AUTHOR’S PREFACE

Ohioan John Milton Rhodes was a visionary individual who journeyed to California at the beginning of the Gold Rush, not to pan for or to dig the precious metal, but to found a bank which invariably came to be linked to the fruits of the miners who toiled to extract the riches from the region known as the "Northwestern Mines."

While he never personally packed treasure-laden mules from the mines to the base towns, or distributed letters from home to anxious miners in "the diggins," John M. Rhodes' pioneer banking venture was the catalyst which eventually drew two of his brothers, James Mason Rhodes and George Washington Rhodes, as well as his uncle, Jesse Rhodes, to California. James or Uncle Jesse became the principals in the successive enterprises known as: 1) Rhodes & Lusk's Express; 2) Jas. M. Rhodes' Express / Rhodes & Co.'s Express; 3) Rhodes & Whitney's Express; and finally, 4) (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express.

In the end, a cascade of events which, had they been compressed into a time-span of shorter duration could be termed "a perfect storm," overtook John M. Rhodes and his kinsmen, resulting in the demise of the last in the chain of the Rhodes Expresses, and the failure of the banking house which had nurtured them from their inception. Decades later, John recollected that:

"My seven years experience in the banking business in Sacramento was attended by several serious reverses by fire, flood, robbery, and steamboat explosions ... It was therefore not without cause that I began to cast about me for some business less hazardous ..." (1)

The story of John M. Rhodes and his early endeavors in the Golden State is synonymous with that of the Rhodes Expresses - it is a story worth the telling. (2)

James Blaine
PRELUDE

I could relate the circumstances of John M. Rhodes' birth, but his own version of the event as written in his 78th year reflects a humble reverence and a subtle mirth which brought a smile to my face:

"The 12th day of February A. D. 1817 was a day of unusual commotion in a certain log cabin in or near the village of Middlebury, County of Portage, & State of Ohio - on that day my mother, who is in heaven if there is a heaven, gave birth to her first child and I was that child." (3)

The family grew to seven children: John M.; William H.; James M.; Eliza; Emily; George W.; and Mary. Four of John's siblings would one day join him in California, as would his parents, Henry and Esther Rhodes.

John's education in the village schools of Middlebury and at the Academy of Tallmadge Center ended at age fifteen, after which he clerked in his father's store in Canal Fulton, Ohio. Tiring of shopkeeping, Henry Rhodes purchased a farm and grist mill in Massillon, and John labored with his father to make the effort a success. It was not long before it was determined that his innate abilities lay elsewhere, and "more congenial work was found with his uncle, Jesse Rhodes, a business man in Massillon," and John was employed as a clerk and bookkeeper in his uncle's establishment for the next three years. (4)

By observing the methods of the senior clerk in his uncle's business, John honed his accounting and bookkeeping skills, and in 1835, at age eighteen, he moved to New York City to take a position his uncle had secured for him in a large wholesale dry goods firm. In 1842, he resigned his employment and returned to Ohio where he engaged in a produce and mercantile business in Canal Fulton in partnership with his brother, James Rhodes.

John relocated to Mansfield, Ohio in 1844, and a year-and-a-half later he "became acquainted with Miss Mary J. Christmas." On Oct 12, 1846, after "a few pledges from each of us" were uttered before a clergyman in the parlor of a private residence, John and Mary were pronounced man and wife. Nearly fifty years thereafter, the aged bridegroom noted, "I may have made many blunders in the course of my life, but if I have, the act on the 12th day of October 1846 was not one of them." (5)

About the year 1847, Rhodes was chosen as cashier of the Farmer's Bank of Mansfield, which position he held when the first news of the discovery of gold in California reached the Eastern states.

Resisting the initial impulse to hastily join the pell-mell rush for riches, it was not until May of 1850 that John M. Rhodes and fellow entrepreneur Stephen B. Sturges started for California with the specific intent of establishing a bank in the rapidly evolving river-front town of Sacramento. The third partner in the projected concern, James Purdy, president of the Farmer's Bank of Mansfield, remained behind in Ohio.

Rhodes and Sturges traveled to California by sea, taking the Panama route, the last leg of which brought them to San Francisco on the steamer California, which anchored in the harbor of the burgeoning port city on Jun 23, 1850. Proceeding to Sacramento on the evening of the 24th, and reaching their destination the next morning, John later recounted, "As soon after our arrival as we could find a suitable location, we commenced business under the firm name of 'Rhodes, Sturges & Co.'" (6)

Their "Sacramento City Bank" was initially housed in a multi-tenanted, crudely constructed, two-story wooden building. Landlord and real estate speculator W. M. Carpenter exacted a monthly rent of two hundred dollars for the decidedly spartan quarters, a large room 16 feet by 50 feet in dimension, which the budding financial magnates had to partition themselves before buying and installing their own fixtures and office furnishings.

In the first letter from Sacramento which he wrote to partner James Purdy in Mansfield, Ohio, Rhodes informed him of their immediate prospects in light of the existing competition:
There are several establishments of the kind [Banking Houses in Sacramento], but I have no fear of these being in our way ... Little has been done by the merchants here, in the way of depositing with Exchange & Banking houses, for the reason (as some of the merchants inform me) that they do not consider them exactly the 'straight brand'.” (7)

A half-page ad denoting their neophyte institution at address, "No 53 Second street ... a few doors north of the Post Office," appeared in the first Sacramento City Directory of date Jan 1, 1851. (Figure 3)

The firm had hardly begun accepting deposits, making loans, selling exchanges, and purchasing gold dust when Sacramento was overwhelmed by the cholera epidemic of 1850. As the Grim Reaper cut a swath through the town's inhabitants, Stephen B. Sturges left Sacramento for the Sandwich Islands, returning only after the scourge had run its course. While it was estimated that upwards of
eighty percent of Sacramento's population emulated Sturges' temporary flight to healthier climes, Rhodes had no choice but to linger in the pestilential environs to conduct the drastically curtailed affairs of the firm. Fortunately, he survived the epidemic unscathed.

In February of 1851, Rhodes left the management of the bank in the capable hands of Sturges, and he returned to Middlebury, Ohio to bring his wife and two children to California. This was the last time that he would set foot in the state of his birth, although he would live a further fifty-seven years. The family departed Ohio in May, arriving in San Francisco on the steamship *Oregon* on Jun 19, 1851. A few weeks later, Stephen B. Sturges elected to dissociate himself from the firm of Rhodes, Sturges & Co., and he permanently abandoned California and returned to Ohio in response to the need to prioritize his personal interests there.

The firm of Rhodes, Sturges & Co. was supplanted by that of Rhodes, Purdy & McNulty when William McNulty, another California immigrant from the Buckeye State, replaced Stephen B. Sturges as the junior member of the Sacramento City Bank's triumvirate. The change in the firm's composition was soon after attended by a change in location when a lot was purchased at the corner of Second and K streets upon which a "substantial two-story brick building was erected." This building would be severely damaged in the Sacramento fire of Nov 2, 1852, and after being rebuilt, would incur further damage in the "Great Flood" the following December, setbacks which led to the dissolution of the Rhodes, Purdy & McNulty partnership. For now, though, having gained his foothold in El Dorado, John M. Rhodes was ideally situated to champion the goals of his family members when they arrived to likewise avail themselves of California's golden opportunities.

Figure 4. Expressman Lewis Wilson Taylor picked up this folded letter (of date Apr 2, 1851) at Leonard's Ranch, affixed his manuscript frank reading "Taylors Express / Leonards Ranch / April 12," and carried it to Sacramento City, where he deposited it in the U. S. Post Office for delivery to New York State. The site of Leonard's Ranch was integral with the developing town of Tehama, about which is written, "The Spring of 1850 found the town of Tehama without a rival in this section of the State. It boasted a hotel of no inferior order. I believe a man by the name of Leonard was the first hotel-keeper in the then embryo city, which was kept in the old adobe erected by [Robert H.] Thomas in 1846." The day after this letter received its "Apr 17" postmark, an article in the Apr 18, 1851 issue of the *Sacramento Union* mentioned that, "Mr. C. [Curtis] camped at Leonard's Ranch..." during the course of his journey from Shasta to Sacramento. After about one year of an apparent contiguous existence, the town of "Tehama" enveloped the adobe way station known as "Leonard's Ranch," and further references to Leonard's Ranch ceased altogether during the Spring of 1851. The Leonard's Ranch cover is one of two surviving covers from the same trip which expressman Taylor consigned to the Sacramento City Post Office on the downward leg of his route. Both covers received "Sacramento City" postmarks of date "Apr 17 [1851]." The second cover of the two likewise bears a manuscript express mark, that one reading, "Taylors Express / Shasty [Shasta] / April 10 [1851]."
1) RHODES & LUSK'S EXPRESS

Aspiring contingents of the Rhodes clan consisting of John's brothers, James and George, and his uncle, Jesse Rhodes, arrived in California between November of 1851 and January of 1853. John referred to the resultant genesis of the Rhodes Expresses in his reminiscences when he wrote:

"About the year 1852, my brother, James, came to California, and with my assistance established a banking and express office in Shasta, with branch offices at Weaverville, Trinity County, Wyreka [original spelling of "Yreka"], Siskiyou County, & Jacksonville, Oregon ... " (8)

Prior to the Spring of 1852, expressman Lewis Wilson Taylor (of Taylor's Express) was the primary conduit for mail between most of the remote mining camps of the far north and the base town of Sacramento. The many letters collected by Taylor along his lengthy route were mainly deposited in the Sacramento Post Office, from which he also extracted incoming letters addressed to those whose names were recorded on his express lists (Figure 4, prior page). Taylor quit the business in April of 1852, just as the influx of competing express companies, including the redoubtable Adams & Co.'s Express, moved into the fertile field and opened offices in Shasta. The town rapidly grew into the main commercial hub and distribution center for the Northwestern Mines.

Quite possibly the first disclosure of an impending Rhodes presence in Shasta surfaced in the Sacramento Union of date Jan 29, 1852. Correspondent "Old Grizzly" directed a letter headed "Shasta, January 17, 1852" to "Messrs. Editors," and its eclectic contents included the observation:

"I notice a huge rusty old iron safe in front of one of our stores; upon enquiry I find that your popular bankers, Messrs. Rhodes, Purdy & McNulty, intend using said uncouth looking monster as a depository of a branch of theirs, which they intend establishing in our town ... "

The Mar 20, 1852 issue of the Shasta Courier confirmed that a "Sacramento City Branch Bank" office had indeed opened " ... in the Post Office building ... J. [James] M. Rhodes, Agent (Figure 5)."

