Falmouth to London.



backstamp



24 January 1830 Santa Barbara, via Mexico to London, August 2, 1830 arrival backstamp
the earliest reported letter from California carried on this route

The earliest reported letter to have taken the route via Mexico is below. It is datelined "California Sa. Barbara 24 Jany 1830" and endorsed "p. Via Mexico" in the dateline. It was written by Scottish trader Stephen Anderson who wrote:

I have no doubt ere now your Lima house has advised you of my intention of shipping by the London Brig "Funchal" John Hart master a cargo of Hides for your market and to your consignment. I have now to inform you she has just finished loading in this port and will sail in a few days with sixteen thousand four hundred fine dry salted hides consisting of Ox, Cow and a few Bulls, all in superior order of which I beg to enclose you the Bill of Lading.

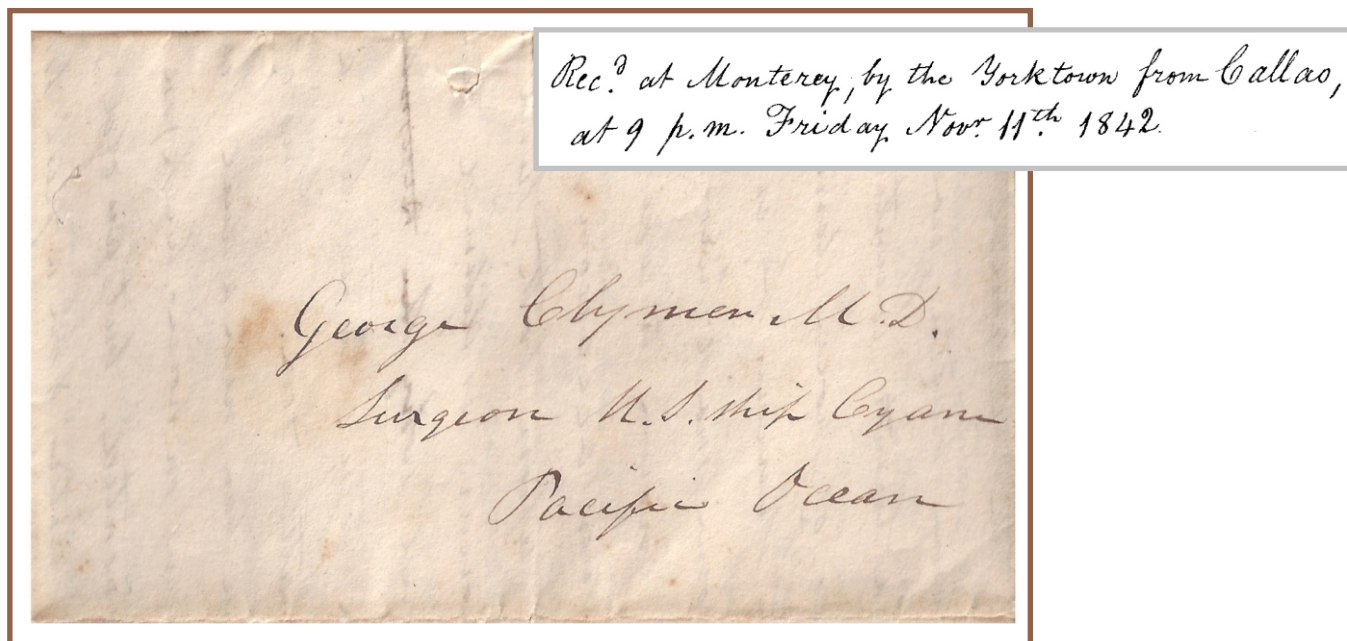
Mexican California

U.S. Occupation of Monterey - 1842 (to and from the USS *Cyane*)

In 1842, the commander of the Pacific Squadron, sent Captain James Armstrong ashore at Monterey on October 19, 1842 to demand a Mexican surrender. The Mexican garrison chose not to resist and on the following day fifty American marines and one hundred sailors landed and captured the city without incident. The American forces were withdrawn on October 21st when Jones learned that war had not begun.



3 December 1842 "U.S. Ship *Cyane*, Bay of Monterey," via Mexico, to Morrisville, Pennsylvania,
per Brig *Maryland* to Mazatlan, across Mexico and per brig *Petersburg* to New York
18 March 1842 entered mails at New York City with 12 cts postage due ship rate



25 May 1842 Morristown, Pennsylvania to "U.S. Ship *Cyane*, Pacific Ocean" (and docketed on back)
4 June 1842 per ship *Natchez* to Valparaiso, Chile (arrived August 7, 1842), then to Callao, Peru
23 September 1842 Callao, per U.S. Frigate *Yorktown* to San Francisco and Monterey (Nov 11, 1842)

Mexican California

Via Mexico Route - 1843/1844 (from and to Monterey)

Beginning in 1842 a mail route across Mexico came into use. It relied on consular and private forwarders at the ports of Mazatlan and Vera Cruz to expedite letters. Mail was carried between the ports by private means, by diplomatic pouch, or by the Mexican post office. Route was abandoned with the outbreak of war in 1846.



3 December 1843, "Ship *Admittance* at Monterey" via Mexico to Boston carried by Consul Larkin to Mazatlan, and placed it in Mexican mails prepaid 4 reales ("4" backstamp) 27 February 1844 from Vera Cruz carried by bark *Eugenia*, arrived New York on March 18, rated 27¢ due



21 June 1844 Boston via Goodhue, NY forwarder and via Mexico to Ship *Vandalia* at Monterey
5 August Vera Cruz and "4" reales rate for carriage to Mazatlan,
an early westbound use of the via Mexico route

Military Government Period

Mail around the Horn - 1847 (from U.S.S. *Columbus* at Monterey)

Commodore James Biddle in the 74-gun United States Frigate *Columbus* arrived in California in January 1847 and assumed command of naval forces from William Shubrick. On March 2 the *Columbus* arrived off Monterey with yeoman Robert Moran, author of the revealing letter shown below, aboard.

The letter is transcribed in full and annotated with background information on following page. It was begun on March 5 and a postscript was added on March 10, 1847. The letter was carried by the U.S.S. *Savannah* that departed Monterey on March 18, 1847. Her trip, via Cape Horn, is shown at right. She departed San Diego on March 26, Valparaíso on May 30 and Rio Janeiro on July 28, 1847. She arrived in New York on September 8, 1847 and the letter entered the U.S. mails with "New York Sep 9 Ship 7 cts" due postmark.

This is a late use of the via Cape Horn route which was resurrected briefly in early 1847 because the route via Mexico had been abandoned due to the war and reliable service via Panama was just being organized.



Map showing the route of the USS *Savannah* from San Francisco, March to September 1847.



