

Henry James “Hank” Monk



Henry James “Hank” Monk
1826-1883

Hank Monk was born in Waddington, New York and allegedly began driving a stage coach at age twelve. At age 24, in 1852, he came to California and began driving for the California Stage Company driving the Auburn and Sacramento route. Later he would run the Sacramento-Placerville route and still later he drove the Placerville-Nevada route. His skill was legendary and even Mark Twain wrote about Monk in his novel “Roughing It.” The tale of Horace Greeley’s trip with Monk spread all over the West even before Twain wrote about it. “Keep your seat Horace, I’ll get you there on time,” was the famous line that has passed through history.

From “Roughing It,”

I can tell you a most laughable thing indeed, if you would like to listen to it. Horace Greeley went over this road once. When he was leaving Carson City he told the driver, Hank Monk, that he had an engagement to lecture at Placerville and was very anxious to go through quick. Hank Monk cracked his whip and started off at an awful pace. The coach bounced up and down in such a terrific way that it jolted the buttons all off of Horace’s coat, and finally shot his head clean through the roof of the stage, and then he yelled at Hank Monk and begged him to go easier--said he warn’t in as much of a hurry as he was awhile ago.

But Hank Monk said, 'Keep your seat, Horace, and I'll get you there on time!--and you bet you he did, too, what was left of him!