

The Pony Express



Monument near Marysville, Kans., depicting rider Jack Keetley making the first westward ride from Marysville on the night of April 3, 1860.



The Pony Express Museum in the original stables, St. Joseph, Mo. Photography by Cheryl Corney



By George Corney
Associate Editor

At 7:15 on the evening of April 3, 1860, the first Pony Express rider galloped off from St. Joseph, Missouri, headed west toward Sacramento, California, in one of the most exciting postal experiments in history. A financial disaster that lasted only eighteen months in its original form, the Pony Express nonetheless left a legacy of courage and dedication that persists to this day.

Despite the hundreds of people who cheered him on his way, the identity of that first rider is a matter of controversy. Some sources credit Johnny Frey while others insist the rider was Billy Richardson. Whoever he was, he was the first of some 200 riders who, over the life of the Pony Express, would face hostile Indians, dangerous blizzards, scorching heat, and outlaws.

At about the time Frey or Richardson was leaving St. Joseph, Sam Hamilton left Sacramento on the first ride east. The eastward journey begun by Hamilton took exactly 10 days to reach St. Joseph, while the westward run was completed in nine days and 23 hours.

The growth of California, which had achieved statehood in 1850, and the possibility of civil war, made quick communication between the east coast and the western-most state a high priority. Some mail went by ship, with a land transit across Panama, a trip that generally took several weeks. Overland, the railroads had reached St. Joseph, St. Louis, and other towns on the frontier, as had the telegraph by the late 1850s, but from there to California the going was rough.

Two overland routes for freight, mail, and travelers existed. The southern route stretched from St. Louis through Arkansas, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. It was the longer of the two, but had the advantage of little snow. The central route

ran from St. Joseph to Salt Lake City and on to Sacramento.

In those days, the U.S. Post Office didn't itself carry the mail to California, but instead contracted the work to entrepreneurs. Southern politicians favored the southern route while northern ones favored the central route. After much political jockeying, the southern route won out and a man named John Butterfield was awarded the mail contract.

The Pony Express was begun by Butterfield's competitors, the firm of Russell, Majors, and Waddell, the richest and largest freighters and stagecoach operators in the west. As such, they already owned a stagecoach line, with way stations and stock corrals along the way. The Pony Express was begun to demonstrate that the mail could be delivered reliably, year around, and quicker on the central route. It was also designed to capture the public's imagination and eventually win a mail contract for Russell, Majors, and Waddell.

The original Pony Express route covered 1,982 miles. Leaving St. Joseph, the route followed the Oregon-California Trail through the northeast corner of Kansas and then ran north through Nebraska to the Platte River. From there the trail went west by way of Fort Kearny, Laramie, Salt Lake City, and around the southern end of the Great Salt Lake. It then crossed Nevada and the Sierras and ended in Sacramento.

From Sacramento, the mail went by steamboat to San Francisco.



The restored stables at Rock Creek Station, Nebr. It was near this spot that Wild Bill Hickok gunned down McCanles and his friends.

A station with at least one attendant was needed every twelve to fifteen miles for the changing of horses. The stations were of two kinds: relay stations at which the rider was allowed two minutes to change horses and be on his way, and home stations, which usually doubled as stagecoach stops, where a fresh rider took over. The home stations were about 50 to 100 miles apart. In all, almost 200 stations dotted the route. To recruit riders, the Pony Express used this advertisement:

“Riders wanted. Young, skinny, wiry fellows. Anxious for adventure and chance to see our great WEST. Must be expert riders, willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred.”

A Pony Express horse was expected to carry a maximum of 165 pounds. Since the mail usually weighed 20 pounds and the rider's equipment 25, that left only 120 pounds for the rider.

The average speed of the horse and rider along the route was about eight miles per hour—a steady lope.

Each rider was issued a bright red shirt, a pair of blue pants, a rifle, a Colt revolver, a horn to blow when approaching stations, and a Bible. The guns were for defense only. The horn was later discarded to save weight. As a condition of employment, each rider was required to sign the following pledge: ***“I do hereby swear, before the Great and Living God, that during my engagement, and while I am an***

employee of Russell, Majors, & 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.”

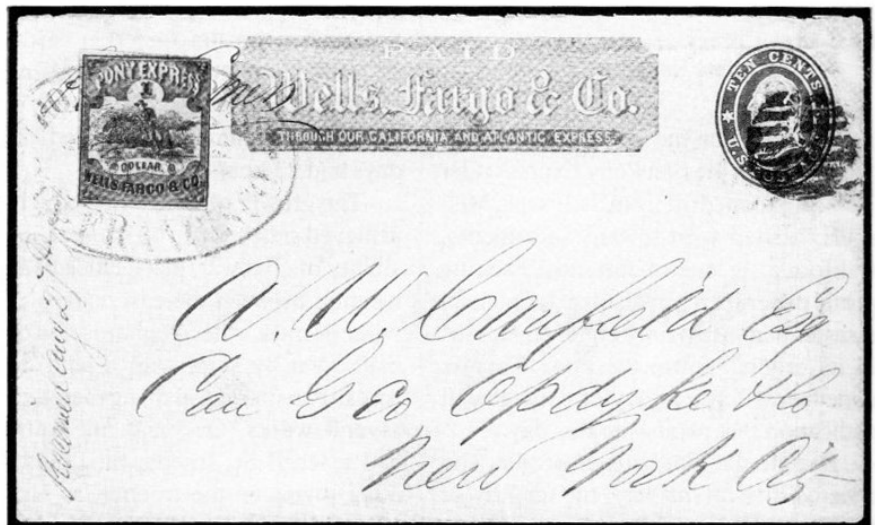
One of the most popular of the Pony Express riders was Johnny Frey, who might or might not have made the inaugural run from St. Joseph. The young ladies along his route would wait for the handsome young rider with breads and cookies which he would snare on the fly and eat as he rode along. To make it easier for Johnny to grab and hold his snacks, one of the girls began baking cookies with a hole in the center, thus inventing the doughnut, or so the story goes.

The Pony Express route required as many as 500 horses, and Russell, Majors, and Waddell provided the best. For the western portion of the route, they chose hardy California mustangs, known for their endurance and heart. For the eastern, flatter portion of the route, they chose fast horses from Tennessee and Kentucky.

At first, it cost \$5 per half ounce to send mail via the Pony Express, but the rate was later dropped to \$1 per ounce. Service was once a week each direction, later increased to twice a week.

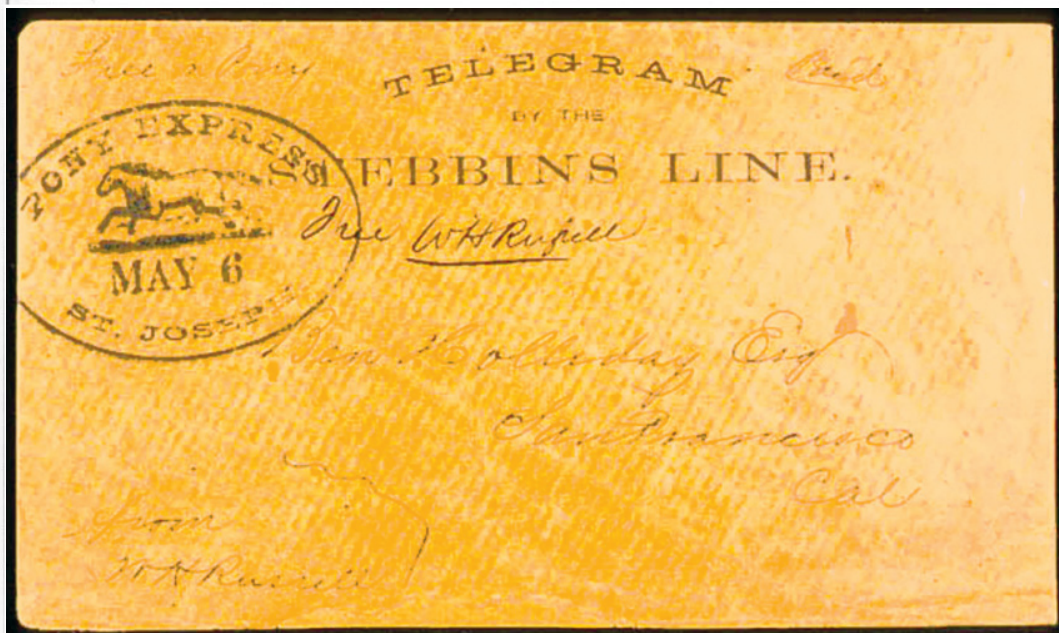
To facilitate the quick changing of horses, the riders used a specially designed *mochila* (pronounced mo-keel'-la), a leather cover that fit snugly over the saddle and could be removed easily. The mochila had four locked mail pouches, the only keys to which were located in St. Joseph, Salt Lake City, and San Francisco. To protect it from moisture, the mail was wrapped in oil cloth before being placed in the pouches.

