

Letter

Continued from page 1A

"I feel very strongly that they belong there," library director Dorothy Elliott said of the pages. "We don't have the facilities to properly house them or display them. It seemed indecent for them to be in the vault where people couldn't see them."

Earlier this year, the library board voted to donate the pages to the museum, and Thursday they were formally handed over by board President Margie Bucher.

In reality, museum officials already have had their hands on the documents. They have carefully deacidified the yellowing paper and sealed each page in plastic holders. The curators hope to have the pages on display soon, and will include them some day along with 10 other letters written by pony riders about the mail run.

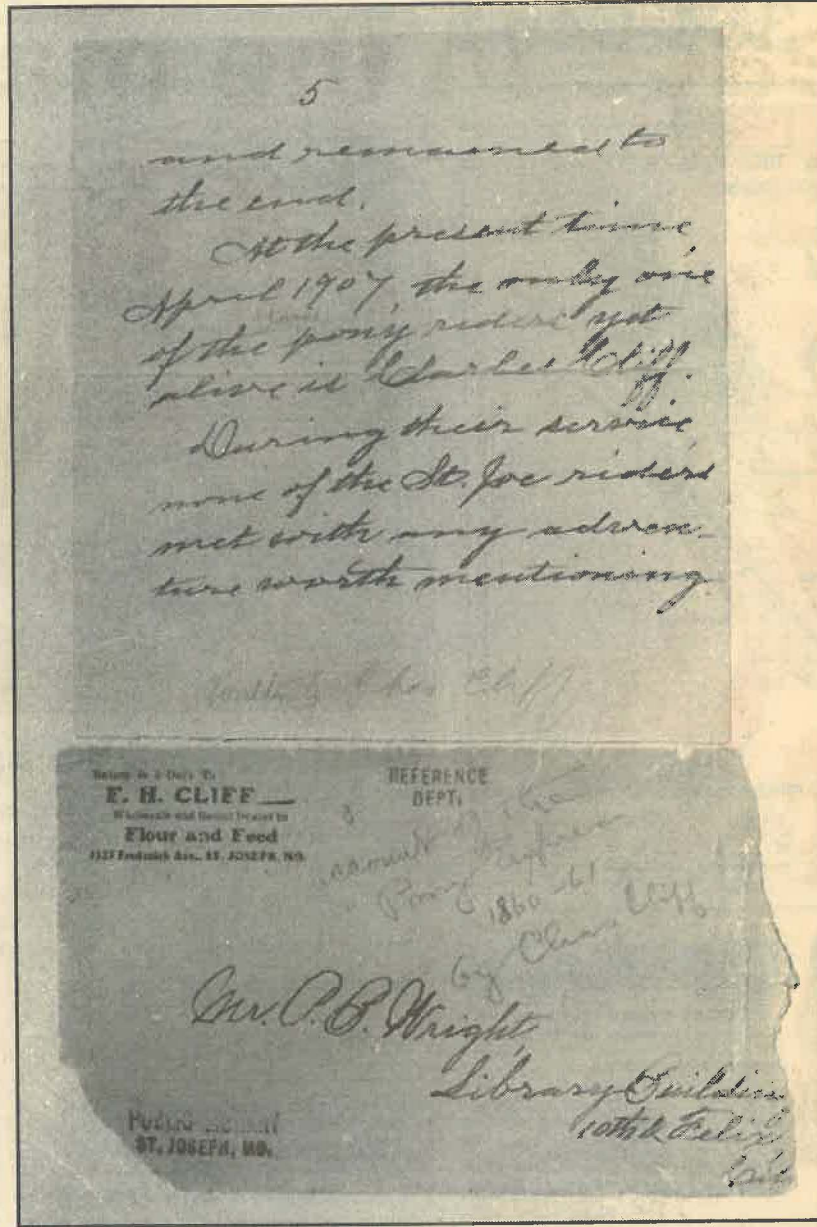
Jackie Lewin, curator of the Pony Express museum, said the Cliff letter does not contain any revelations, but backs up previous scholarship.

Cliff, who apparently witnessed the first run on April 3, 1860, identifies the first riders as "Jack Keetley and John Fry," which has been a continuing debate. He also says the ride from St. Joseph to Seneca, Kan., took about eight hours, which means the pony riders averaged about 10 mph.

