This exhibit examines the overland postal routes that connected the expanding American West with the rest of the world. The 1803 Louisiana Purchase and 1845-48 territorial acquisitions tripled the United States’ territory and moved its western frontier from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. Letter communications played a crucial role in enabling the consolidation of these new territories, but the Post Office Department waited until 1847 to establish the first western post office, and until 1850 to establish the first contract overland route into the new territories. Before that, private parties carried the small amount of mail sent. The period covered by this exhibit begins with the earliest known mail from the Rocky Mountains by fur traders in 1832, and concludes with the May 1869 completion of the transcontinental railroad.

**Major Overland Postal Routes**

- **Oregon mail routes** were the first opened into the Rockies. Americans mainly used the Oregon Trail north of Salt Lake City, while Hudson’s Bay Company used a route through southern Canada to Montreal (both shown in blue in the map below).

- **Utah mail routes** connected Salt Lake City, Utah with Missouri and California, and followed the Central Route (shown in green below).

- **Santa Fe mail routes** used the Santa Fe Trail to transport mail between New Mexico and Missouri (shown in olive below).

- **Colorado mail routes** followed the Republican River and Platte River routes between Denver, Colorado and Missouri (shown in orange below).

- **California mail routes** used the Central and Southern Routes (both shown in red). The Pony Express ran along the Central Route.

**Presentation**

The exhibit is organized by major route, distinguished by different color icons at the upper right. Pre-contract mail (wagon icon) on each route is covered first, followed by contract mail (stage icon).
Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

Introduction: 1832 - 1851

The fur trade developed the early overland trails to Oregon. American trappers opened the Central Route via South Pass, and the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) developed the Canoe Brigade route through southern Canada.

Non-contract overland routes were superseded by the December 1848 steamship contract mail route via Panama, and by the July 1851 overland contract mail route between Oregon and Salt Lake City.

Datelined June 21, 1834 at the Ham’s Fork (Wyoming) Rendezvous - from Nathaniel Wyeth

Carried by Bonneville’s fur trade caravan - left July 10 and arrived in St Louis in late August

Posted on September 1 - rated 25¢ due for over 400 miles to Massachusetts - forwarded twice
Starting in 1825, annual fur trade rendezvous west of South Pass in the Rocky Mountains collected furs and brought supplies to the trappers. Exceptionally, caravans carried mail from a rendezvous. Fur trade caravans left Missouri or the Northwest in the early spring and took about two months to reach the annual rendezvous. They stayed about two weeks and returned in the late summer.

Datelined July 14, 1832 at the Pierre’s Hole (Idaho) Rendezvous - endorsed “Fav. of Mr. Wm L. Sublette”

Carried by Sublette’s fur trade caravan - left July 30 and arrived in St Louis on October 3
Posted on October 5 - rated 25¢ due for over 400 miles to Baltimore

Earliest known letter from the Rocky Mountains
When no post roads were available to a given destination, postmasters were authorized to use private parties to carry mail to that destination, and to compensate them with the amount of postage carried.

Posted March 20, 1839 in Baldwin, Maine - addressed to Oregon and prepaid 25¢ to Westport, MO

Entrusted by the Westport postmaster to the Munger/Griffin missionary party - left May 4

Arrived on July 5 at the 1839 Green River rendezvous with an American Fur Company caravan

Left the rendezvous on July 10 with an HBC fur brigade - received in Oregon on September 16

Only known westbound fur trade caravan letter
The Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) developed their overland Canoe Brigade route to carry furs back to market and bring supplies to Oregon. They also carried some mail from American settlers and visitors. The June 15, 1846 Oregon Partition marked the end of this route for Oregon Territory mail.

Datelined January 16, 1833 in Fort Vancouver, Oregon - endorsed “Fav. Of the Hon. Hudsons Bay Co.”

Carried by HBC Canoe Brigade to Montreal, Canada - posted August 13 - prepaid 6p to the U.S. border

Marked “B” for steamboat to upstate New York - rated 18¾¢ due for 150-400 miles to Massachusetts

Earliest known letter from Oregon by HBC Canoe Brigade
Datelined December 18, 1835 in Fort Vancouver, Oregon - from naturalist John Townsend

Carried by 1836 Canoe Brigade to Montreal - posted August 13, prepaid 6p to the U.S. border

Entered U.S. mails in Vermont - rated 25¢ due for over 400 miles to Philadelphia
The yearly westbound HBC Canoe Brigade was scheduled to leave Lachine (Montreal) each spring and to arrive in Oregon six months later. Only parts of the journey were actually made in birch bark canoes.

Posted April 8, 1844 in Wilbraham, MA - prepaid 25¢ to the Canadian border
Endorsed to the care of the “H. Bay Company Express to Columbia River” at Montreal
Postmarked April 13 in Montreal with 4½p due - **carried by HBC Canoe Brigade to Oregon**
Arrived October 29, 1844 at Wascopam Mission “By Express Boat’ per docket on back

**Only known HBC Canoe Brigade letter to Oregon**
Great Britain and the United States agreed to divide Oregon along the 49th parallel on June 15, 1846. The HBC moved its operations to Vancouver Island, and their Canoe Brigade ceased to run from Oregon after 1846.
Settlers returning from Oregon became more numerous after 1840. They carried a few letters that they posted at one of the Missouri River border towns – Westport, Independence, Savannah or St. Joseph.

Datelined February 23, 1842 at Waskopam Mission, Oregon - carried overland to Missouri
Initially endorsed to the HBC Canoe Brigade - entrusted instead to William Fowler
Posted December 7 in Westport, MO - rated 25¢ due for over 400 miles to Connecticut
Datelined April 8, 1848 in Tualatin Plains, Oregon - carried overland to Missouri

Posted July 27 in Savannah, MO - rated 10¢ due for over 300 miles to New York

Letter describes the November 1847 Whitman Massacre near Fort Walla Walla

Whitman Mission at Wailatpu
John Shively was appointed postmaster of Astoria, Oregon on March 9, 1847. He travelled overland via Independence, Missouri to become the first U.S. postmaster west of the Rocky Mountains.

The Post Office Department instructed the Independence postmaster to entrust any letters being held for the West Coast to Shively, and paid him the postage on those letters as compensation for this first contract trip.

Posted August 17, 1846 at Lawrenceville, PA - prepaid 10¢ to Independence, Missouri
Addressed to California, care of the Independence postmaster “to be forwarded the first opportunity”
Shively left Independence on April 28, 1847 and arrived on September 7 in Astoria, Oregon

Postmarked this letter “Astoria Ore” (at left) - sent by the Whiton to San Francisco on November 10
Charged 50¢ due (40¢ overland plus 10¢ to Sonoma in Mexican California)

Only known letter carried in the first contract mail to Oregon
In March 1851, the Post Office Department advertised for bids on Route 5043 between The Dalles, Oregon and Salt Lake City. This was to connect with Woodson’s Salt Lake City–Independence, Missouri contract route.

