



Warren County Genealogical Society

306 West Salem Indianola, Iowa 50125

Volume 14

January 1988

Volume 1

MEETINGS: The third Monday of each month, except August and December, at the Indianola Public Library. Visitors are welcome. Coffee 6:45, meeting at 7 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: February 15, 1988. The program will be "Helps Found in the Genealogical Section of the Indianola Public Library" by Charles Ginder. January roll call will be: Who came over on the boat?

NEWSLETTER: Published each month except August and December. We encourage our members to send queries and articles for publication. Indexes in the March, July and December issues. Editor: Cathy Ayers, 607 East First Avenue, Indianola, Iowa 50125.

DUES: \$5 single and \$7.50 family membership. Dues are payable to our Registrar: Molly Bowlin, 802 Kennedy Street, Indianola, Iowa 50125.

What's Inside

This month's Brag Box column was written by Louise Pilmer.

Louise's grandfather was a Pony Express rider in Nebraska.

See page 2.

Learn about the many post offices in Warren County in an article from the research of Edith Conn.

See page 3.

If you would like to submit an article for the Brag Box or for publication . . .

See Cathy Ayers.

Tell Your Friends

A beginners genealogy workshop is scheduled for February 22 at 6:45 and February 23 at 1:00. You may want to plan to attend one or both of the workshops. Cost is \$5.00 for one day or two. Both workshops will be held at the

Indianola Public Library. For more information contact Jane Godwin at 961-3363.

You'll Be Miss (ed) (ing)

This years newsletter will include articles about the events and news of Warren County in 1888 - the elections, June brides, Simpson College graduation. . .

But, if you have not paid your 1988 dues, this will be your last newsletter from the WCGS. So don't be sorry, sent those dues to Molly Bowlin, 802 Kennedy Street, Indianola, Iowa 50125.

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- * CALENDER *
- * February 15 - Monthly meeting *
- * February 22 - Workshop *
- * February 23 - Workshop *
- * See article left for time, *
- * places, etc. *
- * March 14 - Articles to Editor *
- * for March newsletter. *
- * * * * *

Grandpa Richards, a Pony Express Rider

Who were the Pony Express riders? There weren't that many of them - only 80 men in all - employed for only about 18 months (3 April 1860 to 24 Oct 1861). Each rider carried two locked mail bags and rode tough half-breed mustangs. They travelled at a constant fast gallop between relay stops of about twenty-five miles apart. A fresh horse was saddled and waiting, ready for the rider's quick, two-minute change from the exhausted horse. Then the fast pace was resumed for arrival at the next relay stop until the entire 1966 miles were covered. Each man travelled a sector of 130 -140 miles across Nebraska as the route paralleled the Platte River, then across the Rocky Mountains to San Francisco, California. The route passed through many miles of Indian Country.

Much pride was maintained on speedy, safe delivery of the mail. Even so, the trip required 10 or 11 days. Only one mail delivery was ever lost by the Pony Express as the rides were made from the west end of railroads at St. Joseph and completed at San Francisco.

Rider qualifications were strict and uncompromised. A young man of slight physique and minimum weight, strictly honest, brave in spirit, but temperate in habits (no drinking) was required. Single men and orphans were preferred. For this dangerous mission, a rider received the attractive wage of \$120 - \$125 per month. They were a special breed of men who filled a special segment of the development of the communication system of the United States. With the completion of the transcontinental telegraph, the Pony Express was outmoded and was disbanded immediately on 24 October 1861.

Why was Grandpa Richards a "natural" candidate as a rider of the Pony Express? Perhaps characteristics and experiences can be gleaned from a brief review of his life to provide an answer.

William Minor Richards, born 19 December 1838 in Washington Township, Coshocton County, Ohio was the first child of Samuel J. Richards and Sarah Winn Richards. They were a pioneer couple driven with the desire to press westward for better and better farm land. However, Sarah died 26 June 1842 when Grandpa was three years old. He, and a younger brother, were taken into his maternal grandmother Carhart's home in Roscoe, Ohio. After about two years, his father married Margaret McGraw on 17 March 1844 and took his young sons back to live in the new home. While there was love for the boys, their lives had to adjust to another change.

About 1848 the Samuel Richards family, which by then included at least a half brother and a half sister, Grandpa and his own younger brother, moved from Ohio westward to Wabash County, Indiana. More adjustments resulted. While the soil of Wabash County was very rich and lay flat, it didn't drain well until tiling was done. Roads were impassable during muddy periods. Plank-covered roads were attempted. During this time a plague developed among the workers on the roads and the families of adjacent farms. Many deaths resulted. Step-mother Margaret's death occurred in 1854, the real cause not known. Within a year Samuel Richards died - 15 August 1855. Now at 17 years of age, Grandpa was an orphan. Again, a loving relative, his uncle William Richards, took Grandpa into his home where he could live with a favorite cousin Joshua Richards of about the same age.

