

THE
TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY
JOURNAL

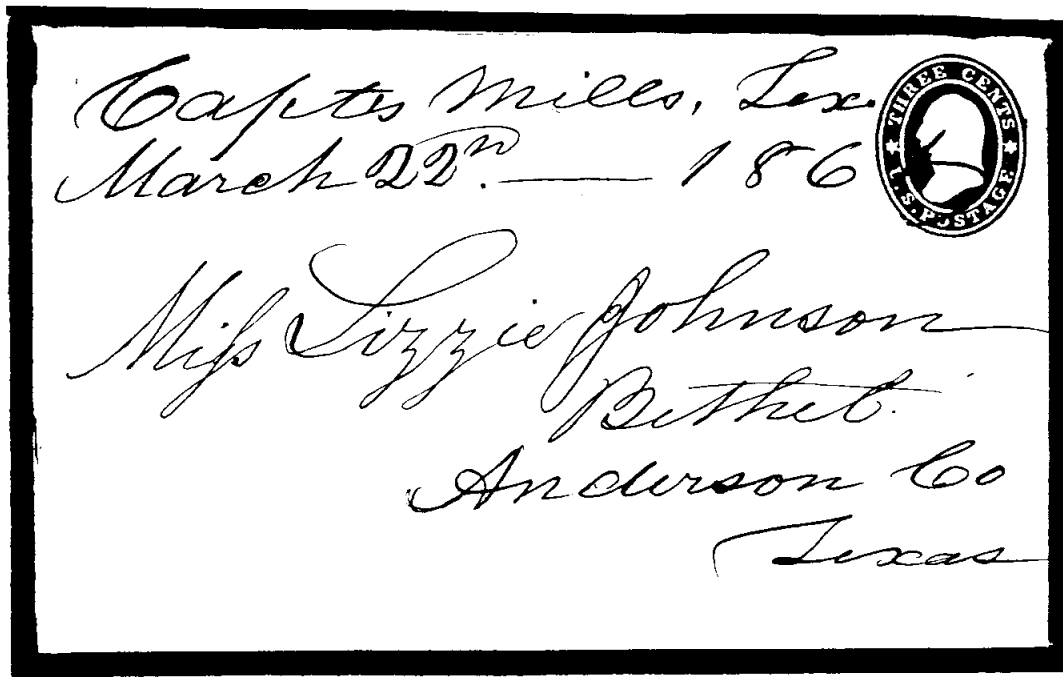


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On the front cover is an early Texas Confederate cover bearing a valid Nesbitt, star-die U-27, with postmaster Thomas Johnsons manuscript notation "Capt's Mills, Tex., March 22nd, 1861." Texas passed the Ordinance of Secession on February 1, 1861 and was admitted as a member of the Confederacy on March 6th. Capt's Mills is a ghost town in Hays County, while Bethel, the town to which the cover is addressed is a discontinued post office in Anderson County.

THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Dues \$10 per year payable to Secretary-Treasurer

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PRESIDENT'S PAGE



As mentioned in the last issue of the Journal, your nominating committee has been searching for new officers for the Society. Due to some gracious individuals, and a little arm-twisting, we now have our slate of candidates for the upcoming election in December. They are as follows: President - Ed Christman, Vice-President - John Germann, and for Secretary-Treasurer - Karl Gebert. According to our Constitution any member may place in nomination one candidate for any office by petitioning in writing the Secretary-Treasurer prior to October 1st of odd numbered years. All candidates must agree to their nomination before their names may be listed on the ballot. You will receive a ballot and a dues notice for 1992 with the December issue of the Journal.

I would like to comment briefly on the TEXPEX-91 show held at the Municipal Auditorium in San Antonio, June 14-16th. Due to a super effort by members of the San Antonio Philatelic Association, this years 95th Annual T.P.A. Exhibition and Convention went off without major glitches. The Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society, The Confederate Stamp Alliance, and The United States Philatelic Classics Society enhanced the quality of the exhibits presented to an unprecedented level. Over 417 frames of superior exhibit material were on view. This included for the first time in your Presidents memory, the showing of five Texas Exhibitions. If you missed this show, you missed a top-notch one.

A recent suggestion was made to your President that a competition to discover, The Best Texas Illustrated Cover might stimulate members interest in our Society. So beginning now, the competition is on. To enter you merely mail to your President & Editor, what you believe is your best illustrated Texas cover. When copies of eight covers are received the 1st contest will close. The eight covers will then appear in our Journal. Members will have six weeks following publication of the first lot to cast their vote for the best cover. Once a winner is determined by a count of the votes, the winner will be notified. This winner may then qualify for a \$25.00 prize by writing a one or more page article pertaining to the winning cover. No cash prize will be given until the article relating to the winning Texas Illustrated Cover is received. Tricky or not, those are the rules for our contest.

