

# THE PONY EXPRESS

## Introduction

The Pony Express is perhaps the most legendary of all postal enterprises. The romantic image of a solitary Pony Express rider galloping across long stretches of desolate mountain trails is not far from the reality faced by the rugged riders who carried their leather *mochilas* of mail.

Behind the popular romantic image lies the fact that the Pony Express was a business, albeit an unprofitable one. It was conceived as a fast-run mail service over the so-called Central Route by William H. Russell, together with his partners in the express business, Alexander Majors and William Waddell, who operated the Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company. They hoped to demonstrate that mail could be carried over the Central Route, in order to secure a lucrative government mail contract for daily stagecoach service over the same route.

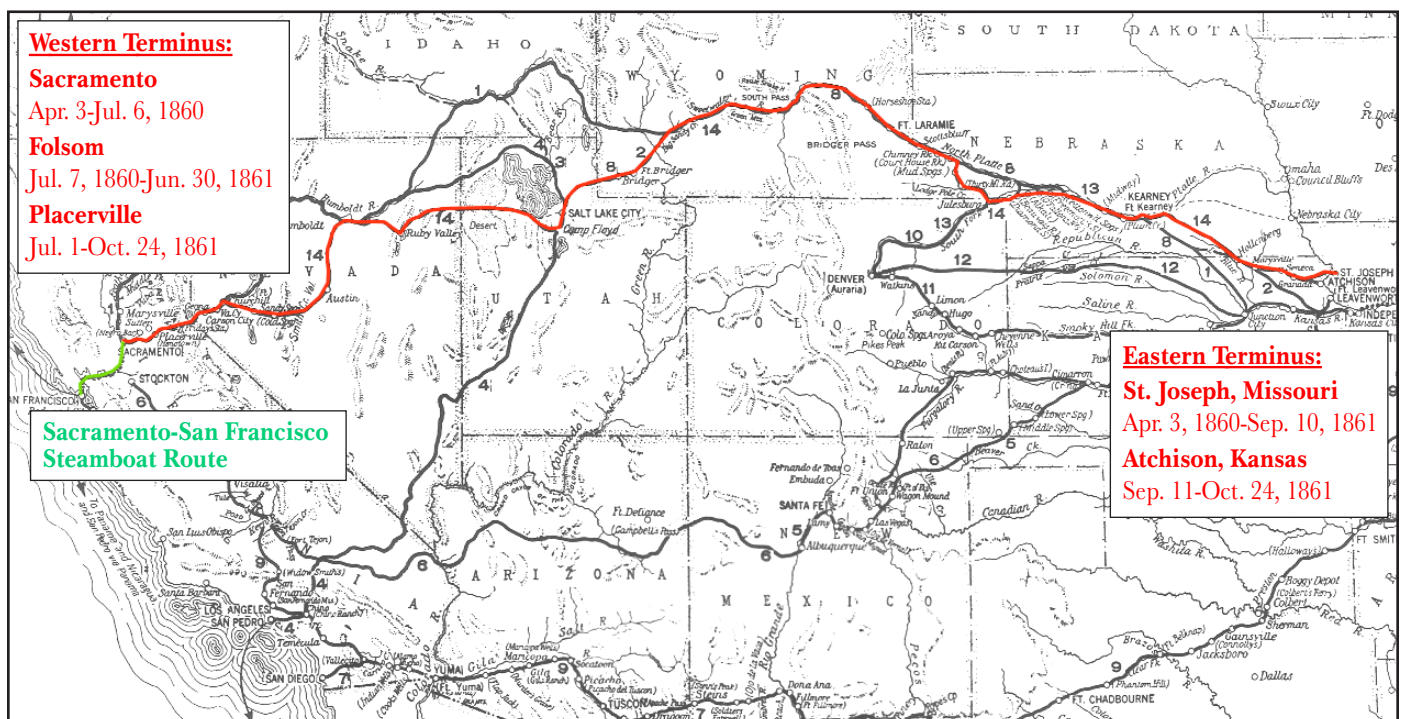
Doomed by the transcontinental telegraph's inexorable path toward completion, the Pony Express lasted less than nineteen months, from April 3, 1860, to October 24, 1861.

As a business enterprise, the Pony Express required a significant investment in start-up costs and maintenance to ensure that relays of horse riders could reliably transport mail between California and the eastern terminus at St. Joseph, Missouri, in approximately ten days.

Financial adversity eventually forced the Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Co. to join with the Overland Mail Co. and Wells Fargo & Co. to run the Pony Express. They obtained a government contract for the route, effective April 1, 1861, but completion of the telegraph line on October 24 prompted the immediate termination of the Pony Express.

Recent scholarship has defined three operational phases and four distinct rate periods for The Pony Express. In this exhibit the transcontinental Pony Express covers are organized by rate period, followed by the Virginia City Pony Express, and ending with examples of stamps and covers that depict horse-powered modes of transportation, which were used in proximity to the Pony Express.

## 1860-61 Transcontinental Pony Express Route



Trip numbers and census figures used in this exhibit are quoted from *The Pony Express* (Walske, Kramer, Frajola)

**First Rate Period—\$5.00 per half-ounce**

*EASTBOUND*

Eastbound: April 3 thru August 14, 1860

Westbound: April 3 thru July 30, 1860



Photo

**First Day of The Pony Express**

Trip ET-1: *dep.* San Francisco 4/3/1860—*arr.* St. Joseph 4/13/1860

Paste-up with regular envelope addressed to Senator Milton S. Latham in Washington D.C.

The inaugural Pony Express trip took place on April 3, 1860, amid great fanfare. A messenger carrying the bag of mail departed from the Alta Telegraph office (where the Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Company was located) in San Francisco at 4:00 p.m. and boarded the steamer *New World* for the short trip up the Sacramento river to Sacramento. From there a horse and rider embarked on the first leg of the journey. The mail reached St. Joseph ten days later, on April 13.

