

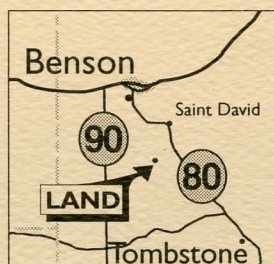
The Heliograph



The Postal History Foundation
Spring/Summer 1998 *Newsletter*

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Cover: 19th-century engraving of Fort Benton, Montana, from an 1853-4 sketch by Charles Koppel.

The Heliograph

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The Postal History Foundation

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The Postal History Foundation is an Arizona non-profit corporation chartered to be used exclusively for historical, research, scientific, and education purposes in the advancement of postal history, including, but not limited to, the collecting, assembling, preserving, recording and publishing of postal history.

Membership donations over that for annual membership, and donations of cash, acceptable stamps, covers, books, postcards, periodicals and postal history material are deductible for U. S. income tax purposes and are most gratefully received. The Foundation is an IRS designated 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

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Land Was Never Lost

By Robert B. Bechtel

As a contrast to some of the Arizona ghost towns I have studied, such as Arizmo, Land was never lost. It is still there, south of Benson, and anyone can visit it. Take highway 80 south of Benson to the Apache Powder Road, follow it until it crosses the railroad, and then go south along the East side of the tracks. Land is just a short way down the tracks, and the red chimney of the old post office will come into view [Figure 1]. The Escalante Road continues east across the tracks, but don't take it. Just keep south along the railroad. Land was named after William C. Land who migrated from Texas, bought the Babocomari Land Grant, and raised 40,000 head of cattle there. He went broke in the drought of 1890-92.

Two families continue to live in Land. Tommy Dreyfus [Figure 2] and his wife are long time residents, and he has steeped himself

in the local lore. The post office building area was homesteaded by Curtis Reed, who died in 1903. His widow, Lucy (Louisa) married L. E. Woolery and had a total of fifteen children from both husbands.

The house where the post office was located was built in November of 1911. The post office was in the house, but a local resident told Tommy that there was a stamp window. The ruins are visible from the Benson excursion train that passes by daily. The official post office records show a post office existing from July 15, 1911, until November 30, 1913. Lou C. Woolery is listed as the postmaster during this entire period. But there never was a Lou C. Woolery! This was Mrs. Woolery, who faked her name from Lucy to Lou C. in order to sound like a man. There was a lot more prejudice against women in those days, and she assumed it would be better to have a male mask.

The Land cancel [Figure 3] is listed in Kriege's territorial catalog. But the statehood cancel is much scarcer because there is only one known. This cancel is the

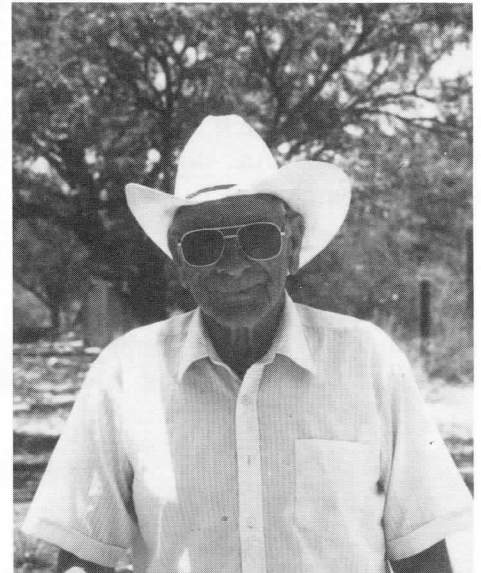


Figure 2.

Tommy Dreyfus

same as Kriege's territorial type, so, presumably, the same cancel was used during the four years of Land's post office.


The area around Land is rich in history. Nearby, just to the south, is the corral used in the making of the John Wayne film *McClintock*. Further on is an area which is actually swampy and was called a *ciénega* (Spanish for swamp). There was a community here named Cienega but it never acquired a post office. Water can be seen seeping up from the ground and with it, there is a lush vegetation still used by cattlemen. There are bull rushes and reeds growing in thick clumps. The water table has been reduced considerably, however, and the trace of a spring can be seen coming from a hillside. The surrounding hills are



Figure 1.

Old post office

aquifers, giving the area its water. When the area was first discovered by William Land, it was capable of producing artesian wells. This is indeed still an oasis in the desert that the casual traveler could easily miss.

The two elderly couples living in Land may seem at first to be the last residents, but if we return to the Escalante Road, there is an emu ranch there and several other houses scattered over the landscape. Tommy is quick to remind me, however, that the emu ranch, "is not Land." So, it may be that Land will someday become a true ghost town, like so many in Arizona with their rich memories of human occupation. But Land will never be lost. 

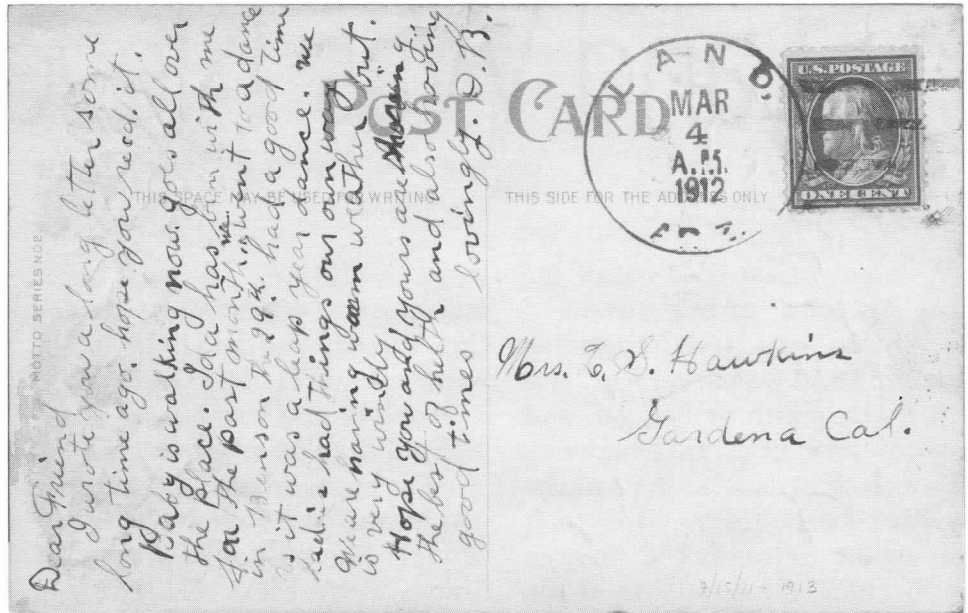


Figure 3.

Land, AZ post mark

From the Editor

By Frank A. Mallalieu

It is a very great honor to have been selected by the Board to become the new editor of *The Heliograph*. I am grateful for their confidence in me, and I am dedicated to living up to their expectations.

In accepting this position, I realize that I follow in a line of distinguished individuals who have guided and nurtured this publication in an exemplary manner. I hope that I will be able to meet the high standards that Charles Towle, Doug Kelsey, Dane Clausen and Paul Tyler have established and maintained over the years of their tenure. In addition, I am indebted to Betsy Towle, Director of the Postal History Foundation, for her support and assistance, not only in the preparation of this first issue under my editorship, but also for her ongoing guidance and encouragement in the preparation of future issues.

While no major changes in *The Heliograph* are currently planned, the challenge exists to make it as good, if not better, than it has been in the past. This may be hard to achieve, but it is not an im-

possibility. But it will be accomplished only with the direct input of you, the readers. To this end, I am encouraging you to provide feedback on upcoming issues: what you like, what you don't like, what's particularly of interest to you or of no interest to you, what hasn't been included or what doesn't need to be. In other words, your input is a very valuable part of the process of making *The Heliograph* the publication that you want to read. Of course, compliments will be welcomed, but constructive criticism is just as meaningful and important.

So, let's hear from you. And, by the way, what really will be appreciated are articles submitted by you for publication in *The Heliograph*. They can be on just about any subject and need not be in pristine finished form. Just send them to me at the PHF, Box 4072, Tucson, AZ 85717, and I'll take it from there.

I hope you enjoy what you see in *The Heliograph* in the months ahead and come to feel that it truly represents the spirit of the Postal History Foundation as well as being supportive of its mission.

Carrier of News and Knowledge: Printed Media and the Mails

By James Bruns

Early on, newspaper publishers realized how to make their association with the postal system pay. Many publishers were themselves postmasters, and for good reason. Being a postmaster was an ideal way of killing the competition. Benjamin Franklin learned all about this first hand. Franklin, the publisher of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, and his rival, Andrew Bradford, printer of the *Mercury*, went head-to-head over advertising in the 1730s. Bradford had the advantage, because as postmaster he used his influence to exclude the *Gazette* from the mails. Bradford reasoned that the lack of visibility would prompt potential advertisers to conclude that Franklin's paper lacked the kind of circulation they desired, prompting them to advertise without him.

