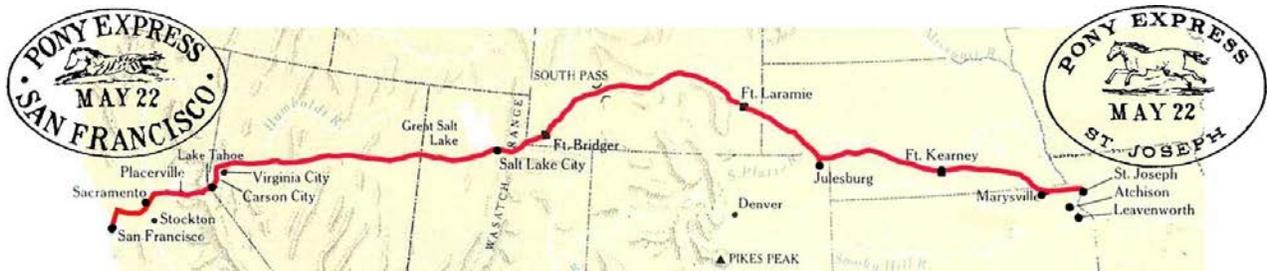


The Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1860 to October 1861

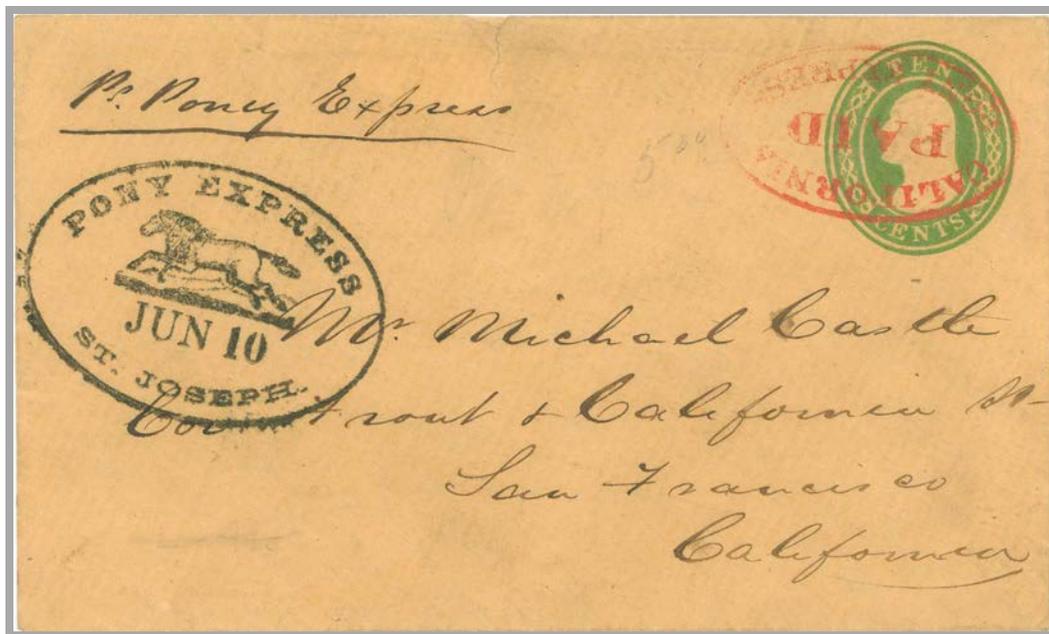
This exhibit displays the rates and markings used on transcontinental Pony Express mail. Since the Express operated for only 19 months, not much surviving mail is known – a detailed census includes only 190 eastbound and 74 westbound covers. The exhibit is organized by Pony Express rate period.

