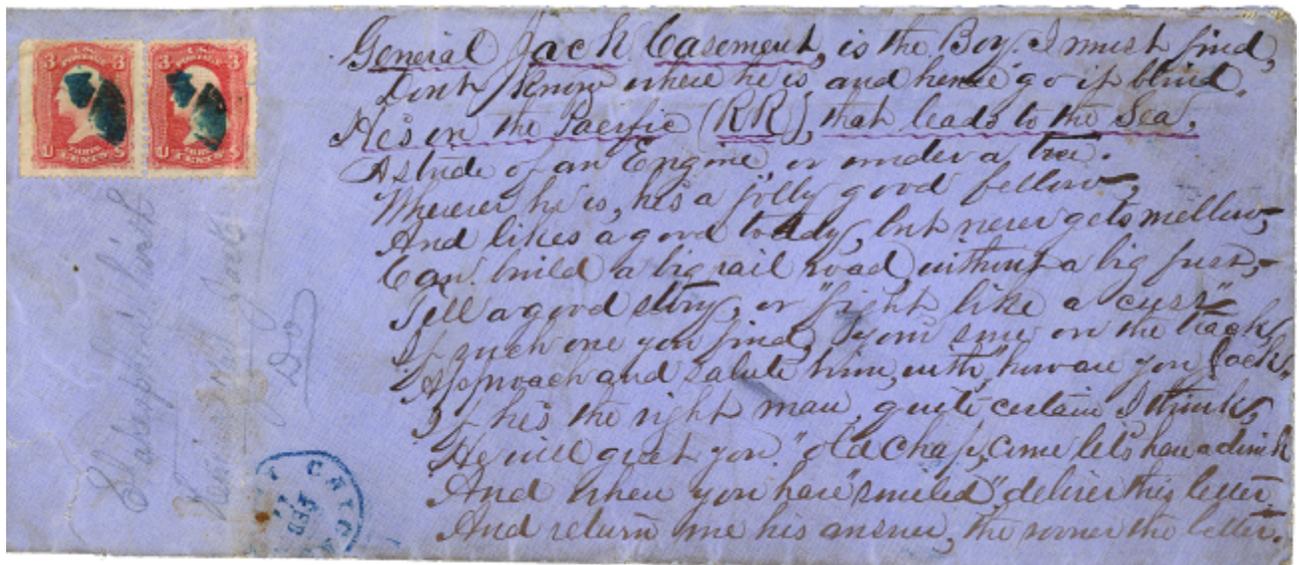


THE TRANSCONTINENTAL

by James W. Milgram, M.D.

A recent book on the American transcontinental railroad by the noted historian Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nothing Like It in the World*, has excited new interest in the subject of this great achievement. However, it seems surprising that almost nothing has been written in the philatelic literature about the railroad service that dramatically changed mail transportation across the country. I suppose the reason is that letters transported by train are not specially marked unless they are way letters given directly to a route agent. Most mail just shows the postmark of origin and bears the correct postage stamp — three cents in the latter 1860s for a single rate.

It might surprise some readers to know that Abraham Lincoln was a great proponent of this daring enterprise. During his administration, two enabling bills were passed (in 1862 and 1864) to establish the line and to provide government financing to help build a transcontinental railroad. The basic story is that



A legal-sized envelope bearing two F-grilled 3-cent stamps from Chicago with an amusing 14-line poem for an address to Jack Casement on the Union Pacific R.R.

RAILROAD

A MEETING OF EAST AND WEST

two separate corporations, the Central Pacific Railroad Company of California (the name was later shortened) and the Union Pacific Railroad, were created by the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862. According to the contract, the Central Pacific would build a railroad line east from Sacramento (California) and the Union Pacific would build west from the Missouri River (Omaha, Nebraska, became the actual terminus).

Railroad lines have to be surveyed and graded before tracks can be laid, and in some places bridges or tunnels need to be built as well. These various operations all had to be accomplished far ahead of the end of the actual track. The groundbreaking of the Central Pacific occurred January 8, 1863, with a large crowd in attendance. The Union Pacific was created later; the corporation was established October 29, 1863, with groundbreaking ceremonies at Omaha on December 1. The two railroads were built east and west, thereafter, until their joining on May 10, 1869. Each kept advancing toward the other as fast as possible in the race to claim as much of the government construction subsidy as it could get.

