

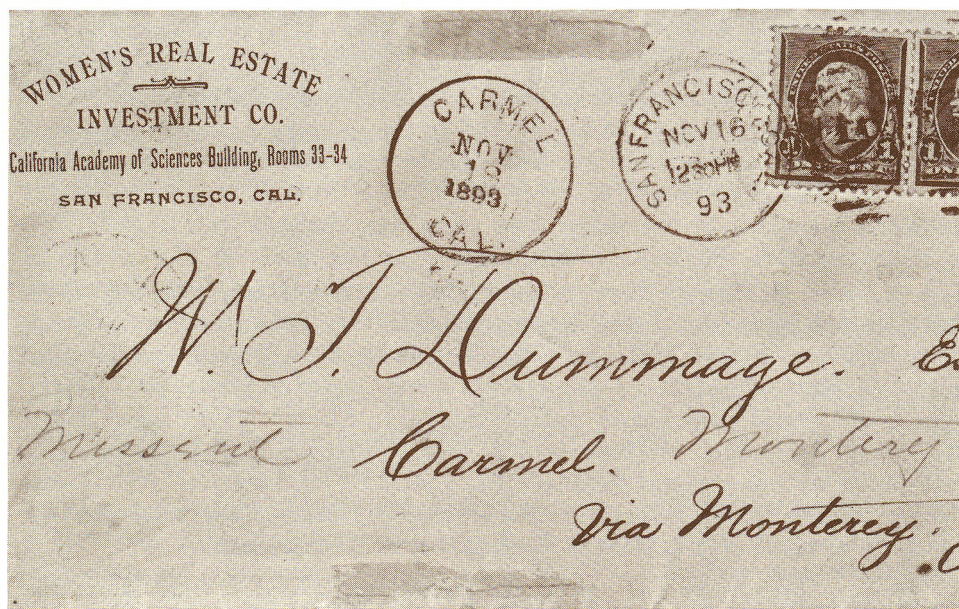
# NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

A Quarterly Bulletin of Historic Monterey Issued by  
The Monterey History and Art Association

Vol. XII, Number 4

December, 1968

## The Early Mails in Monterey County



This letter, although properly delivered as addressed, actually reached the wrong place! For the story behind the cover you may turn the page.

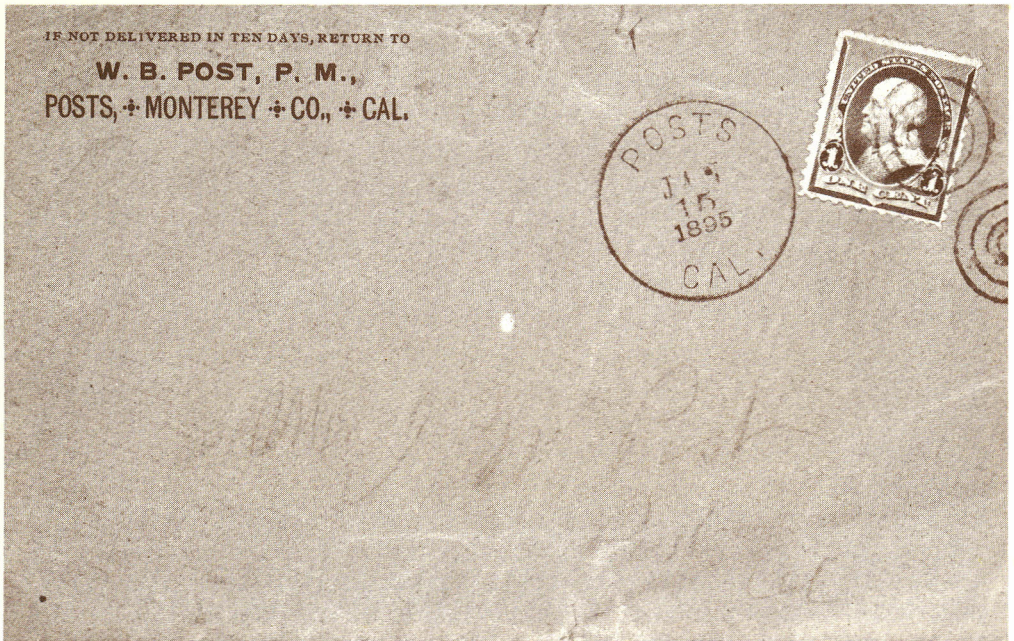
*In the September issue we left our postman delivering the mail to those isolated and now forgotten places far up in the wilds of the Carmel Valley. The documents which enable us to trace this movement provide a wealth of information about the development of our country. Occasionally, however, we find them sorely inadequate and often downright confusing. The records are about to provide an interesting example of this as we continue our narrative.*

