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Article Summary: The article includes a brief history of the Pony Express, an annotated bibliography, a descriptive list of Pony Express stations, a tabulation of mileages between stations from St. Joseph to Fort Laramie and brief descriptions of Pony Express riders.

Scroll down for complete article.

Cataloging Information:

Names: William B Russell, Ben Holladay

Place Names: St. Joseph, Missouri; Sacramento, California

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Photographs / Images: Pony Express Stations: Seneca, Kansas, and Marysville, Kansas; Hollenberg Ranch Pony Express Station, near Hanover, Kansas; Willow Island Pony Express Station, now in Cozad City Park; Gilman's Ranch Station, now in Gothenburg Park; sutler's store, Fort Laramie National Monument; Midway Home Station: plaque and view of the building located in Harry Williams' lower 96 Ranch, south of Gothenburg; Paul Henderson and Merrill Mattes examining Pony Express maps at Bridgeport; photo of W. H. Jackson's painting "Pony Express Fording the Platte in Winter"; eastern portion of official map of the National Pony Express Centennial Association

THE PONY EXPRESS: ACROSS NEBRASKA FROM ST. JOSEPH TO FORT LARAMIE

BY

MERRILL MATTES and PAUL HENDERSON

I INTRODUCTION¹

THE famed Pony Express lasted just eighteen months, from April 3, 1860, to October 24, 1861. It was a meteor, blazing through the skies of history, which burned out as the American Civil War began its thunderous barrage. The excitement which "the Pony" created in its

¹ As the centennial of the Pony Express approached, the lack of an adequate, available narrative of the Pony Express in Nebraska occasioned the editor to ask Mr. Mattes to undertake a study. With the assistance of Mr. Henderson, Mr. Mattes has checked the available sources and compiled the following report. The authors state that in a true sense this is an "introduction" to the subject, and express the hope that it will call forth refinements of their introductory work.

Merrill Mattes is Regional Historian, Region Two, National Park Service, Omaha.

His collaborator, Paul Henderson of Bridgeport, Nebraska, is a history enthusiast and authority on the overland trails.

own time was lost in the coming of transcontinental telegraph and the bellowing iron horse traversing the continent on shining rails.

Now, one hundred years later, the Pony Express Centennial is creating a new wave of excitement.

In an age when the continent can be spanned by jet planes in a few hours, and the near future holds the realistic promise of a trip to the moon and beyond into the oceans of outer space—in such an age, the idea of relays of men on horseback seems quaint and antiquated. What, then, is the reason for the fascination of the Pony Express?

It is not in the stars but within ourselves that the answer lies. The Pony Express rider is symbolic of the bold imagination, the daring enterprise, and the reckless courage which is the highest expression of the American character. This has been admirably expressed by Arthur Chapman:

The "Pony" was one of the outward expressions of a certain business audacity which was common . . . on the frontier. Men plunged, and if they lost, were game in defeat. . . . The Pony was a financial failure which can be translated in terms of glory.

The Pony Express seldom failed those who anxiously awaited its arrival. Like a shuttle it wove back and forth across a 2,000 mile loom. . . . What it wove into the pattern of American life will be admired as long as we care for such things as adventure, romance, and rugged devotion to duty.

It is not for mere sentiment that this nation cherishes its heroes, preserves its historic places, and seizes upon the birthdays of events to celebrate the past. It is from a deep instinctive recognition that noble and inspiring patriotic traditions are the bands of steel that bind us together as a nation; and that when these traditions lose their force and meaning we will disintegrate, spiritually and politically.

It is fitting, therefore, that the National Pony Express Centennial Association and the Postmaster-General of the United States have joined forces to sponsor appropriate celebrations, climaxed by the actual re-enactment of Pony

Express runs, east and west, between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California.

Although many individuals contributed to the idea of fast-horse relays to speed communications to California, the reality was brought about by William B. Russell, the imaginative and daring entrepreneur of the great freighting firm of Russell, Majors, and Waddell.

Russell, Majors and Waddell (as a private venture beginning in April 1860 and as a federally sanctioned project beginning in July 1861) was the firm which backed the Pony Express project financially and bore the brunt of disastrous losses. Other companies were involved as agents in the business and before the Pony Express came to a close in October 1861, Ben Holladay took over the management. Nevertheless the great credit for the remarkable venture remains with William B. Russell, who conceived and executed the bold plan with the somewhat reluctant but nevertheless honorable backing of his partners, Alexander Majors and William B. Waddell.

It cost nearly \$100,000 to put the Express in operation between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California. Something like five hundred horses of superior stamina, including Kentucky breed and California mustangs, were purchased at around \$175 each for the arduous service, a figure far in excess of the twenty-five to fifty dollars which would buy an ordinary horse in those days. Over eighty riders, "young skinny fellows, unmarried" were employed at beginning wages of fifty dollars per month plus board. About 190 Pony Express stations were established, complete with station keepers, stables, animals, and equipment.

The earlier stations, which served stage coach passengers and provided spare teams, were located at approximately twenty-five-mile intervals so that almost 50 percent of the Pony Express stations were stage stations already established, which then saw double duty. This left approximately ninety-five brand new Pony Express stations to be set up, since the limit of the horse going at top speed was

in the neighborhood of twelve to fifteen miles. Generally speaking, therefore, every second Pony Express station was a previously established stage station. The others were new stations thrown together hurriedly and stocked for the new service.

At the outset, each rider rode three mounts for a total distance of around forty-five miles to a "home station." He would then carry the mail coming in the opposite direction to the previous home station. While at first it appears that the home stations were at an average of forty-five to fifty miles apart, later, perhaps in the interest of economy, home stations were more nearly at ninety mile intervals and the riders made six changes of mounts. From the testimony of the riders, there were great irregularities in the distances traveled. Occasionally an emergency situation would require continuous riding by one man of two hundred miles or more!

Mail was sent by the Pony originally for five dollars per half ounce, but later this figure dropped to two dollars and then to one dollar per half ounce. It was carried in four flaps in a leather *mochila* which was thrown over the Pony Express saddle at each relay station. The ponies started from St. Joseph and Sacramento on a once-a-week basis, but later this was stepped up to twice a week.

The original goal was a mail delivery from terminus to terminus in ten days, and in order to achieve this the Pony riders had to average nine or ten miles an hour across the approximate 2,000 miles. The ponies sometimes achieved spurts of sustained speed of twenty miles an hour, but of course the average time was cut way down by the obstacles of terrain, adverse weather, Indians, and accidents. The fastest time on record of around seven days and seventeen hours was recorded when a special relay was set in motion to deliver President Lincoln's inaugural address to California. In this connection the Pony Express is credited with being a very important factor in cementing the new state of California to the threatened Union in 1860-1861.

Operational headquarters for the Pony Express were located at St. Joseph, Missouri, Salt Lake City, Utah and Sacramento, California. There were five major divisions on the line. A. E. Lewis was the superintendent from St. Joseph to Fort Kearny and Joseph Slade was superintendent from Fort Kearny to Horseshoe Station, Wyoming.

In 1912 Robert Harvey of the Nebraska State Historical Society and President of the Oregon Trail Commission made the first systematic effort to identify stage stations, Pony Express stations, and the general course of the Oregon-California Trail through Nebraska. A by-product of this survey was the line of monuments marking the trail and related sites.

Over the years other individuals have taken a keen personal interest in the problem of trail and site identification. In the early 1930's Joseph G. Masters of Omaha and others collaborated in an effort to identify the old Pony stations. With the approach of the Pony Express Centennial in 1959 the writers gave serious thought to the problem of identifying Pony Express stations through Nebraska so that any centennial observances would be fitted within the framework of authentic scholarship.

In October 1959 a field trip was made over the trail between Fort Kearny and the Wyoming line. Available data were further analyzed and additional interviews conducted with people having specialized knowledge of the subject. Among these were Messrs. Harry Williams and Paul Jenkins of Gothenburg; Mr. Warren Doolittle of North Platte; and John Oliver of Bridgeport, Nebraska. The results of the field trip and interviews were combined with information from sources listed in the next section.

II. ANNOTATED PONY EXPRESS BIBLIOGRAPHY²

Allen, O. *Allen's Guide Book and Map to the Gold Fields of Kansas and Nebraska*. Washington, 1859.

This rare guide book includes reference to the numbered sequence of "U. S. Mail Stations" which existed under the government contract with Hockaday and Liggett, taken over by William B. Russell (as Jones, Russell and Company) in May 1859. Often referred to in Section III. Basis for column 2 of Section IV.

Andreas, A. T. (ed.) *History of the State of Nebraska*. Chicago, 1882.

Early county histories, with glimpses of places and events along the overland route.

Anonymous. "The Pony Express Rides Again," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, XXV, No. 4 (Winter 1959), 369-385.

Checklist of Kansas stations and digest of contemporary newspaper accounts.

Bloss, Roy S. *Pony Express—The Great Gamble*. Berkeley, California, 1959.

Most recent book on the subject. A warmed over treatment of material pioneered by Bradley, Chapman and Settle. Has some excellent illustrations.

Bradley, Glenn D. *The Story of the Pony Express*. Chicago, 1913.

The best pioneer treatment of the subject, generally reliable, and with the advantage of proximity of the writer to eyewitnesses. It is being reprinted as the "official Centennial history" by Waddell F. Smith, President, Pony Express Centennial Association.

² In constructing this paper the need for a listing of Pony Express literature became apparent. Since repetitious footnotes from the same sources threatened to slow the narrative of the paper, this annotated bibliography plus the fourth section were put in to replace footnotes.

Burton, Richard F. *City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California*. London, 1861.

One of the great classics of travel up the Platte route, by an English gentleman adventurer with a vivid imagination and an addiction to classical allusions. Burton is a primary source on Pony Express stations. Of particular value is his "Emigrants' Itinerary" in the Appendix, compiled from his diary, "showing the distances between camping-places, the several mail-stations where mules are changed, the hours of travel, the character of the roads . . ." Often referred to in Section III.

Carrington, Margaret I. *Ab-Sa-Ra-Ka, Land of Massacre: Being the Experience of an Officer's Wife on the Plains*. Philadelphia, 1879.

In 1866 the author accompanied her husband westward. She affords vivid descriptions of various establishments which were the Pony Express stations of 1861.

Chapman, Arthur. *The Pony Express: The Records of a Romantic Adventure in Business*. Chicago, 1932.

