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Mail by Rail

The Story of the Postal Transportation Service

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with

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To my dear wife

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FOREWORD

The purpose of this book is to tell the story of the Postal Transportation (Railway Mail) Service, past and present. In particular, it is the story of the unsung and highly trained men who expertly sort your mail and mine on speeding trains, day and night. The author and his collaborator, both of whom have worked in this Service, are eager to portray it so that it will interest everyone who mails a letter—as well as the railfan, the R.P.O.-H.P.O. enthusiast or philatelic collector, and the postal transportation clerk himself. Above all, we hope thereby to improve working conditions within the Service and contribute to its personnel's welfare, as well as to more efficient postal services in the public interest.

As the first general descriptive book on our railway postal services to appear in over thirty-four years, this work is based partly on its small predecessor of 1916, Professor Dennis's *The Travelling Post Office*; but it has become a completely new and vastly expanded volume, covering everything from the mighty streamlined Fast Mail trains and Highway Post Offices of today to the ghostly white street-car R.P.O.s of yesteryear, even though maps had to be omitted.

Young men interested in entering the P.T.S., new substitutes, and railway mail researchers should review carefully the Technical Notes and Appendices at the back. The greatest care has been taken to insure the book's accuracy; but despite intense research in the field, libraries, and by correspondence and re-checking of data, minor factual errors and inadvertent omissions of certain facts or proper credits are all too likely to creep in. The author makes no pretense of infallibility and will appreciate all such points being called to his attention for rectification in future editions and, if warranted, by notice in appropriate journals.

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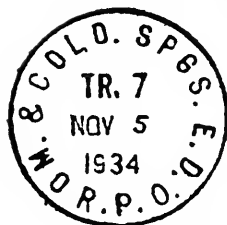
MAIL BY RAIL

STEEL CARS AND IRON MEN

The Railway Mail! Ah, how my mind goes ranging o'er
the years

When, in old Number 31, the mail piled to my ears,
I showed the world, along with all the others in the crew,
Just what a bunch of mail clerks in their fighting clothes
could do . . .

— EARL L. NEWTON



— Courtesy *Postal Markings*

Framed tensely in a doorway on a speeding train, roaring through the night past a tiny village on a curve, he stands alert—a postal transportation clerk. His eyes are fixed upon a tiny light on a track-side crane; his hands grip a strange, huge hook on a cross-bar; his faded denims flutter in the wind, held to his waist by a big belt carrying a grim six-shooter and a long key chain. He has just stepped away from a “blind” mail case into which he had been flipping letters for several thousand post offices to the exact proper routes—without even a mark on any of his 150 pigeonholes to guide him!

As average Americans, we know about as little concerning this grizzled mail-key railroader and his amazing, vitally important job as anyone could deem possible. These expert superpostmen of the rails, who sort America's mails in transit at mile-a-minute speeds to save precious hours and days in

delivery, are seldom heard of or even noticed. Except, perhaps, by their co-workers of the railroad and post offices; by occasional bystanders at stations who suddenly notice their car marked "United States Mail—Railway Post Office" and peer through the barred windows, fascinated, to watch them at work; or by the small-town resident to whom the flying tackle by which our veteran clerk soon hooks a pouch from that trackside crane is an old story, and to whom he's known as a "railway mail clerk."¹

Weird are the misconceptions as to who this man might be! For example:

"You just take on and unload the mail, don't you?"

"What railroad company do you work for?"

"How long have you been with the Railway Express?"

Such are the never-ending questions that in time may irk even the best-natured clerk. Many persons still believe the mail clerk starts out with a pouch ready-locked for each station. Others remark, enviously, "Those chaps only work every other week; the rest of the time they loaf. And they ride all over the country free, seeing the sights. I know—I read the Civil Service school ads."

Far from that, America's thirty thousand postal transportation clerks are trained experts employed solely by the United States Government. Their richly earned time off is spent largely in required studies, label preparations, and scheme correcting. With their officials, they constitute our nation-wide Postal Transportation Service—known as the Railway Mail Service until late in 1949—and handle 93 per cent of all non-local mail matter. It is small wonder that the Postal Transportation Service is famed as "the backbone of the postal establishment" or "the Arteries of the Postal Service."

And these "arteries" are indeed manned by red-blooded, keen-minded men of good physique and uncanny intellect. Aged eighteen to seventy, they work night and day in con-

¹The railroads still officially designate P.T.C.'s as "railway mail clerks," and this popular term will be frequently used here.

necting mail trains, called Railway Post Offices (R.P.O.s), from Halifax to Los Angeles. Still other railway mail clerks—to give them their popular title—work in terminals, highway post offices, boat “R.P.O.s,” airfields, transfer and field offices, and even (experimentally) in airplanes.

With the gruff self-deprecation so characteristic of these clerks, we can well imagine some veteran of the rails at this point as he snorts and emits the classic remark:

“There *were* days when we used to have wooden cars and iron men. Now we have *steel* cars and . . .” And his voice trails off into mumble of good-natured exasperation.

But we who have really come to know these men, as they are today, hold to the conviction that we must say “steel cars and iron men”—for it is still true, as Postmaster General Jones said in 1888:

“There is no position more exacting . . . He must not only be sound in mind and limb, but possessed of above-ordinary intelligence and a retentive memory . . . He must know no night or day. He must be impervious to heat or cold. Rushing along at the rate of [now, 60 to 90] miles per hour, in charge of that which is sacred—the correspondence of the people—catching his meals as he may; at home only semi-occasionally, the wonder is that men competent [for] so high a calling can be found.”

The whole purpose of the P.T.S. is to speed our mails by sorting them *in transit* instead of while lying in a post office. In the 1850's a typical letter mailed to Florida from a town in Maine would require one to two weeks for delivery, because it had to wait its turn for sorting and resorting at Boston, New York, Washington, and so on.

Today five speedy R.P.O. lines carry the letter continuously southward, while all necessary sorting is done en route. A clerk on the Bangor & Boston R. P. O. (McG-B&M)², running through our Maine town, receives the letter and probably puts it in a “South States” letter package in his case. Tied with string, the package is addressed by means of a slip to

²Maine Central and Boston & Maine R.R.'s. Similar standard or easily-recognized railroad abbreviations will be used following all R.P.O. titles as needed.

the next R.P.O. connection, the Boston & N.Y. (NYNH&H). That line will probably make up a "Florida State" package, and the next clerk, on the N. Y. & Washington (PRR), will probably put it in a pouch of Florida "working" packages made up for the Wash. & Florence R.P.O. (RF&P-ACL). A clerk on that line will make up a "Flor. & Jacksonville—Fla." package, containing our letter, for this next line. If the Florida village is directly on the Flor. & Jack. (ACL), the clerk on that line makes a direct package for the town and puts it off there in a pouch; if destined for a connecting line, the letter will go into a package pouched to that route instead. Within two *days* after mailing, it can be delivered.

This ingenious work is done in over three thousand R.P.O. cars (on passenger trains) and highway post offices, operated on over eight hundred separate routes covering over 205,000,000 miles annually. Routes are usually named from their terminals—such as the "N.Y. & Chicago R.P.O.," famed as the New York Central's "Fast Mail" route. Postal cars are usually sixty to seventy feet long; but in all cars, except the "full R.P.O.s" used on the trunk lines, clerks and mails are restricted to a fifteen- or thirty-foot "apartment." Main-line R.P.O. trains containing two or three sixty-foot cars with twelve or fifteen clerks in each are a sharp contrast to the tiny one-man branch-line and suburban facilities.

In addition to the lettering mentioned, most R.P.O. cars may be recognized by their low, continuous windows containing prison-like vertical or horizontal wooden rods, and by a catcher hook or a safety bar in each sliding door. Inside, the busy clerks work in strictly utilitarian surroundings, usually finished in drab brown paint and plain varnish, except for the newest cars, which feature green-enameled cases and walls; ceilings are white. If a typical car is entered through its "end door" from the car ahead, we find first of all a small closet into which the clothes and wraps of a full crew can barely be jammed. Doors, usually nine to 18 inches wide, as well as closets, are wider in newer cars. Front hooks, soon completely covered for easy pocket access, are a particular bane to those due to arrive later.

There follow in quick succession a tiny lavatory opposite, steel-pole stalls or bins ("stanchions" out West) for stacking bag mails, sliding doors, a water cooler, pigeonhole cases for sorting letters, tray tables and steel racks in which *pouches* (for letters) and *sacks* (for newspapers) are hung, and then more sliding doors and storage bins. Letter cases, which in some cars are at the center instead, are built flat against the walls, with a ledge and drawers underneath. Each "letter man" handles a case section eleven or twelve holes high and four to sixteen columns wide; case holes are just four and one-half or four and one-quarter inches wide. The canvas, leather-strapped pouches are hung squarely open in their collapsible steel-pipe rack; pouch clerks are busily flinging letter packages and first-class packets (*slugs*) in front, behind them, and above into auxiliary overhead boxes with sliding gates. The "paper man" does exactly the same thing with his newspapers and occasional parcels; his sacks, loosely hung with dangling cord fasteners, are usually at the rear of the big sixty-five ton car. Each car costs the railroad up to \$85,000—and Uncle Sam up to fifty-four cents per mile for its use.

Working at a mad pace in his speeding, swaying train for nightly nine- to sixteen-hour stretches, the railway mail clerk is a fascinating study in human psychology. His steadfast attention to duty, superior intellect and memory, stamina, and sterling honesty are all proverbial. Less known is his typical, good-natured deprecation of himself and his job; he's loath to admit that he does have a quiet, hidden determination to speed the mails home—to never "go stuck" (leave mails incompletely sorted). He usually detests that hackneyed saying "The mails must go through," and few clerks will admit, as M. E. Peebles did recently in *The Postal Transport Journal*,³ that "I personally believe we have one of the finest jobs in the country." And yet, should their expert teamwork cease for only twenty-four hours, national chaos would result and business and commerce grind practically to a standstill.

But in their personal ideals and special interests mail-car

³Then the *Railway Post Office*.

men are as startlingly different as they are otherwise alike. They run the whole gamut from stag-party-and-hot-swing devotees to poetic symphony lovers, from avid horse-race fans to musicians or creative artists, and from fervent Gospel-declarers to revelers in wine, women, and song! Nearly all clerks, however, like hunting and card games.

A surprising number of college men enter the Service, including scores of former underpaid male teachers. Seventy out of 150 typical new substitutes were found to be college graduates, and many are likely to rise to the top—as did one clerk, a Princeton man named John D. Hardy, who became the highest official of the service.

Occasionally, however, a somewhat unlettered youth who nevertheless makes excellent examination grades is appointed. Clark Carr tells how enraged one Civil Service commissioner was when former General Superintendent Bangs of the old "R.M.S." showed him an atrociously ungrammatical and misspelled letter received from such a clerk—until Bangs revealed that that clerk was the best in the United States at that time, making faster time, fewer errors, and better test grades than any other employee!

To let off steam amid their trying working conditions, most clerks indulge in a good bit of healthy "griping" against "the office" and against their own fraternal union, the National Postal Transport Association (RMA); actually, their loyalty to both ranks close to perfect. A second "escape" is provided by their universal sense of humor.

The typical clerk is a clean-cut, healthy chap with few distinguishing features when in street clothes, unless he is going to or from his train, carrying his "little grip" and heavy key chain. But in his head he has retained the exact names and routes of from three thousand to ten thousand different post offices, and, often, the exact train connections for most of them. Some P.T.S. men have a keen natural interest in the geographical routing of addresses and rather enjoy their studies and duties, and some have yielded to a seldom-admitted lure for serving on speeding trains. But our typical railway mail clerk just regards it all as part of a grind—a job he carries

on faithfully, unknown and unsung. What matters it that in his most important periodic "exams," *passing* is 97 per cent, and in all others, 85 per cent—far higher than the best university requirements!

Postal transportation clerks and their predecessors (route agents) have been publicly cited for their honesty and loyalty for over one hundred years. With no officials to observe them at work, clerks handle billions of dollars on their honor—ranging from an occasional unwrapped silver coin or bank note labeled to destination with stamp affixed (or even a letter with a nickel sewed on for postage) to whole cases and bags of currency, bonds, or coin which they must keep protected at gun point. All are promptly delivered in safety, while the smallest loose coin or the largest bill is scrupulously turned in. Statistically, the P.T.S. is 99.87 per cent honest!

Many a loyal clerk thinks nothing of paying out of his pocket for costly geographical lists, keyed city-distribution case labels, special stationery, knives and thumbstalls, and other supplies, none of which is required equipment for doing his job according to minimum standards. He purchases them voluntarily—solely in order to sort mail more quickly and accurately. Even when ill he sometimes makes his run, if no substitutes are available, rather than default the job. But there are more dramatic examples of loyalty too. . . .

Before Beardstown, Illinois, built its sea wall, the Illinois River often flooded the entire vicinity of the Burlington station. One night as Rock Island & St. Louis (CB&Q) R.P.O. Train 51 was ready to leave over the flooded track, a man in hip boots came rushing up to the door with a revolver and a bag of mail. It seems that a long stretch of track over which a connecting train was due to come in had completely washed out, and this man—Clerk R. E. Glenn, off duty—had hired a rowboat and brought the mail over miles of rough water in the dark to make a last-minute connection, preventing the delay of thousands of letters. Oddly enough, the risky deed was not officially approved at the time.

Similar floods often maroon R.P.O. trains in isolated places or force them to detour many miles, thus requiring clerks to

work sometimes twenty or thirty hours without a break. In some cases the mail is soon worked up and the weary men can doze or rest during the extra time; but, like as not, delayed or unexpected extra mail connections will be received in the train from all directions. Schedules and routings for best dispatch change sharply with the unexpected lapse of time, adding to the complication and often requiring reworking of mail. Lunches are fast exhausted, and any bits of eatables cherished by the crew members begin skyrocketing in value—at least so the stories have it—as the hungry men bargain for them. (Actually, clerks are usually generous sharers; a new “sub” without lunch is often quickly provided for.)

Such major emergencies as train robberies and serious wrecks are pretty rare in these days of safety devices, eagle-eyed inspectors, and armed clerks. But when they do occur, today’s “mail-key railroaders” still live up to their proverbial devotion, alertness, and courage. They yet have a share in all the tasks and traditions, the risks and romance, that float upon the smoky breath of the “high iron.” (See Chap. 11.)

There were, for example, Clerks Earl Boothman and Guy O’Hearn, who beat off desperate bandits (in open gunplay) who had attacked Chic. & Carbondale (IC) Train 31 at Onarga, Illinois, in 1939; badly wounded, they saved a \$56,000 payroll, shot a bandit to enable his capture, later received official commendations and \$1,000 each from the insurance company. Years before, Clerk Alvin S. Page planned a successful trap for the desperadoes of “Indian Charlie,” whom he’d heard were to hold up his Texas R.P.O. train and seize \$300,000; Page risked his life defending the mails as G-men closed in, and later refused *any* of a \$5,000 reward offered him by Postmaster General Hayes.

Fate struck twice in quite a different way, recently, to call forth two magnificent examples of quick thinking courage on the one-man “Harry & Frank” R.P.O. — a P.R.R. run from Harrington, Delaware, to Franklin City, Virginia, just discontinued. Clerk C. E. Adkins, incapacitated by a sudden stroke when on duty southbound, refused medical aid until the conductor could secure a replacement for him,

meanwhile trying to work his mail left-handed on his hands and knees clear to Franklin City and back to Snow Hill, Maryland. There he was relieved by an off-duty clerk, called through the quick co-operation of Mrs. Adkins. Shortly afterwards (March 1946) Clerk C. R. Thorsten saved the lives of seven passengers on the same train at the same spot (Snow Hill) when a gasoline truck hit the mail train—creating a blazing inferno from which he barely escaped alive!

As recently as March 20, 1950, a clerk paid the supreme sacrifice through a train accident—Ira J. Donald of Terre Haute, Indiana, fatally injured making a dangerous "catch" February 1 at Caledonia, Ohio, on the Cleveland & St. Louis (Big Four); and three years before, six clerks were killed in a terrible Pennsy tragedy. But such mass fatalities are now extremely rare; it had been thirty-seven years since a worse tragedy had occurred—the snow avalanche which crashed into Spokane & Seat., now Williston & Seattle (GN) Trains 27 and 25, February 22, 1910, at Wellington, Washington, killing 101 riders and 8 clerks (including Clerk-in-Charge J. D. Fox), when the snowbound trains plunged three hundred feet into a canyon. (Just three years before, a train of the same R.P.O. had been marooned very close by in a snowshed for ten days, with no harm done.⁴) In most recent years only one or two clerks have been killed.

What is a wreck usually like? Ask retired clerk Theodore Wheelock, whose mail car on the Tucumcari & El Paso (SP's *Golden State Limited*) plowed into the far bank of Brazorita Canyon in New Mexico as the rest of the train plunged through a trestle. The only head-end survivor, he dug out and waded through water up to his chin, with a broken shoulder, until he secured help for the trapped passengers from a ranch house, and protection for his mails. Or ask Dan Moschenross of the Toledo & St. Louis (Wabash), who recalls with grim humor:

"A wreck is usually caused by one train trying to meet or

⁴*Railroad Magazine*, March 1940—"10 Days in a Snowshed," by Clerk Fred Wightman.

pass another on the same track. It has never been done successfully . . . but the railroads keep right on trying. Sometimes a train will get off the track and run along on the ground. That has never worked very well either . . .

"Only two people ever get to a wreck ahead of the mail clerks: . . . the engineer and fireman. Next comes the baggageman, then the passengers—and then the ambulance drivers.

"When you are in a mail car and suddenly see all the letters flying around like pigeons, and there are ties and broken rails going past the windows, you can be sure there's going to be a wreck on your line. And, that you will be in it."

In one such wreck, nine pouches of loose letters were gathered up from the resulting jumble of mail, equipment, and broken fixtures. And while the engineer and fireman do "get to a wreck" first, *they* can often see danger in time to jump; but the clerks have no way of knowing what lies ahead.

There are other evidences of the typical clerk's innate loyalty, less spectacular, but just as remarkable. On a simple letter case for a distant state where he is required only to pick out letters for the largest towns, he often voluntarily learns the proper R.P.O. routing for its many offices and rearranges his case accordingly. Transferred to a new, unfamiliar assignment, he pitches in, with the aid of a standpoint list perhaps, to "work" the new State with amazing accuracy until he qualifies on its examination; many a clerk has become expert on an assignment by "picking it up" without ever taking a test on it. A good clerk watches those about him, and hastens to render assistance where needed without being told. And instead of hoping for the train to speed up, so he can get off duty early, he usually breathes a petition for a few slow-downs so he can complete distribution in A-1 style.

What character sketches could be drawn of many a loyal, respected veteran of the mail car! Who could ever forget popular "Cappie," for example—a pleasant, tall, curly-headed clerk on an Eastern line—who for years wore two guns on duty (P.T.S. revolver and a big "horse pistol") and always a brace of pencils as wide as his broad smile, and who eats huge

Dagwood sandwiches? Or a certain efficient clerk-in-charge who demands that all "toe the mark" in no faint tones, but who goes hunting and treats his crew—down to the newest sub—to roast venison? More power to them.

And speaking of sandwiches and game, our mail-train men are champion eaters indeed. Many take three or four big sandwiches or a whole pie for lunch, while others, who eat lightly on duty, may be true trenchermen at other times, especially at the popular banquets and celebrations staged by the N.P.T.A. With pheasant and deer hunting rated as the clerks' top field sports, at least one branch holds an annual pheasant feed famed for its food consumption; perhaps it was here that a clerk named "Paradise" was reported in the old *R.P.O.* to have eaten seven helpings of barbecue and seven ears of corn! Despite claims of one official to the contrary, there are quite a few fat fellows in the Service, as one would expect after hearing of such astounding gustatory records. We read of colossal "eating contests," a clerk whose byword was "Don't throw anything out!" and embarrassing incidents of clerks missing their trains by lingering too long at a way station beanery (one of them had to catch it at the next station, hiring a taxi!).

Few champions have arisen to give railway mail clerks a bit of deserved recognition, as did one New England congressman who was invited to watch a typical clerk at work. He exclaimed, "You fellows earn your salary by your physical labor alone!" then, on learning of the stringent study requirements, "You earn your pay through your mental work alone!" Moreover, big mail-order firms and magazines like *Time* and *Life* buy full-page advertising space in the *Postal Transport Journal* to express gratitude for the excellent service rendered by postal transportation clerks. "We express our appreciation of the splendid co-operation which makes this service possible," advertised the *Reader's Digest* one Christmas.

In Union, South Carolina, a businessman does his part in remedying this lack of recognition—taken for granted by the average clerk—by sending a Christmas message to all clerks through the medium of those running through his town on

the Ashe. & Columbia (Sou). Published afterwards in the clerks' *Journal*, a typical recent message of Mr. Nicholson's, sent despite illness, read thus:

Happy Christmas greetings to you, my friends of the Railway Mail Service: To your steadfast devotion to duty, regardless of physical feelings and exhaustion; to your quickness of thought and hand . . . which brings pleasure . . . help . . . and hope with the Christmas greetings and packages, I pay highest tribute. Without your untiring efforts . . . the world, in a sense, would stand still.

Thank you . . . for what you have done for me the past twelve months, and many years; . . . and I add a most fervent God bless you, this . . . season, and every day.

Your friend,

ALLAN NICHOLSON

Similarly, clerks on San Fran. & Barstow (Santa Fe) Train 23 were pleased to receive the following card one day in April 1947:

. . . I want to pat you guys on the back. That niece of ours, Dolores, received letter April 3, mailed April 2 . . . addressed "Hinkl, Calif." You fellows are artists. I've read some bad ones, being a telegrapher, but this one got me. "73."

L. B. PARKER, Hinkley, California

And Uncle Sam's engravers once paid tribute to the R.P.O. clerk by picturing a train and mail crane on the old five-cent red parcel-post stamp, as well as a clerk on duty, shown on another stamp of this long-forgotten series.

Such men are the men—known officially as "railway postal clerks" before 1950—who speed your mail and mine home in double-quick time. Small wonder it is said that "It requires as much mental, and more physical, labor to become a first-class postal clerk than it does to become proficient in any other . . . profession." They almost never know regular daylight hours; holidays often mean just another workday; they are always subject to emergency call.

Yet at Chicago, nerve center of our mail-train operations, these postal experts connect 95 per cent of all transit mails,

from individual letters to whole through storage cars (supervised by P.T.S. transfer clerks), direct to the proper outgoing train without involving the post office there. And so speeds onward the vital correspondence of a great nation, come darkness, deluge, or disaster.

A RUN FOR THEIR MONEY

That Texas case is all gummed up, and so is the Rackensac;
The *Daily Sun* put out a ton of single wraps, by heck—
If we can't get through with that "Old Missoo"¹ the
Chief will tramp my neck. . . .

—ROBERT L. SIMPSON



On the train platform of a great Eastern railway terminal a group of neatly dressed men are carrying bags and apparently waiting for a train like any other bunch of travelers. But what a rail journey *these* men are destined to make—in the R. P. O. car of a great express train, manning a strenuous trunk-line mail run of hundreds of miles! And they well earn their hardly lucrative pay—it's really a "run for their money."

From all directions and distances they have come—some on foot, from lodgings hard by the station; some by trolley, bus, or auto from city and suburbs; some of them on commuters' trains, and particularly on incoming trains of their own line. From town or farm residences all along this route clerks can deadhead to work free on their travel commissions, some from points over one hundred miles away. (These passes are restricted to business travel on this one line.) Other clerks in the group will hail from the line's other end, or from far-distant midway points—the latter circumstances often restricting home life to layoffs.

¹Missouri letters.

Because they must prepare their cars and sort the mails already accumulated locally, clerks put in several hours' *advance work* while their car is still in the station. A different (but fixed) reporting time is set by the District Superintendent for each run out of that station; it may be morning, evening, or night. If it is a heavy run, there may be two or three full R.P.O. cars with a storage car between them and usually others attached. (There are only 606 of these full R.P.O. cars—but nearly 2,600 cars with R.P.O. apartments.)

Sooner or later a puffing switch engine backs the R.P.O. unit into the particular track where the crew awaits it. If it is late, there may be a bull session until it comes, and at no loss of pay—but the clerks may have to work twice as hard later to catch up. They clamber into the car over the short door ladders, and one clerk quickly turns on the lights. In some cars he must fish around in a dark fuse box to do it, and let's hope he can distinguish between the switch handle and the shiny copper bars adjacent!

At about the same time arrives the *grip man*, who is not a cable-car motorman, but a baggage porter or elevator man hired by the clerks to bring down their "big grips" of heavier supplies to the train, at five cents per grip each way. It saves wearily lugging these via stairs, ramps, or elevators from a distant grip room in the station or post office.

Inside, each man throws both handbag and grip on the case ledge and flings them open. Out of the bag comes a wicked-looking revolver and holster, a lunch, *schemes* of distribution (showing the mail route for each office in a given state), mail train schedules, various personal belongings, stamped slips and labels or *slides* (furnished by the Department, printed for that train) used for identifying packages and bags of outgoing mail, and perhaps his clerk's name dater with pad and rubber type to fit, pencils, and so forth. Pouch and sack labels, cut or torn from ribbons or strips of five labels each, look like this:

(Actual size, on
buff cardboard "slides")

ALLENTOWN & PHILA Tr 40
Pennsylvania Newspapers
Fr N Y Geneva & Buff Tr 7

His *slips* are printed on paper like newsprint, like this
(*dis* means "mails distributed from"):

(Printed)

Size $3\frac{1}{4}$ " x 4"

(Rubber-stamped)

BALTIMORE MD DIS
Maryland A to D
Fr Buff & Wash Tr

BUFF & WASH RPO
Tr 554 — Jun 30, 1950
JOHN D. DOE

The big grip is usually a large, sturdy metal or vulcanized-fiber suitcase (leather and its substitutes seldom stand the gaff). It contains a weird assortment of extra schemes (booklets about $4\frac{1}{2}$ x $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches), labels, blank slips, official forms, a "Black Book" of Postal Laws and Regulations, work clothes, soap and towels, coffee cup, *headers* (cardboard letter-case labels), knife, registry supplies, and so on.

Instantly the mail slingers disrobe and don work clothes and shoes, guns, badges, and small caps in a quite literal "overall transformation"—although many prefer denims or aprons to overalls. Some gay whimsies are tossed about as multicolored BVD's are momentarily exposed; then guns are

loaded and all hands proceed to hang pouches and sacks in the racks after unfolding them from the wall. Space is limited in most R.P.O.s; eight to ten pouches may be squeezed into each rack row (normally divided for five), although seven are usually hung. Extra pouches or sacks may be hung in aisles and under tables until even the thinnest clerk can barely crawl "down the alley," and dragging a big sack or *shin-peeler* down the aisle becomes a nightmare of barked ankles and frayed nerves. Still more mail bags may be crammed in little "pony" racks called *crabs* or *jacks*.

Letter clerks hasten to their cases to insert their headers (or face up the proper case label on the revolving stick in each hole). Pouch clerks place their labels in neat visible holders fastened inside each pouch's back edge, while "paper men" place most of theirs in special holders on the rack frame—unless a "blind-case expert," who places all labels in the hidden sack holders instead, is at the rack, to the exasperation of any perplexed assistant assigned to help him!

Pigeonholes, pouches, and sacks are seemingly arranged in a confused helter-skelter order, which is almost never alphabetical; but there is method in this madness—the heaviest separations are closest at hand (see *Technical Note 1*). There is at least one letter case for each state distributed on the train, and headers show much colorful variation—from those neatly printed at clerk's expense to hand-lettered Gothic, and from penciled scrawls to colored cutout letters and advertisement headings. Oddly enough, the top pigeonhole in each row will not hold a header, and the one below it must do double duty, divided into two parts—although most cars have many a title scribbled on walls above the top holes by less painstaking clerks! All other headers are placed *over* the box designated, as new substitutes have discovered to their chagrin after working considerable mail according to the headers *below*—much to the rage of the case's owner. Skipping each header designating a single post office (called a *direct*), the letter clerk inserts his stamped slips within the remaining *line* and *dis* boxes (*Note 2*), and meanwhile the rack clerks set up their tray tables between the rack edges and

stretcher bars (supported by pedestals). The "grip man" will poke his head in the door about this time, and the pile of nickels near by will be counted.

"Who's light on the grips?" the clerk-in-charge will bellow.

One or two absent-minded culprits will hasten up with their nickels, and the "poor old grip" man departs. One clerk will be sent out as an armed convoy for the first incoming load of "mail of value" from the post office and is jokingly ordered to bring back "a small load." If he returns, as he usually must, with an overflowing truckful, his innocent ears will ring to echoes of "Oh! heartless son of a gun!" and "We'll never send *you* again!" Such repartee, not always printable, continues all the way "down the road." A little bag of locks and twine is opened and the balls of string distributed; it is a rather weak, linty jute, but many clerks insist on it, so they can snap it with the fingers—despite the irritating fuzz which fills the air. Other clerks use a twine knife, worn like a ring, to cut the twine after tying knots; it also cuts open working packages. Every clerk has a knife of some sort, from ornate carved hunting blades on down; many get sharpened to a curved remnant.

A brief bull session may await the first mail, or it may come flooding in with the grips. Direct bags for large towns on and beyond the line are often loaded in a separate storage car, supervised by a certain clerk among other duties; he must sometimes load and unload it. And going through a dark, bouncing vestibule on a freezing night into a storage car a dozen times is no fun, especially since its big sliding doors usually stick like sin.

But there are mountains of mail coming into the R.P.O. car, too; and to the cry of "On the belt!" or "Battle stations, men!" the clerks line up to pass working pouches to the tables in fast bucket-brigade style. Storage mail for smaller stops is separated into bins at the ends, while working newspaper sacks are piled at the paper table; excess working mails may be piled on and under the tables and even in aisles and bins.

In a colorful ceremony, working pouches are recorded by the clerk-in-charge and his "pouch caller," whose opening

cry is "On the hanger!" (the official check list often being hung up). Incoming pouches are checked on this clip-board list or *checkboard* by means of an amazing gibberish:

"From the Madhouse with a two—Tom Cat—Rockin' Chair Line—Pennsy from the Doghouse—Win an' Bridge with a one—West Working Holy Smoke—City of the Dead 3-X—Chat 438 Directs—Working on it—Forty-six—the other Chat—Empire State with a six, Gyp—Ohio Working from the Grand—the Far Rock"—and other strange nicknames and numbers, until the welcome words "Hang it up!" indicate a temporary lull. (*Note 3.*)

Huge piles of mail are dumped up at both tables, especially at the pouch rack, where the *key man* or *dumper* is lifting, unlocking, emptying, and *setting up* the mail—a most strenuous job, usually done by a junior clerk or substitute. The large and small letter packages (*bales* and *skins*) and *slugs* or *flats* must be all set on edge facing the same way, so that pouch clerks can instantly fling them to the proper separation. Each pouch and sack must be thrown open and examined for stray mail after emptying, and then bagged (in the same fashion in which the original "empties" were received) or piled for hand access; they are used to replace full pouches later locked out. Labels are removed and placed in a box.

"Working packages" of letters for local offices and nearby states are thrown directly (or via temporary pouches or boxes) to the letter cases for sorting, instead of into the outgoing pouches which are labeled to the towns along and beyond the line and to connecting R.P.O.s. Similarly, packages tied out from the cases are tossed on the pouch table to be thrown off like the "made-up" packages. The head pouch clerk must have a general knowledge of the routing for ten thousand or more post offices in the distribution area and beyond—and usually without a single chart or list to guide him!

Mail is now flying in all directions. Newspapers just published are rushed to the train with wrapper paste still wet, and they are, of course, speedily handled exactly like the pouch-rack mail. Some publishers include a complimentary copy addressed to the clerk-in-charge, but there's no time to

glance at it now. There is often so much mail that separate paper racks (and, rarely, pouch racks) are maintained for each state handled. Meanwhile, incoming and locked-out pouches and sacks are constantly being passed along to the tune of "Up the alley!" "Down the alley!" or "Alley Oop!" Mail then sent the other way is heralded as "Return Movement!" (officially, a reverse space shipment).

When extra or delayed connections not ordinarily due are received by our train, the whole car becomes a madhouse on wheels as frantic clerks try to get "up" (finish sorting all mail at hand). Conversely, it may be that some connections due our train are missed due to late running, and the pleasant prospect of a light, little-to-do trip looms forth—despite the tinge of regret at the resulting delay to the mail. Tense is the excitement as leaving time nears, when a connection is often made or missed by a split second.

The pouch-table "key man" and the paper-rack "end man" have the most thankless tasks. The pouch dumper must contend with insecurely tied letter packages which break and shower the table and mail with loose letters which he must stop and separate, face together, and tie, watched by the impatient pouch clerk; and must stop and lock out pouches, many wedged behind piles of under-table mail, just as another heavy connection comes pouring in. The end man, besides his usual heavy distribution and tie-out, must usually drag and pile all mail coming down the alley, on the high-stacked storage bins; and must unload, load, and often pile all mail passing his door at every stop.

Serenely presiding over the car, the genial clerk-in-charge, or *chief*, usually works a letter case just inside the first door, which keeps him busy when not supervising. The other "letter men" are busily flipping letters all over the eight or ten other cases at high speed. It is no easy job, although they are often dubbed *case admirals*, especially if any are *canvas-shy* or afflicted with *sackolitis* (i.e., averse to locking out pouches and sacks). As each pigeonhole fills up it is quickly tied out, using a special knot requiring a real knack to tie.

Throughout the car the weird jargon of the Service re-

verberates, and while many terms have been or will be explained eslewhere in our story, the following are typical general or regional slang terms often used in the P.T.S.

A-C—Actual count of mail worked.

Angel—Extra label found in bag of mail (not supposed to be taken credit for).

Appleknockers, knuckleheads, the boys—Crew going up road as we go down.

Balloon—Huge sack or pouch of mail, expanding vastly when dumped.

Beno—Prohibitory order ("There shall be no").

Bladders (German "blatter")—Newspapers.

Brains—Chart or list of mail routes.

Bridge-rack, crab, jack—A small "pony" rack.

Butterfly—Wingnut used by railroader to set up pedestals in car.

Buttons—Snap-on mail locks.

Catch—Local exchange; the mail caught.

Civil-service—To thumb through a package of letters, seeking errors, et cetera.

Club—Correspondence file on mishandled mail.

Cripple or bum—Damaged pouch or sack.

D's, hickies, sinkers, mopies, minus points, brownies—Demerits.

Dress a rack—Hang pouches therein.

English—New England (States).

Fly-paper, wind-mail—Air mail.

Hash or house mail—Miscellaneous bag mails.

Hards—Letters whose route is unknown.

High-wheeler, hypo—Highway post office.

Hitting mail, virgin, one for the knocker—Letter to be postmarked.

Jumbo—To put mail in a *jumbo pouch* for reworking down the road.

Jack-pot, swamp—A jumbo pouch.

LA lock—Snap-on lock or "Lock, Andrus" (from name of inventor).

Mud—Mail matter.

Nixie—An unsortable, misaddressed letter.

Pilot—Mail piler (i.e., "pile-it").

Pull a rack—To remove and lock all pouches.

Red (from abbreviation "reg.", or from former red-striped pouches)—A registered piece.

Red man, money man—Register clerk.

Rob a box—Collect from station letter box.

Sleeper—Unobserved letter left in car.

Stringer—Pouch (sack) hung on rail.

Swindle sheet—Trip report; balance sheet on registers.

Trunk, log—An exceedingly heavy parcel.

Wart—An extra trip.

Way clerk—Local clerk (who makes *catches*).

By this time the switch engine shifts our car to the regular train consist. There is usually at least one new clerk on board, and some wag is sure to holler, as we move, "We're off! Missed everything!" (i.e., all connections due). But the greenhorn's visions of an easy trip are sharply shattered as the car backs in again to receive mountains of connecting mail as well as more from the city post office. The engineer is jerking the car fearfully, and someone yells "Why doncha go back to school and learn how to *drive* an engine!"

"Seventy-six in the house!" yells the pouch caller, and the *chief* checks off a score of pouches from Train 76 as they are called "—with a one . . . with a two . . . a three-X" as before (serial numbers indicating the first, second, and last of three identical pouches). Work continues feverishly; a big road engine is now coupled on ("We've got a horse!"), and leaving time is almost here. Sometimes the clerks' hours of duty are by now nearly half over. The local city *dis* pouch, containing what little mail was missent to our train, is flung out, and an air of tense expectancy pervades the whole car.

"Throw the bums out!" comes the cry, and startled bystanders, expecting to see some tramps ejected from the car, are unaware that *bums* are only the sacks of empties often thrown off before leaving. Then comes the conductor's welcome cry "O.K. on the mail!" and his two short whistle blasts.

"We're off!" It's the real thing this time, and we pull out and gather speed as the *red man* on his stool yells for a helper. We are fast approaching the first station at which mail is de-

livered, and letter, pouch, and paper clerks must have all the "No. 1 mail" (that for first section of the line) worked up by then to keep from "carrying by" a letter or a paper.

At the engineer's signal, the letter man on the local state case ties out the package for this station from his row of "locals" and throws it in the pouch with its other mail; the local clerk locks it and rushes to the door. If it is a non-stop exchange, he quickly throws the pouch in the designated area and catches the incoming pouch off the crane with his hook.

This pouch must be *completely* distributed before reaching the next station, so that the local letter package and pieces from the first office to the second one can be gotten into the next pouch (along with the letter man's tie-out) before it is locked out. Arms work like pistons, and the job is done just in time. This ingenious process is repeated all down the road, while mails for far-distant states are simultaneously being sorted out to the finest degree.

Anything can happen on an R.P.O. run. Lights may fade out, necessitating tying out all cases and working the pouch mail by the feeble glow of candle lamps. The car's underpinning may go haywire, requiring it to be "shopped" for repairs—with every letter package, pouch, and sack to be tied out, unloaded, transferred, and installed in a new car amid much delay.

Most prominent stations along the line, as well as leading distant points, will be identified by special nicknames. Thus, on the N.Y. & Washington R.P.O. (PRR), New Brunswick, New Jersey, is "Once-a-week" (from porters' abbreviation "'Runsweek"); North Philadelphia is "Longest Straight Street in the World" (Broad Street, crossing the P.R.R.); Perryville, Maryland, on the wide Susquehanna is "The River"; and Middle River, Maryland, of Martin Bomber fame is "The Airplanes." Down South, Savannah, is "Yama-craw" and Miami, "My-oh-my"; while Boston is sometimes "Boss-town" and Chicago "She don'-go."

Somewhere along here comes the welcome lull of "coffee time," the clerks' brief fifteen- or twenty-minute lunch period; on long runs, two or more may be allowed. A typical

mail-car "coffee man" (see Chapter 10) provides a fragrant brew to accompany the lunches brought in bags, or occasionally purchased at way-station restaurants (i.e., at a Harvey House out West), or bought from the coffee man or some other clerk who may operate a "commissary" of sandwich ingredients, pie, and sometimes even hot dishes.

On heavy-mail trips, conscientious clerks often eat with one hand and stick mail with the other, or simply postpone lunch until the end of the trip. Lunch time has its pranks, too, when jesters substitute raw eggs for someone's hard-boiled ones, or dust crullers with plaster-of-Paris "sugar." But road life is usually at its best at lunch time—clerks relax comfortably on ledges, tables, or mailbags and eat amid a friendly chat or while reading a paper or viewing passing scenes on a daylight run. Some clerk, celebrating a family addition or promotion, may treat all to refreshments or cigars; a real party may be thrown. During World War II most R.M.S. coffee and commissary men had their R.P.O. units listed as "institutions" to secure necessary rations.

Through tunnels, over great trestles, and around sweeping curves the train roars on. As it approaches each junction station where other R.P.O.s intersect, letter men quickly tie out all packages due to be dispatched there and toss them in the proper pouches, which are locked out and unloaded as soon as the train grinds to a stop "in the house," the door clerk calling the pouches to the *chief* in his usual jargon. A few mail-car Romeos meanwhile eye the station-platform girls through the windows with a fond and delighted gaze, whistling to their companions "Boy! Will you look at *that*!" But mountains of mail are being loaded, and soon the station, luscious blondes and all, is speedily left behind. Occasional unscheduled operating stops or delays sometimes bring forth the accusing remark, "Never stopped *here* before!"

The stacks of working pouches surrounding the pouch table gradually disappear, and the exhausted key man is likely to give a pleasurable sigh as he anticipates a well-earned breathing spell. He dumps the last pouch and waits. But all too often the head pouch clerk then calls:

"Send down that next bin now!" Then the disillusioned dumper discovers that stacks of reserve pouches were stored in the end of the car for lack of room! Only after countless miles of toil will the pouch men finally get "up"; then all full pouches must be locked out before a few minutes of relaxation can be enjoyed—unless, as often happens, there are other assignments then requiring assistance. Clerks who are "up" are usually needed to tie out cases or run out *directs* of letters on the pouch table.

There are more catches "*on the fly*" which the local clerk dare not miss, for any pouch not caught nets him five demerits. Some "hot runs" have less than a minute between certain catcher stations, such as between Berwyn and Branchville, Maryland—two adjacent Washington suburbs on the N.Y., Balt. & Wash. (B&O); the cranes are just four blocks apart, with long stretches of other suburbs on both sides. A pouch clerk must work like lightning to serve two such towns in time for them to exchange mails.

Clerks are given lists of landmarks by which to recognize their approach to each mail crane. But at night these are invisible, whistle signals are obscure, and a veteran clerk must go by the sound or "feel" of the tracks as he passes over switch points, trestles, and other structures. At station after station he promptly delivers "mail for the local inhabitants, whose day would be ruined if you carried it by . . . going through towns when everybody is still in bed, the farmers' lights beginning to show up as you get down the road . . . moonlight across the fields, and all that sort of thing . . . even getting whiffs of what you think is ham and eggs cooking," as one clerk writes us.

Some clerk is sure to liven up the journey by suddenly staring out a window and crying, "Oh, see the big wreck!" "Wow, cars strewn all over the track!" "Whew, what a fire!" or something equally startling. New men present hastily crane necks trying to see, only to bob back and forth in confusion at the howls of "Other side! No, *other* side!" until they catch on to the trick in considerable embarrassment, after beholding nothing unusual whatever.

Now we are approaching the end of the trail. "Every turn of the wheel, now!" we hear. There is often a *shirttail finish*, trying to get "up" on the heaviest case or rack. Perhaps the *red man* has gotten "up" a bit early and is busy balancing his records—his *ninety-mile balance sheet*, someone will slyly call it, with the joking insinuation that he tries to keep occupied thereon (on his handy little stool), while other clerks are locking out racks and hoping for help, during the last ninety miles of the trip! But he has a tough, responsible job.

The "grand tie out" is now under way, and the letter men leave only a few main pigeonholes in, for handling mail from the last few stations. Identical separations in adjacent cases are *massed out* on each other (combined), and very light directs are *massed* into the proper R.P.O. boxes. (Last-minute mails may be sorted flat on a table.) Then the packages are handed to helpers to tie; the big tie-out spreads to the pouch rack as the letter packages are thrown in, and the pouch man cries "Come on, you case lizards!" to letter men hesitating to assist. Overhead boxes are emptied into the proper type bag, and all pouches closed with the standard lock which snaps shut under simple pressure. Only a few pouches for last-minute mails are left in the rack. The end man, his papers tied out earlier, drags and piles the pouches in the proper bins; tray tables are detached, iron pedestals knocked down by stretcher bars, racks are folded back, and bag mail piled in their places.

Now the last station has been served and the last pouch locked out and piled by the weary end man, who sinks into a stupor on a pile of bag mail. Wastepaper and twine must be bagged in a special sack and sent to the terminal office; all outgoing pouches are checked. Some clerk, with gay cries of "Geronimo!" (battle cry of World War II paratroopers), may threaten to "parachute"; i.e., jump off at one of the last few stations—especially if near his home—without doing any unloading. But this is forbidden except in special emergencies, and persistent "paratroopers" really get into trouble.

Then comes washing-up time, and the grimy mail slingers await their turn by the collapsible, potbellied washbasin

(Note 4). Most clerks-in-charge try to allow the last twenty or thirty minutes or so of each trip for wash-up and for counting slips from mail worked (for the trip report), changing clothes, and relaxing a bit. There may even be time for a friendly little game, seated in a circle on the handy wooden boxes used for receiving case mail from the pouch table. Other clerks may read a paper, stamp slips, chat, or even doze a bit (mailbags make a dandy couch). Pranksters play their usual tricks, like nailing down someone's shoes or filling his "little grip" full of locks.

But if it has been a really hectic trip, with the car choked with extra mails, there's no time for such as that! To keep from *going stuck*, many a crew has worked right into its terminal and locked out afterward. If it is still impossible to get "up" even then, the crew must reluctantly go stuck on its heaviest distribution, anyway. Then the unworked (or *uncooked*) mail must be placed in "emergency pouches" and sent to the local terminal, P.T.S., for sorting. (If some of the unworked mail is in *residue* packages from which the *directs* only have been picked out, they are marked with *kisses*—X X X— to indicate it.)

Now our train is in the yards—it pulls up to the platform—and watches are compared as we hear the welcome words "We're in!" Usually we arrive *on the button*, but in case of late running (sometimes paid for as overtime), a tiny fraction of a minute may spell the gain or loss of an extra *item* of travel allowance—an additional \$1.50 for each clerk!

The clerks quickly unload all mail onto the hand trucks brought up by the station porters, while the clerk-in-charge lingers to the last as he fills out his many reports. Valuable mails are convoyed to the post office (or another train) by an armed clerk. One clerk is assigned as *X-man* to examine all parts of the car for stray *sleepers*, and following him, a transfer clerk double-checks every case and box. Last to be unloaded is the *dog load* of sacked empties (bums) and coffee outfit or *pie box*.

It is usually in the gray hours of dawn that the weary clerks finally stumble towards the "Railroad Y," dormitory,

or small hotel where they customarily secure their sleep— or toward some all-night restaurant, first, for a bite. Some clerks, living at this end of the run, will make for home as best they can via owl car or auto. Most large cities and important railroad towns have a Railroad Y.M.C.A. operating twenty-four hours a day and located upstairs in the principal station; dormitories containing several beds each, plus washrooms and recreational facilities, are available there for all railroad men. In New York, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Boston, and other cities there are special dormitories operated by and for railway mail clerks only—such as the Railway Mail Club in New York's Hotel Statler; and spacious facilities, formerly in the Fort Pitt Hotel, in the Smoky City.

Even if a quick turn-around permits only five or six hours' sleep, most clerks still insist on time out for a good meal and often for a pool game or other recreation as well. On the other hand, a long layover will permit several hours of movie going, visiting, or sight-seeing in the terminal city before reporting for duty. However, quite a few clerks have run into a certain city for decades without ever bothering to look it over. One man may visit relatives, another do some shopping, a third make for a tavern, a fourth ride streetcars or what not, until time to go to work.

Their grips, meanwhile, have been stacked on shelves in the station or post-office grip room. Strange things can happen in grip rooms; in one case a suitcase of valuables was stamped, labeled, and sent as air mail by a postal patron, only to lose its label when in an R.P.O. car, get unloaded along with grips and mail at the end of the run, and be deposited on the grip-room shelves to gather dust for years (as do many old grips, full or empty, left there by retired or deceased clerks). It was discovered long after the patron had been reimbursed for his loss after a fruitless search! Another clerk, whose grip was always being moved to an obscure corner by a second clerk (who coveted its proper spot), finally nailed the offender's grip securely to the shelf—and eventually took it with him and threw it off a bridge when the practice continued! A mail thief, prowling in a post-office basement, once

stole a valuable ladies' suitcase en route to Asbury Park, New Jersey, carefully removing the tell tale tag bearing stamps and address; to avoid detection, he retied the latter to an old piece of luggage on a truck near by. It happened to be a truck of mail clerks' grips, and the tag was placed on that of Roger Gaver of the N.Y. & Wash. (PRR). This piece of "mail" was soon discovered and promptly dispatched to Asbury Park—to the mutual ire of the lady addressee and of Gaver, who had no supplies for his runs until he got his grip back six months later!

When several men sleep in one dormitory room there is often at least one first-class snorer. In one Railroad "Y" several regular patrons who are thus unfortunately afflicted voluntarily (and most considerately) segregate themselves in a special "snorer's room" furnished to them. There are many snorer stories, but the best probably comes from Washington, D. C., where a very loud-snoring clerk always registered for a certain dormitory at the "Y" in Union Station. A clerk on the opposite crew, who usually used the same room on alternate nights, was once assigned to run extra on a Christmas trip with the first man, and crew members warned him of the snorer. The extra clerk promptly reserved all four beds (they were only twenty-five cents, then) in that room. But the snorer was tipped off about this effort to exclude him, so he used one of the beds anyhow, slept free, and made the rafters groan with his noise while the harassed extra man tried to sleep! Such is life at the outer terminal; then comes the busy return trip, with new duties for all.

"TRAINED LETTERS" FROM COAST TO COAST

While I am taking hours of rest in my big white bed each day,
My thoughts, they get to wandering, and wander miles away . . .
To the grand old gang on Tour 1, at the "Cleve Term" R.P.O.;
At times it seems but yesterday, but 'twas long, long years ago. . .

— GUY STREBY



— Courtesy *Postal Markings*

Like a gigantic spiderweb sprawled across the living map of these United States, a network of over seven hundred busy Railway Post Office lines on 165,000 miles of route is speeding our mails in all directions twenty-four hours a day. For example, there's the famed transcontinental "Fast Mail" route which includes the New York Central's great *20th Century Limited* (a train of the N.Y. & Chicago R.P.O.), the C&NW's Chic. & Omaha, the Union Pacific's Omaha & Ogden and Ogden & Los Angeles, and the SP's storied Ogden & San Fran. or "Overland" route.

They are typical of the 7,666 mail trains operated daily by our vast railway mail system and involving 600,000 miles of daily travel. These railways rush well over forty billion pieces of mail each year to our 41,500 post offices and their branches—ranging in size, with the same impartial type of designation, from New York, New York (population 7,841,000) to Huntley, Virginia (population 3)!

Fewer persons are employed in the Postal Transportation Service than in the New York City Post Office—yet the P.T.S. sorts or transports the vast bulk of all our mail matter with

amazing efficiency. It is truly the lifeblood of the "world's biggest business" (the U.S.P.O. Department; annual turnover, \$16,000,000,000). Its living flow of transit-sorted mails are expertly handled by only 7½ per cent of our 400,000 postal employees; distributing far more mail per man-hour than the average post-office clerk, railway mail clerks put in over four billion miles of travel annually to sort the staggering total of twenty-one *billion* pieces of mail each year in 2,620 R.P.O. trains! (*Note 5.*)

R.P.O. trains range from the famed streamliners like the *Century* down to tiny branch-line or suburban locals, mixed trains, or "Galloping Goose" diesels—even suburban electric-car trains. Some major roads have exclusive all-mail, non-passenger trains, such as Boston & New York Train 180 (see Chapter 10), N.Y. & Chicago (NY Cent) Train 14, or Chic. & Omaha (C&NW) Train 5. Most R.P.O. lines are named directly from the terminal towns, but there are about one hundred of them in which actual R.P.O. trains do not reach one or both termini—usually because former R.P.O. service has been partially replaced by closed-pouch train or truck service reaching to the former terminus. If two or more R.P.O.s terminate at the same cities, the name of an important intermediate town is inserted; thus, the N.Y., Scranton & Buff. (DL&W) and N.Y., Geneva & Buff. (LV) both connect New York and Buffalo. The only lines not named from two or more towns are apparently the Boston & Cape Cod (NYNH&H) in Massachusetts and two R.P.O.-equipped New Hampshire lake boats. R.P.O.s are *normally* named from north to south and east to west, regardless of the relative importance of the termini. Current lines are listed in Appendix I.

In most large cities the main post office (or an important annex) is adjacent to the principal railway station, with conveyor-belt or hand-truck connection direct to the train platforms. In Los Angeles mail porters unload sacks from storage cars onto the belts at such a frenzied pace that alternate fifteen-minute shifts are required. Special facilities, such as rooms for accommodation of clerks and their baggage (grip rooms) separating platforms with overhead signs for bulk

mails, and train-mail boxes, are installed at most large stations; and the P.T.S. Transfer Office is usually there also.

Chicago, birthplace of the P.T.S., is the biggest hub of R.P.O. operations in America and probably in the world. Nearly forty different R.P.O. lines, most of them carrying from four to fifteen daily mail-sorting trains, converge there from all directions; the huge Chicago Terminal, P.T.S. (consolidating many earlier ones), six transfer offices, an airfield, one division and nine district offices, and large railway mail dormitories, organizations, and national memorials are all centered there. New York, although boasting the largest P.T.S. terminals, does not even rank a poor second in the number of R.P.O. routes centering there—twenty-three, to be exact; Kansas City and St. Louis have as many or more. Philadelphia has but fifteen; Washington, sixteen.

Perhaps the typical "railroad town"—a small city or village which is nevertheless an important railroad (and R.P.O.) division point or junction—plays an even more vital part in the life of the railway mail clerk; its streets, small hotels, and "beaneries" are often alive with P.T.C.'s. In Martinsburg, West Virginia, on the Wash. & Chicago—Wash. & Grafton (B&O) and Harris. & Win. H.P.O., clerks' wives often meet the train with forgotten work-pants, baked goodies, hot lunches, or what not; Crestline, Ohio, with its famous Pennsy shops (on Pitts. & Chicago R.P.O.), even has its own district office and N.P.T.A. branch.

Miles City, Montana, on the St. Paul & Miles City (NP) and other R.P.O.s, is famed for its "Tool House" Restaurant run by "an ageless Chinaman named Toy Ling" who has been host to the clerks for over thirty-five years. Adrian C. Austin relates that nearly seventy clerks from four trunk-line R.P.O.s "lay over" there, but no clerks live there. He describes a typical Christmas morning at three-thirty, the town swarming with doubled-up crews, when fifty clerks were eating at one lunchroom "half of them tired but glad the trip was over, and the other half grouchy and bleary-eyed at having to get up to go to work." Ashfork, Arizona (on the Santa Fe's Albuquerque & Los Angeles), writes T. M. Bragg, is merely

"a small unincorporated village perched atop a malpais rock formation, where drinking water is brought in in tank cars" but with comfortable Harvey House lodgings.

Most of our great trunk-line R.P.O.s have a fascinating historical background. The two big routes from New York to Boston; the PRR's vitally important electrified N.Y. & Washington (connecting America's metropolis and capital); the great New York & Chicago on the Central; and the Pennsy's "Pitts" (N.Y. & Pittsburgh) could all tell stories of great interest to the researcher or postmark collector. The evolution of these lines has been summarized in the Technical Notes (*Notes 6-8*); but Western lines like the Santa Fe's famed "Ashfork" (Albuq. & Los Angeles R.P.O.), traversing the vast desert country of New Mexico and Arizona as a southern trunk route to Los Angeles, are just as worthy of historical study. Most such lines carry six to twenty or more *daily* R.P.O. trains!

There are great chains of R.P.O. trunk lines along the Pacific Coast and through the Southern states, too, in addition to the transcontinental and Atlantic Coast link-ups already described—as this Florida-Washington state itinerary reveals:

THROUGH THE SOUTH

Atlanta & Jacksonville (Sou) in Georgia and Florida.
 Atlanta & Montgomery (A&WP, Western Ry. of Alabama),
 Georgia-Alabama
 Montgomery & New Orleans (L&N), Alabama to
 Louisiana
 New Orleans & Houston, (Tex&NO), Louisiana-Texas
 Houston & San Antonio (Tex&NO), in Texas
 San Antonio & El Paso (Tex&NO), also in Texas
 El Paso & Los Angeles (SouPac), Texas to California.

AND UP THE PACIFIC COAST

Los Angeles & San Diego (Santa Fe), extreme south end
 of route in California

San Francisco & Los Angeles (SP valley route), in California

Portland & San Francisco (SouPac), in Oregon and California

Seattle & Portland (NP), in Washington and Oregon

Blaine & Seattle (GN), in Washington State (through trains to Vancouver, B. C.)

In common speech, clerks usually refer to trunk R.P.O. routes by single-syllable abbreviations, such as "The Chic" (N.Y. & Chicago-NYCent), "The Ham" (Washington & Hamlet, North Carolina, on the Seaboard), "The Pitts" (N.Y. & Pittsburgh-Pitts. & St. L.-Pitts. & Chi. on the PRR, also B&O's Wash. & Chic.), "The Wash" (N.Y. & Wash.—PRR), etc. The latter R.P.O. is likewise also dubbed "The Wash-Line," much to the embarrassment of a staid young substitute who once told his girl that he worked thereon, whereupon she decided he must be employed in a laundry! (Other abbreviations and nicknames will be found scattered throughout the book, as well as following *R.P.O. Titles* in our Appendix I; while nicknames in particular are dealt with in Chapter 10.)

Supplementing the R.P.O. trains are many "closed pouch" or "C.P." trains on routes not having R.P.O. service; for example, there was the picturesque Ridgeway & Durango C.P. (RGSou) on the famed narrow-gauge lines of the Colorado Rockies. According to V. A. Klein and Eldon Roark, this route used old Packard or Pierce-Arrow autos fitted with flange wheels and sawed-off cabs, which sped their way precariously across creaky wood trestles spanning gaping canyons; dubbed "The Galloping Goose," each was manned by a nonchalant flagman-brakeman-conductor-operator who wired the throttle wide open for the whole trip—even if hauling a boxcar of mail, freight, and express! Another roughhewn Western route is the old Tonopah & Mojave CP (SP) and star route, called "The Jawbone" and formerly an R.P.O.; it begins in the old Tonopah (Nev.) gold fields and winds up in a thinly settled part of California, and now uses railroad trucks to haul mails via highway instead of over the old rails.

A typical longer route is the current Buffalo & Cleveland C.P., 184 miles (Nickel Plate).

At the other extreme are many small C.P.s on busy suburban railways too short for R.P.O. service, in our big metropolitan areas, with as many as fifty mail-carrying trips daily—often using electrified service, like the Jamaica & Brooklyn C.P. (LIRR) in New York City; but no C.P. lines carry clerks. Many C.P.s are trolley lines. New metal storage containers (with special cars to accommodate them) are now being introduced to handle bulk mails in C.P. service. Thousands of "star routes" or mail-truck lines connect outlying post offices with offices or junctions on the R.P.O.s, and the latter often "pouch on" each office on the route. (See Chapter 16 for H.P.O. and air lines.) Most R.P.O.s have C.P. trains also.

Second only in importance to our R.P.O. network are the sixty-odd terminals, P.T.S. (formerly terminal R.P.O.s), usually located in important large post-office buildings or railway stations; but local postmasters have no jurisdiction over them. Terminals, P.T.S., have two important functions: to sort the vast majority of all not-so-urgent bulk mails (magazines, parcel post, circulars) which would otherwise congest the R.P.O. lines intolerably; and secondly, in many cases, to "advance" letters and newspapers for heavy suburban R.P.O.s or other R.P.O.s converging at points of congested mail traffic like Harrisburg or Atlanta, sorting out letters between trains into direct separations for all sizable post offices on these lines. Only when an outgoing R.P.O. train is directly connected are incoming mails for such lines sent to the train instead of to the terminal first—which may also handle *all* mails for some areas without R.P.O. service.

Terminal clerks work an eight-hour day, five days a week, and are often dubbed "termites" in fun. In each terminal there are cases for circulars (and letters, if worked), parcel racks, and paper racks (handling magazines), for all states assigned to be distributed. The unit for each state is divided into a *primary* (city and large town), *secondary* (small town), and *residue* (R.P.O. line and *dis*) case, with individual boxes or sacks for every town of any size. By first "straining" their

mail through the primary and secondary separations in order, then sorting mails for the tiny hamlets into packages or sacks for R.P.O. lines (or distributing offices) at the residue case, the terminals accomplish an amazing amount of distribution in a very short time. A terminal railway mail clerk sorts up to ten thousand circulars, or other mail in proportion, daily. If a terminal advances letters for particular R.P.O. routes, there is often a case for each line in addition to general primary cases; then packages addressed to some particular suburban R.P.O. are at once diverted to the proper terminal case whenever there is sufficient time between trains. Such terminals usually pouch on most towns involved via all available C.P. trains and star routes as well.

In nearly all terminals clerks work in three shifts: Tour 1 (late night or "graveyard" shift), Tour 2 (daytime), and Tour 3 (evening), with night work paying 10 per cent extra. There is usually a raised and railed (or enclosed) platform for the clerk-in-charge's desk, dubbed the *bull pen*; a time clock for recording arrival and departure of the clerks; a desk with a well-filled "order book," and a clerks' mail case to accommodate time slips and official mail, all located together. Out on the floor are wheeled canvas baskets, officially listed as *gurneys* but always called "tubs," for conveying mails from primary to secondary, residue, or other racks; small hand trucks (or *nutting* trucks, derived from a manufacturer's name) for conveying bag mails; and large *four-wheelers* with wagon tongues, in terminals without belts, which require them to receive and dispatch bag mails to and from the trains. Overhead there may be inconspicuous slits at the tops of certain walls, tiny "peepholes," looking out from secret passageways used by postal inspectors to detect the very rare postal clerk who is tempted to lift something from the mail; but there is seldom need to use them. Outside of the terminal workroom are locker, "swing" (lunch), and wash rooms.

The largest railway mail distributing unit in the country happens to be one of these terminals—the huge Penn Terminal in the G.P.O. Building, New York, with over eleven

hundred clerks. It not only "advances" Florida and Texas letter mails but also works ordinary bulk mails for most New England states, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and for other states—but *not* for New York State (except Long Island). Similarly, the Washington, D. C., Terminal works bulk mails for Pennsylvania and nearly all Southern states from Virginia on down, but *not* for the adjacent state of Maryland; each terminal is arbitrarily assigned certain states only. Important Eastern terminals advancing letters for suburban R.P.O.s include those at Camden, Hoboken, and Weehawken, New Jersey; the Central and Erie terminals at Jersey City, New Jersey; and the Reading Terminal in Philadelphia. Westward, the Chicago and Los Angeles terminals and others do likewise.

The Philadelphia Terminal or "Dog-House," in the G.P.O. Building opposite Thirtieth Street Station there, is one of the most modern in the country, with its conveyor belts and floor-level trap doors for dispatches direct to trains; no piling or trucking of mail by clerks and porters is necessary. The great Chicago and Cleveland terminals are both in the Main Post Office buildings; the Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Boston, Portland (Maine), Detroit, and Omaha terminals are other large ones. Metropolitan New York alone has seven.

The first "Terminal R.P.O." was the old Jersey City (New Jersey) Register Terminal, established in 1903 by Superintendent V. J. Bradley. A clerk from Courtland, Illinois, named W. H. Riddell, was appointed a chief clerk about 1907, with the duty of organizing the Union and other railway station terminals at Chicago, and a Union Terminal R.P.O. later appeared at Omaha. However, regular terminals first appeared throughout the country in 1913-14, as explained later, and by late 1914 nearly one hundred terminals had been hurriedly set up wherever there seemed to be the slightest justification.

Since then there has been a steady reduction of over 30 per cent in the number of terminals, with much of the mail assigned thereto being restored to the R.P.O. lines, until the

last few years. The number was down to eighty-eight by 1915, and to seventy-one by 1942—and of these, nearly twenty were (and are) small part-time units in transfer offices, without any employees and seldom a postmark of their own. Historic terminals which have folded up in the meantime include the old Grand Central Terminal R.P.O., New York; the Broad Street and Sears Terminals, Philadelphia; the Columbus (Ohio) Register Terminal; the La Salle and other railway-station terminals at Chicago; and those at Long Island City, Toledo, San Francisco, and Sacramento. Our newest terminals are those at Jamaica, N. Y.; Indianapolis; Toledo (just re-established); Greensboro, North Carolina (previously existing, however, as a part-time T.C.-manned unit as in the Indianapolis case); and Los Angeles (Sears Terminal, 1949)—both the latter necessitated by mail-order expansions. There were about fifty of these full-sized units when they became terminals, P.T.S., on November 1, 1949. Two new terminals are planned (at New Haven and at a northern New Jersey location).

Most substitutes begin their careers in the terminals, and some decide to stay. Mimeographed "bid sheets," listing assignments, and periodic "reorganizations," as on the lines, offer all a choice of jobs according to seniority. Men who tire of "the road," with its strenuous and irregular away-from-home duties, often transfer to a lower-paid terminal job, especially if nearing retirement. Occasionally a clerk, unable to perform exacting road duties, is thus transferred arbitrarily. But more often a terminal clerk literally lives for the day when his seniority will permit him to succumb to the lure of the trains and transfer to them.

Colorful and humorous sidelights of terminal life are hard to dig out. But from the Los Angeles Terminal—whose outside U.P. parcel-separating table is called the "pneumonia-platform"—clear to the Washington, D. C., Terminal, where the boys voted to present roller skates to the clerk-in-charge, "with which to cover the terminal in a hurry" (after a nice speech he gave them to his son!), one can unearth a few tales and tidbits. At Penn Terminal, New York, Arthur Carucci

tells how a young lieutenant tumbled into the terminal on an incoming belt, mixed with pouches from the LIRR trains; he couldn't find the train-platform exit, chose the belt as a last resort! At the same terminal one supervisor would ask each new clerk his educational qualifications; then bellow, "Well, you lawyers, dump the parcel sacks; the college grads push the tubs around; you teachers lock out the full sacks . . ." and on on.

At another Eastern terminal, old "Tony" was the butt of all jokes. One day a few fun-loving co-workers, who were (unknown to Tony) in league with his principal tormentors, offered to help Tony to get even with the latter.

"At lunch hour, get inside this big No. 1 sack and let us lock it up," they proposed, "and we'll label it and put it on those guys' parcel table with their other working mail. Then when they come back to work and unlock the sack, you jump out and scare them!"

The naïve old chap agreed, and sure enough was locked in the sack and placed on the right worktable. But when his tormentors returned and one started to unlock the sack, the other cried out:

"Hey!—watch that label—it's a direct sack for Chicago. And we've only got ten minutes to make Train 43 with it!" And poor old Tony was quickly trucked to the elevator and down to the train platform, despite his ragings, before they let him out.

Washington Terminal is famed for its daily "Florida War Cry" on some occasions, announcing completion of distribution on the Florida letter case, its only regular first-class mail assignment. Long led by veteran ex-navy clerk Frank Eccles, it was designed to call a mail handler to truck away the locked-out pouches, but sounds more like a combined fire siren and Hopi battle yell !

The historic old San Francisco Terminal could perhaps tell the grandest stories of all, prior to its discontinuance, as noted above. The *Go-Back Pouch* tells how it was one of the very first terminals, located directly over the water of the bay between the ferry slips. Wide cracks and holes in the floor

inevitably invited the installation of fishing lines while clerks were at work at the letter cases directly overhead. Sometimes, during a feverish tie-out to make connections, a clerk would vainly eye his line jerking with a couple of fish on its hooks and nearly getting loose! Crab nets were also hung on the end of the ferry slip and brought in many rich hauls—except when the ferry captain discovered them first with his searchlight. Another poor old clerk in this terminal would plod on board the ferry to go home, not knowing that pranksters had tied the end of a ball of twine to his coattail—to watch it unwind and trail him clear over the pier and halfway across San Francisco Bay! The faithful old distributor never objected; devoted to his work to the very last, his heart gave out one day as he leaned against his case, his last package of letters in his hand.

There are lesser incidents galore: The district superintendent at one new terminal who tried out its spiral chute in small-boy fashion; the wags who string “circ” cases with twine running behind the mail in each vertical row in such a way that a sly tug from behind sends two hours’ work flying into the aisle; the unorthodox and inconvenient places in which mail locks can be attached, in letter cases or on paper sacks, to the great annoyance of anyone trying to sort mail or to tie out sacks. (Locks are always plentiful; they are used in such huge quantities in some terminals that they are literally shoveled out of tubs like coal.)

Terminal men are definitely “railway mail clerks” and are usually proud of it. Steeped in the traditions of the iron road, they refer to the daily time record (showing amount of mail worked) as the “trip report”; each day’s work is a “run,” which is “exchanged” (using road-service forms) or “defaulted” just as on the trains, and there is often a race against time to dispatch to some outgoing R.P.O. Highly train-conscious, they must separate direct sacks and sort residue mails out to definite R.P.O. trains; and they must take examinations from the same schemes as road clerks do.

Some very strict sets of Terminals Rules and Regulations have been issued in past years; some have included rules

forbidding clerks to wash up, change clothes, or even approach the time clock before closing signal, or to so much as step inside the terminal to speak to a clerk when off duty. However, the more humane terminal heads have endeavored to have such rules relaxed as much as possible in recent years; until the privilege was unfortunately withdrawn, officials even allowed clothes changing and eating lunch on duty for a considerable recent period, permitting a true eight-hour day.

Terminal cases and racks are permanently labeled with printed *headers* according to official diagrams, mostly alphabetically. (Header holders provide storage space for extra strip labels. Although the practice is frowned upon, most headers become helpfully annotated with the names of small *dis* offices which are included in certain separations, for dispatch from a larger post office). Low tables or moving belts with high rims are used for dumping up the parcels and papers to be sorted or "thrown off," and small bags of locks are hung at one end (or on the rack) (*Note 9*). Clerks must turn in a "count" of mails worked (represented by the slips and labels turned in) which is at least up to the daily average requirements of the terminal—and they are supposed to dutifully discard any *angels* or spurious extra labels found enclosed inside the sacks by sympathetic clerks at the point of origin. Since a "skin" sack containing only a couple of magazines counts just as much as a huge "balloon" sack crammed with tiny hard-to-work papers (*squealers*) or samples, some laughable scrambles for the more desirable sacks often occur. Some "balloon" sacks, strangely enough, seem to remain around for the next tour!

And we must not forget the transfer clerks—postal transportation clerks assigned to the important duty of supervising connecting mails between trains, among many other responsibilities. They are stationed at about two hundred transfer offices at important railway stations or junction points all over the country; and large cities may have several. The office is usually in some nondescript, smoke-begrimed alcove of the depot, containing a desk for the clerk-in-charge, tables, files, and usually order books and an official-mail case

for road clerks. In one corner is a box of the long strip-metal "seals" used to close storage car doors. Transfer clerks must meet all incoming trains and see off all outgoing ones, in all kinds of weather, often scrambling across a dozen tracks from train to train at considerable risk; and must keep a detailed statistical record of the mails carried and other facts regarding each. They must keep informed as to mail dispatches and authorizations on all outbound trains, be familiar with all hours of arrival and departure, issue complex requests for additional space, notify the office of schedule changes, furnish substitutes for emergency runs, take supplies out to R.P.O. trains, and must often distribute connection mails between trains or for offices on C.P. or star routes by means of a small case and rack. They are required to collect mail from station mailboxes before departure of train and sort it—at some stations it's done in a little case inside the mailbox door. Letters are usually taken direct to the proper train, but sometimes to the transfer office, for cancellation. Transfer clerks must take special case examinations from standpoint schemes; and while on duty, must carry a notebook and pencil at all times to record statistical data for transfer to their report sheets. The Register Transfer Office, Kansas City, Missouri (for registers) is the only one of its kind.

Transfer clerks are much maligned because of their supposed "soft snap" of a job. "My father doesn't have to work; he's a transfer clerk at Union Station!" They are pictured as sitting around with nothing to do except meet occasional trains; but we have already shown the unjustness of any such concept of their duties. Transfer clerks must busily dash across tracks to record data of four or five trains all arriving at once; messy "bad-order" parcels must be written up in triplicate on complex forms, through storage cars carefully locked or sealed, car-floor diagrams drawn up and supervised, sorting done in the small part-time terminals often housed in the transfer office, and what not.

In one case transfer clerks were instrumental in apprehending a mail thief stealing from numerous pouches, resulting in great benefit to the reputation and financial

standing of the Postal Service. In another, a new one-man transfer office was established at the suggestion of clerks themselves, resulting in savings equivalent to *three* transfer clerks' salaries in view of the "padded" railroaders' mail-count reports thus unmasked. William Koelln, one of our leading P.T.S. historians and authorities, was a transfer clerk at Penn Station T.O., New York; so was the late Lillian V. Woods, the only female transfer clerk in the Service, capable and efficient. Yes, transfer clerks earn their salt!

