



Hollenberg Station  
State Historic Site  
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(785) 337-2635  
Duane Durst, Administrator

# PONY EXPRESSIONS

Friends of Hollenberg Station Quarterly Newsletter

Second Quarter 2009

No. 91

## *Plans being finalized for Festival 2009*

by Jim Scheetz, Editor

Exhibitor confirmations have been coming in for the 24th Annual Pony Express Festival to be held on Sunday, August 30. We look forward to renewing friendships among the blacksmiths and flint knappers, the butter churners and Pony Express riders.

According to President Gary Minge, we will have more exhibitors than last year.

The official Festival button this year features Vanan Shamburg who last year gave a plowing demonstration using his team of Belgian draft horses. Vanan is planning to be back again this year.

Also returning will be the Horseshoe Band, this year celebrating their 100th anniversary.

Other entertainers include "The Bremen Man" Mark Allerheiligen, the Kramer Sisters and the McClellan Singing Sisters.

A circuit rider preacher, Kenny Martin of Oketo,

will arrive in a horse-drawn buggy. He will give the opening services, accompanied by the community choir.

The noon lunch will again be catered by Ricky's Cafe.

The highlight of the afternoon is always the Pony Express re-enactment and mochila (mail pouch) exchange, put on by members of the Kansas Division of the National Pony Express Association.

The day's festivities will once again end around 4:00 with the drawing for the Festival quilt, made by volunteers as a fund raiser for the Friends group.

WIBW-TV in Topeka will air a 5-minute interview with volunteer Steve Pralle concerning the Festival at approximately 12:25 p.m. during the Midday in Kansas program.

We always enjoy putting together a full day to celebrate the history of the Pony Express and pioneer life with a day of family-friendly fun. 🐾



### Calendar of Events

**July 17-19** — 14th Annual Plattduitsch Konferenz, hosted by the Low German Heritage Society of Washington and Marshall Counties will be held in Marysville, KS. A group will tour the site on July 18 at 2:00 p.m. A power point presentation on the life of Gerat Hollenberg will be shown.  
**July 29** — Friends' meeting at Visitors Center. 7:30 p.m.

**August 4** — Volunteer meeting, 6:00 p.m. at A J's Steak Shack in Washington.  
**August 19** — Friends' meeting at Visitors Center. 7:30 p.m.  
**August 30** — Twenty-fourth Annual Pony Express Festival at Site. Public is invited.  
**September 1** — Volunteer meeting, 6:00 p.m. at Cafe in Greenleaf.  
**December 5** — Christmas Open House, 6:00 p.m. at Hollenberg Station. Public is invited.

### New Site Hours

Site hours will change starting Wed., July 29, 2009.

**OPEN**

10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Wed. - Sat.

(closed Sun., Mon. & Tue.)

**CLOSED**

Oct. 31, 2009 - April 7, 2010

## From the Administrator's Desk

by Duane Durst

I want to send an expression of sympathy to the Odvody family. Marvin Odvody recently passed away, and with his passing goes the last member of the Pony Express Band. The members Paul Gleue, Arnold Knabe, and Marvin Odvody were referred to as the Pony Express Band when playing at the site. They have all passed on now, but still will be remembered for their music, kindness, friendship and help in promoting the Hollenberg Pony Express Station. We love you guys and will never forget you.



The re-ride on June 10 went real well. Not as many people as I would like to have seen out, but 6:00 a.m. is not the best time for people to be out and about. A big thank you to the Kansas Division and National Pony Express Assoc. for continuing this great tradition. Thanks to the people that helped with refreshments at the Station.



Several months ago I had a 103-year-old lady visiting with her family members. They were from the state of Washington and traveling across the country in an RV. I believe this makes her the oldest person to ever visit the site. I might add that she was still very alert and active.



On June 12th I attended the annual meeting of

the US 36 Highway Association, Inc. in Atwood, Kansas. I went out a day early so I could visit the Arikaree Breaks north of St. Francis. There are indeed canyons in Kansas. What a wonderful experience. I would encourage anyone to visit this wonderful part of Kansas.