EXCUSE THIS HASTY SCRAWL, MY HORSE IS SADDLED AND MY COMPANY GONE

BY KARL C. GEBERT

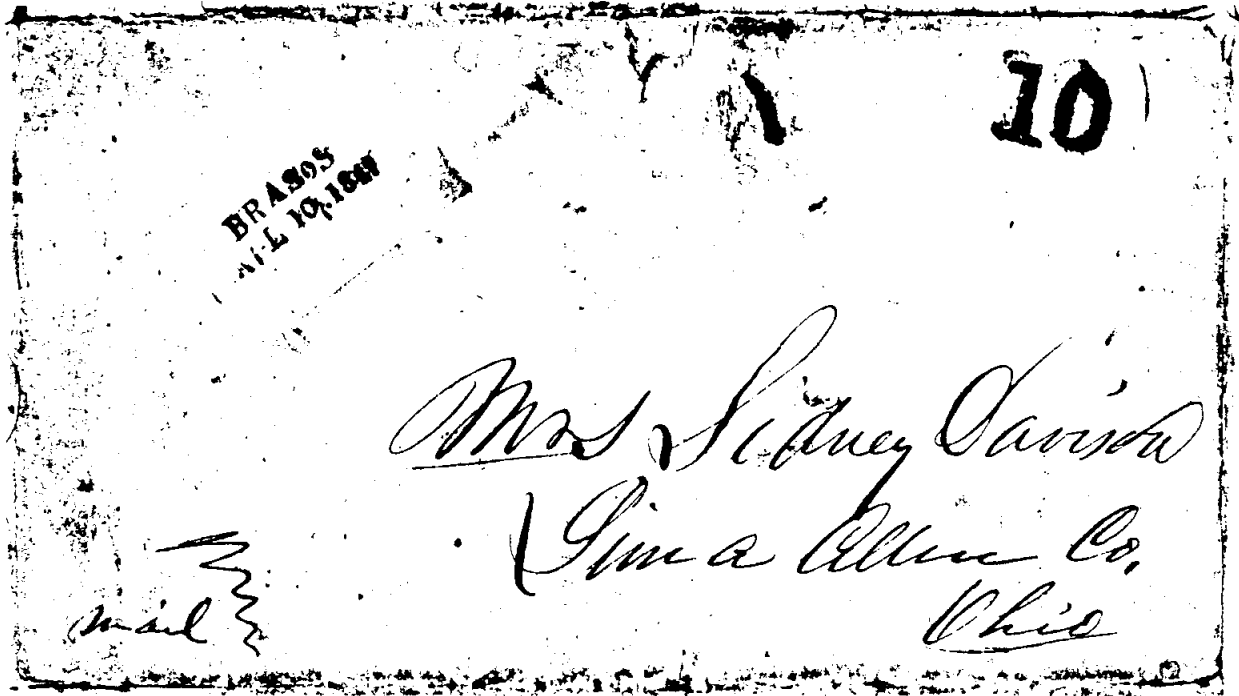


Figure 1

The folded letter illustrated in Figure 1 was written at Camargo, Mexico on April 4, 1847 by First Lieutenant G.H. Nelson, a Texas Ranger serving as part of U.S. forces in the Mexican War.

Mail from the troops in northern Mexico was carried by light draft steamboats to the mouth of the Rio Grande. Two such steamboats, the Corvette and the Colonel Cross, were captained by Mifflin Kenedy and Richard King, respectively. Kenedy and King, boatmen with experience on southern U.S. rivers, were lured to the Rio Grande by the opportunity to join the civilian corps of army boat captains. Both would continue to occupy key positions in Rio Grande steamboat commerce for a number of years and ultimately establish extensive south Texas ranches.

After the steamboats reached the mouth of the Rio Grande, mail was taken to a central mail location for processing and forwarding to the U.S. via ship. From mid-1846 until March 1847 that function was performed at Point Isabel and subsequently at Brazos Santiago (Figure 2), the site of depots for military supplies received by ship from the U.S. and forwarded to the military.

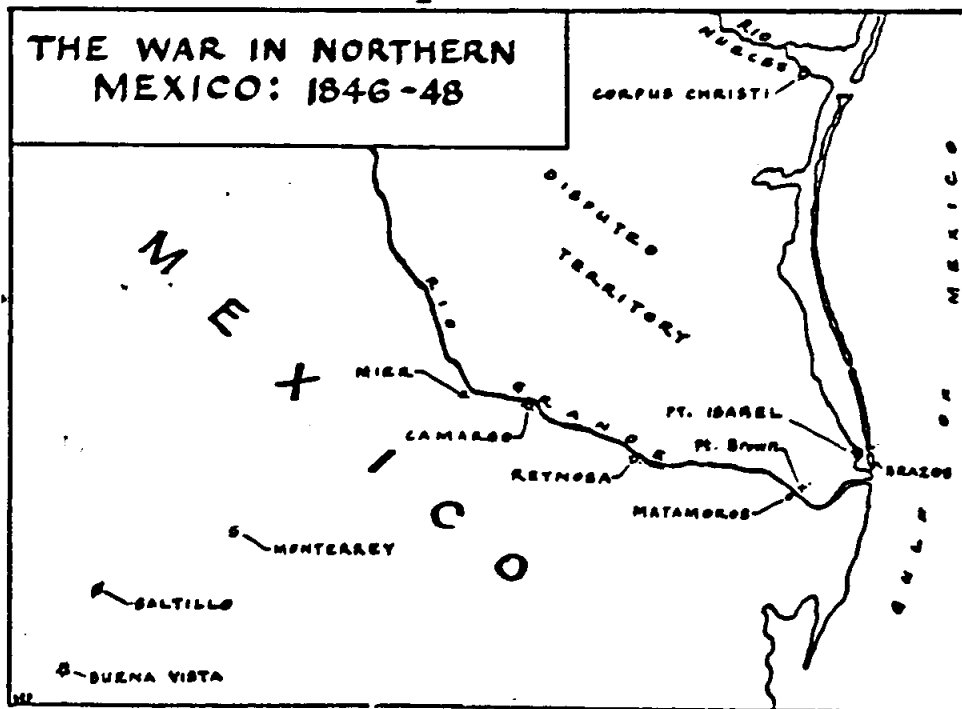


Figure 2 (courtesy of Dale R. Pulver)

In a November 1846 report to Quartermaster General Thomas S. Jessup, Captain John G. Tod described the Brazos depot as follows:

"The depot on the Brazos Island is situated on a point, or sandy flat, which is liable to be covered with water during a heavy northerly gale, particularly if it occurs after a blow from the N. Eastward & our northers along this seacoast mostly ensue after eastwardly gales, and may be looked for during the season, which continues until April, with as much certainty, as we calculate upon the sun's rising & setting.

Immense supplies, pork, beef, bread, flour, corn, hay, oats, wagons, supplies in boxes, and every thing else, is [sic] piled up all along the shore and about the Point or Neck, which composes the depot. I observed some few stages erected high enough to protect the supplies that were stored on them from the water. In other cases, pork & beef, and such articles as are not so liable to injury, form the ground tier & perishable articles are then stored on them. They are covered chiefly with tarpaulins [sic], or canvass, so as to form a roof, the ends open...

The depth of water at the mouth of the Rio Grande is about 3½ feet at low water & about 5 feet at high tide, some few tides have given as much as 6 feet over the bar, but it is not safe to calculate over 5 feet for vessels to enter the river. The depot at the river is situated about two (2) miles from the bar.

