1. Learn about the history of the Pony Express, discovering the following:
    a. What year was it created, and by whom?
    b. How many miles long was it?
    c. Where was the start of the route, and where did it end?
    d. How long was it in service?
    e. Why was it started?
    f. How many stations were along the route?
    g. How many people did it employ?
2. Trace the Pony Express route on a map. What states did it cross?
3. How long did it take for the mail to get from one end of the route to the other?
4. Answer the following questions about the riders of the Pony Express:
    a. What were the requirements for someone to get hired to ride?
    b. What did they carry with them?
    c. How many miles did they ride each day?
    d. Repeat the loyalty pledge that the riders had to take before becoming an Expressman.
5. How much did it cost to send a letter through the Pony Express? About how many letters were delivered during the Pony Express's service?
6. Discuss the challenges that each of the following could cause the Pony Express riders:
    a. Weather
    b. Animals
    c. Native American Tribes
7. When was the Pony Express closed, and why was the use of the route ended?
8. Choose and research a Pony Express rider, and give a short presentation about their work on the Pony Express to a group.
9. Do one of the following:
    a. Create and perform a song, poem, story, or skit about the Pony Express.
    b. Create a display of pictures, articles, and information about life on the Pony Express.
    c. Visit a section of the Pony Express route and write or discuss what you saw with your instructor.
    d. Participate in a conservation project for the preservation of the Pony Express route.
10. How were messages and letters sent in the Bible? Find three stories about Biblical letter carriers or messengers and discuss them with instructor.
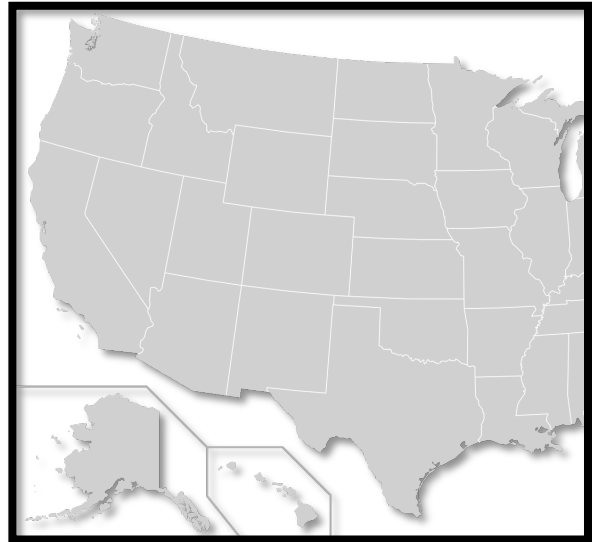
Name(s): _____   Date: _____

The Pony Express

1. Fill in the blanks from the word bank to complete the following statement about the Pony Express:

The Pony Express was a _____ service that began in the year _____, and closed only

_____ months later. The service employed _____ riders who rode over _____ miles,

from the city of _____, Missouri to _____, California.

Word Bank		
Mail	1860	St. Joseph
19	Sacramento	120	1900

2. On the map, trace the route ridden by the Pony Express:

3. Circle the items carried by Express riders of the Pony Express:

Matches   Poncho   Mochila   Gun

Compass   Water   Food   Map

4. Match the following names with the statements about their involvement with the Pony Express:

_____ Jack Keetley

_____ Numaga

_____ Billy Richardson

_____ Johnny Fry

_____ William Russell

_____ Billy Tate

_____ Robert Haslan

a. One of the few riders to be killed while riding for the Pony Express.
b. The rider who rode the first leg of the first Pony Express trip westward.
c. A peace-advocating Paiute chief during the Paiute War, whose land the Expressmen had to pass through.
d. Known for completing a 340-mile ride in just 31 hours, the longest continuous ride recorded.
e. One of the founders of the Pony Express.
f. A famous Express rider known for riding 380 miles with only a short break, and helped carry President Lincoln's inaugural address to California.
g. The rider who rode the final stretch of the first Pony Express trip westward.