Pony Express mail was usually franked with regular U.S. stamps (generally, the 1857 issue) for the portion of its trip via



An August 10, 1861, Pony Express cover with Wells, Fargo & Co. franking on a 10-cent Star Die envelope (Scott No. U32) and bearing the \$1.00 red issue; mailed from San Francisco for eventual delivery in New York City. From the Canfield Correspondence. Richard Wolfers Auctions, San Francisco.

the routes of the U.S. Post Office Department. The Pony Express itself didn't issue adhesive stamps, but marked each piece of mail with a distinctive oval hand stamp, called the "Running Pony,"



It is known that a small amount of mail was carried free of charge by the Pony Express. With the high cost of a \$5.00 per half-ounce letter, it seems obvious that such free mail would be tightly restricted. This cover, originally from the Weill Brothers (New Orleans) stock, dated at St. Joseph on May 6, 1860, is the earliest recorded westbound Pony Express cover. It bears the free frank of William H. Russell, Express co-founder, and is addressed to Ben Holladay, a major creditor of the Express owners, who was later to buy the company at public sale after its financial problems. The cover last appeared in a Christie's auction sale on October 12, 1989.

which is one of our most famous postal handstamps.

While the Pony Express didn't issue stamps of its own, Wells, Fargo & Co., its California agents, prepared and sold a set of stamps good for prepayment of Pony Express charges. These stamps were recognized by the Pony Express. The Wells Fargo stamps showed a Pony Express horse and rider and were printed in denominations of 10 cents, 25 cents, \$1, \$2, \$4 and \$5. Pony Express covers today are rare and valuable. Among the rarest and most valuable is the cover shown above. The Pony Express began operation in April, 1860, but no covers from the first month are known to survive. The cover in the illustration, dated May 6, 1860, is the earliest-known specimen. The cover is interesting for several other reasons as well: It bears a fine example of the "Running Pony" hand stamp, was sent free of charge by William H. Russell, one of the founders of the Pony Express; and it's addressed to Ben Holladay, the man who eventually purchased the assets of the Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company, the Pony Express's parent company. What's it worth? Well over \$100,000.

The cover on page 26 is worth much less; about \$10,000 to \$12,000 dollars. It carries the \$1 red Wells Fargo stamp tied with the "Running Pony" handstamp. In contrast to the Russell cover shown and described above, this cover traveled eastward along the Pony Express route.

The section of the Pony Express trail west of Salt Lake City was the most dangerous. Not only was the terrain difficult, but the Paiute Indians, rightfully distressed about white encroachment on their territory, were a constant cause of concern. In May 1860, 8,000 of them went on the warpath, soon joined by the Shoshone tribe who were angered by the killing by whites of an elderly tribesman. One by one, the isolated Pony Express stations were attacked, the station keepers killed, the cabins burned, and

the livestock taken.

One rider, Nick Wilson, was hit above the eye with a stone-tipped arrow as he chased some Paiutes who had attacked a station just as he rode up. Left for dead in a grove of trees, he was found the next day, unconscious, by two passersby. While trying to remove the arrow, the good samaritans only managed to break off the shaft. Leaving Nick for dead a second time, the two men told of his plight at the nearest Pony Express station that was still operating. The next day, two Pony Express employees went to bury Nick, but found him still alive, if unconscious. They took him back to the station where a skillful doctor was able to remove the arrowhead. A few weeks later, this tough youngster was again riding his route.

For the rest of his life, how-

ever, he wore his hat tipped over his eye to hide an ugly scar.

On May 31, 1860, Russell, Majors, and Waddell, fearing further loss of employees' lives, shut down the Pony Express temporarily. The stoppage of service was a blow to western settlers who had quickly gotten used to timely news from the east. One newspaper after another called on the government to bring the situation under control. The stoppage was also devastating to Russell, Majors, and Waddell who, after all, had set out to prove that mail could be reliably delivered over the central route.



The lovingly cared for Pony Express station in Marysville, Kans. Now a museum, the station sits right off U.S. Highway 36 which was originally part of the Oregon Trail.

After several weeks, the Indians were subdued to the point where the firm felt it could begin operating again. New riders were hired, stations rebuilt, and new horses purchased. In all, the uprising set the company back about \$75,000. However, when

service was reestablished, its frequency doubled to twice a week.

In addition to Indian attacks, Pony Express riders also worried about outlaws. Stagecoaches were the outlaws' favorite targets, but Pony Express riders also received their share of attention. One day, a young rider named William F. Cody, later to become better known as "Buffalo Bill," was assigned to carry a box of money as well as the mail. When confronted with two bandits demanding he hand over the money and the mail, Cody threw a leather blanket over the head of one robber and shot him. He then ran down the other robber and made his escape.

Another violent incident involved James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok, who in July 1861 was working for the Pony Express and the stage line at Rock Creek Station, Nebraska, as a stable hand—long before his days as one of the West's most renowned lawmen and adventurers. Hickok became involved in a dispute between the station manager and James McCanles over payment for the station which McCanles had previously owned. When McCanles, along with two friends, approached the station to demand his money, Hickok shot him from ambush, ironically using McCanles's own rifle which he had left with the manager to protect the station. He then wounded the friends with a pistol. One of the wounded was hacked to death with a hoe by the station manager while Hickok dispatched the other with a load of buckshot. Wild Bill was arrested and tried

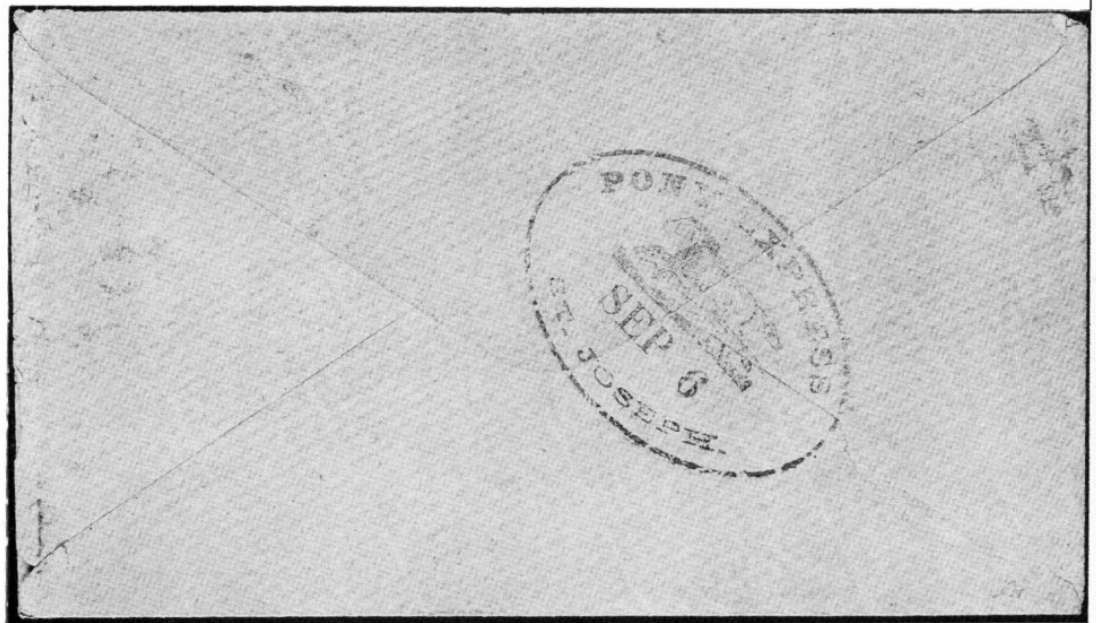
for the crimes but was acquitted when the one eyewitness, MaCanles's twelve-year-old son, wasn't allowed to testify.

The Pony Express lost money throughout its existence, but it was the telegraph that put it out of business. As the telegraph lines stretched across the country, the Pony Express route became shorter and shorter. By October 24, 1861, the telegraph spanned the continent, ending the need for fast horse-delivered mail. Ironically, the Pony Express finally achieved its purpose of obtaining a mail contract for Russell, Majors, and Waddell, but by then it was too late. Financial losses had piled up to a point where the firm was bankrupt and couldn't take advantage of the opportunity.

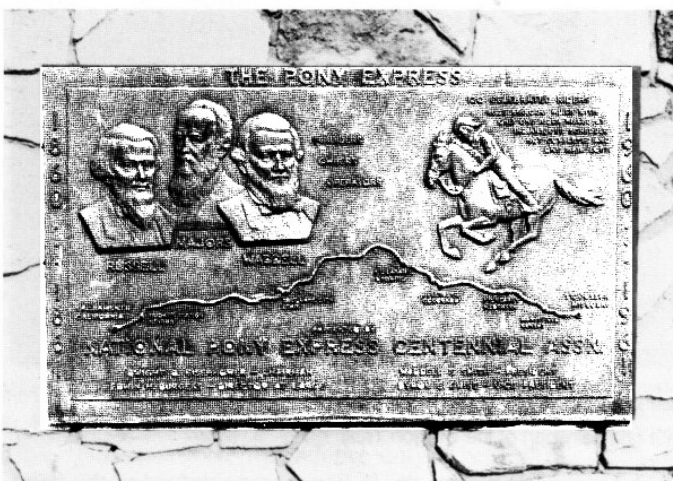
Despite its short life, the Pony Express played an important role in American history by helping keep California in the Union during the Civil War. California's gold would have been useful to the Confederacy for purchasing the foreign weapons it so badly needed. Aside from many Southern sympathizers, there was a group in California who advocated that if civil war broke out, California should remain neutral and declare itself independent of both the Union and the Confederacy.

By speeding the news of Lincoln's election to California, the Pony Express was able to strengthen the hand of the Union supporters. Union backers quickly pushed through the legislature a resolution of support for the Union, news of which the Pony Express sped eastward. The all-time Pony Express speed record was later set carrying Lincoln's inaugural address to California—seven days and 17 hours from St. Joseph to Sacramento.