A train of some hundred wagons (oxen & mules) leave[s] the depot at Brazos Island, carrying supplies to the depot on the river. It is a heavy road, over a sandy plain, a distance of nine(9) miles."

At Brazos, Nelson's letter received the handstamp "Brasos" along with the date of April 10, 1847-six days after it was written upriver at Camargo. This was the first of several handstamps used at Brazos after transfer of the mail facility from Point Isabel and the only Brazos handstamp with this (misspelled) version of the name. It was used for the brief period from March 31 through April 15, 1847. Since it was in use for only two weeks, examples are scarce and better strikes are even more elusive.

In addition to the application of the "Brasos" handstamp, the rate marking of "10" was also applied. The rate of 10¢ was for letters with a destination in excess of 300 miles and was collected from the addressee.

Lieut. Nelson was serving as a Texas Ranger under Jack Hays and Richard Gillespie when Texas entered the Union in early 1846 (see related article by this author in TPHS Journal of February 1991). As the certainty of war with Mexico became apparent, Nelson enlisted as a private in Gillespie's Company, Texas Mounted Rangers at San Antonio. By the time the Company participated in a major battle at Monterrey in September 1846, Nelson was a second lieutenant and third in command of the 73 man company, after Captain Gillespie and First Lieutenant William "Bigfoot" Wallace, one of the principal figures in nineteenth century Texas.

Five years after the war, Major Luther Giddings of the First Ohio Volunteers described the Texas Rangers as follows:

"Their knowledge of the character of the enemy and of the military frontier, acquired in their long border struggle, rendered them valuable auxiliaries in the invasion. Of this far-famed corps-so much feared and hated by the Mexicans-I can add nothing to what has already been written. The character of the Texan Ranger is now well known by both friend and foe. As a mounted soldier he has had no counterpart in any age or country. Neither Cavalier nor Cossack, Mameluke nor

Moss-trooper are like him; and yet, in some respects, he resembles them all. Chivalrous, bold and impetuous in action, he is yet wary and calculating, always impatient of restraint, and some times unscrupulous and unmerciful. He is ununiformed, and undrilled, and performs his active duties thoroughly, but with little regard to order or system. He is an excellent rider and a dead shot. His arms are a rifle, Colt's revolving pistol, and a knife. Unaccustomed to the saber or to move in mass, the Rangers are of course unable to make a charge upon, or to receive one from well-armed and well-disciplined troops. But when an enemy's line is broken by the rapid volleys of their rifles, they then "pitch in promiscuously," and finish the work with the "five-shooter," -delivering their fire right and left as they dash along at full speed. And it must be confessed that for a chaparral skirmish, or an "up and down and cross over fight" upon house-tops, such as that of the third day at Monterrey, the Rangers have few superiors. Centaur-like, they seemed to live upon their horses; and, under firm and prudent leaders, were efficient soldiers, especially for scouts and advanced post-service, where the necessity for unintermitting vigilance left them no opportunity for indulging in mad-cap revels and marauding expeditions for which they are somewhat celebrated."

On the second day of the battle of Monterrey, the Rangers were ordered to ascend and capture a key fortified hill called Independence Hill. During the assault, Captain Gillespie, for whom Gillespie County in Texas was named, was mortally wounded. In the autobiography of another ranger captain, W.P. Lane states that G.H. Nelson killed the Mexican soldier that shot Gillespie. Additionally, the Texas Democrat (newspaper) of Austin, in a December 16, 1846 article about G.H. Nelson, reported that:

"He was the bosom friend of the lamented Gillespie, was by his side when he fell, and by his particular request, took possession of his sword and pistols, after that unfortunate event".

Soon after the battle of Monterrey, on September 29, 1846 the Rangers' enlistment period ended and Nelson rode to LaGrange in Fayette County, Texas in an attempt to raise a new company for Mexican War service. Nelson had previously lived in LaGrange for at least three years (1840-1843) after his arrival in Texas. Returning to the December 16, 1846 Texas Democrat, it was reported that:

"Mr. G. Nelson has gone to Fayette and the counties below for the purpose of organizing a company... He has been so long upon the frontier, rendered so many important services to the country, that he needs no commendation-his name carries with it an influence which will ensure a hearty response from the 'Colorado boys' when he calls them to follow him to the field."

This somewhat effusive optimism, a relatively common tone in the newspapers of the 1800's, was apparently premature. Although Nelson may have found some volunteers in the country through which the Colorado river flowed, he did not raise a company. On February 19, 1847, at the age of 27, he was mustered back into federal service in San Antonio as a first lieutenant of Company A, one of three companies forming Michael

Chevallie's Battalion, Texas Mounted Volunteers. He was the second in command of the Company, under Captain Walter P. Lane, 28, a native of Ireland, who was a veteran of San Jacinto and would ultimately attain the rank of brigadier general in the Confederacy.

After the formation of the battalion, the Rangers left San Antonio for Camargo on the Rio Grande. They arrived on March 23, 1847. Samuel Reid, who also served as a Texas Ranger, described the town as follows:

"Comargo (sic) had now become the most important point of military operations on the whole line. Many of the houses had been rebuilt, and the town presented the most busy scenes of activity. The quartermaster's and commissary's departments were crowded to overflowing, with people on all sorts of business, making contracts and reports, receiving orders etc., etc."

While the Rangers were accustomed to an uncomfortable life in the saddle and in the harsh climate of south Texas, soldiers experiencing the area for the first time found the lower Rio Grande environment to be somewhere this side of utopia. Lieut. John Forsyth, of the Georgia Volunteers and in his civilian life the editor of the Columbus (Georgia) Times, described the lower Rio Grande camps:

"This country is distinguished, above all other particulars by its myriads of crawling, flying, stinging and biting things. Every thing you touch has a spider on it. We are killing them all day in our tents. We never draw on a boot or put on a hat or garment without a close search for some poisonous reptile or insect crouching in their folds or corners. It is wonderful that we are not stung twenty times a day...

Besides these we have spiders, centipedes, hordes of flies, and every thing else that crawls, flies, bites and makes a noise...I would willingly forego the possession of all the rich acres I have seen to get back from this land of half-bred Indians and full-bred bugs."