The Mar 20, 1852 issue of the Shasta Courier confirmed that a "Sacramento City Branch Bank" office had indeed opened " ... in the Post Office building ... J. [James] M. Rhodes, Agent (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Ad announcing the opening of the Shasta branch of the Sacramento City Bank, from the Vol 1 No 2 issue of the Shasta Courier of Mar 20, 1852. Per the "m13tf" notation in the bottom, right corner of the ad, we know that the ad first appeared in the Vol 1 No 1 issue of the Courier published Mar 13, 1852 (of which there are no surviving copies).

Figure 6. This Rhodes & Lusk's Express ad is the earliest ad of that express located by the author. It ran in the Sacramento Union from Apr 17, 1852 through Sep 2, 1852. It was replaced on Sep 3, 1852 by an ad (Figure 8) which proclaimed that Rhodes & Lusk's Express was now "connecting at Sacramento with Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Daily Express to San Francisco, and semi-monthly to the Atlantic States and Europe."
It is presently unknown whether the first of the Rhodes Expresses commenced its operations with the advent of the bank, for it wasn't until Apr 17, 1852 that the inaugural advertisement of Rhodes & Lusk's Express was published in the *Sacramento Union* of that date (Figure 6, prior page). A week later, the first of the Rhodes & Lusks ads published in the *Shasta Courier* appeared in the issue of Apr 24, 1852. (Figure 7) (9)

Moving aggressively, the novice expressmen set the parameters of their route which extended from San Francisco in the South, to Jacksonville, Oregon Territory in the North. Located at points between were the California offices at Sacramento, Colusa, Shasta City, Weaverville, and Shasta Butte City (name changed to "Yreka" in the Spring of 1852). Ancillary offices were quickly added, but those situated at Shasta, Weaverville, Yreka, and Jacksonville became the bastions of Rhodes & Lusk's Express and retained their significance throughout the succession of the various Rhodes Expresses which followed.

After Wells, Fargo & Co. entered the fray and opened their San Francisco and Sacramento offices in July of 1852, partners Rhodes and Lusk realized that connecting with the future behemoth at Sacramento would spare them the considerable time and expense of running to and from San Francisco on their own. On Sep 3, 1852, their ad in the *Sacramento Union* (Figure 8) affirmed that their express now connected with Wells, Fargo & Co. at Sacramento, which city replaced San Francisco as the southern terminus of Rhodes & Lusk's Express.

Figure 7. This ad, the first of many Rhodes & Lusk's Express ads published in the *Shasta Courier*, emerged in the issue of Apr 24, 1852.

Figure 8. This Rhodes & Lusk's ad from the *Sacramento Union* of date Sep 3, 1852, superseded the inaugural ad of that express (Figure 6). Lines six through nine of the new ad denoted that Rhodes & Lusk's Express now connected with Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Express at Sacramento.

It is doubtful that James Rhodes ever embarked in the express business as a sole proprietor before teaming up with Hiram Lusk (no evidence to the contrary having come to light). Lusk journeyed to the gold fields from his home in Western New York State (exactly when is not known), and as only his wife and two children are listed in the 1850 New York census, he presumably reached California two years or so before the launch of Rhodes & Lusk's Express.
Figure 9. This cover, courtesy of Ken Stach, is a conjunctive usage carried by both Gregory's Express, and Rhodes & Lusk's Express. Addressed to "A. [Alexander] M. [Madison] Rosborough Esq. / Weaverville / Trinity Co. / Cal.," the cover's point of origin was San Francisco, where the "Gregory's / Express Office / San Francisco" handstamp was applied. Gregory's Express then conveyed the letter to Shasta, where it was turned over to Rhodes & Lusk's Express for delivery to Rosborough in Weaverville. Upon receipt of the letter in Shasta, Rhodes & Lusk's agent there applied the small oval handstamps reading "Rhodes & Lusk's / Express / Shasta." This cover dates no later than April, 1853, for on May 1st of that year, Joseph W. Gregory, the proprietor of Gregory's Express, embarked from San Francisco aboard ship, returning to the Eastern States after having closed out his California operations.

Figure 10. Another item from the Rosborough correspondence, this cover is presumably of December, 1853 vintage, and was sent to "A. M. Roseboro [sic] Esq / Fort Jones / Siskiyou County / California." In October of 1853, Alexander M. Rosborough received a letter from Edward F. Beale, Supt. of Indian Affairs for California, containing Rosborough's appointment as "Special Indian Agent" for Northern California, headquartered at Fort Jones. Fort Jones had been established near the town of Wheelock (sixteen miles from Yreka) twelve months before, and the 640 acre military post was garrisoned by two companies of the First Dragoons whose duty it was to "protect" the populace of the Northern Counties from "Indian depredations." The missing letter once contained in the cover probably reached Rosborough at Fort Jones shortly after he had assumed his appointed position. The letter was carried "FREE" by Rhodes & Lusk because of Rosborough's status as a government official, a fact disregarded by the Weaverville postmaster, who collected the required three-cents postage ("PAID 3"). The large "Rhodes & Lusk / Express / Shasta" handstamp postdates the smaller Shasta handstamp of that express as pictured in Figure 9. It is conceivable that the small Shasta handstamp was incinerated when Rhodes & Lusk's Shasta office burned to the ground along with most of Shasta's business district in June of 1853.
In early June of 1853, James Rhodes chose to remove Rhodes & Lusk’s Shasta office from the structure which also housed the Shasta Post Office, to a vacant saloon building formerly known as the "Miner's Inn." After he completely renovated the premises "inside and out," the Shasta Courier described the new express office as, "one of the neatest and most comfortable offices in the place." All soon proved for naught, for a week later the whole of his efforts was swept away by the "terrible conflagration" which leveled Shasta's business district on Jun 14, 1853. With the help of townsmen joining together to fight the fire, James managed to save the office safe, which was manhandled into the middle of the street at the first alarm. Like most of the merchants who had also been burned out, Rhodes undertook immediate provisions to rebuild, and on July 2nd, Courier readers were told that Rhodes & Lusk's "customers will find them in the new building on the ground of their old stand."

James Rhodes and Hiram Lusk were not alone in servicing the northern extremities of California's gold-bearing regions. When Lewis W. Taylor hung
up his saddle bags and relinquished his role as the pioneer long-distance expressman of the Northwestern Mines, both Rhodes & Lusk and Cram, Rogers & Co. were poised to fill the void (Figure 11, prior page). Cram, Rogers & Co.’s Express, founded in 1851 by Robert B. Cram and Franklin A. Rogers, also had primary offices in Shasta, Weaverville, Yreka, and Jacksonville, with branch offices located in many of the ramshackle burgs and bars where “color” showed in the pans of the industrious miners (Figures 12 and 13). The rivalry existing between the Rhodes Expresses (bolstered by their connecting company, Wells, Fargo & Co.’s Express), and Cram, Rogers & Co. (buttressed by its connecting company, Adams & Co.’s Express), lasted until Adams & Co.’s Express and Banking House imploded during the financial panic of February, 1855 (Figures 14 and 15, following page).

Leaving James Rhodes to temporarily carry on alone, in July of 1853 Hiram Lusk took a three-month hiatus from expressing to visit his former home in New York State. In addition to his own wife and children, on his return, Lusk escorted the wives of several of his Northern California acquaintances to their new homes in Shasta County. The extended party arrived in late October, and Lusk received the salutations of the Shasta Courier in its issue of Oct 22, 1853:
Figure 14. This conjunctive cover of Rhodes & Lusk’s Express and Wells, Fargo & Co.’s Express is from the Ken Stach collection, and it bears the only Rhodes & Lusk’s “Weaverville” handstamped frank known to collectors. Rhodes & Lusk’s messengers carried the letter from Weaverville to Sacramento, where it was turned over to Wells, Fargo & Co., whose agent or letter clerk applied the red Wells Fargo “Sacramento” handstamp to the letter before forwarding it onward to San Francisco. Its recipient docketed the rear of the cover, ”Rec’d March 14 / 53.”

Figure 15. This much-traveled cover highlights the connection which existed between Cram, Rogers & Co.’s Express and Adams & Co.’s Express which facilitated the flow of mail from north to south, and south to north, over the routes of both expresses. This cover began its roundabout journey at the coastal town of Crescent City, where it received the black "Adams & Co.'s / Express / Crescent City" handstamp. Originally addressed to "A. M. Rosborough Esq, Yreka City, Cala," the cover was carried to that interior Siskiyou County mining town where Adams & Co.’s messenger turned it over to Cram, Rogers & Co. for local delivery to Rosborough. The Yreka agent of Cram, Rogers & Co.'s Express determined that Rosborough had departed Yreka for San Francisco, and after drawing a line through the "Yreka City" and "Cala" portions of the address, he readdressed the envelope to "San Francisco Care T J Henley [postmaster of San Francisco]” before he applied the blue "Cram, Rogers & Co. / Express / Yreka" handstamp (2nd handstamp from left) to the envelope, and dispatched the letter onward. The next stop was Shasta, where Cram, Rogers’ messenger passed the letter to Adams & Co.’s agent there, who in turn applied the red "Adams & Co. / Sept, 20 / Shasta” handstamp (far right of cover) before expediting the letter to San Francisco. When it reached San Francisco, Adams & Co. was unable to deliver the letter to Rosborough, and it languished in their office for two weeks before a clerk lined out "San Francisco" in the envelope’s second address and scrawled "Yreka" in its place, initiating the return of the undelivered / unclaimed letter to that distant town in the Siskiyou. Before the letter exited the portals of Adams’ San Francisco office, it received the circular, blue "Adams & Co. / Oct 7 / San Francisco" handstamp (center of cover). When he arrived at Shasta, Adams & Co.'s messenger consigned the letter to Cram, Rogers & Co.’s Express, whose agent applied the black, double-lined "Cram, Rogers & Co. / Express / Shasta" handstamp (right side of cover) before sending the wayward letter on the final leg of its return journey to Yreka, where, presumably, it was finally placed in the hands of elusive addressee Alexander Madison Rosborough.
"Mr. Hiram Lusk. - We are glad to welcome back in our midst the gentleman whose name heads this article ... Mr. L. is the junior partner in the firm of Rhodes & Lusk, and has, of course, brought his family to California for the purpose of making it his place of permanent residence."