One of the most satisfying treatments of the subject. Contains interviews with Pony Express riders.

Clark, C. M., M.D. *A Trip to Pike's Peak*. San Jose, California, 1958.

Another traveler of 1860, he throws a few rays of light on the "ranches" or stations along the Pony route as far as Julesburg.

Conkling, Roscoe and Margaret B. *The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857-1869: Its organization and operation over the Southern Route to 1861; subsequently over the Central Route to 1866; and under Wells Fargo and Company in 1869*. 3 vols. Glendale, 1947.

Especially chapter on Overland Mail on the Central Route, and Appendix J.—*Stations on Original Central*

Route of Overland Mail Company in 1861 (Route No. 10773), from U. S. Senate, Exec. Docs., 46th Congress, 3d Sess., I, No. 21, pp. 7-8.

Dawson, Charles. *Pioneer Tales of the Oregon Trail and Jefferson County*. Topeka, 1912.

A rare and exceptionally informative county history which places the magnifying glass on a section of the Pony route in southeastern Nebraska. Several references in section III.

Denny, James. "A Trip to Pinpoint Pony Express Stops," *Omaha World-Herald*, November 1, 1959.

A report on the Mattes-Henderson effort to retrace the Pony Express route and locate station sites between Fort Kearny and the Wyoming line.

Ellenbecker, John G.: Letter to Paul Henderson on questions concerning Pony Express Route. Several references in Section III.

Frederick, J. V. *Ben Holladay, the Stage Coach King*. Glendale, 1940, pp. 46-68.

Discussion of the Central Overland Route.

Hafen, LeRoy R. *The Overland Mail, 1849-1869: Promoter of Settlement, Precursor of Railroads*. Cleveland, 1926. pp. 165-195.

A scholarly, thoroughly documented analysis of the subject.

Harvey, August F. "A New Map of the Principal Routes to the Gold Regions of Colorado Territory," 1862.

A contemporary road map which identifies establishments on the "Denver Road" coinciding with the Pony Express through lower Nebraska. Referred to in Section III.

Harvey, Robert and Sheldon, Addison E. "The Oregon Trail: Monuments and Markers in Nebraska." Report

of their locations and inscriptions from a survey made . . . during the years 1917 to 1923.

Typed manuscript in Nebraska State Historical Society Library.

Henderson, Paul. "The Story of Mud Springs," *Nebraska History*, XXXII, No. 2 (June 1951), 108-120.

Long, Margaret. *The Oregon Trail*. Denver, 1954.

This is a handbook for dedicated trail "fans."

Mattes, Merrill J. "The Sutler's Store at Fort Laramie," *Annals of Wyoming*, XVIII, No. 2 (July 1946), pp. 93-138.

Documented study of a famous building, still standing, which dates back to 1849 and which was associated with the Pony Express in its heyday.

----- "Chimney Rock on the Oregon Trail," *Nebraska History*, XXXVI, No. 1 (March 1955).

----- "Fort Mitchell, Scotts Bluff, Nebraska Territory," *Nebraska History*, XXXIII, No. 1 (March, 1952).

Majors, Alexander. *Seventy Years on the Frontier*. Chicago, 1893.

One of the founders of the Pony Express vividly recalls "The Pony Express and Its Brave Riders."

Masters, Joseph G.; Williams, Harry L.; Henderson, Paul; and Prather, Donald E. "Pony Express Stations in Nebraska." Ms., ca. 1935, in Nebraska State Historical Society.

An earlier effort to identify the Pony stops across Nebraska.

National Archives. Natural Resources Division. Odometer Book from Fort Kearny, South Pass and Honey Lake Wagon Road Expedition. 1857 (unpublished).

National Archives. Record Group No. 28. Postmaster General's Order and accompanying data relating to Route 10.773 of the Overland Mail Company, dated March 12, 1861, modifying the contract with that Company for route 12.518, executed September 16, 1857.

Root, Frank A. and Connelley, William E. *The Overland Stage to California*. Topeka, Kansas, 1901.

Frank Root's personal reminiscences as a mail messenger making his first overland trip in 1863. The stage stations he describes are two years older than the Pony stations of 1861, but they are still the same stations. His dissertation on "The Overland Pony Express," reflecting personal acquaintance with some of the riders, is a classic. Much used in Section III.

Settle, Raymond W., and Settle, Mary Lund. *Saddles and Spurs: The Pony Express Saga*. Harrisburg, Pa., 1955.

Perhaps the best and most reliable of recent works on the subject, especially on background material.

Shumway, Grant L. *History of Western Nebraska and Its People*. Lincoln, 1921.

In the early presettlement phases, including Pony Express data, of doubtful reliability.

Twain, Mark. *Roughing It*. New York, 1871. Vol. I, pp. 52-54.

A magnificent and oft-quoted description of a Pony rider in action near Scotts Bluff.

Ware, Eugene F. *The Indian War of 1864*. Kansas, 1911.

Ware is one of the most alert and intelligent observers of military posts, stations, and landmarks along the Platte route in the early 1860's.

III. PONY EXPRESS STATIONS, ST. JOSEPH TO FORT LARAMIE³

Missouri Station No. 1—St. Joseph: "St. Joe," as the eastern terminus of the transcontinental line, was, of course a home station. The general office of the Pony Express was located in the Patee House, the town's most celebrated hostelry. This structure is still standing.

Perhaps even more expressive of the Russell, Majors and Waddell enterprise is the "Pony Express Stable," generally accepted as an authentic survivor of the exciting days of 1860-1861. This structure, located on the east edge of Patee Park opposite 912 Penn Street, is reputed to have been built by Benjamin Holladay in 1859, used by the Central Overland California and Pikes Peak Express Company as a base for its Pony riders. Gutted by fire in 1879, the walls remained over the decades, and in recent years the structure has been restored by the Goetz Pony Express Foundation. It is now operated as a historical museum.

The spirit of the Pony Express finds expression in a magnificent statue of a Pony Express rider which stands in front of the City Hall.

Riders out of "St. Joe" had only a brief gallop to the wide Missouri River, over which they were conveyed by ferry boats. At the time of the Pony there were two steam ferries in operation, with Bellemont and Elwood on the

³ To give continuity and unity to the Nebraska section the stations are listed from St. Joseph to Fort Laramie, two outstanding features of the trail. The following Pony Express structures still stand along this part of the trail.

St. Joseph—Both Patee House and Stables

Log Cabin—Rising's cabin, altered

Seneca—Hotel, relocated

Marysville—altered

Cottonwood—Hollenberg Ranch, unaltered

Willow Island—altered and relocated in Cozad

Midway—unaltered

Machette's—altered and relocated in Gothenburg

Fort Laramie—Sutler's Store

All station names on the first line of an entry are from the mail contract of 1861. If the station was not on the mail contract the most common name appears in parenthesis.

Kansas side as their respective destinations. (The modern traveler crosses the river by bridge on U.S. 36 leaving Missouri close to the former ferry terminal.)

Kansas Station No. 1—(Elwood and/or Wathena): These towns (which are still in existence), respectively about five and seven miles west of St. Joseph (both on the south side of a Missouri River bend), claim a station. The *Elwood Free Press* of April 21, 1860, identifies Elwood as a station and this claim is supported by Allen and Long. A Pony Express monument which once graced U.S. 36, one-half mile south of Elwood, disappeared in the great Missouri River flood of 1952.

According to Ellenbecker, Pony riders used the Bellemont ferry and landed at Wathena (now well inland, but in 1860 apparently on the river's edge). From there the rider used the old Pottawatomie trail for forty-two miles to Kennekuk where it was joined by the Leavenworth city road. It is doubtful that either Elwood or Wathena was a bona fide relay station since the first certain station (Troy) is only fifteen miles from St. Joseph, the distance of the average ride per pony. Further, no station between St. Joseph and Troy was indicated in the U.S. Mail Contract. It is possible that the Company had an agent on the Kansas side to make certain that the mail got off to a good dry-land start. This would constitute a "station" of sorts but not a relay station. Such an agent could have been at either Elwood or Wathena.

Kansas Station No. 2—Troy: A monument standing in the northwest corner of the Court House lawn is thought to be at the site of the original relay station. The old stage road out of St. Joseph via Elwood junctioned at Troy with the old Pottawatomie trail that crossed via the Bellemont ferry. Burton describes the Troy of 1860 as "a few wretched shanties."

Kansas Station No. 3—Lewis: This site may have been in Sec. 19, T. 4 S., R. 19 E., but has not been definitely located. The "Lewis" on the Mail Contract suggests the



(Photo, courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

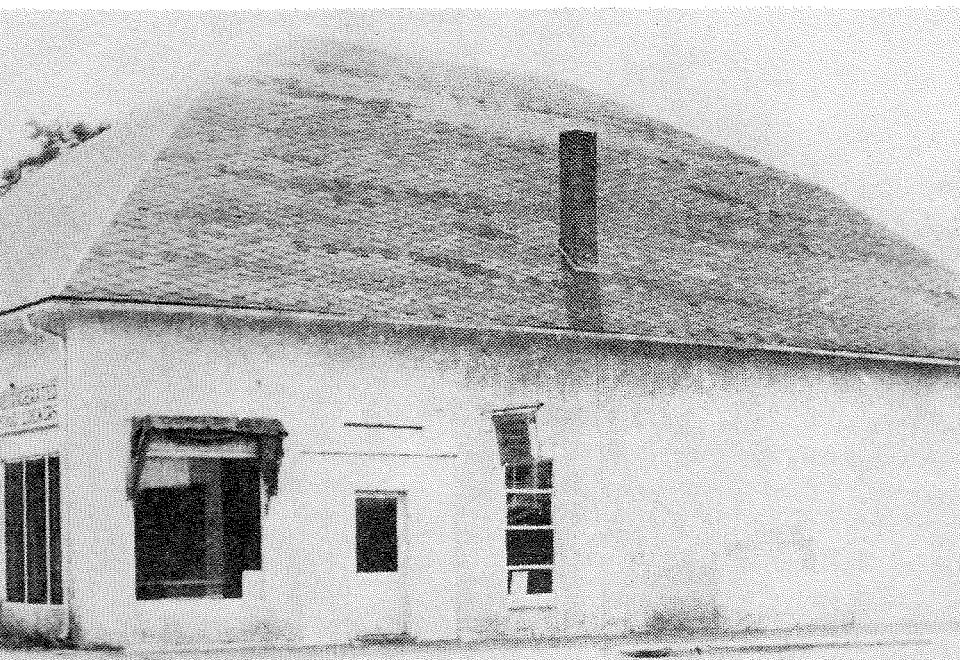
Above—Pony Express Station, Seneca, Kansas

Originally a hotel kept by John E. Smith, this building was moved about three blocks from its original location and converted into a private residence.

