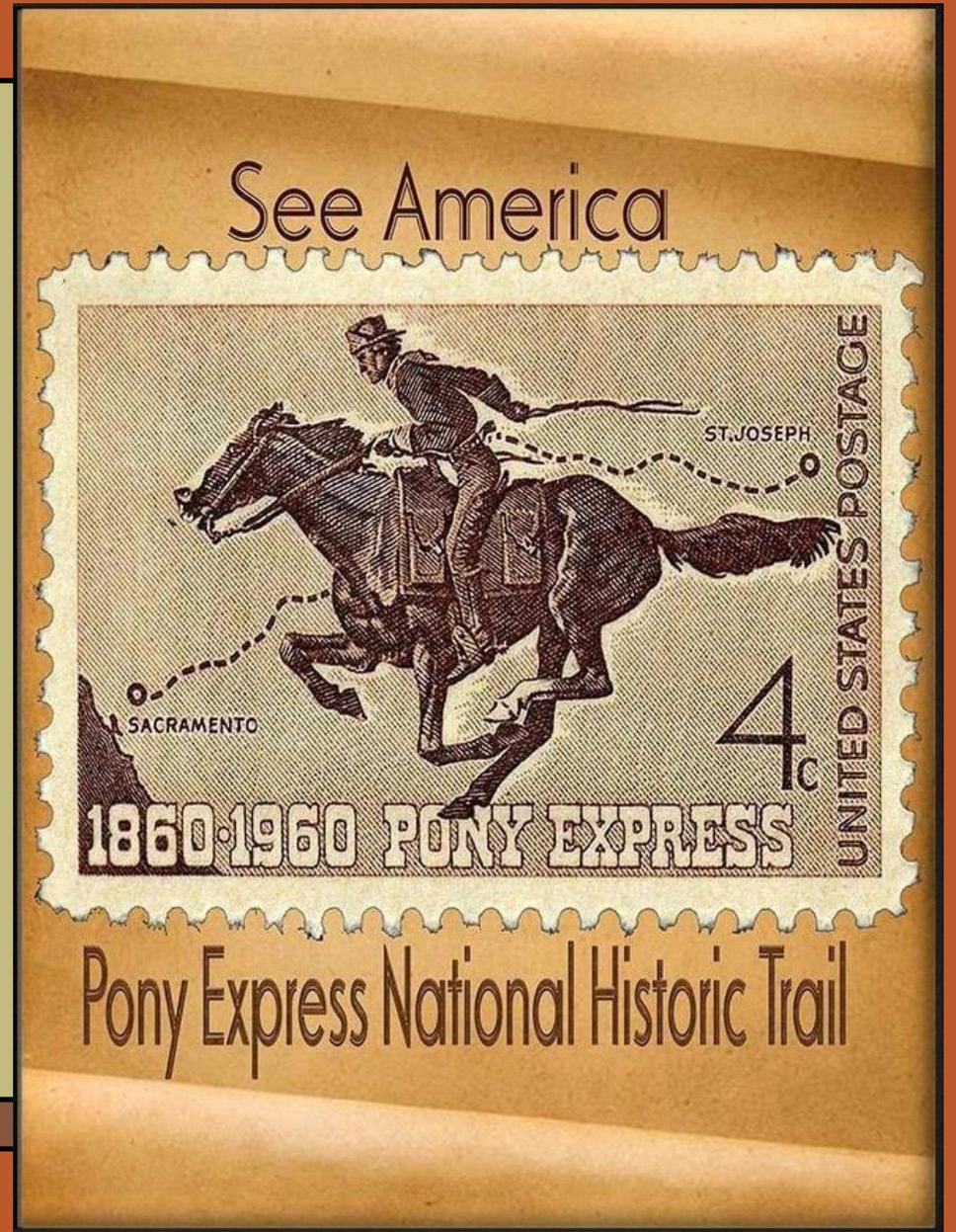


# The Pony Express

Presented by Marv Mondy



## **Why my interest in the Pony Express?**

Crossing the country every 4 months along the many parts of the pony express route and being a stamp collector, I began to wonder how it all began. That along with a family connection spurred my interest in the history of the Pony Express.

One of the more famous riders of the Pony Express was Buffalo Bill Cody and, it seems, that W. O. Finch, the great-grandfather of my wife worked for Buffalo Bill Cody on his ranch outside North Platte, Nebraska.