5. Draw or write a spiritual lesson you learned while earning this honor:

The Pony Express

Upper Columbia Conference Honor Pilot

As settlers poured across the Continental Divide, settling into the newly established territories of Oregon, Montana, and California, a need was found for a system of communication with those back home on the East Coast. Hundreds of miles separated those in California from their family and friends back East, and mail could take months to carry from one side of the continent to the other by stage coach across the United States, a trip of 25 days one way, or by ship around South America, which took months. Because of how long it took, the cost of shipping a simple letter was outrageous. There was a need for a better mail delivery system, and out of this need, the Pony Express was created!
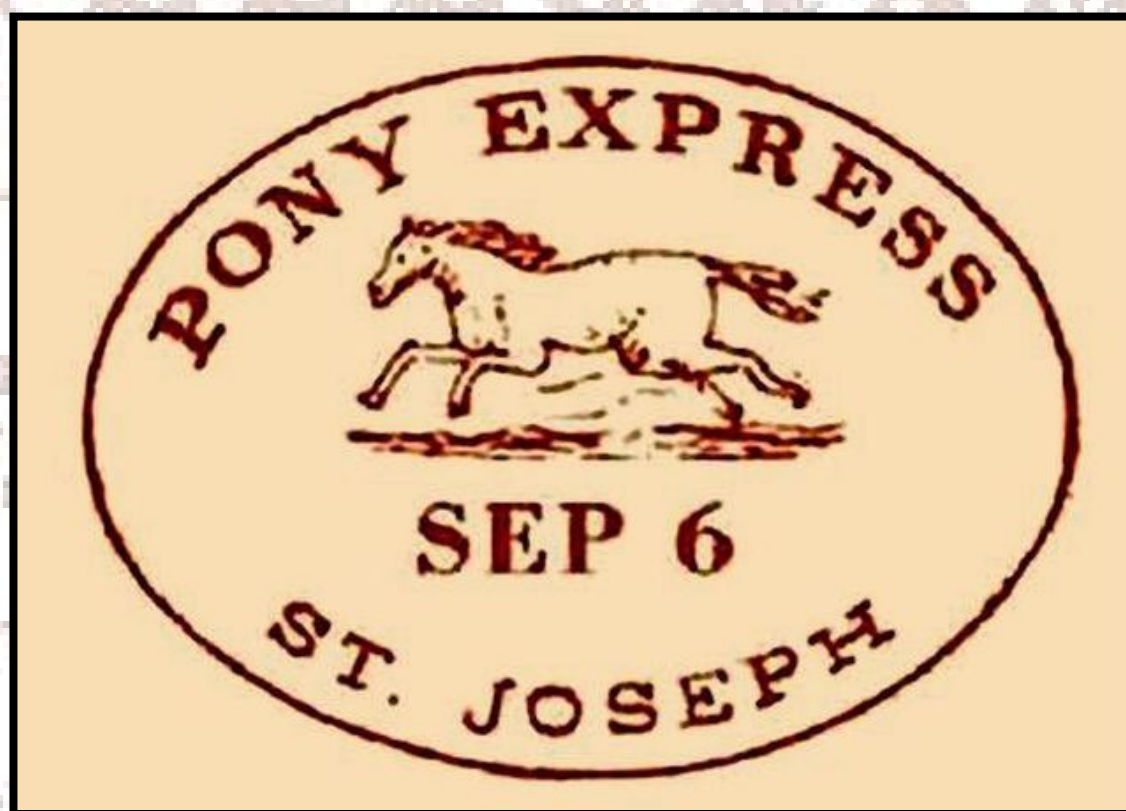
A postmark used by the Pony Express for mail headed westward.[1]

Birth of the Pony Express

Alexander Majors[1]

William Russell[1]

William B. Waddell[1]

On April 3, 1860, Alexander Majors, William H. Russell, and William B. Waddell, the owners of two stagecoach shipping companies, founded the Pony Express. One end of their planned route was in St. Joseph, Missouri, a popular starting point for pioneer wagon trains, and the other end was in bustling Sacramento, California, a route of about 1,900 miles. The service operated for only 19 short months, but when it closed, it was legendary for its display of true American grit!

A map of the route used by the Pony Express.[2]

<u>Riders and Stations</u>

A preserved station in Kansas, now a National Historic Site.[1]

The Pony Express operated using a series of small stables called "stations" spaced out along the route. Each station had fresh horses and keepers hired to take care of them, as well as lodging for a mail service rider. The Pony Express management employed 120 riders and over 400 personnel to operate over 180 stations and a total of over 400 horses!