Today, it's possible to follow the Pony Express trail across much of the country. Most of the stations are long gone, but many of the sites are marked by stone monuments, one of which is shown in the illustrations. Several of the stations have been restored and function as museums. One of the most interesting



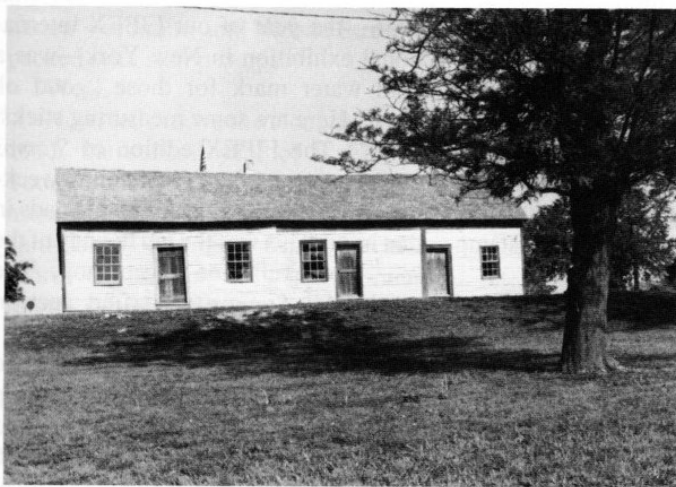
The rare St. Joseph carmine "Running Pony" handstamp. Only 12 such uses of the carmine handstamp are known. This August, 1860, usage includes an enclosed letter which quotes Abraham Lincoln's famous "House Divided" speech and also refers to John C. Fremont, explorer and pathfinder.



A map of the Pony Express route—part of the Marysville, Kans., memorial shown on page 25. The three bearded gentlemen are Russell, Majors and Waddell.



Most of the Pony Express stations have disappeared, but in many cases, their original locations are honored with markers such as this one for the Axtell, Kans. relay station—well off the beaten track.



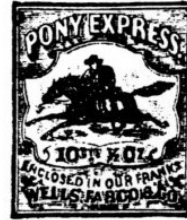
The Hollenberg home station near Hanover, Kans. This station has been meticulously cared for and is still in its original condition.

is the Hollenberg Station near Hanover, Kansas, shown above, which is purported to be the only unaltered station still on its original site. Look for more restoration in the future—the Pony Express route has recently been given the National Trail designation, which makes preservation and restoration of various sites along the route eligible for substantial federal aid.

The Pony Express Museum is located in St. Joseph, Mo, in the building that once served as the stables for the Pony Express horses. The museum features a video program describing the history of the Pony Express, and a number of well-conceived exhibits, including an important, nicely preserved Pony Express cover. The museum is open from nine until five (six in the summer) Monday through Saturday, and from one to five (six in the summer) on Sundays. St. Joseph is located less than an hour north of Kansas City on Interstate Highway 29. Many frontier-era structures in the town are preserved and open to visitors, including the home of Jesse James, robber of railway mail cars.

While it may be stretching a bit to say we owe everything from doughnuts to the preservation of our country to the Pony Express, the “young, skinny, wiry fellows” who answered the call of the Pony Express have become a fascinating part of our American heritage. ☐

The Pony Express In Philately



It should be noted that the Pony Express carried letters only. The original postage rate was \$5.00 per half-ounce for the entire route. On April 1, 1861, Wells, Fargo and Company became the agents for the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company and issued on that date two postage stamps designated for use in the service: a \$2.00 red and a \$4.00 green.

The rates were reduced 50% just three months later on July 1, and new stamps were immediately placed on sale: the \$1.00 red, \$2.00 green, \$4.00 black, and a \$1.00 blue which was issued in the east for use only on the westbound route.

With the revival of the Pony Express, known as the "Virginia City Pony," in 1862, values of 10 cents (brown); 25 cents (blue), and 25 cents (red) were issued. Wells, Fargo & Co. re-initiated the Express to run between Sacramento, Virginia City, Nev., and Placerville, Calif. Rates for these routings—which specified that all letters be enclosed in Wells, Fargo franked envelopes, were 10 cents per half-ounce prepaid.

All Wells, Fargo stamps were lithographed by the firm of Britton and Rey of San Francisco.

Covers of the Pony Express—both under the Russell, Majors and Waddell and Wells, Fargo firms—are among the most colorful in philately. Several are illustrated in this article. Though such covers are now quite expensive (some having been sold for up to \$150,000), the unused stamps are still collectable and within the price range of most collectors. Scott Catalogue values (unused) for all of the various issues list at from \$20 to \$200. They are quite colorful and are, very much, pieces of American frontier history. Certainly, one of the lower priced examples deserves a place in any collection of U.S. stamps.

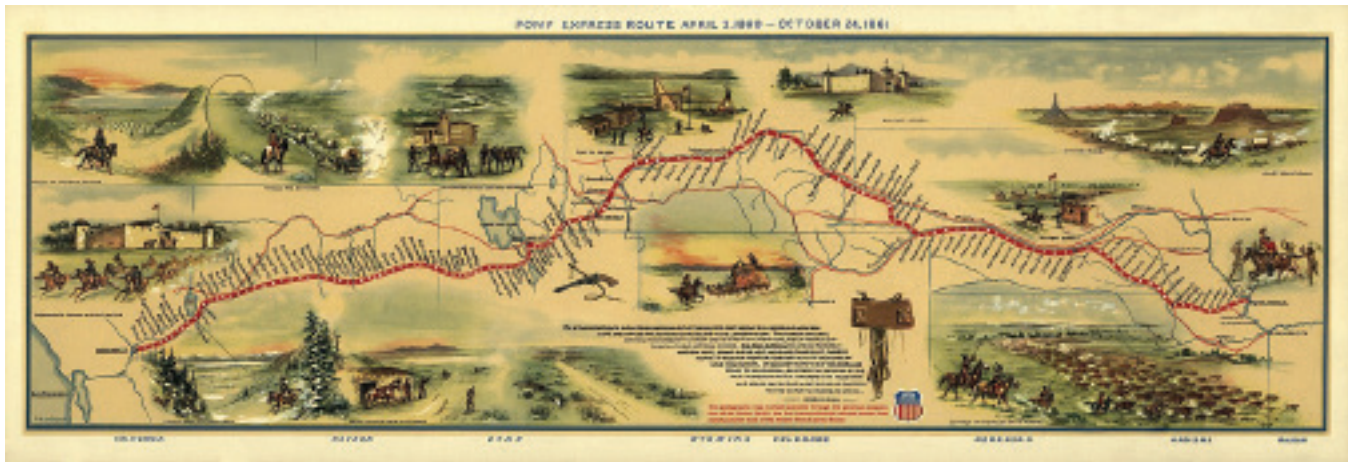
Both express companies used numerous—and often quite illustrative—handstamps on these mails. Readers who wish to pursue study of not only the handstamps, but the story of this service may consult two books that relate to the subject: *The Handstamps of Wells, Fargo and Co.*, John F. Leutzinger, 1968; and *The Pony Express*, by M.C. Nathan and Winthrop S. Boggs, The Collectors Club of New York.

Further information on the Pony Express and a list of literature available, write to: The Pony Express Museum, P.O. Box 244, St. Joseph MO 64502-0244.

By Pony Express

by Herman Herst, Jr., with color images added

This article first appeared with a few black & white illustrations in Pat Herst's "Still More Stones to Collect Stamps By", published by Mekeel's Weekly.



Above, from the Library of Congress, an illustrated map by William Henry Jackson showing the Pony Express route with the express stations indicated. Left, one of two known Eastbound covers, which left San Francisco on April 3, 1860—to be carried first by steamer to Sacramento, where then began the Pony trip eastward. Right, the only known cover carried on the first Westbound trip, departing St. Joseph on April 3, 1860.

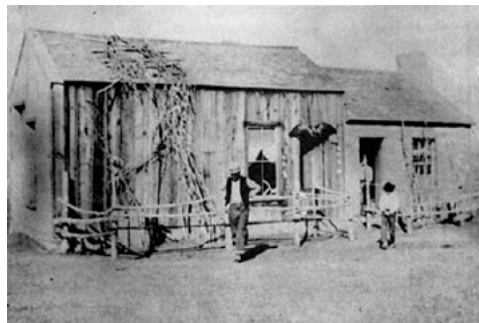


Left to right, artist's rendering of the departure of the first Pony Express rider leaving San Francisco; from the Oct. 12, 1861 London Illustrated News, a "A pony rider en route from Missouri to San Francisco"; right, Frederic Remington's "The Coming and Going of the Pony Express"

It was April 3, 1860, one of the celebrated days in the history of philately. With cannons booming, and people in festive array, two riders considered by most historians to be John Fry and Jas. Randall, started the saga of the Pony Express between St. Joseph, Missouri and San Francisco, California, one rider heading West, the other East. Thus started what is probably the most romantic period in the history of the carrying of the mails.

For the next 19 months the deeds of daring and valor that these and subsequent express riders undertook began the tradition of the Pony Express which still excites the world. Almost every hazard imaginable was encountered along the 1,966-mile route which operated through barren prairies, through Indian country, over mountains and desert. Land that previously had taken weeks and sometimes months to cross, now was traversed in from eight to 10 days.