Mr. Finch was quite skilled in making the leather quirts similar to those used by the Pony Express riders. My wife inherited one of those riding quirts he made.

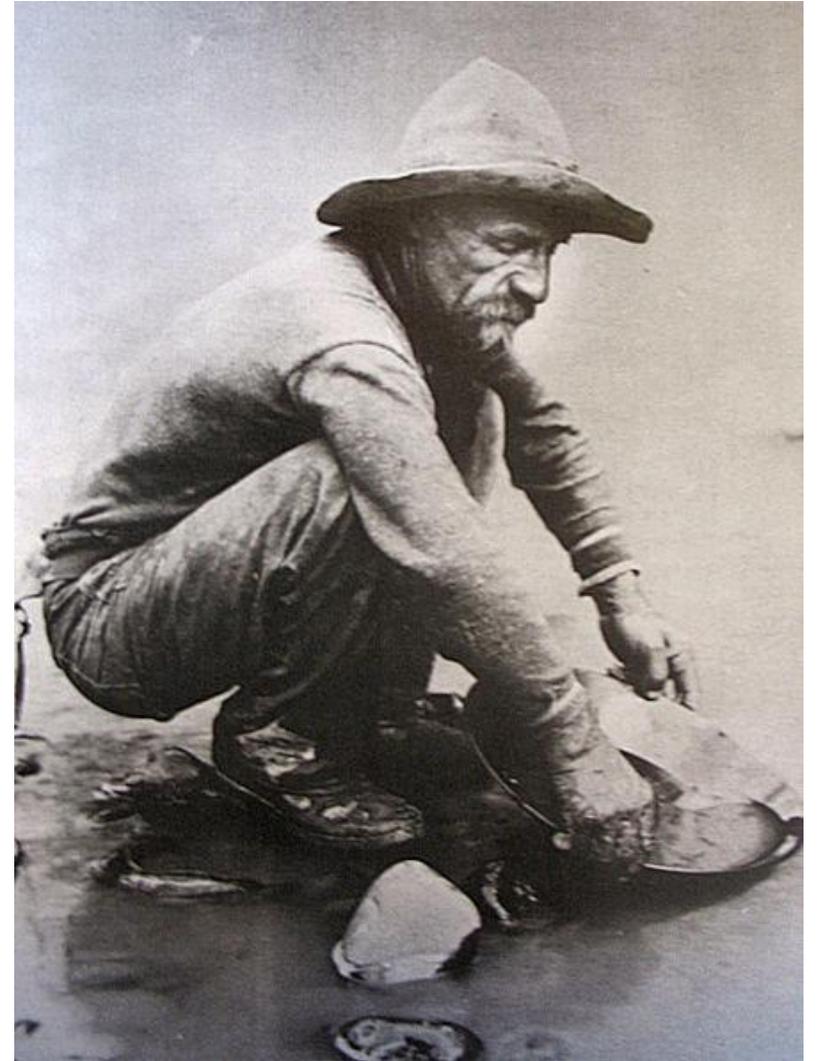


## Pony Express Route - St. Joseph to Sacramento

# “GOLD IN THEM THAR HILLS”

In 1848, gold was discovered in California and the rush was on.

Between 1848 and 1849, 300,000 “forty-niners” migrated to the state. In 1850 it became the 31<sup>st</sup> state.