When Cliff joined the Pony Express in May 1861 — more than halfway through its 18-month life — there were no big celebrations at each run. He picked up the mail at "the foot of Jule street" and crossed the river on the ferry.

"During their service, none of the St. Joe riders met with any adventure worth mentioning," he writes in conclusion.

One curious note, however, is attached to the letter by Cliff's daughter, Agnes. In 1943, she wrote that her father told her he lived across the street from the



Staff photo by IVAL LAWHON JR.

Charles Cliff's five-page memoir about his life with the Pony Express has been donated to the Pony Express National Memorial.

stables, which were located not on Penn Street, but downtown.

Cliff himself writes nothing about the location of the stables, and museum Director Richard Nolf dismisses the discrepancy as

bad recollection.

"Stables were parking lots for horses," he said. "They were all over. The population of the city as a whole always knew that (914 Penn St.) was the Pony Express building."

Letter from rider for Pony Express delivered to museum

By **PRESTON FILBERT**
News-Press Staff Writer

9-17-93

In April 1907, apparently at the request of the city librarian, Pony Express rider Charles Cliff sat down and wrote a five-page memoir about his life with the mail relay.

For the next 86 years, the pages lay in the library vault, not forgotten, but only rarely brought to light.

Now they've found a new home with the Pony Express National Memorial, 914 Penn St., where the papers will go on display for everyone to read.

Please see **Letter/Page 7A**

THE NEWS-PRESS . . . YOUR BEST SOURCE

Recall Days When Father Was Pony Express Rider

The son and daughter of a Pony Express rider visited in St. Joseph Saturday.

They are shown here: Ernest R. Jay, 82, Custer, Mont., and Mrs. Nora McCraig, 80, Houston, Texas, at the Pony Express Stables. Their father, David R. Jay, was said to have been one of the youngest riders of the Pony Express. He was born at Lancaster, Mo., in 1847 and joined the Pony Express at Marysville, Kan., in 1860. His runs were from Seneca, Kan., to the Big Sandy and occasional rides to Julesburg, Colo. Mr. Jay joined the Kansas 11th cavalry in 1864.

After completing his army service, he made his home at Atchison, Kan. He was a stone mason by trade and also served on the police force there. He died at Atchison in 1930. A picture of Mr. Jay and an account of his Pony Express feats appear in a book, "Saddles and Spurs," written by Raymond W. Settle and Mary Lund Settle.

The son and daughter came to St. Joseph to search for a picture of the father to be placed in the Pony Express stables here. The picture apparently was lost en route to the St. Joseph Museum for it was not received. They plan to send another one and it will be displayed at the stables.



The two are visiting nieces, Mrs. Edna Heaid and Mrs. Harold Willis, at Atchison and plan to return to their homes this week. Mr. Jay worked at the Metropole Hotel in St. Joseph before moving to Custer, Mont. He was a bell captain.

Weather Forecast

Cloudy today;
sunny Thursday.

(Complete Forecast on Page 2A)

ST. JOSEPH NEWS-PRESS



VOL. 103, NO. 46

(2d Cl. Post Pd. at St. Joseph, Mo.)

ST. JOSEPH, MO., WEDNESDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 26, 1975

44 PAGES

FIVE SECTIONS

FIFTEEN CENTS

Son of Pony Express Rider Talks of Dad

By PAM KINGSLEY

WANTED: Young, skinny, wiry fellows not over 18. Must be expert riders, willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred. Wages 25 dollars per week.

The above advertisement for Pony Express riders appeared in newspapers in 1860. It was answered by Elijah (Nick) Wilson. His son, Charles A. Wilson, visited historical sites of the Pony Express here in St. Joseph yesterday. The son lives at Fort Washkie, Wyo.

The 73-year-old man told how his father rode with the original group of young men:

"He was just six days shy of his 18th birthday when he carried the mail through Indian territory in Nevada. The trail stretched from St. Joseph to Sacramento, Cal., and back again.

"On his 18th birthday, he started a ride of 72

hours, stopping only to change horses. Other riders were not at their stations, so he just kept riding on until he found a rider."

Wilson described how his father had started by training horses for the Pony Express before the mail route was opened. Nick became a rider and rode until three weeks before it was discontinued in October of 1861.