1. The service began on April 3, 1860 under management of the Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company (COCPPE), which charged \$5 per ½ oz. for the ten-day express between San Francisco, California and St. Joseph, Missouri. They had no postal contract.
2. Starting July 31, 1860 (westbound) and August 15 (eastbound), COCPPE reduced their charges to \$2.50 per ¼ oz. They continued to operate the service privately without a postal contract.
3. Starting April 1, 1861 (westbound) and April 15 (eastbound), Wells, Fargo & Company took over private management of the route, and introduced a \$2 per ½ oz. rate.
4. On July 1, 1861, Wells Fargo reduced the rate to \$1 per ½ oz. At this time, the Pony Express became a partially-subsidized post office contract service. It was discontinued by notice from Wells Fargo on October 26, 1861.



Prevailing U.S. postal rates were 10¢ per ½ oz. for over 3,000 miles, and 3¢ for less than 3,000 miles. Payment of U.S. postage was required, even during the first three pre-contract periods.

Eight major types of Pony Express markings were used and are shown in this exhibit. These include two from San Francisco, one from Sacramento, two from St. Joseph, and two from New York. Early New York and St. Joseph markings are shown on the first period cover below.



June 1860 New York "California Pony Express Paid" and June 10 St. Joseph "Running Pony" postmarks
10¢ U.S. postage prepaid - \$5 express fee paid per manuscript "5.00" - arrived in San Francisco on June 25

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1860 - August 1860



The COCPPE privately operated a weekly service between St Joseph and San Francisco during the first period of the Pony Express. Transit times ranged between 10 and 13 days, unless disrupted by Paiute Indian attacks.

Operations began on April 3, 1860 with departures from San Francisco and St. Joseph. Express fees were \$5 per ½ ounce, but were reduced in August.



First trip departed from San Francisco on April 3, 1860 - arrived in St Joseph on April 13
\$5 per ½ oz. Pony Express fee paid per black April 3 San Francisco Running Pony marking
10¢ U.S. postage paid - post office carried the letter from St Joseph to New York on April 17

One of two known covers carried on the first eastbound trip

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1860 - August 1860



The first westbound Pony Express trip left St Joseph on April 3, 1860 and arrived in San Francisco on April 14. Letters were sent under cover from the East to St Joseph and never directly entered the U.S. mails.



Sent under cover from the East to St Joseph - pencil "Paid 5.00" express fee paid
First Pony Express trip left St Joseph on April 3, 1860 per black St Joseph COCPPE mark
10¢ US transcontinental postage paid even though the post office did not handle this letter

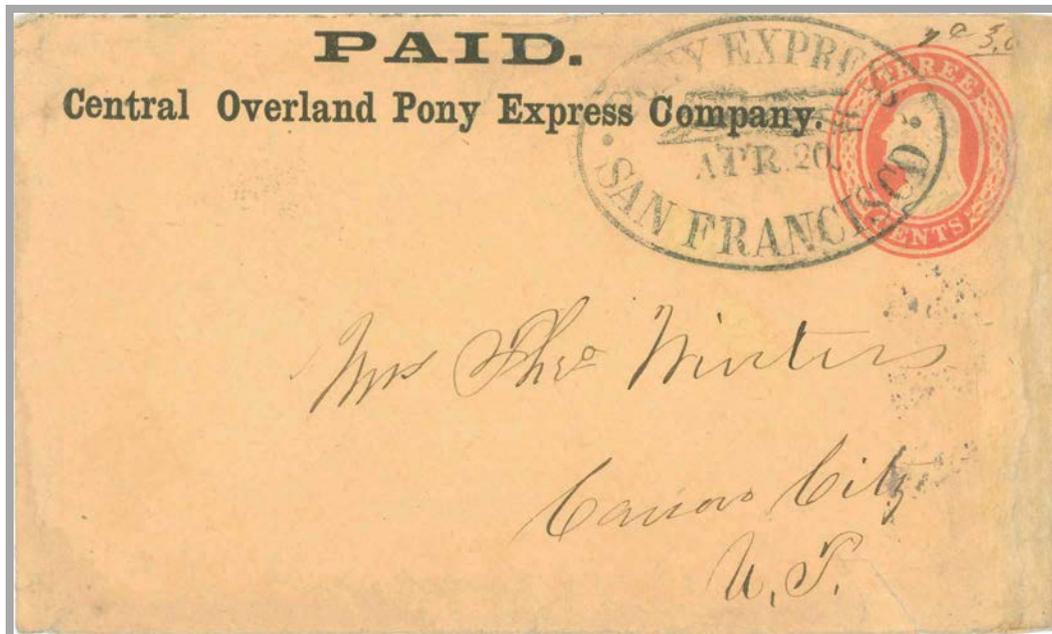
Only known cover carried on the first westbound trip

