

## PONY EXPRESS HISTORY

The Pony Express was a private mail service which operated between St. Joseph, Missouri and Sacramento, California. Begun on April 3, 1860 it operated for 18 months until the connection of the transcontinental telegraph on October 24, 1861.

The Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company provided a 10 day delivery between the terminal points. Forty riders in the saddle in each direction, 190 stations and 400 station keepers kept the operation working smoothly. Riders were paid \$25 a week, and rode 10-15 miles before changing horses, 75 miles before being relieved.

Started by the Missouri freighting firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell, it was a dramatic attempt to capture a federal mail contract. Although it was not successful, it proved the Central Route as an all-weather transportation route. It is remembered as one of the enduring symbols of the American Frontier.

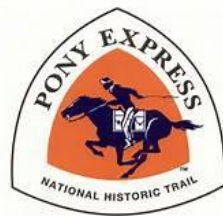
The Pony Riders are gone now but they are remembered for their daring and courage. Their exploits are retold even today in books, videos and recreations like the NPEA's Annual Re-Ride.

## PONY EXPRESS NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

Contributions of the Pony Express in the development of communications in the west are commemorated by the Pony Express National Historic Trail.

Legislation authorizing the addition of the Trail to the National Trails System was signed by President George W. Bush on August 3, 1992. It is administered by the Department of Interior/ National Park Service. The PENHT is a route rather than a continuous trail. It can be followed by horse, foot or auto for most of its length. Large expanses of the territory through which it crosses are still very scenic and many museums and historical sites offer interpretation and preservation.

Through its Re-ride, publications, resource guides, speakers bureaus, work parties and commemorative events on the trail, it seeks to give the horseman, historian and general public a sense of excitement, danger and accomplishments of the unique historic mail service on this trail.



## THE MOCHILA

The telegrams and letters transported by the Pony Express were carried in a mochila. This leather blanket-type device was designed to fit securely over a McClellan saddle, and be easily removed and placed on a fresh horse at the Relay Stations. The letters were wrapped in a protective covering and carried in one of four cantinas (pockets) sewn in each corner. The NPEA uses a mochila designed to carry a greater number of letters and to fit over a western saddle, yet can easily be transferred to a fresh horse and rider at mochila exchange points during the Re-ride.



# PONY EXPRESS



**A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION  
TO  
RE-ESTABLISH, IDENTIFY  
& RE-RIDE  
THE  
PONY EXPRESS NATIONAL  
HISTORIC TRAIL**

**Post Office Box 236  
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[www.nationalponyexpress.org](http://www.nationalponyexpress.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/expressrider/>

[nationalponyexpress@gmail.com](mailto:nationalponyexpress@gmail.com)

## THE RIDER

A lone rider gallops across various landscapes such as desert, sagebrush or prairie grass. The sound of approaching hoof beats is heard from afar. Another rider and horse awaits in the shade of a tree. The incoming rider reins in and greetings are exchanged. Dismounting, the incoming rider lifts a leather mochila from the saddle. It is placed on the fresh mount and a new rider steps into the stirrup, swings into the saddle and begins a ride over the horizon and back into history.

## PONY EXPRESS RE-RIDE

Each June, members of the National Pony Express Association recreate the Pony Express in a Commemorative Re-ride over a ten day period. Letters are carried in a mochila over the original trail.

The approximately 2,000 mile, eight state event is conducted 24 hours a day until the mail is delivered to its destination. More than a national event, it is an opportunity for a new generation to ride the Pony Trail or to receive Express Mail carried by Pony.

Over 750 riders participate. They come from all walks of life, but are all members of NPEA Divisions in the eight states that the trail crosses. We invite you to join us in this exciting event.

## COMMEMORATIVE LETTERS

Commemorative letters are a cachet comprised of a special designed envelope and an enclosed vignette. The vignette highlights an historical events, site or person of the Pony Express.

Each envelope is hand-stamped with a special US Post Office cancellation. They are the official souvenir of the Annual Pony Express Re-ride.

The Letters are sold in advance for \$5.00 each, like the mail of 1860. They are carried by horseback the entire route in one of the four cantinas on the leather mochila.

## THE NPEA

The National Pony Express Association is a non-profit, all volunteer organization founded in 1977 to "Re-establish, Identify and Re-ride the "Pony Express National Historic Trail."

National Headquarters is located in Pollock Pines, California. An Annual Board of Directors Meeting is held in September in a city along the trail.

The organization is governed by written by-laws and incorporated in the State of California. A National President is elected annually at the National Meeting.

The Association is composed of State Division members of the eight states along the trail: Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and California.

## HOW TO JOIN

Membership is open to all as either a Rider or Associate Member. Riders must be experienced equestrians, at least 18 years of age (14 with parental permission and supervision), and be willing to abide by the Pony Express Oath and Rider Requirements.

You can become a member of one of our eight Divisions. Membership dues include national dues plus state dues which vary.

For an application visit our website at [www.nationalponyexpress.org](http://www.nationalponyexpress.org).

## BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

- Opportunity to ride during our Annual Re-ride
- Ride Pin
- Subscription to annual Pony Express Gazette
- Subscription to the National Newsletter
- Learn about the Pony Express
- Learn about the Pony Express National Historic Trail
- Special Edition New Testament Bible (Riders)
- Subscription to State Newsletters (if published)
- Trail Rides, Local Events Parades and Souvenirs

## NPEA OATH

In keeping with tradition, all Riders are required to take an Oath of Conduct very similar to the one required by Russell, Majors and Waddell of their own Pony Express Riders. Each rider is sworn prior to the Annual Re-ride and is presented with a small Bible as were the riders of history. We are proud to be keeping the history alive!

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I,

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do hereby swear, before the great and living God, that during my engagement as a member of the National Pony Express Association Re-ride

I will under no circumstances use profane language, that I will drink no intoxicating liquors, that I will not quarrel or fight with any other member of the Association, and that in every respect, I will conduct myself honestly, be faithful to my duties and so direct all my acts as to win the confidence of my associates.

So help me God.

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