"Nick would have ridden until the end," Wilson continued, "but he was shot in the head with an arrow by Indians. After he recuperated, he drove stagecoaches for a while."

Wilson also related how his father escaped after being captured by Indians:

"The Indians didn't like the riders going through their territory. They captured Nick, but he managed to talk them into letting him go by promising not to ride in that territory again. You see, he had lived with the Shoshone In-

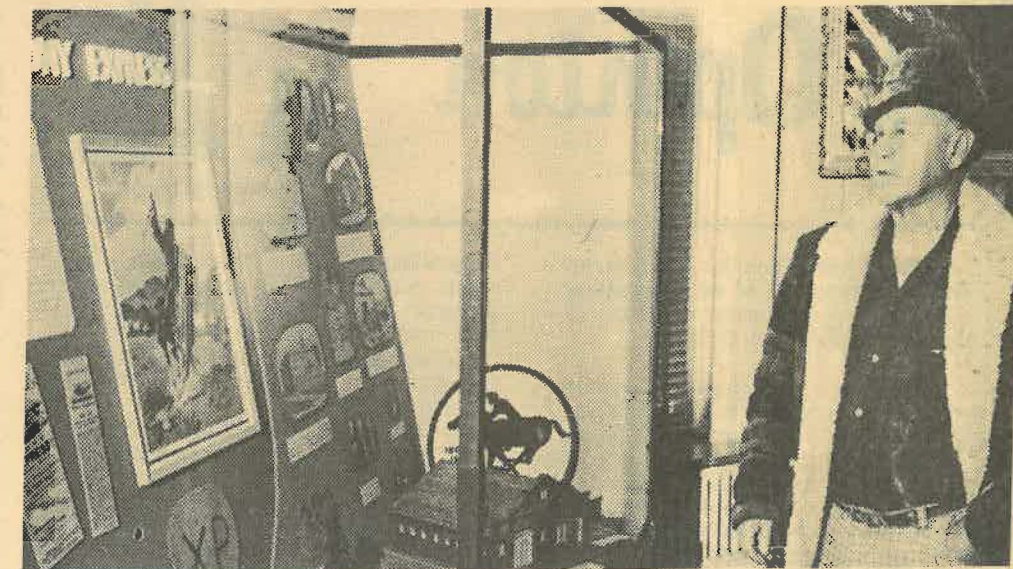
dians for two years as a boy and he knew a couple of the men who captured him."

After they released Nick, he kept his promise by asking for a transfer to a different part of the trail.

The exciting life led by Nick Wilson did not end with the Pony Express. He later led settlers to Jackson Hole valley in Nevada. He also authored a book entitled, "Uncle Nick Among the Shoshone." The title was later revised to White Indian Boy and finally to Among the Shoshone.