Supervising the whole P.T.S. setup is the Assistant Executive Director, Bureau of Transportation at Washington—better known by his long-time popular title (until 1946) of "General Superintendent, R.M.S." He, and sometimes the Assistant P.M.G. (Transportation) himself, is nearly always a former P.T.C. who has worked his way up through the ranks. At this writing, capable and respected ex-clerk George Miller holds the office, which places him in charge of most mail transportation and all distribution of transit mails (except international mail transportation). In a handsome office at the new Post Office Department Building in Washington, he holds forth at a big flat-topped desk, surrounded by green-upholstered chairs and by famous paintings or photos of great mail trains and planes. Interested visitors—or clerks—are warmly welcomed to the offices. Fifteen big loose-leaf books, giving details of current operations in each division, lie on a table in one room for instant reference; while a long row of file cabinets contains an individual folder for each R.P.O. or H.P.O. line. A library of schemes of all forty-eight states, books on the Service (such few as there are), and much related material is on hand. Just down the hall is the office of "Charley" Dietz, sympathetic head personnel man, whose glad-hand of help to any clerk with a real grievance is proverbial everywhere. The offices are designated as the Bureau of Transportation.

Outside, the south side of the building contains a circular sculptured frieze featuring notable dates in our postal history, including "RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE, 1862." It overlooks the great Mall which is only two blocks north of

the PRR-RF&P tracks carrying five great trunk-line R.P.O.s to the South; and trolleys which later carry P.T.S. "C.P." service pass the front entrance on Pennsylvania Avenue.¹

The country is apportioned among fifteen divisions, each with its own general superintendent.² Assistant general superintendents and a faithful staff of office-assigned railway mail clerks are assigned to the various "sections" at each headquarters. Each division is composed of several districts, with headquarters at key cities, which directly supervise from one to a dozen R.P.O. lines and terminals each. A district superintendent ("chief clerk" until 1946) heads each district, with a few office clerks and others to help him (including an assistant district superintendent). P.T.S. offices are located in large post-office buildings but are, of course, independent.

The division general superintendents have great authority; they not only supervise the operation of the P.T.S. and clerks assigned to their divisions, but also prepare the general schemes and instructions which all first- and second-class post offices are required to follow in sorting their own mails. The district superintendent must carry out all the multitudinous duties of direct supervision of each of his lines and the clerks thereon, including the reporting of all observed cases of "insubordination, inefficiency, and lax morality" among clerks. Division and district superintendents are promoted exclusively from the ranks, although clerks allege that some

¹The Wash. & Suburban C.P. (CTCo) to Cabin John, Md.

²Numbered and located as follows: 1—P.O. Bldg., Boston 9 (N. Engl. States); 2—G.P.O. Bldg., New York 1 (N. Y., north N. J.); 3—City P.O. Bg., Washington 25 (Md-DC-Va-NC-WVa); 4—Fed. Annex, Atlanta 4 (Ala-Fla-Ga-SC-Tenn-PR); 5—P.O. Annex, Cincinnati 35 (Ohio-Ind-Ky); 6—Main P.O. Bg., Chicago 7 (Ill-Ia); 7—P.O. Bg., St. Louis 3 (Mo-Kans); 8—P.O. Bg., San Francisco 1 (Calif-Ariz-Nev-Utah); 9—P.O. Bldg., Cleveland 1 (Mich.; Cleveland, Ohio; N. Y. Cent. main line area); 10—P.O. Bg., St. Paul 1 (Minn-ND-SD-Wisc., N.P. of Mich.); 11—P.O. Pgg., Fort Worth 1 (Tex-Okla-NMex); 12—Fed. Ofc. Bg., New Orleans 6 (La-Ark-Miss and Memphis, Tenn); 13—P.O. Bg., Seattle 11 (Wash-Ore-Ida-Alaska); 14—P.O. Bg., Omaha 1 (Neb-Colo-Wyo); 15—Fed. Bg., Pittsburgh 19 (Pa-Del, south NJ, E. Shore Md-Va, PRR main line area). Address "Div. Genl. Supt., P.T.S."

Important District offices are located at Philadelphia 4, Pa. (309a G.P.O. Bg.); Detroit 33, Mich. (329 Roosev. Park Annex); Los Angeles 52, Calif. (226 Term. P.O. Annex); Denver 1, Colo. (410 P.O. Bldg.) and at many other points.

"pull" is usually needed. Clarence E. Votaw describes in humorous fashion a typical day of a district superintendent in his book: "Seventy letters to answer . . . Transfer clerk wants man to fill run in fifteen minutes . . . Four clerks want their study scope revised . . . Extra clerks wanted to work ninety-five sacks of "stuck" train mail, at once . . . Clerk-in-charge running too late to return on his proper train; what to do?" and so on. Daily visitors include: "An old patron of a tiny post office insisting on two daily deliveries from the R.P.O.; a superintendent of mails on a big newspaper, with new problems; a 'distinguished visitor' who turns out to be a magazine salesman; a railway superintendent desiring a conference on mail handling; a patron whose mail arrived late, to bawl him out; a messenger from the general superintendent, who wants a list of all stations on all lines . . ." and so on. His is no bed of roses!

In normal times mails are distributed in transit not only on land but on the high seas as well—by the Seapost service, in United States and foreign vessels. This colorful service is closely linked with the P.T.S., which has itself operated or reorganized the Seapost on three different occasions and which supplies most of its personnel. But, alas, space requirements forbid discussion (*Note 10*).

And our general survey of America's vast railway mail network remains incomplete without mention of the unusual private "R.R.M.," or "railroad mail," system, by which railroads carry their own company mails over their own connecting lines—completely apart from the United States mails and the R.P.O. facilities. It is our *only* sizable arrangement for handling of mails outside of the government's monopoly on letter carrying provided by the strict Private Express Statutes.

Only a few other exceptions (other transport-company mails, special-messenger facilities, employee distribution of bills, and so on) are thereby permitted to the Post Office Department's exclusive right to transport "letters for others by regular trips at stated intervals over all post routes." The statutes do permit the carrying of "railway letters" for the public by conductors (if regulation postage is affixed), just as

is done on a large scale in England and elsewhere; but the practice has never become popular here, probably because of the excellent R.P.O. facilities.

The companies' own "railroad mail" is usually handled in large-sized brown envelopes franked with the letters "R.R.S." or "R.R.B." (railroad service; business) in the corner; it is sorted in private station mail rooms and in small cases (with large boxes) in baggage cars. In small quantities, it is usually carried by the conductor. But for the general public our vast R.P.O. system—which in areas like the Chicago and Duluth regions and North Dakota includes a network of main and branch lines unequalled anywhere—provides the finest and most extensive facilities in the world for speedy transit-sorting and delivery of our ordinary mails.

FROM WOULD-BE "SUB" TO VETERAN

It's "Hang up those pouches" or "Pull down that rack,"
It's "Tie out these boxes" or "Hand me a sack."
It's "Sandy, get busy, don't go to sleep yet,
Here, sack up these empties before you forget."
It's "Hustle up, Sandy, what makes you so slow?" . . .
The shack¹ takes the blame, on a full R.P.O.

— EARL L. NEWTON



In many varied ways, young "hopefuls" over the country first hear of the P.T.S. and dream of being a clerk on the trains. Perhaps they've watched one at work on the local at the depot, seen the flying express make its "catch," read about the Service or heard of it from employed friends or kin or from Civil Service announcements. Many, however, are first attracted by the lurid "Travel Free for Uncle Sam" ads of the private civil service schools (non-government connected); and there are quite a few "Franklin grads" and "I.C.S. men" in the P.T.S., though definitely a minority. Advertisements no longer show a clerk in natty uniform leisurely leaning out the car door to greet his girl; but they do emphasize the travel, layoff, and salary (not the lack of sight-seeing opportunities and the arduous duties, conditions, and home requirements!). One is reminded of the uninformed friend in Votaw's *Jasper Hunnicutt* who told an applicant, "The R.M.S. would suit you. It is such nice clean work (!), sorting letters as you fly along and tossing out bags as you go. There is really no labor about it!"

¹All-around "sub."

The young examinee must make a sworn application on a long form secured from the nearest office of the Civil Service Commission, which recruits nearly all government employees through non-political competitive examinations. He does not need to take a civil-service course, though some are helpful; he can practice up on the sample questions in the exam announcement. But he *must* meet stringent physical requirements: a minimum height and weight, freedom from all disabling disease or defects, and an aptitude for "arduous exertion," all confirmed by two medical examinations. Finally he receives his official-looking "IMPORTANT ADMISSION CARD," announcing the exact time and place of the next exam for Substitute Postal Transportation Clerk; he must paste an identification photo thereon. At the examination, which is held at intervals of several years at about six hundred cities, the applicant sees the examiner solemnly open and distribute the sealed examination papers, which include a General Test (on mental alertness, geography, arithmetic, and so on) in multiple-choice form, and three Mail Tests on following instructions, sorting, and routing. The latter is done by studying sets of imaginary post-office names, route symbols, train numbers, and related data, and by checking off the routes on a long list.

Few applicants are able to "finish everything" in any part of the stringent four-hour test (not realizing that this is seldom expected). Passing is 70 per cent, but our examinee is in a fortunate minority if his grade is high enough to insure appointment—usually about 90 per cent. In this case he is finally notified of his grade on a form outlining the strenuous duties of the position and the system of "registers" of eligibles by state of residence. Occasionally a few clerks are accepted by transfer from other government units under very exacting requirements, the P.T.S. enjoying so high a reputation that senior clerks with ideal hours in a post office will sacrifice their pay and comforts for a chance to become a lowly railway mail "sub" under the most trying conditions.

After a wait of months or years, possibly broken by a little temporary government employment, a P.T.S. vacancy may

occur. The Commission reports the three highest names on the appropriate state register to the proper division officials, who will select one or more names as needed and mail out inquiries to "advise if you will accept" a vacancy—with the cautious notation: "This is not an offer of appointment." But, barring irregularities, our new man is eventually given his final physical, his oath of office, *Black Book* (Book of Instructions condensed from Postal Laws & Regulations, hence, *The PL&R*) a scheme of his first study-assigned state (with map), and a Schedule of Mail Routes (timetables of all R.P.O. trains and other routes in the division). He may also receive a mail key and revolver. The new substitute's starting salary is now \$1.41½ per hour.

Most substitutes are first assigned regularly to some terminal, P.T.S., on a straight five-day week when mails are normal (classed either as "acting additional" or "vice"—in place of—clerks on leave). In some cases a self-confident new "clerk" has entered a terminal the first day, asking:

"And where is my desk, sir?"

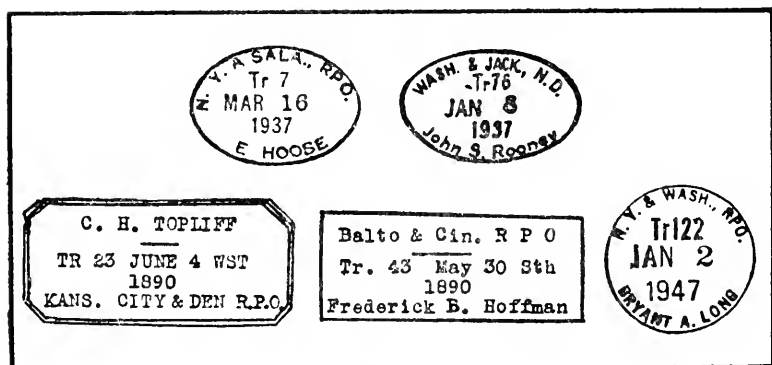
"Right here," the clerk-in-charge will usually reply, escorting him to some big parcel-dumping platform where perspiring men are violently shaking mail out of huge sacks! The disillusioned neophyte then has to "dump up" parcels the rest of the day for the convenience of the others.

"A doggone baboon could do *this* work!" has been the sentiments of more than one sub after weeks of such back-breaking labor requiring almost no thinking. Most terminal clerks are helpful and sympathetic; but there have been exceptions, as witness the plaint of one newcomer:

. . . They guided me through a maze of racks, trucks, mail sacks, and chutes . . . It was a strange and alien world . . . no friends about and few smiles . . . A job: "Here's something you can do. Anybody, even a grade-school boy can do it." It was working circulars in a secondary case . . . But what a welcome! They looked me over like I was some strange species of animal . . . By my side was a young sub who was as quiet as I. We discovered one another . . . We "picked to pieces" the Mail Service

in our room after a hard day's work . . . There was no explanation as to *why* a certain job is performed . . . Kindlier relations . . . a pat on the shoulder, and a friendly smile would be life-savers to a new sub . . .

From 1946 to 1950 a new official, the counselor-instructor, was assigned to each division to see that new subs got a friendlier sort of welcome as well as organized instruction in job fundamentals, often including classroom talks, demonstrations, and instruction trips; this program is now operated by other officials. The new man must secure a rubber stamp showing his name, date, line or terminal, and train or tour number (with necessary type and inkpad). Plain straight-line stamps are furnished free on request after considerable delay, but most clerks prefer to buy theirs from postal or rubber-stamp supply houses, who design them to order in myriad styles. Clerks have used them since well before 1890 for stamping slips and labels (in lieu of postmarking) and occasional records or pieces of mail (that found without contents or consisting of *fluff*—soft, easily damaged packets). Some early and current styles are shown herewith (operating lines are listed in Appendix I:



Soon the sub is acclimated and wearing his long key chain like a veteran, fearful only that it might be mistaken for a zoot-suiter's watch chain. He learns to "tie out" packages of

letters or circulars with the quick, special, hard knot—on back of the bundle, to leave addresses unobstructed, and with short letters tied both ways and long ones sticking out below, tied singly. He gradually catches an unspoken spirit of quiet determination.

His strenuous work may include, if there is a shortage of mail handlers, heaving whole piles of sack mail up onto outgoing trucks or separating incoming sack mail, and at heavy-mail periods twelve- to eighteen-hours stints and more are common. Al Humpleby, now of the N.Y. & Wash. (PRR), reports having had thirty-six hours' continuous duty in two North Jersey terminals years ago, except for inter-terminal commuting; then the "sub shortage" that caused this changed to a surplus, and he received only one day's work for a month. Assigned that day to the Wilkes-Barre (Pennsylvania) T.O., where no mail was distributed, he received a check for nine dollars for the month (including allowances and held-back pay)—plus ten demerits, levied despite protests, for not checking any mail-distribution errors that month!

Other new subs are assigned direct to the trains, filling in for various trips irregularly; and the "first trip" is usually a nightmare (see next chapter). A bewildered new man is often assigned to stack incoming bag mail in the bins, much perplexed by the absence of any signs or other indications of which is which—a sympathetic *paper smoke* (newspaper clerk) may enlighten him. After dumping up the paper man's mail and helping at the pouch table the whole trip, he's very sure he has handled every one of the 1,600,000 pouches and 14,000,000 sacks in the Postal Service.

Stories about new subs' inexperience make laughable reading. There are many versions of the tale in which the newcomer is told to stack numerous important bags of mail in a storage car or bin "with the labels out" (for quick perusal from the aisle); the sub reports to his chief with a whole pocketful of labels, necessitating opening and examining every pouch. Another classic: A sub is given a row of labels in proper order and asked to "put them in" a row of pouches to be locked out; not knowing about label holders, the young

innocent drops them inside each pouch, locks the unlabeled pouches, and usually has them all in a heap just as the first throw-off point is reached! Then there was the sub instructed to "take down" a row of overhead boxes of mail, being given an empty pouch for the first box's contents as an example. Of course he puts the mails from every box into the one pouch, necessitating a frenzied reworking of the contents: Subs have sometimes made up a "junction box" for letters for all points which are R.P.O. junctions, just as they are required to do with junction cards on their examination practice case.

Harassed substitutes are sent from one clerk to another, in search of a sack stretcher, case scraper, or similar weird article, or are put to work counting locks when they've nothing else to do. But such jokes can backfire. When Boundary Line & Glenwood (MStP&SSteM) clerks used to run through to St. Paul, Minn., on Train 110, the second clerk would set a green sub to sandpapering the rust off locks as they ran into Minneapolis and St. Paul, giving the observant transfer clerks at both places a good laugh. But one day the district superintendent greeted the train on arrival and asked the sub what he was doing. Answered, he remarked, "Do a good job of it," and walked in for a quiet word with the clerk-in-charge. There were precious few locks sandpapered on that line after that.

One gag was to require a new sub to get off the train at each stop to announce its arrival in loud tones. W. F. Kilman tells how, on a MoPac train stopping at Poplar Bluff, Arkansas, he dutifully leaped to the crowded platform to cry out, "OH YES, OH YES, ST. LOUIS & LITTLE ROCK TRAIN 7 HAS NOW ARRIVED." On the same trip he learned that all sacks were to be "thoroughly washed and sacked twenty to the bundle with each layer sprinkled with talcum" before arrival at Little Rock. Fortunately for him, the basin and talcum could not be located.

Hazing new clerks has declined considerably following such tricks as that once played on the Rock Island & Kansas City (Rock Island) years ago, when a sub, awed at the huge piles of working mail, asked what would happen if it was not sorted in time. An old clerk cracked, "Oh, if we have a few

left at the Mississippi, we just heave 'em overboard"—and a few mornings later, when the sub went stuck on an "East States" sack, he did just that! It was rescued by a fisherman, and the old clerk guarded his joking after that. (When the writer² asked the same question as a sub, the old "head clerk" just straightened up and announced with set jaw, "Young man, this crew *never* goes stuck!")

On the old Davenport & Kansas City (CM&StP), in the days of "sack time" when clerks could sleep on duty, a clerk-in-charge asked a sub to awaken him at Dawn (a small Missouri town) to finish his reports—and, of course, was not awakened until daylight, at the very end of the run. Jokes about subs and others distributing mail "nice and evenly" among all sacks in a rack, without regard to destination, date back to the pre-R.M.S. "route agent" days; in the 1850s, W. H. "Hoss" Eddy (CB&Q agent, Chicago-Burlington) boasted of "the fairest distribution of mail ever made. As it came into the car I piled it all on a big table; when the engine whistled for a station, I looked . . . to see how big the town was, and poked into a mailbag what I thought was the town's share and put it off."

F. C. Gardiner tells of a soft-spoken Dixie sub trying to snitch a ride to New York on his commission, accompanying some Northern clerks on official travel to Jersey City, who was abruptly rejected by the conductor when he couldn't growl "Jarsey!" on displaying his pass, as they did. And Thomas Chittick tells of a sub on the run just mentioned in our sandpapering incident, who was assigned as a mail weigher there back in 1904 and not required to assist with distribution, although he did. When they reached the Boundary Line one trip badly "stuck" the Canadian clerks who took over at that point to run on to Winnipeg were greeted by the crow of a rooster in the baggage car and the sub's joking remark, "There he goes again—I couldn't sleep all night on account of him." The Canucks, feeling much imposed upon, reported the incident; and the regular clerk had a lot of

²Professor Dennis, here.

FIG. 1

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WESTCHESTER

WESTCHESTER COUNTY (A)

Castle ^a	} Bos. Spgf. & N. Y. Stamford, Conn. to New York. ^a New Rochelle. ^b Trs. 263, 266, 283, 292, 296, 362, 379. ^c Trs. 263, 266, 283j, 292, 362. ^d Trs. 263, 266, 283, 292, 296, 362, 379j. ^e Trs. 55, 71, 99, 263, 266, 283, 292, 296, 362, 374, 379. ^f Trs. 263, 266, 283, 292, 296, 362, 379. ^g Rye.
(Sta. New Rochelle).	
Fort Slocum ^a	
(Ind. Br. New Rochelle).	
Harrison ^b	
Larchmont ^c	
Mamaroneck ^d	
New Rochelle ^e	
Port Chester ^f	
Purchase ^g	
Rye ^b	
Amawalk	} Brewster & N. Y. ^a Tr. 101. ^b Yorktown Heights.
Ardsley	
Chauncey ^a	
△Croton Lake ^b	
Eastview	
Granite Springs	
Kitchawan	
Millwood	} *New York (New York Co.).
Yorktown Heights	
Pelham	} Brewster & N. Y. N. Y. & Chi. via M. M. from Tarrytown R. R. Sta. Trs. 14j, 32r, 39t.
(Br. New York)	
Elmsford	} Bos., Spgf. & N. Y. Mount Vernon via M. V. S. Lv. 12 noon (j); arr. 45 min. Chat. & N. Y. Via M. V. S. from Mt. Vernon R.R. Sta. Tr. 438j. N. Y. & Chi. New York to Peekskill. Trs. 14, 26b, 32, 38, 50j, 56, 103, 112, 154, 156, 161, 199, 207, 216, 235, 237, 238. ^a Yonkers (only supply).
Nepera Park ^a	
Yonkers	

Abbreviations:

Br.—Branch P.O.

Ind.—Independent.

j, r, t, et cetera, after train numbers—

Letters indicating frequency of service.

M.M.—Via mail messenger.

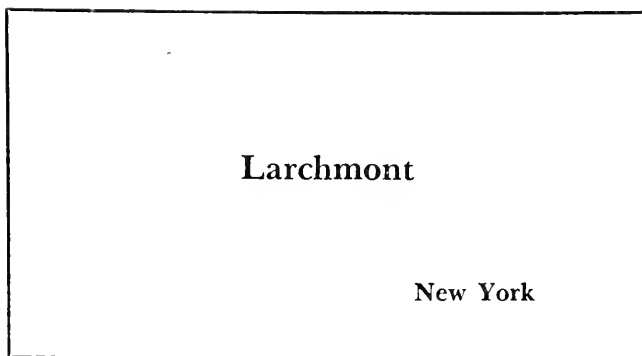
M.V.S.—Via motor-vehicle service.

Sta.—Postal station.

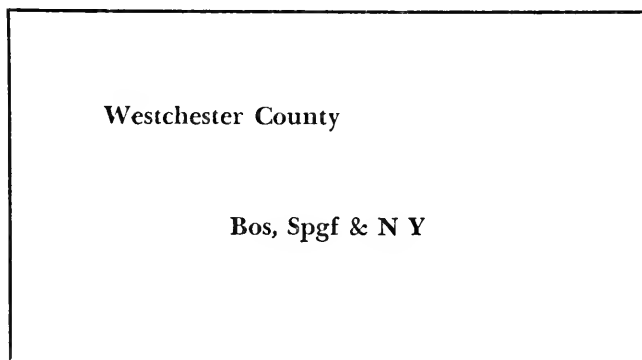
Tr., Trs.—Train or Trains (Train Numbers).

(R.P.O. line abbreviations—See General Index).

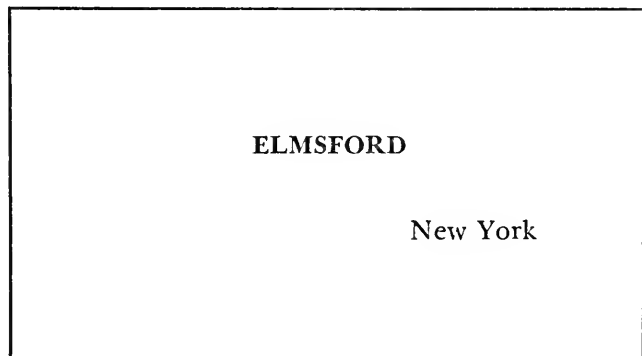
FIG. 2 (a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

<p style="font-size: 1.2em; margin: 0;">Westchester County</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center; gap: 10px;"> Brewster & N Y ✓ </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center;"> N Y & Chic </div>

TYPICAL PRACTICE CARDS

(Based on Scheme illustration in Fig. 1, showing two of the same post offices and corresponding routes.) Fronts of cards are lettered *a* and *c*, and backs of the same cards are lettered *b* and *d* respectively (printed or homemade). Routes on cards are printed exactly like routes shown in large type in scheme, with all detailed data omitted. The clerk must throw Larchmont, by memory, in his "Bos. Spgf. & N.Y." pigeonhole only; he can throw the Elmsford card in either the "Brewster & N.Y." or the "N.Y. & Chic." box without being marked wrong by the examiner, but he is advised to indicate the preferred route from his standpoint by a check mark as shown, and hence should throw it to that box only. Any post office at which two or more R.P.O. lines⁴ connect mails is called a *junction* and is marked (*) in the scheme and on back of card; and in general, the cards for each post office must be correctly thrown to either a certain R.P.O. line or to one of these junctions or *dis* (distributing) offices. Schedules, crammed with complex symbols and data, must be used to determine preferred route.

⁴Important offices reached by only one R.P.O. but served by other leading air-mail or closed-pouch routes may sometimes be arbitrarily schemed as junctions, and thus designated.

as much as the poor clerk (in Carl Lucas's verses in the *Go-Back Pouch*) whom Satan turns away, saying:

. . . "You go to the gates with gold agleam
 And learn new things from Heaven's scheme."
 The poor gink turned a ghastly shade,
 And reeling, this reply he made:
 "If another scheme I've got to learn
 I'd rather stay right here and burn!"

Grades are determined from secret symbols on the examiner's card backs, and passing is 97 per cent; higher grades bring the clerk up to fifty *merits* on his record. Clerks must average sixteen cards per minute, and most of them are two or three times that fast and make at least 99 per cent; because of "case errors," 100-percenters or *pats* are not too common. All R.P.O.s supplying each junction office must also be named from memory at this time. (See Chapter 10 for information on outstanding examination records and on memorizing systems.)

After two beginners' tests of comparatively few simple questions on the *Black Book*, clerks must take annual exams involving knowledge of exactly 284 complex questions and answers from the same volume; some single answers have twelve to fifteen parts! A few sample questions and answers will be most revealing:

Q. What are the conditions governing the acceptance of special-permit matter without stamps affixed?

A. A small number of pieces of metered first-class matter may be accepted by postal-transportation clerks or transfer clerks direct from a permit holder, who has been authorized to mail such matter in R.P.O. trains, but only upon the presentation by the permit holder of a statement on a form prepared by him showing his name, his meter permit number, that the pieces offered at the train conform to the conditions governing the acceptance of metered mail, and that the number of pieces, or value of the impressions thereon, will be endorsed on the regular statement of mails, Form 3602-A, furnished the postmaster in accordance with regulations.

(Some are much longer. But just listen to this one:)

Q. What insects, fowl, and live animals may be accepted for mailing?

A. Honeybees, day-old ducks, day-old geese, day-old guinea fowl, day-old turkeys, day-old chicks, and harmless live animals having no offensive odor and not likely to become offensive in transit, which do not require food or water in transit. All

must be properly crated; the day-old fowl can be sent only to points to which they may be delivered within seventy-two hours from time of hatching, and animals only within a reasonable distance.

Another annual exam is that on space regulations (under which the railroads are paid for carrying mail)—also a complex set of queries, but totaling only forty-five. Passing is 85 per cent in both examinations, but merits are awarded only for one hundred per cent grades.

After one year a substitute's probation is up. His clerk-in-charge will grade him, subject to checking by officials, on some twenty-three points of ability and behavior dealing with his eyesight, memory, speed, industry, neatness, carefulness, obedience, personal habits, sole attention to the Service, and so on. If all is well, his appointment now becomes permanent. Although quite proficient by now, recognition of his ability is sometimes begrudged by old-timers, as in the case of one sub who wrote that after finishing his own work he "tied out the C.-in-C.'s letter case and helped the second man rack out his papers—yet the C.-in-C. reported we went stuck due to 'inexperienced substitute'!"

Gradually our new man nears the head of his state substitute seniority list and, if in a terminal, begins to get a preferred tour and a Saturday-Sunday layoff. The top man is called the *king sub*. As vacancies occur, senior subs are gradually appointed "regular" to lines of their choice at from \$2,870 to \$3,870 a year, depending on their length-of-service grade; but in a terminal the highest automatic salary is \$3,670 (*Note 12*).

The newly appointed "regular" may be assigned to any imaginable type of R.P.O. It might be a local mixed train in the mountains of Washington State, like the Oroville & Wenatchee (GN), crawling up to the border of British Columbia . . . or a pair of all-night trunk-line trains, like N.Y. & Salamanca (Erie) Trains 5 & 10,⁵ where they kid him about being on "the Woolworth train" . . . or temporarily, a busy inter-

⁵Service just now on Trains 5 and 8.

state local, like the "Ma & Pa"—the York & Baltimore (Md & PaRR), a scenic rural run, usually reserved for senior clerks. Usually the new "regular" must return to undesirable hours.

He knows, at least, that he'll *not* get one of the few remaining small, rural branch-line runs with ideal hours and not much to do. They are fast disappearing into oblivion, as has (for example), the sleepy little abandoned Tuckerton & Phila. (TucktnRR-PRR) in New Jersey. Its lone train stopped at each crossroad to flag the autos, and if the clerk missed a catch, it would back up for him! On the old Bowie & Popes Creek (PRR) in southern Maryland, whose daily mixed trains became so slow that all mail service was pulled off, one clerk was due to get on daily at Bel Alton—but often didn't. The other clerk would shut the door on him, knowing he could easily run ahead and catch the train at the next station (the irritated short-stop clerk eventually refused to do it, and *this* train had to back up too!). But some branch lines are still found in most states—in New York, for example, the NYC-West Shore's 104-mile Kingston & Oneonta or "K.&O." Some, like the Franklin & Cornelia (TalFlsRR,N.C.—Ga.), are now freight lines only—the R.P.O. is sandwiched between express and box cars. In sharp contrast are many feverishly busy suburban runs (see Chapter 12).

Assignment to one of the heavier one-man runs is an interesting possibility for a new regular clerk, but it is an unusually responsible job and sometimes a tough one. The lone worker is clerk-in-charge, *red man*, letter clerk, paper man, and pouch clerk, all rolled into one. Perhaps the all-time record for holding down such a run goes to Roy "Kit" Carson, an authority on Arizona lore, who went on the Santa Fe's Ashfork & Phoenix there in 1912 and just retired from it—a relative of his famous namesake of 1863, he personally coaxed the government into creating the Carson National Monument. E. M. Martindale (later an examiner at Des Moines, and now, at eighty-one, in retirement there) tells of his old one-man run, the Newton & Rockwell City (Newt & NW), in Iowa, which lasted just about four years (1905–09); long abandoned, large trees now grow in the right of way.

The best one-man runs are those within one state (usually requiring exams on no other state) and with good hours and layoff. The hours often permit a clerk to be home each night—a privilege impossible on the long lines—even though layoffs may be confined to only every fourth or sixth week. On a typical run the clerk first calls for his registered mail; then he consults the "order book" of latest district regulations, and reports to the car with his usual work clothes and supplies. Changing clothes, he records the *reds* in his manifold-bill book, checks his arriving pouches, and hangs his small pouch-and-paper rack.

If his mail has been well made up, and most mail is, the clerk should have a good trip. Mail for the first town or two is, or should have been, made up direct as "holdouts" (as is the mail for any large towns); and the remaining working mail is largely in line-division packages marked No. 1, No. 2, and so on. (One village postmaster labeled his No. 1-2-3 separations for an eastbound R.P.O. as "East," "Further East," and "Way the h— on East!") Only the No. 1 and unmarked packages require immediate attention, and by the first throw-off whistle that town's mail will be ready for dispatch and, normally, all the No. 1 mail worked up. Soon all the original mail is distributed, and only the light incoming local mail needs attention thenceforth. The clerk then has things fairly easy—especially, of course, on the lightest branch lines, which are held down by older clerks rich in seniority. But there will be some days when local newspaper printings or week-end accumulations mean really heavy trips, and very fast work may be required if the next-to-last stop is a heavy office, since all mail must be worked and locked out at the terminus. Before leaving, the clerk rehangs his rack and "labels up" for the return trip, also making out his trip report (giving data such as statistics of mails worked); then he takes his *reds* to the post office.

A clerk on one such side line used to fill out his trip report before beginning work (since the mail was always about the same), and mail it in afterwards. One day he forgot, and mailed it before beginning the run. Alarmed, he then real-

ized it would reach the office before his run was over. The alert clerk quickly wired for annual leave for the following trip, adding, "And please return sample trip report I prepared for sub who is to run for me." It worked! Years ago W. F. Kilman was due for a one-man run in Bald Knob & Memphis (MoPac) Train 204, in Arkansas, after very little sleep. Oversleeping, he was roused by phone and reached the station just before his train pulled out, still but half awake—then he discovered, horrified, that he had made his mad dash through the streets of Bald Knob minus both his pants and attached key! Now the first stop was rapidly approaching, and he could not even unlock his pouches of mail; he frantically wired postmasters along the line (at his expense) to lend him a key, but to no avail. Helpless, he could only take in more mail at each stop and work none of it; and, finishing at Memphis, he had to skip his meals and work his mail up in Memphis post office until 2 A.M. next morning. His wife had rushed him the key by then—but he was docked a day's pay anyhow!

On another occasion the same clerk was accosted at a way station by a patched-up hillbilly who had just heard that men were needed in the postal service—and would Kilman put him to work? Kilman, badly "stuck," would have welcomed even such help as that, but of course could not accept the offer. But, wanting a little fun, he quizzed the applicant on his church affiliations, temperate habits, and so on, and received most reassuring answers. "Then come to the station at this exact time tomorrow, and I'll hire you," finished Kilman. Since the run was long enough to require two-day trips, of course it was the blissfully innocent clerk running *opposite* Kilman who was insistently waylaid!

The exasperating annoyances and difficulties confronting the new clerk would soon make him resign were it not for the compensations. After working all night on a quick turn around run, he may get only four or five hours' sleep before he has to report for the return trip—perhaps involving hours of strenuous advance work on a heavy paper rack, in a torrid non-air-conditioned car with unopenable windows. Twine

lint and sack dust fill the air, blackening skin and clothing and torturing those with colds or sinus troubles. Starting a week of duty, he usually has to work all night after being up all day, then try to sleep in daylight amid myriad noises. Hands get red and raw from tying, locking out, and piling mail for hours—especially if there's a rackful of nice brand new pouches with their stiff, ununlockable straps. He learns his mail one way by scheme, only to find it routed differently in practice at times; must accept all mail brought to the doors after leaving time, if train has not left; and must struggle with oversize greeting cards that won't fit his case, and with insufficient heat or light when utilities go haywire.

Clerks are granted only fifteen days' annual and ten days' sick leave at the best, and road clerks get even less (about ten and seven respectively) in actual days, due to layoff credits. Clerks must sort papers and *circs* which publishers seem to delight in having bulk-mailed with alternate addresses turned backward or upside down, or with excess paste sticking them all together. Dispatch deadlines must be met just when excess mails come flooding in; delays and diversions require complex rerouting of mail. They must contend with contradictions in schemes—half of Maryland is schemed differently (in minor details) in 3rd and 15th Division schemes. Late running may require even a turn-around to "work back" with no sleep at all. Looking forward to a layoff, a clerk often finds himself too exhausted to do more than sit around for two or three days; then he may have to make new case headers or draw up a whole list of labels to order, study an exam or answer P.T.S. mail, or get called by the *sub-chaser* (officer detailing substitutes and extra men) for an extra trip—all in addition to his usual home requirements!

"It's enough to make a preacher cuss," the average clerk exclaims; and truly, the general run of language in an R.P.O. car is not exactly mild, although there are a few clerks who never use profanity. It is a wonder, indeed, that the average clerk retains his proverbial courtesy to the public and his usual gentlemanly consideration for other clerks, especially newer ones. By kindly acts and hearty good humor many a

clerk wins the esteem of all his fellows—oft expressed, to be sure, in the form of the good-natured insults so typical of R.P.O. repartee. But when a tired clerk in a lurching, torrid car is set to sticking hundreds of long letters in a short-holed case (covering all his headers), and is then brusquely transferred to an overflowing paper rack to dump up and throw off huge sacks of tiny country papers or *squealers* (one called *Comfort* was formerly abhorred) mixed like jackstraws, then tie out the balky full sacks (often wedged in the back row behind the other sacks), bruising his knuckles and maybe finding his sack has no tie string—better hold your ears!

Fearsome is the scene when bad weather has “grounded” the planes at one or more of the area’s airports and huge stacks of air mail are turned over to the faithful old R.P.O.s which run in the fiercest weather. Most of the flood of pouches are addressed to distant airfields, but that makes no difference; all must be opened and distributed at once and all other sorting suspended. Mail is stacked in every spot, clear to the roof, perhaps; and someone cries in mock delight, “Oh, look at the pretty colors!” as the bales of red-white-and-blue letters are dumped up. The *wind-mail* must be worked to air outlets as well as by scheme. Pests who formerly riled clerks but are gradually disappearing include the rhymester who addresses mail in verse and the “wise-cracking” addresser who makes Wyandotte, Michigan, read “Y & •,” or Lineville into “——ville,” or who addresses letters to celebrities with “clever” symbols and drawings (and minus words). Distribution is badly slowed by such cranks, and the fact that such mail is usually delivered is a tribute to P.T.S. ingenuity but no excuse for the mailer. (A letter with nothing but “O.O.” on it was promptly delivered to O. O. McIntyre, New York.)

The clerk must know that the foreigner using native spelling who addresses a letter to Zizazo or Jajago, or to “Oukcet, Nounchire,” intends it to go to Chicago or to Hooksett, New Hampshire, respectively—and that the cultured Bostonian who sends mail back home to “J. P.” or “NUF,” Massachusetts, means Jamaica Plains or Newton Upper Falls. Mis-

takenly thinking they are helping the postal clerks, many firms as well as other mailers often reverse the address on their mail to show the city and state in top line (perhaps in large letters), to the confusion of the clerk, who is trained to scan only the *last* lines, constantly. All states seem to have at least one pair of identically named communities, although under postal regulations only one can be an independent post office. Ardmore, Brookline, Oakmont, and Overbrook, Pennsylvania, are suburbs of *both* Philadelphia and Pittsburgh! Clerks must contend with much mail improperly addressed to such points, as well as mail for towns where the post office and railroad station have different names (sometimes it's unavoidable—the railroad has named its station for an off-line post office; then the station gets a post office later!). And clerks must know, for example, that mail for South Norfolk, Virginia, can be included with Norfolk, but that South Boston, Virginia, is hundreds of miles away from Boston, Virginia. Illegible scrawls are a headache too, not to mention letters for no-post-office points.

Clerks are frequently called to sort letters under an unfamiliar set of headers (perhaps largely obsolete) which they cannot or dare not rearrange, or may be required to work them on a table with no headers at all. Train sickness and foot weariness beset the new clerk; as a *shack*, he is sent "jackassing" from one job to another, with no time to finish any one of them. Porters pour incoming mail in two or three doors at once, twice as fast as clerks can pile it. Tough-rimmed *hardhead* (repaired) pouches, hung and unhung with greatest difficulty, hound clerks on lines out of Washington especially. When setting up pouch tables, their underslung hooks are a nuisance (a hooked one flies off as soon as the second one is hooked on), while if overslung hooks are substituted, it is almost impossible to detach them, as they fly back into place similarly. And when a tied parcel is pushed down into a sack, its strings catch annoyingly on the rack-hooks.

Letter-packages, even though addressed plainly to a connecting R.P.O., often cannot be dispatched in the pouch for that line at all; the particular train may not serve the local

offices contained, or it may not be the proper section of the line, or the package may consist of mixed mail turned over by an *incoming* train of that line to ours without re-labeling, or of mail due to be *advanced* by special dispatches! Special-delivery parcels come pouring into the car, especially around holidays, and half of them are too big to be squeezed into the closely jammed sacks, the way they are hung. Big *blocks* or large bundles of newspapers cause the same trouble; the rack must be half taken apart to get the packages in, unless the harassed clerk gives up and sorts his parcels and blocks in piles on the floor! Especially in terminals, sacks of parcels "fill up all wrong," and big ones won't fit in unless the whole contents is rearranged; the clerk dares not do too much of this, either, or he'll be accused of wasting time *bricklaying*. Connections vary, even between days of the week.

Rain, cinders, or snow may come beating in the car ventilators persistently, until a sack is rigged up beneath them as a canopy. Doors on old cars are sometimes the obsolete type with ordinary handles, and, as the clerk who piles mail therein discovers to his great annoyance, they always open inward. Even with standard sliding doors, mail must often be moved and repled when trains come into a station on the "wrong side." Perishable meats and cheeses in parcels will decay, giving off a frightful aroma—as will deceased baby chicks.

Antiquated equipment can work havoc; in a recent holiday season, clerks on one North Dakota run worked in cars without water, heat, or lights. One car had an old Baker heater which was finally lit, but it succeeded in "making smoked hams" of the crew while they all worked by candlelight. Wash water can drain out, necessitating washing with ice water in midwinter. Overhead boxes with their sharp under-slung hooks will not only give a nasty dig in the head to any clerk unbending so as to contact them; they have sliding gates, too, which will descend to crack one's knuckles violently when being emptied. Stall poles, supposedly removable with a twist of the wrist, often stick like the mischief; mails are passed through the alley both ways at once, or a "bottleneck" results from some other cause; and trying to figure out

"space" requirements under the complex regulations involved drives clerks to despair. As Dan Moschenross puts it:

"During the Middle Ages, the *Flagellants* considered self-torture as the only means of attaining Divine favor . . . they beat one another . . . with whips and scourges.

"Today their modern successors bury one another under great piles of heavy sacks and call it Space System."

Although much is being done to remedy such conditions, C. D. Sherwin writes that a postal transportation clerk must often work "on a shaking platform, under lights [fifty-watt] that do not meet I.E.S. standards, eat . . . in the same room with exposed toilets, and handle dirty sacks used all over the world twenty years without cleaning." In an antique, non-ventilatable car he "is expected to . . . correctly case some twenty-five letters per minute. Try balancing yourself on the rear bumper of a moving auto some dark night and read your mail by the taillight. It'll give you an idea . . ." Small fifty-foot 1901 wooden mail cars are still run in some seventy-mile-per-hour trains, some clerks claim.

Unless assigned alone, the new man must learn to be a congenial asset to his R.P.O. crew. Thrown into constant contact with the same men for years or decades, he usually develops a friendly tolerance for the peculiarities and failings of others, faults that we all have. Only occasionally do we find the clerk who is morose or mean towards those whose personality he does not find congenial. Time passes rapidly amid the tempo of a heavy run, and soon a clerk finds himself living from layoff to layoff until months and years have slipped away as if by magic. Before he realizes it a clerk may have spent his entire Service life in one locality (or even on one line). Others, with wanderlust, transfer all over the United States.

There is a sense of rhythm felt throughout the crew. There is the synchronized, clocklike motion of a multiple human machine at work. There is the steady, even click of the wheels. There are the pulsating notes of barbershop harmony indulged in for many a mile, ranging from the classics to jive, from grand old hymns to ribald ballads, de-

pending on the men and the mood. And each letter clerk has his own varying, personal mail-flipping rhythm; some prance or sway in time with their sticking, while others tap letters regularly against bundles or fingers.

The recording and receipting for valuable mails enclosed in "rotary-locked" pouches give an interesting insight into some clerks' different characteristics. To save a record in handling, small pouches for our line or for local points are often enclosed in one large pouch; and when a *red man* opens one and discovers all the little ones, he may growl expressively that the "pouch has pups"—only to find, perhaps, that some of the smaller bags have "pups" in turn. He calls off the lock numbers from each *opener* or *liner* (working pouch), such as L-12345 or B-6789, followed by the numbers of the articles, and a helper checks all this on the bill enclosed. To avoid confusion, words are called to replace the lock letters—thus, *Lucy* 12345 and *Baby* 6789—and one can pretty well "size up" some clerks by noticing what words they choose. For example, "L" is commonly heard expressed as Lucky, Lucy, Lady, Lousy, Louis, and Liquor! (*Note 14.*)

One colorful personality, an old-timer once of the Toledo & St. Louis (a Wabash route, famed in the song "Wabash Cannonball"), evidently used worse words than the above for "L" and the rest of the alphabet too. Although he claimed he was once an evangelist or preacher of sorts, he was notorious for his vitriolic language. He became famous throughout the area, especially after some extra trips were clamped on to his assignment; he referred to them disgustedly as *warts*, and this term has meant extra trips in the Midwest ever since.

There will often be a left-handed chap in the crew who works his mail "backward," and since the larger letters slant the wrong way, no one else can work his case. Another may be a "string saver," tying up all discarded twine for re-use, or a tier of fancy knots (the work of some clerks can be recognized thus). Some clerks use privately-printed, name-on facing slips rather than the free government ones; others hang extra sacks galore on all the aisle hooks or *gills* on both sides, until no one can squeeze past. Others, perpetual kidders, threaten to

push senior men (with a desirable assignment) out the door when crossing bridges; cry, "What's the number of *that* job?" when a clerk is "up" and taking it easy; or annoy mail messengers by calling mail for the local stop as "Dogtown" or "Bird Center." One such clerk, called by phone for unwanted extra trips, always sneezed violently while listening, then repeated, "What did you say?" until the "office" gave up!

There is a more grim form of humor too—the grins and facetious wisecracks indulged in when men grab the long safety rods overhead in case of any sudden application of brakes. They know chances of wreck are almost nil, but they are prepared for anything, as tight hand holds reveal.

Our new crew member often discovers odd practices peculiar to that area. On Atlantic coastal lines, for example, mails for Pensacola, Florida, are always included with those for Georgia State—because Pensacola is the only locality not routed to the regular Florida connection, the Florence & Jack. R.P.O. (ACL). At certain stops on a line an outgoing mail separation may be called as *hot stuff* (a close connection), *snake mail* (for West Virginia), or *good and bad* (as for Cle Elum, Wash., and dis).

A good crew member soon learns what *not* to do. He tries not to drop twine under his neighbor's feet, haul large objects through a crowded aisle (they are best carried high, to the cry of "Low ceiling!"), or "have a chair" (frequent the district superintendent's office) every time he feels mistreated. He doesn't pile mail in bins in a slovenly, falling-down, old-wheat-shock stack, or come to work with out-of-date or unprepared slips, or keep his things, and change clothes, in the aisle. He admits responsibility when wrong, helps at doors or busy cases without being asked, and keeps discarded miscellany off the floor and the case ledges. He avoids imitating the occasional chap who shows contempt for his clerk-in-charge, who partakes of hidden stimulants, or who stops necessary sorting to pour out windy chatter or soiled barroom tales which distract and perhaps annoy his co-workers. He knows that only a pest "keeps his cup under the water spigot, buys stamps from his clerk-in-charge, whistles the same tune

all day long, and yells 'Shut up!' at baby chicks." (Most of these traits were listed by D. D. Bonewits in the *Railway Post Office*.)

Our new clerk will develop varied interests. Besides hunting and card playing, as noted, most clerks like fishing, ball games, and horse races. Terminal clerks are often adept at chess. Some are religious workers or even ministers, like Reverend Lawrence L. Fuqua of Cleveland (Ohio) Terminal. Some clerks even do farming in their free time; others are enthusiastic musicians, stamp fiends, or railroad "fans," and a few are dreamy Shakespearean scholars, writers, trolley fans, or even R.P.O. enthusiasts (to their co-workers' utter amazement—See Chapter 13). Possibly the strangest hobby is that of George E. Travis and his wife, who built a much-publicized "Shaker House" in Fort Worth, Texas, containing the largest saltcellar collection known.

Since 1921 clerks have had to carry revolvers, usually a Colt .38, with belt and bullets; it must be kept cleaned and polished, and unloaded when not on duty. Such a requirement is most essential, as Clerk J. B. Williams of Washington, D.C., discovered to his sorrow when his ten-year-old son was seriously injured while playing with his pistol. Official target instruction is not given, but many clerks can "pull a mean trigger" and keep up practice in voluntary groups such as the 2nd Division P.T.S. Pistol Club. A congressional investigation, deploring the lack of firearms training and the extra responsibility forced upon clerks, has urged that armed guards be substituted.

Federal law requires recognition of postal gun permits in all places, but some localities have refused to honor them. In North Carolina one clerk was fined sixty-five dollars for carrying his gun on duty, deprived of his twenty-five dollar weapon, and warned that other armed clerks would be arrested on sight—because he had no local permit! Don Steffee, the railway author (see Chapter 16), tells of laying over for three hours in Saratoga Springs, New York, when subbing on the Rouses Point & Albany (D&H), and of spending his time exploring the town or resting in the park—his

gun in a back pocket. One day he was gruffly accosted by a cop, disarmed, loaded into a patrol car while onlookers gawked, whisked to the station house, and released only after examination of his papers. He carried no guns in Saratoga after that! And even with guns put away, clerks who go and come in the witching hours before dawn often run afoul of the law anyhow. A judge in New York City, not knowing of the P.T.S., has even ruled that "the only people one can expect to meet at 3 A.M. are those who might be lawless." Picked up as "suspicious characters" for such reasons as growing a luxurious beard, attending a criminal trial, or dashing up the street, recently, were Bob Lareau of the Kan. City & Albuquerque (Santa Fe); a Bos. & Newport (NYNH&H) clerk, in Rhode Island; and Ben Spurgeon and Fred McCandlish of the Toledo & Charleston (NYCent, Ohio—W.Va.), respectively. This writer has himself been stopped and grilled at about 2:30 A.M. by the alert constabulary of two different New Jersey towns near his home!

From time to time, speaking of guns, P.T.S. officials or inspectors ride the R.P.O. lines or inspect other functions of the Service, and one superintendent discovered a fault in Clerk Al Gunn's trip report on the Portland & San Francisco (SouPac), proposing to give him five demerits for it; and when the clerk replied (on the form) "Shoot.—A. Gunn," he was "shot" twenty-five more *sinkers* for disrespect in official correspondence. Retired District Superintendent J. P. Fitzpatrick, inspecting the same line, used to help sort the letters, and one day found a private note in a package of letters received via "go-back pouch" from the opposite train, reading, "I carried Dixon by. No report." The official added a letter, making it read, "Now report," and returned it to the clerk who wrote it and who had missed the exchange at Dixon, California! On an Eastern line one official tried to catch red-handed a clerk suspected of imbibing on duty, contrary to regulations. He watched the suspect throw newspapers for the whole two hundred-odd miles, was amazed to see the clerk become steadily woozier until he was completely "out" at the end of the trip, and gave up the quest in despair. Only after-

ward did the clerk admit to his fellows that his flask was hung inside a paper sack in his rack, from which he took a swig every time he leaned over to rearrange or push down the mail therein!

Another superintendent, inspecting a terminal, proposed a charge of five demerits to a clerk merrily whistling, contrary to his regulations, but canceled them when he received the reply "... Sorry; little did I dream I was disturbing those fine men with whom I worked ... I was merely trying to knock off the rough edges of fatigue." Sometimes, however, a P.T.S. official himself is inspected. A postal inspector interviewed a former chief clerk, whose office included the Great Northern's Fast Mail (St. Paul & Williston), to demand why a large second-class office on its route was not supplied by that train when it was the only one which could afford a morning delivery. Told that they couldn't fool around with a little local stop like that when mailbags thrown in at Minneapolis were still in the way and being stacked, the inspector replied, "All right—we will report to the Department that the car doors are blocked for fifty miles after leaving. In case of wreck the clerks could not get out. The Chief Clerk knows this, and has taken no steps to correct it." The local office supply was established.

Meanwhile our typical clerk has been gradually climbing up the various salary grades and later longevity levels, each of which brings a one hundred dollar increase. Usually he has his eye on some "dream job" on his own or another line, which he takes when seniority permits. He may be nearing middle age by then; and, having reached his goal, he will stay there unless he aspires to be a clerk-in-charge or an official. Promotions to such positions, at a very substantial salary increase, are made to qualified clerks who are willing to accept and who are in the highest automatic grade and with top seniority, a clerk-in-chargeship, of course, usually preceding any higher promotion. Many clerks do become C.-in-C.s, especially on the short one-man lines where every clerk is one; few aspire to higher offices, because of the influence allegedly needed.

As the busy *chief* of a trunk-line crew, a clerk-in-charge well earns his Grade 16 or 17 pay and *wears the saber*, as they say (or the *burlap tights*), with distinction. Typing check sheets and handling correspondence consumes much of his layoff, and on the job he usually must work letters as well as supervise, check pouches, write trip reports and records, handle train space, and what not. He is accountable for all property in the car, must see that clerks obey orders and work properly all mail received, if possible, and that mails are properly dispatched. He must collect the "count" of each clerk (amount of mail worked) in a pigeonhole labeled "OFFICE" before he can make out his trip report.

A wise and friendly clerk-in-charge conducts himself like any other clerk; he is equally considerate and respectful, wears the same work clothes, works just as hard, and gives "orders," if necessary, in the form of pleasant suggestions. (It seldom is necessary in the ideal crew, where each man knows his duties in detail.) On his responsible job, as one writer says, he must have the "patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon, sometimes as hard-boiled as a top sergeant, but as diplomatic as Franco would like to be; wide-awake and alert, yet at times blind and dumb—meek as a lamb . . . He is custodian of what other clerks are not to be bothered with: Special orders, post-marker, 'Missent' and other stamps, canceling pad and ink, postage stamps, trip-report book, postal guide, extra registry supplies, clip boards, wire clips, rubber bands, flashlights, batteries, car keys, space books, special-delivery and check sheets, and a thousand and one blank forms . . ."

Two-grip man he is rightly called, for he seldom gets all this material into one case. His extra grip or box, as well as his regular one, must be bought and handled at his own expense even though used for government property only. A C.-in-C. who tried using a mail sack for this purpose was severely reprimanded.

Scattered among the P.T.S.'s legion of kindly and capable clerks-in-charge there are, of course, a few of the Simon Legree type too. One clerk said in the *Railway Post Office*: "They cannot give an order in a respectful manner, and oft-

times use profane language in emphasizing same . . . a direct violation of P.L.&R." In the same magazine (now *Postal Transport Journal*) D. D. Bonewits lists a few other complaints toward such, including, "He uses all the drawers and boxes for his shoes, hat, parcels, and personal collection . . . Waits until the engineer whistles, then hurriedly ties out his local package and charges you with a pouch-exchange failure when you can't get to the door in time . . . Asserts his authority—officious and arrogant in giving orders . . . Lets some favorite mollycoddle assign the distribution for the crew . . . Is a superman on supervision, pygmy on effort . . . Never has time to listen to suggestions . . . Arranges for valet service—someone to wait on him, no matter how busy . . . Fallaciously thinks the hard way is the best way to get the most out of his crew . . . Never gives partner a lift when a ten-minute breather would have saved carrying mail by . . . Careless about orders from his superiors—thinks they are meant for . . . the crew," and so on.

It must again be emphasized that such clerks-in-charge are much in the minority, and that the *chief* himself has to contend with the annoying crew-member habits quoted from Mr. Bonewits earlier, not to mention many others. And of course there are anecdotes galore about clerks-in-charge. A C.-in-C. on the old Chicago & Hannibal (IC-Wabash), says F. C. Gardiner, discovered a *sleeper* in his Decatur box just after all mail was unloaded at Decatur. The conscientious *chief* took the letter in his teeth, jumped off, snatched a pouch off the truck, unlocked it, threw the lock in the pouch, and closed it up, yelling, "Gimme a lock! Gimme a lock!" until the second clerk tossed him one just as the train started up. When he jumped back inside, his teeth still held the letter tightly clenched!

Old "Rocky," in charge on a Western run, would fuss at his men whenever he got caught up on his work; so to occupy him they would slip a penny under his letters—keeping him busy for half an hour digging into his grips, sprawled amid patent medicines and junk, hunting for a "matter-found-loose-in-the-mails" form and writing it up. Years ago, Owen

D. Clark gasped when, while he was throwing mail as a sub on a branch line in the East, a sudden shot rang out in the car. His clerk-in-charge was standing there with a smoking .45 in his hand. But he hadn't gone berserk; his old-style gun had a secret shell compartment, which he had forgotten about when he dumped the bullets out before hammering a loose nail with the butt. Before putting them back, he had decided to give the trigger a couple of test clicks!

On the Atchison & Downs (MoPac) in Kansas an elderly bachelor clerk-in-charge had a crush on a little postmistress out on the line. The romance progressed nicely during the train's two-minute stops there as the little lady met the train, until the old chap stayed home sick one day and a sub (who resembled him enough to pass for a son) was sent out amply coached by the crew. He answered the postmistress's inquiry:

"Yeah, Pop's rheumatism has got him again." Then, noticing a pendant she wore, "Say! Where d'ye get Ma's locket—did Pop give it to you?"

The old gent could never understand why she stopped meeting the train.

Clerks-in-charge have run up enviable records in supervising the same crew for many decades. Before 1900, it was reported, J. C. Beck of the N. Y. & Chic. (NYCent) had held such a record for nearly thirty-five years. Palmer C. Vincent of the Chatham & N. Y. (NYCent), supervised one crew from 1906 to 1943.

Then there was J. F. "Cat" Caterlin of the K.C. & Denison (M-K-T), who perhaps typifies the ideal clerk-in-charge, with forty years' total service on the line. One could not find, says E. E. Stuart, a more beloved or capable *chief*; he was a charter member of the R.M.A. and a division secretary, and a regular "steam engine" on his Texas letters in the mail car. He "would slash a double row five feet long, jab his right arm like a piston, and never slacken until the last letter was in . . . 'Old Cat can sure hide it,' they said. It was his best, his whole best, nothing but the best . . . Competent in action, superlative in judgment." He was sometimes brusque, but never showed a temper; kindly to his men, with a sound

philosophy and keen sense of humor.

Other clerks, too, have run up some amazing service records. The longest and most distinguished of all is said to be that of Christopher A. McCabe, of the St. Paul & Williston (GN), who became district superintendent at St. Paul, Minnesota, to round out fifty-seven years of continuous service since his appointment in 1889 at \$800 a year. A delegate to R.M.A. conventions as far apart as 1892 and 1949, he retired in 1946 as "the best-loved and admired man in the 10th Division." He was "fired" twice during the hectic early days, felt a gun in his ribs during a train robbery in 1894, and is still rallying against any curtailment in the P.T.S.

Longest career on *one line* was probably that of William H. Meyers, of the S.P.'s former Placerville & Sacramento (California), or of Fred Sheldon of the N. Y. & Chic. (NYCent), just retired—both fifty years. Other high P.T.S. service records were those of "Dean" John H. Pitney, Boston & Alb. (B&A), over fifty-five years (see Chapter 16); 12th Division Superintendent John Morris, Memphis Gren. & New Orleans (IC), fifty-five years; 7th Division Superintendent Joseph A. Muldoon, St. Louis & Monett (StL-SF), fifty-four years; and so on down.

A clerk can retire optionally at fifty-five or over, but in any case not later than seventy. Formerly, railway mail clerks were arbitrarily retired at sixty-two—much to the displeasure of clerks still strong and capable at that age who had children to put through college or homes to pay for. On the other hand, most younger clerks—eager for the promotions that retirements bring them—are anxious to restore a compulsory retirement of sixty-five, sixty, or fifty-five. They argue that the old-timers need a few years of well-earned leisure and that too many have slowed up and must be "carried" by the young clerks. The argument goes merrily on, but it would certainly seem obvious that if a clerk is healthy, interested in his work, and truly efficient, he should be permitted to stay to seventy if he needs the money.

Reactions to the final departmental "order of discontinuance" at the end of the month in which a birthday occurs

are mixed. Many vigorous old-timers definitely hate to leave the job and the co-workers they like so much and snort at the idea of some sub abruptly relieving them in the middle of a trip when the fatal day arrives. Others eagerly await it, as an emancipation from a lifelong grind, perhaps flinging the old road grip into a river on the last run.

Many outstanding clerks are honored with a dinner and gifts on their retirement, especially if they have become officials; but some were still on the road, like J. H. Lucitt of the N.Y. & Pt. Pleasant (CRR-NJ), to whom seventy clerks gave a banquet, autograph book, and diamond ring. Another unusual retirement was that of Joseph McElvin of the Kan. City & Denison (M-K-T), whose father was still on the retirement rolls himself. And when Lum Andrews, of the Chic. & Council Bluffs (CB&Q), retired in 1919, his son Carl had been on the line fourteen years—and is *still* on it, a family record of 77 years' service on *one* line! (Note 22.)

The low retirement annuity, averaging about fifteen hundred dollars annually for those retired before 1949, is a great hardship to many clerks. (Clerks retired now fare only a little better.) A mere fraction of active salary, it is unlike army, navy, and similar pensions in being subject to income tax too! Railroad employees retire at much better pay after paying less in deductions (6 per cent in the P.T.S.); their pensions are tax-exempt by law; and they often receive passes good for rides on most railroads for themselves and their family. On the other hand, the retired clerk's commission—restricted to single-route business trips as it was—is returned to him *canceled* as a souvenir! The P.T.S., though obviously eligible, has not been included in recent legislation authorizing a liberally paid retirement after twenty years' service in "hazardous and arduous" government jobs.

Some retired clerks secure part-time employment, others make for a quiet fishing retreat or chicken farm in the country—still chatting with old pals down at the depot, and sometimes continuing active in the N.P.T.A. and in retired clerks' groups. Some of the latter are the National Retired N.P.T.A. Clan (California); the Veteran R.P.C.s of New England, in

Boston; the Seattle Retired Clerks' Club; the Old Timers Club, Syracuse, New York; the Twin City Retired Clerks' Clan⁵ in Minnesota; and others in San Francisco and Fort Worth, Texas.

Some clerks have doubtless reached the century mark, but the longest-lived clerks of whom we have records include the late John W. Masury of the Boston & N.Y. (NYNH&H) and Royal S. Dale of the Eland & Merrilan (CStPM&O-C&NW) in Wisconsin, both of whom lived to be ninety-seven. Mr. Masury was a world traveler during his twenty-nine-year retirement and was an active guest in the Odd Fellows Home, Worcester, Massachusetts, with his letter writing and Bible reading, until his death at almost ninety-eight late in 1949; Mr. Dale hailed from Romulus, New York, and was retired twenty years. Close seconds at ninety-six were Charles H. Hooton of the Wash. & Grafton (B&O), who just passed away, and William J. Cook of LeRoy, New York, who ran just four years on the N.Y. & Chic. (NYCent) before becoming a Collector of Internal Revenue. Hooton was born in a log cabin, had lunches with President Grant, and was active in Baltimore N.P.T.A. affairs.

Oldest living ex-clerk at this writing is Joseph M. Kurtz, ninety-seven, of the Mount St. Joseph Home, Kansas City, Kansas, who ran on the old Leavenworth & Miltonvale (KCLeav&W) and is active and in good health. Feted at his last birthday in a big celebration, he is a general favorite at the home and active in the religious services and singing; he reads and tells stories with gusto, and his clever humor is proverbial. Right behind him at last report were Charles J. Bohnstead of the old Mich. City, Monon & Indpls. (CI&L) in Indiana, and Robert C. Whaling of the former Roch. & Pittsburgh (BR&P-B&O), who lives in Rochester, New York—both aged ninety-four. A. F. Collier, off the St. Paul & Miles City (NP), is ninety-three. Many other old-timers still keep hale and hearty through interesting activities. At last report these included former Chief Clerk A. T. Nichols, ninety-

⁵Branch of National N.P.T.A. Clan.

two, (who knew such diverse characters as Jesse James and President Lincoln), of St. Joseph, Mo.; C. J. Cissna, ninety-one, ex-Kan. City & Memphis (StL-SF); and W. F. Doolittle, ex-chief clerk, Boston, ninety-one. To conclude our Honor Roll of old-timers still living, as far as we know, we salute the following (nominated by our correspondents), plus others mentioned later:

J. E. Reid, 89, Kansas City & Denver (UP)

James L. Stice, 88, P.T.S. author (see Chapter 16)

Charles M. Brown, 86, Cairo & New Orleans (IC); lives in Memphis, Tenn.

Felley M. Miller, 86, Omaha & Ogden (UP); active in N.P.T.A., Council Bluffs, Iowa

Thomas B. Robertson, 86, St. Louis & Monett (StL-SF)

August Kraft, 85, St. Louis & Kansas City (MoPac)

Morgan Jenkins, 80, Pittsburgh & Kenova (B&O); active in Huntington, West Virginia.

Some very distinguished long-lived clerks have now passed on. Clarence E. Votaw of Fountain City, Indiana, lived to be ninety-five (1949); he was a prominent former assistant superintendent and author, as described in Chapter 16. Andrew J. Baer, reputedly of the PRR's N.Y. & Pitts., closely resembled John Wilkes Booth and had a hair-raising escape from capture following his Civil War military career and Lincoln's assassination; he helped save lives at the Johnstown flood and finally retired to live in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to the ripe age of ninety-three. Richard G. Whiting, of Hyattsville, Maryland, passed on at ninety-two after many years on the N.Y. & Wash. (PRR); like Mr. Hooton, he was a friend of President Grant, while his father was a close associate of Grant's famed opponent, General Robert E. Lee, when a Mexican War colonel! (Mr. Whiting lived in the home town of the late Second Assistant P.M.G. Smith W. Purdum, an ex-clerk; likewise that of this writer and other clerks.) William I. Woodruff, of the old Sioux City & O'Neill (CB&Q) in Nebraska, had a famous photographic memory and could quote R.M.S. journals by the page; he lived to be ninety-one.

One and all, such men have "fought the good fight, and kept faith" with the great Railway Mail Service which they knew. Well did they deserve a ripe old age of constructive leisure to round out their days in this, the new and modern age of the Postal Transportation Service.

VIVID INCIDENTS OF THE RAILWAY MAIL

. . . Of Needham's old tin suitcase and his tin-can drinking cup;
He swore the boys who slit them just wasn't on the up . . .
Of sweet potato leavin's on the doorknob which were placed,
While through the train the big Chief Clerk so busily he paced;
He came upon said doorknob and he grasped it good and strong—
With a loud and angry bellow he announced something was wrong.

— Selected (from *The R.P.O.*)



The sorting of mail on trains makes a deep impression on those to whom it has not become just a part of the day's work, and humorous, dramatic, and even tragic happenings accentuate it. Perhaps a substitute's memorable "first trip" is often the most interesting of such incidents to the reader, and Clarence Votaw describes

his own hectic initial run in *Jasper Hunnicutt* thus:

I followed 11 other clerks, who climbed hastily into the mail cars. Everyone but me knew exactly what to do and did it with celerity. First, a dozen valises opened and numerous books, schemes, schedules, and other articles were produced . . . Our journey to Pittsburgh began: "Don't try to unlock the sacks of papers—only the pouches are locked. You face up." Pouch clerks, taking them by armfuls, threw the bundles with precision . . . "Poor fellow, he's stuck!" sighed the clerk-in-charge, very audibly . . .

A classic of such tales¹ is told by E. M. Martindale, mentioned in the previous chapter, and long of the Chic. & Omaha (C&NW). Watching the mail trains as a boy, he built a glamorous picture of himself seeing the world from the car door. Appointed a substitute, he describes his first trip thus:

"My first duty was to take into the car some tons of Kansas paper mail. . . . I had less than five minutes; but I did it somehow, though every nerve was quivering and my breath seemed gone forever. Just as I finished: 'Here, feller,' said a superior clerk, 'face this mail up in station order.' I didn't know the order of stations; but believing that hesitancy would be punished as mutiny, I tackled those huge stalls . . . A lurch of the car threw me off my feet and an enormous sack pinned me down. I was rescued by the superior clerk, thoroughly disgusted:—'Guess embroidery work would suit *you* better!' But he turned in and helped; for we were approaching Mount Pleasant and there were still scores of sacks to be sorted. (This was on the CB&Q's Chic. & Council Bluffs.)

"These preliminaries finished, I was ushered back into the second car, where my patriotism was put to the test of dragging mail to the opposite end, lifting it to the tables, 'setting it up' piece by piece for the convenience of the swiftly throwing distributor. Before we reached Ottumwa, the glamour and glory of my dreams had departed, in company with the spotlessness of my shirt sleeves and bosom. I was dizzy and faint; the cars were dark with smoke and dust, and the whole scene inside seemed an endless tangle of pouches, sacks, and pigeon holes, these presided over by perspiring demons whose flying hands kept the air alive with packages and bundles, the while mumbling a jargon, concerning routes and connections, which was all Fiji to me. Other demons rushed up and down the aisles, dragging behind them bags which anon they hurled from the train and snatched others as though by magic from the winds without.

"The noise was deafening, myriad switches crashed alarmingly beneath the wheels, trains on other tracks suddenly and

¹See Chapter 12 for some hectic first trips on fast electric suburban R.P.O.s.

ominously rushed past, throwing me into a state of panic. Then the roll of the train, rounding sharp curves, taxed my strength and nerve, and levied toll upon the breakfast which I had eaten in such repose and anticipation.

"The next hours dragged, naturally, but at length we approached Murray, and having begged the boon of a moment's time, I drew myself together, opened a door, and prepared to receive the homage of a conqueror. I couldn't see a soul—Yes, there was a boy, my brother, and he cheered me loyally. And over in the 'News' office door my father gave a sort of military salute, and the ovation was at an end. I had tears and was prepared to shed them, but I didn't; I just sank down in utter weakness on a detested sack.

"A new field of endeavor awaited me, however. By ukase of the clerk-in-charge I was to try the catcher, a performance which in my nervous state I mentally compared with powder making or bronco-breaking. I urged my inexperience and said I was ill, but to no purpose. 'Got to learn—as well now as any time,' he replied. 'Get ready. When she whistles, spot the crane. Just before you reach it, throw out your pouch hard, and raise the catcher; the rest'll come to you.'

"I glanced ahead, unable to spot any crane, only switch targets, telegraph poles, and semaphores in spindling abundance, but I knew it must be there somewhere so decided to raise the catcher in good time and wait for the 'rest to come to me.' It came—even sooner than I expected, and with such violence that the catcher was torn from my grasp, wrenched from its socket, and disappeared entirely, leaving me dumb and paralyzed. I had caught a semaphore post instead of the mail pouch. Grasping the situation instantly from the crash, fellow clerks yelled, 'throw it out,' meaning the outgoing pouch which I held stupidly in one hand. I quickly obeyed, and another tremendous crash and clatter followed its exit. A glance back showed that my pouch had crashed through the station's bay window. In mute horror, I thought the clerk-in-charge would revile me and report me and I should be ignominiously discharged and held for damages by the company. Imagine my surprise when I saw him double over a

pouch rack, howling with amusement, while the other clerks made pandemonium with merriment.

"It was several days before they could look at me without whooping, and much longer before I could be induced to touch one of those pesky catchers."

Experiences like this could be duplicated many times; but, tough as they seemed, they were not so soul-racking as those of lone substitutes taking over one-man runs for the first time. Not only aching muscles and frayed nerves are the lot of this kind of novice; he works under a tense, lonesome helplessness not experienced by the beginner accompanying experienced clerks. The writer² well remembers his first one-man run, where he worked under such tension that he carried lighted lamps the whole trip, so as to utilize the few moments lost traversing dark bridges or tunnels.

Russel Danniel thus describes his first trip on the old Momence & Terre Haute (C&EI):

"It was awful! I could handle the local mail all right, but when the other began to pile up I didn't know what to do with it. I imagined that if I missent a letter—the 'pen' for me. So when I got down to Terre Haute I 'massed' the whole pile on the post office. I soon received a note from the clerks there, asking why in blazes I didn't at least take out the Chicago city mail. When I got back to my room that evening, I wrote to my chief clerk, for God's sake, to send someone who could handle that run."

More than one disillusioned sub has attempted to quit at once, although most are persuaded to remain by a bit of kindly official remonstrance and conniving. But one young man simply went back home the next day, after having some cards printed to forestall embarrassing questions, thus:

Q.—What are you doing here?

A.—I have quit the mail service.

Q.—Don't you like it?

A.—No.

Q.—Was the work hard?

A.—Yes.

²Professor Dennis.

Q.—What was it?

A.—Lifting and unlocking two hundred pouches, shaking out contents, arranging same, removing pouches, locking same, carrying same away, jumping and stomping on mail matter, rearranging sacks, then going over same work, continuing same seventeen hours without rest, with trains flying around curves and slinging you against everything that is not slung against you.

The clerks' sense of humor runs largely to practical jokes. When a dignified middle-aged new sub showed up for duty on a St. Paul & Williston (GN) train, the second clerk coached him in just what to say to the clerk-in-charge, who arrived later. The head man arrived, and the distinguished-looking stranger was introduced to him as the new division superintendent, just appointed at St. Paul, whom the clerks had never met. The "superintendent" made an impressive inspection, with the C.-in-C. deferentially answering his questions, and continued his investigative, official demeanor throughout the trip—at the end of which he revealed his identity!

From several exchanges of tricks by two Chicago & Omaha (C&NW) clerks, whom we shall call Turner and Jones, the following prank is taken. There are no women clerks in postal cars, but there are in post offices. On a certain trip Turner received a note on the back of a Vermilion, Illinois, facing slip, inquiring, "Why in h— don't you spell Vermilion right?" and the slip was stamped "Postmaster, Vermilion." The angry Turner, on his next delivery to that office, made a profane rejoinder on his facing slip to the effect that no blinkety-blankety postmaster was telling him how to spell. A few days later he got an order to report to his chief clerk in Chicago. There he was handed a facing slip with the epithets he had called the Vermilion postmaster. "Did you write that?" asked the chief.

