

## OVERLAND MAILS OF THE WESTWARD EXPANSION: 1832 TO 1869

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 size of the United States, 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).



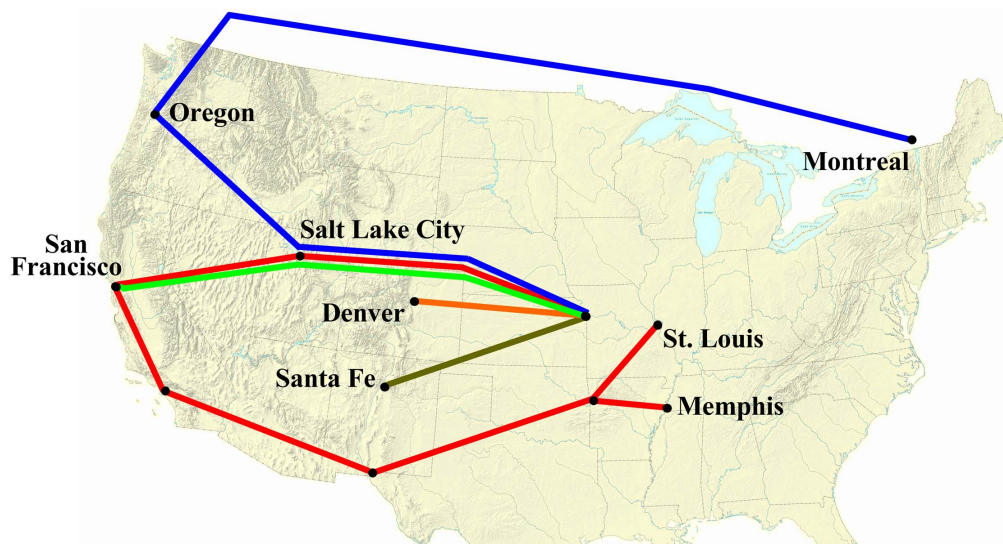
Santa Fe mail routes used the Santa Fe Trail to transport mail between New Mexico and Missouri (shown in olive below).



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 or canoe icon) on each route is covered first, followed by contract mail (stagecoach 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.

Pre-contract overland routes were superseded by the December 1848 steamship contract mail route between Astoria, Oregon and New York via Panama, and by the July 1851 overland contract mail route between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



Dated 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

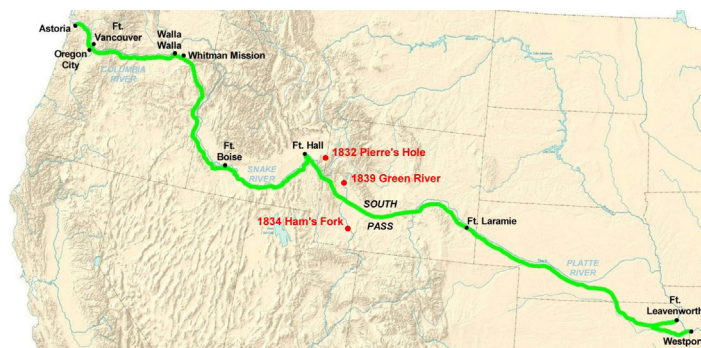
## Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

Fur Trade: 1832 - 1840



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.



Dated 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**

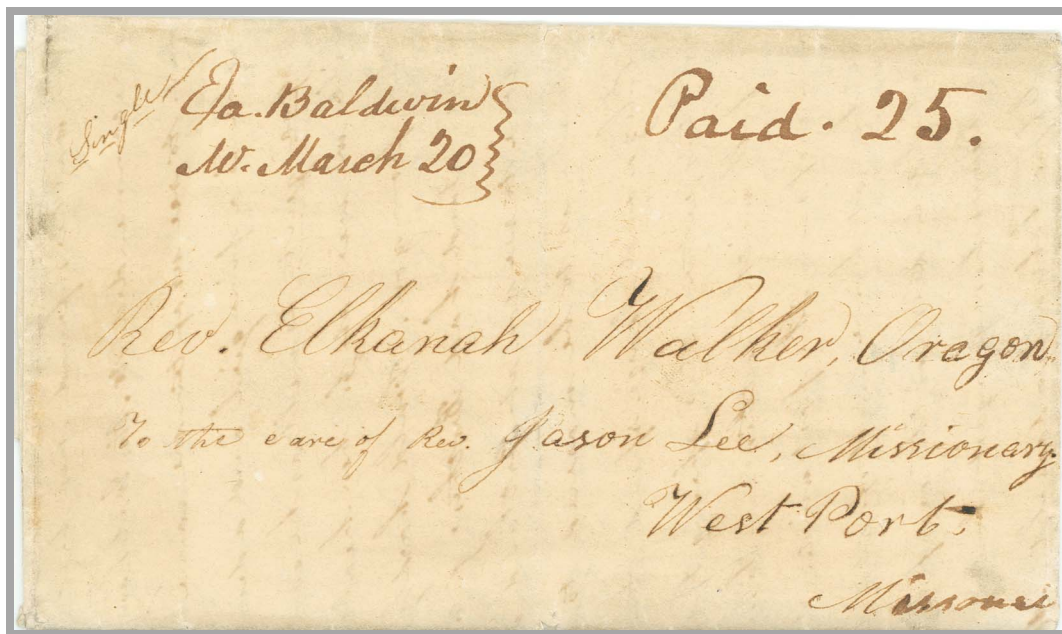


## Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

Fur Trade: 1832 - 1840



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 a westbound HBC fur brigade - received in Oregon on September 16

**Only known westbound fur trade caravan letter**



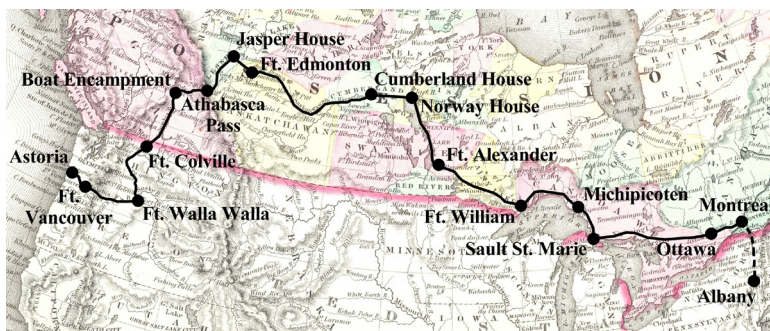


## Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

HBC Canoe Brigade: 1833 - 1846



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 or to Americans in Oregon. The June 15, 1846 Oregon Partition marked the end of this route for Oregon Territory mail.



Dated 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

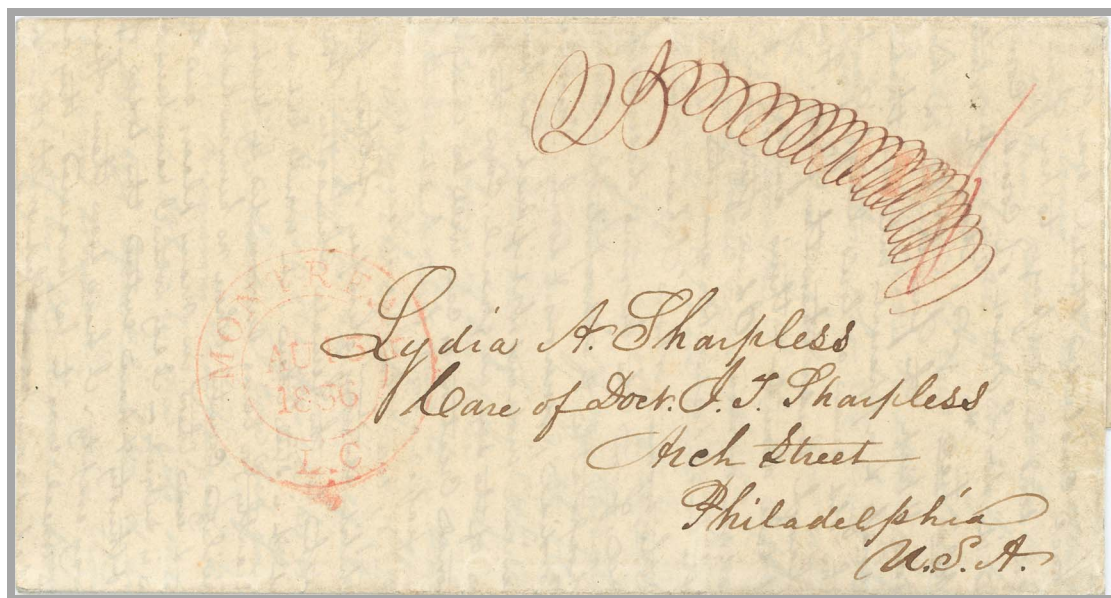
**Earliest known letter from Oregon by HBC Canoe Brigade**

## Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

### HBC Canoe Brigade: 1833 - 1846



Eastbound HBC Canoe Brigade trips left once per year from Fort Vancouver after the ice had cleared on the Columbia River, typically in February. They took about six months to reach HBC headquarters at Lachine (Montreal), Canada.



Dated 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



## HBC Canoe Brigade: 1833 - 1846



James Brew  
Columbia R. River  
Columb. R. River  
by Express Boat  
Oct 29. 1844

PAID 13 1/2

25

Case of James Keith & Co. Wm. W. Bridgman Brewer  
Machine Co.  
H. Bay Company, Columbia River  
Express to Columbia River Dallas Station

## Only known HBC Canoe Brigade letter to Oregon

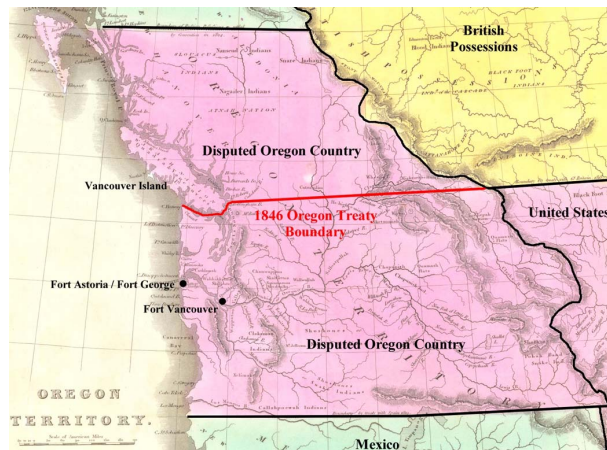


## Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

HBC Canoe Brigade: 1833 - 1846



Great Britain and the United States agreed to divide Oregon along the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel on June 15, 1846. The HBC moved its operations to Vancouver Island, and their Canoe Brigade ceased to run from Oregon after 1846.



Dated February 9, 1846 near Fort Colville, Oregon - **last HBC Canoe Brigade from Oregon**

Posted October 27 at Lachine (near Montreal) prepaid 4½p to the U.S. border

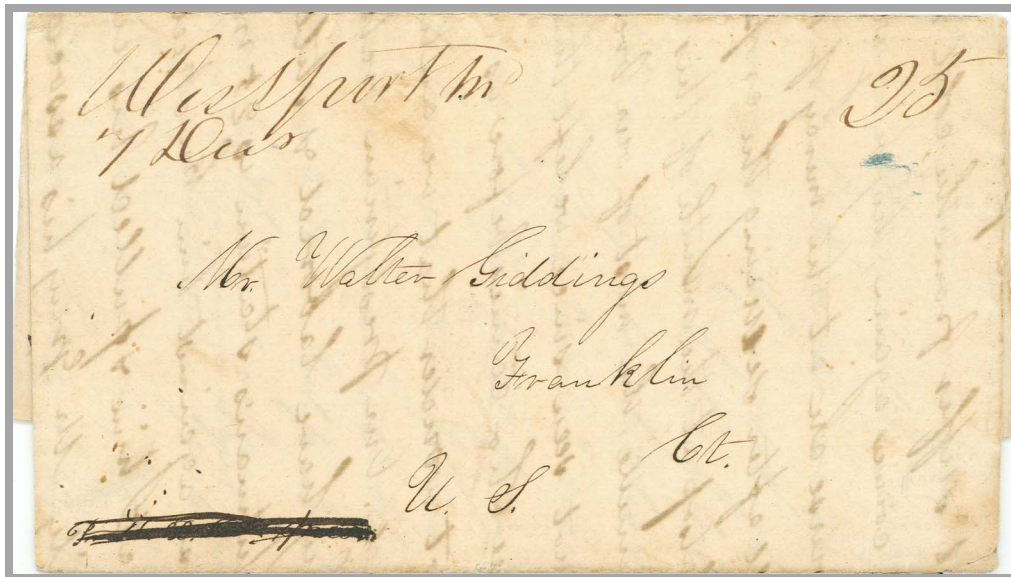
Entered U.S. mails in Vermont - rated 10¢ due for over 300 miles to Massachusetts

## Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

Overland Courier: 1840 - 1848



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.



Dated 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



## Oregon Pre-Contract Mail

Overland Courier: 1840 - 1848



Oregon post offices were established at Astoria and Oregon City in 1847. After 1848, most Oregon mail was given to those post offices, and was sent by the steamship contract route from Astoria via Panama to New York.



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

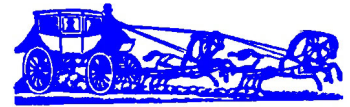


Whitman Mission at Waiilatpu



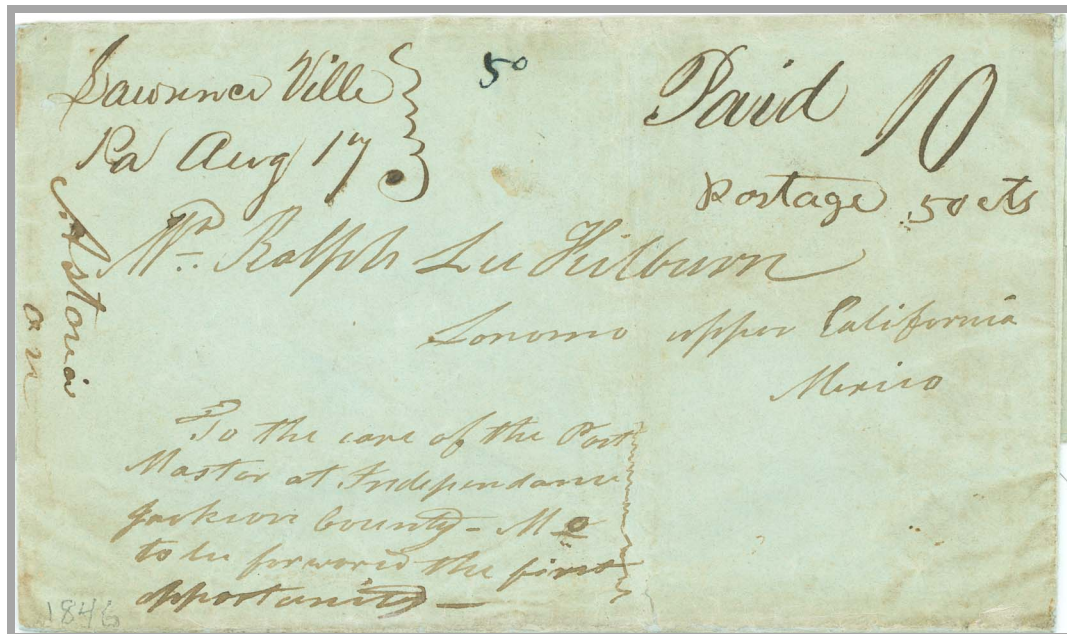
## Oregon Contract Mail

First Contract Mail: April - September 1847



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**

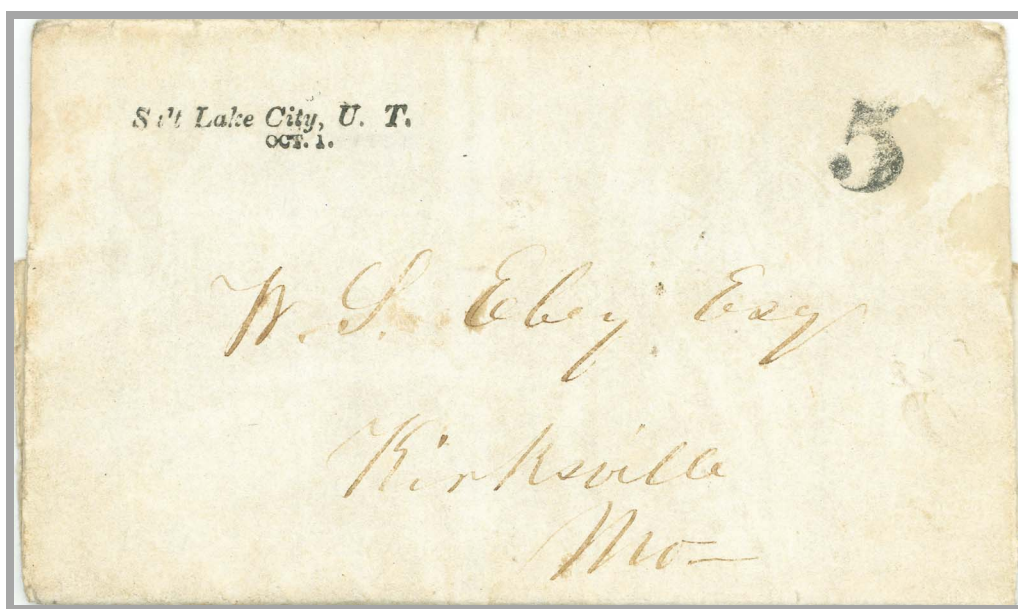
## Oregon Contract Mail

**Brown & Torrence Contract: July 1851 - June 1854**



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.



