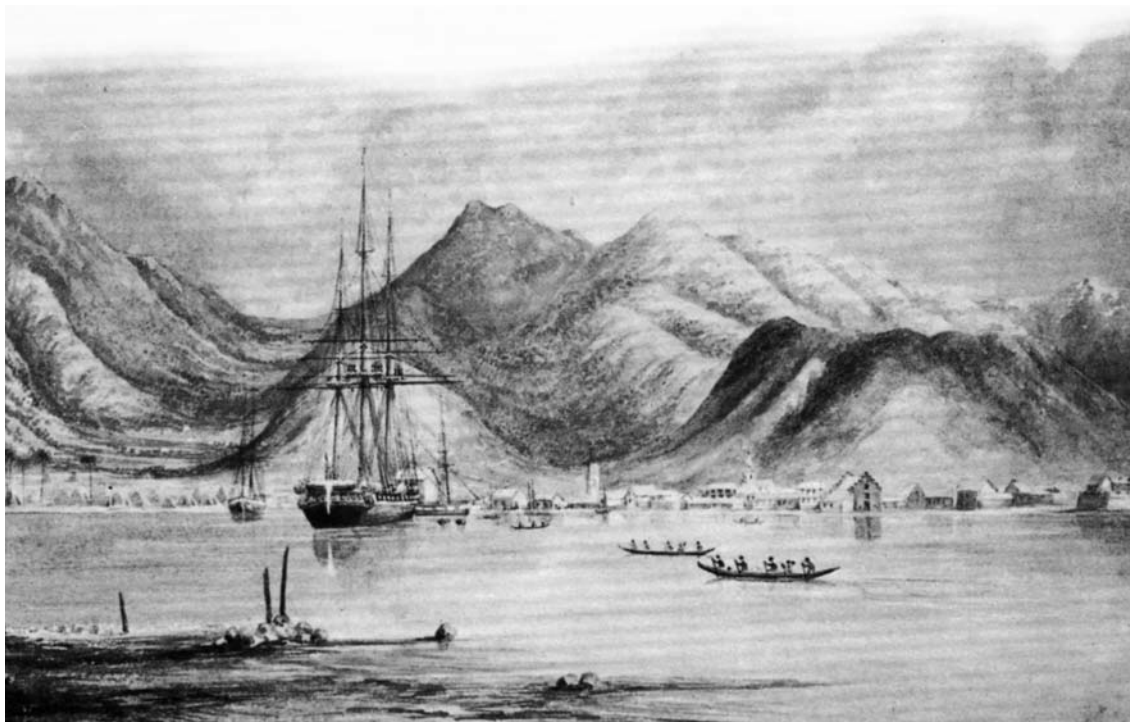


### **Hawaiian Postal History from Steven C. Walske's “Heart of the West” Grand Prix Award Winning Exhibit**

The Steven C. Walske collection of San Francisco postal history—The Heart of the West—is a comprehensive study and Grand Prix award winning exhibit. The collection and exhibit comprise material and Steve’s original research on all of the postal routes involving the port city of San Francisco, beginning in March 1849 with the start of formal postal operations and ending in June 1869, soon after completion of the transcontinental railroad. Included in this sweeping historical study are covers to and from Hawaii.

Steve has decided to change his focus to the mail that crossed the American continent, dating back to the earliest recorded efforts to transmit mail to and from explorers and fur traders in the West. In the process of redefining his scope, mail that originated from Hawaii and other foreign countries has been excluded.

This sale of just 44 lots is one of the most important auctions of Hawaiian postal history ever held, with no less than six Missionary covers, including three mixed frankings, one of which is the famous and unique Dawson cover bearing the 2¢ and 5¢ Missionaries.



## Introduction to Hawaiian Postal History

The publication of Fred Gregory's three-volume *Hawaii Foreign Mail to 1870* has greatly advanced our knowledge of Hawaiian postal history, and Gregory's classification of operational and rate periods replaces the previous Meyer-Harris classification. The Walske collection is arranged according to the Treaty Periods defined by Gregory, which are summarized in this introduction. More detailed information will be found in the book, and we strongly recommend that collectors purchase the three-volume set for their libraries.

### *Pre-Postal Period—Prior to November 2, 1850*

Until the establishment of regular mail service in 1850, letters to and from Hawaii were handled privately and entrusted to ship captains at the ports of departure. The mail routes followed maritime channels, and the postage charged, if any, was paid in accordance with each sovereign country's postal laws. Ship captains received a customary fee of 2¢ per letter. The Hawaiian Organic Act of 1846 contained a provision for postage, but it was apparently never implemented.