The Union Pacific

There are some covers showing usages on the Union Pacific before the completion of the continuous line created by the linking of the two separate railroads. The man in charge of laying the actual track was a former Civil War general, Jack Casement. He and his brother supervised the crews that did the many jobs necessary to build the finished railroad. Casement lived at the end of the track, moving westward with it each day. An unusual envelope to him contained a long poem as the address:

General Jack Casement is the Boy I must find,
Don't know where he is and hence go as blind.
He's on the Pacific (RR) that leads to the Sea,
Astride of an Engine, or under a tree.
Wherever he is, he's a jolly good fellow
And likes a good toddy, but never gets mellow,
Can build a big rail road without a big fuss,



A 3-cent F-grill tied "BROOKLYN N.Y. DEC 9" to Rawlings Springs, Wyoming Territory, Union Pacific R.R., with "Recd at Rawlings Springs W.T. Dec 17, '68."

Tell a good story, or "fight like a cuss."
If such one you find, I am sure on the track,
Approach and salute him, ask "how are you Jack?"
If he's the right man, quite certain I think,
He will greet you "old chap, come let's have a drink."
And when you have "smiled," deliver this letter
And return me his answer, the sooner the better.

The postmark is from Chicago on February 11, 1869, and the original letter is enclosed. I know that it reached the general in Utah Territory, because I obtained it from his grandson.

Another surviving Union Pacific cover is addressed to "Rawlings Springs/Wyoming Territory/U.P.R.R." The Brooklyn postmark is dated December 9, and there is a notation on the envelope that reads "Recd at/Rawlings Springs W.T./Dec. 17, '68." Rawlings Springs was the original name of a town now known as Rawlins, located in the center of Wyoming. It was named by Gen. Grenville Dodge, who surveyed the Union Pacific route, after he discovered a spring there in the company of Gen. John A. Rawlins. The Union Pacific was built across Wyoming during 1868, but the grading for new track was hundreds of miles west of the actual track terminus, and by the end of the year track had been laid into Utah.

A cover that puzzled me for years is a Wells Fargo 3-cent entire that contained a letter from Boise City, dated July 13, 1868. The envelope is addressed to "Eugene A. Brewster/



A cover featuring a Wells, Fargo & Co. black frank on 3-cent entire with manuscript "Boar River July 17th/68" and black "U.PACIFIC R.R. JAN 23" with "A" killer.

Attorney/Newburg Orange Co./New York. Over the frank is the manuscript notation "Boar River July 17th/68." The postmark is "U. PACIFIC R.R. JUL 23" with a large "A" as killer. Mark Metkin gave me the explanation of the usage. Bear River City was the name of one of the temporary "Hell on Wheels" gambling and red light shanty towns that sprang up for the crews along the course of the Union Pacific R.R. while it was under construction. Some of these disappeared when the crews moved on, while others outgrew their rowdy beginnings to become permanent settlements. The track reached Bear River City, situated on the Bear River just short of the Wyoming-Utah line in November 1868. The letter, however, is dated July, when the end of the line was still

more than 200 miles to the east. The explanation is that the community was created originally to relieve the forward grading and bridge crews of their pay, although probably it was much smaller in July than when the tracks finally arrived later that fall.

Wells, Fargo & Co. carried the envelope from Boise, Idaho Territory, to the settlement at Bear River, where someone misspelled the town's name and postmarked it.

While it is possible that the letter went from Idaho to Salt Lake City first, there was no official post office at Bear River, and Mark Metkin terms this a Wells, Fargo & Co. way usage. From Bear River the letter was carried alongside the track grading by the overland mail stage, until it reached the beginning of the tracks where there was a railroad route agent who accepted the letter into the regular mails. He postmarked the entire a second time, not accepting the prior postmark. The letter was carried by the Union Pacific R.R. to Omaha and then by other railroads to New York City, where it went up the Hudson River via yet another train to Newburgh, New York.