Dateline September 13, 1851 at Fort Boise, Idaho - rated 5¢ due to Kirkville, 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**

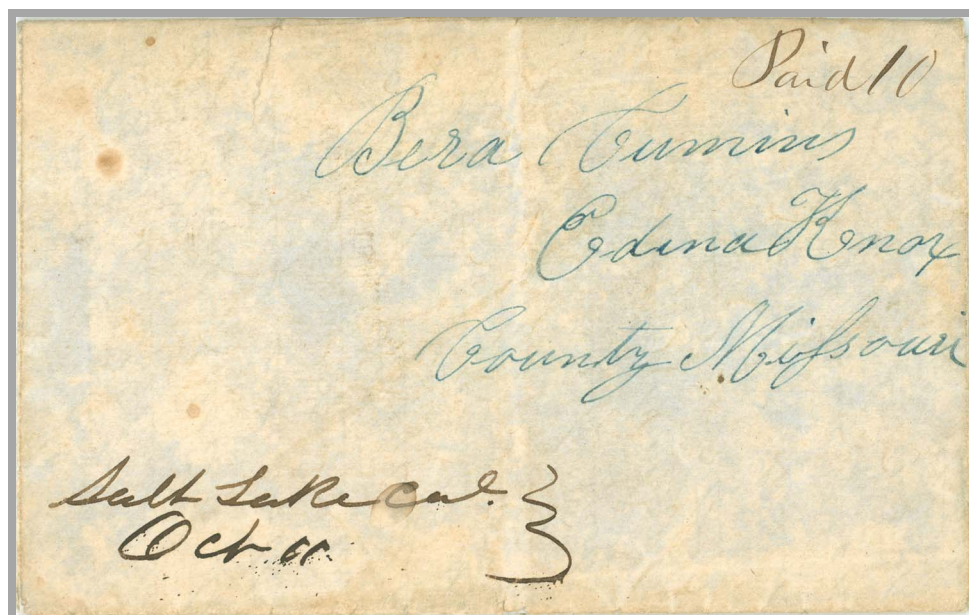
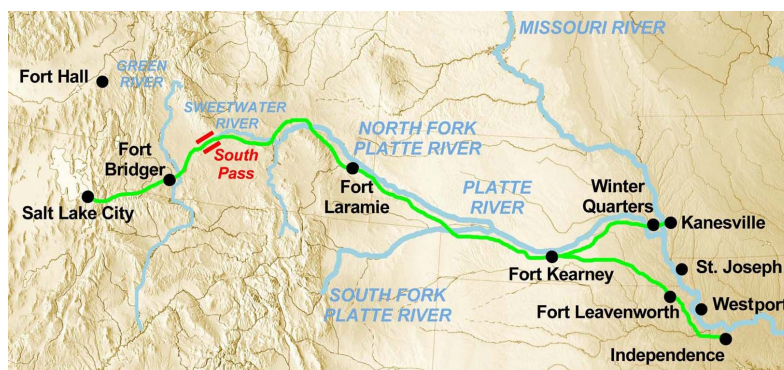
## Utah-Missouri Pre-Contract Mail

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

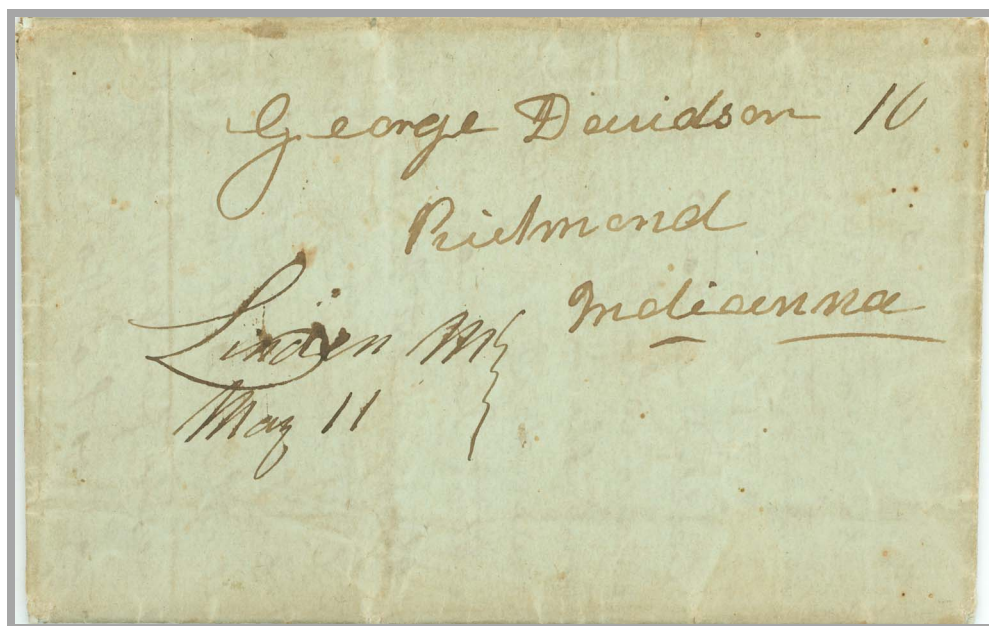


## Utah-Missouri Pre-Contract Mail

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 Missouri or Iowa.



Datelined "Great Salt Lake City: January 9th 1848" - posted on May 11 in Linden, Missouri

**"This mail is carried by some of the soldiers of the Mormon Battalion recently from...California"**

Rated 10¢ due to Richmond, Indiana

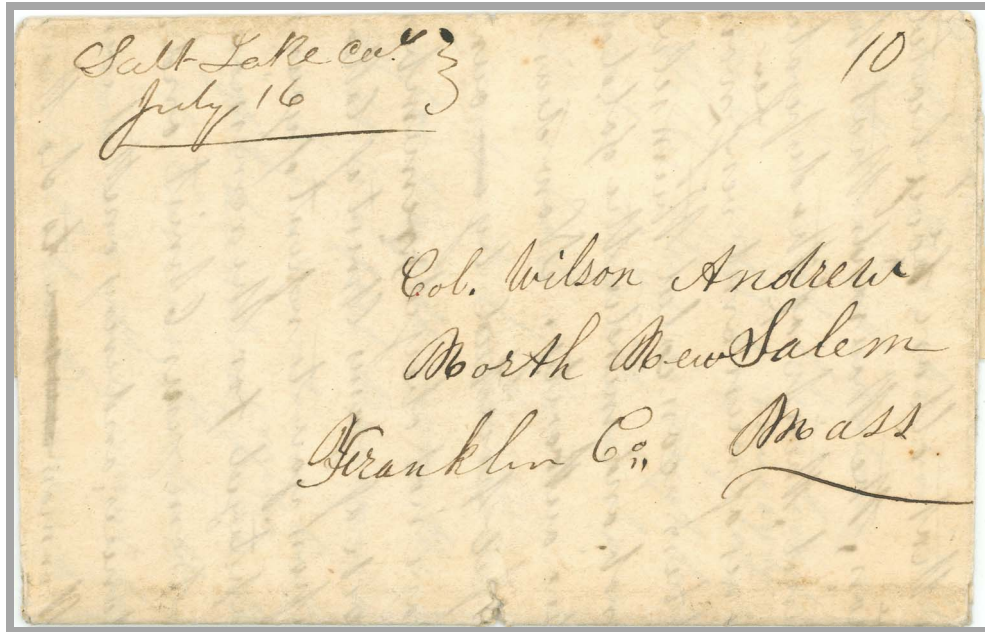
**Earliest known letter from Salt Lake City in private hands**

## Utah-Missouri Pre-Contract Mail

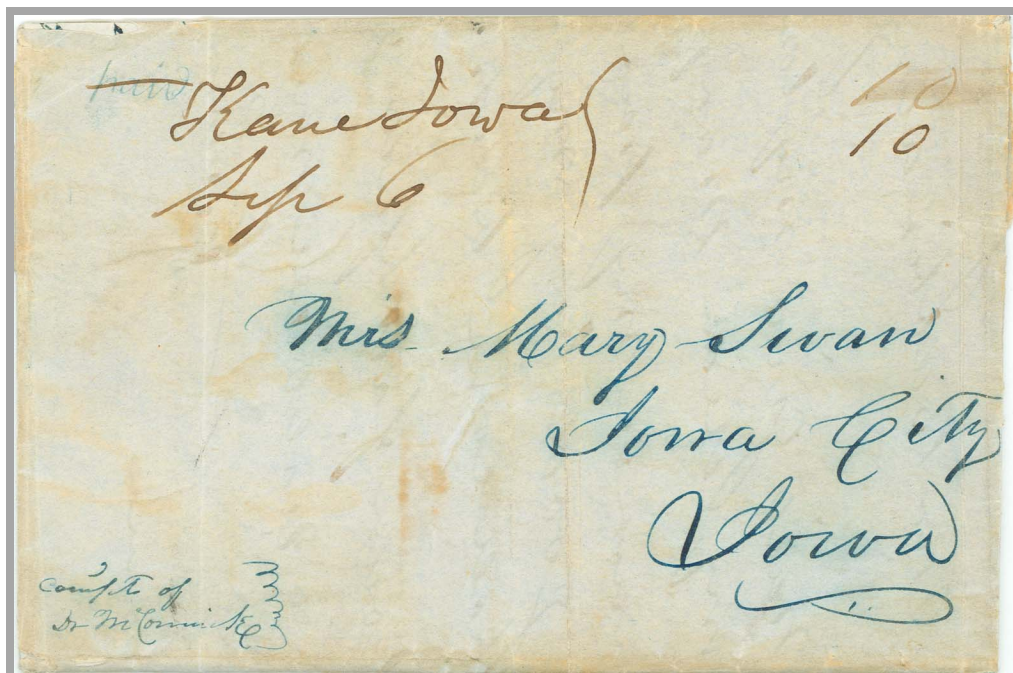
Mormon Courier: March 1849 - August 1850



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, Iowa  
Left July 27 and arrived September 3 - **earliest known letter from the Salt Lake post office**

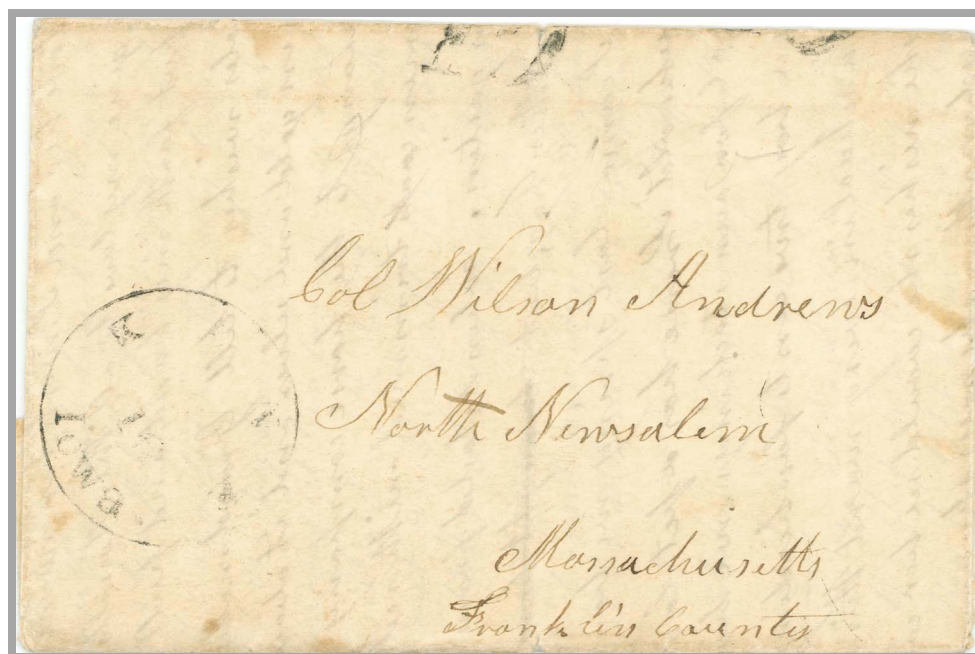


Datelined near South Pass (Wyoming) on July 27, 1849 - **collected enroute by Almon Babbitt**  
This privately-carried letter was postmarked on September 6 at Kane, Iowa - rated 10¢ due

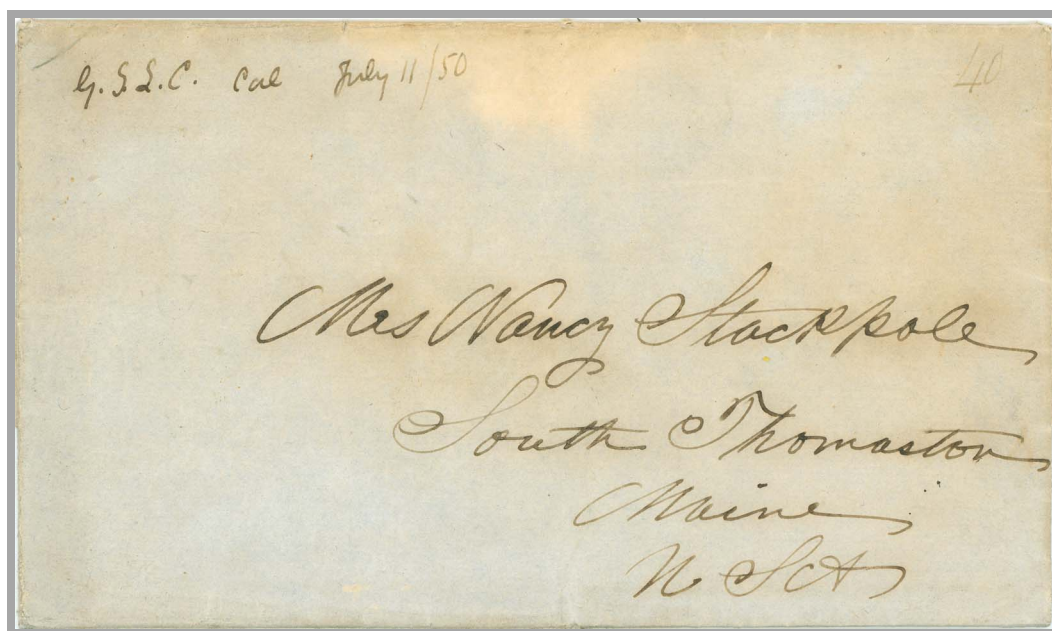


## Utah-Missouri Pre-Contract Mail

Mormon Courier: March 1849 - August 1850



Datelined "Great Salt Lake City July 27 1850" - **carried privately by John Green**  
Left August 2 and arrived in Kane, Iowa on September 12 - postmarked there on September 16



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.



