

Grade Level: Fourth Grade

Topic: Pony Express

Essential Questions:

1. How did the westward trails impact methods of communication?
2. Why do people take risks?
3. How do new ideas/innovations impact lives?

Resources:

- A. Kansas Memory (Hollenberg ranch house) (attached)
- B. Kansas Memory (Historical marker sign) (attached)
 - a. <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/228936/page/1>
- C. Kansapedia articles from Kansas State Historical Society: Pony Express; Hollenberg Pony Express Station (attached)
- D. Read Kansas! The Pony Express Rides through Kansas by the Kansas State Historical Society (attached)
- E. The Kansas Historical Quarterly Winter 1959 (Kansas State Historical Society):
 - a. oil painting cover to journal (attached)
 - b. *The Pony Express Rides Again* pages 369-385 (beginning on page 372 various newspaper accounts)
 - c. <http://www.kshs.org/p/kansas-historical-quarterly-winter-1959/17486>
- F. Kansas Reflections Winter 2010: (attached)
<http://www.kshs.org/publicat/reflections/pdfs/2010winter.pdf>
- G. The Pony Express History
 - a. <http://officialponyexpress.org/pony-express-history.html>

Writing Types	Guiding Questions	Prompts	Reminders/Things to Consider (student-friendly rubric descriptors)
Opinion	According to the resources, what were the benefits and dangers of carrying the mail? What can you learn about the riders on the Pony Express? How was communication improved through the Pony Express?	After reading and/or listening to the resources presented by your teacher, write a message to your classmates sharing your opinion about whether or not the Pony Express was worth the effort to get mail across the country. Support your opinion with material from the resources.	A thorough response will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● A clear opinion that addresses the resources and prompt.● Relevant and accurate details/evidence from the sources.● Connections between and among ideas.● Conventions that are used correctly.
Informative/ Explanatory	How did distance impact the way people communicated in the	After reading and/or listening to the resources presented by	A thorough response will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● A clearly stated idea that

	<p>mid 1800s?</p> <p>Why were people moving in the mid 1800s?</p> <p>How could messages be sent over long distances in the mid 1800s?</p> <p>What brought about the end to the Pony Express?</p>	<p>your teacher, write an article for a new student to your class that thoroughly informs your classmate about the existence of the Pony Express in this country's history. Support your article with evidence from the resources.</p>	<p>addresses the resources and prompt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relevant and accurate facts, definitions, and details throughout the piece. ● Connections between and among ideas. ● Conventions that are used correctly.
<p>Narrative</p>	<p>What conditions brought about the Pony Express and under what conditions did the riders ride?</p> <p>How might the riders approach their job?</p> <p>What emotions and dangers might the riders experience?</p> <p>What was part of a typical rider's supplies?</p> <p>What type of person might be interested in being a rider for the Pony Express?</p>	<p>Option 1: After reading and/or listening to the resources presented by your teacher, create an entry into a journal as it might have been written by a Pony Express rider. Use what you have learned to assist you in your writing.</p> <p>Option 2: Develop a story that spotlights the relationship, the struggles, and the joys between the rider and the pony(ies). Consider what the resources offer to help you create your story.</p>	<p>A thorough response will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A setting and narrator/character(s). ● Use of dialogue and/or descriptions to develop characters and/or situations. ● Use of words and phrases to signal event order. ● Conventions that are used correctly.



Source: Kansas Memory

Kansas State Historical Society

G. H. Hollenberg ranch house, Washington County, Kansas

A photograph of the Hollenberg ranch house in Washington County, Kansas. This house was built in 1857 by Gerat H. and Sophia Hollenberg, establishing a way station for travelers on the Oregon-California Trail, and from 1860 to 1861 they operated a Pony Express station. After Gerat Hollenberg's death in 1874, the station became a farm home until 1941 when the Kansas Legislature purchased the building and the surrounding seven acres. The site was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1961 and two years later, the Kansas Historical Society was given the responsibility to operate it as Hollenberg Pony Express Station Historic Site





Source: Kansas Memory

Hollenberg Pony Express Station historical marker, Hanover, Kansas

A photograph of the Hollenberg Pony Express Station historical marker in Hanover, Kansas. This station was established in 1857 by Gerat H. and Sophia Hollenberg.

Source: Kansapedia

Kansas State Historical Society

Pony Express



The Pony Express began operation on April 3, 1860, and lasted just 18 months. The goal was to provide a mail route from St. Joseph to California. Averaging less than 10 days per run on the 2,000-mile route, traveling through the storms and heat of summer, and the snow and cold of winter, through American Indian lands, and rough terrain, the Pony Express became one of the West's most colorful stories.

