# THE COLORADO POSTAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

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## GENESIS OF THE PROJECT

This issue contains the first installment of a project that I have been working on for nearly 30 years. In the 1960's, when I first began to collect Colorado Postal History I quickly learned that there was a near void in literature relative to the postal history of the state. It became my goal to alleviate that situation. Since 1970, much has been accomplished. In cooperation with James Ozment and John Willard two editions of the listing of Colorado Post Offices have been published. It is considerable gratification to often find those books cited in other published historical studies of Colorado. Also, in the 1970's David L. Jarrett's book, *Colorado Territorial and Pre-territorial Postmarks.* was an important addition to the literature. The pages of the *Colorado Postal Historian* and *La Posta*, have also added to the published knowledge of Colorado Postal History.

However, none of this has accomplished the primary purpose that I hoped to achieve. My interest in Colorado goes beyond the markings and the covers to the history of the places that at one time had, or still have, Post Offices. Where were these places? What was the reason for their existence? What was the origin of the Post Office or settlement name? And of course, the second part of the effort would be to list the postmasters, and the known postal makings from each office. Certainly a monumental task, and one that may never be completed.

Now, in 1998, I feel that I have gone about as far as I can in collecting information, and it is time to put what I have on paper and to let others add to the data base. The first of what will be many segments appears in this issue.

## THE SCOPE AND PROCEDURE

The production of this "encyclopedia" will be county by county, and in no particular order. Hopefully, there will be a portion in each issue to come of the *Colorado Postal Historian*. The previously published articles on the "City and County of Denver" are actually a part of this effort.

Within each present-day county all of the post offices will be treated in alphabetical order, and the information will hopefully be presented in a consistent format. However, that could change as time and experience dictate a change in format. For each office the information will be in the following sequence:

1. A discussion of the history, the location, and the source of the name of the office.

2. A chronology of the post office: dates of establishment, discontinuance, reported locations, postmasters to approximately 1980, and other events.

3. A descriptive listing of the recorded postmarks for the office.

4. Tracings of the postmarks.

## HISTORY

During the past 30 years, my reading of Colorado history has been extensive. A short list of references provided the bulk of the information, however, some key facts were uncovered in some rather esoteric publications. Often historical information is repeated, and in many cases it is possible to follow the trail of a statement from the one author through several subsequent authors.

The reason a settlement (post office) existed is usually well understood. Various authors usually agree on who were the founders, and the reported dates of founding of the settlement, at least within reason.

The location of a settlement, particularly the tiny and short-lived ones, is more often a point of contention. On

the eastern plains, the post offices were often at the ranch of a person willing to be the postmaster. For such post offices, if the postmaster changed, so did the location of the post office, and in a few instances the move was across a county or even state boundary. Therefore, depending on the time under discussion, different authors will report the office at different locations with different postmasters. In several instances, I have found references to "postmasters", and even to a few "post offices" which are absent from the official records. Such names will not be reported in this encyclopedia.

In connection with the previously described Site Location Reports, I have also studied a number of published maps, and have integrated that information into the locations I report. More recently, together with James Ozment and others, I have begun the task of actually visiting every site which we can physically reach. A few are no longer on or close to public roads, or they lie beneath reservoirs. As of January 1998, I have been able to cover most of the counties east of the Front Range. Surprisingly, when reaching the indicated spot, there has often been some remnant or evidence that there was indeed human habitation at the location. As time passes, the evidence becomes less, and more and more locations are "empty fields." A photographic record has been made at each site visited, and I will include comments on what was to be found when I visited. From these visits it should be possible to provide a description of how to find that site today.

Ever since reading *Names on the Land* by George R, Stewart, I have had a fascination with the source of town names. Therefore, in my reading I have paid particular attention to from whence came

the settlement names on the Colorado Landscape. Many are obvious and well known, for many a reasonable assumption can be made, and for some the reason is lost in antiquity. Local legends, often fanciful abound, but from reading the postal records, at times a more prosaic explanation seems appropriate. Very often the post office name is the family name of the person who filed the original application for a post office, or who was the first postmaster. Derivation of the names will be reported where a logical explanation exists or, if a speculative version, it will be so noted.