After almost two weeks in Camargo, on April 4, 1847 the Rangers continued their southward journey toward Monterrey. Nelson's departure from Camargo was apparently delayed and he hastily wrote a short letter (Figure 1) to his mother in which he related:

"We are now on the road to Monterrey, I shall overtake my Company this evening on the road. I expect to have a brush with Aria on the rout (sic), as he is now on the road with some four thousand cavalry. We have him to fight or to elude... and have to brand the lion in his den, with but three companies of men. Yet I have but little fear that we can get through. I think we can whip all that can catch us...Excuse this hasty scrawl, my horse is saddled and my Company gone."

After ultimately mustering out of federal service, G.H. Nelson returned to San Antonio where he pursued commercial interests. Fourteen years later, he would volunteer for service in the Confederacy, and made a captain in McCulloch's Texas Cavalry-one of the undoubtedly limited number of individuals to have served under three of Texas' flags (the Republic of Texas, the United States and the Confederate States of America).

* * * * *

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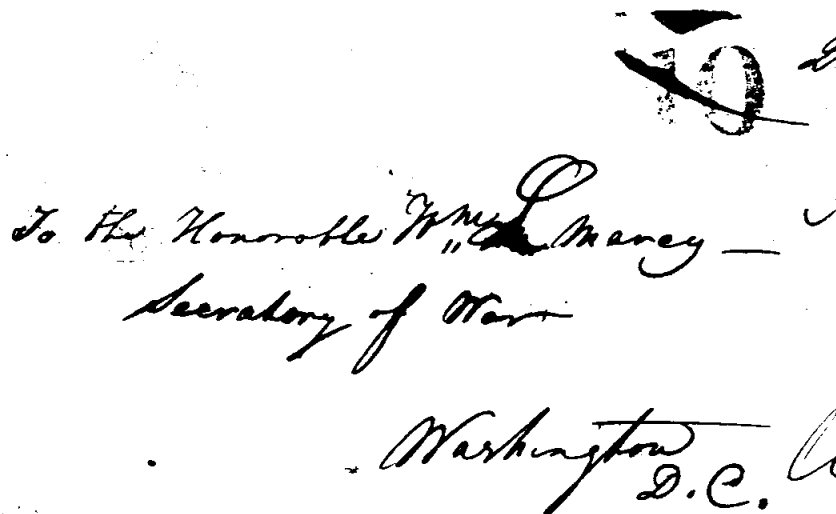
A WHISTLE-BLOWER FROM THE MEXICAN WAR

By William H. P. Emery

Reading in modern newspapers, one often comes across articles dealing with accusations of illegal activities, exposed by employees of some organization. Often we hear of such activities when the employee is fired from their job, demoted, or transferred to a less sensitive post. Such individuals have gained the title of "whistle-blowers".

Our Federal Government, our State Government and even some of our lesser administrative bodies have during this century passed regulations protecting individuals who expose illegal activities by their superiors. Obviously this protection has come as an incentive to those who would do the right thing. However, protection for the "whistle-blower" did not exist in 1847.

Recently I acquired a folded letter postmarked "Galveston, Texas, August 12, 1847. See Figure 1. Upon opening the letter and reading its contents, I discovered that while "whistle-blowing" maybe a modern expression, the practice of exposing illegal activities by ones superiors has been around a good while.



The image shows a handwritten address on a folded letter. At the top right, there is a circular postmark with the number '10' inside, indicating a 10-cent rate. The address is written in cursive and reads: 'To the Honorable Wm. S. Marcey - Secretary of War Washington D.C.' There is a checkmark to the right of the name 'Marcey'.

Figure 1

The folded letter is postmarked by Galveston's first circular, date stamp, 30mm. in diameter, with red ink, and belonging to the type G-6A. This type of c.d.s. was used from August 1845 to November 1849. In the upper right corner there is printed the 10¢ rate, in red. This cover was to be postpaid by the recipient, Secretary of War Wm. S. Marcey.

Contents of the letter are as follows;

Honorable Wm. S. Marcey
Secretary of War

Galveston, Tex.
August 11, 1847

Sir:

It is the duty of every good honest citizen, wherever he serves the forces of the United States squadrons to give information to the proper departments. One B.O. Payne, quartermaster of this place is not doing the fair thing.

This evening Mr. B.O. Payne gives an aquatic excursion on board the Steamer Ami Chase, for the amusement of his juvenile friends. The Ami Chase was not built to amuse the people, only to do service to the country, wherever she is needed, especially at such a period when her services are so needed.

Blank receipts have been signed by different individuals for work done for the Quartermasters Department. One receipt I will mention. L.B. Lewis moved some guns for the quartermaster and signed a blank receipt. By writing to the Collector or to Governor Runnels you will find out the truth.

The Schooner Lavinia has been chartered to take down the Indiana Volunteers to Brazos St. Jago for an enormous amount. Other vessels were in port at the time. Major Eastland, quartermaster below wrote to B.O. Payne about it. You may imagine the excuses that will be made.

The said Payne, is drunk the best part of his time, and is a disgrace to be called an officer of the United States.

Government shoes were condemned and sold at public sale by order of B.O. Payne and the principal part bought in by B.S. Parsons of this place for B.P. Payne.

If B.S. Parsons and T.B. Lewis should be examined, under oath, before the Collector, they will tell the truth.

Not considering it safe to sign my name,

I remain,
Your Obedient Servant
S. M.

ISLAND TOWN

by R. H. Stever

I suppose one could say there were two basic types of individuals that came to Texas in the early days. One was a solid citizen who wanted to create a new life for his family. The other was a mixed bag of unscrupulous characters, glib promoters, soldiers of fortune and visionaries often ahead of their time. The frontier was a fertile field for these fellows.

One such opportunist was "Col" Elihu Ropes who appeared in Corpus Christi in early 1888. Historian Bill Walraven says he "breezed into town with all the impact of one of Corpus Christi's famous hurricanes". He was a New Jerseyite, a raconteur who charmed the local citizens. He also was one of those visionaries who saw the town's potential and attempted to do something about it. He quickly perceived the need for a deep water port. Ropes had eastern financial backing of unknown extent. He also used his magnetic personality to charm several local citizens out of their life savings for his proposed Ropes Pass across Mustang Island, the principal Nueces County barrier island.