I have been hearing from visitors more all the time about how wonderful it is to travel US 36 Highway as compared to an interstate highway. They like the condition of the road, the slow pace, being able to go through the small towns and the beautiful scenery.

We have been running a series of articles on the history of US 36 Highway 36 in the last four issues. I appreciate all the fine stories forwarded to me about the highway and hope that you also have enjoyed them. There will be more stories in the future if I can just get more people interested in sending them to me.



Alice Dyck of Washington, Kansas has given me a wonderful article on the Pony Express. It was printed in *The Axtell Standard* newspaper starting January 8, 1953. The story was continued in the next two issues which were provided to me by the Marshall County Historical Society. Hope you enjoy reading the articles, reprinted below, as much as I have. Thank you folks for your help.



Make plans now to attend the 24th Annual Pony Express Festival on August 30, 2009. See you here.

## The Pony Express

by Mrs. Margaret Larzelere Rice  
Troy, Kansas

*Note: The following letter from Mrs. Margaret Larzelere Rice was written to Lillian Keegan Farrar, Maxwell, Iowa, and was printed in three parts in The Standard, newspaper of Axtell, Kansas, in January of 1953.*

Dec. 25, 1952

Dear Mrs. L. K. Farrar:

Last fall your "A Rambler on Transportation and

Communication" in the Oct. 16, 1952, issue of the *Axtell Standard* was brought to my attention by my husband's niece, Mrs. A. S. Hay of Holton, Kansas. I tho't you might be interested in a Doniphan County version of the Pony Express, so I am sending you a copy of a little talk I gave on the Pony Express before the local Kiwanis Club in 1949.

"The invitation to speak before the Kiwanis Club

brings to mind some facts about the Pony Express that probably will be forgotten when my generation passes on.

"As some people will be wondering 'How come' that lady should know anything about what happened way back in 1859 to 1861, almost a quarter of a century before she was born, I shall try to satisfy their curiosity as I proceed.

"The Pony Express Trail came right through the door yard of the Larzelere homestead where I was born, Jan. 11, 1883. The trail followed ox team trails that had been made by the '49ers and early emigrants that came into Kansas after the Kans.-Neb. Act was signed.

"Those early settlers and their older children saw the Pony Express riders, most of them 18 or 19 year old boys, rush by their log cabin homes day after day and later told and retold the thrilling adventures of those fearless carriers of Uncle Sam's mail.

"Johnny Fry (not Frye or Frey), the first rider whom the Pony Express monument in the Civic Center of St. Joseph is supposed to represent, often came from his father, Joseph Fry's home in St. Joseph to visit his cabin on the east forty acres of the farm where we lived before we moved to Troy in 1947.

"Reason Fry was a frail little man, probably a consumptive, who often remarked to his husky neighbors, 'It would take a mighty little lick to knock me down.' Some of his neighbors, unaware of his condition, were mean enough to say that he knew how to do everything but provide for his family. In a few years he died, leaving a wife and six children.

"Mrs. Reason Fry was a sister of the late Jack Evans and was our neighbor, first on the Rev. B. F. Bowman place and later on the 160 A where the Red Apple stood, west of Wathena on U.S. highway 36. She often told us children stories of the early times.

"When the St. Joseph Frys visited at the Reason Frys, Johnny and his brother, Dick, who usually came along, came to know all the young men of the Mt. Airy community among whom were the

Larzelere boys, my uncles and my father, R. H. Larzelere, then a young man of six years.

"The Pony Express was the 'Rocket' means of transportation in 1860. Late in 1859 Russell, Majors, Waddell, an express company, was organized to carry mail from St. Joseph, the end of the railroad, to the Platte River Valley in Nebraska, west to Salt Lake City and to Sacramento, Cal., in the shortest time possible.

"Relays of swift footed horses or Indian saddle ponies ridden by dare devil young men, swept back and forth between St. Joseph and Sacramento day and night with the regularity, if not the speed, that equal the present schedules of express trains that carry the mails today. A letter mailed in St. Joseph arrived in Sacramento 10 days later. Once the trip was made in 7-1/2 days to carry news of Lincoln's election to the presidency.