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1860 - August 1860



A special “short distance” rate of \$3 per ½ ounce was in effect during the first period for mail addressed to points between San Francisco and Salt Lake City.



3rd eastbound trip left San Francisco on April 20, 1860 - manuscript “3.00” express fee paid

Addressed to Carson City, Nevada - “short distance” rate applied

3¢ U.S. postage paid - **only known example of the \$3 “short distance” rate**

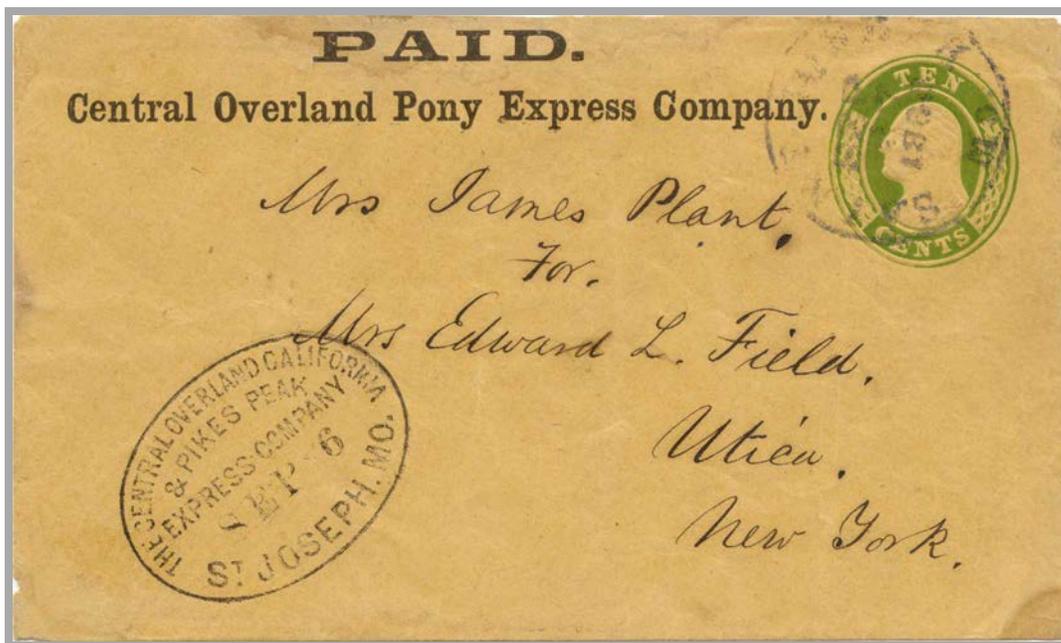


California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



The second period began with a reduced rate of \$2.50 per ¼ ounce on July 31, 1860 in the East and on August 15 in the West. The twice-weekly service was still operated privately by COCPPE in 10-15 days between St Joseph and San Francisco.



The Central Overland Pony Express Company (COPEC) was a subsidiary of the COCPPE. COPEC frank indicates that the \$2.50 express fee was paid at a way station along the route. September 15, 1860 trip from San Francisco arrived in St Joseph on September 26. 10¢ U.S. overland postage prepaid - postmarked on September 27 in St Joseph.