10 March 1847 Monterey to Brooklyn, NY, carried by the U.S.S. *Savannah* around Cape Horn
9 Sep 1847 entered mails at New York City with "Ship 7 cts" postage due rate

Military Government Period

Kearny Overland Mail of 1847 - (from USS *Congress* at Monterey)

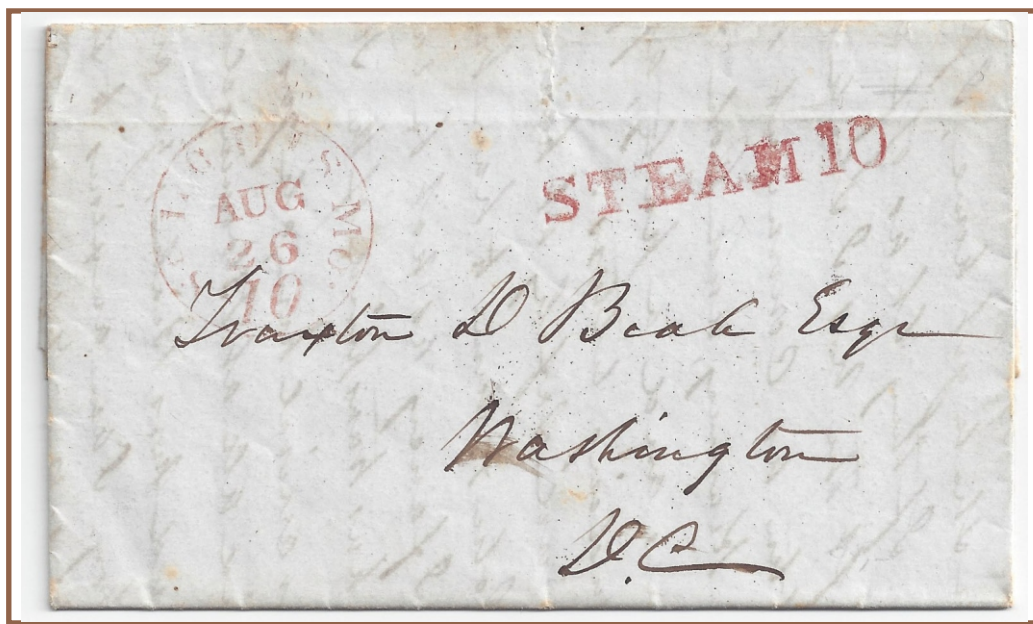
Commodore Sloat had claimed Alta California for the United States by raising the American flag at Monterey on July 7, 1846 and turned over the command of all US Naval forces to Commodore Robert F. Stockton, aboard the U.S.S. *Congress* on July 23.

Although John C. Fremont had signed the treaty of Cahuenga that ended the fighting in California in January 1847, Commodore Stockton and General Stephen W. Kearny who were also present at the time outranked Fremont and a conflict arose. Kearny, with orders to serve as military governor from the President, demanded that Fremont step down. After refusing to do so, Kearny ordered Fremont to accompany him back east. Kearny's expedition east carried the first overland mail from California with official sanction.

Kearny appointed Colonel Richard B. Mason as military governor of California and departed Monterey on May 31, 1847 on the overland journey. Kearny proceeded to New Helvetia (Sacramento) near Sutter's Fort to await Fremont. On June 14, 1847 Kearny departed camp with Fremont and his group closely following. The route that the Kearny expedition took is shown above. After burying members of the Donner's ill-fated party at the pass the two parties continued onward to Fort Leavenworth arriving there on August 22, 1847.



Kearny, accompanied by the mail from California, went aboard the steamer *Amelia* on August 23 for her southbound trip on the Missouri River to Saint Louis. The *Amelia* arrived in Saint Louis on August 25, 1847 and the mails were deposited into the St. Louis post office. There of the four known letters carried on Kearny's overland mail of 1847. Two are dated from San Francisco, one from Monterey and one from Los Angeles. All of these letters entered the mails at Saint Louis on August 26 and bear the red "Steam 10" handstamp applied upon arrival.

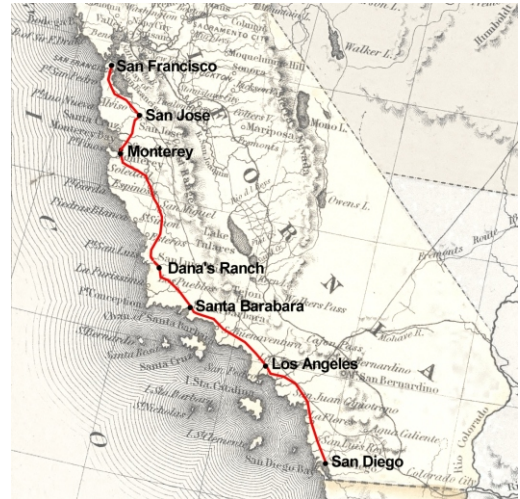


29 May 1847 Monterey to Washington, D.C., carried overland by Kearny Expedition to Leavenworth
26 Aug 1847 entered mails from steamboat *Amelia* at St Louis with "STEAM 10" postage due rate
letter of Assistant Surgeon, Charles Everfield aboard U.S.S. *Congress* is transcribed following

Military Government Period

Regional Military Mail Service - 1847 (from San Francisco)

The United States also sent a military force under General Stephen W. Kearny overland from Santa Fe to California, where Kearny arrived in December 1846. Kearny became military governor and soon established a regional military mail service that carried the first official U.S. mail on the West Coast. Kearny's twice-monthly mail system within California was designed to facilitate military communication but civilian mail was authorized to be carried and all mail was carried free of charge.



The April 17, 1847 *California Star* announced that:

REGULAR MAIL. Our readers will be pleased to learn that Gov. Kearny has established a semi-monthly mail, to run regularly between San Francisco and San Diego. This mail is to be carried on horseback, by a party consisting of two soldiers; and is to commence on the 19th inst. Starting every other Monday from San Diego, and San Francisco, the parties to meet at Captain Dana's Ranch, the next Saturday to exchange Mails; and start back on their respective routes the next morning, and arrive at San Diego and San Francisco, on the Sunday following, and so continuing.



27 December 1847 San Francisco to Los Angeles by Kearny's Military Mail Service
the only reported letter carried on the first official U.S. mail in California

This letter is was endorsed "San Francisco Dec 27" at top in red ink, typical of military endorsements of the time. This was probably applied by Captain Joseph L. Folsom the acting military postmaster at the time. December 27 was a Monday that corresponds with a scheduled departure. The writer of this letter, Henry Mellus, came to California in 1835 and served as agent for Appleton & Co. in the hide and tallow trade before partnering with William Howard in purchasing the Hudson Bay Co. property in San Francisco in 1846.

