

Western Express Mail Routes

Gold discovered anywhere in the world offers people a chance to gain wealth. My interest in Colorado history began by learning about the Gold Rush. My father and I had taken up panning gold as a hobby in the summer of 1950 on North Clear Creek near Black Hawk.

Thousands of gold seekers rushed to Colorado in 1859. Demand was strong for speedy and reliable mail service east and west from the newly discovered Gold Fields scattered among the Rocky Mountains. Post Offices were established Auraria, Coraville, Denver City, and Montana City, however with few good mail routes to connect them with the East.

Along came two entrepreneurs John Jones and William Russell, who started the Leavenworth City & Pikes Peak Express Co. (LC&PPEC) in February 1859, the first of its kind in the territory delivering passengers, freight and mail to the area. The 600 mile route traveled was not an easy journey over barren dry lands often taking ten days to cover the distance.



LC&PPEXP service began on April 18, 1859. The first trip from Leavenworth City, Kansas Territory to Denver arriving on May 9th taking 19 days!

Jones & Russell's Pikes Peak Express Co. began service October 29, 1859 reorganizing LC&PPEC with minor route changes, and continued service until February 23, 1860.

The Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Co. (COC&PPE) took over the Jones & Russell Company in February 1860, after a few years the company was forced into bankruptcy and auctioned to Ben Holladay's Overland Mail & Express Co.

Hinckley & Co.'s Express began service to the mines on May 23, 1860 connecting with COC&PPE at Denver. Hinckley's was taken over by COC&PPE in late 1861.

Wells Fargo & Co. operated between Denver to the Overland Mail Route & Rail Road via LaPorte to Cheyenne, also to mining towns west of Denver from 1862 to 1869.

Barlow and Sanderson's Southern Overland Mail began operating in 1862 in Sedalia, Missouri as they moved west into the Kansas and Colorado Territory they carried mail by contract for the Post office to many small towns along the Front Range and into the San Luis Valley.

Leavenworth City & Pikes Peak Express

February 1859 to July 1859



A partnership between Jones and Russell formed in February 1859 created the Leavenworth City & Pikes Peak Express Co. They provided rapid transportation of mail and passengers to the newly discovered Gold Fields. The first service started West on April 18, 1859 arriving in Denver City on May 7, 1859



West Bound April 15, 1859 Stout, Ohio To E. P. Stout at Cherry Creek, Kansas Territory
Carried on April 30th by **Leavenworth City & Pikes Peak Express** endorsed "**By way of Fort Laramie**
Earliest known letter carried on the Third Trip arriving in Denver City on May 18th.



Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express Company Office, Denver City, K. T.

Leavenworth City & Pikes Peak Express

February 1859 to July 1859



The Denver office of the Leavenworth & Pikes Peak Express was managed by Beverly D. Williams who arrived on June 6th. he brought news the company did not have mail contract between Denver City and Leavenworth, and had carried mail for free.



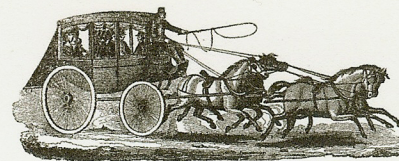
East Bound June 1, 1859 with dated Leavenworth & Pikes Peak Express Co. To Wadsworth, Ohio on 3 cent red Nesbit. Arrived June 12th at Leavenworth City
The fee for delivery from Denver City was 25 cents per letter.