Fewer than ten letters with COPEC franks are known

California Pre-Contract Mail

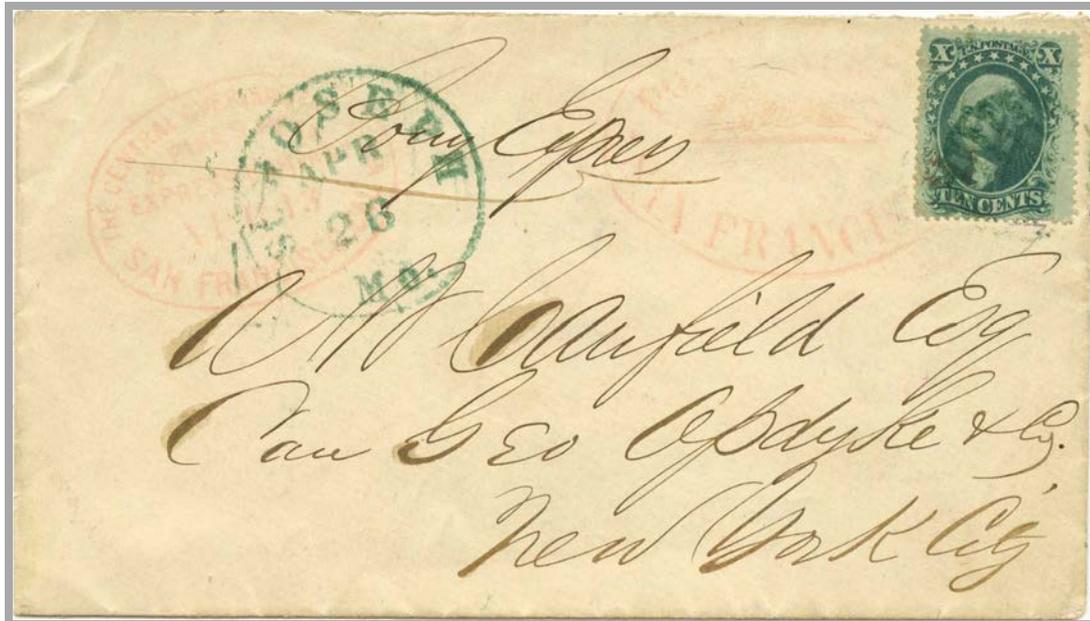
Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



The San Francisco Running Pony marking was used as a departure datestamp, and to indicate that the \$2.50 express fee was paid. It is known in black, red and mainly in blue.



Blue September 29, 1860 San Francisco Running Pony datestamp - 10¢ U.S. postage prepaid
Arrived October 10 in St Joseph per oval COCPPE marking - postmarked the next day



Dateless Red Running Pony used briefly in March-April 1861 - **only five examples known**
Red San Francisco COCPPE mark shows April 13 departure - postmarked 13 days later in St Joseph

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



Only six Pony Express letters sent to foreign destinations are known: two to Great Britain, one to France, one to Germany, one to Switzerland, and one to Prince Edward Island.



April 13, 1861 red San Francisco COCPPE datestamp and undated red Running Pony marking

Posted unpaid on April 26 at St Joseph - 24¢ rate to England did not require prepayment

April 30 New York debit to England for 5¢ postage - Cunarder *Niagara* left Boston on May 1

Arrived in Liverpool, England on May 13 - one shilling due from recipient



Only five red San Francisco Running Pony markings are known

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



The carmine St Joseph Running Pony datestamp is known used in both directions from August 12 to September 13, 1860. Ten examples are known.