Riders, undaunted by summer heat or winter snow and ice, operating

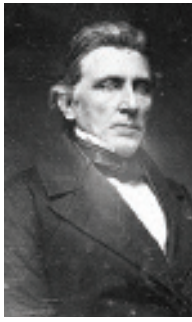


A Pony Express station, Diamond Springs, Nevada

with relays of horses, raced against time. They maintained schedules that, even today, would seem incredible. Neither the weather nor hostile Indians could stop these riders. They easily outran the Indian ponies in the open country, and traveled so fast that ambush attempts in the mountains were of little avail. The weather was taken as a matter of course.

If a rider found no relief at the end of his seventy-five miles, he kept on going, and then doubled back. Several instances are recorded of a single horseman covering nearly 400 miles, stopping only to change mounts. And all of this was done with the loss of only one mail in the more than 300 trips made.

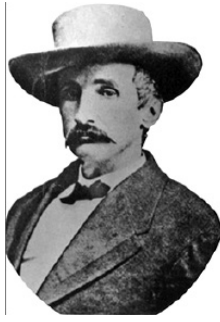
In seven days and 17 hours, the news of Lincoln's election, carried by Pony riders, reached waiting Californians. By getting this information there ahead of any private agency they are said to have saved the region west of the Rockies for the Union and prevented it from becoming an independent state. Several conspiracies on foot there would have had it thus.



Sen. Wm. Gwin



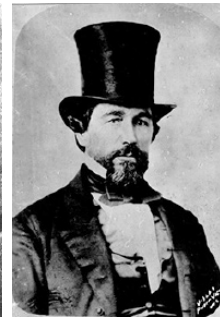
John Butterfield



B. F. Ficklin



Wm. Russell



Alexander Majors



Wm. Waddell

So much for the glamor of the hurrying hooves of the ponies and the heroism of the riders. There is another side to the story, a side far from glamorous wherein men's promises were unfulfilled and fortunes and reputations wrecked.

A "horse express" to California long had been talked of. Senator Gwin, of the state, first mentioned it to B. F. Ficklin, superintendent of Russell, Majors & Waddell, freighters of Leavenworth, Kansas, as early as 1854, while the two were traveling East together on horseback. The firm, however, was not at the time interested, as they were too busy with government contracts for carrying supplies to the Western Army Posts.

John Butterfield, who in 1858 began carrying mail under the first through overland mail contract, also talked of a "horse express" and in fact tried one trip with Buchanan's 1859 message to Congress. He made the 2,795 miles in some 12 days, and beat the best steamship time by four or five days.

Butterfield's stagecoach route was known as the "Southern," and ran from St. Louis to Fort Smith Arkansas, El Paso Texas, Los Angeles California, and thence to San Francisco, a route which reputedly had been chosen by Southern influence in Buchanan's Cabinet to try to bring California into the Southern fold. The shorter "Central" route, as it was called, through Salt Lake City, Utah, reputedly was not approved for fear the North would have an advantage in California.

In 1858, gold was discovered near Pike's Peak and a rush of immigration followed. Russell became enthusiastic over the possibility and suggested a stage line from Leavenworth to Denver, Colorado, but Majors, the monied man of the company, refused to join in the enterprise until the country was proven to be passable.

Russell went ahead on his own account and with a partner, Jones, established the Leavenworth City & Pike's Peak Express Company to run weekly stages between the two points. In three months the company's resources were exhausted and Majors, rather than see his old friend fail, took over the proposition.

The only way out seemed in expansion and toward that end the decrepit Holladay line of stages from "St. Jo" to Salt Lake was taken over, and the two lines merged into a new company, the Central Overland California and the Pike's Peak Express.

In the meantime the contractor for the line between Salt Lake and Placerville, California was said to be about to default, and on representations from Russell, the Postmaster General transferred that contract to the new company.

Thus, in a few short months the shorter Central route, backed by adequate capital, loomed as a serious competitor of the Southern, a situation which, it seemed, pleased neither the Butterfield interests nor the reputed ruling powers in Washington.

At that time the government owed Russell, Waddell & Majors large sums on past freighting contracts, which could not be paid on account of the condition of the Treasury. J. H. Floyd, Secretary of War, entered into the unauthorized practice of issuing acceptances for services performed and to be performed to transfer large quantities of war supplies to the Southwestern Army Posts. The banks refused to honor these acceptances, and so, to allow the contracts to continue, Floyd reputedly caused certain government bonds to be given to Russell as security, the bonds to be returned when the acceptances were paid.

Russell also busied himself about the mail contracts of the Central Overland, which were to expire in a little over a year. California Senator Gwin offered to help and suggested all that was needed was a thorough demonstration that there was nothing in the stock argument that the Central route was impassable in winter, and that the best way to show this was by a "horse express," which would cover the distance in 10 days.

An advertisement of this kind could not do otherwise than bring a renewal of the contracts on the basis of a profit rather than the losing proposition they then were. Gwin also promised that he would secure a subsidy to cover the cost of its installation and upkeep once the "horse express" was a going reality.

Whether Russell really believed Gwin could carry out his agreement or was simply carried away by enthusiasm never will be known, but at any rate, Russell convinced the skeptical Majors that the word of the firm had been pledged and so nothing remained but to go on with the Pony Express, as it now was called. Consequently (and at enormous expense), they built stations every 10 or 12 miles from "St. Jo" to Placerville, California, secured the necessary horses, equipment, and men, and announced April 3, 1860, as the starting date.

The Pony Express was a good advertising promotion. The whole country talked about it, and had future contracts depended on its popularity there would have been no question of the result. But like many another road show, it did not pay.

Gwin fell down on the subsidy. As the months went on, the government payments on the freight contracts got slower and slower. Russell, Majors & Waddell began to need money. The initials of the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company (C. O. C. & P. P.) was said by the press of the day to stand for "Clean Out of Cash and Poor Pay."

To keep going, the Company borrowed large sums from Ben Holladay, another freight contractor, and possibly from Wells Fargo & Company, which had secured control of the Southern Overland route.

To make matters worse, in December a scandal broke in Washington. Floyd's use of the acceptances and bonds caused Floyd, Russell and a clerk to be indicted for conspiracy to defraud the government. Floyd and the clerk fled South. Russell insisted on his innocence, but he evidently made good the amount of the bonds, for the indictment was never brought to trial, nor has any report of the Congressional investigation ever been found. Of course, very soon after this, the nation was involved in civil war.

The final blow, which completely destroyed this once great company, came when the lame duck Congress of 1861, just before adjournment on March 2, altered the contract with the Overland Mail Company, which had operated over the Southern route. Reportedly to prevent its falling into the hands of the Confederate States, this route was moved north to the Central route, and the C. O. C. & P. P.'s hopes of obtaining the Central route contract were extinguished.

With this, Holladay foreclosed on Russell, Majors & Waddell. The Overland Mail Company, which now controlled the route, signed contracts by which with the C. O. C. & P. P. Express Co. would operate the Pony route east of Salt Lake City, and Wells, Fargo & Company would run a "fast express" west of Salt Lake City.

It was under this arrangement that the famed Wells, Fargo & Company became the agents for the handling of the mail west of Salt Lake City and subsequently issued their Pony Express stamps.

Yesterday in U.S. Stamp News:

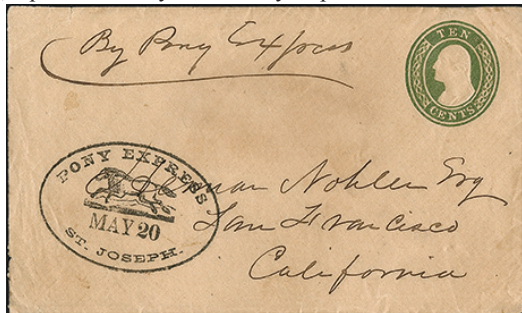
Viewing the Kramer Pony Express Collection

by John F. Dunn (From USSN, May-June 2020)

Last September [2019] the Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries offered at auction selected Pony Express Covers from the award-winning George Kramer Collection. The usual reminders: prices quoted here do not include the 18% Buyer's Premium that is added on to these hammer prices; and the statements are from the auction lot descriptions. My comments are in brackets.

In this case, however, I need to suggest that what you will find here in the descriptions only touches the surface, and that you absolutely should go to the Siegel website and read the four-page introduction to the sale in the pdf version, a precise history of the Pony Express.

With that, the first lot selected for viewing is a 10¢ Green on Buff Nesbitt entire (U16) addressed to Herman Wohler in San Francisco, sender's directive "By Pony Express", no government postmark and no indication of origin or \$5.00 rate. Most important, it shows a perfect strike of the St. Joseph Running Pony oval dated May 20, 1860—the first westbound Pony mail delayed by Paiute Indian War and carried with military escort.



As documented in "The Impact of Indian Attacks on the Pony Express in 1860"—available at http://siegelauctions.com/enc/Pony_Indians.pdf—published by the Siegel firm, the attacks on Pony Express stations and riders occurred during the Paiute Indian War, which started on May 7. The presence of U.S. troops guarding the route helped keep the stage and Pony Express running during July and August 1860, but several mails were delayed and combined as they waited for an escort.

This May 20, 1860 cover was carried as far west as possible and held until a military escort could accompany the riders beyond the dangerous part of the route. Mail from three subsequent trips—May 27, June 3 and June 10—eventually caught up with the May 20 mail and was carried to California.