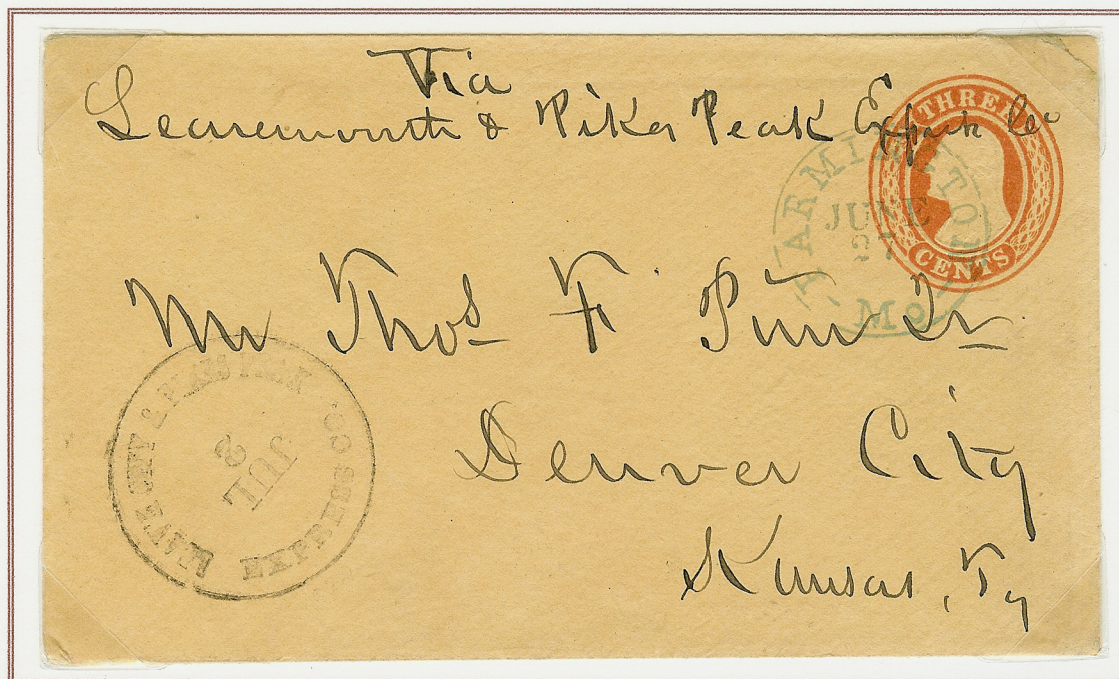
Six Horse Stage Coach Going Down The Trail

Leavenworth City & Pikes Peak Express

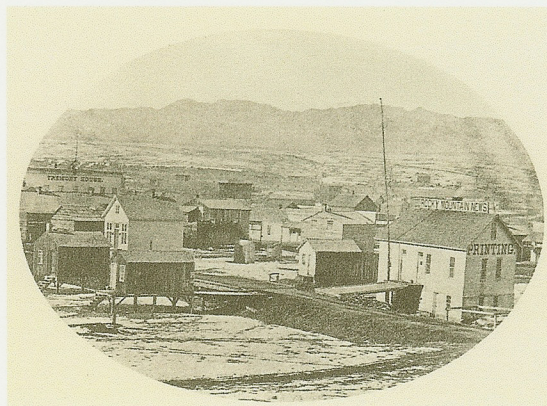
February 1859 to July 1859



The Company had a problem with the U. S. Mail that was a very unfortunate misunderstanding by Williams. The contract did not include payment for service between Denver and Leavenworth. Post Office offered no subsidy and the company lost the income.



West Bound June 27, 1859 Farmington, Missouri blue postmark on 3 cent red Nesbit to Denver City, Kansas Ty. manuscript routing instruction **"Via Leavenworth & Pikes Peak Express Co"** frank dated July 2 without year date Leav'n City & Pikes Peak Express Co. **Very late usage.**



Denver City ~ Early 1860's

Jones & Russell Pikes Peak Express

July 1859 to June 1860



The Jones and Russell Company reorganized in July 1859 acquiring fresh capital to expanded services. This worked well traveling over the Platte River Route from Leavenworth City to Denver. This route became fully operational on July 2, 1859.



November 11, 1859 "**Free R. B. Bradford**" manuscript frank addressed to W. B. Waddell at Leavenworth City. Postage not required as Bradford was the company agent in Denver City and soon reorganize the office in more efficient way.