**One of three recorded April 3, 1860, first day covers (two eastbound, one westbound).**

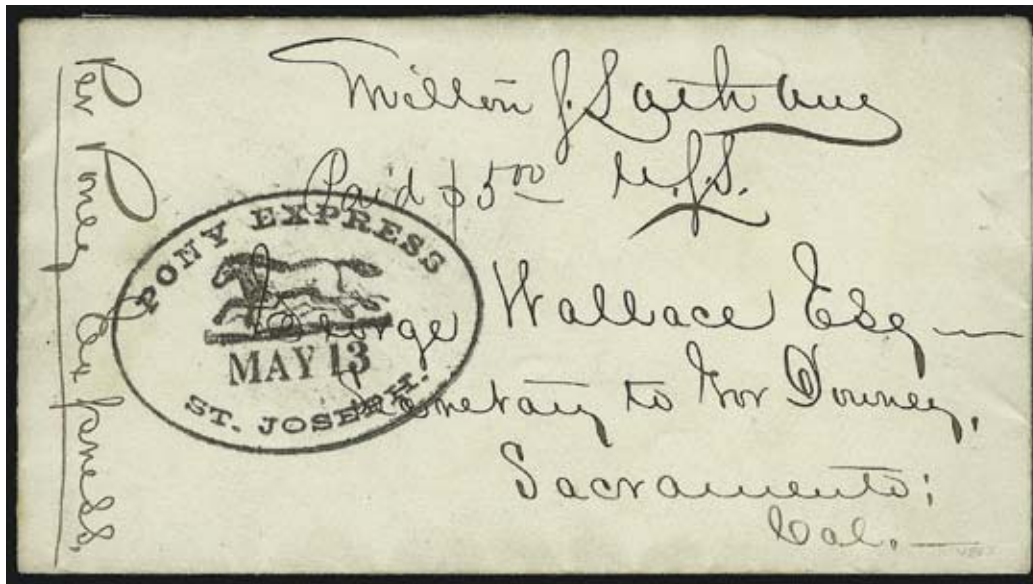
**One of eight recorded COPEC franks (two on 3c entires, six on 10c).**

**First Rate Period—\$5.00 per half-ounce**

WESTBOUND

Eastbound: April 3 thru August 14, 1860

Westbound: April 3 thru July 30, 1860



**Free Franked by Milton S. Latham, U.S. Senator from California**

Trip WT-7: *dep.* St. Joseph 5/13/1860—*arr.* Sacramento 5/22/1860

Senator Milton S. Latham went to California in 1850 and was elected to Congress on the 1852 Democratic ticket. After his term expired, he declined to run for reelection and served as collector for the port of San Francisco. In 1859 he was elected governor, but he resigned almost immediately to become a U.S. senator. Latham served until 1863, during which time he was a strong supporter of Russell, Majors and Waddell and their effort to secure the contract for the Central Route. Senator Latham was among the few individuals later permitted to send Pony Express mail free of charge. However, in this case he paid the \$5.00 express fee (his frank applied to U.S. postage).

**One of six recorded Pony express covers signed by Senator Latham.  
This is the only one on which the express fee was charged.**

Senator Latham's letter includes interesting comments on the Democratic Convention in Charleston:

"...I am in no way responsible for the acts of our Delegates at Charleston. They never consulted me in any manner & at C. seem to have been led by Austin Smith who was as fiery as the extreme Southerner. . .Don't show this letter to anyone. You may rely upon it, the Democracy are hopelessly split forever. There are four candidates in the field & the Republicans have every prospect of success."



**First Rate Period—\$5.00 per half-ounce**

*EASTBOUND*

Eastbound: April 3 thru August 14, 1860

Westbound: April 3 thru July 30, 1860



Photo

**The Carmine Pony**

Trip ET-19: *dep.* San Francisco 8/4/1860—*arr.* St. Joseph 8/16/1860 (ms. “1AM” arrival time)

The St. Joseph Running Pony handstamp was normally struck in black, but ten covers are recorded in the distinctive Carmine color. Dated in August and September 1860, all but two are struck on the backs of covers. The “U.S.A.” designation in the address and “To be forwarded” instructions make it almost certain that this cover originated outside the United States, probably from a travelling member of the Coffin family, some of whom were merchant sea captains. This cover was sent from San Francisco on August 4, 1860, after the new Pony Express rate of \$2.50 per quarter-ounce was announced. Because news of the rate change took approximately two weeks to reach the West Coast, it was not implemented in San Francisco until the August 15 eastbound trip.

**One of ten recorded examples of the St. Joseph Running Pony handstamp in carmine.  
Six are eastbound, four westbound.**

**Second Rate Period—\$2.50 per quarter-ounce**

*EASTBOUND*

Eastbound: August 15, 1860, thru April 14, 1861

Westbound: July 31, 1860, thru March 31, 1861



Photo

**Postage Prepaid with 12c 1859 Issue**

Trip ET-50: *dep.* San Francisco 11/21/1860—*arr.* St. Joseph 12/3/1860

The three recorded Pony Express covers with a 12c stamp instead of a 10c were mailed from San Francisco on November 7, 10 and 21. They probably owe their existence to a temporary shortage of 10c stamps in the San Francisco Pony Express office.

**One of three recorded examples of the 12c 1859 on Pony Express mail.**

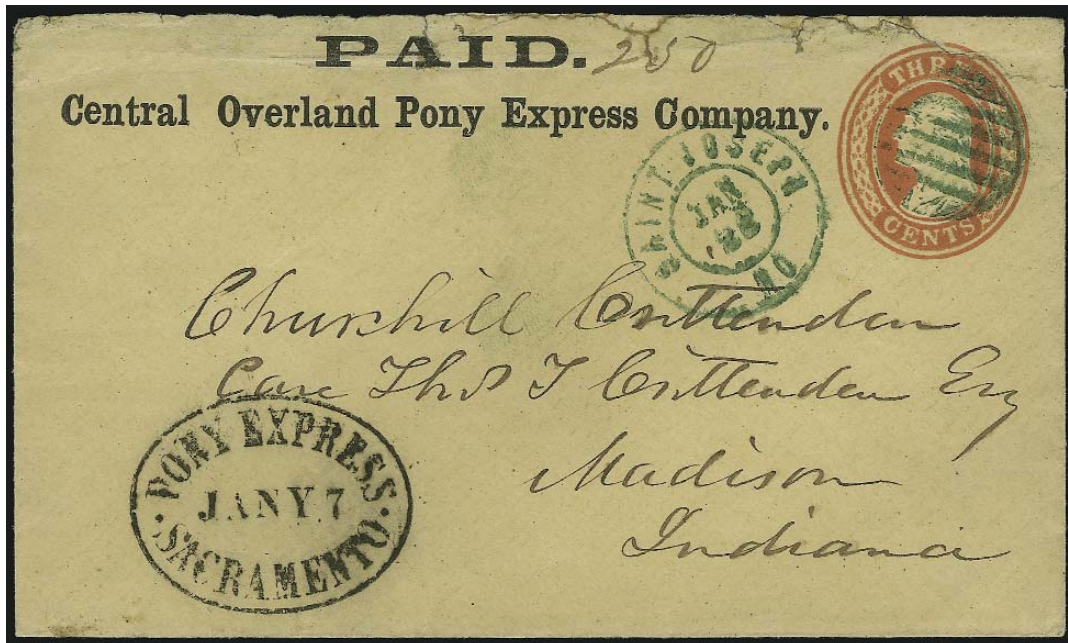


**Second Rate Period—\$2.50 per quarter-ounce**

*EASTBOUND*

Eastbound: August 15, 1860, thru April 14, 1861

Westbound: July 31, 1860, thru March 31, 1861



**“Paid. Central Overland Pony Express Company.” Frank**

Trip ET-63: *dep.* San Francisco 1/5/1860—*arr.* St. Joseph 1/22/1860

Manuscript “2.50” rate after “Paid”

This was mailed from and postmarked at Sacramento on January 7, two days into the Pony trip that left from San Francisco on January 5, 1861. The 3c entire underpays the required 10c rate.