Seven years after the establishment of the JAMESBURG P.O. the residents of the lower valley finally succeeded in obtaining regular mail service. The office was located within shouting distance of the present Carmel Valley P.O. and opened for official business on September 27th, 1893. The name chosen, appropriately enough, was CARMEL. This is not as surprising as it may seem because the valley had for many years been known as **Carmelo**, or Carmel, and also in 1893 the site of the City of Carmel was virtually uninhabited—the streets and avenues existed only on the survey map. The CARMEL P.O. remained in the valley for exactly ten years and, judging from the scarcity of covers from this period, probably was used quite infrequently.

Shortly after the turn of the century a new group of entrepreneurs took over the development of Carmel City and by 1903 the prospects for the little village had begun to materialize. Until this time all Carmelites were obliged to use the Monterey P.O. as an address because it was the nearest facility. To further complicate matters, all letters addressed to them in Carmel (City) would, of course, be delivered to the CARMEL P.O. miles up the valley. Undaunted, the people devised a solution.

When Louis Slevin applied to the Post Office Department in 1903 he suggested that the office to be established in the growing hamlet overlooking the bay be called "Carmel-by-the-Sea" in order to differentiate between the two places. The government, however, had a better idea. To avoid any further confusion the name of the valley post office was changed to TULARCITO on September 26th, 1903 and shortly thereafter, on December 5th, the CARMEL P.O. reopened in Slevin's store on Ocean Avenue. At last the little settlement that had had such a hard time getting started was officially in contact with the outside world. And TULARCITO? The Post Office Department also had second thoughts about that—the records show "never in operation." Thirty-eight years would pass before the village in the Carmel Valley again had a post office. Authorized on January 5th, 1941, ROBLES DEL RIO operated until the name was changed to CARMEL VALLEY on June 1st, 1952. Covers postmarked CARMEL before 1906 are scarce. The circumstances surrounding the cover pictured on the front of this number are interesting.

William Dummage was one of the earliest settlers in Carmel. Sometime early in 1893 he arrived to set up residence as official land agent for the Women's Real Estate Investment Company which was headquartered in San Francisco. The letter was written by Abbie Jane Hunter, the founder of the enterprise, soon after the CARMEL post office opened and was mailed from San Francisco November 16th, 1893. Markings on the reverse of the envelope indicate that it reached the CARMEL P.O. by way of Salinas—probably traveling over the Los Laureles grade. Abbie Hunter must have known the mail route because of the address "via Monterey" but, in spite of this, the letter reached the wrong place. However, the postmaster at CARMEL must



This cover is a collectors dream come true. A so-called "Drop Letter" because it was mailed, cancelled and delivered in the same office, the letter was written from father to son. The word POST can be found spelled out six times on this unique cover. Can you find them all?

have been aware of the error for the letter was immediately forwarded to Monterey with the notation "missent." Imagine this confusion lasting for ten years only to have the reverse happen after the name change in 1903!

One other post office operated in the valley locale. CORRAL De TIERRA opened on May 6th, 1912 and closed the 29th of May, 1931. These covers are surprisingly difficult to find.