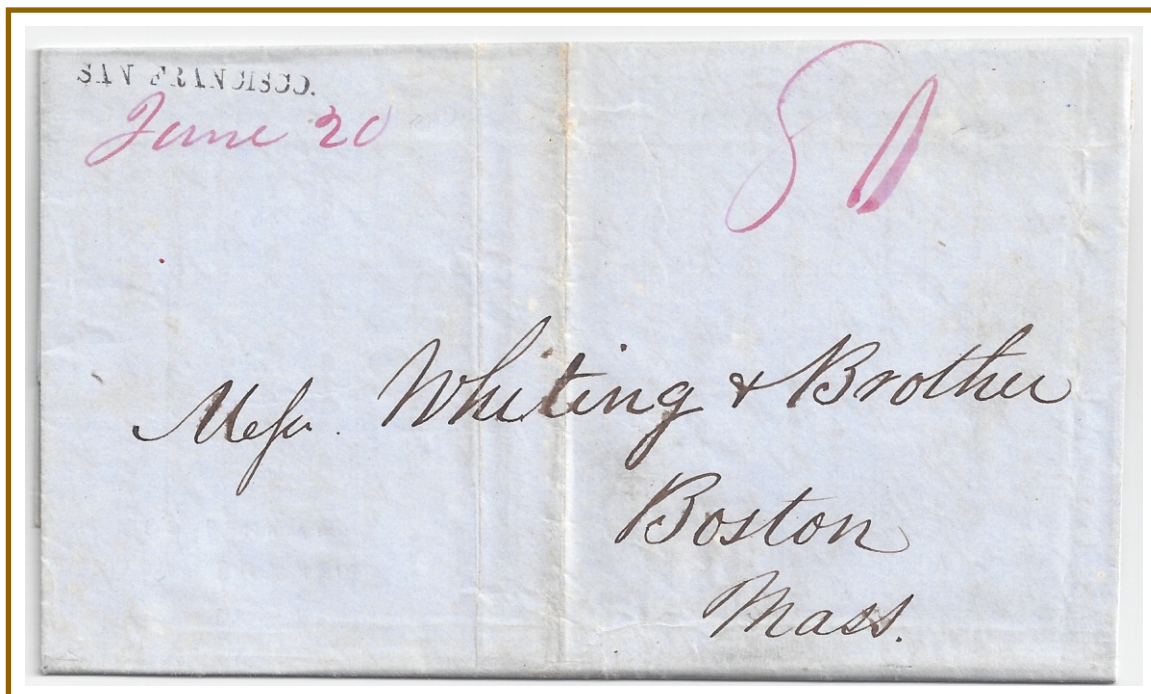
Military Government Period

Via Panama Route - 1849 San Francisco Postmarks

The San Francisco post office became fully functional with the departure of the PMSS steamer *Oregon* on April 12, 1849. Manuscript postmarks were used until June 1849 when a straight line postmark was introduced. Mail was postmarked with departure date so top cover below was processed prior to lower letter.



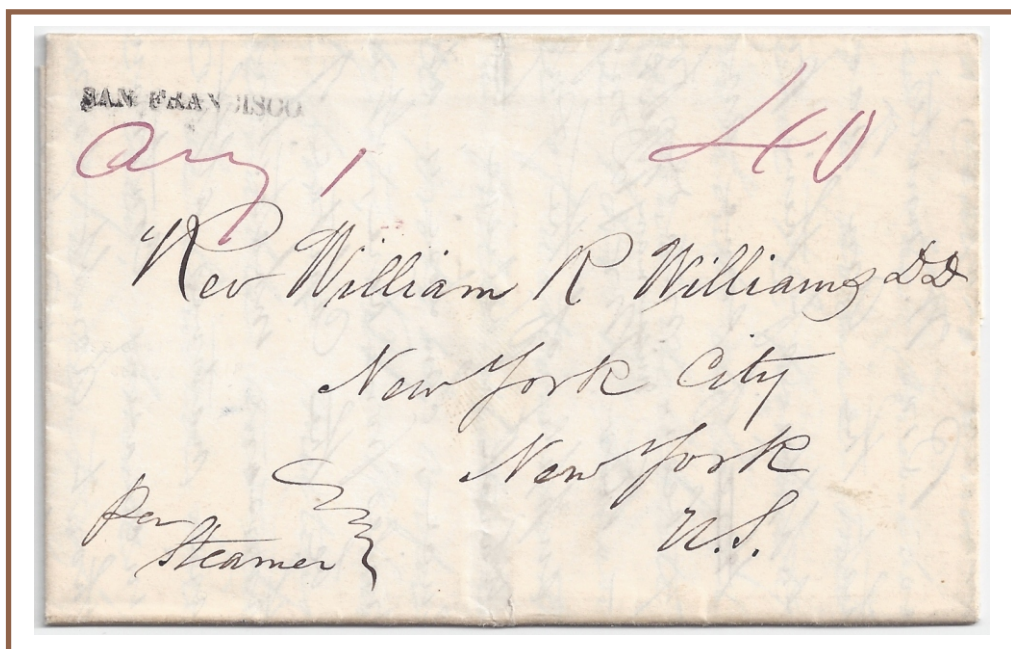
20 June 1849 San Francisco, **last day use of manuscript postmark**, single weight unpaid, 40¢ due carried my PMSS *Panama* to Panama City and by USMSC *Falcon* from Chagres to New York



20 June 1849 San Francisco, **first day use of straight line postmark**, double weight unpaid, 80¢ due carried my PMSS *Panama* to Panama City and by USMSC *Falcon* from Chagres to New York

Military Government Period

Via Panama Route - 1849 San Francisco Postmarks



1 August 1849 San Francisco, **last day use of straight line postmark**, single weight unpaid, 40¢ due carried my PMSS *California* to Panama City and by USMSC *Empire City* from Chagres to New York

Letter includes: *Brother W. (is) laboring to build up the cause of the Redeemer in this land where it would seem thousands have raised an altar and inscribed upon it the blazing characters "Gold" and the devotees of the Idol seem to have chained themselves to the car. The acquisition of gold brings an accumulation of other vices, gambling, drinking and sabbath breaking prevail to an alarming and dreadful extent.*



1 August 1849 San Francisco, **first day of circular datestamp**, double weight unpaid, 80¢ due to New York used to London, rated 5 shillings 4d due (80¢ plus twice 19¢ treaty rate due, a \$1.18 equivalent)
the earliest reported letter fom San Francisco to England

Military Government Period

Salt Lake California - 1849 letter by Babbitt's Contract Service

A post office was established at Salt Lake City in April 1849 and was assigned to California, as part of Alta California, for administrative purposes. However, no contractors could be found for carrying the mails. In such rare instances, the post office relied on so-called "special" contracts, with compensation to the carrier consisting of each trip's postal proceeds (the total postage due).

Almon Babbitt, who had previously been employed by the Mormon Church to operate an express between Salt Lake and Kanesville, Iowa began his "Special Contract Mail" service. He almost certainly collected an additional 40 cents from the senders when they deposited letters with him for carriage to Kanesville.