Brown & Torrence won the three-year contract. Trips every other month began from Oregon on July 1, 1851. It was not renewed after June 1854.

Datelined September 13, 1851 at Fort Boise, Idaho - rated 5¢ due to Kirksville, Missouri
Picked up during the second contract trip - left Oregon September 3 and reached Salt Lake on September 30
Postmarked “Salt Lake City, U.T.” - Woodson departed October 1 and arrived October 30 in Independence

One of two known letters carried under this mail contract
Utah-Missouri Pre-Contract Mail
Introduction: August 1847 - August 1850

Mormons established Salt Lake City in July 1847. They used the old fur trade and Oregon migration route to carry the mail.

Initially, they relied on irregular private couriers between Salt Lake City and Kanesville. Starting in March 1849, an organized system of Mormon couriers serviced a special mail contract with the recently-established Salt Lake City post office.

Postmarked “Salt Lake Cal.” on October 11, 1849 - prepaid 10¢ postage to Missouri

Carried by Mormon courier John Taylor under special trip contract with post office
Left Salt Lake City on October 19 and arrived in Kane on December 10
Utah-Missouri Pre-Contract Mail
Private Courier: August 1847 - October 1848

Before the January 18, 1849 establishment of the U.S. post office at Salt Lake City, mail trips were infrequent and irregular. Letter writers had to rely on travelers returning to Winter Quarters, Iowa.

Datelined “Great Salt Lake City: January 9th 1848” - posted May 11 in Linden, MO with 10¢ due
“This mail is carried by some of the soldiers of the Mormon Battalion recently from…California”

Earliest known letter from Salt Lake City in private hands
Mormon couriers carried both post office and private mail for 50¢ per letter. They also received the amount of postage on post office mail.

Postmarked July 16, 1849 in Salt Lake City - carried by Mormon courier Almon Babbitt to Kane
Left July 27 and arrived September 3 - earliest known letter from the Salt Lake post office

Datelined near South Pass on July 27, 1849 - collected enroute by Almon Babbitt
Non-post office letters were postmarked upon arrival at Kane, Iowa - rated 10¢ due
Datelined “Great Salt Lake City July 27 1850” - **carried privately by John Green**
Left August 2 and arrived September 12 - posted September 16 in Kane, Iowa

Postmarked Great Salt Lake City Cal. on July 11, 1850 - **carried by Mormon courier, John Green**
Salt Lake City post office fell under jurisdiction of California - rated 40¢ due to Maine
Utah-Missouri Pre-Contract Mail
Military Courier: May 1848 – August 1850

Fort Kearny was established in May 1848 on the south bank of the Platte River to protect the growing migration to the West.

Initially just a military post, its couriers could carry mail to Fort Leavenworth, MO for entry into the mails.

Datelined May 21, 1848 “on the plains” by immigrant to California
Entrusted to Fort Kearny quartermaster - marked letter “Fort Kearny Oregon Route” in red
Carried by military courier to Fort Leavenworth - postmarked June 14 - rated 10¢ due
Mormon couriers also carried mail on a few trips between Salt Lake City and California. After post offices were established in California in 1849, postmasters there could grant special trip contracts to these couriers for the amount of postage carried.

The May 1851 start of the Chorpenning service between Sacramento and Salt Lake City superseded these trip contracts.

Postmarked August 12, 1850 in Sacramento, California - addressed to Salt Lake City, Deseret
Sacramento integral post mark indicates 12½¢ due for August 1848 local West Coast rate
Entrusted by postmaster to Amasa Lyman party - left August 16 and arrived September 29

Only known letter carried by a Mormon courier to or from California
The first post office route contract on the Central Route began on August 1, 1850 between Salt Lake City and Independence along the Platte River Road. This was followed on May 3, 1851 by a contract between Salt Lake City and Sacramento along the California Trail.

This series of contracts along the Central Route ended with the July 1, 1861 start of the daily transcontinental overland service.

Postmarked November 19, 1850 in “Salt Lake Deseret” - rated 10¢ due to Iowa

Left November 22 with third Woodson trip - forced back due to heavy snows

Finally left on May 1, 1851 and arrived in Independence on May 31

Earliest known contract letter from Salt Lake City
Utah-Missouri Contract Mail  
Woodson Contract: August 1850 - June 1854

Samuel Woodson’s four-year monthly contract for Route 4965 between Salt Lake City and Independence, MO began operations from Independence on August 1, 1850 and from Salt Lake on September 11.

He had great difficulty adhering to the 30-day schedule during the winter months, so much mail was delayed or sent via California and Panama to New York. Route 4965 was not renewed after June 1854.

Postmarked June 15, 1852 at Fort Laramie, Oregon Route - rated 5¢ due to Michigan

Hand-carved Fort Laramie O.R. postmarks - 5 due positioned in the middle of the postmark

June 1852 mail left Salt Lake City 12 days late - reached Fort Laramie around June 23

Woodson mail carrier collected this letter enroute - reached Independence around July 8

Fewer than ten “Fort Laramie O.R.” postmarks are known
Utah-Missouri Contract Mail
Woodson Contract: August 1850 - June 1854

“Oregon Route” was a postal designation for the Platte River Road. Post offices along the route used “O.R.” in their postmarks. Mail to the Oregon Route was often mis-directed to Oregon.

Dated June 22, 1852 by Fort Kearny O.R. fancy postmark - prepaid 3¢ postage to New Jersey
Picked up enroute by the Woodson mail carrier on July 1 - arrived in Independence around July 8

Only four covers with this postmark are known
The Salt Lake City post office used manuscript postmarks until July 1, 1851 when a straight-line marking was introduced. It was in use for only five months.

Postmarked July 1, 1851 in Salt Lake City U.T. - incorrectly rated 6¢ due to New Jersey

**Left July 1 with 10th Woodson trip** which arrived on July 24 - re-rated to 5¢ due

Postmarked November 1, 1851 in Salt Lake City U.T. – re-rated 10¢ due to Massachusetts

Held until January 1 due to impassable mountain snows - finally arrived January 31
Unsatisfactory performance by Woodson led to the cancellation of Route 4965. William Magraw received a new four-year contract for re-designated Route 8911 between Salt Lake City and Independence.