"Pd \$5.00" indicates double-weight express fee - sent under cover from the East to St Joseph
Pony left St Joseph on September 6, 1860 - only 3¢ postage was needed from St Joseph to California

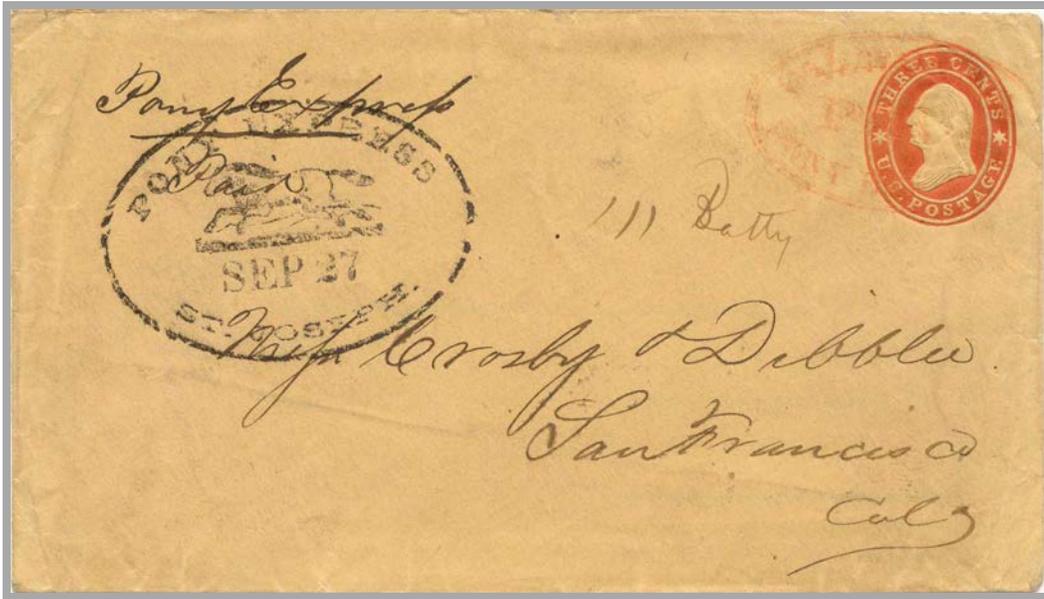
Only four westbound carmine Running Pony markings are known

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



From June to November 1860, New York used a red "California Pony Express Paid" (CPE) marking to indicate payment of the \$2.50 per ¼ oz. fee. Fewer than fifteen examples are known.



Red CPE marking applied in New York City - 3¢ U.S. postage for St Joseph-San Francisco distance
September 27, 1860 St Joseph Running Pony departure mark - arrived October 7 in San Francisco



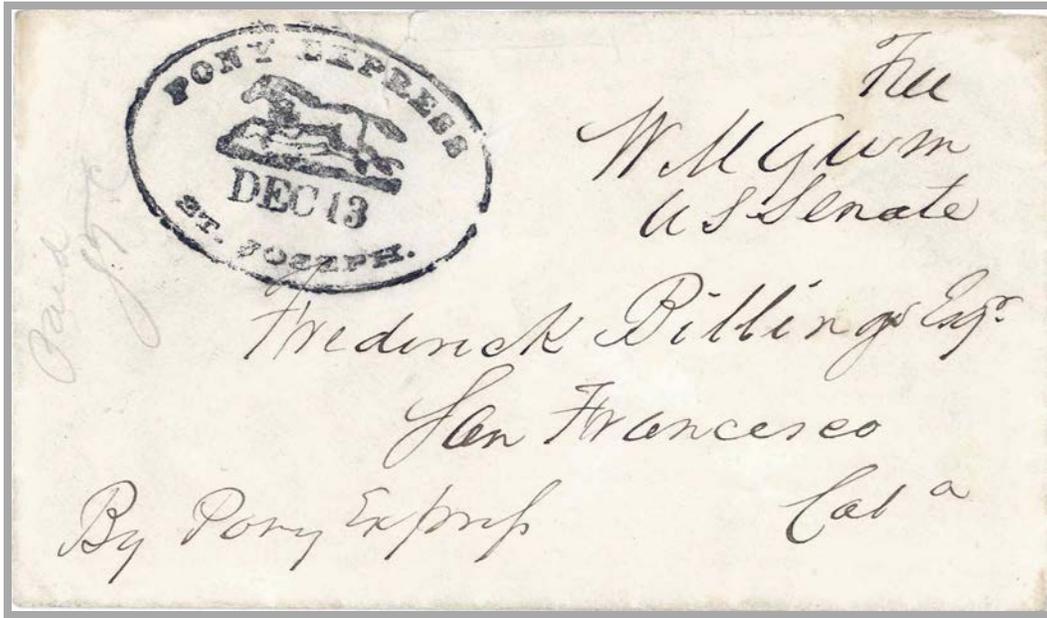
"5.00" for double-weight express fee - departed St Joseph on October 11, 1860