It was simple. A mail rider rode his horse hard from one station to the next, where a fresh horse waited for him. He quickly switched the mail bags to the new horse and raced off to the next station. After several hours of riding and multiple horse changes at stations along the route, he met a new rider and handed off the mail bag to him to carry through the next leg of the relay.
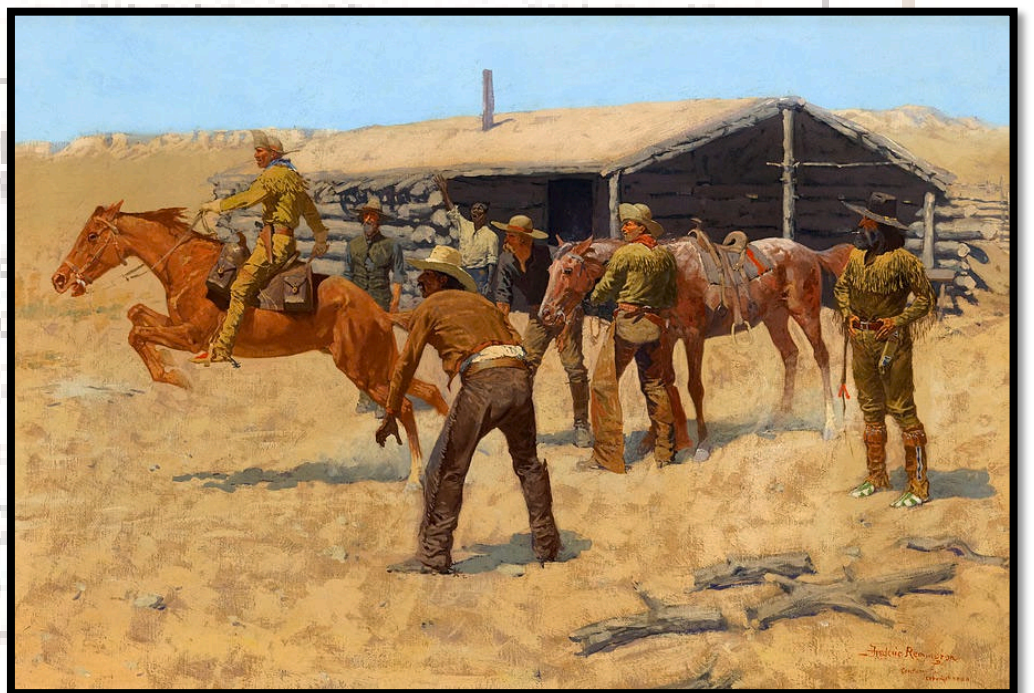
Mail switches were meant to be fast, similar to a pitstop in NASCAR today![2]

(1) https://assets.simpleviewinc.com/simpleview/image/upload/c_limit,h_1200,q_75,w_1200/v1/clients/kansas/Hollenberg_Ranch_Pony_Express_Station_d0a8063c-33dd-464d-bcb5-8c7eb63ac3fe.jpg
(2) https://images.fineartamerica.com/images/artworkimages/mediumlarge/3/the-coming-and-going-of-the-pony-express-frederic-remington.jpg

Route of the Pony Express

Ruins of an old Pony Express station. The Pony Express route crossed through some very barren and forbidding territory![1]

The Pony Express primarily used existing trails following the Oregon Trail west from St. Joseph until it reached Fort Bridger, Wyoming, before dropping south to Salt Lake City, Utah, on the Mormon Trail, and finally traveling by means of the Central Nevada Route through Carson City, Nevada to Sacramento. The route crossed 8 states, including parts of Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and California.