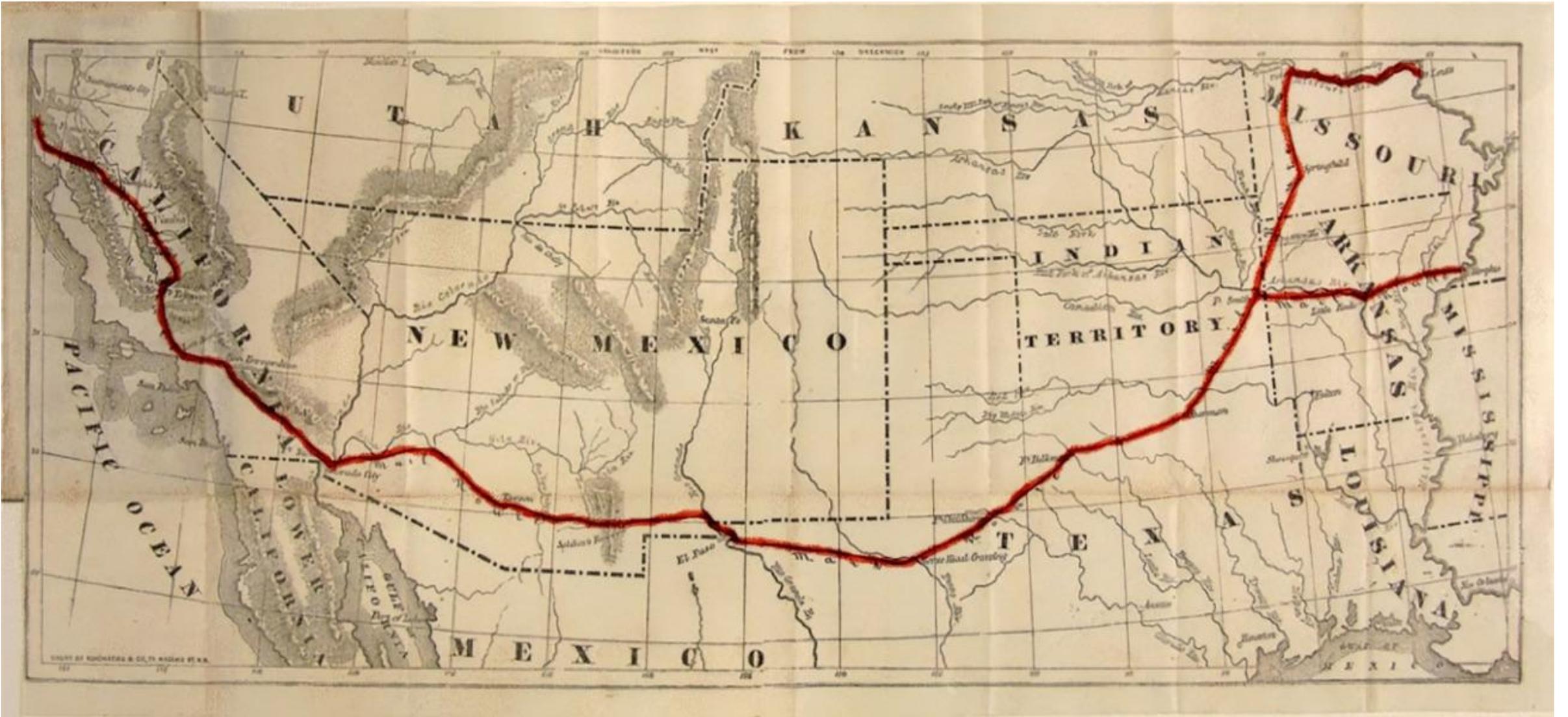
# A NATION DIVIDED

The Civil War was on the horizon and getting military communications from one side of the union to the other would be difficult.

Union mail to the west coast required conveyance through Confederate states.

Stagecoach lines existed (Butterfield Overland Mail Co.) but were slow (25 days) and passed through what would soon be Confederate territory.