Things were running smoothly when Lusk resumed his duties, which fact elicited a grateful acknowledgement from the editor of the *Yreka Mountain Herald*, "We are placed under obligation, for the *Shasta Courier* and late California papers, to Rhodes & Lusk's Express. Also, for the delivery of valuable letters." (10)

As was all too common throughout Gold Rush California, the Washington bureaucrats failed to adequately address the logistics of implementing and maintaining satisfactory postal service in the rugged expanse of the state's northernmost gold belt. One such oversight which impacted the residents of Siskiyou County was highlighted when the *Yreka Herald* apprised its readers of "the paper being circulated in Yreka by Mr. John Lintell, the Postmaster, for the purpose of raising adequate funds to have a semi-monthly mail carried through" from Shasta to Yreka during the coming winter. The editor of the *Shasta Courier* sought to allay the anxieties of the populace over the lack of a funded mail route linking Yreka with the population centers to the South, pronouncing:

"We are under the impression that Rhodes & Lusk and Cram, Rogers & Co. will perform this service during the winter months to the perfect satisfaction of all concerned, as they have done here-to-fore." He further commented that, "We have every confidence that the people of Siskiyou [County] will be properly cared for next spring by the [Post Office] Department. We cannot conceive that such gross neglect of any portion of our people will continue much longer." (11)

**Dissolution and Transition**

Inexplicably, barely three months after Lusk returned from the East with his family, the partnership existing between James Rhodes and Hiram Lusk was dissolved. A notice to that effect (dated Feb 17) was contained in the Feb 18, 1854 issue of the *Shasta Courier*:

"THE CO-PARTNERSHIP heretofore existing between the undersigned, under the name and style of Rhodes and Lusk, is this day dissolved by mutual consent. James M. Rhodes having purchased Hiram Lusk's entire interest, is alone authorized to settle the business of the late firm. JAMES RHODES, HIRAM LUSK."

What little supplementary documentation exists regarding the split specifies that Lusk received $6,000 for his one-half interest in the firm's banking and express buildings located in Yreka, California, and Jacksonville, O.T. (See Addendum #1 at the end of this article.)

Before I chanced upon the following citation in the Oct 2, 1854 issue of Stockton's *San Joaquin Republican*, I hypothesized that considerations emanating from the fact that his family had joined him in California might have compelled Lusk to seek a more sedentary occupation than that of an expressman, however, the article in question indicated otherwise. Under the heading "Express to Kern River," readers of the *Republican* were told:

"We understand that an express [has been] established ... between Stockton and the Kern River country. Mr. Lusk, the gentleman connected with this enterprise, is well known in the northern portion of the state, being formerly of the firm of Lusk & Rhodes' Shasta Express [Rhodes & Lusk's Express] ... An undertaking of this kind deserves encouragement, and we sincerely hope Mr. Lusk will find it sufficiently remunerative to continue ... Mr. Lusk left this city on Saturday last, and carried an express, we are informed, for Wells, Fargo & Co. Success to the enterprise."

Progressive issues of the *Republican* made no further mention of Lusk's Kern River Express, which must have been an exceedingly short-lived venture at best.
Lusk had previously (June of 1854) hedged his bets regarding the potential outcome of his post-Rhodes & Lusk endeavors by engaging carpenter/joiner William Fisher to erect "a dwelling house for said Lusk situated on a block of land being between 15th and 16th, and O and P streets in the City of Sacramento ..." By the spring of 1856, Lusk had cut all ties with the express business, and he was residing with his family in their Sacramento abode. In a radical departure from his prior calling, he had become the owner of a "broom manufactory" located at 16th and J Streets.

On Jul 14, 1859, Hiram and Sarah Lusk sold their entire square block of land, with their residence situated thereon, to Sacramentan James Bithell. I found no mention of any disposition of the business.

After the sale of his Sacramento property, Hiram A. Lusk disappeared from the historical record, nothing further being known of him after he apparently left California with his family in 1859. His namesake son Hiram A. Lusk Jr., returned to California in 1907, dying in Los Angeles County on Apr 24, 1914.

2) JAS. M. RHODES' EXPRESS / RHODES & CO.'S EXPRESS

The initial ad listing "Jas. M. Rhodes' Express" as the successor of Rhodes & Lusk's Express ran in the Shasta Courier on Feb 18, 1854 (Figure 16). The ad continued through the Mar 4th issue of the Courier, in which an overlapping ad was first inserted (Figure 17) indicating that within two weeks of its inception, "Jas. M. Rhodes' Express" had transitioned in name to that of "Rhodes & Co.'s Express."

Although it has been logically conjectured that the change to "Rhodes & Co.'s Express" occurred because James Rhodes associated himself with one or more partners to enhance the viability of the undertaking, I am not certain that such was actually the case.

In view of the fact that John M. Rhodes retained his insularity as the owner/president of the Sacramento City Bank (which had passed exclusively into his
Figure 18. Rhodes & Co.'s Express, the second of the Rhodes Expresses, carried this cover from Shasta to Sacramento, where it was turned over to Wells, Fargo & Co. for delivery in San Francisco. This was in keeping with the text of the Rhodes & Co.'s ad pictured in Figure 23, which ad boldly announced, "CONNECTING AT SACRAMENTO WITH WELLS, FARGO & CO." The cover's addressee, "Mr. William A. Mix," was the agent of Rhodes & Co.'s Express at Red Bluffs.

Figure 19. Agent William A. Mix dispatched this cover from Rhodes & Co.'s express office at Red Bluffs to "Mr. Hiram Onderdonk / Delavan / Wis." Boarding a steamboat at Red Bluffs, the messenger of Rhodes & Co.'s Express ultimately conveyed the letter to the post office at Sacramento. According to the Postal Act of 3 March 1851, the prepaid rate for letters of 1/2 oz or less traveling over 3,000 miles was six cents. Because the letter exceeded 1/2 oz in weight, additional postage was required, and a pair of three-cent stamps was affixed to the letter (most probably at the express office in Red Bluffs). Upon receipt of the letter at the Sacramento Post Office, the postal clerk cancelled the stamps ("Sacramento City / 14 / Mar / Cal") and bagged the letter with those destined for the next contract mail steamship departing from San Francisco. (Cover is courtesy of Gordon Eubanks.)
hands at the termination of the Rhodes, Purdy & McNulty partnership on Jan 31, 1853), the two most likely individuals to have been involved with James in any formal partnership were his brother, George Rhodes, and/or his uncle, Jesse Rhodes. Yet, nowhere in contemporary newspapers did I find any published "notice of partnership" or "dissolution of partnership" announcements, nor was I able to locate any applicable contractual or partnership agreements in the many county records and archival sources which I consulted. Furthermore, when Rhodes & Co.'s Express was sold in July of 1855, "James M. Rhodes" was the only name listed as the Grantor (owner/seller) in the official record which documented the sale of the express.

A potentially illuminating bit of information put forth by Henry Byron Phillips, early philatelic author and paramount collector of Western Express covers, possibly furnishes a reason why "Jas. M. Rhodes' Express" may have become "Rhodes & Co.'s Express" in name only. Phillips wrote in the
January, 1895 issue of "Filatelic Facts and Fallacies" that the designation "Co." was sometimes adopted by the purveyors of early expresses... "mainly for ornamental purpose, [and] also as a sort of passport into the world of dignified and responsible expressdom." (12)

Partners or not, George and Jesse Rhodes attained positions of responsibility within the "company," and their diligence and perseverance proved crucial to its overall success. George Rhodes often traversed the route between Shasta and Yreka, at which latter place he augmented the efforts of Rhodes & Co.'s agent, Elijah Wadsworth, and where he also fostered his own business interests in partnership with Yreka liveryman John Loag. Jesse Rhodes took up residence in Shasta, primarily handling the "Banking" facet of Rhodes & Co.'s Express and Banking House in that pivotal location. Although he was also predominantly rooted in Shasta, James Rhodes periodically ranged over a wide area, intermittently functioning as the organization's operations manager/route agent.

Contributing from behind the scenes, in May of 1854 John M. Rhodes took steps to increase the amount of gold dust streaming into his Sacramento City Bank. He called upon the San Francisco office of St. Louis bankers Lucas, Turner & Co., wherein future Civil War general William T. Sherman was the resident manager, to negotiate a $20,000 loan to be used to purchase the output of the miners in the northern counties. A clause in the loan agreement stipulated that "Lucas, Turner & Co. was to have the first right to purchase all of Rhodes' gold dust." (13)

It naturally entailed that Rhodes & Co.'s Express would serve as the primary carrier of what John M. Rhodes hoped would be a steady supply of dust accruing to him from the mines. The vagaries of the express business dictated that not all such shipments would reach him without incident.

THE PEARL DISASTER

According to "credible witnesses," the first indication that something was amiss aboard the high pressure steamboat Pearl as it neared its Sacramento destination was revealed by the actions of Andrew S. Wadleigh, the vessel's engineer, when he was allegedly observed bolting for the stern of the boat.
and leaping overboard. (14) While that disputable occurrence was supposedly being noted, the Pearl's boiler exploded, lifting the forward deck and blowing it directly over the bow. "Nearly a dozen [of the passengers and crew] were flung into the air, and one or two to the height of sixty or seventy feet, and nearly to the opposite shore of the Sacramento River." (15)

Prior to the explosion, Adams & Co.'s messenger, Henry Keefer, was lounging in a stateroom reserved for express messengers which was located at the stern of the boat. James McBride, the dual messenger of Rhodes & Co.'s and Wells, Fargo & Co.'s expresses, entered the stateroom to offer his assistance in moving Keefer's express matter to the starboard gangway. McBride had already staged his strongboxes and letter bags there under the guard of passenger Tunis V. Mount (a close friend of Jesse Rhodes). Shouldering Keefer's letter bag, McBride started forward while Keefer momentarily held back to tidy up the stateroom. Keefer was afterwards working his way through the main cabin towards the bow when the blast erupted. He was not hurt, but both McBride and Mount, who were standing together near the gangway, were instantly killed. Mount's overcoat containing his pocket book was later discovered floating in the river, as was Adams & Co.'s letter bag which Keefer had entrusted to McBride minutes before the catastrophe unfolded. The express boxes of Rhodes & Co. and Wells, Fargo & Co. were catapulted into the river by the force of the explosion.