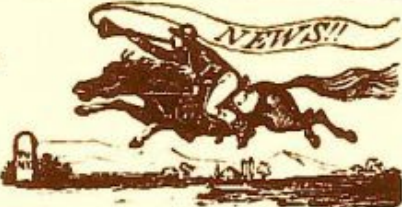An old map listing Pony Express stations along the route.[2]
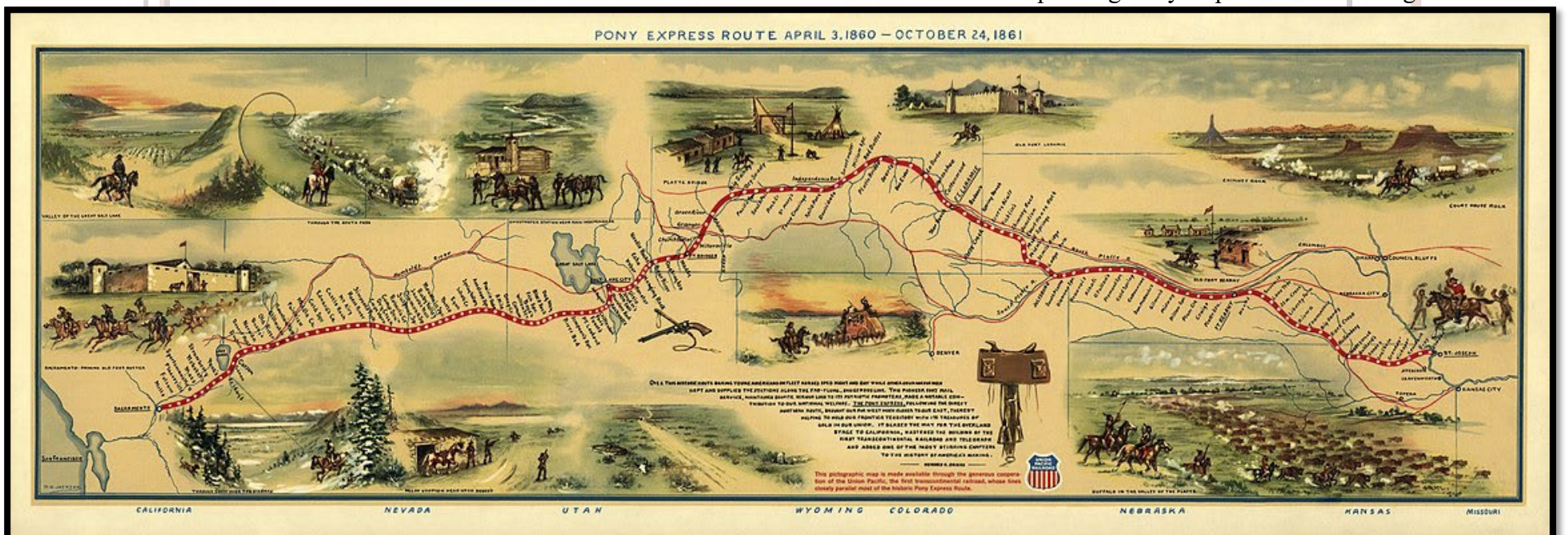
(1) https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/images/POEX_NV_ColdSprings_ColdSpringsStationRuins_20190813_nps-3.JPG
(2) https://nationalponyexpress.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Pony_Express_Map_William_Henry_Jackson.jpg

Mail Travel Time

The average time for a letter to get from St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento, California was about ten days, less than half of the time it took for any other method to carry the mail. However, Lincoln's inaugural address was carried in a record time of seven days and seventeen hours. Only on one occasion did the mail fail to get through immediately, after the mail pouch was stolen by warring Native Americans. That mail, which left Sacramento, California on July 21, 1860, didn't reach its New York destination until May 3, 1862, almost two years later!

An advertisement for the Pony Express mail service.[1]

(1) https://nationalponyexpress.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Pony_Express_Poster-560x1024.jpg

The Riders

When the Pony Express began, an advertisement was sent out by the company's founders, supposedly with this message:

"Wanted: Young, skinny, wiry fellows not over eighteen. Must be expert riders, willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred."


Early photograph of an Expressman.[1]

The men that the company eventually hired had to weigh no more than 125 pounds, and were usually around 20 years old. However, records exist of a young Expressman who was hired when he was only 11 years old! Riders were expected to repeat and sign the following oath:

"I…do hereby swear, before the Great and Living God, that during my engagement, and while I am an employee of Russell, Majors, and Waddell, I will, under no circumstances, use profane language, that I will drink no intoxicating liquors, that I will not quarrel or fight with any other employee of the firm, and that in every respect I will conduct myself honestly, be faithful in my duties, and so direct all my acts as to will the confidence of my employers, so help me God."

Unfortunately, many of the Expressmen didn't live up to that high standard!

Tools of the Trade
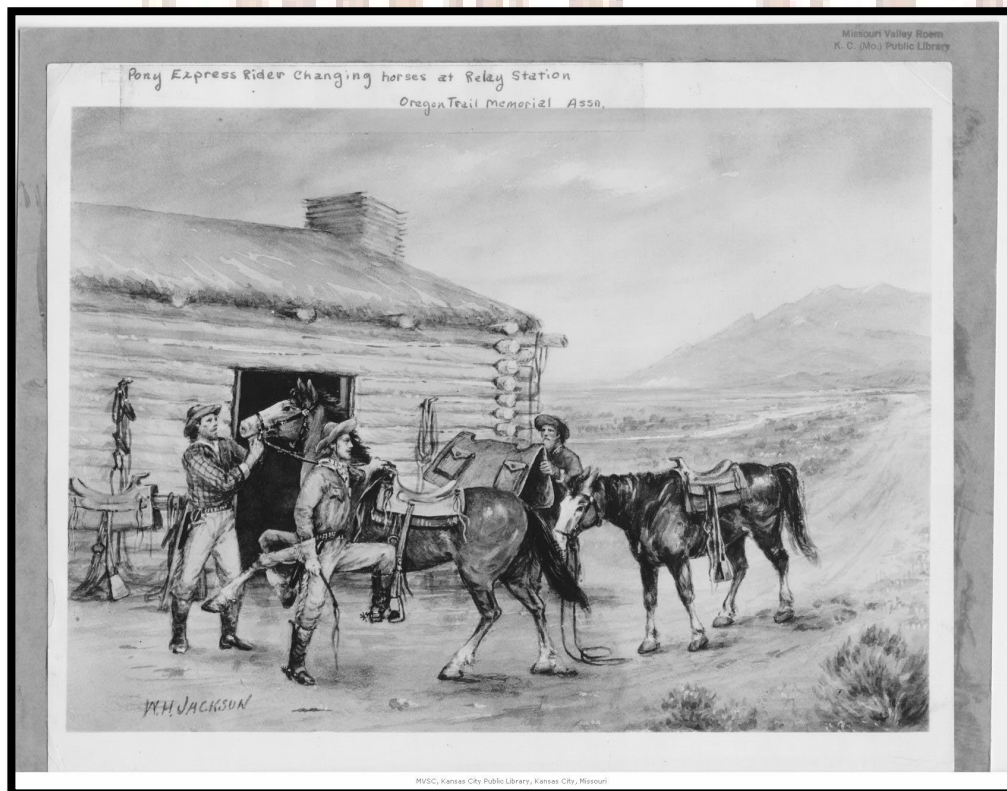
An artist's depiction of transferring the mochila mail pack to a fresh horse.[1]