The next year, in 1856, several Richards families left Indiana and migrated westward to Marion County, Iowa. Rich farm land was found near

Pleasantville where they lived and prospered for the next 100 years. Grandpa came with his relative to Iowa. By 1859 plans were developing for beginning a Pony Express mail route.

Grandpa was then 21 years old. He was strong, lithe and wiry and of minimum weight for a man of 5'11" height. He was single and an orphan. He liked adventure, people and travel. He abhorred smoking tobacco and alcohol drinking. He went to St. Joseph and was accepted as a Pony Express rider. His sector of the route lay from Fort McPherson National Cemetery east of North Platte, Nebraska along the Platte River to about where Paxton, Nebraska is located.

He met Jack Keetley, a fellow rider, who had a sister Elizabeth who became Grandpa's first wife. Three children were born to this union - the first child while they resided at a Pony Express station in Nebraska. After the Pony Express folded, the family returned to Pleasantville, Iowa. Later this marriage was ended by a divorce.

On 15 March 1869, Grandpa married my grandmother Henrietta Gordon. My father, Will Richards born 25 July 1877 was one of their nine children. Grandma Richards died 17 January 1913. Thereafter, Grandpa lived with his children. During the time he spent in our home, I remember the stories he told of earlier days and his Pony Express experiences. The magazine, "Cappers Weekly" ran an ad for stories told first hand by Pony Express riders.

Grandpa dictated his story and I wrote it in a "Big Chief" tablet. I was about 10 years old at the time. Grandpa and I didn't win space in "Cappers" but I sure wish I had a copy of that writing!

Once while on a Pony Express ride, Grandpa's horse became lame and could not go on at any pace. He realized he was in "bad" Indian country but he had no choice but to dismount. Very soon, as if from nowhere, three Indian men appeared. Grandpa could speak a few Indian words and gesture a lot. At the sight of the horse's sore foot the Indians were convinced of his emergency. They grasped the bridle and began easing the horse away from the trail. Grandpa was uneasy as to his plight. They directed him to sit down when they reached their camp and eat from the stew pot. The meat was fine-grained. He felt a little nauseated when he learned he was eating snake meat. The next morning he got his horse back to the trail where another Pony Express rider overtook him and rushed his mail bags to the next stations.

Grandpa stayed with his horse and finally, much later, they got to the relay station where the horse could rest and Grandpa could get a fresh horse.

On other occasions he was halted and held captive for brief periods but was never harmed by Indians during his Pony Express Days.

Until the end of his 88 years some of the old pioneer spirit glowed within him. Only a few minutes spent visiting with him would reveal the zest with which he had lived through those early years. He was truly a product of the frontier and a pioneer molded by frontier experiences. Grandpa Minor Richards died at the home of a daughter in California on 4 February 1927. He is buried in Hartford, Iowa Cemetery.

by
Granddaughter, Louise Richards Pilmer

P. O., Irish Grove, Iowa

The county post office, hamlets, villages, communities or towns of the past played a very vital part in the history of Warren County.

Some were important business places, milling center or merely a building which housed a rural post office but each during it's existence was important to the growth and development of Warren County.

Their failure of abandonment came because of various reasons -- the railroad missed them by a few miles, the automobile and trucks with speedier and easier travel, the changes in rural mail service and many many other changes from pioneer days to the present computer age.

Our purpose is to locate these places and preserve their names and memories for future generations.

We have used a large number of maps; courthouse records; United States Postal history; county histories; reasearch of over 100 years of newspaper files; data collected by Don L. Berry and David C. Mott and may personal interviews. We claim only such accuracy as possible with the resources available as mentioned.

POST OFFICE	ESTAB.	CLOSED	
FIRST POSTMASTER			
Ackworth	5/8/1871	In Service	Thomas Berkley - Postmaster Ellendale ^a 1869 ?????
		John Tomlinson - Postmaster	
Banner	6/25/1874	9/17/1875	Felix ⁷ 4/5/1876 12/13/1883
		John S. Crawford - Postmaster	
Bevington	6/4/1872	In Service	Ford 9/10/1880 5/31/1914 John R. Taylor - Postmaster
Beech	12/18/1915	1/30/1957	Fort Plain ^d 1854 1870 E.H. Barker - Postmaster
		Pearle Keeser - Postmistress	
Bellemont ¹	3/25/1870	1/13/1871 ²	Friends Grove 1/27/1864 11/14/1865 Jeptha Morgan - Postmaster
Carlisle ³	1/12/1852	In Service	
Churchville	1/26/1888	1/31/1944	Greenbush ⁷ 7/26/1850 3/31/1854 C.B. Jones - Postmaster
Clarkson	11/22/1880	6/30/1906	Hackney's Grove 7/22/1852 ????
		Crate Hill - Postmaster	David Johnson - Postmaster
Conger	1/5/1889	2/28/1917	Hammondsburg 10/9/1851 Robert G. Hammond - Postmaster
Cool ⁴	2/6/1879	?????	
Cummings	10/19/1887	In Service	Handsome View 8/22/1853 3/18/1879 George Coverdale - Postmaster
		John Douglas - Postmaster	
Derrough	10/17/1890	8/31/1892	Hartford 10/11/1854 In Service John D. Hartman - Postmaster
Darrville	1/17/1890	6/30/1863	Indianola 8/4/1849 In Service M.R. Barker - Postmaster
		Madison M. Melvin - Postmaster	
Economy ⁵	1/9/1888	see note #5	Irish Grove ¹⁰ ?????
			?????