The earliest reported use and finest one of three known Bradford franks.



Denver City ~ Early 1860's

Jones & Russell Pikes Peak Express

July 1859 to June 1860



Outbound September 15, 1859 Denver City to Bushville, Illinois with 3 cent red Nesbitt entire.
Entered the U. S. Mail postmarked September 24, 1859 at **Leavenworth City. K. T.**



Outbound May 3, 1860 Denver City to Cherry Fork, Ohio with 3 cent dull red #26.
Entered the U. S. Mail postmarked May 10, 1860 at **Saint Joseph, Mo.**

**Central Overland California
Pikes Peak Express**

February 1860 to March 1862



Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express took over the Jones & Russell operation in February 1860. The companies first trip departed Denver on March 1, 1860 carrying the mail serving three major areas of Denver, Leavenworth City and Saint Joseph.



June 2, 1860 Denver City, K. T. oval **Central Overland** transit datestamp on cover to Wisconsin in conjunctive use with **Hinckley Express** bringing mail from the mines.

The sideways **H** endorsement next to the lower left of the handstamp indicating a 10 cent prepaid fee to the COC&PP office in Denver. The cover carried east arrived St. Joseph, Mo. entering the U. S. Mail with blue single circle cancel and 3 cent dull red #26. Excellent combination usage.

**Central Overland California
Pikes Peak Express**

February 1860 to March 1862



December 22, 1860 Denver City, K. T. to St. Joseph, Mo. with **black on magenta label** tied to 3 cent red Nesbitt entire with additional 3 cent #26. Arrived Saint Joseph on December 28 entered the U. S. Mail December 29 with double circle postmark extra 3 cent dull red #26. Oval express cancel tying label.

***"The Only Through Express, Direct Your Letters
Care C.O.C.&PP Express, St. Joseph, Mo. or Leavenworth, K. T.***

Letter to Col. J. B. Patterson, Editor Spectator, Oquawka, Illinois. Obverse frank date November 29 an error at Denver City, with green St. Joseph frank dated December 28.



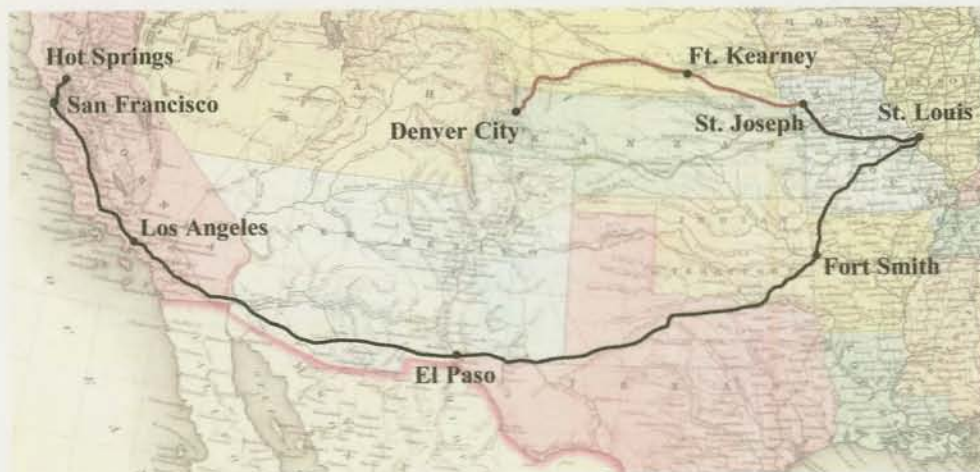
Obverse Franks Denver City, K. T. and St. Joseph, Mo.

Central Overland California
Pikes Peak Express

February 1860 to March 1862



July 31, 1860 by **Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express** oval datestamp to **Hot Springs, Napa Valley, California**. Endorsed "Via Overland" entered the mails postmarked at Saint Joseph, Mo. on August 9, 1860. **At that time the overland route from Saint Louis was the Southern Butterfield route** arrived San Francisco "**Due 7**" handstamp on this unusual westbound use.



