

Viewing Collections: Viewing the Risvold Americana Collection, Part 1

by John F. Dunn

On January 27-29 Spink Shreves Galleries offered at auction the Floyd Risvold Collection: “American Expansion & the Journey West,” a mixture of history and postal history in the form of documents, literature and other material. In this “viewing” we will focus on the postal history. I covered this comprehensive auction in multiple issues of *Mekeel's & Stamps* and *U.S. Stamp News* during the first half of 2010, and have decided to bring it all together in two installments of *Stamp News Online*.

All prices reported here do not include the Buyers' Premiums that are added on to these hammer prices. In this auction, the premium was 20% of the successful bid price of each lot up to and including \$2,000 plus 15% of the excess over \$2,000.

The auction opened with the Colonial Period, filled with lots of historical interest. Among those with a postal history connection was this cover from the Braddock Expedition, sent by Henry Walker and datelined “Pe-



tersburg up Appamatox James River, Virginia,” on August 3, 1755, addressed to his father at Whitehaven, England, endorsed “p the How / Capt Eilbeck” and carried privately. The letter states, “Gen. Braddock with 1300 chosen Men and officers were attacked by the French and Indians...and after a Bloody action of Three & a half Hours our Troops yielded Ground. We lost all our provision Artillery Stores and Baggage of every kind, and by much the greatest part of our Officers...We are informed the French and Indians were not in number above 400 whose method of fighting were

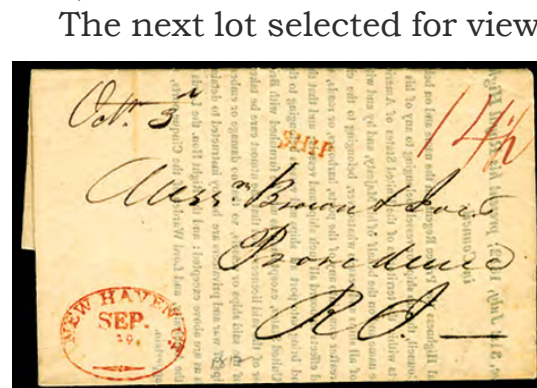
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sticking on every side behind logs and busges and by aying a train of powder and setting it on fire our troops kept firing at the smoak till the were half killed and not knowing what they fired at and the Indians firing from every side drop's them like Bees. It is reported that Washington a Virginian who was our late Generall in our Expedition last year rode up to General Braddock and advised him to break his men and take the Indean Method of fiting behind the Bushes but he refused so by that means lost the Battle. Washington last year with three Hundred Men was attacted by Nine hundred and by his good noshons of there way, kill'd upwards of three Hundred of theirs with the loss of Seventy kill'd and wounded....” Estimated at \$4,000-5,000, this fabulous historical report sold for \$19,000.

As an example of a strictly postal history lot, I selected this cover with a “NUEVA/ORLEANS,” red circular Spanish Colonial Period handstamped postmark, the earliest handstamped postmark in private hands from the



Trans-Mississippi West. The April 19, 1790 folded letter to Bordeaux, France, also shows a manuscript “16” decimes due and a red “YNDIAS” handstamp, indicating that it came from the West Indies and then was forwarded to Bordeaux. Estimated at \$7,500-10,000, this lot fetched \$28,000.



The next lot selected for viewing was this printed letter with a copy of the Royal Order of July 31, 1812 to Providence, R.I., with a “New Haven/Sep 19” entry datestamp, matching “SHIP” handstamp and “14 1/2” rate, datelined “Liverpool, 4th August,

1812” the first lines of which read: “The American Declaration of War [of June 19, 1812] was received here on the 31st ult. and the next morning an order was received for the detention of all American vessels.” The letter also reprints the Royal Order “...that no ships or vessels belonging to any of his Majesty’s subjects be permitted to enter and clear out for any of the ports within the territories of the United States of America...” Estimated at \$500-750, this lot sold for \$1,000.

Next, an eyewitness account to history, a British artillery officer’s folded letter datelined “HMS Royal Oak, Patuxent River, Sept 2nd, 1814” to Gloucester, England, and



rated “1/2”, also showing a large double oval Portsmouth ship letter handstamp that was applied on arrival and re-rated “1/10” for forwarding to Somers. The message includes “...On the 23rd it was determined that we should march against Washington...we pursued the enemy on the 24th who retired into Washington...In the evening, the army marched into Washington, a few muskets only being fired on us—then immediately proceeded to burn the Capitol, a most handsome, elegant building—the President’s house and all the public offices—the enemy himself set fire to the dockyard arsenal and all his military storehouses and in the morning we proceeded to accomplish the destruction of the cannon and everything which had escaped the flames. The loss of the Americans must have been immense, there were seven or eight magazines blown up

during the night...” Estimated at \$2,000-3,000, this lot fetched \$13,000.



This next lot combines postal history with an account of the fur trade in 1837. It is the earliest recorded cover from the

present day Northwest Territory interior to a foreign destination. Datelined "Fort Simpson McKenzie River, 15th March, 1837", it was carried by Hudson's Bay Co. canoe brigade express to York Factory on Hudson's Bay, then by H.B.C. ship to London, arriving with stepped "Deal/Ship Letter".

In the letter, Robert Campbell, a fur trader and explorer who discovered the source of the Yukon River, writes: "At this place and Fort de Liard provisions have not been for some years past so plenty...Mr Bell had by accounts 31st Jan. furs in store to the value of about \$3000...we have but very few rats this year but martens, beaver and lynx are better and more valuable...the Marten Lake Indians who have the last two years visited us pretty regular and...have brought us about 1500 martens. Estimated at \$3,000-4,000, it sold for \$5,000.