"Yes, sir; he got funny with me and I —"

"But," interposed the chief, "the postmaster at Vermilion is a woman."

Turner was stunned, but only for a minute, "Oh, I know.

It's another trick of that blinkety-blankety Jones. I'll get even with him."

Railway mail clerks have seldom been required to wear full uniform clothing. At times a blouse was required, and for several years a special cap and always a badge. During the period that both badge and cap were required this incident occurred on the former Chadron & Lander (C&NW), later Chadron & Caspar. It was a local and used to stop out at a small lake on the prairie, where the crew went swimming if there were no women passengers. One day the engineer sneaked back and started the train, causing all to make a mad rush to get aboard. It was but a short run to the next station, so the mail clerk locked out his pouch instead of putting on his trousers. Imagine his surprise when, instead of the usual agent, the agent's wife came to throw in his pouch. Horrified and insulted, she reported the trouserless clerk. When he got the correspondence he defended himself in a strong letter to the office, asserting that he was wearing his cap and badge, which was all the uniform prescribed by regulations. Technically right, he got off with an admonition always to wear his pants at stations.

Charles Hatch, of the St. Louis, Eldon & Kansas City (Rock I.), relates an incident in which the main actor was William Davenport, retired secretary of the 7th Division, R.M.A. He was on the St. Louis & Little Rock (MoPac), a few miles from St. Louis, when the train came to a stop. A hyena had broken out from its crate and was standing in the door of the baggage car, uncertain when to leap out. The crew, fearing the animal might injure people in the city, had stopped outside to ponder the problem. Davenport went forward and, seeing the beast, drew his revolver. But the hyena didn't look very tough, so he holstered his gun and, picking up a chunk of coal from the right of way, made a strike on the nose of the astonished animal. Dazed, it slunk back toward its cage and the car door was closed. The train proceeded on to St. Louis, where the beast was crated. A clerk certainly gets in on the "goings-on" in railroading.

The writer (B.A.L.) was on duty in a N. Y. & Wash. (PRR)

storage car when a half-grown alligator, destined as a pet for someone, crawled out of its crate and explored several stalls of mail. With some difficulty and cautious handling, he was coaxed back into his crate and the plank secured thereon.

F. C. Gardner, Ret., of the Washington and Bristol R.P.O. (Southern) tells of a towerman at a crossing on the Toledo & St. Louis (Wabash) who was ordered to observe Train 4 from the ground one day and report. On that day Train 4 had picked up a shipment of baby chicks mailed at St. Louis in very hot weather; many had died and were "overripe." The third clerk, ordered to open the boxes and count and throw out the "ripe" ones, did so—flinging 137 of them out the door at once. One can imagine the dispatcher's consternation when he received this report: "I was on the ground to observe Train 4 as ordered and the *!\$. *!¾&%!! postal clerk dumped a carload of rotten chicks on me!" Grown chickens, too have caused consternation—as when one clerk volunteered to help an expressman catch an escaped hen, only to find an inspector in the car demanding the cause of his absence when he returned after a merry chase around the depot.

As for other animal tales: A monkey escaped from a baggage car into one R.P.O., amused the crew awhile, then smashed the C.-in-C.'s watch! A "religious" dog at North Germantown, New York, would regularly catch the pouch thrown from N. Y. & Chic. (NYCent) trains—except on Sundays. Other clever pets—dogs, deer, and what not—regularly meet various R.P.O.s today. Puppies and mice are enclosed by jokesters in fake pouches for other R.P.O. trains.

When a Philadelphia transfer clerk opened a "restless" sack from New Haven, a huge black cat jumped out and high-tailed it northward. And the Newark Air Mail Field's cat once got pouched—and flown—to Pittsburgh. Likewise, the Spokane, Washington Terminal's pet kitten jumped in a sack, was dispatched three hundred miles, and safely returned after a frantic telegram; and another kitten jumped out of a pouch opened on a New England R.P.O. F. C. Gardiner tells of a tenderhearted Wash. & Charlotte (Sou) clerk whose mother cat had kittens he had to dispose of—so he hid them in a box

under his car's case ledge, knowing the car went on through to Atlanta. But his co-worker, a prankster, sought out the Charl. & Atlanta clerks privately and recovered the kittens; he took them back to Washington on the early train he ran on northbound and let them out in their yard to greet their owner later!

Tales of "catching on the fly" are legion. A. D. Bunger, of the Oelwein & Kan. City (CGW), had a series of failures to catch at Peru, Barney, and Lorimer, Iowa. Although the headlight daily revealed each pouch hanging in its place, he'd swing out his hook and catch nothing—the pouch would be nowhere, not even on the ground. His correspondence on the matter piled up, but when an inspector visited, the catch was normal. Next trip it happened again at Peru and Barney, but at Lorimer the train stopped for passengers and the station agent threw in the Lorimer pouch and the Peru and Barney pouches also. The fireman had brought up the other two, explaining that he'd found them on the end of his rake, which he'd left protruding across the end of the tender. The rake had acted as a catcher, holding each pouch for miles.

One clerk used to depend partly on a white horse in a certain field as a landmark for one catch—and missed it when the horse was moved to another lot. When Bert Bemis, now a well-known writer, was a clerk on the Omaha & Denver (CB&Q) he made a nearly fatal exchange near Lincoln, Nebraska. His key chain became entangled with the cords of a pile of sacks he was dumping out and they pulled him out to hang in space from the safety rod until pulled in by other clerks. One clerk on another run caught a small trunk off a truck instead of the intended pouch.

When a Texarkana & Port Arthur (KCS) train once stopped in Leesville, Louisiana, a young lad jumped up and hung onto the catcher arm, seeking to "bum" a ride that way. When the clerk opened the door to make the catch at the next town he saw the boy in the nick of time, for it would have been fatal if the prongs of the oncoming crane had hit him. Dragging the frightened youngster inside, the clerk undoubtedly saved his life.

A classic catching story tells about a substitute who missed the first catch, which made his station list one behind, and he later put off each local pouch one station ahead and was reported by thirty-two postmasters for missending their mail. And legend has it that on reaching the terminal of the run he had up his catcher arm, since he thought one more town was due to be caught.

Several authentic cases have been found like that of Fred Harmon on the Duluth & Thief River Falls (MStP & SSteM). He forgot to change his catcher to face the direction in which the train was moving. Thinking fast, he decided to pull up the catcher in reverse, which, while not hooking in the pouch, did knock it down from the crane. The demerits for a failure in catching were less than those for being reported as leaving the pouch hanging on the crane. But Harmon's pouch momentarily whipped around the reversed hook and paused on the small end loop long enough for him to reach out and grab it, saving himself from any failure or demerits; then he changed his catcher.

Some accidents and a few deaths have occurred in making catches. Defective arms or cranes sometimes bring injury. Sometimes a spot designated for delivery is not kept clear, and L. E. Clerk reports a whole row of cream cans bowled over like tenpins on an icy platform. Pouches have been sucked under the wheels of the car. Working hard on an all-night run recently, Otis M. Cropp, of the Chic. & Council Bluffs (CB&Q), lost his footing in the door making a catch at Wyanet, Illinois, at seventy mph—and lost his life. The year before, a clerk fell from a Pitts. & St. Lou. (PRR) car the same way. Clerk Taylor of the former Detroit & Mansfield (PRR) tried to catch Tiro, Ohio, with a loose catcher and was pulled out the door to grasp the grab irons for dear life. Signboards and a busy highway interfered with the non-stop deliveries on this line, too, often scattering newspapers to the four winds. (See Chap. 1 re 1950 fatality.)

A clerk who'd leisurely wait until the last minute to lock out and throw off his pouches was cured of that habit when the crew substituted a defective strapless one in his row of

"locals"! One confident district superintendent, demonstrating "proper catching" procedure, caught a steel bridge and floored himself. Other clerks have thrown off currency pouches which burst, scattering bills everywhere (at Dunlap, Iowa, and from Cobre, Nevada, to Valley Pass); similarly, letters were scattered along the B&O from Brentwood to Hyattsville, Maryland, when a N.Y., Balt. & Wash. local clerk did the same. J. L. Buckmaster tells of a nervous sub who bit the stem off three three dollar pipes making the first catch on his first three trips. James L. Stice (Chapter 16) missed all cranes on the left-hand side of a single-track run while faithfully watching the right side, as when on double rail. Another clerk on the Reading caught the hose from a water tower alongside the Shamokin & Phila., a line known for its "extension cranes" which reach to catch from an inside track. A young clerk, assessed demerits for dispatching beyond the proper spot because the mail messenger always stood there, hit a bull's-eye next trip and sent messenger and mailbags rolling over together.

One clerk, teasing a sub after teaching him to catch, expressed deep concern one Sunday when the sub could catch no pouches at the first two stops (they were not due that day). Stating that this would never do and he'd better catch the other offices himself, the clerk *missed* the next pouch (Rockford, Minnesota), the only one due! Another found his train moving too slowly and the hanging pouch too empty to be caught properly, and sighed in relief when the brakeman dashed out and retrieved the dropped pouch for him. Later he discovered that his outgoing pouch was still in his hand! In days of "sack time" one sleepy clerk was aroused too early for an exchange and caught a coal-chute which broke off the catcher; he installed a new one just in time. On Tol. & St. Lou. (Wabash) Train 2 a knocked-down inbound pouch bounced from the ground up onto the rear hook.

A district superintendent inspecting the Chic., Ft. Madison & Kansas City (Santa Fe) was watching a catch about to be made when it was discovered that the door was stuck. Both the clerk, Bill Poole, and the official hit on the idea of using

a catcher in the car ahead; and they raced forward, with Bill seemingly in hot pursuit of the latter and yelling, "Get that son of a —!" referring, of course, to the pouch. Men leaped for tables and cases to avoid the raging fight which they expected.

The whole spirit of "serving the local" was well summed up by L. E. Davis, in the old *Railway Post Office*, who wrote, "The train was Kans. City & Memphis 105, the Frisco's crack Florida Special . . . through the Ozark hills. The night was coal black, and it was awkward holding onto the mail sack with one hand, the other on the crossbar . . . watching for the faint glow of the light on the crane . . . The wind tried to steal your breath away . . . There was both relief and satisfaction when I heard the 'whing' of the pouch as it was snatched. And on through the night the train rushed from station to station, like the song 'Blues in the Night.' From Thayer to Hoxie; from Hoxie to Jonesboro; from Jonesboro to Memphis . . . The progressive stages of life awakening: A few early risers in this town with a sprinkling of lights, and half the town awake at the next station . . . Darkies filing out to the cotton fields . . . As the grand finale, the Mississippi, muddy and turbulent."

To insure accuracy in distribution, the system of checking "errors" was devised as explained elsewhere; by it, one takes the slip from mail received from another and checks on the back any errors in sorting perceived. These affect a clerk's record, and naturally he resents being "checked" too zealously. Theoretically, clerks are required to check all errors noted, but in the press of urgent distribution it is often impracticable. "It is only human nature to try to catch an error on someone who always checks you; while if a line is broad-minded about checking yours, you go easy with them." Some conscientious clerks, trying to check all errors, have been hounded out of the Service by their fellows, or at least ordered privately to desist.

One sub, helping on a short run, lacked hours and was assigned to work a couple of hours in a car in the yards after his run. It happened to be a train for which he made sacks

of papers, and one day he opened a sack in this yard car, hastily checked some newspaper errors, and sent the slips in without a glance. He had checked himself! A northern clerk named Ulysses S. Grant had to watch his distribution for southern trains like a lynx—the famous name he bore was none too popular in Dixie as yet.

Pranksters in the Service sometimes get back at overzealous superiors. A certain division superintendent used to issue harsh orders on minor irregularities, and finally the clerks got up a fake "General Order" printed like the genuine and gave it out. It contained such notices as:

Section 1. General. It is hereby ordered that all clerks in this division make up Shanghai Dis, regardless of quantity, to contain all offices on the Fook Lang Shang Hop San R.P.O. as far west as Tai Po Sing.

Considerable complaint is made that mail for the late Robert G. Ingersoll is being sent to New Jerusalem. Extreme care should be taken to dispatch mail for this party according to Mark 16:16.

Section 2. Suspensions. A clerk of Class 5, this Division, thirty-five days without pay for failing to cross two "t's" and dot an "i" in his trip report; also, one day without pay for purloining a registered letter.

When Oscar Johnson was "tending local" on San Fran., San Jose & L. A. (SP) Train 71 years ago, he exchanged the usual small pouch with Surf, California, and was horrified after leaving there to find that a huge "2X" pouch for the same town had been "carried by"—little knowing that the San Francisco letter clerk had relabeled a big pouch of "city" with that name, behind his back, as a practical joke. At San Luis Obispo the city clerk, "up" on all his pouches except that one, missed it and yelled at Johnson to find the "Surf" pouch for him, relates J. Goodrich.

"I got rid of it," assured Johnson: "just put it out, to go back on Train 71!" And the dumbfounded Frisco clerk had to dash out in the rain, have Train 71 held and hunt through

a truckful of pouches before he returned, drenched, with his mail.

F. C. Gardiner relates a gay tale of the Wash. & Bristol (Sou) in Virginia. One of the clerks, prevented from smoking at home, started each run with a cigar always in his mouth;—no one could understand a word he said, and whenever the clerk-in-charge heard grunts from him at any station, he assumed it was pouches being called. A water tank had developed a leak which, it developed, had not been fixed as supposed; and when the water boy filled it again at Roanoke, water flooded the floor, causing the dispatching clerk to yell:

“CUDEWADDEROFF!” The clerk-in-charge, in the other end of the car, grabbed his pouch record and yelled, “That’s one.”

“CUDEWADDEROFF!” again cried the cigar-mouth-ing clerk.

“That’s two,” yelled the C.-in-C., knowing three pouches were due off there.

“CUDEWADDEROFF!” the dispatcher bawled, louder, to the railroad men.

“That’s all!” cried the *chief*, and dropped his check list.

“CUDEWADDEROFF! CUDEWADDEROFF! CUDEWADDEROFF!” screamed the clerk, jumping up and down like a jumping jack. The head man turned, looked over his spectacles, and remarked, “Well, boys, I gues it’s time to call them to take him to the bughouse.”

A clerk on the afore-mentioned “Boundary Line” run missed his train (a one-man run), told the dispatcher the railroad could not be paid for the unoccupied car, and got him to hold it until he caught up to it from the next train! Similarly, a clerk who forgot to put off a local pouch until he was half a mile out of town pulled the stop cord and asked that the train be backed up. The request was refused “with definite references to animals and ancestry,” but he coaxed a farmer driving some bulls to town to take his pouch on in.

And that brings us to the most famous of all railway mail animal stories. Owney, the famous traveling dog of the

R.P.O.s, attached himself to the Albany, New York, post office in 1888, and the clerks made a collar identifying him therewith. Taken out for one trip in a mail car, he became an inveterate traveler. To his collar were attached checks, medals, verses, and postmarks by men in most states of the Union, plus a dollar from Old Mexico. Postmaster General Wanamaker made him a harness to carry the tags and medals, with memo book attached, but the accumulation became too heavy and it was sent to Albany for display.

Owney was shut up in Montreal for nonpayment of board, which the Albany clerks had to foot; and seapost clerks later took him across the ocean—even to Japan, for a tag bestowed by the Emperor, and thence around the world (in 132 days). He was exhibited with his medals in halls and dog shows as "The greatest dog traveler in the world," and was right in his element at postal clerks' conventions. He stole the show at the 1897 National Association of Railway Postal Clerks (now N.P.T.A.) Convention by wagging his stumpy tail in a run down the aisle, to thunderous cheers, to mount the stage. He looked all around in glee, and it was fifteen minutes before order was restored.

It was Owney's last triumph. He was a very ordinary-looking dog, almost ugly; and when he was in Toledo that August the postmaster did not know who he was and ordered him shot. The body was eventually mounted and sent to the old Post Office Department Museum in Washington, thence to several Worlds' Fairs, ending with the Chicago Century of Progress (1933), always attracting great attention. Today, resting in storage at the Washington City Post Office, is all that remains of the faithful "clerks' best friend" who had traveled 143,000 miles and received 1,017 medals.

And as a final sequel, it seems that Owney has an inanimate successor of today which is traveling in R.P.O. pouches all over the United States and Canada—an old gray hat from California named "Dapper Dan!" Plastered with postmarks and tags inside and out, an album was finally attached to hold photos and data, and it was last heard of near Quebec about 1948.

TRANSIT MAIL: FROM STAGE TO TRAIN

Louder rolls the mighty thunder, louder changes the tireless bell,
Wilder shrieks the warning whistle; each the startling story tell.
Pouring out the canvas pouches on each platform without fail—
Like a hunted deer, still flying, speeds the early morning mail . . .

— A. M. BRUNER



—*Courtesy Postal
Markings*

In the early days of our republic the evolution of mail transportation from horse, sulky, and stage to steamboat and railroad was a steady and dramatic development. (Deputy Postmaster Hazard, who followed the Continental Army around 1776 with letters in his knapsack, has been humorously dubbed "the earliest traveling post office.") The germ of transit mail service was planted in 1810, when a law was passed establishing thirty-five "Distributing Post Offices"—important post offices in centers of areas, counties, or states to which all mail was sent for redistribution in that area, and on to destination. The number of these offices, known as D.P.O.s, increased to fifty by 1859, then the number gradually fell and their function was absorbed by the railway mail cars after 1864.

The distinction between the through mail for Distributing Post Offices, often called the "great mails," and local way-station mail was long maintained; iron locks were provided for the way mail and brass ones for the D.P.O. bags. D.P.O. postmasters received a commission for each letter redistributed. Postage stamps had not been introduced, and postmasters entered each letter, and the postage due on it, on a

waybill which was tied up with letters going to a D.P.O. in brown paper. Its record was entered on the wrapper, and the packets, so wrapped, were referred to as "mails."

Mails were first carried by railroad in England in 1830 on the Liverpool & Manchester Railway. The same year our first steam passenger road was opened by the B&O from Baltimore to Ellicott City, Maryland (May 24, 1830), and soon Peter Cooper ran his famous race of thirteen miles between his *Tom Thumb* engine and a powerful gray horse of Stockton & Stokes' mail stage. The slipping of a blower belt on the engine gave the race to the horse and the mail contract once more to the stage, but the iron horse was soon to prevail. The earliest record of mail being carried by railroad is January 15, 1831, when some was hauled unofficially on the South Carolina Railroad, now mostly the Columbia & Charleston (Sou) R.P.O. The locomotive used was the *Best Friend*, first American-built engine, and it went to Bamberg, South Carolina.

The above date is disputed and held by some to be 1834, which, if true, would change the "firsts," because in 1831 and 1832 contracts were let to other operators, extra pay being granted for carrying the mail by rail as far as West Chester, Pennsylvania (over what is now the PRR's electric Phila. & West Chester R.P.O.), starting December 5, 1832, by Slaymaker & Tomlinson stages—perhaps the first authorized "mail by rail." It is hard to verify "firsts," for the contractors quickly transferred mails from stage or sulky to rails over portions of their routes as soon as possible. During 1832, and perhaps earlier in the year, mails were also carried over the B&O out of Baltimore, on the Saratoga & Schenectady Railroad in New York—unofficial partial transfers from stage routes to the rails—and on what was probably the first complete mail-by-rail route authorized officially, New Jersey's Camden & Amboy Railroad, contracted by Postmaster General Barry; it later became the PRR's New York & Phila. R.P.O., still referred to as "The Amboy." The B&O route used later became the old Balt. & Point of Rocks R.P.O., on tracks no longer carrying mail; it first hauled mail officially

on this route in November 1834, to Frederick, Maryland, which is usually quoted as the first mail-carrying by rail. On August 25, 1835, the B&O was formally opened between Washington and Baltimore, and the following month contracts were let (still to the stage company) providing for mail to be carried partially by rail. The first orders, September ninth, provided for the exchange of mails once a day by daylight by rail. All night mail on that line was to go by stage, and coaches were held ready to receive any mail not arriving at the depot in time for the train. A direct contract was let January 1, 1838. Before that date, which is important in railroad mail history, advance had been made, although the report of 1837 showed but one contract with a railroad: it was on the Reading, from Philadelphia to Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania, with branches to Reading and Port Carbon, 117 miles.

It was in the shift from stage to rails that a new job or profession appeared—that of the route agent, forerunner of the postal transportation clerk. On the old stage lines a local postmaster, who usually had his office in the tavern, took the mail portmanteau and opened it, exchanging “mails” while the stage driver changed horses. On the railroads this could not be done, except in a few instances where post offices were moved to depots; and soon a man was assigned to accompany the mail on the train, a separate apartment being set aside for the mails in some cases in 1835. This agent usually rode in the baggage cars, however, and was at first the baggage-man or other employee of the stage company or railroad.

In May 1837 the Post Office Department began appointing “route agents” of its own on some lines, the first recorded being John E. Kendall, who ran from Philadelphia to Washington, beginning at that time. Others followed, and were equipped with postmarking stamps to use on the local letters received along the way. The earliest known postmark is an Old English “Railroad” stamped by a route agent on the Mohawk & Hudson R.R. in New York State on November 7, 1837. (If anybody has a cancellation earlier than this date, he has something valuable.)

With rapid appearance of railroads, Congress, on July 7, 1838, declared all railroads to be post roads and provided for making direct contracts for mail by rail wherever the cost would not exceed by 25 per cent the cost by stage. It was really accepting and legalizing the iron age for mail, because the *Niles Register*, May 18, 1838, describes the "progress and perfection" of route agent service then as follows:

Mail cars constructed under the direction of the Post Office Department are now running on the railroads between Washington and Philadelphia [now the N.Y. & Wash. R.P.O. (PRR)]. They contain two apartments: one appropriated to the use of the great mails, and the other to the way mails; and a post-office agent. The latter apartment is fitted up with boxes, labeled with names of all the small offices on or near the railroad lines. It has also a letter box in front, into which letters may be put up to the moment of starting the cars, and anywhere on the road. The agent of the Post Office Department attends the mail from the post offices at the ends of the route, and sees it safely deposited in his car. As soon as the cars start, he opens the letter box and takes out all the letters, marking them so as to designate the place where they are put. He then opens the way-mail bag and distributes its contents into the several boxes. As the cars approach a post office, the agent takes out the contents of the proper box and puts them into a pouch. The engineer slackens the speed of the train, and the agent hands the pouch to a postmaster or a carrier, who stands beside the track to take it, receiving from him at the same time another pouch with the matter to be sent from that office. This the agent immediately opens and distributes its contents into the proper boxes. Having supplied thus all the way offices, the agent, when arrived at the end of the route, sees the mail safely delivered into the post office.

In conclusion, the writer become eloquent over this service. He actually calls it a "traveling post office," and asserts that "well executed, the plan must be almost the perfection of

mail arrangements. It is intended . . . to extend a similar arrangement through to New York."

In view of this little-known auspicious start in transit-sorting of mail, it may seem strange that transit-mail distribution progressed so slowly and that the coming of the modern Railway Post Office was delayed until 1864. "Assorting," of course, meant the sorting of packets of local letters (wrapped) and of letters brought to the train for mailing or from the post office after closing of pouches. The equipment and service described above were rather exceptional, and not found on many routes. But the existence and importance of these agents, who were "assorting" transit mails en route for twenty-seven years before true R.P.O.s appeared, have now been likewise attested from numerous other documented definitions or descriptions of their duties.

A typical pre-R.M.S. route-agent apartment, later in use by Agent J. E. White (a future general superintendent) was "a 7-by-10-foot apartment partitioned from the smoker" with sliding doors in both sides for exchanges, one opening across a gangway. The small letter case, table, and large packet boxes were illumined by a "wretched light . . . dingy oil lamps—as much light as a tallow dip of the third magnitude." His simple distribution was purely local, and the mail received "made up."

Also in 1838, the Postmaster General had a special presidential message carried from Philadelphia to New York by railroad mail in five hours (one hour faster than by stage) on December twelfth; and a month later definite authorization for railroad mail pay at \$300 per mile annually was made. Meanwhile mail agents were appointed to the B&O Railroad. The earliest cancellation known on the B&O was dated August 17, 1838, and read "BALTO R.R." For many years routine instructions on duties of route agents were:

1st. To receive letters written after the mail is closed, also way letters unpaid or prepaid, accounting to the deputy postmaster at the end of the route for all prepaid postage received, and to hand over said letters to the

proper office for delivery of mailing, reporting a list of all such letters to the Auditor of the Department.

2nd. To assort the mails for the several offices, being intrusted with the key to the iron lock for that purpose.

3rd. To attend to the delivery and reception of mail bags.

4th. To report all irregularities of service on the route.

The duties of a route agent included accompanying the mail bags and pouches to the train and receiving them in his compartment or part of baggage car. Then, as the train pulled out, he opened the letter box on the car platform and took out late-mailed letters. Before 1847, when stamps were introduced, he made out waybills for collection at delivery point on all late letters. In a car sometimes equipped with pigeonholes, he would distribute the way mail taken from the letter box, any way mail handed him, and that which he took from the iron-locked pouch given him on starting his run. He canceled letters brought to his car. Before reaching the station, he would take from its box that town's mail, mostly "mails" or wrapped packets and papers, and put them in a pouch for the local station. Mail or "mails" received at each station were treated the same as his initial mail, only local letters being dispatched en route, no connecting lines being dispatched until 1849. Mail for every office beyond the terminal of his run was made into sacks and packages for the terminal office or nearest D.P.O.

The compartment, boxes, and other equipment for route agents varied from the unfurnished end of a baggage car to compartments provided with boxes, a table, chair and pigeonholes. Agents were highly praised for their intelligence, honesty, fidelity, and hard work. They were early armed, and their compartment bore a sign of "No Admission." Frequently inspectors, and, on one exception, Postmaster General Hall, tried to enter the compartment incognito; they invariably found it next to impossible. The railroads complained, however, that too many inspectors and postal agents were riding free on their various passes, and this was often

cited in mail-pay squabbles when officials tried to reduce the cost of mail transportation (averaging \$50 to \$300 a mile in 1845). Some railways canceled all mail shipments, whereupon the Department used agents who (as passengers) carried mail in trunks. Hence service did not expand as fast as it should have, but all main lines soon had route agents.

Route agents were provided between Boston and Springfield and between Worcester, Massachusetts, and Norwich, Connecticut, in 1840; from Philadelphia on, agents were extended to New York in 1848, and between Boston and Albany by 1850. Numerous other routes were established as railroad building extended westward. It was soon seen that the weak spot in the system was the Distributing Post Office at junction points and termini, where the "mails" had to be redistributed—missing, of course, all close connections. An attempt was made to remedy this in 1857 by establishing mail "express agents" who continued from a line on to a connecting line with through mail. Express agents went over the Erie and on, by connecting lines, to Chicago, which somewhat speeded up the mail westward. In 1860 through routes with express agents were established from Boston to New York and on to Washington. (An early type of express agent appeared about 1842—route agents carrying outside express packages.)

Express agents facilitated the through dispatches greatly but did nothing for other lines and connections at junctions. It is believed that in the 1850s some route agents, on their own initiative, made up some pouches for other agents at junctions. In *Old Postbags*, Holbrook states with regard to the Boston-Springfield and Norwich-Worcester runs (the latter the first route to build a car just to carry the mails) that it is his opinion that there must have been "some sorting of through mail" on these two particular runs. And in 1857 a proposal of the Postmaster General that "agents take receipt" for pouches from other route agents, as well as from postmasters and messengers, indicates there was some junction exchange of pouches, thus by-passing the D.P.O. at that date. Unfortunately, the proposal was not carried out, or we would have copies of pouch lists of the time, clearing up

this point. Additional weight to this theory is given by certain postmarks, but they could not be conclusive without data as to the time of arrival of the envelope postmarked on a certain date, proving that letter hadn't time enough to pass through its usual D.P.O.

In all, the route-agent epoch of the mail service was a spectacular one. The route usually, but not always, coincided with the corporate name of the railroad. Detailed lists of such route postmarks have appeared in Konwiser's *Stampless Cover Catalog* and in Norona's *Cyclopedia of U. S. Postmarks and Postal History* (in New England, by Hall). Dr. Carroll Chase has listed 161 different route markings of agents, the collecting of which has become an important branch of philately. Solely on the basis of such postmarks, researchers like B. B. Adams and Seymour Dunbar have declared the Boston & Albany route (1852) or the Phila.—Washington "Potomac Postal Cars" (1862, before Davis's run), respectively, to have been "our first R.P.O."; but all evidence indicates that only ordinary agent service was involved.

The number of agents jumped from 47 in 1847 to 295 in 1855, and to 862 by 1873—for agents were used on branch lines well after the advent of the R.M.S. (until 1882, though cancels are known up to 1888), and, conversely, thirteen of the D.P.O.s were discontinued by 1859. Some of the D.P.O. clerks were detailed to the agent runs to make proper separation for connecting roads for immediate dispatch at termini. Official observers sent in 1840 and 1848 to report on the British Traveling Post Office returned with adverse recommendations thereon, pleading excuses such as "our rougher trains"; but the idea was catching hold, for even Eastern offices were by-passing D.P.O.s to pouch on Midwestern routes like the Logansport & Peoria Agent and the Dayton & Michigan Agent in late pre-R.M.S. days. With letters lying in the Chicago D.P.O. untouched for two weeks, and with other delays "causing untold evils, bankruptcy, estrangements, crimes . . .," there was a crying need for reform.

AMERICA'S FIRST RAILWAY POST OFFICE

The guests do ride serene inside the air-conditioned train;
 It matters not if cold or hot, if sunshine, snow, or rain;
 The mail clerks sweat and fume and fret, their eyes all
 full of grime,
 Their backs do ache, their muscles quake, but mails go
 thro' on time.
 When maiden fair with flaxen hair receives her *billet doux*,
 She little knows how much she owes to men who brought
 it through . . .

—S. C. ARNOLD



— Courtesy A. G.
 Hall, and S.P.A.
Journal

The difficulties derived from the Distributing Post Office and the wrapping and post-billing of letters vanished in a relatively few years after the establishment of Railway Post Offices in the 1860s. Oddly enough, a mooted question later arose over who was the founder or father of the Railway Mail and what was the first "Railway Post Office." Twenty years after the establishment of the service which is now the P.T.S., and ten years after the death of the principal actors in the drama, heirs of one of them raised the question of recognition or credit. An attempt was made by the Post Office Department then to ascertain the facts. The result was a so-called "official history," now known as *Executive Document No. 20* of the 48th Congress, 2nd Session, or as Maynard's *History of the Railway Mail Service*. This research was not conclusive, owing to the loss of records by fire and to the failure of the investigators to

define the terms "First Railway Post Office" and "Railway Mail Service." Many of the men questioned could not remember clearly what had passed and, of course, each wished to give all credit possible to his friends.

Recent research has brought to light some significant new source material, and it is now easier to trace the evolution of route-agent service to railway postal service. A glance at the route-agent system in 1860 shows that it was increasing rapidly with the constant building of railroad lines. On June 30, 1864, there were 6,085 mail routes. Of these the mileage was: steamboat, 7,278; railroads, 22,666; stage and sulky, 109,278 miles. While less numerous in mileage than the "star" routes of "certainty, celerity, and security," as the horse routes were dubbed,¹ railroad transportation of mails was more important because it and the boat lines were the big arteries which fed the horse routes. These railroad routes at first formed an unorganized and unattached service loosely related to the Post Office Department, to local congressmen, and to the terminal distributing post offices. Technically they were given some supervision by the nearest large distributing post office, in addition to some general instructions from Washington. And the D.P.O.'s at fast-growing cities like Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Chicago were still railway mail's worst problem when the War between the States burst on the scene.

Congestion of army mail now posed an especially difficult problem at Cairo, Illinois, where both land and naval forces were assembling. Cairo was made a "Distributing Post Office," and special agents and extra clerks were rushed there to attack the mountains of mail piling up around station and post office. Among the special agents who came was George B. Armstrong, Assistant Postmaster at Chicago, in charge of its distributing post office. In lieu of a formal organization in transit mail service, the men in charge of large "Dis" offices, such as Clark of New York, Wheeler of Cleveland, and Armstrong of Chicago, were conceded technical authority in a

¹The three words were indicated as *** in old official records.

large radius from their offices. So it was that Armstrong assumed charge of the mail situation at Cairo. There, with the co-operation of the Cairo postmaster, of General Grant, and of naval officers, by early 1862 the mail was received and dispatched with surprising order and speed. In recognition of this initiative, the clerks at Cairo presented Mr. Armstrong with a gold watch for his wife, and the contacts he made with General Grant and other officials were a great aid in his later plans for reorganizing railway mail, which as early as 1854 had included the statement, "We should put the post office on wheels."

Unfortunately, we do not have a good record of the exact special services that were performed at Cairo in this terminal emergency. Since special agents carried keys to the brass-locked pouches for their inspectorial duties, it is most probable that they opened and took out, in this war emergency, through mail for points beyond Cairo. If they didn't have the "Dis" mail for Cairo sorted before that point was reached, our information that "mail for Commodore Porter was delivered as soon as a passenger could have made the trip" is an exaggeration. However, if proof is found that Armstrong did have this advanced opening of the "Dis" mails performed on the Illinois Central in May of 1862, that would not constitute the first "railway post office"—as we shall see when we examine "mail reform" later—but it would antedate considerably the experiment on the "Hannibal & St. Joe R.R." (now CB&Q) now to be considered.

This celebrated variant of the route-agent system was authorized on the Hannibal & St. Joseph R.R., July 7, 1862, to meet an emergency caused by a close connection at St. Joseph, Missouri, with the pony express established two years before. The road completed in 1859 bade fair to become the main mail artery westward, after a remarkable run by a famous wood-burning engine, the brass-trimmed *Missouri*, which ran the 206 miles in four hours. The overland mail was delayed in the St. Joseph Distributing Post Office, and William A. Davis conceived the idea of deadheading east, boarding the westbound trains and taking out from the

D.P.O. pouches those packets bearing the heavy pony express charges for California. When Davis—local assistant postmaster and once postmaster at Richmond, Virginia—received necessary permission, the pony express was discontinued; but there was still a need for the experiment. There had been a route agent on the line, but in 1861 guerrillas had burned the bridge over the Platte River, wrecking the train and killing the agent, Martin Fields, who wasn't replaced.

The railroad company furnished a baggage car, altered as requested by Davis, which was similar to a route agent's car; it was provided with a table and a case of sixty-five pigeon-holes, but had no pouch rack. Davis deadheaded east and on July 26, 1862, boarded the westbound train at Palmyra, Missouri, with "authority to open the brass-lock sacks and the St. Joseph distributing post office packages, taking therefrom all the California letters, going by the overland stage route. These letters were made up precisely as they would have been at our office." This was the description made by a later assistant postmaster there—Barton—who, along with a special agent (A. B. Waller), made the trip starting this service. For a time Barton and Waller, together with Fred Harvey, ran as clerks in alternate directions. They were said to have had a postmarker, but no cancellation by it is now known. Davis was paid at the rate of \$100 per month,

The route was harassed by guerrillas and lack of maintenance, resulting in several suspensions in 1862 and abandonment of the work on January 19, 1863 (or 1865). After the war a railway post office was established on the line—the present Chicago & Kansas City R.P.O. (CB&Q), which is called "The Hannibal" to this day. Historically this was an interesting service, and high authorities say that the Fred Harvey involved was the one who later founded the great restaurant chain of that name, although one investigation cast doubt on this. With regard to evaluation of the Hannibal & St. Joe's significance a bit later, it is interesting to note part of Davis's orders from Washington:

"It is desired that the work be done as part of the business of your office; the car for this purpose to be considered a

room in the office, the bills to be made out and accounts to be kept as at present in the name of the office . . . and the monthly returns made to this office of letters and papers sent and received . . .”

According to the Burlington, Davis used a local case for sorting of way mails also, and his car was lettered “U. S. MAIL—NO. 1” and had one side door in the center of its vertical-clapboard sides, a tiny window on each, open platforms, and raised roof.

Some have asserted that our service was patterned after England's; but while there were parallel developments, there was no known copying. We received no specific suggested improvements from the two missions sent over there. What we did receive from England, however, was a definite stimulus for progressive service.

Connected with the Post Office Department in Washington were several men who caught this reform spirit. H. A. Burr and A. N. Zevely were among them. George Buchanan Armstrong was likewise a former employee in Washington. His mother was a Buchanan, and it was her relationship to Senator Buchanan, the future President, that caused her to immigrate to America and her son later to secure a position as a clerk in the Contract Office of the Post Office Department. For this deep interest in the technical side of mail handling, he was recommended by his superiors to go to Chicago in 1854 for a mail emergency there, when that city was suffering growing pains. It was while there that he became unofficial supervisor of route agents in a large radius and went to Cairo for the emergency of early 1862.

Later, when the “official history” was being written, a department employee, H. J. Johnson, claimed that the topographer, H. A. Burr, had first suggested to Armstrong the putting of mail distribution “on wheels.” Without detracting from the contribution of Burr, who had developed schemes of distribution for D.P.O. clerks, it may be said that neither Burr nor Armstrong himself, had thought out yet the plans adopted by Armstrong in 1864. Armstrong's first prospectus in early spring of 1864, even, underwent much change

before it evolved into his railway post office by August twenty-eighth. Reports of Canada's "T.P.O. cars," sorting mails at less cost than our closed cars, may have hastened the idea.²

Now the war emergency drove Armstrong, Zevely, Clark, and Wheeler into a consideration of the complete problem of transit mail, a real study of "mail reform." Of all of these, the writing of only one, Armstrong, shows that he got to the bottom of the problem. In the eastern part of the country the problem was different and the demand for reform was different. The cause of most of the trouble was not delay of mails going through the "Dis," but rather delay in separating from the "Dis" letters arriving at New York, Washington, and Philadelphia for local delivery. In early 1864, Mr. Zevely took some clerks from the New York Post Office and made a few experimental trips in one direction; i.e., running into New York. This was no doubt the first experiment with working "city" mail on the cars; i.e., separating, on the train, mail for the city into substations and carriers for immediate delivery upon arrival. A meeting of postal officials was held in Cleveland the previous year, which emphasized the need of "postal reform" and gave the severest castigation that is on the record to the delays and abuses in the Distributing Post Offices, explaining how letters were sent by circuitous routings in order that more "Dis" offices would get commissions for redistribution.

Letters were subjected to so many distributions as entirely to absorb the postage charged upon them, and in some cases the distribution commission of a postmaster largely exceeded the whole proceeds of his office. Even when no abuse was practiced, a large portion of the correspondence of the country paid an unnecessary tax of 25 per cent, besides the regular commission of 40, 50, or 60 per cent to which the mailing office was entitled. For instance, a hundred letters, on which the postage was three dollars, originating in small offices in Ohio and west of Pittsburgh, and destined for New England, were sent to Pittsburgh for distribution and there subjected

²Postmaster General's Report, Washington, 1859.

to a commission of 12½ per cent; from Pittsburgh they were sent to New York or Boston, and there charged with a second commission of 12½ per cent, and then forwarded to destination. Assuming the average commission taken at the mailing to be 50 per cent, this three dollars' worth of letters paid a tax of 75 per cent in the shape of commissions while passing through the mail, or \$2.25 out of \$3. The delay was costly and annoying.

One amusing story of how Armstrong originated our R.P.O. states that one winter in 1856 the postmaster at Ontonagon, Michigan, opened a long-delayed mail pouch from Chicago—only to find a lively family of mice ensconced in the mail: the parents and four offspring! (Another version says it was two rats, sent in a parcel, which multiplied.) The indignant postmaster is said to have reported the facts to Armstrong, who agreed that such appalling delays must be eliminated and the mails speeded sufficiently to prevent mice breeding in transit. But, as we know, he had suggested R.P.O.s two years before.

A. N. Zevely was chosen to have charge of experiments with postal "reform." He wrote various railroad officials in the spring of 1864, asking that special cars be prepared for experiments with "traveling post offices." Except for apparently wanting distribution on the cars, he seemed to have hazy ideas as to the technical improvements wanted. But he gave a sympathetic hearing to Armstrong, who made several trips to Washington to talk up general "reforms." The result was that Zevely asked Armstrong to put his plan in writing and submit it to Washington. This was done in three letters, the first dated May tenth.

Armstrong proposed three basic changes. First, he wanted all possible direct mailing to "Dis" offices discontinued; this meant no more wrapping up of letters. Second, he proposed the reclassification of all post offices to show which were terminals, which star routes, and so on. The third was a system of Traveling Post Offices, which, while most important of the three, *would be useless without the other two reforms.*

In short, Armstrong, after classifying offices and dispensing with the wrappers which often had errors within, would have

all letters for the same office or connection tied up in a package. If they were all for the same office, he would have a plainly addressed letter on the top of the package, a modern direct package. Since all letters were not yet postage prepaid with stamps, he provided for continuation of the post-billing, but simplified the system. *In fine*, his plan called for a melting down of the old system to mold anew the dispatching of mail via the railroads, which were building a network around Chicago and extending all over the Midwest. The traveling post office, he thought, would be the climax of it all. He said:

But the main feature of the plan, which, after its introduction and final adoption to the service, would undoubtedly lead to the most important results, is the system of railway distribution. To carry out the true theory of postal service, there should be no interruption in the transit of letters in the mail, and, therefore, as little complication in the necessary internal machinery of a postal system as possible, to the end that letters deposited in the post office at the last moment of the departure of the mails from the office for near or distant places should travel with the same uninterrupted speed as passengers to their places of destination as often as contracts with the Department for the transportation of the mails permit. It is well known to the public that passengers, traveling over railroad routes, generally reach a given point in advance of letters; when to that given point letters must pass, under the present system, through a distributing office, as is largely the case now, the tardiness of a letter's progress toward its place of destination is proportionately increased. But a general system of railway distribution obviates this difficulty. The work being done while the cars are in action, and transfers of mail made from route to route, and for local deliveries on the way as they are reached, letters gain the same celerity in transit as persons making direct connections.

Soon after sending in his letters on postal reform, Armstrong had them published in pamphlet form for distribution to all who would read them. A meeting of experts was called at Washington in June, and there the consensus was to put

some kind of traveling post office in operation in spite of the indifference of Congress, opposition of the Contract Office, and the ridicule of businessmen. With the exception of Armstrong, nobody seemed to have a definite idea of what they were going to do; but he was trusted completely by A. N. Zevely, Third Assistant, who got permission from Postmaster General Montgomery Blair for Armstrong to try out his ideas. On July first the following was sent to Armstrong:

SIR:

You are authorized to test by actual experience, upon such railroad route or routes as you may select at Chicago, the plans proposed by you for simplifying the mail service. You will arrange with the railroad companies to furnish suitable cars for traveling post offices; designate "head offices" with their dependent offices; prepare forms of blanks and instructions for all such offices, and those on the railroad not "head offices"; also for the clerks of traveling post offices . . . To aid you in this work, you may select some suitable route agent, whose place can be supplied by a substitute, at the expense of the Department. When your arrangements are complete you will report them in full.

GEORGE B. ARMSTRONG

Chicago, Illinois

M. BLAIR

Postmaster General

The Department also acted upon the essentials of the other parts of the Armstrong plan. Orders were sent for reclassifying offices, discontinuing wrapping packets, and simplifying post-billing. Post offices were asked to make up letters in packages addressed to the post office on wheels with the nearest offices on the line marked No. 1, the next few offices No. 2, and farther ones No. 3, so that mail clerks could do first things first. Correspondence between Zevely and Armstrong on August sixteenth indicated preparations were about completed and, incidentally, revealed the naming of the new service. Zevely said, "I also have to say that I have ignored the name 'traveling post office' and have adopted 'U. S.

Railway Post Office.' This term was adopted; and, with the addition of the word "Mail" after "United States," is still in use today. Just before this Zevely had asked the Camden & Amboy to prepare for R.P.O. service.

Armstrong arranged with General Superintendent G. L. Dunlap, of the C&NW R.R., to remodel a route agent's car. Letter cases with seventy-seven boxes each were borrowed from the Chicago D.P.O. and installed at angles. The car was about forty feet long, with two windows, upper deck lights, oil lamps, and no end doors. Armstrong arranged with the *Chicago Times* for publicity on his experiment, giving them the date when he would start the service from Chicago to Clinton, Iowa. He secured Harrison Parks, a route agent on the run to Centralia, and two Chicago D.P.O. clerks, Percy A. Leonard and James Converse, for the letter end of his car, and Asa F. Bradley to assort papers in a crude case of big 10x12 inch boxes. Leonard and Bradley were East States experts.

And so, on August 28, 1864, this "United States Railway Post Office" left Chicago with its crew and some business and newspaper men who went as far as Dixon, Illinois. Among the visitors were editor James Medill, of the *Chicago Tribune*, and Captain James E. White, later long-time general superintendent of the Railway Mail Service. A canceler, probably reading simply "Chicago to Clinton," was used. The route was but slightly different from that of today's Chicago & Omaha R.P.O.; it was the old "Dixon Air Line," originally the Galena & Chicago Union Railroad (Chicago's first) which made a wide circuit through Danby (Glen Ellyn) and then veered westward toward the Mississippi River. A little No. 1 mail was carried by, owing to strangeness of the case, but mail was worked on the trip with surprising ease and efficiency. The trip was rather rough, according to Mr. Medill, who was at first skeptical. When asked for an opinion, he said, "Why, Mr. Armstrong, your plan is the craziest idea I ever heard of in regard to mail distribution. If it were to be generally accepted by the Post Office Department, the government would have to employ a regiment of soldiers to

follow the cars and pick up the letters that would blow out of the train." Later he became an enthusiastic backer of the new service. The clerks sorted through mails direct to connecting services in addition to local exchanges.

Very soon, other lines were started and a form of national organization developed. The first plan, December 1864, was to divide the nation at the Indiana border and place Armstrong in charge of the territory west of the line and Wheeler east. The country was divided into divisions and the service placed under a General Superintendent of the Railway Mail Service, George B. Armstrong becoming the first incumbent. Wheeler resigned on December 20; and Parks—the pioneer R.P.O. clerk—succeeded him.

Mr. Armstrong lived to see his ideas developed fully, resigned in May 1871, and died a few days later. In Chicago a large school building bears his name, and in the Adams Street entrance to the old Chicago Post Office there was placed a monument and bust. It bears the following inscription:

To The Memory
of
GEORGE BUCHANNAN ARMSTRONG
Founder
of the
RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE
in the
UNITED STATES
Born in Armach, Ireland
Oct. 27, 1822
Erected
By the clerks
IN THE SERVICE
1881

A duplicate is in P.T.S. headquarters in Washington.

In addition, a bronze plaque in honor of Armstrong was installed by President Hughitt of the Chicago & Northwestern

Railroad in November 1914 in their station at Chicago to commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Service. It shows a bas-relief of the first R.P.O. cars, and a duplicate is on Armstrong's grave in Rosehill Cemetery there.

Soon after the death of Armstrong, the heirs of William Davis, who had died in 1875, put in a claim to the Post Office Department for priority for their father as the initiator of the Railway Mail Service. Davis himself, after his three months' service deadheading east to take from westbound trains California letters for close connection with the stage at St. Joseph, had returned to his duties as assistant postmaster there and never claimed any recognition for his services on the railway. The Maynard investigation turned up some interesting data and many erroneous statements. Few knew how to interpret the documents, and the net result was more confusion. The Armstrong family later published for private circulation a volume claiming exclusive credit to George B. Armstrong as the father of the Railway Mail Service. Since then this mooted question has become a perennial for postal writers, and especially for the rapidly growing philatelic journals. In addition to the Armstrong and Davis schools of interpretation there promises to be a new one, that of the Chicago & Cairo claimants, not to mention the Boston & Albany and Potomac Postal Cars claims already refuted.

A brief statement of these schools of interpretation is now in order, so that the reader may take his choice.

To Armstrong is conceded the founding of the "first permanent, complete, and official Railway Mail Service," through his postal-reform letters and his run from Chicago to Clinton, August 28, 1864. The Davis school claims that Davis's run from Palmyra to St. Joseph back in 1862 constituted the first experimental railway post office because he was the first to open, officially, brass-locked sacks and take out mail in transit to be advanced past a distributing post office. The Armstrong school says if this constituted "sorting mail in transit," route agents had sorted in transit for years, besides performing local delivery and reception of way mail.

The Davis school of historians rests its case by asserting that unless and until record is found of earlier authorization for opening brass-locked sacks and taking out letters for beyond a D.P.O., the Hannibal & St. Joe service constitutes the "first experimental railway post office." Journalistic writers of this school make broader claims, as we shall see. The Armstrong adherents deny to Davis any invention, and certainly not the foundation of a service, because Davis was only "a special agent" and took out only California letters. They cite records of route agents pouching to other route agents beyond a terminal and a D.P.O. via the express route agents; they say that the service of Davis was only a special service such as Armstrong had performed at Cairo, and the fact that it was soon discontinued eliminated him from being the founder of any railway mail service. They say Davis, as a special agent, sought to aid in an emergency in his distributing post office, while Armstrong sought to and did destroy all distributing post offices in order to initiate the Railway Mail Service.

Davis writers in popular and philatelic journals have made far wider claims than Davis historians. Articles have appeared, based on the Maynard document, headed "U. S. Mail First Sorted in Transit in 1862," "First R.P.O. Line in History was between Hannibal & St. Joseph," "Wm. Davis Was the Father of the Railway Mail Service," etcetera. In 1905 the legislature of Missouri appropriated seven hundred dollars for a tablet in the St. Joseph Post Office in memory of Davis, and a number of biographical sketches give him credit for founding the Railway Mail Service.

As for the Chicago and Cairo theory, it will be recalled that before the Hannibal & St. Joe work by Davis, a situation at Cairo, Illinois, has resulted in a special service being performed there. Special agents worked into Cairo and undoubtedly took out mail from the newly established Cairo Distributing Post Office for the Army of the Tennessee. No record has been found of orders to special agents to open brass-locked pouches which route agents carried, perhaps because the Chicago fire destroyed the route-agent records

of that region. But it is possible that such may be found, in which case the course of the "firsts" discussion would be radically changed.

The following is taken from the Post Office Department Information Service Bulletin for January 1950; it may help close the chapter, but not the argument:

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Up until 1862 all mail carried on trains was distributed in post offices. In that year the postmaster at St. Joseph, Missouri, tried out a method of sorting and distributing mail on a moving train between Hannibal and St. Joseph. This was done in an attempt to avoid delays in mail departures for the West. The experiment was successful. In 1864 the first officially sponsored test of a railway post office car was made on August 28 between Chicago, Illinois, and Clinton, Iowa. On December 22 of that year the Post Office Department appointed a deputy in charge of railway post offices and railway mails. This marked the beginning of the Railway Mail Service.

As a final summation of the two viewpoints, we might add that Davis supporters base their claims on his service having apparently been (1) the first line to distribute raw, unsorted mails for a state at a great distance—California; (2) the first distributing route to be authorized by special order from Washington as a new departure from route-agent service, although local exchanges were performed as on modern R.P.O.s; and (3) so far as is known, the first line officially authorized to open brass-locked pouches for *distribution* purposes. They further point out that the Post Office Department decided after recent studies that the Davis experiment was the beginning of R.P.O. service, as witness the carved date on the new Department building (Chapter 3); that the *History of R.M.S.* states that no earlier example of transit distribution of the through mails has been revealed after a "thorough search" of records; and that Railway Mail Association (N.P.T.A.) members at Chicago officially concluded

that this line was the first R.P.O. and said so in a plaque which they installed in the Burlington's replica. Some of Davis's more rabid early supporters even claimed that erasures and changes were made before publishing the *History of the R.M.S.*, to throw major credit to Armstrong. Refuting claims that Topographer Burr had suggested the idea to Waller and Davis, one points out that Zevely himself stated it was Davis's own idea.

In rebuttal, Armstrong supporters point out that only on the Chicago & Clinton car were the full functions of a railway post office carried out. Pouches and sacks had been made up and addressed to the line (not done in Davis's case); its clerks had opened them to cut and work up the packages of individual letters for local dispatch and had made up mails for crossing star routes and points beyond termini. They were ready to make up mails for other R.P.O.s as soon as established, and probably did it for agent connections from the first day. Armstrong adherents deny claims that Davis ever sorted individual letters—despite public mailboxes shown on the car replica—stating that his distribution consisted of packet sorting, or possibly of opening packets of "St. Joseph Dis" but merely separating California points into new packets to be rebilled while seated at the table; they conclude that his operations in no way resembled those of an R. P. O. letter clerk. And so rests the case of a controversy unique in postal history, still going merrily on.

THE RAILWAY MAIL COMES OF AGE

In a country wild and Western, red with many a crimson stain,
 There's a city, name of Carson, 'twixt the foothills and the plain.
 And the treasured lore of Carson holds a legendary tale
 That deals with Baldy Baker and the "Dwight & Carson" mail.
 Baldy Baker was a mail clerk on the Dwight & Carson then,
 Tall, straight and strong and fearless, weighing 14 stone and 10 . . .

— EARL L. NEWTON



—Courtesy *Postal Markings*

The impact of the first Railway Post Office upon the postal service and the national economy was but a small one at the time, subject to discouraging counterblows; but Armstrong and Zevely went determinedly ahead. Before its birth-year had expired, the

N.Y. & Wash. R.P.O. (now PRR) was begun; leading post offices were instructed to dispense with wrappings, post bills, and letter packets, and tie letters with twine for quick R.P.O. handling; and thirteen more of the country's thirty-seven remaining D.P.O.s were discontinued.

The first full year of the infant R.M.S. (1865) saw the old N.Y. & Dunkirk (Erie) and Phila. & Pittsburgh (PRR) R.P.O.s established in the East (now the N.Y. & Sala. and N.Y. & Pitts.); but eastern postmasters, with their fat redistributing commissions, opposed any further expansion, and no more lines were added for a long time. But in the west the R.P.O.s grew both in numbers and facilities; first came the Chic. & Davenport (Rock I.), then the Chic. & Quincy (CB&Q), Chic. & St. Lou. (Alton), Chic. & Centralia (IC), Clinton & Boone (C&NW) in Iowa, and the Chicago & Cairo (IC) on the route of the controversial service mentioned.

The earliest R.P.O.s had the crudest of equipment. Newspapers, if handled at all, were sorted into large wooden boxes either on the floor or stacked case-like. Later some cars had a wooden rack of boxes opening at the bottom, the contents being gathered from below into sacks when full, with great difficulty. Mail sacks had no label holders, but rather tiny wooden paddles called *whittlers*; on these destinations were written, then shaved off for re-use until too thin. (Clerks unsure of routings were inclined to whittle off the *from* line right away!) Wooden racks to hold paper sacks were not invented by White until 1874; the iron Harrison rack for papers and pouches (invented by C. H. Harrison of the R.M.S.) followed about 1879, and then the similar collapsible steel-pipe rack now in use.

Pioneers of the scattered, radically new Service had to contend with an unwieldy mass of distributing offices still wrapping and post-billing ordinary letters, but were harassed most of all by the frightful messes of loose papers, untied letters, and heavily wrapped packets dumped onto them in "mixed" sacks by connecting agent runs. It often took five times as long to separate and face up the mail as it did to sort it, and drastic corrective orders were issued to all agents, including a simple faced-out tie-up of direct letter packages.

"Catching" of mail on the fly by non-stop trains was practiced on the N.Y. & Wash. as early as 1865, but in the absence of cranes and catchers, most early R.P.O. trains merely slowed up for the clerk to catch the pouch with his arm from the station agent. This proved dangerous to both men and after trying modified train-order sticks, crude wooden F-shaped mail cranes were substituted. Soon afterward the present simple steel hook and crane were adopted.

To co-ordinate the work of post offices with the new R.P.O.s, R.M.S. officials were early authorized to supervise the make-up of outgoing mails in all large post offices, and naturally many experienced clerks later became post-office superintendents of mails. The arrangement is still in effect.

Expansion in the progressive Midwest continued, with Armstrong and post-office men working in harmony. Before

1866 arrived, the Wisconsin legislature was petitioning Congress for R.P.O.s; and Harrison, the future rack inventor, planned the first cars to be constructed especially for R.P.O. service (aided by a Route Agent Johnson), for the first route there (on the C&NW to Green Bay). On September 6, 1866, transit distribution was restored to the historic Hannibal & St. Joe route, which then became the Quincy & St. Joseph, a true R.P.O. The next year saw the first "full R.P.O." cars, forty feet long, installed on the pioneer Chic. & Clinton (C&NW) and on the Overland run continuing to Boone and Council Bluffs; they were designed by Armstrong, with Captain James E. White (later General Superintendent) labeling the letter and paper cases. "Chief head clerks," now known as clerks-in-charge, were also first designated in 1867, and their duties specified.

But in the East the continued antagonism snowballed into forces that threatened extinction of the whole Service. When Harrison Parks took over the three struggling lines there, he found no local service being performed and almost no qualified clerks; the Department was threatening to abandon the three. Bitterest opposition was in New England, around the just-established Boston & N.Y. (NYNH&H). The smoldering resentment of politically powerful postmasters and newspapers, notably in Boston, broke into raging flame in January 1874 with an attack on the whole R.M.S. system by the *Boston Morning Journal*. Backed by the postmaster, it proposed an immediate return to D.P.O.s and route agents, decried the "extravagance" of clerks working only "half the time," and accused the Department of holding all westbound mails for the two daily R.P.O. trains to New York and of not providing southward connections for these two. Captain White of the R.M.S., in a masterful defense, published a stinging rebuttal—publicly informing the Boston postmaster of his duty to pouch on New York City and points beyond by means of a dozen closed-pouch trains a day; the necessity of needed rest periods and the studies currently arranging better connections were noted.

At the height of the trouble the vexed postmaster had a

bell installed in the office of the Division Superintendent, R.M.S., located in his building, and thereupon would summon him as he would a messenger boy. The superintendent, calmly aware of his responsibilities and his independence of the post office, ignored the bell; and when the enraged postmaster sent a messenger after him, he sent back the message that the post-office head would have to call on him—"The bell is on the wrong end of the wire." By such firm tactics, and by steady improvements everywhere, the R.M.S. slowly established its position of authority and respected necessity in the East. It began to expand rapidly, until its lines connected with those of the Midwest. On the N.Y. & Chic. local runs alone, mail once requiring the exchange of forty-seven pouches from the New York G.P.O. was now dispatched in one pouch to the postal car.

In 1868 some sweeping, essential innovations were begun. First there appeared schemes of distribution (sorting lists), the first being one designed by Captain White—the Civil War officer slated to become a prominent R.M.S. leader—as a scheme for all lines out of Chicago. The first state scheme (1872) was that of Wisconsin, and the first Eastern one was for New York State; most were alphabetical "standpoint-exception" lists (still used by Western Union) on large sheets of paper, reading (for example, the Massachusetts scheme) thus:

MASSACHUSETTS:—To Boston D.P.O.

Except:

Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire, } and Worcester counties. }	Bos. & Albany R.P.O.
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Thus were clerks gradually relieved from "doping out" routes from maps and inquiries.

The second new reform, the facing slip with its "error-checking" procedure, is said to date back to an inspection trip between Mattoon and Centralia, Illinois, to check accur-

acy of sorting on the connecting Chic. & Cairo (IC); the investigator discovered many errors in dispatch, resulting in inauguration of stamped facing slips in 1868 or 1869 and the issuance of orders to check errors thereon by 1871. Other reports, however, state that the two lines involved were the Lafayette-Quincy run and the Chic. & Centralia (IC); and still others say the clerks themselves originated the error-checking idea informally to help each other learn best dispatch, or that George S. Bangs originated it. (Facing slips were used in some post offices in 1864.)

On July 1, 1869, the Railway Mail Service was first organized in six divisions under a single general superintendent; Armstrong, who had planned the setup, was himself appointed to the top position. All closed-pouch and route-agent runs were placed under R.M.S. jurisdiction. Resigning after only three years in top place, the great "Father of the R.M.S." died just a few days later in 1873. He had just put his whole life and heart into the great new field that was his. George S. Bangs succeeded him, but not before Armstrong had introduced the first standard mail cranes (1869) and the first extensive night R.P.O. trains. Giving overnight delivery to most mails within hundreds of miles, they were introduced over the protests of the railroads; they were needed particularly to transfer outbound local mails to an inbound morning local train at outer termini for early deliveries, and for keeping express mails in continuous movement. Armed guards were often assigned at night.

With 1870 came the practice case and scheme examinations, another invention of Captain White. Designing the former, he had UP Master Carbuilder Stevens build the first one in Omaha, and he commenced the examinations in Chicago in 1872. He introduced a probationary period the same year, weeding out hundreds of incompetent politically-appointed clerks. Bangs soon authorized him to order the separation of R.P.O.-bound mails from the post offices by States, and in New York City the "stating" of large periodicals direct by publishers was then begun under R.M.S. supervision. It is still done today, and sometimes symbols are supplied to en-

able dispatch to routes. Most of such mailbags now go direct to R.P.O.s.

Final fundamental step in R.M.S. innovations was the Schedule of Mail Trains, another White invention, first printed in the Chicago *Postal Record*, as was the pioneer Wisconsin scheme, in the issue of March 1872. It listed only the trains serving each junction, but it gradually evolved into today's schedules.

The Service Rating System of merits and demerits, based on the Brown system on the railroads (whence *Brownies*), also had its first beginnings in 1872. In the same year appeared a set of *Instructions to R.P.C.s.* Among interesting requirements therein were that post bills were still to be made out for unpaid letters, that direct packages were to be faced out minus slips, and errors in direction or address were to be corrected by clerks—all of which instructions have now been directly reversed.

By 1873, when Bangs came into office, there were just 752 railway postal clerks in the United States. The same year, we might note, the American Bible Society was placing Bibles in mail cars and others on the Balt. & Cumberland R.P.O. (Wmd) and B&O lines in Maryland. Next year Bangs issued his first R.M.S. Annual Report, later a large and important volume, but now absorbed in the small Annual Report of the P.M.G. By now there were eight divisions—the 8th out West.

To Bangs also is credited the establishment of the first famous "Fast Mail," on September 16, 1875. Previous to this time there had been fast service on short and separate lines, but their time value was lost at connecting points. Bangs therefore included in his report a recommendation for a through exclusive train over the various independent lines then connecting New York and Chicago, saving twelve to twenty-four hours in transit time. The service was organized and arrangements made with the hearty co-operation of the railroads involved; it was designated, as now, the N.Y. & Chicago R.P.O. It traversed the N. Y. Central & Hudson River and Lake Shore & Mich. Southern Railways.

The initial trip, made with great ceremony, was the most

publicized event in R.M.S. history and a significant milestone of progress in the entire Postal Service. General Superintendent Bangs himself was in charge at the old Grand Central Station, New York. Such prominent guests as the Vice-President, the Honorable Henry Wilson of New York, the reporters from all sizable Eastern newspapers, mayors, postmasters, and top railroad officials accompanied him at the ceremonies and on the trip. The train was composed of four postal cars with William B. Thompson in charge, and one drawing-room coach accommodating one hundred distinguished officials and visitors. The "letter" cars were fifty feet long, the "paper" cars sixty feet. All were painted white, trimmed in cream, and ornamented with gilt; each car was named after the governor of a state, the R.P.O. cars being designated the *Tilden*, *Dix*, *Allen*, and *Todd*. The name of the car and the words "United States Post Office" were included within large gilt ovals, while "The Fast Mail" and the railroad name were lettered on sides and ends. Painted landscape scenes and medallions in relief of both sides of the Great Seal of the United States (as shown on back of today's dollar bills) completed the decorations.

In the rainy dawn, mail wagons clattered from the old downtown New York Post Office up to Grand Central with their loads for the new train, simultaneously with others destined for the Cortlandt Street piers and the first trip of the Pennsylvania's own competitive Limited Mail. A picked crew of clerks received the mail—43 pouches of letters, 663 sacks of ordinary papers, and bundles of newspapers numbering 50,000 pieces, a total of 33 *tons*. Red bags were provided for the New York-to-Poughkeepsie mail, so the local clerks would be sure to sort it first—only to have the dyers' bill for the bags later disallowed by a Post Office Department clerk, unfamiliar with the exacting conditions on the trains, as a silly extravagance! Perhaps it was; no more were dyed.

The train pulled out and thundered on its way northward. At Albany 150 more bags were received from the Boston connections, while local catches continued apace. Crews were changed several times in the nine hundred-mile trip, with

Bangs watching the Indiana crew while sitting on some pouches, watch in hand. At suburban Englewood, Illinois, a sudden lurch dazed the engineer with a blow to the head; but still the "hogger" brought his train into Chicago one minute early. He had made the run in twenty-six hours (or thirty—sources differ), or about half the former time. Then, exhausted, he fainted dead away.

The successful performance was greeted with great satisfaction, and both England and France requested diagrams of the cars. But next year Congress reduced all railroad mail pay by 10 per cent, and the irate companies (who had invested \$4,000 per car in the Fast Mail) withdrew the service July 22, 1876, ten days after that act. In spite of public protests, the Fast Mail was not restored until 1881 (or possibly 1877, one source says), when the freshly painted train began rolling again—in two sections. The "Fast Mail" designation was dropped sometime after 1883, but regulation fast-mail trains on "The Chic," such as the *Century*, still keep up the pace.

The Pennsy's competing *Limited Mail* route to Chicago and St. Louis (N.Y. & Pitts.—Pitts. & Chic.—Pitts. & St. Lou. R.P.O.s) began operating officially at the same time as the more famed Central's setup; in fact, non-mail-carrying runs began three days before (4:50 A.M., September thirteenth). Built in record time at Altoona, the cars were hauled by Engine 699, with Sam Knowles as conductor and Al Herbert as engineer (data which is sadly lacking for the *Fast Mail* run). The *Limited Mail* was withdrawn and restored together with its competitor. By beating the New York Central in speed, the Pennsy eventually secured many of the desirable mail contracts. Its "Limited" was gradually succeeded by the famed *Broadway Limited* of today.

Other "Fast Mails" followed in quick succession—on the IC's Chic. & Cairo, the PRR's N.Y. & Wash. (about 1883), the CM&StP's Chic. & Minn. (about 1898). But most famous of all others was the storied Overland transcontinental line which extended the New York & Chicago service on west to San Francisco. The Burlington's "Fast Mail," which made its first run on the Chic. & Council Bluffs (adjacent to Omaha) at

3 A.M., March 11, 1884, claims to have been the first link in the chain; the train was prepared on one day's notice from the P.M.G. after a conference. Despite a greatly speeded-up timecard, it hit every stop on schedule on the 499-mile route, whereupon the Department at once shortened the schedule—and has done so a dozen times since, each increased-speed demand being promptly met without failure. On Feb. 17, 1899, its Fast Mail (Train 15) made the run in 9 hours, 14 minutes. This line, the C. & N. W., and the Rock Island all competed fiercely for the westbound mail contract, engaging in some stirring races. Gradually the C&NW's Chic. & Omaha secured a plurality of the total R.P.O. service and is today usually considered the Midwest's transcontinental link; this route was a leader in the cutting of running time through the years.

Following consultations, Captain White then succeeded in contracting with the Union Pacific at Omaha for a connecting Fast Mail on their Omaha & Ogden route and, at a second conference with South Pacific and Central Pacific heads in San Francisco, secured promise of their own fastest trains to carry on the Fast Mail from Ogden to the coast on the Ogden & San Fran. R.P.O.

The first transcontinental Fast Mail from Omaha to the Pacific pulled out on November 15, 1889, at 7 P.M., forty-five minutes late—with Captain White, high postal and railroad officials, and newspaper correspondents from New York to San Francisco on board as guests. Thirteen tons of mail were taken on, mostly from the East via the N.Y. & Chic.—Chic. & Counc. Bluffs Fast Mail connection. The first lap, over the slowly ascending grades, prairies, and mountains to Cheyenne, Wyoming, was done in record time, the forty-five minutes being made up easily in these five hundred miles. Changing crews, the train pulled thirty miles farther to Sherman, the Continental Divide; then down through Laramie to Green River, Wyoming. This was the junction for the connecting fast mail to the Northwest (the UP's Green River & Portland), and twenty-three minutes were lost here—the car of officials and guests had been accidentally switched to the wrong con-

sist. The Fast Mail had to back up to reach it, and fifteen more minutes were lost. With powerful head wind and a grade of 211 feet per mile to overcome, it seemed the time could never be made up by Ogden.

But they reckoned without "Wild Bill" Downing, a famous, reckless engineer who came on at Evanston, Wyoming. Substituting a more powerful engine, he gave them such a hair-raising ride through the mountains and down Echo and Weber canyons as had never been dreamed of; with savage energy he sent the train rocking wildly as sparks and ballast flew from under the wheels. "Three miles in two minutes!" gasped Captain White at Devils Gate; and when their car careened until one set of wheels was off the rails, even General Manager Dickenson tried to have the train stopped. But the time was made up by Ogden; a speed record deemed "impossible" had been made through the daring of Railway Mail and Union Pacific personnel. The U.P. had been interested in good R.P.O. service since its construction days, when even the track-laying train had its "Union Pacific R.P.O."

From Ogden the epoch-making train proceeded as the Ogden & San Francisco, the famous "Overland" route. Holding to its schedule, the Fast Mail continued through the rugged terrain while clerks distributed both California and San Francisco City mail; with mails ready for dispatch, it pulled into Oakland Pier depot right on the dot. Total transit time from New York to San Francisco was 108 hours, 45 minutes—mighty good time in those days.

Steady improvements in the Fast Mails continued. The CB&Q's Chic. & C. Bluffs Fast Mail even elicited a dramatic description of its passage from the great evangelist Billy Sunday, who had considerable sentiment for it; it now carried six cars (150 tons) of mail.

General Superintendent Bangs was succeeded in 1875 by Theodore N. Vail, the first railway postal clerk to be promoted on merit to the top R.M.S. position (see Chapter 16). Then came General Superintendent William B. Thompson in 1878, under whom the Railway Mail Service established

its *Daily Bulletin*—which evolved into the familiar *Postal Bulletin* of today—on March 4, 1880. On July 1, 1882, all remaining route agents and “head clerks” were officially re-assigned under the universal title “railway postal clerks,” and remaining agent runs became “R.P.O.s.”

On December 31, 1888, under another general superintendent (Nash), President Cleveland ordered the entire R.M.S. placed under the federal Civil Service. That meant that all appointments and promotions after May first were to be on merit alone—eliminating the political influences causing discharge of hundreds of losing-party clerks at every new administration change, which had governed even such things as choice of runs and had permitted many incompetent appointments.

The Gay Nineties, a typical period in the younger days of the R.M.S., were launched by the appointment of none other than Captain White as general superintendent, October 4, 1890, succeeding J. Lowrie Bell and others. Life on the mail trains in this era was colorful and interesting, but certainly no picnic. Some of the conditions of the period, or of operations shortly before or afterward, are reflected in a few descriptions such as this one by Votaw:

“... A dilapidated car, vintage of 1860, which had not felt a paint brush for years . . . track visible through the broken floor . . . dingy from years of smoke from a single oil lamp which dripped gently on the floor. Old boxes like hens’ nests served as a paper case; . . . a rusty barrel stove on one side.”

Later the potbellied stove was often replaced by a cranky Baker (hot-water) heater; then came the first engine-heated steampipes (still used), but with no steam during advance hours. Men not near the little auxiliary stove froze, and had to blow the steampipes twice an hour during the trip. Sack carpets and heavy overshoes were needed to prevent freezing, for temperatures went below zero despite the stove. When one antiquated heater, unused for twenty-seven years, was lit in a recent car shortage it *still* “made smoked hams of the crew!”

The dirty, leaky coal-oil lamps were often drained to fill

those in "more important" cars, and candles substituted. Acetylene and Pintsch-gas lights—which still had to be lit from stepladders in inky darkness, and which were tapped for gas when a connecting line ran out, and candles furnished again—some from Germany, gradually appeared. At least clerks no longer wore sacks to ward off dripping oil!

Cars themselves were of flimsy wood construction, often rebuilt from other coaches scrapped as too old; whole chunks of rotten wood were pulled from some cars. One crew could never report their car's length as required, because it was inches longer going uphill than when level. Some compartments for clerks were as tiny as 3 x 7 feet, while clerks on the Lawrenceville & Carbondale (Lawr&W) in Illinois held forth in the caboose. Windows were far dirtier than at present—even "slimy." Western trains operated over light rails on loose-laid ties in black muck, hauled by old-style lightweight Baldwin or Rogers engines; one clerk was thrown in the same ditch three times.