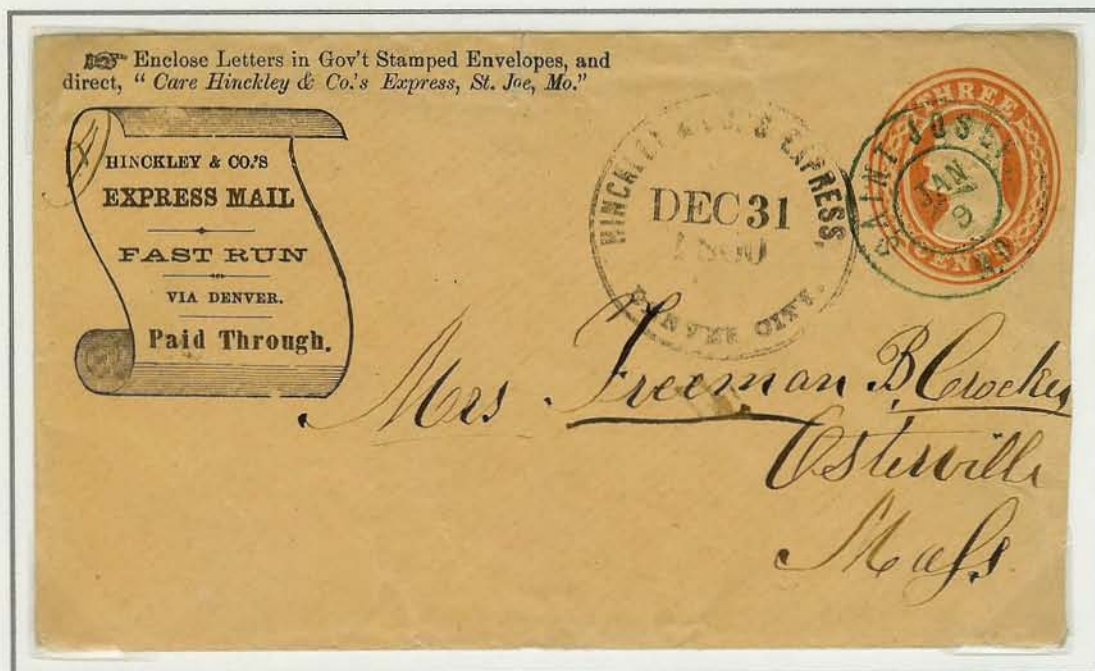
Butterfield Southern Overland Route

Hinckley & Co. Express

June 1860 to May 1861



October 29, 1860 Denver City on printed entire with 3 cent red Nesbitt to Superior, Wisconsin entered the mail at Saint Joseph. Hinckley & Co. Express. "Type 1" frank "Fast Run via Denver".



December 31, 1860 Denver City on 3 cent red Nesbitt entire to Osterville, Mass. Entered the mail at Saint Joseph, Mo. with green postmark on January 9, 1861 Hinckley & Co. Express "Type 2" frank with Printed Directive. Enclose Letters In Gov't Stamped Envelopes, and directive "Care of Hinckley & Co.'s Express, St. Joe Mo."

Hinckley & Co. Express

May 1860 to April 1861



Hinckley & Company Express was the fourth principal express to operate between 1860 and 1861. Transporting passengers, mail, and gold from remote mining towns in the mountains west of Denver and then on east to St. Joseph connecting with the U. S. Post Office. The company had little competition in the remote mining areas, however their was intense competition with Western Stage Company and Central Overland using the same routes east from Denver.



Overland via Central Route manuscript directive addressed to Denver City, Kansas Territory

Entered the mail on February 3, 1861 Georgetown, California to Hon. Cyrus C. Carpenter
with block of six 3 cent dull red #26 and pair of highly off center 1 cent blue #24
cancelled with two bold large circle datestamps.