**One of eight recorded COPEC franks (two on 3c entires, six on 10c).**

**Also the earliest use of the Sacramento office oval (and the only strike in black).**



**Combination of San Francisco Running Pony and COCPP Oval Datestamps**

Trip ET-43: *dep.* San Francisco 10/27/1860—*arr.* St. Joseph 11/8/1860

**Second Rate Period—\$2.50 per quarter-ounce**

WESTBOUND

Eastbound: August 15, 1860, thru April 14, 1861

Westbound: July 31, 1860, thru March 31, 1861



**“California Pony Express Paid” Red Oval Applied at New York City**

Trip WT-41: *dep.* St. Joseph 10/4/1860—*arr.* San Francisco 10/14/1860

The red oval handstamp was applied on westbound mail by the New York City agent from early June to early November 1860. The St. Joseph oval has the “OCT” over “SEP” date correction.

**One of twelve recorded examples of the New York agent’s red oval handstamp.**



**Company Mail Free Franked by William H. Russell (President) to J. E. Bromley**

Trip WT-55: *dep.* St. Joseph 11/22/1860—*arr.* San Francisco 12/4/1860

James E. Bromley was the Division Superintendent for the route between Salt Lake City eastward to Elkhorn in Wyoming. Addressed to South Pass (Bromley’s home was at Weber Station).

**One of three recorded Pony express covers franked by William H. Russell.**



**Second Rate Period—\$2.50 per quarter-ounce**

WESTBOUND

Eastbound: August 15, 1860, thru April 14, 1861

Westbound: July 31, 1860, thru March 31, 1861



**Free Franked by Isaac I. Stevens, Territorial Delegate from Washington**

Trip WT-59: *dep.* St. Joseph 12/6/1860—*arr.* San Francisco 12/20/1860

U.S. postage free; “Paid J.T.C. 5.00” double rate; entered U.S. mails at San Francisco

According to Appleton’s, Major General Isaac I. Stevens (1818-62) served two terms as Washington’s first territorial delegate to Congress from December 1857 to March 1861. Stevens had a long career as a public servant, including service in the Mexican War and in the U.S. Coastal Survey office. In 1853 he was appointed governor of Washington Territory, in which capacity he conducted explorations for the northern route of the Pacific Railroad. During this period he was also superintendent of Indian affairs and negotiated a number of significant treaties with Native Americans in Washington Territory. In 1856



St. Joseph Running Pony backstamp

Stevens became involved in a bloody confrontation with Native American tribes who rebelled against the white settlers. After suppressing the rebellion and slaying the tribal chiefs, Stevens arrested whites alleged to have sympathized with the Indians. When a territorial judge, Chief Justice Edward Landers, issued the writ of habeas corpus, Stevens declared two counties under martial law and had Landers arrested and held prisoner until the end of the war. Soon after, Stevens joined Congress and succeeded in vindicating his treaties and actions in the Indian war. With the outbreak of the Civil War, Stevens became an officer in the Federal army. He was killed at the battle of Chantilly in September 1862.

**One of two recorded examples of Isaac Stevens’ free frank on Pony Express mail.**

Original letter datelined “Washington City November 27, 1860”, regarding recipient’s appointment to the Indian Service:

“Col. Simmons has been removed from the Indian Agency and you have been appointed in his place. The commission will go out next steamer. . . I shall send this letter by Pony Express, so that you may have an early notice of the appointment. And I want you to write me very fully by Pony Express as to the Indian Service by the Sound.”



**Third Rate Period—\$2.00 per half-ounce**

*EASTBOUND*

Eastbound: April 15 thru June 30, 1861

Westbound: April 1 thru June 30, 1861



**Way Mail from Fort Bridger, Utah Territory, to Washington D.C.**

Trip ET-109: *dep.* San Francisco 6/15/1861—*arr.* St. Joseph 6/27/1861

Posted from Fort Bridger on June 20, 1861

10c Type V affixed over "7 Paid" (stamp probably applied at St. Joseph office)

Fort Bridger was a Pony Express station located in Division III, about 120 miles east of Salt Lake City. It was established in 1843 by famed mountain man Jim Bridger and a partner, Louis Vasquez, on Black's Fork of the Green River in the southwest corner of what is now Wyoming. It was for many years an important emigrant supply stop and Indian trading post along the Oregon Trail. In 1853 the Mormons took control of the fort after trying to arrest Bridger for selling gunpowder to the Indians — this event led to a dispute over ownership that lasted many years. In 1857, with the outbreak of the Mormon War, the fort was abandoned and burned by the Mormons. In the summer of 1858, Fort Bridger was occupied by United States troops under the command of Albert Sydney Johnston, 2nd U.S. Cavalry. Fort Bridger postal markings from this early period carry the "U.T." Utah Territory designation. In 1861 most of the troops headed east to participate in the Civil War.

**One of three recorded Pony Express covers from Utah Territory (two from Fort Bridger).**

**Third Rate Period—\$2.00 per half-ounce**

Eastbound: April 15 thru June 30, 1861

Westbound: April 1 thru June 30, 1861

WELLS, FARGO & CO.

\$2.00 RED

\$4.00 GREEN

**Wells, Fargo & Co. First Issue Pony Express Stamps**

After the Overland Mail Co. took control of the Pony Express, \$2.00 Red and \$4.00 Green stamps were issued by Wells, Fargo & Co. (their agents) for the new \$2.00 per half-ounce rate, effective April 1, 1861. The earliest documented use of the new stamps is a \$2.00 from Placerville on April 28, 1861. The stamps were printed from a lithographic stone of 20 subjects (5 x 4). They are found only on eastbound Pony Express mail.