Next we have an extensive account of the fur trade by an unsuccessful participant. It was sent by William P. Tillton to his father, Daniel, The exceptional content autograph letter, signed from Gale-



na, IL, March 24, 1830, is postmarked and rated 25c, forwarded with additional 10c due. It is addressed to Washington, D.C., and was forwarded to Leesburg, Virginia. In the letter the younger Tillton explains, "It may seem strange to you that after residence of Eleven years in this western country...risking my life & health for gain that I should still be so poor, but...I will give you a sketch.... The first 3-1/2 years I spent in St. Louis as a clerk principally in an auction house...I received a salary for my services of \$400 and board, this just about paid my expenses...I associated myself with five other young men like myself, obtained a credit for about \$20,000 worth of Indian goods and went into the Indian country. In this business I spent five years returning every spring to St. Louis with my peltries for supplies. We traded on the Up-

per Missouri as high as the Yellow Stone....The last year we returned to St. Louis, furs and peltries to the amot. of \$90,000, yet...we wound up our business at the end of five years with a loss of \$2000 per share, this was owing to the great opposition in prices we had to contend with in the Am. Fur Co. together with a loss in one Spring...by the rise of the Missouri River of about \$10,000....Forming a co-partnership with a Mr. (Lemon) Parker came to Fever River (Galena) about 2-1/2 years ago and my usual bad fortune has attended me here...in consequence of the great...depreciation to the price of Lead.”

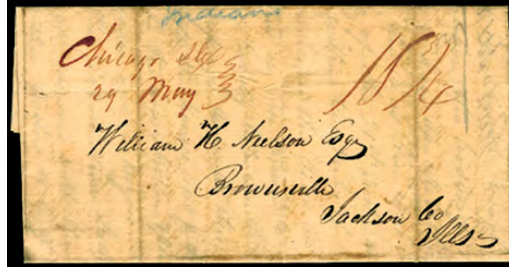
As explained further in the lot description, “The Columbia Fur Company had been formed by Tillton with former employees of the Hudson’s Bay and North West Companies who had been displaced when those two companies merged. Astor bought them out in 1827 and their territory became the Upper Missouri Outfit of the American Fur Company. Tillton had been president of the CFC because many of his partners were Canadians and thus barred from trading with Native Americans in the United States. Estimated at \$1,000-1,500, this fascinating lot sold for \$1,100.

Also from the fur trade era we find a cover with the Canada Beaver stamp being used from a beaver trapping center. It was sent from the Red River Settlement via Pembina



and the U.S. Mails to Ottawa with two singles of the Canada 1852 3d (Sc. 4), tied by a light strike of “Pembina, Min/Apr 27” (1862) datestamp, also repeated at right and a blue arced “U. States/10” exchange office handstamp. It arrived in “City of Ottawa, U.C./My 19, 1862” [per arrival backstamp], then forwarded to Almonte with straightline “Forwarded” handstamp. One of only two recorded covers franked by the Canadian 3d Beaver on mail originating from the Red River Settlement, it realized \$20,000 against a \$10,000-15,000 estimate.

Next we find an eye-witness account of the Indian Creek massacre during the Black Hawk War on an 1832 cover bearing an early Chicago postmark.



The cover bears a brown manuscript “Chicago Ill, 29 May” postmark (believed to be the second earliest postmark of Chicago in private hands) and a matching “18-3/4” rate. The letter, written by a member of the party sent to the relief of the settlers in the Fox River Valley, states: “At the house of a Wm. Davis on Indian Creek on the morning of the 22nd...we witnessed one of the most shocking sights that could possibly be presented to the human senses. There were three families assembled at Davis’ house for security, consisting of seventeen persons men, women and children, fifteen of whom we found laying in the house and around it, all shot, speared, tomahawked and scalped with the exception of an infant and woman who were not scalped but were much mangled, and the cruelty perpetrated upon the bodies of the slain was enough to have shocked the senses of even a savage....this country is completely desolate the houses and farms abandoned and most of the houses broken open...and some of them burned.” Estimated at \$2,000-3,000, this cover sold for \$3,750.

Also from the Indian Wars period, we see this cover with a 3¢ rose (Sc. 65) tied by waffle grid with matching “Saint Paul, Min/Nov 12” datestamp. It is addressed to “Hole in the Day, Chief of Chip-



peawas, Crow Wing, Minn.” and includes a photo of the chief on a railway advertising card. Per the lot description, “Hole-in-the-day was chief of the Pillager band of the Chippewa Indians at Crow Wing. He was one of the insurgent leaders among the Indians during the uprising and was

assassinated by members of his tribe on June 17, 1868 at Crow Wing.” The cover was estimated at \$300-400 and went for \$550.

In the Republic of Texas section we come to a letter written and signed by Stephen F. Austin, with a Nashville February 25, 1836 postmark. Less than a year before his death, he writes from his home in Tennessee, “I have been detained here by an attack of pleurisy, but have recov'd & shall leave tomorrow. I shall pass through Lexington, but cannot sop more than one or two days.



I know not what your inclinations may be towards a removal to Texas. ...But I wish TO SEE YOU THERE, sword in hand...A more glorious field never presented itself. That country is in fact superior to any part of the US in point of climate & soil, and local advantages....The bounty for volunteers is 640 acres....I have for fifteen years been a dray horse laboring to take materials there for...a foundation...I know would sustain the great temple of Liberty which I always expected to see reared in Texas....Come to the raising'...Bring 2000 Kentuckians with you. Form a New Kentucky of your own....The truth is we shall have very little fight, perhaps none. Mexico is too weak and distracted.” Estimated at \$15,000-20,000, this fabulous letter fetched \$180,000.

Moving ahead on Texas’ historical timeline, we find the cover on page 8, with an “Adams Express Co., Brownsville, Texas” blue straightline handstamp. The 1865 folded letter to New Orleans with manuscript “2/- Paid” (two bits

= 25¢) rate is docketed as originating in Matamoros, Mexico on November 25, 1865, making it a rare post Civil war express use during period when government postal services in Texas were virtually non-existent. It was estimated at \$4,000-5,000 and realized



\$6,750.