There are six similar covers from a single correspondence, all in Wells, Fargo & Co. franked envelopes and postmarked with Union Pacific R.R. route agent postmarks, two with the same large "A" killers. Five contain enclosures. In order of dating they are:

April 5, 1868 — from
Atlantic City, Dakota
Territory, via Fort
Bridger and South Pass
City

Photograph of the Cisco (California) Wells, Fargo & Co. office showing incoming train and three waiting stagecoaches. (Photograph courtesy of Wells Fargo Bank.)



July 1, 1868 — from North Platte
 August 7, 1868 — from Green River City
 August 23, 1868 — from Green River City
 September 9, 1868 — from Bryan City, Utah Territory

Green River is one of the settlements that arose on the line, and Bryan City was a similar settlement just ten miles to the west. The end of the track did not reach Green River until the end of September 1868. Thus the writer of these letters at times must have been with the grading or surveying crews in advance of the actual railroad tracks. It is not clear why Wells Fargo entires were used for the letters from Green River City and Bryan City, since these were sites along the railroad line. However, they might have been carried out of the mails, because the postmark is the Union Pacific R.R. route agent's mark at the eastern end of the tracks. This would be separate from the regular overland mail that Wells, Fargo & Co. carried between the two termini while the train tracks were under construction.

The Central Pacific

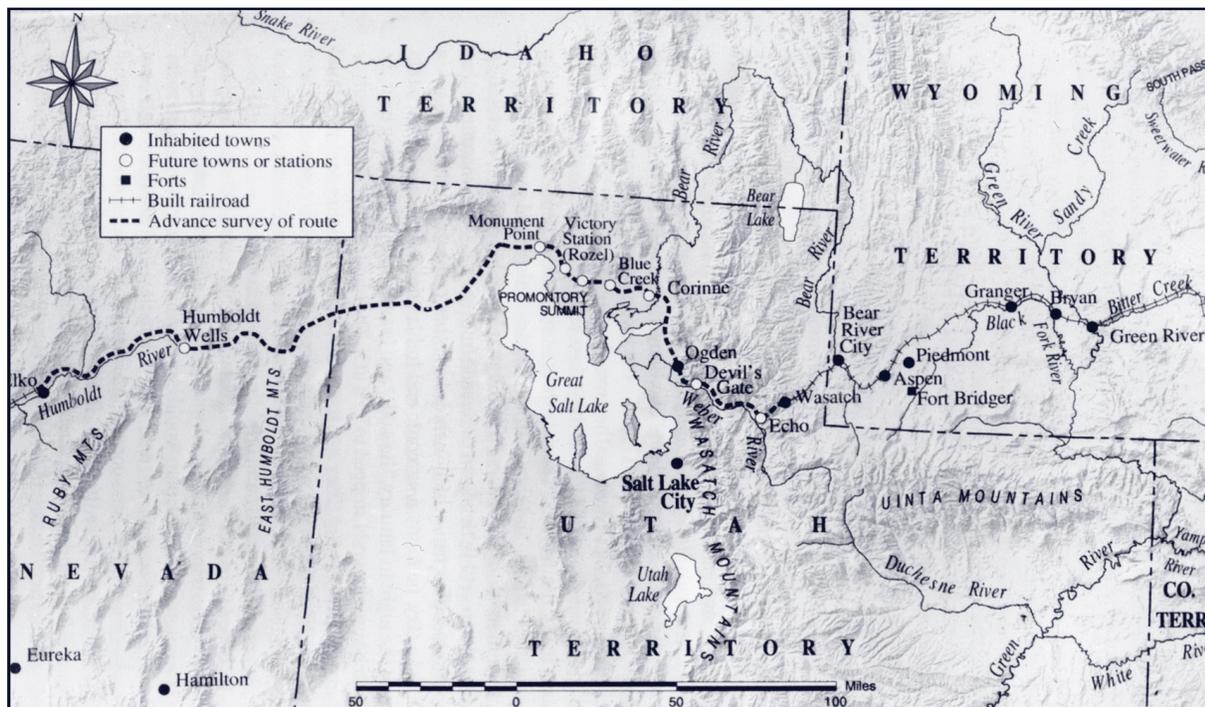
Track completion for the Central Pacific portion of the transcontinental railroad was much slower than for the Union Pacific due to the mountainous terrain over which



A 3-cent entire with red frank Pacific Union Express Co. canceled "CENT. PACIFIC R.R. AUG 11" to LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

the line had to run. Track was completed to Roseville, California, on February 18, 1864 (passenger service began April 25); to Auburn May 13, 1865; to Colfax September 1, 1865; and to Cisco November 29, 1866 — a total distance of sixty miles from its starting point in Sacramento in January 1863. Wells, Fargo & Co., which was carrying the overland mail via the northern Placerville route in 1867, also ran a mail and passenger stagecoach line on the railroad route around Donner Lake after September 1, 1865.