Below—Pony Express Station, Marysville, Kansas

Remodeled, this building still stands in the downtown area.

(Photo, courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)



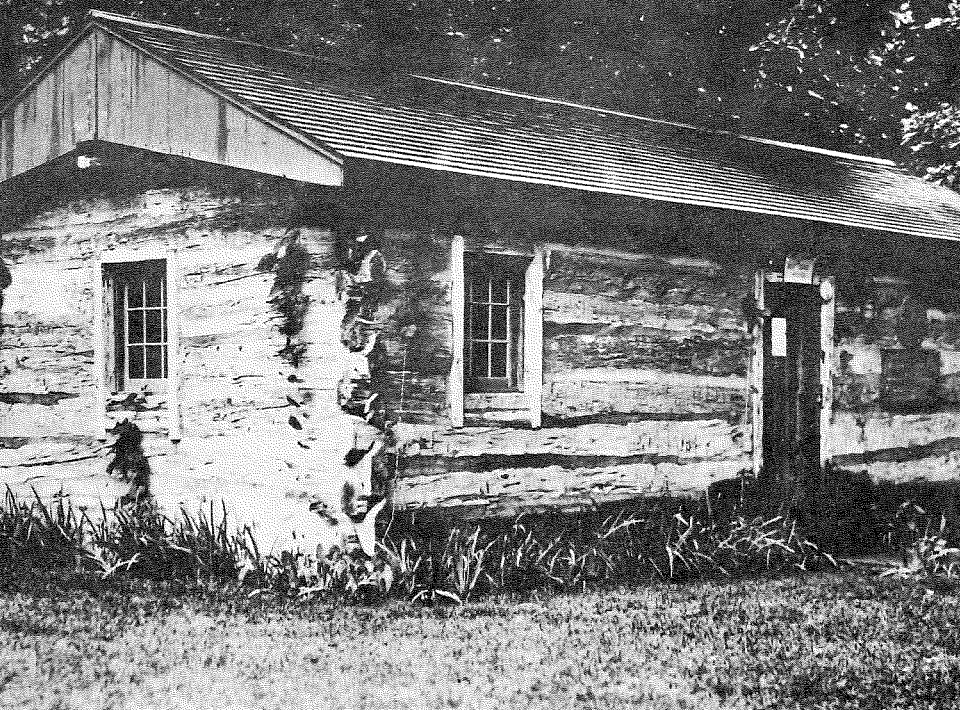


(Photo, courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)
 Above—Hollenberg Ranch Pony Express Station, near
 Hanover, Kansas

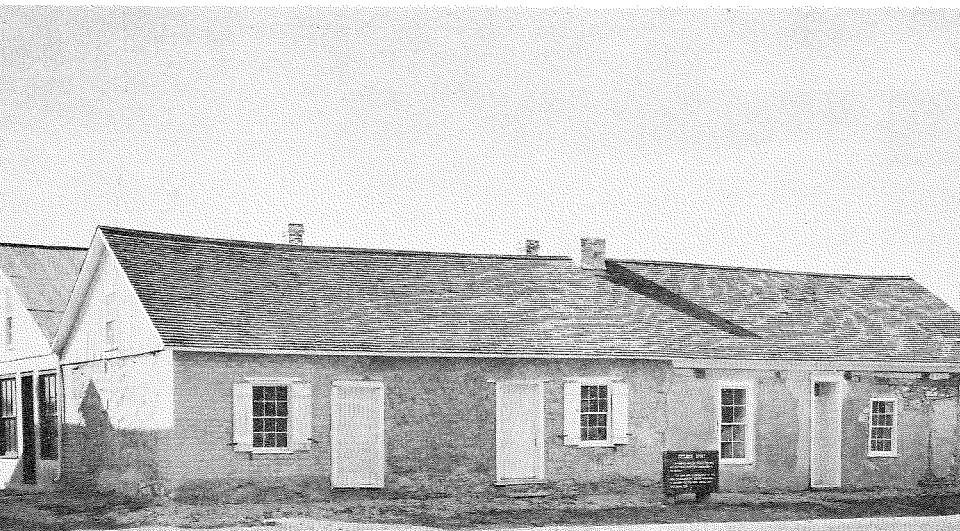
Below—Willow Island Pony Express Station, now in Cozad
 City Park

(Photo by Rogers Studio, Cozad, Nebraska)





Above—Gilman's Ranch Station
 This building is now located in Gothenburg Park
 Below—Fort Laramie National Monument.
 Front, or east side of Sutler's store
 (Photo by Grant, courtesy of the National Park Service)



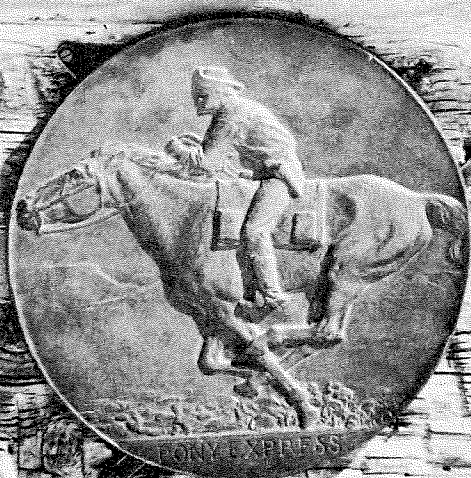
ORIGINAL PONY EXPRESS STATION

ERECTED ABOUT 1850 ON THE OREGON TRAIL - USED AS FUR TRADING POST AND RANCH HOUSE.

1860-1861 USED BY THE PONY EXPRESS. KNOWN AS MIDWAY STATION AND AS "PAT MULLALLY'S RANCH" ON JUNE 8, 1860 JIM MOORE, A PONY EXPRESS RIDER, RODE FROM HERE TO JULESBURG, COLO. AND RETURN, DISTANCE 240 MILES, IN 14 HOURS AND 46 MINUTES.

1862 TO 1960 - USED AS AN OVERLAND TRAIL STAGE STATION AND RANCH HOUSE DWELLING. SINCE 1879 IT HAS BEEN THE HOME DWELLING OF THE LOWER '96 RANCH.

DEDICATED TO ALL PIONEERS
WHO PASSED THIS WAY TO WIN AND HOLD THE WEST



Midway Home Station, Dawson County

This building is located on Harry Williams' lower 96 Ranch,
south of Gothenburg.





(Photo by **Omaha World-Herald**)

Paul Henderson and Merrill Mattes examining Pony Express
maps at Bridgeport, Nebraska



(Photo of painting by W. H. Jackson, courtesy of the
National Park Service)

name of the stable proprietor. This may have been the "Chain Pump" of Allen or the "Valley Home" of Burton, but if so he errs in placing it ten miles from Troy. A rival claimant for Kansas Station No. 3 is "Cold Springs" which Ellenbecker places on North Independence Creek Sec. 36, T. 3 S., R. 19 E., near present Severance.

Kansas Station No. 4—Kinnekuk: Except for variations in spelling (Kennekuk, Kennykirk), there is general agreement on the identity and location of this station in the middle of Sec. 3, T. 5 S., R. 17 E. Kinnekuk was a rather substantial settlement, boasting a dozen houses, a store, a blacksmith shop, and the Kickapoo Indian Agency. A stone monument marks the site, one and one-half miles southeast from present Horton. This was the first home station, forty-four miles from St. Joseph, and the junction point with the Fort Leavenworth-Fort Kearny Road.

Kansas Station No. 5—Goteschall: Again there is general agreement on the location of this station, more commonly known as "Kickapoo." The identified site is on Delaware (Plum or Big Grasshopper) Creek, in Sec. 14, T. 4 S., R. 15 E. about 12 miles west of Horton. The old stone Kickapoo Indian Mission building of 1851, one mile northwest of the Pony station, was also used as a hotel for stage passengers.

Kansas Station No. 6—Log Chain: This station is in Sec. 19, T. 3 S., R. 14 E., on Locknan's or Muddy Creek, just outside the western border of the Kickapoo Indian Reservation. "Log Chain" may commemorate the frequent snapping of chains as wagons were driven across the difficult creek bed, as legend has it. More likely, it is a corruption of the stream name, which in turn appears to have been named for an otherwise mysterious early settler or innkeeper. Proprietor N. H. Rising's barn has disappeared but a 24 x 40 foot log cabin, somewhat altered and now covered with boards, is now believed by the Kansas State Historical Society to be a Pony Express original. Ellenbecker and others erroneously identify old Granada, four miles south of here, as the station.

Kansas Station No. 7—Seneca: This important home station was on the headwaters of the Nemaha River. It was a famous hotel kept by John E. Smith and noted among stage passengers for its fine food. The old building, now a private residence, still stands in the town of Seneca (on U.S. 36) but it is three blocks down main street from its location in Pony Express days. The original site at the corner of Main and Fourth Street is identified by a boulder with inscription.

Kansas Station No. 8—(Ash Point): Identification is confirmed in the SW Corner, SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 8, T. 2 S., R. 11 E., on Vermillion Creek, two miles northeast from Axtell on U.S. 36. A granite monument placed by Ellenbecker commemorates the site. The well dug by station keeper O'Laughlin was recently found near a lone tree, covered with flat stones. Ash Point had three aliases—Frogtown or Laramie Creek (Root and Connelley) and Hickory Point (Allen). A monument stands 240 rods west of the site.

The "Uncle John's Grocery" of Burton was probably a separate site.

Kansas Station No. 9—Guttard's: It was at Guittard's that Burton saw his first Pony Express rider. This station, operated by the George Guittard family, is pinpointed in the SW Corner, SW $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 2, T. 1 S., R. 9 E. The site, eighty rods east of a marker on the east side of a county road, is to the north of the hamlet of Beatty. This was also called Vermillion Creek Station.

The "Oketa Cut-off" from Guittard's to Rock House or Otoe Station just across the Nebraska line, crossing the Big Blue River north of Marysville, was not laid out for the stage line until 1862. Accordingly, it is not a proper part of the Pony Express story.

