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Hollenberg Pony Express Station

Gerat H. Hollenberg had lived an adventurous life before he came to Kansas Territory in 1854. A native of Germany, he sailed to the United States in the late 1840s. There he joined a party of men who spent the next several years searching for gold in South America and Australia, and in the great California Gold Rush of 1849.

No one knows how much gold Hollenberg was able to gather during his travels. However, one legend relates that he lost it all when he was shipwrecked off the coast of Florida while returning to the eastern United States. Many of his friends were drowned but Hollenberg survived. He is said to have walked all the way to Chicago.

Nothing further is known definitely of Hollenberg's life until 1854 when he settled near the crossing for the [Oregon-California Trail](#) on the Black Vermillion River in Marshall County, Kansas Territory. In his small log cabin he kept a stock of goods to be sold to travelers on the trail.

In 1857 Hollenberg moved his business to the present site of Hollenberg Station in Washington County. He realized that there he could capture the growing trade from the St. Joseph branch of the Oregon-California Trail as well as from the older southern branch. He began with a one-room log cabin that soon evolved into a long, narrow five-room building. Here he sold supplies, meals, and lodging. Over the years he added barns and sheds to house his other trail-related activities such as selling draft animals and repairing wagons. His wife, Sophia Brockmeyer Hollenberg, was responsible for the care and feeding of the travelers who stopped at the station.

Hollenberg's road ranch became involved with the [Pony Express](#) during its brief life in 1860 and 1861. The route went by the station, and the ranch offered all of the necessary services, such as food and shelter for both riders and horses. Great excitement came with the beginning of the Pony Express runs, but soon the enterprise began to lose money. Eventually Hollenberg lost hundreds of dollars when the parent company went bankrupt.

With the end of the Pony Express and with the reduction of traffic on the trail during and after the Civil War, Hollenberg turned to general farming for his livelihood. He grazed cattle and raised grain, as did most of his neighbors. Less and less frequently did travelers pause at the station for a meal or an overnight rest.

Hollenberg, however, was far from inactive. He turned much of his effort to civic activities. He founded the nearby town of Hanover, donating money for both governmental and church buildings. He made a small fortune in real estate, and he served three terms in the Kansas legislature.

After Gerat Hollenberg's death in 1874, the station became a farm home until 1941 when the Kansas Legislature purchased the building and the surrounding seven acres. The site was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1961 and two years later, the Kansas Historical Society was given the responsibility to operate it as [Hollenberg Pony Express Station Historic Site](#).