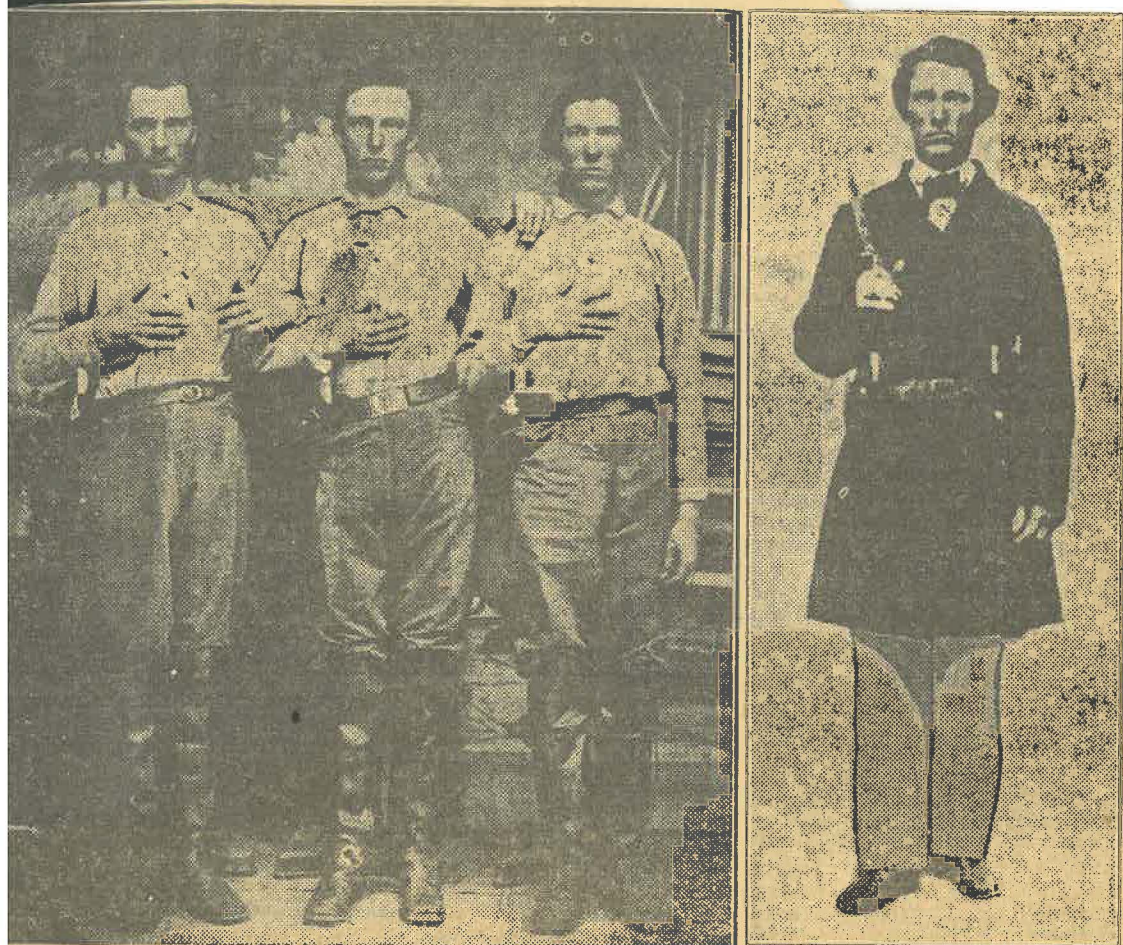
As the book concentrates on the early part of Nick's life, Charles Wilson is writing a sequel encompassing the later years of his father's life.

Wilson and his wife are the guests of relatives in Turney, Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Dorsey Elliott.



Charles A. Wilson son of Nick Wilson one of the original riders for the Pony Express, studies artifacts at the St. Joseph Museum. Wilson plans to write a

book about his father's experiences as a rider and later as a guide for settlers in Nevada.



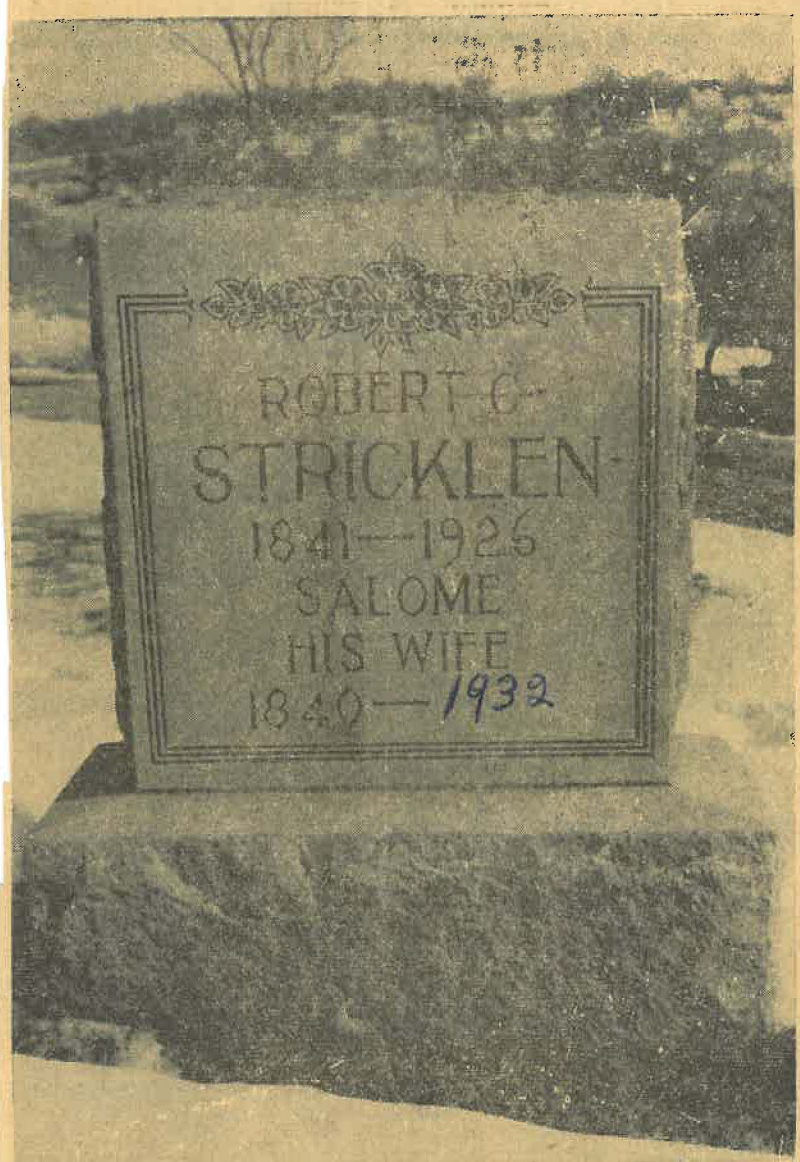
Johnny Frye, one of the most daring of the Pony Express riders and St. Joseph's greatest hero of era. Above are shown two rare photographs of him. In the picture at the left he is shown, at right, posing with his brother, Joseph Frye, center, and Benton Wells, left, in their army uniforms. In the picture at the right he is shown, holding a dagger in his hand and wearing a pistol.

