

Virginia City Pony Express Route



The regional Virginia City Pony Express should not be confused with the transcontinental pony express of 1860-1861. The Virginia City Pony Express was established by Wells, Fargo and Company in August 1862 to supplement their normal express business between Virginia City, Nevada territory, in the rich Washoe mining area, and San Francisco, California. While the normal express transit time between the two cities was 44 hours the pony express service was advertised as 24 hours. Mail was carried by a pony rider from Virginia City to Placerville where it was put on a train for Sacramento. At Sacramento the mail was placed on a steamboat for conveyance down the Sacramento River and across San Francisco Bay to San Francisco.

Letters to be sent by the Virginia City Pony Express had to be enclosed in a Wells, Fargo franked postal entires. The use of a government postal entire was required for all letters carried outside the government mails. The fee for the pony service was originally ten cents per half ounce in addition to the cost of the franked envelope. A brown 10c adhesive stamp was issued and although the service was advertised to begin on August 11, 1862 the earliest reported use of the stamp is September 1, 1861. In February 1863 the rate was increased to twenty-five cents and the brown stamp was replaced by a 25c blue adhesive. In March 1864 the blue stamp was replaced by a red stamp of the same denomination. From the census of reported uses it appears that service was suspended between July 29 and December 28, 1864. After a brief revival in 1865 the service was permanently suspended on March 2, 1865.