Dated 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

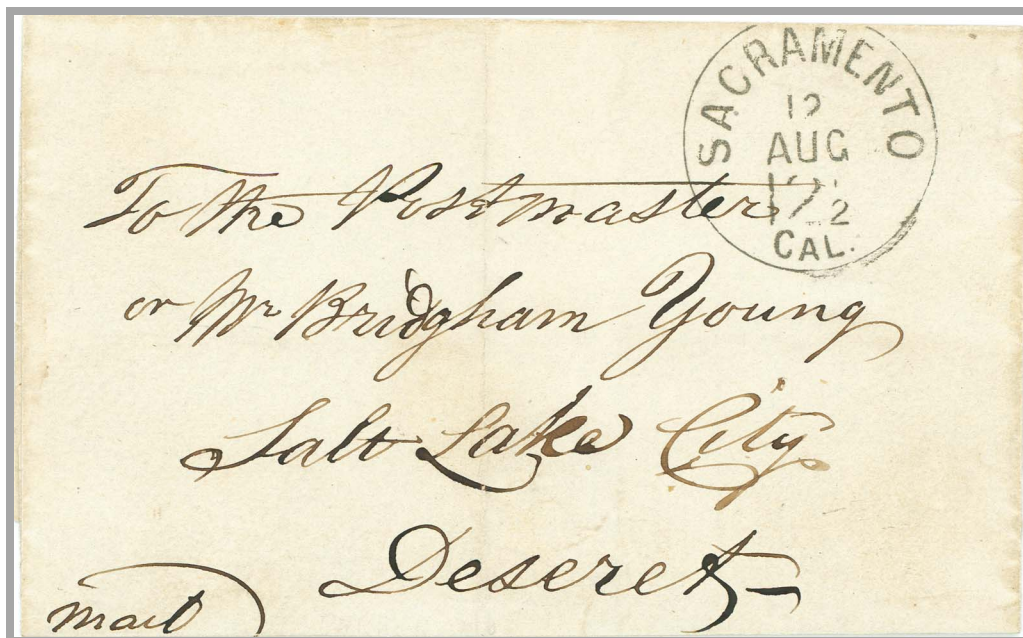
## Utah-California Pre-Contract Mail

Mormon Courier: August 1847 - May 1851



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**

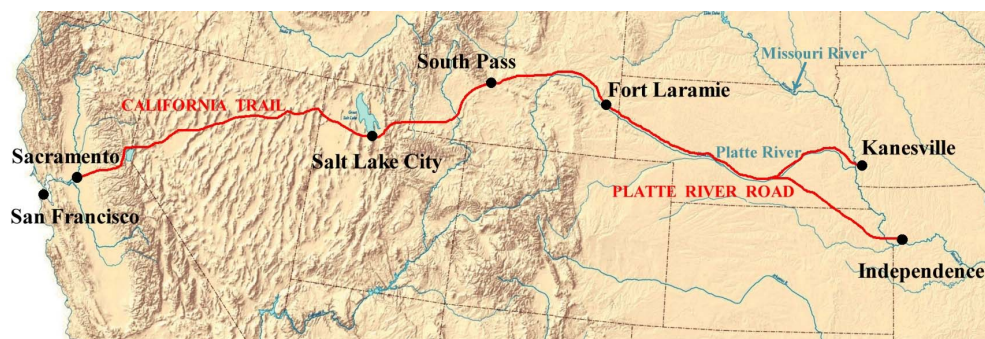
## Utah Contract Mail

Introduction: August 1850 - June 1861



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 Sabula, 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**



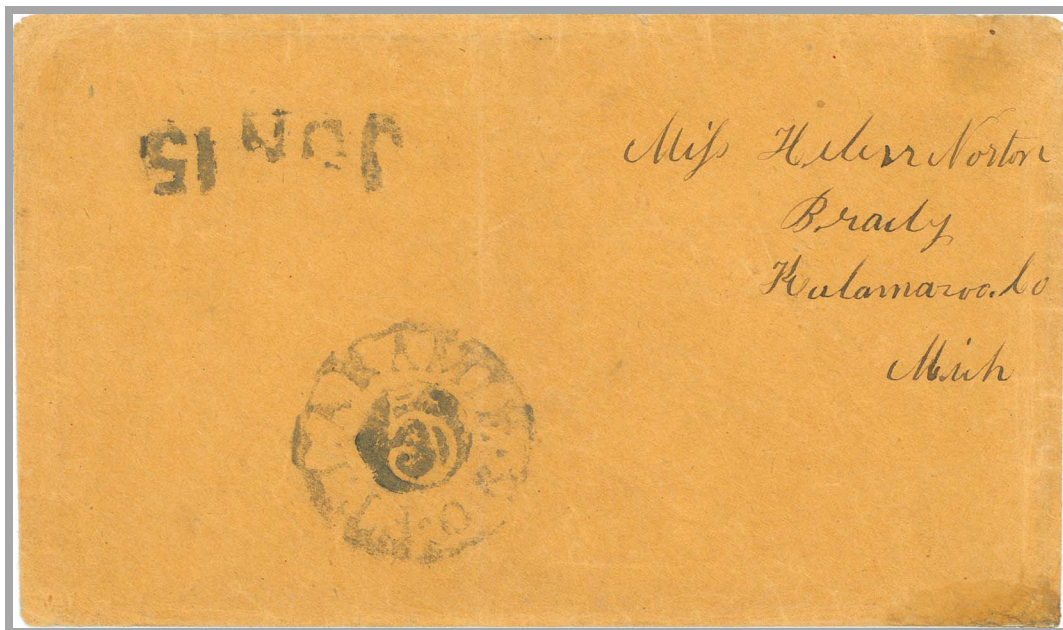
## Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Woodson Contract: August 1850 - June 1854



Samuel Woodson's four-year monthly contract for Route 4965 between Salt Lake City and Independence, Missouri 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 1, 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



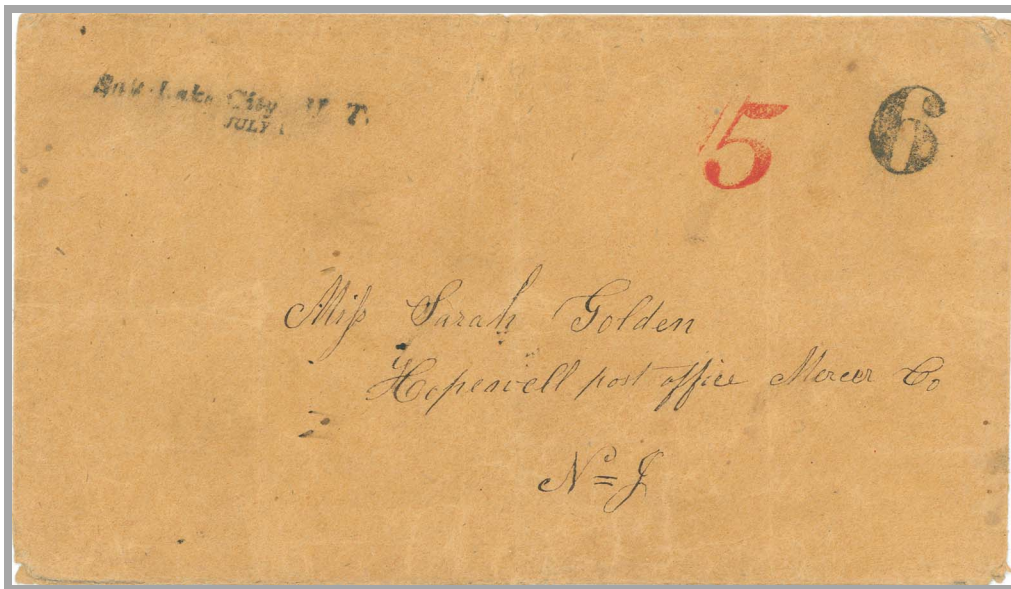
**Only four covers with this postmark are known**

## Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Woodson Contract: August 1850 - June 1854

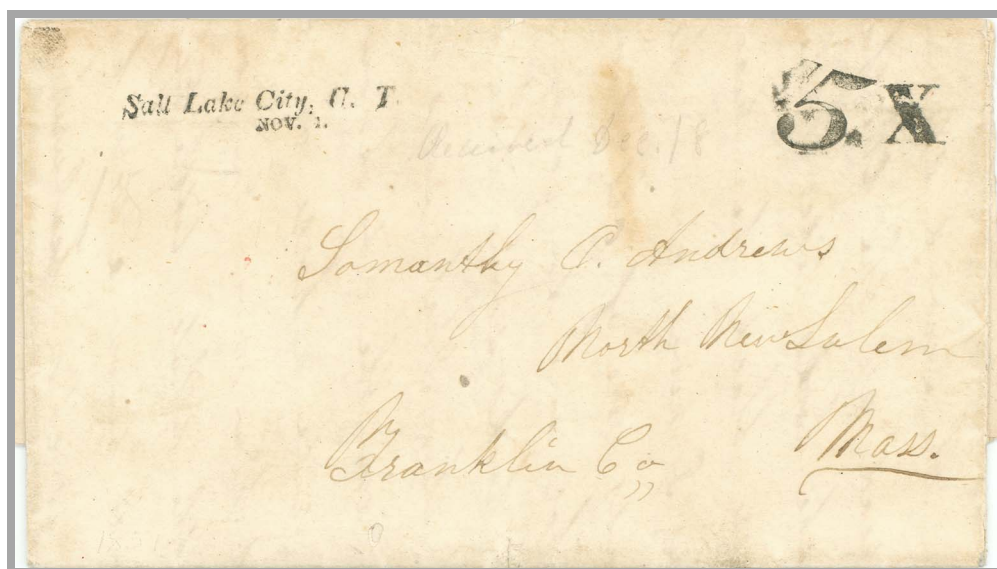


The Salt Lake City post office used manuscript postmarks until July 1, 1851 when a straight-line marking was introduced. It was in use for only five months.



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

**Left July 1 with 10<sup>th</sup> 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



## Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Magraw Contract: July 1854 - November 1856



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 1<sup>st</sup> Sioux War. Weather also caused many mails to detour via California.



Postmarked September 1, 1855 at Salt Lake City, Utah Territory - prepaid 24¢ 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



## Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Kimball Contract: November 1856 - June 1857



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 "Salt Lake City Utah T." on November 1, 1856 - **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 4 and arrived in Liverpool on April 17 - marked "U.S. Packet"



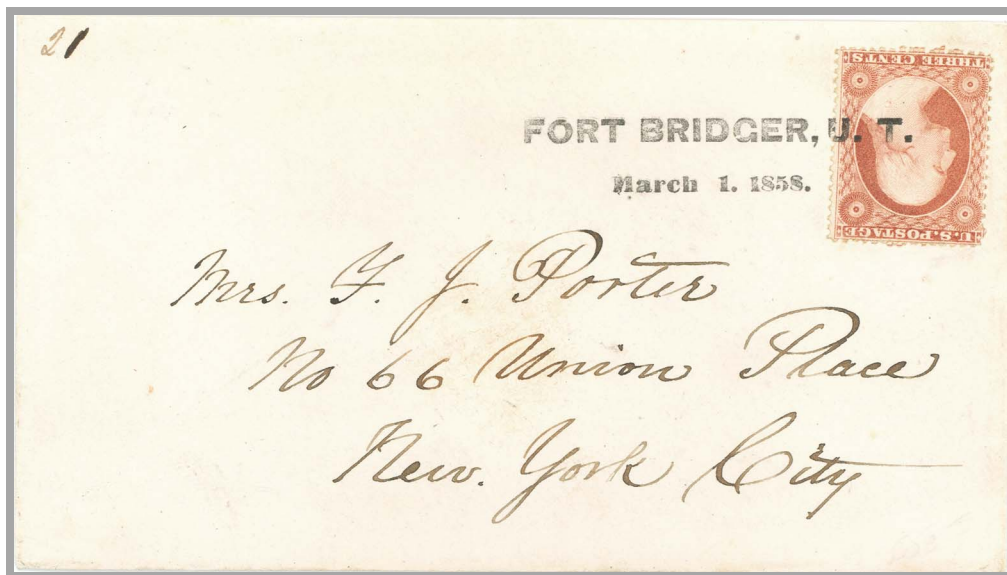
## Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Miles Contract: October 1857 - March 1858



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.



Postmarked March 1, 1858 at Fort Bridger, Utah Territory - prepaid 3¢ postage to New York City

From Captain Fitz John Porter, adjutant to the commander of the 1857-58 Utah Expedition

Porter later commanded the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps of the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War

**One of five known Fort Bridger straight-line postmarks**

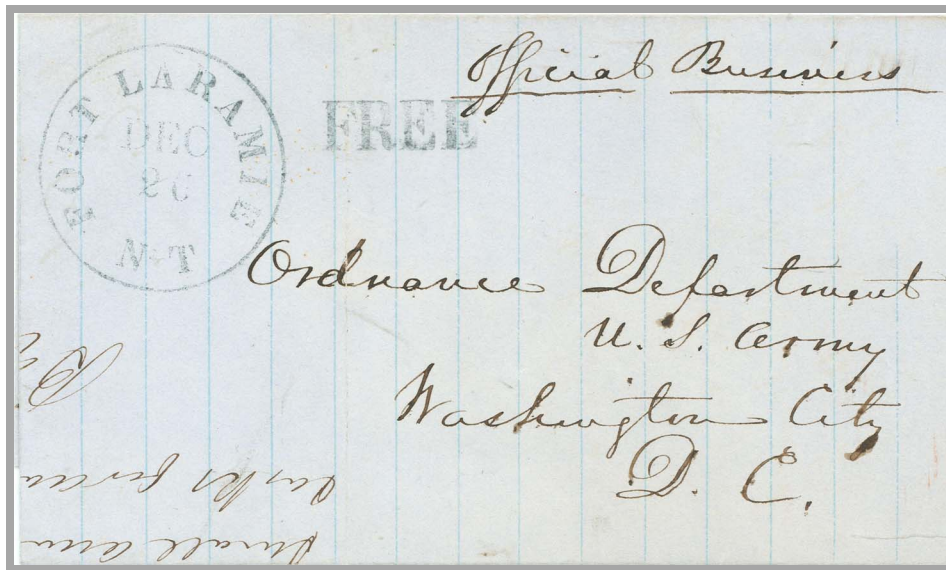


## Utah-Missouri Contract Mail

Hockaday Contract: May 1858 - June 1861



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. Hockaday carried mail to or from towns along the Central Route.



Postmarked December 26, 1858 at Fort Laramie, N. T. - sent "FREE" from 4<sup>th</sup> 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, Utah Territory - prepaid 3¢ postage to Fort Laramie

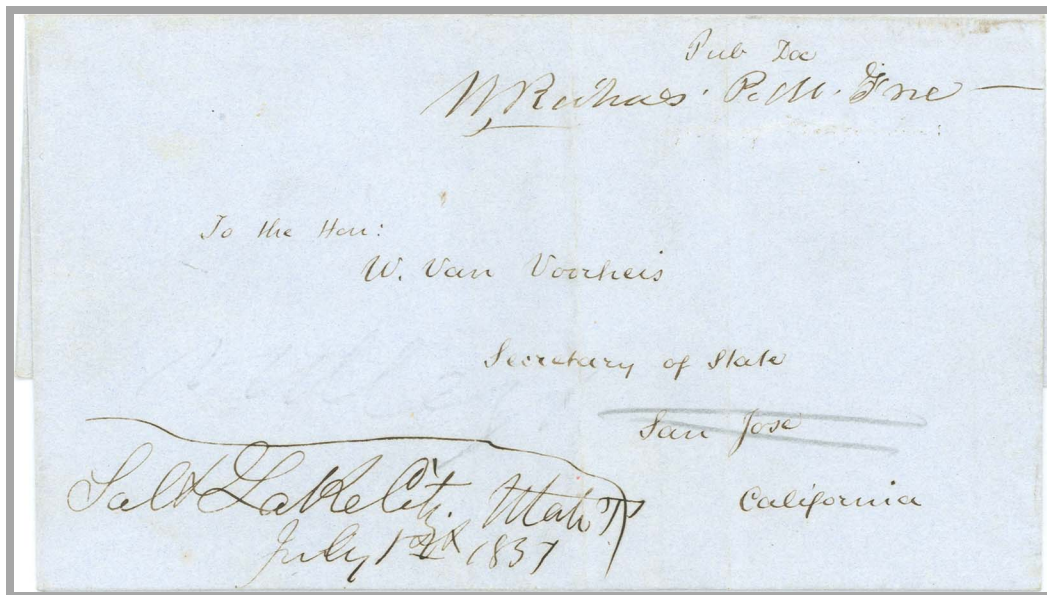
# Utah-California Contract Mail

Introduction: May 1851 - June 1861



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 Territory - sent free on post office business

**Left July 1 with 1<sup>st</sup> 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**

## Utah-California Contract Mail

1<sup>st</sup> Chorpenning Contract: May 1851 - June 1854



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 2<sup>nd</sup> Chorpenning eastbound mail** - arrived July 2 in Salt Lake City

5<sup>th</sup> 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

1<sup>st</sup> Chorpensing Contract: May 1851 - June 1854



Lt. John Grattan led Company G of the 6<sup>th</sup> 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 Chorpensing mail - arrived mid-August at Fort Laramie