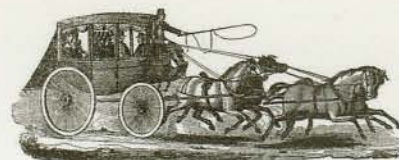
March 25, 1861 Hinckley Express circular date stamp for delivery to Denver City
A 50 day journey from California to Colorado

One of only two recorded uses on the West to East route.

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Hinckley & Co. Express

June 1860 to May 1861



July 22, 1860 Georgetown, California to Denver City, Kansas Territory. by Hinckley Express
 July 30, 1860 Denver City Forward to "**Cal G**" California Gulch, Lake County on white entire with
 10 cent green Nesbitt transcontinental rate. **One of two known covers used on west to east route.**



September 13, 1860 Denver City to Scandia Minnesota on white entire with 3 cent red Nesbitt
 Entered the mail at St. Joseph September 20 with grid cancel.
 Early example of "**Type 1**" Hinckley printed frank with "**Paid St. Joseph, Missouri**".

Holladay Overland Mail and Express Company

June 1860 to May 1864



On March 21, 1862 Ben Holladay known as the "Stage Coach King" purchased the assets of the bankrupt Central Overland California & Pike's Peak Express Co. This was major opportunity to expand his companies express business into Kansas and Missouri. It was just a short time till his "Empire" failed and he sold out to Wells Fargo Co.



February 20, (1866) Denver, Col. to Independence, Missouri with faint black company cancel on 3 cent pink entire with blue Denver, Col. postmark. The Denver postmark had only been put in use seven days earlier replacing the older type Denver City postmark.



Stage Coach Routes to the Pike's Peak Gold Region



Wells Fargo Company
Overland Mail
Denver, Col.

Letter to James Clark
Containing Mining Deeds
Nevada City
Colorado Territory

Value \$25.00
Paid Through \$23.90

Blue Label Forwarded
by Wells Fargo & Co.



Value \$25.00
Paid thro \$23.90
Mr James Clark,
Nevada City,
Colorado Territory



Wells Fargo & Co.
Overland Express

Company started service in
Colorado late in 1866 to 1868
with two major routes on serving
gold mining town west of Denver to
Central City and on west to Georgetown
With Orange Forwarding Label
American Express Co.
8 Court Street, Boston, Mass.

Wells Fargo Company

March 1867 to October 1868



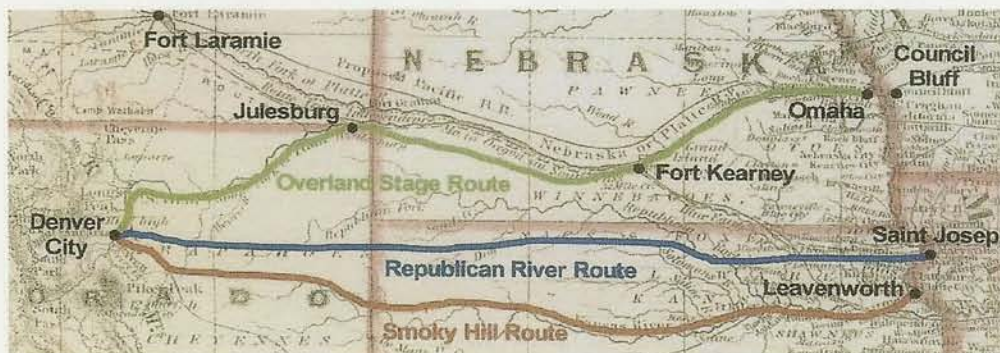
Wells Fargo carried mail under government contract traveling over the Smoky Hill Route directly to connect with the Union Pacific Eastern Division Headquarters located at Salina, Kansas. They also offered service to mining towns and north to Cheyenne, Wyoming.

This example is earliest use of four known covers.



