

Emily Pralle
Pony Express Scholarship Essay Contest

“Historical and biographical synopsis of one of the five superintendents that the founders Waddell, Russell and Majors used to set up, stock and operate the approximately 165 stations.

MAJOR HOWARD EGAN

“IRON MAN OF THE WEST”

Although each of the five superintendents hired by Benjamin Ficklin played a significant role during the Pony Express era, the superintendent that I feel had the greatest influence on the Pony Express was Major Howard Egan. His territory included Salt Lake City to Robert’s Creek, Nevada. In my opinion, the decision to name Major Howard Egan as supervisor of this area must have been an easy one for Mr. Ficklin.

Having already explored and established many all weather trails across Nevada to accommodate the mail service at that time, Major Egan, nicknamed “Iron Man of the West,” was a proven skilled frontiersman and trailblazer. His son, Howard Ransom Egan, described his father as “having the instinct of a free animal of the wilds, and the strength of Paul Bunyon.” Major Howard Egan, a Mormon pioneer and great explorer of the west, pushed through this pioneering era cutting trails, guiding, scouting, and creating establishments for thousands of people who came after him. It seemed his passion to continually be searching for an alternate route that would improve the mail delivery time. Research indicates that Major Egan was always ready to prove his new findings with anyone that would put him up to the challenge, and usually came out on top.

When the Pony Express came into being, it seemed natural to follow the mail route that had already been established in this area. Over 300 miles of the Pony Express route was over the trail established by Howard Egan. However, much work and organization remained to be done. The stations along this line needed to be adapted for the Pony Express and more relay stations needed to be built to enable more frequent exchange of horses and riders. Mr. Egan rose to the challenge and began the undertaking of overseeing the management of each of these stations. Hiring station keepers and riders, and stocking each station with supplies and horses was only the beginning of his duties as superintendent of this area.

Major Howard Egan did not put himself above any other individual. When it was made known that there would be no rider available at Rush Valley to carry the mail into Salt Lake City, Major Egan answered the call himself. Making this very impressive and eventful ride at the age of 46 was a true show of his strength and character, not to mention the challenge that it raised with the younger riders.

The Pony Express was fortunate to have claimed Major Howard Egan as one of its own. The role that he played in making the Pony Express a success was an important one. His integrity and leadership together with his strength and perseverance certainly earned him the name "Iron Man of the West".

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Information Sources

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