Addressed to soldier in Company G of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry - **letter marked “Sent Back to England”**

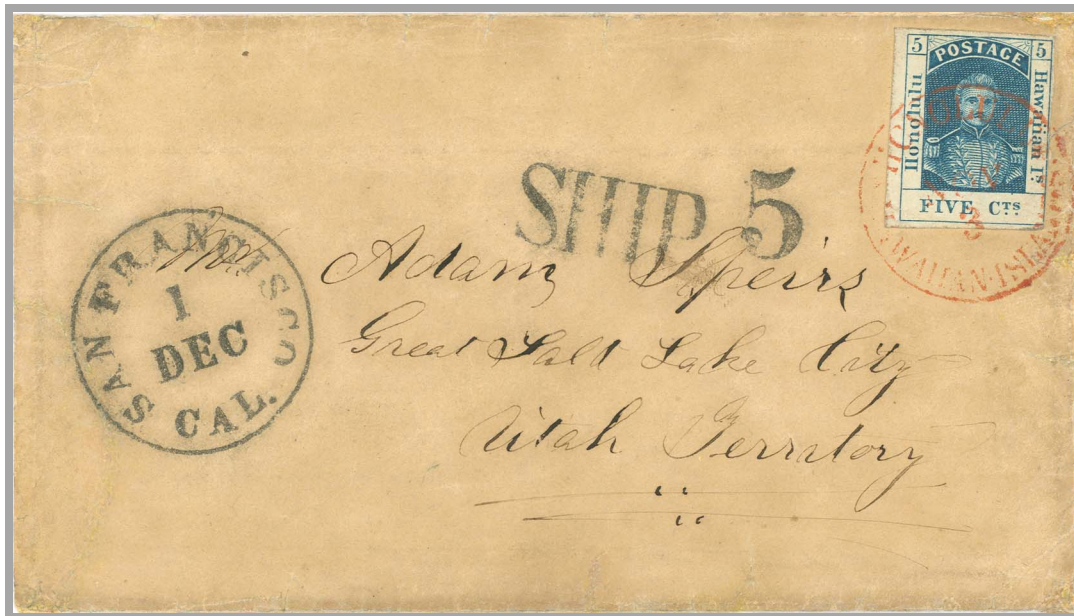


## Utah-California Contract Mail

2<sup>nd</sup> Chorpenning Contract: July 1854 - June 1858



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

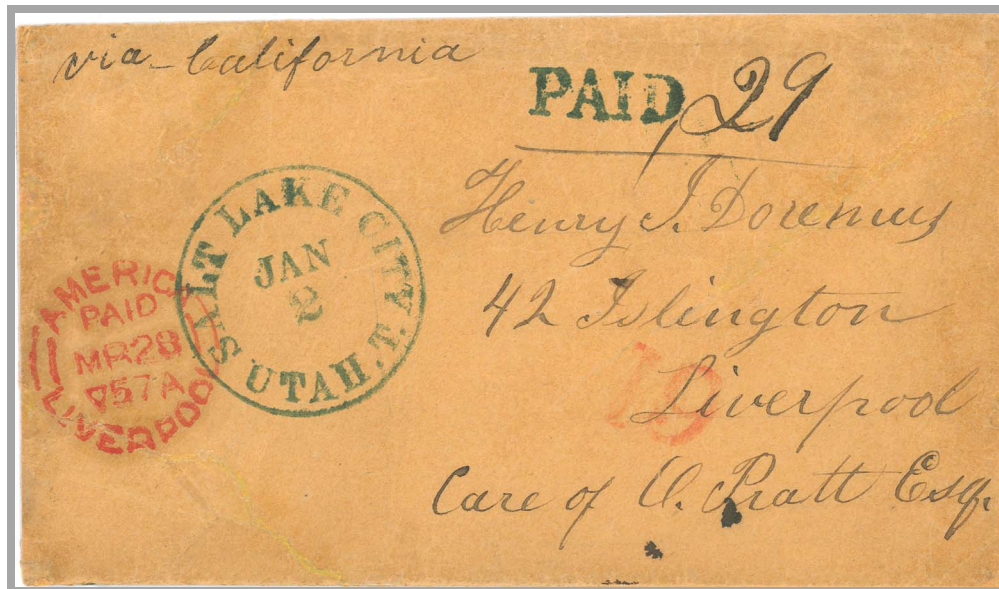


## Utah-California Contract Mail

2<sup>nd</sup> 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



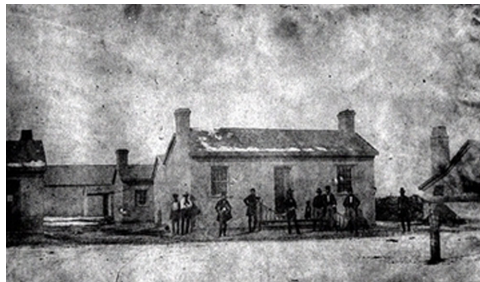
## Utah-California Contract Mail

3<sup>rd</sup> Chorpenning Contract: July 1858 - May 1860



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 mid-February 1859 and a rimless “tombstone” postmark in March-August 1859.



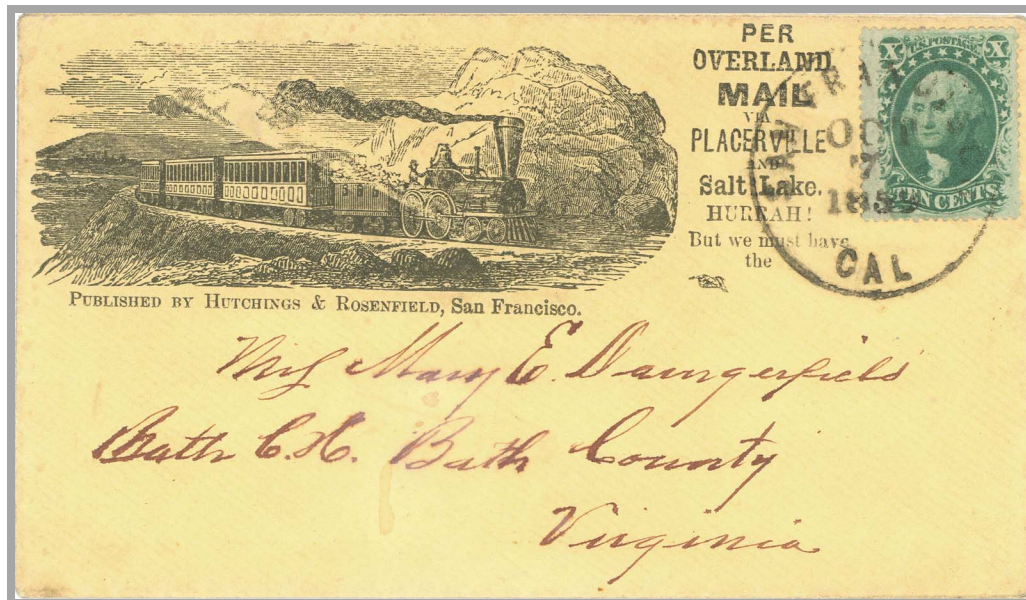
Postmarked “Camp Floyd, U.T” in manuscript on February 7, 1859 - **endorsed “Via California”**  
Held for insufficient postage - additional 17¢ paid in cash - **April 18 “tombstone” postmark applied**  
April 18 Chorpenning coach collected this letter in transit - arrived in Placerville on April 30  
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

3<sup>rd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 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, California - 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



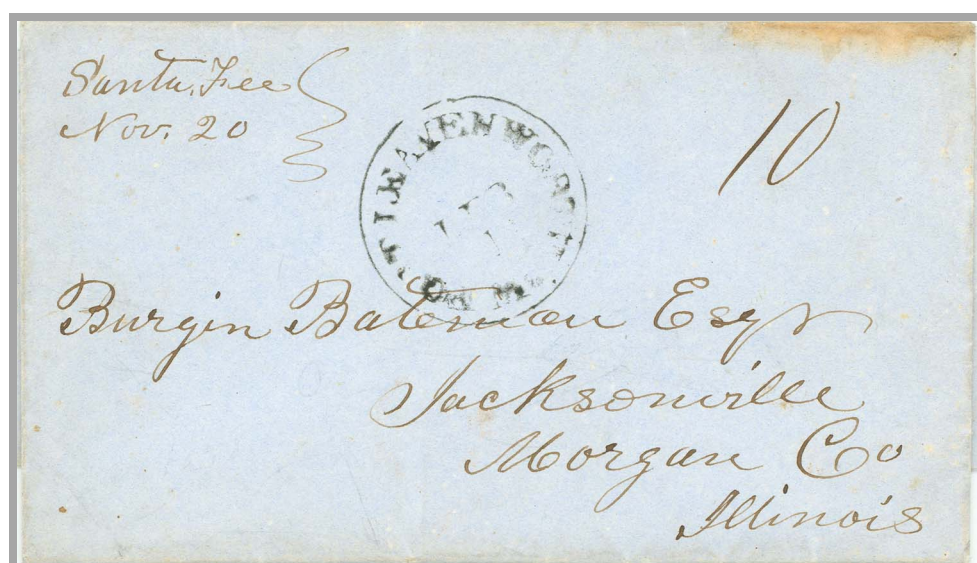
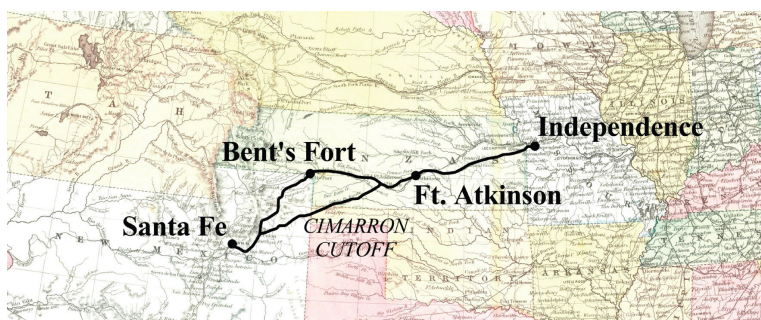
## Santa Fe Pre-Contract Mail

Introduction: July 1846 - June 1850



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.



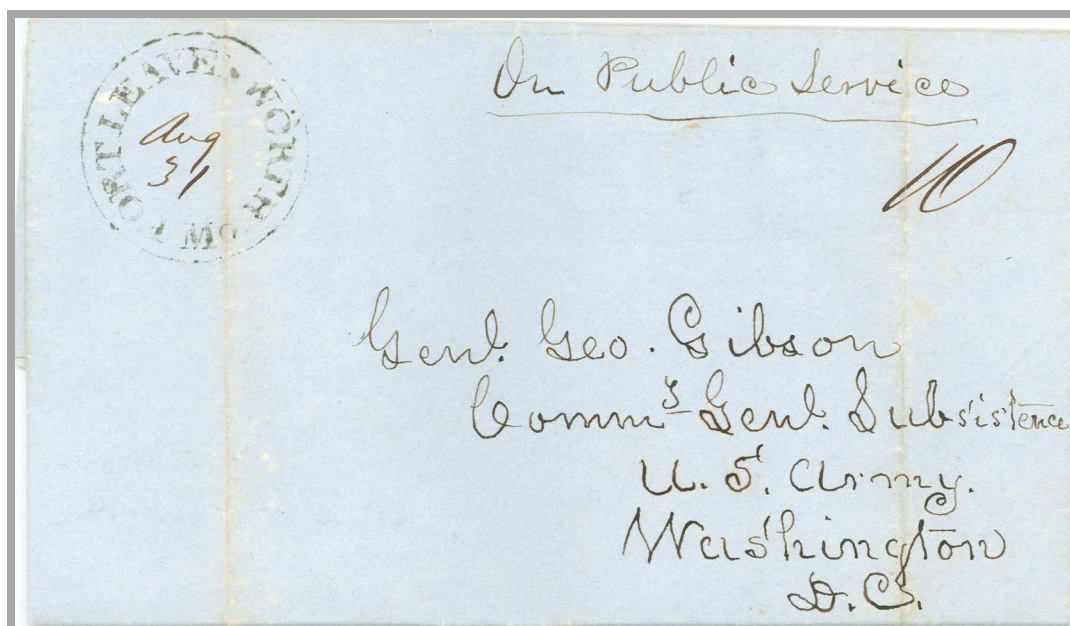
Postmarked "Santa Fee" on November 20, 1848 in red by military quartermaster  
**Carried by military courier Mr. Newman** - left November 20 but forced to return  
Left again on December 20 and arrived in Fort Leavenworth on February 1 - 10¢ due

## Santa Fe Pre-Contract Mail

Military Courier: July 1846 - June 1850



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.



Datelined near Bent's Fort on July 31, 1846 - from Lt. Grier of Kearny's 1<sup>st</sup> Dragoons  
**Carried by military courier to Fort Leavenworth** - postmarked there on August 31 - 10¢ due





## Santa Fe Pre-Contract Mail

Military Courier: July 1846 - June 1850



Doniphan's 1<sup>st</sup> Missouri Mounted Volunteers defeated a much larger Mexican army at Chihuahua on February 28, 1847. They captured most of the enemy's supplies.



Datelined in Chihuahua, Mexico 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, Missouri**

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



Letter written on captured letterhead of the Governor of Chihuahua (67% size)



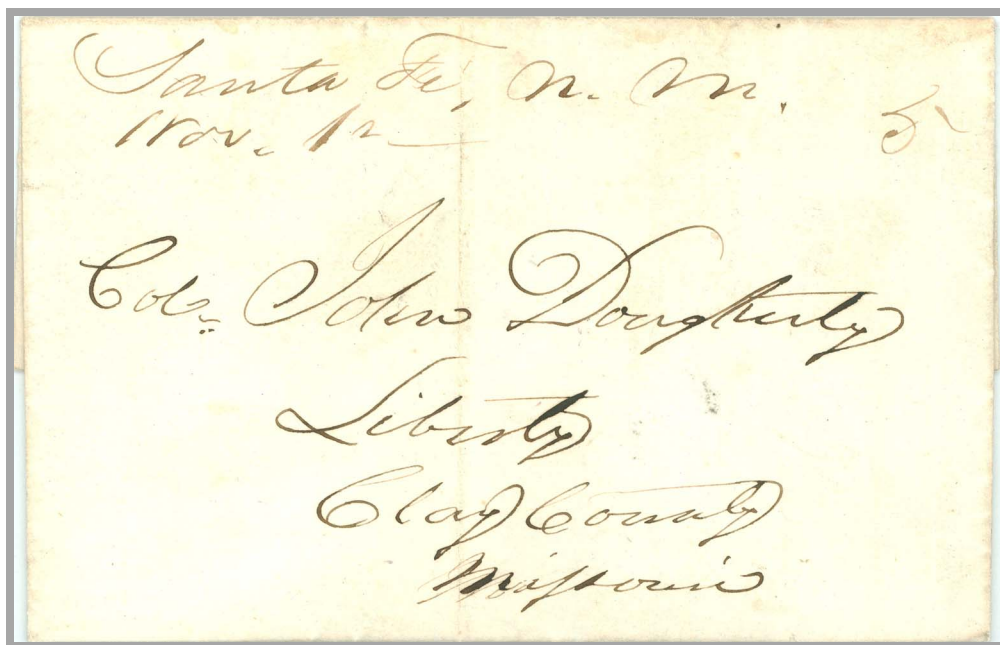
## Santa Fe Contract Mail

Introduction: July 1850 - June 1862



The first post office route contract into the West began on July 1, 1850 between Independence, Missouri and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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 Liberty, Missouri

Carried by the 15<sup>th</sup> stagecoach from Santa Fe to Independence around November 30

