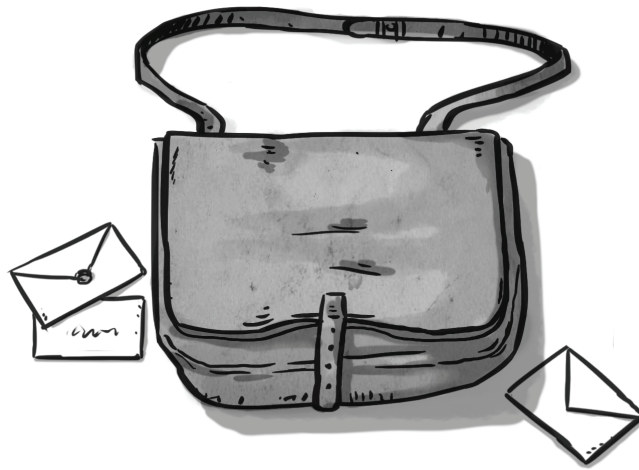


Adventures on the American Frontier

MAIL RIDERS

Part Seven

Pony Bob on the Long Trail



A Royal Fireworks Production

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In 1860, the Pony Express opened, stretching nearly 2,000 miles across the American West. Riders had to be tough to face the harsh conditions and the rough terrain they rode through, and there wasn't a tougher rider than Bob Haslam.

Like most of the riders, Bob was small and wiry. But he was as strong as most men twice his size, and the square set of his jaw gave a hint of the strength of his spirit, too. If any man could be counted on to get the mail through, it was Bob Haslam.



Before the mail line opened, the man in charge of the western end of the Pony Express, Mr. Bolivar Roberts, took a group of the boys who had been chosen to be riders out into the desert to help build stations. Bob was one of the boys.

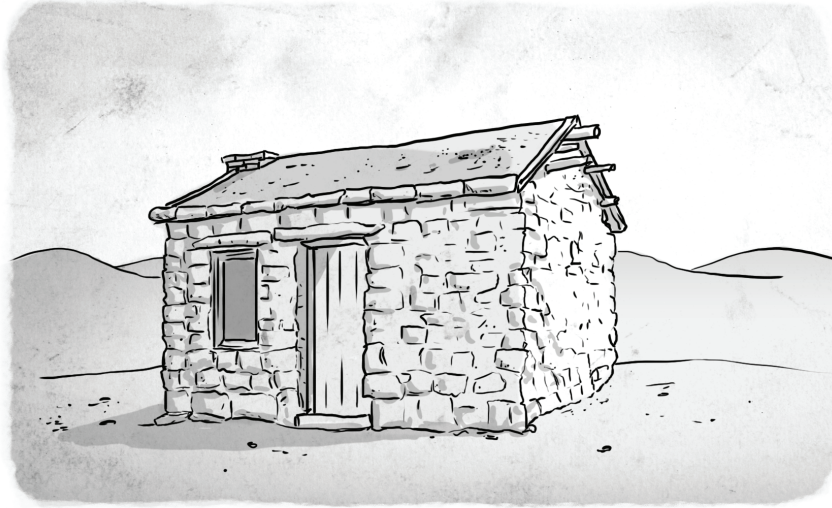
Finding something to build with wasn't easy in western Nevada. For some of the stations, the boys had to make "dobies," as they called the big sun-dried bricks that were used in the desert country. Good mud for the adobes was hard to find, too.



But Carson Sink always had mud along its shores, for its level seldom changed. A “sink” is a kind of lake that a river flows into but from which no rivers flow out. The river just disappears there.

The boys went to Carson Sink at the end of the Carson River, and Mr. Roberts showed them how to mix the mud with straw to make adobe bricks.

“Take off your boots, boys, and get in there,” he said. “The only way you can mix the mud for dobies is with your bare feet.”



But the mud had harsh chemicals from the earth in it, and at the end of the first day, Bob and the other boys had sore, swollen feet. At the end of a week, Mr. Roberts had to order larger boots for all of them because they couldn't push their feet into their old ones.

One of the boys said later, "Before that time, I wore size six boots. Ever since



then, number nines fit me better.”

Cutting and hauling rock to build small forts at two of the stations was the next job Mr. Roberts gave his riders. By the time the stations were finished, he knew the boys well. He knew which ones could stand the desert heat and which would stick to a job after the going got hard.

When it was time to tell the boys which runs would be theirs, Mr. Roberts called Bob Haslam in to see him. He showed the boy a map of the route.