**\$2.00 Red**

**\$4.00 Green**



Position 13



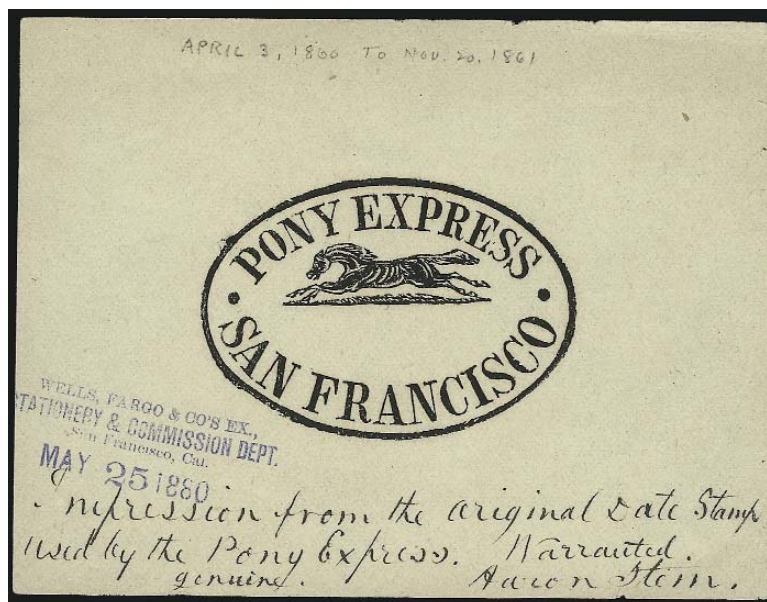
Position 8



Position 6

Block of four with part original gum—Positions 14-15/19-20

**The only recorded block of the \$4.00 Green.**



Impression from original San Francisco "Running Pony" oval handstamp struck in 1880 at the Wells, Fargo & Co. office in San Francisco.

**Third Rate Period—\$2.00 per half-ounce**

Eastbound: April 15 thru June 30, 1861

Westbound: April 1 thru June 30, 1861

WELLS, FARGO & CO.

\$2.00 RED



**10c Nesbitt Entire with Wells, Fargo & Co. Red Frank  
and Sacramento Double Circle**

Trip ET-99: *dep.* San Francisco 5/11/1861—*arr.* St. Joseph 5/23/1861

Posted at Sacramento on May 12, 1861

Beginning with the Third Rate Period, when Wells, Fargo & Co. became involved with the operation of the Pony Express, examples of their franked entire (red or black) can be found sent by Pony Express.

**The only recorded Pony Express cover with the Sacramento double-circle datestamp.  
Also one of only four 10c Nesbitt entires with the red frank carried by Pony Express.**



**Third Rate Period—\$2.00 per half-ounce**

Eastbound: April 15 thru June 30, 1861

Westbound: April 1 thru June 30, 1861

WELLS, FARGO & CO.

\$2.00 RED



**Blue “Paid” in Oval Applied by Wells, Fargo & Co.**

Trip ET-105: *dep.* San Francisco 6/1/1861—*arr.* St. Joseph 6/13/1861



**Without Blue “Paid” in Oval**

Trip ET-111: *dep.* San Francisco 6/22/1861—*arr.* St. Joseph 7/4/1861

The blue “Paid” in oval is found on some Pony Express covers, but not others (as shown above). It was applied by Wells, Fargo & Co., but its purpose is not known.

**Fourth Rate Period—\$1.00 per half-ounce**

*WELLS, FARGO & CO.*

**Official United States Mail Contractor**

*\$1.00 RED*

Eastbound: July 1 thru October 23, 1861

*\$2.00 GREEN*

Westbound: July 1 thru October 24, 1861

*\$4.00 BLACK*

**Wells, Fargo & Co. Second Issue Pony Express Stamps**

Effective July 1, 1861, the Overland Mail Co. was granted a government contract to carry mail over the Central Route and 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...” (P.O. Order of Mar. 12, 1861). A new set of stamps was issued by the western office of Wells, Fargo & Co. The \$1.00 Red (single rate) was printed from a new lithographic stone of 40 subjects (two panes of 20 each, 4 x 5). The \$2.00 and \$4.00 were printed in new colors, Green and Black, from the same stones used to print the First Issue. The stamps were available for the first Pony Express trip under the new government contract (from San Francisco on July 3, 1861).



**Broken Leg**—Position 9R



Position 17



Position 2



Position 16L



Position 12



Block of four  
Positions 1-2/6-7



Block of six  
Positions 6-7/16-17

Block of six  
Positions 6-7/16-17





**Fourth Rate Period—\$1.00 per half-ounce  
Official United States Mail Contractor**

Eastbound: July 1 thru October 23, 1861

Westbound: July 1 thru October 24, 1861

WELLS, FARGO & CO.

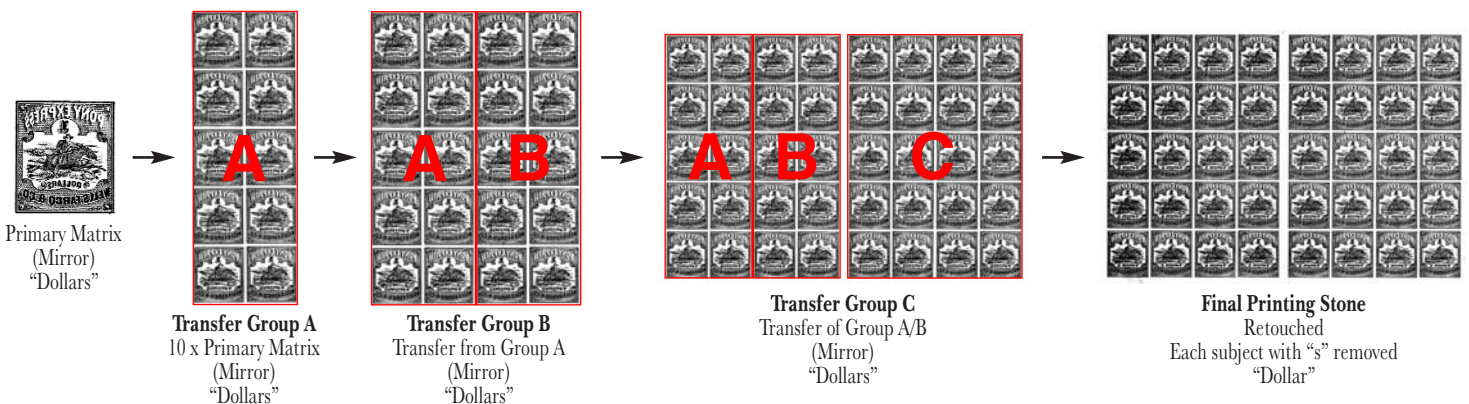
\$1.00 RED



**\$1.00 Red—Complete Sheet of 40**

Printed from a lithographic stone of 40 subjects arranged in two panes (4 x 5 each)

The lithographic stone was produced in a series of steps involving a Primary Matrix and intermediate transfers that were “built up” into the stone of 40 subjects. The diagram below shows the steps.





**Fourth Rate Period—\$1.00 per half-ounce  
Official United States Mail Contractor**

Eastbound: July 1 thru October 23, 1861

Westbound: July 1 thru October 24, 1861

*WELLS, FARGO & CO.*

*\$2.00 GREEN*



**\$2.00 Green—Reconstructed Pane**

Printed from a lithographic stone of 20 subjects (5 x 4)

The same lithographic stone was used to print the two different colors of the \$2.00. This reconstruction of the 20-subject pane comprises 23 unused stamps, including one block of six and three blocks of four.