On the very day that the treasure box of Rhodes & Co.'s Express was raised from the bottom of the Sacramento River, the remains of James McBride and T. V. Mount were lowered into their graves at Sacramento's City Cemetery. Because of McBride's express affiliations and Mount's status as a Mason, their requiem was a stately affair which the Sacramento Union described as a "pageant of unusual solemnity." Out of respect for the fallen expressman and his compatriot, Adams & Co. and Wells, Fargo & Co. closed their Sacramento offices for the duration of the funeral.

Three weeks after the destruction of the Pearl, Rhodes & Co.'s Express underwent a second trial signaled by the collapse of Adams & Co.'s Banking House on "Black Friday," Feb 23, 1855. The spreading turmoil in Northern California's financial institutions affected not only Rhodes & Co., but also Wells, Fargo & Co., and John M. Rhodes' Sacramento City Bank. Tempered by the ordeal, all three concerns survived the upheaval even stronger than before. That James Rhodes' integral express and banking firm had staunchly met the challenge was attested to in the Shasta Courier of Mar 3, 1855 where, under the caption "Rhodes & Co.'s Express," its editor remarked:

"This Express and Banking concern, which has passed so successfully through the fiery ordeal occasioned by the bursting of several of our prominent Banking Houses, and the temporary suspension of Wells, Fargo & Co., with which they connect at Sacramento, announce their continuance in the business, with renewed strength and energy. No better evidence of their safe mode of doing business can be given, than the firmness with which
they met the tremendous financial whirlwind which, during the past ten days, has swept so many prominent Banking firms into the sea of bankruptcy."

The article was accompanied by an updated ad (Figure 23) which defined Rhodes & Co.'s routes and services.

During its seventeen-month existence, newspaper accounts mentioning Rhodes & Co.'s Express ranged from the usual "puff pieces" extolling the virtues of the express's accommodating agents and messengers, to items of more general interest. Three months after its startup, Rhodes & Co. figured in a May 15, 1854 article in the Shasta Courier which informed readers that:

"We learn by Mr. George Rhodes of Rhodes & Co.'s Express, that a Mr. John W. Henderson, while endeavoring to obtain a bucket of water from the Sacramento River, was jerked off the steamer Belle, on the 8th inst., and drowned ..."

The Mar 17, 1855 issue of the Weaverville Trinity Times quoted an article from the Shasta Courier of the week before which had announced, "We were shown at Rhodes & Co.'s Express Office, in this place ... the largest specimen of pure gold ever found in this section of the State ..." The mammoth nugget weighed in at "precisely sixteen pounds," which at the prevailing rate of $16.00 per ounce, yielded a valuation of more than $4,000.

Despite the relative success which he achieved, over the course of the slightly more than three years which he devoted to the express business (first as the senior partner in Rhodes & Lusk's Express, then as the steward of Rhodes & Co.'s Express), James Rhodes had grown increasingly weary of contending with the many negative variables inherent in his profession, and he vowed to find a more stable means of livelihood as an alternative.

To aid brother James in achieving his objective, John M. Rhodes became a signatory on the bond of California State Treasurer Henry Bates, consequent-ly leveraging James' entry into the State Treasurer's Office as a clerk. But first, James needed to dispose of Rhodes & Co.'s Express. His doing so brought what was heretofore the most enigmatic of the Rhodes Expresses - Rhodes & Whitney's Express - into existence.
3) RHODES & WHITNEY'S EXPRESS

The formalities of the creation of Rhodes & Whitney's Express are detailed in Book E of Deeds (housed in the office of the Trinity County Recorder, Weaverville, California), pages 194-196 inclusive, wherein it is transcribed:

"This indenture made this second day of July A.D. One Thousand, Eight Hundred and Fifty-Five, by and between James M. Rhodes ... party of the first part, and Jesse Rhodes ... and Cornelius S. Whitney ... parties of the second part, Witnesseth: That the said party of the first part for and in consideration of the sum of Thirty Thousand dollars to him in hand paid by the said parties of the second part ... do sell and quit claim unto the said parties of the second part ... the following described real and personal property, to wit ..."

The "real property" enumerated in the record consisted of the buildings in Jacksonville (O.T.), Yreka (Cal.), Weaverville (Cal.), and Shasta (Cal.), all of which were owned and occupied as express and banking houses by Rhodes & Company. A peripheral piece of property "in the town of Shasta now occupied by Rhodes & Co. as a corral ... which ... contains about one acre of land ..." was also included.

The "personal property" as inventoried was comprised of: " ... all the safes, office fixtures of every kind, horses, mules, saddles, bridles, express bags and [strong]boxes, and all other tools, implements and appliances appertaining to the Banking and Express business of Rhodes & Co. now owned and used by the said Rhodes & Co. in the business aforesaid."

The signature of "J.[ames] M.[ason] Rhodes" confirmed the sale of Rhodes & Co.'s Express to Jesse Rhodes (James' uncle), and San Francisco capitalist Cornelius S. Whitney.

As denoted in the ads of their express (Figure 24, shown on this page, and Figure 25, on the following page), proprietors Rhodes and Whitney perpetuated the infrastructure conceived by their predecessors,
running over the same routes, and maintaining offices in the same key locations as had Rhodes & Lusk's and Rhodes & Co.'s expresses. Jesse Rhodes, however, was first and foremost a "Banker," not an "Expressman," and he promptly prioritized the banking aspect of the business by focusing on the purchase of gold dust, and by liberally extending the profitable short-term, high-interest loans of the day to a steady queue of applicants.

Whitney viewed the alliance from an investor's perspective, and he mirrored Jesse Rhodes' tenets. Because of their mutual outlook, the "Express" element of Rhodes & Whitney's Express and Banking House was willfully relegated to a peripheral status. As a consequence, the tacit "watchdog" over the emergent firm's express activities became, by default, none other than James Rhodes, who was then a full time resident of Sacramento as were his brothers, ex-Rhodes & Co.'s expressman George Rhodes, and banker John M. Rhodes. James would not enter into his duties as clerk in the State Treasurer's Office until January of 1856, and during the six month interval after his sale of Rhodes & Co.'s Express, he joined Wines & Co. as an attache' in their Sacramento express office.

Departing from past precedent, in September of 1855, Jesse Rhodes and C. S. Whitney turned to Wines & Co.'s Express as their connecting link to San Francisco and the Eastern states, and to realms extending beyond the limits of their northernmost route (Figure 26, following page). Over the previous three years, Wells, Fargo & Co. had served both Rhodes & Lusk's Express and Rhodes & Co.'s Express in that capacity. An explanation for the change was provided in the Sep 14, 1855 issue of the San Francisco Herald:

"New Express Arrangement. - Messrs Rhodes & Whitney have changed their connection in the express business from Wells Fargo & Co. to the house of G. H. Wines & Co., of No.18 Sacramento street [San Francisco]. By this arrangement the house has increased facilities for the transaction of interior business." (17)
Irrespective of the rationale which prompted the turn in connecting companies, from his vantage point within Wines & Co.'s Sacramento office, James Rhodes could assess the performance of Rhodes & Whitney's Express by monitoring the flow of express matter passing between the two companies at their Sacramento connecting point. He was therefore able to partially compensate for any shortcomings stemming from Uncle Jesse's and C. S. Whitney's preoccupation with the banking side of their business. James' oversight was not long required because the third incarnation of the Rhodes Expresses endured for only a short period of time.

Whether over dissatisfaction with the level of profits gleaned from his participation in the venture, or possibly having felt constrained by his involvement in what was still somewhat of a "family affair," on Dec 14, 1855, Cornelius S. Whitney sold his interest in Rhodes & Whitney's Express to partner Jesse Rhodes for the sum of $10,000. (A reproduction of the original document delineating this transaction is included in its entirety as Addendum #2 at the end of this article)

Thanks to pertinent information ferreted out by Western Cover Society member Mark Metkin, those seeking corroborative proof as to exactly when Rhodes & Whitney's Express went out of existence need only look to the California State Supreme Court case of "Tuite Vs. Wakelee," in which erstwhile partner Cornelius S. Whitney was called...
Figure 27. "Rhodes & Whitney's / Express / Weaverville" handstamp on Wines Franked Entire, with conjunctive handstamp of "Pacific Express Co. / Aug 5 / Shasta." If this is an August, 1855 usage, then the Rhodes & Whitney's handstamp is contemporary with the operation of that express (early July of 1855 to mid-December of 1855). However, if this is an August, 1856 usage, then the Rhodes & Whitney's handstamp was applied by the Weaverville agent of (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express, which firm succeeded Rhodes & Whitney's Express in December of 1855. Per the cover illustrated in Figure 29, it is evident that Jesse Rhodes' Weaverville agent continued using his old Rhodes & Whitney's handstamp long after Jesse Rhodes bought out partner Cornelius S. Whitney and carried on as the proprietor of (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express. As for the cover's addressee, "Messrs. J. H. Coghill & Co, 137 Front Street, San Francisco," according to city directories and newspaper advertisements, the wholesale grocery firm of J. H. Coghill & Co. was located at 137 Front Street, San Francisco in Aug of 1855, as well as in Aug of 1856. All things considered, it has yet to be definitively determined whether Rhodes & Whitney's Express, or (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express, carried this cover from Weaverville to Shasta (a task made all the more difficult, if not altogether impossible, in view of the cover's missing contents).