But Franklin got around Bradford's ban by bribing postal workers to carry his newspaper. The need for such deviousness left a lasting impression on Franklin, who later replaced Bradford as postmaster. "I thought so meanly of the practice that when I afterwards came into his situation, I took care never to imitate it," he said.

Another sentiment of the time expressed in countless newspapers, including the Newport (Rhode Island) *Mercury*—not to be confused with Andrew Bradford's Pennsylvania newspaper of the same name—was that the Crown's post had to be replaced. "The grand design of establishing a new American post office, seems now to engage the attentions of all ranks. In our present situation, it is...important and indispensable."

There was a need for something better, and Baltimore newspaper publisher William Goddard had an alternative. When Goddard was denied use of the Crown's post, he pressed the Continental Congress for permission to establish a "Constitutional Post." His two-and-one-half-page petition, now in the collection of the National Postal Museum, was presented to the Continental Congress in 1774. It advocated that the Congress "establish an American Post Office" founded on Constitutional principles.

Goddard's action dramatized the urgent need to replace the Crown's post with one that could be trusted. Royal representatives had, and used, the authority to open mail. As loyal subjects to the King, they felt compelled to ferret out disloyalty to England. Noted the *Mercury* on May 2, 1774, "a set of officers, ministerial indeed, in their creation, direction, and dependance, are maintained in the colonies, into whose hands all the social, commercial, and political intelligence of the Continent is necessarily committed; which at this time everyone must consider as dangerous in the extreme."

"Without the use of the mails, there is not a newspaper in the land that could long exist."

—Editor,
Journal of Commerce,
1861

Rebellious Americans realized that they needed to replace the British system with one of their own, but Goddard's was not quite right. It was based on subscriptions. The subscribers were to have a hand in selecting the postmasters and share the profits, if there were any. But, perhaps the greatest attribute of his scheme was the sanctity of the mail. He promised that the mails "shall be under lock-and-key, and liable to the inspection of no person but the respective postmasters to whom directed, who shall be under oath for

the faithful discharge of the trust reposed in them." The principle of the sanctity of the mail would become one of the strictest cornerstones of the system that was ultimately created.

Another of the legacies of the American Revolution was the recognition of the vital importance of books, magazines and newspapers to a republic. The writers of the Constitution insisted upon both a postal system and a free press. The government went even further in 1792 with the enactment of the Post Office Act, which among other things called for the expansion of post roads, the sanctity of the mails, and the inclusion of general publications. In effect, the Act subsidized the press. It established cheap newspaper rates which remained in effect for decades.

In the 1840s, newspapers could travel over 100 miles for slightly over two cents. Magazines and pamphlets were charged slightly more, but less than

Printed Media and the Mails

—Continued—

the rate applied to a single letter composed of one piece of paper. Letter postage was twice that charged for periodicals. The price break was an incentive to the distribution of reading materials and news. It was a small price to pay for national unity. The rush of migration along and over the Allegheny Mountains was unsettling to government officials, who feared that without a functional free press, the frontier population might soon lose all sense of loyalty to the new republic. This was a scary thought to the nation's early leaders. In his first annual address in 1790, George Washington hammered home the need to bind the nation together through the mails. His view was that "facilitating the intercourse between the distant parts of our country by a due attention to the post office and post roads" was imperative. A year later, in his opening address to the first session of the Second Congress, Washington again repeated the need to greatly expand service in the expectation of "diffusing a knowledge of the laws and proceedings of the Government, especially to some of the important parts in the western and northern parts of the Union."

This sentiment was echoed by Postmaster General Charles Pickering, who in 1793 stated that without a postal system, "our fellow citizens in the remote portions of the Union...will not only be embarrassed in their correspondence, but remain destitute of every necessary information. Their great distance from the seat of government and principal commercial towns subject [many Americans] to peculiar difficulties in their correspondence."

Congress' view at the time was that "the establishment of the Post Office is agreed to be for no other purpose than the conveyance of information into every part of the Union." This pronouncement relieved the postal service of the burden of being a money-making proposition. Profits did not matter. Service was the important thing. A century later this was still the rule. Postmaster General John Wanamaker restated this premise in 1889 when he observed, "The Post Office is the visible form of the Federal Government to every community and to every citizen. Its hand is the only one that touches the local life, the social interests, and business concern of every

neighborhood...."

Repeated attempts to make newspapers and periodicals pay more was vigorously opposed. Such publications were seen as "the strongest bulwark of free government." Attempts to curb their exchange was envisioned as an "unconstitutional means of stopping in any degree the sources of that information which distinguishes America from the people of all other countries."

Statesmen, such as John C. Calhoun, fully appreciated this. His view in 1817 was that "the mail and the press...are the nerves of the body politic. By them the slightest impression made on the most remote parts is communicated to the whole system."

Further, writing in 1909 for the *Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, Cornell professor Julian P. Bretz noted, "Everywhere the posts went

"The establishment of the Post Office is agreed to be for no other purpose than the conveyance of information into every part of the Union."

newspapers sprang into existence, and by the time of the second war with Great Britain [the War of 1812], 33 had appeared in Kentucky and 31 in Ohio, while elsewhere the development was proportionate to the extent of settlement."

Because of cheaper postage rates newspapers constituted the bulk of the mails. This fact had a profound impact upon the methods used to move the mail. Riders on horseback were unable to haul the quantities of newspapers entering the mailstream. Coaches, steamboats

and trains had to be used instead, and this reliance had a corresponding ripple effect upon the creation of post offices along mail routes.

In the days before the wire services, such as the Associated Press or United Press International, the mails also furnished newspaper publishers with a wealth of hopefully newsworthy material. This practice goes back to the colonial era. According to Hugh Finlay, the Crown's "Surveyor of Post Roads on the Continent of North America," a New London, Connecticut, printer, who also was the town's postmaster, "extracts all advice from newspapers, which require considerable time; the New London paper is afterwards printed containing the extracts." In this case the publisher paid extra to have other newspapers carried by private couriers so he could have them 12 to 14 days ahead of the mail. This enabled him to scoop the competition.

Taking news from another paper was an acceptable practice, one which continued well into the 19th century. In 1851 a Baltimore paper noted, "The

Southern mail has arrived, but the papers contain no news of importance."

Newspapers, which were seen as exerting a patriotic nationalizing influence on the population, were often delayed because of being read and reread in transit; and, more often than not, it was the postmaster doing the reading. This snooping was the closest thing to a news service early newspaper publishers could afford, and any disruption or delay of mail meant a delay in reporting timely news. The editor of the Frankfort, Kentucky, *Palladium* advised his readers on March 13, 1800, that, since nothing of importance arrived in yesterday's mail, he was publishing George Washington's Will. Other newspapers frequently did similar things.

Occasionally, the personal or political views of such early newspaper printers collided with those of the community, threatening to literally bring the roof down upon the post office. That certainly was the case in Baltimore, although in this instance the publisher was not a postmaster. By the start of the 19th century Baltimore was the nation's third largest city. During the War of 1812, Federalist opposition to the war and Republican [not to be confused with the Republican Party, which didn't exist at that time] enthusiasm for it collided. In Baltimore, a Republican stronghold, the populace literally demolished the offices of the city's Federalist newspaper. Undaunted, the publisher succeeded in having subsequent editions printed elsewhere and shipped to Baltimore by mail. This only further enraged the citizenry. Residents promptly turned on the post office, threatening to tear the building down too. Only the hasty intervention by the militia saved the post office from the wrath of an angry mob.

Less than a half-century later a similar problem between the press and the post office popped up, but this time the consequences were national in scope. Again, censorship was at the heart of the matter. The First Amendment forbids Congress from passing laws abridging freedom of the press. But, does this guarantee newspapers the right to circulate by mail? Does freedom of the press include the right to mail publications that might incite violence in a community? Does one objectionable article mean that all subsequent issues of a journal should be refused mail delivery? These troublesome questions were at the heart of the debate over the roles of the press and the postal service before the Civil War.

For more than 30 years before the Civil War, anti-slavery advocates tested the limits of the freedom of the press. Copies of abolitionist papers, such as the *Liberator*, the *Emancipator*, the *Philanthropist*, Frederick Douglass' *North Star*, and the *Colored*

Helio News

By Betsy Towle
Director

Summer is a quiet time for most of the volunteers at the Foundation. Winter visitors are gone and the heat keeps most people's activities to a minimum. At our philatelic window we see a flurry of folks, regardless of the heat, at new issue time.