The *Daily Alta California* 6/24/1860 contains a report from Carson City dated June 23, which states, "The long missing Pony Express arrived at Carson City last evening, bringing dates from St. Louis to June 10th." The *San Francisco Bulletin* 6/25/1860 confirms that the four delayed Pony mails arrived in San Francisco on June 25. Five covers are recorded with the May 20, May 27, June 3 and June 10 departure dates.

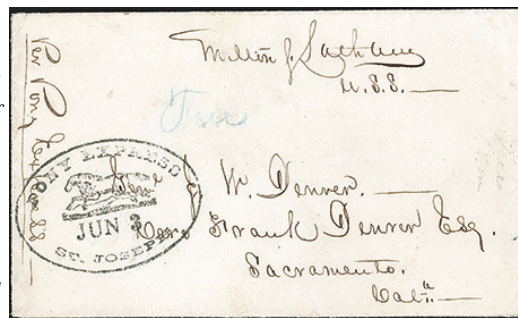
Estimated at \$40,000-50,000, it drew a top hammer price of \$52,500.

At the top of the next column is another cover carried on the westbound Pony mail delayed by Paiute Indian War and carried with military escort, this one with a St. Joseph June 3, 1860 Running Pony oval and Latham free frank.

Senator Milton S. Latham, who franked the cover, went to California in 1850 and was elected to Congress on the 1852 Democratic ticket. After his term expired, he declined to run for re-election and served as collector for the port of San Francisco. In 1859 he was elected governor, but he resigned five days after taking office to fill the U.S. Senate seat left vacant when Senator David C. Broderick was killed in a duel. It was during his term as a U.S. senator that Latham franked this cover addressed to his friend and fellow Democrat, General James W. Denver, who was the former territorial governor of Kansas, state senator and U.S. congressman, and who would be commissioned as a general in the Union army at the start of the Civil War.

Senator Latham was a friend of William H. Russell, the Central

Pony Express, St. Joseph, Jun. 3 (1860) full clear strike of Running Pony oval datestamp on cover with a freefrank "Milton S. Latham U.S.S." and addressed in his hand to



General James W. Denver, care of Frank Denver in Sacramento, Latham's directive "Per Pony Express" along left edge, blue crayon "Free" above oval and pencil "Free F.A.M." at right, lightened stain and minor cosmetic improvements.

Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company president, and a strong supporter of their effort to secure the contract for the Central Route. He was among the few individuals later permitted to send Pony Express letters free of charge. In this case Senator Latham's free frank applied to the \$5.00 Pony Express rate and U.S. postage.

Estimated at \$50,000-75,000, it sold for \$50,000.

This next lot shows a blue Running Pony oval datestamp clearly struck and tying a 10¢ Green, Type V (Sc. 35) on a blue cover addressed to Robert Patton in Covington, Kentucky, sender's directive "Pony Express, August 22nd 1860", also with a carmine "Pony Express, St. Joseph, Sep. 2" (1860) Running Pony oval receiving datestamp on the back, no indication of \$2.50 rate, entered the mails with "Saint Joseph Mo. Sep. 2, 1860" circular datestamp also tying the 10¢ stamp, receipt docketing "George Binds, himself, Keep this carefully for me, R Patton", cover opened for display and professionally restored with some paper backing and additions, but not affecting the stamp or markings.

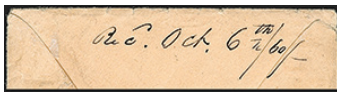


The St. Joseph Running Pony handstamp was normally struck in black, but ten covers are recorded with this marking struck in the distinctive carmine color.

This cover was sent from San Francisco on Wednesday, August 22, 1860, after the new Pony Express rate of \$2.50 per quarter-ounce (half of the \$5.00 per half-ounce rate) was announced at St. Joseph. Estimated at \$20,000-30,000, it realized \$20,000.

On page 2 we view one of three recorded covers franked by William H. Russell, the most prominent of the three Pony Express founders, with a "Free W. H. Russell" free frank (for Pony Express fee) on a 3¢ Red on Buff Star Die entire (Sc. U27) addressed in his hand to Judge William A. Carter, the station agent at Fort Bridger, Utah Territory (later in Wyoming Territory), also with "The Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company, St. Joseph, Mo. Sep. 30" (1860) oval

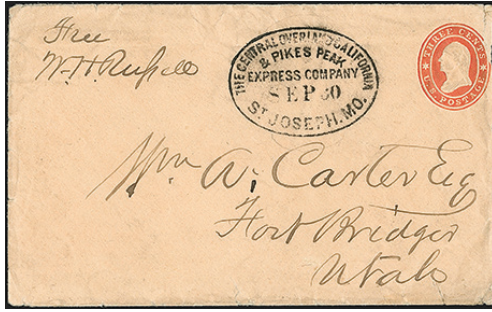
datestamp applied at origin, receipt docketing on back "Recd. Oct. 6th /60" which confirms a six-day Pony



Express trip starting at St. Joseph on Sunday, September 30, 1860, reduced and opening faults at right.

Estimated at \$7,500-10,000, it went for \$6,250.

Here we see one of nine recorded "PAID. Central Overland Pony Express Company" entires and a rare way-mail Pony Express cover with a two-line frank with manuscript "2.50" quarter-ounce rate



and "Placerville, Cal. Oct. 25" (1860) station agent's way-mail marking on a 10¢ Pale Green on Buff Nesbitt entire (Sc. U18a) to Mrs. Frances Bye, Wellsville, Ohio, "The Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company, St. Joseph, Mo. Nov. 5" oval datestamp applied the day of arrival (the entire trip was 12 days), lightly-inked strike of "Saint Joseph Mo. Nov. 8" double-circle datestamp (date is unreadable, but the other two recorded covers from this trip are dated November 8), with original letter enclosure datelined "Placerville Oct. 25th 1860."

The presence of manuscript station markings on several of these COPEC franks, including the cover offered here, supports the theory that they were mainly used by telegraph operators and by relay station agents for way mail received along the Pony Express route.

Estimated at \$15,000-20,000, it did not sell.

Next is a mostly complete strike of a "The Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company, St. Joseph, Mo. Nov. 23" (1860) oval datestamp applied on arrival



to a way-mail cover carried on the Pony Express trip that started in San Francisco on November 10, 1860, and arrived in St. Joseph on November 23, addressed to Charles White, Whitestown, New York, sender's directive "By Pony Express", 3¢ Dull Red, Ty. III (26) affixed by St. Joseph office over manuscript "1/4" quarter-ounce weight notation (\$2.50 rate), cancelled by grid with matching "Saint Joseph Mo. Nov. 24" double-circle datestamp, stamp has margin defects including piece out at lower right, cover slightly reduced at left.

This cover's original mailing location is not known, but it must have originated within the distance limit for the 3¢ rate. Postage was probably paid in cash, and upon arrival in St. Joseph, the receiving office applied the November 23 oval datestamp, then affixed the 3¢ stamp. The St. Joseph post office applied the November 24 datestamp and cancelled the stamp before sending the cover on the eastbound train. Pony Express way-mail covers are rare. This is the only cover we have seen on which the adhesive stamp was applied at the receiving office. Estimated at \$7,500-10,000, it did not sell.

The next lot selected for viewing is one of five recorded covers with the 10¢ 1857 stamp tied by the San Francisco Running Pony oval, Dec. 8 (1860) with a matching "The Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company, San Francisco, Cal."



dateless oval handstamp on mostly complete blue folded cover addressed to A. A. Low & Brother in New York City, sender's directive "pr Pony Express", manuscript "1/4 oz" weight notation (\$2.50 rate), carried on the Pony trip departing San Francisco on Saturday, December 8, 1860, and arriving at St. Joseph 15 days later on December 23—a longer journey due to winter weather. On arrival the "Pony Express, The Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company, St. Joseph, Mo. Dec. 23" large oval within circle receiving datestamp was applied in green on the backflap, entering the mails with "Saint Joseph Mo. Dec. 24" double-circle datestamp tying the 10¢ stamp.

[Demonstrating the depth of the lot descriptions, the auctioneers also tell us] The recipient firm, A. A. Low & Brother, was named for Abiel Abbot Low and his brother, Josiah Orne Low. Founded in 1840, the firm became one of the leading importers of China and Japan silks and teas, and operated its own line of clipper ships. In 1850 Low completed the A. A. Low building at 167-171 John Street, **now the offices of the South Street Seaport Museum** [emphasis added].

Estimated at \$15,000-20,000, it soared to \$35,000.

Next is a Pony cover with a California Pony Express, New York, Dec. 11 (1860) greenish-blue oval datestamp on a 3¢ Red on Buff Star Die entire (Sc. U27) to Daniel Gibb & Company in San Francisco, sent to the eastern terminus at St. Joseph where "Pony Express, St. Joseph, Dec. 16" Running Pony oval datestamp was boldly struck at lower left, arithmetic notations applied at the offices of Gibb & Company, slight wear at top left corner.



Only 21 covers have the St. Joseph Running Pony oval struck on the front, including two in carmine and four eastbound covers (one of which is badly damaged). Of the 21, only two have this distinctive New York office oval with a date. They are both dated December 11 and were carried on the same trip to two different addresses in San Francisco.

The addressee, Daniel Gibb & Company, was a large merchant firm in San Francisco. The firm's warehouse at Front and Vallejo Street is a registered historic landmark building.

Estimated at \$15,000-20,000, it sold for \$16,000.

