

Through rocky valleys, scorching deserts, frigid blizzards, and over miles of treacherous terrain rode the men of true grit. Although the duration of the Pony Express lasted only eighteen months, it was evident riders had hearts of lions. Eager applicants traveled from places throughout the country, enthusiastic about accepting the life-threatening obstacles they would soon experience. Among these in line was Major Howard Egan, superintendent of the Pony Express between Salt Lake City and Roberts Creek, Nevada.

Born to imprudent parents in Ireland, Howard became an orphan at thirteen. As a result of being orphaned, he immigrated to Canada and became an exceptionally young sailor, learning essential life values along his way. Howard later established roots in Salem, Massachusetts, where he married and joined the Mormon Church. Due to his strong devotion to the church, he was selected as a guard for the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith. Seeing that Howard had the capability to protect others, he broadened his career spectrum by working for the city police force and served time as a major in the local militia.

Receiving mail during the 1840s and 1850s was very rare; therefore, people treasured those who braved the components of nature and brought their own personal mail. Striving above other superintendents and riders, Major Egan led the way by cutting trails, guiding, scouting, and creating foundations for his followers. Creating three hundred miles of the horse-traveled mail route was Major Egan. His trail ran through the central portion of the far western states and territories. This later became known as the Egan Trail and ultimately shaped much of the Pony Express Trail; its main objective was to generate a more direct route between Salt Lake City and California. In September

1855, Howard outlined a much shorter route south of the Great Salt Lake along the fortieth parallel, north latitude that took approximately ten days to reach Salt Lake City from Sacramento.

Among his primary Pony Express accomplishments, Major Egan also undertook several business responsibilities including a store at Ruby Valley, a ranch and store at Deep Creek, and several businesses in Salt Lake City. Additional duties in the course of his life consisted of selling beef in California and establishing several mines in Nevada. However, in the eighteen months the Pony Express was active, practical know-how was readily increasing when the railroad was completed; as a result, traffic and mail began to disappear from his trails. After fulfilling numerous demanding endeavors, Major Howard Egan died in March of 1878 at the age of sixty-three.

As stated by Frank S. Popplewell: "In the spirit of the Pony Express it is for us to bequeath to those who shall follow, new trails in the sky uniting in thought and in deed." The Pony Express initiated the success of mail travel. Without the unique innovations of Major Egan, a man who is acknowledged for his distinguished service on the trail, and fellow riders, the mail system would not be as highly developed as it is today.

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