

Washington County, Colorado



Historic Photos Project Burdett Sod Post Office, circa 1900



The Burdett PO was established in 1888 and operated until 1937. No details were provided with this postcard photograph to indicate when it was shot but it appears to be circa 1900 when Dorcas A. Harvey was postmistress. The faded sign on the building to the left probably reads "Groceries" since the Harveys operated a store at the Burdett post office location from 1897-1915.

Apparently it was remodeling day (the Harveys built a new soddy for the store and P.O. when it outgrew the single room in their home) since that mail sorting rack leaning against the wall still has mail in some of the boxes. Note the three nail keg seats for customers to sit and talk.



Picture above and story below donated by Arlene Glenn, 2006.



HISTORY OF BURDETT, COLORADO

Written by Dorcas A. Harvey - 1919

In the year 1870 there was one William or Bill Burdett settled on Rock Creek, and had his shanty built

of buffalo hides, of which there were many running wild on the prairie at that time. This shanty was on the ranch where the Harvey buildings now are. Bill Burdett spent his time mostly riding over the prairie, killing buffalo and selling their hides, and rounding up wild horses, of which there were a great many at that time. Mr. Burdett bought his groceries--the few he had--in Greeley, the nearest trading place at that time. Then a Mr. Cox came and built his shanty near the Nitzen Springs.

In this year a heavy snow came in November and laid on the ground all winter. Other settlers came, but they soon got discouraged and moved on to other localities. Dan Gilbert had his homestead near the Nitzen Springs. In March, 1887 Henry Felkey took the land he now lives on. Later in the season, his family--consisting of his wife and two children--drove through in a wagon Mr. Albert Nitzen came also in 1887 and settled near the Gilbert ranch. He died some years ago, and his son Jeff, of near Otis, still owns his father's homestead. There were others came about this time, but most of them soon tired of the country.

Mr. Felkey and Mr. Jeffries had their home in the bank of the creek. The first winter Mrs. Felkey was here, she and her daughter were alone, while Mr. Felkey and his son had gone to Nebraska for cattle. Then there came a snowstorm and covered their dug-out door so they had to dig out at the windows. Besides the Felkeys, there were families by the name of Swanson, Howard, Bruce, Boorum, Jensen, and Gold.

In May 1888, J. J. Harvey and family--consisting of wife, Dorcas, and four children--came and took a homestead. About this same time Dick Henry came and took a claim about five miles south of Rock Creek. He and Mr. Felkey are the only ones living on the land they took more than thirty years ago. There was a Walter Taylor away to the northeast. That is in old times too.

I guess he could tell of some of the hardships of pioneer life. Nathan Mustin [or Austin] was also an early settler here. He went back east for some years, but he decided that Colorado was good enough for him. He now has a nice home, and I think his boys and one daughter are all living near him. Some years previous to the year 1887, there was a survey from Holyoke to Akron; and along this survey the Lincoln Land Company laid out town sites. There were Curtis Burdett, Leslie, Rockland, Bryants, and Emersons.

In May 1888 a postoffice was established to accommodate the settlers in this thinly settled country. At Burdett the mail was first kept by C. B. Price in his little sod shanty on his claim. The cancellations for the first month, July 1888, was .29 cents; for the second month, August, was .29 cents; for the third month, September, was .58 cents--making a total of \$1.16 for the quarter. Quite a paying office!

In the year 1889 the postoffice was given to Mrs. Dora Forbes. Then Dora's brother and D. Casselman came and started a printing office and store. For a short time they printed a newspaper, called the Burdett Bee. Casselman married Dora Forbes. They soon tired of the country and went away.

Mrs. Majors kept the postoffice for some time. [Elizabeth McCutcheon Magers* see footnote below and a more detailed history of the Magers in the [Washington County Historic and Pioneer Photos Project](#) section].