In the hope of winning a million dollar government contract, the Central Overland California & Pike's Peak Express Company run by William Russell, Alexander Majors, and William Waddell, developed a mail delivery system that was faster than the overland stage. A pouch of letters dispatched from Washington and New York on March 31, 1860, was transported by train to St. Joseph, and to be carried by a succession of riders on the trek west to Sacramento, California.

Johnny Fry was one of nearly 200 young men selected to take part in an ambitious endeavor. Leaving from St. Joseph, Missouri, Fry would carry a mail pouch on the first leg of the Pony Express.

Fry was scheduled to leave the station at 5 p.m. April 3, 1860, with his parcel, but the train delivering his pouch was delayed and he did not depart until 7:15 p.m. A cannon boomed, the brass band played, and a crowd of people cheered as Fry's mount raced from the station. They headed west to Seneca, Kansas, a distance of 80 miles with the leather "mochila" that held 49 letters, five telegrams, and special edition newspapers.

Fry's horse galloped the short distance to the ferry, which transported them across the Missouri River. At Elwood, Kansas, they followed the trail through the wooded bottoms, across the Kickapoo reservation, and to Seneca, where another rider and horse were ready to continue the trek.

To ensure the fastest transport, Pony Express horses carried a maximum of 165 pounds, which included the 20-pound mochila and the rider whose weight could not exceed 125

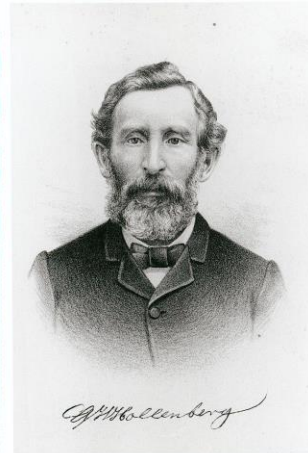
pounds. Other items were a water sack, a horn to alert the station, a Bible, and two weapons: a revolver and optional rifle. Fresh horses were provided every 10 to 15 miles at stations along the trail. Two minutes was allowed to switch horses and transfer the mail pouch before heading off on the next leg. Riders were replaced every 60 to 80 miles. Though the company proved that rapid transcontinental communication was indeed possible, the contract went to the operators of the Butterfield Overland stage line.

The experiment was costly: approximately 500 horses, nearly 200 stations, a similar number of station employees, and 80 riders. Even with charges of \$5 per letter, the company could only recover about 10 percent of its costs. The transcontinental telegraph line, completed by the fall of 1861, sealed its doom. Fry went on to become a soldier in the Union army and was killed in 1863 in Baxter Springs in conflict with William Quantrill's raiders.

One of the original pony express stops, [Hollenberg Pony Express Station State Historic Site](#), is located near Hanover in Washington County and is administered by the Kansas Historical Society

Source: Kansapedia

Kansas State Historical Society



Hollenberg Pony Express Station

Gerat H. Hollenberg had lived an adventurous life before he came to Kansas Territory in 1854. A native of Germany, he sailed to the United States in the late 1840s. There he joined a party of men who spent the next several years searching for gold in South America and Australia, and in the great California Gold Rush of 1849.

No one knows how much gold Hollenberg was able to gather during his travels. However, one legend relates that he lost it all when he was shipwrecked off the coast of Florida while returning to the eastern United States. Many of his friends were drowned but Hollenberg survived. He is said to have walked all the way to Chicago.

Nothing further is known definitely of Hollenberg's life until 1854 when he settled near the crossing for the [Oregon-California Trail](#) on the Black Vermillion River in Marshall County, Kansas Territory. In his small log cabin he kept a stock of goods to be sold to travelers on the trail.

In 1857 Hollenberg moved his business to the present site of Hollenberg Station in Washington County. He realized that there he could capture the growing trade from the St. Joseph branch of the Oregon-California Trail as well as from the older southern branch. He began with a one-room log cabin that soon evolved into a long, narrow five-room building. Here he sold supplies, meals, and lodging. Over the years he added barns and sheds to house his other trail-related activities such as selling draft animals and repairing wagons. His wife, Sophia Brockmeyer Hollenberg, was responsible for the care and feeding of the travelers who stopped at the station.



Hollenberg's road ranch became involved with the [Pony Express](#) during its brief life in 1860 and 1861. The route went by the station, and the ranch offered all of the necessary services, such as food and shelter for both riders and horses. Great excitement came with the beginning of the Pony Express runs, but soon the enterprise began to lose money. Eventually Hollenberg lost hundreds of dollars when the parent company went bankrupt.

With the end of the Pony Express and with the reduction of traffic on the trail during and after the Civil War, Hollenberg turned to general farming for his livelihood. He grazed cattle and raised grain, as did most of his neighbors. Less and less frequently did travelers pause at the station for a meal or an overnight rest.