Figure 28. This cover was carried by Rhodes & Whitney’s Express from Yreka to Sacramento, where (per the ad shown in Figure 26) it would have been handed over to G. H. Wines & Co. for delivery to San Francisco. Wines applied their San Francisco receiving handstamp over the Rhodes & Whitney “PAID” blue oval upon arrival to the Wine's office in San Francisco, where Mr. S. (Savery) W. Collins evidently picked up his letter. (From the Ken Stach collection.)
to testify on behalf of the defendant, H. P. Wakelee. A synopsis of Whitney's testimony in the case is contained in Volume 19, pages 698 and 699, of David T. Bagley's *Report of Cases Determined In The Supreme Court of the State of California*, a part of which states:

"The defendant then called Cornelius S. Whitney, who testified that he was a member of the firm of Rhodes & Whitney in the express and banking business ... that the firm of Rhodes & Whitney was dissolved about the middle of December, 1855, and [remaining partner Jesse] Rhodes then continued to carry on the business in his own name ... "

Thus, (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express, the fourth and final incarnation of the Rhodes Expresses, emerged upon the scene.

4) **(JESSE) RHODES & CO.'S EXPRESS**

When (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express replaced Rhodes & Whitney's Express in December of 1855, the business public (including newspaper editors) remained essentially unaware of the changeover. For reasons known only to himself, Jesse Rhodes chose not to issue any timely proclamation of the transition, nor did he immediately withdraw the expired Rhodes & Whitney's Express ads from publication and substitute ads introducing his own express and banking services. Accordingly, the past confusion shared by authors on the subject of the Rhodes Expresses is attributable to the continuing Rhodes & Whitney's advertisements, and to the many references erringly citing "Rhodes & Whitney's Express," which recurred in newspapers long after that firm had been superseded by (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express. From a purely Postal History standpoint, an exacerbating factor is that Jesse Rhodes' Weaverville agent persisted in using his obsolete Rhodes & Whitney's "Weaverville" handstamp on letters in his charge (Figure 29).

![Figure 29](image-url)

*Figure 29. This inbound cover from Saint Louis, Missouri bears that city's postmark of date "Jul / 16 / 1856." Note that the sender of the letter phonetically rendered "Shasta" as "Chesler" when addressing the envelope. After the letter arrived in Shasta County (sometime in August of 1856), it was eventually consigned to the Weaverville agent of (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express, who applied the handstamp of the then defunct Rhodes & Whitney's Express to the letter before effecting its delivery. This is a cover which, despite the presence of the Rhodes & Whitney's handstamp, can definitely be attributed to (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express, thanks to the year-dated Saint Louis postmark.*
If Jesse Rhodes imagined from the start that both he and his newly evolved firm would somehow escape the tribulations which frequently plagued his family members while pursuing their chosen vocations, an abortive robbery attempt on Dec 20, 1855 dispelled any such illusions. While no loss of life or lucre came to pass on that occasion, the incident foreshadowed more ominous events to come.

**EXPLOSION OF THE BELLE**

On Feb 5, 1856, nine days past the one-year anniversary of the loss of the ill-fated *Pearl*, the steamer *Belle* slipped her Sacramento berth and embarked on a routine upriver voyage to Red Bluffs. On board were Robert McCabe, the mountain messenger of both (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express and Wines & Co.'s Express on the Shasta-Yreka route, and Shasta resident William A. Mix, the former Red Bluffs agent of Rhodes & Co.'s Express. McCabe, a young man "universally admired for the numerous good qualities of his heart and mind," was returning to his duties after spending an enjoyable interlude in Sacramento.

When the *Belle* reached a point eleven miles above the city and was proceeding at normal speed, her boiler unaccountably ruptured with horrific results. Much of the upper superstructure of the vessel disintegrated into a crimson mass of "broken furniture, scattered goods, dirty and blood-clotted wearing apparel, snapped timbers, broken lamps, curled and twisted iron bars, and human brains ... dashed together in strange confusion." (18) William A. Mix was conversing with a friend in the main saloon, and he had just turned to leave when the boiler burst. An iron missile cleaved the head of his friend, splattering blood and gore over Mix's coat. After recovering from the shock, Mix frantically began throwing overboard anything that would float to those struggling in the water.

Expressman McCabe was blown into the river where, if not killed outright by the blast, he drowned as a result of his injuries. His body was dredged from the water the following day, and in what was probably James Rhodes' last official act on behalf of Wines & Co.'s Express, he identified the battered corpse at the coroner's inquest as that of "McCabe, [Jesse] Rhodes & Co.'s and Wines & Co.'s messenger."

McCabe's imposing public funeral was a deja-vu affair remindful of the rites which attended the *Pearl* disaster the year before. The wake was held in "the spacious offices of Messrs. Wines & Co.'s Express," at the conclusion of which the express wagons of Wines & Co., Wells, Fargo & Co., Pacific Express, and Langton & Co. trailed behind the hearse - "that very unexpress-like-looking vehicle" - as the procession wound its way to the cemetery. The horses drawing the express wagons were draped with black palls and their nodding heads bore plumes of black and white. The elaborate spectacle proved to be yet another testament to what the press lauded as "the thorough and inimitable style always attending the operations of our indefatigable Expressmen, who seem to possess, intuitively, the faculty above all classes of men for high taste in matters of appropriate display." (19) At Sacramento's City Cemetery, "by the side of McBride of the same Express, who was lost from the *Pearl*, all that remains of kind, poor McCabe except his memory," was laid to rest. (20)

Robert McCabe's peers had little time to lament his passing, for five weeks after the annihilation of the *Belle*, Jesse Rhodes' express suffered another setback, the residual effects of which imperiled its survival and ultimately ended in personal tragedy for Rhodes himself.

**THE TRINITY MOUNTAIN ROBBERY**

On the morning of the 12th of March, 1856, Solomon D. Brastow was enroute from Yreka to Shasta together with four itinerant travelers who had joined up with him at various points along the way. As they began their ascent of Trinity Mountain, Brastow was astride a mule, ahead of which he prodded another of its long-eared brethren bearing saddle bags containing $16,000 in gold dust destined for John M. Rhodes' Sacramento City Bank. The gold was first dispatched to Shasta under the protection of Brastow as the treasure guard of (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express. Brastow knew his business, having for some years past been in the service of Cram, Rogers & Co.'s Express. Brastow was astride a mule, ahead of which he prodded another of its long-eared brethren bearing saddle bags containing $16,000 in gold dust destined for John M. Rhodes' Sacramento City Bank.
After the weakened Cram, Rogers & Co. merged with Pacific Express in March of 1855, the two formed Horsley & Brastow's Scott River Express, running for about ten months (May of 1855 through Feb of 1856) before ending their partnership (Figure 30). Brastow subsequently joined the last of the Rhodes Expresses as messenger on its vital Shasta-Yreka route, replacing Robert McCabe (killed on the month before).

When Brastow's makeshift cortege reached an abrupt bend in the narrow incline which they were negotiating up the mountainside, five masked men armed with pistols and double-barreled shotguns simultaneously arose from concealment and summarily ordered Brastow and the others to dismount their mules. Brastow instinctively reached for his holstered pistol, causing one of the gunmen to loudly admonish him, "Hold - boys, we don't want to kill you, but we must have your money!" The entrapped riders, each of whom had a cocked weapon leveled at his breast, had no choice but to comply.

After partially binding their captives, the brigands proceeded to divest them of their personal valuables before ransacking the saddlebags of the mules. At his request, Brastow was surprisingly allowed to retain the $30-$40 in coin found in his pockets, though such was truly "small change" in comparison to his golden burden of $16,000 in dust, which the outlaws methodically plundered.

Once the bulk of the booty had been accounted for (including an additional $5,000 in gold dust belonging to one of Brastow's wayfaring companions, Yreka merchant Rhamar Hickman), the robbers forced their unwilling benefactors a few hundred yards from the trail and tied them all to trees.
When engaged in hog-tieing Brastow, the thief performing the indignity asked whether Brastow "knew" him. When Brastow judiciously replied that he did not recognize the inquisitive bandit, the miscreant responded that HE knew Brastow, and candidly volunteered that he had "been waiting [for the opportunity to waylay]" Brastow "often [and] for a long time."

Three days after the holdup, the editor of the Shasta Republican professed:

> It has always been to us a matter of wonder that the express messengers on our mountain routes have so long escaped being robbed - riding as they do at all times of the day and night, frequently entirely alone and over the most lonesome trails in California, and this fact well known to the desperate gang of cut-throats and thieves which are now, and have so long infested the Northern country." (23)

In the wake of trussing up their quarry, the perpetrators drove off the hapless party's mules before they packed the glittering haul on their horses which they had picketed nearby, and rode off toward the crest of the mountain. Hickman soon managed to free himself and he untied Brastow, who assisted him in unloosing the others. According to Brastow's later court testimony:

> "When returning towards the trail, we saw several of the robbers on horseback proceeding toward the summit of the mountain; we hid ourselves behind trees from their view, as we did not deem it safe to be seen by them; they soon passed out of sight; we came on towards Shasta, trailing them to the summit, where their tracks turned off from the trail down to the left ..." (24)

A "round up the usual suspects" stratagem yielded the probable mastermind of the holdup, one W. T. Carter, who had escaped from the Shasta jail a short time before the heist was accomplished. A week after the robbery, Carter was traced to Marysville, where he was arrested and returned to Shasta to be incarcerated for the second time.

In late April, the whereabouts of all but one of Carter's accomplices was discovered by lawmen who, based on a tip, had tracked them to the vicinity of Folsom, twenty miles northeast of Sacramento. One of the three fugitives, Adolph ("Dolph the Dutchman") Newton, was seized as he sauntered by Officer Robert Harrison of the Sacramento City Police. The remaining pair, George Walker and Niconora Romero, would not be taken so easily.

On the evening of April 22nd, Harrison and the two officers accompanying him rushed the door of the cabin which Newton had been frequenting prior to his arrest. In the ensuing clash, Walker was felled by a shotgun blast through the heart, and Romero was shot twice before being handcuffed face down upon the dirt floor of the cabin. None of the officers were hurt, although more than twenty shots were exchanged during the encounter.

