

The most dangerous job of the Pony Express was probably that of the station keeper at lonely outposts. Often they were attacked by Indians. The station man had the job of having a fresh horse saddled and ready to go before the rider was due. Two minutes were allowed for changing horses, but often less than half a minute was used. The transfer of the rider and mochila was made in a twinkling of an eye, and the rider was soon out of sight.

Although the spotlight of admiration and praise mostly focused on the Pony Express riders, their success was impossible without the humble, mostly forgotten station keepers and stock tenders. These were the unsung heroes, without whom no rider could have operated very far or for very long. They formed a standby group, mostly too old or too heavy to withstand the strain on human and horse flesh, but who were always ready to serve as substitute riders in an emergency.

There were horseshoers, artisans and mechanics at home stations, and stationmen and stock tenders at outlying, sometimes remote relay stations. Their sole job was the preservation of connecting links between home stations, and having ready for an incoming rider a fresh mount, saddled and bridled and ready to keep the mail moving at top speed. Theirs was a lonely, dangerous life, far from immediate help against hostile Indians and outlaws. Several station keepers lost their lives while performing their duties.

That the Pony Express mail moved smoothly, swiftly, and dependably was due in no small part to their ingenuity and loyalty, and to their ability to accomplish so much with so little. Courage, endurance and the ability to live under the most primitive, harsh, and in many cases very dangerous conditions, were their primary characteristics. The remarkable success of the entire enterprise is evidence that they did their work well.

Day # 3 Activities:

- Talk about what it would have been like to be a station keeper. Show the picture of the drawing of the statue found at "This Is The Place" Heritage Park in Utah honoring both the riders and the station keepers.

-Show the page with the drawing of the Nebraska and Wyoming Stations.

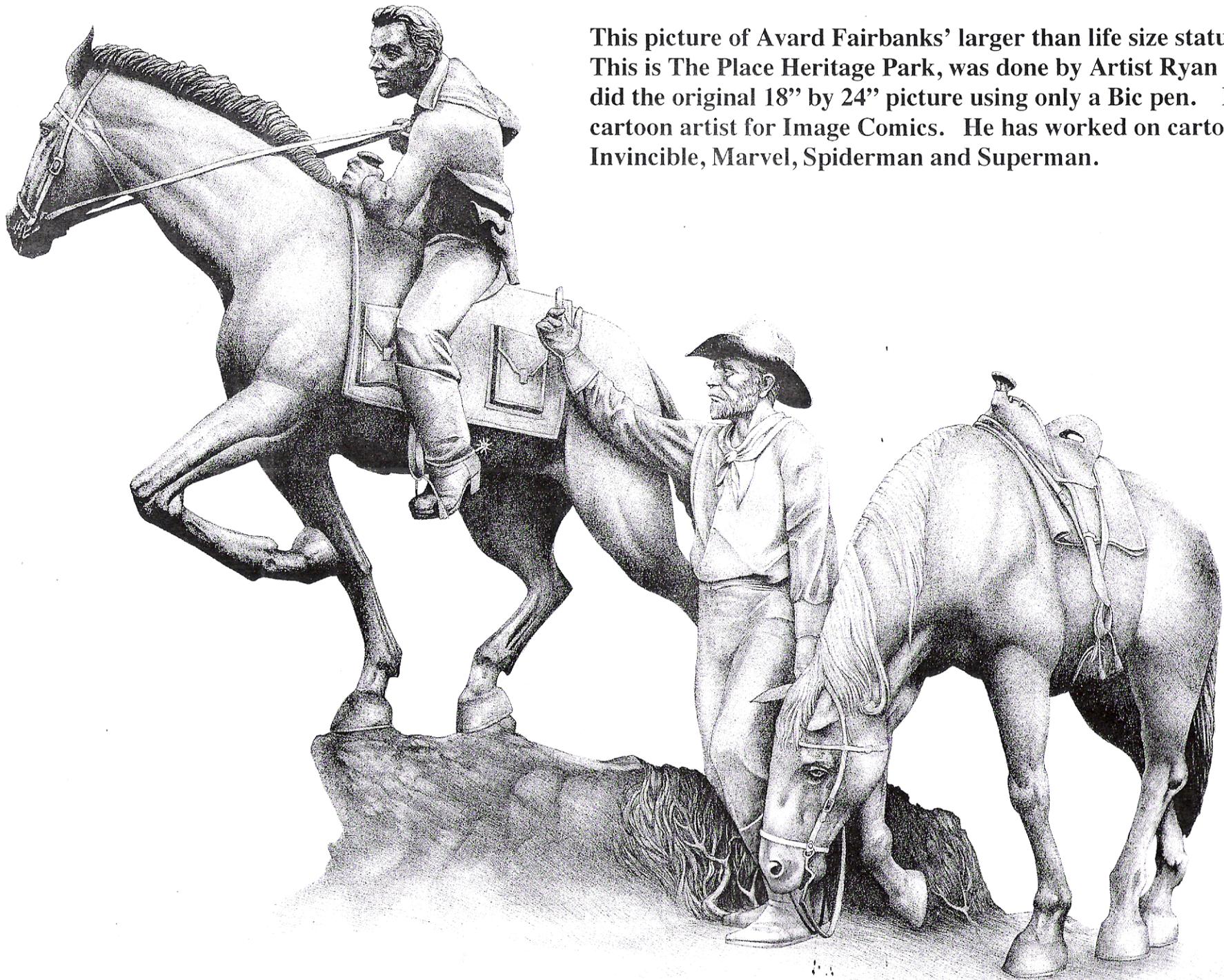
Rock Creek Station in Nebraska was the station where Wild Bill Hickok got into a gun battle, and as a result of that event, he gained his reputation as a tough man and a gun fighter.