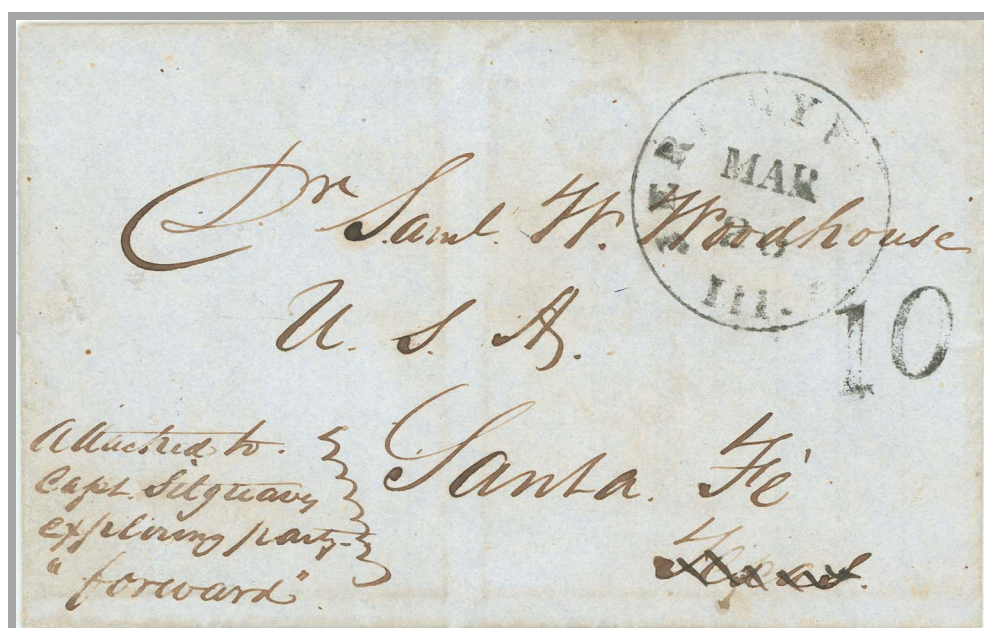


## Santa Fe Contract Mail

Waldo Hall Contract: July 1850 - June 1854



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  
**Addressed 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

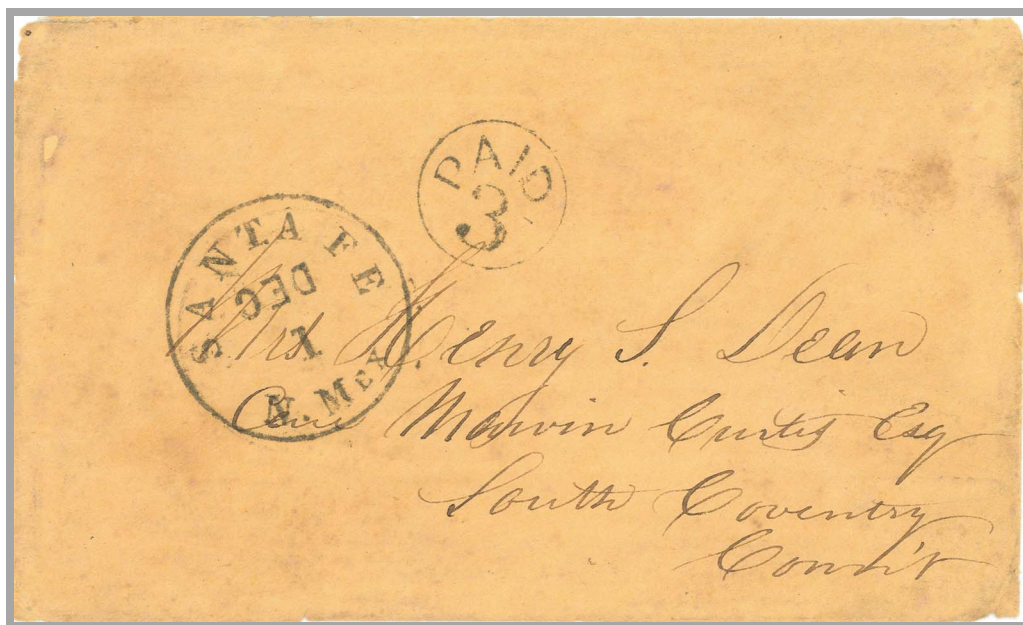
**Fewer than five letters are known to Santa Fe in this period**

## Santa Fe Contract Mail

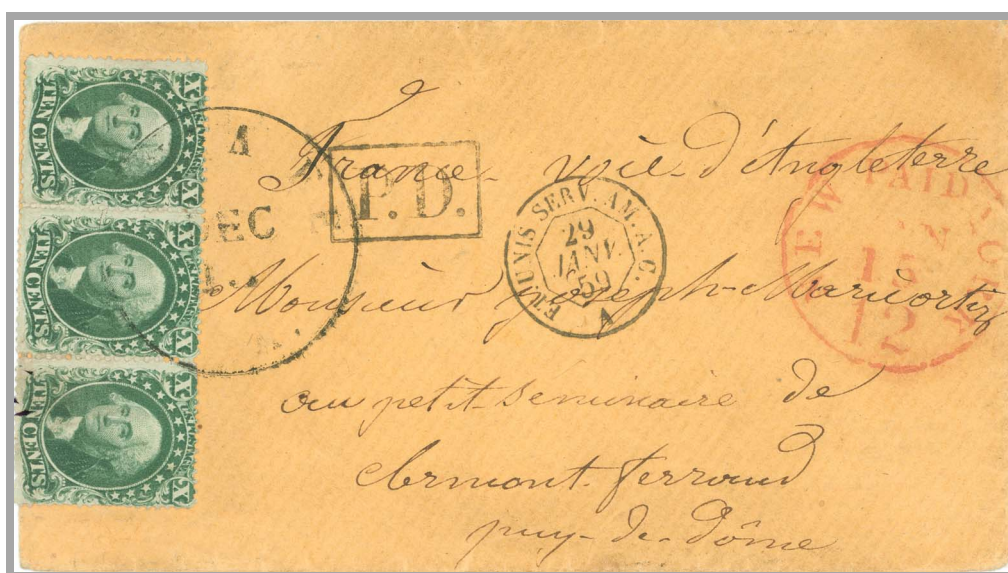
Hall Contracts: July 1854 - June 1862



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, New Mexico on December 1, 1855 - prepaid 3¢ postage to Connecticut



Postmarked in Santa Fe, New Mexico 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



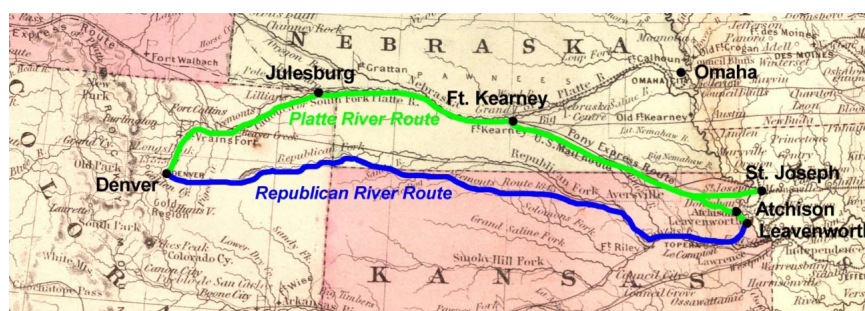
## Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

Introduction: July 1858 - June 1861



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

## Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

Private Courier: July 1858 - March 1859



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 on December 4 in Pacific City, Iowa - on Missouri River near Omaha

From "Pinky" Stout - arrived in Denver on October 24, 1858 with the J.H. Dudley party

**Earliest known letter from the Denver gold mining region**

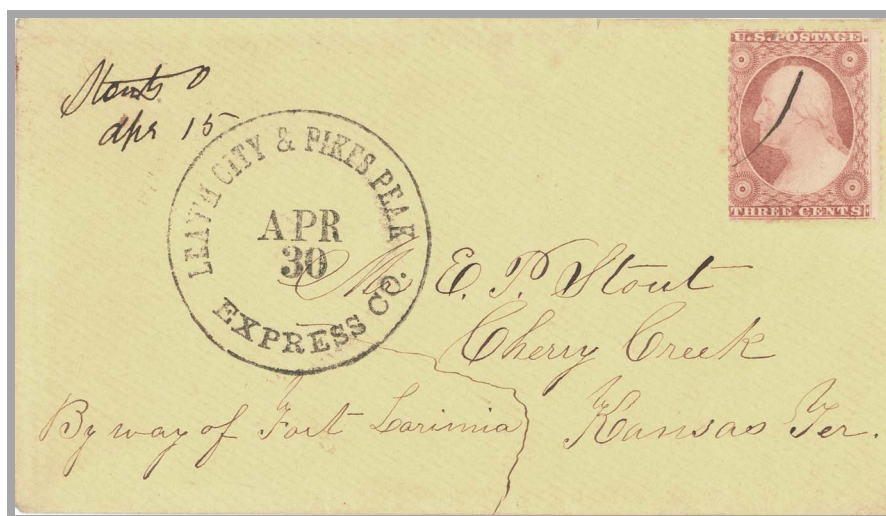


## Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

LPPE: April 1859 - June 1859



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 3<sup>rd</sup> LPPE westbound trip - **earliest known westbound letter**



Postmarked June 1, 1859 by LPPE in Denver City - postmark with year-date used in Denver  
Carried on 7<sup>th</sup> 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 the U.S. mails in Leavenworth City, Kansas Territory on January 6

## Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

COCPPPE: May 1860 - June 1861



The Central Overland California & Pike's Peak Express (COCPPPE) 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**



## Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

COCPPPE: May 1860 - June 1861



The Central Overland California & Pike's Peak Express (COCPPPE) 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 the U.S. mails in St. Joseph, Missouri on June 23 - prepaid 3¢ postage to Iowa

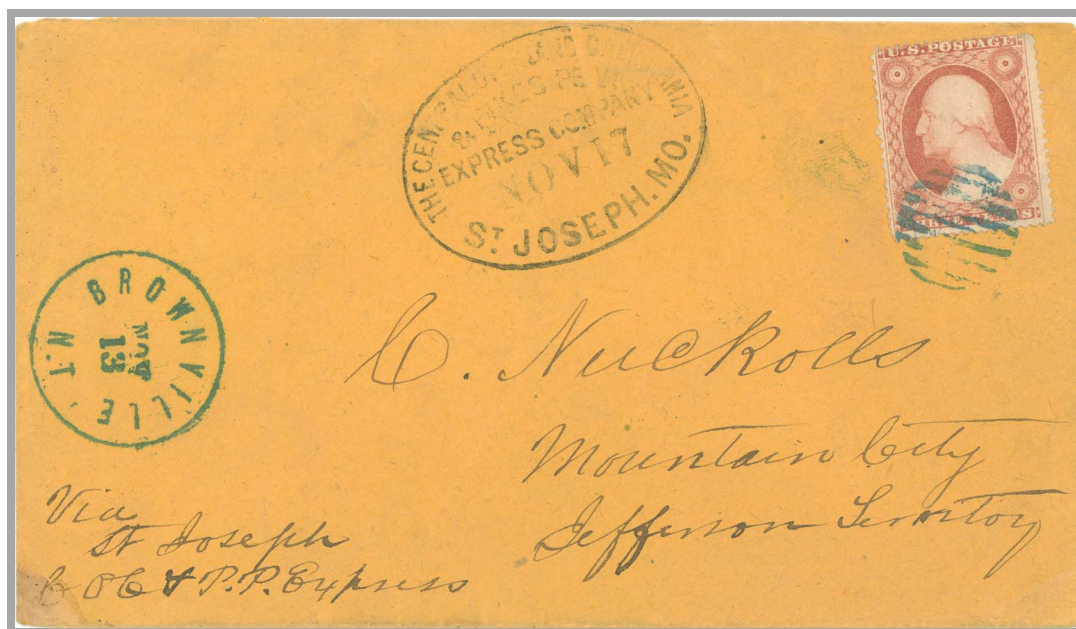


Pike's Peak by Bierstadt

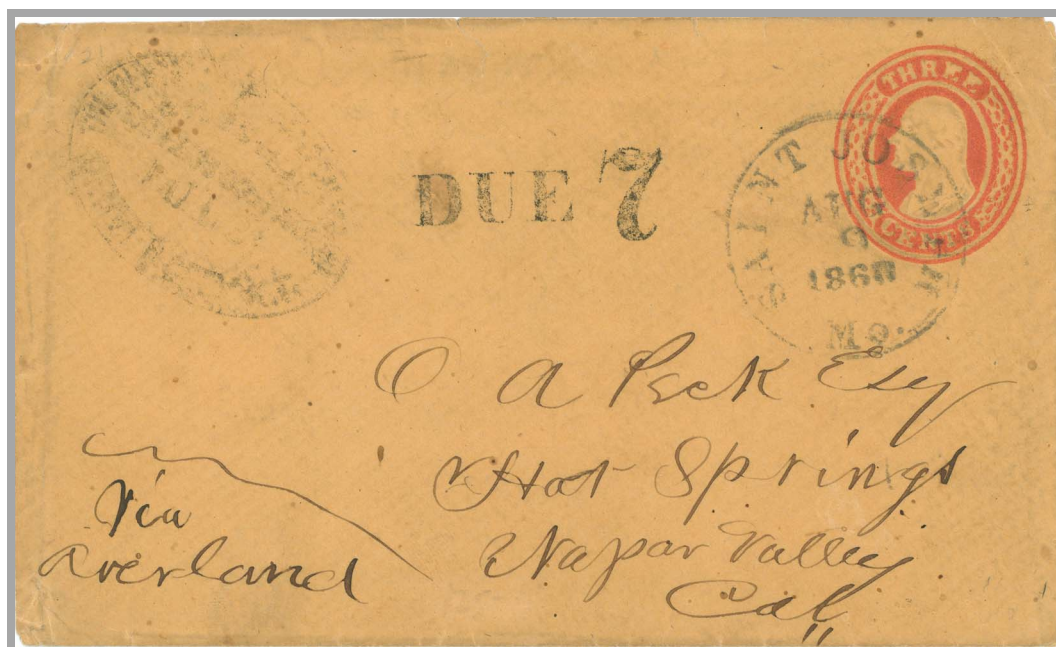


## Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

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

## Colorado Pre-Contract Mail

Hinckley: May 1860 - May 1861



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 Superior, Wisconsin  
Frank for 7¢ express fee - entered the U.S. mails at St. Joseph, Missouri 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 re-named 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 in August 1860 for weekly service on Route 15151a between Denver and Fort Kearny, Nebraska. Western was not able to fulfill its contract until September 1860, so COCPPE fulfilled the contract on a trip-by-trip basis from August 10 to September 13.



Postmarked August 9, 1860 in Stillwater, Minnesota - 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**

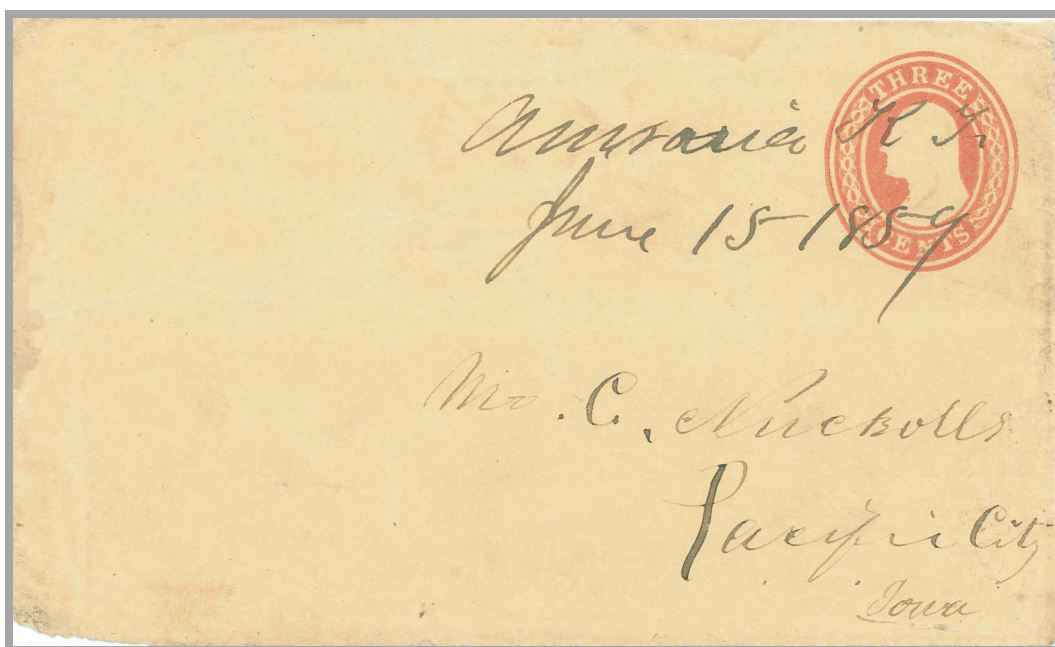


## Colorado Contract Mail

### COCPPPE “Phantom” Contract: June 1859



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¢ U.S. postage, 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**