Expressmen didn't carry much on their rides because more weight meant less speed. Besides the mail, carried in a special mail pouch built into a saddle cover called a mochila, the riders carried water and a gun, usually a revolver, with only 12 bullets. One of the founding members of the Pony Express, Alexander Majors gave Bible to each of the hired riders, and some stories say that each rider carried it with them on every ride, but that story is probably not true due to the extra weight.

Riders raced along at up to 30 miles per hour, and even with stops at stations to change to a fresh horse, the mail traveled at an average speed of 10 miles per hour, not bad for an early mail delivery!

A mochila, a saddle cover with built-in pockets for the mail.[2]

(1) https://kchistory.org/islandora/object/kchistory%3A104639/datastream/OBJ/view
(2) https://centerofthewest.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/MM-PonyExpressSaddle-1.69.16.jpg

Distances of an Expressman's Ride

The Pony Express was advertised as a very speedy mail service, so the company had to frequently change out horses and riders to avoid them getting tired and slowing down.[1]

A permanent art installation of a Pony Expressman riding toward the Hollenburg Station in Kansas.[2]

On a normal day, an Expressman would cover about 75 miles, switching horses every 5 to 25 miles at "swing stations" so the rider was always riding a fresh horse. The last station of his ride was called a "home station", which was the first station of the next rider, and where he could stay until his ride back. Some of the longest rides on record include Jack Keetley's 340-mile trip, and Robert "Pony Bob" Haslam's 380-mile ride.

(1) https://stjomo.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/pony-express-5.jpg
(2) https://www.worldatlas.com/r/w1200/upload/24/94/75/pony-express.jpg

Cost of Postage

When the Pony Express began, the cost of sending a letter was $5, or about $130 in today's money for something that weighed half an ounce. That was incredibly expensive, even for that time period, when sending that same letter through normal government postage cost only $0.02, or about 75 cents in today's money! The price eventually got as low as $1, or about $27 in today's money, for that half ounce, but it still isn't surprising that most people couldn't afford to send letters that way!

Postage stamps used to send mail through the Pony Express. Notice the different postage amounts![1]

An original envelope carried by the Pony Express, sold at auction for $65,000.[2]

A letter sent from San Francisco to New York in 1861, delivered to A.W. Canfield.[3]

Original envelope sent through the Pony Express with postage for $1.30, about $47.48 in today's money.[4]

In the 19 months of service, the Pony Express delivered about 35,000 pieces of mail!

(1) https://kelleherstampassets.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/Sales/757/804587N2.jpg
(2) https://stampauctionnetwork.com/Y/1207/24.jpg
(3) https://postalmuseum.si.edu/sites/default/files/npm-299379_1.jpg
(4) https://www.linns.com/images/default-source/news/george-kramer-patriotic-pony-schleswig-holstein-cover.tmb-slide-1900.jpg?sfvrsn=dd5a31d1_4

Challenges

Nature

Expressmen faced many obstacles along the route, some uncomfortable, some deadly. The riders had to ride through all sorts of weather including rain, snow, wind, cold, and storms of all kind, and there are even reports of them riding through wild fires! But weather wasn't the only challenge. Animals could be a hazard as well, though some of the most dangerous animals for riders were prairie dogs, whose holes could break a horse's leg! Most other wild animals would be dealt with using a round from the rider's gun!

