



Stagecoach: Wells Fargo and the American West

Philip L. Fradkin

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Sweeping in scope, as revealing of an era as it is of a company, *Stagecoach* is the epic story of Wells Fargo and the American West, by award-winning writer Philip L. Fradkin.

The trail of Wells Fargo runs through nearly every imaginable landscape and icon of frontier folklore: the California Gold Rush, the Pony Express, the transcontinental railroad, the Civil and Indian Wars. From the Great Plains to the Rockies to the Pacific Ocean, the company's operations embraced almost all social, cultural, and economic activities west of the Mississippi, following one of the greatest migrations in American history.

Fortune seekers arriving in California after the discovery of gold in 1849 couldn't bring the necessities of home with them. So Wells Fargo express offices began providing basic services such as the exchange of gold dust for coin, short-term deposits and loans, and reliable delivery and receipt of letters, money, and goods to and from distant places. As its reputation for speed and dependability grew, the sight of a red-and-yellow Wells Fargo stagecoach racing across the prairie came to symbolize not only safe passage but faith in a nation's progress. In fact, for a time Wells Fargo was the most powerful and widespread institution in the American West, even surpassing the presence of the federal government.

Stagecoach is a fascinating and rare combination of Western and business history. Along with its colorful association with the frontier -- Wyatt Earp, Black Bart, Buffalo Bill -- readers will discover that swiftness, security, and connectivity have been constants in Wells Fargo's history, and that these themes remain just as important today, 150 years later.

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