News Press
5-21-71
**Kin of Pony Express Rider
Is Pilot for Sun Aviation**

Charles Cliff, a pilot for Sun Aviation Co., Kansas City, is towing an advertising sign over the St. Joseph area today and tomorrow from a vintage biplane. More than 100 years ago, his great-grandfather, also named Charles Cliff, had quite a different assignment. He was one of the first Pony Express riders out of St. Joseph on the famed mail route to Sacramento. The rider was only 17 years old at the

time. The grandfather of the present Charles Cliff had the name of Warren and was a St. Joseph city fireman. The pilot's father, Harold Cliff, turned to railroading. He left St. Joseph during World War I. The plane will be flying over St. Joseph four or five hours today and three hours tomorrow. The 200-foot cloth banner announces that Home Oil Co. has joined Texaco.

Times-Tribune, Grant City, Mo. June 7, 1960



Grave of Pony Express Rider

The only known resident of Worth County, who at one time was a Pony Express rider is the late Robert C. Stricklin of Worth, Mo. He is buried at the Grant City Cemetery and his grave is marked by the above marker. Mr. Stricklin rode the route from St. Joseph to Laramie, Wyo., and to California. He was married January 13, 1866, to Salome Louella Smith. Their only child was the late Mrs. R. B. Pringle of Worth. After his marriage Mr. Smith quit riding. On April 3, 1960, St. Joseph will observe the Pony Express Centennial and riders will start on a re-run of the Pony Express route from St. Joseph to Sacramento, Calif. — Times-Tribune Photo.

N-P 4-11-93
It was Alex Carlyle — not Fry

TAKE IT ON THE WORD of J. H. Keetley, one of the Pony Express riders, the first rider out of St. Joseph on April 3, 1860, when the Missouri to California mail service started, was not Johnny Fry. According to Keetley, who later headed an extensive mining concern at Salt Lake City, Utah, the first rider out of St. Joseph was Alex Carlyle.



TIMELY OBSERVATIONS

By FREDERICK SLATER

The story of Keetley and that first ride was relayed by William Lightfoot Visscher, early-day St. Joseph newspaperman, in his book, "The Pony Express." Visscher recalled that the late Huston Wyeth, St. Joseph manufacturer and wholesaler, was curious about the identity of the first man to carry the mail on the initial run. So curious that he wrote Keetley in 1907 for information. **IN ANSWERING** Wyeth's inquiry, Keetley wrote in part on Aug. 21, 1907: "Alex Carlyle was the first man to ride the Pony Express out of St. Joe. He was a nephew of the superintendent of the stage line

to Denver, called the 'Pike's Peak Express.' The superintendent's name was Ben Fickland. "Carlyle was a consumptive, and could not stand the hardships, and retired after about two month's trail, and died within six months after retiring. "John Fry was the second rider, and I was the third and Gus Cliff was the fourth. I made the longest ride, stopping only to

change horses. It was said to be 300 miles and was done a few minutes inside of 24 hours. The ride was made from Big Sandy to St. Joe. and returning with the west-bound mail to Seneca without a stop, not taking time to rest, but eating my lunch as I rode."