Hollenberg, however, was far from inactive. He turned much of his effort to civic activities. He founded the nearby town of Hanover, donating money for both governmental and church buildings. He made a small fortune in real estate, and he served three terms in the Kansas legislature.

After Gerat Hollenberg's death in 1874, the station became a farm home until 1941 when the Kansas Legislature purchased the building and the surrounding seven acres. The site was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1961 and two years later, the Kansas Historical Society was given the responsibility to operate it as [Hollenberg Pony Express Station Historic Site](#).



Read Kansas!

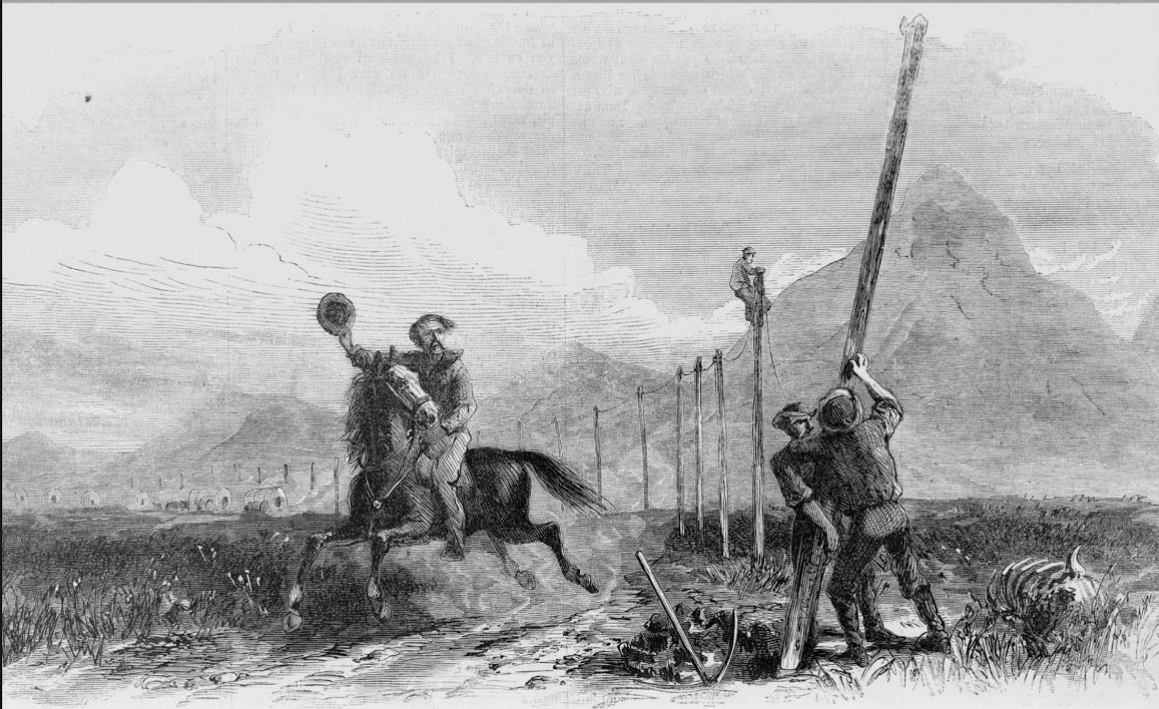
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By the Kansas State Historical Society

The Pony Express Rides Through Kansas

In order to send a letter overland to California, it had to travel a special way. On April 3, 1860, a young man on horseback left St. Joseph, Missouri. He carried leather saddlebags called mochilas. These bags were filled with mail. The rider rode as fast as he could. He traveled about 75 miles, where he gave the mailbags to another rider. After 10 days, the mail reached Sacramento, California—a 2,000-mile journey. This was the work of the Pony Express.





The Pony Express lasted only 18 months. It ended as a result of a new form of communication. It was called the telegraph. In 1844 Samuel F. Morse invented the telegraph. He did this by using electricity. Morse tapped on a special machine. It sent electrical pulses across telegraph lines. These clicks were short and long sounds. They sounded like dots and dashes. These sounds were understood as letters and the letters spelled words. He called it Morse Code.