"In addition to the government postage of 10c an ounce, \$5 for each half ounce was paid to the company operating the express line. The cost was out of reach of the average pioneer. From Sacramento the mail went by steam-

boat down the Sacramento river to San Francisco.

"According to Frys and other early pioneers the Pony Express Trail began at the Pony Express barn which collapsed in 1948 but was later restored by the M. K. Goetz Brewing Co. A crude post office desk and a Pony Express saddle, both obtained from the barn, are in the St. Joseph museum. Riders and horses were ferried across the Missouri river at Elwood. From Elwood they followed what was later known as the Old Rock Road across the Elwood bottoms to Wathena. Here the riders crossed Peter's Creek at a ford near the present Wathena bridge and followed approximately what is now the Pottawatomie road to the Larzelere farm." (To be continued.)

P.S. It was a great pleasure to receive this letter. I only wish there are those of you who have similar memories of "Yesterday" and would write me of them.

Lillian K. Farrar.  
Maxwell, Iowa.

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"Abraham Lincoln drove along  
this branch trail when  
he made a campaign  
speech at Troy in 1859."

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## The Pony Express (cont.)

“At the Larzalere farm the riders turned to the northwest and followed a ridge to the northwest corner of the 160, then passed over the 60 acre tract recently owned by Lon Rice, swung around the head of a creek emptying into Peter’s Creek. At this point a branch trail extended north to a ford on Peter’s Creek and then west to the old McClennand house where travelers could find lodging for the night. Abraham Lincoln drove along this branch trail when he made a campaign speech at Troy in 1859.

“From the Lon Rice 60 the trail passed the Van Evan’s place now (1949) owned by George Schwope, extended across the Lewis Ruhlman farm and on to Cottonwood Springs on the Hugh Finkler farm southeast of Troy. This station was also called Cold Springs Ranch by some Missourians who probably did not know too much about water anyway.

“This was the first depot where the drivers threw their mail bags onto a fresh horse and dashed away to Syracuse, the next station, near Severance. This was the last station in Doniphan county.

“Other stations between Syracuse and the Nebraska line were Kennekuck, Kickapoo, Granada, Log Chain, Seneca, Laramie Creek, Ash Point, Guittard Station and Hollenberg. Every forty miles, some writers say 30, was a division point where riders rested over night before carrying the mail back to their home station.

“On one occasion my uncle, Chas. Larzelere, substituted for Johnny Fry, who for some reason did not choose to make his run that day. As he came upon the body of the east bound rider, pierced with an Indian arrow, he pulled out the arrow and pronounced the rider dead. Then he took the arrow and the mail bag on to its destination where he reported the tragedy. The next day he brought the arrow with its blood stained shaft and feathers with him. His nieces, (one myself) and nephew never tired of hearing this story and

in imagination lived over the thrilling adventure as they gazed at the bloody trophy.

“When the Civil War came Johnny Fry marched away to his country’s call but left his mare with his brother Reason at Mt. Airy. Frederick Rice, my father-in-law, bought the mare colt, foaled by this famous mare. When she grew to maturity the Rice boys named her for some reason or perhaps for no reason at all, “Old Puss” and from her they raised a number of colts. These horses were not very large, perhaps weighed about 1100 pounds but were as tough as iron. They could be ridden or driven 40 miles a day and after a night’s rest were ready for another 40 mile trip.

“In 1938 the Post Office Department issued a postage stamp honoring the Pony Express rider and a monument was erected in the Civic Center of St. Joseph. I have never admired this monument as I think the real express ponies spent little time standing on their hind legs as though getting

ready to buck their riders into the great hereafter. Instead they stretched themselves out in a steady swinging gallop that ate up the miles between them and their destination.

“That same year (1938) the Pony Express was re-run by men who went jog-

ging along on pudgy fat horses that probably wore their riders out on the first 5-mile stretch. There were simply no Johnny Frys present.

“Johnny Fry was killed in the battle of Eldorado. His brother, Dick Fry, who was also in the Union Army, wrote from St. Louis at the close of the war, that he was sending his trunk home and would follow in about a week. The trunk reached St. Joseph but Dick never arrived.