**Fourth Rate Period—\$1.00 per half-ounce  
Official United States Mail Contractor**

Eastbound: July 1 thru October 23, 1861

Westbound: July 1 thru October 24, 1861

*WELLS, FARGO & CO.*

*\$4.00 BLACK*



**\$4.00 Black—Reconstructed Pane**

Printed from a lithographic stone of 20 subjects (5 x 4)

The same lithographic stone was used to print the two different colors of the \$4.00. This reconstruction of the 20-subject pane includes two blocks of four.



**Fourth Rate Period—\$1.00 per half-ounce  
Official United States Mail Contractor**

Eastbound: July 1 thru October 23, 1861  
Westbound: July 1 thru October 24, 1861

WELLS, FARGO & CO.  
\$1.00 RED



**First Pony Express Trip Under Government Contract  
and Earliest Possible Use of Second Issue**

Trip ET-114: *dep.* San Francisco 7/3/1861—*arr.* St. Joseph 7/(15?)/1861

One other cover is recorded for this trip, posted at Folsom and datestamped at Sacramento on July 4. Neither cover has a St. Joseph postmark (grid or pen cancels only).



**Obsolete Freeman & Co. Frank Overprinted with Wells, Fargo & Co. Red Frank**  
Trip ET-119: *dep.* San Francisco 7/20/1861—*arr.* St. Joseph 8/1/1861

Freeman & Co. was purchased by Wells, Fargo & Co. in 1860. Eight overprinted entires are recorded.



**Fourth Rate Period—\$1.00 per half-ounce  
Official United States Mail Contractor**

WELLS, FARGO & CO.  
\$1.00 RED

Eastbound: July 1 thru October 23, 1861  
Westbound: July 1 thru October 24, 1861



**Pony Express Stamp Affixed Over Blue “Paid” Applied by Wells, Fargo & Co.**  
Trip ET-119: *dep.* San Francisco 7/20/1861—*arr.* St. Joseph 8/1/1861



**Pony Express and 35c Prussian Closed Mail Rate to Switzerland**  
Trip ET-133: *dep.* San Francisco 9/7/1861—*arr.* St. Joseph 9/(20?)/1861  
New York to Queenston by Cunard *Africa* (*dep.* 9/25/1861, *arr.* 10/5/1861)  
Addressed to Maggia, Ticino, Switzerland (*arr.* Locarno 10/31/1861)  
**One of six recorded Pony Express covers addressed to foreign destinations.  
This is the only cover to Switzerland and one of four with U.S. adhesive stamps.**

**Fourth Rate Period—\$1.00 per half-ounce**  
**Official United States Mail Contractor**

Eastbound: July 1 thru October 23, 1861

Westbound: July 1 thru October 24, 1861

WELLS, FARGO & CO.

\$1.00 RED



**Posted at Sacramento (September 1, 1861)**

Trip ET-131: *dep.* San Francisco 8/31/1861—*arr.* St. Joseph 9/14/1861



**Eastern Terminus Moved to Atchison, Kansas**

Trip ET-140: *dep.* San Francisco 10/2/1861—*arr.* Atchison 10/16/1861

The eastern terminus was moved to Atchison in September 1861 after the new bridge allowed the St. Joseph & Atchison Railroad line to run trains over the Missouri River and Confederate raids in central Missouri raised security concerns. Pony Express covers from September 11 on (25 recorded) were post-marked at Atchison.



**Fourth Rate Period—\$1.00 per half-ounce  
Official United States Mail Contractor**

Eastbound: July 1 thru October 23, 1861

Westbound: July 1 thru October 24, 1861

WELLS, FARGO & CO.

\$4.00 BLACK



Photo

**\$4.00 Black on U.S. Consulate Cover from Hawaii to Washington D.C.**

Trip ET-125: *dep.* San Francisco 8/10/1861—*arr.* St. Joseph 8/22/1861

This contained documents from the U.S. consul in Honolulu to the fifth auditor of the U.S. Treasury in Washington D.C. It has a mate with the same postal markings applied on the same days, also bearing the \$4.00 Black. Both have the backstamp of McRuer & Merrill, who are listed in the 1861 San Francisco directory: "McRuer (D.) Co. & Merrill (John C.), auction, shipping, and commission merchants, agents Honolulu packets, 117 and 119 California, dwl 18 Laurel Place."

**One of two recorded covers bearing the \$4.00 Black Pony Express stamp.**

**Fourth Rate Period—\$1.00 per half-ounce  
Official United States Mail Contractor**

Eastbound: July 1 thru October 23, 1861

Westbound: July 1 thru October 24, 1861

WELLS, FARGO & CO.

\$1.00 GARTER

**Wells, Fargo & Co. \$1.00 “Garter” for Westbound Pony Express Mail**

Prior to July 1, 1861, stamps were never used to prepay the express fees on westbound Pony Express mail. Following the award of the government contract (effective July 1, 1861), Wells, Fargo & Co. issued a \$1.00 adhesive stamp for use on mail through its East Coast offices. Unlike the appropriately representative Horse and Rider design, the new \$1.00 stamp earned the nickname “Garter” for its peculiar shield and frame design. For more than 130 years, the Garter issue was always attributed to Britton & Rey, the San Francisco lithographers who printed the First and Second Issues. However, in the late 1990’s, an example surfaced with the imprint of New York printer, George F. Nesbitt, which proved beyond question the printer’s true identity. The stamps were lithographed from a printing stone of 20 subjects, arranged 5 across by 4 high with the imprint below Position 23.



Strip of three with original gum and corner sheet margins—Positions 1-3

**The only multiple of the issued \$1.00 Garter stamp.**



Imprint “G. F. Nesbitt & Co. N.Y.”  
Position 23

**The only recorded \$1.00 Garter stamp with imprint.**



Proof blocks on card marked “Sample”—  
Positions 12-13/17-18 and 14-15/19-20

**Only three proof blocks are recorded.**



The \$1.00 Garter was usually left uncanceled. Pen-canceled examples are unusual.