As for equipment, clumsy tie-on tags had now replaced the *whittlers* on mailbags; letter pouches were mostly leather ones with awkward multistaple fastenings—heavy, strapped *bull-heads* and light, strapless *suckermouths*. Some cars even had a "metallic forest" of wire ropes and rods to hold mailbags suspended open, instead of the usual racks.

Salaries and working conditions would have seemed incredible today. General Superintendent White drew less, in dollars, than the average clerk at present. Remembering that money had a much higher purchasing value then, we note that pay for the starting grade (Class I) was usually \$800—sometimes as low as \$610—a year. New subs were paid at this rate only for time worked, direct by the regular clerk for whom they ran, and often several days late; they received about \$2.18 for each "day" worked, which might be a trip of more than twenty-four hours.

There was no travel allowance, no overtime pay, no sick or annual leave, no study-allowance time. Nevertheless the new clerk was given a handsomely embellished certificate of appointment, printed in crimson or purple from engraved

script type! In contrast, old clerks who had slowed down were often summarily dismissed without pension—there was no retirement pay.

Clerks had to sign an arrival-and-departure book before and after each trip and carry a photographic pass bearing their picture instead of the signed travel commission of today. Vivid memories of his old photo commission are recalled by Earl Newton, who growls in contempt at the old photo the office had used; but—

Tildy Ann looked at the picture, then put
Her arms round my neck, and she said;
“Don’t you know, John, that picture looks just as you did
The summer before we were wed?
I remember you sent me a photo like that;
I’m sure you don’t wholly forget—
It looked pretty comely to both of us then,
It looks pretty good to me yet . . .”

There were no terminals, P.T.S., for the lines to dump “stuck” mails into; clerks not only had to sort all circulars, magazines, and parcels received into the train (as well as letters), but had to remain in the car at the terminus to finish sorting any undistributed mails—without pay. Even when terminals first appeared, road clerks were often forced to work long hours therein after completing a lengthy run of their own; if the train was late, they sometimes had to omit all sleep, do their stint of terminal duty, and report for the return journey with no rest whatever. They were also called into post offices to relieve mail congestion, especially at the turn of the century. Endless stacks of “blue-tag” paper mail was sorted, for example, both on the Pitts. & St. Lou. Limited Mail (PRR) itself—where clerks worked clear through between terminals after much advance work at Pittsburgh—and in the St. Louis depot for additional hours after arrival. Still longer continuous runs existed in the Far West.

The heavy mails brought many complaints, not all of which were justified. White once learned of one clerk who said he was swamped with far more mail on his run on the

Omaha & Ogden (UP) than could possibly be distributed before reaching Ogden. White accompanied him on the next trip, asking only that the clerk set up and tie out for his chief; and White himself "sorted out" the whole pile by North Platte, Nebraska, only one quarter of the way out of Omaha. The clerk never complained again.

However, White was keenly aware of the genuine hardships which were nevertheless suffered by clerks throughout the Service, and he favored and predicted retirement annuities, increased salaries, travel allowances, longer layoffs, and high-speed trains many years before they came about. There were petty restrictions, too; a rule was issued requiring clerks to turn each bag inside out after emptying, to be sure no mail was left therein. Since this would consume hours of valuable time, clerks commenced *using* the bags inside out too—and the order was soon rescinded. There was an economy drive on the use of twine, requiring receipts for each ball by each clerk too; cut twine was ordered knotted together and re-used. Clerks on the old Detroit & Albany (*not* a Michigan-to-New York State run, but an SP branch in Oregon) dispatched a two-foot-ball of saved twine to the division superintendent, labeled "First Annual Ball for Benefit of Baled-Hay Widows and Unidentified Orphans," which was displayed at headquarters and the clerks highly commended.

Registered mail was another headache; it was dispatched in regularly scheduled striped pouches (*stripes*) and inner sacks, checked like other pouches; there were no facilities for quantity billing to terminal offices or unauthorized destinations. John Fisher tells of the registered packages of gold and what not that poured east from California, eight hundred per trip, requiring four clerks to write them on the Albuquerque & El Paso (Santa Fe) alone; one clerk went through to Kansas City to catch up. Other registered parcels, several hundreds, were found buried under storage mail.

The bearded, adventurous clerks of that day included some picturesque characters—"Cheyenne Pete" of the Ogden & S. F. (SP), a legendary superman famed in verse, and many others. Clerks wore an indigo-dyed uniform with double-

breasted coat and vest, and regulation silk-corded navy cap. For rough work, indigo rolled-collar flannel shirts and tent-duck overalls with "stomach protectors." When uniforms disappeared, a standard cap was prescribed with the letters "R.M.S.," richly gold-braided. But Northern clerks complained of freezing ears, and portly ones of "unbecomingness" to their broad, side-whiskered faces; so it too, gave way to the official badge of today.

Coffee and lunches were prepared under difficulties, but often with a humorous or nostalgic note. The *train box* contained a frying pan and other cooking ware as well as a coffee pot, and old-time hot meals were cooked on the flat-topped stove—steaks, pork chops, ham and eggs, and fried potatoes, instead of today's cold sandwiches or "insipid canned goods warmed on the steam pot." Some railways allowed clerks to wash up, change, and eat in the diner at half price, or even had trays brought to the car door at bargain fees. Western ranch stops provided fresh eggs and fruit at country prices; and on leisurely branch lines the train would stop while the whole engine and mail crew shot ducks, geese, or pheasant for a game dinner to follow at home.

But crews without stove heat did cooking with great difficulty, perhaps over kerosene-soaked twine balls. One type of car had gas lights so arranged that coffee could be heated thereon, but globes broke if any coffee boiled over. One N.Y. & Chic. (NYCent) clerk heated his coffee in this manner just after a rule against the practice had been issued, and just as he was serving coffee at Albany he was greeted by the chief clerk entering the car.

"Well, Louis, how did you get your coffee heated so nicely?" he asked.

"Oh, I got off at Schenectady and tied the pot to the brake beam where it would rub the wheels a little . . . it warmed it just right," Louis assured him. The official, who of course knew better, just grinned and walked away.

Trunk-line runs were so long and exhausting then that a few hours' sleep had to be allowed en route. Most clerks carried a "bed sack"—a worn-out sack stuffed with discarded

blankets, an old pillow, and work clothes, and handled at terminals by the *grip man*. Some cars had collapsible bunks which lay on racks or stall cleats and folded up; others used laced-paper-sack hammocks. Some long runs were three and four full days one way, and sleeping regulations required that any of the men could sleep one at a time if the mail was in good shape. Exhausted clerks sometimes slept more time than allotted, and one was removed from the Service for "sleeping on duty and giving as reason for failure to make catch, 'Did not hear the whistle.'" On shorter lines, rough cots were provided on top floors of large post-office buildings at termini of runs.

A final sidelight of the period was the famed "car permit," issued theoretically as an admit card to various postal cars and stamped in bright red "Not good for transportation." Actually they were furnished to clerks as passes for rides over lines other than their own, even by officials of the Service, and all clerks-in-charge were expected to honor them for passage in spite of regulations. As related by C. E. Parsons, they were used for many years until 1893, when they were quickly withdrawn after clerks from all over the nation were noticed in Washington, D. C., attending the presidential inauguration on their permits. Despite howls of protest, no such passes were ever restored.

Most trainmen also honored the permits, but some observed the regulations to the letter. One clerk riding on a permit in a B&O storage car next to the engine was killed in a wreck, and his family won an expensive suit against the road. Provoked B&O officials condemned the permits, saying the clerk should have been given a pass to ride the coaches, where no one had been hurt. Another permit-riding clerk was permanently "blackballed" from riding any part of the Missouri Pacific when he talked back to a conductor questioning him as he reclined in a chair in the mail-car doorway. On being requested to pay fare as a result, he angrily remarked, "If I do pay, I doubt if the Company will get it." Rensch himself, riding by permit over the old St. Louis, La. & K.City (C&A), found himself in the car with a nervous new

clerk instead of the one he knew—and to keep him from going stuck, Rench had to help him all night without pay, on a detour!

There are many other vivid incidents of the old days. When no one on Albuquerque & L.A. (Santa Fe) Train 3 had a match to light the Pintsch-gas lamps one evening, one clerk merely pulled the cord and borrowed one from the wrathful conductor. Then there was that notorious huge sack of mail labeled "Snowsheds D&D" (i.e., mail for "delivery and distribution") which a storage-car helper brought back to the old Ogden (Utah) Temporary Terminal, which had just made it up for dispatch, asking what the clerks wanted done with it—there was no such place as Snowsheds. The exhausted Ogden helpers, all detailed there twelve hours a day at \$75 a month because of washouts on their line, all denied having made up the sack despite the label's evidence. The reason was quite evident when the sack was opened—it was crammed with tiny salve cans, the size of quarters, addressed practically everywhere! The force, composed, by the way, "mostly of future R.M.S. officials," *never* distributed that noxious sack; it was allegedly relabeled once more to some unsuspecting line or post office in California.

The postmaster at Letts, Iowa, once reported a crew on the old Davenport & Atchison (Rock I.—traversing his town) for throwing mail off the train into piles of cow manure. It had not been done intentionally thus far, but the provoked clerks now began to improve their marksmanship until they became pretty expert, says Rench. Appearance of a paper addressed to Letts on connecting lines from then on was sure to elicit bantering remarks, not all printable. When "Old Nathan," a clerk of that era, was discovered embroiled in a raging scuffle, yelling for help, in the end of the car where he was supposed to be sleeping one night, would-be rescuers crept in with drawn guns. They discovered, says Earl Newton in verse form, that he had a mouse in his pajamas!

A booklet of 1902 by Superintendent V. J. Bradley (2nd Division) well reveals the scope of the Service at the time. There were then 179,902 miles of R.P.O. routes and 8,794

clerks, handling 272,714,017 ton-miles of mail annually; there were eleven divisions. Despite the 76,000 post offices then existing, efficient R.M.S. distribution had enabled the great New York G.P.O. to cut its outgoing mail separations to less than 1,300 and the Philadelphia post office's to only 1,000. Bradley, admitting some clerks still got only \$800, also pointed out how little of their layoff was actual free time. Clerks were averaging 98.74 per cent in exams, as against only 90.24 in 1890, and sorted thirteen billion pieces of mail a year. At about this time modern pouch records had just appeared.

In the 1880s (and up to 1916) mail pay to the railroads was based on a quadrennial weighing of all mails during a fixed period of some 105 days; the country was divided into four sections, and one section was covered each period, with special clerks assisting. There were always weighings going on.

Clerks of the era were particularly loyal to Postmaster General John Wanamaker, the great merchant-philanthropist, who took much interest in the R.M.S. (see Chapter 10 for his gold-medal awards). By 1902 they were running on 1,278 steam, 23 trolley, and 49 boat-line R.P.O.s. By 1907 there were 14,000 clerks, and their accuracy in distribution was up to only one error in every 11,822 pieces handled (it was one in 2,824 in 1890).

The railways continued to build up right and left, and the R.P.O. system was overexpanded as railway post offices were hastily installed on practically every piece of trackage longer than a spur. There was even one on the private track of the Nevada Consolidated Copper Company—the old Cobre & Ely (NevNthn), serving Kimberly and other famous towns until scrapped (1941).

An ill-dated experiment in shipping bulk mail to various distributing points in freight cars was commenced under the Hitchcock economy regime in 1909, causing great delay to thousands of magazines and catalogs and great confusion among clerks at distributing points, especially concerning weighings. (It was this mail which required the blue tags mentioned earlier, attached in a futile effort to keep it

straight.) Protests from publishers finally secured a curtailment of the practice in 1912. By 1915 the force totaled over 20,000 clerks; they were distributing nearly fourteen billion pieces of mail annually, 99.98 per cent correct, in 914 full and 3,040 apartment cars, and mail-carrying trackage had reached the staggering total of 216,000 miles.

NOTE: The period covered by this chapter would chronologically include the Spanish-American War and other special events (the Chicago fire, the "Gold Trains," etcetera) involving the R.M.S., but these are covered more appropriately in Chapter 11. Similarly, it would normally include the founding of the association which is now the N.P.T.A. (also the M.B.A.), but this will be better discussed in the following chapter, along with the significant events between 1910 and 1940, which all seem inextricably linked with the railway mail labor movement. Most new developments since 1940 are in Chapter 16.

PERILOUS DAYS: THE "ASSOCIATION" AND THE "BROTHERHOOD"

There's a great jubilation about us,
And, hailing from far and from near,
From the shadowy vales to the hilltops,
The sounds of rejoicing we hear;
The goddess of fortune is smiling,
Prosperity's coming our way—
They've made us a travel allowance
Of six shining coppers a day! . . .

— EARL L. NEWTON



Thrilling, sometimes horrifying, almost incredible, is the saga of the railway mail clerk's successful fight for safer and better working conditions, for a closer approach to fair salaries, for the right to petition Congress, and for true labor unionism in its finest existing form.

Until today the story never could be fully told; but now that tempers have cooled and many key figures in the bitter struggle have passed from the scene, many a cherished secret has been revealed to the researcher for the first time. One salient fact stands out—that it was America's railway mail clerks who initiated and spearheaded the successful restoration of basic constitutional rights to *all* government employees in 1912 and after.

Postal employees cannot ask for a raise from the superintendent or postmaster; they cannot form a union which threatens to strike; their salaries are set by law. They will

receive pay commensurate with the cost of living, and other needed benefits, only when the public is enough aroused to demand such through its representatives in Congress.

Before 1900, clerks, and officials as well, were very poorly paid. Many of these officials were naturally unfair in making appointments and promotions (with an eye to political approval), were bitterly opposed to unionism, obtained privileges or railroad passes through political influence, and lived only for a chance to quit and grab a better job—preferably as a supervisor of mails for a railroad. (Some officials, of course, were of high character and entirely different.) Many clerks were removed from the Service merely because of politics or grudges—a white envelope meant one was fired.

But clerks evidenced even more dissatisfaction with regard to the dangerous, poorly constructed and serviced postal cars in which they worked; clerks were being killed and injured in wrecks everywhere. Railroad work has always been dangerous, but working in the postal cars of that day was almost like working in a powder mill. Before the advent of double tracks, automatic block systems, heavy rail and ballast, the air brake, the automatic coupler, and legal control of railroadmen's working hours, wrecks occurred with dreadful frequency. The postal clerk was in the greatest danger; his car was generally the weakest in the train (often an old, remodeled baggage car), was spotted at the head end, and hence received the brunt of any impact or followed the engine in case of derailment.

Determined at least to provide a little financial security for the maimed clerks and bereaved families involved, a group of the employees met in Chicago on November 18, 1874, and organized the Railway Mail Mutual Benefit Association, the first national organization ever formed among railway postal clerks—the first in the Postal Service, it is claimed. A. B. Hulse was made president. The association was to provide straight life insurance at low rates, since old-line companies would not consider such risky fields of occupation; each member was assessed \$1.10 upon the death of any other member, and \$2,000 was paid to the latter's beneficiary. Lodges were

formed throughout the country. The "M.B.A." has continued to function throughout the years. Its newsy little magazine, the *M.B.A. Reminder*, was founded in October 1921, and in 1942 the present national secretary—Benjamin F. Carle, former 10th Division Assistant General Superintendent—took over the reins. A recent sharp increase in rates induced a drop in membership from a high of 13,285 to but 7,459 in 1947; but the association is again expanding and it still sends out \$2,000 checks to beneficiaries from its Chicago headquarters. Active lodges are found at Boston, Cincinnati, Atlanta, Omaha, and elsewhere.

But the M.B.A. of 1874 also endeavored to secure legislation for better wage and working conditions, and it began this work years before the post-office clerks' and carriers' national groups were even founded. Considerable publicity was given to the hazardous nature of the work, and by 1879 legislation was enacted by Congress to provide ninety days' full salary during incapacitation because of injuries on duty.

And there was plenty of need for such legislation. The report of the Postmaster General for 1883 contained eleven printed pages of wrecks, and the 1884 report, fourteen pages. They were crammed with phrases like "Mail car was completely destroyed"; ". . . was fatally injured and died the next morning"; ". . . was precipitated . . . and badly injured, and died on December 2"; ". . . neck was broken, killing instantly"; ". . . was caught in wreck and burned to death"; ". . . so badly crushed as to be unrecognizable," and so on. From 1877 to 1884 25 clerks were killed and 147 seriously injured out of only 3,153 employed; in 1885-92 the figures jumped to 43 and 463.

In 1883, furthermore, Congress arbitrarily reduced the pay of clerks in the two top classes by \$50 to \$100, making it only \$1,150 and \$1,300 per annum. This blow, coupled with unfair political discriminations, led to the hasty organization of a "Brotherhood of Railway Mail Postal Clerks," in 1886, to protect the interests of clerks involved; but it was admittedly a Republican partisan group. It originated in the old 5th Division and was denounced by General Superintendent

Jamison and fellow officials (apparently including Captain White, who reports the incident) as "an association . . . inimical to private and public interests, because its purpose was intimidation and retaliation."

That started the fireworks. The Department itself retaliated, with eighty immediate dismissals. The B.R.M.P.C. was completely crushed, and the M.B.A. took care not to emulate its tactics. Next year (1887) the injury-on-duty salary benefit was extended to a one-year maximum—a benefit claimed as an M.B.A. credit.

By 1888 the first railway mail journal had appeared—the *R.M.S. Bugle*, published by Abraham E. Winrott at Chicago. The next year Representative Hopkins introduced a bill to increase postal clerks' salaries, supported by both the M.B.A. and General Superintendent J. L. Bell. Bell organized his own lobby of railway mail clerks to come to Washington and plead for the increase; provided with free transportation, they were ordered to team up and visit congressmen. Enough votes were mustered, but filibusters killed the bill; and the delegates returned, anxious for an independent group.

From this beginning, in part, sprang the great National Postal Transport Association of today. After a three-year discussion in the *Bugle*—and by correspondence between the editor, James Elliott, of Minneapolis, and Harry First, of Cincinnati—the journal published a call for representatives of all eleven divisions to convene in Cincinnati in 1891. On July fifteenth, nineteen clerks met in the post-office reading room there, with First acting as chairman; and on July 17, 1891, they formally organized the National Association of Railway Postal Clerks, now the N.P.T.A. The first actual convention was held in Detroit in August; M. C. Hadley, of Waltham, Massachusetts, was elected president, and M. H. Brown, of Atlanta, secretary.

Its constitution provided that the N.A.R.P.C. was to be a fraternal beneficiary association providing for closer social relations, perfection of any movements of benefit to the clerks or the Service, and planning benefits to its membership in case of accidental death or disability. With the exception of

added labor-union functions, these provisions still hold true. Local branches, and later divisional associations, soon sprang up. The headquarters was considered to be at Hadley's home.

In 1898 an efficient Beneficiary Department was founded at Omaha, offering insurance to the extent of \$4,000 for accidental death and \$18 weekly for disability. Organized by D. E. Barnes, of Wichita; August Bindeman, of Elyria, Ohio; N. L. Harrison, of Hornell, New York; and several others, it issued certificates numbered largely to correspond with division numbers to the charter members. It selected Portsmouth, New Hampshire, for its Home Office and George A. Wood as secretary. William H. "Bill" Fry was appointed an enthusiastic National Organizer to solicit memberships, riding everywhere on his car permit; he also was the first to suggest the Women's Auxiliary. "Bill Fry" still adorns the N.P.T.A. membership card, but a town in Minnesota named after him ended up as "Bull Frog."

The N. A. R. P. C. soon received special favors. Its activities were announced in the General Orders, and free leaves and transportation to National Conventions were given by the government. The *R.M.S. Bugle* became the official journal, but in September 1896 it was reorganized, with an eye to independent control, as the *Railway Mail*, edited by Elliott at St. Paul, Minnesota. In August 1899 he relinquished it to outside control (it continued until 1918) and organized the *Railway Post Office*, now the *Postal Transport Journal*, as the N.A.R.P.C.'s official organ from then on. He was later succeeded as editor by Secretary George A. Wood, holding both offices concurrently.

Meanwhile the wreck situation became intolerable. On the old Switz City & Effingham¹ (Ill&IndS) alone there were *thirty-eight wrecks* within three years. There were 5,000 accidents during the 1890s; 14 deaths in 1897 and 75 for the period, despite new, stronger mail-car specifications drawn up by Captain White. By 1899, 4,500 of the 8,388 clerks were N.A.R.P.C.s.

¹Famed in early lore as "The Pumpkin Vine" or "The Abe Martin."

About 1900, through the efforts of the N.A.R.P.C. and Honorable J. A. Tawney, the clerks' first effective pleader in Congress, the previous maximum salaries were restored—following an impassioned speech in which Tawney appealed for "Equality and Justice" and pointed out that R.P.C.s were subject to more continuous labor, stricter rules and discipline, and less of home and family comforts than any other government employees. (He described the travel allowances received by foreign railway mail clerks even then.)

But discipline became even more severe, and in 1902 (a year of 9 wreck-deaths and 390 injuries) came the crowning blow. President Theodore Roosevelt issued a startling proclamation, Civil Service Order No. 12, better known as the infamous Gag Rule. Issued in November, it read:

All officers and employees of the United States . . . are hereby forbidden either directly or indirectly, individually or through associations, to solicit an increase in pay or influence in their own interest any other legislation whatever, either before Congress or in its committees, or in any way, save through the department . . . in or under which they serve, under penalty of dismissal from the Government service.

Three years later, when Roosevelt tried to fire a government printer who had disputed (on his bicycle) the President's right of way, he found that legislative safeguards prevented it; therefore he issued a follow-up White House order authorizing the instant dismissal, without reasons or appeal, of any government employee.

From then on these two closely related Executive Orders were rigidly enforced by postal officials. Barred effective protests, employees' conditions became intolerable. Soon N.A.R.P.C. President J. A. Kidwell, departing from the Association's usual conciliatory tactics, made a speech at Chicago criticizing conditions, and was fired from the R.M.S. Wreck fatalities doubled in 1903; strong car specifications were drafted in 1904, but older cars still became more and more dangerous. Unclean water and filthy toilets were daily complaints, despite honest efforts by General Superintendent

White, the N.A.R.P.C., and others to improve conditions.

In 1904 the N.A.R.P.C. became the "Railway Mail Association," and kept that name for 45 years. In 1907 a \$100-a-year salary increase, credited to R.M.A. efforts, was secured, but in that year, also, White was succeeded by Alexander Grant as General Superintendent, with a marked change of policy for the worse. A stricter merit-and-demerit system, with "teeth," was first adopted; and its "plus and minus points" filled hearts with fear. A clerks' petition to Congress via approved departmental channels, demanding I.C.C. safety rules, was returned unapproved as "unhappily worded."

By now 210 clerks had been killed since 1875 and there had been 9,400 R.P.O. wrecks; there were only twenty-six steel R.P.O. cars anywhere. Worse yet, in 1908 Taft was elected President and revamped the Gag Rule in emphatic terms (instead of rescinding it, as expected), and appointed Amos Hitchcock, a strict and economy-crazed politician, as the successor to Postmaster General Meyer. At the same time the first movement for retirement annuities had been begun in the 10th (Wisconsin-Minnesota-Dakota) Division, with R.M.A. groups banqueting officials; but rugged individualists among the clerks squelched it. However, legislation was passed granting \$1,000 death benefits for clerks killed on duty—claimed by the R.M.A. as its accomplishment.

In 1909, however, the seething cauldron of resentment boiled over. Urban A. Walter, a clerk on the N.Y. & Chic. (NYCent), had just transferred to the Albuq. & Los Angeles (Santa Fe) for his health and was living in Phoenix, Arizona, on sick leave without pay. Appalled at service conditions and determined to quit anyhow, he launched in June "the most remarkable publication since the time of William Lloyd Garrison" (who was quoted freely therein)—the *Harpoon*, a vivid, red-and-yellow-bound, 6 x 8 inch, 32-page magazine.

A huge red harpoon and the words "A Magazine That Hurts—For Postal Clerks" were on the front cover, and a memorial tombstone to three clerks burned to death in a wreck was the frontispiece. "Strike?—No! Publicity?—Yes!" was its opening headline. Articles in tense, compelling style

outlined its purpose "to let the public, especially the business public, *know . . . the abuses . . .*" The horrible details of insanitary water and bedbug-infested lodgings were exposed. "The Gag Is Nailed!" cried Walter, pleading for support and decrying the customary fawning and cringing before the officials. The first edition of 15,000—produced under heroic conditions, a saga in itself—was sent to every senator and congressman, every big postal official, every worth-while newspaper, and thousands of R.P.C.s and P.O. clerks. Its articles were sensational yet positive, captivating the reader's interest in Walter's unorthodox, startling manner. He printed and circulated the paper at his own expense for months, throwing a bombshell into government labor affairs, after a narrow escape from total failure.

Gradually subscriptions and extra money came in; a cartoonist was hired and the N.E.A. syndicated the cover design. The second issue printed glowing tributes from many, bitter notes from officials, and startling articles on the unflushable "tank and can" in many cars, delay to mails through disgraceful personnel management at depots, rotten-wood cars, and "iced rat soup" (the rat was found inside the drinking water). It made newspaper headline everywhere.

The leviathan of officialdom quivered with rage at the Harpoon's biting barbs. Both Urban and Beatty, the Amarillo & Pecos (Santa Fe) clerk who had sent in the dead rat, were promptly fired; officials threatened all supporters of the infamous magazine with dismissal; the Second Assistant Postmaster General decried the "flagrantly false representations of the R.M.S." in it. The Railway Mail Association, with the exception of its fighting Publicity Committee, also threw up its hands in horror at these disloyal tactics. Under President J. T. Canfield, R.M.A. leaders honestly felt that their policy of respectful conciliation toward the Department was the best way of securing benefits for all clerks, and they doubtless thought they were saving at least one clerk's job by dismissing their militant Publicity Committee at the next convention (its chairman, E. H. Roberts, had been threatened with discharge).

Walter moved the *Harpoon* to Denver, changed it to newspaper format, and backed up his campaign with hundreds of letters and telegrams to Congress, securing over two hundred pledges of support. The Department, a bit on guard by then, began to order wooden mail cars kept away from engines in the train consist; sanitation was improved a bit, a few more steel cars added, and up to thirty days' sick leave (evidently without pay) granted the clerks. Simultaneously, two law students among the clerks started a campaign for travel allowances, convinced by a study of the P. L. & R. that they were due. Others including the R.M.A., but especially the *Harpoon*, took up the fight; and legislation the following year (1911) granted the first pittance of twenty-five cents per day—although seventy-five cents was authorized—to clerks for travel expenses.

But conditions were still intolerable. Clerks reporting filthy or unsafe cars were told to stop being so fussy. The Service Rating System was again expanded into a fearful weapon of discipline, with new penalties being added without notice to the clerks and harshly applied, to their complete surprise. Walter, raging against these and other practices, was sued three times for libel by the government, but without success. Lines were badly understaffed, but on top of this Hitchcock issued orders to "take up the slack" by reducing layoffs and lengthening hours. Men who "never went stuck" now cared little if they didn't get "up." Morale was at its lowest in the winter of 1910-1911; not even the customary Christmas help was allowed, and tons of Christmas mail remained unworked for days amid a chaos of sidetracked cars with men called in from layoffs, back-and-forth hauls until mail could be worked out, and quadrennial weighings where this shuttling became a four-year expense. The wreck situation was climaxed by a Christmas Eve crash killing four clerks—in a wooden car just passed at inspection despite new "safe-and-sound construction" specifications issued July first. When a catcher arm was pulled out of the rotten wood in another accident, the event was reported—and three years later the rotten wood had still not been replaced.

The press, which had been backing the Administration, now swung around to skepticism of Hitchcock's policies and published vivid accounts of dissatisfaction in the railway mail and post-office services, as well as photos of huge piles of "stuck" Christmas mail and broadsides against the Postmaster General. One striking photo was obtained by Walter at Denver, despite temporary arrest, of stacks of bag-mail.

In January 1911 came the crisis: Clerks on the 225-mile Tracy & Pierre (C&NW) went on "strike." This line, now "The Elroy" (Elroy & Rapid City), was a twice-daily service from Minnesota into South Dakota's state capital, employing thirteen to sixteen clerks on a six-day-on, six-off basis. (Another source says two weeks on, one off.) Its borrowed sixty-foot car was choked with working mails for four states as "green" helpers arrived just at leaving time, leaving it still badly undermanned. The clerk-in-charge had to do almost half the letter sorting besides his heavy record work; over one hundred new clerks assigned to the line at some time had quit it, and the helper runs were going stuck five days weekly as early as 1899. In 1910 alone, sixteen dissatisfied clerks had resigned or transferred.

Eight clerks "ran through," while at least three (two at a time) were helpers between Tracy and Huron, South Dakota, leaving only two "through" men in each crew. Soon, however, certain through clerks were ordered to run west only as far as Blunt, South Dakota, since through-running of all clerks would necessitate a higher salary classification for the line. And there were no sleeping accommodations at Blunt, so these men had to run through to Pierre anyway, helping without pay.

And now, in "taking up the slack," Superintendent Norman Perkins at St. Paul (who had profanely denounced the *Harpoon*) issued an order through Chief Clerk Denison at Aberdeen that *all* regular clerks on the Tracy & Pierre report on their layoffs without pay to keep up a vacancy on one of the helper runs out of Huron (its occupant had resigned—the position was abolished). At least half the regular clerks lived in either Tracy or Pierre and would have to

deadhead to Huron twelve hours before leaving time, taking three nights of their layoff for the unpaid trip. A protest to Denison, signed by Fred C. Ohman, Claire W. Holcomb, and other clerks, was fruitless. Thereupon all thirteen clerks, with one exception, declined to cover the extra runs and, as they came due, did not report. Some inspectors backed up the clerks at first, and even secured the discharge of one official involved; but that only outraged those higher up.

All twelve of the "strikers" were suspended for insubordination and failure to protect runs; five were later discharged, the others reduced. It was a startling situation—virtual mutiny, yet justified on the ground of unjust, physically unendurable conditions. Mail piled up in appalling congestion; desperately, officials tried to get the line into working order. To assist Forsburg, the one "loyal" clerk (he was commended and promoted), two others were hastily transferred from nearby units; scores of substitutes were rushed to the line, and utter chaos reigned for two months as "strikebreakers" totally unfamiliar with the distribution were brought in from all nearby divisions. Even Chief Clerk Wolfe had to take the run once, in addition to helping sort 1,100 sacks of unworked papers on the station platform at Phillips, South Dakota. Mail rode up and down the line undelivered for a week or more; a letter from Miller to Huron, almost the next station, took several weeks to get there.

The news spread like wildfire, making the Department apprehensive of new strikes. It was reported that a similar strike had occurred on the connecting Oakes & Hawarden (C&NW), but investigation has indicated that it did not. Still, clerks everywhere followed developments with consuming interest; the *Harpoon* took up the cause with vigor, and contributions to assist the strikers poured in. "What's the latest on the T.&P.?" was heard everywhere. Clerks and substitutes called for runs on the line, overwhelmingly sympathetic with the cause, found every conceivable excuse for staying home or reporting sick. Forsburg and his regular assistant were treated with utter scorn, and their line was swamped with sacks of *squealers* and *nixies*. Over two hun-

dred resignations were written out by clerks near by, ready to hand in if things didn't improve.

One month after the strike began, indignation crystallized in the organization of the Brotherhood of Railway Postal Clerks at *Harpoon* headquarters in February 1911. (A local group of the same name had been organized in Los Angeles in 1907 but was crushed by the Department.) For six years the B.R.P.C., while never the size of the R.M.A., was destined to be the most influential national group of railway mail clerks ever known thus far. It openly advocated affiliation with the American Federation of Labor; introduced a secret grip, ritual, and password; and organized active lodges at Denver, Chicago, Washington, San Francisco, Minneapolis, and a dozen other cities. Its colorful red-and-black union card was decorated with green and orange stamps certifying to dues payment (\$1 and \$2)—rare, attractive adhesives of which only a few specimens exist today. The initiation ritual was grimly humorous, the blindfolded candidate, as a “new sub,” was put through a third degree of questioning by a Class 2 clerk, assessed “demerits” for his answers, and put through an appalling simulated wreck.

Thus was literally fulfilled an announced purpose of the *Harpoon* in its first issue: “To cement the . . . clerks into one vast, vital, pulsating Brotherhood.” Walter, elected secretary-treasurer, introduced for the first time among postal groups the direct election of national officers by mail ballot, the monthly published and open audit of funds, and the public handling of all routine business through its official journal—naturally, the *Harpoon*.

Meanwhile the Department tried both appeasement and oppression on the “struck” line. Overdue promotions were handed out; even the strikers, before suspension, were offered clerk-in-chargeships (promptly refused). Then, suspended, they were spied upon or harassed until their discharge or reduction; substitutes were given demerits for not taking the run. Apparently none of the discharged clerks was ever reinstated; many went into business successfully, and Ohman (discharged, with Holcomb) later entered the legislature. Of

those reinstated, one—Ed Bicek—is still running on the Elroy & Rapid City today. By now the public was thoroughly aroused; it did not know the merits of the case, but it did want its mail, and without delay. Telegrams poured into Washington, Pierre, St. Paul, any seat of authority offering possible relief; both state assemblies petitioned Congress; newspapers reprinted *Harpoon* blasts.

It worked. Within two months the line had been raised to its proper class (salaries \$100 higher), the objectionable Blunt runs were extended to Pierre, and the reduced clerks reinstated in grade. Other clerks were induced to transfer to the line by salary increases, and a semblance of order was restored. It has been claimed that "the boys lost their fight," but the record indicates otherwise. And the Department, alarmed, did not stop there; Walter's pitiless exposés of tragic wooden-car wrecks crushing clerks like matchboxes and of other abuses certainly helped secure corrective action. Congress, in particular, stepped in to pass the first "steel car law" on March 4, 1911 (the end of the strike)—providing that full R.P.O. cars had to be constructed under rigid safety specifications and built of equal strength to all other cars of the train, which meant "steel" on all principal railroads. July 1, 1916, was set as the deadline for withdrawal of all main-line wooden cars; travel allowance was also increased to \$1 a day, and thirty days' annual leave with pay was granted to certain six-days-a-week clerks (later voided).

The Railway Mail Association claimed credit for all such benefits obtained, of course, and doubtless their influence did help. At their 1911 Convention in June at Syracuse, Peter J. Schardt, of Saukville, Wisconsin (later a high Southern Railway official, just deceased), was elected president to succeed J. T. Canfield—on a "progressive" platform. Vice president at the time, he had been an aggressive worker for better conditions in the strike-famed 10th Division (Wisconsin-Minnesota-Dakota) and later its R.M.A. president, in contrast to the association's general appeasement policy. However, instead of threatening a great strike, as expected, the new president counseled moderation—an action which,

like others of his, is staunchly defended by many N.P.T.A. leaders even today on the ground that such measures would have been ruinous; the "time was not ripe for unionism." The upshot was, however, that the R.M.A. could do little to help the situation; and it opposed strongly, of course, both the T.&P. strike and the Brotherhood itself.

There was still the Gag Rule, and discontent and rebellion seethed everywhere. New groups of indignant clerks were organized in the Midwest and East, some later absorbed by the Brotherhood but others consisting of progressive R.M.A. units—notably in the 1st (New England) and 10th divisions. Ringleaders in all these fields were fired for their pro-labor activities: Charles Quackenbush at Boston, C. P. Rodman in Omaha, John Albert Whalen in Des Moines (the clerk who sent in the famous samples of rotten car wood), and many others. Whalen, allowed no defense (despite Second Assistant P.M.G.-published announcements of advance notice and defense facilities for all accused clerks), published his whole story in a challenging booklet (see Bibliography). New England clerks, wroth at Quackenbush's discharge, elected him R.M.A. division president over the bitter opposition of its favor-carrying incumbent officers; Quackenbush had to have his predecessor legally ousted from the hall. But members rallied to support him, and finally even got him reinstated; the government ordered the voluminous proceedings recorded in a "pamphlet," which turned out to be a 265-page clothbound book—one of our few all-R.M.S. volumes!

Postal inspectors spied on meetings of all progressive groups, took names of those advocating unions or affiliation, and cited many for discipline or removal; in the T.O., Omaha, Nebraska, spying inspectors were put on letter cases. Five hundred clerks declared they would resign in a body if General Superintendent Stephens of the R.M.S. were not removed. They asked instant relief from unpaid overtime, undermanned runs, unreasonable hours, dangerous cars, and payless retirements. Secretary Frank Morrison of the A.F. of L. took up the clerks' cause, and the Department extorted pledges from clerks to repudiate any group advocating affilia-

tion therewith. Brotherhood members refusing to sign were reduced or fired on insignificant charges or for "pernicious activity."

The very next year the tide turned. President Gompers of the A. F. of L. declared boldly for full constitutional rights for clerks; then progressive Senator Robert M. La Follette, backed by Senator Lloyd, introduced a sweeping measure calling for complete abolition of the Gag Rule and summary dismissals. The bill was the direct culmination of pleas from the Brotherhood, the *Harpoon*, a few bold R.M.A. workers, and the public as evidenced in thousands of letters and newspaper pleas—many of the letters being replies to an inquiry sent by La Follette to every clerk in the Service under promise of anonymity.

In May, President Schardt addressed the R.M.A. in convention at New Orleans. He was expected to support the bill vigorously, in common with the rest of the growing progressive element; there was hope for its endorsement in a body by the delegates. But Schardt, after long conferences with Second Assistant P.M.G. Stewart (General Superintendent Stephens's superior), finally reported to the delegates:

"I argued for hours with Stewart for the right of direct petition . . . but finally grasped the significance of their position. I would have been a base poltroon and a traitor to the cause if I had done otherwise [than agree to oppose such legislation] . . ."

With the "old guard" all too eager to follow the suggestion that voting for such an officially-disfavored bill would dangerously antagonize the Department, the convention—after twice denying Urban Walter the floor—"ruthlessly slaughtered" the resolution favoring the Lloyd-La Follette bill by a vote of 44 to 20.

Fortunately the bill was enacted anyhow on August 24, 1912, amid great rejoicing by the Brotherhood, which had fought for it. The R.M.A. later took credit for securing the act's passage; but the record, alas, must stand. The law, Section 12 of the Post Office Bill, is still in force and reads essentially as follows:

That no person in the classified civil service . . . shall be removed therefrom, except for such cause as will promote the efficiency of said service and for reasons given in writing; . . . [he] shall have notice of the same and of any charges preferred against him and be furnished with a copy thereof, also be allowed a reasonable time for personally answering same in writing, and affidavits in support thereof . . .

Membership in any society, association, club, or other organization of postal employees, not affiliated with any outside organization imposing an obligation or duty upon them to engage in any strike . . . against the United States, having for its objects, among other things, improvements in the condition of labor of its members, including hours of labor and compensation therefor and leaves of absence, . . . or the presenting by any such person or groups of persons of any grievance . . . to the Congress or any member thereof, shall not constitute or be cause for reduction in rank or compensation or removal of such person or groups of persons from said service.

The right of persons employed in the civil service of the United States, either individually or collectively to petition Congress, or any member thereof, or to furnish information . . . shall not be denied or interfered with.

And Congress did not stop there; it also granted automatic progressive promotions to clerks after a year's satisfactory service in the next lower grade, granted up to one and one-half years' pay to any clerk incapacitated by injury while on duty, and provided for each eight hours of work of non-road clerks to be within not over a ten-hour spread.

Such advances, for which the R.M.A. took credit, were all a great step forward; but the fight was not yet won. The Department found ways of circumventing the law to continue unjust dismissals, and in the same year efficiency ratings were introduced and often unfairly applied. Regular parcel post was introduced for the first time January 1, 1913 (Hitchcock mailed the first one), flooding the unprepared lines and creating new resentment.

In 1913 the Cincinnati R.M.A. Convention again rode roughshod over its progressive element, with hundreds of members deserting; but progress was made too. Direct mail-ballot election of national officers (as in the Brotherhood) was decided upon, and even the *Harpoon* applauded the move. The R.M.A. announced the securing of an optional thirty days' leave (payless) per year. And having discovered serious irregularities in the records and services of Secretary Wood, the association dismissed him and elected Rufus E. Ross, a progressive; but conservative August Bindeman (charter member) was elected editor of the *Railway Post Office* to succeed J. A. Kidwell, who as president had once defied the Department.

The progressive element was headed largely by Carl Van Dyke of the 10th Division, his division president William M. Collins, and Edward J. Ryan of Massachusetts (representing the Quackenbush unionists). Van Dyke, a capable clerk on the old St. Paul & Devils Lake (C&NW), hailed from Alexandria, Minnesota; he was soon disciplined by the Department for "subversive activity" as a Brotherhood charter member and organizer, being demoted to a low-grade job in the St. Louis post office. Refusing to accept it he was fired. Still an R.M.A. member, he was elected division president by his outraged supporters and offered the equivalent of his R.M.S. salary to fight for the cause full time. He continued his effective trips to Washington, helped to secure a salary increase for certain clerks, and after much frustration finally organized a "Brotherhood of R.P.C.'s Grand Lodge" (independent) to assist the division R.M.A. in raising money for the cause. Charles J. Wentz, still active in retirement, was his secretary, and credits him with most of the responsibility for passage of the Anti-Gag Act. (The St. Paul Branch N.P.T.A. still owns its spread-eagle official seal.)

Then Van Dyke ran for Congress—on the Democratic ticket in a Republican district—and won, in 1914, through support of postal men and thousands of friends. The first congressman to specialize in openly championing the railway mail clerks' cause, he secured them many legislative benefits.

He prominently publicized some three hundreds clerks' resignations he had on file, to be handed in if things didn't improve. He pleaded for true unionism in the R.M.A.; but meanwhile President Schardt had been appointed a chief clerk in January 1914, to be succeeded by a typical rigid conservative from Topeka, Kansas—George H. Fair.

On May 1, 1914, the American Federation of Labor chartered the B.R.P.C. as a full-fledged affiliated union, with Clarence A. Locke as president. They still had plenty of injustices to fight against, as their *Harpoon* files reveal—intimidation against Brotherhood membership direct from avowed anti-unionist General Superintendent Stephens; a nerve-racking, demerit-backed "speed test" introduced on all trains to hound any efficient clerk who was nervous under observation or just a bit slower than average (some were fired); withheld promotions for those in official disfavor; rail passes for politicians and rigidly restricted commissions for clerks; continued fatal wrecks; diversion of letters and newspapers to the new terminal R.P.O.s (set up to take over parcels and circulars), delayed in sacks "held until full"; new mountains of "stuck" mail, due to insufficient force and poor handling; and recruiting of "bums off the streets" for substitutes, as portrayed in a vivid, "libelous" *Harpoon* cartoon showing Hitchcock beckoning to them from the window of a house of ill fame labeled "Postal Service."

And in December, Postmaster General Burleson (who had succeeded Hitchcock) actually expanded his predecessor's stern policies in a vindictive proposal to Congress to abolish the Postal Service's eight-hour day, the one day's rest in seven, the eleven thousand promotions due to be made in 1915; to cut substitute's salaries to thirty cents an hour, and put all terminals in the lowest pay classification. He pointed with pride to this \$22,000,000 economy saving to be taken from the government's most underpaid employees. Yet the *Railway Post Office*, although publishing articles by progressives decrying the bill and even praising Urban Walter's good work (June 1913), went the conservative limit editorially—stating it could not criticize a single point of this program!

But the outraged protests of the B.R.P.C. and R.M.A. progressives brought immediate defeat to the measure, as publicly admitted by Congress.

While the B.R.P.C. expanded its lodges, Senator William E. Borah was now persuaded to draft a bill to eliminate the speed test, and hundreds of clerks signed a petition in support thereof. Stephens promptly announced that he would "remove for lying" every clerk signing it, adding, "I have the power, authority, and inclination to" do so. Borah then openly attacked Stephens in Congress, revealing the scores of letters he had received from clerks intimidated into writing him to "remove my name from the petition;" and accused him of violating the Act of 1912. Every Civil Service publication except the *Railway Post Office* ("That worse than vile journal"—Walter) joined in denouncing the Stephens threat, as did the new Congressman Van Dyke.

The crisis came in 1915. Yielding to the agitation, the Department abruptly demoted Stephens to a division superintendent and replaced him by J. P. Johnson. And, tired of appeasement tactics, R.M.A. members were crying, "Beat the Old Gang!" to unseat Fair and Bindeman in their elections—which they did, selecting Ryan (the fighting progressive from Roslindale, Massachusetts) as president and Collins to a new position of industrial secretary, to fight for good legislation and better conditions. Collins, a Chic. & Minn. (CMStP&P) clerk from Verona, Wisconsin, was installed at the San Francisco Convention in June together with Ryan, and in August the association succeeded in unseating Bindeman and electing another progressive, Henry G. Strickland, of Kansas City, as *Railway Post Office* editor.

Backed by most R.M.A. members and the Brotherhood, as well as by the *Harpoon's* nine thousand to twenty-four thousand subscribers (reports vary), the anti-speed-test law was passed. Representative T. L. Reilly, Senator Simmons, and others joined Borah and Van Dyke in sponsoring good postal legislation; Reilly even got a B.R.P.C. worker appointed as a chief clerk at Richmond, Virginia. But the department had not given up the fight, as evidenced by Sec-

ond Assistant Stewart's heated objections to that appointment. It chose R.M.A. President Edward J. Ryan as its immediate target, since he had just issued a plainly worded (but respectful) protest against some increases in working hours at lower pay and against unusual hardships and mail delays already mentioned.

As a direct result, President Ryan and two other leaders were discharged from the R.M.S.—for “circulating false and misleading information and fomenting discontent” among the clerks (cleverly circumventing the Anti-Gag Act in the wording). Ryan presented a masterful defense, proving that he had circulated only true facts and that the only “fomented discontent” in the R.M.S. was because of conditions he was trying to correct. Stewart, however, not only upheld the dismissal but canceled from thence forth all R.M.A. extended leaves and travel privileges and ordered all remaining association officers back to their jobs as clerks.

Strickland and Ross immediately resigned from the Service, and all three national officers were promptly voted full-time salaries by the Association—an unprecedented step. By 1916, R.M.A. officers were actively co-operating with Legislative Representative Yeates of the B.R.P.C. in backing Van Dyke's bills in Congress for fifteen-day paid vacations, limited hours, and better conditions in general—although three old-guard division presidents, and apparently General Superintendent Johnson, actually opposed the bills. The bills were passed, including one which restored reduced layoffs and the terminal straight eight-hour day which had been eliminated by Stephens; others provided full time for deadheading under orders and gave holiday and promotion benefits. But the Department still refused to compromise on the labor affiliation; inspectors opened clerks' letters or hid in doorways to spot labor-minded R.M.A. officers attending meetings. A clerk could still get fired by stating facts the “office” didn't like.

The B.R.P.C. was still determined to eradicate these conditions and others; but its principal battles having been won, and not having much over two thousand members, the idea

of merging with a stronger union came up when Walter decided to resign as secretary-treasurer and editor. When the R.M.A. refused to consider the Brotherhood's offer to merge with them (June 1915), provided that an A. F. of L. affiliation referendum be held, Carl Freeman (Walter's successor) proposed the affiliated National Federation of Post Office Clerks as a substitute.

The B.R.P.C. voted to approve; and first of all, the famed *Harpoon* ended its eight-year career in February 1917, when it was absorbed as the "Harpoon Section" of the Federation's *Union Postal Clerk*. The Brotherhood itself came to the end of the road on April 25, 1917, when it amalgamated—at least in theory—with the N.F.P.O.C. But immediate new developments altered the situation.

The now largely pro-labor R.M.A., in convention at Cleveland, directed its Executive Committee to take a referendum vote of its *existing* members—exclusive of any B.R.P.C. influx—on the controversial affiliation question; it also authorized the establishment of permanent association headquarters in Washington. Two future national presidents (Collins and J. F. Bennett, a clerk from Alleghany, New York, on the Erie's N.Y. & Salamanca) and a future division superintendent were on the Affiliation Committee, which was eager to reverse traditional policies entirely and take over the Brotherhood's coveted A.F. of L. charter.

They won—6,000 votes for affiliation, 2,072 against; and the R.M.A.'s A.F. of L. charter was issued December 22, 1917. On either January 1 or February 5, 1918, the association's new offices were opened in Washington's Bond Building—to be moved to the A.F. of L. Building in 1920. Aside from its Portsmouth, New Hampshire Beneficiary Headquarters, occupied since 1902, this was the R.M.A.'s first real home—the headquarters having been divided between various president's homes, editorial offices in Kansas City, and temporary rooms in Washington's Continental Hotel.

A large number of B.R.P.C. members now enrolled in the R. M. A. directly, while the others—temporarily under the N.F. P.O.C.'s wing—were retransferred to the association by

agreement with the latter federation. (Hence the common report that the Brotherhood and the R.M.A. "amalgamated" in 1917.) The real fight was over at last, and the one thousand clerks in three areas who had written out resignations could now tear them up. The danger of gross injustice and summary dismissal was over, for the power of millions in the ranks of organized labor was behind the R.M.A.

Legislative benefits secured by the R.M.A. in 1917 included travel allowances of \$1.20 daily and a prohibition of salary reductions in reorganizations. The Association had redeemed itself as an undominated fraternal labor union ready to fight for its members; and Walter, his work in this field done, turned to other fields—editing a militant journal (*Playfair*) for World War I servicemen until his death about 1919. He was a fearless genius, "sympathetic, square, and upright."

The united Association forged ahead, helping to secure a \$200 salary increase, \$2 travel allowances, and other benefits. But there was one more serious hurdle to mount: When R. M. A. officers asked for a departmental conference on non-legislative problems, Burleson and his cohorts refused to see or even recognize them. "They are not railway postal clerks," they claimed. Thereupon most of the division R.M.A. presidents (active clerks constituting the Executive Committee, now Board of Directors) decided to meet with the Department without their national officers; but two, the much-maligned Benton of the 8th Division, and Botkin of the 6th, stayed away and held out for 100 per cent recognition. Their firm stand was instrumental (after two fruitless conferences by the others) in securing the R.M.A.'s complete acceptance as the clerks' official representatives in 1920. Another help was the fact that Burleson had just been replaced by Postmaster General Will Hayes, an understanding man determined to "humanize the postal service" (he had an inch cut off the huge No. 1 pouches—called *humanizers* to this day!).

Early in 1921 the first collective-bargaining agreement ever made between the government and a federal union, the R.M.A., was signed by both sides. Samuel Gompers held it up as a model to other A.F. of L. groups. Meanwhile the

affiliated groups had secured passage of the first retirement law in 1920 (annuities began at \$180 to \$720 annually); overtime at straight time was secured, sick leave with pay restored, and a standard seniority system drawn up by the R.M.A. and adopted by the Department. All later amendments thereto were made by the R.M.A.

Aside from certain retrogressions in 1932-33 (pay cuts, especially) and in the late 1940s, steady progress has been made by the Association ever since. Many new friends in Congress arose: Senators James M. Mead, Thomas A. Burch, G. H. Moses, and William Langer; Representatives Clyde Kelly, John H. Tolan, and many others. The N.P.T.A. has secured hundreds of benefits since 1920 which we cannot possibly list here, but outstanding among them are (1) progressive salary increases culminating in a \$300 annual war time bonus in 1943 (made permanent at \$400 in 1945), another \$400 increase in 1945, one of \$450 in 1948, and one of \$120 on November 1, 1949; (2) steady increases in travel allowances, formerly \$3 per day, on up to \$6 by 1948; (3) longevity payment for current service beginning in 1945, amended to include past service in 1949; (4) increased compensation for night work and for travel on high-speed trains; (5) a five and one-half, then a five-day week, in 1935; and (6) liberalized annual and sick leave and promotions. By administrative bargaining, the Service Rating System was humanized and its provisions published; fairly strict sanitary standards were put in force; trains were made safer, with few or no fatalities in most recent years; other abuses were rectified.

In 1947 the straight eight-hour day (with lunch, wash-up, and clothes-changing while on duty) was restored to the terminals, P.T.S., thirty years after its abolition by Stephens; but within a year the whole setup was abruptly withdrawn. Similarly, after enjoying standard pay-grade status for years after Stephens's day, the terminals were cut to the lower salary grade in 1933 and still remain there; and the high-speed train differential was abolished in 1950. Remembering also that all the above salary increases fall far below the

current rise in cost of living, it can be seen that much remains to be done, as outlined later in Chapter 16.

Meanwhile Collins had succeeded Ryan in the R.M.A. presidency in 1921, with Strickland becoming industrial secretary as well as editor. Collins's outstanding work was cut short by his death in 1936, and impressive memorials were later erected to both him and Van Dyke. Bennett succeeded him, supervising the completion of a new Home Office in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the next year. At that office, Secretary J. J. Kennedy of Boston succeeded Ross in 1936, retiring in 1949 to give way to Jerauld McDermott of Indianapolis. The presidential chair has seen hectic days since 1941, when Bennett was succeeded by Chester M. Harvey of St. Paul. Harvey was considered too conservative by opponents who defeated him in 1947; Robert Rice of the Chic. & Minn. (CMStP&P), an aggressive union worker and branch president, won the office. Then Rice, embroiled in differences with National Vice-President Ole Twait, was unseated—along with Twait—and replaced by President William M. Thomas, a Houston & Corpus Christi (T&NO) clerk from Royce City, Texas, and former division president, in 1949; he now heads the association and has won its undivided loyalty.

In December 1949 the R.M.A. was officially renamed the National Postal Transport Association, as directed by its Omaha Convention, to conform to the new name of the Service; and in January 1950 the *Railway Post Office* became the *Postal Transport Journal*. It is edited by Industrial Secretary John L. Reilly (ex-N.Y. & Chic.—NYCent), who succeeded Bennett (the only man ever to have held three national offices) as editor in 1945; Bennett had taken over upon Strickland's untimely death in 1943. In the official world George E. Miller (previously mentioned) succeeded Deputy Assistant P.M.G. John D. Hardy, a popular holder of the position, in 1948; while Hardy, known as "General Superintendent" when appointed, had followed Steve Cisler in 1938. This top position is now designated by the title "Assistant Executive Director of Transportation."

In general the N.P.T.A. has held steadfastly to its status

as a strong, independent fraternal union as attained in 1917. Strictly "open-shop," however, it has never coerced any clerk to join it, and its dues are unbelievably low—\$1.75 to \$2 monthly, *including* insurance premiums and local dues (initiations are only \$5)! Every postal transportation clerk, despite universal benefits obtained by the N.P.T.A., is free to exercise his traditional "right to work" and to join it or decline to join. And this policy has paid off—the N.P.T.A., including nearly every eligible clerk in its membership of twenty-eight thousands, has probably the finest record of organizational loyalty within the industry of any voluntary labor union in the world.

Even its most labor-minded leaders believe in friendliness and respect toward P.T.S. officials whenever possible, and such is nearly always the case. But, when felt necessary, there is plenty of frank criticism expressed. Throughout the years since 1917 the N.P.T.A.'s official journal has printed statements that it would have abhorred as traitorous before that date, as witness a fairly recent item:

... The extent to which the present General Superintendent has gone ... is a matter of common knowledge. Legally he may have had the authority to do things which at the same time are morally wrong and repugnant to a sense of fairness and equity.

This excerpt (which does *not* refer to any present P.T.S. official) was written by an ordinary mail clerk without any hesitation, although in an earlier day he would have soon lost his job thereby. And yet the N.P.T.A. is so proud of high P.T.S. work standards that it firmly opposes any "easing" of clerks' distribution and "exam" requirements.

The N.P.T.A.'s national president (salary now \$9,500—originally \$3,000), vice president, and industrial secretary-editor hold forth in a comfortably furnished suite of four huge, high-ceilinged rooms comprising the third floor of the noted Ashburton Mansion (1525 H Street) in Washington. Nicely refurnished as an office annex of the A.F. of L., this handsome and historic building has provided a separate room

for each officer since they moved from the A.F. of L. Building in 1948. The fourth room, with an annex, is for the secretarial staff. Fireplaces, ranging from polished red marble to rich wood finish, grace each office; the editorial sanctum also houses the N.P.T.A. library of books on P.T.S., postal, labor, and government matters as well as bound volumes of the *Postal Transport Journal*. Attractive divans and other furnishings greet the ever-welcome visitor.

The Beneficiary Department, still managed from the Portsmouth, New Hampshire, office, handles all membership work and issuance of accident certificates; it pays \$24.50 to \$31.50 weekly for accidental disability (and \$4,000 for accidental death) from any external cause on or off duty. An attractive building is occupied exclusively by this office. Its work has been highly commended by state insurance commissioners and other experts. One of its big headaches is in convincing claimants that reporting all details of a ride and a picnic which was followed by an accident, or writing simply, "Was mowing lawn when accident happened," does *not* constitute a report of the accident itself.

Besides a beneficiary certificate (unless a mere "social member)" and membership card, members receive a round gold pin bearing the Association's name, the A.F. of L. hand-clasp, and the new lock-shaped N.P.T.A. shield (showing train, plane, H.P.O. and terminal). The older pin, in old-time mail-lock shape and reading "R.M.A.—A.F.L.," is still by far the most commonly used, however. It corresponds to the *stinger* of the railroad brotherhoods; although the Association is, of course, pledged not to strike. The membership, in 15 division associations, corresponding to the P.T.S. divisions, is subdivided into local branches found in every large city or railroad center. Division and national conventions are held every two years.

N.P.T.A. elections and conventions are strictly big-time affairs, with plenty of pungency, publicity, and politics. Leading candidates for the \$8,000-and-up national offices buy space lavishly for full-page ads in the *Postal Transport Journal*, and words wax hot amid proclamations of ideal ability, charges of

utter unfitness, and countercharges of departure from the truth. "WARNING!"—"A Rank Fraud Exposed!"—"Fault-finders!" are typical headlines over candidates' statements or comments thereon. In the best political tradition, the aspirant's most flattering photo usually accompanies his "committee's" broadside. The pre-convention ballot is held by mail. Finally about one hundred elected delegates join with hundreds of visitors at the official hotel in the convention city, and a colorful week-long assembly begins. There are sight-seeing trips, banquets, and special celebrations scheduled, but the busy delegates have to leave such pleasures mostly to the ladies and visitors; they are too tied up in committee meetings and sessions of the Board of Directors. National magazines and business associations are represented; the Asst. Executive Director of Transportation (ex-Gen. Supt. R.M.S.), the Postmaster General or other high postal officials, senators, the city's mayor and postmaster, and other prominent leaders invariably address the delegates by invitation at the start. Then comes the installation of officers; an inspiring memorial service; reports of the various committees, with hundreds of resolutions to be passed; necessary new business; and probab^{ly} an adjournment in the witching hours before dawn. An N.P.T.A. convention is no pleasure junket.

Since P.T.S. officials have always been promoted from the ranks, a policy has arisen of expecting them to retain N.P.T.A. membership but not to continue as officers thereof (for such division and national N.P.T.A. officers are most likely to be appointed officials). With few exceptions, these promoted union leaders usually remember their clerking days well and become wise and understanding P.T.S. officials. Retired Deputy Assistant Hardy is still a member of the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, branch.

While some benefits and improvements for P.T.S. personnel have, of course, originated from humane officials honestly seeking the welfare of the clerks, the record seems clear that *most* beneficial legislation and departmental rulings have originated otherwise—as a result of the efforts of the N.P.T.A. and its affiliated postal unions. Any skeptic who doubts the

power of the National Postal Transport Association in bettering conditions among the clerks is referred to some simple examples:

An oft-repeated N.P.T.A. resolution:

"We favor the Department ordering District Superintendents to call in a committee of clerks whenever a reorganization [of a line] is contemplated . . ."

The Department's reply:

. . . Proposed change would be impracticable.

A second resolution:

"We request tabulations on pay checks as to salary, night differential, travel allowance, and deductions." (Also, "leave-request slips showing amount of annual leave remaining.")

Reply:

Unnecessary and impracticable. Such information may be obtained by any employe on request.

A third resolution:

"We favor facilities for distribution on aircraft where length of route and volume of mail justifies, such distribution to be done by railway postal clerks."

Reply (in effect):

This is impracticable and not necessary.

THE FINAL RESULT:

After continual urging by the Association, *every suggested proposal* was *adopted* by the Department within a few years at most. (The Flying Post Offices, still in experimental stages, were definitely dubbed "successful.")

The Seniority Rules, administered by the Department for the N.P.T.A. as stated, consist of many highly complex regulations; but the newest rules (put in effect July 2, 1950) are based on the principle that seniority is determined by date of appointment to the organization or line to which assigned.

Nation-wide seniority as existing on railroad systems is unknown, and a clerk transferring to another line must start at the bottom of the list again in most respects. A senior clerk "surplused" from a discontinued line is often transferred to a new one where he is junior to clerks much younger in the Service than he. Although the membership once voted for a certain type of straight service seniority, the Department objected to it as impracticable.

The heart of the N.P.T.A. is in its local branches. The largest three, with about one thousand clerks each, are the New York (2nd Division) Branch, the Illinois (6th Division) Branch at Chicago, and the Kansas City Branch; New York is tops just now with 1,243. Others have from a dozen or two members up to hundreds. Activities and characteristics of the various branches provide some remarkable contrasts. Practically all of them go in for big feeds and social good times of all sorts; but the latter range from the very enjoyable parties and picnics of the Washington, D. C., Branch where nothing stronger than lemonade has been served to the riotous stag smokers of a branch not too far away, featuring powerful liquid refreshment and very questionable entertainment! Many branches and most divisions issue newssheets.

The huge New York Branch, though a storm center of controversy, has had a tremendous impact upon N.P.T.A. affairs in the last five years—largely through its aggressive journal, the *Open Pouch*, which has been a printed, nationally circulated newspaper since 1945. At that time the branch launched a powerful campaign for the correction of Service abuses—simultaneously accusing incumbent national R.M.A. leaders of incompetence, subservience to the Department, discrimination against Negro clerks (then constitutionally barred from the entire association), alleged censorship, and failure to editorialize against wrecks and bad conditions on the part of the *Railway Post Office*, and deserting the principles of union labor.

In rebuttal, the national officers stated that the branch was a leftist group dominated by Communists; that the R.M.A. was holding to its true ideals, free of departmental domina-

tion; that the association was not a union, but a fraternity in which dangerous social problems would result if discrimination were ended; that the *Railway Post Office* considered its frank reports and photographs of wrecks, with its sympathies to the bereaved, as quite sufficient editorializing—and that no censorship existed. The branch and its sympathizers (mostly in the 2nd or N. Y.—N. J. Division) were ostracized, and they were unable to elect a single division officer or National Convention delegate that year (1945). In two short years, however, they were able to elect fighting *Open Pouch* editor George Cutler as division president, plus nearly half the area's national delegates—and they repeated this in 1949. They were active in the 1947 unseating of National President Harvey, although they later also repudiated his "pro-labor" successor they supported. When New York State and others passed Fair Employment laws forbidding union discrimination the branch backed them and applied for legal authority to admit negroes. The National R.M.A., at high cost, fought the proposal in the courts but eventually lost when the Supreme Court declared the association to be a true labor union; it had to amend its constitution, and now admits clerks regardless of race to branches in states and cities having anti-discrimination laws. The general constitutional bar still remains, but at each successive recent National Convention a larger percentage of delegates voted for a change (now 50 per cent).

It is still early to attempt an evaluation of merits in such a recent controversy, in which tempers have flared and some unwise utterances and misstatements of facts have been made on both sides. Probably the New York Branch's policies and tactics were too extreme, and it may contain some individual radicals or leftists; but it must be admitted that (1) it has had a largely stimulating and wholesome influence in reawakening the N.P.T.A. to its status as a non-dominated union and to its obligations to improve some crying abuses that are still rampant; that (2) careful inside observation has revealed no evidence of Communist leanings on the part of the branch's top officers, despite the suspension

of one active member on allegedly trumped-up "subversive activity" charges (shades of Carl Van Dyke!) in 1949—its own *Open Pouch* has declared against Communism; and (3) that despite some unfortunate methods it has courageously fought for true democracy in action (not social intimacy) in N.P.T.A. race relations—conforming to the fair policies of the P.T.S. itself, in which white and colored clerks work together in equality and harmony. Even some Tennessee and Alabama N.P.T.A. officers have backed N. Y. Branch policy. (Most colored clerks belong to the National Alliance of Postal Employees.)

The N.P.T.A. can well be proud of its *Postal Transport Journal*, one of the finest magazines in the field, despite this group's objection to it. During his long editorship, Henry Strickland had built up the *Railway Post Office* into a comprehensive and interesting journal, edited with his proverbial friendly tolerance. Editor Bennett first introduced colorful covers and modern layouts, and the present editor, popular John L. Reilly, has continued improving it with special new features, photographic department headings, a "Contents," and other innovations. With very few exceptions, it prints all material submitted, unless the Board of Directors rejects an article as defamatory or scurrilous. Presidential and Secretarial Reports, in each monthly issue, are followed by the voluminous Branch Notes, reporting meetings and personal doings everywhere; a story in themselves, they vary from the dry or commonplace to talented and witty reports of wide interest. Some have even been in concealed-rhyme poetry (by S. J. Brian, Jr.), while Leon Cushman published a clever satire of one from the "Fallen Arch, Idaho" Branch. General articles, followed by editorials, are inserted between the two reports.

There is an active national Women's Auxiliary to the N.P.T.A., founded at Indianapolis, June 7, 1899, at Organizer Bill Fry's suggestion. Auxiliary women have plenty in common, for their husband's occupation is a trying one from their standpoint—daytime sleeping, coming and going at all hours, horribly soiled work clothes to wash, a husband either

gone for days or underfoot for a week, schemes and cards to look for and perhaps correct or assist with. Auxiliary branches feature meetings with book reviews, lectures, clerk welfare discussions, sewing. As with N.P.T.A. branches, their tastes vary from cultural meetings opened with prayer or Scripture, to the wild beer-and-cigarette parties of other units! The National Auxiliary furnishes scholarship loans to talented children of clerks and holds its convention along with the N.P.T.A.'s.

There are other interesting railway mail clerks' organizations. Besides the M.B.A., as mentioned, there are other insurance groups, such as the national Postal Transport Hospital Association of Kansas City, and many "Immediate Relief" groups, such as the National Immediate Relief Association at Washington. In New England the "Spring Line Association" and "Shore Line Association" of clerks running on the New Haven (the Bos., Spg. & N.Y. and Bos. & N.Y., respectively) are famous for their clambakes and social affairs. A unique St. Louis & Texarkana Last Man's Club has been active since veterans of that former MoPac Line started it in 1940. There is a South Carolina Railway Mail Club, with its own clubhouse at Folly Beach; a Railway Postal Club at Lexington, Kentucky; an N.P.T.A. Social Club at Denison, Texas; two Railway Mail clubs (with dormitories) at New York and Boston; various P.T.S. Bowling Leagues, and other sports groups. The Postal Transport Hospital Assn. is now affiliated with the N.P.T.A. One and all, they help perpetuate the spirit of fraternity and mutual benefit that postal clerks have always cherished.

AMAZING FACTS OF THE RAILWAY MAIL

Have you heard about the White Mail that wended thru the hills,
 And days when all the slow train boys stepped off for daffodils;
 Of a Narrow Gauge's engineer who stopped his train so still
 While the fireman kissed his sweetheart who lived upon the hill?
 Of Evans on the Kill, & Trin. who hunted hill and vale
 While the train crew coaled the engine from that funny crank-
 up pail?

—TUDOR FRANCIS BROWN



—Courtesy *Postal Markings*

Shortly after 4 p.m. each weekday, a group of multiple-unit electric cars—Train 2068—pulls out of Penn Station, New York City, east-bound into the Long Island Rail Road tunnel; one passenger car has a tiny R.P.O. compartment, containing a lone postal clerk busily at work. Yet its destination is not some distant town, but merely the Far Rockaway section of *New York City*, out in Queens—and every morning, Train 2010 does the same thing. This R.P.O. serves several independent post offices both outside and within the city (of which Far Rockaway is one); yet, when operated on its normal loop route, it never once leaves the city on its return trip (or morning outgoing trip)—the only loop R.P.O., and the only wholly intra-city outbound or inbound R.P.O. run anywhere in America! At this writing, the latter service has been suspended since May 8, 1950, due to a Jamaica Bay trestle fire; but its unique terminal points are still within the same city. No other R.P.O. boasts that distinction; although one California H.P.O. does (Los

Angeles & San Pedro, the later being part of Los Angeles.) Before the fire the afternoon run, Train 1072-1073, always operated clockwise about the loop, while a morning train ran around the other way. (The present morning run is now extended to Rockaway Point.) And the postal clerk, with only two 2-hour round trips and a little advance work, must work out his allotted time between trains in the Penn Terminal, P.T.S., upstairs, in order to obtain a suitable layoff.

Such is the amazing New York & Far Rockaway R.P.O. (LIRR), long-famed as one of the most utterly incredible operations of the P.T.S. The existence of R.P.O. service on this 23-mile electric line is largely explained by the unusual nature of the postal facilities of New York City—which, uniquely enough is served by *seven* independent post offices instead of one: New York, Brooklyn, Staten Island, Jamaica, Flushing, Long Island City, and Far Rockaway. The last four, with large branch offices for each community center in Queens, provide that Borough with all its mail service; and it is quite possible for mails from one Queens office to be sorted on an R.P.O. and dispatched to another, both being within New York City. The N.Y. & Far Rockaway, an important link in this service, connects New York P.O. (Manhattan Borough) with Far Rockaway P.O. (Queens Borough). Dozens of additional commuter trains, many with C.P. mails, ply over this third-rail line daily.

Hefty loads of mail are received at Penn Station, and an assistant helps the lone regular clerk until leaving time. An old hand at the game, he makes up only a dozen or so separations on a "blind" letter case. But he has a busy run, with plenty of "hot local" to manage as he emerges from the tunnel, skirting the busy industries of Long Island City, past the nondescript frame houses and business center of Woodside, and hard by vacant lots, row-houses, and apartments into fashionable Forest Hills. After serving busy Jamaica, he crosses City Line into Laurelton and Valley Stream; swinging south through open suburban country past various "manor" stations, he serves Lawrence and Hewlett in Nassau County before recrossing the city limits into Inwood

(Queens) and Far Rockaway. As we write, it is necessary to make the return journey exactly the same way. But normally the train (having changed its number at Valley Stream) stops only momentarily and continues straight ahead, soon turning north over the trestle to Ozone Park, Woodhaven, Woodside, all within New York City, and back to Manhattan; the clerk hangs return-trip pouches long before reaching Far Rockaway, working *both* outbound and inbound mail. The unique line's future is, as yet, unsettled; but part of it may be absorbed by the city subway system.

Equally incredible are the "records" held by some other lines. Our *oldest* R.P.O. has operated continuously for 86 years—the C&NW's historic Chic. & Omaha, as we know from Chapter 7. Our *newest* railway post office seems to be the Alpena & Durand (D&M—GTW) in Michigan, established February 5, 1950; its 53-mile Bay City-Durand segment had not had R.P.O. service for years (the rest, old Cheboygan & Bay City R.P.O., was closed pouch Cheb-Alpena).

The *longest* R.P.O. in the United States is the Williston & Seattle (GN), 1168.9 miles from North Dakota to Washington State! However, the route is in three divisions, with clerks changed at each point; and the longest *clerks' run* for individual clerks seems to be from Elkhart, Ind., to Syracuse, N. Y., 570.8 miles, on the N.Y. & Chic. (NYCent). But the longest run of a crew is apparently the East Div., Kansas City & Albuquerque R.P.O. (Santa Fe), terminating at La Junta, Colo.—569 miles on its longest route. (The longest R.P.O. on record, however, as well as the longest run, used to be the old Deming & San Francisco R.P.O. (SP), New Mexico to California, 1198 miles.)

The *shortest* rail-operated R.P.O. is the Carbondale & Scranton, on the D. & H., in the Pennsylvania coal region—a 16-mile branch line. The lone clerk makes one daily round trip, with considerable advance work at Scranton; he makes up 20 pouches dispatched to distant points on star routes even *before* leaving; and then has just 40 minutes for his actual run via Dickson City and Olyphant. (Note 22). Until 1949, however, the far shorter 10½-mile Thurmond & Mt.

Hope (C&O—formerly the Thur. & Price Hill, 11½ miles) had always held the record; it, too, was in a mining region, winding through a picturesque West Virginia canyon. Running engine-backwards, southbound, this busy peewee line was cut out on September 17, 1949. However, the shortest line *designated* as an R.P.O., a tiny lake-boat run mentioned later, is only 9.5 miles long.

