



# OPPY'S STORY OF THE MONTH

READ THIS STORY WITH A CHILD AND GIVE THEM SOMETHING MONEY CAN'T BUY — YOUR TIME!

## From a Spec of Dust to the Pony Express!

**T**he Pony Express – America's First Speedy Delivery Today, Oppy is in Wyoming visiting his friend CheyeAnn. They're walking along an old trail, when Oppy spots a spec of dust far away. "CheyeAnn, do you see that spec of dust in the distance?"

"Where, Oppy? I don't see it."

"Just by that large rock," says

Oppy pointing. "It's getting bigger now."

"Oh, I can see it now, Oppy. I think it's a car coming along the trail road. Gee, Oppy, you sure have good eyes!"

"Thanks, CheyeAnn. You know, over a hundred years ago, people used to wait and watch this trail for other travelers. Only those people rode horses as part of the Pony Express!"

"The Pony Express? What's that Oppy?"

"A long time ago, before people used computers or the telephone to talk with each other, they wrote letters. It could take a long time for a letter to get to its destination. If you sent a letter

from Philadelphia to your friend in California, it might take six months to get there!"

"Wow! That sure is a long time!"

"The Pony Express was started to deliver mail faster to the west. The Pony Express riders began their journey in St. Joseph Missouri,

and rode 2,000 miles to Sacramento, California."

"Why was it called the Pony Express?" CheyeAnn asked.

"Because the riders used ponies - young, very fast horses – to travel. They were the fastest way to get around then. The riders didn't even stop at night or if the weather was bad. Every ten miles, the riders changed horses. They also changed riders too – leaping into the saddle or a galloping pony."

"Is that why people would watch for the spec of dust? Too know when a Pony Express rider was coming?"

"That's right, CheyeAnn. The next rider would





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watch for that spec because he either had to get a fresh pony ready, or he might be continuing the journey himself! There was no time for stopping with the Pony Express.”

“You would have made a good rider, Oppy. You have great vision!”

“Pony Express riders needed other skills besides good eyesight. The riders covered unpaved land, and crossed mountains, deserts, rivers, and wide prairie. Wild animals, such as coyote, buffalo, and wolves were a danger to the riders and their horses. In spite of these challenges, a letter sent through the Pony Express could reach the west coast in an amazing 8-10 days.”

“Wow! From six months to ten days! Those riders and their ponies sure were fast! But Oppy, it doesn't take ten days to talk with someone in the West anymore.

Why, you're in Philadelphia, and I'm here in Wyoming, but our letters arrive faster than that. Besides, we can talk on the **eyephone** too.”

“Yes, **CheyeAnn**, that's the biggest reason the Pony Express stopped running. When the telegraph – sort of the grandparent of the telephone – was invented, messages could be sent much quicker. People didn't need the riders and their ponies anymore.”

“But they still did an important job! Hey, Oppy, I think I see a spec of dust in the distance!”

“**CheyeAnn**, that reminds me of a fun game. The next time you're on traveling in the car or bus, look far into the distance and try to guess what one of the far-away objects is. As you get closer, you'll learn if you were right! If you're traveling with a group, you can pick a landmark, like a bridge, at the

start of your trip, and then see who's the first to spot it!”  
– Kate McCorkle



*This stamp commemorates the Pony Express's historic mission, depicting a lone rider galloping across the west on his pony. The mail is visible on his saddle.*

### Oppy Club Members,

remember that, depending on your eyesight, a spec of dust can sometimes be much more than a spec of dust.