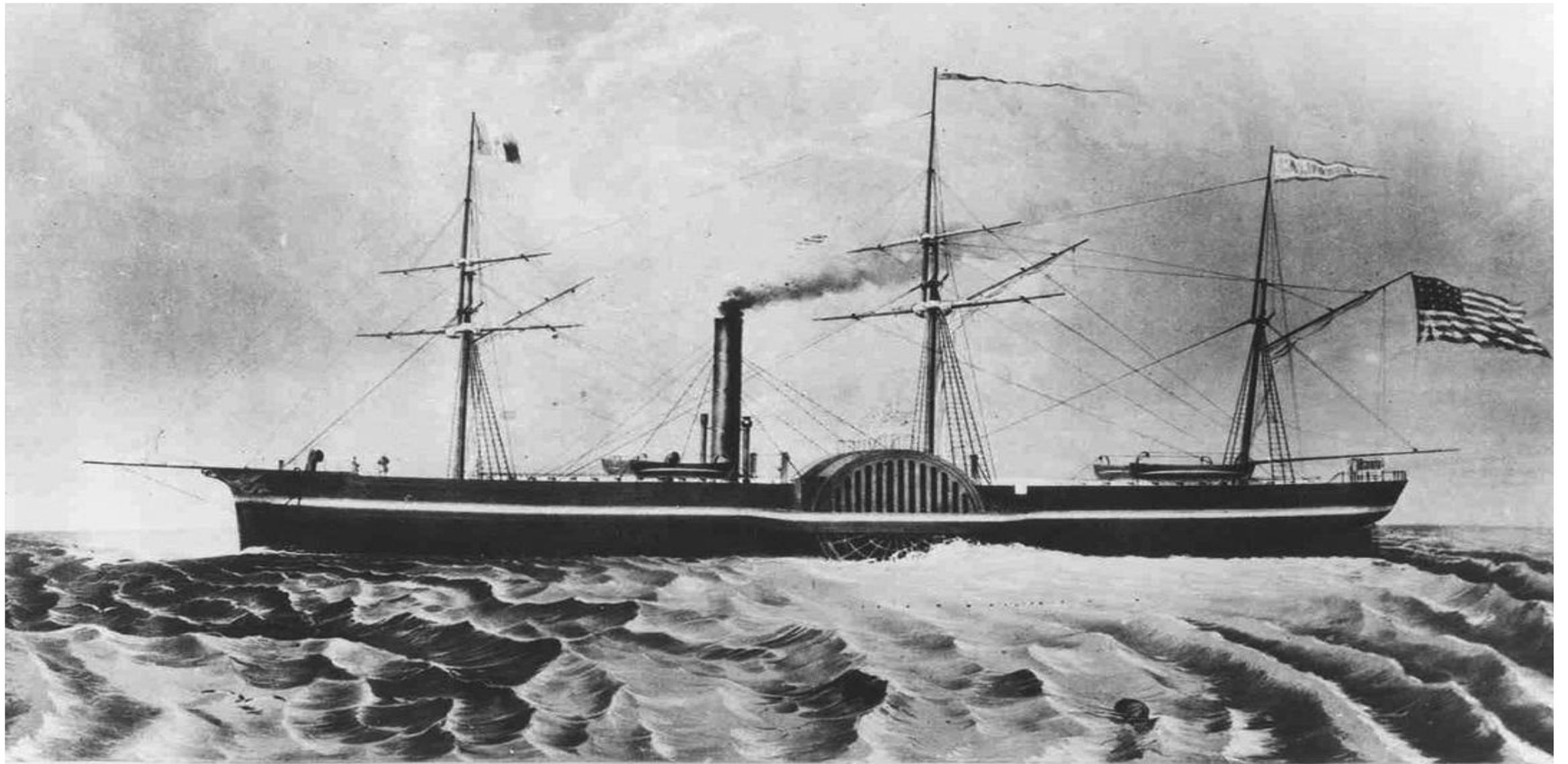
Butterfield Overland Mail Co. (1858-1861) - Memphis & St. Louis to San Francisco

# THE PROBLEM WITH STAGECOACHES

The stage lines were subject to weather conditions and Native American raids. Mule teams saw limited use in some rugged areas.

That left boats as the safest method of mail delivery but that took 24 days to months. The first steamship to carry contracted mail from the east coast to California was the SS California (1848).

Citizens, miners, businesses and the military began to apply pressure to the government.



U. S. PACIFIC MAIL SHIP CALIFORNIA.

# VENTURE CAPITALISTS

In 1850, William Russell, William Wadel, and Alexander Majors began discussing horse travel for mail.

They purchased horses (400) and made arrangements with fur trading posts and stagecoach stations to be used as mail relay station.

The stations would be located every ten miles along the route.



## ORPHANS PREFERRED

- Not Over 18 Years Old -
- Weighing no more than 125lbs -
- Wages: \$25 / Week -
- Willing to Risk Death -



## PONY EXPRESS

St. JOSEPH, MISSOURI to CALIFORNIA  
*in 10 days or less.*

 **WANTED** 

**YOUNG, SKINNY, WIRY FELLOWS**  
not over eighteen. Must be expert  
riders, willing to risk death daily.  
Orphans preferred.  
Wages \$25 per week.

APPLY, **PONY EXPRESS STABLES**  
St. JOSEPH, MISSOURI

"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 to my duties, and so direct all my acts as to win the confidence of my employers, so help me God."

~Pony Express Oath

# “CALIFORNIA, HERE I COME!”

In 1860 under the name of “Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company” the Pony Express was born.