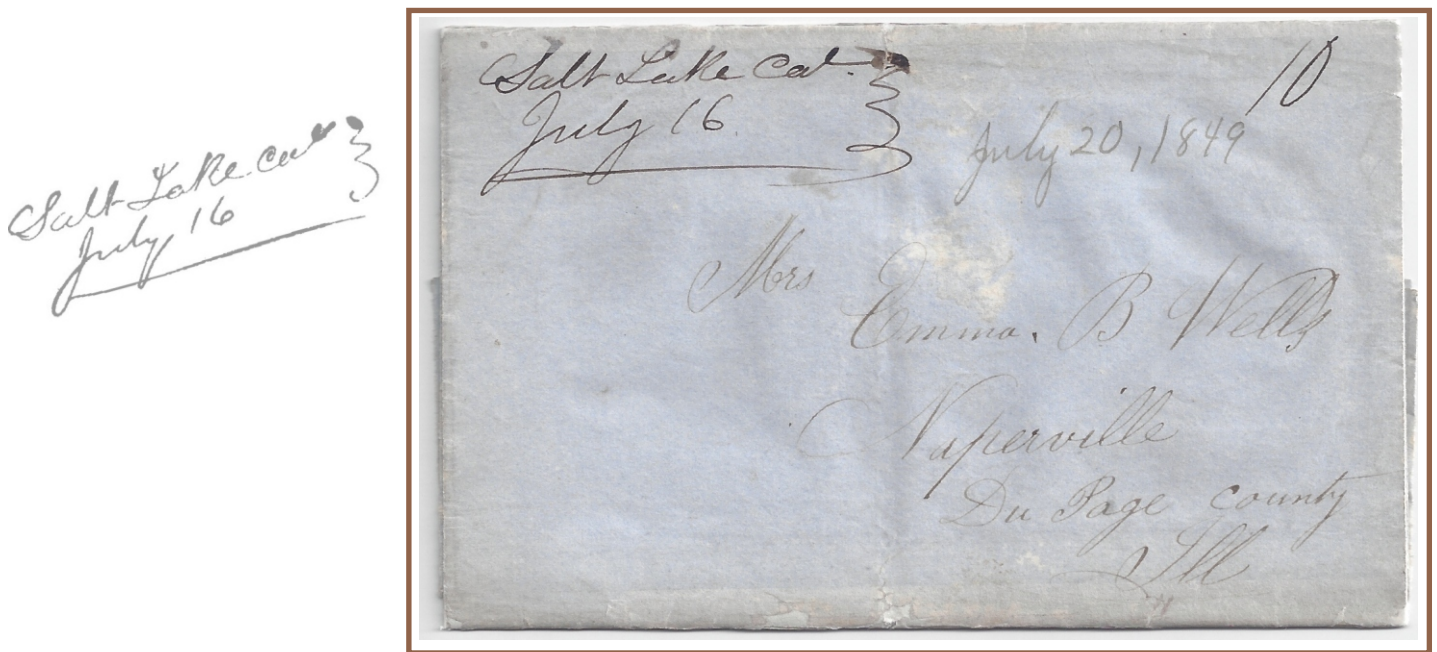
This letter from Edward Wells, an overland pioneer on the California Trail, was written from Salt Lake City to his wife in Naperville, Illinois. It was carried as post office mail from Salt Lake, the earliest reported letter bearing a postmark, by Babbitt's special contract mail service. It is one of three known with the same postmark.

All letters were postmarked in the hand of Thomas Bullock, a Mormon pioneer and private clerk to Joseph Smith. Almon Babbitt left Salt Lake City with this mail on July 27 and arrived in Kanesville on September 3 where the letter was turned over for onward transmission.

On September 8, 1850 an Act created Utah Territory. On the same day California became a state.

The trail letter includes:

We arrived here at the Mormon settlement last evening .. I can write but a few lines as the mail for the states closes in half an hour. .. After crossing the Rocky Mountains we took this route, only 400 teams having come this way before us, and found the grass good. While on the Oregon route, at least 3 thousand ahead of us and no grass. We expect to get over to California by the 10th of September



10 July 1849 Salt Lake California to Naperville, Illinois,

"Salt Lake Cal, July 16" postmark in hand of Thomas Bullock, by Babbitt special contract mail service
27 July 1849 Almon Babbitt party departed, mail arrived in Kanesville, Iowa on September 3, 1849