### *First Treaty Period—November 2, 1850, to June 30, 1851*

#### *November 2 to December 20, 1850—Polynesian Letter Bag Mail*

The final version of the Hawaii-United States 1850 Treaty of Friendship was signed on December 20, 1849, and formally ratified on August 24, 1850. It included a provision for mail exchange between the two countries in Article 15. While diplomats worked out the procedural arrangements, responsibility on the islands for the mails between Hawaii and San Francisco was transferred from customs collectors to Henry M. Whitney, the editorial assistant at the government newspaper, *The Polynesian*. Starting with the first advertisement on November 2, 1850, *The Polynesian* office became the collection point for mail between Hawaii and San Francisco. Eight sailings with *The Polynesian* "letter bag" mail on board were made from November 6 to December 14, 1850. There is no evidence that Hawaiian postage was paid on this mail. Postmaster Whitney sent some letters in packages to avoid the 2¢ fee per ship letter, and they were mailed at San Francisco as regular domestic mail.

#### *December 21, 1850, to June 30, 1851*

The Hawaiian Royal Decree of December 20, 1850, established the first post office in Honolulu with Henry M. Whitney as postmaster, effective December 21. The following chart shows the Hawaiian and U.S. postage rates during the First Treaty Period. Examples of mail from this brief six-month period are very rare.

**UNITED STATES AND HAWAII POSTAGE AND SHIP FEES—DECEMBER 21, 1850, TO JUNE 30, 1851**

Destination		Hawaii Postage per ½ ounce	U.S. Postage per ½ ounce	U.S. Ship Fee per letter	Total Postage
<b>To the U.S. East Coast via SF and Panama</b>	HAWAII & U.S. PREPAID	10¢ Prepaid	40¢ Prepaid	[2¢] Absorbed by Hawaii	50¢
	HAWAII PREPAID U.S. COLLECT	10¢ Prepaid	40¢ Collect	2¢ Collect	52¢
<b>To San Francisco</b> HAWAII PREPAID/U.S. COLLECT		10¢ Prepaid	—	6¢ Collect	16¢
<b>To Inland West Coast*</b> HAWAII PREPAID/U.S. OPTIONAL		10¢ Prepaid	12½¢ Prepaid/Collect	2¢ Prepaid/Collect	24½¢
<b>To Hawaii from U.S. East Coast via Panama and San Francisco</b> HAWAII COLLECT/U.S. PREPAID		10¢ Collect	40¢ Prepaid	[2¢] Absorbed by Hawaii	50¢
* No covers addressed to inland West Coast destinations from Hawaii are recorded during this period					

Chart adapted from Gregory *Hawaii Foreign Mail to 1870*, Volume I (p. 216)

**Second Treaty Period—July 1, 1851, to May 16, 1855**

Effective July 1, 1851, the U.S. domestic letter rate was reduced to 3¢ prepaid per half-ounce for distances under 3,000 miles (5¢ collect) and 6¢ prepaid over 3,000 miles (10¢ collect). The distance for the San Francisco-Panama-New York route was well over the 3,000-mile limit. Early in the Second Treaty Period, there was also a change in the Hawaiian postage rates and in how ship fees were collected. The two charts below show the July 1 to September 12, 1851, rates and the September 13, 1851, to May 16, 1855, rates.

**UNITED STATES AND HAWAII POSTAGE AND SHIP FEES—JULY 1, 1851, TO SEPTEMBER 12, 1851**

Destination		Hawaii Postage per ½ ounce	U.S. Ship Fee per letter	U.S. Postage per ½ ounce	Total
<b>To the U.S. over 3,000 mi. via SF and Panama</b>	HAWAII & U.S. PREPAID	10¢ Prepaid	[2¢] Absorbed by Hawaii	6¢ Prepaid	16¢
	HAWAII PREPAID U.S. COLLECT	10¢ Prepaid	2¢ Collect	10¢ Collect	22¢
<b>To San Francisco</b>		10¢ Prepaid	6¢ Collect*	—	16¢
<b>To the U.S. Inland under 3,000 mi. via SF and Panama</b>	HAWAII & U.S. PREPAID*	10¢ Prepaid	2¢ Prepaid	3¢ Prepaid	15¢
	HAWAII PREPAID U.S. COLLECT	10¢ Prepaid	2¢ Collect	5¢ Collect	17¢
<b>To Hawaii from U.S. over 3,000 mi. via Panama and San Francisco</b>		10¢ Collect	[2¢] Absorbed by Hawaii	6¢ Prepaid**	16¢
<b>To Hawaii from U.S. under 3000 mi. via Panama and San Francisco</b>		10¢ Collect	[2¢] Absorbed by Hawaii	3¢ Prepaid**	13¢

\* Although prepaid rates are listed, Gregory reports that no prepaid letters from Hawaii are recorded during this period  
 \*\* Mail from the U.S. to Hawaii had to be prepaid to San Francisco