This next lot was carried from Santa Fe up the Oregon Trail in the Spring of 1839. It is a folded letter datelined at "Baldwin (Missouri), March 19, 1839" and ad-

ressed to "Rev. Elkanah Walker, Oregon to the care of Rev. Jason Lee, Missionary, West Port, Missouri", also with manuscript "Baldwin/March 20" postmark and matching "Paid 25" rate. It was carried up the Oregon Trail by the Munger/Griffin missionaries party while traveling with the annual fur trade caravan to the Rendezvous at the junction of Horse Creek and Green River in what is now southwest Wyoming, then to Fort Hall and on to Oregon. The only known letter carried on this trip, it was estimated at \$3,000-4,000 and realized \$8,500.

The next lot in our viewing is this folded letter with a "Fort Leavenworth, Mo./June 14" date-stamp and matching "X" rate. The datestamp is struck over the only reported example of the



"Fort Kearny Oregon Route" manuscript military marking, computer enhanced (inset) to better display the marking. Per the lot description, "The Post Office Department did not establish a Post Office at the fort until 7 July, 1849.

This letter was written by a California bound emigrant, J. Emery, who dated it 'On the Plains May 21st 1848'. The following is from the letter: 'I have an opportunity to use the influence of our Captain...to get a letter conveyed...there are so many persons wishing to send letters that it would be impossible for the Quartermaster to get them all in the mail.'...There is a large number of persons going - all rushing ahead - some one way & some another - some of their teams & waggons already giving out & breaking down & the road is strewn with broken waggons - trunks - boxes - bacon - lead - powder - sugar - coffee & in fact everything which people in their mad zeal throw out...some are turning back...There is certain to be a great amount of suffering in the mountains'. There were two Fort Kearneys in what is now the State of Nebraska. The first was abandoned in the spring of 1848, less than a year after it was founded, for a more favorable site at the head of Grand Island in the Platte River." [This is the Ft. Kearny that is seen on Scott 970.]. Estimated at \$4,000-5,000, this cover realized \$6,750.

This modest looking folded letter has an impressive message. It was written by Henry Bridgeman Brewer, datelined "Oregon Territory Columbia River Sept. 27, 1844"



and endorsed to be carried by "Rev. Mr Perkins" via ship around Cape Horn, entering the mail to Norwich, Ct. with red a "Fall River, Ms./Jul 9" (1845) datestamp, also bearing a manuscript "7" rate. Brewer writes his father in law in part: "...While we were on our visit to Wallamette a circumstance took place which shows that heathen practices are not all done away. It may be a good story for a Sabbath school. Sinims an Indian who lives not far from our house had a little boy who he loved dearly; the Father's heart was set upon him. This little boy was taken sick and died. The Father had a little slave that used to wait upon his little son in his life time. The Father thought for the love he had

for his son he ought to sacrifice the slave at his death, accordingly the deceased child and the living slave were taken to the sepulchre of the dead—The Indians of the Dalls bury their dead in houses made of boards on an Island in the Dalls, to keep them from the wolves—The slave is probably eight years old, he made no resistance—they bound him hand & foot & laid him upon the bodies of other deceased persons who had been recently placed there, with his face downward & the body of the deceased child placed upon him, just as they were about to leave him he called to them to loose the cord that bound him but they heeded not his cries. In this awful situation he spent one long dismall night though before morning he shook the corpse off from him—he said he heard the dead singing (the Indians believe this to be really true) one of the chiefs was in at Br Perkins & was mentioning the circumstance & said he tried to dissuade them from doing as they did. Br P. tried to have them bring him (slave) away that night but in vain. The next day Br Perkins ransomed him from the grave by paying three blankets & a shirt which are to be placed in the room (in place of) of the slave, so that the dead may not be robbed—Br P. has named him Ransom for he was ransomed from the grave....” Still another fascinating record of American Expansion West, it was estimated at \$3,000-4,000 and sold for \$2,700.

The next lot selected is this folded letter carried on the Oregon Trail, originating with a red “Granville, O/Aug 23” (1848) datestamp, addressed to Captain Joseph Tram, Monterey, California with the directive “It is politely requested that the Post Master at Independence Missouri will forward this by the first opportunity / California.” “First opportunity” apparently turned out to be ten months later, as the letter laid in the Independence Post Office until the opportunity to forward arrived on June 21, 1849 as



per “Independence, Mo./Jun 21” departure postmark. The postmaster also endorsed it “ford” (forwarded, top center) and rated it “10” from Granville, Ohio and “40” to California, for a total rate of 50¢ collect. Estimated at \$1,500-2,000, this historic piece realized \$3,500. (All prices reported here do not include the Buyers’ Premiums that are added on to these hammer prices. In this auction, the premium was 20% of the successful bid price of each lot up to and including \$2,000 plus 15% of the excess over \$2,000.)

Here we have a cover that is one of only four reported examples of the Fort Kearny Oregon Route postmark, this being the only example in black. (This is the same Fort



Kearny whose centennial was celebrated on Scott 970.) The 3¢ dull red (Sc. 11) is tied by a “Ft Kearny O.R.” handstamp with spread eagle, stars and leaves, with a second stronger strike repeated at lower left. In the enclosed letter datelined “Fort Kearney June 15th/52” Edgar G. Smith writes to his parents in New Jersey “...We see some Indians, plenty of adventure and a good deal to amusement — We have joined a party of two waggons from New York state, six men and two ladies, they have cows....” Estimated at \$5,000-7,500, this cover fetched \$11,000.

