

# THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY JOURNAL

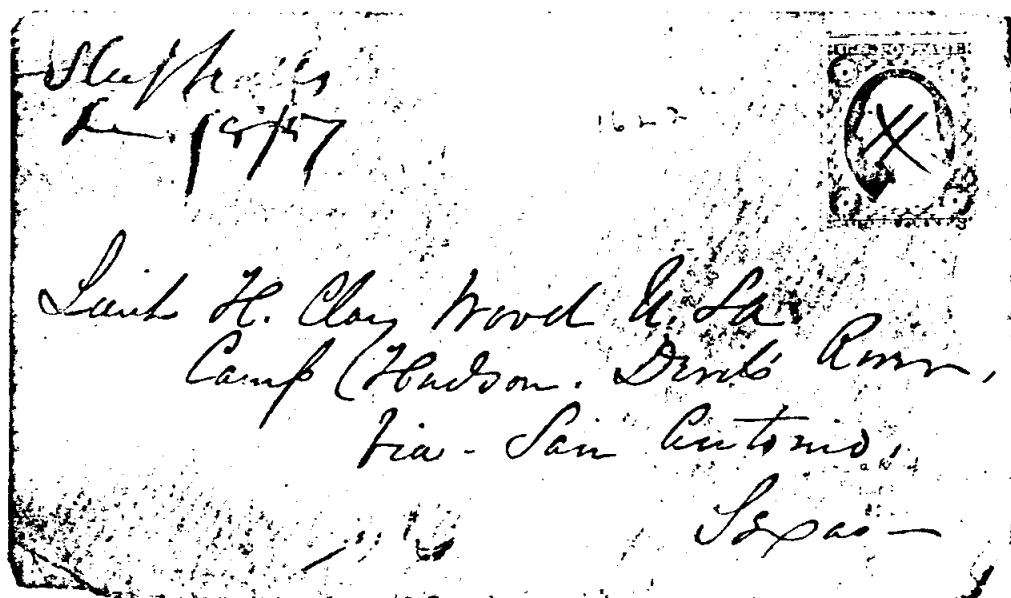


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Shown on the front cover is a fine early example of the "Jackass Mail" carried on the San Antonio - San Diego Mail Route.

# THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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## THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

In this issue I would like to indulge in a brief philosophical discourse relating to the showing of postal history materials at exhibitions. It is "sparked" both by printed comments I have read recently and by private discussions I have had during my participation in the field of postal history.

It appears to me that a few outstanding collectors, as well as some knowledgeable postal historians have on occasion been disappointed by the evaluation given their exhibits. It also seems obvious that in any form of competition there must be those that excel, and those who merely participate. I firmly believe that participation to the best of one's ability makes of that person a true winner, regardless of what other awards may be given. To paraphrase an old adage, "It matters not whether you win or lose, it's that you participate that really counts". Certainly those who do not enter cannot win. Without exhibiting, you risk missing those individuals who have collection interests parallel to your own, who may have the very cover missing from your collection. You might even miss that person who would become a friend for life.

It appears to me that when we exhibit postal history materials we should have two basic reasons; first is to show the enjoyment we derive from our hobby, and second, to attract newcomers to join with us in our pursuit of postal history.

From personal experience, I would venture the opinion that the one new friend you make at an exhibition, or through the showing of your collection, will prove more valuable than all the "silver-plated" trophies or "colored ribbons" ever awarded. "Friendship through postal history" should be our slogan, and we should practice it at every opportunity.

## OTHER MATTERS:

The Confederate States of America Stampless Cover Catalog, published by David G. Phillips, Inc., is now available. As mentioned in the last issue of our journal, the Texas section of this catalog was edited by TPHS member Charles E. Sawyer. Mr. Sawyer has done an excellent job of reproducing many of the Texas Town cancellations and has expanded listings of the Confederate markings contained in the American Stampless Cover Catalog. His effort is a truly worthy contribution to the Texas postal history of this period.