The Northern end of the island was settled in the 1850's by the Mercer family from Lancaster, England who used the land for sheep and cattle grazing. The Mercers later, about 1880, opened a store in a little town which they called Star. Star never had a post office. When the Ropes boom hit, Star became Ropesville. A post office was established at Ropesville on July 12, 1888 with William R. Roberts as postmaster. Figure 1 shows a 2-cent Columbian entire posted at Ropesville on January 25, 1894.

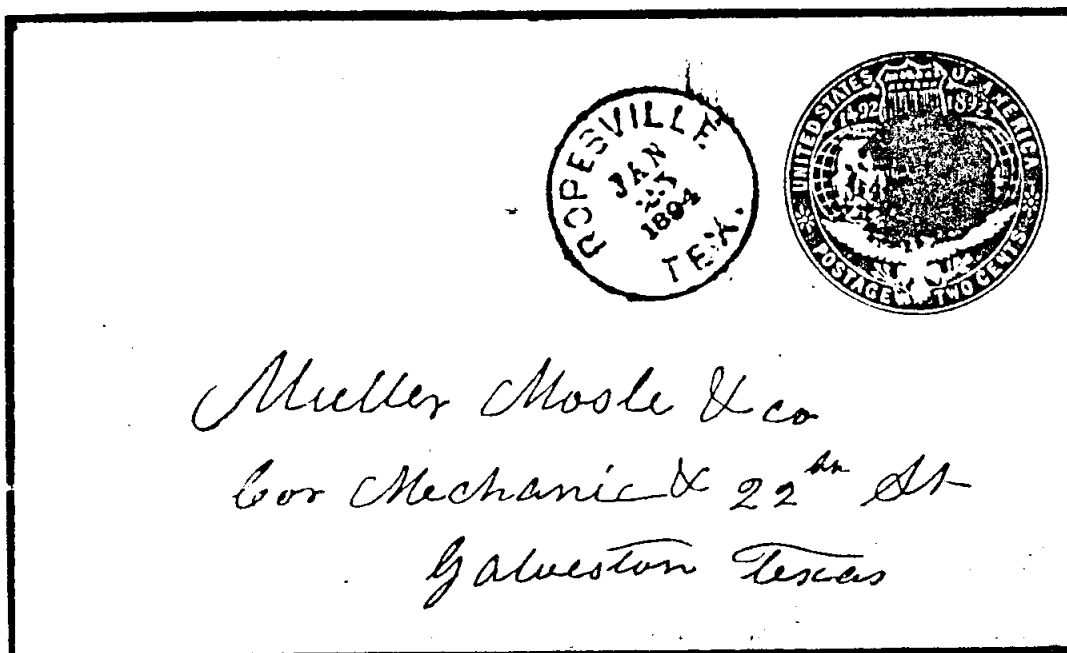


Figure 1

Meanwhile Col. Ropes' channel operation had gotten underway in late 1888 with the dredge Josephine. But the Josephine never finished the cut because of continuing mechanical breakdowns and is today buried in sand in the middle of Mustang Island. Although the dredging project died, the town of Ropesville did not. It became famous for deep sea fishing excursions and in 1896 the town name was changed to Tarpon. Figure 2 shows a Tarpon postmark dated April 1, 1903 on a letter to Indiana. A same-day Rockport backstamp indicates how it was routed. Like Figure 1, this is a 2-cent entire paying the then domestic rate of two cents.

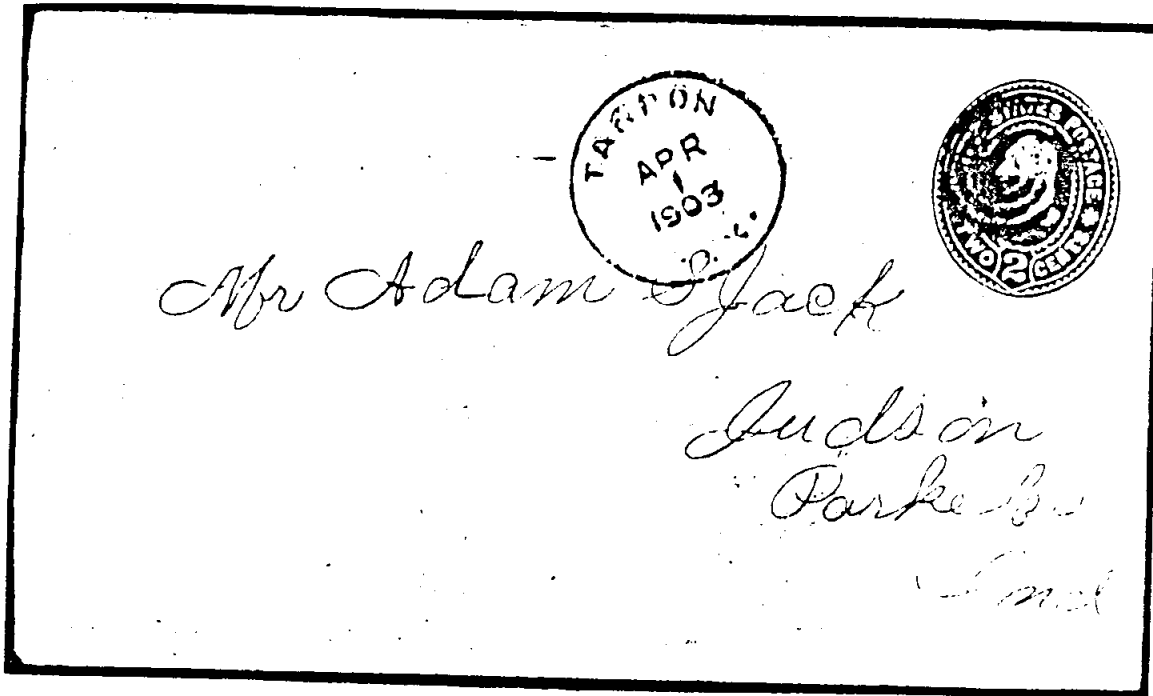


Figure 2



Figure 3

The name Tarpon certainly conformed to the fishing industry heritage. A famous hotel and seafood restaurant, the Tarpon Inn, was erected around the turn of the century. Figure 3 is a picture postcard entitled "Off to the fishing grounds. Tarpon, Texas". The card was posted at Tarpon on August 8, 1906.