The next morning, the wounded Niconora Romero and the body of George Walker were brought to Sacramento, where both the living and the dead were lodged in the station house of the Sacramento City Police. John M. Rhodes viewed the corpse of the slain outlaw after its arrival, declaring in his memoirs forty years later:

> "The body of the one killed near Folsom was brought to Sacramento where I saw it - I did not shed any tears over the remains nor did I waste any sympathy on the wounded one who was also brought to Sacramento." (25)

The reason for Rhodes' bitter and unyielding antipathy for those who executed the robbery is evident elsewhere in his narrative, where he averred, "This loss of $24,000 worried my uncle [Jesse Rhodes] exceedingly, and the worry I have no doubt precipitated his death." (26)

Although a search party guided by captured ringleader W. T. Carter recovered roughly half of the hijacked hoard from where it had been buried in a ravine near the headwaters of Clear Creek, only $6,000 of the amount retrieved consisted of the gold dust which had been entrusted to (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express, $10,000 more of which still lay secreted somewhere on Trinity Mountain. (27)
Had Carter entertained any hopes that the presiding judge at his upcoming trial would impose a lesser sentence upon him as a reward for his role in the reparation of a part of the spoils, he was unfortunately mistaken. He and the two other surviving highwaymen were tried in the Shasta County Court in May of 1856, the sentences handed down being the same in each case - ten years in San Quentin Prison. (28)

A SLIPPERY SLOPE

Jesse Rhodes resolutely forged ahead, and it soon became apparent to him that Wells, Fargo & Co., energized and ascendant since the fall of Adams & Co. the year before, was proving to be more of an unremitting impediment to his efforts than were holdups and steamboat explosions.

Wells, Fargo & Co. had responded to a petition signed by many of Shasta's inhabitants by opening an office there in August of 1855. With Shasta as a base, Wells Fargo reached deeper into the Northwestern Mines by employing the same strategy it had resorted to some twenty months before when Frank Rumrill (of Rumrill & Co.'s Express) was vested as the means by which the advancing company had expanded into the territories north of the base town of Marysville. This time, the mediums of Wells Fargo's expansion were Francis Wheeler Blake (of Blake & Co.'s Express) in Weaverville, and George and Ridgley Greathouse and partner Hugh Slicer (of Greathouse & Slicer's Express) in Yreka. (29)

As had been the case with Rumrill, Wells, Fargo & Co. empowered the principals of F. W. Blake & Co. and Greathouse & Slicer to represent Wells Fargo's interests in the locales in which they operated (Figure 31, this page, and Figures 32 and 33, following page). Wells Fargo also encouraged them to run their own expresses, which served as feeder lines funneling treasure, parcels, and letters into Wells Fargo's coffers at their Shasta connecting point. (Figures 34 and 35, shown on page 34).

Thanks to his previous three-year tenure with the Rhodes Expresses as their Weaverville agent, Blake was an experienced and resourceful individual whose services would have proven invaluable to Jesse Rhodes when Rhodes began operating on his own in December of 1855. However, Blake had ended his association with Rhodes & Whitney's Express that September to start his own express, and his loyalties now lay elsewhere. Exploiting his enduring relationships with the area's miners and merchants to Wells Fargo's advantage, Blake siphoned off a goodly portion of the treasure which might otherwise have been consigned to (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express for conveyance over its Shasta-Weaverville Route and beyond.

The Greathouse & Slicer trio was equally adept at gaining inroads in Yreka, and in a short time the vital supply of gold dust flowing into John M. Rhodes' Sacramento City Bank over the Shasta-Yreka Route of (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s Express was also materially diminished.
Figure 32. This ad of Greathouse & Slicer's Express (from the Yreka Union of date Nov 24, 1855) clearly overstated the case when it intimated that an "Agency of Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Express" had been established at Yreka. While it was true that Wells, Fargo & Co. had empowered Greathouse & Slicer to act in a surrogate capacity as its defacto "agent" there, more than two years would pass before Wells Fargo moved to open its own agency in Yreka. In the interim, because Greathouse & Slicer were primarily occupied with running their own express which connected with Wells Fargo at Shasta, they appointed W. (William) T. Hanford to watch over their interests, and the developing interests of Wells Fargo & Co., in Yreka.

Figure 33. The text of this Greathouse & Slicer's ad (from the Shasta Republican of Dec 15, 1855) is almost identical to that of the ad pictured in Figure 32, the sole exception being that its heading, "Greathouse & Slicer's Express," has replaced "Agency of Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Express." The result is that this ad more realistically reflects the actual relationship which existed between Greathouse & Slicer and Wells, Fargo & Company.
In early January of 1856, F. W. Blake & Co.’s Express carried this cover from Weaverville to Shasta, where it was turned over to Wells, Fargo & Co. at their Shasta connecting point. Wells Fargo then expressed the letter to San Francisco (where the Wells Fargo “San Francisco” receiving mark was applied), and from there to New York City, where it was placed in the U. S. Mail for delivery to Greenville, Connecticut. Blake had erred in “canceling” the envelope indicium with his express handstamp, but the postal clerk at the New York Post Office overlooked that fact when he applied the “NEW YORK / FEB / 13 [1856]” postmark over the already obliterated indicium without assessing an additional ten cents in compensatory postage. The cover once contained one of the earliest letters which California Argonaut Henry Saunders had written to his wife “back home.” Six years later, Saunders was still in the Gold Fields, working a claim in partnership with two others on Douglas City Flat, four miles from Weaverville. On Apr 26, 1862, while he was standing in the bedrock ditch of the claim, its walls caved in upon him, and he died half an hour after the accident. His brief obituary in the Trinity Journal lamented that his untimely death was all the more tragic because “he was about leaving to join his family in the East.”

This exceptional cover was one of the many treasures contained in the Lichtenstein Collection of Western Express Covers auctioned by H. R. Harmer in May of 2004. Greathouse & Slicer’s Express carried the cover from Yreka to Shasta, where it was turned over to Wells, Fargo & Co.’s Express for conveyance to San Francisco. Although the cover bears the ornate, Printed Frank of “G. H. Wines & Co.’s California Express,” the text of the Frank reading “PAID” and “G. H. WINES” (upper ribbon) was lined out in ink, ostensibly by William T. Hanford, Greathouse & Slicer’s Yreka agent, who also applied the Greathouse & Slicer’s handstamp over the Wines Printed Frank in addition to the envelope indicium. This was possibly done to denote that Wines & Co. did not handle the letter in a conjunctive capacity along with Greathouse & Slicer and Wells, Fargo & Co. An alternative explanation may be that the envelope was simply an unused remainder which came to hand after Wines & Co. had ceased its California operations, and Hanford was “claiming” it for use in his own right.
Well capitalized and proficiently managed, Wells, Fargo & Co. grew stronger over the winter and spring of 1855-1856, as did Blake & Co. and Greathouse & Slicer operating under Wells Fargo's widening umbrella. Conversely, Jesse Rhodes was forced to contend with a mounting attrition in his volume of business which came upon the heels of the appreciable loss he incurred in the Trinity Mountain Robbery.

Hampered by steadily decreasing revenues, Uncle Jesse turned to nephew John M. Rhodes' Sacramento City Bank where he arranged the first of several loans which enabled him to carry on. Throughout the year 1856, he continued to draw upon his nephew's resources to offset his rising deficits, and to pay off a growing list of creditors.

To publicize the attempted rejuvenation of his express, Jesse Rhodes had at last instituted newspaper ads of his own which were published in the San Francisco Bulletin and the Weaverville Trinity Journal (Figures 36 and 37, this page and Figure 38, following page). Nevertheless, it was a vision come too late, and his struggling express and banking house was once again teetering on the brink of ruination. In a last attempt to stave off the spectre of failure, he procured $10,000 from the Sacramento City Bank by offering up his banking and express buildings in Jacksonville, Yreka, Weaverville, and Shasta as collateral on the note (Figure 39, following page).

The Shasta Republican referred to the temporary respite derived from this latest stop-gap infusion of borrowed funds when it reported, "We are informed that the financial difficulties which have lately
threatened this old and well-established house have been promptly met and overcome. All claims against the house have been paid.” (30)

Regrettably, unbeknownst to Jesse Rhodes, the lifeline which he had come to depend upon was about to be severed.

ENDGAME

Because of his willingness to unstintingly abet the personal ambitions of his family members, John M. Rhodes had unwittingly left the Sacramento City Bank vulnerable to an unanticipated crisis which was brewing in the office of the California State Treasurer, where former expressman James Rhodes had been installed as a clerk (thanks to the trusting largess of brother John, who had compromised his bank's assets by endorsing the bond of State Treasurer Henry Bates as a prelude to James' appointment.)

Bates was a practicing physician before being elected State Treasurer, and his inexperience in matters of finance (!) rendered him putty in the hands of his longtime friend and advisor, expressman Edwin A. Rowe. Rowe, who had served as Bates' "confidential clerk" before assuming the presidency of the Pacific Express Company, was a scheming opportunist whose avaricious tendencies were exceeded only by his

Figure 39. $10,000 promissory note of Jesse Rhodes, which amount Uncle Jesse secured from nephew John M. Rhodes' Sacramento City Bank as a means to keep his faltering Express and Banking House afloat. Jesse Rhodes died in Ohio four months before the note matured, and the principal "due Oct 22/25 [1857]" was never repaid. (From Jesse Rhodes' Probate File, Clerk/Recorder's Office, Redding, Shasta County, California.)
pennant for larceny. To further his own ends, Rowe manipulated not only Bates, but also the State funds in Bates' charge, and eventually rumblings were heard emanating from the Legislature that an accounting was soon to be had. (31)

When an Investigative Committee at length audited the contents of the Treasurer's vault, they found that more than a quarter of a million dollars was missing, and impeachment proceedings were initiated against Bates. Word quickly spread that banker John M. Rhodes was one of Bates' bondsmen, and alarmed depositors flocked to the Sacramento City Bank to withdraw their money. Rhodes' creditors also insisted upon immediate payment of the balances due them, and on the morning of Feb 12, 1857, unable to readily convert enough assets to coin to meet the demands being levied against him, John M. Rhodes closed the doors of his Sacramento City Bank for the last time.

Deprived of its solitary vestige of support, Jesse Rhodes' Express and Banking House could no longer sustain itself, and the almost five-year run of the Rhodes Expresses came to an end.

Chastened by his involvement in the cumulative sequence of events which led to the downfall of the Sacramento City Bank, in March of 1857, Jesse Rhodes left California for Ohio to "make some monied arrangements" which he anticipated would reverse nephew John's, as well as his own, waning fortunes. Not of overly strong constitution to begin with, and laboring under the excessive strain imposed by what proved to be a futile attempt to accomplish what he had set out to do, he sickened and died in Cleveland, Ohio on Jun 27, 1857.

