

BEN. HOLLADAY'S PONY EXPRESS

COLONEL FRANK V. DRAKE TELLS HOW TWO PROMINENT PORTLANDERS SERVED AS RIDERS

A complete account of Ben Holladay's transcontinental "pony express" should be written, with its details of commercial enterprise, physical exploits, executive achievement, its influence on the affairs of this Nation in its most critical period of its history, and its effects upon a territory now covered by a half-dozen states, a record would appear which would surpass the histories of many a kingdom, ancient and modern. The story would be punctuated with tragedies, dramas, romances and comedies.

The following scrap from the unwitting story of that unique enterprise can be in part verified by the signatures of L. L. Hawkins and Henry E. Dosch, on ancient receipts for money paid them as carriers of mail:

The eastern slope of Mount Davidson was treeless, verdurous and gray. A small, persistent streamlet of water bubbled up from a ledge of "croppings," fissured and broken at that point. Scattered about were small pieces of quartz, large and small, every pebble carrying particles of gold and silver. A wagon road passed here on its course down Six-Mile Canyon, past the "Sugar Loaf" out into the silence and desolation of the bed of an ancient inland sea, long gone dry, and to Forty-Mile desert, the death place of hundreds of immigrants, young and old, male and female—the dread Gehenna of the gold-seekers. Here were the bodies of thousands of animals, undecayed, simply dried and preserved, like jerked meat, sometimes petrified, and occasionally carried off for meals, otherwise the skeletons remained, and still remain, to mark the line of the now-abandoned desert road.

Eastward for 200 miles human eyes could see deserts and barren mountain ranges, melting into misty gray, but it was all dead, all desolation. There were no trees, no flowers, no beauty anywhere, save the tiny brook flowing over a barren bed from the ledge in the rocks.

A half-mile further up a cluster of gray buildings, gray tents, gray dumps, had been tacked onto the side of the mountain, but these served only to intensify the universal desolation. A low indistinct rumbling came down from near the gray dumps. It seemed to be a moaning of the ash-buried mountain.

At a little distance below the spring and near the road a level, circular pit had been graded, and a "patio" plant established—an ancient Spanish-Mexican device for amalgamation of gold and silver ores. It was like a huge arastra in form, some 30 feet in diameter, into which the pulverized ore-bearing material, with salt, copper, quicksilver, water, etc., were introduced, and the mass "worked" by the feet of a dozen or so of horses and mules, the animals being hitched from the center post by chains or ropes, one to another in groups. As the mules walked around in this big dish, their feet mixed the ore with the chemicals and effected slow amalgamation of quicksilver with the precious metals. These animals and their use are mentioned because they were in the experience of one of the "pony riders" of the West.

Twice each day, in the earliest '60s all the dreariness and desolation of this ancient spot disappeared, and was transformed in the eyes of the reverent Mexicans and enraptured Americans employed in handling and working the ores at the "patio" below the spring. A woman did it—nothing but a woman, and a woman of the world was full of beauty and all lovely things whenever she came.

I have forgotten her name; it was pretty and Spanish—so was she, and this was what affected the men there. Her father, an old Spanish don, had come up from Mexico to participate in exploiting the first silver mine discovered and worked in the United States, and which became the most noted mine in the world, because of its size, richness, and the wonderful achievements there first attained in methods of mining and metallurgy. His daughter, Señora Carlota something or other, told me that the Mexicans were accustomed to address her as "Chiquita," but that she disliked the word. Furthermore, she was then too old (15) and too large (100 pounds), to bear such "little" nicknames. She wanted to be called "Carlota," which was proper and appropriate. She could speak the Spanish better than any person I ever met, and she was—but I'm getting ahead here.

Well, at 7 in the morning and at 4 in the evening of each day this (there's not space or words to describe her), winsome Spanish lass came to the roadside, just above the patio plant, and took station upon a large, flat-topped quartz boulder for the coming and going of the "pony" and its silent rider. When little puffs of dust, which seemed to be flung upward into the air, in the distance told the coming of her hero she made ready a pretty, parti-colored silk scarf, which she always brought, and as he flashed past she waved welcome and adieu to him, and—well, she didn't shout, "screech," but the air seemed filled with musical "bravo Americano" and "viva Caballero mio." With a wave of his hand—a salute—he was gone.

It was not long before the Mexicans, in the Spanish, and the Americans, in questionable English, began to discuss the habit of the rider in throwing "bosos" and "kisses" with his salutations. But there was no exception to such doings anywhere on the trail. The Mexicans, from the Missouri; the riders, from the mining and enthusiastic sweethearts at every city and hamlet on the line across the continent, and they were worthy all the love and praise bestowed, as I am trying to show in relating the incident of courage and heroism unrecorded.

I have met four of those former "pony riders" here in Portland. Two are here now, leading, honored, and influential residents of the state and of the city—but my horse is bucking again, and got me out of the road of my story.

The name, or appellation, "pony express," though, as you know, it was not a name of the state and of the city—but my horse is bucking again, and got me out of the road of my story.

Each rider covered about 50 miles with five horses—changing each 10 miles—when another rider would take the little mail sack filled with letters written on the

CLASSIFIED AD. RATES

"Rooms," "Rooms and Board," "Housekeeping Rooms," "Situations Wanted," 15 words or less, 10 cents; 16 to 25 words or less, 15 cents; 26 to 35 words or less, 20 cents; 36 to 45 words or less, 25 cents; 46 to 55 words or less, 30 cents; 56 to 65 words or less, 35 cents; 66 to 75 words or less, 40 cents; 76 to 85 words or less, 45 cents; 86 to 95 words or less, 50 cents; 96 to 105 words or less, 55 cents; 106 to 115 words or less, 60 cents; 116 to 125 words or less, 65 cents; 126 to 135 words or less, 70 cents; 136 to 145 words or less, 75 cents; 146 to 155 words or less, 80 cents; 156 to 165 words or less, 85 cents; 166 to 175 words or less, 90 cents; 176 to 185 words or less, 95 cents; 186 to 195 words or less, 1.00; 196 to 205 words or less, 1.05; 206 to 215 words or less, 1.10; 216 to 225 words or less, 1.15; 226 to 235 words or less, 1.20; 236 to 245 words or less, 1.25; 246 to 255 words or less, 1.30; 256 to 265 words or less, 1.35; 266 to 275 words or less, 1.40; 276 to 285 words or less, 1.45; 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