From the Santa Fe Trail section I selected this Socorro, New Mexico, 1849 folded letter with manuscript “Paid to Ft. Leavenworth/H.W. Edgar/P



M/Socorro, N.M./Nov 20/49” military period postmark and with directive “Via San Antonio.” According to the lot description, “...it is doubtful that it went that way as the military was running regular expresses directly

to Fort Leavenworth...” It entered the mails with a red “Fort Leavenworth, Mo./Feb 7” datestamp and matching “5” rate handstamp being applied. It is addressed to Coleman Younger, described as “Coleman and William Younger were famous as guerillas with William Quantrill in the Civil War and later rode with the James boys as bank robbers”. This cover bears the only known Socorro postmark during the military period. The letter was written by William L. Smith, a forty-niner on the Mexican Gold Trail on his way to the California gold fields via the old El Camino Real to Mazatlan and thence by steamer to San Francisco. Smith was traveling from Socorro to Mazatlan, via Chihuahua and Durango, using a two mule carriage. He planned to form up with a company of Americans, because of the dangers of passing through a country plagued by Indian marauders and robbers. At the time of this letter Socorro was a small adobe village under military occupation, garrisoned by a detachment of the U.S. Dragoons. Estimated at \$5,000-7,500, this cover soared to \$45,000.

Next we see another important postal history lot, an 1834 folded cover with the earliest known hand-stamped postmark from California, this also being the only reported example



of the “FRANCO ALTA CALIFORNIA” two line straightline postmark. The cover from Monterey to Senor Don Fernand Deppe at San Diego was docketed internally as originating from “Genl. Jose Figueroa, Monterey 17 Junio 1834”. It also bears the oval “Comandancia General/de la alta California” cachet with spread eagle. Estimated at \$10,000-15,000, it was hammered down for \$27,000.



At the bottom of the previous column is a Mining Stock Certificate with a 25-cent revenue stamp at left. It was signed in

November 1863 “Sam. L. Clemens” on the back (inset), transferring ten shares of the Fresno Mining Company. The great majority of Clemens autographs come from the years after he achieved fame in 1865. Estimated at \$2,000-3,000, it soared to \$42,500.

The Vigilance Committee of San Francisco was established to restore law and order in that area. Among the graphic presentations contained in the Risvold Collection was this letter sheet illustrating the



execution by public hanging of two men involved in the assassination of James King of William, one of the leaders of the Vigilance Committee. The letter sheet bears a pair of the 1¢ blue, Type IV (Sc. 9) tied by grid cancels. Estimated at \$2,000-3,000, it went for \$3,750.

Here’s another interesting item. The stampless cover to Kingston, Tenn., entered the mails with a red “Sacramento, Cal/26 May” datestamp and matching “40” rate, but the contents are of more interest. The sender, L.B. Crow, writes: “...This



thing they call Gold diggin is a very disagreeable kind of work. A man has to work in mud and water most of the time....Sunday is the main day to play cards and drink liquor. If a man commits murder or is caught stealing horses they will rais a mob and just take him right out to a lm and swing him right up with out Judg or Jury...” He

then concludes with “I send you five small s(p)ecimens of gold dust in a small bit of paper.”—and the five gold nuggets still remain affixed to a small piece. Estimated at \$1,000-1,500, this lot brought \$9,500.

Next up is still another interesting record of 19th Century life in the West. It is a comic miner’s illustrated cover showing a prospector hiding behind a tree while a bear searches through his belongings for



food. Published by J. M. Hutchings’ and used to Boston, Mass. with a pair of 3¢ dull red (Sc. 11) tied by a waffle grid with matching oval “Weaverville, Cal.” postmark, also with manuscript “Feb 20” date, it went for \$4,750 against an estimate of \$1,000-1,500.



Also in the California section of this fabulous collection, we find this “San Francisco News Letter / P.M.S.S., Golden Age, June 20, 1857” printed directive on an all over steamship and train illustrated

design cover to Panama with a 10¢ green, Type III (Sc. 15) tied by a “San Francisco, Cal./20 Jun” datestamp. It also bears a “DUE 10” handstamp, because the rate (as published in this S. F. News Letter) was 20¢. Per the lot description, “This type of news letter was prepared and printed with current news to date for the sailings of the ships of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company.” Estimated at \$10,000-15,000, it sold for \$30,000.

Next up is this Placer-ville and St. Joseph Overland Telegraph Company red on buff telegraph of-



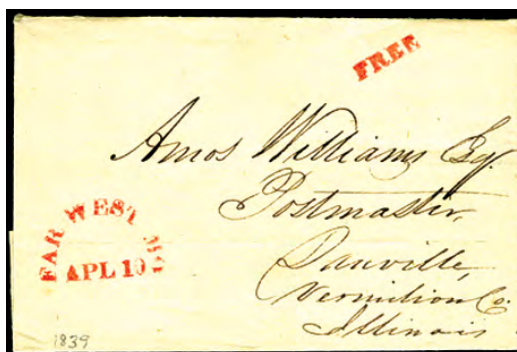
fice illustrated design cover with a 3¢ rose (Sc. 65) tied by a “Placerville, Cal./Jun 30” datestamp. Per the lot description, “Frederick A. Bee established this pioneer telegraph company in 1858. It was the first telegraph line to be strung eastward from California to Nevada and in June of 1861 it was incorporated with other interests as the Pacific Telegraph operating as the Overland Telegraph Company. Building crews, working from both ends, completed the line on October 24th thus bringing to an end the need for the Pony Express, which made its last run in November of 1861. The cover is addressed to A.W. Bee, brother of Frederick Bee.” Estimated at \$750-1,000, it fetched \$6,250.

The best depiction of life in the westward migration, in my opinion, is the hand painted legal size cover just below with a



Conestoga wagon design on the side of which is the declaration, “Oklahoma for Starvation, Kansas for Desolation, Texas for Devastation, Nebraska for Damnation, Going to Cal. to Sponge on my Relations, to Hell with the Democratic Administration”. The cover “For A.M. Parsons, Los Angeles, Cal. (upper left) has a 2¢ pink, Type III (Sc. 267a) tied by “Cincinnati, O/Apr 20, 96” duplex postmark. A design and message that predates the Dust Bowl migration by 40 years, it was estimated at just \$300-400 and soared to \$3,500.