Prairie dog holes could easily break a horse's leg.[1]

An artist's depiction of a late-night mochila transfer during a thunderstorm. Weather was only one hazard the Expressmen faced.[2]
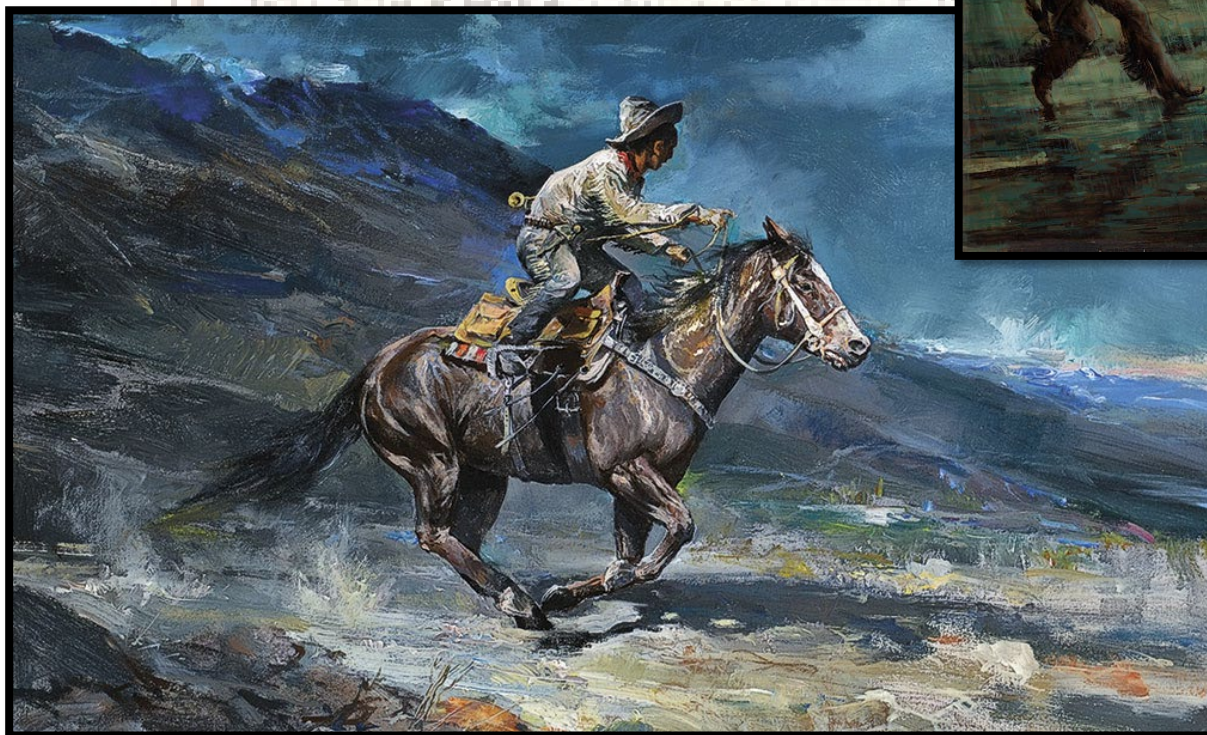
Riders rode all day and night, regardless of the weather.[3]

(1) https://i0.wp.com/jdawgjourneys.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/IMG_6369.jpg
(2) https://truewestmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Lot-19-Pony-Express-Rider-by-Valeriy-Kagounkin_scaled.jpg
(3) https://cdrhsites.unl.edu/diggingin/images/di.rg.2409.jpg

Challenges
Native Americans

Riders faced the constant risk of attack from Native Americans, angry about their trespassing on traditionally tribal land.[1]

Another challenge that the riders faced were hostile tribes of Native Americans along the route. The Paiute War began not long after the Pony Express was started, causing complications in the mail delivery. However, records show that only a few (four to six) riders were killed by Native Americans. However, the caretakers for at least seven stations along the way didn't fare so well. Sixteen stockmen were killed and the horses stolen during the war.