St. Joseph, Missouri was selected as the starting point and Sacramento, California as the final destination.



Postmark used on [first Westbound Pony Express trip](#),  
April 3, 1860

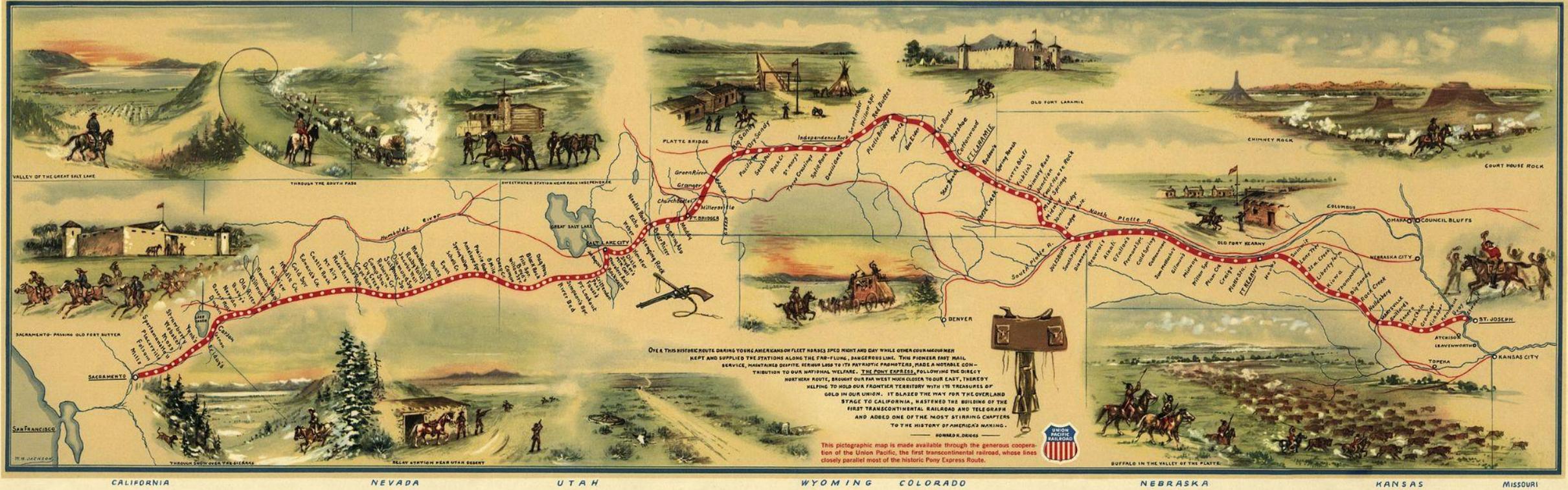
St. Joseph was selected as the starting point because it connected to many eastern railroads and the start of the telegraph.

The route was approx. 2000 miles long with 190 relay stations.

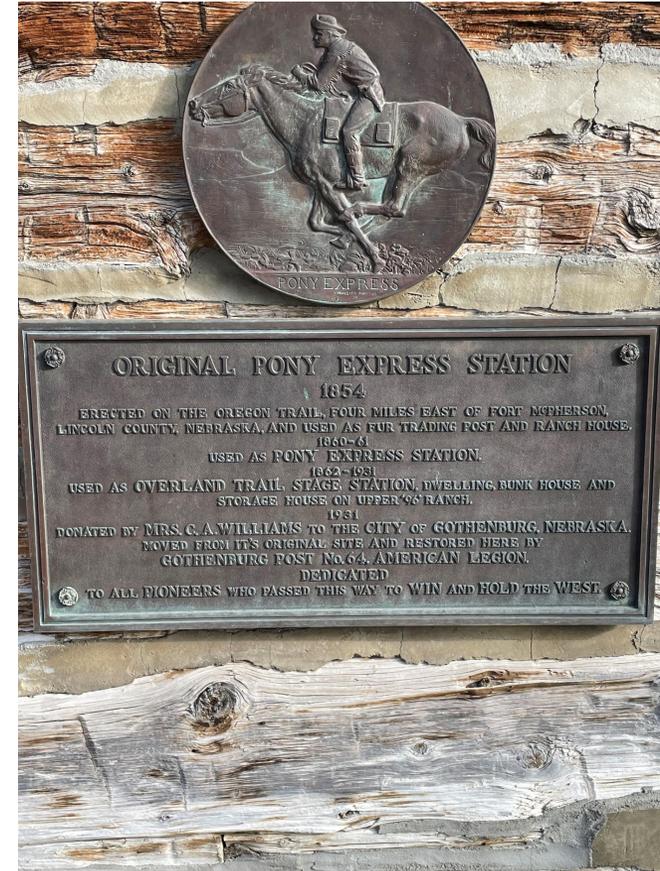
Each rider rode 75 to 100 miles a day, up to 20hrs each day. The total route took 10 days. Swapping horses took 3 minutes.