A second publication recently off the press, edited by TPHS member Thomas J. Alexander, is Simpsons - U.S. Postal Markings 1851 - 61. A monumental work, showing in full size the postal markings of every type. This is a classic reference tool for every serious student of U.S. postal history. You will not want to be without this volume once you open its cover.

The 84th annual meeting of the Texas Philatelic Association was held June 21 - 23 in the border city of El Paso at ELPEX-TEXPEX. A fine exhibition was enjoyed by numerous visitors to the show. Postal history exhibits dominated the show with several exhibiting mainly Texas material. TPHS members exhibiting included:

Ottis C. Bobbitt - San Angelo  
 William H. Emery - San Marcos  
 Nonie Green - San Angelo  
 Richard E. Spies - San Antonio

## THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS:

The "editing" work on this issue of the Texas Postal History Journal has been done by Gordon Hyatt of San Marcos, who very kindly responded to a plea for help by your beleaguered editor. The time needed to run the two businesses I operate has made it impossible for me to devote the necessary time to the editorship in the last few months, and I deeply appreciate Gordon's help. He has suggested we call ourselves co-editors, and the masthead in the next issue may indicate that, but I assure the lion's share of the work in putting this issue out was done by Gordon. With his continued help, I do think we will get back on our normal publishing schedule. This issue should have been put in the mail in June, and is obviously a bit late. The September issue, however, should reach you in a timely manner. Be sure to give Gordon a kind word for his efforts the next time you see him at a show.

Now, how about some help from those of you reading this. We have one article on hand for the next issue, and can certainly use some others. How about writing up some of the unusual covers in your collection? Your co-editors will be glad to help you, and we can assure you the members of the TPHS will be glad to read about your "finds".

## TEXAS STEAM PACKET COVERS

By James W. Milgram, MD

A number of vessels connected the newly founded Republic of Texas with the United States through the two ports of New Orleans and Galveston. Even before 1830, letters were sent between the two cities by different sailing vessels whose names are now unknown. Through Galveston, other important towns in eastern Texas could be reached by wagon and stagecoach.

A regular mail route between Houston and Galveston was inaugurated May 17, 1837. The steamer LAURA connected the two cities via a water route. These steamboat letters must be differentiated from steamship or steam packet letters which crossed the rougher open water of the Gulf of Mexico between Galveston and New Orleans. Other Texas seaports such as Velasco, Quintana, or Matagorda received little mail in comparison to the large volume of letters that passed through Galveston. Certain letters passed directly to Houston.

The two vessels best known to collectors through their covers are the steam packets COLUMBIA AND NEW YORK. The former used red and, more commonly, black markings reading "STEAM PACKET COLUMBIA" as the 1838 cover in Figure 1 demonstrates. This is a letter without U.S. postal usage that was carried from New Orleans to Galveston by steamer and then was rated "Free" because the addressee was the Surgeon General of Texas.