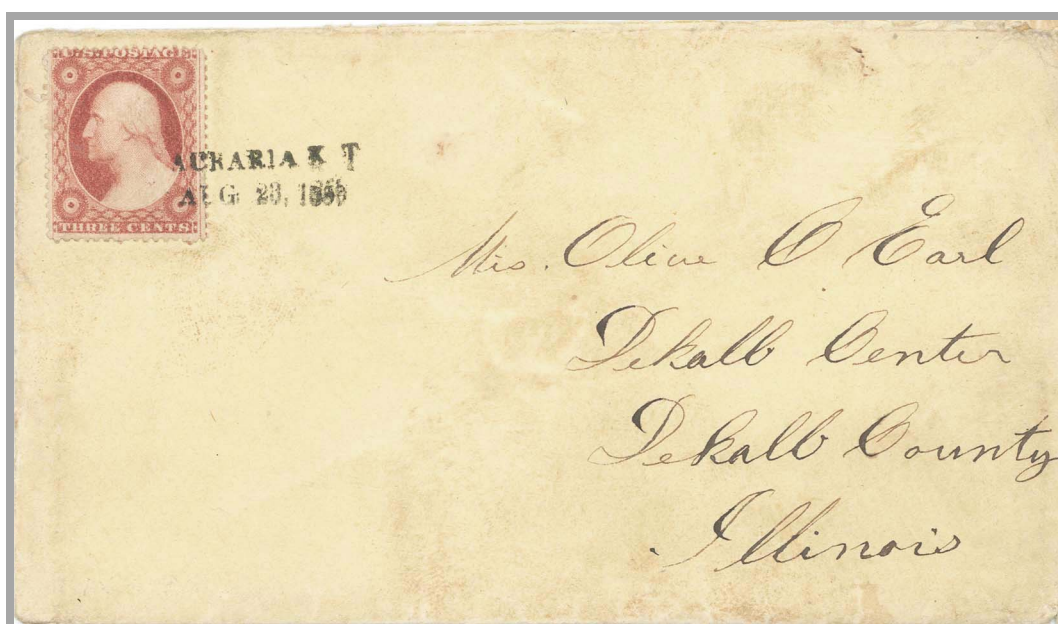


## Colorado Contract Mail

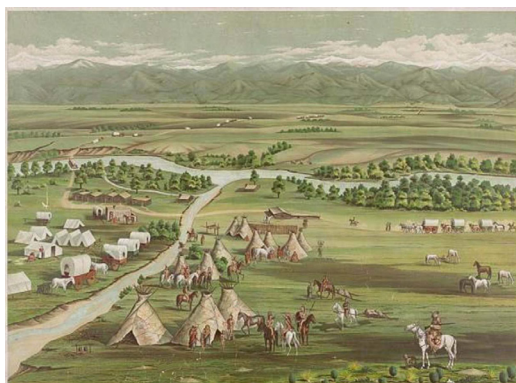
Willis Contract: July-August 1859



The Auraria postmaster contracted with Mr. Willis on July 12, 1859 to carry a weekly mail between Denver and Fort Kearny, Nebraska. 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**



Auraria in 1859 (south side of Cherry Creek)

## Colorado Contract Mail

Western Stage Contract: August 1860 – June 1861



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, Kansas Territory on August 16, 1860 by Hinckley & Co.

Postmarked August 23, 1860 in Denver City - prepaid 3¢ U.S. postage to Nelson, Ohio

Carried by the COCPPE under a temporary contract with the Post Office Department

**Earliest known Denver “tombstone” postmark**



# California Pre-Contract Mail

Introduction: July 1846 - March 1849



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.



Dated 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

## California Pre-Contract Mail

### Kearny Overland Mail: June-August 1847



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 1<sup>st</sup> Volunteer Regiment - carried in military dispatches to Fort Leavenworth



## California Pre-Contract Mail

Stockton Overland Mail: June-October 1847



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, Missouri on October 26.



Dated 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, California  
Postmarked October 30 in St. Joseph, Missouri with 10¢ due - **only letter known from this mail**



USS *Congress*



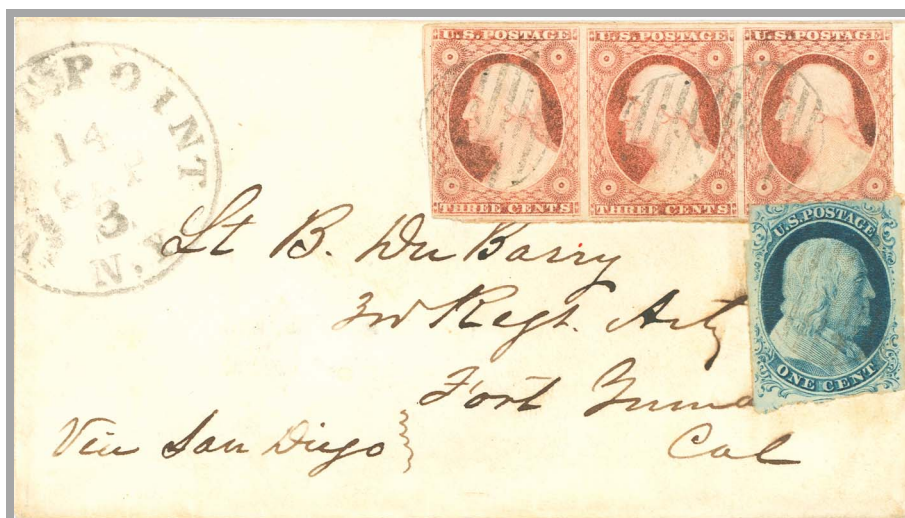
## California Pre-Contract Mail

Desert Dispatch: 1854 - July 1857



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.



Posted September 14, 1855 at West Point, NY - prepaid 10¢ and endorsed "Via San Diego"

Carried by USMSC *Empire City* from New York on September 20 to Aspinwall on September 29

PMSS *Golden Gate* from Panama City on September 30 to San Francisco on October 16

Coastal steamer to San Diego and then overland via the "Desert Dispatch"

**Fewer than ten letters carried by this service are known**

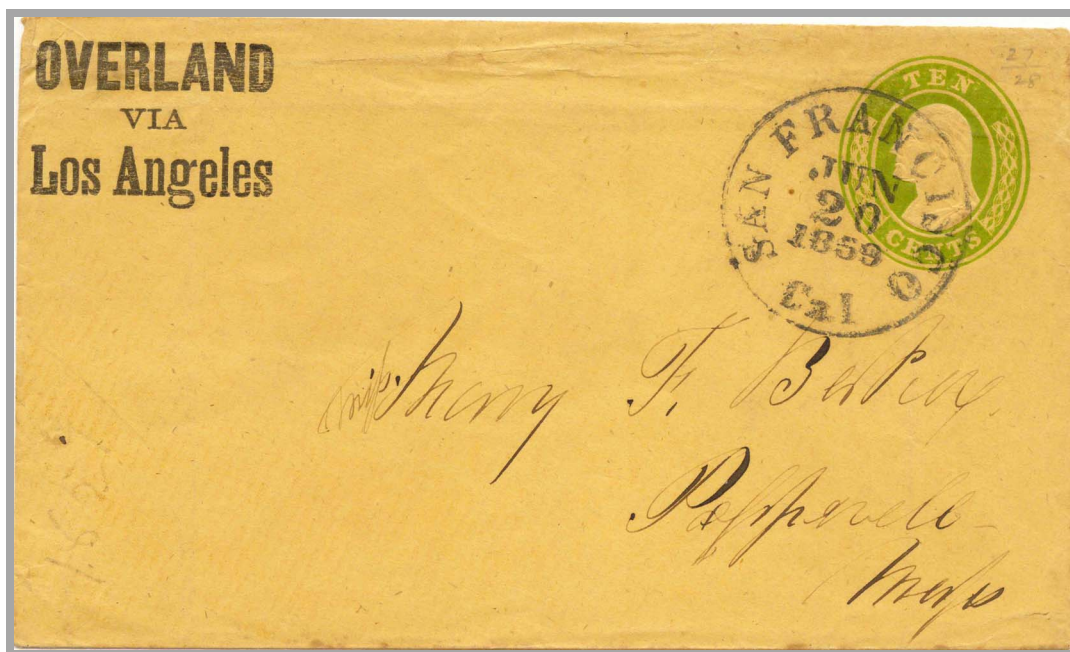
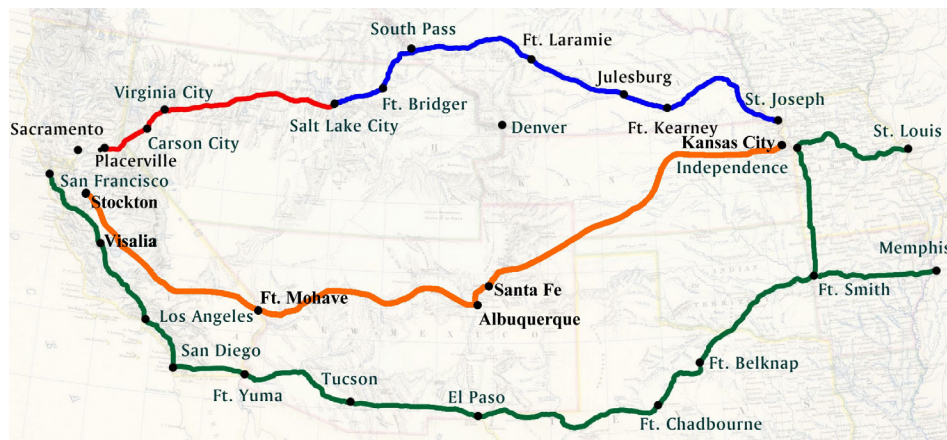
# California Contract Mail

Introduction: September 1858 - April 1861



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.



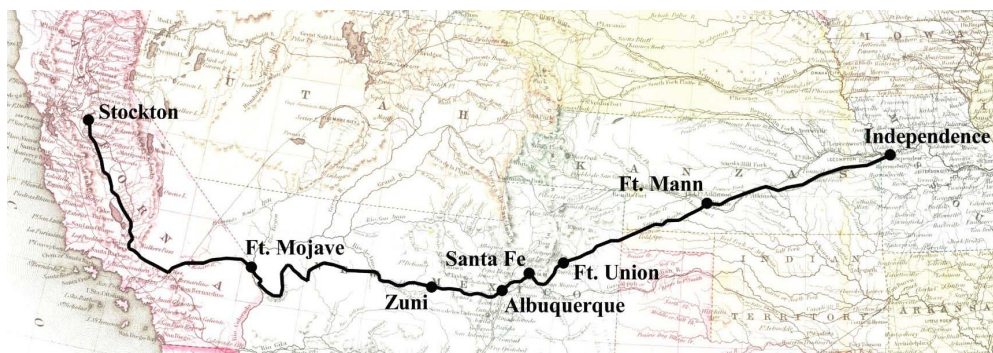
Postmarked June 20, 1859 in San Francisco - franked 10¢ for over 3,000 miles  
Butterfield stagecoach left on October 19 - early pre-printed "Overland" envelope

## 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, Missouri and Stockton, California. 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, California - 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**



## California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



Congress authorized a twice-weekly transcontinental overland mail between St. Louis and San Francisco via Texas and Los Angeles on March 3, 1857. Route 12578 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



## California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



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



## California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



“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**



## California Contract Mail

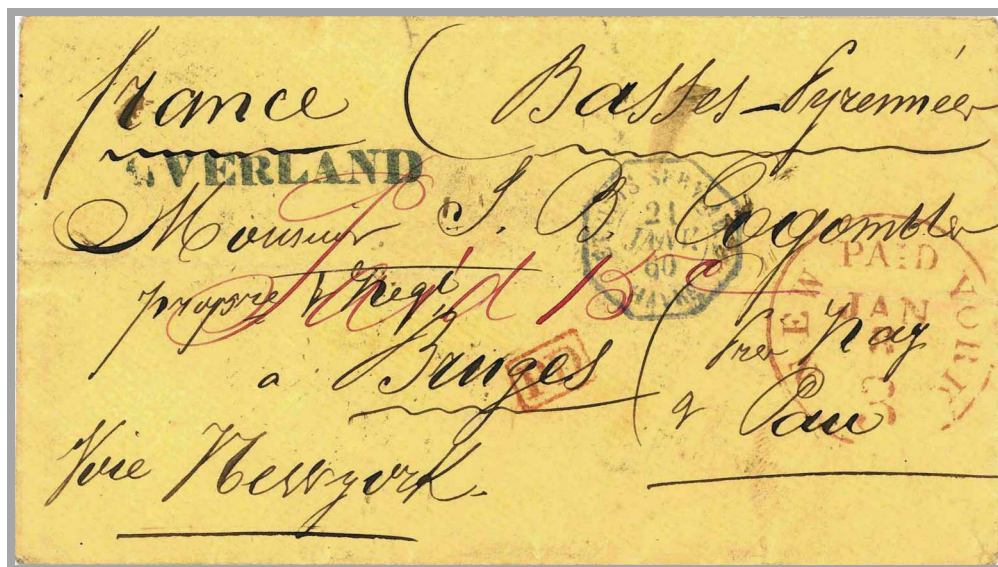
Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



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*

## California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



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

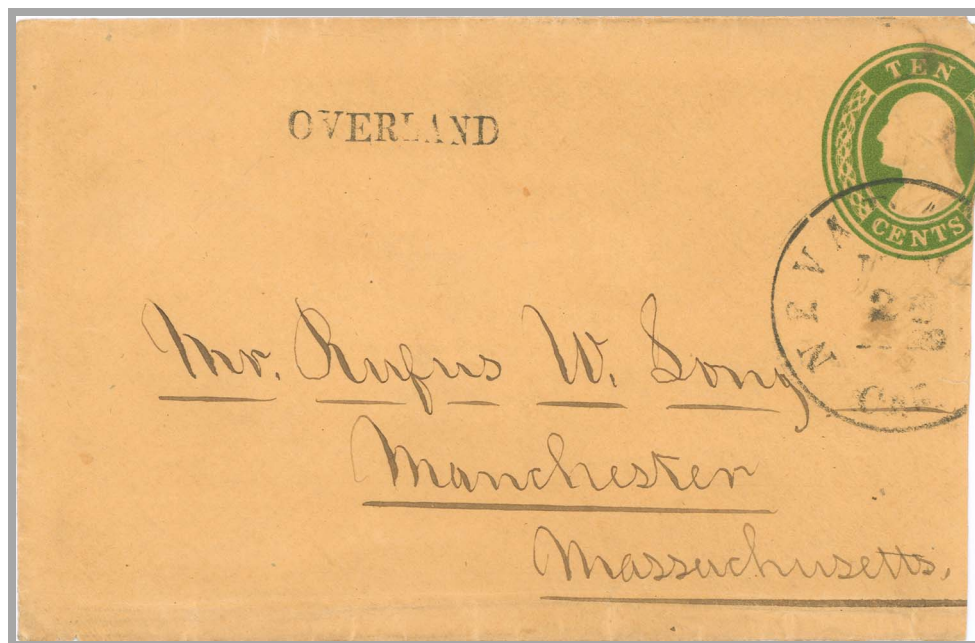


Cover front posted September 1860 in Victoria, V.I. - 5d colonial and 15¢ US postage paid at Victoria  
September 27 San Francisco postmark - **fewer than ten type 2 “OVERLAND” handstamps known**



## California Contract Mail

Butterfield Contract: September 1858 - April 1861



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

## California Pre-Contract Mail

### Pony Express Introduction: April 1860 - October 1861



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, Missouri 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**

## California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1860 - August 1860



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**

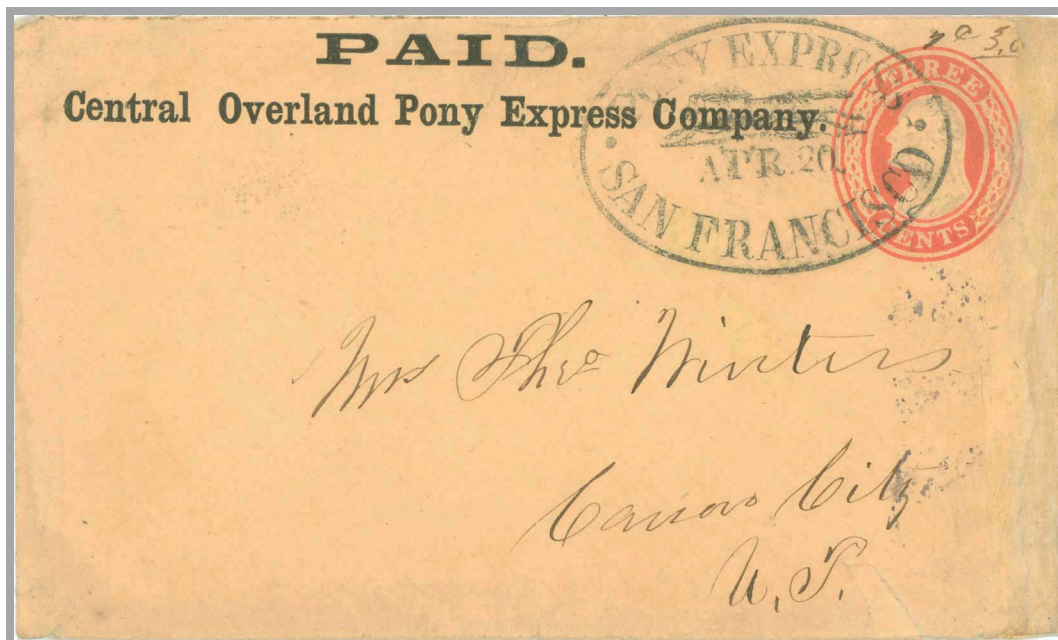


## California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1860 - August 1860



A special “short distance” rate of \$3 per ½ ounce was in effect during the first period for mail addressed to points between San Francisco and Salt Lake City.



