

THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY JOURNAL

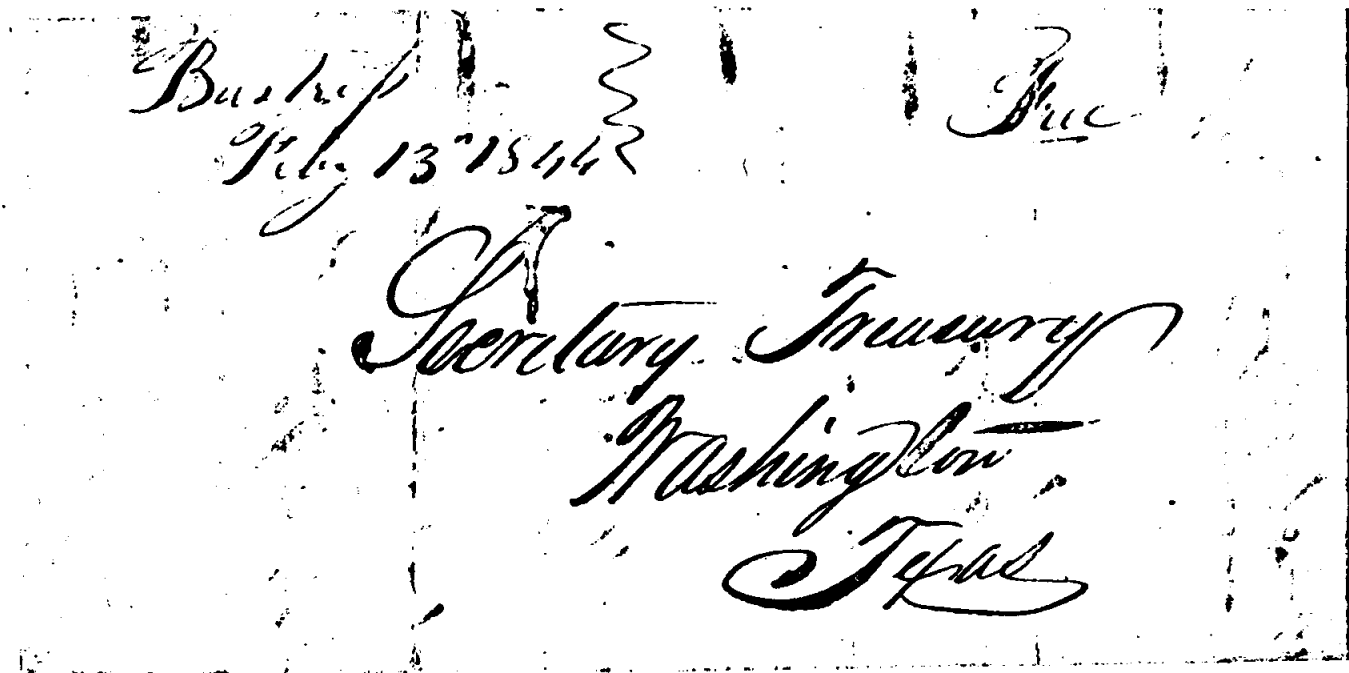


TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| The President's Page..... | 1 |
| Mail During the Reconstruction..... | 3 |
| A Postmark Pursuit of "Easterly Texas" Little County Seats..... | 7 |
| More on Texas Ghost (Lost) Towns, DPO's, and Name Changes..... | 9 |

Shown on the front cover is a Bastrop Republic (1844) Cover from the County Tax Collector to the Secretary of the Treasury in Washington. It may be remembered that the Texas Capitol had been moved to Washington on the Brazos because of the danger of Mexican and Indian raids on Austin.

THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Dues \$5 per year, payable to Secretary-Treasurer

President:

Dr. William Emery
1421 Schulle Dr.
San Marcos, TX 78666

Vice-President:

Rick Rodgers
2612 Greenleaf
Houston, TX 77009

Secretary-Treasurer:

Edgar L. Leissner
711 Canterbury Hill
San Antonio, TX 78209

Journal Editor:

Charles Deaton
Box 12814
Austin, TX 78711

Affiliated With:



THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

As this issue of the Texas Postal History Journal is written, work is rapidly nearing completion of publication of the most complete, comprehensive and important compilation of postal information ever assembled on the postal system in the State of Texas. I am of course referring to the impending publication of the Jim Wheat work titled, "Postmasters and Post Offices of Texas, 1846 - 1930".

After many setbacks, delays, and evaluations on how best to get this information to postal historians, Charles Deaton has at considerable expense and extended personal effort come through with a super job. We all owe him our sincere thanks, and I hope each of our members will take the time and effort to sit down and write Charles a short note telling him in our own way.

The publication of this research tool will allow collectors and exhibitors of postal history material easy access to vast amounts of hard-to-find Texas Post Office data. Information as to when post offices opened, closed, or had their names changed is included, as well as the first postmaster to be appointed for each community and the date of his appointment. This study will allow determination of all post offices authorized for each county in the state. Further, by reference to the years a post office was in operation and the size of the community, it will give the collector a tentative indication on the rarity of specific covers. It would be difficult to overestimate the multiple uses to which this study may be put by future students of Texas postal history.

Many of us hope and believe it will aid in the production of more articles of improved quality, and increase the accuracy of the information getting into print. The data contained is so voluminous that it cannot help but stimulate and enhance the study of Texas postal history. We also look forward to the publication of this study to increase postal history exhibits and the number of individuals who prepare their covers to show.

OTHER MATTERS:

HOUPEX-80 was held at the Stouffer's Hotel - Greenway Plaza, in Houston, Texas, September 5-7, 1980. The show contained more than 180 frames of highly interesting material and featured more than forty dealers, many from out of state. Despite the sometimes damp conditions outside, the hospitality inside was warm and friendly, and I believe those who attended felt properly rewarded. I noted exhibits on display by the following TPHS members:

Ottis C. Bobbitt - San Angelo
 Charles Deaton - Austin
 Susan Deaton - Austin
 Wm. H. Emery - San Marcos

The Spring meeting of the TPHS will be held the third weekend in March, the 21st and 22nd, at the Sheraton Inn at Waco. The Inn is located at 401 Interstate 35, Waco, Texas, Phone 817 - 753-7361. Room rates are \$27.00 single, \$35.00 double. More on this later.

I hope each of the members will take note that publication of the last two issues of the Texas Postal History Society Journal has been under the direction of Gordon Hyatt. I know that Gordon will do a good job, but you can help him. He needs a continuing supply of articles to make this Journal and our organization a recognized research group.

You can write if you will try. So, please, let's create an avalanche of Texas postal history articles and make the editor's job as easy as possible.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Eureka! Three fine articles from our members. Otis Bobbitt of San Angelo has given us a tremendously interesting story on the difficult Reconstruction period following the Civil War. I am sure everyone who reads Otis' comments and the accompanying letter from his relative can relive those sad times for a few moments.

Chuck Beery of Bryan has a great thing going in his search for county seats of "Easterly Texas". I know every Texas postal history buff will enjoy his approach.

And Ward Parker of St. Louis has submitted a fine list of Texas DPO's from his collection. Sure hope this is the start of a comprehensive list of known Texas DPO's.

Several members have promised us articles. We hope Nonie Green's study will be ready for our next edition. Keep 'em coming!

MAIL DURING THE RECONSTRUCTION

by Ottis C. Bobbitt

During the Texas Postal History Society meeting at Austin on March 2, 1980, it was mentioned that there was a lack of information concerning Texas postal history during the Reconstruction period of 1867 to 1876. Illustrated is a copy of a letter dated March 1, 1868, from Carthage, Mississippi, to San Augustine, Texas, which may furnish some information concerning the problems of communications during Reconstruction.