John M. Rhodes later elaborated on their collective travails when he revealed, "At the time of my uncle's death he was in arrears with me by the amount of over $30,000 - which sum represents my loss through him ..." Alluding specifically to the Trinity Mountain Robbery, John further related, " ... the [10,000] loss through the express robbery - primarily his was really mine (by virtue of a loan made to Uncle Jesse to compensate for the unrecovered portion of the stolen gold dust, which loan, among several others, was never repaid)." (32)

William T. Sherman succinctly summed up the temporary insolvency of John M. Rhodes and the failure of the Sacramento City Bank, proclaiming, "Of all our interior correspondents, I have always thought best of Rhodes. He was so cautious and did his own work. His fatal error was going on bond of an official and a California official at that." (33)

While the Gold Rush chapter of his California chronicle may have ended in adverse circumstances, like Sherman, John M. Rhodes' most telling campaigns were yet to come, and the setbacks of the 1850's proved to be no match for Rhodes' indomitable spirit and strength of character as he discarded the mantle of banker and began anew.

TWILIGHT

By the time that James Rhodes divested himself of Rhodes & Co.'s Express in July of 1855, twenty-nine year old George, the youngest of the Rhodes brothers, had already liquidated his business interests in Yreka and was residing in Sacramento. He is listed on Page 69 of Colville's Sacramento Directory For The Year Commencing August 1, 1855, as a "rentier at J.[ohn] M. Rhodes' [house]."

When not distracted by Sacramento's enticing amenities, George Rhodes leisurely ruminated over his future prospects. On Sep 3, 1855, while engaged with friends in an afternoon of camaraderie in the Alhambra Saloon, he was seized by a "stroke of apoplexy" which left him prostrate upon the floor. John M. Rhodes immediately procured a buggy and was rushing him to their M Street residence when George expired. His premature death marked him as the first to occupy the family plot in Sacramento's City Cemetery.

As for James Rhodes, the Bates defalcation ended his term as clerk/bookkeeper in the tainted State Treasurer's Office, and he subsequently strived to recoup a modicum of the success and prosperity he once had enjoyed. In November of 1858, he was peddling "Childs & Co.'s Patent Elastic Fire and Water-Proof Roofing" in Shasta, where he had formerly gained his much-deserved reputation as an accomplished expressman and banker. By 1860, he had moved to San Francisco, being listed in the census of that year as a "Merchant," with real estate
holdings valued at "[$]1,000," and a personal estate of "[$]500." One has to wonder what had become of the thirty-thousand dollars obtained from his sale of Rhodes & Co.'s Express in 1855, but perhaps that amount had constituted nothing more than a "paper profit" borne of an accounting shell-game. The passing years once again found James in Sacramento, where he met an untimely death at forty-four years of age on Jul 17, 1865. Author Robert D. Livingston provided an epitaph of sorts when he wrote in a definitive article published in the June 1997 issue of Western Express that, "James Rhodes never again attained the importance of his earlier days in the tri-county area, but his contributions to long-distance expressing continue to perpetuate his memory." (34)

The same summer that James Rhodes was laid to rest beside brother George, the remains of Rhodes & Co.'s messenger James McBride (killed on the Pearl in 1855), and also the adjacent interred body of (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.'s messenger Robert McCabe (who died on the Belle a year later), were exhumed and unceremoniously shoveled into a common grave in a less prominent part of the cemetery. Although at their deaths both men had garnered all of the (evidently fleeting) honorariums which a respectful citizenry could bestow, the unmarked location of their secondary sepulcher swiftly passed from memory. Because of encroachment upon the cemetery's boundaries over the years, today's best guess is that when Gideon's trumpet sounds, the forgotten expressmen will likely arise from beneath the asphalt and gravel of Sacramento's Broadway Boulevard, or from beneath the black-topped tarmac housing the cemetery's maintenance building. Sic Transit Gloria ...

After Jesse Rhodes' death in Cleveland in 1857, Mary Rhodes, the wife whom he left behind in California awaiting his intended return, spent time over many years probating his estate in both Sacramento and Shasta Counties (Figure 40). The estate's liabilities far exceeded its assets, and she was left penniless but for the support afforded her over the remainder of her lifetime by John M. Rhodes. She died in 1873.

Solomon D. Brastow, whose trigger-finger "fairly itched" at his inability to contest the pillaging of the treasure he had been shepherding over Trinity Mountain in 1856, joined Wells Fargo & Co. in November of 1857, and his proven skills led to rapid advancement. (35) In 1866, his interest no doubt had been piqued by the rumors circulating in newspapers to the effect that:

"The highwaymen who robbed Brastow, the Expressman, on Trinity Mountain several
years ago, having served out their time at San Quentin, returned recently and camped on Trinity Mountain, it is supposed to find the money they buried” (Figure 41). (36)

Carter informed him that on the occasion of the return to their mountain depository as referenced in the papers, he and his cronies had come away from their quest empty-handed. Such was no surprise to Brastow, for it was common knowledge among the "locals" that while the bandits were imprisoned, good citizens from far and near had indulged in many a search for the unaccounted-for portion of the sequestered gold. One lucky seeker eventually uncovered the remnants of the hidden trove, and applying the exculpatory axiom, "Gold is where you find it!," elected not to hand over the last of the buried bonanza to the proper authorities.

Years after the appearance of such articles, reformed bandit leader W. T. Carter was passing through San Francisco where he looked up Sol Brastow, then the recently promoted Superintendent of Wells, Fargo & Co.’s Western Division. During the course of what (at least initially) must have been a somewhat terse exchange on Brastow's part,

S. D. Brastow (Figure 42) continued his long and distinguished career with Wells, Fargo & Co., and
he was still at the reins when the San Francisco Earthquake struck on the morning of Apr 18, 1906. He and his family survived the tremors, but their house and all of their possessions were consumed in the fire which ensued. Leaving San Francisco, they moved across the bay to Alameda for the reason that Brastow could not bear to look upon the devastation wrought in the city where, in so very many respects, he and Wells Fargo had both come of age. Just weeks past the earthquake, he was returning from a business trip to Portland when he caught a cold which developed into pneumonia. For possibly only the second time in his life, the first having been that March morning on Trinity Mountain half a century before, Solomon Dupee Brastow was unable to mount an effective resistance and, once again yielding to the inevitable, he quietly passed away on Jun 5, 1906.

John M. Rhodes, the man who had started it all when he sailed through the Golden Gate on Jun 23, 1850, was the last surviving major participant in the Rhodes express and banking saga. The financial panic of February 1855 had driven home to him the disastrous potentialities lurking in California Gold Rush banking, and in 1856 he had fortuitously provided a haven against the volatilities of his profession by purchasing the one-half part of Rancho Canada de Capay, a Spanish Land Grant located in the Capay Valley, Yolo County, California. In the spring of 1857, he and his family withdrew to the 16,000 acre retreat when it became clear to him that only his concerted efforts expended over time would resolve the issues which clouded his future after the failure of the Sacramento City Bank. He did not take advantage of the bankruptcy laws, or of the statute of limitations, to cancel the debts incurred primarily through his involvement with his late uncle, Jesse Rhodes. He instead utilized his appreciable landholdings to generate capital which he channeled to his creditors until the last of his obligations was satisfied. By assiduously applying his business acumen, coupled with an unswerving integrity in his dealings with others, he regained his security and financial independence.

In 1865, John returned to Sacramento with his family to enable his children to attend that city's schools. In 1877, he again relocated, moving to Woodland to oversee the most successful of the three grist mills which he had acquired over the previous decade. A year later, he was elected a representative to California's Constitutional Convention, where he was instrumental in drafting the new Constitution for his adopted state.

Yearning for greater tranquility in his life, and "attracted by the mountain streams of pure water, green meadows, and the pine forests of the contiguous mountains," in 1883 he purchased a 1788 acre ranch in Long Valley, Lassen County, California, spending his declining years there happily surrounded by family and friends. (37)

Jesse Mason Rhodes, John's youngest son, and at whose behest John authored the slim volume of remembrances so often quoted herein, made the final entry in that journal when he inscribed, "My dear father, John Milton Rhodes, died in Reno [Nevada] on August 4, 1908 at 6 minutes of 6 PM, and was buried in the Masonic Cemetery of that city." (38)

John M. Rhodes wrote that the sketch of his life as set forth in his reminiscences "will not be the record of any great achievements either in public life or as a civilian," yet a recurrent thread which I found woven throughout as I researched the man and his accomplishments revealed that he was dearly beloved by his family, and deeply respected by his friends, and by those with whom he had interacted in matters of business and politics. Such was indeed a "great achievement" of the highest order, a legacy of virtue, honor, and trust internalized by his children, and manifested in the lives of his descendants down to those of the present generation.

FINIS.

