

## WASHINGTON MAIL ROUTES IN 1857

From the annual report of the Postmaster General in 1857 it is learned that there were then in Washington Territory five mail routes. In addition to these were routes that connected the Territory with other Territories and States, but not many others, as in those days there were few people, few postoffices and few letters and papers to be carried.

The first of the routes was from Olympia to Whatcom—the only route on Puget Sound. The contract was let to James M. Hunt and John H. Scranton, for four years, at \$22,400 per annum, mails to be carried once a week. They were to leave Olympia at 4 p. m. on Friday, arrive at Whatcom at 4 p. m. on Monday; leave Whatcom at 9 a. m. on Tuesday, and arrive at Olympia at 9 a. m. on Friday. Though not mentioned in the report the writer knows that the ports of call included Steilacoom, Seattle, Port Madison, Port Gamble, Port Ludlow, Port Townsend, Dungeness, Victoria and Penn's Cove on Whidby Island. Other places on or near the route, as Seabeck, Port Orchard and Mukilteo, were unsupplied, and people in those places were obliged to use the places on the route for their mail gettings and sendings. Three days were allowed for the making of the trip each way, and the schedule of calls at the ports was open and loose. This enabled the contractors to pick up good money on the side, in the way of special services to ships needing towage, occasional excursions, etc. Most of the time the mail was carried on the Constitution, a steam propeller that later became a barkentine and was put in the codfishery and lumber trades. Other boats employed were the Sea Bird, soon lost in British Columbia waters; the Wilson G. Hunt, too large and expensive a boat for those days; the Julia, a large stern-wheeler, built at Port Ludlow, but afterwards taken to Columbia River, and the Eliza Anderson, built on the Columbia River in 1859, but brought to the Sound for Hunt & Scranton. At one time in 1858, by the absence in California of the Constitution for repairs, there was no steamer of any kind on the Sound, a condition of affairs that never later prevailed. In 1862, however, owing to failure of the contractor to supply a steamer, the Sound mails were carried on sail boats, a service very unsatisfactory to the people, the Eliza Anderson and other steamers being on the Sound, but then in opposition to the contractor and his bondsmen. The contractor, George Parkinson, abandoned the job, and removed to Victoria, leaving the service to his principal bondsman, Philip Keach, of Steilacoom.

For a short term—Sept. 1, 1857, to June 30, 1858—contract was made with Fred A. Clarke to carry the mail between Cowlitz Landing and Boisfort Prairie, fifteen miles and back once in two weeks, for \$300, or \$30 a month. Clarke was long a leading citizen of the Territory, a Legislator, and in his last years a citizen of Pierce county, where his widow still resides. He was then a Lewis Countian, and was prominent in the effort to secure the Territorial University for that locality, an effort that well nigh succeeded.

From Oak Point, on Columbia River, to Grand Mound, 50 miles, contract was made with D. W. Bush for ten months at \$90 per month. Mail was to be carried once in every two weeks, leaving Oak Point every other Monday at 6 a. m., and leaving Grand Mound every other Friday at 6 a. m. Thirty-five hours were allowed for making the trip each way.

From Olympia to Glenn Prairie was the fourth route, 40 miles, once in two weeks. Though a petty service, a lot of prominent men were after the contract, there being more bidders than for the other four routes combined, including William Pumphrey, Levi Shelton, John Shelton, Thornton F. McElroy, Thomas B. Hicks, Arch McMillan and T. F. McElroy and Edward Furste. The bids ranged from \$300 to \$800. The McElroy & Furste of \$300 was accepted, but for some reason the contract was not let.

From Pacific City to Olympia, once in two weeks was the last of the proposed services. The only bid was that of Sidney S. Ford, commonly known as Judge Ford, a Lewis County resident of the 1840's. He offered to carry the mail with horses and boats for \$8,500 per annum. That seemed like a lot of money for a small service in a far-off, sparsely-settled territory, and the authorities in Washington City refused to let the contract. Pacific City was on the maps before Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma and hundreds of other places in the State of Washington. It has been off the maps now for many years.

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