

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

THEME: Architecture

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Oak Grove Butterfield Station

AND/OR COMMON

Oak Grove Butterfield Station

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 13 miles northwest of Warner Springs on California 79

CITY, TOWN

Warner Springs XX VICINITY OF

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

43rd

STATE

California

CODE

06

COUNTY

San Diego

CODE

073

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Mr. and Mrs. Cecil A. Britt

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Oak Grove, San Diego County     VICINITY OF

STATE

California

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, San Diego County Registry of Deeds  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

San Diego

STATE

California

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey (5 photos)

DATE

1937

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress/Annex Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Oak Grove Stage Station is a well preserved one-story adobe building. The structure has been enlarged from time to time, but the northern end of it, now used as a residence, unquestionably belongs to the original ranchhouse that was erected in the 1850's. The remainder of the building is sometimes used as a general store and old gas pumps and general debris clutter the area around the building. The old oak trees still remain, however, to lend some integrity to the setting.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1858-1861

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Oak Grove Station is one of perhaps several stations still standing on the entire route of the Butterfield Overland Mail which operated between San Francisco and two eastern termini, St. Louis, Missouri, and Memphis, Tennessee, from September 15, 1858 to March 2, 1861, by means of a 2795 mile oxbow course that dipped deeply into the South. The Civil War disrupted the Butterfield services but the road over which the company's stages had operated, continued to serve as a transportation route during the postwar period. During the Civil War, the Oak Grove building was used as a hospital for Camp Wright, which occupied the ground on the east side of the present highway. The Oak Grove Stage Station is a well preserved one-story adobe building.

## HISTORY

When it became clear that the hoped for transcontinental railroad would be delayed for an undertermined period, steps were finally taken in 1857 to establish what was the first truly transcontinental stagecoach service. The company that was awarded a contract was to be officially designated as the "Overland Mail Company" but it was to become known and remembered as the "Butterfield Overland Mail" after its president, John Butterfield.

The bill authorizing the mail line became final on March 3, 1857. Bids were called for by Postmaster Aaron Venable Brown and the award went to John Butterfield and associates who included such widely known transportation magnates as William B. Dinsmore and William G. Fargo. The terms of the contract specified two eastern termini rather than one: Memphis and St. Louis. Lines from these two places were to converge at Fort Smith, Arkansas, and from there make a deep dip through Preston (Texas), El Paso, Fort Yuma, across the Imperial Valley to Los Angeles, and finally swing north through the San Joaquin Valley and Pascheco Pass to San Francisco. The total length of this so-called oxbow route was to be 2795 miles. Further, the contract required that letter mail should be carried semiweekly each way over this route within the twenty-five days prescribed by law. Mails were to be securely stowed away in a "boot," preferably under the driver's seat, "free from wet or other injury," and should, of course, be distributed to the recipients along the route. "Good four-horse post coaches or spring wagons" should be employed and passenger and mail service was to begin, as it did, on September 16, 1858, one year after signing of the contract. For its services the Butterfield concern was to receive six hundred thousand dollars per annum.

(Continued)

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Conkling, Roscoe and Margaret B., The Butterfield Overland Mail Company 1858-1869, 3 Vols., Glendale, 1946.  
 Hoover, Mildred B., Hero, E. Rensch and Ethel G., revised by Ruth Teiser, Historic Spots in California, Stanford, 1958.  
 Winther, Oscar O., The Transportation Frontier, New York, 1964.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .1

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 1	5 1 9 1 5 0	3 6 9 4 3 2 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Oak Grove Butterfield sits about ten feet back from Route 79. Because of the general clutter of sheds and other miscellaneous structures the boundary is drawn to include the house and some land on three sides, using the east edge of State Route 79 as the western boundary.

