



Name: John Butterfield

Years: November 18, 1801- November 14, 1869

Residence: Berne, New York. Utica, New York

Brief Biography

John Butterfield was born on November 18, 1801 in Berne, New York. Growing up, he held various jobs including stagecoach driver and investor. After marrying Malinda Baker, he moved to Utica, New York. While in Utica, Butterfield took part in many endeavors. He created a street railway company, was a part of the telegraph implementation system, and also built a grand hotel and business block. In addition to all of this, he was also mayor of Utica.

Butterfield is well known for his creation of his company, Butterfield, Wasson & Company, which delivered goods that were of high quality. This allowed goods to travel on one line as opposed to various lines. By 1850, Butterfield, Henry Wells, and William Fargo had created the American Express Company which became an industry leader within ten years.

Most importantly, Butterfield created the Overland Mail Company. There was a lack of communication between railroads in the mid-west and those of California. At the time, the government was unable to make any head way because of the internal conflicts within the U.S. Consequently, the government created a subsidy which Butterfield took over.

This project was very taxing financially and required lots of manpower, animal power, and technology. In the end, traveling with his company would cost between \$100 and \$200, they were not supplied with meals, and they could only carry 40lbs of luggage. However, Butterfield was business savvy and was able to operate on a profit.

The Civil War ruined the route that Butterfield's business utilized. Furthermore, the mail route was changed but Butterfield was given a subsidy to oversee it. However, with the development of a transcontinental railroad Butterfield had to switch from operating with stagecoaches to railroads.

Major Achievements

Butterfield was a business man that started his own express line and joined forces with other businessmen to create the American Express Company. In addition, he created the Overland mail company to aid in the communication between the mid-west and California.

For More information

The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857-1869 by Roscoe P. Conkling and Margaret B. Conkling, *The Overland Mail* by Roy Hafen, *Stagecoach West* by Ralph Moody and *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860* by George Rogers Taylor.

Resources

American National Biography Online, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/media-detail.aspx?mediaID=5904>

By Jenn Delisle