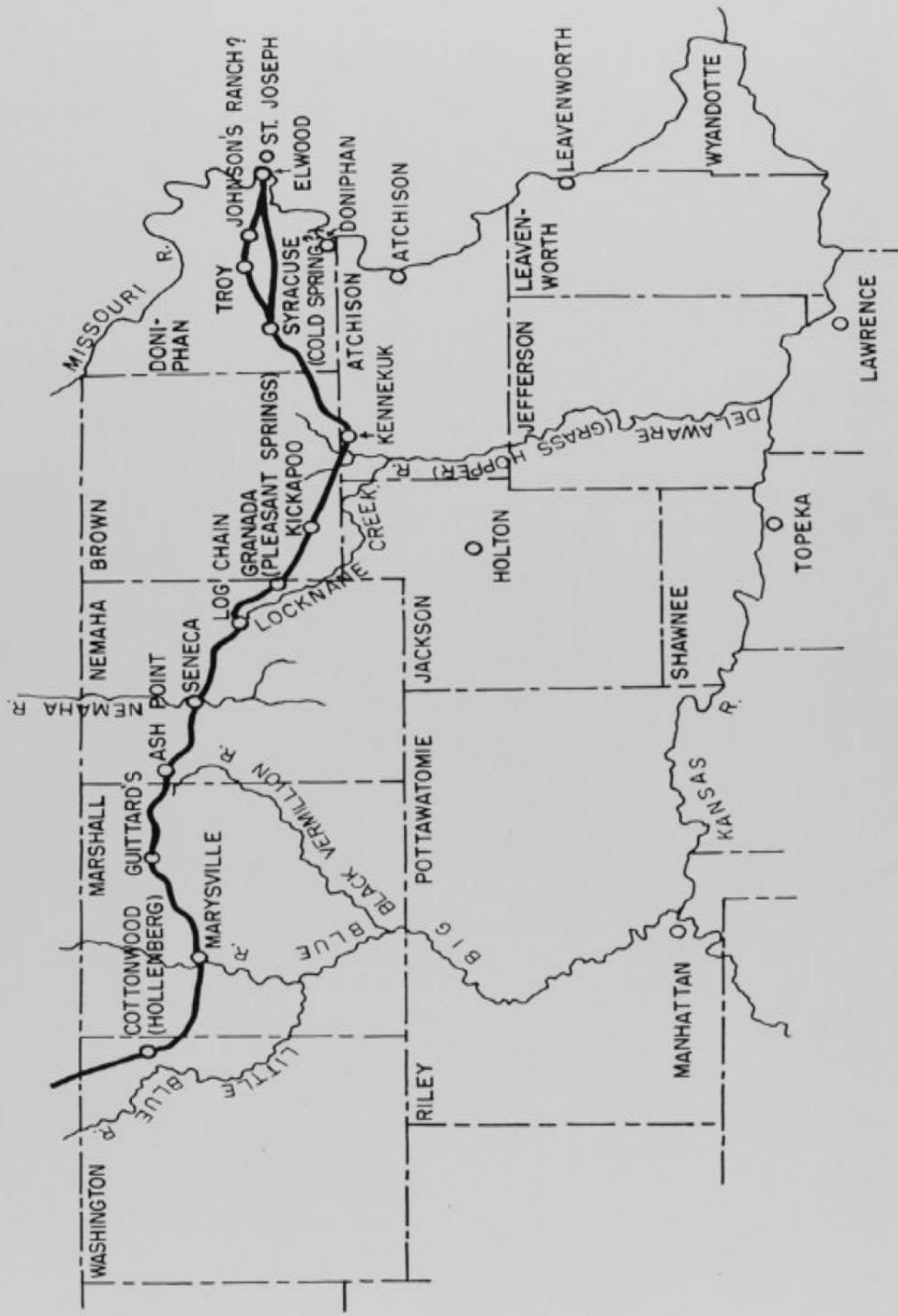
It took many years to put up poles and string wire across the entire country. By 1860 this was finished and the telegraph was used to send messages. As a result of the telegraph, messages took minutes instead of days to cross the country. Therefore, the cost to send a telegram was much less. For these reasons, the Pony Express ended.



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SOURCE: The Kansas Historical Quarterly Winter 1959
Kansas State Historical Society



Map of the Kansas portion of the Missouri-California Pony Express route (April, 1860).

**THE
KANSAS HISTORICAL
QUARTERLY**

Winter 1959



Published by
Kansas State Historical Society
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THE COVER

A Pony Express rider, from an oil painting in the museum of the Kansas State Historical Society.
Courtesy Mary Huntoon.

SOURCE: Kansas State Historical Society

Reflections - Winter 2010

Reflections is published quarterly by the Kansas Historical Society.

In this issue:

Pony Express: Wanted. Young, skinny, wiry fellows. - 150th anniversary of the Pony Express

Pony Express: Wanted.

Young, skinny, wiry fellows.

Johnny Fry was one of nearly 200 young men selected to take part in an ambitious endeavor to create timely coast-to-coast communication. Leaving from St. Joseph, Missouri, Fry would carry a mail pouch on the first leg of the Pony Express.



This illustration from 1860 depicts a Pony Express rider preparing to switch horses.

Additional information can be found at:

The Pony Express History

<http://officialponyexpress.org/pony-express-history.html>