“In 1944 my husband and I visited Mark Fry. Mark is short for Marquis De Lafayette, Reason Fry’s son at Dearborn, Mo. After giving me much of the above information about his famous uncle he remarked, ‘If these things are not true (as some folks would like to have us believe) why did our grandfathers, uncles, aunts and parents, tell these things over and over as long as they lived?’

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“...Johnny Fry will always be remembered as the first Pony Express rider in spite of Mrs. Louise Platt-Hauck’s claim.”

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“The Pony Express which was never a financial success gave way to the Iron Horse when railroads were built across the country, just as the Iron Horse is now giving way to airplanes for swiftness. (To be continued).

### The Pony Express (concluded)

“In 1939 historical markers were put up along the highways of Kansas on the approximate route of the trail. In the last year I cannot remember seeing a single marker in Doniphan county. Have tourists taken them as souvenirs to California or New York? I would like to know?

“To Doniphan county people Johnny Fry will always be remembered as the first Pony Express rider in spite of Mrs. Louise Platt-Hauck’s claim to the contrary. We just never heard of Bill Richardson until she mentioned him in her book.

“In 1938 or ‘39 C. W. Ryan, Wathena, Kansas, and R. C. Triplett, Troy, checked on the original Pony Express Trail and obtained markers from ‘The Old Trails Association’ New York. They placed markers along highway 36 and highway 20 across Doniphan county. C. W. Ryan tells me that at that time he tried repeatedly to see Mrs. Louise Platt Hauck about what she knew about the trail and also to advise her she was contradicting Mr. Root, co-author of ‘The Overland Trail.’

“When he called she was never at home and when he wrote her his letters remained unanswered. She evidently did not wish her story to be questioned by his committee and saw to it that

it was not questioned.”

Hoping this will be of some help to you Mrs. Farrar, I remain, sincerely yours, (Mrs.) Margaret Larzelere Rice, Troy, Kansas.

P.S. The wild open country of 1860 can hardly be imagined. It was indeed the “Wild and Woolly West”. The first settlement west of the Wolf River was made on the banks of the Nemaha River north of Seneca. In 1859 there were only two houses between Hiawatha and Sabetha.

The primitive dwellings of these pioneers were one room log cabins. Travel was on foot, horseback, or in lumber wagons. Up to 1860 there were few settlers except in the small towns and stage stations. Much of the money was ‘Indian money’, swap materials such as posts, corn, pumpkins, flour, wheat and other things.

Russell, Majors and Waddell, who had the government contract for the Pony Express, were the great freighting company carrying supplies to the West. They had their headquarters at Leavenworth with the government contract for carrying military supplies to western forts among them Ft. Laramie. Their trains broke the otherwise desolation of the bleak countryside. Around 1860 these trains of from forty to sixty wagons, passed through Seneca and to the north of Axtell. As each wagon was drawn by six or seven yoke of oxen it must have been an inspiring sight for the few settlers to watch the movement of these covered wagon freight trains.

Changes came quickly from 1860 to 1870. In October 1861, the telegraph line was completed across the continent. This put an end to the famous Pony Express. The great firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell went broke, largely from expenses incurred by handling the Pony Express. Folks’ thoughts and efforts centered on the Civil War until after 1865. This was followed by the building of the western railroads, one of which entered Nemaha county in 1870. Thus began an influx of emigration and of settlement to which many of us can trace our forefathers. Two important settlements resulting were the Germans around St. Benedict and the Swedish settlement south of Axtell. Transportation and communication was changing rapidly from the days of the Pony Express when it cost \$5 to send a letter. 🐾

#### Pony Expressions

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# Plattdüütsch Konferenz Attendees Visit the Pony Express Station

by Jim Scheetz

The Visitor Center was packed to overflowing with attendees of the Plattdüütsch Konferenz on Saturday, July 18, who chose the Pony Express Station as an optional event on the agenda.