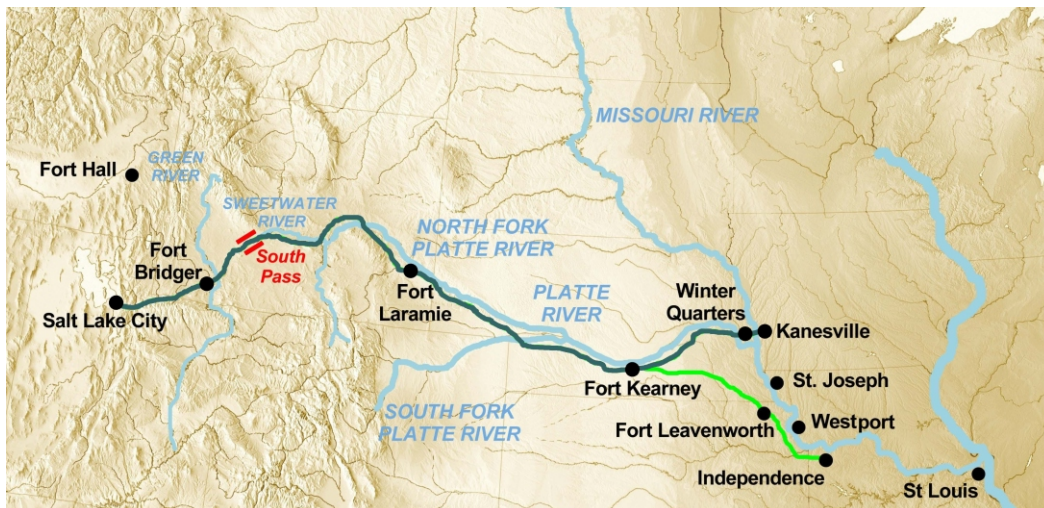
Military Government Period

Salt Lake California - 1849 letter by Babbitt's Contract Service

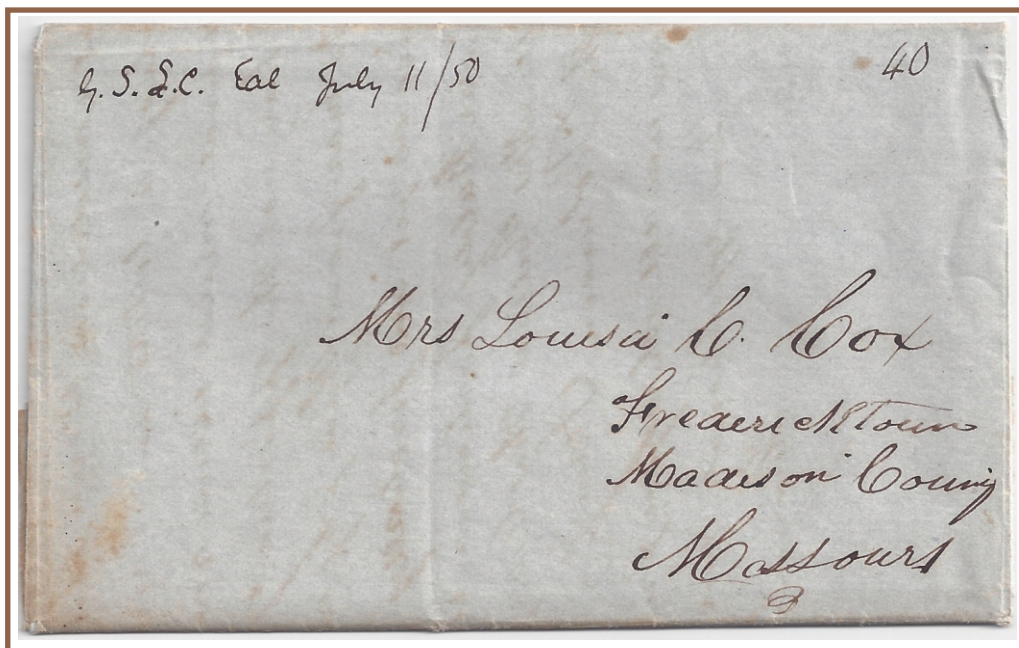
Almon Babbitt, who had previously been employed by the Mormon Church to operate an express between Salt Lake and Kanesville, Iowa began his "Special Contract Mail" service in March 1849.

This letter from Henry Cox, an overland pioneer on his way to Oregon, was written from Fort Hall, Oregon where the Oregon and California Trails split. After private carriage to Salt Lake City it was carried as post office mail from on the last run of Babbitt's special contract mail service. The actual carriers of mail for Babbitt on this trip were John Green and Ben Holladay. They left Salt Lake on August 2 and arrived at Kanesville on September 12, 1850. It is one of two known examples of this postmark, both carried on same trip.

The letters were postmarked in the hand of acting postmaster Willard Richards.



Map showing the Babbitt special contract mail route between Salt Lake City and Kanesville, Iowa in blue green.



20 July 1849 Fort Hall Oregon carried privately to Salt Lake, two reported examples

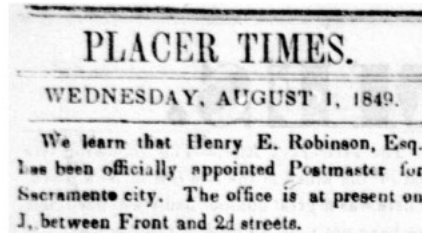
11 July 1850 Great Salt Lake City, California to Fredericktown, Missouri

"G.S.L.C. Cal, July 11/50" postmark in hand of acting postmaster Willard Richards, 40 cents due
Babbitt party departed on August 2, 1850 and arrived in Kanesville, Iowa on September 12, 1850

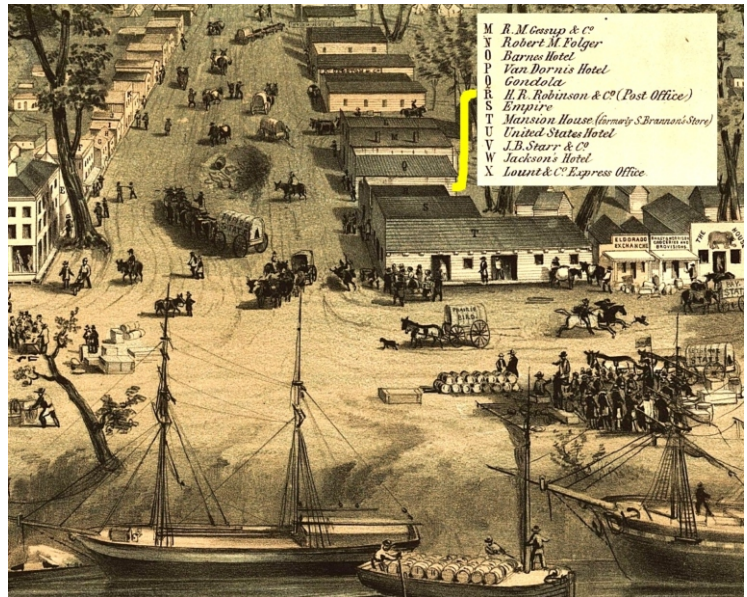
Military Government Period

Sutter's Fort - 1849 (via Sacramento)

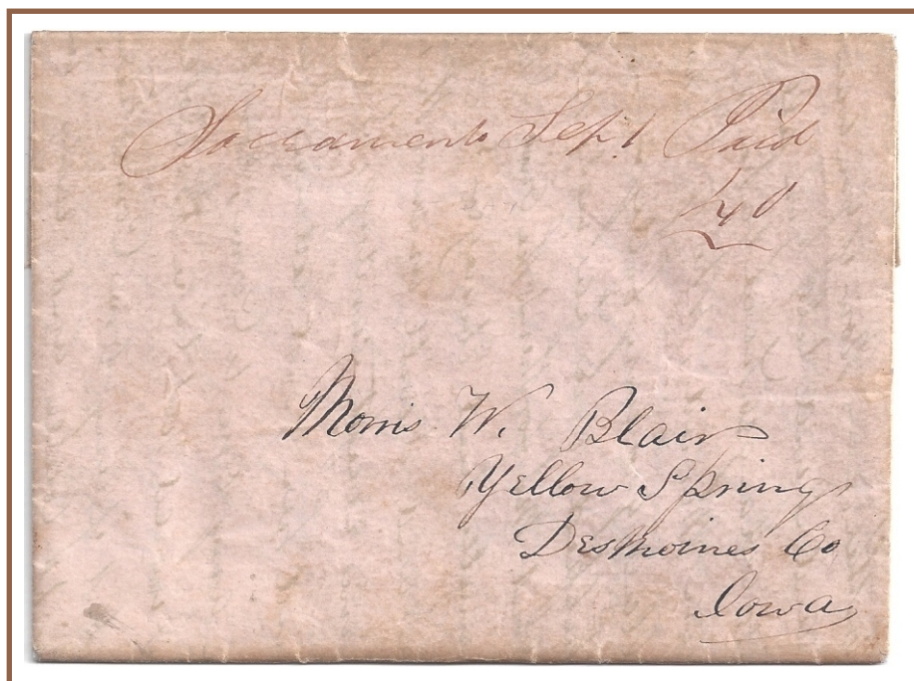
The first post office in Sacramento City was announced in the *Placer Times* on August 1, 1849 with Henry E. Robinson as postmaster. Mail service was erratic as no reliable contractor was willing to provide regular service for the payment authorized.