On page 3 we see, the "Cuba Pony"—the only recorded Pony Express cover from Cuba and one of three originating outside the United States. It bears a California Pony Express Paid red double-line oval handstamp on a blue folded invoice datelined "Havana 5 September 1860" from Levy Hermanos (Levy Brothers), a detailed invoice for 137,550 cigars in 15 cases, billed at \$3,480.23, addressed to St. Losky, Levy & Co. in San

Francisco, sender's directive "pr Pony Express" and "Paid" notation, blue "Forwarded by Duncan Sherman & Co. New-York" oval handstamp a commercial



banking firm in New York City which received the invoice from Cuba and forwarded it through the New York office of the Central Overland California & Pike's Peak Express Company, postage paid by 3¢ Dull Red, Ty. III (Sc. 26) affixed over part of the written word "Express" and effectively tied by a faint ink bleed, left uncanceled since this invoice was carried in a package of letters to St. Joseph for the next Pony trip, with a wedge-shaped sealed tear at bottom.

Estimated at \$20,000-30,000, it did not sell.

This next lot features one of six recorded Pony covers originating in Nevada and the earliest recorded Wells Fargo & Company franked entire carried by Pony Express and the



only Pony cover from Silver City. It bears a "Pony Express Paid \$2.50, Silver City March 7th/61" manuscript express marking and "X" cancel on a 10¢ Green on Buff Nesbitt entire (Sc. U16) with a red Wells Fargo & Co. printed frank, addressed to Ephraim Brigham in Natick, Massachusetts, Also with a "Via Carson City UT Mch 7/61" manuscript express marking in a different hand. At Carson City the cover was placed into the way-mail pouch of the mochilla carried on the Pony trip that departed San Francisco on Wednesday, March 6, 1861, passed through Carson City March 7, arrived in St. Joseph on March 20 ND entered the mails with A green "Saint Joseph Mo. Mar. 21" double-circle datestamp and matching grid cancel, tears in backflap and also into red frank and embossed stamp at right (skillfully sealed).

The Pony Express mochilla had four pouches. Three were used for mail originating at the San Francisco and St. Joseph offices. The letters were bundled and wrapped in water-resistant oiled silk, then placed in the pouches, which were locked for the entire trip (only certain offices had the key). The fourth pouch was used for way mail, which was collected at stations along the route and placed into the pouch by the station agents.

Estimated at \$10,000-15,000, it realized \$13,500.

Here we view an example of the red San Francisco Running Pony oval dated April 17, 1861, carried on the first eastbound trip of the \$2.00 rate period clearly struck on



a 10¢ Green on White Nesbitt entire (Sc. U15) addressed to A. W. Canfield, care of George Updyke & Co., New York City, sender's directive "Pony Express", no indication of \$2.00 rate, carried on the Pony trip that departed San Francisco on Wednesday, April 17, 1861, and arrived in St. Joseph on April 30, entered the mails with green "St. Joseph Mo. Apr. 30" circular datestamp, small opening slit at top, faint stain spot at bottom right.

One of the finest San Francisco Running Pony ovals in red, and the only recorded red strike with a date, this cover carried on the Eastbound trip marked the beginning of the \$2.00 per half ounce rate period, or what postal historians call Rate Period 3, and it is also the early stage of Phase II, known as the Interim Phase, in which the Pony Express was operated as a joint private enterprise by COC&PP (now controlled by Holladay) and the Overland Mail Company, with Wells Fargo & Company acting as agents for the business.

Estimated at \$20,000-30,000, it went for \$23,000.

This next cover is one of three carried on the first eastbound trip of the \$2.00 rate period. It bears a "Pony Express, San Francisco, Apr. 17" (1861) Running Pony



oval datestamp in blue struck on a 10¢ Green on Buff Nesbitt entire (Sc. U16) addressed to Charles Arthur Ely in Elyria, Ohio, no indication of \$2.00 rate, carried on the Pony trip that departed San Francisco on Wednesday, April 17, 1861, and arrived in St. Joseph on April 30, entered the mails with bold green "St. Joseph Mo. Apr. 30" circular datestamp, with original letter enclosure datelined San Francisco, April 17, 1861, from Henry Leffingwell at 6 Montgomery Block, concerning debts incurred by Charles Ely and demanding reimbursement—"I send this by Pony, because I cannot wait any longer."

Henry Leffingwell, a San Francisco real estate agent with offices at 6 Montgomery Block, was a frequent newspaper advertiser, offering properties for sale or rent. According to the letter, Leffingwell had provided considerable financial assistance to his friend, Charles A. Ely, and was demanding payment of the long overdue debt.

Estimated at \$5,000-7,500, it realized \$8,000.

Moving into a section with Wells Fargo stamps on cover, we find the famous and unique \$4.00 Green Pony Express cover, with the \$4.00 Green (Sc. 143L2), Position 15, used with a \$2.00



Red (Sc. 143L1), Position 3, clear to ample margins except in at top, tied by a clear strike of "Pony Express, San Francisco, Jun. 26" (1861) Running Pony oval datestamp on a 10¢ Green on Buff Star Die entire (Sc. U33) addressed to Eugene Kelly & Co., 164 Fulton Street, New York City, embossed Donohoe, Ralston & Company corner card beneath stamps, sender's directive "Pony Express June 26th" and carried on the Pony trip that departed San Francisco on Wednesday, June 26, 1861, and arrived in St. Joseph on July 8, entered the mails with bold green "St. Joseph Mo. Jul. 8" circular datestamp, no obvious evidence of missing stamps, but it is presumed that two 10¢ stamps were affixed overlapping the embossed stamp and were removed from the cover, since the triple \$2.00 per half-ounce express fee would require corresponding triple 10¢ rate postage, Pony Express stamps have creases and sealed tears, and have been lifted and reaffixed.

This is the only recorded cover with the \$4.00 Green and one of two with a combination of Wells Fargo Horse & Rider stamps. The Wednesday, June 26, 1861, Pony mail from San Francisco was carried on the penultimate eastbound trip during the Phase II (Interim) operational period and Rate Period 3. From April 1, through June 30, 1861, the rate for a Pony Express letter was \$2.00 per half-ounce. The \$2.00 Red and \$4.00

Green Horse & Rider stamps were issued in April 1861 by Wells Fargo & Company for use on mail from the West. On July 1, the new government mail contract for overland mail on the Central Route and the Pony Express took effect, and the rate was reduced to \$1.00 per half-ounce. A new \$1.00 Red stamp was issued, and the colors of the \$2.00 and \$4.00 were changed to Green and Black, respectively. [The only other Horse & Rider combination cover will be seen later.]

Estimated at \$150,000-200,000, it sold for \$150,000.

This next cover is the earliest of eight Pony Express examples of a Pony Express usage of the obsolete Freeman & Company Franked entire, overprinted by a Wells Fargo imprint at the top, and the only one that is a Way-Mail usage.



The Wells Fargo & Company Pony Express, \$2.00 Red (143L1), Position 16, is tied by a blue “Wells, Fargo & Co., Carson City, Jun. 16” (1861) oval datestamp on a 10¢ Pale Green on Buff Nesbitt entire (Sc. U18a) to William B. Taylor, postmaster of New York City, with a red Wells Fargo & Co. frank printed twice over green Freeman & Co. frank, sender’s directive “Pr Pony Express June 16/61”. Carried on the Pony trip that departed San Francisco on June 15, 1861, it arrived in St. Joseph June 27 and entered the mails with a green “St. Joseph Mo. Jun. 27” circular datestamp and matching grid cancel on the 10¢ embossed stamp, the cover restored at top with some paper added and part of red printed frank inked in, \$2.00 stamp has faint crease and tiny repair at top right.

John Freeman was an agent for Adams & Co. at the time of the firm’s collapse in February 1855. He ran the Freeman & Co. Express until November 1859, then sold out to Wells Fargo & Co. The unused supply of 10¢ embossed envelopes bearing Freeman & Co.’s green frank was overprinted with the Wells Fargo & Co. red frank in two directions. Some of these were used to send letters by Pony Express.

Estimated at \$15,000-20,000, it went for \$18,500.

Here we have the earliest recorded westbound Pony Express cover of Rate Period 3 and one of two Pony covers with a black Wells Fargo & Company frank. It bears a



“California Pony Express, New-York, Apr. 6” (1861) partly clear strike of an ultramarine oval datestamp on a 10¢ Pale Green on Buff Nesbitt entire (Sc. U16a), addressed to James Pullman, Sansome and Sacramento Streets, San Francisco, no indication of \$2.00 rate and no government post office markings, carried by Wells Fargo to St. Joseph where green “Pony Express, The Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company, St. Joseph, Mo. Apr. 14” large oval within circle datestamp was applied before the cover was carried on the Sunday, April 14, westbound trip to San Francisco, some minor toning around edges.

The Phase II (Interim) operational period and Rate Period 3 started in St. Joseph on April 1, 1861, and the first westbound trip left on Thursday, April 4, followed by trips on Sunday, April 7, and Thursday, April 11. No covers from these three trips are recorded. The cover offered here is the earliest recorded westbound mail to which the new \$2.00 per half-ounce rate and Phase II handling procedures applied.

Estimated at \$15,000-20,000, it did not sell.



This lot presents the complete set of Wells Fargo & Company Pony Express Horse & Rider Issues (Sc. 143L1-143L5), including the \$2.00 Red and \$4.00 Green First Issue (April 1861) and \$1.00 Red, \$2.00 Green and \$4.00 Black Second Issue (July 1, 1861), 143L1 part original gum, others no gum, all have four margins (mostly clear to large), 143L3 and 143L4 slight creases and thin spots, others sound.