Duane Durst and his crew of volunteers had put together a power point presentation on the history of Gerat Hollenberg and the Hollenberg Station. More than fifty lucky ones got chairs, the rest stood for a total of about 80 folks who listened as volunteer Herb Dyck, Washington, went through the 15-minute presentation in fluent German from a script translated by his wife Alice.

And exactly on cue, Colin Finley, recent graduate of Hanover High, presented the computerized slides he put together from a script prepared by Duane, Irene Laue and Jim Scheetz.

After the presentation, the visitors filed along the nature trail to the original Pony Express station to go through the building. Another surprise

awaited them there.

Pony Express re-enactor Kyle Pralle rode his galloping horse up to the station, exchanged the mochila (mail pouch) with Dan Pralle on a fresh mount, who then rode off toward the next station. But before going too far, Dan turned his horse around and returned to the station where the mochila exchange was completed a second time.

Kyle and Dan are Hanover members of the Kansas Division of the National Pony Express Association.

"We had way more visitors than was scheduled, but we made out quite well," said site administrator Duane Durst. "I'd like to thank the Low German Heritage Society Committee for visiting our site. Meeting all these fine people was a wonderful experience for all of us."

Duane also thanked all the volunteers and riders who helped to make the event a success. 🐾



*Conference attendees make their way along the winding trail to inspect the Hollenberg Station and await the arrival of the Pony Express rider.*



*Kyle Pralle gets ready to head on out with the mochila. Kyle and Dan Pralle are Kansas Division members of the National Pony Express Association.*

# The Extraordinary Art of Ukrainian Egg Decorating

by Diane Gleue



June Kucera, right, with partner Trinidad Jensen, at a recent Pony Express Festival.

The Ukrainian Egg — a beautiful, delicate and fascinating piece of art.

June Kucera, Wilbur, Nebraska, has been sharing the art of painting eggs at our festival for many years. How many? “I don’t know...I lost track several years ago,” she said.

Her friend Christine Janda taught her how to design and color the eggs. Another friend, Trinidad Jensen, shares and paints Ukrainian Eggs as well.

The art and method of painting eggs was brought here from the Ukraine and Czech Republic. They use raw bees wax and dye to make the design on a raw egg. The instrument used to apply the melted wax is called a kistka, or kystka. The wax is placed on the lines you want to stay white.

Next, the egg is dipped into a light colored dye, then dried off. This process is repeated several times using a little darker dye each time. After the last color has been applied the egg is warmed over a candle to melt the wax. A tissue is used to wipe off the wax and the final design is revealed.

After poking a hole in the top and bottom of the egg, the yolk and white is blown out and a coat of shellac or clear nail polish is applied. The

eggs are beautiful and each is unique.

The color and symbol or design on each egg has a special meaning and each egg was created to express a feeling. An example of this would be, if your neighbor is to go on a hunt, they may receive a decorated egg with a deer in the design on it. It meant “best wishes for happy hanting.” “They were like a greeting card before Hallmark company was founded,” June said.

June has always lived in Wilbur, Nebraska. She recently retired from the Saline County Judge’s office after 40 years. She lives in the house of her husband’s family. It was built in 1932. She didn’t know for sure what she would do with her spare time but found out that she has more time for babysitting her grandchildren, quilting, and she just spent the day at Sokol Hall helping make 30 dozen kolaches for the upcoming Wilbur Czech Festival.

She has a trip planned this year to go to Alaska and found out that her trip is set for the same time as our Pony Express Festival, so she unfortunately won’t be here this year to share her Ukrainian Eggs. We look forward to having her with us again next year. Be sure to come visit us to get a glimpse of these fascinating pieces of art in the future. 🐾

# Now THIS is Horsepower!

by Erin Matthews, the Salina Journal

*Note: The following article is reprinted with permission from the Salina Journal, July 27, 2008. Photos by Jim Scheetz.*

PORTIS — Vanan Shamburg—like many boys who are 16—spent a lot of time over the past year shopping online for just the right vehicle with a lot of horsepower.

But Shamburg's dream wagon is heavy on the horse.