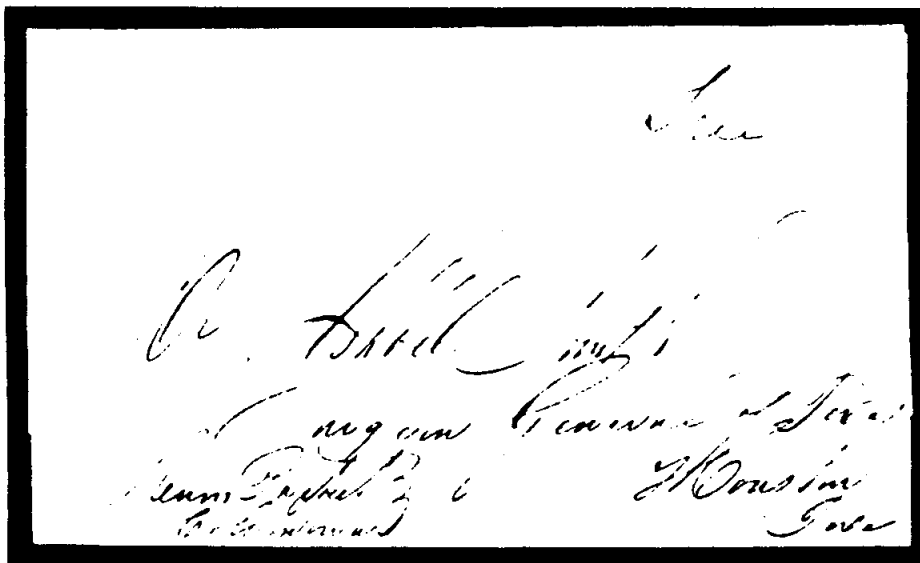


Figure 1.

The marking probably was applied on board the steamer, but most of the known covers also were forwarded by Sam Ricker, Jr., the postal agent, who applied his own marking device to these covers. Additionally, the ink of the two special postmarks often seems to be the same. Most of the "STEAM PACKET COLUMBIA" postmarks were used between November 1837 and November 1838, according to Alex Ter Braake in TEXAS, THE DRAMA OF ITS POSTAL PAST.

In 1839 the steam packet NEW YORK joined the New Orleans-Galveston service and employed a black straight line postmark. Figure 2 is an example of the black "S. P. NEW YORK" marking which is quite scarce. A red "SHIP" and manuscript "6" were applied at New Orleans for an incoming ship letter intended for the port of entry.

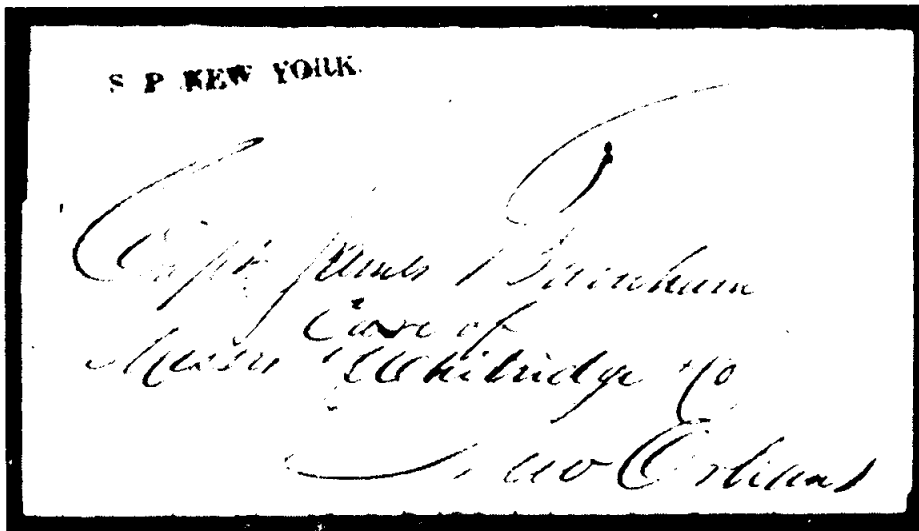


Figure 2.

The other ships that joined the service connecting the two cities did not employ specific handstamps and thus usually their covers cannot be identified except by presumptive evidence in the enclosed letters or by the dates of the postmarks. An exception is the cover in Figure 3, carried out of the mails "pr Steam Packet Neptune". It contains an interesting letter regarding the economics of early Texas:

