



Jolting Days Aboard the California Overland Express in 1860: A Journey Aboard the Butterfield Overland Express Mail Company on the Longest Stage-Ride in the World

William Tallack

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2010 is the 150th anniversary of William Tallack's exotic stagecoach journey through a dangerous, long-lost American culture and landscape. For a flickering moment in the history of the United States the world's longest stagecoach line ran along the 2,868 mile southern Butterfield Route from San Francisco to St. Louis, passing through Los Angeles, the Colorado Desert, Mexico, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, the Indian Territory, Arkansas, the Ozarks, and Missouri. For 1,000 days, between 1859 and 1861, U.S. Mail and passengers moved along this route-sometimes at the breakneck speed of 12 miles an hour. When America plunged into the horrors of civil war, the line was shut down forever. During the hot summer of 1860, for 23 days and 22 nights, a keenly observant British gentleman, William Tallack, rode the exhilarating and frenetic California Overland Express, obsessively recording the details of the people he met, the places he saw, and the important social issues of the day. On this wild rush of a journey, they never stopped for longer than forty-five minutes, barrelling along through jagged mountain passes, dusty plains, scorching deserts, and tangled, jungle-like forests. Tallack's Jolting Days is a valuable and unique glimpse into the everyday dangers and joys of frontier travel and is required reading for anyone interested in the rough and wild diversity of life found on the American frontier before the transcontinental railroad and a bloody Civil War changed everything.

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