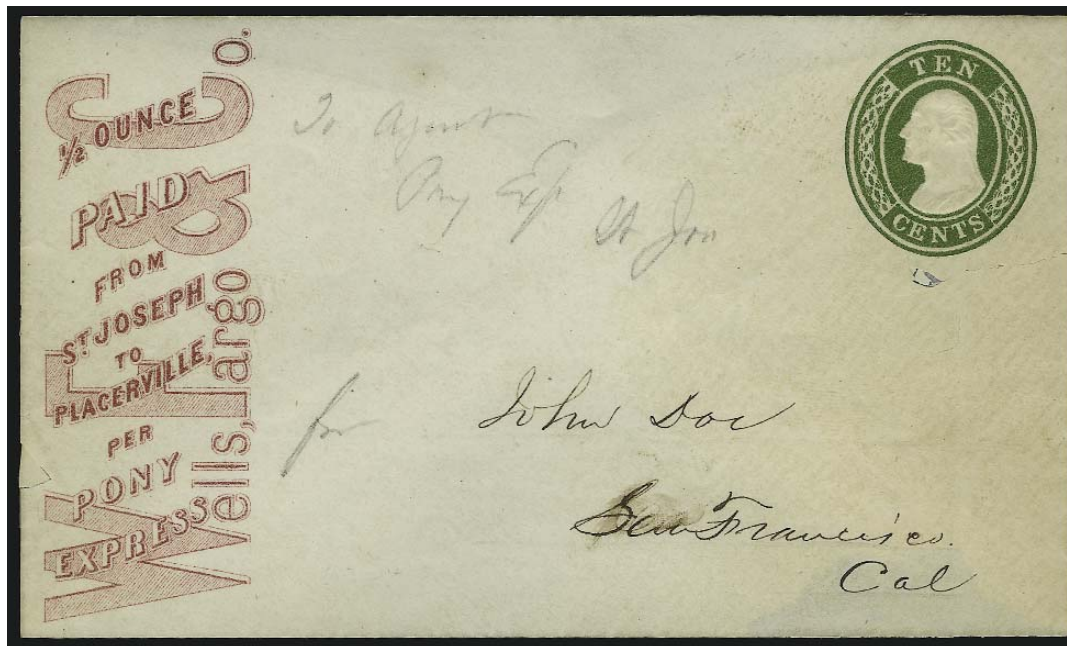


**Fourth Rate Period—\$1.00 per half-ounce  
Official United States Mail Contractor**

Eastbound: July 1 thru October 23, 1861

Westbound: July 1 thru October 24, 1861

WELLS, FARGO & CO.  
\$1.00 WESTBOUND FRANK



**“Sample Envelope” Submitted by Overland Mail Co. to Postmaster General Blair for Approval Prior to July 1, 1861, Government Contract Inauguration Date**

The \$1.00 entire and \$1.00 Garter were needed by Wells, Fargo & Co.’s eastern offices when the Pony Express entered its official U.S. government mail contract period on July 1, 1861. The 1861 10c “Pumpkin” entire with the Type II frank was ordered from George F. Nesbitt & Co. (New York) by the Overland Mail Co. after they obtained approval for the design and imprint from the Postmaster General’s office. The earliest recorded usage is August 14, 1861. This 10c Nesbitt entire with the Type I East-to-West red frank (\$2.00 rate period) was submitted to Postmaster General Montgomery Blair along with a transmittal letter dated June 21, 1861:

“We beg to enclose a sample envelope which we wish to use for Pony Express. You will see it has a Govt. 10c Stamp, and also the stamp of our agents Wells F & Co. upon it, and is directed  
To Agent of Pony Express  
St. Joseph Mo.  
For John Doe  
San Francisco  
California.  
Now, the object of the present is to ask of the Department that such envelope may be mailed here, delivered to Pony Express Agent at St. Joseph, and by Pony Express mailed again at Placerville, for its destination, without an additional stamp.  
If this is consistent with your reading of the law, will thank you to issue the proper order to aid us in carrying out such rule.  
As the service is to commence on 1st July, we would beg for an early reply to this.  
[Signed Frederick Cook, Treasurer, Overland Mail Company].”

PMG Blair’s office docketed the letter “F. Cook Treasurer, Overland Mail Co., June 21, 1861, Answered June 22 ‘61”.

The Cook letter is in the same hand as the address on this essay entire. This is the “sample envelope” submitted to the Postmaster General for approval and to help in clarifying the procedure for East-to-West Pony Express mail during the new contract period. The actual Type II \$1.00 frank was modified slightly with the deletion of the comma after “Placerville”, and it was printed on envelopes with the new 10c “Pumpkin” design. Nesbitt was asked to produce envelopes on a thinner, tougher paper than regular stamped envelopes, presumably to reduce weight for the riders.

**Fourth Rate Period—\$1.00 per half-ounce  
Official United States Mail Contractor**

Eastbound: July 1 thru October 23, 1861

Westbound: July 1 thru October 24, 1861

WELLS, FARGO & CO.  
\$1.00 WESTBOUND FRANK



**Type II Westbound Frank from Philadelphia**

Trip WT-136: dep. St. Joseph 9/1/1861—arr. San Francisco 9/13/1861

**One of two recorded Pony Express covers from Philadelphia.  
One of twenty recorded used Type II franked entires.**



**Type II Westbound Frank from New York**

Posted from New York 10/23/1861; arrived in St. Joseph after last Pony Express trip



**Fourth Rate Period—\$1.00 per half-ounce  
Official United States Mail Contractor**

Eastbound: July 1 thru October 23, 1861

Westbound: July 1 thru October 24, 1861

WELLS, FARGO & CO.

\$1.00 GARTER

\$1.00 WESTBOUND FRANK



**\$1.00 Garter Stamp Used with Type II Westbound Frank from New York**

Trip WT-135: *dep.* St. Joseph 8/29/1861—*arr.* San Francisco 9/10/1861

This Pony Express cover weighed more than the half-ounce limit and required the 10c U.S. adhesive (1859 Issue, Type V) and \$1.00 Garter in addition to the 10c embossed stamp and Type II frank.

**One of four recorded \$1.00 Garter covers.**

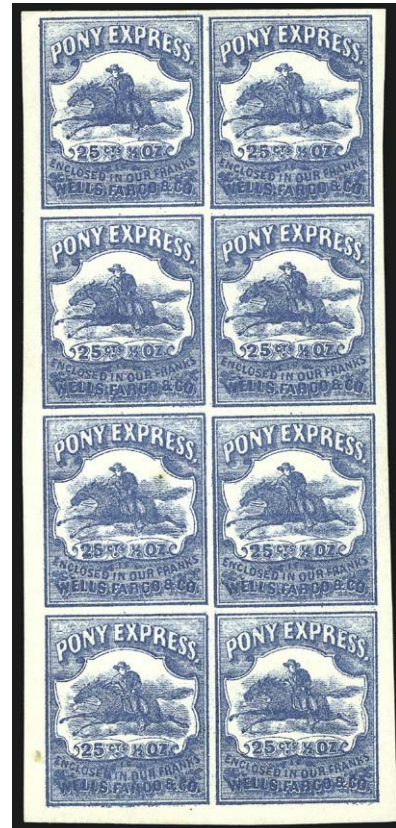
**This is the earliest recorded use of the \$1.00 Garter stamp  
and the only known combination with the 1857-60 Issue.**

## 1862-65 Virginia City Pony Express

In 1859 two miners discovered gold at the head of Six-Mile Canyon in what was then Utah Territory. Another miner, Henry Comstock, convinced them that he held the original claim, thus establishing the legendary Comstock Lode, one of the richest deposits of gold and silver ore ever found. The “Rush to Washoe” led to the formation of Nevada Territory in 1861 and turned “Old Virginnny Town” into the boom town of Virginia City. On August 11, 1862, Wells, Fargo & Co. inaugurated a “Pony Express to Washoe” with 24-hour service between San Francisco and Virginia City, and they issued a series of stamps for the express rates. The actual Pony route was between Placerville and Virginia City (San Francisco-Sacramento by boat and Sacramento-Placerville by rail). The original fee of 10c per half-ounce, for which the Brown stamp was issued, was increased to 25c per half-ounce before February 1863. A new 25c Blue stamp was issued, followed by the same value in Red about fourteen months later. A contemporary letter gives the last day of the Virginia City Pony Express as March 2, 1865.