PONY EXPRESS ROUTE APRIL 3, 1860 - OCTOBER 24, 1861



The following pictures were taken in Gothenburg, Nebraska. The building was originally erected 4 miles east of Fort McPherson, Nebraska and used as a fur trading post among other uses. The relay station was moved from there to Gothenburg in 1931.



# TRAVELING LIGHT

Each rider carried a special leather pouch called a Mochila. The pouch slipped over the saddle and had four pockets, each being locked. The pouch contained letters, telegram, and a bible.

With each rider not exceeding 125lbs in weight, only two items were allowed besides the mail:

- A water jug
- One side arm was allowed but was furnished by the rider.



# THE MAIL

The Pony Express was never part of the US Postal Service, however it operated as a mail route only in the final 4 months.

It cost \$5.00 to carry a letter from Missouri to California. Letters were written on thin paper and wrapped in oilskin bundles.

## PONY EXPRESS!

CHANGE OF  
TIME!



REDUCED  
RATES!

10 Days to San Francisco!

### LETTERS

WILL BE RECEIVED AT THE

### OFFICE, 84 BROADWAY,

NEW YORK,

Up to 4 P. M. every TUESDAY,

AND  
Up to 2½ P. M. every SATURDAY,

Which will be forwarded to connect with the PONY EXPRESS leaving  
ST. JOSEPH, Missouri,

Every WEDNESDAY and SATURDAY at 11 P. M.

### TELEGRAMS

Sent to Fort Kearney on the mornings of MONDAY and FRIDAY, will connect with PONY leaving St. Joseph, WEDNESDAYS and SATURDAYS.

### EXPRESS CHARGES.

LETTERS weighing half ounce or under.....\$1 00

For every additional half ounce or fraction of an ounce 1 00

In all cases to be enclosed in 10 cent Government Stamped Envelopes,

And all Express CHARGES Pre-paid.

☞ PONY EXPRESS ENVELOPES For Sale at our Office.

WELLS, FARGO & CO., Ag'ts.

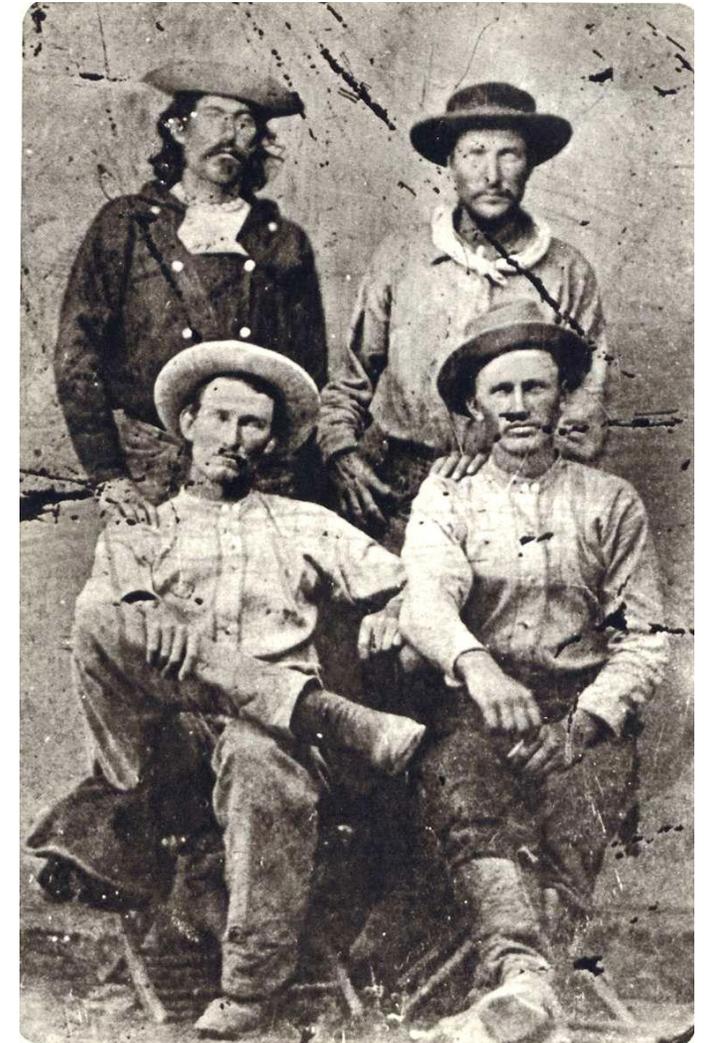
New York, July 1, 1861.

