



# Video Story Transcript

## Another Way West

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**Link to YouTube Video:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZvbdICb5pE>

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Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

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Hello, I'm Jane Stenson. I'd like to tell you an excerpt from a story, "Another Way West." It's a story about my great-grandfather. His name, his long name was Elbert Adrian Brinkerhoff. Everybody called him Brink. He was really short. He was a very slight kid but really short. I mean, he was probably about my height, about 5'2" or 5'3". And he loved horses. Well, actually, what he liked to do, was to race horses. He lived for school to be over at the end of the day. And then he would jump on his horse, he would race out to the general store, pick up the family's mail, and race home.

In 1855, he graduated from a school where his father was Headmaster and he was all set to go to college. But what happened was that a letter came. And following that letter, came the author of the letter, a Captain Joseph Hamilton. And he is, his clipper ship was in New York Harbor but he was a war friend of Brink's father. So, they invited him out to Long Island, to their house. And he began to talk about the clipper ship, about how beautiful it was, about the white sails on the ship, and how fast it was. It went faster than anything else that was out there. And about how much money you could make in the around the world cargo trade. So, the more he talked, the more interested Brink became. And when Captain Hamilton invited Brink to go along with him on this around the world cargo trade, and that he would teach bring all about how to make money in the cargo trade, it was very easy for Bring to defer college and decide to go around the world.

So, they left New York Harbor. They went south, ah, east, southeast all the way down and around the big bump in South America, and all the way down and around under Cape Horn, all the way up the west side of South America, Central America, up to San Francisco. And in San Francisco, when they offloaded all that cargo, Brink found out it was just ordinary things. Things, which in 1855, would be important to the people that were settling out there. Eggs, whiskey, cotton cloth. And things that were important to the miners like

picks and shovels and boots. Soon as the cargo was offloaded, Captain Hamilton, now this was unexpected, but Captain Hamilton got a cargo all the way back to New York. Brink didn't get to go around the world. In fact, he was stranded in San Francisco.

Well, he had skills; horses, he was educated, for the time, and he was amili... amiable. He was a good kid. So, he went, with his letter of introduction, to Wells Fargo and he got himself a job. He was a Treasury Agent. And it was a perfect job for him because it was all about riding his horse through his territory, which was San Francisco up to Sacramento, and then out beyond Sacramento into the Shasta mining district.

Well, he delivered the mail. Yeah. So, he put on his slouch hat and his bright, red shirt and he'd jump on his horse and he'd whack and he'd bang on the door of a claim. And somebody inside the claim of the gold mine would know that there was a letter. And then, in those days, if he was delivering the mail, it was the recipient of the letter who paid the bill. So, they would offer not cash because those miners didn't have a lot of cash. What they had were vials of gold. He might get half an ounce of gold for delivering one letter. That's probably about \$300 in today's, today's money. Or, or he delivered newspapers that were five or six months old. And the miners will pay anywhere from 8 to \$150 for those letters.

And then a letter would be there. Somebody would climb up the ladder from inside the claim and they would pay the pony man. Brink would hand over the letter and then he jumped back on his horse, three blasts on his horn, and a way he was down the trail, down the creek bed, wherever he was to go on to the next house. He liked that job.

And in fact, as Treasury Agent, he got to know where everything was. Where people lived in that, in that whole area between San Francisco and Sacramento and up into the Shasta area. He got to know which claims were mining gold, which claims were beginning to dry up and he got to know about the Shasta Indians. Where they lived, how they were moving, if they were moving, what they were doing, and that was part of his job. Part of his job was to keep track of those things for Wells Fargo.

Well, this was 1855, 1856 when he had this job. And when the Gold Rush had started in 1849, miners began to pour into California followed by the settlers. And those miners' white tents sprang up all over the Shasta district, like some sort of non-native invasive species. And the miners, they were interested in the gold. They panned for the gold. They found gold inside of caves and they gouged inside the caves. And the fish went belly up and the land that the... the game on the land went scarce. Well, that was the Shasta Indians way of life. That was their food. And the Shasta Indians began to realize with more and more people coming in, that they were losing not just their food source, they were losing their entire way of life.

In, in 1849, as the gold rush started, there were 290 people in Sacramento. And just in 1856, when Brink got this job, there were 400,000 people in Sacramento. Four hundred thousand people interested in becoming rich. Rich with gold. Rich with owning land. And the Indian began to understand that he was losing. He was losing again and again. Some of the Indians began to raid. Some of the Indians began to massacre. There were problems. And the government, which was represented by the U.S. Army at that time, decided that they needed to protect the Indian. And that the Indian needed to be moved out of the Shasta District and on to a reservation.

They hired Treasury Agents to do that job. Brink was a member of the Vigilance Committee in San Francisco. That was a group of men, six thousand strong, who were committed to law and order in California. And that's what they wanted to do. So, he took that job, that extra job, extra work for him, because he knew where the Shasta Indians were. He gathered them. He collected them. And he marched them to Nomlaki, which was a piece of land where nobody wanted to settle. It was poor. Nothing grew there. It was bad land. But he

marched those Indians, with friends, with other people, to that military reservation that was quickly and poorly constructed. I don't know how he felt about what he did because in his journal he simply documented that he had participated in that...march.

I do know that he liked his job as a Treasury Agent because he wrote about it. And he wrote about the people that he met and he, and how he likes delivering the mail and keeping track of all the things that were going on. He wrote about how beautiful the land was in the Shasta nation. About the hunting and the fishing that he did on his days off. But about his participation for the few days of the, the Indian march to Nomlaki, he simply documented that he had participated in that.

Well, I have to tell you that he went back to his regular job after that. And he was honored by Wells Fargo for the good job that he did as a Treasury Agent. They asked him if he would be interested in riding the first leg of the Pony Express East. Well, he said yes. And so, he carried, in 1860, he carried his mail pouch of 56 letters from San Francisco up to Sacramento, and then he handed the mail pouch off to the Overland rider, who would take all those letters to um, to the east coast. At that time, the people who wrote the letters were the ones who paid \$5 for each letter going east.

Well, I have to say, in thinking about my great-grandfather Brink, the family stories that have come down to us, are all about his participation in the Pony Express and what an adventure it was and how romantic it was. And how great it was that he got to do that and I believe that.

Do we talk about his role as a member of the Vigilance Committee and his role in dislocating the Indians from their, from their nation, from their land? No. I had to look that information up. It was not information that was handed down in the family stories. Now, at the time that he did that, he was 18 years old. And he was probably not as wise then as he became later on in his life. That he moved 300 people from their land to a reservation is not praiseworthy by any standard. Yet it's part of a lot of white family histories in this country.

Dr. Martin Luther King said that, "The arc of moral history is long. But that it bends toward truth."

I believe...I hope that that is true.