August 1, 1849 *Placer Times*



location of the first Sacramento post office on "J" St. in 1849



19 August 1849, Sutter's Mills, California to Yellow Springs, Iowa

1 September 1849 entered mails at Sacramento City post office, manuscript postmark and "Paid 40"

important content letter from one of the first overland 49'ers, JH Blair, writing from the site of Sutter's original gold discovery includes description of the journey to California, method of using rocker to extract gold, and his success, *I have worked 14 days and averaged an ounce per day*

carried in the first transcontinental through mail bags from Sacramento City, via Panama, to the East

by steamboat to San Francisco
PMSS steamer *Panama*
dep San Francisco Sep 2 1849
arv Panama Sep 22 1849

across Isthmus to Chagres

USMSC steamer *Falcon*
dep Chagres Sep 27 1849
arv New Orleans Oct 4 1849
carried up Mississippi River
with regular contract mails

Military Government Period

Camp Riley - 1849 letter from the Boundary Commission

By the terms of the 1848 peace treaty that ended the Mexican-American War, an International Boundary Commission was established to set the boundary between Mexico and the United States. The United States commissioner, John B. Weller, sent Major Emory, Chief Astronomer and Topographical Engineer, as well as six civilian employees via Panama to determine the boundary line. This group included assistant surveyor, G. Clinton Gardner, the author of the letter below.

Upon arrival in San Diego on the PMSS steamer *California* on July 14, 1849 the group set out to determine the initial boundary point on the Pacific Ocean. On July 20, Major Emory established Camp Riley and determined its geographical position precisely as starting point on the Pacific. Located at the southern end of San Diego Bay (near present-day Otay) it was named for Brevet Major General Bennett C. Riley who commanded the military department of Upper California at the time.

In this letter Gardner writes candidly to his brother, Capt. Frank Gardner including:

I had a very long twenty day journey by sea from Panama to San Diego on board the U.S. California. The town here has only 50 to 100 small houses. ... This newly established post of Camp Riley is very primitive and we have many problems with supplies and snakes and coyotes coming into camp.



31 August 1849 Camp Riley, California to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri

3 September 1849 San Diego, by PMSS *Panama* to Panama City and across Isthmus

27 September 1849 Chagres by USMSC *Falcon* to New Orleans

5 October 1849 New Orleans by USMSC *Ohio* to New York

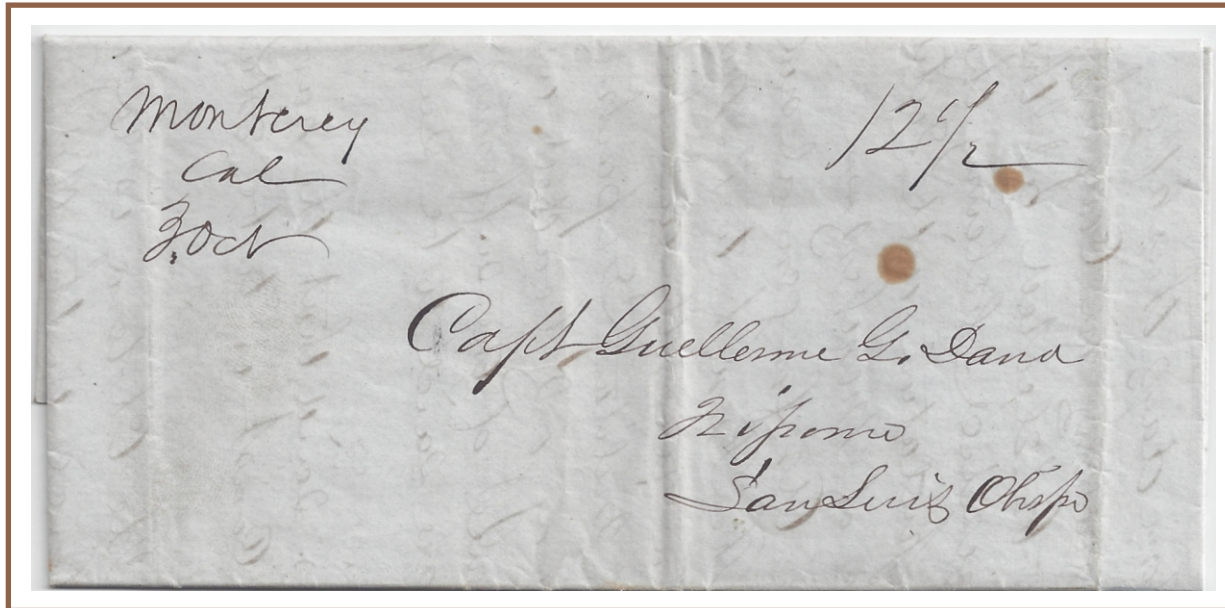
13 October 1849 arrived New York with their 40 cents due handstamp and overland to Missouri

29 January 1850 Jefferson Barracks forwarding postmark and 10 cents rate addition to Palaka, Florida forwarded from Pilaka to Tampa, Florida with further 5 cents postage due, total due 55 cents

Provisional State Period California Constitutional Convention - 1849

*Convention Hall
Monterey 15th Sept 1849*

Bennett C. Riley, the last military governor of Alta California, called a constitutional convention in June 1849 to meet in Monterey in September. After district elections of delegates, the convention met in September and October 1849 and on October 13 ratified a new constitution. The delegates, mostly pre-1846 American settlers, set up a provisional state government that operated for 10 months before California was given official statehood by United States Congress on September 9, 1850. The author of this letter was the delegate from San Luis Obispo.



3 October 1849 Monterey to San Luis Obispo, 12½¢ due rate within California
letter of delegate Henry Tefft reports on the first California Constitutional Convention

Henry Tefft, author of this letter, was a delegate to the first California Constitutional Convention representing the San Luis Obispo District. He was married to Eliza Dana, daughter of the addressee, Captain Dana. Tefft writes to his father-in-law on the progress of the convention, a crucial event in the history of California, and of prime significance to the wealthy Americanos who had settled in Alta California. **Letter originally dated September 15, 1849 at "Convention Hall"** includes:

... We have adopted the Bill of Rights, Article on Suffrage ... Last evening the Citizens of Monterey gave a fine party to the Delegates to the Convention in "Colton Hall" which was well attended ... There are 43 members having seats ... General Vallejo is a member of the Convention from Sonoma and Captain Sutter from Sacramento ...

Under second date of October 3, Tefft continues:

We are now on the second reading of the Articles - Slavery and Fueling are Prohibited .. boundary of the State is declared to be North-South and West as heretofore and the Eastern boundary the old line as laid down on the maps between California and New Mexico ... The Legislature are to convene at the "Pueblo de San Jose" on the 15th of December, and within four days thereafter elect by joint ballot 2 Senators in Congress ...