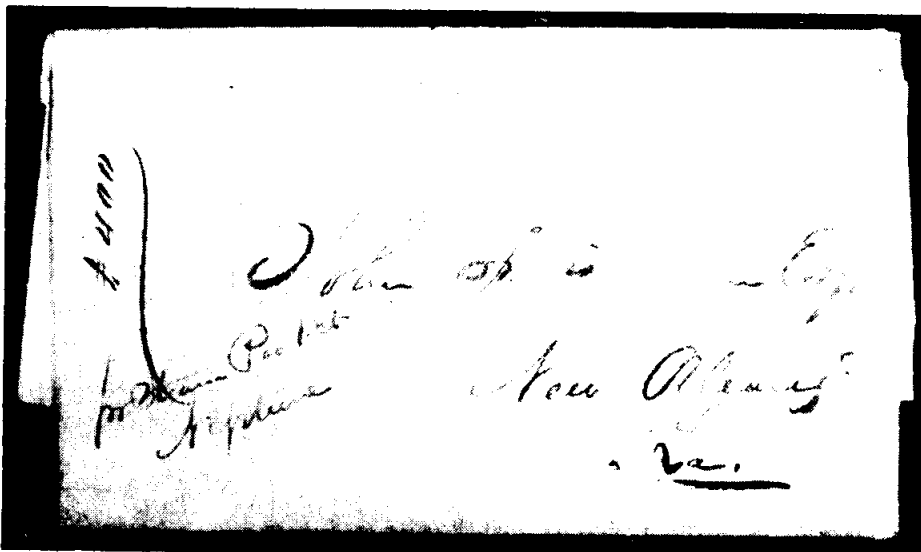


Figure 3.

Galveston April 2, 1841

John F. Johnson Esqr.

Sir,

In answer to your enquiries relative to certain lands located by O. H. Delano in Jefferson & Jasper Counties in Texas, I reply that having spent the summers of 1835 & 1837 in Texas and during that time travelled through nearly all the Eastern part of the Republic, with a view of selecting Land for myself and friends, and for the last three years resided at Velasco and Galveston City, as a Consul for the United States to Texas, and during the month of February 1840 travelled to Austin & back and in the summer of same year visited the Western part as far as 40 miles west of the Nuaces River, and during the whole of this time I have been diligent in obtaining information relative to locations for good land and from all I have seen and heard, my information being derived from the best sources, I now think the land located by Mr. Delano to be as valuable as land can be found anywhere, possessing advantages but rarely met with in this country, viz, abundance of fine timber, good water, lying not more than about one easy days ride or sail from the Gulf of Mexico, by Sabine Pass, between Sabine & Neches, and near the River, and adjoining places now settled upon, and improved, and capable of producing cotton, sugar, tobacco, corn & in short, any kind of produce, adapted to the climate of Texas, and a fine grazing country, and as Steam Packets, from New Orleans much nearer, to this land, than land lying on the Ohio River, and the expense of transportation less. The locations referred to are in healthy situations, the timber varying kinds, oak, hickory, pine & Maple & much cane. Timber can be rafted to the Sabine Pass, in one day, or at most two days, and a ready market to be found in a few hours, either at Galveston, or New Orleans for lumber &c and after fully staisfying myself, of all parts of the country, have given a preference to the one named, and have now located adjoining those for you, nearly 40,000 acres for myself, and friends, and employed Mr. Delano to make the surveys, and have now received our field notes of the same, which is the only evidence of Title, to land in this country, and is sufficient to enable any one to sell or otherwise dispose of it and as (?) same as patents, are issued you, and I will receive them, perhaps during the ensueing summer, and I would not now (bad as times are) dispose of any land, I have, in Texas, all of which is in the immediate vicinity and adjoining yours for \$2 par funds per acre, and would have sold the Scrip, previous to location, but after finding where it could be located, and was offered by a responsible man, one dollar per acre in cash par funds.

I remain respectfully yours &amp;c

Stewart Newell

It must be remembered that sailing vessels also carried certain letters which would be rated by the two respective post office systems of Texas and the United States in a manner similar to the steam packet letters.

The last letter discussed was mailed after the admission of Texas to the Union on March 1, 1845. The letter originated in New Orleans April 11, 1849, and bears a red oval handstamp "STEAMSHIP FANNY". The illustrated cover (Figure 4) bears the only known example of this marking. At Galveston the letter was postmarked "GALVESTON TEX. APR. 17" and "10" in red. It then was mailed to the addressee at Houston. The ten-cent rate applied covered the full distance between New Orleans and Houston; otherwise, the rate would have been five cents under the postal act of 1845.