ADDENDUM

The three figures contained on the following pages constitute the Addendum for this article. They are followed by the Footnotes/Bibliography.
ADDENDUM 1. (Hiram Lusk to J. M. Rhodes). From: Book Number 2 of Deeds, Pages 264 and 265 (consolidated), Siskiyou County Recorder’s Office, Yreka, California
ENDNOTES / BIBLIOGRAPHY

1) Courtesy of the Center for Sacramento History, Cecil E. Rhodes Collection, 1980/145/001, pp. 28-29


3) Courtesy of the Center for Sacramento History, Cecil E. Rhodes Collection, 1980/145/001, p. 2

4) Gregory, Tom, History of Yolo County California With Biographical Sketches Of The Leading Men and Women of the County, Historic Record Company, Los Angeles, (1913)

5) Courtesy of the Center for Sacramento History, Cecil E. Rhodes Collection, 1980/145/001, p. 11

6) Ibid, p. 12

7) John M Rhodes to James Purdy, MSS 862 (Letter Number 10 of date June 28, 1850), Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah


9) Previously, some authors writing on the subject of the Rhodes Expresses indicated that the first published ad announcing the inception of Rhodes & Lusk’s Express appeared in the Shasta Courier, Vol. 1 No. 1, of date Mar 13, 1852 (of which no surviving copies exist). This premise was deduced from the few vintage 1852 issues of the Courier then available. However, current researchers and authors are able to access additional early issues of the Courier which have come to light during the intervening years. Two of these, the Vol. 1 No. 2 issue of Mar 20, 1852 (American Antiquarian Society), and the Vol. 1 No. 7 issue of Apr 24, 1852 (Shasta County Library, Redding, Calif.), afford new insights regarding the actual date when partners Rhodes and Lusk first advertised their express in the Courier. While the issue of Mar 13, 1852 DID contain the ad of Rhodes, Purdy & McNulty’s Sacramento City Bank (as denoted by the “mar 13” date in the lower corner of the ad in the March 20th issue), no Rhodes & Lusk’s Express ad was contained in the issue of March 13th (as evidenced by its absence in the issue of March 20th). Conversely, the Apr 24, 1852 issue DOES contain an ad for Rhodes & Lusk’s Express, which ad bears a date of “a(pril) 24” in its lower corner, signifying that Apr 24, 1852 was the date the ad first ran in the Courier. Until/unless additional copies of the Courier are found (bridging the gap between the issues of Mar 20, and Apr 24, 1852) which alter the status of the present findings, it is apparent that Apr 24, 1852 marked the date of Rhodes & Lusk’s initial ad in the Shasta Courier, not Mar 13, 1852. This more closely coincides with the dates upon which ads of Rhodes & Lusk’s Express first appeared in the Sacramento Union (Apr 17, 1852), and the San Francisco Alta (Apr 30, 1852).

10) Newspaper, Yreka Mountain Herald, October 29, 1853

11) Newspaper, Shasta Courier, December 10, 1853

12) Phillips, Henry Byron, Department of Western Franks and Locals, Filatelic Facts and Fallacies, Vol 3 No 4, January 1895, p. 27


14) Newspaper, Nevada Journal, Feb 2, 1855 - Engineer Wadleigh was pilloried in the newspapers of the day, which in essence tried him in absentia, alleging that he had negligently allowed the water level in the Pearl’s boiler to sink so low that the resultant explosive gas fueled the blast which destroyed the boat, decimating its passengers and crew. When he first appeared in public three days later, Wadleigh stated that after the boiler exploded, he had lowered the skiff suspended near the stern of the stricken vessel, which he employed to rescue three individuals floundering in the water before he rowed to shore and made his way to his Sacramento residence. Feeling (quite correctly as it turned out) that he would be made the scapegoat for the tragedy, and fearing for his immediate safety, he had sequestered himself until passions had cooled
somewhat. One unbiased newspaper editor, citing the fact that part of Wadleigh’s story had been confirmed by one of those whom he had rescued, lamented in print that it was a deplorable facet of human nature which demanded that someone always had to be found to bear the burden of blame whenever a disaster of such magnitude occurred. Wadleigh was arrested on January 29th, but it was quickly determined that the available evidence (based almost exclusively upon unsubstantiated conjecture and innuendo) would not support a charge of criminal negligence on his part. Although the filing of “civil proceedings” was subsequently explored by San Francisco’s acting District Attorney, I found no record that such “proceedings” were ever initiated. Nevertheless, Wadleigh had already been condemned in the court of public opinion, and he never again plied his trade on the inland waterways of the West. In 1880, he was listed in the census of that year as an “Engineer in Saw Mill” at North Bend, Oregon. Andrew Strong Wadleigh died in San Francisco on Feb 6, 1908.

15) Ibid


17) Wines & Co.’s Express commenced its California operations over the summer of 1855, at which time Wells, Fargo & Co. already had a comprehensive infrastructure in place comprised of efficient agents, an expanding network of offices, and well-established routes, all of which it had developed in the three years since its arrival in the Golden State in July of 1852. How then, could the neophyte Wines & Co. have provided Messrs. Rhodes and Whitney “increased facilities for the transaction of interior business” exceeding that which Wells, Fargo & Co. had formerly afforded the Rhodes Expresses beginning in September of 1852? Unless Wines & Co. had somehow managed to achieve parity with Wells, Fargo & Co. within a short six months of its inception (an unlikely scenario which, by all accounts, was not the case), there must be some other explanation for Messrs. Rhodes and Whitney having transitioned from Wells Fargo & Co. to Wines & Co. in September of 1855. Had the working relationship existing between the Rhodes Expresses and Wells, Fargo & Co. deteriorated for some reason which we are unaware of today, prompting James Rhodes to join Wines & Co. instead of Wells, Fargo & Co. after his sale of Rhodes & Co.’s Express? Were partners Rhodes and Whitney subsequently induced to initiate an alternative liaison with Wines & Company for the same reason? Or, did James Rhodes temporarily cast his lot with Wines & Co. purely out of personal considerations, and did his presence within that organization then constitute, of and in itself, enough of a reason for Jesse Rhodes (James’ uncle), and Cornelius S. Whitney to have abandoned Wells, Fargo & Co. in favor of Wines & Company? From our isolated vantage point 159 years after the fact, we may never know the real reason(s) why the change in connecting companies actually occurred.

18) Newspaper, Sacramento Daily Democratic State Journal, Feb 6, 1856

19) Ibid, Feb 9, 1856

20) Ibid, Feb 9, 1856 - Note: James McBride was not a messenger of (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.’s Express (the last of the Rhodes Expresses), as was Robert McCabe, but rather of Rhodes & Co.’s Express (the second of the Rhodes Expresses), the proprietor of which was James Rhodes.

21) Cram, Rogers & Co.’s Express was so closely aligned with Adams & Co. that when the financial panic of February 1855 brought down Adams & Co.’s Express and Banking House, its demise undermined Cram, Rogers & Co.’s ability to carry on as before. Cram, Rogers & Co. itself weathered the storm which resulted in the ruination of so many other concerns, paying every demand made upon its offices in the mining regions and remaining solvent, but it did not possess the requisite capital and infrastructure necessary to successfully operate independently thereafter. While they did initially form a working relationship with Adams & Co.’s successor, the Pacific Express Company (much in the same vein as that previously shared with Adams & Co.), the four partners in Cram, Rogers & Co.’s Express (Robert B. Cram, Franklin A. Rogers, Alonzo E. Raynes, Richard Dugan) ultimately chose to cease their efforts to keep their faltering enterprise afloat, and Cram, Rogers & Co. was absorbed by Pacific Express in the latter part of March, 1855.
22) Newspaper, *Shasta Republican*, Jul 5, 1856
23) Ibid, Mar 15, 1856
24) Ibid, Jul 5, 1856
25) Courtesy of the Center for Sacramento History, Cecil E. Rhodes Collection, 1980/145/001, p. 27
26) Ibid, p. 25
27) Ibid, p. 25 - As is true of other aspects in the accounts of the Trinity Mountain Robbery, variances exist in the figures published as to the dollar amount of the gold dust and coin stolen during the holdup. A composite of all the pieces indicates that the total amount of loot approached the figure mentioned by John M. Rhodes in his reminiscences, “This loss of $24,000...,” which amount consisted of: $16,000 in gold dust consigned to (Jesse) Rhodes & Co.’s Express; $5,000 in gold dust taken from Rhamar Hickman; approximately $2,000-$3,000 in coin collectively taken from two of the remaining three members of the cortege, and a trifling amount of pocket change obtained from the last member of the group, Lawrence Delap.
28) As for the fifth member of the gang, a “Spaniard” known only by the name of “Domingo,” one source reported that his dead body was found “near Cottonwood, Shasta County,” further noting that “it was supposed” that he had been dispatched by one of the band in a dispute over the ultimate disposition of their plunder, which at the time of his death still lay concealed deep in the wilds of Trinity Mountain.
29) Some questions have arisen in the past concerning which of the four Greathouse Brothers (in conjunction with Hugh Sands Slicer) were involved as principals in Greathouse & Slicer’s Express. A letter written by George Greathouse to his “Dear Old Friend,” Lewis K. Wood, clears up the matter once and for all. The letter, headed “Shasta, Dec 21, 1856,” was delivered to Wood in Eureka, Humboldt County, California by Wells, Fargo & Co.’s Express. A passage contained therein states, “I am now in partnership in the Yreka Passenger Train with my youngest Bro. Robert, and
30) Newspaper, *Shasta Republican*, Dec 13, 1856
31) In August of 1855, Edwin A. Rowe was a candidate for nomination as State Controller. When he failed to garner the nomination, he actively worked behind the scenes to have his old boyhood friend, Henry Bates, secure the State Treasurer’s nomination. Rowe’s efforts were productive, and after Bates was eventually elected Treasurer, “he was set upon by designing men, who, to all intents and purposes obtained such complete control of his mind as to enable them to use the public funds as suited their desires.” First and foremost amongst those manipulating Bates and the State’s purse strings was Edwin A. Rowe, whom Bates had appointed as chief clerk and cashier in the Treasurer’s Office. The stench of the ongoing frauds finally reached the Legislature, and in February of 1857 Bates was impeached. One of the primary Articles of Impeachment charged Bates with “permitting E. A. Rowe, in the interest of himself and others, to withdraw moneys from the Treasury for their use in business, with particular reference to an item of $124,000, and efforts to conceal such illegal acts from public knowledge.” For his speculation with public funds, Rowe was denounced in the press as a “smooth-faced scoundrel,” a “base miscreant,” and a “thrice-damned villain.” Because of his refusal to answer certain questions posed to him by the Grand Jury, as well as during the subsequent proceedings of the trial courts, Rowe was imprisoned for contempt of court. He was released on appeal, but was ultimately rearrested and afterwards spent about a year in jail. In December of 1856, three months prior to his incarceration, Rowe had assumed the presidency of the Pacific Express Company, which was then locked in a competitive struggle with Wells, Fargo & Co. The negative notoriety devolving upon president Rowe, who was publicly cast as a primary perpetrating factor in the Bates defalcation, undermined the public’s confidence in the fidelity of Pacific Express, propelling the company to its ignominious end in April of 1857.


34) Livingston, Robert, “Early Expresses In Shasta, Trinity and Siskiyou Counties,” Western Express, June 1997, p. 22


36) Newspaper, Yreka Journal, Dec14, 1866

37) Courtesy of the Center for Sacramento History, Cecil E. Rhodes Collection, 1980/145/001, p. 37

38) Ibid, p. 41

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