The *fastest* R.P.O. between its termini is North Platte & Denver (UP) Train 112, averaging nearly 70 mph; but from Kankakee to Rantoul Chic. & Memphis 1 (IC), the *City of New Orleans*, claims the title. Fastest *local* train is N.Y. & Wash. (PRR-electric) Train 255. What was once claimed as the fastest run on record was made by Pitts. & Chic. Train 29, the PRR's *Broadway Limited*, at Ada, Ohio, June 12, 1905 (allegedly, three miles in eighty-five seconds); and the fastest sustained long run may have been that of Engineer Bob Butterfield from Albany to New York on the N. Y. Central's *Century*, N.Y. & Chic. R.P.O., on October 13, 1904, with future R.M.A. President Canfield as C.-in-C., which made up all but seven minutes after leaving Albany one hour and ten minutes late—allegedly reaching a 105-mph speed. (Both speed figures are seriously questioned today.) The Omaha & Denver (CB&Q) is said to make up to 100 mph at times.

One amazing R.P.O. runs over *six* different railroads and also makes a unique "catch" at Greggton, Texas, by slowing down while incoming mail is thrown into a storage-car door—the Little Rock & Fort Worth (MoPac-Tex&P-CRI&P-FtW&DC-GC&SF-BurlRI). Another has a train number almost longer than its line—the tiny thirty-three-mile Dott & Pocahontas (N&W—W.Va.-Va.), on which Train No. 28-51-129-130-51-131-72-51-72-51-68-51 darts into numerous side-tracks, changing its number each time.

The *largest* R.P.O. train in the country is now N.Y. & Chicago (NYCent) West Division Train 14, carrying three full R.P.O. cars and over twenty-five clerks from Chicago to Cleveland. The N.Y. & Chic. is also the largest route in personnel, with over one thousand clerks on all trains (all divisions); and furthermore operates the largest R.P.O. cars

anywhere (80 ft.; 20-ft. storage). Until 1949, Train 180 of the New Haven's Bos. & New York, a solid mail train, held the record—it had more clerks, the same number of cars, and furthermore covered the whole run. (It now has two full, and one thirty-foot, R.P.O. cars; plus many storage cars, as does N.Y. & Chic. 14.)

Nearly incredible is the fact that there is still a rural, single-track branch-line R.P.O. operating right into New York City. Dubbed "The Put," it is the little one-man, 51.8-mile Brewster & New York; running over the N.Y. Central's out-of-the-way Putnam Division through suburbs and typical country scenes, it provides little mail service for either Brewster or New York! Mails for Brewster are routed almost entirely via the busy suburban Chat. & N.Y. run (NYCent), while the "Put" terminates in the big town at Highbridge (Bronx), many miles from Grand Central and the G.P.O. But the clerk, busy with his local mails for Yorktown Heights, Briarcliff Manor, and Elmsford, has plenty to do on his daily round trip (three hours one way), leaving at 7:44 A.M. over the little track hidden in Van Cortland and Yonkers parks (its other suburban trains carry no R.P.O.). Equally unique, in sharp contrast, was the former Clearmont & Buffalo (WyoRy) in Wyoming, a line with no clerk on it at all! A "joint employee" (mail and express messenger) rode it to sort mail for the Clearmont post office until World War II, tying it in rolls to be slung into troughs erected by the ranchers along a parallel R.F.D. route.

Another amazing R.P.O. is the DL&W's N.Y. & Branchville R.P.O., which is actually two totally different routes: (1) a heavy-duty main and suburban run, electrified from Hoboken (opposite New York) to Newark, Morristown, and Dover, N. J., with some trains continuing to Branchville, New Jersey; and (2) a steam line from Hoboken to Paterson, Boonton, Dover, and Washington, New Jersey, sharing only a few short miles of route (out of Dover) with the main line. Furthermore, the trunk-line trains of the N.Y., Scranton & Buffalo R.P.O. (DL&W) operate over most of *both* routes several times daily! It is no wonder that perplexed postal

clerks often send mail to the wrong route—a situation which could be avoided by redesignating the Boonton branch as the “N.Y., Paterson & Wash. R.P.O.” Incidentally, “The Branch” (as it’s called) serves at least *six* New Jersey towns bearing the same names as do offices in Virginia supplied by the Wash. & Charlotte (Sou)—Orange, Chatham, Roseland, Madison, Stephensburg, and Washington.

Numerous other interesting examples of two lines designated as one are found everywhere, such as the PRR’s unique N.Y. & Philadelphia R.P.O. This is *not* the busy main line between those two cities (the N.Y. & Wash.), but rather the “old back road” track of the historic Camden & Amboy R.R., one of the first in America. Today not a single train runs the whole length of “The Amboy;” the *northern* segment diverges from a busy suburban route at South Amboy (which in turn veers off the main line at Rahway), and continues southwest to Spottswood, Jamesburg, and Monmouth Junction—rejoining the main line into Trenton, New Jersey. Multiple-unit electric cars furnish the service—except on week-ends, when an electric locomotive takes over. The original “Amboy” track misses Trenton, however, and continues southward from Jamesburg and Bordentown as a double-tracked steam line used by the N.Y. & Phila.’s *southern* segment—a totally distinct R.P.O.—from Trenton via a Bordentown cut-off and Burlington to Camden, New Jersey (opposite Philadelphia). The single north-end train makes *no* connection with the various south-end trains, and vice versa; packages labeled simply “N.Y. & Phila.” of course can not be properly handled by either segment and must be worked out on the main line first. But the *railroad* considers the southern segment an extension of its “Bel-Del” (Phillips. & Trenton) route—and sometimes runs mail trains over both stretches with the same number (R.P.O. crews and title being changed at Trenton)!

The Spokane, Pasco & Portland (SP&S) even includes a long branch at right angles, on a *different* railway!¹ Then

¹Wishram & Bend branch (Wash.-Ore., Ore. Trunk Ry.). Newest such branch, one off the Rous. Pt. & Alb. (D&H), just commenced operation to Lake George, N. Y. on Oct. 2, 1950. The Port. & Boston (B&M) comprises two totally different routes—one out of Portland, Me., one out of Intervale, N. H.

there was an old R.P.O. once due to "catch" its own terminal station—exchange mails by crane with its end-of-run post office. This was the famed old Rumsey & Elmira (SP) or "Rum & Gum" in California; the Rumsey post office was reached half a mile before arrival at the station, the catch made from a crane in the postmaster's yard, and the pouch leisurely distributed during the layover. (The clerk was said to be the only one in the U.S. allowed to certify to his own "Arrival & Departure Book" signatures, since the book had to be kept in the car, not the P.O.) Two other odd catches (with two cranes and two catchers) are still made daily by Memphis, Grenada & New Orleans Trains 2 and 3 at each of two successive stations, due to heavy first-class mails, from its unusual forty-foot R.P.O. apartments. The *longest distance* between catches or other mail exchanges on any line is from El Paso, Texas, to Columbus, New Mexico, on the SP's El Paso & Los Angeles R.P.O., 74.7 miles.

The unique Royal Train R.P.O. (PRR-NYC-D&H) made only one trip—in 1939—as described in Chapter 13. On the continuous St. Joseph & Grand I. (UP)—Omaha & Denv. (CB&Q) route in Nebraska there is an exactly alphabetical series of stations from A to K (Alexandria—Kenesaw) which is a boon to clerks' studies there. The ninety-six-mile St. Johnsbury & Cambridge Jct. (StJ&LakeCh) in Vermont must contend with a record number of 94 grade crossings and 966 bridges and culverts (twice the per-mile number of its nearest competitor, out west). The old Nyando & Tupper Lake (NY&Ott), in New York State's Adirondacks, was often expected to run without benefit of postal cars; Clerk Roy V. McPherson was forced to borrow abandoned post-office letter cases, sort paper mail into milk cans, and nail his bags to the wall when the railway gave forth with only a caboose or baggage car for his use. (Clerk W. H. Miller, of Atchison, Kansas, reports using the same milk-can technique on a snow-bound branch line.)

Most picturesque of all, perhaps, are—or were—our mean-dering little narrow-gage R.P.O.s. There is only one left now in the United States—and even there, the railroad has applied

to abandon service; but four are flourishing in nearby Newfoundland (see Canada, Chapter 15). On the "toughest two hundred miles of rail in the world," the little *San Juan*, a three-foot-gage train of the D&RGW's Alamosa & Durango R.P.O. still chugs out of Alamosa, Colorado, daily at 7 A.M., dips briefly into New Mexico via Chama, returns to Colorado about noon, and spends the afternoon climbing Cumbres Pass to Durango. So crooked is its horseshoe-curved mountain trackage that "the A. & D." passes the same section house three times! The thirty-foot apartment has its back rack cut to one row to save space, and even then only a slim clerk can barely squeeze through the aisle. The train was badly wrecked by an avalanche in 1948.

The other famed narrow gauges of the Colorado mountains are all gone. We must skip, alas, the vivid stories of the picturesque Salida & Montrose (highest elevation of any R.P.O.) and the unique Antonito & Santa Fe or "Chili Line" into New Mexico (both D&RGW), recently discontinued. Tales of the *Tennessee Tweetsie*, the ET&WNC's Boone & Johnson City, featured in a movie short of that name (North Carolina to Tennessee), and Ohio's "Bend, Zigzag & Crooked" (the BZ&C-OR&W's Bellaire & Zanesville) must wait—even though the *Tweetsie* was the last slim-gauge R.P.O. in the East, lasting until September 30, 1940. In quick retrospect we recall the cleverly nick-named "Slow & Low" (the PC's San Luis Obispo & Los Olivos—note initials) in California, a typical old-time light "pension run" whose six-foot-six clerk developed a permanent stoop . . . the old, slim Wells & Brad. (Erie?), of which only a couple of little rails still remain embedded in a Bradford, Pennsylvania, street . . . "The Narrow Gauge" of Illinois, which was the Galesburg & Havana . . . and scores of others elsewhere in Oregon, Virginia and so on.

But most incredible of the narrow gauges were the tiny two-foot-wide R.P.O. tracks of Maine. A typical flea-gauge route was the WW&F's Albion & Wiscasset, 43.5 miles, operating the smallest-known (7x7 feet) R.P.O. apartment anywhere. The one tiny mixed train left Albion daily at 5:30 A.M., its speed cut from 60 mph to 20, doubtless dreaming

of the four hundred mile slim-gauge network its promoters planned to extend to Quebec, Province of Quebec. Its last new postmarker was celebrated by a cacheted collectors' cover March 8, 1933—a wreck the following June 8th “finished” the railway for good. On the “Sandy River” (SR&RL), two two-foot R.P.O.s operated until 1918—the Farmington & Rangely and Farm. & Kingford; the twenty-one-mile Harrison & Bridgeton on the B&SR (later B&H) also discontinued its R.P.O. then, but ran other trains until late in the 1930s. Only the forty-six-mile Sandy River runs had the typical mail-car letter slot, catcher, and so on; most cars did not even have the standard lettering on them. Some of the equipment now runs on the Edaville Railroad, South Carver, Massachusetts.

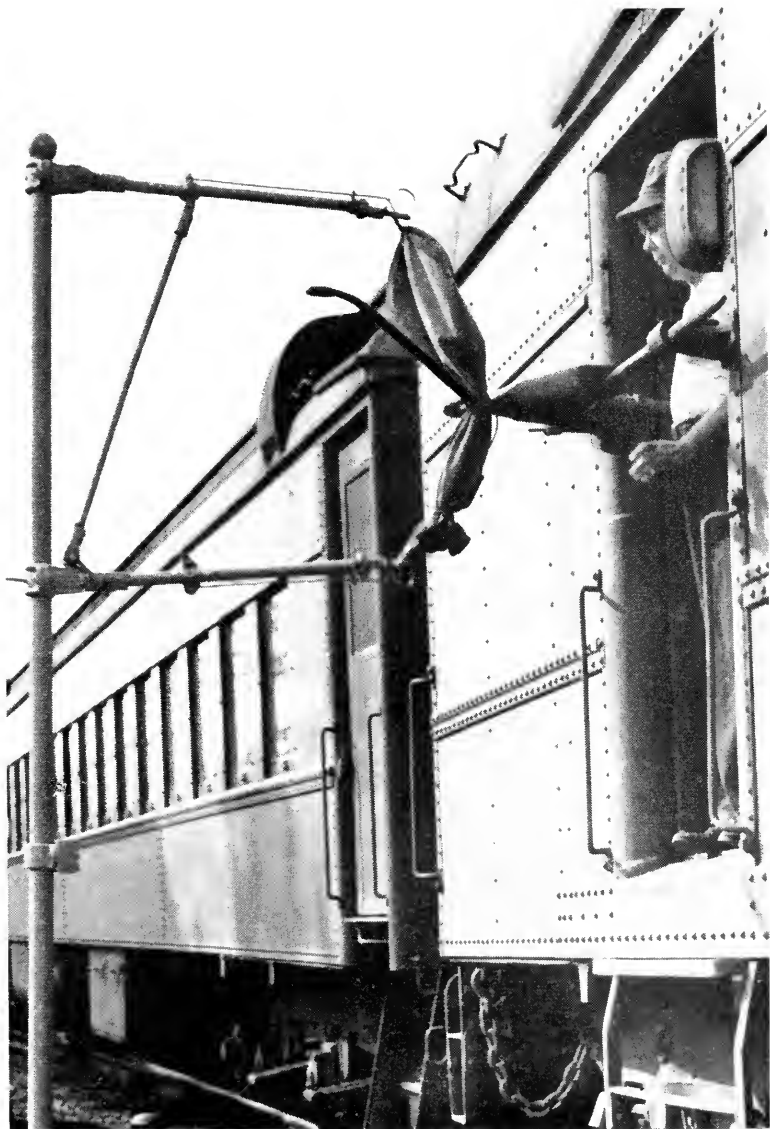
Still another type of amazing “railway post office” is following the vanishing narrow-gauges into near extinction. A paradox in name, these are the boat-line R.P.O.s which sort mail for lakeside or bayside points in transit. (The term “R.P.O.” was assigned to them when that was the only kind of transit-sorting unit known.) The whole tempo and atmosphere of life on the mail boats is startlingly different from that in an R.P.O. car; but although four daily boat R.P.O.s still operate part of each year, only *one* actual postal transportation clerk still enjoys his work in the calm, quiet, and unhurried surroundings of a secluded lake or bay! Not for him are the roars, jerkings, and dangers of fast mail trains or *hypos*, the strain of night work, the hectic life of metropolitan maelstroms, the frantic scurry to dispatch connections. Alas, even he must restrict his idyllic existence to summers; the rest of the year he must take other assignments instead of his serene “banker’s hours.” And the joint employees on the other three boat runs do other boat jobs as well.

Route agents, and later R.P.O. clerks, were placed on inland boat lines at a very early date; postmarks apparently applied on Lake Erie (Buffalo) and Erie Canal boats go back to as early as 1857. By the 1890s the famed river packets and steamers on the Ohio and Mississippi usually carried mail units—R.P.O.s such as the old Cairo & Memphis and the Vicksburg & New Orleans; dozens of lakes and harbors boast-

ed the service. Eighty-two clerks were serving on forty-nine boat routes by 1902. Nearly 250 different postmarks of boat routes are known, although many are mere renamings, curtailments, or extensions. Later the number fell sharply. Postal regulations for the service require safe boats, a suitable mail room, and first-class board for the mail clerk without charge; night boats must have a sleeping compartment for the clerk's "exclusive use." Since there are no train numbers, the boat's postmarker may show only the date or may show directions as "NORTH" or "SOUTH," or as "Tr 1" or "Tr 3" (*trip* numbers) in standard fashion.

The one boat R.P.O. served by a regular clerk is the Inlet & Old Forge (Leon E. Burnap Boat Line), eighteen-mile New York State route on the Fulton Chain of Lakes in the Adirondacks. The most startling fact about the line, however, is that it serves only *two* post offices and that its distribution consists of sorting *patrons'* mail for the Old Forge office—delivering it direct to private docks, as would an R.F.D. carrier (similar to the old Clear. & Buff. joint-employee R.P.O.). But the outgoing mails are sorted to proper P.T.S. connections, via Old Forge; and the Malone & Utica R.P.O. (NYCent), its rail outlet, also pouches on the boat via Thendara and Inlet. A June-through-August operation, the boat makes two daily loop-shaped round trips, serving 125 resort hotels and camps around the lake; the first trip leaves Old Forge, 8:30 A.M.

And this is America's only R.P.O. where a lovely swim-suited bathing beauty, instead of the usual glum mail messenger, is likely to be on hand to make the on-the-fly exchanges with the fortunate clerk—at present, any available substitute is assigned. Exchanges are made hand-to-hand while the boat is in motion, the skipper (W. Donald Burnap) merely slowing up a bit. Small cloth satchels are used for patrons' exchanges (they must return one each time), but regulation pouches must be used for authorized dispatches to the two post offices and the connecting rail R.P.O. The forty-foot, motor-powered R.P.O. boat *Miss Ussma* also accommodates up to twenty-six passengers as well as the



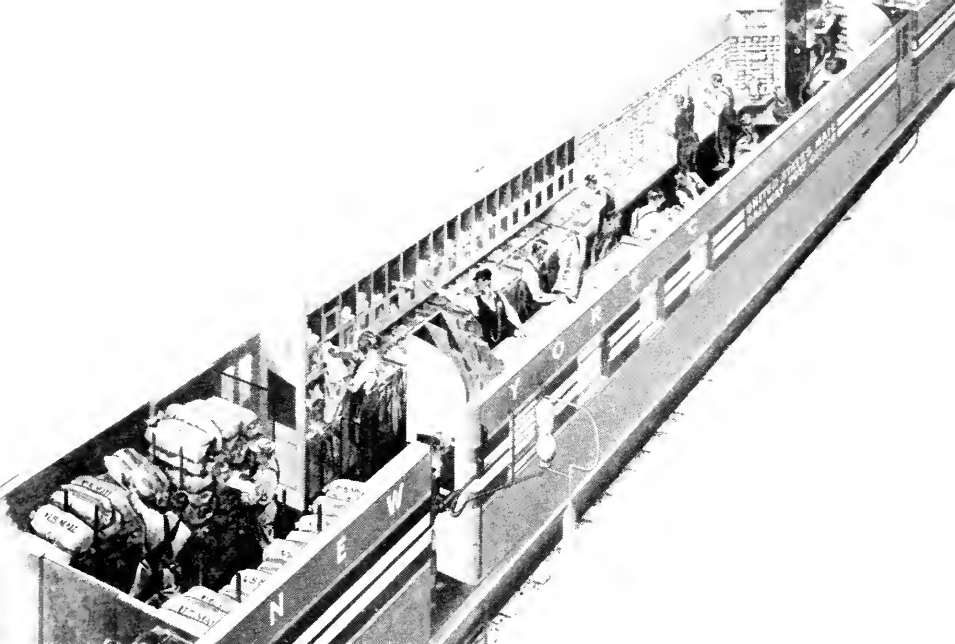
C. E. Burdick (Wilkins of Brooklyn, Photographer)

MAKING THE CATCH AT SHOHOLA, PENNSYLVANIA—Thousands of non-stop local exchanges like this one, made on the Erie's New York & Salamanca Railway Post Office in 1939, are still performed daily in the United States.



Postal Transport Journal

HOW MEN SORT MAIL AT A MILE A MINUTE—This is a typical close-up of clerks at work, snapped in the Southern Railway's Washington & Charlotte Railway Post Office on Train 34 which operates from North Carolina to the nation's capital.

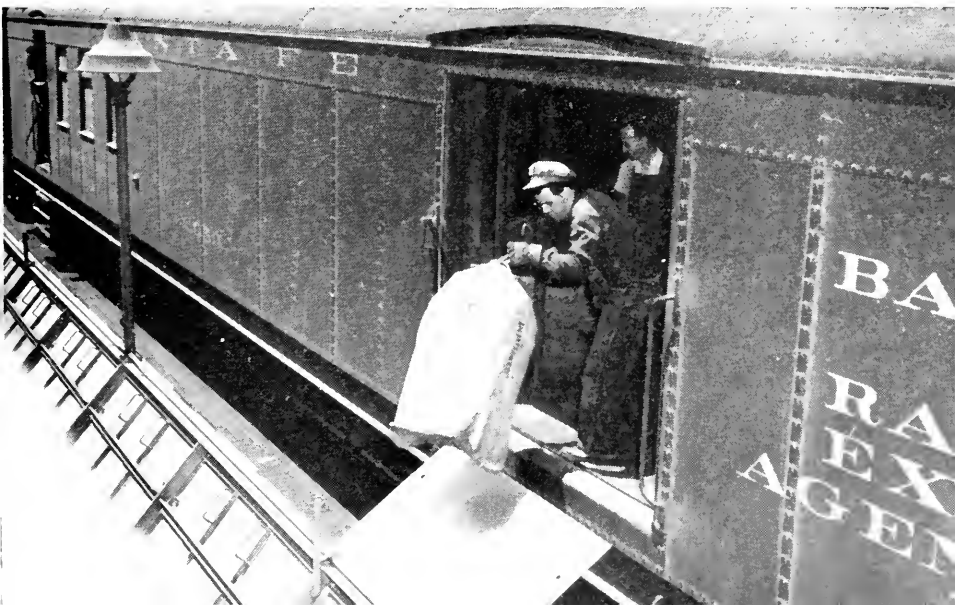


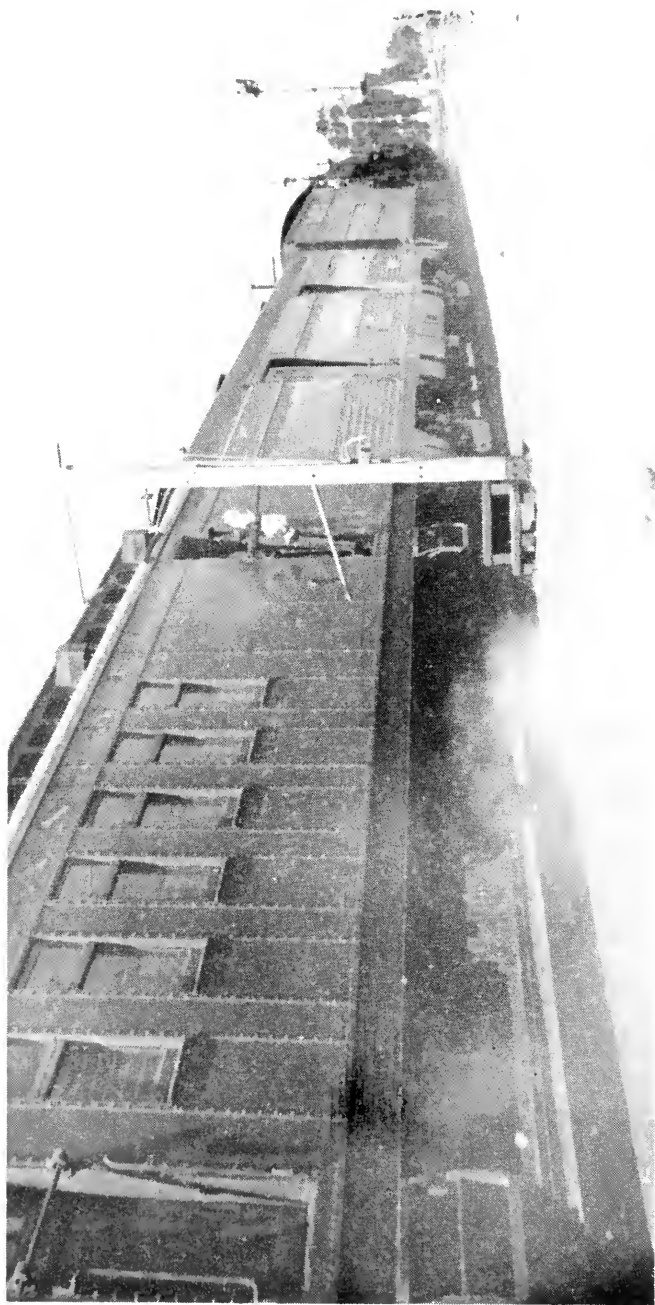
New York Central System

CROSS-SECTION OF AN R.P.O. INTERIOR—This remarkable scale drawing by New York Central engineers was used in national magazine advertisements during World War II and shows the interior of the noted "Twentieth Century Limited" (New York & Chicago Railway Post Office). The interior details of such a car will be found identified and described on Pages 4, 5, and 17ff.

UNLOADING THE ALBUQUERQUE & LOS ANGELES RAILWAY POST OFFICE—Mail is being unloaded from the storage end of this typical Santa Fe combination car (R.P.O. apartment at left) direct onto post office-bound moving belts at Los Angeles Union Station.

—Santa Fe Railway

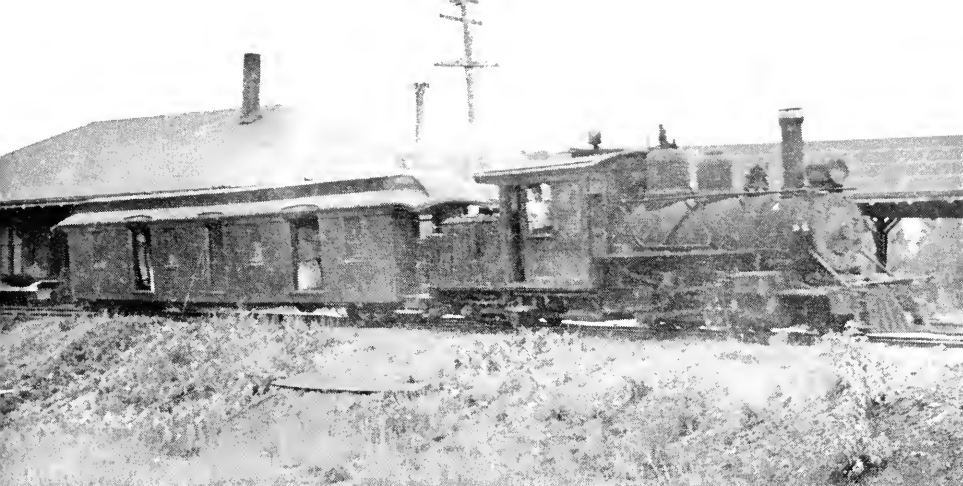




Santa Fe Railway

A CATCH OUT WEST, ON THE SANTA FE'S "CHIEF"—Here at Monrovia, California, on Albuquerque & Los Angeles Train 20, the

clerk inside car has completed catch of mail from catcher crane beside track, at the same time throwing off outgoing pouch.

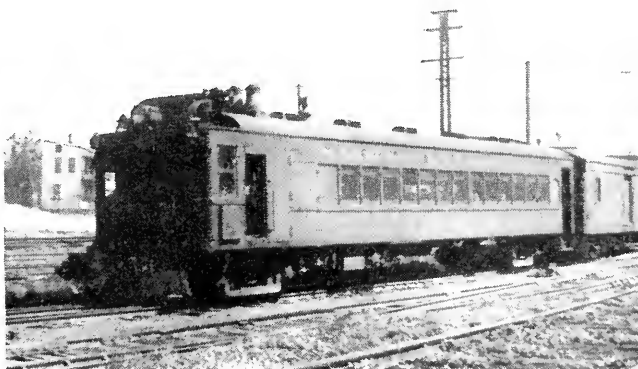


Linwood Moody

A TINY FORMER TWO-FOOT GAUGE RAILWAY POST OFFICE CAR—This view of the Harrison & Bridgeton Railway Post Office, a tiny train of the Bridgeton & Sandy River Railway shown leaving Hiram, Maine, in 1934, is but an echo of the departed past. The toy-like two-foot railways are all gone today, and only one narrow-gage R.P.O. remains in the United States.

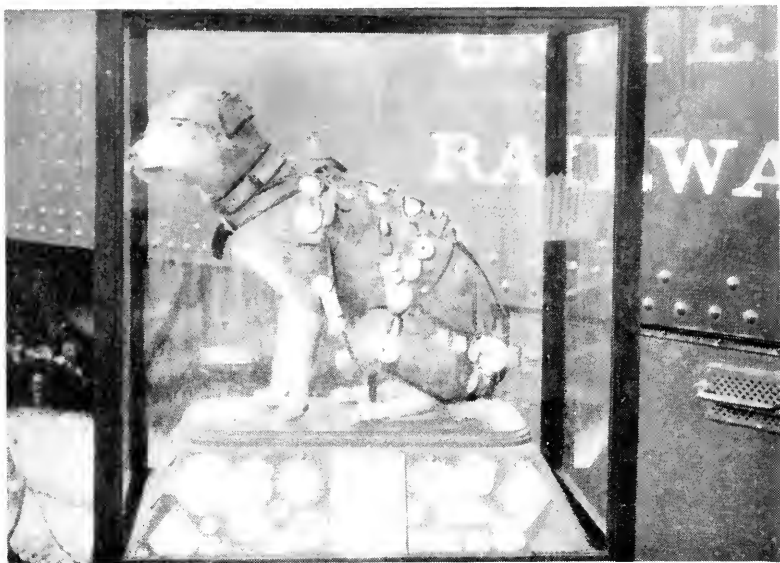
A TYPICAL LOCAL SHORT-LINE RAILWAY POST OFFICE OF TODAY — The postal apartment is at the extreme rear (right) of this York & Baltimore motor train on the picturesque "Ma & Pa," the Maryland & Pennsylvania Railroad.

L. E. Dequine



A POSTAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICE "TERMINAL" — This view of the old Weehawken (New Jersey) Terminal Railway Post Office, snapped at the West Shore Railroad station in 1932, is still typical of terminal interiors.





—W. J. Dennis

OWNEY, FAMED TRAVELING DOG OF THE MAIL CARS—This bemedalled mascot of the old Railway Mail Service is described on Pages 93 and 94. Stuffed, he is now in storage at the Washington City Post Office after many exhibitions.

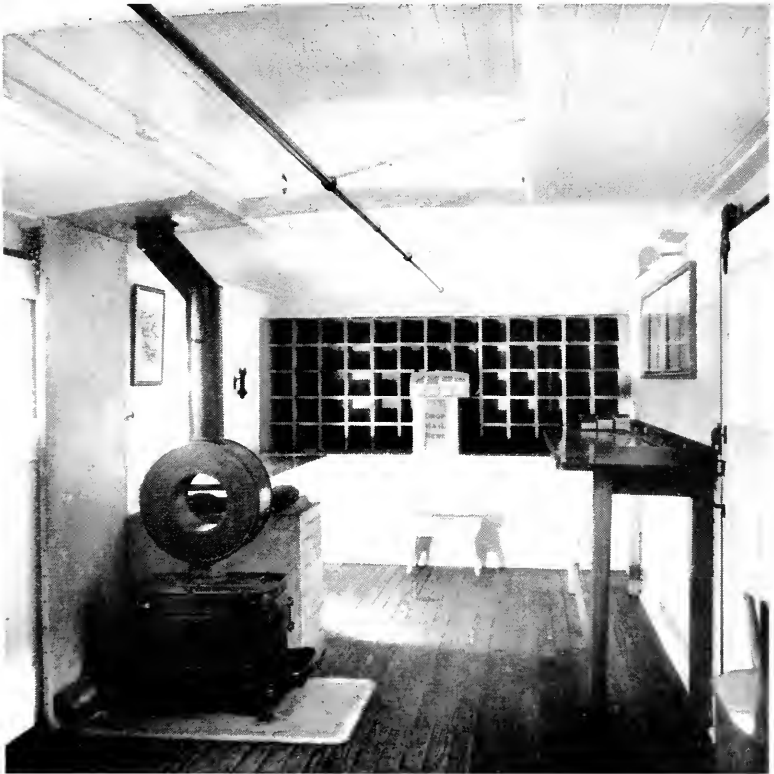


—Bert Swilling and B.A.L.

NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR RAILWAY POST OFFICE—Regularly established as a temporary unit with the above title, in full operation except for remaining stationary, this New York Central exhibit car is shown here on Railway Mail Service Day at the Fair in September, 1940, with author (B.A.L.) about to make the catch.



—Burlington Lines



—Burlington Lines

REPLICA OF THE ORIGINAL HANNIBAL-ST. JOE MAIL CAR—These two views show the exterior (top) and interior of this controversial experimental railway post office, operated just before the Railway Mail Service was founded, as described on Pages 105 to 107.

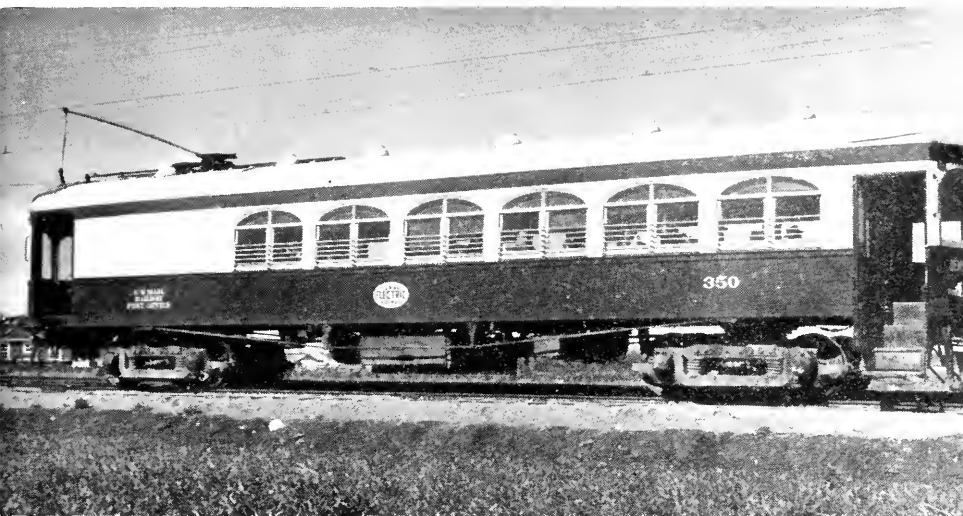


—Walter Thayer



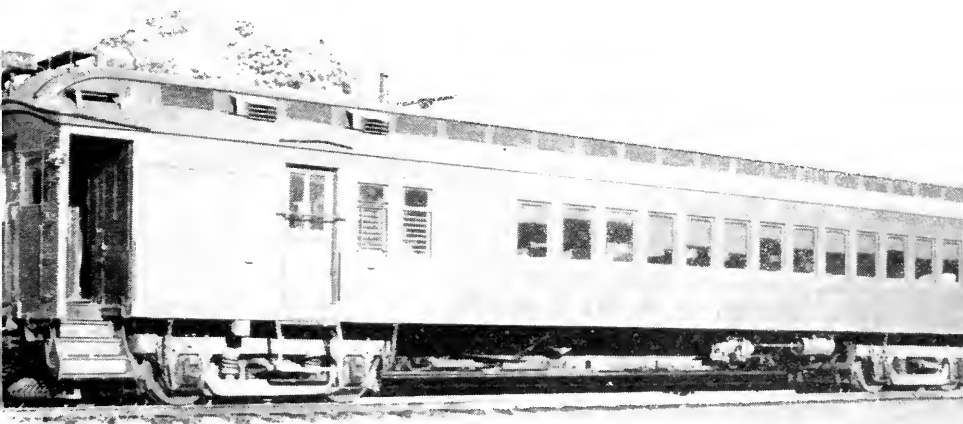
—Harold Lambert

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT—Shown at the top at Whitefish, Montana, we have the Great Northern's "Oriental Limited," Train 4 of the Williston & Seattle, longest railway post office route in America (1169 miles)—and, in sharp contrast, the interior of the Thurmond & Mount Hope Railway Post Office (C&O) in West Virginia, shortest in the country until 1949 (10½ miles), with Clerk Esker W. Davis shown on duty, at the bottom. (Chapter 10)



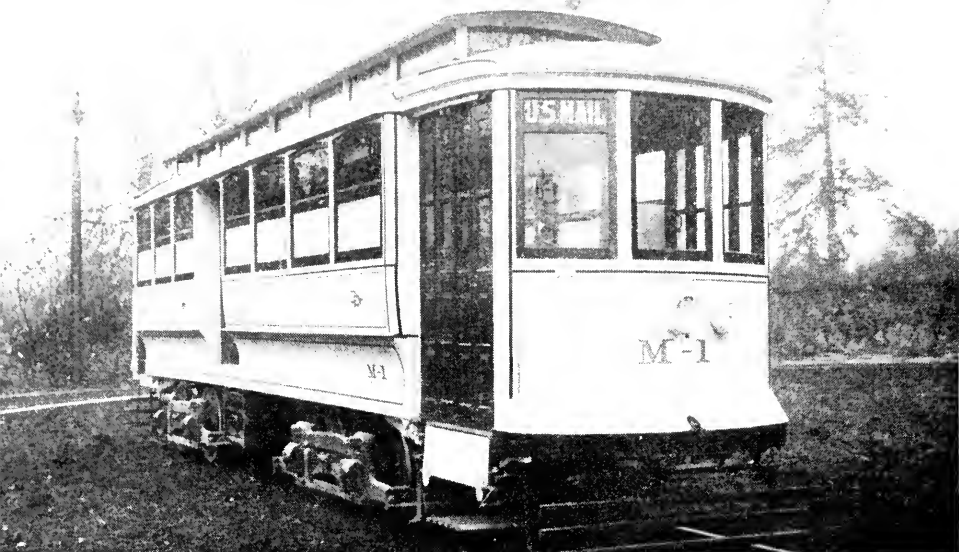
— William C. Janssen

FORMER INTERURBAN TROLLEY RAILWAY POST OFFICE—This beautiful old Texas Electric car carried the Denison & Dallas run in Texas, now a highway post office route, until December 31, 1948. (Chapter 12)



—B. A. L.

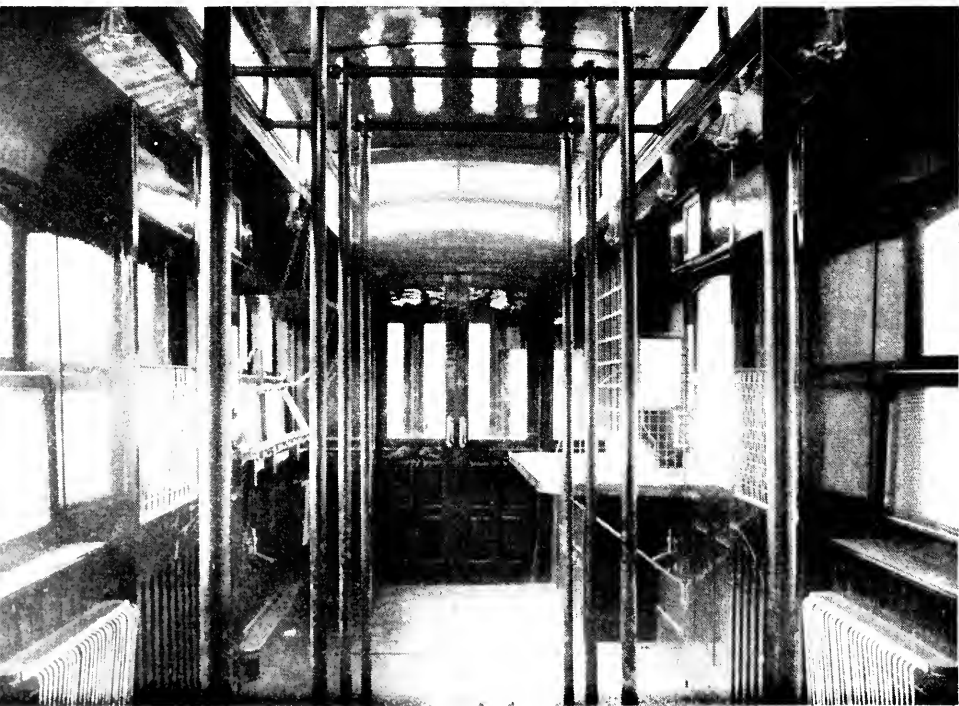
AN ELECTRIC-CAR RAILWAY POST OFFICE OF TODAY—This apartment car of the Summit & Gladstone (Lackawanna Railroad) in New Jersey is operated by a motor-man at left end.



John Gibb Smith

OLD-TIME CITY STREET RAILWAY POST OFFICE—This spruce new car, built in 1915 as No. M-1 of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company, was used on several routes in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The exterior view is at top, interior at bottom. Further details, as well as the car's final disposition, are in Chap. 12.

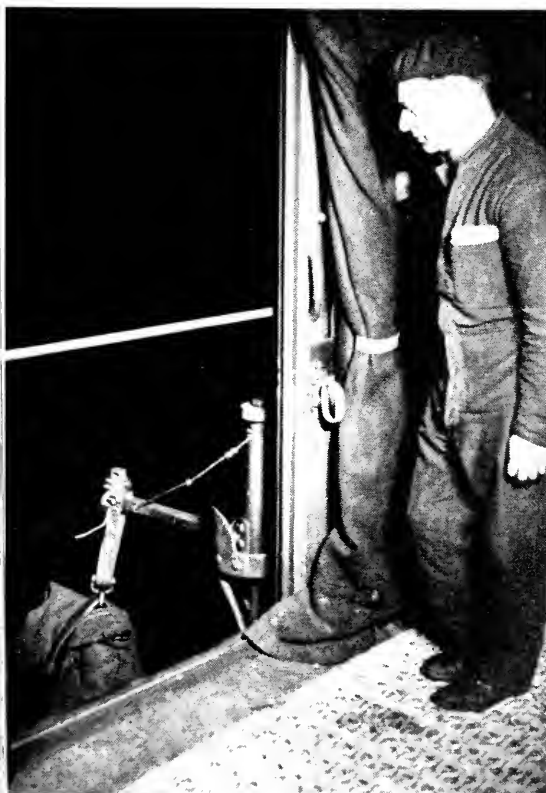
—John Gibb Smith





British Railways

A BRITISH RAILWAY POST OFFICE—This is the Down Up Special Travelling Post Office (Midland and Scottish Regions, British Railways) operating from London to Aberdeen, Scotland; see Chapter 14.



British Railways



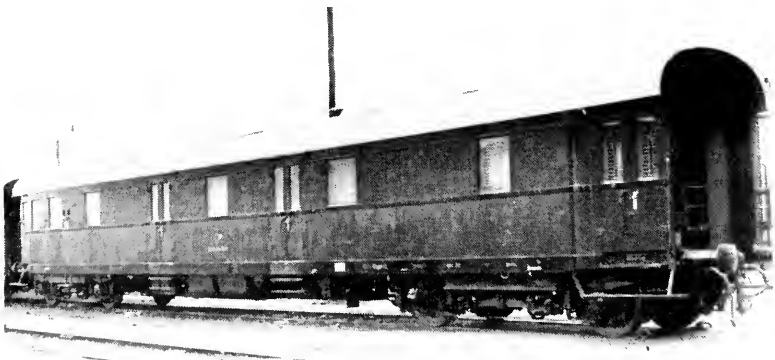
Courtesy of Postmaster General, L. C. 1950

CLERKS AT WORK ON A BRITISH TRAVELLING POST OFFICE—At the left we see a sorter prepared to make the "catch" by the automatic apparatus shown on car in top picture; despatching arm holds outgoing pouch (bottom left) ready to be sheared off. At right, clerks are busy at the "sorting frame."



—Donald M. Steffee

A CANADIAN RAILWAY POST OFFICE TRAIN—This is a train of the Gaspé & Campbellton (Canadian National) snapped at Matapédia, New Brunswick; the postal car (behind engine) closely resembles United States cars.

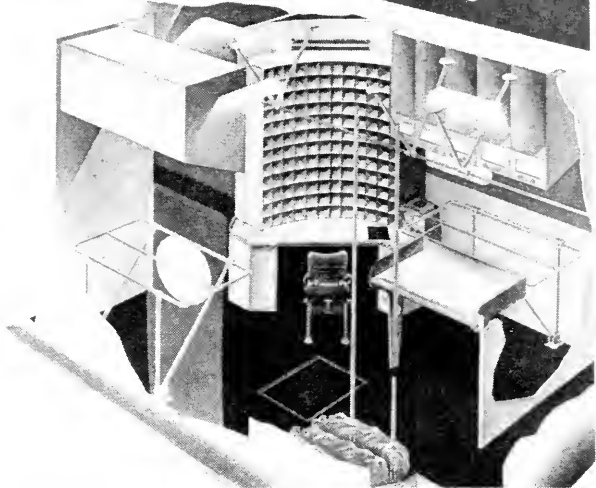


—Gunter Stetza

RAILWAY POST OFFICE CAR IN GERMANY—This is a typical "Bahnpost" sorting coach of the Deutsches Post (German State Railways).

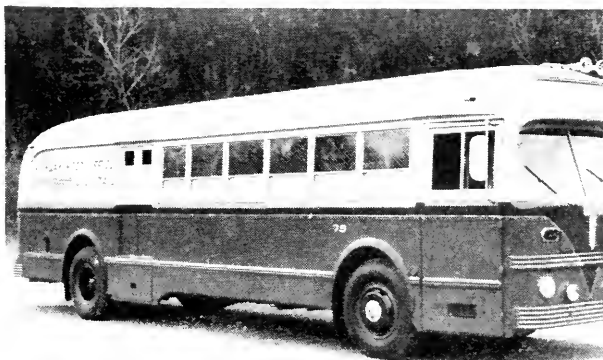
THE FLYING POST OFFICE—This simple cross-section of the center fuselage of the Fairchild Air-mail Packet shows the sorting case, overhead boxes, and pouch racks of the clerk's compartment where mail was sorted in transit aloft on several routes in 1946.

—Fairchild Aircraft



MODERN HIGHWAY POST OFFICE—This sleek mail-sorting bus operates on the Pikeville & Bristol (Kentucky-Virginia) and Welch & Bristol (W. Va. — Va.) routes. The exterior of No. 79 is shown at center, interior at bottom. Rack at right folds down to hold pouches.

—White Motor Company





—New York Central System

A FAMED POSTAL STREAMLINER OF TODAY—The noted "Twentieth Century Limited" is shown here carrying the New York & Chicago Railway Post Office, of which an interior diagram has been shown earlier.



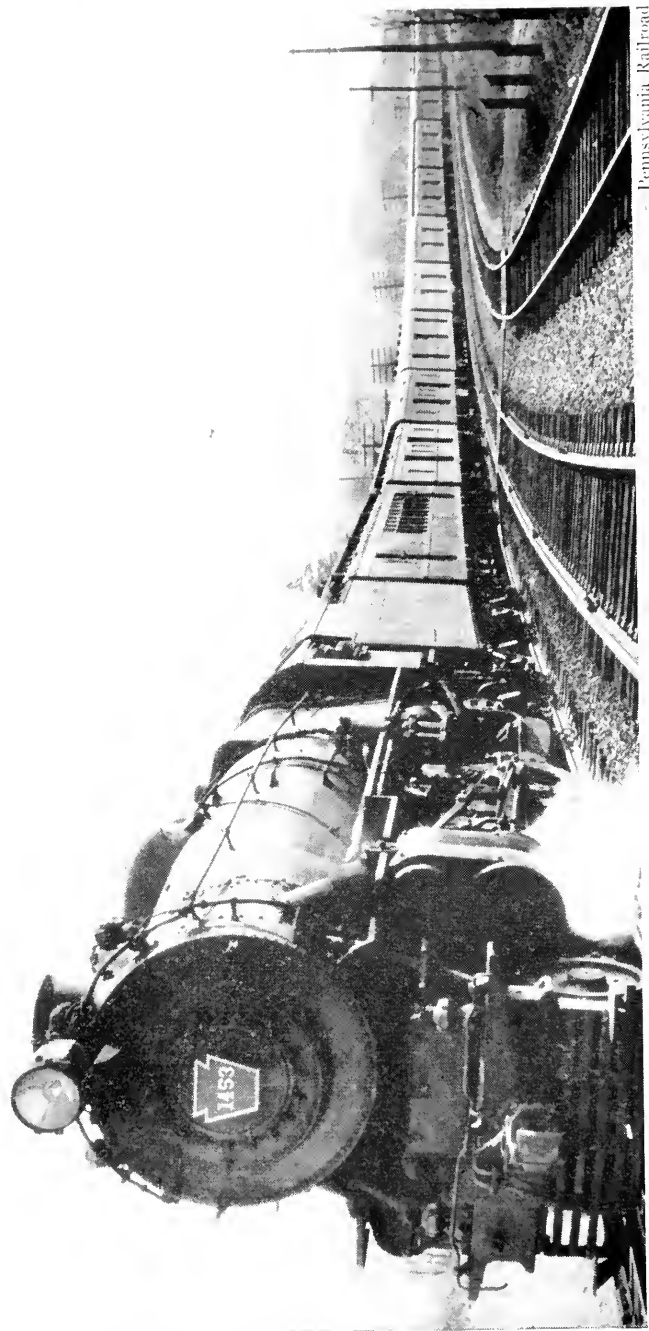
Burlington Lines

THE ULTIMATE IN MODERN POSTAL CARS—With the modern refinements described in Chapter 16, this handsome car "Silver Post" is used by the Burlington's Chicago & Council Bluffs Railway Post Office.



—*Postal Transport Journal*

THE LATE SMITH W. PURDUM: BELOVED EX-HEAD OF THE SERVICE—Starting out as a mail clerk on the PRR's New York & Washington Railway Post Office, Mr. Purdum climbed to the highest ranks of the Service on merit, finally becoming Second Assistant Postmaster General and heading the entire Railway Mail Service (now the Postal Transportation Service). Hailing from Hyattsville, Maryland, he earned the respect and affection of practically all who knew him.



Pennsylvania Railroad

A TYPICAL STEAM RAILWAY POST OFFICE TRAIN—The Pennsy's "Fast Mail," New York & Pittsburgh Railway Post Office, in the 1930's, was a solid mail train carrying no passengers.

8 x 12-foot mail apartment. The clerk must handle money orders, registers, C.O.D.s, stamps, etc., for patrons (including boat riders) just like an R.F.D. carrier or post-office window clerk. The scenic trip is not always made without adventure; an excited new camper may miss the "catch" and have to fish for a wet bag of mail, a terrific windstorm may come up (one, blowing 80 mph, smashed the windshield), or an emergency landing made to deliver Girl Scout trunks by parcel post. In a double L-shaped sorting case, the substitute clerk works his mail; outgoing letters must first be postmarked, while incoming mail—addressed via Old Forge post office to either the R.P.O. or name of camp—is sorted to patrons' boxes and placed in the satchels. Main hotel bags are hung on hooks on the side wall, in English fashion.

The unique service was established either in the 1890s or on July 24, 1901 (accounts vary), through influence of Cabinet members and other prominent camp owners, by contract with the Fulton Navigation Company. During the years just one clerk lost his life—though a good swimmer, he never came up when a safety chain broke and he fell overboard.

Our other three R.P.O. boat lines are similarly operated during summer only over connecting lakes in New Hampshire; all are managed by joint-employed private contractors. These are (1) the tiny Asquam Lake R.P.O. (Squam Livery), 9.5 miles from Holderness to Sandwich Point (no P.O.), New Hampshire, which is our *shortest* designated R.P.O. and the *only* one manned by a woman clerk (Contractor Kathryn O'Neill) whose boat *Oriole* covers most of Squam Lake and connects with the Woodsville & Boston (B&M) via Ashland, New Hampshire; (2) the Alton Bay & Merrymount (L. P. Beck Boat Line), 27.8 miles via Wolfeboro on southern Lake Winnepesaukee, connecting with the Portland & Boston (B&M) via Alton Bay and Dover; and (3) the strange 21.5-mile Lake Winnepesaukee R.P.O. on the *north* end of that lake, operating from Lakeport (station of Laconia) via The Weirs to Bear Island, New Hampshire. A post-office clerk is detailed from the Laconia post office to sort mail for its contractor on E. J. Lavalley's steamer *Uncle*

Sam, which now uses the only machine canceller on any operating R.P.O. It exchanges mails between its three post offices as well as delivering that for patrons (addressed via the head office, Lakeport, as on the other lines). Dubbed as "a combination of star route, R.F.D., R.P.O., and branch of Laconia P.O.," the "Lake Winnie" was denied recognition as an R.P.O. for several years recently when it was officially relegated to rural route status and stricken from R.M.S. records (although the clerk innocently continued using the R.P.O. postmarker). Restored to P.T.S. listing now, it connects with the Woods. & Boston (B&M) at Lakeport; established by Act of Congress in 1919, its contractor-carrier must be appointed on recommendation of New Hampshire senators or congressmen—its clerk compensation is specially fixed by the PL&R!

A few rail R.P.O.s have a steamer connection to complete the journey, too, on which sortation of mails is continued. The Phila. & Norfolk (PRR) uses the steamers *Maryland* and *Elisha Lee*, containing large mail rooms with cases and racks, to carry mails and clerks across Chesapeake Bay from Cape Charles, Virginia, to Norfolk (once the independent Cape Charles & Norf. R.P.O.). And the Mackinaw City & Calumet (DSS&A) in Michigan has its entire R.P.O. train carried over the water intact on the car-ferry steamers *Chief Watawam* or *Sainte Marie* across 8.7-mile Mackinack Strait. A very colorful part-boat run of bygone days was the old Truckee & Lake Tahoe (SP) in California, on which the historic boat *Marion B.* served the water-bound 80 per cent of the route until it suddenly blew up in 1941, killing the clerk. Some recently discontinued all-boat runs, too, were most unusual—such as the old Claremont & Hopewell (Haynie Boat Line) on Virginia's James River, serving tiny plantation villages of a bygone era and sorting mail in *one* direction only (toward Hopewell; hence the R.P.O. was omitted as a service for Claremont in the Virginia scheme!). It quit about 1944. Another was the all-year-round Bellingham & Anacortes (BTransCo), earlier the picturesquely-titled Bell. & Friday Harbor, serving numerous post offices on islands off the Wash-

ington State coast, using the M/S *Osage*; it lasted until June 30, 1950.

There are actually six or eight other boat lines—not R.P.O.s and not under the P.T.S.—which definitely sort some mail in transit; they range from the Skaneateles Lake Powerboat Route (ex-R.P.O.), out of Skaneateles, New York, on which an R.F.D. carrier distributes mail en route for 625 cottages about the lake, to the famed ninety-seven-mile River Route R.F.D. in isolated Hell's Canyon (Idaho), deepest gorge in America, where almost no mail is actually sorted on Kyle Grady's much-publicized boats, *Idaho* and *Florence*. Mail on some lines is informally pen-canceled. Until June 30, 1948, the unique Detroit River Station of the Detroit, Michigan, post office was located on board the sixty-five-foot steel motor craft *George F. Becker* to sort and deliver mail to officers and seamen of some ninety Great Lakes ships there. The service, only one of its kind in the United States, was begun June 17, 1895; mail was placed in buckets slung over the side of each ship, amid many hazards. There were many other historic boat runs (see *Note 15*).

But to return once more to the true *railway* post offices. The colorful or paradoxical titles and unusual nicknames used for them are amazing in themselves. Actually used officially are such romantic or weird titles as the "George. & Grace." (L&N) in Alabama, with its closed-pouch extension to Graceville, Florida; and the "Pad. & Hick." (NC&StL), from Paducah to Hickman, Kentucky. But the prize one of all was doubtless the officially titled "Thief. & Crook." from Thief River Falls to Crookston, Minnesota (GN), now discontinued. The Cincinnati & St. Louis (B&O) is, of course, dubbed the "Sin & Saint" and the N.Y. & Mauch Chunk (CNJ) "The Chunk" or "The Much Junk." There was a Welch & Jenkinjones (N&W) in West Virginia.

Some interesting coincidences exist, or have existed, in railroad names; thus the Boston & Albany (B&A) has exactly the same name as the railway carrying it—as did the old Louisville & Nashville (L&N). Until recently there was *both* a Colum-

bus & Norfolk R.P.O. (N&W) from Ohio to Virginia, and a Norfolk & Columbus (UP) in Nebraska; and also a Springfield & Indianapolis (CCC&StL) out of Springfield, Ohio, and an Indianapolis & Springf. (B&O) running into Springfield, Illinois. All four, except the Cols. & Norfolk, which was named in reverse order because consolidated after the Norf. & Cols. began, have been discontinued.

The most fantastic R.P.O. title of all time was of a line which, in the literal sense, never existed—the “Greaterville & Total Wreck” in Arizona. Its “record” was excitedly uncovered by a correspondent for the *Go-Back Pouch*, 8th Division newssheet, a few years ago; he sent in an item from an old General Order of 1887 reading “*Greaterville and Total Wreck . . .* discontinue pouching on . . .” and so on. It was noted that the two names in the title were those of two tiny mining towns—doubtless once connected by a long-abandoned short railway. The news was written up in the *Railway Post Office* and in philatelic journals; collectors wanted its postmark; inquiries poured in. But when officials searched their dusty files, no record of it was found. Finally a studious clerk on the nearby El Paso & L.A. (SP) revealed that there never could have been such an R.P.O.; the two Arizona towns (Total Wreck is now discontinued) were only fourteen miles apart, with a huge mountain range in between. He showed that the original item had not been quoted in full; it referred to the post offices at Greaterville and at Total Wreck, the correspondent having failed to copy the state name (Arizona). But in railway mail lore the famed old R.P.O. has already become a permanent tradition. As Editor Monroe Williams stated in the *Go-Back Pouch*:

The Greaterville & Total Wreck R.P.O. has been established and can never be discontinued. It will forever steam out of Greaterville on a roadbed that never knew rails. It will climb the rough edges of the Whetstone Mountains. It may pass the Lemonade Springs and the Cigarette Trees in the Great Rock Candy Mountains but certainly it will run on and on until it finally comes into its terminal—a Total Wreck.

But there have been real R.P.O.s, too, with no trains entering *either* named terminal—it's true of the Wash. & Bluemont today (see Chapter 12), even as it was toward close of service on the old Spring Valley & N.Y. (NJ&NY) when trains operated only from Montvale to Jersey City, both in New Jersey—yet the named termini were both in New York State! Dubbed "The Virginia Creeper," the Wash. & Blue. (W&OD), furthermore, is the *only* R.P.O. officially classed as "electric" (it no longer is, though several suburban M.U. R.P.O.s *are*); and is the only R.P.O. traversing the heart of Arlington, Virginia, Washington's suburban metropolis—a city served by *none* of the seven R.P.O. and H.P.O. routes crossing its borders! And we are reminded of the D&RGW's former Salt Lake City & Kanab (now S.L.Cy. & Richfield H.P.O.) famed as "The Polygamy Special" or "The Marysvale," whose 125-mile star-route extension from Marysvale to Kanab was longer than the R.P.O. run. And today's Reno & Las Vegas (SP) in Nevada is also over 60% star route—largely, as on "The Kanab," over paths which *never* knew rails!

But getting back to the subject of striking nicknames, who but postal clerks could ever have conjured up "The Dreamliner" (Det. & Gr.Rap.), "The Galloping Goose" (Spok. & C.C.), "The Horny Toad" (Alb. & El P.), "The Leaky Roof" (K.C. & Mem.), "The Little Windy" (L.Rock & Ft.W.), "The Macaroni" (Hou. & C.C.), "The Monkey Wrench" (Pul. & Mt.A.), "The Old Man's Darling" (Ak. & Del.) and "The Ox Cart" (Knox. Cart. & At.)? Or, "The Pow Wow" (Eug. & C.B.), "The Preacher" (St.L. & Parsons), "The Puddle Jumper" (Port. & Sea.), "The Pumpkinvine" (Roa. & Winston-Salem), "The Poor Boy" (Jack. & Tam.), "The Raging Sioux" (Chi. & SuCy.), "The Rickety Bang" (Gr.Jct. & Og.), "The Scissorbill" (St. L. & Mem.), "The Pickle Vat" (Texarkana, Ark. Term.), "The Mountain Goat" or "Belvidere" (Phill. & Tr.), "The Pedro" (Og. & L.A.), and to cap it all, "The Wooden Axle" (Harri. & Nash.)? (*See Appendix I for complete data on each line.*)

There are at least *six* stories as to why the MoPac's Kan. City & Pueblo is called "The Doghouse" (and so are the

Philadelphia and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Terminals); while the NP's Duluth & Mpls. is still "The Scally" because of the Swedish lumberman who once rode it saying "I tink skall I go down to St. Paul" and so on. Farthest apart of identical nicknames are our two "Coast Lines"—the Wash. & Flor.—Flor. & Jack and San F., San J. & L.A. (*see Appx. I*).

But utterly fantastic were some nicknames of discontinued lines! Besides ones we've named, we recall Idaho's Ketchum & Shoshone (UP)—"The Ketch & Show," of course; the one-time Elkton & Bridgewater (N&W), formerly CWRy (Va.) and thus "Crooked & Weedy"—now a C.P.; the horrifying "Fish & Dirty Feet" (the G&P's old Salmon & Blackfoot, Ida.); the "Tin Can" (Waco & Stamford, Texas—M-K-T); the "Underbrush Limited" in Michigan (Frankf. & Toledo, AARy) and "The Two Brothers" (Harry. & Frank.—see Chapter I). Then there were "The Sowbelly," an old Kansas City routing; and "The Kite," a loop-like, kite-shaped former local run on the Albuquerque & Los.A. (Santa Fe)—the name still clings to the remaining part. At least nine lines out of New York, St. Louis, Council Bluffs, San Francisco, and elsewhere are called "The Valley"; these, together with hundreds of other nicknames (many explained elsewhere in the book), are all listed in Appendix I.

One of the most unbelievable P.T.S. operations is the ingenious process of sorting out mails for an individual city to separate postal stations, or even to carriers, on a speeding train hundreds of miles away! Confined mostly to night trains, it permits instant delivery of city letters by the first carrier—mail that would otherwise be delayed four to twenty-four hours. Thus the N.Y. & Chic. (NYCent) works city mails for New York, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Rochester, Syracuse, Toledo, and Detroit! "City clerks" even make up direct letter packages for important firms, buildings, and individuals to be delivered direct to addressee. Such clerks must usually memorize the proper postal station serving each street, as well as the exact house-number breaks if the street is in more than one zone; their case-examination cards show every street, or part street with house numbers, of any im-

portance in the city. Most clerks personally pay for and use special letter-case headers with printed house-number breaks; but others can work a "city" well under plain headers or even, with some experts, "blind"—a miraculous feat when the complex data to be memorized is considered. Clerks running into Los Angeles sometimes make direct bundles of fan mail for movie stars.

Large-city stations have zone numbers, and zoned mail is instantly sorted by substitutes using simple numbered headers (the *numbers racket*, as the process is dubbed). But regular "city men" must know the exact route of any unzoned letter instantly. A huge amount of such mail is distributed; thus one Omaha & Denver (CB&Q) train dispatches twenty-five pouches of worked Denver City mail daily. (Much Milwaukee and Dallas city mail is now distributed by a simple alphabetical system.)

The story is told of one Chicago City clerk on the Chic. & Council Bluffs (CB&Q) who was plugging away at his case dead to the world, and particularly, to some commotion back in the car. A clerk had just collapsed, seriously ill, and was being asked where he lived. Hardly had the victim gasped his city address than the preoccupied Chicago clerk barked out "Carrier 145, 2nd morning delivery; if it's special, pouch it to the Main . . ." (See *Note 16*.)

Other amazing facts of the Service involve the clerks themselves. Their dexterity in sortation from memory has been publicized by Dr. Irving Cutter as "an amazing exhibition of both physical and mental skill," and these complex duties must be carried out under a set of stringent and rather interesting regulations. For example, a clerk sorting mail for his own state or city is not allowed to take out or open a letter addressed to himself, no matter how urgent; every letter must go on through exactly as addressed. And if he accepts a letter from a patron and postmarks it, he can under no circumstances return it for correction or withdrawal—not even the very next minute.

Clerks have run up some remarkable personal records. J. W. Bloom, of the old Wmspt. & Mahaffee (NYCent), was

recently banqueted and given a plaque by the Williamport, Pennsylvania, Branch N.P.T.A. for having been their secretary for *fifty-one* years. Retired clerk Al Glasser boasts a record of twenty-four years' perfect attendance at New York (2nd Division) Branch meetings; they also gave him a plaque, but Bob Ripley rejected his record with "I don't believe it." Ripley, however, *did* feature two other clerks in his nationwide cartoon: (1) Bowman M. Peterson, "The Ground Hog Man" of the Knobel & Memphis (MoPac), whose grandfather, father, and he were all born on February 2; and (2) A. E. Igou, of the Chatt. & Meridian (AGS, Tenn.—Miss.), the famous "Vowel Man." Peterson's line, by the way, is called "The Pete," and is very unusual because of its train splitting to go in two or three directions.

Speaking of names, we have mentioned Clerk Ulysses S. Grant but not a well-known district superintendent, Mr. Orange Lemon. Clerk C. H. Miller, of Memphis, is "The Thirteen Man"—everything in his life is based on the number thirteen; and, similarly, Clerk Jimmie Mayer of the old McCall & Nampa (UP) in Idaho was in a wreck involving that number throughout. Clerk-in-Charge J. J. Ferris made a round trip on the Chatham & N.Y. (NYCent) on his *eightieth birthday* in 1920; while on the Watertown & Aberdeen (M&StL) in South Dakota, it was always either a Sunday or a Holliday on that line for years (the two alternating clerks). Wartrace, Tennessee, by the way, claims to have produced more railway mail clerks for its size than any other United States town or city—31 out of a population of 700. The Chic. & Minn. (CMStP&P) is loaded with "Mutch Mohr Ham and B. Loney" among other clerks!

When Clerk Charles W. Houghton of Charlestown, New Hampshire, dropped his good jackknife somewhere in his pouch rack, as he discovered later, he hastily wrote notes to all fourteen of the postmasters he pouched on. Fourteen knives were mailed back to him—none of them his! (Returning them, he received his own two days later.) W. F. Kilman once dumped up a silk dress and "scrambled eggs" from the same sack (taken on via catcher) and later received a pouch

containing a live racoon and a large package of butter lying next to a skunk hide! In Kansas, recently, a pouch of letters was cut up under the wheels of an R.P.O. train—and postal officials patched up each tattered letter so well that one man received (the second time) a letter he'd read, torn up, and thrown away while waiting for the train!

Recently B. O. Wilks, of the Monett & Okla. City (StL-SF), received no receipts for five registers he sent to Vinita, Oklahoma, until he coaxed a "duplicate" out of them. Then he was suddenly called in, later, by an inspector at Tulsa who showed him his original receipt amid a big file of papers dealing with a startling irregularity—the receipt was from the island of Okinawa, where the *reds* had been found by a World War II army postal clerk in a sack of ordinary parcels. And the inspectors declared there was *no* connection with the incredible fact that the soldier himself hailed from Vinita, Oklahoma! Less serious was the discovery of a registered case, completely unaddressed, on one Eastern line—the label was located just in time on the pants seat of a clerk who had been sitting on it.

Clerk-in-Charge L. Beaumont Reed, of the N.Y. & Pitts. (PRR), ran in his mile-a-minute train for sixteen miles without an engineer—he had been knocked senseless, leaning out at Atglen, Pennsylvania, by the mail crane. Reed also caught on the fly "mail, female, and bluefish" as he says. A young lady at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, ran excitedly to the mail-car door, trying to board the moving train, and he had to catch her by the waist and pull her inside to prevent an injury; and again, on the Montauk & N.Y. (LIRR), he caught a pouch containing both the mail and a fresh bluefish that a mutual friend of Reed and postmaster wanted to send him!

The records made by some clerks on case examinations are "incredible," as some expert observers have exclaimed after investigation. Brilliant case-exam records were formerly recognized by gold-medal awards, especially by Postmaster General Wanamaker around 1890; and later all 100 per cent exams were listed in General Orders. (Unfortunately, both practices have been discontinued; but a welcome innovation

now provides 50-merit awards for continued high grades made at 30 cards per minute.) The over-all high score in the main Gold Medal competition was said to have been won by C. H. Oler, of the N.Y. & Chic. (NYCent)—his exact record seems unavailable. The highest divisional record went to the 3rd, taken by Hardy T. Gregory, as listed below. Superintendent White's grand-prize medal, the next year, was won by J. F. Phelps; while the best all-time record is said to have been Abe Singer's (N.Y. & Chic. also), who made 100 per cent on *every* exam taken. He later founded the Amsterdam (practice card) Printing Company.

Today the finest record of continuous case-exam accuracy in all America is held by genial Joseph A. Hctor, of the N.Y. & Wash. (PRR). A friendly, lifelong West Philadelphia resident (and a good-looking bachelor!), he has made 100 per cent on *every* examination—case or otherwise—in the past seventeen years; that is, for thirty-four consecutive case examinations! He throws his cards at an average of thirty-four per minute; they are mostly for the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and the Carolinas, and taken under the examiner at Philadelphia. He studies by "association": connecting the offices on the Wash. & Charlotte (Sou) with the idea of "charred," for example. An excellent worker in the car, he has received special letters of commendation from the Department; nevertheless he prefers to use *headers* helpfully annotated with office-lists on his North Carolina letter case.

The best *speed* record is evidently held by William M. Manion, of the Des Moines & Kan. City (Rock I.)—101 cards per minute! This was made on Section B of Missouri recently, under Examiner Meikel of Kansas City, and nearly 99.9 per cent correct. Close behind comes Clerk Patzke of the Minneapolis & Des. M. (Rock I.), 99 cpm. Other high recent records were made by John E. Joyce (88), John F. Mullins (81), Sub. Charles Giebel (76), Frank J. Graczyk (70) and Charles Thuston (58).

Getting back to accuracy, perhaps the best existing record of *total* perfect exams (62 out of 70) goes to Fred J. Billingham of Chicago, as shown in Table I; but at least one

TABLE I

RANK	NAME	LINE	Number		Percentage of 100s	STATES INVOLVED
			of Case Exams Taken	Number Rated at 100 Per Cent		
1	Joseph A. Hoctor	N. Y. & Wash. (PRR)	34	34	100.0	Pa., N.C., et cetera.
2	Fred J. Billingham	Chicago & Soo City (IC)	70	62	88.6	Ill., Iowa, Chgo.
3	Edward J. Bayless	St. L. & Kan. Cy. (MoPac), retired	32	28	87.5	Mo., O., Calif.
4	Harry Fried	Penn Term., New York, N. Y.	30	26	86.7	Not reported.
5	Raymond Exler	N.Y., Scr. & Buff. (DL&W)	34	29	85.3	Not reported.
6	Wilburn Humphries	Chic. & Cincin. (IC-CCC&StL)	80	64	80.0	Ill., Ind., Iowa, et cetera
7	George W. Bruere	Alliance & Casper (CB&Q)	24	18	75.0	Not reported.
8	C. Winfield Caswell	N.Y. & Wash. (PRR)	46	33	71.8	N.J., N.Y., Va.
9	John F. Mullins	St. Lou. & Little Rk. (MP)	17	12	70.6	Mo., Ill., Ark., La.
10	Roy V. McPherson	Utica, N. Y., Term., retired	Not reported		67.0	N.Y. State.

younger clerk has made 100 per cent in *every* examination thus far—Kenneth D. Nowling (appointed 1947) of the Council Bluffs, Iowa, Terminal. He has made 100s on six examinations, 3,519 cards, on California and nearby states. E. J. Bayless and Harry Fried, also in Table I, have nearly equaled Billingham's amazing percentage. This table (page 189) includes all names of *living* clerks known to us who have made 100 per cent in two-thirds or more of all exams over a sizable period of years—beginning in each case at (or within a few years of) the time of appointment, and terminated as of 1950. Intensive research failed to bring out other similar records which doubtless exist.

Next to Abe Singer's unconfirmed record, Billingham's is the highest in sheer numbers of cards thrown at 100 per cent—or some 58,000; his grand total, 65,432 cards at 99.99 per cent, defies all known records past and present. The late District Superintendent Reese Porter (Table II) actually threw more consecutive perfect *cards* than Joe Hctor; but in number of consecutive *exams*, Hctor is probably tops for all time (Porter threw thirty-one of his last thirty-two exams *pat*—all but the final one; on Louisiana, largely). And E. J. Bayless threw 28,949 cards at an average of 99.9 per cent, with twenty-eight 100-percenters. The list below includes those of the above records for which we had appropriate data (consecutive 100s) as well as the notable one of the late James E. Thompson, who was retired with high honors after taking, at *one sitting*, a demonstration test—throwing all six New England states, Boston City, and Michigan at 100 per cent, the highest known record of several perfect exams taken at once. The following list is of *typical*, all-time records known to us of *consecutive* 100s; many in Table I, and others, would be eligible, but records are missing.

Space forbids, alas, a similar listing of all-time records of near-perfect, high-volume total cards throws such as those of Bayless and many others. Like him, 11th Division Medalist C. H. Field of the Denver & Ft. Worth (C&S) had a 99.99 per cent average, back in 1890. (The 4th Division Medalist, at 99.98, was the aged H. M. Robinson listed in Chapter 4.)