SMITH & JAMES, STATIONERS AND PRINTERS, 26 FULTON STREET, NEW YORK

# THE LAST RIDE

The Pony Express was short lived. It lasted just a few months from April 3, 1860 to October 24, 1861. Its demise was due to the completion of the transcontinental telegraph on October 24, 1861. Two days later the Pony Express was no more.

The business partners invested \$700,00 in the enterprise and left a deficit \$200,000. The company was sold at auction in 1862.

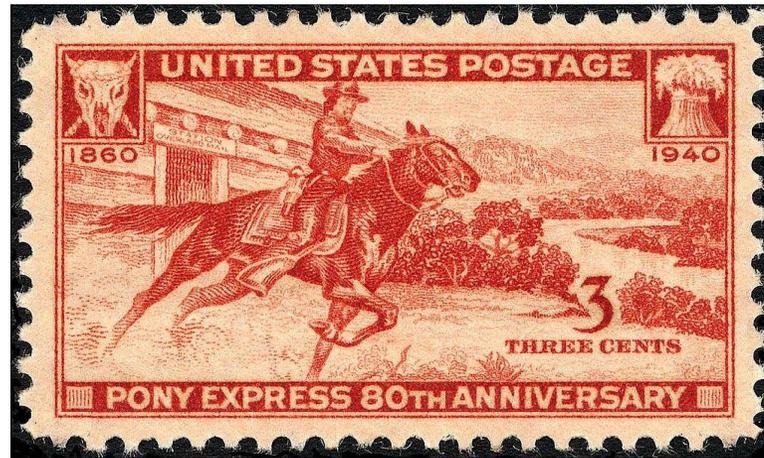
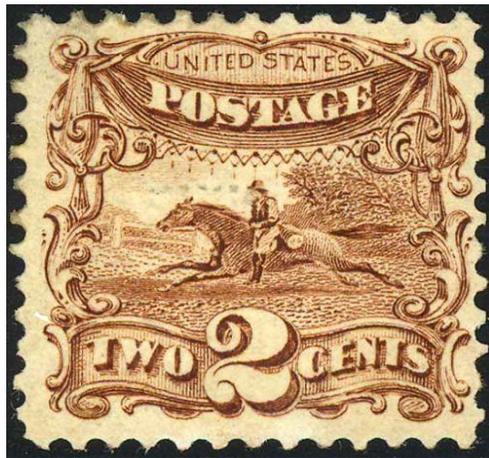


Pony Express riders:  
"Billy" Richardson, Johnny Fry,  
Charles Cliff, Gus Cliff

# PONY EXPRESS STAMPS

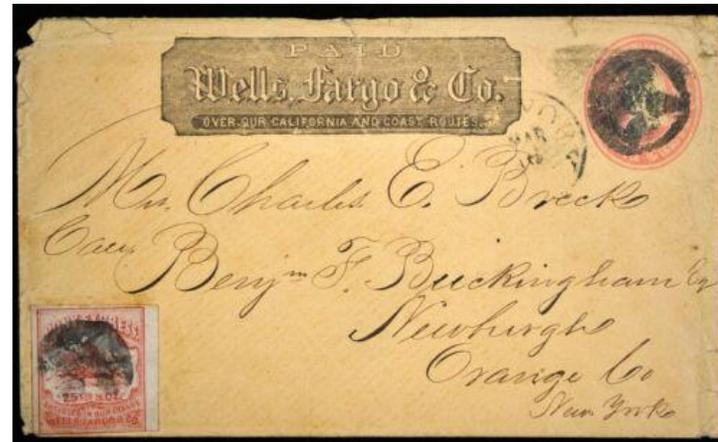
Four US Postage stamps have been issued commemorating the Pony Express. These are Scott #s 113 (1869), 894 (1940), 1154 (1960) and U101 Cover (1960).