It will be noted that the letter has no postal markings. It was folded the same as letters were before use of envelopes and stamps. The letter is a reply to a letter dated December 8, 1867, and received by the letter writer "yesterday", who made a prompt reply.

The information in the letter is confusing, and probably could be understood only by the addressee. In the letter a number of deaths of contemporaries of the addressee are mentioned. It is difficult to understand why so many young men died in such a short time.

The term "muddying the waters" was a common expression for opposing policies of the Reconstruction authorities. The signature at the end of the letter is not the name of the writer but is a signature that the addressee could recognize. The letter was not carried by the US mail, but was probably carried in relays (along with other letters) by some unofficial anti-Reconstruction organization of Confederate Veterans.

The addressee of this letter had left Mississippi in April of 1867 as a result of difficulties with Reconstruction authorities, and arrived at his uncle's place near San Augustine shortly thereafter. He was advised shortly after arriving in Texas that he would have to leave Texas. During his efforts to leave, Reconstruction authorities tried to arrest him near Rusk, Texas, which resulted in three additional murder charges being filed against him. He managed to leave Texas and was in northern Mexico with the army of Juan Jose Trevino when he wrote the letter of December 8, 1867, which was received in Carthage, Mississippi, the day before March 1, 1868.

How this type letter was handled would be an interesting research project. Any study of the Reconstruction period will be difficult because of corruption and destruction of records. During Reconstruction, apparently each county had a military detachment and a reconstruction unit. These two offices (sometimes combined) controlled all civil activities of the locality concerned. They appointed or elected whomever they pleased for civil officers.

A story told by "Old Timers" is that one San Augustine Postmaster could not read or write or sign his name. Mail was controlled by one or the other of these two units. It was reviewed and confiscated if worthwhile. Review of mail was used to help locate offenders

against Reconstruction policies. As a result, some Southern people did not use the official mail service.

This subject interests me greatly, and I would appreciate receiving copies of correspondence that was carried in a manner similar to the subject letter.

P. S. I forgot to mention that Oscar Williams
& Lin Cameron are dead. You have
probably heard of the death of the old man
Swails & his wife.

Mr. Uriah R. Bobbett
San Augustine
Texas

Carthage Miss.

March 1st, 1868.

Dear Uriah

Yours under date of 8th Decr last did not reach me untill yesterday, & I hasten to reply. I am truly glad to hear, that you are doing well, & I hope you will continue so to do. Be industrious, save your money, ~~money~~ & avoid bad company, & you will do well any where. Your father was a good citizen, & a perfect gentleman, & had he lived, his children would have had a happy home. I often think of the many happy hours we spent together fishing and hunting. At the time of his death, he had a large estate in lands, negroes, & other valuable property, & was owing but very little. The property is all gone, & I understand Hanson has declared the Estate insolvent, thus the children will ^{probably} never get a cent. Raymond Reed has been appointed ^{by the court} guardian for yourself, Lucy, & Dickey, & I would advise you to write to him at

once, & direct him as your guardian to Sue on Haws's
 bond for the property, or for its waste. In my opinion,
 the children have been treated, ^{most} shamefully in this mat-
 ter; but do not mention my ^{saying so} name in writing to Reed
 or others. Your brother Dickey, at last accounts was
 living near Canton, Lucy was living on the sea shore
 with Mr. Con. Ann Yates is married to a man by the
 name Higgins, & has moved to Ashoba. Her mother
 has gone with her. There have been several deaths since
 you left, & among them, is my son George. A crowd was
 engaged in muddying a lake; he was swimming in a
 deep part of the lake, & was taken with Cramp, sunk

& drowned, before he could be rescued. No affliction of
 life has ever borne so heavily upon me. The hope, that he
 has gone to a better world than this, is my only consolation.
 Candia Jordan died a few days ago. Times are very
 hard, money scarce, & provisions high. Nine tenths of
 the people in Seneca are broken up.

