

Day # 2

Russell, Majors, and Waddell, the owners of the Pony Express Company, bought good horses for their men to ride. A rider on the trail in Indian country could be in danger, but pony express horses could usually outrun Indian ponies. Riders were told by the company not to fight but to outrun the Indians or outlaws whenever possible. Horses and riders traveled light. The bag used for carrying the mail was called a mochila. It fit over the saddle and had four pockets called cantinas in which the mail was placed. Three of the pockets were kept locked and the fourth was used to put letters in that were picked up or delivered along the way. The mochila was transferred by the rider from one horse to another. Only the mochila made the entire trip across the trail.

The mochila was a square leather saddle covering with a mail pocket sewn on each corner. It fit over the saddle horn and could be removed in seconds. When in the saddle, the rider's legs came over the mochila between the front and rear pockets.

Mail was wrapped in oil cloth to protect it from rain or snow and from the sweat of the horses. Postage rates to send mail by Pony Express were \$5.00 per half ounce. Later they dropped to \$2.00 per half ounce.

Riders joining the Pony Express were asked to take an oath that they would use no profane language (swearing), drink no alcohol, and not quarrel nor fight with any other employee. They were expected to act honestly and to be faithful to their duties. At first each rider carried a Bible, a sheath knife, a horn, a cavalry rifle, and a pair of Colt revolvers. Every pound of weight slowed the horse. Soon the riders carried only a Bible and a single revolver.

Some of the written histories of the Pony Express tell that each rider was issued a red shirt and a pair of blue jeans. It is believed that this was the official uniform for the riders. But, because the weather and availability of clothing was different in each area, many historians believe that the riders wore what they had and what was appropriate for the conditions they faced.

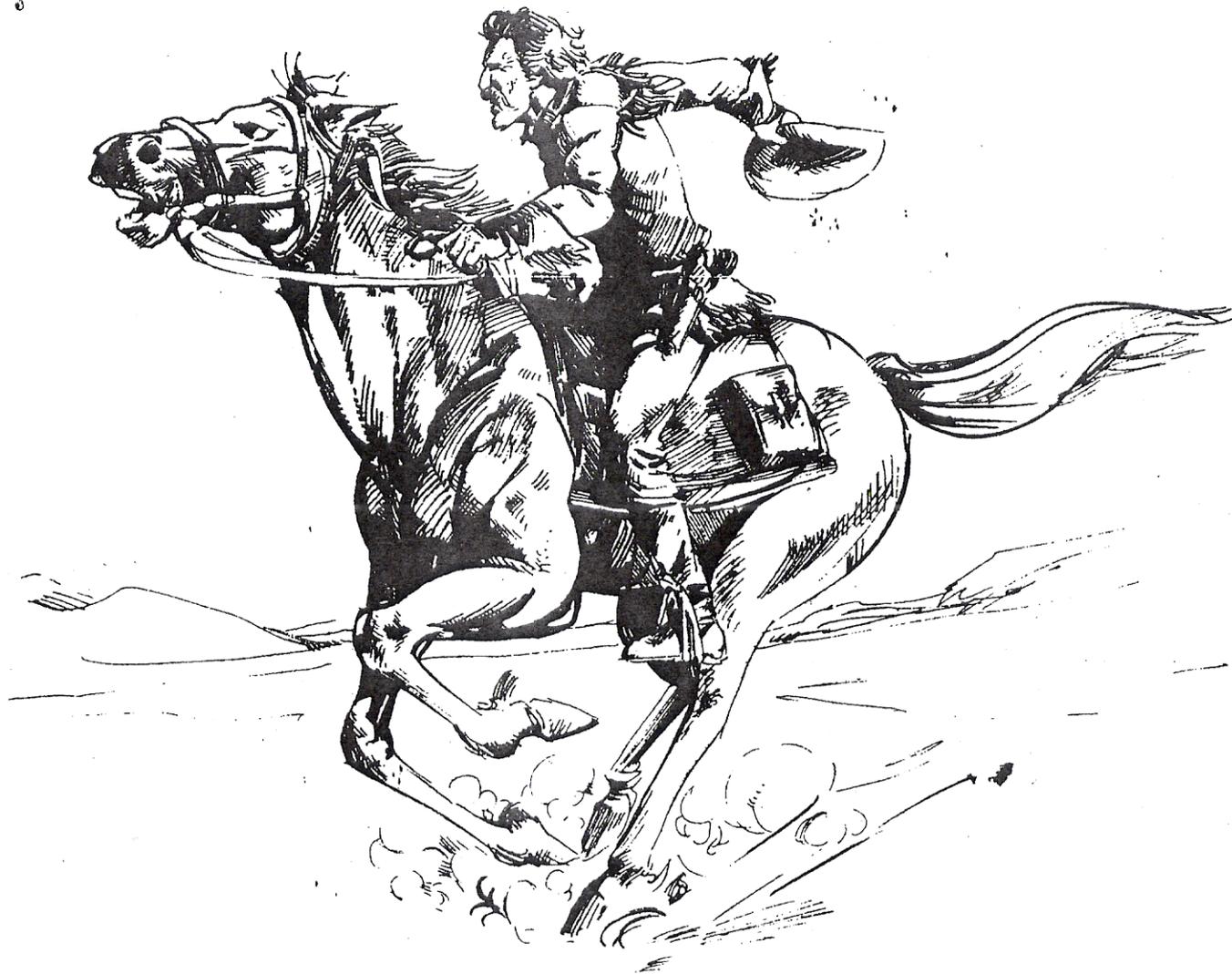
Activity for Day # 2:

-Color the mochila

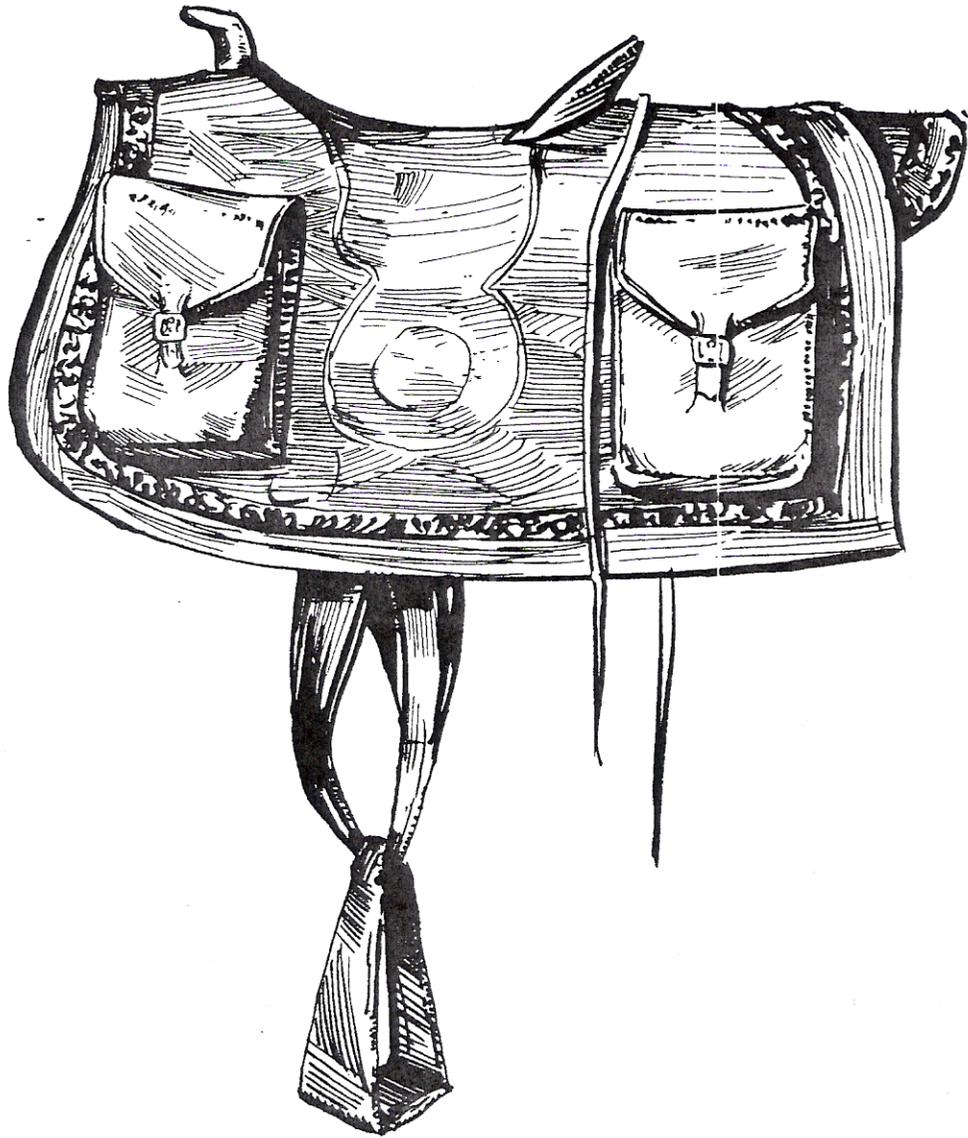
-Color the Pony Express Rider and pony, using the official uniform of the rider. (red shirt and blue jeans)

-You could have the children pretend to be a child living in 1860 and write a letter to a friend or family member that lives far away, to be carried by Pony Express.

-Members of the class could make a large mochila out of brown paper with pockets to hold the letters written by others in the class.



PONY EXPRESS RIDER



MOCHILA

The mochila fit over the saddle and had mail pockets in each corner. Only the mochila made the entire trip.

The Pony Express Oath

I do hereby swear, before the great and living God, that during my employment as a Pony Express rider, I will under no circumstances use profane language, drink intoxicating liquors, abuse my mount, quarrel or fight with any other riders and so that in every respect, I will conduct myself honestly, be faithful to my duties, and so direct my acts to win the confidence of everyone.