**UNITED STATES AND HAWAII POSTAGE AND SHIP FEES—SEPTEMBER 13, 1851, TO MAY 16, 1855**

Destination		Hawaii Postage per ½ ounce	U.S. Ship Fee per letter	U.S. Postage per ½ ounce	Total
<b>To the U.S. over 3,000 mi. via SF and Panama</b>	HAWAII & U.S. PREPAID*	5¢ Prepaid	2¢ Prepaid	6¢ Prepaid	13¢*
	HAWAII PREPAID U.S. COLLECT	5¢ Prepaid	2¢ Collect	10¢ Collect	17¢
<b>To San Francisco</b>		5¢ Prepaid	6¢ Collect	—	11¢
<b>To the U.S. Inland under 3,000 mi. via SF and Panama</b>	HAWAII & U.S. PREPAID*	5¢ Prepaid	2¢ Prepaid	3¢ Prepaid	10¢
	HAWAII PREPAID U.S. COLLECT	5¢ Prepaid	2¢ Collect	5¢ Collect	12¢
<b>To Hawaii from U.S. over 3000 mi. via Panama and San Francisco</b>		5¢ Collect	[2¢] Absorbed by Hawaii	6¢ Prepaid**	11¢
<b>To Hawaii from U.S. under 3000 mi. via Panama and San Francisco</b>		5¢ Collect	[2¢] Absorbed by Hawaii	3¢ Prepaid**	8¢
<b>To/from other foreign ports</b>		5¢ Prepaid/Collect	—	—	—

\*This 13¢ prepaid rate from Hawaii to the U.S. was the basis for the 13¢ Missionary and 13¢ Kamehameha III stamps  
 \*\* Mail from the U.S. to Hawaii had to be prepaid to San Francisco

Charts adapted from Gregory *Hawaii Foreign Mail to 1870*, Volume I (pp. 236 and 239)

### ***Third Treaty Period—May 16, 1855, to August 30, 1863***

The United States 1855 rate changes became effective on April 1, but the news did not reach Honolulu until May 16 with the arrival of the *Frances Palmer*. The mail sent from Honolulu on May 17, which arrived in San Francisco on June 6, was the first to be rated according to the new law.



Henry Martyn Whitney (1824-1904)  
Hawaii's First Postmaster

The 1855 law eliminated collect rates for domestic mail and established the 3¢ under-3,000 miles and 10¢ over-3,000 miles rates. However, mail from foreign countries (Hawaii among them) was allowed to be transmitted without prepayment. The net effect of this change on Hawaii-U.S. mail to and from the East Coast was to raise the prepaid U.S. postage 4¢, from 6¢ to 10¢, and to make the prepaid and collect rates the same for Hawaiian correspondents (U.S. correspondents had to prepay postage). Therefore, a letter from Hawaii that previously needed 13¢ prepayment—5¢ Hawaii, 6¢ U.S. and 2¢ ship letter fee—now required 17¢ to be fully prepaid. The same letter could be sent collect for 17¢. This change had the immediate effect of rendering the 13¢ Missionary and Kamehameha III stamps insufficient for their original purpose.

On April 1, 1861, the distance provision in the U.S. was modified to define the 10¢ rate as applicable to mail crossing the Rocky Mountains. A letter from Hawaii to any destination east of the Rocky Mountains required 10¢ postage (including mail sent via Panama). If addressed to an inland destination (excluding the port of San Francisco), the U.S. postage was 3¢. The 2¢ ship letter fee was

added to the postage. Mail to San Francisco was subject to a 6¢ ship letter rate until March 31, 1861, and 5¢ from April 1 to August 30, 1863.

All inbound mail to Hawaii was subject to the 5¢ Hawaiian postage charge. Up to November 4, 1856, the 2¢ ship letter fee on inbound mail was absorbed by Hawaii. Thereafter, it was added to the 5¢ postage.

The U.S. and Hawaii outbound and inbound rates during the Third Treaty Period are summarized in charts in the Gregory book (Volume II, pages 4-5).

### ***Fourth Treaty Period—August 30, 1863, to June 30, 1870***

The Fourth Treaty Period starts on August 30, 1863, when the bark *Comet* arrived in Honolulu with confirmation of the changes in U.S. domestic rates per the Act of March 3, 1863 (effective July 1). The first prepaid letters with the new rates were postmarked at Honolulu on September 9, 1863, in preparation for the return trip of the *Comet*.

The seven-year Fourth Treaty Period is exceedingly complex, mainly due to the evolving interpretation of rates by the postmasters in San Francisco and Honolulu. It ends on June 30, 1870, when a Postal Convention between the U.S. and Hawaii took effect and replaced the provisions of the 1850 Treaty of Friendship. The Gregory books divides this period into six sub-periods (Volume II, pages 140-142). The last, starting in September 1867, coincides with the inauguration of contract steamship mail service and application of the 10¢ uniform contract steamship mail rate.