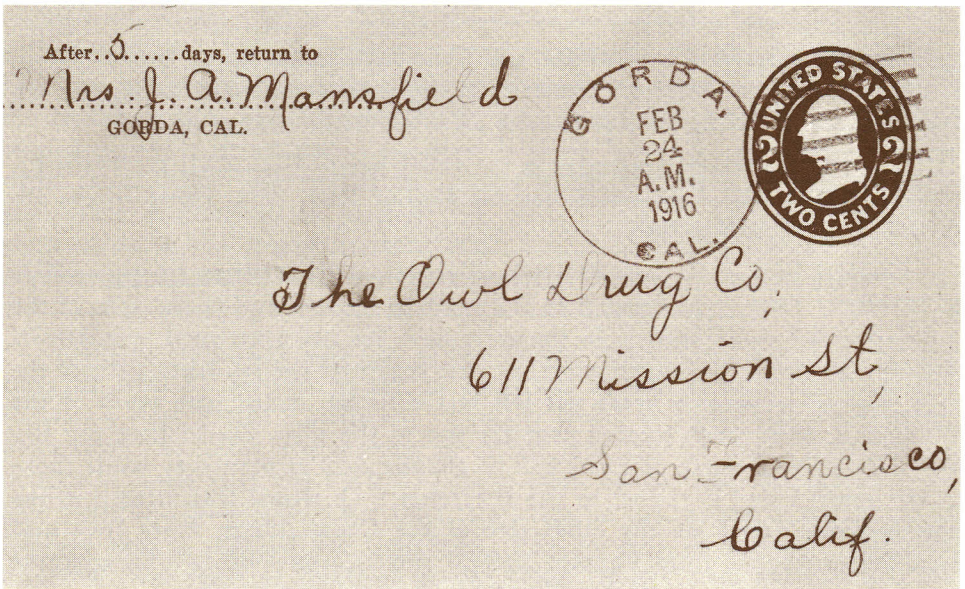
Unquestionably the best example of coordinated activities among settlers in Monterey County to bring thru the mails is to be found in the area of the southern coast communities. In the early days the old coast road, winding its narrow way down the jagged shoreline that separates the sea from some of the most remote wilderness areas yet left in California, ended just south of the William B. Post ranch located near the top of the ridge overlooking the Big Sur. Those living north of Posts had to get the mail in Monterey while those to the south found it easiest to use the Jolon P.O. which was located in the San Antonio Valley on the other side of the Coast Range. Here they also obtained provisions from Captain Tidball and George Dutton who operated a store and hotel as well as the post office.

Life was not easy down there in those days. There were few comforts to be had and the feeling of isolation often became acute when, occasionally

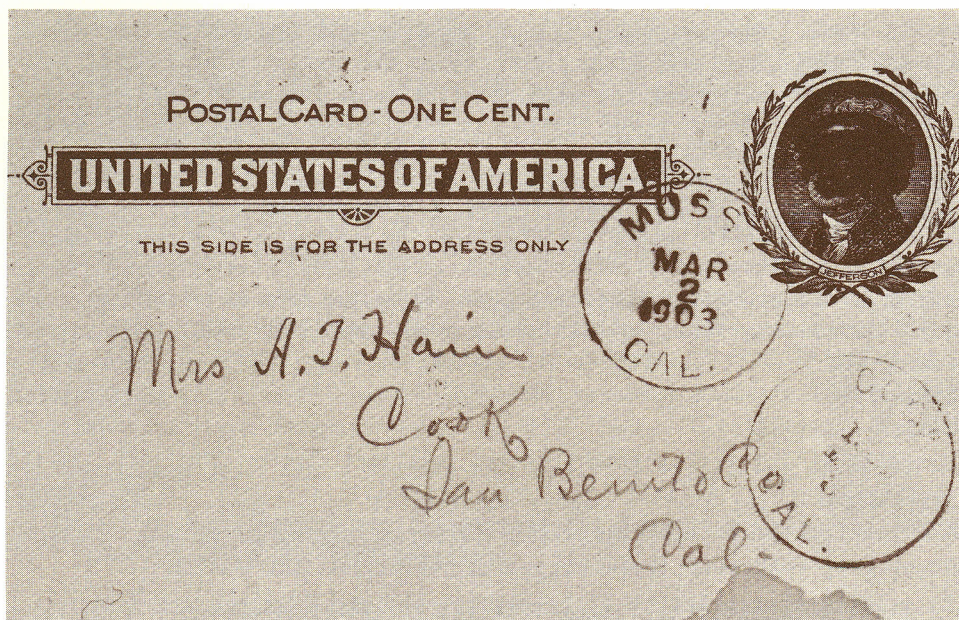
for weeks at a time, the weather made passage over the road and trails impossible. The only other contact with civilization was by way of the sea but, here too, the harsh elements prohibited the landing of the small tramp steamers that wanted to take on wood or tan bark.