Commencing July 1, 1861, the Pony Express was authorized by Congress to carry mail at the rate of \$1.00 per half-ounce. Although the Scott Catalogue lists the July 1861 issue Pony Express stamps (143L3-143L6) with other private post issues, we wish to emphasize that these stamps were issued under the terms of a government mail contract; therefore, they have semi-official status. Although some of the Horse & Rider stamps were remaindered, they are scarce and the vast majority do not have gum or four margins.

Estimated at \$500-750, it fetched a top bid of \$1,600.

The next lot selected for viewing is this the celebrated and unique “Patriotic Pony” cover to Europe, bearing a Wells Fargo Pony Express, \$1.00 Red (Sc. 143L3), tied by a blue



“Pony Express, San Francisco, Sep. 14” (1861) Running Pony oval datestamp with matching “PAID” in oval handstamp, used with a 30¢ Orange (38) to pay the Prussian Closed Mail rate, tied by an “Atchison, Kan. Sep. 27” double-circle datestamp on a Civil War patriotic cover depicting George Washington and a quote from his Farewell Address, “To the Efficacy and Permanency of Your Union, A Government for the whole is indispensable”.

The cover is addressed to Mr. H. Hauschildt at Elmshorn in Schleswig-Holstein, then under Danish crown rule, with sender’s directive “by Hamburg” (18.5 miles south of Elmshorn) and in the same hand on back “Stadt Altona”—Altona being a Danish harbor town on the Elbe river.

The cover was carried on the Pony Express trip departing San Francisco on Saturday, September 14, 1861, and arriving in Atchison, Kansas, on September 27. At this date the western terminus for the Pony relay was at Placerville, and the eastern terminus had been moved from St. Joseph to Atchison, due to Confederate bushwacker attacks on railroad lines near St.

Joseph. From Atchison it was sent by railroad to New York for the October 5 sailing of the Hamburg-American line's Saxonía, which off-loaded the mail at Southampton on October 17. Mail for the German-Austrian Postal Union (GAPU) was transported to Aachen for processing. From there the cover was sent north to Hamburg, then turned over to the Royal Danish Postal Agency in Hamburg and transported to Elmshorn. Danish postage was collected from the addressee.

The sequential transit markings follow the route described above: red "N. York Am. Pkt. 7 Paid Oct. 5" (1861) 7¢ credit datestamp dated on the departure day of the HAPAG Saxonía; red framed "AACHEN 19 10/ FRANCO" (October 19) transit datestamp and matching framed "FRANCO/PREUSS. RESP. VEREINS/AUSGANGS-GRENZEN" handstamp (Paid to the GAPU Border); "HAMBURG 20 10" (October 20) datestamp on back; "KDOPA HAMBURG 20/10" (October 20) Royal Danish Postal Agency in Hamburg double-circle datestamp on back; "HOLST. EISENB. POST SP. BUREAU Z2 20/10". (Holsteinisches Eisenbahn Postspedition Bureau) Holstein railway datestamp on back; red crayon "4" on front for postage due in Danish rigsbank skilling.

This cover is one of three recorded Civil War Patriotic covers carried by Pony Express and one of six Pony covers to destinations outside the U.S., of which only four bear a Pony Express stamp.

With a pre-sale estimate of \$500,000-750,000, it drew a hammer price of \$525,000.

Next we view a Pony Express cover bearing a Wells Fargo Pony Express \$1.00 Red (143L3) tied by a blue "Wells, Fargo & Co. Express, Folsom" oval handstamp,



also with a blue "Pony Express, Sacramento, Jul. 4" (1861) oval datestamp on a 10¢ Green on White Star Die entire (U32) with Wells Fargo & Company printed red frank. Addressed to Massena, New York, the embossed envelope stamp was pen-canceled, with no post office markings, and was carried with the mail that left San Francisco on July 3, 1861, the first trip under the new government mail contract.

This is the only recorded Pony cover from Folsom that made the journey in both directions, 24 miles west from Folsom to Sacramento, where it was placed in the mochilla, then back east to Folsom and onward from Placerville by Pony Express.

The government awarded the mail contract along the Central Route to the Overland Mail Company on March 12, 1861, effective July 1. The contract paid \$1,000,000 per year for mail/passenger service along the Central Route and required the company "to run a Pony Express semi-weekly at a Schedule time of ten days eight months of the year and twelve days four months of the year, and to convey for the Government free of charge five pounds of Mail Matter; with liberty of charging the public for transportation of letters by said express not exceeding One dollar per half ounce..."

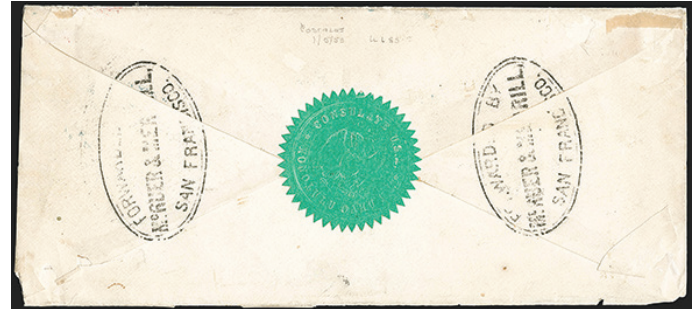
This period of operation is known as Phase III, which corresponds to Rate Period 4 (July 1-October 24, 1861). On July 1 Wells Fargo & Co. issued new stamps and envelopes to reflect the agreed-upon government contract rate for the Pony Express. The fee for Pony Express service between Placerville and St. Joseph (or Atchison) could not exceed \$1.00 per half-ounce.

Since the July 1 commencement date of the new contract was known well in advance at both the eastern and western terminal offices, the \$1.00 rate went into effect simultaneously, and new stamps were ready for the first eastbound trip.

The unusual east-to-west and west-to-east journey this cover took is probably best explained by the timing. Rather than hold the cover until

the Pony mochilla passed through Folsom, it was sent by train to Sacramento to meet the express there. The Sacramento office applied its July 4 oval datestamp and the cover made its way back to Folsom and on to Placerville, where the Pony relay started.

Estimated at \$30,000-40,000, this cover sold for \$30,000.



Next up is the "Black Pony", the finer of two recorded \$4.00 Black Pony Express covers, bearing the Wells Fargo \$4.00 Black (143L5) tied by a blue "Pony Express, San Francisco, Aug. 10" (1861) Running Pony oval datestamp, also with a large blue "Wells, Fargo & Cos. Express, S.Frco. 10 Aug." double-circle datestamp on this 8.25 by 3.5 inch legal-size cover addressed "To The Hon. Fifth Auditor of The Treasury, Washington, D.C." with sender's directive "By Pony" — Voucher by regular mail" in the same hand, return address at upper right in a different hand "U.S. Consulate, Honolulu H. Islands", green seal on back with embossed "CONSULATE U.S.A. HONOLULU, OAHU H.I." and American eagle, two strikes of "Forwarded by McRuer & Merrill, San Francisco" double-line oval handstamp on back—carried from Honolulu to San Francisco on the American bark Yankee, which sailed on July 18 and arrived on August 7; then carried on the Pony Express trip that departed from San Francisco on Saturday, August 10, and arrived in St. Joseph on August 22, entering the mails with a green "St. Joseph Mo. Aug. 22" circular datestamp, carried to Washington D.C. free of postage (official mail).

The first Pony Express stamps—the \$2.00 Red and \$4.00 Green—were issued in April 1861 after Wells Fargo & Co. became involved in operating the express. When the \$1.00 per half-ounce contract rate took effect on July 1, 1861, a new set of stamps was ready, comprising the \$1.00 Red, \$2.00 Green and \$4.00 Black.

Estimated at 300,000-400,000, it went for \$330,000.

Here we view the only Pony Express cover with a combination of the \$1.00 and \$2.00 Pony Express, the only one known with two different July 1861 Issue stamps and one



of two with the \$2.00 Green Pony stamp. It bears the Wells Fargo Pony Express, \$2.00 Green (143L4). Position 18 (showing plate flaw on rider's face), used with a \$1.00 Red (143L3), both stamps tied by a blue "Pony Express, San Francisco, Aug. 3" (1861) Running Pony oval datestamp,

also with a separated vertical pair of 10¢ Green, Type V (35) canceled by three strikes of a New York City grid cancel. It was carried on the Pony trip that departed San Francisco on Saturday, August 3, 1861, and arrived in St. Joseph on or about August 15, the mail from this Pony trip was brought to New York City and postmarked at the post office on August 18.

It was opened on three sides and slightly reduced, with a long diagonal cover tear across upper left corner that has been expertly repaired (not affecting stamps), the 10¢ pair has a large piece of one replaced, a third 10¢ stamp to make up the triple rate was probably removed, but there is no trace of it.

This cover was prepaid \$3.00 for the triple Pony Express rate based on weight (it weighed between 1 and 1.5 ounces). The corresponding postage of 10¢ per half-ounce should have been 30¢, which has led to the longstanding assumption that a third 10¢ stamp was originally affixed and has since fallen off or been removed. There is no physical evidence of a missing stamp, such as a ghost outline in regular or ultraviolet light, but it is possible the third stamp was affixed at the top right corner, and the cover has been reduced slightly at right. Since this is the only known cover with a combination of the July 1861 Horse & Rider stamps, the missing stamp and restoration are immaterial. The bidders agreed with the auctioneers' assessment: estimated at \$50,000-75,000, it realized \$65,000.