3<sup>rd</sup> 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**

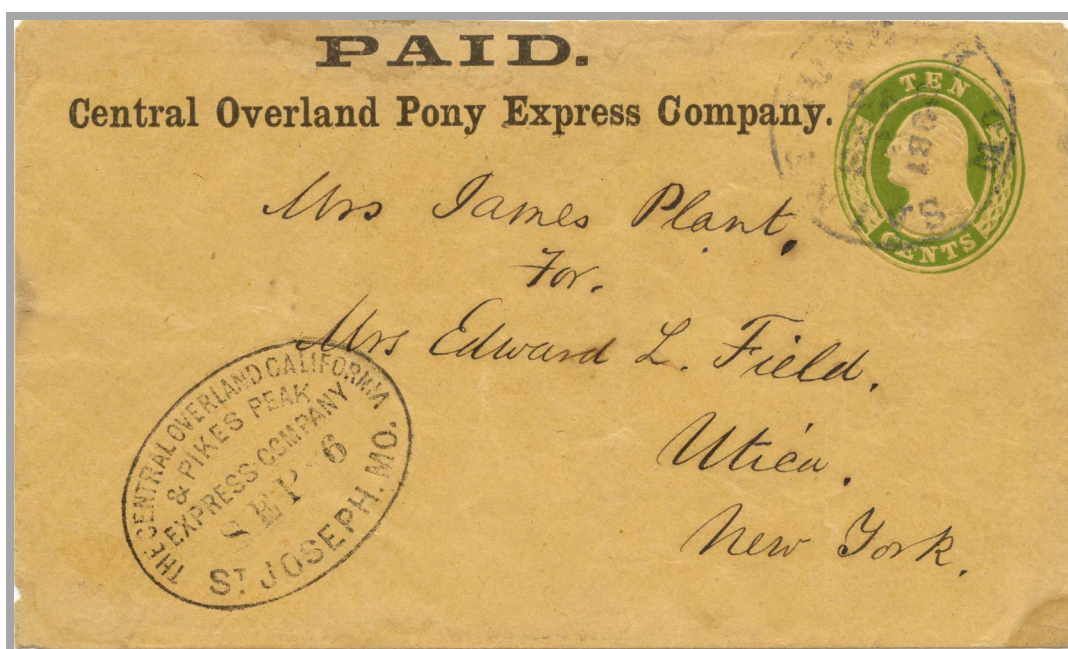


## California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



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 - postmarked on September 27 in St Joseph

**Fewer than ten letters with COPEC franks are known**



## California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



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

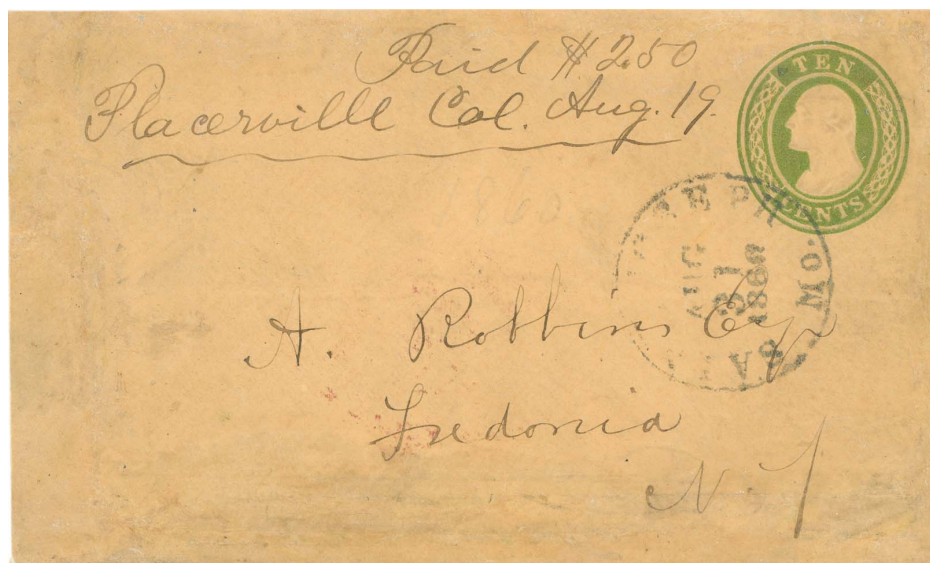
**Only four westbound carmine Running Pony markings are known**

## California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



Collected August 19, 1860 at Placerville, California 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



Letter front (90% of original)

**Only six eastbound carmine Running Pony markings are known**



## California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861

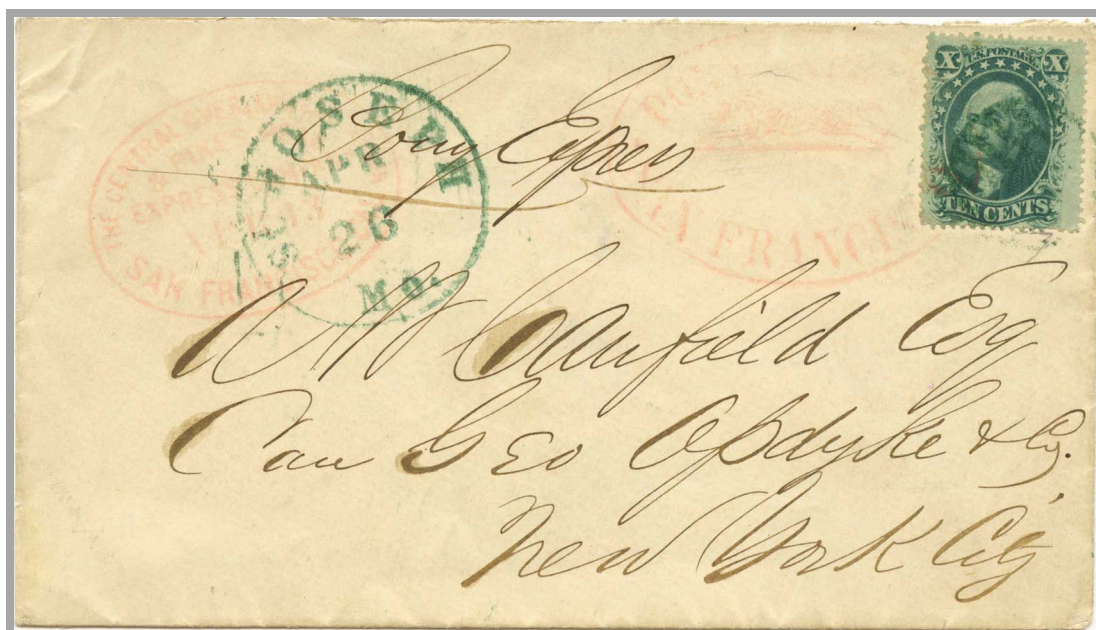


The San Francisco Running Pony marking was used as a departure datestamp, and to indicate that the \$2.50 express fee was paid. It is known in black, red and mainly in blue.



Blue September 29, 1860 San Francisco Running Pony datestamp - 10¢ U.S. postage prepaid

Arrived October 10 in St Joseph per oval COCPPE marking - postmarked the next day



**Dateless Red Running Pony** used briefly in March-April 1861 - **only five examples known**

Red San Francisco COCPPE mark shows April 13 departure - postmarked 13 days later in St Joseph

## California Pre-Contract Mail

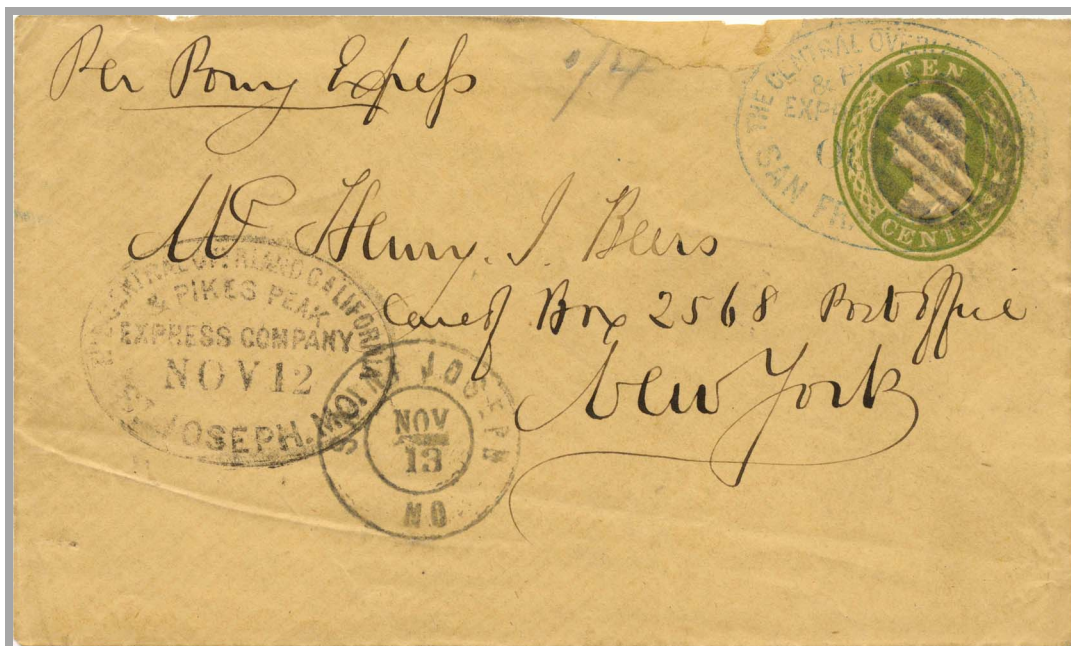
Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



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 "1/4" indicates weight for \$2.50 express fee - postmarked February 2 in St Joseph



October 31, 1860 San Francisco COCPPE mark - November 12 St Joseph COCPPE arrival mark

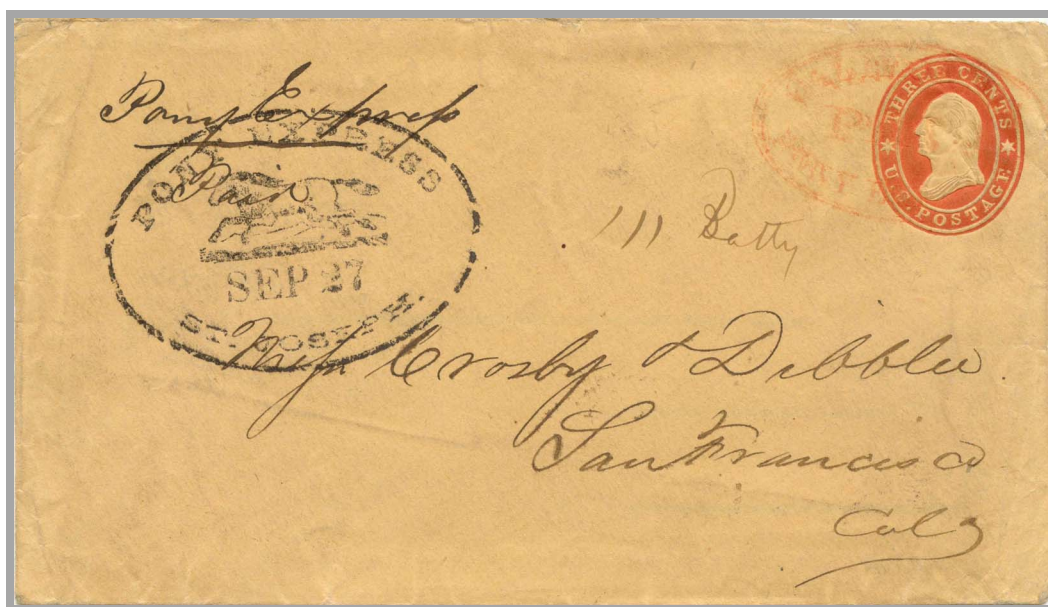


## California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



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



## California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



Only six Pony Express letters sent to foreign destinations are known: two to Great Britain, one to France, one to Germany, one to Switzerland, and one to Prince Edward Island.



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 sub-contractor, 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

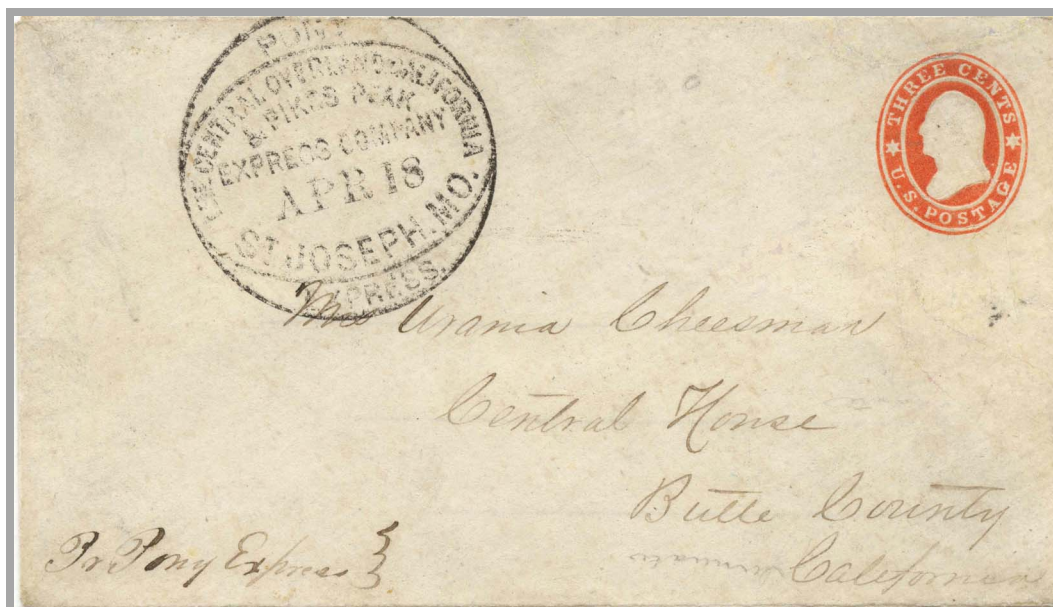
Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1861 - June 1861



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

## California Contract Mail

### Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861



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 datestamp 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**



## California Contract Mail

### Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861



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 - postmarked July 29 in St Joseph - envelope restored



Originated October 3, 1861 outside of San Francisco - October 5 San Francisco Running Pony mark  
\$1 stamp on 10¢ star die entire with Wells Fargo red frank - **postmarked October 19 in Atchison**

## California Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861



Only five Pony Express letters which originated in foreign countries are known: one from Cuba, two from England and two from Hawaii. All were sent under cover to forwarders in the U.S.