KEETLEY TOLD WYETH that Carlyle rode a "nice brown mare" on the first trip and that the first ride was to Guittard's, 125 miles from St. Joseph and he made that ride once a week until the service was made twice a week. Keetley also said the express office was in a one-story brick building on the east side of Third Street, between Felix and Edmond Streets, but was later moved to the Patee House.

The information about that disputed first rider came from Jim McCord, St. Joseph Realtor, a history buff and member of a long-prominent St. Joseph family, who has a copy of the Visscher book.

National Search Is On for Pony Express Data

Research on a national scale with the avowed purpose of completing the story of the Pony Express of 1840-1861 as one of the most thrilling chapters in United States history is to arouse the enthusiasm of a million Boy Scouts and thousands of editors, clergymen, librarians, historians and citizens for the next several weeks. So states Dr. Howard R. Driggs, president of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association, which is sponsoring the project, in a bulletin issued from its headquarters in New York city.

From the shrine which marks the resting place of Buffalo Bill Cody on the top of Lookout Mountain to the obscure graves of some 300 other pony riders, station keepers and promoters scattered all over the land will echo memorial tributes to these pioneers on May 30, this year. They carried the first express mail between St. Joseph and Sacramento, Cal., and were later to play significant roles as army scouts in the preservation of the Union.

Citizens Asked to Help.

An appeal to the citizenry of the nation to aid in the search for survivors—if there are any—and for unknown graves, and to relocate the remains of old stations and long obliterated portions of the trail between now and Memorial day is part of the widespread program announced by Doctor Driggs. Boy Scouts of the cities and towns along the Western routes have already pledged themselves to decorate the known graves with flowers and insignia on May 30.

Dr. James E. West, chief scout executive of the Boy Scouts of America; Dr. John H. Finley, noted editor and often referred to as the "dean of American educators," philanthropists like Miss Anne Morgan, Vincent Astor, Herbert Pratt and many others have been caught with the spirit of the enterprise, Doctor Driggs asserted. He is professor of English education at New York University and the membership of his association covers nearly every state in the Union.

Frye Conceded First Rider.

"We want first to complete the roster of the Pony Express," Doctor Driggs stated—especially, the graves of the pioneers who blazed the pathway of communication from East to West. We know many of them now but our quest for these has lasted for years.

For example, it is generally conceded that Johnny Frye carried the first pony mail from St. Joseph to Sacramento, April 3, 1860, and that he was later killed as a United States army scout, serving under General Blount. Then, there was Bolivar Roberts, who was said to be the best judge of horse flesh west of the Missouri, and Ben Ficklin, who had charge of the Western end of the line.

"We have records of Finney, who took out the construction gangs which built the stations along the Western end of the 2,000-mile trail; of H. J. Faust, the remains of whose station in the Utah desert bear his name today; of Maj. Howard Egan and Charlie Reiter. We have the story of Orin

Porter Rockwell, the hard-riding, straight-shooting Utah pioneer, whom legend has made both sinner and saint, and Warren Upson, son of the editor of the old Sacramento Union, battling his way through twenty feet of blizzard snow.

"We must arouse the patriotism of the nation to locate and preserve the deeds of those young heroes who helped nobly to save California and the West for the Union. We want to perpetuate their exploits with markers and monuments; their courage and character for an inspiration to our modern youth; their place in history, as the high light of a fading era."

RECALLS HIS PART IN EVENT.

W. B. Richardson Again Tells of Start of Pony Express.

William B. (Billy) Richardson, eighty-seven years old, told again last night how he had taken part in the inauguration of the Pony Express. The Transit House resident was "nosing around at the Pony Express barn, like a small boy will do when the express was getting ready to start." He hopped on his pony and the express agent threw the mail to him as a joke. Richardson rode with the mail to the river and gave it to Johnny Frye.

Frye or Frey, always has been generally credited in St. Joseph as being the first rider from here. Richardson said last night that he believed Frye rode beside him on the way to the river. The express agent was Paul Coburn, Richardson's half-brother.