And then, there are always a few who are touring the west and read about the PHF in the AAA guide book under sights to see in Tucson. Today it was a family from Belgium who came for a visit. The oldest boy and the father are collectors of US stamps. The boy will be back to spend a day with us next week, to learn more about US stamps, watermarking, tagging, and the like, as well as selecting used stamps from our youth stock for his collection. The father asked if all major US cities had a place like the PHF. If there is such a facility in Belgium, he is unaware of it. I said unfortunately, no. We here in Tucson are very fortunate that almost 40 years ago, a group of dedicated philatelists got together to form the Western Postal History Museum, and that with even more dedicated friends and volunteers, we have been able to grow in size and scope to our present position. It is easy to take our wonderful facility for granted — it has always been here for our enjoyment and use. With your support and help, the Postal History Foundation will be here for many years in the future to serve the needs of stamp collectors, both young and old.

American, sent by U.S. mail stirred anger in the South. Southerners were wary of newspaper discussion of slavery. The slave rebellion led by Nat Turner in 1831, in which more than one hundred people were killed, was a recent and bloody memory. Few in the South were willing to allow distribution of literature they feared would provoke another revolt.

The *Liberator* and other newspapers and antislavery pamphlets continued to be printed by the tens of thousands and sent by U.S. mail to southern subscribers, church members, and legislators. Soon southern officials were pleading with postal authorities to ban these publications from the nation's mail system.

Printed Media and the Mails

Continued

When the Civil War began, Northern postal officials came under military and public pressure to censor the mails. They were urged to refuse distribution of newspapers or pamphlets that criticized the war effort. A New York City grand jury found the *Journal of Commerce* and four other local newspapers to be "dangerous." Postmaster General Montgomery Blair agreed and denied all five newspapers the use of the mails.

The *New York World* was banned in Ohio because it allegedly attempted to undermine federal efforts to "suppress the rebellion." This was partly true. The *World* in 1863 was a Democratic paper, critical of the Republican administration. Just a year earlier the paper had supported the government in banning the *Journal of Commerce* from the mails, stating that such actions were evil, but tolerable, due to the war.

Southern postmasters found themselves caught in the middle of the conflict. If they refused to deliver antislavery publications, they risked federal penalties. If they delivered them, they faced state penalties and their post offices became targets for mob attack. Abolitionist James Birney of Danville, Kentucky, objected when his local postmaster refused to deliver a newspaper, the *Philanthropist*. The postmaster, Birney complained, was "determined to become my intellectual caterer."

In 1835, Postmaster Alfred Huger of Charleston, South Carolina, asked Postmaster General Amos Kendall for permission to refuse antislavery material at his post office. While saying he had "no legal authority to exclude newspapers from the mail," Kendall recognized Huger's dilemma, and agreed to overlook whatever action he might take.

Secretary of State William Seward suppressed journals that published statements critical of the administration by refusing them access to the mails. Late in 1861 he gave Postmaster General Montgomery Blair a list of 12 newspapers to bar from the mails. In 1862 he removed the postmaster general's discretionary power and let army commanders submit names of newspapers for banning. In Kansas, Major General James Blunt had the *New York Caucasian*, the *Columbus Crisis*, and the *Cincinnati Enquirer* removed from that state's mails.

Fortunately, this was not an overly common practice. On the contrary, the dissemination of news was essential to a republic, especially one with a growing frontier population. As a Westerner [western Tennessee], Andrew Jackson knew that all too well. In his first annual message, Jackson described the mission of the postal service as "to the body politic what the veins and arteries are to the natural body—conveying rapidly and regularly, to the remotest part of the system, correct information of the operations of the government. Through its agency, we have secured to ourselves the fullest enjoyment of the blessings of a free press."

Indeed, as the November 1843 issue of *Hunts Merchants' Magazine* observed: "The publication of cheap papers containing the latest information in a familiar form, whatever objections may be urged against the

quality of the matter contained in some of them, has been of immense influence in increasing the number of readers, and consequently the demand for reading matter." Not everyone agreed with such sentiments, especially in light of the fact that newspapers had been carried either for free or at a greatly reduced rate of postage entirely disproportionate to the expense. In 1838 Postmaster General Amos Kendall complained that, "the weight of letters is only three percent that of newspapers, while the postage is ten times at much." Two years later the

complaint was the "printed matter constituted ninety-five percent of the whole mails, while it pays about twelve percent of the gross revenue."

Readership also rose. By 1875, five million newspapers reportedly were distributed daily by mail, roughly equivalent to two a week to every literate American. For all their reliance upon the mails, printer/postmasters typically were stingy about providing space for conducting post office business. That was true from the colonial period to the late 19th century. In colonial Providence, Rhode Island, the post office was in John Carter's printing office. In the journal of his inspection tour of the colonial post office made in 1773-1774, Hugh Finlay noted that Carter did not actually devote any floor space to the post office as such, but did pledge to keep incoming letters under lock and key until the recipients came to call.

Later printers also had to deal with another postal problem, that of collecting postage. Before the second half of the 19th century mail could be sent either prepaid or collect. This allowed countless fees to go


For all their reliance upon the mails, printer/postmasters typically were stingy about providing space for conducting post office business.

uncollected when mail was simply refused. Not wishing to get stuck with unwanted mail, some postmasters tried to lay down the law. The publisher of the continent of the North-West Territory, who was also the postmaster of Cincinnati from 1794 to 1795, advised his patrons, "Those who have a right to calculate on receiving letters and papers at this office in the future, must come prepared with cash in hand, or no letters or papers."

Not everyone a century later favored Rural Free Delivery. Opponents were quick to blame those who they thought were behind it. Each of the accused "culprits" had something to gain...and for good reason. It was profitable! Some spread the fault around, opting to accuse several proponents at the same time. The president of the First National Bank of Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, C. D. Griffith, believed that "there is something that is sapping the very life blood from our villages, and that is the Rural Free Delivery System. I know full well how unpopular it is to say anything against a system so popular in our rural districts, but which is far more dear to the hearts of our Congressmen. This movement was instigated by the city papers and the catalogues delivered at each farmer's door. Are they satisfied with this? No, certainly not. They now wish their goods delivered at his door, practically for nothing." And they did!

Other critics were more sparing, placing the bulk of the blame for RFD on either the mail order merchants or the newspapers...or some other group...but not pairing them together. "The rural delivery service is a huge joke. It was conceived by the mail order people, enacted into existence by these people and the whole Postal Department is now run in their interests where at all feasible," stated *The American Merchant* in 1902. Such a view is predictable for a magazine that represented small merchants. That same year another antagonist zeroed in solely on newspapers when he wrote, "there does not seem to be much doubt but what certain newspaper are at the back of this movement."

And, newspaper publisher felt blessed. They loved the increase in mail order subscriptions. In some cases the start of RFD was met with a corresponding increase in circulation by over 400 percent.

The overwhelming gratitude rural Americans felt towards RFD outweighed any negative points of view. Among those who reacted positively was a Madison, Wisconsin, farmer who summed up things this way: "The whole tendency of the system is to elevate the farmer, making him a broader, more refined, happier, and more useful citizen." Another farmer from North Manchester, Indiana, added his two-cents by noting that "after a trial of nearly a year we feel as though it would take away part of our life to give it up." 

News from the Arizona Philatelic *Rangers*

By John Birkinbine II
Chairman

Several members have inquired regarding the progress of the recently launched Children's Philatelic Education Endowment Fund.

For those not yet familiar with this special fund, all donations will be placed into a Trust, the annual interest from which will provide for the philatelic education of youth. Since such interest will be paid each and every year, each donation will have a permanent longevity in financing this important project for untold years into the future.

This fund raising project is very different from those usually encountered. How? There is no professional fund raiser who receives a percentage of the donations. There is no costly fancy brochure appealing for funds. There are no expense accounts for travel, entertainment, phone calls, etc. Those involved in such efforts pay their own expenses.

All this is very meaningful, with the result that 100% of all donations will be placed into the Trust for the intended benefits of youth philatelic education. Few if any charities can boast such effective use of contributions!

At this early stage, you might find some statistics interesting. Cash donations received to date vary from \$10 to \$25,000, and average just under \$1,000. Fifty percent of the donors are Rangers, and they have contributed 91% of the funds received. Forty-one percent of the donors do not belong to the Rangers, while 9% of the donors are generous philatelic organizations.

A good start has been made, and you are encouraged to join others in expressing their desire to support this noble effort by donating to the Children's Philatelic Education Endowment Fund.