The Mormon migration west was well documented in the Risvold Collection, including informative descriptions. This folded letter to Danville, Ill., bears a “Far West Mo., Apl 10” (1839) bold red semi-cir-



cular postmark and matching straightline “Free”. One of fewer than five examples recorded with this marking, the supporting information is equally appealing: “In 1838 a large group of Mormons settled in a little-inhabited region of northwest Missouri. They established their own county of Caldwell with Far West as the county seat. With increasing numbers the Mormons spilled over into adjacent counties...which led to a little civil war between the Saints and gentiles. On the threat by the Governor of Missouri to have the state Militia ‘Expel or exterminate them,’ the Saints decided to pick up and go back to Illinois. In the meantime General Lucas of the militia had arrested Joseph Smith and other leaders of the church. They were tried by a court-martial and ordered to be shot for treason in the public square of Far West. Alexander Doniphan...was called upon to execute the condemned but refused. He wrote General Lucas that ‘It is cold-blooded murder. I will not obey your order. My brigade shall march for Liberty tomorrow morning at 8 o’clock, and if you execute these men I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God.’ The order was never executed and the last of the Saints left Far West on April 20, 1839, just ten days after this cover was postmarked.” Estimated at \$2,000-3,000, this cover realized \$4,000.

This next lot offers a contemporary report of the death of Mormon leader Joseph Smith. The writer, John L. Cross of Jerseyville, Illinois, writes to his son, John C. Cross, in Somerset County, N.J., on September 6, 1844, “Every



thing destroyed, a great many good Houses & Barns...swept of, their crops of every kind gone with all fruit trees, the best of Orchards destroyed, their fences entirely swept of...their stock chiefly drowned....We had a wonderful time here in June last with the Mormons. There was a printing press sat up in a town three or four miles from Nauvoo, the Mormans

City. They printed some pieces against the Mormons that gave offence to some of the leaders of them. Joe Smith their Prophet his Brother with some others of the leaders went with a mob and pulled down the office, destroyed the press and all that was in the office. Joe, his brother, and two others was prosecuted, taken and put in prison. Joe sent for the Governor to come and see that he was protected. The Governor went and ordered a guard of fifty men to be kept round the prison till he could have a hearing in Court, but he was not long then till there was a very strong Mob appeared, all in disguise ordered the Guard to make no resistance on the peril of their lives. Mob went to the grates and fired. kill'd Joe, and his Brother..." Estimated at \$1,500-2,000, this historic piece realized \$5,750.

Another Mormon-related cover bears a "Salt Lake City, U.T., Mar 16" (1860) date stamp that ties a 3¢ dull red (Sc. 26) to Hendrysburch, Ohio. The letter written by John



G. Hoagland, described as "probably a Scandinavian convert, who had come overland a year or two before this letter," states in part "...the customs & manners of the people are so different to what I have been accustomed and it is not to be wondered at when one takes into acct. the kinds of people of which society is found here...thrown together from all nations almost upon the face of the globe...I don't believe there is another man living that could keep this people together...so well as Brigham Young – you will hardly hear of an instance of one going contrary to his council...there is no appeal from the decision of him & his councllors..."

"...almost to a man hardly one of them has but 2 wives & many of them from 4 to 6 & 8 but none can have more than one without consent of Brigham & from his decisions there is no appeal in matters of matrimony or divorce — in the latter case if a man & woman cannot agree to live together all they have to do is go (to) him & state their

griveances & if he thinks them sufficient import he at once dissolves the marriage covenant...& all this without fee or reward — very magnanimous!”

The letter ends with: “This letter comes to you by a pony express mail that leaves here every friday (March 16, 1860 the day this letter was postmarked) and goes through St. Joseph in 6 days it is carried on pack animals & carries letters only — it is a recent thing & I hope it will be continued although U.S. (Uncle Sam) dont seem to be very favorably disposed towards mail this way...” Again quoting from the lot description, “Apparently, Hoagland decided against the pony service when he was told the rate was \$5.00 per half ounce. Estimated at \$400-500, this cover went for a lofty \$8,500.

To Be Continued

Viewing Collections: **Viewing the Risvold Americana Collection, Part 2**

by John F. Dunn

Continuing where we left off last month with our review of the January 27-29, 2010 Spink Shreves Galleries auction of the Floyd Risvold Collection: “American Expansion & the Journey West,” last month we concluded with a cover whose letter writer stated it was to be sent by Pony Express, but was not. That cover was estimated at \$400-500 and sold for \$8,500.

Compare that realization with this cover that actually was carried via Pony Express, which was estimated at \$30,000-40,000 and sold for \$47,500. It bears a perfectly struck Running Pony handstamp on a 3¢ red entire (Sc. U9) and is addressed



to Camp Floyd, Utah Territory, endorsed “Per Pony Express” with a light blue pencil “\$5.00” express rate. This westbound usage from the first period is one of only twelve examples that are recorded and one of the few to an intermediate point on the route. Per the lot description, “According to ‘Official Army Records’ Captain Parmenas T. Turnley, to whom this cover is addressed,...was Chief Quartermaster of the forces operating in Utah Territory from 1858 to 1860 and was then on leave from 1860 to 1861, consequently the date of use of this cover must be 1860.”

(All prices reported here do not include the Buyers’ Premiums that are added on to these hammer prices. In this auction the premium was 20% of the successful bid price of each lot up to and including \$2,000 plus 15% of the excess over \$2,000.)

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This next colorful display piece shows a “Pony Express, San Francisco, Sep 11” (1861) clear blue Running Pony handstamp tying a Wells, Fargo & Co. \$1.00 red (Sc. 143L3) to a 10¢ green



entire (Sc. U32) with a red Wells, Fargo & Co. printed frank. Addressed to New York City, it still contains the original letter, datelined “Pony Express, San Francisco, Sept 11th 1861”. It was carried by the Pony Express and entered the U.S. mails with a double circle “Atchison, Kan./Sep 23” postmark. As described, “This cover was carried eastbound over the entire route during the third period when the rate was \$1.00. The eastern terminus had been changed from St. Joseph, Missouri to Atchison, Kansas in September of 1861. Estimated at \$10,000-15,000, it sold for \$35,000.