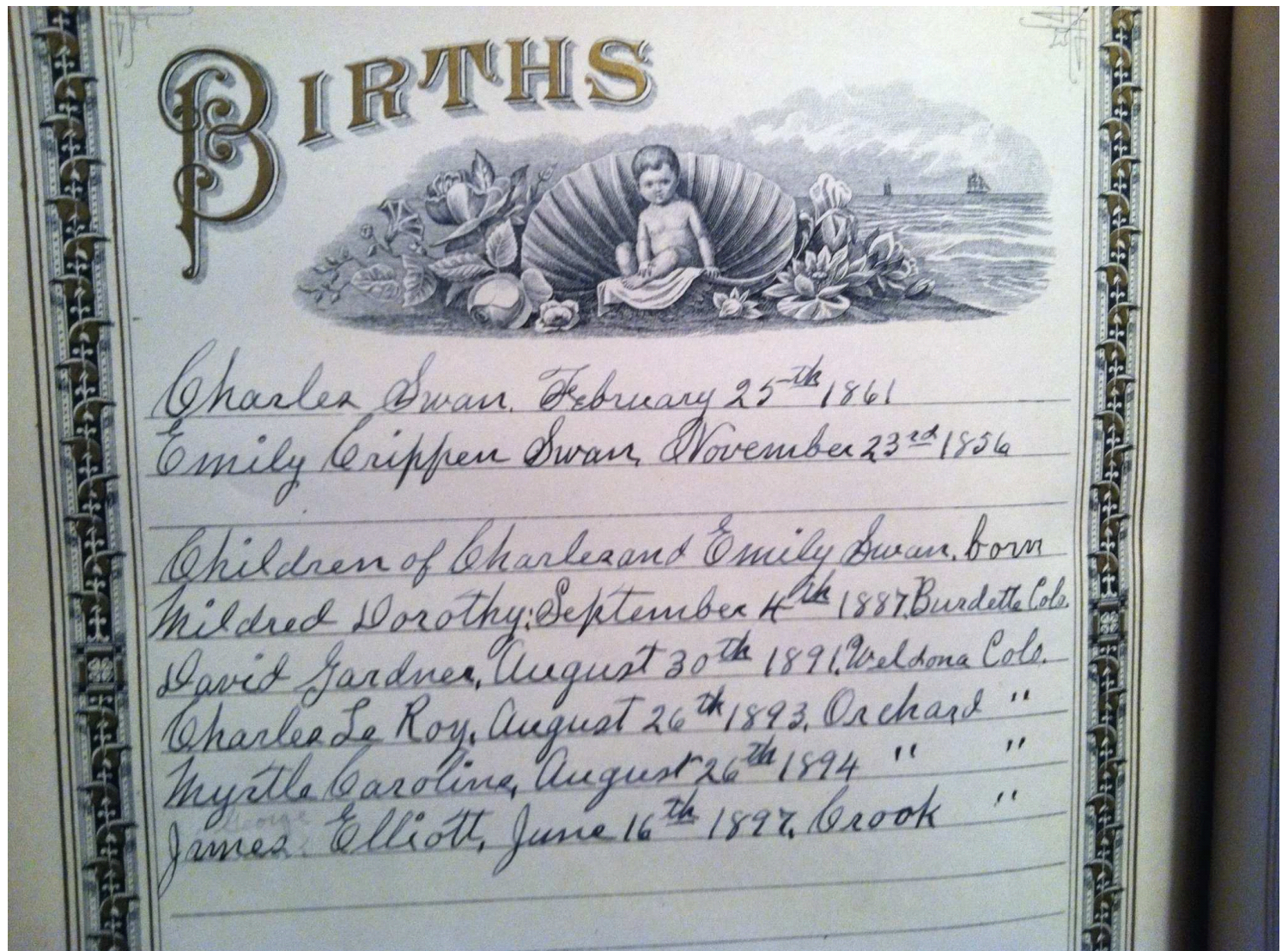
In the year 1897 it was given to D. A. Harvey. [Dorcas A. Harvey]. Then about 1915, Miss Lizzie Mathews took charge of it. The mail used to come twice a week. Then it came three times a week. And now it comes daily. Thirty years ago, the mail was carried sometimes on horseback or in a cart-buggy or spring wagon, just what suited best. Now it is carried by auto.

Today the country is pretty well settled, and nearly all farmed, when thirty years ago there were no fences. Thirty-one years ago there was no schoolhouse, but a school district was established and school

was held in a sod house, without any floors but mother earth. Finally a frame building, not plastered, was built near where Burdett School now stands. The sod house where we had school was located on the N.W. 1/4 of sec. 33, and S.E. 1/2 of sec. 33. Our school term was three months. In these years more good families came to this country, the Watingtons, Stockleys, Rev. G. G. Lake, and Mrs. Amelia Kitcher [Kitchen?] of Akron; all had their homestead near Mr. Dick Henry, who used to mingle with us.

In the spring of 1889 there was a Sunday School organized in the Price soddy, and was kept up by Grandpa Forbes and Mr. Harvey until Mr. Harvey went back east to work, as he did in those years after coming to Colorado. Then when the hot summer days came on, Grandpa Forbes was too feeble to walk the two miles to attend. In 1892 E. A. Lewis came to Colorado. Then G. W. Stockam and family and two brothers came. Sam Harvey was put in as superintendent and kept the Sunday School for some time. Then the people got neglectful, and for a few years there was no Sunday School. How different it was then from now. People came for miles on horseback, in wagons or carts, to attend the Sunday School.