His monthly service began on July 1, 1854 but was disrupted by the 1854-56 1st Sioux War. Weather also caused many mails to detour via California.

Postmarked September 1, 1855 at Salt Lake City Utah T. - prepaid 24¢ postage to Scotland
Left Salt Lake City on September 1 and arrived in Independence on September 30
Collins steamship Pacific left New York on October 17 - arrived in Liverpool on October 28
Magraw’s contract was annulled on August 18, 1856. Hiram Kimball was awarded the new four-year contract for Route 8911 on October 16, 1856.

Kimball’s monthly service began on February 1, 1857 but was annulled on June 24, 1857. The Salt Lake City postmaster used single-trip contracts to move the mail from November 1856 to January 1857.

Postmarked November 1, 1856 at Salt Lake City Utah T. - prepaid 24¢ postage to Russia via England
Postmaster contracted with Feramorz Little and Ephraim Hanks to carry the November-December mails
Left December 10 and arrived on February 27, 1857 after an arduous 79-day trip through mountain snows
Havre liner Arago left New York on April 17 - arrived in Liverpool on April 17 - marked “U.S. Packet”
Stephen Miles was selected to complete Kimball’s monthly contract for Route 8911, effective October 1, 1857 to June 30, 1858. On March 31, 1858, it was terminated early to be replaced by a weekly contract.

The 1857-58 Utah Expedition disrupted Miles’ service. All mail to Salt Lake City was diverted from June 1857 to June 1858, so Miles delivered to the army’s Camp Scott, which used Fort Bridger postmarks.
John Hockaday replaced Miles as the contractor for Route 8911. Weekly service was from May 1, 1858 to June 30, 1859 and semi-weekly after that. Butterfield carried virtually all contract overland mails, so Hockaday typically serviced mail to or from towns along the Central Route.

Postmarked December 26, 1858 at Fort Laramie, N. T. - sent “FREE” from 4th Artillery officer
The Salt Lake mail left December 25 - picked this letter up enroute - arrived in St Joseph January 15

Postmarked August 17, 1860 at Camp Floyd, U.T. - prepaid 3¢ postage to Fort Laramie
The first post office overland contract route to reach California began operations on May 3, 1851 between Sacramento and Salt Lake City along the Central Route. An alternate southern route via Los Angeles was also used later because of weather delays.

This series of contracts between California and Utah ended with the July 1, 1861 start of the daily transcontinental overland service.

*Postmarked July 1, 1851 in Salt Lake City Utah T. - sent free on post office business*

**Left July 1 with 1st Chorpenning westbound trip** - harassed by Indians in Carson Valley

Arrived in Sacramento around August 3 - forwarded to Vallejo on August 4 per docket

**Earliest known westbound contract letter from Salt Lake City**
George Chorpenning was awarded the 4-year monthly contract for Route 5066 between Sacramento and Salt Lake City. Service began on May 3, 1851 from Sacramento and July 1 from Salt Lake City.

Chorpenning’s contract was transferred to William Blanchard in March 1853 for non-performance, but re-instated in June 1853.

Left Honolulu on May 1, 1851 on the Cheerful - arrived June 1 in San Francisco
PMSS steamship had left May 31 - postmaster marked it “overland” and 80¢ due on June 1

Left Sacramento June 2 in 2nd Chorpenning eastbound mail - arrived July 2 in Salt Lake City
5th successful Woodson mail trip left Salt Lake on July 2 and arrived July 24 in Independence, MO

Earliest known transcontinental letter over the entire Central Route
Utah-California Contract Mail
1st Chorpenning Contract: May 1851 - June 1854

Lt. John Grattan led Company G of the 6th Infantry from Fort Laramie to a confrontation with Sioux Indians near the fort. His command of 29 men was wiped out on August 19, 1854. The “Grattan Massacre” ignited the 1854-56 First Sioux War.

Postmarked March 26, 1854 at Morpeth, GB - addressed to Oregon Route, but mis-directed to Oregon
Prepaid 2/4 - carried by RMSP and PMSC steamers via Panama to San Francisco on May 16
Postmarked June 1 in San Francisco for Chorpenning mail - arrived mid-August at Fort Laramie
Addressed to soldier in Company G 6th Infantry - letter marked “Sent Back to England”
Chorpenning’s monthly contract was renewed on July 1, 1854. This contract was shifted to the southern route via Los Angeles and re-named Route 12801.

Postmarked November 3, 1855 in Honolulu - *Yankee* to San Francisco on December 1

**Left Los Angeles in December 5 Chorpenning mail** - arrived December 30 in Salt Lake City

Postmarked February 1, 1856 in Salt Lake City for Chorpenning mail to Los Angeles on February 27

American clipper ship *Resolute* left San Francisco on March 25 and reached Honolulu on April 14
Utah-California Contract Mail

2nd Chorpenning Contract: July 1854 - June 1858

Some Salt Lake City mail to the East during the winter was endorsed to be carried via California and Panama to New York, instead of to Independence.

Postmarked January 2, 1857 in Salt Lake City - prepaid 29¢ and endorsed “via California”

Left in January 5 Chorpenning mail - reached Los Angeles February 1 - arrived Liverpool March 28

Postmarked January 5, 1856 in Salt Lake City for Chorpenning mail to Los Angeles on February 3

Prepaid “phantom” 9¢ rate (3¢ to California plus 6¢ transcontinental) - reached New York on March 12
The Federal Utah Expedition moved through Salt Lake City in June 1858 and established nearby Camp Floyd on November 9, 1858.

Camp Floyd used manuscript postmarks until April 17, 1859 and a “tombstone” postmark from April 18 until November 1859.

Dated February 7, 1859 by manuscript Camp Floyd, U.T. postmark - addressed to Panama

Held for insufficient postage - additional 17¢ paid in cash - April 18 “tombstone” postmark applied

April 18 Chorpenning coach collected this letter in transit - arrived in Placerville on April 30

PMSS steamer Golden Gate left San Francisco on May 5 - arrived in Panama on May 15

U.S.S. Decatur (addressee) had left Panama on March 23 - forwarded back to San Francisco
Utah-California Contract Mail

3rd Chorpenning Contract: July 1858 - May 1860

Chorpenning was awarded a new weekly contract which returned to the Central Route. Route 12801 began operations on July 4, 1858 from Salt Lake.

