

Major Howard Egan

Imagine a night that is as jet black as the mane of the horse that is **pounding** the ground underneath you. The wind is driving sleet into every possible crack of your clothing and is biting your skin. However, this is not on your mind. All you think about is the mail, the mail that must get to the next station along the trail. This was on the mind of the rider that brought the first Pony Express mail to Salt Lake City, Utah. This rider was Major Howard Egan.

Major Howard Egan was assigned the position of superintendent of the Salt Lake City, Utah to Robert's Creek, Nevada branch of the Pony Express by Benjamin Ficklin in the winter of 1859. Already in the area as part of the original group of Mormon pioneers led by Brigham Young, Egan contributed some of the biggest accomplishments that led to the Pony Express's ability to operate smoothly. These included everything from constructing stations to building roads, acquiring horses and supplying men with the necessary provisions to make the trip.

Major Egan after it was all said and done was responsible for establishing over 300 miles of the Pony Express route. This was made especially difficult in his area because of the absence of the L. & P.P. Express Co. stagecoach line that was already present from St. Joseph to Salt Lake City. Egan had to start basically from scratch. Luckily, in 1855 prior to the creation of the Pony Express, he had pioneered an efficient trail that went straight through the center of the western states. This trail would later become the route the Pony Express would use and Egan would construct stations along.

The construction of these stations and an actual distinguishable trail would be Egan's next duty to the Express. Early in the spring of 1860 supply trains and laborers

were sent west to construct the needed stations and trails for the route. Egan found this particularly difficult in his division. According to his autobiography, his men encountered many problems with mosquitoes and other illnesses while trying to accomplish this daunting task. However, they did succeed. There was now a home station roughly every 75 to 100 miles.

Finally, Major Egan was left with supplying horses and riders for the Pony Express. In the spring of 1860 A.B. Miller purchased and distributed roughly 200 horses for Egan's division. Also, holding the same religious backgrounds as Egan, a large majority of the riders under his supervision were also Mormons who knew the terrain of the country.

When all of these accomplishments came together, Major Howard Egan had one of the smoothest running divisions of the entire Pony Express route. Without his devotion to this cause and his adventurous spirit, the Pony Express would have had a difficult time delivering its mail smoothly from coast to coast.

Sources

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