California Pre-Contract Mail

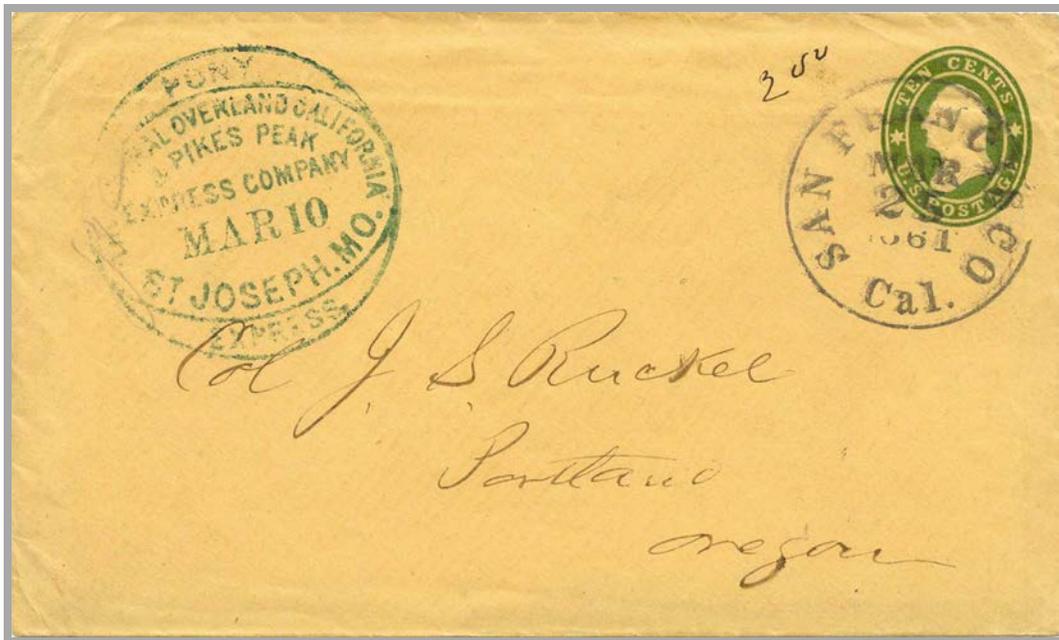
Transcontinental Pony Express: August 1860 - April 1861



St Joseph, Missouri replaced its Running Pony marking with a double oval COCPPE marking in late December 1860.



\$2.50 express fee paid per "Paid JTC" - U.S. free frank for California Senator Gwin in Washington, DC
St Joseph Running Pony mark for December 13, 1860 departure - arrived December 29 in San Francisco



Departed St Joseph on March 10, 1861 - express fee paid per "2.50" - 10¢ U.S. postage prepaid
Arrived March 23 in San Francisco - postmarked March 25 for transmittal to Oregon

California Pre-Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1861 - June 1861



The Post Office was persuaded by the success of the Pony Express to move the daily overland mail contract to the Central Route on March 2, 1861 but awarded it to the Overland Mail Company, effective July 1. COCPPE became a sub-contractor, so the Pony Express was operated jointly in the third period.

This transitional period began on April 1, 1861 (April 15 in the West) with a reduced rate of \$2 per ½ ounce. Special adhesives for this were printed by Wells Fargo & Company, which had begun to administer the service.



