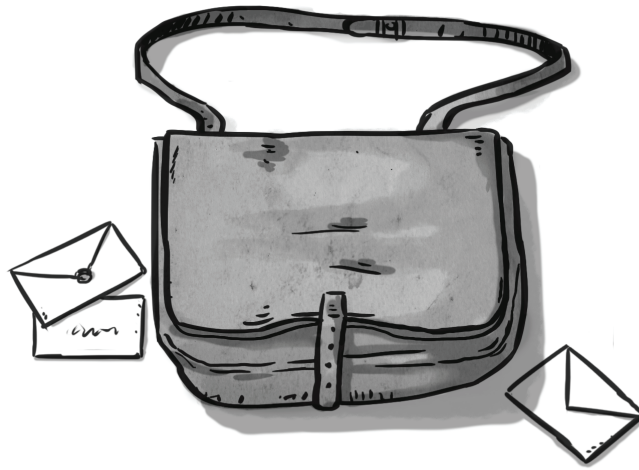


Adventures on the American Frontier

MAIL RIDERS

Part Five

The Pony Express Goes Through



A Royal Fireworks Production

Royal Fireworks Press
Unionville, New York



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This book features QR codes that link to audio of the book being narrated so that readers can follow along.

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Royal Fireworks Press
P.O. Box 399
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Unionville, NY 10988-0399
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website: rfwp.com



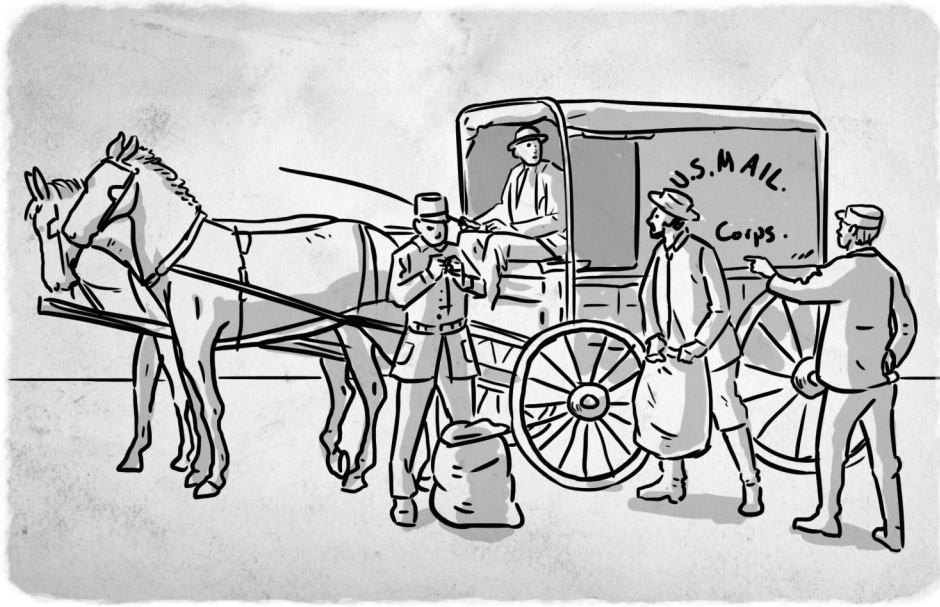
ISBN: 978-0-89824-743-5

Printed and bound in Unionville, New York, on acid-free paper using vegetable-based inks at the Royal Fireworks facility.

Publisher: Dr. T.M. Kemnitz
Editor: Jennifer Ault
Book and cover designer: Christopher Tice
Audio and narration: Christopher Tice



03Feb22



By the late 1850s, stage and mail routes stretched across America, bringing passengers and mail to other parts of the country faster than they had ever gone before. Even so, it took at least twenty-four days to get news from some areas. That was much better than when it had taken months, but it was still not fast enough.



In the East, telegraph wires were being put up, carrying messages as fast as the operators could click them out with a telegraph key. But it would take a long time to string telegraph wires all the way to California.

Early in 1859, William Russell, of the freighting company Russell, Majors and Waddell, brought news to his partners.

“I’ve signed the papers, gentlemen,” Mr. Russell said. “Soon Russell, Majors and Waddell will be running a Pony Express



all the way from St. Joseph, Missouri, to California!”

Alexander Majors wasn't sure this was a good idea. “Have you figured out how much it will cost?” he asked. “We have stations as far as Salt Lake City, but there's hardly a building between there and California. Have you thought of how little mail a rider could carry and compared it with how many horses we would have to buy and care for and how many men we would have to pay?”

“People will pay as much as five dollars to send a letter if it’s important,” said Mr. Russell. His eyes were bright with his dream of a living chain of mail carriers. “You know yourself, Alec, that the Pony Express has been tried—and that it works on short runs. Wells Fargo has a number of short-run pony lines in the West right now. Why wouldn’t it work just as well on a long, cross-country run?”

“A short line, yes,” said Mr. Majors, “but a 2,000-mile relay run is a different



matter. It seems risky.”

Mr. Majors had managed a freighting company to the west for many years and had made money doing it. When he joined Mr. Russell and Mr. Waddell in business, they ran the Central Overland Stage, too. But he didn't think the Pony Express would pay off.

Just the same, the company went ahead with the plan. Soon they were hiring men and building stations. They bought thousands of the toughest, fastest western broncos.