

OREGON TERRITORY MAIL

August 14, 1847 TO February 14, 1859

Postal Covers

Purpose: This Exhibit shows how mail was routed through Post Offices during the territorial period of Oregon from 1847 to 1859. The Oregon Territory was created on August 14, 1847, and included what would become the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, as well as parts of Montana and Wyoming. The first post offices were at Astoria and Oregon City and were authorized by the United States Government in 1847, but the earliest known mail dates from 1848. Additional post offices were established in 1849 at Portland and Salem. By the end of February 1853 there were 174 post offices, but on March 2, 1853 the northern portion of the Territory (north of the Columbia River) became Washington Territory which subtracted 14 post offices. Just before Oregon achieved statehood on February 14, 1859, there were 129 post offices in the Oregon Territory.

Scope: This exhibit is arranged in chronological order by the opening date of the post office. The current county location is shown in parenthesis. Several post offices, are shown where the post offices were established prior to the formation of the Washington Territory in 1853. It is not always possible to represent these post offices with pre-1853 covers.

Of the 174 post offices formed in the Oregon Territory, 50 are represented here. No material has been discovered from 78 of the post offices.

Harder to acquire
items framed in red

Towns formed in Oregon Territory,
and became part of Washington
Territory in 1853.

Abbreviations
USMSC – US Mail Steamship Co.
PMSS – Pacific Mail Steamship Co.

POSTAL RATES

Until June 30, 1851

Transcontinental letter rate ½ oz. 40 cents
West-coast rate ½ oz. 12 ½ cents
Unsealed circulars to 1 oz. 3 cents

July 1, 1851 – March 30, 1855

Transcontinental rate prepaid ½ oz. 6 cents
Transcontinental rate unpaid ½ oz. 10 cents
West – coast rate prepaid ½ oz. 3 cents
West – coast rate unpaid ½ oz. 5 cents

September 30, 1852

Unsealed circulars, prepaid up to 3 oz. 1 cent
Unsealed circulars, unpaid up to 3 oz. 3 cents

April 1, 1855 to Statehood

(All Mail Prepaid)
Transcontinental rate ½ oz. 10 cents
West – coast rate ½ oz. 3 cents