The first post office established down the coast was POINT SUR. It must have been located somewhere on or near the rancho **El Sur**. Operating from January 24th to October 15th, 1883, it was open less than 9 months. How many letters could have gone out of there in that short time? Not many, to be sure, for had there been any substantial business the office would have remained open. I do not know of the existence of a POINT SUR postmark.

During the next six years the coast families were again without mail service but they continued their efforts toward convincing the government that it should provide the necessary facilities regardless of cost. Late in 1889 they finally got their way. On October 30th of that year the government opened three post offices down the coast. SUR (located on Bixby Creek) and POSTS (located at the Post ranch), were served via the coast road while MANSFIELD (named after a prominent settler and situated far to the south in what is now known as Los Burros) received its letters by pack train from Jolon. The letters came thrice weekly then and, once, according to a long time resident of Big Sur, the residents were without communication for almost a month because a severe storm had washed out the road in a number of places.



The GORDA P.O. was located about one quarter mile south of Prewitt Creek on the lower coast trail. Notice that the letter was written by one of the Mansfield family, after whom another P.O. in the area was named. Covers from this post office are difficult to find.



Arthur T. Hain, who later became postmaster at the Cook P.O. in San Benito County, was on a fishing trip at Moss' Landing when he sent home this card to his wife informing her that if he didn't have any luck on the morrow he was going to come home. The Hain family still live at Cook but it is now known as Pinnacles.

None of these post offices remain today. SUR was discontinued on June 30th, 1913 and MANSFIELD closed on August 2nd, 1897. POSTS became ARBOLADO on January 31st, 1910 and that name was changed to BIG SUR on the 6th of March, 1915<sup>1</sup>. MANSFIELD covers are very rare — I have seen only one. The others, including early usage from BIG SUR, are scarce. The pictured cover from POSTS is a real treasure.

South of the Big Sur there were two more post offices but they are both now gone. GORDA was established March 25th, 1893 and discontinued February 28th, 1923. LUCIA operated in two periods. It was first opened on March 8th, 1900 and closed on March 2nd, 1933. Reopened November 5th, 1936, it was finally discontinued November 15th, 1938. GORDA is rare while LUCIA is more common.

To the north of Big Sur there was RAINBOW LODGE. Located on Bixby Creek it operated between June 19th, 1922 and April 30th 1925<sup>2</sup>. Last, and for lack of information, least, there was MUNGO. Established: May 24th, 1895, Discontinued: September 10th, 1898. The last notation in the department

<sup>1</sup> **Arbolado** is a Spanish word that, loosely translated, means "a heavily wooded area."

<sup>2</sup> Howard Sharpe, the owner, passed away on November 16th, 1964. In later years he had built and operated a store and restaurant at the Bixby Creek Bridge. Many will remember it as the "Crocodiles Tail."

records reads "mail to Sur P.O." It must have been located somewhere between Point Lobos and Bixby Creek. What the devil is a MUNGO? These two postmarks are among the scarcest of all the Monterey County offices.