Yours Truly

Geo. Huxie

A POSTMARK PURSUIT OF
"EASTERLY TEXAS" LITTLE COUNTY SEATS

by Charles C. Beery

A line of counties running south from Montague down to Willacy, and the counties east of that line, form what can be called "Easterly Texas". This region includes 110 of Texas' 253 counties. Of the 110, 60 can be considered "little counties". The determinants of being "little" are not found merely in their area or geography.

In a pursuit of the 60 county seat postmarks, arbitrarily set are maximum county populations of approximately 20,000 (per the 1970 census) and/or county seat populations as high as 5,000 (according to the 1975 SMSA estimate of the US Census Bureau). These either/or maximums will no doubt change with our 1980 census. And while indeed arbitrary, the choice of the 60 counties has provided a fascinating sampling of name origins, histories, countrysides and their philatelic lore.

The standards for Texas postal history material in this study are easily met: Sought are one or more examples of postmarks on postal cards, picture postcards, embossed envelopes and/or stamps on envelopes. The material's span in our history is at least as "easy": Items collected range from pre-Civil War to c. 1940. I have combined these inexpensive ideals with the idea that county seats' postmarks should be readily obtainable, and "everything's easy"! The hunt cannot possibly be as demanding as the organization of related data! Right?! Well... let's take another look:

The populations of the 60 little counties and their county seats obviously have some bearing on the scarcity of those postal uses. In fact, 8 of the counties have populations well exceeding 20,000. These counties fit the study because their county seats have less than 5,000 inhabitants. Conversely, there are a dozen county seats which have populations above 5,000 according to those 1975 estimates. These are, again, in counties of less than about 20,000. And among the county seats, there are a dozen in "Easterly Texas" with populations of about 1,500 or less:

Sarita (Kenedy), 185; Boston (Bowie, with a county population of 67,813) has 200; Anderson (Grimes), 320; Montague (Montague), 400; Coldspring (San Jacinto), 619; Centerville (Leon), 750; Emory (Rains), 797; Franklin (Robertson), 1,154; Meridian (Bosque), 1,209; Groveton (Trinity), 1,216; Hemphill (Sabine), 1,424; and Quitman (Wood), 1,511. Again, these and others will change in the 1980 census.

Highest county seat populations in the group include Mount Pleasant (Titus), 10,594 and Port La Vaca (Calhoun), 10,766. Throughout the five dozen seats are towns that had greater numbers 70 to 80 years ago. Continuing research to explain the declines is part of the challenge.

Such statistical analysis or simply judging scarcity of town cancels by populations is a shallow rule for gauging early Texas material. Yet it's about all we have to put us "somewhere in the ballpark" as to measuring availability and obtaining the items. The populations must be considered, and while the county seats are obviously still active, there are at least some inconsistencies in that "ease" of finding them.

An inexpensive expediency can be to settle for some 20th Century forms in the effort. But, as examples, the postmarks of the 15 county seats listed below should be considered "relatively scarce" in any older form. A reason is that one collector "ain't got 'em"! Scarce on older usage are these:

1. Sarita (Kenedy), 185 in 1975.
2. Emory (Rains), 797.
3. Franklin (Robertson), 1,154.
4. Meridian (Bosque), 1,209.
5. Hemphill (Sabine), 1,424.
6. Newton (Newton), 1,577.
7. Hempstead (Waller), 2,011.
8. Kountze (Hardin), 2,243.

There are seven others that show populations like these:

9. Woodville (Tyler), 1,000 in 1930.
10. Madisonville (Madison), 1,100 in 1920.
11. Bastrop (Bastrop), 2,100 in 1900.
12. Rockwall (Rockwall), 1,200 in 1900.
13. Gilmer (Upshur), 1,500 in 1910.
14. Center (Shelby), 1,700 in 1910.
15. Raymondville (Willacy), 2,100 in 1930.