One cover from an unknown site was carried by the Pacific Union Express Co. to a station of the Central Pacific



Map showing both railroad lines during construction (dotted line) in the Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming Territories.



A 3-cent F-grill tied "SAN FRANCISCO CAL. MAY 6" with manuscript notations "Recd May 15th 1869. By 1st through train from San Francisco to N. York. May 6th 1869."

R.R., where it was postmarked on August 11. The cover bears a route agent's postmark similar to the Union Pacific usages that have been described. Wells, Fargo & Co. carried the letter from the end of the track of the Central Pacific eastward to the end of the track of the Union Pacific. Then it was carried back to Nebraska by rail and transported over other postal routes to La-Crosse, Wisconsin. A nearly identical cover to the same addressee bears an August 4 postmark, so the train was

making at least a weekly trip.

When the trains reached the end of the line, the stagecoaches of Wells, Fargo & Co. were waiting to transport the mail and other cargo the rest of the way to the other railhead. From the archives of the Wells Fargo Bank, courtesy of Dr. Robert J. Chandler, I am able to include a photograph made at Cisco in 1867 showing three waiting stages alongside the smoking incoming train at far left. Wells, Fargo & Co. agent Nelson I. Hammond (the man in the top hat) stands beside the first stagecoach.

First Transcontinental Mail by Rail

At least one cover that made the complete trip on the first west-to-east run of the mail over both railroads is known to exist. The cover is postmarked at San Francisco on May 6, 1869. The train carrying dignitaries from the Central Pacific Railroad left Sacramento on May 8. The junction of the two lines took place on May 10. The Postmaster General's Report of 1869 states that the railroads reported being capable of transporting mails through on the 10th. Telegraph wires carried the news coast-to-coast and celebrations took place in cities from New York to San Francisco. The telegraph lines had been erected along the train tracks by special crews. A poster printed in Chicago announced:

1869. May 10th. 1869.
Great Event
Rail Road from the Atlantic to the Pacific
Grand Opening
of the
Union Pacific
Rail Road
Platte Valley Route
Passenger Trains Leave
Omaha
On the Arrival of Trains from the East
Through to San Francisco



The poster of May 10, 1869, promotes the Union Pacific Railroad service "from the Atlantic to the Pacific."

In less than Four Days,
 Avoiding the Dangers of the Sea!
 Travelers for Pleasure, Health or Business
 Luxurious Cars & Eating Houses
 On the Union Pacific Rail Road
 Pullman's Palace Sleeping Cars
 Run with all Through Passenger Trains
 Gold, Silver and Other Miners!
 Connection Pass at
 Cheyenne for Denver, Central City
 & Santa Fe
 Through Tickets for Sale at All
 Principal Railroad Offices
 Be Sure they Read via Platte Valley
 or Omaha



A 10-cent 1857, Type 2, tied "SAN FRANCISCO CAL JUL 20 1859" with overland cornercard depicting train and promoting the southern route through Los Angeles.

The cover bears the notations "Recd May 15 1869," "By 1st through train from San Francisco to N. York," and (above the postmark) "May 6th 1869," thus indicating a total cross-country trip of nine days. Ordinarily it took only six hours and twenty minutes for mail to travel from San Francisco to Sacramento, the initial journey this letter took on May 6; however, the letter was delayed until May 10 at the site of the ceremony for the track completion. The receiving date of May 15 seems correct for the trip from Promontory Summit, Utah, east across the rest of the country to New York City.

The Postmaster General's Report of 1869 shows that mails from San Francisco to New York were carried through in six days and fifteen hours at the fastest, once the service was functioning regularly. However, the average time to New York was seven days and two hours. This should be compared to the overland mail times of sixteen days during April 1 to December 1 and twenty days for the rest of the year.