*Comment on the
H.C.D. when
news article was
received.*

*This is a
rather common
way to start
on who was
first rider
at St. Joe. of
the Pony Express
"Bill" Richardson
gives a frank state-
ment on the interest-
ing small part he
had in it. Johnny
Frey carried
on.*

8/5/80

Harry R Ark
511 Franklin St.
Ashland, Ky
41101

1. JOHN KEETLEY born England.
died Mo? before 1860
and LOUISA PARROT born England
1809 dau of JAMES PARROTT (sic)
(born Engld. d. Albany N.Y.) she
died 4 June 1903 at St. Jos.
2. Children
 - a. Elizabeth 1837-1913 b. Engld d.
St. Jos, mtd. Wm. Minn. tailors,
(only sister)
 - b. JOHN H. (JACK) b 28 Nov 1841 Engld.
d 20 Oct 1912 Salt Lake City (buried
in city cemetery) mtd Margaret
Ochiltree a native of England.
 - c. HELEN ("NELLIE") b 1844 Engld.
d 110 St. Jos. ("misc") in Co.
Pottawm
 - d. HARRY b ca 1847 d before 1907 in
Alameda Calif. mtd had 3 children
 - e. LOUISA b ca 1850 mtd Sanford
Riley + moved to Maithland, Mo.
d 1907-1913
 - f. HELETTA C. b Jan 1853 in Buchanan
Co Mo d 9 Oct 1907 St Jos.
unmarried.

NAMES OF POSSIBLE PONY EXPRESS RIDERS NOT LISTED ON
OUR ROSTER AS OF DECEMBER 1981

JOHN MUPSEY of Pa. Listed as a pony express rider at Cottonwood Station at Hanover, Kansas. See page 11 of Marysville, Kan post-office records as exhibited in Cottonwood Station.

WILLIAM MINOR RICHARDS Born at Coshocton, Ohio in 1838. Brother-in-law of Jack Keatley, another rider. Rode out of Cottonwood Spgs. (Nebr.) 9/1/1923 letter from Richards to Pony Express Celebration Committee in San Francisco, Calif. documents himself as a rider. Also other riders, not previously listed, as follows.

BUCK COLE Rode out of Cottonwood Spings (Nebr.) Wm. Minor Richards states that he took Cole's place and rode for him when Cole took sick.

ALEX DIFFENBACHER "Little Alex" "Little Dutchman" He rode westward out of Alkali Lake Station. (Nebr.)

GUS LASHONSE

SAM FITCKEY

BILL CORBETT
J. DODGE

JOHN B. WADE His daughter still lives as of this date. He rode between Fort Laramie and Salt Lake City, Utah. Made first and last rides for the company. See correspondence between Don. R. and Wade's daughter of Green River, Wyo. Wade rode from Fort Bridger westward to Salt Lake City. Born 1842, died 1919. Skip Cilley of T.V. Channel 2, St. Louis, Mo. learned of this rider while along trail making a pony express film. He said that Wade's grave in the Fort Bridger Cemetery is marked as a Pony Express rider's burial place.

BILLY TATE An orphan. Is supposed to be buried in the old cemetery above Egan Station. (Nev.) Rode near Ruby Valley. Was killed by Indians but accounted for seven of them before he was killed. Not on our list but is written up in the National Geographic article of July 1980.

WILLIAM M. TALCOTT

It took something spectacular to draw people to central Nevada, and that something occurred early in May, 1862, when William M. Talcott, a former pony express rider who was operating Jacobs Station on the overland mail route, discovered silver while gathering firewood in Pony Canyon near the Reese River. Samples of the quartz vein taken to Virginia City for assay revealed that his strike was rich, word of the discovery spread rapidly, and the rush to central Nevada was on.

The Reese River Mining District, organized by Talcott, the two Jacobs brothers (one of whom was agent for the Overland Mail Company) and two other men named O'Neil and Vanderbosch, was quickly surrounded by other districts to the north, east, and south of Pony Canyon. Austin became the metropolis for the outlying towns..... (From THE DIARY OF JOHN GREEN BERRY, JR. 1864 as published in Nevada Historical Society Quarterly Vol. XXIV, Spring 1981) (By Charles R. Berry)