Postmarked October 7, 1859 in San Francisco - prepaid 10¢ - endorsed “via Placerville and Salt Lake”

October 12 mail to Salt Lake on October 20 and October 21 mail to St Joseph, MO on November 11

Postmarked December 21, 1859 in Oroville, CA - prepaid 10¢ transcontinental postage to Maine

Left December 28 from Placerville for Salt Lake City - reached St Joseph around February 4
Utah-California Contract Mail

COCPPE Contract: June 1860 - June 1861

Chorpenning’s 3rd contract was annulled for non-performance, and the bi-weekly contract for Route 12801 between Placerville, CA and Salt Lake City was re-let without bid to the Central Overland California & Pike’s Peak Express Company on June 1, 1860. COCPPE had previously bought Hockaday’s contract for Route 8911 in May 1859, so they controlled of the entire length of the Central Route.

The 1858 Butterfield contract carried virtually all contract overland mails, so COCPPE only serviced mail between intermediate points along the Central Route.

Postmarked February 3, 1861 in Georgetown, CA - franked double-weight 20¢ to Colorado

**Endorsed “Overland via Central route”** - COCPPE coach left Placerville on February 13

Connected at Salt Lake City on February 22 with COCPPE coach to Fort Kearny around March 9

Carried by Western Stage coach to Denver around March 20 - delivered locally by Hinckley Express
In a major action during the Mexican-American War, Kearny’s Army of the West left Missouri on June 26, 1846 and captured Santa Fe, New Mexico on August 18. His forces occupied Santa Fe and also moved south to Mexico and west to California.

Military and private couriers carried mail from these dispersed forces to Fort Leavenworth, near Independence, Missouri. They were superseded by the July 1850 contract mail route between Santa Fe and Independence.

Postmarked “Santa Fee” on November 20, 1848 in red by military quartermaster

Carried by military courier Mr. Newman - left November 20 but forced to return

Left again on December 20 and arrived in Fort Leavenworth on February 1 - 10¢ due
The Army of the West passed through Bent’s Fort in late July 1846 and reached Santa Fe three weeks later. Shortly after that, a third of the force left for Chihuahua, Mexico and another third (under Kearny) left for California.
Doniphan’s 1st Missouri Mounted Volunteers defeated a much larger Mexican army at Chihuahua on February 28, 1847. They captured much of the enemy’s supplies.

Datelined in Chihuahua on March 6, 1847 - from Lt. Hinton of the Missouri Horse Guards

Carried by military courier to Santa Fe - then by private courier to Independence, MO

Postmarked in Independence on May 25 - 10¢ postage due to Ohio

Letter written on captured letterhead of the Governor of Chihuahua (67% size)
Santa Fe Contract Mail

Introduction: July 1850 - June 1862

The first post office route contract into the West began on July 1, 1850 between Independence, MO and Santa Fe, NM. This series of contracts along the Santa Fe Trail ended with the July 1, 1862 expiration of the last contract.

Postmarked in Santa Fe on November 1, 1851 - rated 5¢ postage due to Missouri
Carried by the 15th stagecoach from Santa Fe to Independence around November 30
Waldo Hall & Co. won the monthly contract for Route 4888 between Independence and Santa Fe. Service began from Independence on July 1, 1850 and from Santa Fe on August 1.

Postmarked in Jerseyville, IL on March 20, 1851 - rated 10¢ postage due to Santa Fe

Endorsed “Attached to Capt. Sitgreaves exploring party” at Santa Fe - Texas address corrected

Sitgreaves’ scientific and military expedition left on August 15, 1851 for Fort Yuma, California.

Carried by the April 1 stagecoach from Independence to Santa Fe on April 30

Fewer than five letters are known to Santa Fe in this period
Santa Fe Contract Mail
Hall Contracts: July 1854 - June 1862

Jacob Hall won the new monthly contract for re-numbered Route 8912 from July 1854 to June 1858. He also won the third contract for weekly service on re-numbered route 10532 from July 1, 1858 to June 30, 1862.

Postmarked in Santa Fe, NM on December 1, 1855 - prepaid 3¢ postage to Connecticut

Postmarked in Santa Fe, NM on December 13, 1858 - prepaid double-weight 30¢ to France
Left on weekly December 13 stage to Independence on January 2 - left NY on January 15
The 1858-61 Colorado gold rush created the need for a mail delivery system. Initial efforts were disorganized and relied on individual couriers.

The Leavenworth City & Pike’s Peak Express began an organized private express service in April 1859 along the Republican River Route between Leavenworth, Kansas and Denver. Its successor, Jones & Russell’s Pike’s Peak Express, began using the Platte River Route in July 1859, as did the Central Overland California & Pike’s Peak Express (COCPPE) in February 1860.

Postmarked June 28, 1860 by the COCPPE in Denver - carried by their express to Missouri
Postmarked July 5 in St Joseph, Missouri - prepaid 3¢ postage to Ohio
Early mail from the Denver region relied on travelers who were returning from the Pike’s Peak gold mines. They typically travelled to Fort Laramie, Fort Kearny, or to towns along the Missouri River.

Datelined “South Platte Near the Rocky Mountains” on October 28, 1858 - prepaid 3¢

“An officer of the army at Fort Kearny who came out with us returns tomorrow”

Postmarked December 4 in Pacific City, Iowa (near Omaha) - prepaid 3¢ postage to Ohio

From “Pinky” Stout - arrived October 24, 1858 with the J.H. Dudley party

Earliest known letter from the Denver gold mining region
The Leavenworth City & Pike’s Peak Express (LPPE) began operations from Leavenworth on April 18, 1859 and from Denver on May 10. It operated under that name for three months, so only 16 covers with LPPE markings are known.

Postmarked April 15, 1859 in Stouts, OH - prepaid 3¢ and endorsed via Fort Laramie
Routed instead to 3rd LPPE westbound trip - *earliest known westbound letter*

Postmarked June 1, 1859 by LPPE in Denver City - variety with year-date used in Denver
Carried on 7th LPPE eastbound trip - postmarked Leavenworth City K.T. on June 12
Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

JRPPE: July 1859 - May 1860

The Jones & Russell’s Pike’s Peak Express (JRPPE) was the new name adopted by the LPPE in July 1859, so new markings were prepared.

Postmarked May 3, 1860 by JRPPE in Denver - prepaid 3¢ - entered mails at St Joseph on May 10

Postmarked December 29, 1859 by JRPPE in Denver - prepaid double-weight 6¢
Entered U.S. mails in Leavenworth City K.T. on January 6
The Central Overland California & Pike’s Peak Express (COCPPE) absorbed the assets of the defunct LPPE in February 1860. Its markings came into use starting in May 1860. Oval markings were prepared for Denver, Leavenworth City and St. Joseph. Labels were occasionally used to advertise the service.