May 17, 1867 Wells Fargo Co. Denver City double oval blue handstamp on remainder frank of the Holladay Overland Express Company on 3 cent pink 1864 entire.

Entered the mail at Salina, Kansas on May 22.



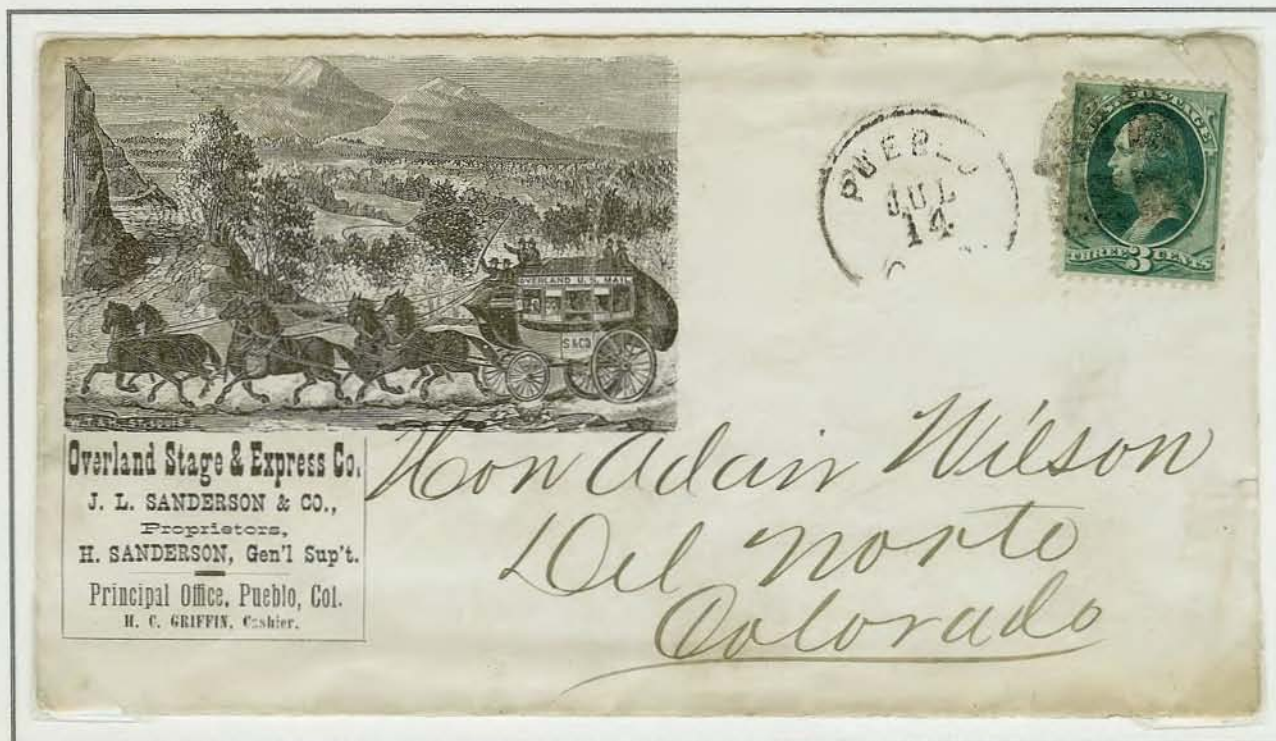
Wells Fargo Express & Mail over the Smoky Hill Route

Southern Overland Mail

Barlow & Sanderson



December 3, 1879 Kansas City, Mo. to New York with 3 cent green Banknote and cork cancel. Southern Overland Mail & Express with Stage Coach corner card. Obverse bears Jan 2, 80 Rec'd



July 14 (1878) Pueblo, Colorado to Del Norte with 3 cent green Banknote and cork cancel. Overland Stage & Express, H. Sanderson, Gen'l Sup't Office at Pueblo, Colorado