

Iowa People and Events . . .

California Brought Nearer

While the people of the eastern states, who early visualized little in America west of the Mississippi, well understood that communication with California must necessarily be by the way of the isthmus of Panama, the inhabitants of the great mid-west, half way across the continent, truly felt isolated for a long time. The western overland trails were long, rough and dangerous. Only the venturesome and the hardy were equal to them, and communication with the Pacific coast desperately slow and uncertain.

It was not until the starting of the Pony Express of the sixties that Iowa and Missouri, as well as other adjacent midwest states, acquired real contact with the Pacific states, particularly California. The gold seekers of '49 reached California largely by the isthmus route, or struggled dangerously over the western plains and through the passes of the Rocky mountains.

More rapid communication west from Iowa came through the means of the Pony Express, the first such rider starting from St. Joseph, Missouri, April 3, 1860, on the first lap of a 1980-mile trip across the continent, as described by the *Missouri Historical Review*, and on the same day, a rider from Sacramento started east.

Thus was begun the short but colorful career of the famed Pony Express. Of course, no telegraph lines or mail facilities traversed the area called "the great American desert" or the continental divide marked by the Rockies. In the leather mail pouch of the Pony Express rider on that first trip were official letters, telegrams, special editions of newspapers, and a telegram from President Buchanan to the governor of California.

At first, horses were changed every twenty-five miles at way-stations along the route, according to the *Re-*

view, but later changes were made every ten miles. The immensity of the undertaking is hardly realized. Riders had two minutes at each station to transfer mail bags to a fresh pony and be off again on their way. Dangers from Indians, robbers, and all the perils of the frontier West tried the courage of the riders, and the exactness of the schedules tested their physical endurance, but the mail went through, and the men each averaged about seventy-five miles of a trip. "Buffalo Bill" Cody was one of the most famous Pony Express riders.

Crossing Kansas and Nebraska, the route was over the Rockies to Salt Lake City and Sacramento. There the mail was put on a fast boat for San Francisco. First announcements of the innovation provoked skepticism as to its success. The first trip westward took about ten days. Important official news was more hurried. The fastest trip made was seven days and seventeen hours, when Lincoln's inaugural address was carried to the west coast.

The enterprise was never a financial success and was operated only about eighteen months, its need being eliminated when the telegraph lines were completed across the continent in October, 1861. Operating expense had included the salaries of eighty riders and the upkeep of 420 horses and 190 relay stations, estimated in total at \$475,000, with mail receipts probably not over \$90,000. But, it was a helpful as well as colorful venture.

Over in Nebraska a project is under way for placing Pony Express markers in the yards of rural schools serving districts crossed by the Pony Express routes. Already this last fall two dedicatory ceremonies were held in Jefferson and Dawson counties, the others will follow.

The Place Far Away

Penoach is a Sac and Fox Indian word meaning "far away," or "the farthest place." This was the name

given the first organized township in Dallas county. On early maps the name appears as designating a place or a postoffice in the county. When a county seat was established by popular acclaim the name was given to the new county seat. But, when the town plat was filed by Benjamin Greene he gave the county seat the name Adell. The name of both town and township afterward was changed to Adel. But Adel township is not as large as was Penoach. Some there were to regret that the name Penoach had not been retained for the county seat. Mr. Greene, when asked about the name, simply said he gave the name in honor of a very beautiful young girl. There were surmises, but no one knew whom he had in mind.

The name Penoach came naturally to a place in Dallas county. In the early days, the Sac and Fox were in the habit of making sundry excursions to different parts of Iowa for maple sugar making. A favorite place was along the Raccoon rivers. There were extensive groves of sugar maples all along the south part of Dallas county. They went to Penoach, that is, to "the place farthest away." That was somewhere in Dallas county. Hence the first settlers called the place that was to be the first town of the county, Penoach, just as they had heard it from the Sac and Fox visitors.

One early spring day a group of the Indians came to the home of Ephraim Williams, who lived a few miles north of where the town of Van Meter is now located. The Indians always came there, for they were well treated, and Mrs. Williams usually gave them bacon rinds and other grease needed for making maple sugar. The grease added to the boiling sap causes it to make sugar rather than hard pieces. Mrs. Williams met the delegation at the gate and talked with them. They knew she had a small iron kettle they much wanted. She gave it to them. Then an Indian rigged out with feathers and beads, brought forth a long string of white and blue beads and wrapped them

around the neck of Ora Williams, then just a child in the arms of his mother. It was their recognition of her gift. They, too, were on the way to Penoch.

Peacetime Patriotism

Gov. A. B. Cummins in an address at dedication of the Iowa soldier's monument at Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, Nov. 19, 1906:

"The faithful follower of Mohammed counts himself especially fortunate if once during his whole life he is permitted to walk the weary way to Mecca, and there kneel before the tomb of the Prophet. He is re-inspired in his faith, reinforced in his strength, as he draws from this fountain of religion his lessons for the future.

"My dear friends, it seems to me that we ought to congratulate ourselves in that we have been permitted to make this pilgrimage to the shrine of the brave Iowa boys who, more than forty years ago, wrought deeds so valorous upon these heights and upon this historic spot. We are here to honor them, but in honoring them we will strengthen ourselves. What they did is written upon the annals of a grateful country; it has been carved into the enduring granite and moulded into the imperishable bronze. Let us resolve that their spirit and their purpose be graven deep upon our hearts as we turn to duties yet before us.

"It was hard to climb these heights in the face of hostile guns. It was hard to preserve courage and fortitude in the midst of the fearful carnage of this assault; but, my friends, peace has its perils as well as war, and I have often thought that it was a little harder to be a patriot in time of peace than it was to be a patriot in time of war.

"This great country demands now the highest type of citizen, just as it demanded forty years and more ago the highest type of soldier, and we ought to consecrate ourselves anew, as we gather to sing the praises

of the boys of 1861. We ought to make deeper and firmer resolutions that we will be as faithful to the things committed to our hands as they were to the things designed for them to do. And in that thought, it seems to me, lies the great value of these dedications. I think, both north and south, we will turn away from this beautiful shaft determined to do better and to live better for the country for which these heroes fought, and for which many of them died."

Graeser Slugged Referee

William L. (Pinky) Bliss, LL.B. 1902, Drake University, now a justice of the Iowa supreme court, was captain of the Drake football "Bulldogs" of 1901, and played a year earlier. This was the period when the game was first played in Des Moines under lights.

Sec Taylor, of the *Des Moines Register*, tells of a game between Drake and Grinnell college, when what looked like a touchdown run by the "Bulldogs" was called back on the last play of the game for infraction of the rules, and Grinnell triumphed 6-5. Immediately thereafter a Drake player fisted the referee, who was Wallace Lane, afterward a patent attorney in Chicago. The late George Graeser of Drake has since been charged with making the attack.

Taylor quotes Don Evans, Des Moines attorney, another player in the contest, but against Drake and for Grinnell, as recently talking with Judge Bliss reviewing that contest, and the slugging episode was mentioned. "I don't know why I did it," Judge Bliss said, "but I was the one who told Graeser to sock the referee. In the excitement, I shouted, 'Hit him,' and George did, apparently acting spontaneously with the suggestion."

Evans commented: "I always knew Graeser was supposed to have done it, but that's the first time I ever heard anyone admit it was he."

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