

domingo, 25 de febrero de 2018

GUAYAQUIL TO GUATEMALA - FEBRUARY 26, 1855

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Internal docketing tells us this letter was written in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on February 26, 1855. Because there is no indication of a postal fee, it was most likely carried out of the mails by the Pacific Steam Navigation Company (PSNC) to Panama (City) on the west coast where it was received on March 9, 1855. In Panama the letter was rated one shilling in manuscript and PAID as indicated by the red British Crown Circle "PAID IN PANAMA". From Panama it traversed the isthmus north, probably on the newly constructed rail line, to Colón (Aspinwall) the east coast.

The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company (RMSP) began service from Southampton or, at times, Falmouth, to the West Indies in the 1840s. One route was England, St. Thomas, Santa Marta, Cartagena and Chagres (later Colón/Aspinwall). In 1855 the RMSP extended the route monthly to the British enclave of Gray Town, Nicaragua, which was the city of San Juan del Norte.



This letter was then sent prepaid on the Royal Mail Steam Packet from Colón to Gray Town.

Since 1852, Gray Town was ruled by an independent Municipal Council. The British consul, Mr. James Green, was responsible for the forwarding of mails which he did free of charge. A great majority of the mails were destined for Europe. In 1855 a double-arc date stamp was supplied from London to be used as a receiving and transit stamp. This is the Gray Town receiving stamp on this letter. The date indicates the letter was received on March 17, 1855, which is an early, if not the earliest, use of this date stamp. Mr. Green forwarded the letter to the Nicaraguan post office without charge as agreed upon by the Municipal Council.

The letter entered the Nicaraguan postal system in San Juan del Norte and received an unrecorded double oval "Correos San Juan del Norte, R.R. Adm.". I am guessing the "R.R." are the initials of the postmaster. The letter followed the usual route through Honduras to Salvador, and from Salvador on the post road north to Guatemala (City). In Guatemala the letter was assessed 6 reales due for an incoming foreign letter.

Interestingly, the letter is addressed to a member of the Jesuit "Company of Jesus". This was the original name given by St. Ignatius who later changed the name to the "Society of Jesus". The Jesuits had been expelled from the Americas in colonial times but began to return to the Americas around 1814.