But apparently the residents thought the little community deserved another name if it were to grow, so in 1910 the name was changed again to Port Aransas. It remains so today. Figure 4 is another picture postcard whose title "Tarpon Inn, Port Aransas. Formerly Tarpon, Tex." reflects the recent name change. The reverse, Figure 5, shows a Port Aransas 4-bar-cancel dated July 29, 1911. As one might expect, many of the Port Aransas mailings are postcards because it is a tourist oriented town. One of the most famous tourists was President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Figure 6 shows a "philatelic" cover associated with that 1937 visit.

Colonel Ropes envisioned a channel through the island and across Corpus Christi Bay to his Alta Vista Hotel on the bluff about two miles south of the Corpus Christi of that day. Figure 7. When the Josephine foundered in the sands of Mustang Island and Ropes' money dried up due to the financial crisis of 1893, he left town "to get more money" but never returned. He died a broken man in 1896. His vision of a deep water port later came to pass. The Port of Corpus Christi ranks 6th in tonnage in the U.S. today, and Ropes'town has grown and prospered.

* * *

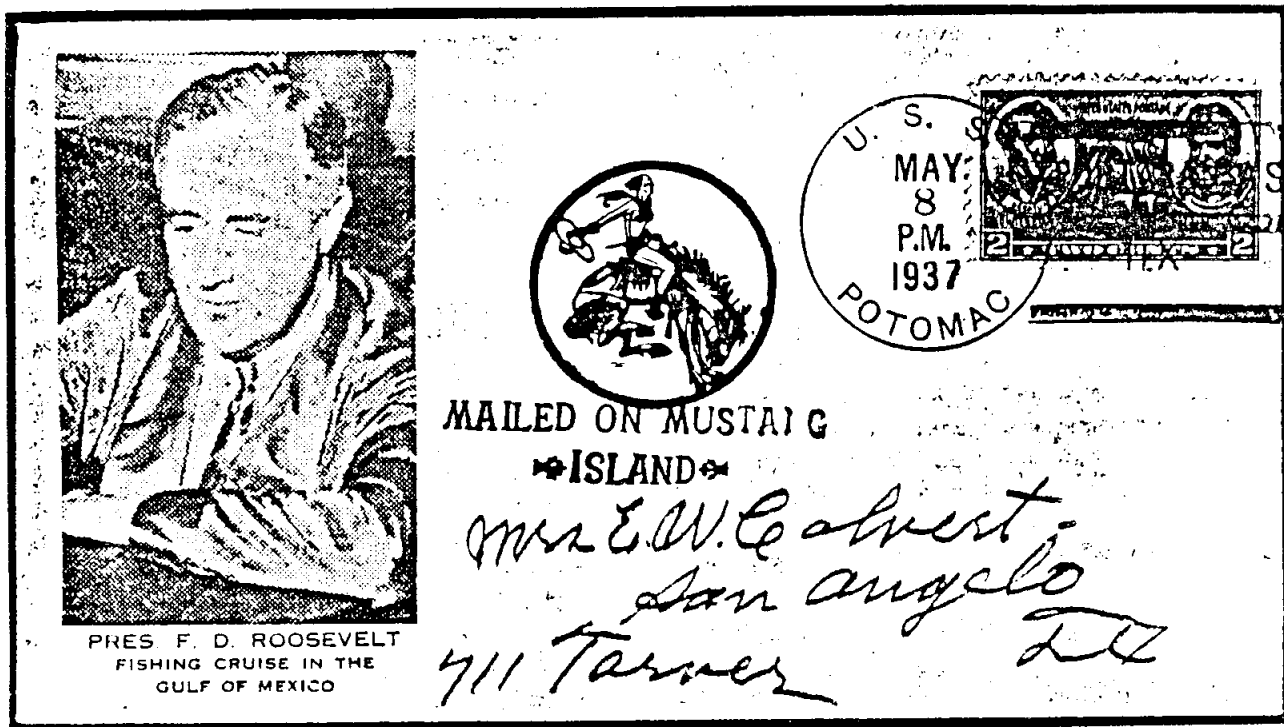


