

3-1-1928

Proximity

Herman H. Trachsel

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest>

Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Trachsel, Herman H. "Proximity." *The Palimpsest* 9 (1928), 107-109.
Available at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest/vol9/iss3/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Palimpsest by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

Proximity

On June 7, 1847, the post office of Lost Rock was established in Davis County and Isaac M. Foster was appointed postmaster. Apparently the place was well named, for the exact location of Lost Rock is a mystery. Old maps do not record it. Probably it was somewhere between Drakesville and Bloomfield.

On account of its nearness to these two towns the post office of Lost Rock produced no revenue for the government and accommodated very few people. The office was allowed to continue for a time on this basis, but in less than a year the authorities in Washington became convinced that it would never be a paying proposition. Meanwhile, according to a local historian, Joseph W. Waldron had become postmaster. He was scarcely familiar with the duties of his office, however, when on March 24, 1848, he received an ominous communication from the Post Office Department.

"Sir," the letter began. "On account of your proximity to another office, this Department has decided to discontinue the post office of Lost Rock." Then followed directions to deliver all books and papers pertaining to the office, all mail pouches, locks, keys, and other property of the United States to the postmaster at Bloomfield. The letter was

signed by S. A. Hobbie, First Assistant Postmaster General.

When Mr. Waldron received this communication he read it and shook his head. He read it again and again, but still he did not fully understand it. He realized that his newly acquired office was being abolished; but why? It had only recently been established. Was he to blame? There was one word particularly that puzzled him. He could not dismiss it from his mind. Finally, in desperation, he went to one of his neighbors for advice. This neighbor had been a justice of the peace for several years and had learned the difference between a summons and execution, and in his own estimation was somewhat of a legal authority. He read the letter through twice very carefully, but he too was unable to solve the problem and only shook his head gravely.

After talking it all over, the two came to the sage conclusion that some one had been vilely traducing the postmaster, and he decided to write a letter to the Post Office Department in self-vindication. In due time the Postmaster General received a carefully prepared document from the injured postmaster of Lost Rock. The postmaster gave the history of his ancestry and recited many worthy deeds of his forebears. Some of them had "fought" in the Revolution, while others had achieved distinction in their chosen fields of endeavor. He told of his long residence in the county, that he had been a school

director of his district and constable of F6x River Township for six years. In each of these positions he had given the very best of satisfaction. Furthermore he had been postmaster once in Ohio and had never heard any complaint against him. In short, this was the first time he had ever been charged with *proximity* — the guilt of which he indignantly denied. Upon his honor, he had never done such a thing in all his life.

The effect of Mr. Waldron's plea of innocence upon the clerks of the Post Office Department is not definitely known. It is supposed, however, that it was somewhat damaging to vest buttons.

The ex-postmaster continued to be very despondent until he received a letter from the Department informing him that "proximity" was not a reflection upon his moral character. Thereupon he became reconciled to the loss of his office.

HERMAN H. TRACHSEL.