Kansas Station No. 10—Marysville: This now substantial community, once known also as Palmetto city or Big Blue Station, was described by Burton as a "town which thrived by selling whiskey to ruffians of all descriptions." At 108 South Eighth Street, the original Pony

Express station still stands, well disguised as part of a modern cold storage plant. This was presumably a home station. The Pony riders used Marshall ferry in crossing the Big Blue, and there joined the original Oregon Trail out of Independence, Missouri. This is eight and one-half miles above the old Independence Ferry, near Alcove Springs, used by early Oregon emigrants. The Pony Express coincides with the classic Oregon Trail from here across Nebraska and past Fort Laramie.

Kansas Station No. 11—Cottonwood: Here, in the SE Corner, Sec. 3, T. 2 S., R. 5 E., one and one-half miles northeast of Hanover on a knoll overlooking Cottonwood Creek, is a small historical park operated by the Kansas State Historical Society wherein the original Cottonwood Station is open to the public. This venerable structure of rough sawed lumber is also identified as the famous ranch of G. H. Hollenberg. A German emigrant, he had joined the gold rushes to California and Peru; later he served emigrants and stage lines at his ranch and became the first postmaster of Washington County.

Nebraska Station No. 1—Rock House: The Pony Express route entered Nebraska in the SW Corner Section (T. 1 N., R. 5 E.) of Gage County, crossing immediately northwestward into the SE Corner Section of Jefferson County. Rock House Station, where the later Oketo Cut-off rejoined the main Pony route, is in NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 15, T. 1 N., R. 4 E., about three miles northeast of Steele City. It is called Otoe Station by Root and Connelley.

Nebraska Station No. 2—Rock Creek: This station site, later to become notorious because of the infamous episode involving McCandles and "Wild Bill" Hickok, is in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 26, T. 2 N., R. 3 E., Jefferson County, about six miles southeast of Fairbury. Other names for the station are Pawnee (Root and Connelley) and Turkey Creek (Burton). Nearby is old Whiskey Run Ranch, Quivera Park with a Fremont inscription, and sandstone outcrops with many carved emigrant records.

According to Dawson, *History of Jefferson County*, in 1859 McCandles built a toll bridge over Rock Creek and a ranch on the east bank of the stream, which structure became the Pony station. This was built of hewn logs 36 feet long, 16 feet wide and 8 feet high at the eaves, with a large stone fireplace and attic reached by outside stairway.

Nebraska Station No. 3—Virginia City: This site lies four miles north of Fairbury, in the NE Corner, Sec. 27, T. 3 N., R. 2 E. Other names used are Grayson's (Root and Connelley) and Whiskey Run (Allen). Lone Tree, in the middle of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 25, one mile south of Virginia City, crops up as an alternate site.

Nebraska Station No. 4—Big Sandy: This was an important home station. The site lies within the SE $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 15, T. 3 N., R. 1 E., about three miles east of Alexandria, Jefferson County. The Nebraska City Road joined the Oregon Trail a short distance west of Big Sandy. According to Dawson, the owner and operator of the station was Dan Patterson who, in 1860, sold it to Asa and John Latham. Also associated with this site are the ranches of Ed Farrell and Daniel, the latter a post office.

Nebraska Station No. 5—Millersville: This site, about two miles north of Hebron, in Thayer County, was operated by George B. Thompson and is called Thompson's Station by Root and Connelley. Nebraska Monument No. 11 (from the marking project of 1912), on the east side of the county road, near the NE Corner, Sec. 18, T. 3 N., R. 1 W., five miles southwest of Alexandria, reads: "Thompson's Stage Station, 125 rods West, 23 rods South."

Nebraska Station No. 6—Kiowa: This site, in the SE Corner NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 16, T. 3 N., R. 4 W., about ten miles northwest of Hebron, Thayer County, had Jim Douglas as the station keeper. The old trail reached the Little Blue River about one mile east of this station and followed along its left bank to beyond Spring Ranch.

Nebraska Station No. 7—(Oak Grove): The Mail Contract for 1861 indicates but does not name this station. This

is the last Thayer County Station, the site being about one and one-fourth miles southeast of Oak, in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 15, T. 3 N., R. 5 W. Al Holliday served as the station keeper, while a "Majors & Waddell Store" was reported to adjoin. Little Blue Station, four miles northwest, was probably a later stage station. Among contemporary ranches in this vicinity were Roper's, Emory's, and Eubank's. E. S. Comstock owned the Oak Grove Ranch. In August 1864 this neighborhood was terrorized by the Sioux.

Nebraska Station No. 8—Liberty Farm: The origin of this interesting name is obscure. The site of this home station is within the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 32, T. 5 N., R. 7 W., just one-half mile northeast of Deweese, in Clay County, on the north bank of the Little Blue. It is marked by Nebraska Monument No. 26. In 1859 Allen reported: "Jct. of Ft. Riley Road 19 miles from Oak Grove, U.S. mail station No. 12, 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles east of this place." This junction is marked by Nebraska Monument No. 26 $\frac{1}{2}$. Successive station keepers in 1860-1861 are named as James Lemmons and Chas. Emory. In 1864 Indians burned out J. M. Comstock here. Liberty Farm was succeeded by the Pawnee Ranch.

Nebraska Station No. 9—(Spring Ranch): There was a Spring Ranch destroyed by Indians in 1864. Evidence is not conclusive that this was a Pony Express station since it is not mentioned in the Mail Contract, but it is in the logical spot distance-wise between Liberty Farm and Thirty-Two Mile Station, a long 25 miles apart. It may coincide with the Lone Tree Stage Station of Root and Connelley. Nebraska Monument No. 29 places the ranch in the N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 8, T. 5 N., R. 8 W in Clay County. The trail left the Little Blue River a few miles beyond this point.

Nebraska Station No. 10—32-Mile Creek: All agree on name and location in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 6, T. 6 N., R. 10 W., about six miles southeast of Hastings. A numberless Nebraska Monument marks the site, as "Dinner Station, I.O.O.F.E., Pony Express." This was a long one-story

building operated by George A. Comstock. It was abandoned after the 1864 raids.

Nebraska Station No. 11—Sand Hill: The name refers to the difficult sandy wagon road which called for double-teaming. This appears also as "Summit Station" in Root and Connelley, "Water Hole" in Allen, and "Fairfield" in Chapman's interview with William Campbell. The site falls within the SE Corner NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 10, T. 7 N., R. 12 W., one and one-half miles south of Kenesaw, on the crest of the divide between Little Blue and Platte River drainages. In 1863 it was described by Root as "one of the most lonesome places in Nebraska." This station was another casualty of the Indian trouble in 1864.

Nebraska Station No. 12—Kearney Station: This was a home station, kept by M. H. Hook, and marked the end of the jurisdiction of E. A. Lewis, St. Joseph-Fort Kearney Division Superintendent. The site is found within the NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 18, T. 8 N., R. 13 W., about one and one-half miles northeast of present Lowell, Kearney County. Burton refers to "Kearny station, in the valley of LaGrande Platte," seven miles from the fort of that name. This station had numerous other identities, among them Dogtown or Valley City (Root and Connelley); Junction City (Andreas); and Hinshaw's Ranch (Harvey Map of 1862).

Nebraska Station No. 13—Fort Kearney: Although claims are made to this effect, it is improbable that Fort Kearny (spelled with two "e's" in the Mail Contract) itself had a Pony Express station. True, the Holladay Stage Line from St. Joe and the Western Stage Line from Omaha (via north side of the Platte and Carson's Crossing) made this fort itself a major objective, and in 1859 Holladay had a log structure "40 rods west of the fort." Pony riders conceivably paused here to pick up or deliver occasional military or civilian mail, perhaps at the sod post office structure erected in 1848. However, it is more likely that the Pony station or stable itself was at Doby Town, two miles west of the fort and just off the Reservation. This would be in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 22, T. 8 N., R. 15 W., about five miles

south and east of present Kearney, on the right bank or Oregon Trail side of the Platte.

Nebraska Station No. 14—Platt's: This station, which would be approximately five miles southeast of Odessa, is named in the Mail Contract, and is spelled Platte by Root and Connelley. The "Seventeen Mile Station" of Burton, where his stage halted to change mules, may be identical with Platt's.

Nebraska Station No. 15—Garden: This was apparently the same as Craig Station of Root and Connelley, and might also be the Biddleman Ranch that appears on the Harvey Map of Nebraska, 1862. It could also be the "Shakespear" that is indicated by Dr. Clark in 1860. Its exact location is not known. Apparently it was about six miles southwest of Elm Creek in Phelps County.

Nebraska Station No. 16—Plum Creek: All hands agree on the name and the place, the SW Corner, Sec. 8, T. 8 N., R. 20 W., about ten miles southeast of Lexington. Nearby is an old cemetery where there are buried fourteen victims of an Indian attack of June 16, 1865.

Nebraska Station No. 17—Willow Island: Allen offers the variant of Willow Bend. Burton refers to a "drinking shop at Willow Island Ranch." The site would be about six miles southeast of Cozad, Dawson County, on the N $\frac{1}{2}$ Sec. 8, T. 9 N., R. 22 W., near the south end of the Platte River bridge southeast of Darr. Some sources place Pat Mullaly's ranch and station at this site. R. C. Freeman, an employee of Mullaly, followed Mullaly as owner and operator of the ranche. The log cabin on the site was purchased by Dawson County American Legion Post No. 77 and moved to the park in Cozad for the use of Boy Scouts. It was dedicated in September 1938 and marked with a plaque relating its history as a ranche on the Oregon trail and as a Pony Express station.

Nebraska Station No. 18—Midway: This important home station survives to this day, in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 35, T. 11 N., R. 25 W., three miles south of Gothenburg, on

the Harry Williams Ranch. The remarkable cabin, built of heavy adzed timbers, has been used until recently as a farm hand dwelling, but it has been carefully preserved by Mr. Williams, who appreciates its historic value. It has never been removed from its original location. It bears the circular bronze Pony Express plaque of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association plus another bronze marker which states that on June 8, 1860, Pony rider Jim Moore rode from Midway to Julesburg, Colorado, and back, in record time, in an emergency situation caused by Indian troubles. David Trout is named as station keeper as of 1863.