Next we see another eastbound usage with a “Paid Central Overland Pony Express Company” printed frank on a 10¢ buff entire (Sc. U18) to Coopers Mills, Maine, with a manuscript



“Carson City - Sept 30/60, Paid \$2.50, Dean Teleg Operator” notation at left, written by the agent at Carson City, Utah Territory (in present day Nevada). It bears a clear oval “The Central Overland California/& Pikes Peak/Express Company/St. Joseph/Oct 10” datestamp, and entered the mails with a double circle “St. Joseph, Mo/Oct 11, 1860” postmark and a target handstamp canceling the indicia.

This is one of only eight reported examples of this printed frank used in the first two rate periods on eastbound mail carried by the Pony Express, this being the earliest use in the second rate period. Per the lot descrip-

tion, "This cover contained a telegraph message which had been wired from San Francisco to Carson City, Utah Territory. The telegraph operator forwarded it on the Pony Express to Saint Joseph. The 'Paid \$2.50' is for the Pony Express. Printed envelopes of this type were for use only of the company and were not sold to the general public." Thus the rarity, and the realization of \$65,000 against an estimate of \$15,000-20,000.

We turn now to this "Overland Via Placerville & Salt Lake" printed directive to use what is the Central Route. The cover, with its six-horse stage coach illustration was sent from Marysville



to North Bucksport, Maine with a 10¢ green, Type V (Sc. 35) tied by an "Oroville, Cal./Dec 21, 1859" datestamp with the year slug inverted. The lot description tells us "covers carried over the Central Route via Salt Lake City in preference to the Butterfield route are substantially more rare." Estimated at \$3,000-4,000, this scarce usage fetched \$18,000.

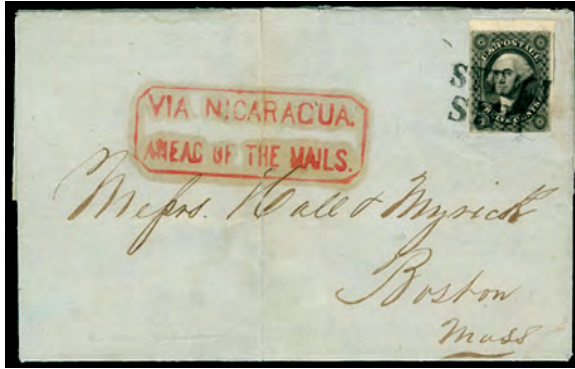
Among other routes, we have this folded letter with an "Independent Line, Ahead of the Mails, Via Panama, Uncle Sam and North Star" double oval handstamp. It is datelined



"San Francisco 1st Sep 1854" and franked by two 3¢ dull red (Sc.11) and, per the lot description, "was carried by steamship Uncle Sam to Panama where there were connections with the S.S. North Star for the run to New York; however, [in Panama] it was turned over to the British Post Office...and then carried direct by British mail steamer to

London....the U.S. stamps were required for mail carried privately and remained uncanceled. The Independent Line was organized by Commodore Vanderbilt as an opposition line between California and New York via Panama in September of 1853. Estimated at \$1,000-1,500, this cover went for \$2,200.

Here's another private mail route. This double rate folded letter bears a "Via Nicaragua, Ahead of the Mails" red boxed handstamp. Addressed to Boston, it is datelined "San Francisco Sept 1st 1853" and entered



the mails with a top sheet-margin 12¢ black (Sc. 17) tied by a two-line straightline "STEAM/SHIP" handstamp of New York. Per the lot description, "The writer advises that he has made shipments via the Clipper ships Staffordshire & Golden Fleece and that I have only time to write...which I forward by the Nicaragua Steamer the mails having closed.' This handstamp was used on mail carried by the Accessory Transit Company of William Vanderbilt, who obtained a concession from Nicaragua to operate across that country between New York and San Francisco. It operated without a U.S. mail contract. Estimated at \$2,000-3,000, it was hammered down for \$11,000.

This next cover brings with it a question of the rate. It is a 3¢ red on buff entire (Sc. U2) [darkened here to bring out the markings] uprated by a pair of the 3¢ dull red (Sc. 11) tied by a blue "Salt Lake City, Utah T./Jan 5" with a manuscript "Via California" (lower left). Per the lot description, it was "carried on the Chorpensing route,



probably over the Old Spanish Trail, to California, then by steamer via Panama to Hopewell, N.J....Carried over the Sierras by Snowshoe Thompson for Chorpenning....There is no record of a 9-cent rate 'Via California.' One logical speculation can be based on the fact that the Mormon postmaster at Salt Lake City was in a position to charge whatever he thought appropriate. Thus he may have reasoned that the letter could have gone overland to the east coast for only 3 cents. Therefore if the sender wanted it to go 'Via California,' he should pay the inland rate for under 3,000 miles to California, plus the 6-cent rate for over 3,000 miles from California via Panama, making a total rate of 9 cents. In 1851, Absolom Woodward and George Chorpenning contracted with the Post Office Department to carry the mails from Salt Lake City to San Francisco via the emigrant route through Nevada (then Utah Territory) and over the Sierra Nevada Mountains....Because of the deep snows in the high Sierras, it became too difficult and dangerous...during the winter months. Therefore the route during the winter was changed to the Old Spanish Trail going southwest to Los Angeles and the port of San Pedro." Estimated at \$1,000-1,500, this great lot went for \$7,250.

Next we see a "Jackass Mail" cover. It was sent "Via San Diego and San Antonio," per the manuscript directive in the lower left, on an "Alta California Newspaper Office" im-



print cover; and carried on the "Jackass" route to the editor of the Picayune newspaper at New Orleans, with a 10¢ green, Type III (Sc. 33) tied by a "San Francisco, Cal/Nov 21, 1859" datestamp. As with many covers in the Risvold Collection, it was accompanied by the original letter.