TABLE II

RANK	NAME	LINE	Number of Consecutive Cards Thrown at 100 Per Cent	NOTES
1	Abraham Singer	N.Y. & Chicago (NYCent)	29,000	Founded Amsterdam Printing Company
2	Reese Porter	Memphis, Grenada & New Or. (IC)	26,300	31 consecutive; District Superintendent
3	Wilburn Humphries	Chic. & Cin. (IC-CCCNSTL)	24,896	26 consecutive
4	Joseph A. Hoxtor	N.Y. & Washington (PRR)	22,707	34 consecutive
5	H. T. Gregory	Washington & Charlotte (Sou)	13,657	1890—3rd Division Medalist
6	F. J. Billingham	Chic. & Sioux City (IC)	12,011	6 years consecutive
7	W. L. M. Austin	Charlotte & Atlanta (Sou)	10,657	1891 runner-up
8	Ed Burns	Red Bluff & Sac. (SP, in Calif)	10,003	Retired
9	James E. Thompson	Boston & New York (NYNH&H)	9,033	9 consecutive, at <i>one time</i>
10	J. F. Phelps	Sedalia & Denison (M-K-T) At least	4,000	Inc one month; 1891 Top Medalist
11	Ken D. Nowling	Council Bluffs, Iowa, Term.	3,519	6 consecutive
12	Richard A. James	Substitute, District 7, Houston, Texas	3,002	In first 11 months service
13	John Butterworth	Portland & San Francisco	2,391	All in one month

Credit is due, however, to many others for generally outstanding examination records.² (See *Note 22.*)

In particular, we recall the unavailable record of A. J. Quinn, a former N.Y. & Chic. (NYCent) clerk, who was said to have made 100 per cent on "exam after exam"—he got so irritated at the kidding about his *pats* that he finally withdrew a card after an exam and stuck it in a "wrong" box; but it *had* been wrong in the first place, the story goes, and by coincidence he stuck it right and kept his record!

Ingenious system of memorizing have been devised by many clerks to assist them in improving grades and speed. Some imagine themselves running a train over each railway on their postal-route map; others learn each county or each line separately, devise poetic jingles or catch sentences, or just grimly master card after card. Although others had been using the general idea long before, one of the first system of weaving post-office names into written "stories" was devised by Haig Kapigian of Camden, New Jersey, in 1931. Another clerk in Maryland, in his first substitute year, conceived independently a similar method, but with a new, original system of notation and procedure, in 1939; called the *Supply*

²Including J. R. Goodrich, Eureka & S.F. (NWP), Retired; Substitute O. A. Jensen, 11th (Texas) Division; E. S. Williams, Graf. & Cincinnati (B&O); Substitute R. A. James, District 7, Houston, Texas; Thomas McCart, Mpls. & Sioux City (CStPM&O)—thirty-nine 100-percenters; R. E. Rex, Louisville, Kentucky; J. C. Shields, Mpls. & Des M. (Rock. I.); Substitute E. C. Bull, Philadelphia, Pa., Terminal; W. W. Allen, Jr., N.Y. & Chic. (NYCent), Retired; H. B. Richardson, Cleve. & St.L. (CCC&StL), who threw more cards (82,406 at 99.89 per cent) than anyone else has reported; E. E. Evans, Pitts. & St. Lou. (PRR), with five 100s in a month; J. S. Wegener, Ash. & Milw. (C&NW); Harry Swift, Greenport & N.Y. (LIRR), Retired; Substitute W. Adams, District 4, Portland, Oregon; F. E. Ely, N.Y. & Chic. (NYCent); W. O. Hare, St. Lou. & Texark. (MoPac), Retired; Justin E. Smith, Kansas City & Albuquerque (Santa Fe); Peter Koefer, Chic. & Burl. (CB&Q), 1893 medalist, who made 100's on nearly all exams; H. W. Schuster, Columbus (Ohio) Terminal; E. J. Fraser, Detroit & Chic. (NYC-MC), declared "most accurate" in 1890; C-in-C A. B. Clark, Gr. Rap. & Chic. (C&O), Retired; and several veteran "steady 100-percenter" clerks on the McAlester & Amarillo (CRI&P), referred to us by Substitute William Mullen (also with a good record), whose names were unavailable. First clerks to become eligible for the new 50-merit awards were William Shultz of the N.Y. & Chic. (NYCent) and S. K. Dinkins of the Pitts. & St. Lou. (PRR), in 1950.

TABLE III

RANK	NAME	LINE	ON-DUTY		TOTAL (including deadheading)
			R.P.O.	MILES	
1	Arthur Piper	Rock I. & Kan. Cy. (Rock I.)	2,717,500		2,895,700
2	L. Beaumont Reed	N.Y. & Pitts. (PRR)	2,571,000		2,665,500
3	J. S. Wegener	Ashl. & Milwaukee (C&NW)	2,219,744		2,654,948
4	George E. Anderson	Wash. & Cincin. WD (C&O)	2,180,000		2,600,000
5	Hugh Gordon	St. L. & Denison (IC)	2,500,000		2,550,000
6	H. B. Richardson	Cleve. & St. L. (CCC&StL)	2,451,222		2,477,754
7	Sherman H. Hill	N.Y. & Salamanca (Eire)	2,194,020		2,401,780
8	Peter T. Jacobi	Cleve. & St. L. (CCC&StL)	2,126,505		2,378,500
9	C. E. Rensch	Kan. City & Denison (M-K-T)	2,100,000		2,200,000
10	Wilson Davenport	St. Lou. & Rock I. (MoPac)	2,190,000		2,190,000
11	William F. Kilman	Memph. & McAlester (Rock I.)	1,940,000		2,000,000 (including railroad service)
12	L. M. Allen	Chamb. & Rap. Cy. (CMStP&P)	1,350,000		Not reported
13	Keith Koons	Albuq. & Los A. (Santa Fe)	1,256,838		1,387,004 (rail only)

Narrative System, it is sold regularly by a small New Jersey partnership. A second regularly advertised method was the *Case Examination Study System*, written by Clerk F. A. Reynolds of Roanoke, Virginia, based on home-drawn map diagrams and charts and marked cards. Other methods and devices, including cardboard "cell liners" and an aluminum "Drudge Eliminator" for handling cards (by J. G. McIlheny), are well-known.

A railway mail clerk covers an incredible amount of mileage in his lifetime. Some say the most outstanding record of all was made by Keith Koons, retired off the Albuquerque & Los Angeles (Santa Fe), who traveled the astounding total of over 2,905,775 miles in the R.M.S. inclusive of the United States Seapost, which was part of it for much of his career; 2,750,233 miles was while actually on duty, and the remainder was official "deadheading." But the highest *rail* mileage is the generally accepted standard for such records, and the greatest figure recorded for any known clerk by the writers (after much publicity and research) was run up by Arthur Piper as indicated above. The late John S. Wegener, a close runner-up, was said to have done "nearly 3,000,000" miles, but a check revealed the figure above as accurate. (Both he and Richardson, in this list, had splendid exam records; see last footnote.) The preceding list shows the highest total *rail* mileages known to us; it doubtless omits many unknown, equally good records.

Of the above clerks, believed now all retired, more is told of Reed, Rensch, Kilman, and Davenport elsewhere; see Chapters 5, 13, and 16.

Then there is the P.T.S. "coffee man," one of the most picturesque characters in American railroading! He is a clerk who has been coaxed (or coerced!) into supplying all his co-workers with hot coffee daily at five cents to eight cents a cup. His big wooden box, loaded into the car with the grips, contains all his supplies. Long before lunch he preheats the pot of water on the steam cooker (if any), then lights his alcohol burner and puts on the brew to percolate, using an iron stand or hanging it by a chain—unless there is

an electric hot plate. (Some coffee men cover the pot with an empty sack, "preferably well seasoned," giving the brew a rich flavor of wet canvas—ignoring the juicy dirt drippings which are all too likely to fall in!) The pot may or may not contain the actual coffee; some men boil water only, supplying jars of instant coffee, cocoa, and tea balls for self-preparation by the customers as desired. Others brew tea also.

At the crucial moment the coffee man spreads out the materials—coffee, a can of evaporated milk for cream, another can of sugar (usually containing a bent spoon for serving it), and several stirring spoons in a glass. Then he cries, "That stuff is ready!" or some similar phrase, or perhaps rings the "lunch bell" by tapping the resonant light globes with a knife. The tin cups are filled one by one as the "nectar birds" or coffee-lovers step forward, often hurling many a gay insult in his direction—with particular reference to the various horrible things he is alleged to have brewed the liquid from. It was such tradition that brought forth Dan Moschenross's popular, slyly phrased *Road Coffee Recipe*:

In the caldron boil and bake
Filet of a fenny snake,
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog;
Adder's fork and blind worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and owlet's wing.
Turn the steam down very low
Then 'round the caldron dancing go.

The coffee man is constantly "accused" of reaping fabulous profits from his "concession," especially if caught sporting a new car; while he himself as stoutly maintains that he is losing money and doing it "as a favor for the boys!" Probably the truth of the matter is somewhere in between. Most P.T.S. coffee men turn out a fine cup of the brew indeed, and the wise clerk will give him an occasional word of appreciation along with his ribbing.

There is always the chronic complainant who declares that the brew doesn't taste right and should be thrown out

the door—usually eliciting the rejoinder that it didn't taste right "because I decided to wash the pot today for the first time in ten months"; other coffee men make less printable replies. Still another source of irritation is the old "free coffee trick" by which the crew persuades one of the newer clerks that "this is free coffee night; the coffee man's celebrating his birthday" or something like that.

"Just walk right up and fill your cup, and thank him as you go by," the new man is told. He does. The harassed coffee maker, not in on the trick, sharply demands his nickel; and both parties to the heated argument following are soon enlightened by the amused merriment of all those looking on.

The coffee man has other trials too. Very likely he inherited the job involuntarily to begin with, having discovered that it "went with" the assignment—he may despise the stuff himself. With the total lack of food-heating devices on many older cars (even on a key line like the PRR's N.Y. & Washington) and with use of electric appliances often forbidden, he has a trying time brewing the amber fluid. His little stove is usually homemade from a cup or can with improvised wick. And, if there is steam, he may have trouble getting it. Needing some one day, a certain coffee man sent a sub outside at the next stop to ask the engineer to turn it on. When the sub jumped back inside he reported that he couldn't find which end the engine was on, and all the conductor would tell him, in response to his frantic inquiries, was, "The front end, of course!"

Another man "inherited" a coffee job and rather liked it—which was more than the crew could say for his brew. Finally, one evening, the hefty pouch clerk walked up to him and said, "From now on, I'm coffee man!" The chap responsible for the insipid fluid looked him over, and meekly surrendered his box!

There was the coffee man, too, who moved from Kansas to two other states in succession, and his family left his big pot behind each time. It finally caught up with him at the start of a run, and he shoved it in a corner of the postal car to take home. He couldn't find it at the end of the run;

it had been accidentally unloaded as a piece of mail and sent back to his old address labeled on the box.

Then there are the furiously hectic days of the pre-Christmas period. Extra cars and clerks (largely temporary ones) are added to practically all lines; regular clerks are given extra trips, or overtime in their terminals; and these terminals, P.T.S. are flooded with tons of excess letter mail (mostly Christmas cards) as well as gift parcels as train after train, swamped at every stop, must turn over huge pouches unworked. Half the cards are too wide for train pigeonholes, as noted, and can be forced into them only amid great delay and frayed tempers. Terminal letter cases, often in storage the rest of the year, have wider boxes and are worked largely by women or youths called in as non-certified clerks. Additional "Temporary Terminals, P.T.S." are set up at places like New Haven, Connecticut; Pocatello, Idaho; Toledo, Ohio (all three consisting of cars set on sidings, at last report); Detroit, Michigan (Convention Hall); Seattle, and Midwestern points like Fargo and Aberdeen, South Dakota. Late running (even to transferring to one's inbound train before destination) and long continuous hours—up to forty-eight hours at once—are common; road clerks seldom get any extra pay, due to "deficiencies."

Most interesting, however, are the temporary Christmas R.P.O. lines set up over new routes. At last report the strangely named Walla Walla & Wallula (UP) was the only complete one still operated, and not even this one is set up unless schedules and conditions warrant. It connects with a second Christmas route, an extension of the regular Moscow & Haas (UP) to Wallula; both are in Washington State, although the Moscow & Haas is out of Moscow, Idaho. The W.W. & Wallula is a one-man branch-line run set up when warranted in December and operated until the twenty-fourth. No special postmarker is furnished the line; it has used the former Spokane & Moscow's (SCd'A&P) canceller, and later an old Wallula Transfer Office "knocker." For a period this Santa Claus line was absorbed by the supposedly permanent Walla Walla & Pendleton (UP), a short-

lived route (only a few years old) now part of the Pend. & Yakima. There was formerly a Wallula & Yakima (UP) Christmas R.P.O. along this route. The two "current" routes, now seldom set up, were operated annually until recently.

Favorite Christmas stories include the one about the Toledo & St.L. (Wabash) "non-cert" who was given a big holiday sack to "throw under the wheel," meaning in the car's *wheel bin* where the brake wheel was; he asked in amazement, "You mean throw it under the train?" And Dan Moschenross penned a classic "letter to Santa Claus," published in the *Railway Post Office*, now the *Postal Transport Journal*:

DEAR SANTA CLAWS:

When you come around agin pleez bring us pore postal clurks sum . . . zippers fur our pouches and sacks. They dunt cost much and we wud save enuf time to pay for them quik. When there aint nobuddy lookin, paint our leter boxes black inside . . . instead of the same color as post cards . . . Bring all the postmasters what hang up ketcher pouches a supply of tuff envelopes with return to put leters with muneys in. This aint as much as sum folks ask for.

Yours trooly . . .

Some of the strange facts involved in the routing and "scheming" of mail in the P.T.S. seem unbelievable. Since the P.T.S. headquarters furnishes no alphabetical schemes and no official lists of no-office communities to any clerk, they may either "nixie" mail for such points (send to dead-letter office) or voluntarily learn the proper dispatch—which thousands do. Two thirds of all United States communities have no post offices, authorities say, and this is confirmed by one clerk's hand made "nixie scheme" for New Jersey, thrice as long as the postal scheme.

Regular schemes contain some startling paradoxes. Important offices located directly upon an R.P.O.—like suburban Pelham, New York, on the Boston, Spring. & N.Y. (NYNH&H)—may be "schemed" and dispatched entirely dif-

ferently (in this case, as a branch of the New York G.P.O.), although the R.P.O. is the main service for the towns on both sides. The N.Y. & Wash. (PRR) goes right through—or under—the cities and towns of Weehawken, Union City, Secaucus, and Harrison, New Jersey, without stopping or supplying a single one of them. As “The Wash” continues through New Jersey, in the heaviest-populated area along our busiest railroad, it nevertheless passes two tiny way-station towns without post offices—Adams (P.O. Franklin Park), New Jersey, and Edgely (P.O. Bristol), Pennsylvania. And, in Maryland, the line traverses a dozen towns served by closed-pouch trains only—as well as still another, Cheverly, which is served only from Hyattsville on the B&O’s N.Y., Balt. & Wash. R.P.O. miles away!

There are special reasons, desirable locally, for all of these strange postal practices. As for others: For years, pouches made for old Phila. & Norf. Train 449 (PRR, with R.P.O. clerks on boat portion only) could contain *no* mails for points local to that R.P.O. (except Fort Monroe, Virginia); the actual train was closed-pouch. Judging by titles, one would expect New York to dispatch mails for Philadelphia to the N.Y. & Phila. R.P.O. (PRR) and for Albany to the Albany, King. & N.Y. (NYC-WS) and so on; but that is never done—fast trunk-line trains on other routes reach the same points quicker and more often. For years Cape May, New Jersey, was never “good” to the recently discontinued Phila. & Cape May (P-RSL) which once went there; and even today, Mackinaw City, Michigan, is “no good” to the Mack. City & Cin. (PRR). Some northbound East Coast trains connect *three* different R.P.O.s serving Buffalo, New York, as titles indicate (Buff. & Wash.—PRR, N.Y., Geneva & Buff.—LV, and N.Y., Scrant. & Buff.—DL&W) yet cannot properly dispatch Buffalo mail to any, because their direct N.Y. & Chic. (NY Cent) connection to that city is quicker!

Many R.P.O. trains actually dispatch mails to a distant train *leaving their far terminus before they arrive*—by “advancing” pouches over an earlier C.P. train during their distribution before leaving. Other trains must distribute mail for a dis-

tant state *before* that for a smaller nearby one, because diverging lines fan out at an earlier station to cover the faraway state. Mails may be diverted hundreds of miles from a direct route to secure earlier delivery by fast trains; at certain times of day Richmond, Virginia, dispatches mail for offices in that state on the Phila. & Norfolk (PRR) clear to Washington and Philadelphia to connect that line. Mail is often sent purposely in just the wrong direction for miles, so as to connect a returning R.P.O. train at an earlier stage in its journey to allow more time for distribution (when faster dispatch is unavailable, or to connect an inbound local, as we have noted). Mail for a given city, for which an R.P.O. makes a direct pouch, is often *withheld* from that pouch for hours—it is better “advanced” by some earlier connection.

Clerks must know the exact proper connection for mails to a given R.P.O.—often best via the distant end, not via the point of direct connection. Mails between offices actually in sight of each other (as Perth Amboy, New Jersey, and Tottenville, New York) must often travel over a circuitous 50-to-350-mile route—to save expense of a direct transfer by using existing facilities; but in such a case clerks must see that overnight delivery is always effected. A letter posted at Ironwood, Michigan, about 5 P.M., for one-mile-distant Hurley, Wisconsin, is a touchy example—it must be connected via Ash. & Milw. (C&NW) Trains 212 and 211 over a 346-mile journey! Mails from the New York area to Atlantic City, N. J., must cross the entire state of New Jersey *twice*—via the N.Y. & Wash. R.P.O. and Phila. & Atl. City C.P. (both PRR).

A pouch must be made up when due, usually daily, by all R.P.O.s for each office or line listed to receive its dispatches—even if empty—in order to keep records straight without using time-consuming written reports. On the other hand, the heavy mails addressed to mail-order houses and other firms often necessitate authorized pouches for such companies; thus trains distributing Philadelphia City actually “pouch on” Sears, Roebuck & Company and put it off at the nearest station. Worked mails for suburban postal stations may be similarly put off at outlying points. The volume of

mail received for offices pouched on, by the way, is often in complete disproportion to population. On one Eastern line most trains need to pouch on Schenectady, New York, but not Albany (which is larger, closer by, and the state capital!); some make newspaper-sacks for West Point and Mt. Vernon, but not Syracuse or Buffalo, New York. Claymont, Delaware (its second most populous city) is not even made up on the state's primary racks in P.T.S. terminals, its mail is so light.

P.T.S. state schemes reveal some other hard-to-believe facts: That Clayton Lakes, Maine, is not served by *any* United States mail route (only via Lac Frontière, P.Q., on the QC's Lac Front., Vallée Jct. & Quebec R.P.O. in Canada).³ That only *two* R.P.O.s directly serve Rhode Island . . . that there are *no* R.P.O.s wholly in that state, Maryland, or Delaware . . . that towns once of topmost postal prominence as "junctions" of R.P.O.s have later lost both their R.P.O.s, their post office, and sometimes even their identity in gazetteers (Red Bank, Pennsylvania; Araby, Maryland; and many others) . . . that Weehawken, New Jersey, is not served by either R.P.O. terminating there (Alb., K. & N.Y.—Ros. & N.Y.; see Appx. I) and, from most standpoints, not even by *its own P.T.S. Terminal* . . . that strange P.T.S. symbols and terms can arouse even a G-man's suspicions as Clerk J. F. Cooper's wife discovered to her dismay. (She rented practice cards to clerks and mailed little correction slips to customers reading ". . . Change Walnut Creek & La Fayette (C.C.County) to Baypoint & S.F. . . . Your M.O. rec'd O.K. . . ." and so on, and was summoned by the FBI for investigation!)

Few people know that they can walk up to any R.P.O. car (or H.P.O.) door and buy a stamp; clerks-in-charge are required to keep ones and threes on sale. Others, hastily addressing a letter to some prominent newspaper, firm, building, or street followed only by a state name, would be amazed

³The Maine General Scheme shows supply only as "Lac Frontiere, P.Q.", followed by names of U.S. R.P.O.'s connecting thereto such as the St. Albans & Boston (CV-B&M).

to see the clerk on an R.P.O. state case quickly recognize the city for which intended (or rapidly thumb through letters in his large-city boxes and often finding another missive properly addressed to the same destination, permitting instant dispatch). One substitute even successfully dispatched a letter addressed by some half-wit to "My Father, Atchison Co., Mo."; he sent it to the county seat, as per the P.L.&R.—where the family and the son's habits were known.

Which clerk has served on the greatest number of R.P.O.s? The most amazing record seems to be that of Earl S. Levitan, of the PRR's N.Y. & Wash.—thirty-three R.P.O. lines, terminals, and transfer offices. Close behind him we find Fred A. Perry, N.Y. & Salamanaca (Erie), Retired, thirty; J.M. "Doc" LeConey, Pitts. & St. Lou. (PRR), Retired, twenty-seven; Al Humpleby, also N.Y. & Wash., twenty-four; and many others. Certain cities, too, boast innumerable R.P.O. connections; five different R.P.O.s over the *same* track connect Washington, D. C. and Alexandria, Va., while until recently there were six R.P.O.s over five *different* tracks between Norfolk and Suffolk, Virginia. And one route, recently discontinued, did not even provide a postal car for its clerk—the Fond du Lac & Janesville (C&NW, in Wisconsin), where engines were removed from part of a locomotive unit to provide a space.

Unique among all United States communities is a colony of retired postal clerks founded at Clermont, Florida, by Railway Mail Clerk Ernest Denslow of Ashtabula, Ohio, in 1923. The Postal Colony Company there has erected hundreds of homes for the old-timers there and has laid out many acres of rich orange groves, providing both investments and an avocation for active and retired clerks. It has its own N.P.T.A. branch—the only one composed wholly of retired clerks, and the only one not at a railway division point or junction. Distinguished departmental, Senate, and N.P.T.A. leaders visit it.

Such, indeed, is this amazing Postal Transportation Service of ours. From the New York G.P.O. Building employees' entrance (where P.T.C.s are instantly ushered past by respectful

guards, while P.O. men must obey seven signs demanding badges and package inspections) clear out West to those vast, lengthy R.P.O. runs (like the SP's San Fran. & Los A.) where clerks are off duty 22 *days* each month (making just 4½ round trips), the service presents a panorama of the unbelievable. Even its N.P.T.A. has one incredible distinction—that of being America's only national fraternity which did not lose a cent on investments or securities during the great 1929-39 depression, and the Amsterdam Printing Company's official P.L.&R. *Questions & Answers* contained until 1950 a startling baby-talk boner "Engineer or motorman of R.P.O. train shall give timely notice, by whistle whistle or otherwise . . ." But many a clerk would agree that most paradoxical of anything in the entire Postal Service are those prominent post office lobby posters imploring mailers not to post tiny, undersized letters and greetings that might get lost—but saying nary a word about those awful, unsortable, super-sized holiday cards that torment every railway mail man.

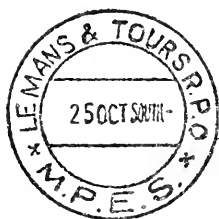
As we go to press, however, we are faced with such an incredible (and disheartening) chain of recent events that other things pale into insignificance—namely, the actual or threatened abandonment of more than *nine* of our most interesting and unique P.T.S. operations, all *within the year 1950!* We note particularly (1) Suspension of our last intra-city and last loop R.P.O. running, as told at start of chapter; (2) Abandonment of our last trolley R.P.O. (S. Berdo. & L.A., May 6th—see Chapter 12); (3) Discontinuance of our only electric interurban Terminal, P.T.S. (same chapter); (4) Imminently-threatened abandonment of our last U. S. narrow-gage R.P.O., Ala. & Durango, as just discussed; (5) Discontinuance of our last P.T.S.-operated R.P.O. outside the 48 states, and of our only other narrow gage line—the San J. & Ponce, P.R., June 30 (Chapter 15); (6) The end of all Alaskan R.P.O. service, including the Fair. & Seward (May 22) and Nenana & St. Michael—see Chapter 15; (7) The demise of our most spectacular and unique C.P. line (Ridge. & Durango, Chapter 3) on March 31; (8) Last run of the historic Reno & Minden, famed V&TRR ex-narrow-gage mining road, on

May 31 as told in Chapter 13; and (9) Abandonment of our only all-year-round boat route, Bell. & Anacortes, as mentioned in this chapter. Never in all our history has the proverbial axe fallen on so many fascinating P.T.S. operations at once—and may we earnestly hope that its blows are now done with; that unique new installations will arise to take their places; and that those amazing and fascinating phases of the P.T.S. which still remain may be preserved in the public interest as tokens of a vital national service which should always intrigue us.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE UNUSUAL

It may be north, south, east or west—the mail must hurry through;
The postal clerk may take no rest, with all these things to do.
He does not see what waits ahead, nor care what lies behind;
The hungry mail sacks must be fed. To all else he is blind . . .

—EARL L. NEWTON



—Courtesy T.P.O.

The Postal Transportation Service has met, with flying colors, the challenge of every emergency which has tested its mettle. The most striking and distinguishing characteristics of the Railway Mail Service (as it was designated throughout the period this chapter covers) have perhaps been the high standards of ability and citizenship and the almost military degree of discipline required of its personnel. A swiftly moving train is no place for a sluggard or weakling, and the Civil Service examination for admission is another incentive toward high standards. Discipline has been paramount since the days of the first railway mail clerks (largely Civil War veterans) and is reflected even today in the written orders, the "Black Book," and in the district and divisional ranks of P.T.S. officialdom.

The great Chicago fire of 1871 was the R.M.S.'s first big challenge. Although its division headquarters was destroyed when the Post Office Building burned to the ground, Superintendent Bangs promptly stationed postal cars at various

points about the city, called in the clerks who were on layoff, and took care of all outgoing mail. Mail connecting via Chicago was detoured, and prompt and efficient local mail service was soon under way. Oddly, enough, the post-office and R.M.S. quarters were twice again destroyed in later smaller fires, requiring the R.P.O. cars to be spotted about the city again as before.

The R.M.S. had the key job of opening the first post offices and mail routes in Oklahoma, during the breakneck land rush of 1889; a railway mail clerk opened the first Guthrie post office. But most pitiful of the emergencies to which the Service lent its valiant hand was the great Jacksonville, Florida yellow-fever epidemic of 1888. Little dreaming that Walter Reed would reveal just eleven years later that only mosquitoes carried the yellow death, R.M.S. officials ordered all mail originating at Jacksonville fumigated in a boxcar at La Villa Junction near Waycross, Georgia. Busy railway mail clerks carried out this magnificent but futile endeavor by perforating the "deadly" letter bundles and newspapers in this car (a total of three million pieces) and smoking them with fumigant for six hours. They suffered many miseries at "Camp Destitution," as they dubbed their restricted outpost.

A more pleasant occasion was in July 1892, when a number of clerks from the East were surprised by a courteous "invitation" to come to Omaha on July twenty-ninth and take a trip to San Francisco; it was explained that the Department wanted to reward their good services and that West Coast clerks would be benefited by their coming. Three division superintendents and thirty-six clerks made the enjoyable trip, and doubtless California clerks were much edified by the visit. But when the time of return arrived (August fourth), the men were taken to two postal cars (one CB&Q, one LS&MS) and issued Springfield rifles with two thousand cartridges plus Colt .45s with one thousand rounds to fit. It was explained that the real purpose of the trip was to effect in secrecy the transfer (by registered mail) of \$2,000,000 from the San Francisco Subtreasury to the one at New York, to bolster lowered reserves there. The armed clerks first con-

voyed the transfer of five hundred boxes of gold direct from the subtreasury to the train; R.M.S. officials, in charge of General Superintendent White himself, receipted for them.

Then the journey of the first famous postal "Gold Train" began. Actually officially described as a "Silk Train" throughout, the secrecy and deception of the arrangements were perfect; and it was well they were, what with the gold-hungry train robbers then abroad. As related by Superintendent White, all went well; but there were some thrills and narrow escapes. Flagmen and would-be hobo passengers were alike frightened out of their wits to find the train suddenly bristling with guns like a porcupine's quills when the doors flew open. A letter addressed to one desperate outlaw was handed in by a clerk at San Francisco even before leaving; after leaving the SP's "Overland" Ogden & S.F. route, an engineer at Rawlins, Wyo., refused to take the train because bandits had twice waylaid his that day; broken draws caused several delays. But the gold went through!

Later "gold trains" were many times as richly laden, however, although the million-dollar train of 1914 was an exception. Supervised by Division Superintendent James L. Stice of Pittsburgh, this train took on fifty pouches of gold via twenty-five armed R.P.C.s (ordered to shoot to kill on interference) from the Philadelphia mint for the New York Subtreasury. Only Stice and four inspectors made the actual trip, after a missing pouch at Philadelphia was finally located back at the mint. Stice collapsed from a heart attack afterward, but recovered and is living today. Then there was a \$3,200,000 "Silver Train" operated by the 8th Division R.M.S. from San Francisco to Chicago, loaded entirely with coins. But by far the biggest such train on record (actually a series of trains) was operated by the Service in the 1930s to carry *fifteen billion* dollars in gold to the underground vault at Fort Knox, Kentucky—only to carry most of it back out again later.

The next most important civilian emergency was the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906. The 8th Division's new headquarters building at Seventh and Market was swept

by interior fires, partially extinguished by heroic Clerk George E. Lawton, who happened to be inside. Postally, special letter-sorting facilities were set up in the Oakland Pier Transfer Office, R.M.S., instead of in R.P.O. cars. Although much mail missed connection, all R.P.O. trains operated in and out of the city on schedule regardless of danger; most clerks managed to get to work despite paralyzed transit. People wrote desperate notes on cuffs, shingles, cardboard—all were transmitted post-free, though paper mails had to wait two weeks.

And in one recent domestic crisis the R.M.S. proved its worth on a national scale—the huge railroad strike of May 24–26, 1946. In the earlier big strikes of 1888 and 1894, none of them nation-wide, most R.P.O. trains continued to be operated under edicts forbidding interference with any United States mail train. But on this occasion no such restraint was attempted; practically every railway in the nation shut down at 5 P.M. on May 24, 1946 (postponed from 4 P.M., May eighteenth, when earlier delays to many trains ensued). R.M.S. offices, geared for action, had previously arranged for R.P.O. cars to be operated on most of the few passenger trains which railroad managements were able to force through. Operated by railroad officials in business suits, such trains carried clerks grimly struggling with mountains of mail for which they had no outgoing connections, carrying on fearlessly despite violence and sabotage attempted by strikers. Other clerks crowded into transfer offices or stayed home to await orders, while many others were assigned to terminal R.P.O.s.

Emergency truck routes were set up to handle the vast bulk of the mails, which had to be sorted at post offices amid considerable loss of time; but mails were delivered daily, and delays cut to a remarkable minimum. At least one full-fledged temporary Highway Post Office was set up—on the Salisbury & Knoxville (Sou) in North Carolina—Tennessee, where C.-in-C. Pat Knowland hung pouches inside a big moving van carrying his mail and sorted it on the floor. General Superintendent Carey of the 2nd Division reported

the "equivalent of H.P.O. service" having been set up there too, and advised his clerks that "in meeting this crisis, you exceeded all expectations! You are deserving of the highest commendation." Some crews were stranded in cars at out-of-the-way places at the strike deadline; many were short of funds, food, or overnight facilities (one clerk had to sleep in his car, inside of a big No. 1 sack, both nights). Clerk Bob Chilton, of the Houston, Texas, area, stranded at his outer terminus, pitched in at the post office there and had the pouches normally made for his line "killed"; then he made up the mails into direct pouches for dispatch over Missouri Pacific bus lines and argued the bus company into accepting and handling them!

Other strikes have hounded R.P.O. operations since, particularly coal strikes in nearly every year from 1946 onward (as well as a threatened railway strike in 1948, when long-distance truck routes were again planned for in detail). Each coal strike forces the suspension of many R.P.O. branch lines (some of which are never restored) on every coal-burning railroad, and three-day-a-week service on others, playing the utmost havoc with schedules and mail deliveries. A trainmen's strike in 1950 created chaos in several areas.

Of major interest, however, are the brilliant performances of the R.M.S. in each of the three major wars since its inception. When Spanish-American war troops were assembled in the South in 1898 prior to Cuba's occupation, a flood of mail swamped the post offices near the camps. Large postal cars were immediately stationed wherever needed, particularly on sidings near Tampa, Florida, and Camp Chicanauga, Georgia. Crews with a wide knowledge of territory were assigned to work up mail for the armies to separate companies, regiments, batteries, and ships—and mail from the soldiers, of course, to regular connections. After departure of the transports, all mail for enlisted men whose destination was unknown was dispatched to Key West, Florida, and thence to Santiago, Cuba.

Postal agents saw that the mails followed the flag as our armies landed on each island. Officers and men of the R.M.S.

were placed in charge of setting up temporary organizations, and regular mail service followed promptly despite crude equipment. At Ponce, Puerto Rico, army carpenters made worktables; and at Manila, Superintendent Vaille of the R.M.S. took over the post office and native clerks with little trouble. The Spanish clerks struck at first, but soon the Spanish merchants persuaded the more desirable workers to resume work so they could get their mail. Of course, as conditions became settled, directors of posts were appointed in each territory and permanent organizations set up by the Department as R.M.S. forces were withdrawn. During the 8th Army Corps campaigns in Luzon a Spanish R.P.O. on the Dagupan—Manila Railroad was taken over by the army postal men, who put it into operation as the Dacupan & Manila Military R.P.O.; the corps exchanged mails daily with its mail clerk and retained control at least until 1901. Civilian R.P.O.s were later established on such routes in all three territories (see Chapter 15).

Far more dramatic was the impact of World War I upon the R.M.S.—which took *complete* charge of all mails for the armed forces overseas. The German juggernaut, rolling into Belgium and France in 1914 and years following, thoroughly disrupted normal postal service; but, with Teutonic efficiency, military R.P.O.s, or *Bahnposts*, were set up in the conquered territory (such as the Bruxelles—Lille Bahnpost from Belgium into France, carrying German soldier mail free.)

At home in America living costs soared, especially upon entry of this country into the war in April 1917; railway mail clerks, because of the vital military mails they handled, were exempted from the draft. But thousands of them enlisted anyway; the undermanned R.P.O.s became choked with a deluge of mail for army camps and overseas, and the lines were soon turning over dozens of unworked pouches to terminal R.P.O.s each trip. Special legislation protected the jobs of those who enlisted, while other acts provided a slight salary increase. Veteran clerks pleaded for reinstatement.

In France was created, mostly by R.M.S. personnel detailed to the A.E.F. Postal Administration, the largest network of

military R.P.O. lines and terminals ever set up by Americans at any time. (The British, too, set up military R.P.O.s—particularly the “B.E.F. Main Line T.P.O.” from Boulogne to Cologne, operated January 1919 to the end of occupation. Six trains, manned by ten crews in British “T.P.O.” coaches, operated—usually with very primitive lights and heat.) By 1918 eighteen American R.P.O.s and six additional closed-pouch lines had been activated on the French railways—plus the new Bordeaux Terminal R.P.O., which received United States-bound mail from the lines and sorted 84 per cent of it out to direct packages for American cities, towns, or R.P.O. routes. Main-line military R.P.O.s were from Paris north to Boulogne (A.P.O.¹ No. 751); south to Orleans (797), Chateauroux (738), and beyond; Paris west to Le Mans (762); Le Mans to Rennes (940), and also to Tours (717), on the Le Mans & Tours R.P.O., whose postmarks are the most commonly found. Other lines to Bordeaux, Nancy (915), Dijon (721), and so on, were similarly named; postmarks read “NORTH” or “SOUTH” in lieu of train numbers, plus the letters “M.P.E.S.”

These letters referred to the “Military Postal Express Service,” an A.E.F.P.A. subsidiary, which was organized by veteran R.P.C. Marcus H. Dunn (later general superintendent). The Bordeaux Terminal was efficiently managed by Superintendent James Cruickshank, another R.M.S. veteran (later Superintendent of Air Mail Service). Officials and distributors there included such R.M.A. leaders as Peter Schardt (during periods of absences from his post as Superintendent, 2nd Division), Chester A. Harvey, L. C. Macomber (all future national or division presidents); and many others. The terminal distributed up to 44,555,000 letters a month (582 tons of mail), dispatched in sealed pouches. When ships were due to sail, no hours were too long and no conditions too forbidding to prevent a speedy all-out dispatch. Robert Bend, Macomber, and others have vividly described life at Bordeaux Terminal in the *Railway Post Office*, particularly

¹Army Post Office.

one huge Thanksgiving feast and their Christmas tour of the city after services at historic Sacre Coeur Church.

United States postal detachments manned by R.M.S. personnel were set up in other parts of the world—at Vera Cruz, Mexico, and even as far away as Siberia. A leading member of that far-flung unit was the late Joseph P. Cleland, of the Omaha & Denver (CB&Q), who was renowned as a three-times-round-the-world traveler.

At home there was the great wartime Chelsea Terminal R.P.O. in New York City. Here all distribution of out-bound mails for soldiers overseas was performed in a huge hall running the length of Pier 86 at West Forty-Sixth Street, occupying the entire second floor; all classes of overseas mail were worked out to the smallest military units. Clerk-in-Charge Bill Sterling and Chief Clerk Fred Hance had the terminal as their sole responsibility. This huge overseas mail center had originated as a small unit (upstairs in the old Grand Central R.P.O.) established by William I. Votaw.

All army overseas mail was ordered diverted there, and half-frozen clerks struggled with it in overcoats until the "world's largest one-room heating plant" was installed. Haphazard overseas addresses used by the public (as, "110 Engineers, France") gradually were standardized in the general form:

(Name of soldier and unit)

A.E.F., A.P.O. 123 (or whatever it was)

FRANCE.

Hundreds of patriotic "dollar-a-year" volunteers worked alongside the paid men and women clerks in the terminal, with steady efficiency, including such notables as Henry Ward Beecher, Jr. At Christmas the Army furnished the public standard-sized cartons for doughboys' gifts—easily distributed due to their uniformity. Before the Chelsea Terminal closed it featured a large redistributing center at one end, manned by army clerks who redirected parcels addressed to men leaving France to the proper United States separation center. Incidentally, "Railway Mail Posts" of the American Legion sprang up at New York and elsewhere.

World War II, however, provided the most climactic challenge of all to the Railway Mail Service. Even from the very first of United States peacetime conscription following the start of the holocaust in Europe in 1939, no deferments for railway postal clerks were announced. Expertly trained distributors, handling increasing loads of vital military correspondence, were drafted into the Army by the hundreds; living costs mushroomed, and trains again went hopelessly "stuck." And yet in 1940, with mail volume up 6 per cent and with 32,000 *fewer* total postal employees than in 1913, railway mail clerks handled their entire additional load without extra cost to the Department—"an astonishing increase in productivity."

Then came the blow of Pearl Harbor. John E. Painter, R.M.A. secretary at San Francisco at the time, describes it as:

December 7, 1941—the stab in the back! . . . Mingled feelings . . . Alerts . . . R.P.O. car windows blacked out. Local non-stops missed. Poor lights. Why not curtains instead of black paint? . . . Clerks sign up for civilian defense. Clerks offer their services in any capacity . . . Clerks buy War Stamps and Bonds . . . Clerks enlist. Clerks are drafted . . . Christmas trains run late—movement of troop and supply trains . . . Clerks buy War Stamps and Bonds . . . Submarine off the coast . . . Guards placed over bridges; listening posts . . . Mails go through, but late . . . Schedules revamped overnight . . . Fewer trains . . . New Year's Eve just another night. Neon lights stay dark. Clerks stay home . . . Retired clerks advise Department they are ready for service . . . More trains canceled . . . R.M.S. offices put on nine-hour day, six days a week . . . R.M.A. arranges meetings during blackouts . . . Wives say, "Remember, purl harder," and knitting goes on . . . Shortage of rubber, clerks begin to walk . . . Shortage of sugar, wives retain natural sweetness . . . Clerks buy Stamps and Bonds . . . Life goes on: not as usual, but in the American way, to save the American day.

Following abolition of the official forty-hour week on December 22, 1941, clerks worked a minimum forty-eight-

hour, but often as much as a sixty- or seventy-hour, week or more. Road clerks had numerous extra trips, paid at "time and a half" for the first time in history (actually much less, through technicalities). Thousands of temporary wartime "subs" were hired, but many were quickly drafted or quit to take high-paying war-plant jobs (as did some regular clerks). Emergency plans were laid for rerouting R.P.O.s disabled by bombings or invasions. Mails increased to all-time record heights. Delayed R.P.O.s were sidetracked as the *mains* (troop trains) rushed past.

A vast proportion of the mail was for army camps and other military separations not yet made up on racks and cases, causing much inconvenience until new case diagrams could be drawn up and new pouches established. Pouches had to be hung in aisles and odd corners—there was no room in the racks. The haphazard addresses on domestic military mail were appalling; hundreds of new military posts with complex long names were inserted into the Postal Guide and schemes, while the military addresses furnished soldiers often varied considerably therefrom. The shortage of trained distributors to handle these vital army mails became acute. But not until the summer of 1942, when two thousand railway mail clerks were in the forces, were limited deferments finally granted to key residue clerks doing scheme distribution and to essential officials. Then in November came President Roosevelt's sweeping directive which began: "I am anxious to make sure that no man should be deferred from military service by reason of his employment in any Federal Department or agency . . . in Washington or any other place"!

Again postal clerks were indiscriminately drafted, much to the despair of field officials and of R.M.A. branches at New Orleans and elsewhere, who had passed numerous resolutions requesting deferment of expert distributors. Much pleased, however, was the big New York (2nd Division) Branch, which had passed an opposing resolution just one month before, demanding no occupational deferments for clerks whatever.

By December of 1944, 3,952 clerks were in the forces. Of these, twenty-five had laid down their lives, mostly terminal

clerks—five of them from Penn Terminal, New York, alone. Half of the letter mail was being worked in these same terminals as nearly every train went hopelessly stuck; pouches for a single state “up to 25X” were turned over to them unworked by the score. Not until 1945, the last year of the war, were clerks over thirty finally deferred, and then it was too late to make much difference. Five thousand clerks eventually went into the forces.

Of special interest during those days of womens’ auxiliaries (the WAC, WAVES, and so on) were the famous “TWERPS”—Temporary Women Employees, Railway Postal Service. Women clerks in the terminals, numbering only a handful in the 1920–40 period, were greeted by hundreds of new sister workers as high-school bobby-soxers, housewives, and grandmothers were added to the ranks of the war-time subs along with teen-age boys and older men. Harassed clerks-in-charge racked their brains over problems of extra washrooms, special rest facilities, and budding romances across the letter cases. Alone among practically all fields of labor, only the R.P.O. trains themselves still remained closed to women workers. The Los Angeles Terminal was especially proud of its one hundred girls, one of whom would bring around fresh coffee and rolls each Sunday morning. A special farewell party was held for them after the war in view of their “job truly well done,” with coffee, doughnuts, and kisses from the C.-in-C.! Women loaded bag-mail at train stops.

Photostated “V-Mail” letters, with tiny, nearly illegible addresses, made letter distribution a real headache, and the well-deserved granting of free postage to military personnel caused the volume of soldier and naval mail to soar to unprecedented heights. R.P.O.s everywhere ran out of standard pouch and sack equipment, as this was channeled overseas. No. 2 sacks, awkwardly tagged in green with the words “FIRST CLASS MAIL,” were declared to be letter pouches for the duration—much to the confusion of pouch clerks and railroad porters. To augment thinning stocks of the standard large No. 1 sack, coarse burlap bags were commandeered, many of them still bearing the names of some kind of sugar or feed

printed on them. (Easily worn through, they were supplied with loose collar fasteners that always got lost, until someone thought to have them fastened on.) With such makeshift equipment and with mail stacked ceiling high, conditions were much as Transfer Clerk Ruben Ericson of Portland, Oregon, described them: "The boys don't sing at their work any more; the coffeepot rusts in the pie box. The day when a clerk just did an honest day's work has gone with the wind . . . he does the work of a horse . . . Tired and sore . . . you never get down to the [last] sack."

In 1944 the Postal Service handled over 1,482,000,000 pieces of mail for army personnel—most of it through R.M.S. hands. Retired clerks were reinstated not only in the terminal R.P.O.s but even at Selective Service headquarters itself, where their sorting skill proved most valuable. Participation in buying war bonds and stamps was 100 per cent in three R.M.S. divisions, 99 per cent in the other twelve; clerks gave gallons of blood for plasma, and one branch gave \$700 to purchase a Red Cross ambulance. They organized R.M.S. Buddy Clubs in New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Indianapolis, and elsewhere, which sent steady streams of letters and gifts to fellow clerks in camp or overseas. Newsy bulletins published especially for them were sent over too—the *Broadcaster*, from Washington clerks; the *Kansas City Service News* or *Buddy News*; St. Louis's *Buddy Club News*; and two *Trip Reports* (from New York and Indianapolis).

Even in the prosaic "calling" of rotary lock numbers the usual "V—Vinegar" quickly became "V for Victory"! Vital registered military shipments were carried over key routes, guarded by an armed soldier or marine for whom sympathetic clerks made up beds of sacks in the end of the car. Clerks even read of one of their number, a prisoner of war in Germany, sending back to his buddies through neutral channels for R.M.S. schemes and schedules to study! Not until V-J Day did the pressure let up; the five-day week was restored in October 1945, and drafted clerks were reinstated in the R.M.S. as fast as they were released. Deprived of their R.M.A. membership under New Hampshire insurance regu-

lations, special rules had to be made to permit their rejoining without a second initiation fee (some unfortunate veterans had already paid it). Wartime subs were quickly released, the last ones leaving on March 31, 1946.

But what of the overseas picture *this* time? Instead of calling in the R.M.S., the entire job of distributing incoming and outgoing military mails was handled by the Army Postal Service and the navy mail clerks. There is no denying the fact that they did a splendid, heroic job of it, under the most trying difficulties and dangers. And yet the record seems clear that had the Railway Mail Service been permitted to take over the whole setup as before, a still better and an amazingly efficient job could have been done which would have eliminated most of the constant complaints of six-month delays, misunderstandings, lost mails, and what not with which postal officials were swamped (from both civilian and army patrons) the whole time.

And much credit for the splendid accomplishments that *did* transpire must go to the many R.M.S. officials and clerks who were placed in the Army Postal Service after their enlistment or induction, many becoming instructors. The vast majority of all outbound army mail was again addressed to Army Post Offices, but the standard form of address was now:

(Name of soldier and unit)

A.P.O. No. —

c/o Postmaster, New York, N. Y.²

These mails were sorted by a huge Embarkation Army Post Office, later the Postal Concentration Center at Long Island City, New York, and by other smaller army units.

Furthermore, no military R.P.O.s were operated on the European continent by United States forces in this war, either. Air mail constituted the bulk of the traffic; intensive bombing had left almost no usable track or railway cars; and the army postal men knew little about transit-sorted mail and its advantages. Mails from New York to France were routed from the port of entry (after mails for nearby units

²Or San Francisco, or other embarkation point.

were taken out) in solid railroad cars for Paris, where a Base Post Office broke it up and scattered Postal Regulating Sections did the final sorting. A few special trains were operated (one called the *Toute de Suite Express*) to haul closed-pouch mails only. The A.P.S. did sort mail in at least one stationery French-type R.P.O. car (*spoorwagon*) in Holland.

However, some important military R.P.O.s were operated—in Germany and Holland, by the British, and outside of Europe, by United States forces. The first R.P.O. of the British Army of the Rhine began operating September 30, 1946, from Herford to Hamburg; operations were later extended to Dusseldorf and the Hook of Holland, this last service continuing to June 4, 1949. Four crews of four soldiers each manned standard German R.P.O. cars, using "FIELD POST OFFICE" cancels.

Best-known U. S. Army R.P.O. was in Iran (Persia), from Bandar Shapur on the Gulf to Teheran, the capital, on the Iranian State Railways. Operated largely by the 711th and 730th (later 791st) Railway Operating Battalions of the Military Railway Service, Persian Gulf Command, it traversed a single-track, standard-gauge route through miles of desert via Arak and Ahwaz. The two daily trains handled military letters for the occupying forces and for Russia, the latter being turned over to the connecting Soviet-operated line from Teheran to Tobruk and the U.S.S.R. In three separate four-wheeled German R.P.O. cars, clerks of the American and British armies, as well as civilian Iranian R.P.O. clerks, distributed mail for their respective personnel. With no official title or postmark known to us, this railway post office operated until July 1, 1945.

In China we operated the Tientsin & Chinguantoo R.P.O., a 150-mile route serving Marine outfits guarding the railway and manned by Marine clerks—probably the only line so staffed. Clerk T. V. Atwell (on military leave from the R.M.S.) reported that the train once returned to Tientsin minus its mail car—which was finally located in a train making tracks for Manchuria miles away. Atwell, the other mail clerk, and three generals pleaded with railway personnel in

vain—none could understand English—as they were shifted around; with only two days' rations on board, it took them five days to be returned to Tientsin.

The Tokyo-Sapporo Military R.M.S. route on the Japan State Railways was operated by the Army, using an R.P.O. car with small square windows and the lettering "U.S. MAIL CAR" and "AOMORI-SAPPORO" in English and Japanese. Though it carried all the first-class mail for northern army units, only registered matter was sorted in transit; this alone kept two six-man crews busy. They had a sixty-two-mile car ferry.

There was a still better-known Military R.M.S. route in North Africa, but despite contrariwise reports, it did not actually sort mail in transit. This train from Casablanca to Oran, however, did carry a mail clerk; he received, separated, and dispatched closed bags of mail over his five hundred-mile run in green-painted, ten-ton cars lettered "M.R.M.S." He had a bunk to sleep in during his twenty-four-hour trip, but no case or racks. It was projected to go on to Algiers and connect with two smaller M.R.M.S. routes operating there, and was in charge of M.R.M.S. Director Carl Gray with a daily ten-car mail train for nearly a year. One Algiers route was given a ceremonious "first trip"—with the mail car left behind, as embarrassed brass-hats discovered!

Highly publicized in the military news of the day was "the first time in history that clerks sorted mails in planes," also over North Africa, in April, 1943. Actually, no pieces of mail were sorted—nor was it the first time clerks had been assigned to mail planes (done in the 1920s—see Chapter 16). Clerks detailed from A.P.O.'s *were* assigned to planes, but only to separate bags for dispatch as before. A "mobile post office" was also operated in an army truck to serve Allied forces: it had a postmark, but there is no evidence that it sorted mail in transit or carried clerks on duty when traveling. By far the largest proportion of distribution in transit in World War II, however, was done in the Navy Post Offices on our ships, which carried out detailed and comprehensive transit-sorting of mails from home ports clear to Pacific

theaters of action—many navy mail clerks being former R.P.C.s, who were publicly commended by the Navy for their magnificent performance as a class.

Railway mail clerks in general invariably distinguished themselves in both courage and ability, and in both postal and combat units, in every part of the forces to which assigned; most became officers of considerable rank, but some met a heroic death. No one could have given more of a "last full measure of devotion," perhaps, than young Substitute Joseph Rozeman of an Atlanta, Georgia, district. He subscribed fifty dollars monthly in war bonds out of his small wages as soon as Pearl Harbor was attacked; solicitous officials protested to no avail. Failing in attempts to enlist in the Marines, he was drafted in the infantry instead; he was detailed to a permanent United States installation but demanded (and was given) combat service in the Pacific—then was wounded on Leyte, finally killed on Luzon. Railway mail officials were sent to several occupied and other countries after the war to rehabilitate civilian postal service, particularly in Germany; hers was placed in charge of former R.M.S. General Superintendent Steve A. Cisler and ex-R.M.A. President Pete Schardt—former R.M.S. Division Superintendent, A.E.F. postal head, and Southern Railway official. Even today ex-clerk Archie Imus is top postal officer for Germany's United States Zone. (See Chap. 15 re Turkey.)

When war broke out anew in 1950 in Korea, again involving this country, the P.T.S. quickly girded for action. Once more, military mails gained priority and were handled as in World War II.

But even in the absence of war's alarms there are still floods, wrecks, fires, and sometimes train robberies to challenge the mettle of the railway mail clerk. Over seventy-five R.P.O. lines have had to suspend service at once because of floods, as in the widespread ones of March 1936 from Maine to Ohio. As in the Beardstown deluge (Chapter 1), the appalling Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Flood of 1889 was taken in stride by clerks on the N.Y. & Pittsburgh, the Pennsy's main line. They found their train stalled at the edge of the flood;

water was rising at a dangerous rate. But one clerk quickly jumped out, ran up a side street, and returned with a wagon and four horses into which all mail was loaded. They drove to Altoona and sorted it there at the post office.

There are dramatic stories of other floods. The de luxe *Ambassador*, Train 332 of the CentVt-B&M's St. Albans & Boston R.P.O. out of Montreal, Quebec, was stalled between two track washouts in a vast waste of water at Roxbury, Vermont, for nearly a week without *any* contact from the outside world; Clerk Harold Kimball had to walk fourteen miles to get his mail out. That was in the 'twenties; but earlier, in 1905, St. Lou. & Little Rock (MoPac) Train 6 ran smack into a fifteen-foot wall of water at Piedmont, Missouri; the engine crew jumped back into the R.P.O. car as their head end was hurled into the torrent, and Clerk Wilson Davenport finally swam fifty yards of raging water to high ground to secure help, saving a drowning tramp on the way. Floods invade even postal cars, necessitating piling all mail on top of racks and working knee-deep in water; Clerks Harry Stone and J. G. McIlhenny did that for hours in a Kansas City & Albuquerque (Santa Fe) mail car in Kansas City, and when relieved could get home only by walking over car tops and yard fences. Ogden & San Francisco (SP) Train 9 was *twice* involved in huge floods on the "Overland" route. In 1911, says the *Go-Back Pouch*, the train left Ogden on February tenth and didn't get back to its terminus until after eleven days and a 2,300-mile detour. Raging streams and washed-out trestles and tracks confronted it everywhere; food, water, and necessities ran out, the SP dining-car department finally furnishing rations; the hungry and unwashed clerks were shuttled in slow stages to Winnemucca, San Francisco, Sparks, Reno, Sacramento, Portland, and back to Ogden! The other (1924) flood involved a fierce storm on the Utah salt flats, with towering waves of brine from the Great Salt Lake crashing the train as clerks swept water out.

This same train was the victim of one of the most spectacular wrecks in R.M.S. history. On September 12, 1932, Train

9 left the rails near Emigrant Gap in the Sierras, and the R.P.O. car tumbled *six hundred feet* down a mountainside without a single fatality! All four clerks were badly injured, yet they convoyed their registers by truck to Sacramento, checked out each pouch after hours of guarding the mails, and completed their trip report in full detail.

In typical contrast was the most recent of our major R.M.S. wrecks, mentioned with a few others in our first chapter. When the Pennsy's *Red Arrow*, N.Y. & Pittsburgh Train 68, reached Bennington Curve at Gallitzin, Pennsylvania (near Altoona), a sudden derailment brought death to six Pennsylvania clerks in February 1947—H. E. Bohner of Lemoyne, H. L. Bowman of Bowmansdale, W. E. Moore of Pittsburgh, P. J. Leiden of Altoona, B. M. Jakeman of Philadelphia, and G. C. Bowman of Tyrone, who was suspended eight hours by his feet before being cut loose, dictating his will in the meantime. Others were badly hurt.

The news shocked the nation, for scarcely even one or two clerks per year had been killed in wrecks for decades—none at all in 1944, 1941, 1939, and other recent years. But the employment of untrained wartime railway workers and lack of equipment upkeep were beginning to show; three more men were killed that year, or a total of 33 for the twelve years 1936–47 inclusive. The wrecks record is again improving, but much needs to be done in pushing a vigorous safety program.

We can only skim through some of the other vivid or tragic wreck scenes of the past. We see the New York Central's *Wolverine*, N.Y. & Chicago Train 8, running off a curve at Rochester in 1945, killing Clerk Al Van Camp; another N.Y. & Chic. train piling up at Canastota, New York, two years later, when another Al became a hero by saving the lives of scores amid scalding water and steam (Al Novak, flagging a second train just in time); the Fourth-of-July crack-up in 1944 of the Santa Fe's *Chief*, when clerks sloshed around in hot oil, saving pouch mail, to be greeted and assisted by General Superintendent John Hardy, who was riding the same train; the Chic. & Omaha (C&NW) train

which broke in two just after a clerk threw off the Vail, Iowa, pouch, injuring a passenger, because the pouch hit a switch standard opening the points; the two widely separated clerks killed in the same month (July 1937) at grade crossings, *each* by an R.P.O. train on which he had once worked: one on the New Haven's Boston & N.Y. at Warwick, Rhode Island, the other at Hoopeston, Illinois, on the Chic. & Evansville (C&EI); and many others, which pass in a crashing panorama before our eyes. Only yesterday, heroic clerks on Chi., Ft. Madison & K.C. (SFe) Tr. 22, in the shock of a frightful wreck (July 5, 1950), did practically *all* the rescuing of injured passengers. (No clerks were seriously hurt in the crash of the PRR's *Spirit of St. Louis*, Pitts. & St. Lou. Tr. 31, on Sept. 11, 1950, into a troop train, killing many soldiers.)

The most historic of all mail-train crack-ups was doubtless the song-famed "Wreck of the Old 97." The engine and four cars of Washington & Charlotte (Southern) Train 97 simply crashed down over the broken side of a seventy-five-foot trestle at Gretna, near Danville, Virginia, on September 27, 1903. Eleven mail clerks were killed, but three other clerks of that crew have survived to this day, still in the Service or recently retired. Two of them, J. H. Thompson and Jennings Dunlap, stayed on the same line until then. Thompson retired in 1941 to his home at Lexington, Virginia, after compiling a huge scrapbook of "Old 97" clippings and meeting every President since McKinley. He was a good friend of David G. George, author of the famous song, who was the telegrapher at Gretna and had a premonition of the wreck; he often told Thompson how he watched Old 97 race "down grade at ninety miles an hour" to the fatal curve, an hour late, with two firemen keeping up a full head of steam. Thompson reveals that George lost an entire fortune defending his song rights.

Some remarkable "series" of wrecks on the same line, or involving the same clerk or other strange coincidences, have occurred. Besides the thirty-eight afore-mentioned wrecks on the old Indianapolis & Effingham, we recall that James L. Stice (see Chapters 10 and 16) was in eleven smashes and

injured in four, and that seven consecutive wrecks on the Omaha & Kansas City (MoPac) years ago invariably involved one particular clerk—it caused so much superstition among trainmen that railroad officials demanded his transfer. Roy V. McPherson, of the Utica, New York Terminal, has published accounts of four amazing hairbreadth escapes from death; in one case he would have been decapitated at Moira, New York, when the engine smashed its cab in sideswiping a boxcar, had he not jumped back from the mail-car door just in time. Again, running on the old N.Y. & O. R.R., his train was derailed at an open switch at Kildare, New York, just a few feet behind a standing boxcar of dynamite. And finally, in addition to nearly drowning on a cruise on his layover, he tells of stopping his Nyando & Tupper Lake (NY&O) R.P.O. train upon a trestle near Madawaska, New York, to have a derailed truck of the tender fixed—only to fall off the trestle and get sucked into a quagmire in the creek below, barely getting out!

In 1948 the two opposite R.P.O. trains on the same run were *both* wrecked when they met head on—Newport & Springfield (B&M-CVt-CP) Trains 78 and 79, near Newbury, Vermont. Train crews on both crack Boston-Montreal flyers were killed, but the clerks escaped with injuries; they carefully salvaged the mail from the crumpled steel R.P.O. cars, one having to be cut up by torches for junk. It was the worst wreck in all New England in a forty-five-year period. And on the C. & N.W. the *same* train was wrecked three times in 1942—Chic. & Omaha Train 5; while in a 1945 smashup, day-old chicks, turkeys, and white mice escaped the mails when Buffalo & Wash. (PRR) Train 575 was wrecked, its mail car jumping over the engine!

An astounding thing happened on the old Hutchinson & Kinsley R.P.O., a Santa Fe cutoff route in Kansas, because of a wreck not involving *any* mail train! On delivering the first pouch en route one trip (Partridge, Kansas), the puzzled local clerk remarked that the depot had been moved across the track, even though it still bore the same name. Making the next throwoff, Abbeyville, they noticed the train cross-

ing another railway. "They've built a new railroad here since we were out last week, John," remarked the local man. This station, also on the wrong side, flew by before they could check its name; but on viewing the "scenery," it appeared as familiar as ever. But when the third station whizzed by on the wrong side, the alarmed clerks called the train porter and asked where they were. They were at Ellenwood, on the Santa Fe's main line twenty miles north or Zenith, the cutoff stop where they thought they were! The conductor, familiar with both routes, had neglected to notify the clerks of a sudden detour necessitated by a wreck on the cutoff. The disarming similarity of the two routes, even to parallel competing railways on the left for miles out of Hutchinson and identical blind sidings and chutes, had been responsible.

The specter of fire is ever-present. A Diesel locomotive blaze on Albuquerque & Los Angeles (Santa Fe) Train 18 at Fontana, California, cracked all window glass on the R.P.O. car recently and set its vestibule fabrics afire; clerks assisted in quenching it with extinguishers, one being injured. A far worse fire in Detroit & Cincinnati (B&O) Train 57 at Weston, Ohio, not long ago consumed all mail in the letter cases and all clerks' belongings and grips; yet the men managed to save all registers and escape uninjured. The Rock Island's *Rocket*, Train 7 of the Omaha & Colorado Springs hit a huge oil truck at Dellvale, Kansas, in 1947, and flaming oil was showered into the R.P.O. car from all openings; pouches of mail caught fire, exits and creep doors were stuck or blocked, and clerks barely escaped. At least four clerks have been killed in other fiery wrecks—Paul Crysler and John Gall, in that of a Chicago & Streator³ (CB&Q) gasoline car at Oswego, Illinois (1943); and two others on the Atlanta, Valdosta & Jacksonville (Sou-Ge & F, near Valdosta, Georgia, in a burning-trestle collapse) and on a Childress & Lubbock (FW&DC) gas rail car near Casey, Texas—both in 1942. A Norfolk & Western (C&NW) R.P.O. car was derailed at Spencer,

³Now Chi. & Zearing.

Nebraska, rolled over, and burned with its mail (the clerk escaped) just recently in 1950.

There may be smoke where there is no fire, as Clerk-in-Charge L. Beaumont Reed of the N.Y. & Pitts. (PRR) fortunately discovered one day at Monmouth Junction, New Jersey; he scented a hotbox there and notified the baggageman that it was a certain engine ponywheel. In spite of a cautious crawl from there on (to pick up a new locomotive at Trenton), the hot wheel and its mate sheered off at Princeton Junction, New Jersey, and the pony frame dropped to the tracks. No one was hurt as the train ground to a stop. Reed little dreamed that the Pennsy's famed *Congressional* would be wrecked from that same cause on the same tracks a few years later, somewhat farther south, at Frankford Junction in Philadelphia, to become the most appallingly fatal rail wreck of modern times. (Neither did the two clerks on the N.Y. & Wash. multiple-unit local just ahead of the *Congressional* suspect anything, even though one of them—this writer—had personally observed Frankford Junction as a check mark for his C.-in-C. just a half hour before!) Reed's valiant feat was credited by all with saving hundreds of lives (see Chap. 16 re broadcast).

Many daring train robberies occurred, too, in addition to the few mentioned previously—especially on lines out of San Francisco. (Mail-train robbers were once given the death penalty.) The most spectacular was undoubtedly the De Autremont brothers' bombing of a Portland & San Fran. (SP) R.P.O. train near Siskiyou, Oregon, on October 11, 1923. They ruthlessly halted the train with a dynamite trap, killed every trainman and postal clerk (only one or two R.P.C.'s were on duty), and stole thousands of dollars. Postal inspectors, with only a coat and some tools as evidence, spent \$500,000 carrying out the world's biggest man hunt for three and one-half years; all three brothers were eventually captured and jailed. The gutted R.P.O. car, rebuilt, was eventually wrecked again at Lowell, Oregon, in 1946; again rebuilt, it is still in use.

A second Port. & San Fran. mail robbery, a \$40,000 unde-

tected rifling of a registry convoy in San Francisco, remained a mystery from 1937 to 1946, when a post-office registry clerk was arrested as the culprit. Four bandits held up the old Deming & San Fran. (SP) just out of Deming, New Mexico in 1883 by spreading the rails, killing the engineer, and firing into the mail car; they got only \$1,000 out of the mail in lieu of an expected \$100,000 pay roll, and the clerks were instrumental in the bandits' later capture through their descriptions. And on the Ogden & San Fran. (SP), in 1900 two "hoboes" on Train 10 pulled out .45s at Suisun City, California, and halted the train. By threat of dynamiting they forced the clerks to admit them, then they seized the registered pouches and fled with them in the uncoupled engine!

The notorious Roy Gardner, too, held up his first big mail train on the Ogden & S.F. About 1918 he boarded a storage car at Roseville, California, robbed the pouches therein as well as a clerk deadheading in the car, and finally leaped from the train. Already sought by posses, Gardner was now vigilantly searched for in several states; but in 1920 he boldly climbed into the closet of a Phoenix & Parker (Santa Fe) R.P.O. car as it left Phoenix, Arizona, attempting to hold up burly Clerk Herman Inderlied by surprise. Inderlied "saw red" at that; he simply knocked the robber down, seized his club as it was poised over his head, grabbed Gardner's gun, sat on him, and called for help! A railroad cop took him prisoner, and was given half of Inderlied's \$5,000 reward from the Postmaster General.

Clerk Z. E. Strong was killed in a most unusual robbery of St. Paul & Miles City Train 2, the NP's *North Coast Limited*. A young supposed new substitute, with forged credentials, held up the crew with a sudden gunshot. Strong was shot as soon as he made a slight nervous move; the other clerks were disarmed and tied or locked in closets, and \$50,000 in currency taken. Near Minneapolis, Clerk H. M. Christensen broke open the closet door with his shoulder, noticed the bandit still in the car, and dashed the other way into the express car. With the express messenger, rearmed, he nearly captured the impostor as the latter hastily jumped

when the train slowed down. He *was* captured a month later.

But the greatest mail-train robbery in all history netted from \$2,000,000 to \$3,000,000 in an insidious holdup of Chic. & Minneapolis (CMStP&P) Train 57 at Roundout, Illinois, on Friday, the thirteenth of June, 1924. The bandits hid in the engine cab, held up the locomotive crew, and made them stop the train and flash a headlight signal. Accomplices in an auto then shot out a mail-car window, forced out the eighteen clerks with gas bombs, and drove off with sixty-four registered pouches. The best available postal inspectors were assigned to the resulting investigation, headed by Inspector William J. Fahy who was considered the "ace of them all." Finally a certain detective got an incredible "tip" by phone from an underworld character; in a daze, he decided to risk his whole career and bring his shady woman informer before Chief Inspector Rush D. Simmons. She told the chief postal sleuth a gruesome story.

Her husband was in jail for another postal theft of which she claimed he was innocent. She had flirted with the officer who'd arrested him in efforts to secure his release; the officer in question had "fallen" for her, and now her retribution was at hand—she had coaxed out of him the fact that *he* was the head of the Rondout robbers' gang. "Name the man!" snapped Simmons.

"Postal Inspector William Fahy!"

It was true; another renegade postal employee—but not an R.M.S. man—was responsible, having connived with the gangsters. He and his five accomplices were caught and jailed for long terms, and all the stolen money recovered.⁴

In the P.T.S. itself dishonesty is so rare that only once in a great while does some clerk succumb to temptation, to the great chagrin and anger of all others on the line thus dishonored. Quickly and quietly, postal inspectors will trap such a culprit (usually by many test mailings), enter his car or terminal, and escort him out of the Service forever. The

⁴See Professor Dennis' *The Travelling Post Office* (still available—see Bibliography) for three remarkably humorous or interesting train-robbery stories on pages 91, 109, and 111 thereof.

few cases quickly reviewed here are almost the *only* ones on record for several years. These included (1) a clerk on a C&NW route who fingered over his mail for money-laden letters when traversing a dark tunnel, later caught pocketing some of them when another clerk lit a cigarette just then; (2) an Eastern terminal clerk, lacking funds for his girl friends, who found the quarters in those little cloth film mailers sticking to his fingers (quickly detected from secret-gallery peepholes); (3) an unfortunate clerk on a PRR run caught with letters, money, and bills scattered over his dormitory bed where he was lying in a stupor, finally arrested in his car by a clever ruse; (4) two clerks on different lines who employed the idea of slipping valuable letters into official or stamped envelopes addressed to themselves or to a fake firm, so as to never get caught taking mail from the car—they were apprehended just the same; (5) a tobacco-chewing clerk convicted of stealing money out of letters (later resealed) by James Stice, after he became an inspector, through the tobacco flecks on envelope flaps; and (6) a Kansas City clerk convicted in 1915 of participating in a \$25,000 theft of money from a Chicago bank pouch which later arrived stuffed with waste paper. Actually, in any five-year period, only about seven or eight such cases ever occur among all thirty thousand railway mail clerks—a top record in industrial honesty!

There are, of course, some unusual, not easily classifiable situations that challenge clerks' ingenuity. One was when Mpls. & Miles City (CMStP&P, now St. Paul & Aberdeen) Train 15 was pulling out of Minneapolis after the disheartened crew had noticed the Minneapolis Dis pouch (due for dispatch there) still nestled in the rack. But as the train backed into its wye a few blocks farther on, Clerk Hyatt noticed a Minneapolis post-office truck waiting at the crossing. With a yell, he jumped out and thrust the pouch into the startled driver's lap with a hurried explanation, regaining his train just as it was starting up. In Illinois, R.M.S. officials had to order the G.M. & O. R.R. to slow down its overnight Chicago, Springfield and St. Lou. mail train at

Lockport—where its 80-mph speed caused mails to be shredded to bits in the local pouch thrown off there, the postmaster having to paste letters back together after finding the pouch about 6 A.M.!

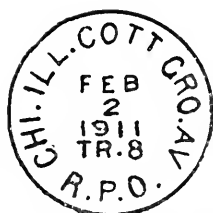
Of course there are the particularly odd or unusual post offices, not to mention the great amount of mail received for long-discontinued ones, that challenge the ingenuity of our railway mail clerks; but in general the fascinating stories of these situations are not within our scope here. Large suburbs without post offices, cities and towns straddling state lines (with one or two post offices), and the post offices named exactly like other large localities within the state, all call for more-than-usual genius in distribution. Clerks are supposed to know the routes of all discontinued post offices, even if long-forgotten at the time of their entering the Service, for which mail is still received. Hundreds of tiny rural post offices are discontinued annually, as has been the practice for decades, because of extension of rural routes providing direct box service to residents of each small hamlet.

In the P.T.S. general scheme of the state involved, the little Greek letter *delta* (Δ) is prefixed to the name of each doomed office immediately upon its closure—a symbol that perhaps incorporates more pathos, more poignant sentiment, than any other used in the Service; it is unknown outside of it. Three years later the forgotten hamlet, symbol and all, is stricken out of the scheme; the rural route serving it bears only a prosaic number instead of perpetuating its name. The village still sleeps on, even if only a tiny crossroads in the wooded farmlands; but all have now forgotten it. All, that is, but the veteran clerks who have given their lives to the Railway Mail Service and the P.T.S.—to meeting the challenge of seeing that the tiny-hamlet mails are still sent home, as well as the “challenge of the unusual” in the great events of national history.

R.P.O.S ON THE TROLLEY TRAIL

Over a glitter of blue-burnished steel
Singing a song of the flange of the wheel . . .
Down in the street. The milkman stays,
Halting his team for a moment to gaze;
He looks, he sees, and hears the ring
Of the onward rush of the "Green. & Spring."

— PHIL BOLGER



—Courtesy *Postal Markings*

The 6th day of May, 1950, marked the end of an era in transit mail distribution so remarkable, so unique, that no other country even approached the incredible stage of development which it reached in America. At 7:50 P.M. that day the last true

trolley-car R.P.O.¹ in America completed its final run into Los Angeles, California; a big red steel interurban car with a twenty-foot postal apartment, it had just rolled into the Pacific Electric terminal from San Bernardino, 57.7 miles eastward. The epic history of the American trolley R.P.O. service, begun in St. Louis late in 1892, had come to its close—fifty-seven and one half years later.