Midway received its name, Root and Connelley point out, because it was equidistant on the stage line between Atchison and Denver. It was also referred to as Heavy Timber (Allen), Smith's East Ranch (Harney Map of 1862), and Pat Mullaly's Home Station. Mr. Williams now refers to it as his Lower 96 Ranch.

Nebraska Station No. 19—Gilman's: This point is indicated only by Root and Connelley and the U.S. Mail Contract. It is surmised to be near the SW Corner, Sec. 21, T. 12 N., R. 26 W., in Lincoln County.

Nebraska Station No. 20—(Machette's): This is a mystery station, the site being on the Williams' Upper 96 Ranch, Lincoln County, four miles east of Fort McPherson. It is not mentioned by Burton, Allen, Root and Connelley, or other published authorities, nor can "Machette" be identified in any available contemporary sources. However, there is the weight of local tradition, reflected in this wording on a monument in the SW Corner, SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 19, T. 12 N., R. 27 W.: "Erected by the people of Lincoln County, 1931, to commemorate the Pony Express riders. This is one of the regular stations of the Pony Express. The log blacksmith shop nearby is the original building used for shoeing horses."

Mr. Harry Williams states that the indicated "blacksmith shop" still stands. Another larger two-story squared log building which used to stand here, was donated by Mrs.

C. A. Williams and moved in 1931 by the American Legion to the city park in Gothenburg, on U.S. 30, several miles east and on the north side of the Platte River, where it now is a prime tourist attraction. It was rebuilt as a one-story structure. The affixed tablet indicates that the original building was built in 1854 as a trading post and ranch house (by "Machette"?). In 1860-1861 (the tablet explains) it was used as a Pony Express station; from 1862-1932 "as an overland station, dwelling, bunk house and storage house on Upper 96 Ranch."

Along with the lack of contemporary records of Machette's, there is the fact that the Pony stations averaged fifteen miles apart, and it is just sixteen miles between Gilman's Station and Cottonwood Springs or McDonald's Station (see below), the authenticity of both of which is unimpeachable. What then was "Machette's" doing in between? The structure now in Gothenburg seems to have much in common with the doubtlessly authentic Midway structure. If, then, of the same vintage, could the answer lie in supposing that Machette's was in existence in 1860-1861 as a ranch but not actually as a Pony station? Or, could the mysterious "Machette" actually be a corruption of "McDonald," and could the Upper 96-Gothenburg structure actually be the original McDonald's Station, transplanted some time after the 1860's to the Upper 96?

Nebraska Station No. 21—Cottonwood Springs: This place, or "McDonald's Ranch," was another station on the Pony run and, like many others discussed here, doubled also as an overland stage station, being midway between Fort Kearny and Julesburg. The site, marked by a monument, is on the east side of Cottonwood Creek in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 15, T. 12 N., R 28 W., on a gravelled road less than one-half mile east of the later (1864) Fort Cottonwood, which became Fort McPherson, and one mile southeast of the present Fort McPherson National Cemetery. In 1860 Burton refers here to "the foul tenement" where he threw himself upon a mattress to sleep; but in 1863 Root says that it was a "home station" and "nearly everything about

the premises appeared homelike." In 1864 Eugene F. Ware reports:

Cottonwood Springs, when we arrived there, was one of the important points on the road. MacDonald had a year or so before our arrival, built, as stated, a cedar-log store-building. The main building was about twenty feet front and forty feet deep, and was two stories high. A wing 50 feet extended to the west. The latter was, at the eaves, about eight feet high and fifteen feet deep in the clear. Around it in the rear was a large and defensible corral, which extended to the arroyo coming out of the canyon. It had been a good trading-point with the Indians, and there was a stage station there, and a blacksmith shop kept by a man named Hindman. In the stage station was a telegraph office. There was also on the other side of the road a place where canned goods and liquors were sold, kept by a man named Boyer, who had lost a leg, and whom the Indians called "Hook-sah," which meant "cut leg." MacDonald had dug, in front of his store, and cribbed up, an inexhaustible well, which was said to be forty-six feet deep; it was rigged with pulley, chain, and heavy oaken buckets. MacDonald and those at the place had formerly had a good trade with the Indians, but now it was all ended, and they were in danger.

Here is a two-story log building, with appendages. (A photo of this appears on page 64 of Ware.) The Upper-96 Ranch was a two-story log building. Again, it is suggested that these might be one and the same building, perhaps torn down and re-assembled at the latter point. It is not certain that the structure Ware describes was the 1861 Pony Express station, but it is a reasonable hypothesis, pending further revelations.

Nebraska Station No. 22—Cold Springs: This site, named by Root and Connelley, would be in the NW Corner, Sec. 20, T. 13 N., R. 30 W., vicinity of Box Elder Creek, Lincoln County, fifteen miles west of Cottonwood Springs, and two miles south and one mile west of present North Platte. It is easy to confuse this station with Jack Morrow's Ranch or "Junction House" (so named by proximity to forks of the Platte), which was twelve miles from Cottonwood. Root and Connelley clarify this point.

Masters has a Box Elder Station "three miles west of Cottonwood Springs," named by Sheldon Davis. This short distance would not admit a Pony station so close.

Nebraska Station No. 23—Fremont Springs: Although just when the explorer Fremont visited this site is another good mystery, the name was consistently used except by an obscure traveler of 1860 named Dr. Clark, who speaks of "Buffalo Ranch." This is spoken of as a home station, which seems reasonable in view of the fifty mile distance from Midway. This station was unlike its neighbors. According to Burton "the building is of a style peculiar to the south, especially Florida,—two huts connected by a roof-work of thatched timber, which acts as the best and coolest of verandahs."

The site was located in the NW Corner, Sec. 4, T. 13 N., R. 32 W., about 1½ miles due south of Hershey.

Nebraska Station No. 24—Dansey's: There was an early Indian agent, Benjamin O'Fallon, for whom the Platte River bluffs here were inexplicably named. The Mail Contract refers to "Dansey's," presumably the Pony Express proprietor. Burton speaks of "Half Way House" and Root and Connelley use "Elkhorn." In any event, the site is believed to be in the NE Corner, SE¼, Sec. 3, T. 13 N., R. 34 W., about two miles south and four miles west of Sutherland. Root describes the section embracing O'Fallon's Bluffs as "undoubtedly the best place between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains for skulking Indians to hide."

Nebraska Station No. 25—(Alkali Lake): Dr. Clark in 1860 calls this Pikes Peak Station. The station is indicated but is given no name in the Mail Contract. Otherwise the name "Alkali Lake" is unanimous. The site, like others in this area, is not definitely located. It may be in the middle of Sec. 12, T. 13 N., R. 37 W., about two miles southwest of Paxton, Keith County.

Nebraska Station No. 26—Gill's: This was the point of the Texas Trail crossing of the 1870's. In 1860 it was called Gill's in the Mail Contract, but Sand Hill by Root and Connelley. Nobody else bothers to mention it; it was just another obscure relay station. Although its precise

location is unknown; it was about one and one-half miles south of Ogallala, Keith County.

Nebraska Station No. 27—Diamond Springs: Nebraska's Monument No. 40, located .9 mile west of Brule, Keith County, on the south side of U.S. 30, reads: "Diamond Springs .8 mile southwest." This was probably a home station, though it is uncomfortably close to Julesburg, which was also a home station. The site has been tentatively located as the SW Corner, SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 21, T. 13 N., R. 40 W. However, two miles west of this point, in NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 30, was the Beauvais Ranch, with buildings of hewn logs, which enjoyed considerable fame through the 1850's and 1860's. With such an establishment handy, why wouldn't it serve as a station? This question remains unanswered.

Beauvais is at one of the famous South Platte River fords, variously identified as Upper Crossing, Ash Hollow Crossing, Fort Laramie Crossing and Old California Crossing. The emigrant crossers here went over the plateau to reach Ash Hollow on the North Platte, but the Pony Express did not follow this route.

Colorado Station No. 1—Frontz': The site is marked, two miles east of present Julesburg, in SE Corner, NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 28, T. 12 N., R. 44 W., Sedgwick County. Variants are South Platte Station (Root and Connelley) and Butte Station.

Colorado Station No. 2—Julesburg: This site, not to be confused with various later Julesburgs, is the original Old Julesburg. It is well marked in NW $\frac{1}{4}$, NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 15, T. 11 N., R. 45 W., one and one-half miles southeast of Ovid, Sedgwick County. The place was named for Jules Reni, who had the inevitable trading post. Root and Burton both offer rather vivid descriptions of the unsavory establishment. Old Julesburg was a mighty busy place, primarily because it was at the junction of the main roads up the South and North Platte Rivers, respectively called the Pikes Peak or Denver Road, and the California Road or Overland Trail. The stages and the Pony Express used the

latter route, here fording the South Platte (wide and rough in spring flood) to a point just above Lodgepole Creek, then following that stream westward to a point three miles west of present Sidney, then crossing Lodgepole and going north. This route was surveyed by Lieutenant Bryan of the Topographical Engineers in 1858 and was called "Jules Stretch." Old Julesburg was sacked by Sioux and Cheyenne Indians in February 1865. The site of Fort Rankin (later Fort Sedgwick), a mile or so west of Old Julesburg, should be noted. The writers found no less than fifteen monuments scattered about this historic tip of northeastern Colorado.

Nebraska Station No. 28—Nine Mile Station: This site is in Sec. 26, T. 13 N., R. 45 W., two miles southeast of Chappell, in Deuel County.

Nebraska Station No. 29—Pole Creek No. 2: Oddly enough, this is named in the U.S. Mail Contract, but no traveler has mentioned it. Its location is vague, being in the vicinity of Lodgepole, roughly half way on the twenty-four mile stretch between Nine Mile and Pole Creek No. 3. It is possible that it may be identical with the site of the ranch occupied hereabouts by E. Farrell in 1865.

Nebraska Station No. 30—Pole Creek No. 3: This site was on the north side of Lodgepole Creek, in the NW Corner, NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 35, T. 14 N., R. 49 W., on the old St. George Cattle Ranch, about three and one-half miles east of Sidney, Cheyenne County. Old maps identify this as the stage ranch of Rouliette and Pringle, with well fortified buildings part dug out, part sod and logs. The ford must have been at or near this point. This place had importance as the junction of the old California Road and stage route heading for the North Platte, and a new stage route heading due west for Bridger Pass and Salt Lake City. (This is the "Lodgepole Route" which later became the Union Pacific route to Cheyenne.)