Figure 6

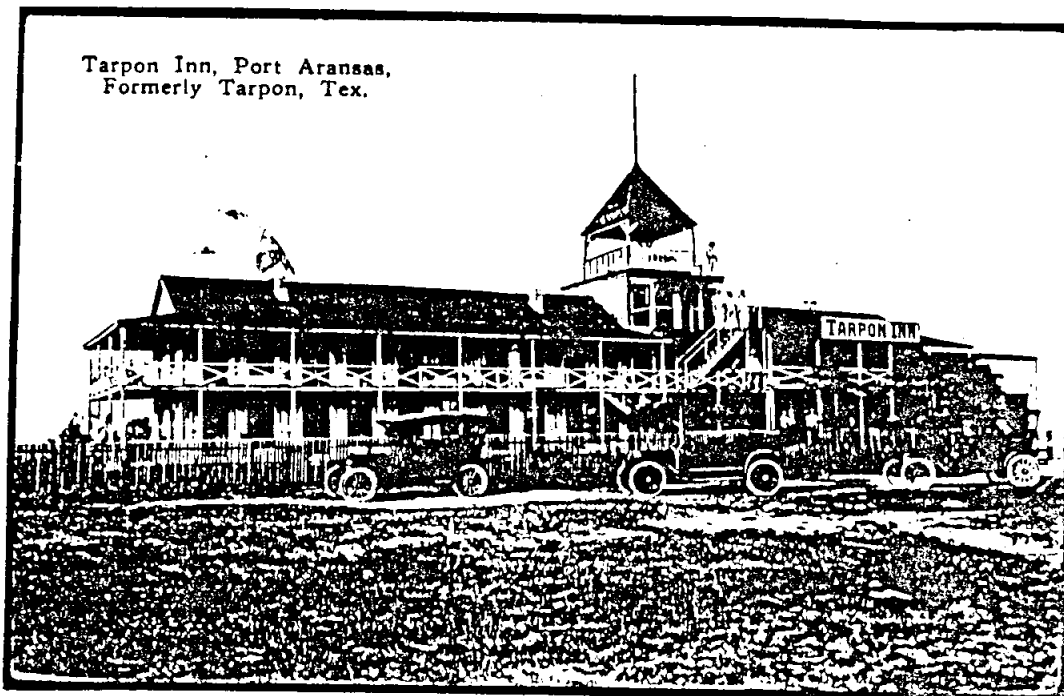


Figure 4

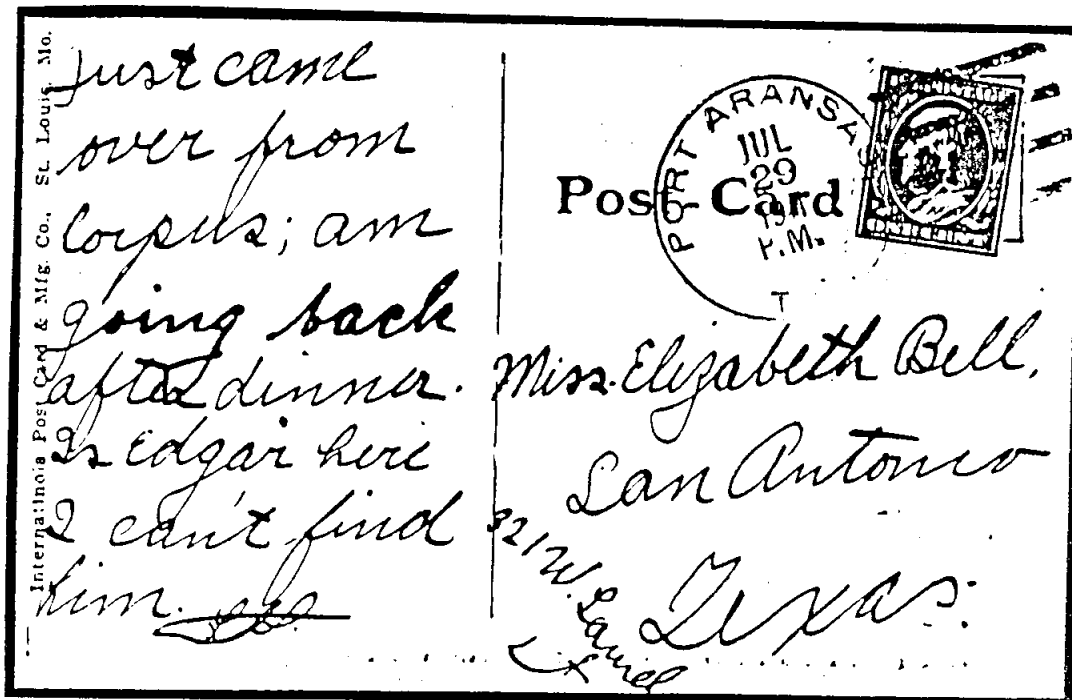


Figure 5

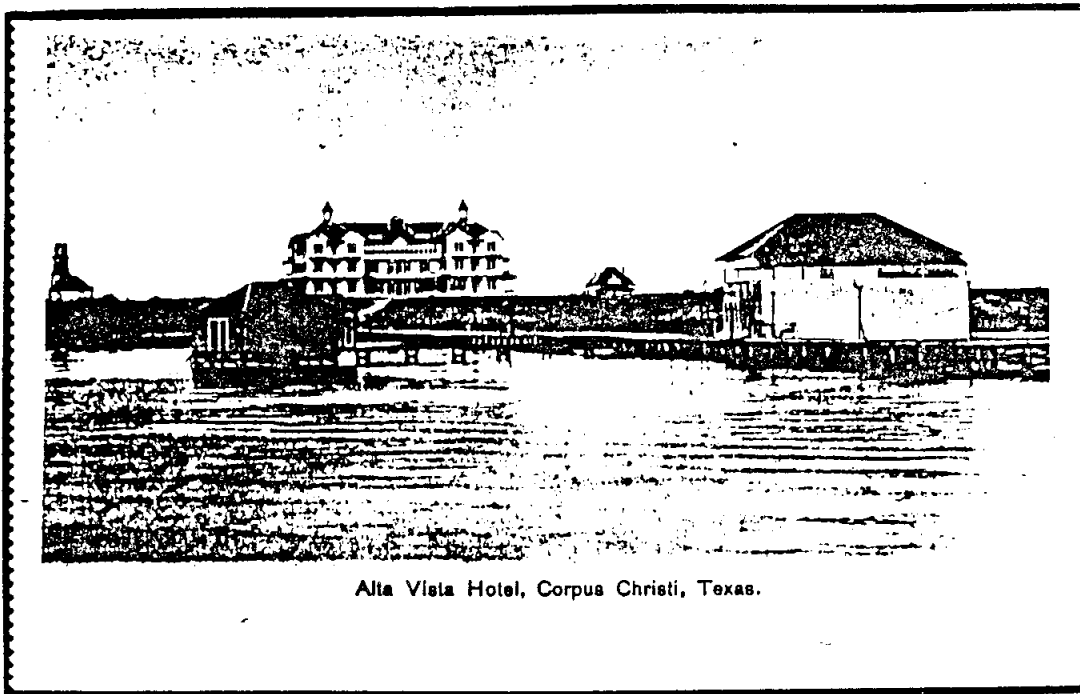


Figure 7

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WANTED: Clear xerox copies of any and all 19th century covers posted at San Diego, Texas. Please note color of CDS and killer plus information on backstamps or docketing on reverse. Also note anything that doesn't show up well on the copy. Jim Stever, 44 Camden Place, Corpus Christi, Texas 78412.

A Letter from the Frontier

by Richard H. Byne

In early 1861, James M. Norris, Colonel of the Texas Frontier Regiment, established a number of frontier outposts--Ranger Stations--in Texas to protect against Indian attack as Union soldiers evacuated the area. Among these 16 outposts were Camps Llano, Davis, and Verde. The original Camp Verde, near Kerrville, had been established in 1855 and was abandoned by U. S. troops in early 1861; the Ranger Station, also called Camp Verde, was established by Col. Norris about two miles below the earlier outpost. The few troopers manning these stations under adverse conditions were later incorporated into the Confederate States Army as the 46th Texas Cavalry Regiment.