### Virginia City Pony Express Issues



Periods of use for different denominations and colors: **10c Brown**, August 11, 1862, to January 1863; **25c Blue**, February 1863 to March 1864; and **25c Red**, March 1864 to March 1865. All three issues were printed from lithographic stones of 40 subjects arranged in four groups of ten (2 x 5).

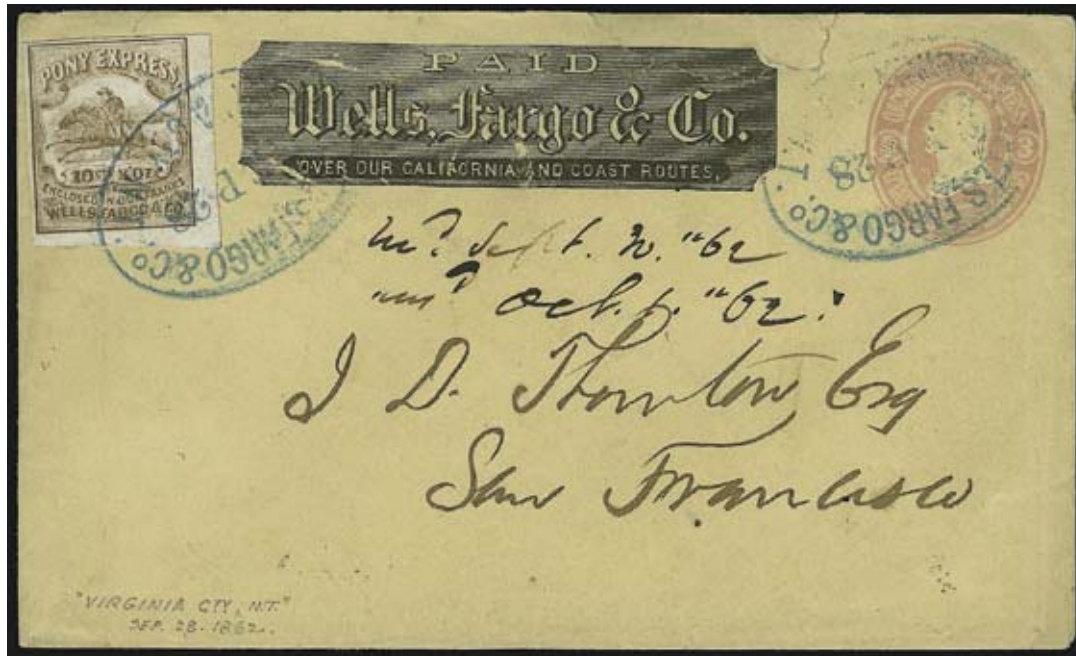




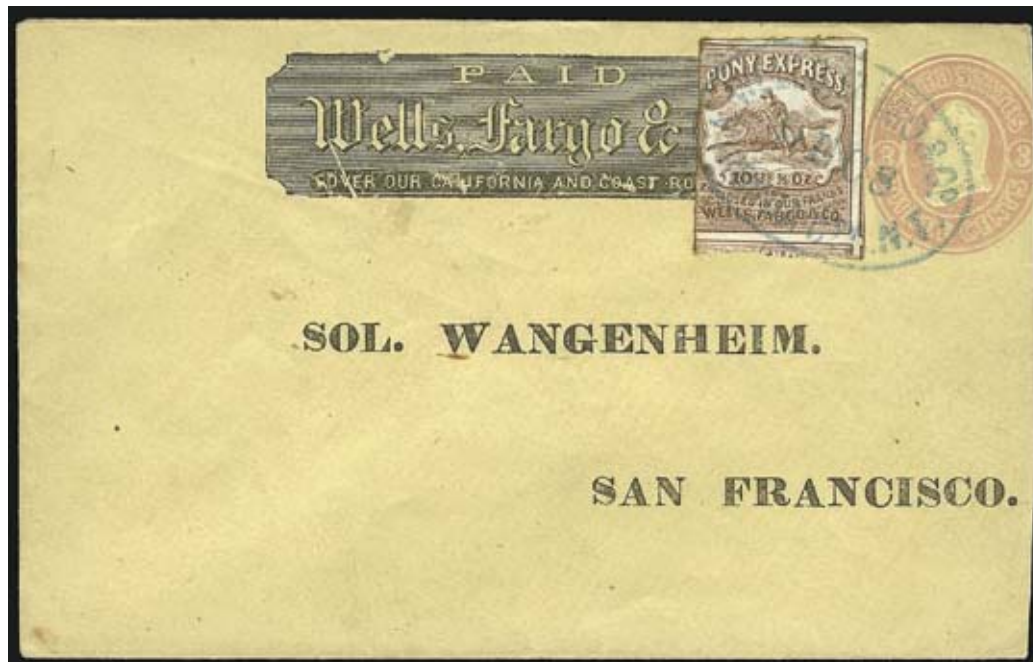
**25c Red—Complete Sheet of 40**

Printed from a lithographic stone of 40 subjects arranged in four groups of ten (2 x 5)

**One of three recorded sheets of the 25c Red.**



Virginia City N.T. to San Francisco  
September 28, 1862



Virginia City N.T. to San Francisco  
December 8, 1862





**Aurora N.T. to San Francisco**

Date unknown (Aurora office did not use a datestamp)