Blue San Francisco Running Pony mark for May 11, 1861 departure - \$2 Pony Express stamp

Prepaid 10¢ U.S. transcontinental postage to Boston - postmarked on May 24 in St Joseph

California Pre-Contract Mail

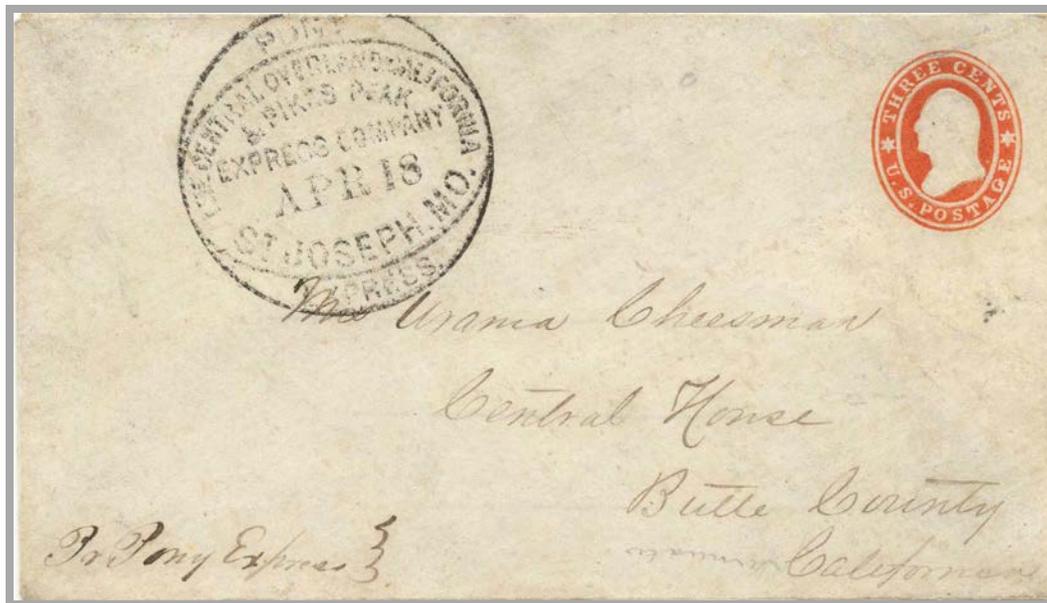
Transcontinental Pony Express: April 1861 - June 1861



Wells Fargo prepared franked envelopes for the \$2 rate. These type I franks were used for some westbound mail, and only two are known.



Franked envelope paid \$2 express fee - U.S. postage paid by restored 10¢ Nesbitt entire
May 7, 1861 “New-York California Pony Express” mark - left St Joseph on May 12



\$2 express fee paid in Washington, DC per “2.00” - left St Joseph on April 18, 1861
Sent under cover to St Joseph - only 3¢ U.S. postage needed from St Joseph to San Francisco