¹See Chapter 15 for trolley R.P.O.s still operated in France and Switzerland (there *may* be others); also see Austria, Canada, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden (same chapter). Trams in Leeds, England, carry public mailing boxes.

Yes, an era has ended—unless, that is, one considers the electric suburban R.P.O.s of the Eastern states, with multiple-unit electric cars, to be in the same class. Or unless, by chance, the P.T.S. should once more authorize electric-car R.P.O. apartment service on one of several modernized interurban trolley routes which still operate in Illinois, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere.

Trolleys still play an important part in P.T.S. operations, for there are still numerous trolley-operated closed-pouch routes—the Wilkes-Barre & Scranton (L&WV) and Phila. & Media (PST) C.P.'s in Pennsylvania, the Carlinville & St. Louis C.P. (ITS) in Illinois, and others. And until 1948 there were still three true trolley R.P.O.s operating; but while the other two were actual holdovers of traction-era mail-car operations, the San Bernardino & Los Angeles was then a brand-new route! Operated for only two and one-half years, it traversed the longest route of the still-operating Pacific Electric system, once the world's largest interurban network, via Covina, San Dimas, and Fontana. At first the San Bernardino & Los Angeles also connected with the abandoned L. A. & San Pedro trolley R.P.O., to be described a bit later.

The unsung final trip of the San Bernardino service, replaced immediately by an identically named H.P.O., was marked only by the cancellation of collectors' covers for this never-to-be-repeated event. But, in contrast, the line was first inaugurated with impressive ceremonies on September 1, 1947. Car No. 1406, cleaned and shiny, had just been commandeered from the much shorter L.A. & Redondo Beach (PE) run, which ceased operation the previous day; and 8th Division General Superintendent T. L. Wagenbach was in charge of the special observances at the Sixth & Main Streets Depot. Pullman-built, the big trolley contained express and baggage sections, as well as the mail unit, and was fifty-five feet long. It operated separately from passenger and freight units on its three-hour run—the majority of its route furnishing no passenger service. Earlier the route had been a busy passenger line whose express cars exceeded even the present railroad streamliners in speed between the same two points,

and with C.P. mail service. The new route greatly improved the handling of local mails, formerly delayed by dispatch to Los Angeles and back, and expedited through mails by direct connection to main-line R.P.O.s at both termini. The same service is now furnished by the new H.P.O., which was placed in operation at departmental option as an "economy" measure after P.E. had announced long-range plans to convert the route to Diesel freight operation if granted permission.

The Postal Transportation Service, to be sure, still lists one *existing* R.P.O. in the same "Electric" category as the Los Angeles lines mentioned. This is the Washington & Bluemont (W&OD) in Virginia—which, however, has operated gas-electric and Diesel units exclusively for years now. Long a busy interurban trolley line with big green-and-gold cars, it was in its very earliest days a steam road starting from Alexandria (the Alex., Loudon & Hamp. R.R.) which became the Alex. & Round Hill R.P.O. Its termini were later shifted a few miles (to Washington and Bluemont) upon electrification in 1912. It now operates only for the 44.6 miles from Rosslyn, Virginia (station of Arlington, opposite Washington), to Purcellville, due to a seven-mile track abandonment. Its last trolley-operated R.P.O. service was gradually replaced by Diesel operations about 1942, during a two-year suspension of all passenger service. Two round trips of R.P.O. operations are furnished daily in fifteen-foot apartment facilities inside streamlined gas-electric and Diesel units; it is a busy one-man run, and numerous collectors seek its postmark. (*Other details in Chapter 10.*)

But the East also boasts several other busy suburban R.P.O.s operated by electric cars coupled to form trains. Although these cars do not travel singly, the head car is operated by a regular motorman despite the fact that the track is part of a regular railroad system on which the trolley wire is contacted by "pantagraphs" instead of trolley poles. In fact, two of these lines vie for the title of "second shortest" R.P.O. in the United States.

One is the picturesque twenty-two-mile Summit & Gladstone (DL&W) in New Jersey. Its "multiple-unit" strings of

cars connect at Summit with main-line electric commuter trains to Newark and New York. Our second-shortest independent R.P.O., its scenic single track winds through attractive towns and luxurious suburban estates. The forty minute R.P.O.-passenger run is but one of numerous busy daily commuter trains and has a fifteen-foot mail apartment and motorman's booth at the front end. Nicknamed "The P. & D." (Passaic & Delaware branch), its clerk has to round out his working time in Hoboken Terminal or on the connecting N.Y. & Branchville (DL&W). Don Steffee tells of the time Substitute Leslie Sheridan drew this combination assignment one hot summer day; he had all the doors open and got the motorman to call out the stations. Near one, Sheridan quickly locked out its light *skin* pouch and threw it down to the end of the car—whereupon the breeze through both doors quickly whipped it outside! Fortunately the motorman obligingly backed up to retrieve it, amid shouted explanations to the deafish but schedule-conscious conductor, to the amusement of the passengers and to Sheridan's embarrassment.

The Summit & Glad., like the N.Y. & Far Rock. (Chapter 10), is a true electric-car R.P.O.—*all* passenger and mail service is by M.U. electrics. But a perplexing borderline case is the so-called Phila. & Paoli (PRR) in Pennsylvania, which, if truly a separate R.P.O., is the second shortest of them all (twenty miles). This is the famed *Paoli Local* of Philadelphia's fashionable "Main Line" suburbs. In fact, it actually does traverse the Main Line of the PRR, being simply a short run of the N.Y. & Pittsburgh R.P.O. thereon; it uses clerks and postmarkers of the latter line and is not even separately listed in P.T.S. schemes or schedules. But, on the other hand, it uses its own tracks exclusively (alongside the others) and is named independently in the *List of Official R.P.O. Titles!* A hot run, it is about the busiest of all multiple-unit locals, perhaps, with its three daily fifty-minute trips each day. Mountains of mail, including that of colleges at Haverford and Bryn Mawr, must be sorted by only one or two clerks in a fifteen-foot apartment. And "The Paoli" has no terminal to do its advance distribution! A similar case is the M.U.-

electric W. Trent. & Phila. (Rdg., N. J.-Pa.), with steam trains of the N.Y., Balt. & Wash. using its route.

There is at least one other true all-electric-car R.P.O., however—the PRR's nearby Phila. & West Chester. Formerly the Phila. & Perry. (with a long steam-operated segment to Perryville, Maryland), it serves Lansdowne, Swarthmore, Media, and other busy suburbs on a 27.5-mile run. The R.P.O. includes within its organization a more direct nineteen-mile closed-pouch run on real interurban trolley cars of the Philadelphia Suburban Transportation Company, between pretty much the same two termini (its Philadelphia end is at suburban Upper Darby); but no clerks serve on these streamlined trolleys. Two clerks work in the apartment car on the actual multiple-unit R.P.O. run on the PRR, *except* on holidays—as Paul Wisman discovered to his dismay when he was ordered to make the first road trip of his life thereon one Christmas. It was almost leaving time when he arrived, mail was stacked high in the doorway, and his helper left the car as the train pulled out. Wisman could not even secure a time table until the third station, and knew nothing of the line; with a station flashing by every fifty seconds on the one-hour run, he could work nothing but a few registers. Duly putting off empty pouches at each station, to keep records straight, he “carried by” two full storage pouches for local points. At West Chester, trying to get receipts for his *reds*, he found the post-office registry clerk in Christmas services at church. On the equally hectic return trip all the unsorted outbound and inbound mail had to be hastily baled into six pouches for “Philadelphia GPO Dis.”

We have already mentioned the local runs on the electrified N.Y. & Washington (PRR), a route also shared by main-line trains. On one of its Philadelphia-Trenton M.U.-car locals, one harassed substitute found himself in the same predicament as Wisman. It was his first run and he had no idea of the requirements; taking no chances, he locked all doors and sat on the mail to ride both ways of the whole trip—disregarding all frantic poundings on the door. Investigating officials finally decided they could not penalize him

when he pointed out he had followed orders to "stick right with the train, even if you can't do anything else." There are many other suburban electric runs on main-line railways out of New York and Philadelphia and perhaps elsewhere, but they share the tracks with steam or Diesel through trains (except for the northern electric segment of the PRR's N.Y. & Phila.—see Chapter 10). The N.Y. & Wash. (PRR) is evidently the only main-line R.P.O. electrified from end to end, although others use electric engines in mountain areas only (in Virginia and the Far West).

But to return to the true trolley-car R.P.O.s, most people are amazed today to learn that such service was operated on *city* streetcar lines for nearly forty years. These cars sorted mail in transit between the main city post office and its stations, "pouching" on each other just as the steam R.P.O.s did; extensive night "circuits" were developed to cover a wide area in loop fashion. This unique service utilized at least a hundred ornate white-and-gold "ghost cars" (as they were known) on city streets alone, on which letters were neatly machine-canceled or hand-stamped as well as sorted. In 1895 all street railways were made post routes by Act of Congress, and by 1898 there were forty street R.P.O. lines operating over 379 miles of route, on which 112 clerks sorted 1,889,090 pieces of mail *daily*. The trundling little cars put in some 1,745,000 miles of travel annually and usually carried a boy to reset wire-jumping trolley poles and fix switches.

As early as 1862 a patent was taken out for collecting and conveying mails to city post offices by "street railway cars" (horsecars), but no action was taken on the idea until about 1890, when closed-pouch mails were first handled by trolley (on Minneapolis—St. Paul intercity lines, now Twin Cities Rapid Transit, and on the little Dunkirk & Fredonia Railway in New York State). In Germany trolleys reputedly carried pouch mail at Berlin as early as 1881.

But in June 1891, Major J. B. Harlow—postmaster at St. Louis, Missouri—made a more detailed proposal: to use streetcars for delivery and collection of mails to and from postal stations, stores, offices, and carriers. The first trial runs

of this closed-pouch route were made in cars of the Lindell Avenue Electric Railway in either August or September, 1891; it carried a motored car and trailer that was preceded by a bell-ringing passenger car to warn postal stations to prepare their mails.

On March twenty-third, orthodox R.P.O. service had been authorized on the steam West End Narrow Gauge branch of the St. Louis Cable & Western Railroad (later St. Louis Suburban Railway) out to suburban Florissant, Missouri. Called the St. Louis & Florissant R.P.O., this route was gradually electrified to become a trolley line (as the city grew rapidly in that direction) between October and December, 1891. And in one month or the other—sources vary—the first trolley R.P.O. in America came into existence, making its inaugural run of two daily round trips under the same title as its steam predecessor, but serving the suburban post offices only. The 18.1-mile route averaged eighty-one miles' service daily eventually; its first R.P.O. compartment occupied half of a thirty-four-foot, open-platform mail-express-milk car (St. Louis Car Company), with four windows and a long door on each side. It contained a canceling table, pouch rack, and letter case.

Although some have denied that true mail distribution was performed on the line at this time, records show that some new twenty-eight-foot R.P.O. cars were introduced on December 5, 1892, and the round trips increased to three daily, arrangements being made to serve substations and commence "city" sorting. No cancels of the steam line are known.

On February 3, 1893, the St. Louis & Florissant R.P.O. was established as our first real city "Street R.P.O.," it is true; for not until that date did clerks begin canceling, sorting, and exchanging city mails between stations en route. Most experts agree that it was this line which first used the cancel "ST. LOUIS, MO., STREET R.P.O. No. 1" and a similarly worded flag; the oldest existing example of the postmark is dated July 4, 1893, and owned by John Snow. The new cars carried a daily average of 1,000 pounds of mail as compared with but 150 on the old steam route; the cars were mounted on huge diamond-truck wheels.

In a dramatic test, mail from one substation was posted, sorted, transmitted, and delivered to a typical addressee within less than one hour—service such as intracity mailers can look for in vain today. A dozen other successful St. Louis routes were established soon afterward on many lines, which long outlived the Florissant route; the latter succumbed to closed-pouch service as early as 1904 and eventually became the St. Louis Public Service's Hodiante—Ferguson car line (on which buses were just recently substituted).

The second route was the 14-mi. Grand Avenue Circuit, established May 16, 1896, and operated (after consolidation of the smaller companies) by the United Railways; and by the end of the year forty-seven R.P.O. and C.P. routes had been set up. Clerks collected mail from 288 special white-painted street boxes, served practically all city stations and eight suburban offices, and even exchanged mails with sixty-three carrier routes—permitting the carriers to use part of their letter cases to arrange their mail for delivery while the postmen rode out on the cars. Both carriers and clerks made up bags or pouches for many other street R.P.O.s and carrier routes, whether they were intersecting or not. The government paid the Railways four dollars per day per car, *including* the wages of the motorman and his conductor or trolley boy. A reporter from the *St. Louis Republic*, riding an inaugural trip, noted that "the denizens of North St. Louis are much more given to letter writing" than those in the South End, and that "it may be that the good people of Carondelet . . . have not yet awakened to the fact that the . . . mail-collecting system [here] is the best in the world." The St. Louis lines were taken over by the R.M.S. shortly after the beginning, but were turned over to the local post office again in 1899, as were the routes in all other cities; most of the best-known St. Louis lines were established later, in 1904. But on November 15, 1915, the advent of motor mail trucks caused the scrapping of all that city's services; one car remained in use until very recently as a St. Louis P.S. rail-grinder, and is now preserved in the St. Louis Electric Railway Historical Society's outdoor museum.

Brooklyn—the second city to have streetcar R.P.O.s—had five routes on the Brooklyn City Railway and the Atlantic Avenue Railway; the first, ceremoniously opened August 8, 1894, was the Brooklyn & Coney Island R.P.O. Cars No. 1, 5, and others served such longforgotten communities as West Brooklyn, Lessers Park, and Unionville, all long since absorbed by the city. A combination R.P.O.-smoker, No. 101, went via Adams Street to Thirty-Sixth Street on Atlantic Avenue Railway tracks. All routes quit in 1914, including the main 12-mile Brooklyn Circuit R.P.O.

Boston was next to install mail clerks on streetcars; five lines were introduced May 1, 1895, on the West End Street Railway (later Boston Elevated); two other routes followed. Steam R.P.O. lines were connected at all railway stations, and up to forty-five thousand letters were made up for carriers daily on one route. Six lines were day runs; but the longest, the Boston Circuit R.P.O., was a night run serving twenty-one stations on three round trips and covering most of the short-line routes. As it was the only line with sufficient time to cancel much mail, postmarks of the other routes—such as the 6.4-mile Boston & North Cambridge—are exceedingly rare.

Fourth in line was Philadelphia, which opened its twelve-mile "H & P R.P.O." on the Peoples Passenger Railway on June 1, 1885, connecting Stations H and P; it was soon extended to form the Phila. & Germantown R.P.O., later the Phila. & Chestnut Hill. The old G.P.O. at Ninth & Market Streets installed special spur tracks for cars of the various street railway R.P.O.s, which soon increased to six or seven in number; one, the 5-mi. Phila. & Darby, reached that suburb over one of the three streetcar routes contacting it. The three original Philadelphia cars were full R.P.O.s, with storage stalls in one end and a 240-box letter case around all three sides of the other; a rack in the middle held twelve pouches, and a stamping table was opposite. Some routes operated over the Peoples' Traction (which used trailers), Union Traction, and similar early systems; but all were soon consolidated as the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company, the present

"P.T.C." In 1915 this company built a handsome new car for the Service, as illustrated herewith; dubbed the M-1, it was noted for its smooth lines and spacious interior. The appalling disappointment of the P.R.T. can well be imagined when, just two months later, on October eleventh, the United States mail contract which expired on that date was not renewed. All R.P.O. service had to be discontinued on that date, and the proud M-1 was rebuilt as salt car L-12, which at last report still operates over P.T.C. tracks today.

New York City, the fifth to install street railway post offices, oddly enough had only one route (unless the Brooklyn lines are included). This was the very extensive, cable-operated Third Avenue R.P.O. (3rdAvRy), which began operation of its 12.1-mile route with great fanfare on either September 27 or 28, 1895, in the presence of high officials, reporters, and a huge crowd; the former were treated to refreshments at the Colonial Hotel on One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Street. The new route eliminated handling of 951 daily direct pouches over the steam elevated railway. Little white Brill cable trailers were used—the twenty-foot, single-truck, open-platform type with three windows on each side and the lettering "UNITED STATES MAIL" vying for attention with two huge decorative circles. Later designated as the "Third Ave. Distributing Car," the route ran from the old main post office on Park Row via the Bowery and Third Avenue to serve old Stations D, F, H, Y, L, J² and others up to Washington Bridge, reaching the latter via 125th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, to 190th Street. Its eight cars were lettered "A," "B," "C," and so on, and were designed in Third Avenue Railway shops from a full-size partial model by J. H. Robertson; they were loaded on sidings on Mail Street and pulled by horses to the cable tracks. With 380 letter-case boxes in each end, the little cars pouched on steam R.P.O.s and advanced mails to the depots by two hours and more; twenty-six clerks were used. Outmoded by the new pneumatic tubes

²Now known as Cooper (Zone 3), Murray Hill (16), Grand Central (17-22), Lenox Hill (21), Triborough (35), and Manhattanville (27) stations, respectively.

and the electrified "el," the route gave up on September 28 or 30, 1900.

The sixth *permanent* system, one of the very largest and most interesting, was that of Chicago. The city had just trebled in size by absorbing suburban Lake View, Jefferson, Hyde Park, and Lake, Illinois (who remembers them?), with their factories and mail-order houses; and by 1895, Postmaster Washington Hessing had persuaded 6th Division Superintendent Lewis L. Troy, R.M.S., to experiment with specially built postal street cars on Madison Street as early as May twenty-fifth (before New York's first line). Aldermen tried to block the new scheme as one forbidding traction men to strike, but Mayor Swift issued special permits for each car. A Pullman Palace cable trailer, No. 1, made the first run, leaving Madison and Rockwell Streets via the West Chicago Street Railroad amid much ceremony and speechmaking: "The poor man will be able to have his letter go . . . and be delivered as quickly as by special messenger!" But no mail was carried, clerks handled dummy pouches only in the cable train loaded with notables. Two other routes were "begun" simultaneously, but it was some days before even closed pouches were carried.

Declared successful, the three runs were put into regular operation and mail sorting begun on November 11, 1895; postmarkers and official titles were supplied. Car No. 1, used on the Chicago & Madison Street R.P.O. (five miles), was one of the most unusual in the country. It was a mail-passenger combination with a skylight in the fifteen-foot R.P.O. apartment, which contained a 176-box letter case. Later cars, of the overhead-trolley type, were full R.P.O. cars carrying up to three clerks; two were named the *Washington Hessing* and *John H. Hubbard*, after the postmaster and his assistant; the white cars were richly decorated in gold. During strikes the postal cars were respectfully exempted from molestation, and traction companies began painting cars to match until postal heads stopped it. The two other pioneer routes were the Clark Street—Lincoln Avenue (later Chicago & North Clark Street) R.P.O. on the North Chicago

Street Railroad (3.8 miles), and the Chicago & Milwaukee Avenue (8.8 miles). The cable lines were mostly electrified in 1889 and all routes taken over by the United Traction Company. (The "Chic. &" was later dropped from titles or changed to "Chic. Ill.")

There were eventually six lines, mostly of great length; one reached Evanston and another the American Correspondence School—which sometimes "stuck" some luckless trolley R.P.O. crew with seventy-five pouches of letters. A circuit R.P.O. setup, without special postmark, was started in 1909 to serve fifteen stations, eleven of them directly, on an eventual twenty-five mile run. By that time postal cars were being barred from the city center because of traffic congestion, but until then all daytime R.P.O. cars met regularly in the Loop to exchange pouches, beginning at 5:30 A.M. daily and making sixteen hourly round trips. At least eight cars and thirty clerks were employed, as well as collectors and face-up men with carts to collect from boxes or deliver bulk mail to firms. From 60 to 420 pouches of mail were sorted in one day or night on some lines; one line handled 3,260 pouches (hauled or distributed) in one day in 1909. Clerks canceled and sorted the mail, then pouched (1) on all stations en route both ways, (2) on the opposite car of their route, (3) on the G.P.O., and (4) on steam R.P.O. lines at depots. But pneumatic tubes and motor trucks doomed the system; it folded, completely, on November 21, 1915.

Chicago, however, saw the revival of one of its streetcar R.P.O.s for one glorious day of renewed operations thirty-one years later, on August 23, 1946. It was to help celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of the American Philatelic Society, which includes some R.P.O.-postmark collectors. The Chicago Surface Lines brought out its one well-preserved R.P.O. car, renovated to its original condition at a cost of \$10,000 (for the subway-opening transit parade in 1943), and operated it once more from the Hamilton Hotel to the post office, manned with mail clerks. Bereft of modern motors, it was hauled by another car, and its special postmark of

"CHICAGO, ILL./STREET CAR R.P.O." was given to thousands of addressed "covers."

Cincinnati was the next city to have a trolley postal system, but only on one line: the 7.6-mile Walnut Hills & Brighton (CinStRy), begun November 11, 1895. This R.P.O. was later retitled the "BRIGHTON CAR," using standard city flag cancels with that phrase in the "killer"; it served Brighton and other suburbs, operating a handsome four-wheel, open-platform car until 1915.

The nation's capital then joined the parade with its 4.86-mile Pennsylvania Avenue R.P.O. (CTCo); a sixteen-foot ex-horsecar trailer was rebuilt for the first trip on December 23, 1895, from the Georgetown carhouse to the Navy Yard. No "token" service, the initial run was swamped with huge bags of Christmas mail, which "were quickly sorted." Cars pouched on Georgetown, Central, and other stations as well as steam R.P.O. trains. This, too, was a cable line; and when its powerhouse burned, the company operated our only known *horsecar R.P.O.* from September 30, 1897, to April 1898. The R.M.S. chief clerk, G. Car, selected A. B. Carter and D. J. Bartello as the first trolley R.P.O. clerks there, and their names, together with that of J. P. Connolly of New York's Third Avenue R.P.O. (later a writer), are alone enshrined in our public records of known clerks who pioneered in this remarkable field. Permanent cars numbered 1 and 2, and lettered "UNITED STATES RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE" in red and gold, were introduced later; they sorted an average of 162 letter packages, 22 sacks, and 128 pouches daily. The route, as well as two short-lived lines begun later, was converted to conduit trolley operation long before final discontinuance in 1913. At last report one car was still used by Capital Transit as a yard tool shed.

San Francisco fell in line in 1896, with three lines begun simultaneously on September twenty-eighth; the main one, a cable route, being the four-mile Market Street or Market Street & San Francisco R.P.O. (MktStRy), operating from the Ferry Station to Stanyan Street. Service on all lines quit September 4, 1905, but cars continued in closed-pouch serv-

ice, and one was caught in the street by the 1906 earthquake and fire. Rochester, New York, installed its East Side and West Side R.P.O.s (Rochester Electric Railway) in 1896 over 15.3 miles of route; later they were retitled "Car Collection Service B" and "C," and cars lettered accordingly, and quit about 1908. The Baltimore system was to follow next.

In 1898, Pittsburgh's lone route was added to the list of street R.P.O.'s; its 12.4-mile Fifth & Penn Avenue Circuit R.P.O. (PghRys) began operating that year on Valentine's Day. It was discontinued in 1917, after being retitled simply as the "Street Car" or "Street" R.P.O.; a Duquesne Traction Company route to the East End, likewise planned to carry clerks, remained a C.P. No more cities were equipped until Seattle inaugurated its oddly titled Seattle & Seattle R.P.O. (SMuRy); this loop used Car "A" mostly, and quit in 1913. The next to last city to install street R.P.O.s was Cleveland; its Cleveland Circuit R.P.O. (CERy) was introduced on Car 0204 on an experimental basis March 1, 1908. Placed in regular service April third, it operated until about 1920. Last of all was Omaha, introducing five lines (July 1, 1910-March 10, 1921) using "white tram cars," including the 5-mile Omaha & Benson and the Union Depot & Stockyards R.P.O.s (O&CBStRy). Cancels are very rare. In contracting for service, the government cautioned that its clerk could not be compelled to act as trolley boy, as the company had hoped!

Most remarkable, however, was the splendid set-up used in Baltimore, a highly-efficient example of a city-distribution system never yet quite duplicated by modern methods. Its three main lines were opened May 29, 1897, using sixteen-foot, single-truck rebuilt passenger cars—the Towson & Catonsville, Arlington & South Baltimore (to Fairfield), and Roland Park & St. Helena R.P.O.s (City&Sub-BaltTrac). The white cars had blue and gold decorations and circular dark-glass monograms reading "U.S.M." In the light-oak-finished interiors busy clerks sorted an average 120 pouches and 56 sacks of mail daily, at a cost of about \$34,000 annually. A photo of Car 220 shows a wire cowcatcher in front of the open-front platform, and the proud lettering "UNITED STATES RAILWAY

POST OFFICE" (different from Washington's) on the side. The traction companies consolidated as the United Railway & Electric (now Baltimore Transit), which built six new cars to Post Office Department specifications in 1903—twenty-six feet long and weighing 18,691 pounds. At least fifteen clerks were employed, up to three on each car; eleven carrier stations and twenty-four substations were pouched on, as well as steam R.P.O.s at depots as elsewhere.

Not only were both local and express R.P.O. cars (with appropriate signs) operated—the Baltimore cars even made "catches on the fly"! It was done by the clerk leaping out as the car slowed, emptying the collection box, and catching up to his R.P.O. "with lightning rapidity." In 1910 the Arl. & S. Balt. was renamed the Balt. & Arlington, and the Roland Park & St. Helena, no longer reaching that suburb near Dundalk, was curtailed as the Rol. Park & Highlandtown. But the Towson & Catonsville tapped far suburbs at both ends, even reaching Ellicott City, miles beyond Catonsville (possibly by closed-pouch extension). Cars converged upon the main post office daily at 5 A.M., where the clerks would unlock them and begin runs lasting until midnight. The lines became a Baltimore institution; residents timed their sleep by the cars' passage, and tourists gaped at the only such installation in America after World War I. But by the late 1920s swarming traffic had slowed the little old cars intolerably; speedy motor trucks offered service so fast as to overcome both the advantages of distribution in transit and the lightninglike collections while traveling.

Thus it was that on November 5, 1929, Second Assistant Postmaster General Smith Purdum—himself a veteran Maryland R.M.S. man—regretfully signed an order terminating the last street-railway post offices in the United States. And on November ninth, just twenty short years ago, the final trip of all was made over the old "Tows. & Catons." Before the end of the month the cars had been broken up for scrap. Today Baltimore Transit's speedy streamlined passenger trolleys still ply over the tracks from Towson to Catonsville, but they arrived too late for restoration of the unique

R.P.O. to be considered, though the once-speedy mail trucks which doomed it are in turn often slowed in today's choked traffic.

Although the doom of the city lines had been foreshadowed as early as 1899 (General Superintendent White, though very hopeful for them, pointed out how the shortness of routes and many petty disruptions prevented efficient or complete distribution) there were numerous other suburban and interurban trolley R.P.O. routes which survived far longer. All have now been discontinued—largely because the entire interurban line quit; but on the other hand, city streetcars still carry passengers (and in some cases pouch mail) over quite a few of the former city R.P.O. routes.

Two of our most picturesque interurban R.P.O.s were on the Indiana Railroad, a farflung traction system consolidating most of the earlier long-distance trolley companies of Indiana. One route, the seventy-six-mile Peru & Indianapolis, operated for only three years (September 2, 1935–September 10, 1938); like its companion route, it was part of the vast interurban trolley network of yesterday by which one could travel on connecting cars from central New York State clear to the heart of Wisconsin or down into Kentucky. This R.P.O. operated a fifteen-foot mail apartment in one passenger car on daily round trips. Its service, extended to South Bend, was revived in H.P.O. form in 1941 (Chap. 16).

The other route, the eighty-six mile Fort Wayne & New Castle (IRR), was one of the most interesting of all trolley R.P.O. runs. It served fifteen post offices directly, and many others through these; a one-man run (two weeks on and one off), it was supplied by substitutes the third week. It began operation on September 2, 1935, as the Waterloo & Dunreith, to replace R.P.O. runs which competing steam roads had given up; its route had been consolidated from four connecting trolley systems (the FtW&NW, FtW&N, UTI, and THI&E). The extensions to Waterloo and to Dunreith were dropped in 1937. It used a fifty-ton car even longer than a coach (sixty-one feet), although separated by bulkheads into passenger, motorman's, and R.P.O. (fifteen-foot) compart-

ments, connected by two-foot creep doors. Bob Richardson has given a thrilling account of a typical winter run of this R.P.O. which should be perused by every reader of these words³—he describes the dark bulk of Car 376 looming beside Fort Wayne's "one bright spot" (the interurban station) at 5 A.M. . . . the huge pile of pouches loaded into the R.P.O. . . . the screeching of wheels on frozen switches . . . tearing at 65 mph through snow-covered fields . . . breakneck exchanges with mail messengers at way stops . . . freezing canceling ink . . . through Bluffton and Muncie, America's book-renowned "Middletown" . . . the clerk, in crushed hat and sweater-overalls combination, scooting through the "doghouse door" to chin with the conductor . . . coasting downgrade into New Castle to the courthouse at 8 A.M.

So heavy was the R.P.O.'s "business" that even the vestibules and passenger seats had to be filled with overflow mailbags. But the bus-minded Indiana Railroad was determined to scrap all of its safe and commodious trolley service, even knowing the new buses could never equal its speed. And on January 18, 1941, the faithful R.P.O. made its last run—north out of New Castle, with little publicity; only seven hundred collectors' covers were handled, the motorman getting the last one (at Fort Wayne). People came to watch the car at every crossroads, and village postmasters brought their last pouches to the car with unashamed tears in their eyes. Sold to Chicago's South Shore Line, Car 376 was rebuilt as their present Line Car 1101. The new Fort Wayne & Indianapolis H.P.O. restored service to the route January 17, 1949.

Two famous old routes were begun about 1910 on the Great Northern's "Inland Empire" interurban division—the ninety-mile Spokane & Moscow (from Washington State to Idaho's "Psychiana" headquarters) and the thirty-two-mile Coeur d'Alene & Spokane (Ida.—Wash.; both SCd'A&P). The heavy, exclusively mail-express-baggage interurbans were given up in April 1939, on the Moscow route and on the other by the next year or so. Called "The Greenacres," this

³"Indiana's Trolley Car P.O.," *Linn's Weekly*, Sidney, Ohio, March 9, 1940.

run to Coeur d'Alene (the only R.P.O. with an apostrophied title) was one of two known trolley R.P.O.s to have inspired poetic publication! Substitute Adrian B. Dodge describes its story in the *Railway Post Office*, soon after discontinuance; proud of his little office "fifteen feet from stem to stern," he nevertheless recalls one startling crash when the trolley pole got caught and jammed into the roof:

... It gives the clerk a might queer feeling
As it pokes its way through the express-car ceiling!

The other trolley R.P.O. to have brought forth published verses in its memory was the grand old Greenfield & Springfield (Northhampton St. Ry.—Conn. Val.) in Massachusetts. In the absence of an early-morning steam train for upvalley points, this service was begun at the insistence of Postmaster Cambell of Northampton and leading newspapers. It used Car 500, a forty-one-foot Watson Car Works model with ornate gilt striping and lettering, two large sliding doors, and mail slots. Officials riding the inaugural run in August 1901 pronounced it a great success; the forty-three-mile route served Northampton and Holyoke en route, with alternate runs via West Springfield and via Chicopee Falls. Robert T. Simpson was the one-man run's first clerk; and, probably alone of all interurban R.P.O.s, it worked Springfield and Northampton city mail. Cars delivered newspapers direct to newsdealers and exchanged pouches by "matching doors" at sidings. The clerk must have changed cars at Northampton, for No. 150 of the Connecticut Valley Street Railway (mail-passenger combination) was used north of there. Pouches for Hatfield, Massachusetts, were flung directly on the doorstep of the house containing the post office, reported Clerk William B. Quilty, at night—until he was finally furnished with a key to "steal inside with it like a burglar."

Tearing along at 50 to 60 mph, the cars were scheduled an hour faster than passenger runs—and were known to pitch new subs headfirst into some open mail sack in the rack. Others suffered acutely from car sickness; but not even the worst blizzard ever stopped the service. Cars connected with

the old Williamsburg & Northampton R.P.O. (North.St.Ry), which began operating much earlier on July 5, 1895; this branch to "Burghy" used a small, boxlike full R.P.O. car, No. 38. The poem which immortalized the line, Phil Bolger's *Flight of the Green & Spring*, was published in a leading Springfield newspaper—an excerpt from it is at the head of this chapter. The route folded up in 1924.

Also in New England was the Camden & Rockland in Maine, on the Knox County Electric (or RT&C). Controversy still rages as to whether this short roadside line was a streetcar or interurban R.P.O.; it operated for eight miles out from the M.C. station in Rockland until the early 1930s, thus being claimed by the pro-streetcar group as being really our last street-R.P.O. route (instead of the Towson & Catonsville). But the line seemed truly "interurban" in character—defined as connecting two sizable towns separated by open country—and is so classed by this writer and other collectors. Its car, No. 18, began operation about 1893.

A similar borderline case was at the nation's other extreme. The old Haywards & Oakland traversed 14.9 miles of built-up territory, largely street trackage, over the Alameda County Electric (OSL&H) via Oakland streets to Fruitvale, San Leandro, and Haywards, California, in three daily 1¼-hour trips. Operated from January 1, 1902, to March 31, 1920, it was part of a co-ordinated mail and express system including a C.P. branch to San Lorenzo and dubbed the "Hay & Oak."

A most interesting run was the old thirty-mile Doylestown & Easton (Phila. & Easton Elec.) in Pennsylvania, which operated two deck-roofed, double-truck, mail-passenger cars with "ELECTRIC POST OFFICE" stenciled on the R.P.O. apartment. This short-lived, mistitled run (for Easton is north of Doylestown) ran only from 1904 to April 1, 1908. The two-hour run connected at Doylestown with two laps of C.P. trolley service to Willow Grove and Olney, Philadelphia, where city streetcar R.P.O.s provided connection to the G.P.O. Oddly enough, only the short Willow Grove—Philadelphia segment of this trolley route is still operating; while practically all of the much longer Philadelphia—Norristown

—Allentown—Easton route of Lehigh Valley Transit was still running passenger trolleys in 1950. Both lines carried C.P. mails until very recently.

A unique combination trolley-and-boat run operated in California until 1938—the Calistoga & San Francisco R.P.O. (SF&NV), or “Cal & Val,” it having operated only to Vallejo Junction for a period. A steel mail-apartment car was used on its forty-one-mile route from Calistoga to North Vallejo (or South Vallejo), with connecting service via the ferry *El Capitan*⁴ the rest of the way, most of the sorting being done thereon. The *Go-Back Pouch* tells of an old-time clerk-in-charge who was once suspended for one day without pay on this run, for some minor infraction of rules. By mistake the office suspended him on a day he was due to work, instead of withdrawing pay for a layoff day (as was customary on one-man runs); he took to the hills for a vacation and could not be found, so mails piled up in the trolley and boat all that day with no clerk to work them! (The same thing once happened on the Phila. & Norfolk (PRR), another part-boat run, when the whole crew missed their train when swimming on a layover.) In Michigan the Pt. Huron, Marine City & Det. (DURy) connected at least one independent boat R.P.O. similarly.

Best known of all interurban trolley R.P.O.s were probably the two recently discontinued ones which survived until 1948. Most unique of all was the Los Angeles & San Pedro (PE), a trolley loop route with *both* terminal points inside the same city's limits—Los Angeles, which includes the independent post office of San Pedro (exactly as in the “Far Rockaway” case). Service was by the big red cars mentioned earlier, operating up to three 3¾-hour trips each weekday in both directions around the 29.6-mile route. This strange R.P.O. hauled vast quantities of mail to the Los Angeles Harbor at San Pedro—one load brought down to the *S.S. President* was the largest ever shipped out over the Pacific. It operated from July 1, 1922, to June 22, 1948, over the spruce four-tracked,

⁴Ferry link discontinued Sept. 12, 1937.

rapid-transit right-of-way south to Watts and around the double-tracked loop via Long Beach, Gardena, and other suburbs outside the city; two H.P.O.s, one of the same name, took over upon discontinuance. The trolleys still operate as the L.A. & San Pedro C.P.

The other route, our second most recently discontinued one, was the interesting Denison & Dallas on a long Texas Electric interurban route, 76.4 miles. Three handsome big, arch-windowed "Bluebonnet" cars contained the ten- and fifteen-foot R.P.O. apartments used on this northeast Texas run. Most cars used only the lettering "R.P.O." not spelled out; two daily three-hour, one-man trips were operated. Its end hastened by a collision between two cars (injuring a transfer clerk), the entire Texas Electric system was discontinued December 31, 1948; some months later the Denison & Dallas H.P.O. took over the resulting star-route service. In contrast to this railroad-enforced discontinuance of service, the L. A. & San Pedro was taken off strictly at departmental option; frequent passenger and freight service continues over its main routes to the beach area.

The second of the two "Beach Lines" was the companion loop route of the L.A. & San Pedro—the Los Angeles & Redondo Beach (PE). It measured 19.3 miles via Beverly Hills, at which place it dispatched many movie stars' mail, and 14.8 miles via Culver City. From 1941 to 1947, when it was discontinued, the R.P.O.'s outer terminus was at Venice, (within the Los Angeles limits), thus constituting still a third electric R.P.O. with both termini inside one city; it operated largely over tracks without passenger service. Another unusual route was Ohio's Toledo & Pioneer (T&W), with daily service on R.P.O. Car 52; it returned halfway, each day, as far as Allens Junction to connect a closed-pouch trolley for Adrian, Michigan, and then went back to Pioneer to pick up the evening mail for way points and Toledo. There were dozens of other similar long-abandoned interurban R.P.O.s; some, however, like the Baltimore & Annapolis (WB&A) in Maryland, carried busy passenger and C.P. mail service for decades after the R.P.O. ceased (about 1910). Operated well

into 1950 as the B. & A. electric, the latter carried *all* mail for Annapolis and points south until 1948, and much thereafter. The New Bed. & Providence (UnionSt.Ry, Mass.-R.I.) used No. 34, a unique ex-horsecar with one electric truck, on a run once reaching Onset; the car is still preserved on a "rail-fan" line.

Besides the closed-pouch lines, we must mention the drop-letter mailboxes which were carried on Buffalo, Knoxville, and Grand Rapids trolleys (as well as in Des Moines and Burlington, Iowa, and elsewhere). In 1930 mail was being carried on seven thousand miles of route by 220 traction companies at a cost of \$628,000, and even in 1948 there were still 1,297 miles of such route being operated by forty-two companies. In both Canada and the United States, R.P.O. clerks have been assigned to ride trolley C.P. routes to guard the mails, as on the old Coytesville & Hoboken C.P. (PSRy) in New Jersey.

In closing, we can but barely mention such long-abandoned trolley R.P.O.s as the Annapolis Jct. & Annapolis, Md. (WB&A); the Beaver Fls. & Rochester (or Vanport—BVT) and Bristol & Doylestown (BCElec) at opposite ends of Pennsylvania; lines from Cleveland to Garrettsville, Middlefield, Painesville (Fairport), and Wellington, Ohio; Dallas & Corsicana, Tex. (TE); Exeter & Amesbury, N.H.-Mass. (EH&A); Ft. Dodge & Des Moines, Iowa (FtDDM&S, still CP elec.); Georgetown (Hammerville) & Cincinnati, Ohio (GP&C); Herk. & Oneonta, N.Y. (SNYRy), now HPO; numerous lines out of Los Angeles on the P.E.; Pen Yan & Branchport, N. Y. (PY&LS); Peoria, Linc. & Springf., Ill. (ITS, now elec. CP); Phila., Newf. & Atl. City, N.J. (WJ&SS); Portland & Corvallis, Ore. (PE&P-SP or OE), now H.P.O., plus lines to Cazadero and Whiteson; Providence & Fall River, R.I.-Mass. (NBSR-USTry); Wareham & Fall River, Mass. (FR&NB?), and the York Beach & Portsmouth, R.I.-Mass. (SERy).

Regarding the Los Angeles lines, at least four or five of them (or their connections) are still operated as busy trolley C.P. routes; and until May 28, 1950, most of them centered at a unique interurban electric terminal, the only one of its

kind—the Pacific Electric Terminal, P.T.S., in the traction depot at Sixth and Main. It pouched on nearly 100 suburban offices by trolley and on all outgoing R.P.O.s including the electric ones; but its work was taken over by the Terminal Annex, Los Angeles P.O., on May twenty-ninth. Hence even today, Los Angeles—the motors of whose last trolley R.P.O. are hardly yet cool—most nearly symbolizes the historic “age that is past” of our forgotten railway mail traction lines, with its white-and-gold city streetcars which only *this* great metropolis (and Detroit) never had.

CANCELS AND CAR PHOTOS: THE "R.P.O. HOBBY"

I really like that run I'm on, it's usually just "tops";
But when the train-mail bags come down, it's "Slim, come hit
these 'drops'."
And scores of jumbled letters in each frequent, bulging pouch
Must needs be canceled clear and clean, as o'er the pile I crouch;
For bids with "date illegible" may bring us legal woes—
And smudgy markings mean we've R.P.O. "fans" as our foes!
— B.A.L.



—Courtesy *Postal
Markings*

Railway Post Office operations, long a topic of mystery or fascination to many, have in one short decade become the subject matter of a popular new hobby now sweeping over the English-speaking world. For many years before, there had been a scattered few such hobbyists (mostly philatelists who liked postal markings or history as much as stamps); but now hundreds of other collectors, rail fans, and even railway mail clerks themselves are joining in the fun. Collectors long ago became curious about those odd postmarks, with no hint of a state name, reading "FLAX. & WHITE./R.P.O." (a MStP&SSteM short line into Montana) and so on. They soon ferreted out lists of such lines and learned that by mailing a self-addressed stamped envelope inside a larger cover addressed, for example, "Clerk-in-Charge on Duty, Flax. & Whitetail R.P.O., via Flaxton,

N. Dak.," one could obtain most current R.P.O. postmarks. (The title of the nearest R.P.O. or H.P.O. serving any town can be obtained from the post office, or proper Division office—see Chapter 3, footnote.)

A few ran into trouble with overzealous inspectors, who questioned the right of clerks to cancel such covers (in Canada they cannot); but careful study of the P. L. & R. passages covering that subject reveals that only the placing of extra marks or endorsements thereon, by the clerk, is prohibited. As leading collectors expanded their researches, many wrote articles dealing with the more unusual R.P.O. routes—operations as well as postmarks—which were published in philatelic journals along with check lists of lines.

About 1928, when such literature was becoming increasingly noticeable in stamp journals, a Glasgow collector named James H. Tierney was walking through the Central Railway Station there one evening—but, like most Scottish collectors, he then knew nothing of railway post offices. Noticing a train with the wording "ROYAL MAIL" and a red letter box on the side, he stopped to investigate. He learned that letters could be posted therein if prepaid with an extra half-penny stamp, and that they would be handled in the "traveling post office" which occupied the car. He dropped in an envelope addressed to himself and eagerly awaited the postman next morning—who duly brought him his first British R.P.O. postmark. That not only started Tierney's intensive interest in collecting railway mail cancels, photos, and information (to the extent of eight albums)—it also provided the impetus for establishing the first and only general society of R.P.O. "fans" anywhere, even today!

Tierney contacted several like-minded philatelists during the next ten years and wrote many articles on the "T.P.O.s"; and on January 6, 1938, he and they organized the "Travelling Post Office Society" in commemoration of the British railway mail services, then exactly one hundred years old. Norman Hill, an English school instructor in Rotherham, was chosen secretary, and they soon began to circulate by mail, scrapbook "bulletins" of news clippings, postmarks,

and general information among all members. Scores of members, from the United States and elsewhere as well as in Britain, were gradually admitted under the very high requirements for eligibility. But the membership consisted entirely of R.P.O.-minded philatelists and included no British railway mail clerks.

While Britain is thus credited with organizing the new hobby's first society, America brought forth its first journal. This was *Transit Postmark*, founded at Jackson Heights, New York City, in July 1942, and now published at Raleigh, Tennessee.¹ Its founder, railway mail clerk William Koelln, had a herculean task on his hands, for not even a list of R.P.O. fans was in existence at the time. Nevertheless, his first issue was in sixteen pages of neat offset printing. It featured the first installment of Koelln's pet project: a colossal proposed list of all the R.P.O. titles and variations ever used. Primarily philatelic, *Transit Postmark* nevertheless featured articles on unusual R.P.O. operations, history, and service changes from the start. Publicity in other stamp journals printing occasional R.P.O. articles or columns—such as *Cancellations*, *Linn's Weekly*, and others—helped to get subscribers. Some interested railway mail clerks also joined in supporting and subscribing to the project, with L. N. Vandivier, of the Indpls. & Louisville (PRR), becoming assistant editor and taking over the Koelln list project.

Ben L. Cash, retired from the Omaha & Kan. City (MoPac), and a leading R.P.O. collector and writer for years, pitched in to help, as did many others. In 1941 and 1942 attempts to organize an R.P.O. society were made by Dick Bush of Schenectady, New York, L. E. Dequine of Long Branch, New Jersey, and others. But Koelln persuaded most enthusiasts to join the Postal Cancellations Society (then the "I.P.S.S.") instead. Both the *Railway Post Office* and *Linn's* published articles in praise of *Transit Postmark's* appearance and of its contents, however, the former describing it as "a publication of value and interest." Both journals re-

¹Edited by H. E. Rankin, Box 152, Raleigh, Tenn.; \$1 a year.

printed a paragraph from it which advocated collecting R.P.O. cancellations as "a hobby in reach of all; if time is limited, collect only certain states, a division . . . if cash, collect only current markings . . . had for next to nothing."

Koelln, a clerk in the Penn Station Transfer Office in New York, accomplished some of the most intensive railway mail research work on record in his insatiable quest for facts and data on every R.P.O. run in history. He soon published the first complete list of all operating R.P.O.s (Departmental lists consist of abbreviations only, and omit some runs). And yet he found time to be an active R.M.A. and M.B.A. officer, attending many conventions, and meanwhile writing for other publications and building up his huge collection of covers, schedules, and R.P.O. miscellany. Victimized by a dread disease, he had to give up *Transit Postmark* after issuing its delayed February 1944 number; mourned by all who knew him, he passed away in March 1945. (His untimely death followed shortly that of his warm supporter, *Railway Post Office* Editor Henry Strickland, and just preceded that of Carroll Frost, an ardent R.P.O. collector and contributor, of the N.Y. & Wash.—a triple blow to the hobby.)

Suspended for two years, *Transit Postmark* was revived in January 1946 by Stephen Hulse of Glenshaw, Pennsylvania, R.P.O. column editor of *Linn's* and *Cancellations*, assisted by Vandivier and this writer. R.P.O.-minded rail fans were recruited from the ranks of railroad hobbyists for the first time. In November 1947 another mail clerk — Hershel Rankin of the Memphis & New Orleans (IC)—took over as editor and has issued it since then. Some printed pages, photographs, and specialized lists have been added to the publication, now supported by more R.P.O. fans than ever.

In direct contrast to the situation in America, the R.P.O. hobbyists of Britain (although long in touch with United States "fans") were completely out of touch with the actual sorting clerks on British lines until December 1946. In that year the British sorters' union corresponding to our N.P.T.A. began to issue its small clerks' journal called the *Traveller*. Through contacts made with a United States clerk who

served in our Army in England, copies were exchanged with the New York Branch's *Open Pouch*, and this fact was mentioned later in the *Railway Post Office*. *Transit Postmark's* newest associate editor, another railway mail clerk, saw the notice and undertook to bring the two English groups into contact in his capacity as a United States member of the T.P.O. & Seapost Society (as it had now become). Subscribing to the *Traveller*, he was able to insert a notice about the society therein—and British clerks learned for the first time that some Englishmen had railway mail operations for their hobby! Several interested British sorters joined at once, contacting United States clerks and hobbyists also in the process. As Secretary Hill of the society learned of the "T.P.O. sorters' " union and journal for the first time, he immediately contacted Editor Ron Smith of the *Traveller* (who had just joined the society); and many enthusiasts on both sides of the Atlantic subscribed to the little journal. So ended a "double surprise" in which news of each development had to cross the Atlantic twice!

During the very next month (January 1947) the T.P.O. & Seapost Society issued the first copy of its own new bi-monthly journal, *T.P.O.*, featuring a pictorial cut (by courtesy of the *Traveller*.) This interesting little journal contains excellently reproduced postmark illustrations and photos of R.P.O. equipment and operations as well—for the society now welcomes non-philatelic R.P.O. fans in addition to collectors. Society membership doubled within little over a year, resulting in the formation of a new American R.P.O. Section of the group late in October 1948, which was formally organized in January 1949 to cater to the many new United States members. Eventually, on July first, it became technically an independent affiliate of the parent body.

Popularly known as "AMERPO" for short, the American Section and the Headquarters Section in Britain are still closely linked in a fraternal sense to form one international brotherhood of R.P.O. and H.P.O. enthusiasts—the Traveling Post Office and Seapost Society, still the only such group in the world. Dick Bush, of whom we have heard, was elected

secretary,² and L. O. Ackerman, president. In 1950 the National H.P.O. Society was organized (for H.P.O. postmark collectors only) by V. J. Geary, J. S. Bath, and H. E. Hightower; it publishes a monthly, *H.P.O. Notes*.³ (Note 22.)

Spearheaded now by both "AMERPO" and *Transit Postmark*, the hobby is at present gaining headway in America with increasing momentum. The *Section Supplement*, AMERPO's own newssheet, appeared in July 1949, and attractive membership cards are furnished, while the journal *T.P.O.* is duplicated and mailed both in Britain and America. A printed journal, the *R.P.O.-H.P.O. Magazine*, is planned for 1951 by Michael Jarosak, former managing editor of *Transit Postmark* (Note 22). The rise of the hobby has been a source of particular amazement to the average railway mail clerk, who considers that his occupation is just one more little-known job and nothing to get excited about.

The collection of R.P.O.-canceled covers, and sometimes of photos of the trains or cars involved, is still the backbone of the hobby's activities. Both can be mounted in albums, and the photos usually are; but the largest cover collections can be filed only in boxes or drawers. As we know, Koelln and Cash had two of the largest cover collections; leading collectors of today include Hulse, Vandivier, Rankin, Jarosak, Dequine (all mentioned earlier) and many others—such as Elliott B. Holton of Irvington, New Jersey (author of the former column "Our Vanishing R.P.O.s" and other philatelic writings), and X. C. Vickrey of Chicago, not to mention eminent specialists spoken of later. *Postal Markings*, an offset-printed periodical, featured hundreds of R.P.O. articles and postmark illustrations while edited by W. Stewart of Chicago and by Stephen G. Rich of Verona. N. J., himself an authority on many R.P.O. markings, and hence has been one of the most helpful publications for all railroad-cover collectors.

*The secretary is located at Brandywine Box 96, Schenectady 4, New York; membership is presently fifty cents per year for accepted applicants.

³Address Secretary, Box 342, Dayton 1, Ohio; about \$1.50 a year.

Thus, Richard S. Clover, a leading collector and writer, once listed four distinct variations of our single current standard R.P.O. postmark in that publication. In general, however, this standardized cancel applied on R.P.O. trains consists of a single circle about $1\frac{7}{16}$ inches in diameter (variations from 28 to 31 millimeters), containing the wordings, plus an elliptical or lens-sect bar-killer for canceling the stamp. The killers of all postmarkers made before November 1, 1949, contain the letters "RMS" (in new ones made since, "PTS"). Three removable slug lines are provided for train number, month and day, and year; the letters "R.P.O." are at the bottom. All steam and electric R.P.O.s, as well as some boat lines, use this type cancel.

Standard (not First Day) Highway Post Office cancels are identical, except that "H.P.O." is substituted for "R.P.O." and the letters "RMS" in the killer omitted (from the very start—in anticipation of a future title change); periods are also often omitted from abbreviated H.P.O. names, and when not abbreviated the state or states of its location are often included. For example: (1) "BALT & WASH/HPO" and (2) "WASHINGTON, D. C., & HARRISONBURG, VA./H.P.O." New H.P.O. killers, however, read "PTS."

R.P.O. line titles change frequently as runs are shortened, lengthened, or rerouted; the old Reform & Mobile (AT&N) in Alabama was once designated, at least in part, by nine different earlier titles. Therefore there are thousands of old titles to collect, as well as numerous "varieties" of wording and design—official abbreviations are seldom used. Some collectors specialize in narrow-gauge and old boat routes or various nineteenth-century markings.

True R.P.O. markings of the past century reveal a rich variety of sizes and types. From 1875 to 1905 many extra wordings, such as "FAST MAIL," "LIMITED MAIL" (with handsome target-style killer), "BALTO.MD.," are found inserted in R.P.O. cancels, as well as the clerk's name in some cases. The most recent known example of the latter was the postmarker used by Wilson Davenport of the St. Lou. & Little Rock (MoPac); he had a private elliptical killer at-

tached to it, tipped vertically to contain his name and a star in the center, and his postmark impressions are collectors' items today. (Davenport, mentioned earlier, has been a N.P.T.A. officer or national delegate since 1904 and is still active in "retirement" with his St. Louis postal-supply business). Train numbers (and even year dates) were often omitted on such early cancels; the words, DAY, NIGHT, NORTH, SOUTH, and so on, were usually substituted—or even TAW (for "Train A, West"). The earliest true R.P.O. cancel, of course, was the rare "CHICAGO TO CLINTON" used on Armstrong's first 1864 run; specimens are said to exist, but no collector seems to know who has them (the same thing applies to the even rarer postmark of the 1862 "Hannibal & St. Joe" route). One of the earliest R.P.O. cancels in collections is "CHICAGO TO DAVENPORT" (1868).

Of remarkable interest are the errors and oddities in wording that appear in some cancels. Two are (1) the "WAY+ & LAKELAND" (now the ACL's Waycross & Montgomery, east end) shown at the head of this chapter—note "+" for "cross"—and (2) a N.Y. & Wash. (PRR) error reading "N.Y. 7 WASH./R.P.O.," still in use today (the clerk ordering two current postmarkers neglected to press a shift key in typing "&"!). Other fascinating errors will be found in *Transit Postmark's* files. A rare "EMERGENCY STAMP/R.P.O." was used on the St. Albans & Boston (CV-B&M) in March 1902, for some reason; and some cancels were once surrounded by a second circle reading "MAIL DELAYED—TRAIN LATE" (detachable).

Pre-R.P.O. railroad cancels, now extremely scarce, are a fascinating study; but only those which are route agents' postmarks were actually applied on trains. The word "AGENT" need not appear; the oldest-known railroad agent marking of all reads simply "RAIL ROAD" in Old English type, applied on the Mohawk & Hudson Railroad in New York State on November 7, 1837—now in the Harry Dunsmoor collection. Since many station agents and postmasters housed in small depots used cancelers or ticket stamps containing railroad names, it takes an expert to distinguish

true route-agent cancels. Some authorities, notably O. A. Olson and Professor Dennis, assert that the earliest cancels were applied by conductors or baggagemen and should be classed as "railroad" as distinct from "agent" markings. But Hall and other point out that such postmarking by railroaders and other outsiders was prohibited. Some post offices stamped mail with railroad marks to indicate routing, too, further complicating the matter.

Some of the best-known agent cancels were those of the Philadelphia—Washington route and those reading HARRISBG. & LANC. RR., both now PRR (N.Y. & Wash.-N.Y. & Pitts. R.P.O.s); others were BOSTON & ALBANY R.R., MIC.CENT.R.R., and so on. A "MAIL LINE" cancel was used on the Louisville & Cincinnati Railroad in 1851. The word "AGT" did not begin to appear until the 1850s and 1860s, as a rule. Some early agent cancels are in pen and ink or even pencil; others are stamped in red, blue, and green as well as black, and some contain agent's names. Harry Konwiser of New York and Arthur Hall of Cranford, New Jersey, both noted philatelic writers, are two of our leading authorities on the earliest railroad (route agent) and R.P.O. covers. Hall's collection of agent markings is probably tops, although that of O. A. Olson of Chicago is very large. Konwiser's *U. S. Stampless Cover Catalog*, the standard text on the subject, lists all known pre-stamp-era agent marks, and Delf Norona's *Cyclopedia* of postmarks lists others. Some remarkable displays of agent and early R.P.O. covers have been exhibited at leading stamp shows by Olson, Hall, and others; some won prizes. One controversial agent cover, "U.S. EXPRESS MAIL," is now known to refer to the through express-agent runs (Chapter 6).

Regulations require that all R.P.O. postmarks now be struck in black, but in emergencies red and other colors have been used—notably on the temporary Wallula & Yakima (UP) Christmas R.P.O. (see Chapter 10) in 1942, where the clerk was supplied only with a red pad. Air-mail fields and other units, including our one unique Register Transfer Office, are authorized to postmark facing slips in red.

Collectors particularly cherish the colorful covers with *cachets*—pictorial or colored worded devices on left half of envelope—sponsored to mark anniversaries, World's Fairs, "First Trips," and what not. With possibly a special-occasion R.P.O. postmark and usually a commemorative stamp, such an envelope is a prized addition to any collection. The government recognizes the R.P.O. hobby by applying colorful pictorial cachets (showing an H.P.O. bus) and a special, spelled-out postmark with "FIRST TRIP" in a long four-line killer on new H.P.O. runs; by special exhibition R.P.O. postmarks; and (rarely) by special postmarks with similar killer on historic final R.P.O. runs. A recent example was the last trip of the famous Reno & Minden (V&T) in Nevada, old-time western route, May 31, 1950. Stamp clubs, too, issue cachets; the one at Glen Ellyn, Illinois, sponsored four for the Eightieth Anniversary of our first permanent R.P.O. (the Chicago & Clinton, via Glen Ellyn), postmarked—2,500 copies—on the same line, now the C&NW's Chic. & Omaha, August 28, 1944. Vivid pictorial designs in colors featured the first R.P.O. and contemporary scenes. The same club sponsored similar cachets on one New York Central "Fast Mail" Anniversary.

Practically every World's Fair has featured an R.P.O. exhibit, usually a car designated as a specially titled R.P.O. for its duration. The earliest similar exposition cancel was apparently the "ATLANTA EXPO./R.P.O.," used in 1885, the only postmark applied at the regional Cotton States Exposition, Atlanta, Georgia. The World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago's "White City" in 1893 likewise had a duly constituted Railway Post Office, but it apparently canceled no mail; its rare postmark ("R.P.O./WORLDS COLUMBIAN/EXPOSITION" in a shield) has been found only on facing slips. The Pan American Exposition (Buffalo, 1901) had a full R.P.O. car (D&H) sorting all exposition mail, with a souvenir booklet *The U. S. Railway Mail Service* issued; no postmark is known. The Louisiana Purchase Exposition, 1904, used an "EXPOSITION R.P.O./ST. LOUIS, MO." postmark; while the St. Louis Centennial featured a "CENTEN-

NIAL PARADE/R.P.O.," operated only on October 7, 1909, as a horse-drawn Missouri Pacific mail coach on wagon wheels (it was long thought to have been a streetcar R.P.O., but the streetcars were elsewhere in the parade). An "R.P.O. EXHIBIT CAR, SPG. MASS." was used at the Eastern States Exposition in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1925, 1929, and perhaps in other years.

The Chicago Century of Progress (World's Fair) of 1933-'34 had "exhibit cars", too—the Burlington's "Hannibal" replica and a modern car. No "R.P.O.", the clerks still canceled covers, the wording reading "U.S. RY. POSTAL CAR EXHIBIT/CHICAGO, ILL." with exposition name in the killer. One prize cachet furnished at the car was printed on the famous original Gutenberg Press, on display there. The "NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR/R.P.O." shown at that great event in 1939-40 consisted of a spruce, flag-decked New York Central postal car, No. 4868. Featuring a green pillared design, attractive cachets were supplied along with the special postmark on "Railway Mail Service Day," September 1, 1940—commemorating the Seventy-sixth Anniversary of the R.M.S., to the nearest week end. Five branches of the R.M.A., assisted by the Vincent Lopez Stamp Club, sponsored the day and the cachets; the American Legion R.M.S. Post's band played, and there were speeches and music by Second Assistant P. M. G. Purdum, President Bennett of the R.M.A., clerk-composer Barney Duckman, and others. Nearly one million people visited the car, including many foreign postal clerks who signed a register; Editor Koelln, who helped plan the set-up, lent an attractive exhibit of rare covers. Clerks Pierce, Hedlund, and others purchased special immaculate uniforms in which to work mail and escort visitors.

The most recent exhibition R.P.O. was the "CHICAGO RAILROAD FAIR/R.P.O." (Deadwood Central), which cancel was applied on a moving train at that Fair from July to September, 1948 and 1949. Thousands of covers, many with neat cachets, were canceled by clerks actually on duty in a tiny R.P.O. baggage combination car in the quaint narrow-gauge train running the length of the grounds. The same

R.P.O. train, without cancel, operated at the Chicago Fair of 1950. At the 1949 R.M.A. Convention at Omaha, Nebraska (at which it became the N.P.T.A.), exhibits included the replica of the Burlington's original Hannibal & St. Joe car as well as their new streamlined *Silver Post* car and an H.P.O.; a cachet, but no postmark, was provided. (Similarly, no clerks or postmark were supplied on board a rubber-tired Missouri Pacific R.P.O. car hauled in the Cornerstone-Laying Parade for the new St. Louis post office in 1936, it appears.)

There have been countless colorful private railway cachets too numerous to mention. They include one dated May 8, 1946, for the initial run of the PRR's new *Robert E. Hannegan*, with N.Y. & Pitts. postmark; one for the one-hundredth Anniversary of Chicago's first railroad, the C&NW, postmarked October 25, 1948, on the Chi. & Freeport (sharing the original tracks with the Chic. & Omaha for some miles); a new Union Pacific cachet for the first trip of R.P.O. service in Omaha & Ogden Trains 101-102, the streamlined *City of San Francisco*, October 2, 1949; and many others sponsored by Scott Nixon of Augusta, Georgia, by AMERPO, and by the New Haven (Connecticut) Railroad YMCA Stamp Club, for various special events.

Collectors cherish cancels of the unusual Royal Train R.P.O. (PRR-NYCent-D&H), which was a United States route for just five days (June 7-12, 1939), although operated in Canada with a different postmark. A picked crew of R.M.S. officials and clerks worked in the postal car of the pilot train escorting King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on a visit here via Niagara Falls, Washington, New York, and Rouses Point (N.Y.); they canceled 318,000 covers with six types of postmarks, including a machine cancel which was the only one used on any steam R.P.O. train.

Terminal and Transfer Office cancels are not so standardized as those of the iron road, and there are numerous varieties of hand and machine postmarks that cannot be classified here. George Turner has listed nine varieties of terminal cancels alone in *Postal Markings*; the newest ones at this writ-

ing still read, as a rule, "(CITY), (STATE) TERM./R.P.O." with "RMS" in the killer. Some abbreviation of "Transfer Clerk" or "Transfer Office" is found in the cancels of nearly all such units, except those of the unusual, just-discontinued "Relay Depot, East St. Louis, Ill.," and the earlier (T.O.) Round Table, Kansas City, Missouri. But the mark "L. M. AGT" (local mail agent) was the one used by earlier, pre-R.M.S. units of this type. Air Mail Fields, P.T.S., show even more variety in their cancels; some were designated "R.P.O.s" while killers vary from "RMS" (the commonest) to "AMS," "PTS" (newest), or no wording at all. No cancels have yet been applied aloft, but cachets have (see Chapter 16). "PTS" killers are slated for our newest terminal and T.O. marks.

There are specialized markings applied to transit mail in post offices, often referring to R.P.O. trains, which attract many collectors. "T.P.O." postmarks in Great Britain include two attractive large modern types with double circles (with black block or center-line fill-ins) and numerous smaller types, some with stars. Neither British nor Canadian cancels, which are a small standardized single-circle type, use killers.

Specializing collectors find the old streetcar R.P.O. cancels of major interest--so much so that a Street Car Cancel Society was founded (March 31, 1946) by Secretary Fred Langford of Pasadena, California, and President Earl Moore of Chicago.³ It was thus the first R.P.O. society (though not for *all* R.P.O. hobbyists) to be organized in America; it considers *Transit Postmark* its official journal and has issued some duplicated Street R.P.O. material. The largest collection of American streetcar R.P.O. covers is owned by member Robert A. Truax of Washington, D. C.; while Moore's collection of car photos is probably tops. Street R.P.O. cancels exhibited a most incredible variety of types. San Francisco alone had both machine and hand cancels, with crude cork killers and steel R.M.S. ones, and several reversals or variations of title, even to shifting it to the killer! Flag cancels were used in

³The secretary is at 100 East Colorado St., Pasadena 1; membership, \$1 for life.

Boston, St. Louis, and Cleveland, also with route name in killer and with year dates separated.

While we have dealt mostly with the postmark-collecting phase of the hobby in this chapter, the photo-collecting angle and others are actually of equal importance. There are, of course, no detailed classifications of photograph types, but they can be grouped roughly as (1) views of R.P.O. trains, (2) exterior views of R.P.O. cars, (3) interior views of cars, and (4) miscellaneous. The largest collection of R.P.O. photos is believed to be that of L. E. Dequine.

Other hobbyists avidly collect R.P.O. literature, data, pouch labels, facing slips, forms, historical information, schemes and schedules (particularly old-time ones), and what not. Closely allied to the R.P.O. hobbyists are the seapost and maritime cover collectors, who are catered to by the Maritime Postmark Society and Universal Ship Cancellation Society as well as the T.P.O. & Seapost Society; but their activities are beyond our scope here. Many leading maritime collectors, however, are also very prominent in specialized R.P.O. fields—including Robert S. Gordon of Northfield, Vermont (our leading authority on foreign R.P.O.s); Vernon L. Ardiff of Chicago, Illinois (a trolley and boat R.P.O. specialist); and Holton (similarly inclined).

The R.P.O. hobbyists are performing a noteworthy service in helping to publicize the importance of the Postal Transportation Service in American life today, and in the past they have been responsible for at least four fifths of the published material dealing with the Service (excluding the *Railway Post Office* and official pamphlets) for the past thirty years. The hobby well deserves Government support to the extent of publicizing impending R.P.O. changes in advance, and of selling P.T.S. schemes and schedules to collectors (now unavailable); revenues from the latter procedure and from stamps for covers would soon return a profit. Such collectors are real boosters of the postal service, and deserve all encouragement.

ON FAR HORIZONS: I—THE BRITISH T.P.O.S

Here comes the Night Mail crossing the border,
 Bringing the cheque and the postal order,
 Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,
 The shop at the corner and the girl next door . . .
 Past cotton grass and moorland boulder,
 Shovelling white steam over her shoulder . . .

— W. H. AUDEN (Courtesy G.P.O., London)



Just what is a typical system of overseas R.P.O.s like? In normal times there is a continuous chain of connecting railway mail and steamship routes all around the world, sorting mails in transit by devious methods often startlingly different from ours (*Note 17*). Disregarding technical duplications, R.P.O.s or related transit mail routes have operated in fully 107 different countries or colonies; and still do, in most. Rather than make tiresome successive studies of the R.P.O. systems of each principal country, we will defer brief descriptions of most of them to our next chapter and concentrate here on one typically European system located in a country in which we Americans have a deep and natural interest. Since it differs from our own system even more than do Continental networks, we shall find the story of the British "Travelling Post Office" to be of consuming interest as we review the amazing contrasts it presents to our American setup.

Imagine, if you will, R.P.O. cars *without* pouch tables,

newspaper racks, or case headers—but equipped with upholstered leather padding, neat coco-fiber floor mats, and a huge net apparatus for making two-way “catches.” Then man these cars with railway mail clerks who have never heard of general schemes, mail locks, or periodic case examinations, and who cut twine and open mailbags only with “the official scissors.” Next, conceive a railway mail service which has no personnel of its own (it is in common with that of the post offices), which includes a letter bill with *every* primary dispatch of first-class mail, and in which practically every term of speech differs from the corresponding “American” word. Finally, picture the great cities of Liverpool and Manchester, which no R.P.O. train ever enters; yet, one *leaves* Liverpool nightly—never to return! That’s just a bare introduction to Britain’s “T.P.O.s.”

Furthermore, we find that a different title is assigned to each train—no train numbers are used to designate the Traveling Post Offices as they speed over the realm from the white cliffs of Dover clear to the rugged lands of the north Scottish crofters (Helmsdale) or out by Cornwall’s famed Land’s End. We learn that letter bags are closed with lead seals and string and that swing-out stools, cushioned to match the car padding, (sometimes in a decorative design) are often furnished for letter clerks. And *no* labels are placed on top of letter-packages (when used, they’re on the back)! But before we poke fun at such “quaint,” apparently leisurely doings or start bragging about the much greater amount of R.P.O. mail sorted per man-hour—according to observers’ claims—in the States, we can do well to remember that in other respects the English system ranks ahead of our own. Only on British T.P.O. lines do we find (1) full facilities for sorting all types *and sizes* of admissible mails (except parcels) with ease, in separate cases; (2) automatic apparatus which simultaneously “catches” and dispatches up to one thousand, two hundred pounds of mail at once, at full speed; and (3) the ultimate in safe, comfortably furnished mail cars. The largest R.P.O. train in the world runs in Britain.

A daily high standard of performance, and not breakneck

speed, is the officially announced aim of the T.P.O. system; but even so the service normally provides overnight delivery by first carrier for any letter posted in the evening at London for *any* place in England or Wales! Letters mailed on midday T.P.O. trains can even be delivered the same evening. Nevertheless, the British Travelling Post Office does not even claim to be a network of continuous, twenty-four-hour-a-day distributing arteries with a main-line R.P.O. train every few hours or so, as in America; the country's small size makes it unnecessary. But the T.P.O. man's specialized job is a very vital one, and he is highly respected, sometimes "almost revered," by such few of the public as know he exists. James Tierney writes to praise "the wonderful team spirit of the workers on these trains; I don't know if you will find anywhere else a staff of men working so keenly together for the accuracy and speed of their service." The British clerk is speedy and efficient, perhaps because he *does* work at a less frenzied pace than his American colleague—in whose R.P.O.s the English chaps in turn find quite a bit at which to poke fun. Our hectic pouch racks, catcher hooks, and armed clerks always amuse them.

The difference in nomenclature between the English and American systems is in itself a fascinating study. Phrases of considerable length and dignity are often preponderant; thus a letter package is a *bundle of correspondence*, and the X-man is called the *carriage searcher*. We speak of a crew of clerks, but in England this is a *team of officers*, or, collectively, *the staff*. Usually officers assigned to distribution (*sorting*) are naturally dubbed *sorters*, although their official titles might be those of *postman higher grade*, *S.C. & T.*,¹ and so on, or of other grades; one's fellow sorters are often called *the bods*. Pouch dumpers are *bag openers*; the R.P.O. car is a *T.P.O. carriage* or *sorting coach* (or *van*), but the whole train is a *mail*. It would never do to apply this term to a closed-pouch train, however; if the latter is an all-mail affair, like most of them, it is a *bag tender*. A letter case is usually a *sorting frame*, and the separations made up thereon, *selections*. (But a case

¹Sorting clerk & telegraphist; British telegraphs are part of the Post Office.

diagram, and hence in many cases the sorting frame itself, is called a *letter plan*.) A sorter gets *on top of*, not "up" on, his work—or else (in rare cases) *fails* or goes *up the ivy* (goes "stuck," or *stucko*, as the English sometimes say). Instead of "laying over" a day at his outer terminal, a sorter says he's *resting away*; he catches pouches on the fly with the *apparatus*; he gets *aggregation* or *agg*, not overtime; and if he's a city clerk, he is often called a *postman* and is said to be sorting his mail to *postmen's walks*, not to carriers. To avoid a *failure*, a sorter may have to depend on a last-minute *scramble* (shirt tail finish) to *clear* his mail. Each trip is a *journey*, newspapers are simply *news*, and surplus clerks (a different type from ours) are *redundant sorters*; errors are *missorts*. Other equally interesting terms will follow.

Britain has only about five hundred T.P.O. "officers" (sorters), but they distribute over 500,000,000 pieces of mail annually. They usually work in attractive, full-size sixty-foot coaches bearing the royal crest and script letters "GR" (George Rex), as well as the letter slot and "ROYAL MAIL" wording mentioned. Also on the side of the car are four collapsed pouch-dispatching arms (two beside each safety-rodded sliding door); two large "side lights" for catcher duty; and a large "apparatus door," recessed for the height of the car, containing the huge hinged-frame net catcher folded against it. Some cars have tiny, narrow horizontal windows in a row under the eaves. These cars cost over \$10,000 each (prewar) and travel some four million miles yearly. Inside there are *no* racks; one entire side of the coach is devoted to sorting frames, the other to a continuous row of iron pegs (one and one-half inches apart) on which mailbags are hung limp by one ring from the wall.