In *Letters of Gold* by Jesse Coburn,¹ a cover with a San Francisco postmark dated May 14, 1869, to Prussia is described as being on the first run of the railroad. This obviously is not correct, because the dates do not correspond with the information given above. Mark Metkin argues that there was so much celebrating done at the Promontory Summit site that no mail could have left by train until May 15, but this does not conform to the statement in the PMG report. I believe that the handwriting on the cover described above is both contemporary and genuine. The most important fact given is that the letter was received in New York on May 15. Unless the writing was faked, that date proves that the letter was transported across the continent by train, because no alternative method of transportation would have been so swift.

Train Cornercards

A final topic concerns the California illustrated envelopes of the late 1850s that carried train designs. From 1849 to 1858 all mail to and from California was transported by sea (at first with a crossing of Panama, although some later routes included a land passage across other areas of Central America, including Mexico), but the dream of transcontinental railroad service was one that many Californians shared. Since such a railroad was not considered a serious possibility in the 1850s, many settled for including an overland freight service on their wish list, in lieu of the sea routes. Between 1856 and 1857 there was much discussion about the possibility of establishing such a service, and the Post Office Appropriation bill of March 3, 1857, included a twice a week overland mail service. The bill noted that the



A 10-cent 1857, Type 2, tied "FOLSOM CITY Cal. JUN 14 [1859]" with "Overland, via PLACERVILLE." The cornercard depicts a very early style train intending to promote a transcontinental train service.

contractors were responsible for selecting the precise route.

The winning bid was from a consortium headed by John Butterfield, who ran a southern line through Fort Smith, Arkansas, and across the southern territories to Los Angeles.² Service commenced on September 15, 1858, according to the 1858 Report of the Postmaster General. The same PMG report describes an alternative weekly service that existed between St. Joseph (Missouri) and Salt Lake City, which then traveled from Salt Lake City to Placerville (California) — a delivery route that took thirty-eight days each way.

Agitation for the creation of a northern route for the proposed railroad line and opposing support for building along the established southern route were behind the creation of the illustrated envelopes.

Despite the Butterfield service, most mail continued to be transported by sea and across Central America. The Post Office Department lost a great deal of money through its support of the great overland mail, particularly the seldom-used southern route. The 1859 Postmaster General's Report states:

Until a railroad shall have been constructed across the continent, the conveyance of the Pacific mails overland must be regarded as wholly impracticable. These mails, as dispatched semi-monthly, average ten tons in weight, which, if divided into semi-weekly departures, would give two and a half tons for each — thus requiring, in view of the condition of the road, ten coaches, instead of the single one now employed....

In September 1859 a Pacific Railroad Convention met in

A Letter from the Wild West

Although the Union Pacific route was surveyed formally in the 1860s, prior to the line's actual construction, the territory through which it would pass was already well known to travelers. A July 9, 1849, letter from Fort Laramie in the Wyoming Territory includes a detailed description of the country and its inhabitants (both animal and human). Although the cover is addressed to "Mr. G.L. Palmer, Athens, Maine," the unsigned letter is headed "Mr. Lafayette" (a small mystery of its own, unless the "L." stand for Lafayette). The postmark is a red "STEAM 10" from St. Louis. This indicates that the letter was given to a steamboat on the Missouri River, which carried it to St. Louis where it was mailed. Many early Fort Laramie and other Oregon Trail letters bear similar postmarks.

It may be interesting to you to know what we are doing out here, and to many others, and as the mail goes out tomorrow, you may want to know how long it will take a letter to go across the continent allmost. I wrote to the P.M. the 20 of May We just got under way then, but owing to sickness after, we are late on our journey. I am well and rugged, never so hearty in my life but don't fat much yet: the wear and tare is great boath of mind and pacience. Our party is all well now. We arived at Fort Kerney the 17 June — its former name Fort Charles. Left the 20 arrived here 8 July. We found wood water plenty up to Fort Kerney. Had two tremendous thunder showers — blew our tents heels over head. Saw no game except antelope and deer, now and then a wolf. Fort Kerney is on the Platt at the head of Grand Island three hundred miles from Ind. It is a government post, twenty mud houses three companys of soulders to protect emigrants. We found provisions