It was described as "the most spectacular of the ten Jackass Mail Route covers reported...The letter requests that Edward C. Wharton, of the New Orleans Picayune send

a weekly newsletter via San Antonio and the Jackass Mail instead of the Butterfield route via St Louis. They want to try the new route and save three days time.” Estimated at \$4,000-5,000, it was hammered down for \$11,000.

Another descriptive carrier name was “Barnard’s Cariboo Express”—so named for the district where this carrier was based, not because the covers were carried by cariboo.



The cover to Stamford, Canada West, bears a “Barnard’s Cariboo Express Paid” black on red adhesive frank on buff cover to Stamford, Canada West, with a blue oval “Post Office/Victoria Vancouver Island/Paid” handstamp indicating the Colonial Postage was paid. A U.S. 3¢ rose (Sc. 65) and 12¢ black (Sc. 69) are cancelled by San Francisco cogwheel cancels. The cover also bears a double circle “San Francisco, Cal/Feb 19, 1864” datestamp. Coming back to the origins of the Cariboo Express and the route this cover took, per the lot description, “In 1858 gold was discovered on the Fraser River in British Columbia. When the news hit the streets of San Francisco it started another Gold Rush similar to that in 1849 in California and 1850 in Australia. The richest strike was made at Williams Creek in the Cariboo district. This cover was carried from Williams Creek to Yale, British Columbia by Barnard’s Cariboo Express, where it was turned over to Dietz & Nelsons Express. The United States stamps were added by the Victoria Post Office or the express company, both of whom carried U.S. stamps in stock. The Victoria P.O. forwarded the cover by steamer to San Francisco, it was then carried by overland stage line and railroad to the east and its destination in Canada. Estimated at \$7,500-10,000, this cover rose to \$23,000.

Shown next is the unique example of a cover with a “Cook’s Express Paid” illustrated printed frank with a snow

shoe expressman in the mountains. The cover to Camptonville, California with a 3¢ rose (Sc. 65), entered the mails with a double circle “Downie Ville, Cal/Mar 19, '67”



datestamp and grid handstamp. Per the lot description, “This...frank is exactly identical to the printed frank of Zack’s [Granville Zachariah] Express [see below], both operating out of DownievilleNewspaper reports from the Downieville Mountain Messenger indicate that George E. Cook had taken over the ‘snow shoe express line’ between Downieville & La Porte as of December 15, 1866....The Nevada Daily Gazette on 20 November, 1865 reports that Tibbetts had employed a man to carry the winter express on Norwegian snow shoes, which were superior to those used in Canada. That man was Granville Zachariah. Both expresses were short lived to about 1870. Both most likely had their covers printed in the work shop of the Mountain Messenger and both worked with the postmasters at the ends of the Downieville - La Porte route. Estimated at \$5,000-7,500, this cover soared to \$36,250.

The next lot is from a “Zack’s Snow Shoe Express collection”. It is one of only three recorded examples (all on fronts) of the blue oval “Zack’s Express, Paid” snow shoe expressman illustrated printed frank, on 3¢ a pink on buff front (Sc. U35) to Port Wine, California.



Per the lot description. “Granville Zackariah operated a one man express between Downieville and La Port, via Gibsonville Ridge in 1865-66. There were no roads between these two points. From Downieville to Port Wine the route

was via Marysville southwest and then northeast to La Port and the Gibsonville mines. Zack took a direct route northerly over the ridges, canyons and rivers stemming from the high Sierra Mountains on show shoe in the winter and horseback at other times, thus he avoided the long circuitous route. Estimated at \$3,000-4,000, this "collection" lot sold for \$6,250.

Our final lot from the Expansion & Journey West section is this cover with a "Union Pacific Railway Company, Engineer's Office, Omaha Nebraska" corner card (altered in manuscript to "Fort Sanders - Dakota") to Philadelphia, Pa. with a 3¢ rose



(Sc. 65) tied by a blue target cancel, with matching "Fort Sanders, Dakota/Mar 13" datestamp alongside.

The original letter was written by a member of one of the survey parties laying out the route of the Union Pacific railroad in the spring of 1868. Bordeaux writes to his mother, "This party will operate much farther west than the others if the rumors which we hear are correct; we will proceed to Green River about 250 or 300 miles west of this place & will work east until we meet the other parties." The completion of the Transcontinental Railroad led to the demise of the Pony Express and led to a new migration via railroads instead of wagon trains. This cover was estimated at \$400-500 and sold for \$1,150.

Moving on to other aspects of the Risvold Collection, we begin with this mourning cover that shows a bold "A. Lincoln" frank as President on a small cover addressed in the hand of Mary Todd Lincoln to the wife of Senator Ira Harris of New York in New York City. Fewer than five mourning covers are known franked by Lincoln for his wife after the death of their son William in February of 1862. This one bears a "Washington, D.C./Apr 8, 1862" postmark.

Lincoln's third son died on February 20, 1862 of what was probably typhoid fever. When the Lincolns attended Ford Theater, the night Lincoln was assassinated, they were accompanied by



Major Henry R. Rathbone and his fiancée Clara Harris, the daughter of Mrs. Harris to whom the cover is addressed.

This rare combination of history and postal history was estimated at \$5,000-7,500 and realized \$24,000.

Next up is a Beardless Lincoln Rail Splitter overall design on an orange cover carried to the Post Office by Floyd's Penny Post with their (1¢) Brown adhesive (Sc. 68L2) tied by a "Floyd's Penny Post" cancellation



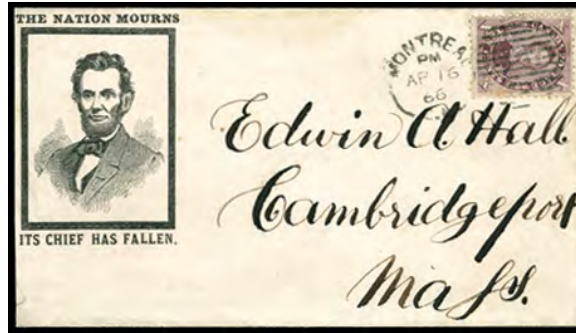
with sunburst in center. It entered the mails to Lowell, Mass. with a 3¢ dull red (Sc. 26) tied by a blue double circle "Chicago, Ills./Jul 16" (1860) datestamp. Estimated at \$5,000-7,500, it fetched \$11,500.