Burton's description of "Lodgepole Station," although serving him as a stage station, may be taken as a rare contemporary description of a Nebraska Pony Express station:

. . . The hovel fronting the creek was built like an Irish shanty, or a Beloch hut, against a hill side, to save one wall, and it presented a fresh phase of squalor and wretchedness. The mud walls were partly papered with 'Harper's Magazine,' 'Frank Leslie,' and the 'New York Illustrated News;' the ceiling was a fine festoon-work of soot, and the floor was much like the ground outside, only not nearly so clean. In a corner stood the usual "bunk," a mass of mingled rags and buffalo robes; the centre of the room was occupied by a rickety table, and boxes, turned-up on their long sides, acted as chairs. The unescapable stove was there, filling the interior with the aroma of meat. As usual, the materials for ablution, a 'dipper' or cup, a dingy tin skillet of scanty size, a bit of coarse gritty soap, and a public towel, like a rag of gunny bag, were deposited upon a rickety settle outside.

There being no "lady" at the station on Lodge-pole Creek, milk was unprocurable. Here, however, began a course of antelope venison, which soon told upon us with damaging effect.

[Burton was forever complaining about the terrible food at these stage stations.]

Nebraska Station No. 31—Unnamed: This station does not appear in official records, and the existence of something here is mentioned only by Mrs. Carrington, in 1866, who tells of a "Government well" to furnish water for the mail stations. Reconnaissance of the site has revealed evidence of structures. There had to be a relay station somewhere along the 25-miles between Pole Creek No. 3 and Mud Springs. The site located is within the Sioux Ordinance area, SE Corner, Sec. 12, T. 15 N., R. 50 W., about three miles south and one mile west of Gurley on State Highway 285.

Nebraska Station No. 32—Mud Springs: This site is in the center of Sec. 31, T. 18 N., R. 50 W., about 12 miles southeast of Bridgeport in Morrill County. It is now within a one-acre tract of ground donated by Mrs. Etta A. Scherer as a state park. This was a home station, the first since Julesburg. Archeological search of the building remains confirms the ground plan made of this site by Lt. Caspar Collins in 1864. The Pony station and the stage station are doubtless identical. Troops from Fort Laramie occupied Mud Springs in February 1865, and had a lively battle

with Indians retreating from the siege of Julesburg. James McArdle was the station keeper.

Three historic wagon routes northward from Mud Springs to the vicinity of Courthouse Rock have been identified. After many years of confusion on this point it now appears that the Pony riders used the left fork to Pumpkinseed Crossing and Courthouse Rock, passing southwest of this landmark. It should be noted that the main trail used by the covered wagon and stage coaches passed to the north of the Rock. Information leading to this discovery may be credited to John Oliver who came to this neighborhood as a boy in the 1880's and knew James Moore, who had been a Pony rider.

Nebraska Station No. 33—Court House Rock: Most Pony stations were also used as stage stations or trailside ranches, but because of the requirement of an approximate fifteen mile interval, many Pony relay stations had to be built "from scratch." Good examples of this are the unnamed station near Gurley and the Court House Station, remains identified in the NE Corner, SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 31, T. 19 N., R. 51 W., five miles south and one and one-fourth miles west of Bridgeport.

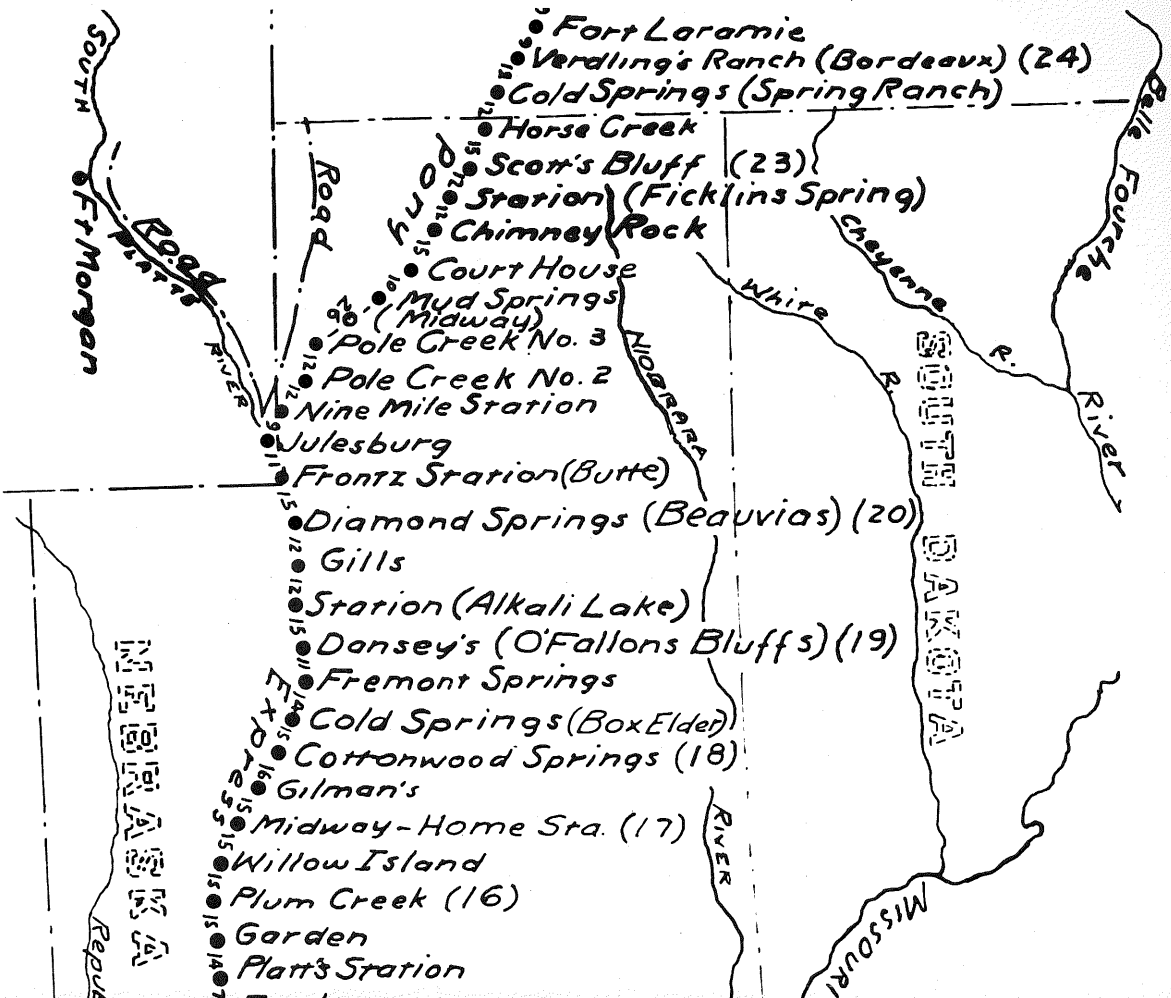
Nebraska Station No. 34—Chimney Rock: This landmark in the shape of an inverted funnel is one of the most famous of all Oregon Trail landmarks. There was certainly a Pony station between the landmark and river, but just where is not definitely known. There are two traditional sites, both now obliterated along with emigrant graves by modern road graders and gravel quarrying. Mr. Oliver quoted James Moore to the effect that the Pony station was at Facus Springs, about nine miles northwest of Bridgeport, where the Pony cut-off rejoined the main trail (near the center of Sec. 24, T. 20 N., R. 52 W.). Burton's stage station here was north of Chimney Rock, "near a spring on a hill," which seems to match the Facus Spring site. The second possible site, which coincides more with the distance given in the U.S. Mail Contract, is further west, being two

miles south and one mile west of Bayard (SW Corner, Sec. 5, T. 20 N., R. 53 W.).

Nebraska Station No. 35—(Ficklin's Springs): Shumway is in error in calling this "the Scotts Bluff station." The name is blank on the 1861 Mail Contract. This station was named for Benjamin F. Ficklin, described as "Route Superintendent," with managerial charge of the entire line between St. Joe and Sacramento. The site, with visible surface remains, is marked on State Highway 86, one mile west of Melbeta in Scotts Bluff County, in NW Corner SW $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 13, T. 21 N., R. 54 W. This was another Pony station built expressly by the men who laid out the Pony line, and not primarily a stage station. Later, however, like most of the other stations described, it was used as a telegraph station, and for a brief period in 1865 was occupied by troops who dug breast works. In 1871, according to Shumway, the sod structure was appropriated by Mark M. Coad for his open range cattle ranch. Foundation stones are in evidence today.

Burton refers to a ranch called Robidoux's Fort, somewhere between Chimney Rock and the pass at Scotts Bluffs (which is clearly identifiable as today's Mitchell Pass). Could this ranch (which is in no way to be compared with Robidoux's Trading Post of 1849 at Robidoux Pass, fifteen miles or so further west) have been the Ficklin's Spring establishment, a Pony Express relay station? It is not unlikely that one of the Robidoux clan of 1849 would have re-established themselves on the main trail in later years.

