Today the United States Post Office is an elaborate network of carriers, sorting facilities and mail transportation systems. What if I told you that it all started 150 years ago with a group of men promising letter delivery from Missouri to California in under 10 days? From the small beginnings of the Pony Express in 1860 mail delivery has grown into the vast organization of United States Postal Service. Many people can tell you some small facts about the Pony Express, mostly that it was a small group of men on horseback who delivered letters and small packages across the country as the United States expanded westward towards California. What many people do not know is that the Pony Express only lasted for 18 months from the first letter received to the last letter delivered. The Pony Express also did not make a single dollar of profit in that 18 months. In 1845, just 15 years before the start of the Pony Express it took the President of the United States approximately 6 months to receive written letters from California. The Pony Express offered a 10 day service to California that greatly quickened the delivery of news and information across the United States.

2010 Marks the 150th anniversary of the Pony Express. Utah holds an important place in the story of the Pony Express because it was the westward movement of the Mormon Pioneers who settled the Salt Lake Valley that inspired the first talk of a mail and letter service. A Pony Express monument was constructed in Northern Utah as a part of “This is the Place” monument.

Post Office Original Carriers Celebrate 150 Years!

Pony Express Facts

- The recruitment posters for the Pony Express called for “Young, Skinny, Wiry” boys who are willing to “Risk death daily.” (See poster picture above)
- Of the entire Pony Express route from Missouri to California only short segments remain in tact in parts of Utah and California, the remainder of the trail has been built over or covered up.
- Over 50 cabins still remain in tact that the Pony Express used during its short 18 month run
- Each June about 75 volunteers from Utah re-ride and re-enact the Pony Express trail and riders. This is because many Utahns were riders for the Pony Express.
- In 18 months the Pony Express carried approximately 33,000 pieces of mail and covered 660,000 miles between Missouri and California.
- Each rider could carry 20 pounds of mail, 20 pounds of food and water, a horn to alert the station master, a bible and a choice of rifle or other revolver.
Now that some of the workings of the Pony Express have been discussed let’s compare the services that the Pony Express offered to the offerings of the United States Postal Service.

**TIME TO DELIVERY**
The Pony Express offered a 10 day guarantee between Missouri and California. The USPS can deliver any piece of mail to any part of the United States in 2-3 days by Express Mail, 4-5 days by Priority and letters generally take 5 days if going from coast to coast. Due to technology letters and packages can be tracked on their way to the destination which was not available during the times of Pony Express.

**SIZE OF MAIL**
Today the USPS offers flat rate boxes in 4 sizes. If your contents fits in the box it will ship anywhere in the United States up to 75lbs. USPS can ship anything from postcards to letters to bicycles. The Pony Express could carry up to 20lbs of mail per horse carrier. Usually the mail consisted of letters and small packages no larger than the palm of the hand. Instead of mailing larger packages, money was sent to purchase items by the recipient of the money.

**RETURN TIME FOR MAIL**
The Pony Express at one time was able to have multiple riders at various points on the mail route. However, if a letter was sent on Monday it could arrive as late as the next Wednesday and if a return letter was sent that day it could possible take until the next Friday. A full three weeks could be required for a letter to be received and a return letter received. The turn around time for mail is much shorter now with the USPS. For example, if a person sent a letter from Los Angeles to New York on Monday, the recipient would have it through normal mail rates on Thursday or Friday and could have a letter back to Los Angeles by the next Wednesday or Thursday. In 8-10 days a letter could across the country and back again.

**COST OF MAILING**
At the start of the Pony Express the cost was $5.00 per 1/2 ounce. By the end of the Express it was $1.00 per 1/2 ounce. Compared with the $.44 stamps that send letters today the price of mailing letters is definitely worth it with the United States Post Office today.

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The original Pony Express route covered the area from St. Josephs, MO to Sacramento/ San Francisco, CA. Notice that the major cities of today are not listed on this route. Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Diego, or Denver. The Pony Express offered letter delivery on this route in “Under 10 Days” With 10 total stops that would average out to be about 1 day per every stop on the way out to California and on the return trip to Missouri.

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**SUU POST OFFICE/MAIL SERVICE**
The Pony Express may be long gone but the SUU Post Office in the Sharwan Smith Center offers students, faculty, staff and the community all the services of a United States Post Office. The SUU Post Office is open 8am-4pm and has stamps, Priority boxes, Express mail, UPS, and FedEx services plus many more. The SUU Post Office is also the new home of the Campus Lost and Found. The Lost and Found will no longer be located in the Purchasing Office so if you have misplaced an item while you were on campus, stop by and check at the Lost and Found at the SUU Post Office!!!!.