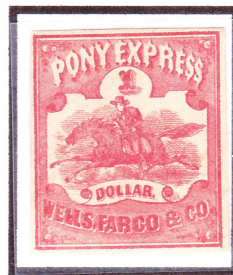


The Pony Express

1860-1861

For 18 months in the mid-19th century, the **Pony Express** provided for the private delivery of mail between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California, via relays of horse-mounted carriers. During one 10-day delivery cycle, riders (comprising a corp of 80-120) carrying 20 pounds of mail each stopped at 186 stations spaced roughly 10-miles apart to replace horses and, as needed, riders. The service was operated by the Central Overland California and Pikes Peak Express Co. using stamps printed and sold by Wells Fargo and Co. [Sc. USA 143L3].



Despite heavy subsidies, economics was the reason for the service's ultimate failure. A letter costing ~\$150 to mail in contemporary dollars was simply beyond the means of most potential users. When replaced by the telegraph in 1861, the Pony Express quickly became romanticized and entered the folklore of the American West [Sc. USA 894 & USA U543]. Its reliance on the ability and endurance of individual young, hardy riders and fast horses was seen as evidence of rugged American individualism during frontier times.