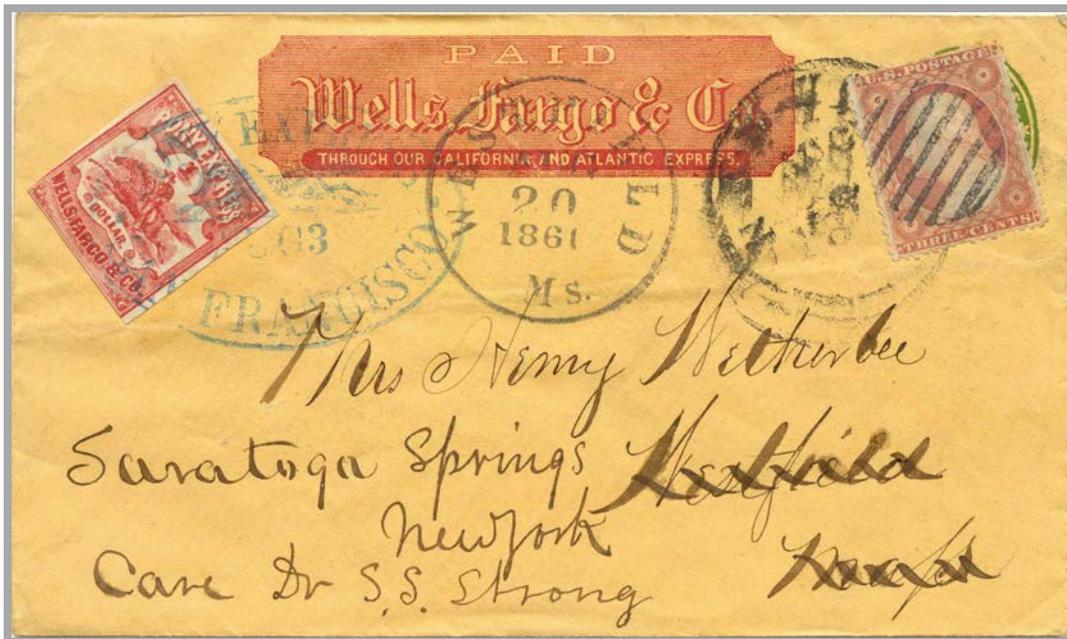
California Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861



The July 1861 daily overland contract included a provision to continue the Pony Express until the completion of the overland telegraph. The service in this fourth period was operated by the Overland Mail Company under contract to the Post Office Department until terminated on October 26.

Wells Fargo introduced a new \$1 per ½ ounce rate on July 1, 1861 for the pony service between Placerville, CA and St Joseph, and issued new adhesives. Wells Fargo also offered an additional 10¢ express service between San Francisco and Placerville, connecting with the Pony Express.



10¢ entire with red Wells Fargo frank sold for 20¢ - express fee to Placerville plus U.S. postage
Blue San Francisco Running Pony datestamp for August 3, 1861 departure - red \$1 WF stamp
Pony Express arrived on August 14 in St Joseph - postmarked August 18 in New York City
Forwarded on August 20 from Westfield, MA with an additional 1857 3¢ stamp

Fewer than ten Pony Express covers are known with 3¢ stamps

California Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861



The eastern terminus for the Pony Express was changed from St Joseph, Missouri to Atchison, Kansas on September 23, 1861.



\$1 stamp on **Wells Fargo over Freeman & Co. frank** - July 17, 1861 Marysville datestamp
Connected with Pony Express at Sacramento - postmarked July 29 in St Joseph - envelope restored



Originated October 3, 1861 outside of San Francisco - October 5 San Francisco Running Pony mark
\$1 stamp on 10¢ star die entire with Wells Fargo red frank - **postmarked October 19 in Atchison**

California Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861



Only five Pony Express letters which originated in foreign countries are known: one from Cuba, two from England and two from Hawaii. All were sent under cover to forwarders in the U.S.



Datelined "London 3rd July 1861" - sent under cover to forwarder in New York City
Given to Pony Express agent who applied **July 20 "California Pony Express" marking**
10¢ postage added - sent in express package to St Joseph - postmarked there on July 28
Pony Express left St Joseph on July 28 and arrived on August 8 in San Francisco



"California Pony Express New-York" mark was used December 1860-August 1861

California Contract Mail

Transcontinental Pony Express: July-October 1861



Wells Fargo prepared special franked envelopes for the July 1861 \$1 rate. These type 2 franks were used to send letters to St Joseph in the US mails.



Franked envelope paid \$1 express fee - U.S. postage paid by 10¢ “Watermelon” entire Postmarked August 15, 1861 in New York - Pony Express left St Joseph on August 18



Posted in New York on October 5, 1861 - addressed to Pony Express Agent at St Joseph October 10 St Joseph “double oval” pony express marking - arrived October 22 in Sacramento