Since the Pony Express was a private enterprise, It fell upon the Carriers to issue their own carrier stamps.



Since many Wells Fargo stage stations also served as relay stations for the Pony Express, often Wells Fargo carrier stamps were affixed to correspondence. Often Wells Fargo Covers were also used.

The Pony Express issued its own carrier stamps. Scott 143L3, 143L4, 143L7, 143L8, and 1439 are examples. Thirteen different cancellations were used.



894



113

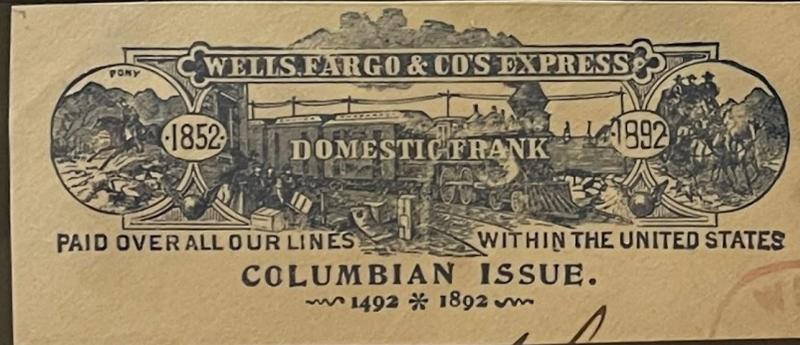
1154



U101



**WELLS FARGO 143LP3**



**1861 143LP6**



**FRAJOLA DESIGN 1WEF**

**143L4**

**143L7**

**143L3**



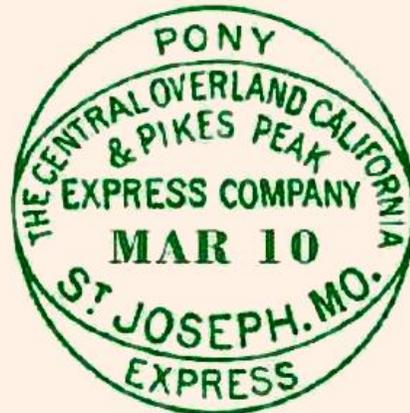
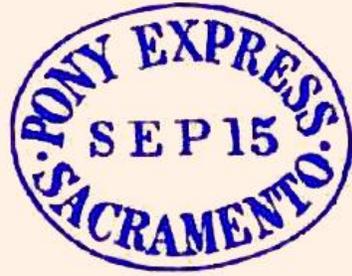
**143L3**

**143L4**

**143L7**

**143L8**

**143L9**



PONY EXPRESS 30c



ST. JOSEPH, MO.  
APR 3  
9 - AM  
1940



FIRST DAY OF ISSUE

AIR MAIL

Mr. D. E. Bateman  
126 South Oxford  
Los Angeles, California

FIRST PONY EXPRESS  
EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY

1860



Commemorating the Eightieth Anniversary of the Pony Express. Left St. Joseph, Mo. April 3, 1860. Arrived at San Francisco, Calif. on April 14th. Distance 1966 Miles in 11 Days.  
FIRST DAY COVER

9:00 AM  
940  
CALIF.  
1940



Major General E. S. Adams,  
The Adjutant General,  
The Adjutant General's Office,  
War Department,  
Washington,  
D. C.

10c

SACRAMENTO,  
APR. 3  
9:00 AM  
1940  
CALIF.

H. R. Velde,  
P. O. Box 606,  
Pekin, Illinois.



# REFERENCES

- U.S. National Park Service ([nps.gov/poex/index.htm](https://nps.gov/poex/index.htm))
- Pony Express Wikipedia Page ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pony\\_Express](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pony_Express))
- History of St. Joseph ([stjosephmo.gov/371/The-Pony-Express](https://stjosephmo.gov/371/The-Pony-Express))
- The Pony Express: A Postal History ([rfrajola.com/pony/PonyBook.pdf](https://rfrajola.com/pony/PonyBook.pdf))