

**Mails of the Westward
Expansion,
1803 to 1861**

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Preface

This book was inspired by the research and collection of Floyd E. Risvold, whose extraordinary "American Expansion & the Journey West" postal history collection was sold by Spink Shreve Galleries in January 2010. Floyd epitomized the postal history collector. His collection was formed by the pieces of paper carried by long ago mail systems, but his real passion was the history behind those pieces of paper. In this way, for example, he could bring to life the travails of a pony express rider in 1860. In addition, his generous sharing of his discoveries with other collectors was legendary.

Postal history is the study of postal routes, rates, frankings and markings. The best postal history reference sources are official postal documents and contemporary newspaper reports. However, the official record is invariably incomplete, so the examination of surviving pieces of mail, or covers, from the period can fill in the gaps by showing patterns of postal use. The combination of surviving postal artifacts with postal documentation, historical events and geography can be used to accurately re-create the details of a mail delivery system. This is the approach employed in this book.

The transcontinental mail systems described in this book crossed or touched the Rocky Mountains, either over them or by route around them. As further described in this book, these systems evolved because the restless spirit of the 19th Century American created a series of westward emigrations that populated the West and raised the need for communications with those who remained back East.

The United States Post Office Department was slow to extend its services westward, so the first U.S. contract postal routes did not start until 1850. Prior to that, a combination of private and semi-official mail services inadequately addressed the need for communication. Accordingly, this book is organized by western destination prior to the commencement of post office service, and by transcontinental route after 1849.

The authors would like to thank the following individuals who have assisted with this book. Many generously supplied illustrations of covers in their collections and provided valuable insights. If any names are omitted, please accept our apology for the omission. In any event, all errors and omissions are the responsibility of the authors alone.

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Westward Expansion: Encounters at a Cultural Crossroads. In the nineteenth century, the United States expanded its territory westward at a dramatic pace, leading to conflict, national growth, and ongoing cultural exchange within a transformed continent. Historical Background. Early Area Homestead Photograph. The expansion of the United States into the territory west of the Mississippi River began with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. President Thomas Jefferson nearly doubled the size of the nation by negotiating a price of \$15 million to purchase 828,800 square miles from France, including all or part of 14 current states. In 1804, Jefferson sent an expedition led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore the area.

- 1 Westward expansion 1800-40
- 2 The Native American experience 1800-40
- 3 Missouri, Texas and Mexico
- 4 The impact of the Mexican War 1846-50
- 5 The 1850 Compromise
- 6 North-South problems 1850-3
- 7 The problem of Kansas-Nebraska.

CHAPTER 3 The rise of the Republican Party.

- 1 The collapse of the second party system
- 2 The 1856 presidential election
- 3 James Buchanan's presidency.

1 Introduction. Why was the USA so successful during the mid-nineteenth century? Before 1861 the history of the USA had been in many ways a remarkable success story. The small, predominantly English settlements of the early seventeenth century had expanded rapidly, so much so that by the end of the eighteenth century they had been able to win independence from Britain. The reasons for westward expansion were the availability of cheap land, U.S. efforts to consolidate its holdings, and the gold rush. When President Thomas Jefferson bought the Louisiana territory from the French government in 1803, it doubled the size of the existing United States. Jefferson believed that, for the republic to survive, westward expansion was necessary to create independent, virtuous citizens as owners of small farms. He wrote that those who "labor the earth" are God's chosen people and greatly encouraged westward expansion. The pioneers who flocked to the West, all had their own set of reasons for taking on the long, treacherous journey to settle there. Reasons for Moving West.