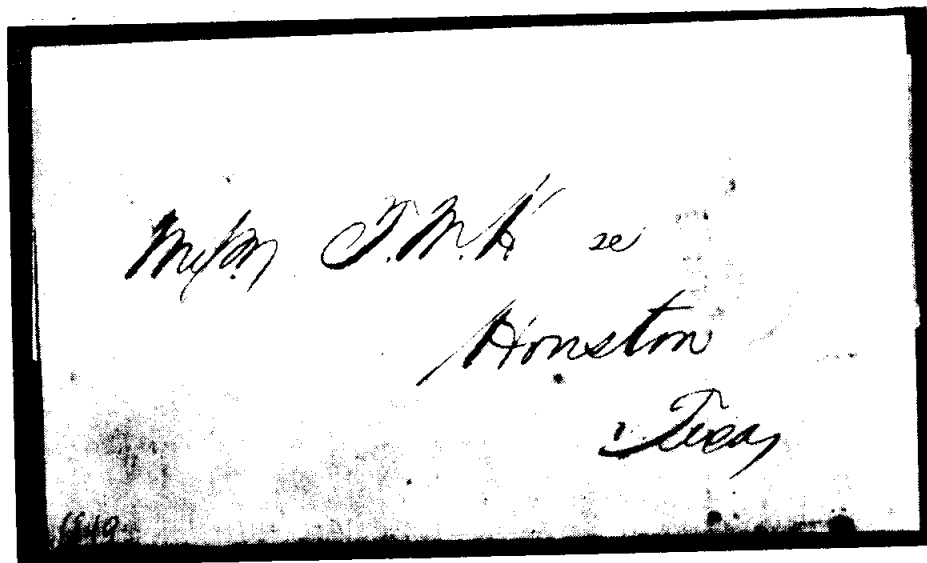


Figure 4.

James W. Milgram, MD, has published more than 200 articles on various aspects of U.S. postal history and the historical letters enclosed in the covers. He is the author of THE EXPRESS MAIL OF 1836-1839 and THE WESTERN MAILS.

---This article reprinted by permission from the July 1980 issue of The American Philatelist, and by permission from Dr. James W. Milgram.



## THE SAN ANTONIO - SAN DIEGO MAIL ROUTE OF 1857

By Bill Emery

The cover shown on the front of this issue of the TPHS Journal is a very scarce early example of "The Jackass Mail" carried on the San Antonio - San Diego Mail Route.

In 1850, California, with a population slightly over 100,000, joined the Union as the 31st state. Its growth and settlement had been rapid, spurred on by the twin motives of "gold" and "cheap land". However, settlement of the intervening territory from the Rocky Mountains eastward to the Mississippi Valley had been slow and its population was small. The problem of regular and dependable communication across this uninhabited area was an acute one.

Shortly after the Mexican War, the military authorities had investigated the feasibility of transcontinental communication. They dispatched the legendary Kit Carson in April, 1847, with the first United States Mail ever carried overland from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Despite Carson's success, a dependable transcontinental route to California for the U.S. Mail was not accepted until 1856.

Congress, heavily pressured by government agencies and private citizens to improve the communications between Washington and the new state, responded by voting substantial subsidies to the ocean steamship lines. During the early 1850's there was competition by various ship lines for the subsidy; but by 1857, three lines held exclusive control. They were The United States Mail Steamship Company, The Panama Railroad Company and The Pacific Steamship Company. These companies came to be viewed by the public as one gigantic monopoly. They were accused of making great profits, charging exorbitant prices and giving inferior service.

Meanwhile, other venturesome businessmen formed numerous small stage lines that served the settlers' needs both east and west of the Rocky Mountains. Many of these companies were partially supported by contracts to carry the U.S. mails. For example, in 1850, the Skillman Stage Line of San Antonio was awarded a U.S. Post Office Department contract to carry the mails westward from San Antonio to Santa Fe via El Paso. This line made such good time and went through with such regularity that it impressed both the U.S. Post Office Department and the Congress. As dissatisfaction with the ship route increased, the pressure on Congress to fund a transcontinental land route to the new state also increased. The idea grew that a mail route via San Antonio to San Diego was both feasible and practical.