As Addison wrote, "Charity is a virtue of the heart...."

Please send your tax deductible donation to this fund at PO Box 40725, Tucson, AZ 95717. Thank you!

Early Montana Merchant Mail

Welcome . . .



By Sam Dougan

to a mini-view of commerce in late 19th century Montana as shown through merchant correspondence of the period. We focus on the business activities of James H. McKnight and that took place at two Montana locales: Fort Shaw and F

Fort Shaw

Fort Shaw (1867-1901) was a military post located on the Sun River (a tributary of the Missouri River) in the northwestern quadrant of the state. The fort was commissioned during the "turbulent sixties," the days of the so-called "Blackfoot War." By the end of 1867 these Indians had killed about 80 white settlers and stolen more than 1,000 horses in random local attacks. Assigned the task of protecting the inhabitants in the area was a battalion of the 25th U.S. Infantry, consisting of four companies of foot soldiers. Their military mission was to guard mail and freight routes as well as to protect isolated gold-mining camps.

Wells-Fargo stage operations had monopolized service in upper Montana since their buy-out of competing stage lines in 1866. In the following year, they suffered heavily from these Indian predations. Many horses had been stolen in raids on its stations. Taking potshots at speeding coaches had provided Blackfoot braves with sporadic recreation. Gold miners scattered in camps girdling Helena felt very vulnerable to Indian attacks as well. General concern that the fruits of their hard toil were in immediate jeopardy threatened continued existence of these gold diggings. Fortunately, troops of the "25th" relieved them of their immediate anxiety

and the non-native community persevered in its varied economic endeavors.

Frontier military installations engaged civilians to provide the quantities of non-military items essential to maintaining morale. Fort Shaw enjoyed the services of an agent, or sutler, appointed officially to this contractual position. Most renowned of its merchant-storekeepers in the period of 1871 to 1891 was James H. McKnight [Figure 1]. Upon

receiving his appointment, he had successfully solicited the financial backing of T. C. Power, a leading merchant entrepreneur in western Montana Territory. With sufficient funding firmly established, McKnight laid in an abundant stock of goods for military and civilian customers.

The new agent utilized several sources for his inventory. Principal of these was Fort Benton, a transit point some 70 miles east at the navigational

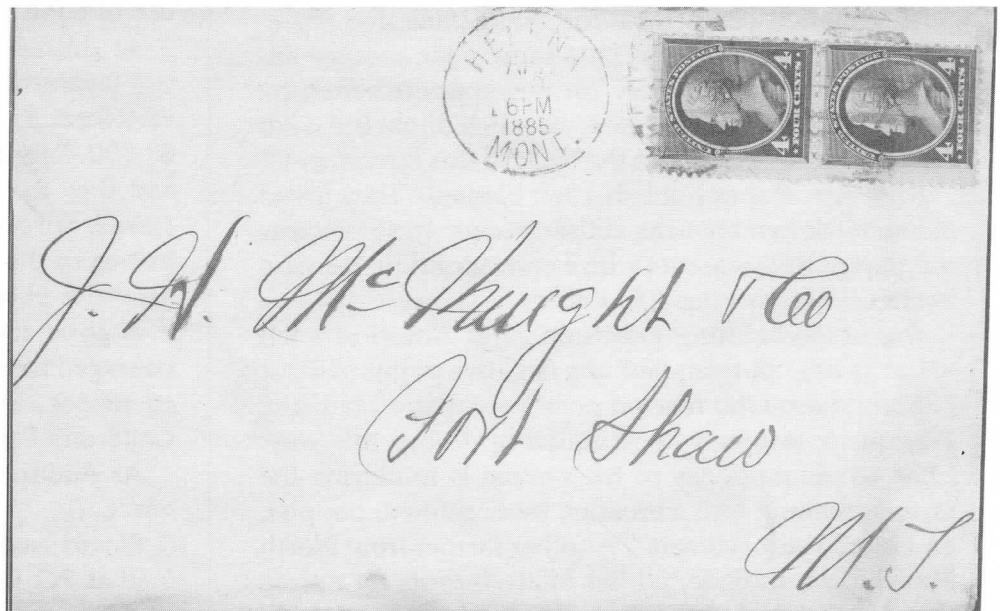
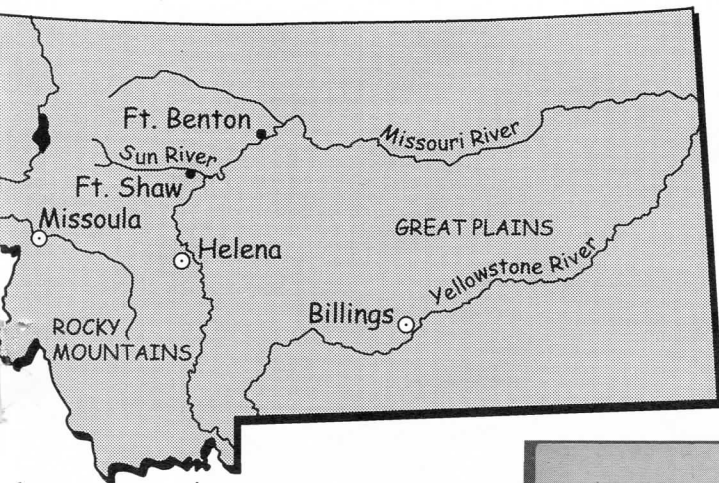
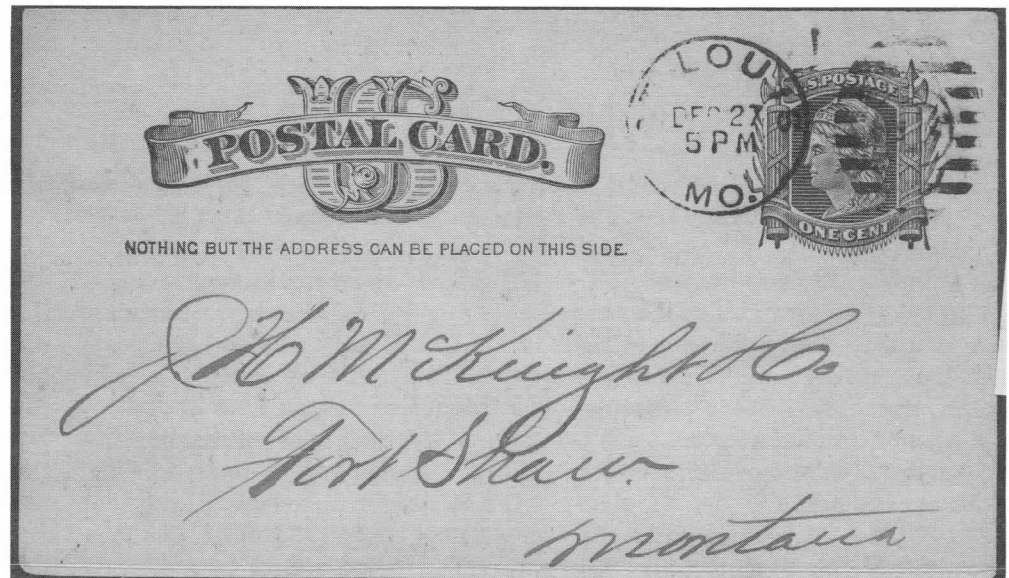


Figure 1. James H. McKnight was postmaster and storekeeper at Fort Shaw.