(1) https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/55063df7e4b0d208dff58c71/1554234039981-D50XAO0Z64G0QQK5B0XC/DSC_8382-2.jpg?format=1500w

The End of the Pony Express

On October 26, 1861, just nineteen months after the Pony Express opened, the operation originally closed its doors to business with the last rider completing his run in November of that year. Not only was the business financially in trouble, but not long before, the transcontinental telegraph line was completed, making a ten-day trip for a message delivery seem very long compared to the nearly instant communication of the telegraph.
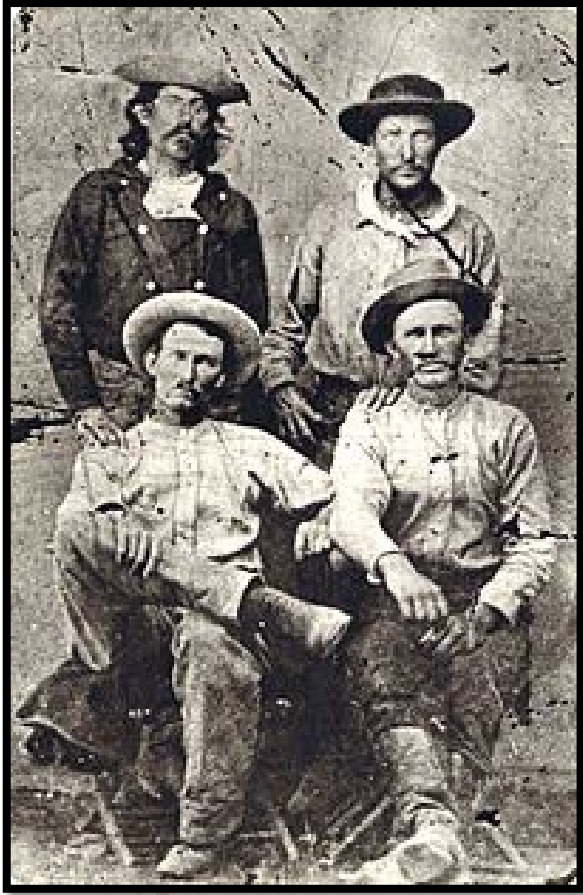
The completion of the transcontinental telegraph on October 24, 1861, spelled the end of the Pony Express.[1]

(1) https://i.pinimg.com/originals/e7/e9/e7/e7e9e72a32a7fae42fde202933a8d14f.jpg

Famous Expressmen
Johnson "Billy" Richardson & Johnny Fry

Billy Richardson (top left) and Johnny Fry (top right) with two fellow Expressmen.[1]

Johnson William Richardson, better known as "Billy Richardson," is most likely the rider who picked up the very first mail pouch in St. Joseph, Missouri and carried it westward, marking the very beginning of the Pony Express. He worked as a sailor before joining the Pony Express, and carried the mail along the route the entire time. When the Pony Express closed, he moved to be closer with his family and died shortly after at the age of 28.

Expressman Johnny Fry rode the finishing stretch of the Pony Express route the first time the mail was delivered by the service to California. He was small but a talented rider who was assigned to ride the last sixty-mile section of the route, meaning he was responsible for picking up the mail bag at the California end of the route and delivering letters from the east. After the Pony Express ended, he joined the Union army and died in battle at the age of 23.
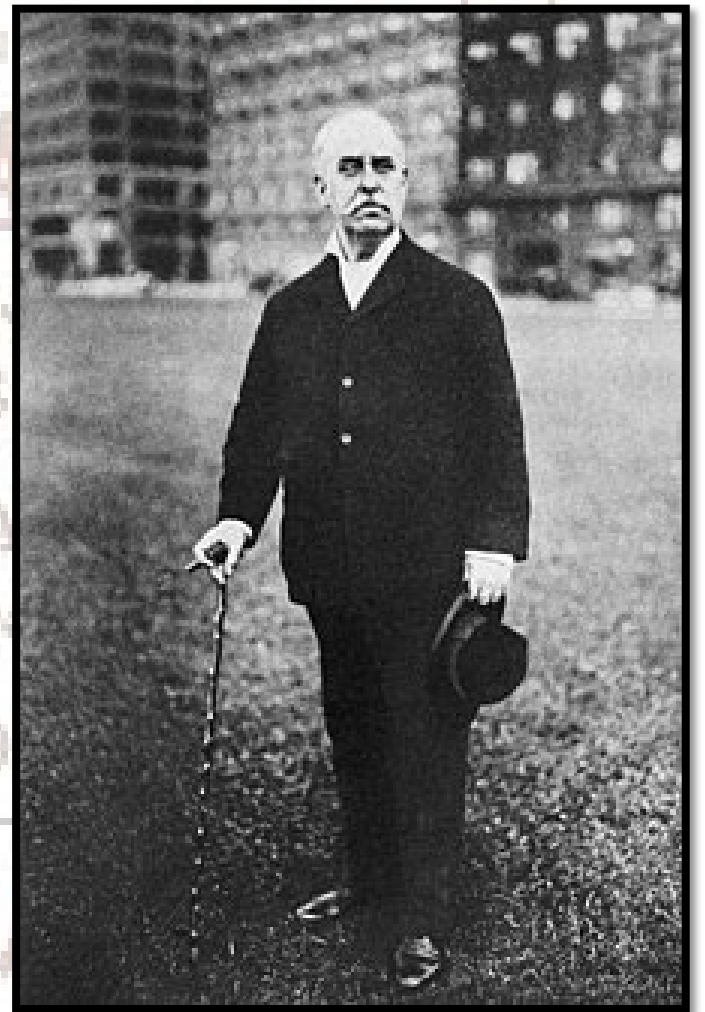
(1) https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/68/Riders_Pony_Express.jpg/400px-Riders_Pony_Express.jpg
(2) https://www.legendsofamerica.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/johnny-fry.jpg