Postmarked October 30, 1860 by COCPPE in Denver - advertising label attached

 Entered U.S. mails in Leavenworth City on November 6

One of four COCPPE labels known tied to a cover
The Central Overland California & Pike’s Peak Express (COCPPE) charged a 25¢ express fee for letters. Occasionally, an undated COCPPE frank was used to indicate that the fee had been paid.

Postmarked June 14, 1860 by COCPPE in Denver - undated frank for 25¢ express fee

Entered U.S. mails in St. Joseph on June 23 - prepaid 3¢ postage to Iowa

Pike’s Peak by Bierstadt
Colorado Pre-Contract Mail
COCPPE: May 1860 - June 1861

Postmarked November 13, 1860 in Brownsville N.T. - prepaid 3¢ - endorsed via St Joseph
November 17 St Joseph COCPPE marking - westbound mail is rarer than eastbound

Postmarked July 31, 1860 by COCPPE in Denver - entered U.S. mails August 9 at St Joseph
Carried to California in Butterfield coach from St Louis - 7¢ additional postage charged
Hinckley & Co. entered the market in May 1860 to carry mail from the mines and to connect with COCPPE at Denver. They entered into full competition with COCPPE in September 1860, but were purchased by COCPPE in May 1861.

June 2, 1860 Hinckley and COCPPE conjunctive use in Denver - entered mails at St Joseph on June 8

Postmarked November 13, 1860 by Hinckley in Denver - prepaid 3¢ to Wisconsin
Frank for 7¢ express fee - entered the U.S. mails at St. Joseph on November 22
Colorado Contract Mail

Introduction: June 1859 - June 1861

In January-March 1859, U.S. post offices were established at Auraria and Coraville. Coraville was discontinued in June 1859 and Auraria was renamed Denver City on February 11, 1860 although the earliest known Denver postmark is August 16.

After two unsuccessful starts in June 1859 and July-August 1859, the Post Office Department contracted with the Western Stage Company on August 29, 1860 for weekly service on Route 15151a between Denver and Fort Kearny. Western was not able to fulfill its contract until September 1860. COCPPE fulfilled the contract on a trip-by-trip basis from August 10 to September 13.

Postmarked August 9, 1860 in Stillwater, MN - prepaid 3¢ postage to Denver
Carried in contract mail to Denver on August 29 - “tombstone” arrival postmark
Carried by COCPPE stagecoach under a trip contract with post office

Third westbound contract mail to Denver
The COCPPE bought the Hockaday mail contract between St Joseph and Salt Lake City on May 11, 1859. Their Denver agent misunderstood this to include the Julesburg-Denver segment, and sent three “contract” mails to Leavenworth from June 11 to June 22. Letters were carried for only 3¢ per ounce, but the error was soon corrected, and the 25¢ express charge was re-instated.

Postmarked June 15, 1859 in Auraria K.T. (Denver) - prepaid 3¢ U.S. postage to Iowa
Left June 17 and arrived in Leavenworth on June 30 - earliest known Auraria postmark
The Auraria postmaster contracted with Mr. Willis on July 12, 1859 to carry a weekly mail between Denver and Fort Kearny. The letter charge was 3¢ per half ounce, all of which was paid to Willis as compensation. This contract was terminated for poor performance on August 27.

Postmarked August 23, 1859 in Auraria K.T. (Denver) - prepaid 3¢ U.S. postage to Illinois

Carried in the last Willis contract mail to Fort Kearny - **one of 12 known straight-line postmarks**
The Post Office Department awarded the weekly contract for Route 15151 between Julesburg and Denver to E.F. Bruce on June 16, 1860. Bruce was unable to perform, so a modified contract for Route 15151a was re-let to the Western Stage Co. on August 29. The first U.S. contract mail arrived in Denver on August 10 under a temporary contract with the COCPPE.

Carried privately from Nevada City K.T. on August 16, 1860 by Hinckley & Co.
Postmarked August 23, 1860 in Denver - prepaid 3¢ U.S. postage to Ohio
Carried by COCPPE under temporary contract with post office

Earliest known Denver “tombstone” postmark
Emigration to California began to build in 1846 and exploded with the gold rush in 1849. Overland mails began after the U.S. gained control of California in July 1846, and virtually ended with the March 1849 start of the contract mail by steamships via Panama.

Two routes were used. The first followed the Central Route via South Pass and the second connected Los Angeles with Santa Fe via the Old Spanish Trail.

Datelined May 18, 1848 in Monterey, CA - carried by Chouteau via Los Angeles and Santa Fe
Postmarked October 11 in St Louis, Missouri - 10¢ postage due to Massachusetts
General Kearny returned overland from California with a mail. He left Monterey on May 31, 1847 and arrived at Fort Leavenworth on August 22.

Datelined April 30, 1847 in San Francisco - carried to Monterey in May 3 bi-weekly regional mail
Mailed August 23 on steamer Amelia to St Louis - postmarked there on August 26 with 10¢ due

Datelined May 2, 1847 in San Francisco - postmarked at Fort Leavenworth on August 31 with 10¢ due
From sergeant in NY 1st Volunteer Regiment - carried in military dispatches to Fort Leavenworth
Commodore Stockton stepped down from his California command in January 1847 and returned overland via South Pass. His party left Monterey on June 20 and reached St Joseph, MO on October 26.

Datelined March 24, 1847 on USS Congress (Stockton’s former flagship) in San Diego harbor
Missed March 26 sailing of USS Savannah from San Diego - sent to Stockton at Monterey
Postmarked October 30 in St. Joseph, MO with 10¢ due - only letter known from this mail

USS Congress
The U.S. secured its southern border by building forts along the frontier. Fort Yuma, California was an important link in that chain. Early mail reached it overland from San Diego via the “Desert Dispatch,” a military courier service across the Colorado Desert.

This route was a necessary precursor to portions of later southern overland contract routes.

Fewer than ten letters carried by this service are known
After unsatisfactory experiences in 1850-56 with contract mails on the central overland route via Salt Lake City, virtually all contract transcontinental mails were carried via Panama from 1848 to 1859.

Strategic interests led the Post Office to sign significant contracts for overland mail via more reliable southern routes in 1857-58. The southern overland route via Los Angeles became the default for transcontinental mails on December 17, 1859.

Postmarked June 20, 1859 in San Francisco - franked 10¢ for over 3,000 miles
Butterfield stagecoach left on October 19 - early pre-printed “Overland” envelope
California Contract Mail
Stockton Contract: September 1858 - April 1861

The Post Office Department signed a monthly contract with Jacob Hall for Route 15050 between Kansas City, MO and Stockton, CA. Service began on October 1, 1858 along a southern route via Santa Fe.