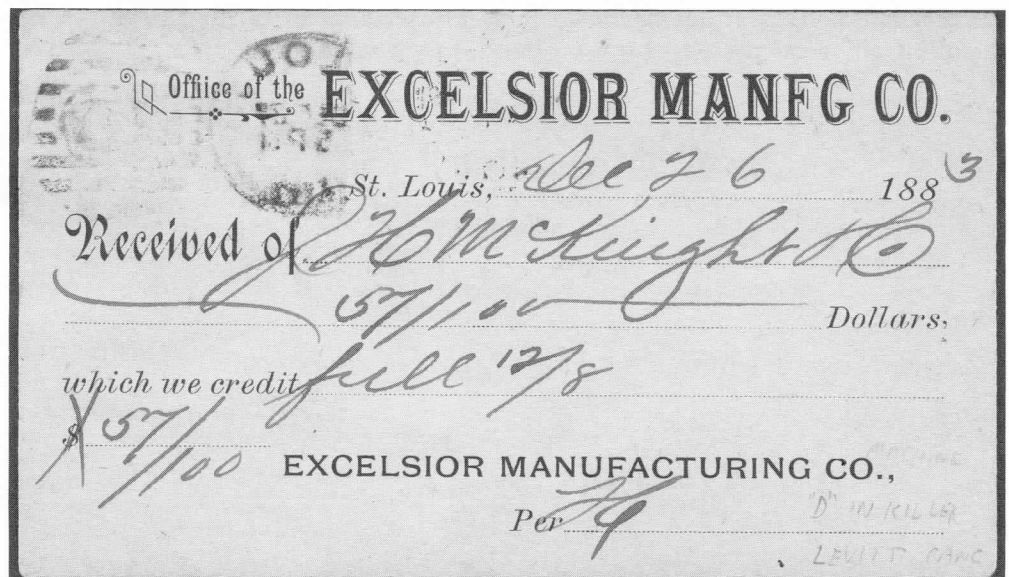


Figures 2A and 2B. Excelsior Manufacturing Company, St. Louis, Missouri, supplied Montana merchant James H. McKnight with inventory.

d T. C. (Thomas) Power
Fort Benton.



headwaters of the Missouri River. Far away St. Louis as well as Chicago were primary centers for procuring manufactured goods [Figures 2A, 2B]. McKnight's mentor, T. C. Power, also profited in these transactions, serving as the supplier and primary carrier for this merchandise. Some incidentals could be purchased in adjacent areas, but most items had to be shipped in [Figure 3, p. 10]. Power, a leading merchant at Fort Benton, also operated a fleet of river boats. River cargo then was trans-shipped by contractual arrangement with local freighter-teams. Power maintained a substantial line-of-credit at the First National Bank of Fort Benton. This financial institution was managed by William Conrad, one of three brothers all destined to become area tycoons. Storekeeper McKnight enjoyed a comfortable financial relationship with this bank which provided him added monetary backing to carry out his business in a successful manner.



Due to burdensome costs of transportation, manufactured goods were very expensive. River boat charges averaged about 25 cents per pound for shipments from St. Louis. Further charges by freighters or mule skinnners added another 5¢ per pound for deliveries to Helena, Ft. Shaw, and other

similar destinations [Figure 4, p. 11]. Note that the T. C. Power freight manifest, or Bill-of-Lading, describes the contents of six separate wagons (traveling as two articulated, or "Hitch," units). They were arranged as follows: the lead wagon, followed by a "swing" wagon which in turn was followed by

a "trail" wagon. A pencil notation on the Bill-of-Lading indicates that the steamboat was unloaded at Cow Island located downstream from Ft. Benton due to low water in the river. Note the amount of tonnage enumerated for each wagon. "Trail" wagons carried lighter loads thus offering some respite to tired

10

FORT BENTON, M. T., *October 4 1882*

Mess J. H. McKnight & Co Ft Shaw

Bought of M. A. FLANAGAN,

DEALER IN

PURE+DRUGS+AND+MEDICINES,

PAINTS, OILS, VARNISHES, BRUSHES, &c.

Terms:

| | | | |
|------------------------|----|----|----|
| 3 Bux Wood Tooth Picks | 20 | 60 | |
| Postage | | 25 | 85 |

PHOTO & CO., FINE, BALTIMORE, A.

Figure 3. Michael Flanagan was the brother-in-law of T. C. Power. His original inventory consisted of the drug stock of the Power Company. He also served as a postmaster at Fort Benton in the early 1890s.

draft animals, either oxen or mules.

A perusal of the Bill-of-Lading gives pause to the credibility of the hardships endured on the military frontier, circa 1878. Note particular items aboard the lead wagons, including 1060 lbs. of tinned oysters, 100 lbs. of canned lobster, 159 lbs. of pine-apples, 70 lbs. of preserved mushrooms and 37 lbs. of chocolate. The letterhead on the Bill-of-Lading features an illustration of a steam locomotive pulling a five-car passenger train.

Historically speaking, this engraving is quite misleading as railroad transportation to this area was still ten years away. This logo truly reflects the self-confidence of Power, who in concert with fellow businessmen was seeking public financing for a railroad shortline, "The Ft. Benton & Helena." Sufficient capital not being subscribed, this venture failed to materialize.

The closeness of the McKnight-Power relationship is further evidenced by a telegram of 1883, trans-

mitted by the Army Signal Service [Figure 5]. Its content announced the acquisition of Steele & Co. by J. H. McKnight, but orchestrated through a third party, T. C. Power. Their other business ventures included supplying the Northwest Mounted Police in nearby Canada with necessities. At Ft. Shaw, sutler McKnight provided limited banking services to his customers, particularly advancing credit. This practice was particularly helpful to his mail-order customers and en-

FORM No. 202. War Department, Signal Service, U. S. Army. (TELEGRAM.)

| NUMBER. | SENT BY | REC'D BY | CHECK. |
|---------|---------|----------|------------|
| | | | 18 Collect |

Received at *Shaw* 1/22, 1883.

Dated *Helena* 22

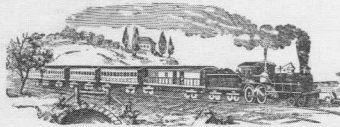
To *F. G. Heldt Shaw*

Heule & Co are attached for fifteen thousand. Wire amount our account to T. C. Power. I leave in the morning

H. A. McKnight.

▲ Figure 5. McKnight acquired Steele & Co. through T. C. Power.

Figure 4. 1878 Bill-of-Lading, T. C. Power & Bro., Fort Benton, Montana. ►



Fort Benton, M. T.,

Oct 24th

1878

Received, from **T. C. POWER & BRO.**, the following merchandise, in
apparent good order (except as below specified), contents and value unknown,
marked and numbered as per margin, which I promise to deliver without

unnecessary delay, in similar order, to Easton or order, at Fort Shaw
Me on payment of freight, according to the weight of each package thereof, at the rate below given,

In Testimony Whereof, I have this 24 day of Oct 1878, signed
three Bills of Lading, all of this tenor and date, one of which being accomplished, the others to stand void.

It is a part of this Contract that goods are liable for all charges remaining unpaid when they arrive at destination; and T. C. POWER & BRO. reserve the right to receive, advance on, and store the same at
expense of owners, when such goods are not promptly received and charges settled.
Not responsible for Leakage, Loss or Damage to goods, save the same shall occur through Negligence.
No liability will be assumed for wrong carriage or wrong delivery of goods that are marked with initials, numbered or imperfectly marked.

Road, McNally & Co., Printers, Chicago.

| MARKS. | ARTICLES. | WEIGHT. | MARKS. | ARTICLES. | WEIGHT. |
|------------|--------------------|---------|----------|-----------------------|---------|
| | Lead 1 | | | Lead 2 | |
| Appl Shaw | 10 Bx Lard | 500 | als | 10 Bx Lard | 550 |
| | 20 Oysters | 1060 | | 6 Syrup | 510 |
| | 2 Lobster | 100 | | 2 Beans | 160 |
| | 3 Peas | 265 | | 6 Jelly Topen | 306 |
| | 2 Salmon | 106 | | 4 pkgs Bx Ham | 160 |
| | 3 Pineapple | 159 | | 2 Bx Starch | 90 |
| 10 pkgs of | 3 Salmon | 150 | | 11 L | 180 |
| | 1 Bx of | 87 | | 10 Bx Ham | 1022 |
| | 5 Apples | 565 | Agm | 25 pkgs of | 1005 |
| | 21 Tomatoes | 1050 | | 1 Bx of Bx Clothing | 607 |
| | 9 Pickles | 666 | | 1 Bx of Bx Clothing | 320 |
| | 4 Apples | 135 | | 1 Bx of Hardware | |
| | 2 pkgs of Bx | 120 | | 4 Bx of Leather | |
| | 1 Tongue | 60 | | 1 Bx of Bx | 550 |
| | 3 Cucumber | 261 | | | 6058 |
| | 2 Catmeal | 174 | | Swing 2 | |
| | 1 Macaroni | 129 | Agm | 30 pkgs of | 1270 |
| | 2 Waxwings | 70 | Marina | 57 Malank | 1579 |
| | 1 Choc | 37 | Capthaus | 1 Bx of Old Stew | 180 |
| | 599 | | Agm | 1 Crate Circ Saw | 55 |
| | Swing 1 | | Shaw | 3 Buckets | 195 |
| | 1 Bx of Raisins | 1636 | | 2 Coils Rope | 402 |
| | 18 Tobacco | 2155 | | 3 Bx of packing | 330 |
| | 1 Clams | 70 | | | 4011 |
| Agm | 2 Soda | 355 | | Trail 2 | |
| | 2 Bx of Oakum | 120 | Agm | 4 pkgs of Malank | 179 |
| | 3 Bx of Bx Ironing | 657 | Marina | 15 Oak | 585 |
| | 4993 | | | 1 Crate Forge | 326 |
| | Trail 1 | | Agm | 1 Crate of Furniture | 360 |
| | 4 pkgs of Oak | 1145 | Marina | 1 Bx of Cheul's Works | 95 |
| | 1 Bx of Soap | 60 | | 1 Bx of Leather | 165 |
| | 1 pkgs of Bx | 85 | | | 1710 |
| | 1 Bx of Bx | 185 | | | |
| | 1 Chain | 115 | | | |
| | 1 Lining | 185 | | | |
| als | 4 Peas | 288 | | | |
| | 2063 | | | | |

hanced profits substantially. Another of several lesser enterprises was that of newspaper agent. Figures 6A and B show a postcard displaying a complaint directed to McKnight for unsatisfactory delivery of the newspaper.