**Aurora N.T. to San Francisco**

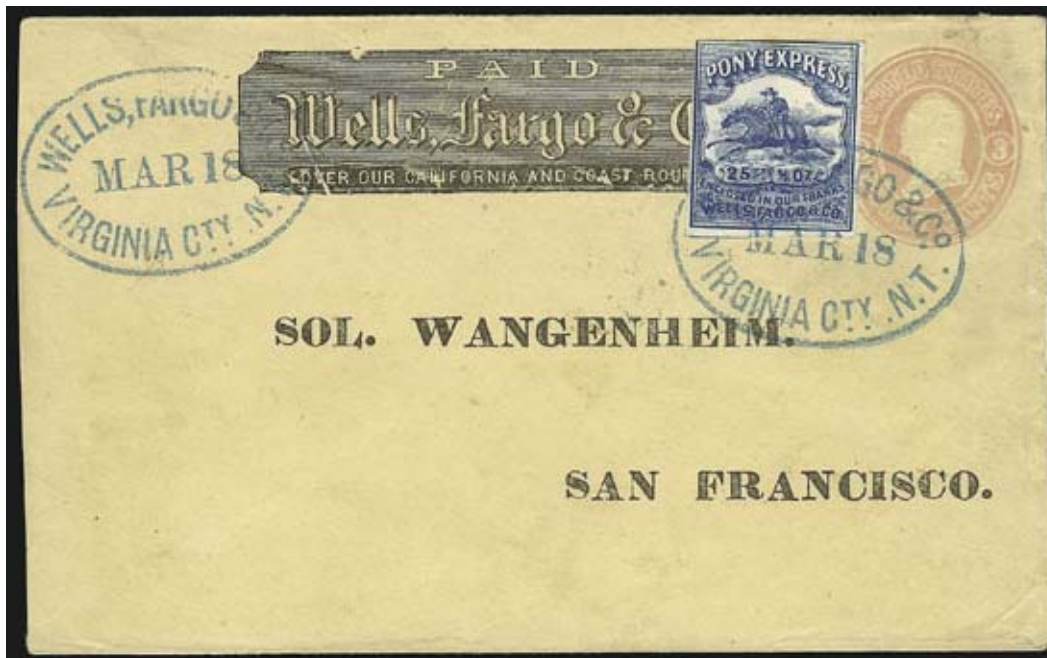
Date unknown (Aurora office did not use a datestamp)

1862-65 Virginia City Pony Express

WELLS, FARGO & CO.

25c BLUE

25c RED



Virginia City N.T. to San Francisco

March 18, 1863



Virginia City N.T. to San Francisco

July 12, 1864





Virginia City N.T. to San Francisco

February 12, 1865



Virginia City N.T. to San Francisco, Second 25c Red Tied by "Sacramento Messenger"

Virginia City, February 21, 1865; Sacramento, February 22

The presence of 25c Red stamps in two slightly different shades, one of which is cancelled at Virginia City while the other was cancelled en route with the Sacramento Messenger oval, indicates that the letter was franked with double-rate U.S. postage at Virginia City, but the second Pony Express stamp was supplied by the Wells, Fargo & Co. messenger who brought the mail from Sacramento to San Francisco.



**10c Red Entire, Paste-Up Usage from San Francisco to Virginia City N.T.**

April 16 (year unknown)  
United States Postage on Back

In addition to adhesive stamps, Wells, Fargo & Co. imprinted their regular franked entires with the 10c Pony Express stamp in Red and Blue, followed by the 25c in Red only. Very few are known used.



**Reprints Printed by Britton & Rey in April 1897**

Wells, Fargo & Co. continued to supply collectors with Pony Express stamps into the 1890's. When their supply was exhausted, they authorized a reprint of all five denominations in various colors, using Britton & Rey, the San Francisco lithographers who printed the original issues.



**Composite Die Proof for 1897 Reprints**

This proof shows the 10c and "Dollars" matrix impressions used to make the new stone.



**Plate Proof for 1897 Reprints**

This proof shows arrangement of different denominations on one printing stone.



**Four-Horse Stagecoach Design “The Star of the Union—California”**  
San Francisco to Oswego, New York, August 13, 1861



**Six-Horse Stagecoach Design “From San Francisco via Los Angeles”**  
Grass Valley, California, to Wetter, Prussia, December 18, 1860

The 58c prepayment marked on this cover by the Grass Valley postmaster does not correspond to any prevailing rate to the German States at this time. It was probably an error based on the 29c rate to England (24c plus 5c for West Coast origin), which was doubled for this letter weighing between one-half and one ounce. The New York foreign-mail exchange office treated it as a double 15c rate Bremen Packet letter, applying a 2 x 12c credit (24c) and sending it on the North German Lloyd’s *New York*, departing on Feb. 23, 1861, and arriving in Southampton on Mar. 7 (the steamer was docked there for repairs and did not carry mail any further eastward; thus the delayed Mar. 11 arrival backstamp).



## Horse-Powered Western Mail

LANGTON'S  
HUMBOLDT EXPRESS  
25c BROWN



### Langton's Humboldt Express from Unionville N.T. to Bidwell's Bar, California

Circa 1862-63; Addressed to the care of famed expressman Capt. W. E. Singer

The Humboldt Express was the last of seven successive Western express services operated by Samuel W. Langton, who has been described by historians as the most energetic and persevering of the numerous expressmen of the period. Langton launched the Humboldt Express in February 1860 and oversaw its operation until his accidental death in 1864. Service was provided between the Humboldt mines in Nevada to Carson City, the state capital. For transportation across this difficult route, 25c was charged in addition to the \$2.00 per letter fee. To facilitate prepayment of this surcharge, Langton issued the 25c Brown adhesive stamp. The stamp, with its exceptionally detailed depiction of a stagecoach drawn by a four-horse team, is widely regarded as the finest example of a pictorial stamp issued by the numerous private posts operating in the United States between 1842 and the 1870's. The style, lettering, color and lithographic technique used to print Langton's stamp are identical to those of the Wells, Fargo & Co. Pony Express stamps of the same period, and it is accepted, though unproven, that the issues of both companies were made by the same printer (Britton & Rey of San Francisco).



**Pacific Express Co. and Berford & Co. Conjunctive Express Usage to Boston**  
 Pacific Express Co., San Francisco, November 20, circa 1855

The Pacific Express Company was formed on March 2, 1855, by former employees of Adams & Company, the huge express and banking concern that went bankrupt in February 1855. Pacific Express operated until sometime in 1857, carrying mail between points in California and also through connections to the East Coast. The original Berford & Company was started in 1849 and is reported to have sold out to Wells, Fargo & Co. in 1854. The “Berford & Cos. Atlantic & Pacific Express” represented in this handstamp (of which one other is known) must have been a short-lived operation under that name, formed after the earlier Berford’s concern sold out.



**Pacific Express Co. Blue Frank, “Paid 7” Uprated Entire to Vermont**  
 Auburn, California, September 3, circa 1856



**Horse-Powered Western Mail**

*OROVILLE & QUINCY EXPRESS*  
*SAN FRANCISCO LETTER EXPRESS*



**Oroville & Quincy Express Co. and Wells, Fargo & Co. Conjunctive Usage**  
Carried from Greenville south to Oroville, then by Wells, Fargo & Co. to San Francisco



**San Francisco Letter Express**  
Delivered locally in San Francisco, circa 1866