Famous Expressmen
Robert "Pony Bob" Haslan

Robert Haslan, better known as Pony Bob, began his time with the Pony Express as a laborer, helping to build the many stations that would house the horses used along the route. Soon after, he was made an Expressman and given his own portion of the route to ride, starting near the California-Nevada border and extending about 75 miles east. He was well known for his endurance and bravery. Once, when wounded, he rode 120 miles in just over 8 hours to help deliver Abraham Lincoln's inaugural address to California. Another time, when he arrived at the end of his portion of the route, his relief rider refused to carry

Photograph of Robert "Pony Bob" Haslan later in life.[1]

the mail further eastward because Native American attacks had been occurring along the next stretch. Pony Bob rode his section too, riding 190 miles without stopping. Then after 9 hours rest, he returned with the westbound mail, another 190 miles, completing the route even though he was shot in the face with an arrow!

Famous Expressmen
Billy Tate

Billy Tate was an orphan who began riding for the Pony Express in Nevada when he was just 14 years old, and was known as being one of the fastest riders along the whole route! During one of his rides, he was attacked by a Native American war party and fought them bravely, shooting many of his attackers before he died. He fought so bravely that his attackers even left his body alone, a sign of respect for a worthy opponent, shocked that their brave opponent was just a 14-year-old boy! Even though Billy Tate died during that fateful trip, his horse arrived at the next station without him, still carrying the mail bags!

Chief Numaga, one of the Paiute leaders during the Paiute War that cost Billy Tate his life. Numaga was an advocate for peace throughout the conflict. In spite of the many artworks showing Expressmen warding off war parties, conflicts with the Native Americans were not as common.[1]

(1) https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6b/Numaga2.jpg

Famous Expressmen
Jack Keetley

Photograph of Expressman Jack Keetley.[1]

Jack Keetley rode one of the longest non-stop rides in the history of the Pony Express. He rode for 340 miles, just short of Pony Bob Haslan's 380-mile ride, but without a break to rest! In fact, when he got to the end of his 31-hour ride, he was so tired that he had actually fallen asleep and had to be pulled from the saddle! After the Pony Express closed, he became a silver miner in Utah. The town of Keetley, Utah is named in his honor.

The Pony Express Today

Although the Pony Express didn't last long, it inspired many stories, legends, and tall tales about the West, giving many generations of children fascinating stories of the west. Some of the Pony Express's principles were implemented into standard postal delivery, including relays and speedier deliveries, and the well-known motto, "The Mail Must Go Through." Portions of the route used by the Pony Express are still visible today, and many statues and monuments have been built to commemorate the bravery of the men who carried the mail!

Members of the National Pony Express Association re-ride the route every year.[1]

Parts of the route are now protected as part of the Pony Express National Historic Trail.[2]

A monument commemorating the Pony Express riders in Julesburg, Colorado.[3]

(1) https://www.visittheusa.com/sites/default/files/styles/16_9_770x433/public/images/hero_media_image/2017-05/4f0e989331a6c6f94020bd733d74e9e8.jpeg?h=3af32444&itok=5RSfsWa2
(2) https://cdn.county10.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/national-pony-express.jpeg
(3) https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/ab/Pony_Express_Monument_P6060506.jpg/1600px-Pony_Express_Monument_P6060506.jpg?20180724172613

The Bible and the Pony Express

In the Bible, mail delivery was very slow! If a letter was to be sent, the author would seal it to be sure no one else read it, then gave it to a trusted friend or servant, who would travel dozens or hundreds of miles to deliver the message by hand. The message carrier was just as important as the message itself, since the messenger had to be fully trusted by the sender!

When God wanted to share the message of salvation to the world, He only had one Messenger who He could trust to deliver it. His Son Jesus risked His life to deliver it because He knew "The Message Must Go Through." He was killed along the way, but only after He had delivered His message, and thankfully, He didn't stay dead!

In what ways can you be an Expressman or Expresswoman for Christ?