

The Revival Of The Pony Express

At a regular meeting of the newly formed Arrowhead Stamp Club of San Bernardino, California, in July of this year, the members were assembled to discuss several important projects. As the club had only been formed a month previous to this all-important gathering, they were anxious to do something original—something that would create a lasting impression upon older and maturer groups in the philatelic world. The stage for their opportunity had been set. San Bernardino was planning a major celebration to take place on October 9th to 12th of that year—an event in which the whole town would don pioneer garb and celebrate the founding of the city by Mormon settlers in 1853.

When any historic event is held in one's own community, the first



Pony express rider Halstead handing the mail-pouch to Assistant Postmaster Fred Carr after completing the last lap in record time.

thought of local stamp enthusiasts is to issue a special cachet to commemorate the occasion. The San Bernardino group was no exception. A committee composed of Fredric Holladay, Pres.; Oliver Laughead, Secy.-treas., and Charles R. Osborn was appointed to confer with local postal officials as to the proper procedure in such matters.

While talking with Postmaster Kenneth A. Dyal several unusual ideas were brought forth. The club president asked if it would be possible to receive permission from United States Postal Officials to carry the mail across the nearby mountain chain into San Bernardino by pony express. Postmaster Dyal was enthusiastic with the idea and immediately wrote to Washington for permission to re-create the colorful pony express ride for one mail delivery on October 9, 1947. Through his and Superintendent of Mails R. E. Barnette's efforts, official permission was secured and plans were laid for the momentous occasion.

A cachet was then designed by Mr. Holladay and sponsored by the San



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By
Fredric
Holladay
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Illustrated by the Author

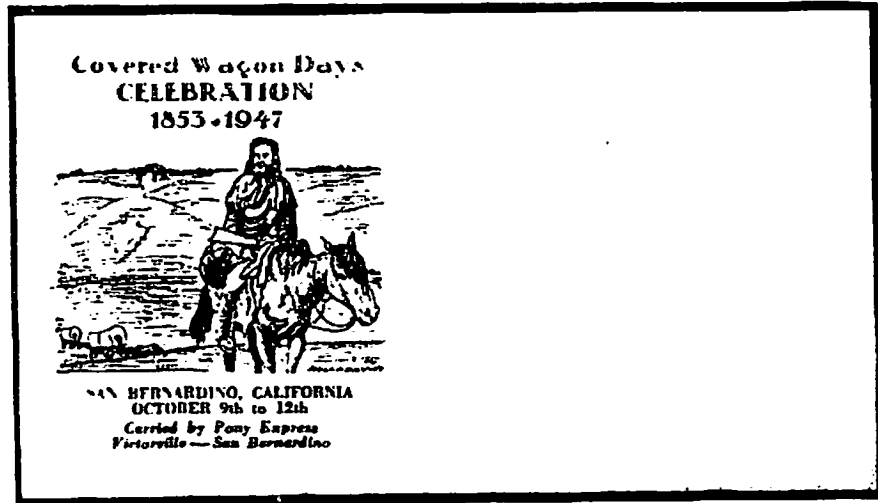
Bernardino Chamber of Commerce and Covered Wagon Days, Incorporated. 7,500 envelopes were issued bearing this special cachet. Local merchants were contacted; given supplies of the envelope and publicity was released to all nearby radio stations and newspapers informing the public that they could obtain their covers from these local distributors. At first, some of the local townspeople were cool to the tremendous publicity value of the plan, but even they were surprised when the entire stock of 7,500 covers were disposed of in a single day! Members of the committee were swamped with additional requests for more envelopes but due to the shortness of time left before the event it was impossible for the club to have more printed. However, the postmaster at Salt Lake City, Utah, to whom the covers would be eventually mailed, backstamped and then dispatched to Victorville, Calif. (the town chosen for the starting point) had been furnished with a special rubber stamp cachet. All those not able to obtain the club cachet were advised to send him plain envelopes which he would stamp with the cachet for the ride.

Two separate riding groups were selected to carry the mail pony express style. Members of the Victor Valley Stockman's Assn. from Victorville were to carry the mail from its starting point to a spot almost halfway through Cajon Pass to San Bernardino, where members of the Perris Hill Riding Club would take over and carry the mail to its final destination.

Secretary Laughead, of the Arrowhead Stamp Club, then hit the proverbial jackpot when he contacted *Life* magazine and succeeded in getting them to cover the ride. Other high publicity marks were reached through broadcasts over all the local radio stations. Station KFXM, on the Mutual Broadcasting System, carried two personal interview broadcasts with President Holladay and members of the Perris Hill Riding Club.

On the evening of October 8th, Ralph Crane, one of *Life's* outstanding photographers and Oliver Allen, top-notch writer of the same publication, arrived in town. They had not been previously informed that the ride was to take place in the early hours of the next morning and being unfamiliar with the route to be taken, were in a quandary as to how they would cover the mail pouch switches from one horse and rider to another. President Holladay offered to accompany them and point out the change-over points and general route and the three of them left for Victorville at the early hour of 12:30 A. M. on October 9th.

The actual ride turned out to be rougher and more hazardous than was expected. Cajon Pass is some 40 miles in length and rises from a
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Cachet in blue on front of cover is official Arrowhead Stamp Club cachet—used on most of covers emanating from San Bernardino. . . . Rubber stamp impression on back of cover was used by Salt Lake City, Utah Postmaster on plain covers in that city.