Lacona	7/11/1864	In Service	Planeville	6/7/1855	3/25/1859	Mr. Walton - Postmaster
Latimer	7/3/1862	8/20/1864	Prole	????	In Service	
Ehich Bilbe - Postmaster			Pryor ¹⁵	?????	????	Sue Pryor - Postmistress
Laurenceburg	10/30/1857	4/21/1879	Pyra ¹⁶	6/18/1856	????	Mr. Glaze - Postmaster
A.H. Condit - Postmaster			Rosemount	4/11/1864	9/7/1880	Solomon Hodson - Postmaster
Liberty Centre ¹¹	3/7/1865	In Serv	Sandyville	5/8/1855	1/31/1907	Benjamin Beem - Postmaster
Calvin Hines - Postmaster			Spring Hill ¹⁷	5/13/1872	1985	Frank Eggliston - Postmaster
Lida	1/16/1901	5/31/1906	St. Marys	1/6/1871	In Service	John Gillespie - Postmaster
Loretta	1/10/1889	12/5/1889	Summerset	4/9/1850	12/31/1932	John Spray - Postmaster
Lothrop	12/24/1872	4/2/1906	Sutton	9/30/1897	11/1/1900	Nathan Corzatt - Postmaster
John Leggitt - Postmaster			Taunton	3/4/1875	?????	Francis Trueblood - Postmaster
Lynn	2/27/1855	????	Three Rivers ¹⁸	12/22/1848	10/11/1854	Jefferson Huff - Postmaster
L.S. Spencer - Postmaster			Twelve Mile Grove	????	????	N. Nefford - Postmaster
Martensdale	11/20/1915	In Service	White Oak Point	7/30/1862	3/31/1854	E.G. Crostwait - Postmaster
William E. Shoemaker - Postmaster			Wick	2/11/1885	????	
Medford	3/7/1890	10/29/1903	Wilmington	3/2/1855	12/1855	George H. Rees - Postmaster
Louis F. Braught - Postmaster			Wisconsin	3/10/1865	12/10/1866	Pleasant Smith - Postmaster
Medora	6/22/1868	11/15/1904				
C.F. McGriff - Postmaster						
Milo	8/4/1879	In Service				
G.W. Burgess - Postmaster						
Montpelier	2/2/1853	10/16/1860				
Charles G. Simpson - Postmaster						
Motor	4/7/1890	????				
R.R. Wright - Postmaster						
Mayview	7/30/1900	9/30/1901				
New Virginia	3/29/1858	In Service				
Norwalk ¹²		In Service				
G.M. Swan - Postmaster						
Orilla ¹³	7/19/1864	4/30/1929				
Oswego	7/28/1864	9/24/1869				
Granville Davidson - Postmaster						
Palmyra ¹⁴	5/7/1852	1/31/1907				
George Bartholonev - Postmaster						

"P.O., Irish Grove, Iowa" is condensed from an excellent collection of stories titled "Towns, Villages and Communities" by Edith Conn. A copy is in the collection at the Warren County Historical Society Libra.

1. Also referred to as Belmont Center Post Office.
2. Became Schonberg.
3. Established as Polk County - changed to Warren County January 12, 1852.
4. Said to have been a town of two names. Some maps it was Fairview-
others Cool, or both names.
5. July 19, 1888 the name of the post office was changed to Orilla.
6. The name before the post office was probably Allendale.
7. The town was laid out by the name Taunton but soon changed to Felix.
8. Formerly Greenbush. May 13, 1872 moved to Spring Hill.
9. The name was changed to Ft. Plain.
10. Most references refer to Darrville and Irish Grove being one and
the same. Confusion was brought about of their location by one post
office and postmaster taking the place of another.
11. December 8, 1893 the postal department changed the spelling from
Centre to Center.
12. The post offices was first established as Pyra and merely the
name changed to Norwalk.
13. Was first known as Pleasant Ridge then later Economy.
14. United States Postal Department transferred Palmyra from Polk
County to Warren County March 6, 1855.
15. Pryor was the name given to the poost office which took the place of
Oswego.
16. The name of the post office was changed from Pyra to Norwalk on December
9, 1859.
17. The post office moved to Spring Hill from Greenbush.
18. Located in Polk County.

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