Monterey was one of the twenty-seven original counties created when California became a state in 1850 and until the 12th of February, 1874 a good portion of its area was included in what is now the county of San Benito. It is therefore proper to include in the history of this county those post offices established prior to the creation of that body. There were not many, and we have already mentioned San Juan, so for the sake of brevity we shall simply list them in order of establishment. They were: HOLLISTER (January 15th, 1869), PICACHO (March 24th, 1869), SAN BENITO (November 5th, 1869), TRES PINOS (January 24th, 1871) and EMMETT (August 10th, 1873).

With the exception of HOLLISTER all these towns are difficult to get on covers dated before the new county was created. In the process of searching these out I picked up some interesting history pertaining to the area. Perhaps someday we shall make it the subject of our modest publication.

There remains but one more loose end to tie before we move south into the Salinas Valley. In the extreme north of the county, where the Pajaro River forms the boundry between the counties of Santa Cruz, Santa Clara and Monterey, there have been four post offices. PAJARO, located across the river from Watsonville, operated in two periods: August 24th, 1872 to October 6th, 1873 and February 1st, 1882 to March 2nd, 1888. AROMAS was established the 9th of March, 1894 and is still in operation. MOSS, established February 9th, 1895, was ammended to MOSS LANDING on March 30th, 1917. The last post office to be opened in this area was DUNBARTON. It was located a few miles from the Monterey-San Benito county line, between AROMAS and U.S. Highway 101, and commenced operation on November 22nd, 1900. It closed on May 31st, 1909. PAJARO and DUNBARTON are scarce. AROMAS before 1900 is a real stinker!

*Adios! Amigo—Rick Wilkerson*

TO BE CONTINUED

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### DONALD M. CRAIG

Volume I, Number 1 of the Noticias del Puerto de Monterey was published March 1957. This December 1968 issue ends the editorship of Donald M. Craig. A telephone call shortly after the September issue — "Will you finish the last issue this year? — I may not be here." Within a few weeks he quietly went to sleep. He specifically asked that there be no "fuss." So — Adios, amigo.

—A.E.

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## COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

The new officers of the association took office at the special October 28th meeting of our Board of Directors. They are: President—Ted Durein; 1st Vice President—Robert Ross; 2nd Vice President—Admiral E. E. Stone; Treasurer—B. L. Heckenlaible; and Secretary—Mrs. Duncan Todd. These capable officers will lead us as we approach the activities of the Bi Centennial Year as well as the regular events of the association.

The Board has also approved the appointment of the following chairmen of committees: Merienda—Edwin Bliss, George Leutzinger; Adobe Tour—Mrs. W. W. Downer; Hospitality—Mrs. Donald Dubrasich; Sloat Landing—General Hap Lyon; Garden—Mrs. Horace Dormody; Membership—Robert Littlefield; Maritime Museum—Admiral E. E. Stone; Bicentennial—Robert Stanton; Auditing—Roudi Partridge; Architectural—William Concolino; Business Affairs—Norman Hasselo; House Committee—Mrs. Tod Singleton; Library—Mrs. Edna Parratt; and Conference of California Historical Societies 1970 Meeting—Prof. A. Boyd Mewborn.

Mrs. Frank LaCauza has been appointed to fill the unexpired term of Walter Haluk as a Director on the Board of the association.

Professor A. Boyd Mewborn represented the association at the California Historical Societies Workshop in November. He is handling arrangements for the 1970 Conference in Monterey.

### NEW MEMBERS:

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**Gifts:** Three beautiful fans from Miss Alice Seckels; three chairs with cane seats, one rosewood dresser with a mirror, and a rug from Mrs. Dorothy Green Chapman; a pair of fine brass andirons from Virginia Klemme.