The frontier was disappearing. Buffalo, so essential to Indian survival, were slaughtered recklessly and had all but disappeared by the 1880s. Destitute Indians wandered disconsolately and aimlessly about lands they had formerly dominated so fiercely. Army troops eventually herded them onto tribal reservations. Soldiers, their mission now completed, were no longer necessary. Accordingly, these troops were transferred elsewhere and Fort Shaw was abandoned in 1891. McKnight resigned his position and relocated his business activities 24 miles eastward in the burgeoning community of Great Falls.

Figure 6B. H. J. Hazlett, the master of the steamboat "Luella" in the 1860s, registers a complaint to McKnight for unsatisfactory delivery of the Benton Daily Record.

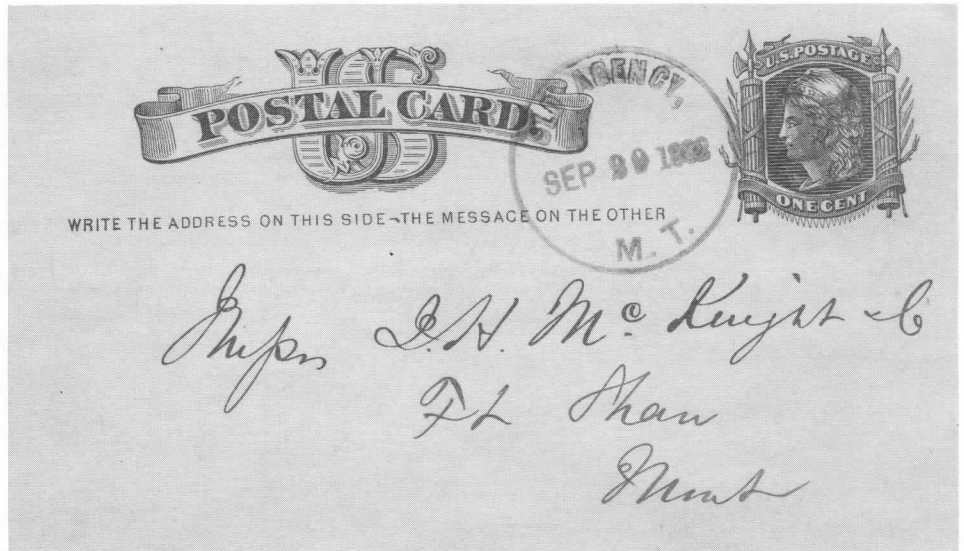
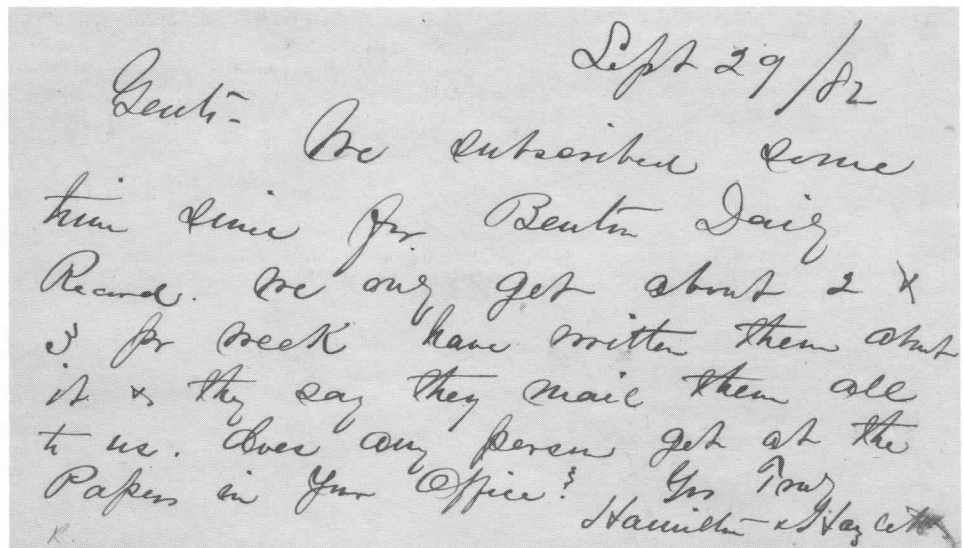


Figure 6A. The Old Agency post office was established in 1875. Alfred Hamilton was the first postmaster. The name was changed to Choteau in 1882.



Fort Benton

Fort Benton was a dual entity. It existed as both trading post and frontier settlement. Standing at the head-of-navigation on the Missouri River, it dominated regional trade from 1846 onward. (Originally it had been named Fort Lewis by its creator, the American Fur Company.)

A typical complement of employees at an American Fur post consisted of agent (often accorded the honorary title of "Major"), clerk, interpreter, carpenter, blacksmith, and in excess of fifty common laborers. The latter were employed for a period of fifteen months, and in return for their work

they were paid the sum of \$200 and "keep." Any debts contracted to Montana merchants and bankers, i.e., McKnight, Power, etc., were of course a drain on these wages. The aforementioned businessmen maintained close contact with frontier outposts, military and otherwise.

Fort Benton remained a company trading post except briefly during its final years when it was leased to the U.S. Army. (Warehouses were converted to barracks to accommodate the men of the 13th Infantry Regiment.) The town itself could be described well into the 1880s as a scraggly, single-

street village. Situated along its sole thoroughfare were a few merchant establishments and a dozen saloons. "Steamboat Season," late spring and summer, was the busiest time of the year. Heyday of this paddlewheel era on the upper Missouri was the late 1880s. The "Helena" and the "Butte" along with sister ships constituted the largest fleet servicing this far western bastion. Known as the "Block P Line," these river boats were the property of T. C. Power, a businessman in Benton since 1867. His basic enterprise, a mercantile establishment, provided mail order service to customers in a

widespread area extending northward to two posts inside Canada [Figure 7].

The advent of sheep ranching in the 1880s provided Fort Benton with a ready cargo for eastbound river boats. Wool shipments replaced buffalo hides and pelts, which were no longer available. In 1883 ranchers met at the Grand Union Hotel to organize the Montana Wool Growers Association [Figure 8].

About this same time the shipping agents (or freighters, as they were sometimes called) began to enjoy a lucrative business on supply treks into Canada. Their good fortune came about inadvertently through an enactment by the American Government, increasing excise taxes on trade goods. This prophesied a sudden decrease in business profits.

Illustrative of their business acumen, Montana merchants devised a scheme for circumventing this threat to their otherwise lucrative Canadian commerce. Purchases of foreign and eastern goods were continued as usual, but much of these items were trans-shipped in "bonded" containers. Ostensibly the contents in these barrels and boxes were destined for eventual delivery to customers in western Canada, and much of this merchandise undoubtedly reached legitimate destinations. But it is speculation as to what happened to the substantial remainders. (Power & Co., along with its chief rival, I. S. Baker Co., posted bonds of \$100,000 with the U.S. Government as a guarantee against misuse of bonded goods.) Trade repercussions were felt as far away as Winnipeg, traditionally the major supplier of trade goods into western Canada. A significant slice of its frontier trade was lost to these enterprising American merchants.

Conclusion

Prosperity eventually "deserts" many erstwhile thriving communities. The "best-of-times" became the "worst-of-times" at Ft. Benton with arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1888. A growing complex of railroad tracks offered more direct



Figure 7. The Peigan post office in northwestern Montana near what is now the entrance to Glacier National Park was an active post office only from 1877 to 1902.