In the little sod house, before mentioned, we had preaching services by Rev. G. Swan, a minister of the Church of the Living God. Sometimes Grandpa Forbes preached, a retired minister of the Presbyterian faith. Then in the little frame schoolhouse Rev. Penny of the Methodist faith, and Rev. G. G. Lake of the Presbyterian faith would also preach to the people who would come for miles around. Ask Mrs. Sam Farrer of Akron, Colorado, if in those days we didn't have good meetings and gatherings.



Dan Berkeley, a descendant of Gardner Swan, provided this [above] scan.

Gardner's son Charles had a daughter Mildred Swan, born in Burdette in 1891. Charles was a Union Pacific section foreman and lived along the railroad in many places. Dan wrote "My grandfather Charles Leroy was born in a sod house in Orchard. Elmer Swan lived in Ft Morgan as did his daughter Delilah with her husband Roy White who ran a store there for years. You can find Swan and White members in Ft Morgan cemeteries."

Rev. G. Swan tried to organize a church of his faith, and immersed fourteen persons; but for some reason, unknown to the writer, it was not carried through. On October 14, 1896, the Rev. C. Bingman of near Otis came and organized a Congregational Church with ten charter members; but it was discontinued the latter part of 1905 or forepart of 1906. I want to say to the people that now live in Colorado, not to think we did not have good times, for we did. Yet we were often discouraged and had hard times. We kept trying and working and hoping for better times, and they have been granted to us.

While the Congregational Church was carried on, there were different ministers. One, a Miss Hauge, came and lived here in Otis. She would drive many miles out in the country with her horse and cart, visiting families. Then there was a Mr. Olmstead. He did not like it here, and told me he did not like to associate with people who were not educated. It is true, we had no high school education, but we knew what was right and what was wrong. I think educated people should have charity for those who did not have a chance to have an education.

For awhile there was a Miss Taylor who was a good talker. We all liked to hear those old settlers preach, and talk about old times. Not long ago, someone said they would like to hear Mr. Penny preach again. And there are others I am sure who would be glad to hear him. Even though we had to go to church in sod houses and have our Christmas entertainment on dirt floors, we still had many good times in those early days. For God was with us, and seed that was sown then did not fall on stony ground. Today it is bearing fruit, bringing golden sheaves to that harvest, where we all hope to be gathered home at last.

I do not know how many there were of Spence Jeffrey's family when they came here, but I know his mother was with them and her homestead was S35-T5N-R50W. We used to have pleasant times together. Her daughter, Daisy, was with her part of the time. Daisy was our first schoolteacher.

We want to mention the Woodward family that were old settlers some miles south of here. They came to our little schoolhouse meetings. There was also the Patches, southeast of here, and the Warners that were old-timers, who mingled with us at times. There was Charles Lindahals that lived where Mr. Forbes now lives, southwest of us. These are all old settlers previous to the year 1888.

About the time E. A. Lewis and wife came, the Kuhring family came. But they went away. Anna Turner came and lived near E. A. Lewis.

[This story was handwritten by Dorcas A. Harvey in 1919. It was kept by Miss Lizzie Mathews of Burdett, Colorado. Miss Lizzie Mathews was postmistress at Burdett postoffice 1915-1922 and was appointed to replace Dorcas Harvey.)

Dorcas Harvey born 1848 in Pennsylvania, married a cousin John J.S. Harvey in May 1874. They had eight children. John J.S Harvey served as mayor of Otis before he died in 1924. He and Dorcas, who died in 1928, are buried in the Burdett Cemetery.

*Charles and Elizabeth Magers came from Illinois to Nebraska and then to Colorado to settle as early pioneers. They arrived in Nebraska about 1879, and by 1881 they were on the move again to Colorado where they settled in Washington County near Burdett (just a post office, grocery store, and a few more buildings 15 miles north and 1 mile east of Otis Colo). Charles and Elizabeth had two children: George Elmer (1881-1982) and Morton Sterling (1888-1975). They eventually sold their land to Mrs. Dora Forbes (who became the new postmaster) and moved to Barr, Arapahoe County, Colorado. Elizabeth died in 1939 and Charles died in 1941. Both are buried at the Fairmount Cemetery, Denver, Colorado. (Information supplied by Mona Sarratt Knight of Denver, Colo. She would like her email address made public and she encourages you to contact her if you have information concerning the Magers. Email: Mona Sarratt Knight)



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Washington County portion of the COGenWeb