Provisional State Period

1847 Issue Stamps used to San Francisco - 1849

On March 3, 1847 a Bill authorized the Navy Department to contract for the transport of mail between Oregon and New York via Panama so long as the steamships used on the routes were readily convertible into warships. For postal purposes, the route was divided into three segments. The Atlantic coast segment was serviced by steamships between New York/New Orleans and Chagres, New Granada via Havana, Cuba. The Pacific coast segment, also serviced by steamships, ran between Panama City, New Granada and Astoria, Oregon via San Francisco. The third segment, overland between Chagres and Panama City, linked the two steamship segments.

The United States Mail Steamship Company (USMSC) gained the contract on the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Mail Steamship Company (PMSS) provided service on the Pacific Ocean between Panama City.



- 1 October 1849 Philadelphia to San Francisco, prepaid 40¢ in 1847 issue 10¢ stamps
- 16 October USMSC *Ohio* from New York to Chagres (arrived October 29)
- 10 November PMSS *Oregon* from Panama City to San Francisco (arrived December 1)

the earliest reported use on 1847 issue stamps on letter to San Francisco

Provisional State Period

Steam Ship Route Agent Postmarks - 1850

In 1850 mail agents were appointed to sorting and postmark mail received on board the contract mail steamers. Bannister Midgett served as agent and postmarked both of the covers shown below. The N. York & Chagres SS marking was used by him on the Atlantic Ocean route and the Pan & San SS was used on the Pacific Ocean. The upper cover is the only known use of a westbound route agent datestamp.



23 July 1850 "N. YORK & CHAGRES S.S." route agent postmark and manuscript 40¢ due
USMSC *Georgia* from New York July 13 to Chagres and PMSC *California* to San Francisco
only known example of the "N. York & Chagres S.S." route agent postmark



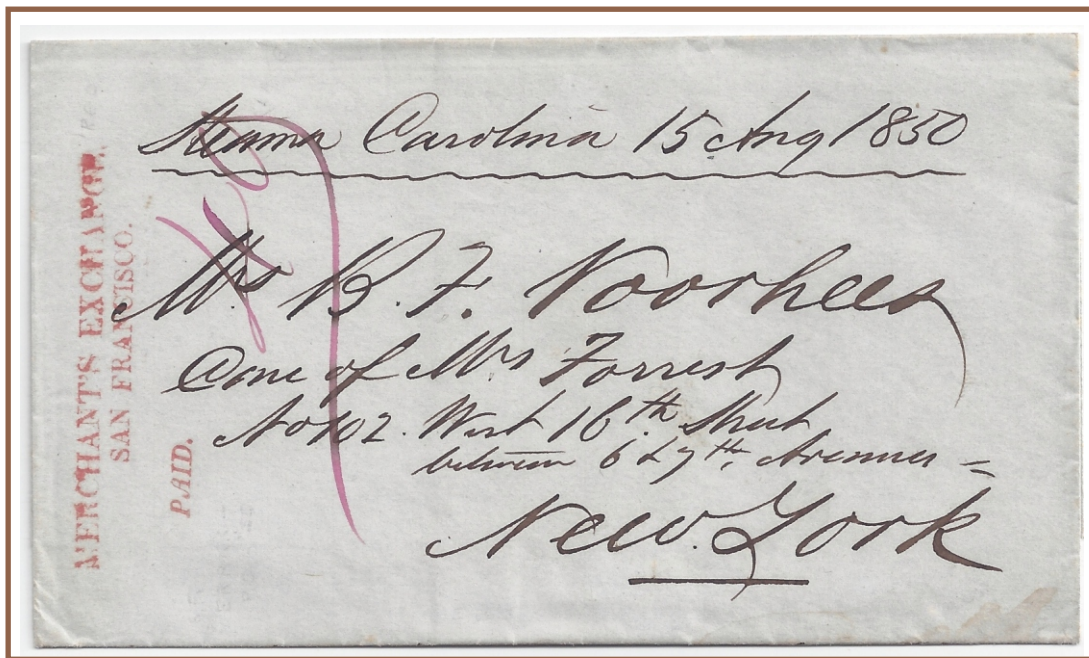
23 December 1850 "PAN & SAN FRAN S.S." route agent postmark applied by agent on PMSS *California*
12 January 1851 agent Bannister Midgett onboard USMSC *Falcon* left Chagres
arrived January 24 in New York where the handstamped 40¢ due was applied

Provisional State Period

Private Mails, via the Merchant's Exchange - 1850



The Merchant's Exchange in San Francisco, a subscription mail, information service and reading room, was announced as being planned in an August 30, 1849 news article. The article lists the sender of letter below, BF Voorhees, engaged in the China trade, as one of the founding members. An article dated May 22, 1850 announced that the exchange would begin functioning on May 27, 1850. The article also mentions that, "arrangements have been made with C.L. Ross, Eqr, for the upper story of the brick fire-proof building on the corner of Washington and Montgomery streets .." In 1849 Ross had served as the first official postmaster in San Francisco.



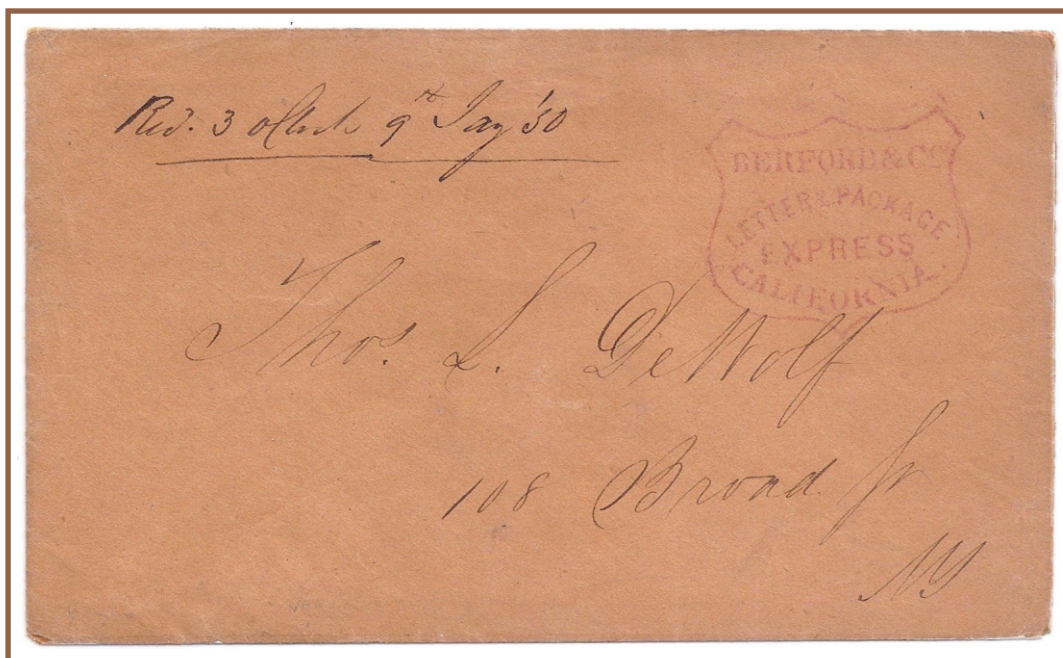
15 August 1850 San Francisco to New York, Merchants Exchange San Francisco Paid handstamps to the mail agent with his magenta "40" rate, accepted at New York as fully prepaid endorsed by sender "per Carolina 15 Aug 1850" at top