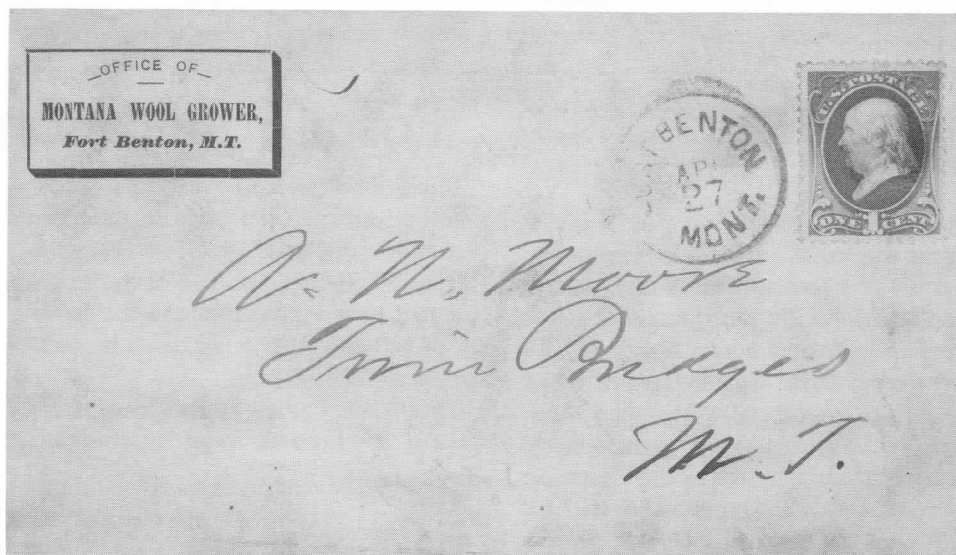


Figure 8. The Montana Wool Growers Association was founded in Fort Benton in 1883. Michael Flanagan was the postmaster at this time.

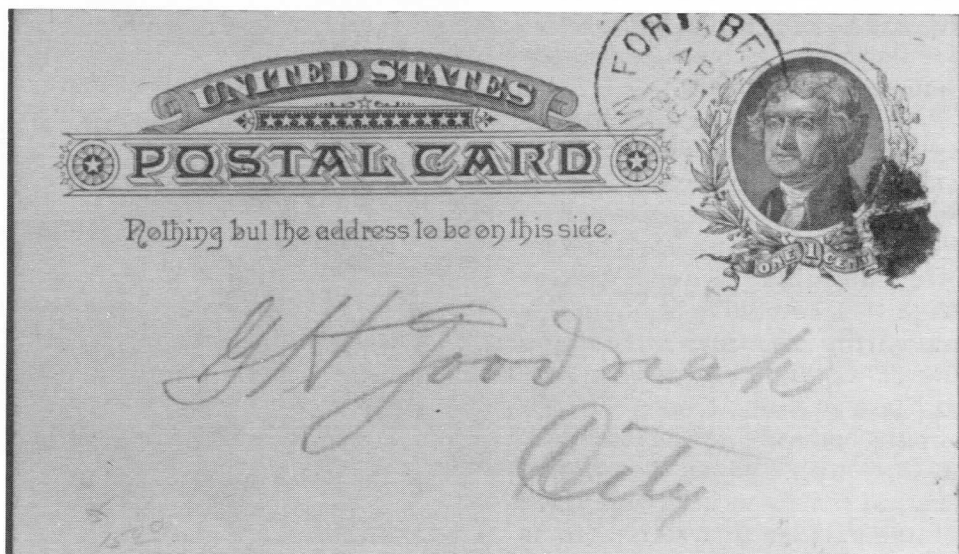


Figure 9A. The Fort Benton post office was established in 1867, with Isaac Baker the first postmaster.

Postal History Foundation

Youth Education

By Frank Klell



The Red Rock Elementary School, in cooperation with the Postal History Foundation, maintains a stamp club for all fifth through eighth grade students at Red Rock Elementary School. The

stamp club, now in its fourth year, has several objectives:

- To introduce students to the hobby of stamp collecting and nurture developing interests;
- To inspire learning through stamp collecting;
- To interlace activities related to stamp collecting with current curriculum programs.
- To involve students in a student government par-

ticipation program. (The student government program is part of the stamp club.)

All stamp club meetings are led by elected student officers and follow parliamentary procedures. The fifth and sixth grade students have been involved with projects on United States presidents and state and national symbols (flag, Uncle Sam, Liberty Bell, etc.). The seventh and eighth grade students have done units on space and world geography. The past two years the students have been able to attend the ARIPEX conferences in Tucson and Mesa. Students have also made trips to the Postal History Foundation.

Montana Mail • Conclusion

— Continued —

routes to the consuming public residing in the West. The new transportation was swifter and more economical than steam boating and horse or mule freighting. Wells, Fargo & Co. in 1869 had farsightedly divested itself of its stage lines operating in Utah and Montana. (They had been sold piecemeal to smaller operators such as the Helena & Benton Stage Co. [Figures 9A and B]) Although the demise of Ft. Benton as a commercial center was rapid, it had nevertheless provided substantial wealth to local merchants. Several fortunes had accrued within the business community, thereby creating somewhat of a merchant aristocracy.

Today many Montana cities proudly display the sumptuous 19th century mansions of these pioneer princes of commerce, several of their estates having been publicly refurbished and restored. Others have been endowned as gifts to their respective communities. Noteworthy examples include the home of "Copper King" Senator William Clark in Butte, banker Charles Conrad's home in Kalispell and William Chessman's home, the original Governor's Mansion, in Helena. These architectural landmarks remain as grand reminders of Montana's impressive economic past.

Postal Foundation Receives Award

The Postal History Foundation has received an award from the Arizona Education Association. The Foundation was selected because of the positive difference it has made in the quality of education the children in Tucson receive.

The AEA Partners in Education Award is given to local businesses,

community organizations or individuals for their exemplary support of local public schools. The PHF was nominated for the award by one of the teachers who works with our program. Youth Education Director Ray Sullivan and Director Betsy Towle attended a dinner to receive the award.

Stamp Classes Offered

The Postal History Foundation will offer beginning stamp collecting classes starting January as part of the Tucson Parks and Recreation program.

Jim Boylan, a member of the sales department, will teach the classes. The beginner class will be followed by a more advanced session in the spring.

If you are interested in either of these classes, please be sure to watch for the winter session Parks and Recreation bulletin, or speak to either Jim or Betsy the next time that you are in the building.

HELENA AND BENTON STAGE CO.

W.B. No. 81

Fort Benton, M.T. 47-188

We have received to your address, and

HOLD AT YOUR RISK

Collections \$

Our Charges \$150

Total to pay \$

Please to call for the same and present this notice, or fill out the order below.

Agent.

The Helena and Benton Stage Co. will deliver the above mentioned property to

or Bearer who will pay all charges, and is authorized to receipt for the same.

Consignee.

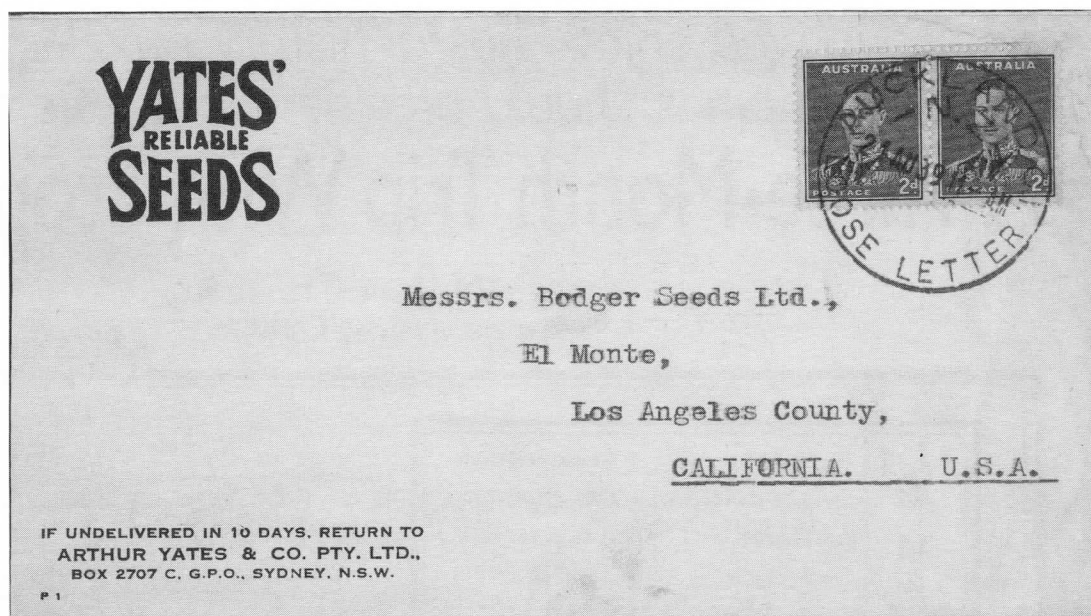
Charges must be paid before delivery of goods. Only responsible as warehousemen after 24 hours notice.