## POST OFFICE CHRONOLOGY

OPENINGS AND CLOSINGS : Included in this section will be the dates of establishment and discontinuance that were listed in *Colorado Post Offices 1859-1989*. That information will be updated to reflect recent closings and the correction of a few typographical errors. This information was originally extracted from records of Postmaster Appointments, maintained by the Post Office Department, and preserved on microfilm available from the National Archives. In addition, in 1980, I was given access to a card file containing recent information on the active post offices. Some of that information was subsequently added to the microfilm records.

Since 1980, learning of changes in post offices has become increasingly difficult. For a time, the weekly *Post Office Department Bulletin* reported openings and closings; frequently and with a fair degree of accuracy. Since 1990, the Postal service has been most casual in their reporting. Fortunately, there has been not a single new, independent post office established in Colorado -just numerous branches and stations. There are a number of post offices that have closed, but in many instances they had ceased operation months, and even years, before an official announcement was made. Because of this, any post 1990 closing date should be considered speculative.

POSTMASTERS : For each Post Office, I will list the names and dates of appointment of the postmasters, as I have extracted them from the Records of Postmaster Appointments. For the most part these documents are handwritten, and in some instances poorly. I have done my best to copy the names correctly, but I offer no guarantee that all of the spellings are correct. 1980, has been chosen as an approximate cut off date for postmasters. That is the extent of the information available to me, and since then the Postal Service more frequently appoints an "Officer in Charge." Such persons serve until a postmaster is appointed, and they change frequently as the Postal Service employees are moved to other assignments or locations. Therefore, I feel that attempting to bring the postmaster name records to a current status is not worth the effort, and in addition would be a task without end.

LOCATIONS : The location information reported in this section is based primarily on the Geographic site Location Reports of the Post Office Department, which are also available on microfilm from the National Archives. These documents were submitted prior to the granting of the application for a new post office, when there was

a change in the location of the post office, and occasionally when a survey of all post offices was conducted. This later event leads me to believe that many changes in location were not reported, and that eventually the Post Office Department decided it was time to find out where everything was situated. The last such survey appears to have been in the late fall of 1941. Subsequent to that time, there are very few documents, and none dated later than 1948.

The site location reports are most helpful if they were prepared after the Federal Land Survey Grid (Section-Township-Range) had been established. Prior to that, the descriptions rely on estimated distances to other towns, or to geographic features. In a small percentage of the reports there are obvious errors in the description and I am left wondering if the postmaster really knew where he was. Hopefully, I have recognized most such errors and what I record here will be accurate.

OTHER EVENTS : On occasion, the Records of Postmaster Appointment and the Geographic Site Location Reports provide a comment on some other historical event that affected the post office. Such items, when found, will be included in the chronology for the office. All of these facts will be listed in order as determined from the dates present on the documents. This should provide some additional guidance to the history of the individual post office.

## POSTAL MARKINGS

A key section of this encyclopedia is to record the postal markings used at each post office. Often only a single type of marking is known, or early markings have not been reported, and for many post offices I have yet to record any markings.

I will make no attempt to assign a "rarity or value factor" to either the towns, or the specific marking. There are too many factors that influence the desirability and value of a given postal marking, not the least of which is individual collector interest and desire. I recall that it was not many years ago that I found my first MONON postmark. Today, nearly every auction offers one for sale - times change.

Nearly all of the markings here recorded have been seen by me, or by some one in whom I have confidence. Nearly all will be shown as tracings; traced from examples in my collection or that of friends and acquaintances.

For manuscript markings, I have chosen to show only one example, unless there are distinctly separate periods of manuscript use or unusual formats.

I also choose to illustrate the associated killers, unless they are common cork smudges. In the case of 4-bar and wavy line machine killers, only a portion, enough to be distinctive, may be shown.

I have done my best to prepare an accurate tracing, however, I am not an artist, and at times my hand is a bit shaky. I feel that I do present a true representation of the diameters and of the size, style, and spacing of the lettering. Irregularities in shape of the letters are my fault, unless otherwise noted. These tracing should be satisfactory for matching to actual examples.

During the last half of the nineteenth century, and the early twentieth century. The great majority of steel handstamps, provided by the Post Office Department, were manufactured by a single firm. These handstamps were all hand engraved. Thus, even if two devices were made for a town at the same time, there will be minor differences between them.