In February, the Portis boy and his dad, Curtis, drove to Assaria to look at a seasoned team of registered, full-breed Belgian draft horses. Vanan decided to buy the horses, and his grandpa, Don Simmelink of Jewell, picked up the pair for him and hauled them to Portis, located in Osborne County.

Vanana and Curtis Shamburg found an old wagon in Nebraska and spent two months replacing all of its wooden parts and rebuilding it.

"He's got a passion for his horses, Curtis Shamburg said. "For a year or more, he spent a lot of time looking on the Internet and dreaming and saving for them."

Vanana, whose grandpa gave him his first horse—a quarter horse named Mandy—when he was 12, said he thought having a team of draft horses to plow with or pull a wagon would be something fun to do in Portis.

"In today's busy lifestyle, you just don't take time for that kind of stuff," Curtis Shamburg said.

Vanana had his eye on a young team that was offered for sale with a wagon on draft horse Web sites, but the logistics of picking them up in South Dakota were pretty daunting. Then he saw the team from Assaria advertised, and he and his dad went to meet the horses the next day.

Linda and Lori, who are about 6 years older than their new owner, stand 16 hands tall and weigh 1,800 pounds each.

Horses such as these have a life expectancy of 30 to 35 years, Vanana said.

Simmelink advised the boy he would be better off starting with a seasoned team, so that the horses could teach their master as much as the master could teach them.

"Draft horses are big animals," Curtis Shamburg said. "You do something wrong, and they're not very forgiving."

Clint Suhr, the Assaria area farmer who sold Vanana the team, said the horses had been used to pull wagons around the Sunny Side Pumpkin Patch on his neighbor's farm but weren't getting much exercise the rest of the year. He said he was sorry to part with them but was very happy with their new home.

"They will teach that boy a lot," he said. "They really will. They're just a great old team."

When Vanana first got the team, the horses had to get used to his voice giving them commands and to how he drove them.

"I had some times with them they didn't do exactly what I wanted them to do," Vanana said.



*Sixteen-year-old Vanana Shamburg guides his team of Belgian draft horses as he plows the field owned by Elvin Holle, east of Hollenberg Station, during the 2008 Pony Express Festival. Vanana says he looks forward to returning this August.*



*Vanan Shamburg and his father, Curtis, prepare to hitch up the team for the plowing demonstration at the Pony Express Festival in 2008.*

“They’re still learning for me, but they are doing a lot better.”

In fact, the horses are doing so well, he took them to a community picnic in Portis this summer, and they pulled a hay rack ride for 40 or 50 people. In August, Vanan plans to take his team to Washington for a 2 1/2-day trail ride.

In the meantime, he plows fields on the Shamburgs’ five acres of land.

Each morning before he goes to work on a nearby farm, Vanan feeds and grooms the team. The horses each eat about 36 pounds of hay or prairie grass a day, and they love oats for a special treat, Vanan said.

Now that harvest is over, he hopes to spend more time with the horses.

Several times on Sundays his family has loaded up in the wagon to ride to church.

The wagon comfortably holds six, so with his mom and dad in the wagon, some of his two brothers—Lucas and Tullar—and four sisters—Caiten, Dacie, Mica and Ellivia—have to ride one

of the family’s four quarter horses.

The horses don’t run, but can trot, although Vanan said he mostly just lets them walk.

“I give them breaks,” Vanan said. “They’re older, and I’m not in a big hurry.”

It takes about an hour and 20 minutes to travel the five miles to the country church in Harlan with the horses trotting some, but mostly walking.

“Now you know why nobody went anywhere in the old days,” said Dee Shamburg, Vanan’s mom. “It’s been a fun family experience.”

Dee Shamburg said the church’s new pastor from Colorado took pictures of the family arriving in their wagon to show his former congregation.

“He said, ‘Well, we moved to Kansas, and this is how people come to church,’ “ she said.

Dee said Vanan has yet to buy his own gas-powered vehicle, but he claims his dad’s pickup truck because it can pull the horse trailer.

“I don’t let anybody else drive when I’m pulling the horses,” Vanan said. 🐾



**THE  
PONY IS  
COMING!**