

Warren, Ohio.
August 7, 1923

Mr. R. X. Curren,
St. Joseph, Mo.

Dear Sir:-

At the request of my nephew, Mr. Grant Downs, I am writing to inform you that I rode the Pony Express in 1862-1863, between the North Platt Bridge and La Parell Creek.

I was born in Portage County, Ohio July 4, 1838, and went West in March 1861, first going to St. Joseph, Mo. and then to the place where Denver now is. From Denver I crossed the Snowy Range into Utah and then came back to Denver, where I was hired in the Fall of 1861 by a man named Alex Benem to ride the Pony Express from Denver to Julesburg for two trips. Mr. Benem had charge of the Over Land Coach Line and lived at Denver. Later Mr. Benem transferred me to the North Platt Bridge where I was hired by James Slade who had charge of the Pony Express from Julesburg to Salt Lake City. I made my first ride in June, 1862 from the North Platt Bridge to La Parell Creek and the distance was supposed to be ninety miles. The first station for change of ponies was at Snow Creek, eighteen miles from the North Platt Bridge, another station was run by a Canadian Frenchman named Bao, another by a Canadian Frenchman named Bulo and another by a man named Simiab, another by a man named Wilson. I rode from the North Platt Bridge to LaParell Creek in nine hours, slept at the bunk house which was run by Tom Miles and then started back to the North Platt the next morning - six days a week. We did not ride on Sunday.

I rode from June, 1862 to February, 1863, both inclusive, nine months, when the Pony Express was abandoned and I went to St. Joseph to get my pay which was to have been \$70.00 a month and board, but when I got to St. Joseph the Office of the Pony Express was closed and I did not get my money. I believe that none of the pony riders who were riding when the Pony Express was discontinued got paid. Mr. Slade, the man who hired me, had been hung by the Vigilantes some time before, and I was unable to get my time from him. We had little chance to get acquainted with the riders who relieved us for we changed and went on immediately. The only rider I knew was a half-breed Cherokee Indian named Jirde Foreman, who relieved me at LaParell.

Yours very truly,

Balvin Cooper Downs

1029 Edgewood Ave.
Warren, Ohio