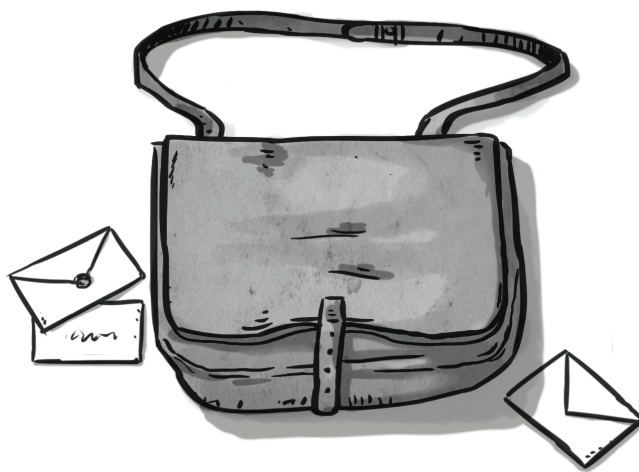


*Adventures on the American Frontier*

# MAIL RIDERS

Part Two  
Michigan Mail Boy



A Royal Fireworks Production

Royal Fireworks Press  
Unionville, New York



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During the Revolutionary War, while the colonies were fighting to become a free nation, no one had time to think about setting up a proper mail service. It went on more or less as usual—slowly and not reliably. There was even one post rider in those days who knitted his own socks as he ambled along on his sleepy old horse.



When the war ended, the American people had a new nation on their hands. It was bigger than most of the countries of Europe, reaching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River. It took about ten years to get the government going well enough to do anything about a postal service.

The first mail carriers rode in shiny, new, dark green coaches pulled by fast-stepping four-horse teams. The coach doors had "United States Mail Stage" painted in yellow letters on them, with an eagle



painted above the letters. With bright red wheels and yellow underparts, the United States mail coaches looked as important as Secretary of State Jefferson thought mail service should be.

“With a growing nation, we need to be able to get word to any corner of it,” he said. He wanted mail riders to speed up the service, too, even on the back roads and trails.

The mail riders began to look upon their work as important.

In the wilderness of Ohio, there was a boy about seventeen years old who took the job of mail rider. He was a good rider, but the job wasn't an easy one.

One day in late spring, the boy found that the river he usually rode through was swollen over its banks. He got down from the saddle and took hold of his horse's bridle.

"Come on, boy," he said, "we'll have to swim for the other shore."

He tugged at the bridle until the horse



stepped into the swirling water. It was too deep for wading, and the boy swam on his side, keeping a grip on his horse's bridle. Soon the horse, too, was swimming.

But the current was strong. It seemed to the boy that he was being swept downstream much faster than he was getting across the river. The water carried tossing logs and broken tree limbs. The boy fought them off as he swam. At last, he and the horse could touch bottom again, and they made their way up the muddy bank.