

The Pony Express

Many people moved west because of the California Gold Rush. By 1860, 380,000 people lived in California. It was not easy to cross the Rocky Mountains to get to the West Coast. The trip from Missouri to California was 2,000 miles. It took a wagon train 3 months to travel that far.

People wanted faster mail service. The Pony Express planned a route from Missouri to California. They would deliver mail in just 10 days. Many people did not think this could be done.

Relay stations were built every 10-15 miles. That is how far a horse could run before tiring. Rested horses were ready at the relay stations. A rider would trade his horse for a rested horse. Home stations were built every 75-100 miles. When a rider got to a home station, he would give the mail to the next rider. Then the rider could stay to rest. The Pony Express kept the mail moving at all times. It took 400 horses and 120 riders to get the job done.

Pony Express riders had to be light so the horses could run fast. They also had to be tough. The job was dangerous. Most of the riders were teenage boys. They were paid \$100 a month. That was a lot of money! Riders had a pouch that held the mail. They also had water, a Bible, and a gun. They had a horn to tell the relay station to get the next horse ready.

Buffalo Bill Cody was one of the most famous Pony Express riders. He was just 14 when he started working for the Pony Express. He rode one of the longest runs ever because the next rider was killed. He used 21 horses to ride 322 miles in 21 hours.

The telegraph replaced the Pony Express as a fast way to deliver messages. The Pony Express mail service lasted for only 18 months. It began in April of 1860 and ended in October of 1861. The Pony Express reminds us that nothing is impossible.