

A Wells Fargo Stagecoach

In 1852, Henry Wells and William Fargo founded Wells Fargo & Co. to provide reliable banking and express transportation service to miners, merchants and settlers in communities across the American frontier.

Wells Fargo agents helped pioneers exchange their gold dust for coin and safely send funds to distant places. Wells Fargo handled valuable shipments using the fastest transportation available: stagecoach, steamship, or railroad.

From 1866-1869, Wells Fargo operated major overland stagecoach routes west of the Missouri River, covering 2,500 miles of territory from California to Nebraska. A distinctive red and gold Wells Fargo stagecoach rolling across western trails has become the enduring corporate symbol of Wells Fargo & Company.

In 1866 a traveler from Omaha could board a westbound train for North Platte, and there take a seat on a Wells Fargo stage, arriving in Sacramento fifteen days later. All for \$300! Wells Fargo used sturdy stagecoaches crafted of the finest materials by the Abbot-Downing company of Concord New Hampshire. The rounded wood Concord Coach body rested on leather straps called thoroughbraces - a unique suspension system that provided a rocking ride and prompted Mark Twain to describe the Concord Coach as "a cradle on wheels." Our reproduction parade coaches are made with the same craftsmanship today.

Frontier drivers guided stages pulled by teams of four or six horses at an average speed of five miles per hour, stopping only to change horses every twelve miles and allow stage drivers and passengers to eat a quick meal at home stage stations approximately every forty-five miles.

In 1867 one stage traveler found a decent meal and some Nebraska hospitality at Alkali Station. What was on the menu at this one-story sod stage station? Warm rolls, butter, ham, stewed veal, fried potatoes, canned tomatoes, peas, blackberries, peach pie, coffee and tea; fare far better than the typical beans and coffee of most frontier stations. For this feast, a hungry traveler gladly paid \$1.50.

For stage passengers, all seats cost the same price, and none was reserved. The leather upholstered seats inside accommodated up to nine passengers, while more could perch precariously on the roof. Each traveler on an overland stagecoach was allowed only twenty-five pounds of baggage.