This next lot featured the only recorded Pony Express cover datestamped at Stockton, California—carried by riverboat to San Francisco by “Chips” Hodgkins. It bears a Wells Fargo Pony



Express, \$1.00 Red (143L3). Position L3 (showing a white flaw in scroll line above “CO.”), tied by a blue “Wells, Fargo & Co., Stockton, Sep. 3” double-oval datestamp on a 10¢ Green on Buff Star Die entire (U33) with Wells Fargo & Company printed red frank, addressed to Geneva, New York, also with a red “T. Robinson Bours & Co., Bankers, Stockton” red oval handstamp, carried on the Pony trip that departed San Francisco on Wednesday, September 4, 1861, and arrived in St. Joseph on September 17, entering the mails with a perfect bold strike of “St. Joseph Mo. Sep. 17” circular datestamp, accompanying certificate notes \$1.00 has diagonal tear at bottom right, entire with corner repair at top left and a sealed 6mm horizontal cut at the center of the Stockton oval—none of these are apparent.

After Wells Fargo & Company became involved in the operation of the Pony Express in April 1861, their offices began acting as feeder lines to the Pony Express. Examples of Pony covers with markings of Wells Fargo offices that were not actually located on the route are rare, this being the only one with a Stockton office marking.

Stockton is located on the San Joaquin River east of San Francisco—the trip by riverboat in 1861 took about eight hours. At this time the Wells Fargo riverboat messenger in Stockton was Pillsbury “Chips” Hodgkins. Mail for the Pony Express left Stockton at 6:00 a.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays, in order to reach San Francisco in time for the eastbound departures. This cover was datestamped on Tuesday, September 3, and presumably was carried by Hodgkins on that day or the next morning. The \$1.00 Red stamp paid the Pony Express rate, and the entire with the red frank paid the Wells Fargo charge for service to San Francisco.

On the day this cover was datestamped at Stockton—September 3—an incident occurred 2,000 miles away that would have a significant consequence for the Pony Express. Confederate bushwackers, who had been destroying rail lines and bridges on the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad since June, attempted to burn the support columns of the bridge over the Platte River. The sabotage caused a westbound train to derail and

plunge 30 feet into the shallow river, killing 20 and injuring 100 more. As a result of this attack, the eastern terminus of the mail route was moved from St. Joseph to Atchison, Kansas. The September 11 eastbound Pony mail from San Francisco was the first to be postmarked at Atchison.

Estimated at \$10,000-15,000, it went for \$12,000.

Next we view the only known Wells Fargo & Company surcharge frank sent by Pony Express. It bears a Pony

Express, \$1.00 Red (143L3), tied by a blue “Pony Express, San Francisco, Aug. 7” (1861) Running Pony oval datestamp on a 10¢ Green on White Star Die rebacked front (U32) with Wells Fargo & Company printed red frank and “PAID 50 Cts.” surcharge overprint, addressed to New York City, with sender’s notation “V M Richards” at lower left. It was carried on the Pony trip that departed San Francisco on Wednesday, August 7, 1861, and arrived in St. Joseph on August 19, entering the mails in New York City with that post office’s grid cancel on the embossed stamp, all backflaps expertly added to make this front appear as a complete cover.



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The “PAID 50 Cts.” surcharge is one of several varieties overprinted on Wells Fargo & Company franked entires to indicate a premium rate for service. Some of these surcharged entires are found with markings indicating that they were used for the service for which they were intended. Others, such as the example offered here, were probably used as an expediency—whether the 50¢ premium was paid and used toward the Pony Express fee, we cannot say, since the \$1.00 Red stamp would have covered the fee.

Estimated at \$5,000-7,500, this cover sold for \$9,500.

Here we see the rare East-to-West Pony Express franked entire with St. Joseph datestamp. It shows the Wells Fargo &



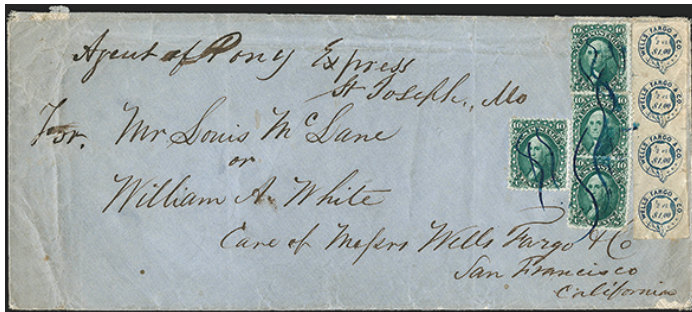
Company Pony Express, (\$1.00) Red Type II East-to-West printed Frank at the left, on a 10¢ Green on Thin Hard White Entire (unlisted in Scott), boldly struck by a “New-York Sep. 20” (1861) circular datestamp and duplex grid cancel, printed address to the “Agent of Pony Express, St. Joseph, Mo.” and handwritten address to F. Gilbert, “Melodeon,” San Francisco, also with an unusually complete and clear strike of “Pony Express, The Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company, St. Joseph, Mo. Sep. 25” large oval in circle datestamp applied one day before the westbound Pony departure on Thursday, September 26, 1861, which arrived in San Francisco on October 8 or 9 (based on 12-13 day trips at this time), small part of top right corner repaired but not affecting 10¢ embossed stamp.

It is one of 21 recorded Type II East-to-West Pony Express entires and one of the more desirable examples that have a St. Joseph Pony Express datestamp. In anticipation of the government contract set to go into effect on July 1, 1861, Wells Fargo & Co. produced a special franked envelope for Pony Express mail from the East.

After seeking approval from the Postmaster General, the 1861 10c "Pumpkin" entire with the Type II printed frank was ordered from George F. Nesbitt & Co. (New York). On August 12, 1861, Wells Fargo announced in the New York papers that "Pony Express Envelopes" were "Now ready and for sale at our office." Although this announcement refers only to "envelopes," in fact both the franked entires and \$1.00 adhesive stamps were put on sale in August 1861. The earliest recorded Type II envelope is dated August 14, 1861.

Based on an article in the San Francisco Bulletin 9/13/1861, the Type II franked envelopes were problematic, because eastern post offices were sometimes sending them in the "through" mail to San Francisco, instead of directing them to St. Joseph for the Pony Express. As a result, they would arrive by regular mail ten days after the Pony Express for which they were intended. This might explain why some examples of the Type II franks are found without a St. Joseph Pony Express handstamp.

The presence of the St. Joseph Pony Express datestamp, as found on the cover offered here, confirms that this was carried by Pony Express riders. Estimated at \$15,000-20,000, this is one of the few lots that did not sell.



Here we view the quadruple-rate Pony Express cover with \$1.00 "Garter" strip—an astonishing and unique icon of American postal history. It bears the Wells Fargo & Company Pony Express \$1.00 Blue Garter (143L6) in a vertical strip of four from the first vertical column in the sheet of 20, with large to huge margins all around showing the corner guide marks on each stamp, used with four 10c Dark Green, Type I (62B), corresponding quadruple \$1.00 Pony Express rate and 10c per half-ounce

postage, the 10c stamps canceled with blue manuscript and all stamps tied on large blue linen-lined cover originating in Boston on October 11, 1861, addressed "Agent of Pony Express, St. Joseph, Mo, For Mr. Louis McLane or William A. White, Care of Messrs Wells Fargo & Co, San Francisco, California", with original letter and several legal documents, carried on the westbound Pony trip departing on Thursday, October 17, 1861, which arrived in San Francisco on October 29.

This was one of the last mails to actually be carried by Pony riders before the service was closed on October 24, certificate notes slight creases in top three \$1.00 stamps and a crease in one 10c stamp.

This is the only recorded multiple of any Pony Express stamp on a cover and one of four extant covers with the \$1.00 "Garter" stamp.

The Horse & Rider Second Issue, the "Garter" Issue and Type II franked envelope were issued to prepay the \$1.00 Pony Express rate under the government contract that went into effect on July 1, 1861. The franked entire and Garter adhesive were needed by Wells Fargo & Co.'s eastern offices, since the Horse & Rider stamps were never sent to them.

The cover and letter are addressed to Louis McLane or William A. White, in care of the Wells Fargo office in San Francisco. McLane was Wells Fargo's general agent and later became president of the firm. The letter is datelined "Boston Mass. Octo. 11, 1861", and with the enclosures weighed between 1.5 and 2 ounces, thus requiring four times the express fee and postage. The 40c postage was paid with the new 10c 1861 First Design (Type I) stamps, and the \$4.00 Pony Express fee was paid with the Garter strip.

The stamps were canceled with blue manuscript ink, and it appears that the cover was carried outside the mails all the way to the Wells Fargo office. It should have reached St. Joseph in time for the October 17, 1861, westbound Pony trip, which arrived on October 29. Newspaper notices of letters arriving by Pony during this period list McLane and Wells Fargo as recipients. Estimated at \$150,000-200,000, it fetched a top bid of \$165,000.

Although this concludes my viewing of this auction, I urge you to go to the Siegel website, www.SiegelAuctions.com and read the four-page introduction to this sale. #1207. in the pdf version, where you will find descriptions of all the lots as well as a history of the Pony Express in an extremely informative introduction to the auction.