Service was not satisfactory, so the contract was annulled effective July 1, 1859. The six successful trips carried a total of three letters.

Postmarked January 21, 1859 in Dutch Flat, CA - endorsed "via Stockton" and prepaid 10¢
Mail party left Stockton on February 1 and reached Kansas City around March 29

Only known letter carried on this route
Congress authorized a twice-weekly transcontinental overland mail between St. Louis and San Francisco via Texas and Los Angeles on March 3, 1857. This route replaced the via Panama route as the default for contract transcontinental mails on December 17, 1859.

John Butterfield’s Overland Mail Co. won the contract, and the first departures were on September 16, 1858. Civil War disruptions in Texas and Arkansas ended operations on the route in April 1861.

Postmarked October 19, 1860 in San Francisco - franked 3¢ for less than 3,000 miles  
Butterfield stagecoach left on October 19 - **arrived in New Mexico around October 27**  
Forwarded from Fort Craig on November 8 with 3¢ due to Virginia
Illustrated envelopes were used to direct mail overland via Los Angeles. Railroad designs were used as propaganda to promote the transcontinental railroad – which was not completed until 1869.

Posted September 23, 1859 in San Francisco - franked by 1859 10¢ type V

Posted June 27, 1859 in San Francisco - franked 10¢ in 1857 Issue stamps
“Via Los Angeles” endorsements were not necessary for the Butterfield service after the December 17, 1859 Post Office overland default order. Endorsements on foreign mail are rare.

Posted March 31, 1860 in Bordeaux, France - triple-weight postage paid by 1859 80c stamps

Havre Line steamer *Arago* left Southampton on April 4 and arrived in New York on April 18

Butterfield stagecoach left St Louis on April 23 and arrived in San Francisco on May 14

“Malle Overland Via Los Angeles” endorsement

Westbound Butterfield mail is much scarcer than eastbound mail
In October 1859, San Francisco introduced a straight-line "OVERLAND" routing handstamp, primarily for use on transit mail. This "dropped R" type was used until April 1860.

Originated December 1859 in Victoria, V.I. - 5d colonial postage paid per oval frank 15¢ US postage to Canada unpaid - postmarked in San Francisco on December 30

Posted in a California mining town in early December 1859 - 15¢ postage to France paid in cash Routed to December 9 Butterfield stagecoach - left NY January 8 on Havre Line steamer Arago
San Francisco used the Type 2 “dropped L” OVERLAND handstamp in September-October 1860. It was used as a “Too Late” marking for Butterfield mail.

Postmarked September 24, 1860 in San Francisco - 35¢ postage to Switzerland via Aachen
San Francisco Type 2 “OVERLAND” handstamp - Inman Line from New York to England

Cover front posted September 1860 in Victoria, V.I. - 5d colonial and 15¢ US postage paid at Victoria
September 27 San Francisco postmark - fewer than ten type 2 “OVERLAND” handstamps known
Posted November 26, 1860 in Nevada City, California - franked by 1855 10¢ Nesbitt entire

Fewer than five Nevada City “OVERLAND” markings are known, used June-November 1860

Posted October 10, 1859 in Sacramento - transcontinental postage paid by 1857 10¢ type III

Straight-line “OVERLAND” Sacramento routing handstamp - fewer than ten examples known
In 1860, the Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Co. (COCPPE) controlled the secondary Central Route overland mail contracts via Salt Lake, but wanted to obtain the lucrative contract owned by Butterfield on the Southern Route.

COCPPE started the transcontinental Pony Express between St Joseph, MO and San Francisco to prove the superiority of the Central Route for the main transcontinental mail contract. Their pony express operation fell into four distinct periods.

June 1860 red New York “California Pony Express Paid” postmark - 10¢ U.S. postage paid
$5 per ½ oz. express fee paid per faint manuscript “5.00” - forwarded privately to St Joseph
St Joseph Running Pony postmark for June 10 departure - arrived in San Francisco on June 25
California Pre-Contract Mail
Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1860 - August 1860

The COCPPE privately operated a weekly service between St Joseph and San Francisco during the first period of the Pony Express. Transit times ranged between 10 and 13 days, unless disrupted by Paiute Indian attacks.

Operations began on April 3, 1860 with departures from San Francisco and St. Joseph. Express fees were $5 per ½ ounce, but were reduced in August.

First trip departed from San Francisco on April 3, 1860 - arrived in St Joseph on April 13 $5 per ½ oz. Pony Express fee paid per black April 3 San Francisco Running Pony marking 10¢ U.S. postage paid - post office carried the letter from St Joseph to New York on April 17

One of two known covers carried on the first eastbound trip
The first westbound Pony Express trip left St Joseph on April 3, 1860 and arrived in San Francisco on April 14. Letters were sent under cover from the East to St Joseph and never directly entered the U.S. mails.

Sent under cover from the East to St Joseph - pencil “Paid 5.00” express fee paid
First Pony Express trip left St Joseph on April 3, 1860 per black St Joseph COCPPE mark
10¢ US transcontinental postage paid even though the post office did not handle this letter

Only known cover carried on the first westbound trip
3rd eastbound trip left San Francisco on April 20, 1860 - manuscript “3.00” express fee paid
Addressed to Carson City, Nevada - “short distance” rate applied
3¢ U.S. postage paid - only known example of the $3 “short distance” rate
The second period began with a reduced rate of $2.50 per ¼ ounce on July 31, 1860 in the East and on August 15 in the West. The twice-weekly service was still operated privately by COCPPE in 10-15 days between St Joseph and San Francisco.

The Central Overland Pony Express Company (COPEC) was a subsidiary of the COCPPE COPEC frank indicates that the $2.50 express fee was paid at a way station along the route
September 15, 1860 trip from San Francisco arrived in St Joseph on September 26
10¢ U.S. overland postage prepaid - posted on September 27 in St Joseph

Fewer than ten letters with COPEC franks are known
The carmine St Joseph Running Pony datestamp is known used in both directions from August 12 to September 13, 1860. Ten examples are known.

“Pd $5.00” indicates double-weight express fee - sent under cover from the East to St Joseph.

Pony left St Joseph on September 6, 1860 - only 3¢ postage was needed from St Joseph to California.

Only four westbound carmine Running Pony markings are known.
Collected August 19, 1860 at Placerville, CA way station - manuscript “Paid $2.50”
August 18 trip from San Francisco arrived in St Joseph on August 30 - 10¢ U.S. postage paid
Carmine August 30 St Joseph Running Pony postmark - postmarked next day in St Joseph

Only six eastbound carmine Running Pony markings are known
California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861

The San Francisco Running Pony marking was used as a departure datestamp, and to indicate that the $2.50 express fee was paid. It is known in black, red and mainly in blue.