It is necessary to emphasize that slight variations will occur in the impressions of the postal marking depending on, the nature of the device, the age of the device, the precision of the strike, and whether it was recently, if ever cleaned.

## DESCRIPTION OF POSTAL MARKINGS

The purpose of this section is to provide specifics and additional information about each of the postal

markings. Included will be a description of an occasional marking, which I have seen and recorded, but which is not available for illustration. The description is a modification of a system I proposed in 1972, and have personally used ever since. The original system was conceived for computer storage and was thus complicated. With time I learned that the complexity was not necessary, and even less so when I decided that the planned publication would illustrate the markings. In addition, any one who builds computer data bases learns that there is a residual percentage of data that is better presented in narrative form instead of "code". The description will consist of the following items, as appropriate, in two lines for each marking. A third line will occasionally be used to describe unusual markings.

Line 1:

Type Number: Initially, this number has been assigned to markings, in chronological order, depending upon the earliest date recorded. It is my intention that any additions will be inserted in a decimal format ( 1.1, 1.1.1, etc.), or added at the end.

Wording: The wording of the device will be from top to bottom. A "/" will separate lines, or the clockwise reading portion from that reading counter-clockwise. Words enclosed in "( )" are in the central portion of the date stamp, and words following "::" are outside the datestamp. The use of upper and lower case letters reflects that use in the date stamp. Manuscript markings will be listed in upper and lower case letters. Punctuation is a problem. I have tried to record it accurately, for at times it can be the distinguishing characteristic. However, periods and commas are

fragile. They wear quickly, break off, or fail to imprint, thus there may be some variations from what I report.

Dates of use: Either one or two dates are given. They are the extremes of the range of dates that I have recorded. If only a single example has been seen, then it is given as the end date. For most of the markings I feel certain that there are in collections, markings with dates that are either earlier or later than the ones listed.

Line 2 - Here I will use some codes. Hopefully they are simple and easily understood and remembered

Shape: A two letter code that describes the simple geometric shape of the postal marking.

AC - Arcuate OC - Octagonal

CI - Circular OV - Oval

IR - Irregular, (non-geometric) RC - Rectangular

MS - Manuscript SL - Straightline (rimless)

Framing: A three character code (two numbers and a letter) that describes the number, the position, and the character of the lines that frame the marking.

1st character - The number of exterior frame lines

2nd character - The number of interior frame lines

3rd character - the nature of the outermost frame line

C - Cogged H - Heavy, (thick)

D - Dashed or dotted P - Plain, (thin)

F - Fancy R - Rimless (no exterior frame)

T - Toothed

By far the most commonly encountered combination of these codes will be "CI 10P" - A circular marking with one plain outer frame line and no inner frame line.

Size: The diameter, or width by height of the marking. A size will be given for each frame line, separated by "/". For straightline, irregular, and rimless markings. the extreme dimensions will be reported. Measurements are to the nearest half millimeter. For an obviously distorted circular marking, an average diameter will be reported.

Type of Device: A four or five character abbreviation to describe the type of device used to create the postal marking.

Aux - Auxiliary, instructional handstamps of many types

Doane - Doane style 4-bar postmarks

Dplx - Duplex (usually with an oval, grid killer)

Flag - Machine Flag cancels

Hstp - Handstamp

Mach - Machine

Mscp - Manuscript

Pict - Pictorial postmarks of recent years

Rolr - Continuous, roller applied postmark

4bars - 4-bar handstamps of various types

Killers and Comments: A narrative description of the killer(s) used with the marking, and other comments about the marking.
The descriptions, combined with the tracings, should make it possible to identify examples of each reported marking.

**CONCLUSION TO THE INTRODUCTION**

This introduction has required considerable space, hopefully it will not have to be frequently repeated. I am certain that each and every one of you possess markings from towns for which none have been reported, additional markings to those listed, or earlier and later dates. PLEASE SEND ME PHOTOCOPIES OF ANY THAT YOU MAY HAVE!!! I would also appreciate any additional historical data or any suggestions and comments you might have for this project.

Eventually the sections will be revised to reflect additions and hopefully re-published as a series of pamphlets. The greater purpose is to record this information and to make it available to the collector and to other interested parties. At some point in time, the collected data, photocopies, maps, and other notes will be placed in the Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library, in Denver.