cheap there. Pork 3 cts per lbs bacon two flour two. We have had some sport since we left and seen many grand sceneryes. There is no wood on this side of Platt comeing up for one hundred miles enough on the Island and the other side. The Platt is shallow, wade it most any where. Nothing took place worth notice until we got to South Fork. There we struck a herd of buffalo of one hundred the first we see. About eighteen of us gave chase to them. They took back into the bluffs, we had the race up hill and down. The bluffs are from fifty to one hundred and fifty feet, like sugar loaves with ravines between them. After racing them awhile I turn one to the right and took him a lone from the rest and in a half mile I got shot at him. I got rather close and he turned to give fight. No sooner he took a rifle ball he started went a while and turned again. I hit head but no effect: a ball will not enter the hair is so long skull so thick. He started after shaking head went a few rods turn a gain. I hit him the third time in the brisket that wound him to. I was alone. Went to camp supposing the rest had got each of them one, [as?] I was on a mule and they horses. But they got none. We got the meat. It was the largest pile of meat I ever saw kill in one animal. Two days after we saw three or four hundred in one herd. Our boys gave chase but no effect. Got none. My animal being some stiff did not go. The other meat not gone. They told us at Kerney, that five thousand and two hundred wagons had gone past the Fort. They had a man to keep account. They will everage four persons and ten animals to wagon. It surprising to see how fast the ox wagons get a long. They go their twenty and twenty five miles a day as easy almost as we do. I would not believed it but how they will make it alone here I don't know. We are to go

San Francisco, where a memorial in favor of a route survey and a congressional bond were issued. A cover created earlier that year with a train cornercard bears the inscription "PER OVERLAND MAIL STAGE, VIA LOS ANGELES./IN HOPE OF THE" above the train picture. Postmarked San Francisco, July 20, this cover supports the established overland mail route, but also promotes building a railroad along the same route. Another design supporting the southern route, with a similar train cornercard, reads: "BY THE OVERLAND MAIL STAGE VIA LOS ANGELES! HURRAH! But we must have the..." followed by a finger pointing to a train illustration.

A different 1859 railroad design cover, promoting the northern route through Placerville, is postmarked Folsom City,³ June 14, and shows a primitive open-coach passenger train with a tiny locomotive. The banner reads: "Overland,

via PLACERVILLE" with a credit line given to publisher Julius Jacobs at the "Post Office Literary Depot, Folsom, Cal." The proposed Placerville route was a straighter route across the country and roughly approximates the actual route the railroad would take a decade later.

However, most of these overland propaganda covers show the stagecoaches that were then carrying the mail rather than trains.⁴ None of the covers actually were carried by train until they had arrived in Midwestern states with established lines, such as Missouri or Arkansas.

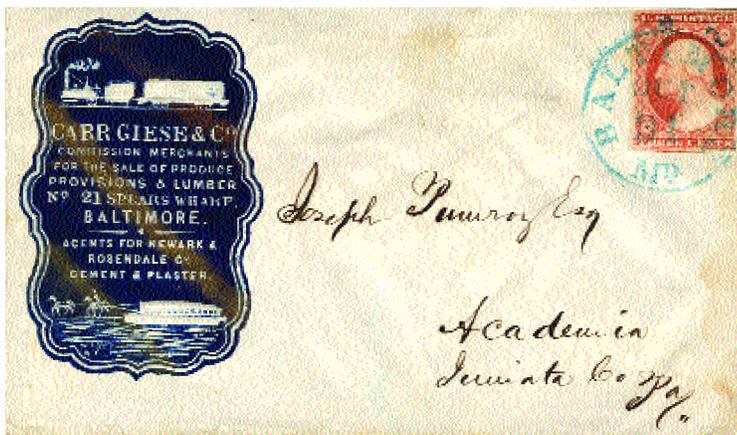
In 1860 most mail continued to be carried by a tri-monthly ocean steamer, with the Post Office continuing to lose money on the three different overland routes then operating. The overland mail service continued to be unsatisfactory throughout the Civil War (it was shifted north),