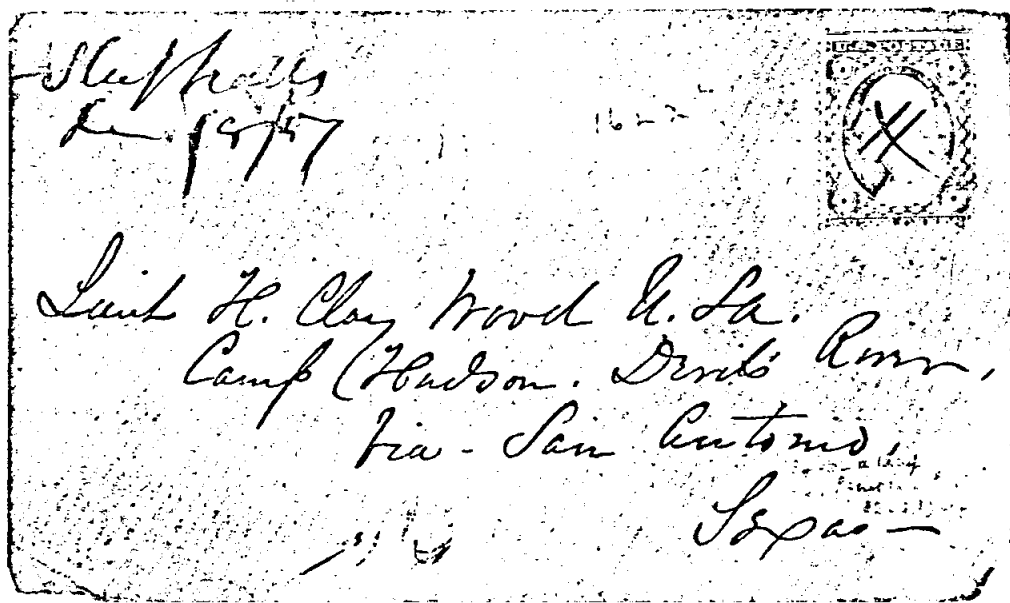
In a postal route bill enacted August 18, 1856, the Congress directed that there should be a San Diego - San Antonio mail route established. In June of 1857, James Birch was awarded a four-year contract at \$149,000 per year to carry the mail semi-monthly between San Antonio and San Diego. This line commenced operations on July 9, 1857, when the first mail for California was placed on a pack mule, and, accompanied by several armed guards, started the 1,475-mile, 30-day trip to San Diego. After Birch was lost at sea, in September, 1857, the mail contract was transferred to George H. Giddings and Robert E. Doyle.

firm of Giddings and Doyle greatly improved the equipment, support stations and personnel during their first year of ownership. By May 29, 1858, advertisements in the San Antonio Herald show they were prepared to carry passengers and mail through to California. Thus, the Giddings-Doyle Company of San Antonio, operating stages over the "southern route", became the first trans-continental mail and passenger line in the nation.

Their advertisement appearing in the San Antonio Ledger of October 9, 1858, contained a small surprise for potential passengers who failed to note the "fine print", which read as follows: "Passengers and express matter - forwarded in NEW COACHES, drawn by six mules over the entire length of our line, excepting the Colorado Desert of 100 miles, which we cross on mule back".

Passengers as well as the news media were quick to dub the stage-coach line, "The Jackass Line", and the mail carried over this route between San Antonio and San Diego as "The Jackass Mail".

One final aspect of this cover seems worthy of note. In the upper left-hand corner of the envelope there appears an illegible name subtended by the date, "Dec. 8, (18)57". This was the date when Theodore Fink took over the official duties as first postmaster for Camp Hudson, Texas. It appears probable that this cover addressed to Lt. H. Clay Wood may have been the first mail sorted and distributed by postmaster Fink in his new position.