Blue September 29, 1860 San Francisco Running Pony datestamp - 10¢ U.S. postage prepaid
Arrived October 10 in St Joseph per oval COCPPE marking - sent next day in the U.S. mails

Dateless Red Running Pony used briefly in March-April 1861 - only five examples known
Red San Francisco COCPPE mark shows April 13 departure - posted 13 days later in St Joseph
San Francisco also used a “Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company” (COCPPE) mark, known both dated and undated.

Undated San Francisco COCPPE mark used with blue January 12, 1861 Running Pony mark
Manuscript “¼” indicates weight for $2.50 express fee - posted February 2 in St Joseph

October 31, 1860 San Francisco COCPPE mark - November 12 St Joseph COCPPE arrival mark
From June to November 1860, New York used a red “California Pony Express Paid” (CPE) marking to indicate payment of the $2.50 per ¼ oz. fee. Fewer than fifteen examples are known.

Red CPE marking applied in New York City - 3¢ U.S. postage for St Joseph-San Francisco distance

**September 27, 1860 St Joseph Running Pony** departure mark - arrived October 7 in San Francisco

“5.00” for double-weight express fee - departed St Joseph on October 11, 1860
California Pre-Contract Mail
Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861

St Joseph, Missouri replaced its Running Pony marking with a double oval COCPPE marking in late December 1860.

$2.50 express fee paid per “Paid JTC” - U.S. free frank for California Senator Gwin in Washington, DC
St Joseph Running Pony mark for December 13, 1860 departure - arrived December 29 in San Francisco

Departed St Joseph on March 10, 1861 - express fee paid per “2.50” - 10¢ U.S. postage prepaid
Arrived March 23 in San Francisco - postmarked March 25 for transmittal to Oregon
April 13, 1861 red San Francisco COCPPE datestamp and undated red Running Pony marking
Posted unpaid on April 26 at St Joseph - 24¢ rate to England did not require prepayment
April 30 New York debit to England for 5¢ postage - Cunarder *Niagara* left Boston on May 1

**Arrived in Liverpool, England on May 13** - one shilling due from recipient

Only five red San Francisco Running Pony markings are known
California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1861 - June 1861

The Post Office was persuaded by the success of the Pony Express to move the daily overland mail contract to the Central Route on March 2, 1861 but awarded it to the Overland Mail Company, effective July 1. COCPPE became a subcontractor, so the Pony Express was operated jointly in the third period.

This transitional period began on April 1, 1861 (April 15 in the West) with a reduced rate of $2 per ½ ounce. Special adhesives for this were printed by Wells Fargo & Company, which had begun to administer the service.

Blue San Francisco Running Pony mark for May 11, 1861 departure - $2 Pony Express stamp
Prepaid 10¢ U.S. transcontinental postage to Boston - postmarked on May 24 in St Joseph
California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1861 - June 1861

Wells Fargo prepared franked envelopes for the $2 rate. These type I franks were used for some westbound mail, and only two are known.

Franked envelope paid $2 express fee - U.S. postage paid by restored 10¢ Nesbitt entire
May 7, 1861 “New-York California Pony Express” mark - left St Joseph on May 12

$2 express fee paid in Washington, DC per “2.00” - left St Joseph on April 18, 1861
Sent under cover to St Joseph - only 3¢ U.S. postage needed from St Joseph to San Francisco
The July 1861 daily overland contract included a provision to continue the Pony Express until the completion of the overland telegraph. The service in this fourth period was operated by the Overland Mail Company under contract to the Post Office Department until terminated on October 26.

Wells Fargo introduced a new $1 per ½ ounce rate on July 1, 1861 for the pony service between Placerville, CA and St Joseph, and issued new adhesives. Wells Fargo also offered an additional 10¢ express service between San Francisco and Placerville, connecting with the Pony Express.

10¢ entire with red Wells Fargo frank sold for 20¢ - express fee to Placerville plus U.S. postage
Blue San Francisco Running Pony datetamp for August 3, 1861 departure - red $1 WF stamp
Pony Express arrived on August 14 in St Joseph - postmarked August 18 in New York City
Forwarded on August 20 from Westfield, MA with an additional 1857 3¢ stamp

Fewer than ten Pony Express covers are known with 3¢ stamps
The eastern terminus for the Pony Express was changed from St Joseph, Missouri to Atchison, Kansas on September 23, 1861.

$1 stamp on Wells Fargo over Freeman & Co. frank - July 17, 1861 Marysville datestamp
Connected with Pony Express at Sacramento - posted July 29 in St Joseph - envelope restored

Originated October 3, 1861 outside of San Francisco - October 5 San Francisco Running Pony
$1 stamp on 10¢ star die entire with Wells Fargo red frank - posted October 19 in Atchison
Datelined “London 3rd July 1861” - sent under cover to forwarder in New York City

Given to Pony Express agent who applied **July 20 “California Pony Express” marking**

10¢ postage added - sent in express package to St Joseph - postmarked there on July 28

Pony Express left St Joseph on July 28 and arrived on August 8 in San Francisco

“California Pony Express New-York” mark was used December 1860-August 1861
California Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861

Wells Fargo prepared special franked envelopes for the July 1861 $1 rate. These type 2 franks were used to send letters to St Joseph in the US mails.

Franked envelope paid $1 express fee - U.S. postage paid by 10¢ “Watermelon” entire

Posted August 15, 1861 in New York - Pony Express left St Joseph on August 18

Posted in New York on October 5, 1861 for the Pony Express Agent at St Joseph

October 10 St Joseph “oval in circle” marking - arrived October 22 in Sacramento
California Contract Mail
Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861

Pony Express letters on company business and from U.S. senators were carried free of any express or postal charges.

Datelined “Fort Bridger July 10. 1861” - endorsed “Express Business Free”
Written by COCPPE agent Joseph Roberson on first daily overland stage from California

Datelined “Washington D.C. 31st July 1861” from California senator Milton Latham
August 8 St Joseph “oval in circle” marking - no indication that any fee was paid
Wells Fargo introduced a daily pony express service between San Francisco and Virginia City, Nevada on August 8, 1862. Express fees were paid by special adhesive stamps on Wells Fargo 10¢ franked envelopes (which included 3¢ U.S. postage).

Given to Wells Fargo & Co. in Virginia City, Nevada Territory on September 7, 1862
10¢ pony express stamp added to 10¢ Wells Fargo franked envelope with 3¢ U.S. postage
The 10¢ stamp was used from August 1862 until February 1863, when rates increased to 25¢

10¢ brown is the rarest of the Virginia City Pony Express stamps
In February 1863, the Virginia City Pony Express rates were increased to 25¢, in addition to normal 10¢ Wells Fargo express fees.