over wind river hills soon. They are in sight. Bryant is three miles a head of us with a pack party. The wagons is all ahead. Don't know how they make it in the mountains all together for feed for their animals. The cholera has followed emigration to this place. It has fritened the Indians away all most. Graves strew the way between here and Ind. Looks like a graveyard in some places. Government has just bought this Fort. It is now a government station. Some soulders here to protect emigrants. Three hundred government wagons has past here to establish a Fort on Bear river valley — the soulders went a few days ago. Probably there will be another three or four hundred miles beyond there, so that soon a regular line will be establish through, but it wont shorten the distance: it's a long road. Flour here is three dollars a hundred sugar ten cts per lb. Bacon we had given to us, and pick up on the ground amounted to four or five hundred weight. It was good Beans we can find on the ground by the bushel. This is owing to emegrants loading to havy with the wind river hills view. Many have burnt their wagons and some their provisions because the government would not by them. There is a great many whole families going out women, girls, children all sorts most. We have sixty five head of young cattle, a good cow for nine of us, tea, coffee, sugar, and [undecipherable]. Don't know how long it will last, but we live now any how. It is about six hundred seventy miles from this Fort to Ind.



Bryant makes it six forty one. The scenery an hundred miles below here is grand. One land mark in particular, the chimney rock. It resembles a chimney: it can be seen forty miles below it. I went on to it. The bluff it stands on is like a sugar loaf one hundred fifty feet, so steep that one has to clime pretty smart to ascent. On the top of that is the chimney part as much in height as the part mentioned, sixty feet by forty five at the base. The next is Scotts bluff just above. They present all forms imaginable Castles, domes, spires, small Forts of all description. They resemble an old city of the Gothic style. Two hundred and seventy miles takes us to the south Pass. When I get there I shall look for Cab. Had it not been for the cholera we should [have] been four hundred miles farther along. We have lost four of our party died of cholera — rest all well.

Railroad Cameo Cornercards



Carr Giese & Co.



Dock, Davis & Steel



Northern Railroad Transportation Office

Transportation by rail was just hitting its stride in the 1850s, supplanting the earlier canal boat and competing with steamboat transport. Not only was rail transport fast and efficient, it was “modern,” and companies vied with one another to promote their tie in with the latest technology.

Carr Giese & Co. Blue design for the Baltimore firm of “Commission Merchants for the sale of produce, provisions & lumber ... agents for Newark & Rosendale Co. Cement & Plaster.” Cornercard with embossed illustration of a very early type of train at the top and a canal boat drawn by two horses at the bottom. Over the blue design are diagonal strips in gold ink. The 3-cent 1851 stamp is tied to a blue “BALTIMORE MD OCT 31.”

Dock, Davis & Steel. Blue design for the Philadelphia firm — “Produce Commission and Local Transportation Merchants.” Design shows a more contemporary style train, printed with embossed raised lettering. The stamp is a 3-cent 1851 with partial imprint tied to a black “PHILADELPHIA PA. JUN 3.”

Northern Railroad Transportation Office. Blue design for the New York firm located at 167 Broadway, embossed train engine (above) and steamboat (below). A 3-cent 1851 stamp is tied “NEW-YORK MAR 13” (1853), but the cover was forwarded from Boston to Hopkinton, New Hampshire. The postal laws in 1853 were that the rate was three cents if prepaid and five cents if unpaid. Therefore, the next postmark was “BOSTON 5 cts 28 MAR,” indicating five cents due. There is a third postal marking. This is the manuscript “Chd” to the right of the illustration. It signifies the word “charged” and was used for incoming unpaid letters when the fee was charged to a post office box account. It was applied in Hopkinton.

The enclosed letter, dated March 29, begins with a familiar plaint: “Your Letter of 20th inst I did not receive ‘till yesterday afternoon. The Post Master said it was returned to him by the Penny Postman yesterday morning, how long he had had it, could not say.”

although its protection and furtherance were felt to be vital to the Lincoln administration. The Butterfield overland mail contract for the transport of mail to Salt Lake City by the Overland Mail Company was renewed in 1864. Due to the high cost of freight charges, the Overland Mail Co. conveyed letter mail only; the trip took sixteen days between the Missouri River and Folsom City (California) via Salt Lake City. Paper and document mail were carried by sea via Panama. However, there were periods during the 1860s when all the mail was transported by sea due to Indian depredations.