Figure 9B. The Helena & Benton Stage Co. was established as Wells, Fargo & Co. divested itself of Montana stage lines, and was owned by John Power, brother of T. C. Power.

Loose, But Not Lost

By
Frank Mallalieu

The cover has a return address of Sydney, Australia, and is franked with stamps from the common Australian King George VI definitive issue of 1937, two 2-pence scarlet.



While rummaging through a dealer's box of mixed covers, I came across the unusual cover reproduced here. The cover has a return address of Sydney, Australia, and is franked with stamps from the common Australian King George VI definitive issue of 1937, two 2-pence scarlet. What immediately caught my eye was the cancellation, which reads "AUCKLAND N.Z. LOOSE LETTER" around the circumference of the single-line circle, with the date "21 AU 39 11 - AM" across the middle.


Never having seen this type of cancellation before, I was intrigued as to its exact meaning as well as its origin. In addition, I was puzzled as to why a letter originating in Australia franked with Australian stamps would bear a New Zealand postmark, especially as the letter's destination was the U.S.A. The term "LOOSE LETTER" would seem to imply that the letter was somehow lost or otherwise misdirected in the mail and ended up in New Zealand, where the postal officials took it upon themselves to cancel it, not wanting to let the stamps slip through the mail unscathed by any postal markings.

As it turns out, the events that led up to a letter receiving a "LOOSE LETTER" cancel were not as infrequent as one might assume, at least as far as New Zealand is concerned. The Postal Regulations of New Zealand have specific policies to deal with situations such as this. These regulations define "LOOSE LETTERS" as those which make part or the whole of their journey (with postage uncanceled) before being handed to the post office. According to the Reports of the Postmasters-General dated September 6, 1873, "In accordance with a resolution passed at the Intercolonial Conference, ship letters, i.e. letters forwarded loose by ship, are delivered free of charge in any of the Australian Colonies, provided they bear the proper amount of postage stamps of the Colony in which they originated, inclusive of the usual late fee." Thus if a letter being sent out of the country of its origin failed to get a proper cancel on the postage applied to the letter, it would be canceled with the "LOOSE LETTER" postmark either on board ship (this was in the pre-airmail era) or at a postal facility upon the letter's arrival at

either its destination or some intermediate stop.

It turns out that New Zealand had several different kinds of "LOOSE LETTER" cancels. Early cancels consisted of a straight-line "LOOSE LETTER" designation either unframed or framed in a single or double-lined box. The RPSNZ (Royal Philatelic Society of New Zealand) encyclopedia, Volume 13, displays 23 varieties of these straight-line cancels. As for the circular date stamp type, the RPSNZ displays 16 varieties covering all the major cities in New Zealand. In most instances rubber stamps were used for the canceling device, but occasionally brass devices were utilized. While it was the usual circumstance for the uncanceled postage stamps on letters originating from countries other than New Zealand to receive the "LOOSE LETTER" marking or date-stamp, in other cases the marking or date-stamp was impressed on the envelope away from the stamps with a normal date-stamp postmark canceling the stamps. At Marine Post Offices, the uncanceled stamps on loose letters were occasionally canceled with a packet boat (paquebot) marking.

In the case of the reproduced cover, it would appear that the letter originated in Sydney, Australia (or perhaps on a boat traveling to New Zealand) and failed to receive any cancel. As Auckland was the next port of call, it follows that any uncanceled mail would be canceled there, which was the case here.

I have not seen this type of marking used by other countries, but it would be logical to assume that at least a few other countries did make use of such markings. Australia would be a likely candidate, inasmuch as the regulations covering this procedure refer to its use in the "Australian Colonies." I know I will keep looking. 

References:

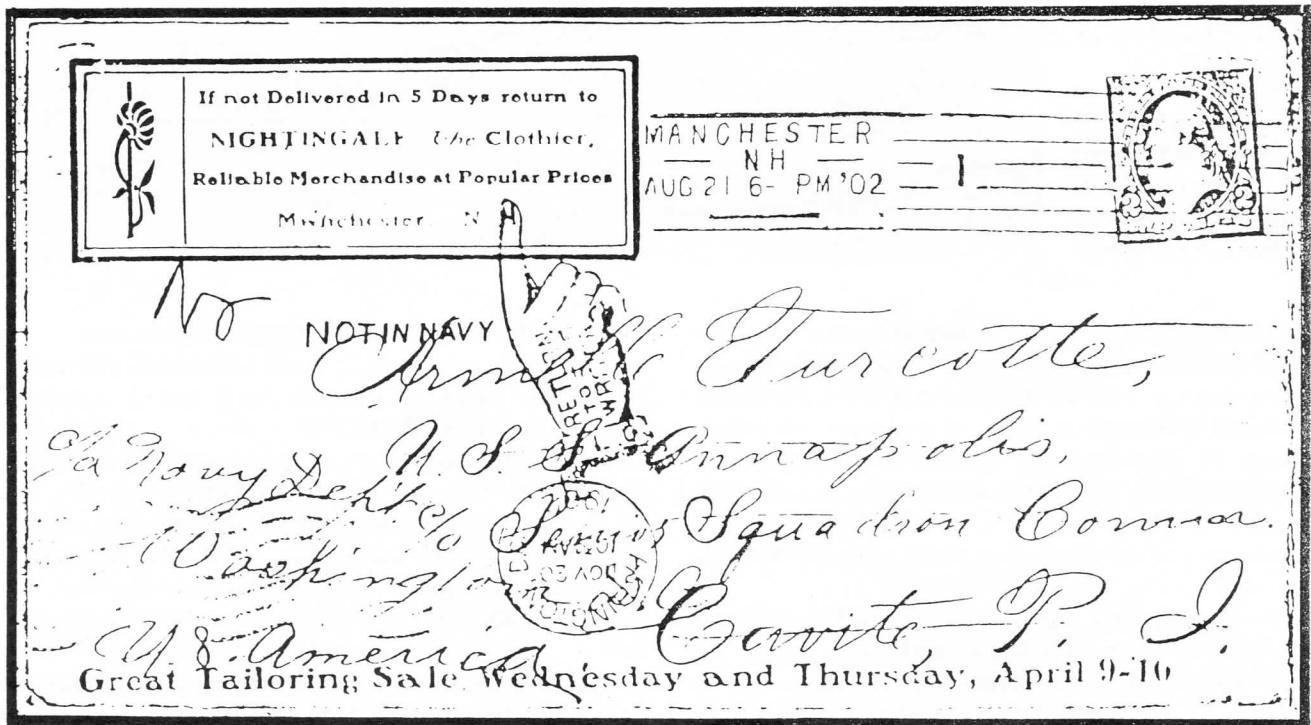
Royal Philatelic Society of New Zealand Encyclopedia, Volume 13, Chapter 15, "Loose Letters."

Personal correspondence from David Holmes, David Holmes Philatelist, Ltd., Auckland, New Zealand.

For anyone who enjoys postal history puzzles, this cover to the Philippines should provide some entertainment

A Three-Month Trip With Stop-Overs

By C.W. Bert Christian
Courtesy of Louise Christian



It might be said that the writer of the letter got his two-cents' worth in transit, if nothing else. In 1899, the first class rate of two cents per ounce was extended to include Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. This letter, to Cavite, P. I., originated in Manchester, New Hampshire, and shows a postmark of 6 p.m., August 21, 1902. Transit was via San Francisco, where it was backstamped August 26. As there are no receiving marks to date the Philippine arrival, the transit for the next seven weeks cannot be determined.

The writer obviously expected the addressee to be aboard the USS Annapolis, as the letter is directed in care of the Senior Squadron Commander, but here the message proved undeliverable. Just below the corner card is the pencilled word "No" and in red ink the forwarding directions to the Navy Dept., Washington, D.C. Arrival in Washington is shown in a second backstamp as October 13.

Two strikes in purple indicate that the addressee was "Not in Navy," so the letter re-entered the mail as undeliverable. Next stop would be the Dead Letter Office, a relatively short distance from the Navy Dept., but five weeks later it was received at the DLO as attested by a triangular backstamp of Nov. 19.

From this point on, no time was lost. The typical handstamp with the pointing finger was applied directing "Return to Writer," and at the bottom of the cover reading in reverse the cover reading in reverse can be seen the out-going mark of Washington, D.C., dated November 20.

A fourth backstamp dates the arrival in Manchester as 9:30 a.m. the following day, probably in time for the afternoon delivery, back to the writer after a round trip of three months.

Reference:
United States Postage Rates, Joseph Waldo Sampson, 1918.