See continuation Sheet

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Patricia Heintzelman, Architectural Historian, Landmark Review Project;  
 original form prepared by Charles Snell, 1961

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey,

DATE

September 1975

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been designated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Boundary Certified

DATE

Feb 14, 1979

TITLE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

4/24/79

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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The laying out of this enormously long route under John Butterfield's direction and close supervision, doing the necessary road building, stocking and equipping the line, and working out operational details was a staggering feat. The route passed over some existing roads, but also over much natural, smooth, open desert country. Some grading was necessary, many bridges had to be built, wells dug, 141 stations either had to be built or provided for, many with accompanying corrals. Needed too were 1000 horses, 500 mules (and forage for same), 250 stagecoaches and additional freight and water wagons, food and assorted equipment, and about 800 men to operate the line.

The way-stations were designed to serve multiple purposes in that they were to operate not only as ticket offices but also as hotels or inns where passengers could, if necessary, obtain both lodging and food. Whenever the stage line passed through cities and towns, arrangements were made with existing hotels for providing these services; but in the open country stations were built by the contractors at distances ranging from ten to fifty-two miles apart. For this construction work the builders used, whenever possible, the material at hand. Therefore, some of the stations were built of stone, some of logs, and still others of adobe bricks. They varied in size from one-room shacks to others that were large enough to accommodate four to ten employees and, if necessary, about a half dozen guests.

The government established postage rates at ten cents per letter, whereas package rates varied. All those sending mail over the Butterfield facilities were to be required to mark it "via overland" or "per overland mail." After a brief period of experimentation, passenger fares from St. Louis to San Francisco, or vice versa, became fixed at two hundred dollars.

While many details were still unattended to on September 16, 1858--the last day of grace allowed under the terms of the contract--the company was on that day ready to begin operations. By that time rail service from St. Louis reached Tipton, Missouri, from which point westbound mails and passengers were to transfer from a train to a stagecoach for the long ride to San Francisco.

Public reaction to establishment of the Butterfield Overland Mail varied. Postmaster General Brown's decision to approve the deep southern route aroused bitter feelings in some parts of the North. The Chicago Tribune, for example, declared the whole operation "One of the greatest swindles ever perpetrated upon the country by the slave-holders." And even though California profited immeasurably by this new service, northern California, which had hoped for the adoption of a central route, expressed its resentment. "The deed is done," declared the Sacramento Daily Union. Expressing its skepticism the Union added: "Four-horse stages cannot be driven from San Francisco, across the seven deserts...in twenty-five days--nor in forty days--nor at all. It never has been done. It never will be done."

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Caustic as were some of the critics, the Butterfield Overland Mail was widely regarded as a successful frontier business venture. The stages usually managed to cover their overland course within the allotted twenty-five days, the average time being twenty-one days and fifteen hours. Moreover, the line attracted customers; by 1860 the combined volume of mail and passenger business taxed the capacity of available facilities. Not only did this frontier transportation enterprise prove a boon to the West coast but it was as well an aid to the Middle West and East, especially the eastern manufacturers of stagecoaches.

In spite of its successes, the Butterfield Overland Mail was doomed. Northern opposition to the Oxbow route mounted as sectional controversy deepened in intensity. Without waiting for the disruption of the Union, there was introduced in the United States Senate, early in 1861, a bill which would direct the Postmaster General to take steps leading to a shift in the Overland Mail route from the deep southern to a central route that would extend from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento. By March 12 both houses of Congress had approved the measure; but even as it did so, zealous prosouthern raiding parties had begun to harrass the line by driving off company livestock, taking possession of rolling stock, and destroying bridges along the stagecoach route. Then on March 6, only two days following Lincoln's inauguration, Butterfield's Oxbow line came to a halt. The end had not come unexpectedly, and for this reason Congressional action turned out to be a mere official recognition of an accomplished fact.

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Beginning at a point on the east side of Route 79 which is approximately 13 miles northwest of Warner Springs, proceed east 300' to a point; thence north 300' to a point; thence west 300' to the east curb of Route 79; thence south along the east curb of Route 79 to the point of origin.