Datelined in Aurora, Nevada Territory on April 24, 1863 and given to Wells Fargo pony express 25¢ blue pony express stamp was used from February 1863 to February 1864 - replaced by 25¢ red

Carried by Wells Fargo pony express from San Francisco to Gold Hill on June 1, 1863 10¢ Wells Fargo entire included 3¢ U.S. postage, even though post office did not handle the mail
California Pre-Contract Mail
Nevada Pony Express: March 1864 - March 1865

The Virginia City Pony Express 25¢ red stamp was used from March 1864 to March 1865. There was no service August-December 1864.

Carried by Wells Fargo pony express from Virginia City, N.T. on February 9, 1865 to San Francisco

Datelined “San Francisco Jany 25 1865” - carried by Wells Fargo pony express to Carson City

Wells Fargo sold franked all-over advertising envelopes for an extra penny, or 11¢ each
Wells Fargo’s Virginia City Pony Express was intended for mail between San Francisco and Nevada Territory. It could also be used as the first leg of an overland trip to the East.

Entrusted to Wells Fargo in San Francisco on February 3, 1865 - addressed to Philadelphia
Carried by Pony Express to Virginia City - forwarded overland via Austin, N.T. on February 6
The 25¢ stamp paid for expedited delivery over the western leg of the trip to the East

Only known transcontinental Virginia City Pony Express cover
Langton’s Pioneer Express operated a pony express service into the Humboldt district from July 5 to August 13, 1864. The extra fee was paid by a 25¢ adhesive stamp on a Langton franked envelope incorporating 3¢ U.S. postage.

Carried by Langton’s Pony Express from Unionville, Nevada Territory to Bidwell’s Bar, CA
25¢ brown Humboldt Express stamp added to Langton’s franked envelope with 3¢ U.S. postage

Fewer than ten 25¢ Humboldt Express stamps are known on cover
Civil War disturbances along the Overland Mail Company’s (OMC) Southern (Butterfield) Route caused the Post Office to move the default transcontinental contract to the Central Route, re-numbered Route 10773.

The Overland Mail Company (OMC) operated this daily mail contract between Placerville, CA and St Joseph, starting July 1, 1861. It serviced all western destinations and ended with the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869.

Datelined “London 19 Octr 1861” and posted on November 3, 1861 by New York City forwarder

Franked 11¢ for overland postage plus 1¢ carrier fee by 1861 1¢ and 10¢ type I First Design

Endorsed to Pony Express which ended in October, so re-endorsed “Overland via St Joseph”

Arrived in San Francisco on December 5 per docket - slow 28 days transit time

Scheduled 20-day trip, or 23 days during the four winter months
Ben Holladay’s Overland Mail & Express Co. was awarded the contract for Post Office Route 15022 between The Dalles, Oregon and Salt Lake City via Boise City and Fort Hall. Thrice-weekly service was from July 1, 1864 to June 30, 1868. This was used as a northwest feeder line which connected with the OMC daily overland stagecoach at Salt Lake City.

Postmarked October 19, 1865 in Ruby City, Idaho Terr. - **endorsed Overland via Boise City**
Carried by Holladay from Boise City to Salt Lake City - connected there with daily overland stage
Postmaster free frank to New York City - from the New York & Owyhee Gold & Silver Mining Co.

**Fewer than five letters carried under this contract are known**
Illustrated stagecoach envelopes were used on the Central Route, and sometimes consisted of modified “Via Los Angeles” envelopes.

Posted on July 18, 1861 in Georgetown, California - franked by 1859 10¢ type V
Design modified for Central Route by removing “Via Los Angeles” from stagecoach door

Posted December 16, 1861 in San Francisco - franked by 1859 10¢ type V
Old Butterfield illustrated envelope modified by scratching out “via Los Angeles”
San Francisco mistakenly applied the 10¢ incoming steamship rate to mail from British Columbia and Hawaii from August to November 1864. They used a special “FOREIGN” postmark to explain the extra charge.

Prepaid 5¢ Vancouver Island colonial postage per blue Victoria “long oval” in August 1864
Sent overland from San Francisco on September 3 - rated “FOREIGN” and “DUE 7” to New York

Posted August 27, 1864 in Honolulu - 5¢ Hawaiian and 6¢ U.S. mixed franking
Sent overland from San Francisco on September 23 - rated “FOREIGN” and “DUE 4”
Transcontinental Contract Mail
Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869

Posted July 1867 in Williams Creek, British Columbia - **25¢ B.C. and 10¢ U.S. mixed franking**
Sent overland from San Francisco on July 19 - arrived August 14 in Aylmer, Upper Canada

Posted August 1867 in Williams Creek, British Columbia - **25¢ B.C. and 10¢ U.S. mixed franking**
Sent overland from San Francisco on August 26 - BC&VI 2½ d stamps used provisionally as 6½ cents
Transcontinental Contract Mail
Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869

Posted August 4, 1863 in Paris, France - franked by 1862 80c - Inman steamer *City of Washington*
Overland to Utah on September 3 - **forwarded overland to San Francisco with 1861 3¢ stamp**

Carried by **Rockfellow’s Express in July 1863 from Boise mines** to Wells Fargo at Walla Walla, WA
Expedited overland by Wells Fargo via New York to Paris - posted unpaid on September 1
Cunard steamer *Asia* from New York on September 1 - 3¢ debit to France - 8 décimes due
Transcontinental Contract Mail
Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869

Posted March 1862 in Hope, British Columbia - 2½d B.C. and 15¢ U.S. mixed franking
Pre-purchased Victoria 5¢ frank not valid in Hope - overland from San Francisco on April 14
Chicago Paid 15 transit mark - addressed to Toronto, Canada West

Posted May 19, 1866 in Honolulu - sent overland from San Francisco on June 11
10¢ Hawaiian franking prepaid total postage - 5¢ U.S. stamp added by S.F. post office

Only known multiple of the Hawaii Inter-Island 5¢ stamp
The railheads of the transcontinental railroad met at Promontory Point, UT on May 10, 1869. Prior to that, OMC carried the mail between the railheads, and transit times gradually shortened.

Posted unpaid on May 6, 1869 in San Francisco - railhead gap was 9 miles - **nine days to New York**

Posted double-weight on April 27, 1869 in San Francisco - 1867 24¢ “F” grill and 1869 6¢
Railhead gap was 23 miles - 11 days to New York - **earliest use of 1869 Issue from California**