A folded letter from one of these Rangers is franked with a 5c blue lithograph and pen-cancelled "Kerrsville [note original spelling], June 27th/62." It provides some interesting reading, and was probably carried by the Scout from Camp Llano to Camp Verde, thence to Kerrville and delivery to Comfort. It's addressed to Mrs. Martha A. Brown, Comfort, Kendall County, Texas, and Mr. Brown writes first to his daughter, then to his wife:

"Camp Llano, 22 June A. D. 1862

"Dear Mary,

"Your letter of the 11th June came by yesterday's Patrol from Camp Davis, being 10 days coming. It was mailed the 17th at Comfort, so you see what time they use getting to me and from here home. I am much disheartened about sending letters home as it appears few get there in time. I was very sorry you remained at home as I would have been very glad to see you and do not know when I can visit home again. I have no news of Indians to write you; they appear to have ceased coming in since we came here. I suppose the appearance of so many troops on the frontier has alarmed them and caused them to stay away, and we do not expect [to see them] in here before August or Sept. We are in great need of rain here not having any since about the first of May. We have to go from 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 miles to graze our horses, have no grass near camp which [is] quite a task on our horses to pass over 4 times a day and stand up all night on 5 1/2 quarts of corn per day. Our horses do not more than hold their own. Spence rode Steir [?] yesterday for the first time; he pitched heavy for a while and then gave up when he rode him about 8 miles without further trouble. He is very gentle otherwise and stays with Rody all the time as if he thought Ro his ma. Night before last, Friday the 20[th], our Scout to Camp Davis stayed 25 miles below here and heard from 20 to 25 cannons fired toward San Antonio and supposed to be there which we expect to be the rejoicing at some good news. God grant it may be. Mary, write me as often as you can. Kiss your dear Ma and little brothers for me and accept your pa's love and best wishes for your happiness. Remember me in your prayers to our Heavenly Father. I will finish with a few lines to your Ma.

"R. E. Brown

"Dear wife, Mary writes me you have suffered with your hand since I was down which I am pained to hear and hope ere this it [is] well. I know your task is a hard one and that to undergo an affliction makes it doubly so.

"I am truly sorry to hear Mr. Schrader has sold some of Brother John's

steers. He has not authorized me to sell them and I feel certain he will be displeased at it. I hope [he] will desist in future from selling any more. The invitation you speak of me giving Margary [?] to visit Camp Llano I do not remember and it must have been in a jest if I did so, not supposing she would [believe] it. If however [you and she] wish to come and can make yourselves comfortable and safe, do as you please. I of course would be glad to see you and the children as often as possible. If you should come you must at least bring Millie Kern. We are not paid as yet, and likely will not [be] before July.

"We have no measles in our camp and but little sickness of any kind at this time. Though I know not the reason, for me the hottest days and coldest nights I ever felt in Texas nothing but the extreme dry weather makes it healthy. I am glad to hear my Shoes and leggins are nearly ready; the last I greatly need. Some of our poor boys are barefoot and cannot get shoes and yet do duty. There is some talk here of a body of Union-men on Johnson Fork of the Guadalupe for the purpose of resisting the laws and it is supposed that some of the men about Comfort are with them. I hope this is not so.

"Please send my best love to Pa. Ma, I want to see [you]. I fear my letter will but little interest you. I suffer much to get the late news. God bless you and our dear children. Give my respects to Jo. I will go on Scout tomorrow to Camp Davis and may go as far down as Camp Verde. Tell my sons Henry Jordan and James Duff pa wants to see [them] and to be good boys.

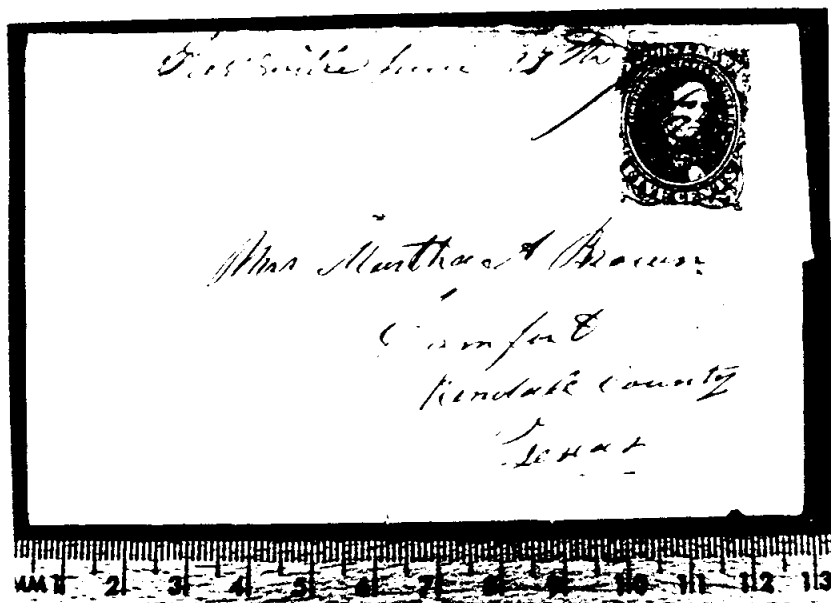
"Adieu, dear wife.

"Rufus E. Brown"

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HAMMER PRICES
 THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY
 MAIL SALE NO. 5

LOT	PRICE	LOT	PRICE
4	2.50	38	2.00
5	22.00	39	2.00
6	8.00	40	2.00
7	5.00	41	3.00
9	3.00	42	2.00
10	3.00	43	3.00
12	3.00	44	6.00
14	7.00	45	6.00
15	14.00	46	15.00
16	11.00	48	2.00
17	6.00	49	5.00
18	21.00	52	6.00
22	3.00	53	45.00
23	5.00	57	17.00
24	2.00	58	3.00
25	24.00	59	2.00
26	5.00	60	13.00
28	10.00	61	10.00
30	5.00	62	2.00
31	4.00	63	5.00
33	2.00	65	3.00
35	4.00	67	3.00
37	2.00	68	7.00

UNLISTED LOTS WERE WITHDRAWN