## GHOST TOWNS, DPO'S, AND NAME CHANGES

By Gordon A. Hyatt

Sooner or later most postal history collectors find their interest will narrow down to one or perhaps two specialties. Perhaps the reason for this is that the deeper one researches and develops his special interests, the less time (and money) he can devote to the broad area.

No matter the subject - rates, civil war, RR, DPO's, etc. - to learn he must research. The broader his knowledge, the deeper he becomes involved in his specialty. Now he's a specialist and often he consults with other specialists in his chosen field. Shared knowledge can be greatly beneficial to all those having a mutual interest.

Over the past several years, through TPHS, we have met and discussed with several members the collecting of Texas DPO's and Ghost Towns. In order to further our knowledge, we would like to set up a clearing house for information in the TPHS Journal. We could devote a page in each Journal to the listing of DPO's and Ghost Towns. We could also include other information from time to time as it is furnished by interested collectors.

I generally classify a postal cancellation as a Ghost Town if it is reasonably certain that it no longer exists as a town or community. This information comes from Wheat's Study, State and County maps, Texas Almanacs, and the Texas Handbook. DPO's are listed towns or communities without a post office. Name changes I list separately unless the town or community no longer exists; then it becomes a Ghost Town.

For starters, here is a partial list of Ghost Towns, DPO's and name changes from my collection. More will follow in the next edition.

Ghost Towns

|                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Alcino, Floyd County          | Bobville, Montgomery County   |
| Alton, Denton County          | Boracho, Culberson County     |
| Alum Creek, Bastrop County    | Borden, Colorado County       |
| Amphion, Atascosa County      | Bourland, Floyd County        |
| Anhalt, Comal County          | Briquette, Milam County       |
| Arah, Scurry County           | Butler, Freestone County      |
| Bala, King County             | Centre City, Mills County     |
| Basin Springs, Grayson County | Christian, Palo Pinto County  |
| Baur's P.O., Lavaca County    | Clear Creek, Galveston County |
| Blakney, Red River County     | Corn Hill, Williamson County  |
| Bluff, Fayette County         | Cattle, Cattle County         |

DPO'S

|                            |                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Augusta, Houston County    | Crystal Falls, Stephens County |
| Atlas, Lamar County        | Dacosta, Victoria County       |
| Bracken, Comal County      | Fairy, Hamilton County         |
| Cedar Bayou, Harris County | Garretts Bluff, Lamar County   |
| Clinton, Hunt County       | Homer, Angelina County         |
| Colorado, Mitchell County  | Hurnville, Clay County         |

Name Changes

| <u>Old Name</u> | <u>New Name</u> | <u>County</u> |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Fanthorps       | Anderson        | Grimes        |
| Nechesville     | Neches          | Anderson      |
| Point Isabel    | Port Isabel     | Cameron       |
| Nashland        | China           | Jefferson     |

We would like to hear from you. Share your knowledge and ideas with fellow collectors. Send us your lists and they will be published. By combining our lists, we may soon be able to develop a master list of most of the known Ghost Towns and DPO's in Texas.

## THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

## New Members

ARCH, Brad, P. O. Box A, New Vernon, New Jersey, 07976  
 DALLAS PUBLIC LIBRARY, Periodicals Assistant, 1954 Commerce,  
 Dallas, Texas, 75201  
 HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY, Serials Department, 500 McKinney, Houston,  
 Texas, 77002  
 JEFFREY, Billy P., 2211 McDuffie, Houston, Texas, 77019  
 MIKESKA, Marvin R., Box 26, Longview, Texas, 75606

## Address Changes

BEALS, David T., III, 5315 Mission Woods Road, Shawnee Mission,  
 Kansas, 66205  
 PETERSON, A. W., 1314 Wilson Heights, Austin, Texas, 78746  
 TRAMMELL, Jack L., 8304 Kate Street, Dallas, Texas, 75225