Deer Creek Station was where The Deer Creek met the Platte River. It was a favorite Buffalo hunting spot for the Indians. They would drive the buffalo over a ridge that was inclined. The buffalo would often stumble and fall and they could then shoot them with their arrows and kill them for meat and hides.

-Draw a picture of a Pony Express Station. Maybe you could put in a horse and Pony Express Rider and/or station keeper.

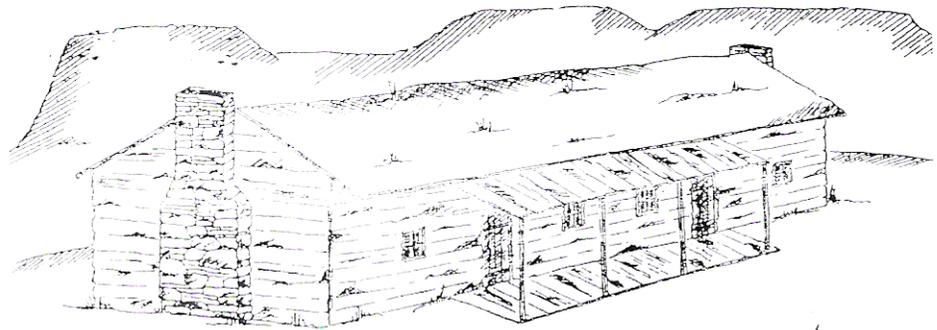
About the Artist:

This picture of Avard Fairbanks' larger than life size statue, found at This is The Place Heritage Park, was done by Artist Ryan Ottley. Ryan did the original 18" by 24" picture using only a Bic pen. Ryan is now a cartoon artist for Image Comics. He has worked on cartoons including Invincible, Marvel, Spiderman and Superman.





ROCK CREEK STATION,
NEBRASKA



DEER CREEK STATION,
WYOMING

About the Artist:

These drawings of Pony Express Stations are done by **Stephanie Johnson** of Gothenburg, Nebraska. Stephanie grew up loving to draw. In High School she was asked to draw some maps for Gothenburg City. Her father, **Lyle Gronewold** the Nebraska State Pony Express President, asked her to draw some of the stations along the trail. Several of her drawings will be on the Pony Express 150 Anniversary Map coming out in 2010.