Another Lincoln cover of interest is this Abraham Lincoln & Andrew Johnson red and blue allover 1864 campaign design cover to Delvan, Wisconsin with a 3¢ rose (Sc. 65) tied by a blue target



cancel with a matching double circle "New Albany, Ind./Nov 15, '64" datestamp. Estimated at just \$400-500, it went for a lofty \$4,250.

We conclude our viewing of the Lincoln section with a rare cover. The cachet, a Lincoln boxed portrait mourning cover with “The Nation Mourns, Its Chief has Fallen” slogan was used from



Canada to Cambridgeport, Mass., with a Canada 1859 10¢ red lilac (Sc. 17) tied by a “Montreal/Ap 16, 1866” duplex postmark. Estimated at \$3,000-4,000, this cover went for \$14,000.

Among Patriotics, we display a cover with “Soldiers and Statesmen/Need Only Imitate/His Example and the Union will bless them,” multicolored, all-over map of the United States Magnus

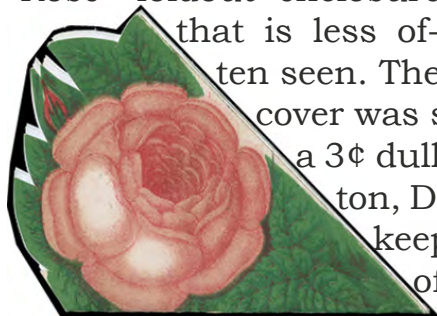


design cover with a 1¢ blue (Sc. 63) tied by a New York City Despatch Post datestamp. This scarce 1¢ New York City local rate use of a patriotic cover was estimated at \$2,000-3,000 and realized \$2,700.

Next we view not only a “Rose of Washington” Magnus all-over multicolored design cover, but we also find the elaborate “Rose” foldout enclosure that is less often seen. The



cover was sent to Evans Center, N.Y., with a 3¢ dull red (Sc. 26) tied by a “Washington, D.C./Jul 26, 1861” datestamp. In keeping with the historical content of the Risvold Collection, also



present is the original letter on patriotic letterhead with a first-hand account of the first battle of Bull Run: "... on the 20th the (re)commenced the battle which lasted 2 days. The first point of attack was at Bulls run. I believe they drove the enemy from that point and passed them at Manassas junction or there abouts ware the rebels were reinforced and likewise were strongly entrenched behind massive batteries from which our men suffered severly. It is said that our officers conducted the battle miserably a bringing their men right up before the batteries and leaving them there without any further (orders). A number of our Regt. got considerably cut to pieces. It is said that the Fire Guards of NY made terrible havoc among the rebels destroying nearly five times their own number. There was a cavalry of 500 charged on them. This troop was called black horse cavalry their horsed all being black. I understand thare was but 5 of them escaped but our troops had 3 to 1 to fight against...and of course our men were defeated. A great many of them retreated into our fortress..." Estimated at \$2,000-3,000, this lot was hammered down for \$11,500.

"The Great Naval Battle Between Ericsson's Monitor, and the Merrimac, March 9th, 1861," is the legend on this wonderful allover naval engagement illustrated cover in red and blue. It was sent



to Solon, Ohio with a 3¢ rose (Sc. 65) tied by a "Reeds Landing, Min/Sep 16" datestamp. Accompanied by a second patriotic cover of the same Monitor and Merrimac battle at Hampton Roads, this a red and blue design cover with draped flags, the lot sold for \$700 against a \$500-750 estimate.

The Second Battle of Bull Run was recorded in another soldier's letter (cover, page 30), which reads in part, "Gen. Pope says he ordered Gen. Porter to attack the rebs. No

attack was made—for what reason I know not...About 2 A.M. next morning we...marched back towards Bull run, arriving...about 9.30. Here a beautiful Sight met our view. The hills covered with artillery which glittered in the clear sunlight, while along their sides and in the valleys bayonets almost innumerable glistened. Every face wore a smile of confidence...About 2 P.M. ordered to advance.... [into woods full of the dead from both sides before emerging in an open field] Here the scene became appalling, death in a thousand forms....A brigade ordered to our support came out of the woods...fired two volleys and turned their backs...We stood our ground firing...for about 1/2 hour, our men falling all round...Anxiously we looked for support. None coming we were begged of to retreat, which was obeyed resuting in a grand skadaddle...Our men were pursued by all the engines of death that a rebel horde could invent. It was a regular 'Bull Run'...I started and made a clean run coming up as the reg. was trying to rally...When we formed we had 69 men left out of over three hundred... We were indeed a badly whipped crowd.”

This letter inscribed “On Picket on the Bank of the Potomac Near Sheperdstown,” September 27, 1862 was contained within a Patriotic “Onward to Victory” cover post-marked at Washington “Sep 31 / DUE 3”. As



explained in the lot description, “General Pope’s orders to General Porter were in fact contradictory, directing him to attack but to maintain contact with a support division that was nowhere near the point he was to attack. Also, James Longstreet had arrived to reinforce what Pope believed was still a weak point in enemy lines. The next day, Porter made the general attack Pope had ordered and was duly flanked by Longstreet. (The writer of the letter, a Sgt. Powers, was among those at the most exposed point of

this attack.) Estimated at \$400-500, this vivid record of the Second Battle of Bull Run sold for \$1,350.

Finally, we find a very different, idealistic rendition of the War, a large allover valentine design cover to Allegany, N.Y., with a vertical pair of the 3¢ Rose (Sc. 65) tied by a “Georgetown, D.C./Feb 11” datestamp. Estimated at \$1,500-2,000, it realized \$2,800.



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