

The Good Ol' Days

By Tobie Finzel

Early Post Offices, Part Two

Mail provided the vital link between friends, families and business in the years before good roads and telephones helped connect distant communities. In Part One of this article, we noted that much of the information came from the Vernonia Centennial special paper, *Vernonia: The First 100 Years*. One of the post offices listed, Pivot, was located two miles northwest of Keasey on Green Mountain and served "the many homesteaders who lived up in that area at the time." Pivot is listed on current websites only as a historical site. The article stated that it operated only from April 1984 to May 1985, but our research showed that the dates should have read "1884 to 1885." Well before the 1980s, all of these remote post offices closed with mail handled from the post office central to the ZIP code area.

Pebble Creek Road was one of the first routes that linked the Vernonia area to the Tualatin and Willamette Valleys. The Clark Parker family, the first settlers in the Upper Nehalem, came in on the primitive trail and had to ford Pebble Creek thirteen times between Mountindale and the valley. The Pebble Post Office was established January 31, 1891, on the Richard Tyacke property three miles south of Vernonia; he was the first postmaster. The office closed in December 1895 when its work was consolidated into the Vernonia Post Office.

Anoka Post Office operated from August 1902 to April 1907. It was situated on the Ralph Rogers homestead on Pebble Creek, two to three miles south of the former Pebble Post Office. The only postmaster was Lou Anna (Mrs. Ralph) Rogers. Alex and Minnie Sword delivered the mail on horseback from Vernonia three days a week. The Rogers's son, Nelson, became Oregon's State Forester in the 1970s. The name for the post office, according to Omar Spencer, came at the request of a Mr. Randolph who had post office experience in Anoka, Minnesota, upstream from Minneapolis on the Mississippi River. The Indian word Anoka means "both sides of the river." Mrs. Rogers also worked as a practical nurse and midwife, and in later years was known as "Grandma Rogers" to all. In 1917 she moved into town to a house

on North Street, slightly northwest of the Vernonia Grange Hall, where she operated a "birthing home." Ralph Keasey is among the many past and present Vernonians born there.

Pittsburg Post Office was established in April 1879 in the homestead cabin of Peter Brouse at the confluence of the Nehalem and its East Fork. He remained postmaster until 1888. Six postmasters succeeded him until the office closed in 1907. The name was taken from Brouse's hometown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the "h" dropped in the process. Along with his fellow Pittsburg homesteaders, the Detricks, he operated grist and lumber mills powered by a small dam on the East Fork.

For a postmark collector, one of the rarest would be that of the Braunsport Post Office which operated for only three months from August to November, 1891. It was located on the homestead of Johann Braun, its only postmaster, on Beaver Creek about five miles southwest of Vernonia.

From Virgil Powell's Diary

Virgil Powell (1887-1963) was a long-time resident whose family had a farm in the Upper Nehalem Valley between Natal and Pittsburg. Each year from 1906 until 1955, he kept a regular diary of his activities. As we noted in last month's column, Virgil carried the mail as a young man between St. Helens and Pittsburg and to Mist. He also enjoyed an active social life in the valley as evidenced below.

Friday, June 15, 1906: Poured down rain just as hard as it knew how all day. Sent Kit out to St. Helens for Edna to ride over. Got Postal Card from Emil mailed at Clatskanie. River up yellow and still a rising.

Saturday, June 16: Carried the mail to Mist. Grange day at Natal. Stopped coming up and talked with Alice till

about 12. Broke the bridle just as I was starting home. Did not rain any to amount to anything during the day. River up very high and yellow. Edna and Grace came over.

Sunday, June 17: Very bright and clear. Think the rain must all be over. Will be very glad when next Sunday comes so I can go to the big ball game. Edith and man went down. Went down to Natal in afternoon with Edna and Grace. Played ball a little. Got home at 6.

Monday, June 18: Hauled wood in morning and did not

The Clark Parker family, the first settlers in the Upper Nehalem, came in on the primitive trail and had to ford Pebble Creek thirteen times between Mountindale and the valley. The Pebble Post Office was established January 31, 1891

work any more all day. Had lots of fun the rest of the day. Clear but not very warm any time during the day. Edna is sick with a terrible headache. Mrs. Detrick was over in afternoon. Natal Grange Hall commenced to be painted.

Tuesday, June 19: Carried the mail to Mist. Very hot all

day. Armstrongs commenced haying. Hoed a little in afternoon. Edna is over her sick headache. The roads are drying up very fast. Will be awful glad when Sunday comes. Pell Soule was over in evening.

Wednesday, June 20: Fixed buggy in morning. Awful hot all day. Picked strawberries in afternoon. Edna got this book and looked at everything in it. (Ed.note: The remainder of the entry for this day is written in another hand). There was a visitor here this morning. Virgil went to Armstrongs. Great attraction some place. Virgil ate so many strawberries that he was nearly sick. Canning strawberries all the go now. He saw Miss White (Black) today. Virgil is planning on

tomorrow's trip.

Thursday, June 21: Carried the mail. Rained quite hard in morning. Seen Minnie and had the promise of a nice white rose for Saturday. Did not have much mail to deliver today. Dave Kaye and co. seen a big bear after goats yesterday.

Friday, June 22: Went to Vernonia in morning. Got back at 11:45. Very warm all day. Stopped at Wilkinson School house and pitched a few for the kids. Came home on left hand side of river. The roads are fine up above but I feel sorry for them down below.

Saturday, June 23: Carried the mail to Mist. Got a nice white rose. Went down to Natal in evening to entertainment. Got home at 4:40 a.m. Had dandy time. Had very heavy mail in outside sacks, had 1/2 sack of mail for Miss Sears. Mr. Detrick quit the sawmill business and left.

Sunday, June 24: Went down to Natal to the ball game between Natal and Vernonia. Score 18-19 in favor of Vernonia. I showed them people how to play ball. Got home at 6:15 p.m. Very hot all day. Hilda invited us to her house for dinner but Edna would not let me stop so had to drive on through the hot sun.

The Vernonia Pioneer Museum is located at E. 511 Bridge Street and is open from 1 to 4 pm on Saturdays and Sundays (excluding holidays) all year. From June through mid-September, the museum is also open on Fridays from 1 - 4 pm. There is no charge for admission but donations are always welcome. Become a member of the museum for an annual \$5 fee to receive the periodic newsletter. We now have a page on the Vernonia Hands on Art website, www.vernonia-handsonart.org If you are a Facebook user, check out the Vernonia Pioneer Museum page. The museum volunteers are always pleased to enlist additional volunteers to help hold the museum open and assist in other ways. Please stop by and let one of the volunteers know of your interest in helping out.

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