The first eight, and others, have no generally available population figures for 1900. This discloses critical aspects within the listing, which reflect foundings, name or status changes, and even the fairly recent non-existence of the towns or counties!

There is plenty of homework to do during "the chase". It includes, of course, collecting historical data as well as material. That includes origins, importance, and population declines. The gathering of such oft-neglected history on "Easterly Texas" can be just as perplexing as any assumption that the postmarks might be readily picked up "for a song" or with ease.

In this vaguely and briefly-described postmark pursuit, it has been found that those "easy" ones are, in fact, becoming difficult. Be assured (as you've probably heard it before) that the collector of limited means must take some of the postmarks in any form he can get them. And along the way, you can believe that older Texas material is getting tougher.

MORE ON TEXAS GHOST (LOST) TOWNS,
DPO'S, AND NAME CHANGES

by Gordon A. Hyatt

Surprisingly, some of the most interesting and challenging postmarks are found on what I classify as name changes. As the early settlers moved into Texas and created thousands of small communities, each with a post office, they were evidently not greatly concerned about time and transportation problems. With the advent of railroads, automobiles and highways, time and transportation became important to the extent that many communities found they were isolated. So they either totally abandoned their location or moved the entire town a few miles to the railroad or highway. Sometimes they kept the same name; more often they changed it.

Other reasons sometimes found for name changes were a new postmaster who wanted to name the community for his wife or daughter or a friend, or the railroad's influence, naming the new town for a company director or a conductor.

At times counties were broken up into smaller counties, creating new county seats. It seems this caused many local political battles among the small towns to be named the county seat. The winners generally prospered and are today's leading towns and cities. The losers more often than not faded into oblivion.

In the pre-1900 early settlement period, Texas had an almost entirely agricultural economy. Most of the towns grew up around the cotton, grist mill or sawmill. If the agricultural economy of a town changed, the farmers stopped growing cotton, or the lumber was all harvested, the town either died or changed its name and found another way to exist.

Many towns and communities were surrounded and incorporated into a large city. Some lost their identity entirely, but a few, if they were large enough, retained their local government and name but became a postal substation of the larger city's post office.

Some towns, through their period of existence, have changed their names four or five times. Only through careful research of postal records can you be sure that the rare postmark you have just discovered is not now a thriving Texas city by another name or a postal substation.

We are certainly pleased that in response to our article on Ghost Towns, and DPO's we received a fine letter and list of DPO's from member Ward S. Parker in St. Louis, Missouri. His letter explains that one of the lists is all registered covers which may be of interest to those specialists. Thanks, Ward.

TEXAS DPO'S, FIRST LIST

| | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Abner | Fincastle | Pilot Grove |
| Burns | Groveland | Proffitt |
| Cannon | Hainsville | Rome |
| Center Mill | Lebanon | Saint Elmo |
| Dargan | Massey | Volga |
| Dewdrop | Mendoza | Wilderville |
| Elwood | Mountain Spring | Yarrellton |

TEXAS DPO'S, SECOND LIST

| | | |
|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| Adell | Faught | Moreland |
| Alliance | Fayburg | Neoga |
| Atherton | Frankford | Noland River |
| Bazette | Fussell | Peerless |
| Bloomfield | Garretts Bluff | Pike |
| Bolivar | Garvin | Pirtle |
| Browings | Gough | Purley |
| Brueggerhoff | Graybill | Ray |
| Brunner | Hanna | Reedville |
| Calhoun | Harmony Hill | Rockett |
| Callisburg | Heath | Rockhill |
| Choctaw | Holder | Roddy |
| Christian | Isabel | Roseland |
| Clawson | Iverson | Saron |
| Collingsworth | Jines | Starrville |
| Corbet | Kellogg | Thompsonville |
| Cottondale | Kentucky Town | Tona |
| Durst | La Belle | Tulip |
| Early | Lavissa | Valley |
| Ellis | Lynell | Verona |
| Elm View | Millwood | Winona |