Nebraska Station No. 36—Scott's Bluffs: The story of old Fort Mitchell, 1864-1868, about two and one-half miles northwest of Mitchell Pass at a bend of the North Platte River, has been given to readers of *Nebraska History* in detail. On the other hand, almost nothing is known of this Pony Express station believed to exist in this same approximate location in 1860-1861. When the Eleventh Ohio Cavalry contingent from Fort Laramie built Fort Mitchell they do not seem to have been aware of a Pony Express station or any previous structure at the site. At

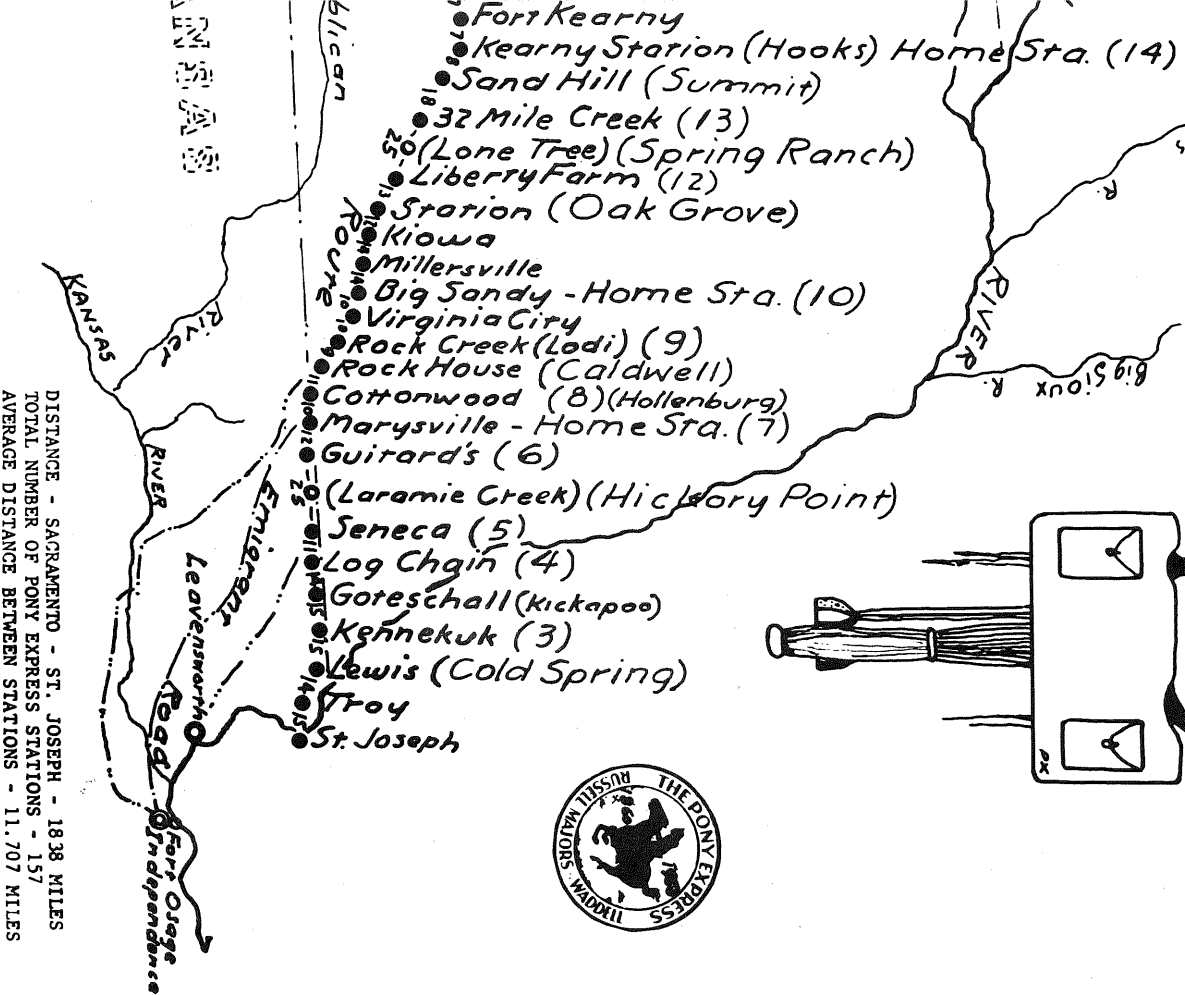
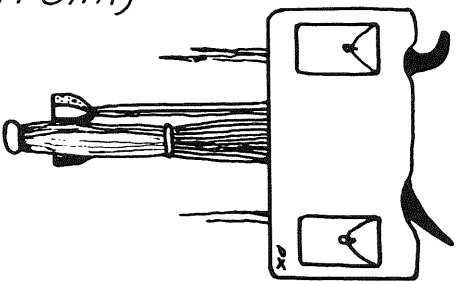


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No. F 27925

Pony Express Saddle with Mochila and Cantinas



least the military records fail to disclose any such recognition. On the other hand, the "Odometer Book of the Survey for the Fort Kearny, South Pass and Honey Lake Wagon Road, 1857" in the National Archives specifically refers to "old houses, once mail station and trading post of the American Fur Company." In any event, the 1861 Mail Contract definitely shows a Scott's Bluff Station twelve miles west of Ficklin's and fifteen miles east of Horse Creek. Allen has his "U.S. Mail Station" of 1859 as "3 miles west of the Gap." This puts it quite near if not right at the Fort Mitchell site. A granite marker with the circular bronze Pony Express seal of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association, near the North Platte bridge, commemorates the site.

Nebraska Station No. 37—Horse Creek: This station is named in the Government Mail Contract and is further identified by Allen in 1859 and Burton in 1860. It may be found in the center of Sec. 25, T. 23 N., R. 58 W., Scotts Bluff County, on the west bank of Horse Creek, about two miles northeast of Lyman. Nine years earlier (1851) the mouth of Horse Creek was the scene of a great Peace Conference with the Plains Indians.

Burton vividly pictures Horse Creek Station, which doubled for Stage and Pony Express:

Presently we dashed over the Little Kiowa Creek, forded the Horse Creek, and, enveloped in a cloud of villainous mosquitoes, entered at 8:30 P.M. the station in which we were to pass the night. It was tenanted by one Reynal, a French creole—the son of an old soldier of the Grand Armee, who had settled at St. Louis—a companionable man, but an extortionate; he charged us a florin for every 'drink' of his well-watered whiskey. The house boasted of the usual squaw, a wrinkled old dame, who at once began to prepare supper, when we discreetly left the room.

Wyoming Station No. 1—Cold Springs: The point where the Oregon Trail-California Road-Pony Express route leaves Nebraska is in a beet field just west of the county road between Lyman and Henry, in Scotts Bluff County.

Little is known of Cold Springs Station, believed to be about two miles southeast of Torrington, Wyoming. Con-

temporary references are lacking. Burton describes this point, about twelve miles west of Horse Creek Station, as the place where "in 1854, five Indians, concealing themselves in the bed of a dwarf arroyo, fired upon the mail wagon, killing two drivers and one passenger, and then plundered it of 20,000 dollars."

Wyoming Station No. 2—Verdling's Ranch: In 1859 Allen speaks of Beauvais' Ranch; in 1860 to Burton it was Badean's. The latter name seems most nearly correct since this was certainly the establishment of James Bordeaux, one-time proprietor of the Fort Laramie Trading Post, eight miles further west. In 1854 he manned a trading post at this point for the American Fur Company when there occurred nearby the misunderstanding with Sioux Indians which led to the extermination of Lieutenant Grattan and twenty-eight soldiers. In 1860 the place consisted of "a single large store, with outhouses full of small half-breeds."

Wyoming Station No. 3—Fort Laramie: Fort Laramie, the extensive remains of which are now protected as a National Monument, was one of the great military posts of the trans-Mississippi West, flourishing from 1849 to 1890. One might suppose that this would therefore be one of the important Pony Express stations of 1860-1861. However, very little light is thrown on this subject by the meager official records.

There were stations at Bordeaux's (Verdling's) and Ward's (Sand Point), nine miles east and west respectively from the fort. This suggests that there was a Pony station somewhere in the immediate vicinity of the post itself. (As in the case of Fort Kearny, it may not have been within the immediate garrison area.) That the Fort Laramie Station was some distance west of the fort area is suggested by this passage from Burton, keeping in mind the fact that for every stage station there were, on the average, two Pony Stations:

The hours and halting-places were equally vilely selected: for instance, at Forts Kearny, Laramie, and Bridger, the only points where supplies, comfort, society, are procurable,

a few minutes of grumbling delay were granted as a favour, and the passengers were hurried on to some distant wretched ranch, apparently for the sole purpose of putting a few dollars into the station-master's pockets.

Surviving buildings at Fort Laramie which existed in 1860-1861 include the imposing frame two-storied officers' quarters called "Old Bedlam," the stone magazine, and the adobe-stone sections of the Sutler's Store. The stone portion of the latter structure is known to have been used as a post office in the 1850's when John S. Tutt, Post Sutler, and Sergeant Leodegar Schnyder served as postmasters. Whether it was the post office in 1860 is unconfirmed. It is known that it served as the postoffice during the 1870's and the 1880's. In any event three Fort Laramie buildings still standing saw the Pony Express riders come and go. Thus Fort Laramie National Monument is one of the principal shrines of the Pony Express route.

IV. *Tabulation of Pony Express Stations, Identifications, and Mileages, St. Joseph, Missouri, to
Fort Laramie, Wyoming*

| 1960 Pony Express Research No. | 1859 U.S. Mail Station No. | 1861 Overland Mail Contract Name | Alternate Spellings, Names or Sites | Contract Miles from Previous Station | Contract Miles from St. Joseph |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Missouri 1 | ? | St. Joseph* | — | 0 | 0 |
| Kansas 1 | — | — | Elwood (E) ** Wathena (E) | — | — |
| Kansas 2 | ? | Troy | — | 15 | 15 |
| Kansas 3 | ? | Lewis | Cold Springs (E) Valley Home (B) | 14 | 29 |
| Kansas 4 | 3 | Kinnekek* | Kennekek (R) Kenneykirk (A) | 15 | 44 |
| Kansas 5 | — | Goteschall | Kickapoo (R) Whitehall (B) | 15 | 59 |
| Kansas 6 | 4 | Log Chain | Lockman's (B) Muddy Creek (A) Granada (E) | 14 | 73 |
| Kansas 7 | 5 | Seneca* | — | 11 | 84 |
| Kansas 8 | — | — | Hickory Point (A) Ash Point (E) Laramie Creek (R) | — (13) | — |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|----|---------------|----------------------|----|-----|
| Kansas 9 | 6 | Gautard's | Guittards (R) | 25 | 109 |
| | | | Vermillion Creek (A) | | |
| Kansas No. 10 | 7 | Marysville* | Big Blue (A) | 12 | 121 |
| | | | Palmetto City (B) | | |
| Kansas No. 11 | 8 | Cottonwood | — | 10 | 131 |
| Nebraska No. 1 | — | Rock House | Caldwell (R) | 11 | 142 |
| | | | Otoe (R) | | |
| Nebraska No. 2 | 9 | Rock Creek | Turkey Creek (A) | 9 | 151 |
| | | | Pawnee (R) | | |
| | | | Elkhorn (?) | | |
| | | | Lodi P.O. (?) | | |
| Nebraska No. 3 | — | Virginia City | Grayson's (R) | 10 | 161 |
| | | | Whiskey Run (A) | | |
| Nebraska No. 4 | 10 | Big Sandy* | Patterson's (?) | 10 | 171 |
| Nebraska No. 5 | — | Millersville | Thompson's (R) | 14 | 185 |
| Nebraska No. 6 | — | Kiowa | — | 14 | 199 |
| Nebraska No. 7 | 11 | —Station | Oak Grove (A) | 12 | 211 |
| | | | Little Blue (R) | | |
| Nebraska No. 8 | 12 | Liberty Farm* | — | 13 | 224 |
| Nebraska No. 9 | — | — | Lone Tree (R) | — | — |
| | | | Spring Ranch (N) | | |
| Nebraska No. 10 | 13 | 32-Mile Creek | — | 25 | 249 |