The address, "Mrs B. F. Voorhees (Catherine Voorhees), Care of Mrs Forrest" is worth mention. Mrs Voorhees was a sister of Mrs. Forrest who was married to the world renowned stage actor, Edwin Forrest. At the date of this letter the couple was in the midst of a very scandalous divorce with accusations of a love triangle involving Edwin and the two sisters. This followed the May 10, 1849 Astor Place Opera riots which resulted in 22 people dead, 36 wounded and \$4,400 worth of damage before the military quelled the crowd. The riot had begun during a performance of "Hamlet" by famed British actor, and arch-rival of Edwin Forrest, William Macready. They differed in how Hamlet should be portrayed on stage.

Military Government Period

Private Mails, Berford & Co's Express - 1849

Berford & Co's Letter & Package Express was founded by Richard G. Berford in the fall of 1849 after his arrival in San Francisco on May 8. The express operated between coasts and advertised agents on all Pacific and Atlantic steamers. A December 1849 advertisement listed offices in San Francisco, Sacramento City (T. J. Bayless), San Jose (Plitt), and Stockton. In December 1850 they began advertising as the only express operating to San Jose. The last California advertisement for his ocean to ocean service appeared on February 26, 1855.



(November 2, 1849) San Francisco by Berford & Co's Letter & Package Express to New York
company shield handstamp, docketed as received in New York January 9, 1850

the earliest of five reported covers bearing this first handstamp of the company

Waybill (via Panama)		
depart San Francisco Nov 2 1849	PMSS steamer <i>California</i>	arrive Panama City Nov 22 1849
across Isthmus of Panama from Panama City to Chagres		
depart Chagres Nov 27 1849	USMSC steamer <i>Falcon</i>	arrive Havana Jan 3 1850

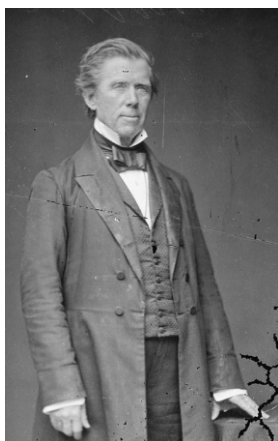
Provisional State Period

San Jose - 1850

The post office at San Jose was established on November 8, 1849. The following week, after provisional statehood was decided, it became the first state capitol. The capitol building, shown at right was a two story adobe structure. On May 1, 1851 the capitol was moved to Vallejo.



9 April 1850 San Jose via Panama to Missouri, manuscript postmark and 40 cts" due letter of Maj. William L. Smith (later Brig. Gen. CSA) to the uncle of members of the "Younger gang"



William L. Smith, author of this letter, was a contract mail carrier who first gained fame for the extent of his routes in Virginia and Georgia. He served as Governor of Virginia from 1846 to 1849. This letter describes his recent trip from Virginia, via Mexico, to California. He was president of the first Democratic party state convention in 1850. The letter mentions:

"Mr Burnet (the newly elected first Governor of California, Peter Burnett and husband of Mrs. Smith's sister) is overwhelmed with official business (but) will accompany me to Sacramento ... my first impression is that there is no doubt at all that what we have heard about California is not only true but falls far short of the reality. Plenty of room for all at present to realize fortunes, splendid fortunes .."

Smith returned to Virginia in 1852. He served the CSA in the Civil War and was Brig. General on the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg. His refusal to pursue the retreating Yankees on that day contributed to Lee's loss of the battle.

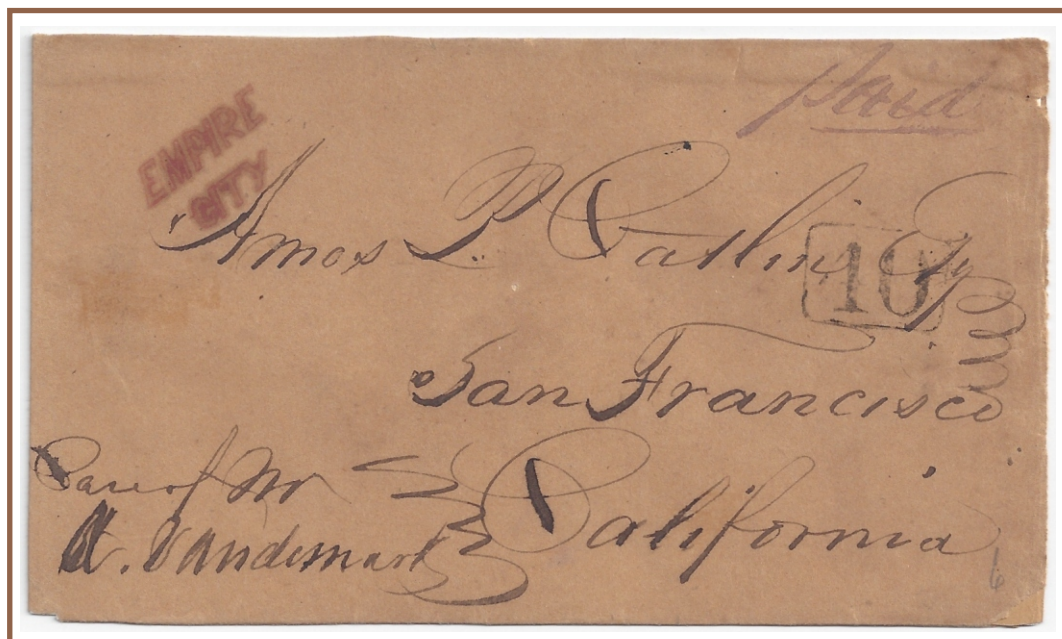
Military Government Period

Atypical via Panama uses to California - 1848 / 1849



28 August 1848 Granville, Ohio to Monterey, California via Independence "by the first opportunity" rated 10¢ due at origin, Independence, Missouri June 21, 1849 forwarded with + 40¢ rate = 50¢ due

27 August 1849 New York via Panama to California, arrived October 31, 1849 on PMSS *Unicorn* addressed to Capt. Joseph Aram of Russell-Boggs party that had left Independence with Donner party



September 15, 1849 New York to San Francisco, entered mails on Empire City Line steamer *Empire City*

1 October 1849 arrived at San Francisco on PMSS steamer *Panama* and 40¢ due marked on arrival

the only reported example of the name of ship handstamp