Datelined "London 3<sup>rd</sup> 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**

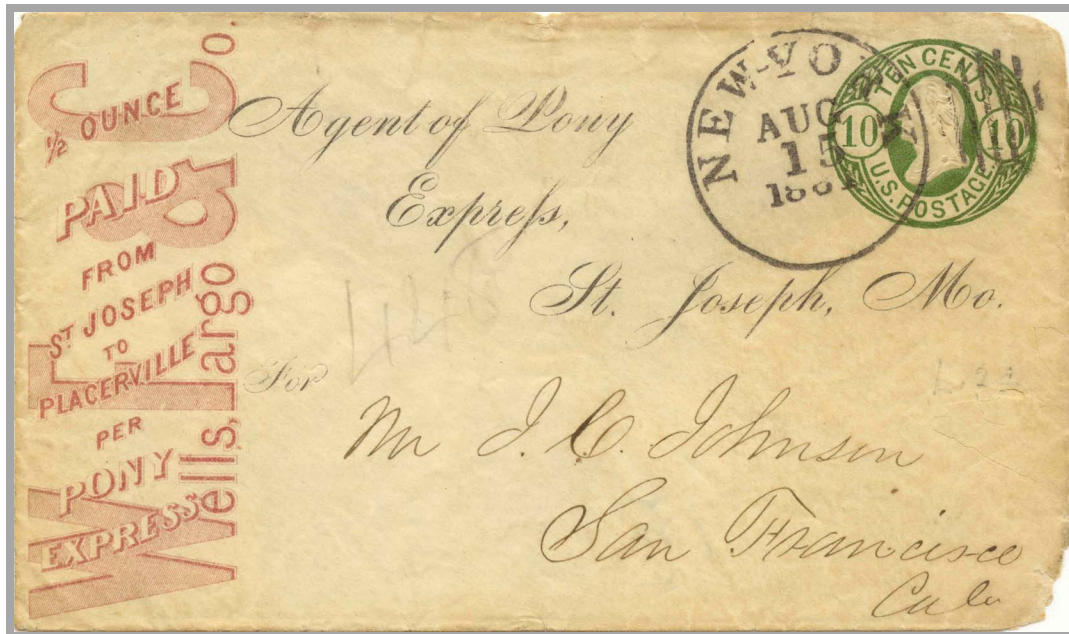


## California Contract Mail

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



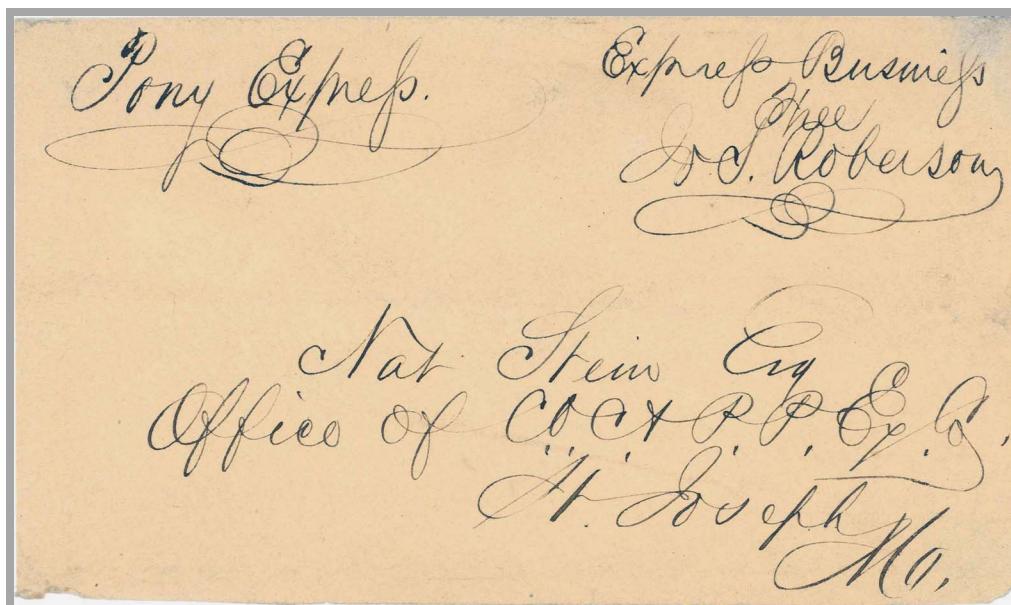
Posted in New York on October 5, 1861 - addressed to Pony Express Agent at St Joseph  
October 10 St Joseph “double oval” pony express marking - arrived October 22 in Sacramento

## California Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861

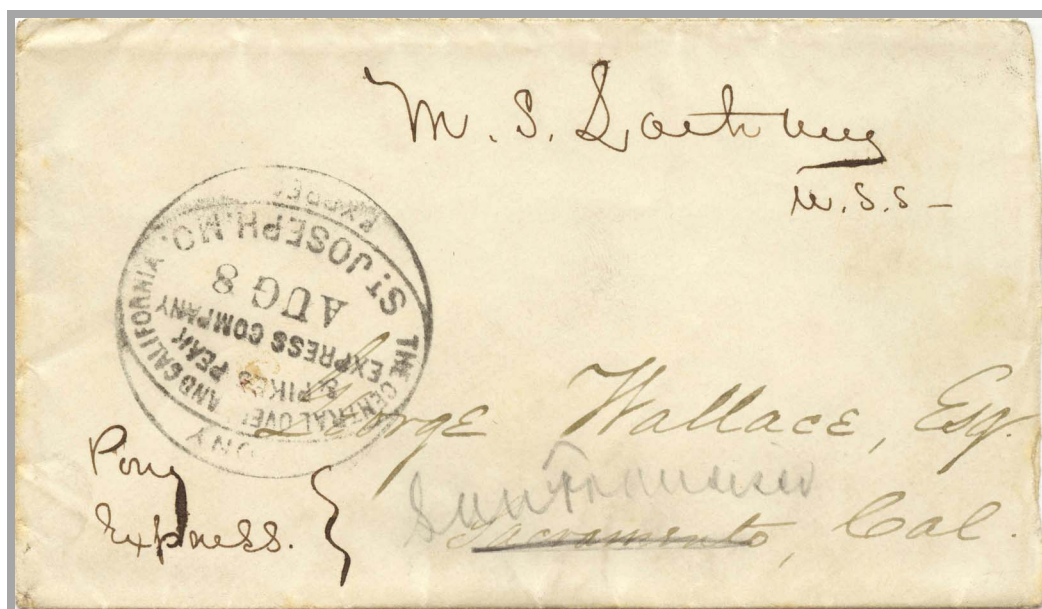


Pony Express letters on company business and from U.S. senators were carried free of any express or postal charges.



Dated "Fort Bridger July 10. 1861" - endorsed "Express Business Free"

Written by COCPPE agent Joseph Roberson on first daily overland stage from California



Dated "Washington D.C. 31<sup>st</sup> July 1861" from California senator Milton Latham

August 8 St Joseph "double oval" marking - no indication that any fee was paid

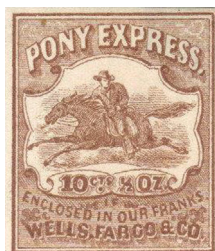


## California Pre-Contract Mail

Nevada Pony Express: August 1862 - March 1865



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 Wells Fargo franked envelope with 3¢ U.S. postage  
10¢ stamp was used from August 1862 until February 1863, when rates increased to 25¢

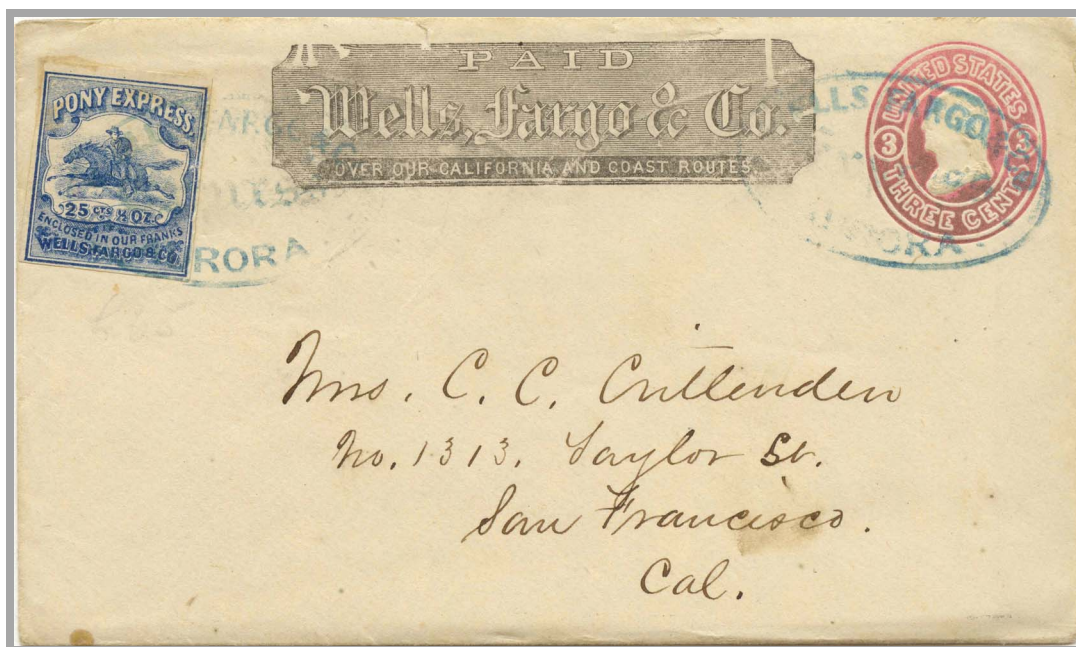
**10¢ brown is the rarest of the Virginia City Pony Express stamps**

## California Pre-Contract Mail

Nevada Pony Express: February 1863 - February 1864



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



Dateline 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



Dateline "San Francisco Jan 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

## California Pre-Contract Mail

Nevada Pony Express: March 1864 - March 1865



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 - then 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**



## California Pre-Contract Mail

### Langton's Nevada Pony Express: July-August 1864



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, California

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**

## Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



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 OMC operated this daily mail contract between Placerville, California 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

Prepaid 11¢ (10¢ overland postage plus 1¢ carrier fee) - **1861 Issue 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**

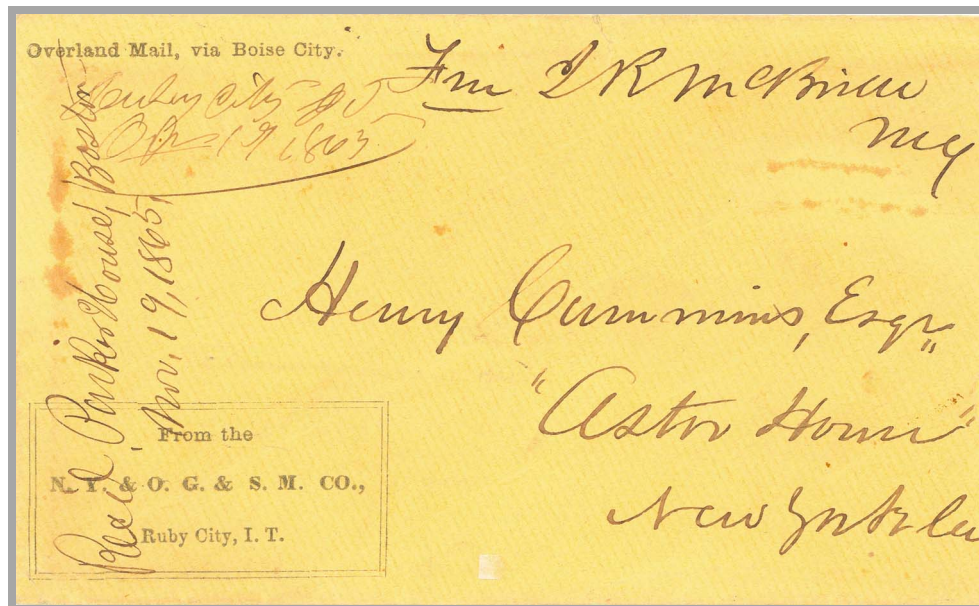


## Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



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 Mail, 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.



## Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



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”



## Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



San Francisco 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”

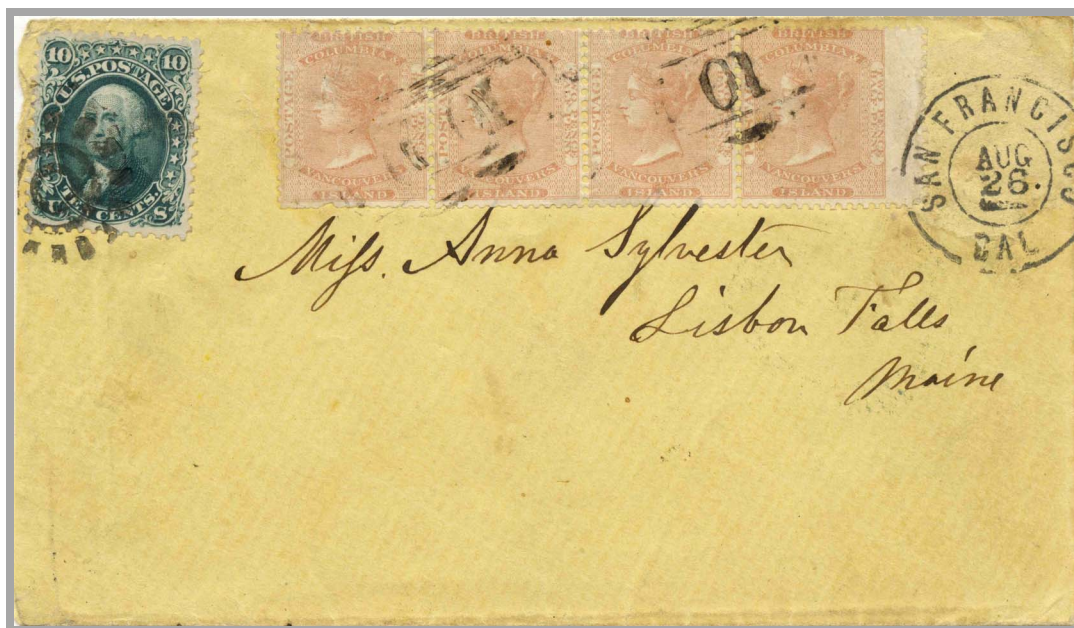
## Transcontinental Contract Mail

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 2½d stamps used provisionally as 6¼ cents

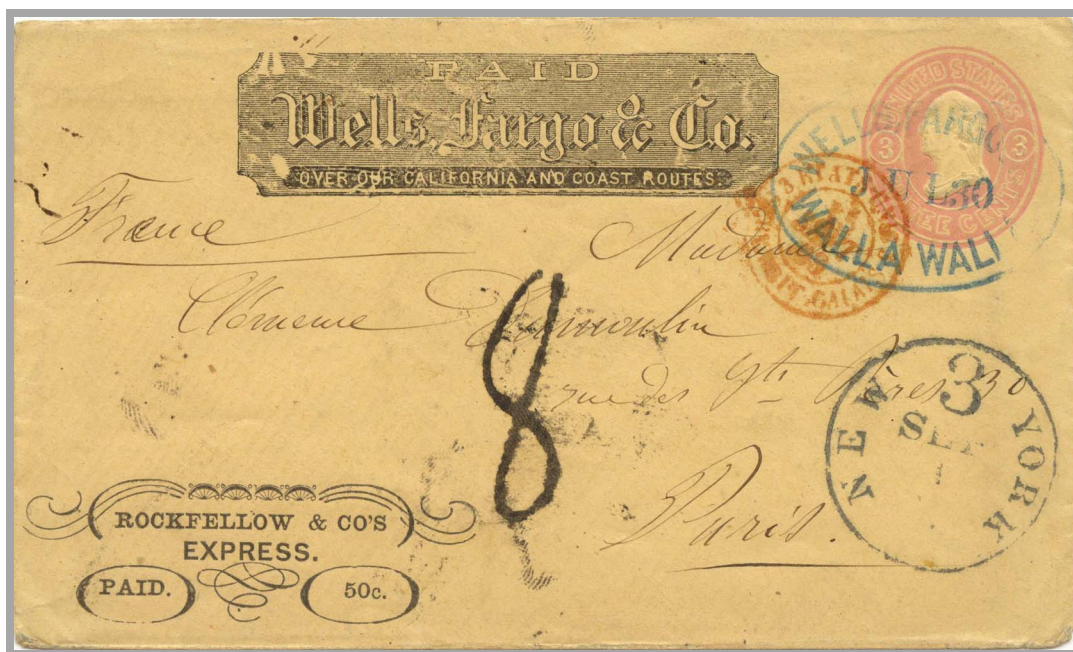


## Transcontinental Contract Mail

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 Ill 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 5¢ Hawaiian and 5¢ U.S. postage - 5¢ U.S. stamp added in S.F.  
**Only known multiple of the Hawaii Inter-Island 5¢ stamp**



## Transcontinental Contract Mail

Overland Mail Company: July 1861 - May 1869



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**