In 1866 the initial eastern stagecoach point of departure for the western mails was changed from Atchinson (Kansas) to two other points, both on the planned Union Pacific railroad route. By following the Junction City (Kansas) route, stage travel was shortened by some 168 miles. Thus, mails to and from California that had previously been sent via Chicago and St. Joseph (Missouri) were ordered, as of August 15, 1866, to be sent via St. Louis, Wyandotte (Kansas), and Junction City. When the railroad completed lines to Omaha, orders were issued to ship the mail via Chicago, Omaha, and Fort Kearny (Nebraska).⁵ Once track laying began, the Union Pacific Railroad connected with the overland stagecoach route that carried the mail between the end of the track to and from the west. This distance, as of November 1867, was extended to Hays City (on the Kansas Pacific R.R.) making the length of available railroad line west of St. Louis now 571 miles.

Wells, Fargo & Co. bought the Holliday Overland Mail and Express Company on November 1, 1866, and took over Holliday's mail contract for the eastern overland mail. Wells, Fargo & Co. also bought out Butterfields in the West. By November 1867 the Wells Fargo overland route was making connection with the Central Pacific at Cisco (California), ninety-four miles from Sacramento. The west-to-east connection of the transcontinental railroad still was advancing only slowly as it struggled to cross the Rocky Mountains. However, Indian troubles along the Union Pacific route were significant that year. During the month of March there were eighteen failures to keep within the allotted contract times. Between April and August of that year the Indian raids robbed the mail contractor of 350 head of stock, burned twelve stations, destroyed three stagecoaches, wounded an unspecified number of passengers, and killed thirteen employees. This led to the reopening of the southern overland route by the Post Office Department for the benefit of those along the line.

In 1868, when the original Holliday contract had expired, three new contracts were let for transportation of the overland mails. The main contract (No. 16,635) advised that "service and pay [were] to be curtailed *pro rata* as each fifty miles of the Union Pacific railroad should be completed westward ... the [P.O.] department reserving the right to cur-

tail the service at its western terminus when the eastward progress of the Central Pacific railroad should be sufficient to warrant the starting of the western mails from a point on the railroad rather than from Virginia City [Nevada]."

This is the first year that the documentary and newspaper mail formerly carried by sea was transferred to the overland route. The successful bidders for the contract backed out when they were told that they would have to carry *all* the mail, not just letters. The Post Office Department's special agent could find no one willing to perform the service other than Wells Fargo. Therefore, the Postmaster General accepted a proposition from Wells, Fargo & Co. to carry the mails between the termini of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads daily for the term of one year, or until the two railroads met, subject to deduction *pro rata* for every section of fifty miles of railroad completed and reported to the Department as ready to carry the mails; it being estimated that the closure would occur by August 1, 1869 (a quite accurate guess as it turned out). The bidders on the other two routes also pulled out, and their functions were assumed by Wells, Fargo & Co. as well.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful for the kind assistance of Robert Chandler and Mark Metkin.

Endnotes

1. Jesse L. Coburn, *Letters of Gold: California Postal History Through 1869* (U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Canton, Ohio/The Philatelic Foundation, New York, New York, 1984), page 286.
2. See map in Stanley B. Ashbrook, *The United States One Cent Stamp of 1851-1857, Vol. 2* (H.L. Lindquist, New York, New York, c. 1938), page 277.
3. Folsom City is near the capital city of Sacramento.
4. See Jesse L. Coburn, *op. cit.*, pp. 246-51 and 283-85.
5. Fort Kearny, built in 1848 near the Platte River, was the first military post established to protect emigrants traveling the Oregon Trail; during the Trail's heyday as many as 500 ox teams are said to have passed the fort on a single day. Both the overland stage and the short-lived Pony Express had stations there, and the fort became known for the reliability of its mail service.

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- Bain, David H. *Empire Express: Building the First Transcontinental Railroad* (Viking, New York, NY, 1999).
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The Author

Dr. James W. Milgram collects American illustrated lettersheets, historical letters, and covers and has written extensively about them. His most recent book is *United States Registered Mail 1845-1870*. He won the Ashbrook Cup for 1999 from the United States Philatelic Classics Society.