| 1960 Pony Express Research No. | 1859 U.S. Mail Station No. | 1861 Overland Mail Contract Name | Alternate Spellings, Names or Sites | Contract Miles from Previous Station | Contract Miles from St. Joseph |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Nebraska No. 11 | — | Sand Hill | Summit (R) | 18 | 267 |
| | | | Water Hole (A) | | |
| Nebraska No. 12 | 14 | Kearney Station* | Valley City (B) | 8 | 275 |
| | | | Hook's (R) | | |
| | | | Omaha Junction | | |
| Nebraska No. 13 | 15 | Fort Kearney | Fort Kearny | 7 | 282 |
| Nebraska No. 14 | — | Platt's Station | Platte (R) | 7 | 289 |
| | | | 17 Mile Pt. (B) | | |
| Nebraska No. 15 | — | Garden | Craig (R) | 14 | 303 |
| | | | Shakespear (?) | | |
| Nebraska No. 16 | 16 | Plum Creek | — | 15 | 318 |
| Nebraska No. 17 | 17 | Willow Island | Willow Bend (A) | 15 | 333 |
| Nebraska No. 18 | — | Midway* | Heavy Timber (A) | 15 | 348 |
| | | | Coldwater R. (B) | | |
| | | | Pat Mullaly's (?) | | |
| | | | Lower 96 R. (N) | | |
| Nebraska No. 19 | — | Gilman's | — | 15 | 363 |
| Nebraska No. 21 | — | — | Machette's (N) | — | — |
| | | | Upper 96 R. (N) | | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|----|--------------------|----------------------|----|-----|
| Nebraska No. 21 | 18 | Cottonwood Springs | McDonald's R. (N) | 16 | 379 |
| Nebraska No. 22 | — | Cold Springs | Junction House (B) | 15 | 394 |
| | | | Morrow's R. (N) | | |
| | | | Box Elder (?) | | |
| Nebraska No. 23 | — | Fremont Springs* | — | 14 | 408 |
| | | | Buffalo Ranch (C) | | |
| Nebraska No. 24 | 19 | Dansey's | Elkhorn (R) | 11 | 419 |
| | | | O'Fallon's (B) | | |
| | | | Half Way House (B) | | |
| Nebraska No. 25 | — | —Station | Alkali Lake (R) | 15 | 434 |
| | | | Pike's Peak Sta. (C) | | |
| Nebraska No. 26 | — | Gills | Sand Hill (R) | 12 | 446 |
| Nebraska No. 27 | 20 | Diamond Springs* | Beauvais R. (?) | 12 | 458 |
| | | | | | |
| Colorado No. 1 | — | Frontz's Station | South Platte (R) | 15 | 473 |
| | | | Butte Sta. (N) | | |
| Colorado No. 2 | — | Julesburg | Overland City (B) | 11 | 484 |
| Nebraska No. 28 | — | 9-Mile Station | — | 9 | 493 |
| Nebraska No. 29 | — | Pole Creek No. 2 | Farrell R. (N) | 12 | 505 |
| Nebraska No. 30 | — | Pole Creek No. 3 | Rouliette | | |
| | | | Pringle R. (N) | 12 | 517 |
| Nebraska No. 31 | — | — | — | — | — |

| 1960 Pony Express Research No. | 1859 U.S. Mail Station No. | 1861 Overland Mail Contract Name | Alternate Spellings, Names or Sites | Contract Miles from Previous Station | Contract Miles from St. Joseph |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Nebraska No. 32 | — | Mud Springs* | — | 26 | 543 |
| Nebraska No. 33 | — | Court House | — | 10 | 553 |
| Nebraska No. 34 | — | Chimney Rock | — | 15 | 568 |
| Nebraska No. 35 | — | —Station | Ficklin's Springs | 12 | 580 |
| Nebraska No. 36 | 23 | Scott's Bluff | (Fort Mitchell) | 12 | 592 |
| Nebraska No. 37 | — | Horse Creek | — | 15 | 607 |
| Wyoming No. 1 | — | Cold Springs | — | 12 | 619 |
| Wyoming No. 2 | 24 | Verdling's Ranch | Bordeaux's R. Beauvais R. | 13 | 632 |
| Wyoming No. 3 | — | Fort Laramie | — | 9 | 641 |

*Indicated home stations

**Letters in parentheses refer to authors cited in Section II and III

V. *Pony Riders in Nebraska*

Since official records of the Central Overland are missing, the only evidence for the most part as to the identity of Pony riders consists of interviews with alleged survivors made many decades after the event. Frank Root may have known some of these riders personally (although he doesn't say so). Other writers like Visscher, Bradley and Chapman could only have depended on the good faith of their informants. Settle found six listings of Pony Express riders, with a total of over 120 names. Only twenty-eight of these, however, appear on all lists. Following is a review of allegations relating to Pony riders in Nebraska, gleaned from Root and Connelley, Chapman, Carter, and Settle (see Section II).

Henry Avis, a Fort Laramie resident and veteran of the mail run to Salt Lake City, was hired in 1861 by Joseph Slade to ride between Mud Springs and Horseshoe Station (west of Fort Laramie).

Melvin Baughn, who was later hanged for murder at Seneca, Kansas, at one time rode between Thirty-two Mile Creek and Fort Kearny.

Jim Beatley, "whose real name was Foote" and who had a "decided preference for wild-half-broken horses," operated between Seneca and Big Sandy. He was murdered in 1862 at Farrell's Ranch at Big Sandy.

James W. Brink, according to no less than seven authorities, was either stationed at or rode through Rock Creek Station, and was thus a contemporary of James B. "Wild Bill" Hickok.

William Campbell died in 1932 at Stockton, California, alleged then to be the last surviving Pony Express rider. He told Chapman that his relay was along the Platte, between Fort Kearny and Cottonwood Springs, "with changes at Plum Creek, Pat Mullaly's, Midway and Gilman Ranch." Campbell was six feet tall and 140 pounds, but despite his above-regulation size he was retained because of his tough

qualities. He reports various adventures, being chased by wolves; getting thrown by his horse; and once riding twenty-four consecutive hours in zero weather to keep the mail moving.

William A. Cates carried the mail "from Cottonwood Springs west to Horseshoe Station." Since this is a distance of three hundred miles, there is an error somewhere.

James Clark is reported to have ridden between Cottonwood Station (Kansas) and Liberty Farm, a distance of over ninety miles. This is more reasonable.

Richard Cleve is reported by William Campbell to be the rider "opposite" him on his run between Kearny and Cottonwood Springs (also about ninety miles).

Charles Cliff is mistakenly reported by Shumway in his *History of Western Nebraska* to have ridden in the vicinity of Scotts Bluff. "On his return he was attacked by Indians in Mitchell Gap, and when he arrived at Scott's Bluff station he had three bullets in his body and twenty-seven through his clothes." Root and Connelley have him riding between Mud Springs and Scotts Bluff all right, but Settle says he ran between St. Joseph and Seneca and was bored there by the lack of excitement. Both sources contradict Shumway on the Pony Express Indian attack, stating that this attack did not occur until 1863, while Cliff was freighting with ox-teams.

William F. Cody, the one and only "Buffalo Bill," claims that at fifteen years of age he was employed as a Pony Express rider and given "a short 45 mile run from Julesburg to the West." Subsequently he reported to Slade at Horseshoe Station and rode between Red Buttes and Three Crossings, with alleged heroic feats climaxed by a 384 mile run made necessary when another rider was killed by Indians. There are many discrepancies in the Cody legend, not the least of which is the tender age at which he was employed.

Frank Helvey's claim to being a Pony Express rider is expressed in the reminiscence of his daughter published in *Nebraska History* XXI, No. 1 (Jan-March 1940), 22. The Helvey family had a ranche on the Little Sandy in Jefferson County. Frank Helvey claimed to be a substitute rider.

Martin Hogan, Julesburg to Mud Springs.

David Robert Jay, Big Sandy to Marysville. Jay lived until 1930. Settle says he was hired "in spite of the fact he was not yet fourteen years of age." Perhaps Buffalo Bill at fifteen was not too young after all. But what about that twenty year age rule?

William D. Jenkins, at Big Sandy.

Jack Keetley, like Robert Campbell, was one of the few who rode the Pony eighteen months, from start to finish. He handled the Marysville-Big Sandy stretch. He was another marathon rider, once going 340 miles in thirty-one hours. "He was taken from the saddle sound asleep."

Jim Moore rode from Midway to Julesburg. He made another famous ride, of 280 miles, in something less than fifteen hours when relief riders were not available. This achievement is commemorated by a plaque on the surviving Midway Station.

Theodore Rand, also known as "Little Yank," took the first herd of horses out of St. Joseph to stock the line. He is reputed to have the run between Cottonwood Springs and Julesburg. He is also identified with Box Elder.

Don C. Rising, at sixteen, rode between Log Chain and Marysville, later between Big Sandy and Fort Kearny. His father was the station master at Log Chain.

Alexander Topence was a bullwhacker for Russell, Majors and Waddell, and an employee of the Butterfield Overland Mail before he was hired, at age twenty-four, "as a rider in Lewis' Division." Carter has him going westward from Fort Kearny.

Henry Wallace was "given the run from Big Sandy to Liberty Farm," a little over fifty miles.

Joseph B. Wintle is another rider between Fort Kearny and Cottonwood Springs. He reports having once ridden 110 miles in five hours with ten changes of horses. He had several brushes with Indians.

Luther C. North, the famous Indian fighter of Columbus, Nebraska, told Chapman that he tried to get a job as a Pony Express rider at Fort Kearny as a boy but was turned down because he was too young. In view of the number of teen-agers who did apparently obtain such employment, it appears that there was a distinct lack of uniformity in the application of the age twenty or over policy. Perhaps some of the applicants were not above a little harmless prevarication in an age when birth certificates had not yet been invented.