Car-interior paint varies from green to a new "duck-egg blue" (some English ducks lay bluish eggs); and green leather covers the upholstered horsehair padding applied to all walls and projecting edges, case ledges, and even horizontal case partitions. In lieu of safety rods, it serves to absorb the buffetings received by clerks when rounding sharp curves or in case of wreck. Case pigeonholes vary in size from those for short

letters (large enough for most greeting cards) to those for long letters and packets (wide cards and small "flats") in some instances, and those in *news frames*, the largest boxes, used for sorting newspapers and large packets; such cases have different-sized boxes according to "position" values. The wide horizontal case partitions are enameled with numbers (in lieu of headers); vertical partitions are very narrow and recessed concavely to enable instant withdrawal of mail. Sorting frames average about fifty-four (six tiers of nine each) boxes, but vary from forty-five up to eighty-two on *news* and packet frames. (Photos show some clerks standing all letters in certain narrow boxes on edge; but this is not standard practice.)

All comforts and conveniences possible are supplied. The *R. L. officer* (registry clerk) has his own special five-foot frame with a locking roller-shutter closing over it. Electrically operated "urns," ovens, or hot plates are found in all cars; tea can be boiled in half an hour, foods quickly cooked or warmed by hot plate, and urns switch off automatically when contents are boiling or when emptied; the largest R.P.O. has three urns and several ovens. The case ledges or *tables* are covered with green baize, and the *news desks* (cases) have breast boards to keep mail from falling. There is no worry about separating pouches and sacks, for the same standard mailbag is used for all postal matter; the term *pouch* refers only to the leather containers in which bags are packed for non-stop dispatch. Outgoing bags are hung directly behind the proper letter frame, their large printed tags mounted on the pegs above them—and the sorters, most conveniently, reach directly behind to *bag off* their "tied-up bundles." (With few made-up bundles received and with cases for sorting all "flats," there is little need for a pouch table.) There is the usual *wardrobe cupboard* (closet) and "combined lavatory and wash-up."

Of course vexatious irregularities can play havoc with the intended provisions for comfort—broken urns and carriage gangways, eye-straining "half lights," dangerously rough lurchings from the *engine driver*, or freezing trips following an unheated *stationary period* (advance time) are all too well

known. When the windows of one car were suddenly washed thoroughly, the staff commented, "We must have been mistaken for first-class coaches!" (It all sounds strangely familiar to American clerks, as does the sometimes-disregarded provision that the T.P.O. coach should be separated from the engine by another carriage if possible. The objection is the rough riding, rather than a safety factor, however.)

The staff consists mostly of post-office sorters who volunteer for *traveling duties* and are detailed largely from the London G.P.O., although provincial staffs hail from Birmingham, Glasgow, and so on. They wear no badges. (A Civil Service Commission appoints these clerks originally by competitive exams, exactly as with us.) Most T.P.O. sorters are, or soon will be, classed in two principal grades—*Postman Higher Grade* and *Postman*—under the current reallocation of staff; the *officer in charge*, or O/C (clerk-in-charge), is of the *Assistant Inspector* grade thereunder, although many are in the old grade of *Overseer* at this writing. Popularly, the O/C is called the *guv'nor* or *gaffer*; he is required only to attend to supervision and the necessary reports, any assistance he may give to a sorter being purely voluntary. He does not, as persistently reported (even in a film), occupy a private office on the train; at least not in any modern T.P.O. Nor does he, as on United States lines, sell stamps to the public.

The average sorter works on the lines only on a *term* basis; each four or five years' road duty is followed by a required period of two years or more in a stationary (or *static*) office. He may still be considered a *reserve officer* for emergency T.P.O. runs; and conversely, during road terms, any extra duty needed to equalize time must be done in post offices—there are no P.T.S. terminals. Acting additional clerks are called *pressure men*, but there are no substitutes. Promotion is from the ranks, but mostly to post-office positions. Sorters in service prior to 1947 may travel permanently.

While sorters average only about \$38 a week in total pay²

²Pre-devaluation pound values, a more accurate economic picture, are used here.

and allowances, they are furnished many special items free—all necessary medical attention, protective clothing (work clothes), free soap and towels, free grips (*tot bags*), and certain ration privileges. And, of course, British living costs are lower. Travel pay consists of a *duty allowance* (\$1.80-\$2.10 weekly) to compensate for the strenuous work, payable even when on leave, and a *subsistence or trip allowance* (\$1.30 to \$2.40 per trip) covering board and lodging. Largely because of the six-day week, British clerks also have shorter *rest days* or layoffs than American clerks; but here again their days off are free from all studies and home duties, and they have much more annual leave—twenty-one *actual* days yearly. They average about one and one-half to two days off per week, depending on size of the line; but if a five-day week is introduced, as the postal union is urging, length of time off will be only slightly under American standards.

New men, freshly detailed to a T.P.O. from the post offices, are given two weeks' tuition in T.P.O. duties at the Central Training School, London, or at regional schools elsewhere. Demonstrations in sidetracked T.P.O. carriages, as well as instruction trips, follow; on short lines such trips may be the only instruction available. The London T.P.O. school provides the *only* example of T.P.O. sorters using practice cards; they are a postwar innovation and still used by new learners only, and are *not* sorted to T.P.O.'s. Clerks on all runs terminating at London are drawn from the various London post offices, while provincial lines and outlying short runs (*half-way journeys*) are staffed from their terminal offices. Round trips (*return journeys*) on the latter are made within one day.

In most cases a T.P.O. sorter is an English gentleman—and dresses accordingly, even when on duty. Business suits and spruce white shirts are not an uncommon sight in the mail car. Clerks on medium-heavy work slip protective clothing (like P.T.S. officials' "coveralls") over street wear; but only the *news rats* and others on heaviest assignments have to change clothes. Meticulous and rules-conscious, they are required to refuse unauthorized privileges asked by the public (such as irregular postmark impressions); but their courteous and

helpful attitude to all comers, including collectors, is proverbial. The O/C can even approve the admittance of a visitor, at his discretion. Most sorters are of a high degree of intelligence, culture, and good nature, although they jokingly call themselves *topers* in spite of their usual temperate habits. They usually work on a five-week cycle but rotate among the various assignments (numbered, as in our crews) as listed on the *running sheets* (register of runs). Denied use of schemes, most T.P.O. men—especially the R. L. officer, who is the key distributor—carry a *tip book* of important local routings.

To view a typical British T.P.O. run, let's take a trip on the great Down/Up Special of the Midland and Scottish Regions, British Railways. We would call this route the Aberdeen & London R.P.O.; but the British apply titles to each train only, the line's other trains being designated as the North West T.P.O. and so forth. World's largest R.P.O. train, the Down/Up Special is faster than the line's speediest passenger train as it roars through the night up to Scotland—yet it does not actually pass *through* a single large city! T.P.O.s leaving London are *Down Mails* and those arriving there *Up Mails* (regardless of direction); so our train is really the "Down Special" to begin with. It is often dubbed "The Longest and Largest," "The Night Mail," or just the Special; but in railway circles it is the *West Coast Postal* or *Postal Special*. It is one of two pairs of non-passenger, all-mail trains.

At about 7 P.M. the fifty-odd sorters manning the Special begin to converge upon the Euston Station *mail room* from all parts of London and its suburbs, carrying handbags. Most arrive via suburban train, bus, underground (subway), or tram (trolley), but even those commuting in by train over the Special's own route must pay fares; their official *warrants* (commissions) are no good for deadheading to work. At the mail room, with its lockers and bulletin boards, the sorters pick up their black cloth *tot bags* which they use instead of grips. Their contents are mostly work clothes, for the British clerk need carry no headers, schemes, schedules, slips, or labels; such of these as he requires are sent direct to the car in

the train-supplies bag (labeled "T.P.O. Stores"). Since the tot bags are not heavy, there is no grip man.

A "rather fussy little shunting engine" brings in the long line of sixty-foot coaches from the Willesden yard, where they are *marshaled* (made up), and spots them at Euston's No. 2 platform. Fully five cars are sorting carriages, while the rest are for *stowage* or storage mails (one devoted largely to the catcher apparatus). By seven fifteen, the reporting time, the sorters are inside the car and donning their coveralls; the handbags containing overnight needs are stowed on overhead shelves; all sorters sign the *tick sheet* (like our old arrival-and-departure book!), and the 1¼-hour *stationary period* begins.

All slips, labels, and letter bills have been previously furnished, stamped, and run out by office personnel; and twine and sealing materials accompany these supplies in the "stores" bag. Three of the junior sorters or *mail porters* (*postmen* under reallocation) thereupon hang some 250 to 280 bags on the pegs in *each* R.P.O. car, in limp Christmas-stocking style. Bag labels contain extra holes for quick hanging on pegs or in surplus-label rows overhead. Each sorting coach is also equipped with sealing presses, car keys, reference books such as the *Postal Guide* and *P.O.'s in the United Kingdom*, a postmarker, rubber stamps, various pairs of official scissors, and (in one car) an "official watch"—a standard timepiece brought up by runner from the G.P.O. Inland Section.

In the absence of headers, many sorters use a piece of *duke* (or *Duke of York*)—chalk—to mark or abbreviate the names of the various *selections* (boxes) in the letter frames. Some prefer a cardboard diagram of the case arrangement, showing all the names, hung overhead. But the more expert sorters often dispense with both and pretty much "work blind," guided only by the consecutive numbers from one to fifty-four or so. Newspapers are simply sorted into the big pigeon-holes at the *news desk*, gathered up, and "bagged off" with the letters. Most sorters arrange their cases by standard *letter plans* (diagrams) furnished by the Department, but do otherwise if preferred. Separate cases and plans are used for each postal division of England and Scotland, for certain heavy

counties, for cities, for foreign mails, and for the mixed (*unsorted*). Since even short-letter boxes are five inches wide and the other cases have wider ones, there is no trouble with wide greeting cards! Official diagrams are usually alphabetical in the horizontal plane, except for heaviest separations (placed near bottom center, according to "position values" determined by test); most *selections* are directs, others are *Forward* or *Dist.* (dis) boxes, and very few will be labeled to connecting T.P.O.s.

The "order book" is used in England, as here, except that it is kept on the train; "authorized amendments and corrections" to circulation (routing) instructions must be noted therefrom. (Like *check sheets*, *extra trips*, *primary-secondary residue*, *G.P.O.*, *Postmaster General*, this is one of the few terms which is common to both British and American practice.) The neatly dressed officer-in-charge, presiding at a spare (unused) letter frame equipped with a stool, keeps not only the order book but also the *tick sheet*, which is a combination check sheet (pouch record) and trip report; the main *circulation list*, the nearest thing to an R.P.O. scheme; the *forward list* (alphabetical list of all bags made up and dispatched); the *time bills* (T.P.O. train schedules); the postal volumes mentioned; and T.P.O. rule books and duty schedules. The tick sheet must show the *date stamp* of the postmarker, signatures of all on duty, especially of the *carriage searcher*, and reports of all mail mis-sent or *overcarried* (carried by).

One of the first bags received in the coach contains the daily orders from the chief superintendent (of the T.P.O. Section) for the train and official mail for the O/C. The "guv'nor" is permitted to answer his official correspondence in detail while on duty; at the halfway point his replies (all enveloped and postmarked) are sent back to London via the *transfer bag* (go-back pouch). Answers will be in the office by 7 A.M. of the day following that when the letters went out.

News reporters enthusiastically describe the Special as "a thing of beauty inside and out," with beams of light from its "big electric bulbs giving a dazzling and bizarre effect." Mails arrive at trainside in motor vans or on *trolleys* (hand trucks)

and are quickly separated and lined up to the proper coach by station postal employees. A Sheffield newsman, the first admitted to a T.P.O. (1931), stated, "The perfect organization commences with the loading . . . No rush, just organised speed." ("Speed" is right—many "Special" clerks sort seventy letters a minute!) A sorter called *the clerk* "ticks off" both the letter bags and newspaper bags on the check sheet as another officer calls the labels. All inbound bags of identical origin are in the same series regardless of contents, but instead of using serial numbers, the last bag of the series (the "X," as we say) is called the *final*, and any others, *extra bags*. (The *final bag* has a pink tag showing total number in series.)

The regular (final) bags are stacked behind the bag opener's table (part of the case ledge), and the extra bags, usually containing newspapers, behind the appropriate *news desk*. From all of London and southern England the bags come flooding in—from the suburbs, from the London district offices (branches), and especially from the huge Inland Section, or "Big House," which sorts all the provincial mails (particularly in daylight hours, when T.P.O.s seldom operate). The highly graded bag opener opens up each bag with the official scissors (its ends curved to avoid injuring the bag), for British mailbags are tied with string and lead-sealed at the office of origin, the sealing press stamping its official signet thereon. Cutting the string also detaches the big 2 x 5 inch cardboard label from each steel-ringed bag (which is stenciled "GREAT BRITAIN—POST OFFICE"), then the opener must turn each bag inside out lest any mail remain therein.

Meanwhile one clerk has been stationed in each *stowage brake* (non-passenger cars are "brakes") to pile the storage mails as diagrammed in his bag-duty book. As in the United States, bags are stacked carefully in station order with the first-off ones close at hand, and the stowage-van officer is advised to chalk up the names of the various separations. But he must also lock all doors with a key, later surrendering this to the O/C, unless railway employees are detailed to this.

In the T.P.O. coach the *bag humper* (dumper) must quickly locate the tied-up *entry items* (registers and urgent matter)

with attached letter bill which are looked for in each final, or "bill," bag. The bill, a postmarked green form listing all registered and special-delivery (*express*) items, jury summonses, mailed telegrams, parliamentary notices, and other official matter, must be included in each regular bag whether entry items are present or not; if six or more items, they come inside a small *enclosure bag*. All entry items and bills are placed in a nearby tray, checked by totals, and transferred to the R. L. officer (register clerk) with an initialed form against his receipt. (On British lines the R. L. officer may accept mail from the public for registration.)

Most incoming mail consists of working bundles—quickly tossed to the proper sorting frame, perhaps to the broad-accented warning, "Coming ov-aaar!" If too many bundles come flying over, the sorter may cry, "Take it easy, sonny boy!" or something similar, whereupon further packages are relegated to the *skips*, which are baskets for overflow mail. Letters to be worked, cut open with the official scissors, are usually stacked on end between the case and the front board; balls of heavy twine are in overhead holders. American twine knives, first introduced in 1949, are becoming popular; but most sorters use the official scissors to cut all twine both on working bundles and when *tying up* after finishing. No sorters are armed, not even the R. L. man; but registers are properly convoyed.

As the R. L. officer prepares his outgoing letter bills, the short stationary period nears its end. By then he must have his *tally sheets* (balance sheet), outgoing extra-bag record, *transfer sheets* (bulk-receipt forms for bag opener), and his sealing press all functioning properly. His registers are distinctively marked with two crossed blue lines (+) and neat printed labels showing both registry number and origin—a convenience adopted in nearly every country but the United States. Mail containing coins or jewelry is given compulsory registration, if detected, at the addressee's expense.

The last collection has been made from the station's late-fee posting box, and the zero hour of eight-thirty approaches. Mail trucks with the final loads from Euston Square Post

Office, and latecomers with letters to mail, hurry to the train-side. At a prolonged blast from the whistle the great Night Mail slowly pulls out; it crawls under Ampthill Square and Hampstead Road and gathers speed, passing Regent's Park on the left and the Camden Town section to the right. It is carrying at least three thousand bags of mail, including five hundred or more "workers," containing seventy thousand letters (about two thousand, eight hundred packages) and thousands of newspapers all to be sorted. Mail received later may equal and even exceed this total. The electric tea urns are switched on, and some men place soup or other food in the various handy electric ovens.

The Special rushes through South Hampstead tunnel, past Killburn Station and Willesden Junction, then crosses the London city line into the thickly settled Middlesex suburbs; Wembley (8:43) is first, but not served going north. Sorters are busy in all five T.P.O. coaches—the two English cars, the two for Scottish divisions, and the Glasgow city car. The bag opener is throwing letter bundles in all directions—the *labeled bundles* (directs) going right into the proper outgoing bag, of course. Nine storage cars precede and follow them!

At exactly 8:46 the train is due to make its first "catch"—the *apparatus working* at suburban Harrow, Middlesex. All Harrow letter bundles have now been tied out, the R. L. man's billed bundle of entry items is ready, and all mail is put in the bags due off here; each bag is sealed with the T.P.O.s imprint. Then they are stuffed into the outgoing leather *pouches* and tightly strapped. The pouches to be caught have been previously hung on the *lineside apparatus* (mail crane) by Harrow's *local apparatus postman* (mail messenger). The gallows-shaped structure has from one to three pouchfuls of mailbags hung on its high projecting arm. Attached to the standard are suitable lights, plus a permanent folding receiving net at the bottom; all fittings are at the exact proper height to engage the identical complementary equipment on the train. Since wayside signs erected at approach points are hard to see at night, the *iron man* or *apparatus officer* (local clerk) must expertly recognize the exact sound of the overhead

bridges and so on which constitute the *fix-on* for this particular catch.

Outgoing pouches are hung on the "despatching arms" beside the regular doors—only one to each arm, but with twenty such arms on the train there is far more than enough equipment. With speed up to 60 mph and more, precision timing in *working the iron* is vital. As soon as the crane is sighted, the apparatus officer presses levers which lower both the carriage net and despatching arms into working position; an electric bell also rings continuously to warn clerks not to approach the open center of the apparatus coach (where the big safety door beside the net has also opened automatically). With a thunderous roar, the powerful strap of the carriage net catches the incoming pouches, which bound into the car with great force; simultaneously, the outgoing pouches are trapped by the wayside net, whereupon the despatching arms fold back automatically. When the carriage-net lever is released, it too folds back, and the bell stops. It is a ticklish business to lower the projecting devices at the exact proper instant only, for they would quickly engage some station platform, signal, or other railroad structure if extended too quickly. Important stations have several lineside standards in operation, permitting the exchange of over half a ton of mail at one time—despite a sixty-pound limit on each pouch container. Expert *iron men* learn to recognize *fix-ons* instantly by counting wheel clicks, by listening for the rattle of *points* (switches), and so on.

The bags "caught" must be opened at once, examined for damaged items, and the *immediates* (No. 1 local packages) separated from the labeled bundles and No. 2 or No. 3 working bundles; the immediate bundles must be cut and sorted at once, as mail for nearby stations may be included. The entire process, including the numbered line separations, closely resembles American practice; however, many small way offices are served only by indirect conveyance.

With the suburban area well behind, the Down Special speeds through the darkened countryside with its myriad twinkling lights to work apparatus *marks* (catches) at Wat-

ford, Hemel Hempstead, and Berkhamstead-Tring; then the train enters Buckinghamshire to serve Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire (just over the county line) and Bletchley, Buckinghamshire, all non-stop. The bag opener bags up his inspected empties (in one of the bags, as we do), and labels them to the Inland Section, which is the "bag control office" for most T.P.O.s, for forwarding by opposite trains. Of the many *enclosure bags* included in his dumped-up mails, not all contain registers; ordinary "dis" mails for close connection at some distributing office are often placed in these little inside bags, perhaps labeled "IMMEDIATE" for instant attention.

The busy sorters make an exceedingly fine distribution for all points in Scotland and Northwest England, making up selections (directs) for practically every *post town* (independent post office) in the territory. (The smallest post offices all consist of *sub-offices*, each operated as a rural station of some post town, and their mails are included in the same bundle or bag with the proper post town's.) Sorters do not distribute mail by scheme, for the routing of British mails is based entirely on the grouping of all these post towns into a number of divisions (consisting of one or several counties), each with its central *distributing centre*—at some large post office—which sorts practically all mails for its area (for closed-pouch forwarding) during daylight hours.

Each T.P.O. has its own *main circulation list* showing the proper dispatch for all points from that train; and clerks are simply expected to gradually memorize the proper routings from continual experience therewith. Many smaller "directs" on the frame will become *labeled selections*, to be thrown into a bag for some distributing-center office. By this process all mails are delivered in Britain within twenty-four hours—by closed-bag dispatch if posted early in the day, and by T.P.O. sortation when mailed toward evening.

Now it is teatime; for tea, not coffee, is the T.P.O. man's beverage. Instead of one volunteer handling the tea, a formal *tea club* is organized on each T.P.O. with a duly elected chairman, secretary, and treasurer. Members receive a small honorarium (for the extra work involved), plus possible dividends

at the end of the year, from the profits. Customers pay only four pence (seven cents)—for six cups—per round trip, on the Special. Supplies having previously been purchased by club members assigned thereto, the brewing is done by the first member to get “on top of” his sorting duties; when ready, the huge steaming pots are carried through the cars by two *char wallahs* (tea men) starting from each end. In normal times tea clubs on the Down/Up furnish a complete “commissary” of chocolate, biscuits, cigarettes, and what not—at a \$6,000 annual turnover! Official meal allowances of thirty minutes in each four hours are credited to each sorter in his wages, but two or three quick ten-minute snacks each way are about all actually taken, and then only if mail volume permits.

The tea clubs themselves date back at least to the 1890s. One tale from those days tells of an officer who threw out his old cracked teacup; it struck a telegraph pole, crashed into bits, and the pieces flew back to hit the *guard* (conductor) in the face. The “brains” thundered back into the T.P.O. coach at the next station, profanely demanding (in vain) to know who had thrown it. Following such occurrences, T.P.O. officials evolved the current rule covering such playful habits, with severe penalties: “The throwing of bags, packets, balls of string, or any kind of missile, either inside a Mail or outside . . . is forbidden.”

While most of the train's distribution is for the Scottish Divisions, English mails for the local North West Division are being busily sorted in two cars. Now the Night Mail is approaching Rugby, Warwickshire, its first actual stop; here, at 10 P.M., dispatches to nearby Birmingham and much of Warwickshire are made. Huge loads of bags from the East Anglian counties and Lincolnshire are taken in, brought over by bag tenders of the “Peterboro Line.” After pulling out, the “Peterboro” mails must be sorted at top speed; for it is only fifteen minutes to the very “fast mark” (by *apparatus*) at Nuneaton, Warwickshire, and the *correspondence* due off there must be fully separated for dispatch at this 70-mph catcher station. No less than 360 pounds of mail (in nine forty-pound pouches) are exchanged in both directions at its three mail cranes.

The huge receipt at Nuneaton must be sorted in time for connection at Tamworth, Staffordshire, the next stop—the closest point to Birmingham, and the line's first T.P.O. junction. Mails for that city, as well as for the northeastern counties, are received and dispatched here, a connection being made with the key cross-country Midland T.P.O. (LMS—now Midland Reg.) from Bristol to Newcastle-on-Tyne. The proportion of English mail has been steadily decreasing, and as the train passes Stafford (the Up Special's junction with the LMS's Crewe-Birmingham T.P.O.), the two English divisions coaches commence their gradual conversion into "Glasgow city" cars. A second respite for tea is enjoyed along here.

At 11:42 P.M. the Special reaches Crewe, a Cheshire town which is England's Chicago—the nation's largest railroad and T.P.O. junction. In normal times thirteen T.P.O. trains enter or leave Crewe station between 11 P.M. and 2 A.M., alone, each night. Several *Glasgow town sorters* get on here; while certain *halfway officers* (short-stop clerks) get off, to work back to London on the Up Special. Numerous intersecting T.P.O.s are connected here, including the LMS's Crewe-Birmingham and Shrewsbury-York T.P.O.s, the Crewe-Cardiff (GWR), and others. Vast loads of mail, fifteen hundred bags or more, are dispatched and received from Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and so on. With only 16 minutes here, speedy and delicate timing is essential; the *transfer bag* is put off for the "Up" (containing some mis-sent items, even as with us!), and outgoing bags for the three big cities mentioned (all nearby) and for many parts of Ireland, Wales, Cheshire, Yorkshire, and South Lancashire are ticked off. As we pull out, at least fifty-five men are now tackling the mail on our train.

Starting at Crewe, the three Glasgow coaches are redesignated as a separate unit, the Crewe-Glasgow S.C. (*sorting carriage*; i.e., a small R.P.O.), which will later diverge to the west. The town sorters are working Glasgow mail out to stations, *postman's walks*, and suburban sub-offices. Any *out-of-course* (delayed or mis-sent) bags received at Crewe or elsewhere must be opened, sorted, and reported if the contents can be properly advanced; while individual mis-sent letters are also "written

up" on a form in detail (with name, address, origin, and so on), not merely "checked."

The working mail is now all for Scotland (except a bit for northern Ireland), but a heavy apparatus exchange is made at Warrington, Lancashire, nearest point to the big cities of Liverpool to the west and Manchester to the east. After a third cup of tea a stop is made at Preston, Lancashire, where the Preston-Whitehaven T.P.O. route (LMS) branches off; final receipts from the two large cities are taken on here instead of at Warrington, and again the coaches are loaded to capacity. For two hours the train traverses Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland, crossing the bleak Pennines and other mountains, and "catching" Lancaster, Carnforth, and Penrith. By now the sorters are *tying up* most of the letters in their frames and dropping them in the limp bags to the rear. No labels are used, if dispatched in a direct bag. Preliminary dispatches for most large Scottish towns are bagged and sealed, to be put off at Carlisle; like all other bags tied out early, they are taken into the proper "storage brake" and piled. The final tie-out of the bags is now under way, for Carlisle is the end of the run for our team (crew); most officers assist, and then comes wash-up time as the O/C finishes up his reports. If it is, say, a light week-end trip, there may be a little time for a friendly game (poker or solo whist), note writing, or a chat. Protective clothing is doffed, and at 3 A.M. the tired London sorters climb out at the end of their three hundred-mile run. North-end clerks from both Carlisle and Aberdeen, as well as more Glasgow city men, get on here to take their places; meanwhile connection is made with the Carlisle-Ayr S.C. (ScotReg), a short branch line.

Most sorters sleep at private lodgings, but small hotels also are favored. Overnight lodgings are usually dubbed *the digs* (although many, with wry humor, refer to their quarters as a *doss* or flophouse). While our crew slumbers, the "North Division" (as we would say) of the Special thunders across the Scottish border to Carstairs Junction, where it is reassembled as parts of *three* R.P.O. trains with separate engines—the Crewe-Glasgow S.C., the Carlisle-Edinburgh S.C. (which

works Edinburgh City and Midlothian mail), and the Special proper. The two sorting carriage trains soon veer off to the left and right, and the much-shortened Special, now manned by only three or four clerks, sweeps northward via Coatbridge and Perth (making numerous "catches" all along) into Aberdeen, at 8:13 A.M., connecting the second carrier delivery there as well as an air-mail route carrying all mail for the Orkneys. The Special has sorted at least 200,000 pieces of mail on its 50-mile journey, and its last dispatch at Aberdeen, if the King is staying at Balmoral Castle, is a special one to him from Buckingham Palace.

Meanwhile the London sorters are sleeping, usually about six or seven men to a house, after recording its address in the mail-room book (for emergency calls). If a regularly reserved accommodation is not used on some occasion by a sorter while on leave, the Department allows "compensatory payments to landladies." Arising at 1 or 2 P.M., the clerks have a good breakfast and then enjoy such pastimes as the cinema, walks about town, or billiards and snooker at a workingmen's club there. Some may study at part-time Workers' Education Association classes, while certain dashing Romeos will look up their "favourite blondes" or brunettes instead. After a three-course dinner at 8 P.M., the officers then meet the Up Special for the return journey at 8:43.

After sprawling itself all over Scotland, the Special has long since been again consolidated into one train—the Glasgow (R.P.O.) and Edinburgh (C.P.) sections (with no independent titles, southbound) having rejoined it at Law and Carstairs Junctions. The London staff quickly boards it at Carlisle, and in general the return trip to Euston follows the same pattern as the Down journey. But the Up Special is even larger than the Down, for it has *seven* R.P.O. cars or sorting coaches; mail for all England and for London City is worked, to the practical exclusion of Scotch "correspondence." One English county division alone may occupy half of a sixty-foot coach; thus the sorting van nearest the engine handles Middlesex and Surrey letters only. Another coach handles the *cross post* or "local," plus Hertfordshire; there is an apparatus coach,

used also for stowing tied-out bags; and two London city cars, one including a foreign division.

The strong team spirit of mutual assistance which exists on the Up Special and other T.P.O.s is proverbial. Contrary to the unfortunate exceptions often noted on United States trains, the usual regulations requiring such mutual help are observed to the letter in England; if one man has finished his sorting, he immediately volunteers to assist someone else. If one division is running light while another is swamped, the O/C promptly reassigns the former's sorter to *dig out* the man who is going stuck. The comradeship of the typical T.P.O. team is also reflected in the gay ditties or bits of harmonizing sometimes indulged in, even as with us. But such music may be abruptly ended if the next stop reveals a huge pile of *buckshee stowage* (or working) mail—i.e., "free" or not due to the train—to be crammed into the coaches!

On a recent journey of the "Up" it was revealed that English clerks as well as ours perform some remarkable feats in dispatching misaddressed mail. An unaddressed picture postcard carrying *only* a brief message beginning "Dear Mr. Ricards" turned up, but one of the sorters (who are permitted to correct poor addresses, in England) immediately marked it "try Bushey" and dispatched it to Bushey, Hertfordshire, at Watford. He had remembered the same handwriting on a previous postcard, which on being located revealed that the writer was "seeing Mr. Ricards" in Bushey after returning there from vacation!

Some 65 men work on the Up Special, and they make up a selection (direct package) for practically every post town in England, and even direct bags for each separate office in Surrey, Middlesex, Buckinghamshire, and most of Kent. One London car works letters for "The City" (London's Eastern Central District only) out to carriers or *postman's walks*; but since most carrier routes there consist only of single short streets or of buildings (or banks and firms) made up direct, no sorting by street-number breaks is necessary. The Foreign Division in the same car sorts letters to countries and divisions (formerly even to foreign R.P.O. lines in Europe and Asia);

New York, N. Y., is made up. In the second London coach, zoned mail for all the rest of London's 128 numbered subdistricts (zones) is worked out; thus "S.E. 10" in a London address (Greenwich) is Zone 10 of the South Eastern District Office. Almost no London mail is received unzoned, and sorters are not required to learn street-and-number dispatch for such letters, but many voluntarily learn and dispatch a considerable number of such items each trip.

The staff works busily as we approach London, for it is a T.P.O. tradition to avoid *failing* (going stuck) if at all possible. After the tie-out, all waste twine, seals, and labels are placed in a special red waste bag (to be searched later for stray mail, as in the United States); the sorters wash up, pack their tot bags, and finish their actual journey at 4 A.M. in London; then they unload the coaches.

Station duties at London also include "dispatching the vans" (mail trucks) to the various London district offices, the Inland and Foreign sections, and to railway stations and suburban post offices. The mail has been worked up to such a fine degree that only a couple of residue bags (i.e., London G.P.O. Dis) are turned over to the Inland Section; the vast bulk of the mail goes out in direct bags all over southern England, although one or two day T.P.O.s are also connected. A late arrival at London may spell considerable excitement—taxis can be commandeered to rush valuable mails to important railway connections, with penalties for any driver refusing; and sorters eagerly note details on their *aggregation sheets* (overtime record) to see if their minimum hourage has been made up and any *agg* due to be paid them, as they say. At the end of each week sorters must also make individual claim for their trip allowances by mailing a *docket* to the office after the last run. Finally the carriage searcher (X-man) inspects all the frames and takes up the mats, looking for stray letters, often using an electric extension bulb to assist. He does it diligently, for he knows that if railroad men later find any mail therein he must pay the finder a sixpence (ten cents) for each letter, or two shillings (forty cents) for a register! There

is often a weary wait for transportation home, for there are few vehicles running at that hour.

All British T.P.O. lines are now operated by the T.P.O. Section, London Postal Region. A chief superintendent (currently, Mr. C. R. Clegg) manages the setup from offices in the great King Edward Street Post Office Building and occasionally makes inspection trips over the lines. One sorter, pleasantly surprised by a visit from former Chief Superintendent Fielder, wrote afterward that ". . . he speaks English just as we do!"; but relations with officialdom were not always thus. A morose chief superintendent of decades past once strode into a T.P.O. coach to scowl at the sorters in stony silence, eliciting the remark of "I beg your pardon, sir?" from one wag.

"I didn't speak!" was the grumpy rejoinder.

"Sorry," the sorter explained innocently, "I thought you said, 'Good evening, gentlemen'!"

Over seventy T.P.O. trains are operated over about twenty-five different routes in normal times; a few prewar lines still remain to be restored. Like American lines, most of the T.P.O.s have accumulated nicknames. Thus the Southern Region's South East and South West T.P.O.s (London to Dover and Dorchester, respectively) are both called "The Tram-car"; the Northwest T.P.O. (a short run of the Down/Up Special route, to Carlisle) is "The Ten" (or "10 o'clock") or "The Nightmare"; the LMS's suspended London & Holyhead T.P.O. (which once used a "UNITED STATES MAIL" postmark) was, of course, the famous "Irish Mail"; and the short Liverpool-Huddersfield T.P.O. (LMS) is humorously dubbed the "Liver & Udders." This is the T.P.O. which never gets back to Liverpool—its team works back on different-route T.P.O.s and on a bag tender as guards. "The Cale" (Caledonian) refers to several Down/Up Special short runs.

The Great Western T.P.O. (GWR) or "Ghost Train" is an all-mail, no-passenger train operated nightly from London to Penzance, Cornwall, where forty sorters work some one thousand letter bags on a 325-mile journey, plus up to three thousand registers. Leaving London at 10:10 P.M., the train sweeps past the Bristol Channel seacoast, the rolling bracken-

covered hills of Somerset, the lonely and misty marshes and rocky hillocks around Dartmoor. Eight Penzance clerks get on at Plymouth to sort mail for their town to carriers, as well as the Cornwall mail; all other mail (except Devon's) must be "up" by Bristol. The Great Western is famed for its "travelers' tales" or anecdotes thereof, but we can mention only a couple here. In one coach the regular bag for Liskeard, Cornwall (due off by apparatus), is hung beside a bag of fragile matter for that town, labeled and handled accordingly—and one new bag hanger innocently inquired "if Liskeard Fragile were anywhere near Liskeard"! When several Danes (delegates to a postal convention) were once invited to visit the G.W., one overseer "missed reading the paper, paid extra attention to his appearance, and put on his best suit and most charming manner, thinking someone had said *dames*!" Another alarmed Great Western sorter, followed by a policeman all the way home, discovered it was merely the one who lived next door. (One crew on this line has asked for a "6 & 8"—eight days "off" each two weeks; but they'll work 19 hours daily to get it, if approved!)

The Preston-Whitehaven T.P.O. (LMS), or "The Truck," is a typical short line along the northwest coast of Cumberland; it has only three clerks (the smallest number ever assigned to a T.P.O.) and exchanges with practically every office on the line. On such branch lines the O/C is often the R. L. officer, as in the United States. Some side lines, temporarily short of T.P.O. coaches, have used portable frames installed in the *brakes*.

Trains work city mail for many towns, like Penzance, but *not* for Liverpool, Birmingham, and Manchester, three of the largest cities! Two routes from York to Bristol and from London to Edinburgh operate—the second route in the latter case being the LNER's London-York-Edinburgh T.P.O.³ (includ-

³The "LNER" is now the N. E. Region, British Rvs.; these familiar railway abbreviations are still in use. The restricted city sorting is quickly explained: All TPO trains arrive in the Midlands around midnight, and there is plenty of time for local sorting at these three big cities. Only towns at the extremities of the longest runs—London, Penzance, Glasgow, et cetera—require city sorting in transit due to morning arrivals.

ing the N.E. T.P.O., its short run). Yet many other parts of Britain have no *direct* T.P.O. service at all, including not only Manchester but also inland sections of North England, most of Aberdeenshire, and all northwest Scotland, northern Devon, and so on. Pending restoration of a central route, only coastal lines serve Wales. The progressive T.P.O. Section, however, has expansive plans for the future. Already two brand-new extensions of service have been opened: (1) from Birmingham to Derby on the former Birmingham-Bristol (LMS), now the Derby-Bristol T.P.O.; and (2) from Haughley out to Peterboro on the East Anglian T.P.O. (LNER), connecting with the North East route of T.P.O.s, both in 1949. Two other runs intersect the Derby-Bristol at Birmingham—the LMS' Crewe-Birmingham and Midland T.P.O.s.

T.P.O. sorters encounter a few vexing problems which are a bit different from those of American R.P.O. clerks. True, they are spared the rigors of a Christmas rush on the road—because the entire T.P.O. system shuts down each year for two weeks preceding Christmas, in direct contrast to the United States practice of expansion. But the clerks, who are anxious to have all-year road sorting restored, must be plunged into unfamiliar surroundings to work mails in the Inland Section or other post offices. Another headache is the fact that the actual post office or sub-office of address, on a given letter, may be any of the *last three* place names thereon—in contrast to American practice, where it always is the next to last. The public often disregards official urgings to capitalize the post-town name, to alleviate this problem; but it faithfully follows the official address forms suggested in the *Postal Guide*, which show sub-office name, post town, and county in the case of small hamlets, post town and county for most post towns, and office name only in the case of large cities!

In Britain, despite unarmed sorters, one never hears of T.P.O. trains being held up and robbed; it just isn't done. There was, however, a series of mysterious mail thefts on the old London-Manchester Bag Tender (LMS) which continued for ten years before they were solved. Finally the guard in charge, one of the LMS's most trusted employees, was

caught slitting open a mailbag; it seems he had a grudge against the railway for failing to transfer him to the seashore for his wife's health!

Serious wrecks, too, of T.P.O. trains are rare; no sorter has been killed in one since 1927, when three or four lost their lives in a crack-up of the LMS's York-Shrewsbury T.P.O. Few can recall any other fatalities, except when three sorters were killed in a wreck of the London-Holyhead Irish Mail (LMS) in 1916, and on that tragic occasion of long ago when the Firth of Tay trestle collapsed in 1879; a postal bag-tender guard was lost in the sinking train, there being no survivors. (A few clerks are assigned to bag tenders to separate and load mails.) Recently the two most noteworthy T.P.O. train smash-ups both involved the Down/Up Special. The Mail crashed into a halted passenger train at Winsford, Cheshire, on April 16, 1948, killing many passengers; the first sorting coach was smashed to bits, but only three sorters were injured, thanks to the strong all-steel construction and the great distance from the engine. Clerks hastened to assist survivors and save the mails, and Sorter W. J. Carrick was awarded the *Daily Herald's* coveted Order of Industrial Heroism. On the other occasion the Special was rammed from behind in Scotland, injuring four sorters, some years before. When the East Anglian T.P.O. (LNER, London-Norwich) was wrecked at Gidea Park, Ilford, Essex, in 1947, the scene was a shambles of wrecked fittings and coaches, shattered glass, and scattered letters; but again clerks hastened to rescue injured passengers and forward valuable mails, and even insisted on reporting for their return trip despite severe shake-up and shock. (See end of *Note 18*.)

Floods and freeze-ups have worked real havoc on the T.P.O.s, however. The great English blizzard of 1940 terminated an unbroken record of fifty-five years of consecutive nightly trips of the Down/Up Special (except Christmas night); the two Specials were both stranded in huge drifts on Beattock Summit and were annulled for four days. (Soon after, all T.P.O.s were suspended for the duration of World War II.) The great ice storm of March 1947 forced complete suspension of many T.P.O.s and delayed others up to fourteen

hours; apparatus working was abandoned. Chief Superintendent Fielder immediately ordered special meals and hot drinks served to sorters affected, at stations en route; they were particularly welcomed by one crew which worked thirty-three hours continuously, then reported for work again that same day. Many were the trains which had to give *second circulation* (rerouting) to their delayed mails; and on the South East T.P.O. (SouR), the Down and Up trains passed each other five times in one night before getting on the right lines for their destinations.

On the Great Western (GWR), of course, a humorous angle was sure to develop from such frightfully beastly weather and the severe floods which followed it. One of its badly delayed trains had just pulled into Exeter, Devon, whereupon a local news reporter hastened up to interview the O/C—whom he caught snatching a nap beside the steampipes. Aroused, he sleepily yawned to the inquiring stranger that “the bad weather and our late arrival can in no way be attributed to the Labour Government” (which is, of course, strongly backed by postal union men). The statement duly appeared in the Devonshire press that evening.

There have been tales of unorthodox objects caught by the apparatus, of course, since the very earliest days—ranging from viaducts and signals to a wheelbarrow filled with baled rags (which nearly wrecked the LNER's old York-Newcastle S.C. at Chester-le-street, Durham, in the 1890s). A different sort of tale comes from the North West T.P.O. (LMS), which was once honored by an unexpected visit from the King and Queen (then Duke and Duchess of York); showing great interest in everything, they left after giving the O/C a warm handshake. The thrilled gaffer “for weeks afterwards wore a glove on his hand, but refused to take the advice of an irreverant young member of the team who enquired, ‘Why don't you pickle it in vinegar, guv'nor?’ ” On the North East (LNER) another sorter consistently imposed upon the team by napping on duty; he was cured, one night, by having his face liberally daubed from the ink pad as he snored. On waking, he breezed into the station buffet for lunch as usual!

On the North West (LMS) one "guv-nor" discovered with horror that his tick sheet had been used to wrap up a greasy bunch of fish and chips, by the very sorter helping him hunt for it.

The American influence is occasionally felt. During the serious economic "dollar shortage" following World War II, men receiving a family allowance on the birth of a new child were said to be "pursuing the official dollar." And when 1947 brought forth the popular ditty "Open the Door, Richard" from New York's Tin Pan Alley, railway mail men on both sides of the Atlantic were soon hounded by the phrase whenever porters brought up huge loads of mail to the car.

Working conditions and salaries of T.P.O. men are the particular concern of the T.P.O. Branch, Union of Post Workers—the union which corresponds to our N.P.T.A. The U.P.W. and its predecessors have secured innumerable benefits for the sorters; travel allowances, annual and sick leave, and retirement annuities were obtained for them long before they were secured by American clerks. The branch holds quarterly meetings, with a *mail representative* speaking for each T.P.O. The T.P.O. "Whitley Committee," a group of labor and management representatives (dubbed the *staff side* and the *official side*), forms the basis of their very successful collective bargaining. About 98 per cent of all sorters belong to the U.P.W. (all but the most distant provincial members are in the T.P.O. Branch). Enjoyable social gatherings, including an annual Iron Road Revels, feature branch activities. The branch has also made admirable proposals, in international contacts, for temporary exchanges of postal personnel between British and overseas railway mail routes—an idea bound to provide better mail service and more international good will throughout the world wherever applied.

Both the T.P.O. Branch and the British Government have done much in the way of publicizing the T.P.O.s through literature, radio programs, and the cinema. Each month the branch issues an attractive printed journal of eight to twenty pages, the *Traveller*—an outgrowth of a mimeographed *T.P.O. News Letter* (published for its members in the armed

forces from 1941 to 1946). Featuring illustrated articles on R.P.O.s of the world as well as union news, it has a subscription list (in Britain, America, and elsewhere) three times as large as the branch membership! Ron Smith of the Down/Up Special is its editor, and he is assisted by William D. Taylor, formerly active as branch secretary. The government publishes numerous booklets of the T.P.O. service, as listed in the Bibliography, mostly free to the public; one is a beautiful volume bound in transparent plastic and printed in three colors (for the T.P.O. Centenary), and another features a map of all T.P.O.s (which reminds us that the United States Government has never issued such a map). The T.P.O. Branch publishes a booklet for new union members assigned to road duty; also numerous magazine and newspaper feature articles on the T.P.O.s have been published, as well as a 106-page book, *English T.P.O.'s*, by C. W. Ward. For the history of Britain's T.P.O.s, we must refer all readers to the pages of this excellent volume (*Note 18*). A new list of current British T.P.O. routes is in Appendix I.

A complete short motion picture, *Night Mail*, was produced by the G.P.O. Film Unit in 1936 to picture the story of the Down/Up Special; it has been viewed by many in both Britain and America. Just ten years later (December 14, 1946) the British Broadcasting Corporation featured a special program with actual sound effects and interviews on board the same T.P.O. There is also a well-known, very attractive painting by Golden entitled "Euston Station: Loading the T.P.O."

Since Britain's (and evidently the world's) first T.P.O. was first inaugurated on January 6, 1838, its railway mail services have given 112 years of magnificent service to the public. Space forbids consideration here of such unique British institutions as the famed Post Office Railway (an automatic, unmanned electric tube railway, hauling closed mailbags only, under London's streets), and the popular "railway letter" service by which railway conductors handle specially stamped letters outside of the mails. And thus we take leave of the fascinating Travelling Post Offices of "this realm—this England" with the

words of the distinguished poet W. H. Auden, from whose epic poem *Night Mail* we have quoted at the start of our chapter, still ringing in our ears:

Pulling up Beattock, a steady climb—
The gradient's against her but *she's on time* . . .

ON FAR HORIZONS: II—FROM CANADA TO THE ORIENT

From the frozen wastes of Lapland
To the rice-lands of Cathay:
Even there the mail trains rumble—
Even there the tired clerks sway . . .

— B.A.L.



—Courtesy *Postal
Markings*

Aside from the continental United States and Great Britain, doubtless the most significant countries to us from a railway mail standpoint would be Canada and Mexico—plus, of course, the outlying United States territories, where R.P.O. operations differ markedly from those in the States. A brief study of the systems in each of these three areas, plus a short review of that of India (a typical Asiatic country), will follow. Very brief summaries of other national systems will be tabulated in conclusion.

THE DOMINION OF CANADA

Canada's modern network of nearly two hundred R.P.O. lines is intermediate in character between the United States and British systems, but the American influence has the edge by far, for Canadian lines are closely synchronized with ours. About twelve hundred men, officially designated as "railway mail clerks," man the coast-to-coast layout; but they are appointed by promotion from the post offices, as in England.

They then, however, become a permanent part of the Railway Mail Service, as Canada still officially entitles its operations. The R.M.S. is part of the Post Office Department, as in the United States, but is headed by a *chief superintendent* at Ottawa (in English fashion)—currently, Mr. W. G. Ross.

Of the transcontinental mail channels, perhaps the most important chain from east to west coasts (3,770 miles) is composed of the following R.P.O.s:

1. Halifax & Moncton R.P.O. (Can.Natl., 189 miles), Nova Scotia to New Brunswick.
2. Monc. & St. John (Can.Natl., 89 miles), in New Brunswick.
3. St. John & Montreal (Can.Pac., 482 miles), New Brunswick to Province of Quebec.
4. Mont. & Toronto (CN, 336 miles), Province of Quebec to Ontario.
5. Tor. & Ft. William (CP, 812 miles), in Ontario.
6. Ft. Wm. & Winnipeg (CP, 419 miles), Ontario to Manitoba.
7. Winn. & Moose Jaw (CP, 398 miles), Manitoba to Saskatchewan.
8. M. J. & Calgary (CP, 434 miles), Saskatchewan to Alberta.
9. Cal. & Vancouver (CP, 642 miles), Alberta to British Columbia.

Of these, the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 7th lines listed are all long ones, broken up into two or three divisions, as in the United States; but, in contrast to our practice, each division is named as a subsidiary R.P.O. The division titles are used only in schemes and on slips or labels, not in schedules (thus the St. John & Montreal comprises the St. John & Lac Megantic, Lac Megantic & Sherbrooke, and Sherbrooke & Montreal clerks' runs). As in the United States, all R.P.O. lines were apportioned long ago among fifteen administrative areas (now sixteen, with Newfoundland added), but these are called *postal districts*, not divisions—usually designated by the name

of the headquarters city. Despite the fact that all long-distance ordinary letters have been carried by air for three years now, the R.P.O.s are thriving.

Canadian R.P.O. schemes are termed *distribution lists* or sortation books; much larger than ours, they are sturdily bound in cloth board. They are issued for each province in a convenient and handy alphabetical form (as in our earlier official schemes, now unfortunately obsolete). Spaces between each line permit instant insertion of new post offices. However, *no* mail routes are listed for the large-city offices, and the scheming of "dis" offices, without using either that abbreviation or asterisks, is a bit confusing to our eyes. The Schedules of Mail Trains, likewise much larger than ours, are models that we could well emulate; timetables are clear and detailed (direct lock bags for nearby points are bracketed with station of dispatch), and the symbols for frequency of service are superbly simple. Instead of using over two hundred complex, arbitrary letter-combination symbols (as does our P.T.S.) the Canadian R.M.S. numbers each weekday from 1 to 6 and combines them with "Dy.*" (daily) and "Dv." (daily except Sunday; thus, "daily exc. Sun., Mon., & Sat." is Dy.-1 6). Clerks memorize the principle instantly.

Some Canadian R.P.O. cars—their seventy-two-foot ones—are almost the world's longest. Most cars closely resemble ours, except that they are usually lettered only "MAIL AND EXPRESS" or something equally noncommittal. Inside the appearance is practically identical, but the lock bags hung for letter mails differ markedly from our pouches (a huge, permanently attached lock and bolt is used to close the top in accordionlike folds). Facing slips are folded, as in former United States practice, for use in the slide-in label holders on all bags. Slips are larger and thicker, and the same handy registry labels and good strong twine are used as in England. The public is not permitted to purchase stamps from R.P.O.s. C.P. routes, designated *B.C.S.* (baggage car service), sometimes carry registry convoys.

Canadian R.P.O.s usually deliver letters overnight, via first carriers, to any point within four hundred to eight hun-

dred miles. City sortation on night trains likewise works Montreal or Toronto mails out to carrier routes for the first daily delivery. Now performed by railway mail clerks, the city distribution was formerly done by "city sorters" borrowed from post offices; semicircular cases in the car end are often used. Several terminals exist (at Toronto, Regina, and so on), which resemble ours; but local post offices run them—not the R.M.S.

Tea is the favorite beverage en route, and regular hotels are patronized at the end of the run, where sizable layovers are given. Layoffs are a bit shorter than in the United States, however, for clerks must put in forty-four weekly hours of actual road duty (without study allowances). Eighteen days' annual leave is given. Duties in the car are rotated among the men, including the duty of local exchanges by the *catching arm*, which is just like ours. Clerks take regular case examinations, using practice cards (up to twenty-five hundred per province) printed and sold by the Post Office Department; passing is 90 to 95 per cent, but for promotions, 97 per cent. One card-exam per year is required, and clerks use many study methods, varying from "adaptations of Pelmanism" to just plain memory work. Five questions each are asked, at the same examination, on Canada's P. L. & R.; on the instructions to clerks; and on specific train connections for letters between given points. Salaries are considerably less than those of the United States, but living costs are also lower; higher pay is being sought.

Canada's interesting types of R.P.O.s include some unusual boat and part-boat runs and some still more remarkable "international" routes, for Canadian R.P.O. cars are used interchangeably with ours—plus four busy narrow-gauge R.P.O.s in Newfoundland. But most routes in Newfoundland are not only boat lines but still retain English titles, such as the *Argentia & N. Sydney T.P.O.* (*S.S. Bar Haven*) or *Cabot Strait T.P.O.*; its former boat was sunk by enemy action when on its run October 14, 1942, killing 137. The four unique slim-gauge R.P.O.s in Newfoundland include the Newfoundland Railway's 545-mile "Express" or St. Johns

& Port aux Basques R.P.O., whose three clerks are often snow-bound and dug out by dog teams; their R.P.O. and others were pictured on former Newfoundland stamps. On idyllic Prince Edward Island—the province with no crime, divorce, poverty, or liquor—the unique Charlottetown & Sackville R.P.O. (CN) makes connection to the mainland via railway, the car-ferry steamer *Prince Edward Island* (also shown on a stamp) then rail again; two other rail R.P.O.s serve the island only. Then there is the “Muskoka Lakes Steamer” (MLNav&HCo), with clerks running from Gravenhurst to Port Carling and Rosseau, Ontario. Two similar routes in British Columbia operate: one is the Robson & Arrowhead R.P.O. (S.S. *Minto*), and the other is variously entitled the T.P.O. Burrard Inlet, the Indian River & Vancouver, or simply as the “Burrard” or “Burrard Inlet,” B. C., post office (its present postmark)! The latter distributes patrons’ mail to docks but is operated as a post office and not by the R.M.S.—it consists of a mail boat (usually the S.S. *Scenic*), operated for twenty-five years by Postman-Captain Anderson. And the Quebec, Natash. & N. Shore (ClarkeSSCo) on the St. Lawrence has three unique “Seapost” and “Poste Fluviale” runs (see Appx. I for list of these and of all Canadian R.P.O.s).

Best known of the many international routes is perhaps the D&H’s Rouses Point & Albany (for United States-operated lines are named after points in this country only), which actually runs from Albany to Montreal, P. Q.; like many other such runs, it uses United States clerks and postmarkers and serves no Canadian local stations. One such United States route operates *entirely* in Canada except for a mile or two in Buffalo and Detroit—the Buff. & Chicago, East Div. (NYC-MC); Canada’s Ft. Erie & St. Thomas R.P.O., on same tracks, gives the local service. Canada, similarly, has many routes entering the States, like the CN’s Island Pond & Montreal out of Island Pond, Vermont, or completely crossing one of them—like her remarkable St. Johns & Montreal R.P.O. (CP), traversing the width of Maine for hundreds of miles, exchanging mails with United States lines but not serving local offices (they receive mail from nearby R.P.O.s).

The most incredible of all border R.P.O.s is doubtless the amazing joint operation of the P.T.S.'s Warroad & Duluth R.P.O. and Canada's Fort Frances & Winnipeg, comprising the CN railway from Duluth to Winnipeg. The two R.P.O.s overlap for almost a hundred miles in Ontario and Minnesota. United States clerks run from Duluth to International Falls, Minnesota, and cross into Ontario via Fort Frances to Crozier, where they get off — after delivering even the *Canadian* local mails, in international sealed sacks, between the Falls and Crozier. Canadian clerks take over the run at that point and work westward to cross the border *again* between Rainy River, Ontario, and Baudette, Minnesota; and they in turn serve several United States towns from Baudette to Warroad, Minnesota, inclusive! These offices, "schemed" to the Warroad & Duluth, are actually served by clerks of the Canadian route only, who use and deliver regulation United States pouches (left by the United States crew) for each town. The "Canucks" also handle much mail for Penasse, Minnesota (via Warroad), our northernmost United States post office, for which all mails must be carried through Canada. Finally the train crosses into Canada again via South Junction, Manitoba, and on to Winnipeg.

Some complex and interesting variations from standard practice are necessary on such routes. Many items must be segregated for customs inspection; direct letter bags for offices and R.P.O.s across the border, in either direction, must be prepared as sealed tie sacks; local offices are served by pouch or sealed sack, depending on country traversed, regardless of which nation's clerks are on duty; and periodic counts of international parcels and the complex foreign registry regulations must be observed to the letter. Since United States lines entering or nearing Canada "pouch on" many Canadian offices and lines, and vice versa, border lines of both countries must carry sealing presses and equipment to prepare the needed sealed sacks. United States clerks "put up" Canadian provinces, using sortation books and cards from Ottawa, exactly as they do their own examinations; but Canadian clerks do not learn United States states. Each country must dispatch mails in its

own bags only, and return the other's empty; vari-colored tags are used to denote each class of international mail.

Mail carrying by rail in Canada dates back to 1836, when the first railway was built (Laprairie to St. John's, P.Q.); most railroads began carrying mailbags as soon as constructed. Route agents began sorting local mails on the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad (as well as on steamers) about 1851. The first true R.P.O., the Niagara Falls & London (Grand Trunk), began operating in 1854; and by 1857 forty clerks were running on fourteen hundred miles of route throughout eastern Canada, although an 1865 report lists only seventeen actual R.P.O. lines. As late as 1874, however, lines like the Toronto & Windsor (GT) used no letter cases; letters were thrown loose into the large parcel and paper boxes (resembling the ones once used in the United States). The first R.P.O. in western Canada, the 132-mile Winnipeg & Brandon, began operating January 2, 1886; on June 28, 1886, the first through R.P.O. train left Montreal for the Pacific Coast.

The clerks' union is the Dominion Railway Mail Clerks' Federation, founded about 1885 as the regional (Eastern) Railway Mail Clerks' Association of Canada at St. John, N. B. In January 1917 it was consolidated with the Western Railway Mail Clerks' Federation (founded 1912), at Winnipeg, to form the present organization. About 1921 it affiliated with the Canadian Federation of Postal Employees, and in 1944 with the Civil Service Federation; however, it withdrew from the former federation after an "unfortunate" strike of postal and railway mail clerks about 1924, sponsored by the C.F.P.E. Like our N.P.T.A., the D.R.M.C.F. believes in encouraging the highest standards of performance of duty by each clerk, expressed in the words "We must give as well as take," in order to deserve and better secure the improved conditions for which the organization often successfully bargains.

It, too, is comprised of divisional associations, one to each postal district, and of branches at all important railroad centers. About 80 per cent of all clerks are members, and a full-time secretary serves the federation at Ottawa. Here, too, is published its well-printed journal, the *Railway Mail Clerk*,

which is published in English and French editions cleverly bound together with separate covers and titles. Enjoyable outings are held jointly by the D.R.M.C.F. and the N.P.T.A., including friendly Toronto-Buffalo area family picnics.

Electric rail fans will be interested to know that one railway mail clerk is assigned to the trolley-operated Port Stanley, St. Thomas & London B.C.S. (L&PS) in Ontario to convoy registered mails on Train 48 from London to St. Thomas; and that until 1938, operating postal cars of the former Windsor & St. Thomas (CN) were hauled by trolley locomotives, likewise, from London to St. Thomas. Previously, cars of other R.P.O.'s had been similar hauled; but Canada never had any true trolley R.P.O.s supplying either local or city stations. However, several C. P. runs are trolley.

The Dominion's railway mail clerks, dubbed "Canada's Night Riders" by Deputy P.M.G. Turnbull in a recent radio address, have to contend with (as he pointed out) cars that "sway, roar, bounce, lurch, scream around curves, jerk like a busting broncho"—in addition to the low salaries and long hours. We can leave them with no better parting salute than one which Mr. Turnbull quoted as oft applied to them: "The key men who swiftly dispatch the nation's business . . . who race against time and win."

THE UNITED STATES TERRITORIES

In all the outlying territories of the United States, only one R.P.O. still remains—and even that is not a P.T.S. operation! The Postal Transportation Service, which was operating four interesting rail and boat R.P.O.s in Alaska and Puerto Rico in 1949, closed out the last of these operations in 1950; and the 10 short former R.P.O.s of Hawaii, such as the old Aiea & Waianae (Oahu RR?) had disappeared long before. (Lines formerly operated by the R.M.S. in Cuba and the Philippines, however, are still flourishing as detailed later—but under independent governments.)

The transition of Alaskan postal service to 100 per cent closed-pouch operation with air routes as its basis is now com-

plete; rail and boat services carry little but non-first-class mails, and operate about weekly to monthly as opposed to daily air operation. With even ordinary three-cent letters being carried mostly by air, and with official disapproval toward any increased frequency of R.P.O. running or to establishment of H.P.O.s as the fixed policy there, the death-blow to all distribution in transit was inevitable. The infrequent R.P.O. services were made to appear quite useless because of such handicaps, in comparison with the air lines' overpowering speed and frequency factors.

Very interesting, however, is Alaska's longest rail-operated closed-pouch route, the Fairbanks & Seward C.P., which was an R.P.O. until May 1950; this connects the very center of the Territory with its south coast. The other two R.P.O.'s were steamboat runs, with mails sorted by a joint employee. The Juneau, Sitka & Skagway (J. V. Davis Boat Line), 496 miles through the coastal bays, served the present and former capitals; it had weekly service on each of two sections until its steamer burned in 1947—listed as "Suspended" thereafter, it was officially discontinued in May, 1950. The other boat line, the Nenana & St. Michael R.P.O., operated bi-weekly in summer until discontinued Oct. 15, 1949; it traversed the famed Yukon for 1,028 miles as our longest boat R.P.O. (the St. Michael end was closed-pouch). The joint employee served on two Alaska R.R. steamers, the *Alice* and *Nenana*, using a postmarker reading "ALASKA" at the bottom instead of the usual "R.P.O."

Alaskan R.P.O.s had to contend with the highly unorthodox ways in which Alaskan mails were and are handled as compared to operations in the States—dispatches of mail-bags addressed to no-office points, "catches" made by the train from hand-held train-order hoops, the rigid exclusion of ordinary parcels and much printed matter from mailing to most areas in winter, special regulations for mailing gold dust and bullion, and mails for railroaders at section houses formerly delivered hand-to-hand.

Trains on the Fairbanks & Seward C.P. operate over the 470-mile Alaska Railroad on probably the most leisurely

schedule on record. The R.P.O. and passenger trains used to take only 32 hours for the run, with both lunch and overnight stops; but this breakneck speed was reduced to a 37-hour trip well before the last day of R.P.O. service—when Clerk John F. Rowland finished his final run on May 22, 1950. Contrary to a common impression, the Fair. & Seward was a short-lived R.P.O. of comparatively recent origin; it was not established until May, 1936, when Clerk J. B. Carson inaugurated its career of just 14 years with a borrowed postmarker. The line was a mere newcomer among the many boat R.P.O.'s Alaska then boasted—the Alaska S.S. Co.'s 2070-mile Seattle & Seward (now C.P.), the Seward & Unalaska on the S.S. *Starr*, and many others (*Note 15*). Clerk Rowland, who furnished us much of this information, was transferred to the Seattle & Portland R.P.O. in Washington and Oregon; and he now runs on this Union Pacific line.

Today, Fairbanks & Seward C.P. trains leave Seward north-bound on Tuesdays and Saturdays (the Saturday trip was the R.P.O.) and on days when steamers arrive, at 8:30 A.M. as always. Of the mail which is loaded on before leaving, the clerk used to distribute some 20 to 30 pouches and sacks received here—including mails addressed to the Nenana & St. Michael, Nenana Dis, and so on, for which he did advance sorting; he occupied a 30-foot compartment with five racks, and dispatched nearly all of his own outgoing long-distance mail by air. Fully 50 per cent of the mail received is addressed to no-office localities—which, however, are practically all listed in the second half of the very unusual “standpoint scheme” which is the only one issued for Alaska. The end of all R.P.O. service has worked havoc with this scheme, for no longer can any office be schemed to a distributing line; however, it has always listed the offices alphabetically in Canadian fashion with summer and winter services (many no-office points were routed only to some R.P.O.). The clerk used a self-compiled local scheme also.

By 1 P.M., our train arrives at the fast-growing metropolis of Anchorage; and it stays here all afternoon and all night. (The R.P.O. stayed there *both* Saturday and Sunday nights,

with the clerk utilizing railroaders' overnight accommodations.) Early in the morning, much mail is loaded on from the big new Anchorage Post Office; and again the train leaves at 8:30. It passes in succession magnificent snow-capped mountains . . . glaciers gleaming in the sun . . . the Matanuska resettlement colony . . . Curry, the lunch stop . . . scenic McKinley Park . . . a stop for supper at Healy . . . Nenana, where the R.P.O. connected the Nenana & St. Michael every other trip . . . and into Fairbanks at 10:30 P.M. But no longer does the clerk worry about balancing his registers, which were the line's real mainstay in its closing years; nor has a pouch-rack been already neatly re-hung for the return trip as before. Until the close of R.P.O. service, Clerk Rowland would return to Anchorage with the mail train the following morning (Tuesday) then lay off until Friday, when he'd complete the trek into Seward; he was relieved for occasional extra weeks by a part-time clerk, and both men worked under a District Superintendent at Anchorage.

With the present increase in population and commerce, C.P.-passenger trains on this route now operate daily in the Anchorage area and thrice weekly from there to Fairbanks. It is to be earnestly hoped that the great benefits of both local and through transit-distributed mail can be eventually restored to Alaska, by means of (1) Flying Post Office service on trunk air lines, (2) speeded-up local R.P.O. service every other day on the Fairbanks & Seward (possibly also on the shorter daily Palmer-Whittier and Skagway-Whitehorse runs); and (3) modern H.P.O. service on the Alcan and connecting highways. Both air and surface mails would be speeded more than ever before, that way; the resulting encouragement to Alaskan self-sufficiency, commerce, and Statehood would be well worth the investment in time-saving and efficient transit distribution with local exchanges.

Puerto Rico had just one R.P.O.—the unusual narrow-gage 171.9-mile San Juan & Ponce (Amer.RR.ofP.R.) which made its last run on June 30, 1950. Here, too, the extreme slowness of the carrier's trains was a factor in discontinuance; both mail delay and costly clerical overtime (up to 10 hours!) were in-

volved. The railroad was planning a reorganization, furthermore, and pulled off the two particular daylight trains in which the Spanish-speaking clerks had daily traversed two-thirds of the island's circumference for years. They worked city mail for both termini, and served Areceibo, Mayaguez, and other important towns on their 9-hour run; and until 1941, they connected the N.Y. & San Juan S.P.O. (seapost) which is still in a suspended status (it used the steamers *America* and *Barinquen*). Several C.P. and passenger trains still operate on the ex-R.P.O. line, but most first-class mail goes by star route; and the addition of an H.P.O. route or of speeded-up R.P.O. service on the reorganized railway, or both, would provide Puerto Rico with far faster mail service than ever before and other benefits also. A standard general scheme was issued for Puerto Rico, with all post offices routed either to San Juan or Ponce "Dis," or to the R.P.O.; the two cities were schemed as "junctions," although only the one distributing line was shown (even omitting the N.Y. & S. Juan). Oddly enough, *both* of our last two narrow gauge R.P.O.s were associated with this word "San Juan"—the name of the Ala. & Durango's train (Chap. 10).

The one remaining R.P.O. route in a United States territory, however, is in the Canal Zone. The Panama Canal R.P.O. (Panama RR) is *not* controlled by the P.T.S. or even by our Post Office Department, but is operated by the Bureau of Posts of "The Panama Canal," an independent United States Government bureau. This 47.6-mile international route, running "from Coast to Coast in 85 minutes," is the only R.P.O. in the Zone or in the Republic of Panama, and has operated since canal construction in 1905. From Panama, R.P., on the Pacific, the R.P.O. runs northwest via Balboa Heights (Ancon's railroad station), Corozal, Pedro Miguel, and Frijoles, C.Z., to the joint station for Cristobal, C.Z., and adjacent Colon, R.P., on the Atlantic. The daily R.P.O. train largely parallels the canal and is staffed by "railway mail clerks" (official title) who report for only thirty minutes' advance time. The postmasters at Ancon and Cristobal supervise the R.P.O. Since there are only about twenty-

four civilian post offices in the entire Zone (all served by the R.P.O. directly or otherwise), the official "scheme" is merely a section of the Canal Zone Postal Guide listing the offices (and other localities, as in Alaska) with the station through which served.

Like the former Alaska lines, the Panama Canal R.P.O. is authorized to deliver mail for residents of no-office points, like Frijoles, to "the railroad station agent or anyone accepting mail for him." Even registered and insured mail, if made up by the Ancon or Cristobal post offices in special form, can be delivered by the clerks to addressees residing along the railway. Clerks are required to pouch daily on Balboa, Balboa Heights, Ancon, and Cristobal—plus international sealed sacks for Panama and Colon, as well as "additional pouches as necessary." Panamanian laborers employed by the Canal, formerly "silver employees" (because of pay scale), are required to assist and obey the clerks during receipt and delivery of mail at the car door; and paymasters carrying pay rolls for these and U. S. white-collar workers (formerly "gold employees") can ride in the postal car to safeguard the same. In normal times the R.P.O.'s connection to the States is by the N.Y. & Canal Zone S.P.O. out of Colon (formerly designated as an R.P.O.; now inoperative). At one time the United States Railway Mail Service may have operated the rail R.P.O., for it uses a standard canceler with "RMS" in the killer. Clerks are authorized to accept letters with Panama and United States stamps on them, but must forward them for canceling and for rating with postage due; all such mails are considered "foreign" and must be waybilled when bagged. CP service, only, is operated for Panama Republic postal movements.

MEXICO

Mexico's interesting R.P.O. network, like Canada's, is synchronized with ours. Aiming to attain the highest modern standards, the system operates mostly over the National Railways of Mexico—which actually claims to have R.P.O. service over all its trackage. There are about 120 routes, supervised

by a "Chief of the Transportation Office, General Postal Administration" assisted by his regional "Postal Inspectors." Most routes are called O.P.A.s (*Oficina Postal Ambulante*), but some are designated as *Servicio Ambulante*, and they are named in reverse order for the return trip. The clerks (and hence the service) are popularly designated *post tren* and number about five hundred; officially *agentes postal ambulante*, they are exempt from loading storage mails and similar "porter work."

Connecting with United States lines at El Paso, for example, is the important "O.P.A. Juárez y Torreón" (NRM; i.e., Juárez & Torreon R.P.O.)—or, northbound, the Torreón y Juárez. Its service continues on into Mexico via the O.P.A.'s Torreón y Aguascalientes and Aguas. y Mexico, also on the National Railways. Other lines include the heavy O.P.A. Nuevo Laredo y San Luis Potosí (MP-NRM), likewise a heavy Mexico City connection to Laredo, Texas; and the O.P.A. Nogales y Navojoa (SP). Postmarkers are issued separately to each clerk regardless of the different lines he may run on, and hence show no titles; arbitrary numbers are used. Some domestic Mexican mails are forwarded in part over speedy connecting United States R.P.O.s for fastest dispatch to Mexican destinations. Mail receipts are given for each bag of mail (numbered and billed to correspond).

Sealed sacks of international mails are regularly exchanged by United States and Mexican R.P.O.s, and American clerks distribute Mexican mails to lines by standpoint scheme, the border-area O.P.A.s (like Western Canada lines) being listed in United States schedules. Mexican R.P.O.s often deliver mails direct to persons stationed at small railroad section posts or way stations which have no post office; if no postal representative is on hand, letters can be handed to addressees. Mexican postal cars, which much like ours, have no tables fitted to the newspaper racks. Hence reports have arisen that "mail to be distributed is poured on the floor"; but while this was done on small lines years ago, the standard practice is to work papers out of an opened sack or to improvise a table from sacks piled up or spread on the rack. Sack mail is sealed

before dispatch. Many cars have no fans or electric lights, but these are being installed.

The two to four clerks assigned to each train usually bring a small portable stove for heating coffee and food en route, but modern food-heating devices are planned. Mexican clerks are notably courteous, polite, and loyal to their government—though they have the right to strike against it. They are naturally paid much lower salaries than United States clerks (\$3.50 daily in 1948), but here again the low cost of living helps to equalize things. Layoffs are not quite so long as ours. Clerks often alternate in clerk-in-charge assignments, in day and night runs, and so on. They are issued detailed state schemes (with much postal-guide data included), as well as one of Mexico itself, and are expected to memorize hundreds of routings of the tiny no-office localities. No practice cards are used except occasional homemade ones. Clerks belong to a general communications union (the S.N.T.S.C. O.P.!) instead of to a postal or railway mail group, and joint meetings and banquets have been held by this union and the El Paso Branch, N.P.T.A., which have been attended by clerks and high officials as well—a laudable boon to international friendship. The future of Mexico's system is bright.

INDIA

(Including Burma and Pakistan)

Like the Canadian and Philippine systems (and like ours up to 1949) the Railway Post Office system of India is designated as "the Railway Mail Service," and the same types of divisions, each headed by a superintendent, are used. Furthermore, "catchers" for non-stop exchanges resemble the United States type; layoffs are much like ours (clerks often work four days, then are off three); and, finally, the R.M.S. is "entrusted with almost the whole sorting (i.e., transit distribution) of the Post Office," exactly as in this country.

Working conditions, efficiency of operation, and salaries have all improved remarkably in recent years. Sorters on the more than 450 lines now receive about 45 to 120 rupees a

month (about \$36, a good salary in India). Cars are small, often only fifteen feet in total length, and, like English T.P.O.s, contain no pouch or sack racks. But they are fitted with electric lights, and special resthouses have been provided by the government at "changing stations" and termini for the sorters, as they are called. An attendant and necessary utensils are provided there for cooking meals; hence most lines offer only a low travel allowance or none at all.

Runs often comprise a full week of varied duties, including certain hours at a *Mail Office* (terminal R.P.O.) or Record Office, and a deadhead journey or two to complete the cycle. Mail Offices (with a postmark such as "POONA R.M.S.") also employ many regular terminal clerks, who get only one day off in ten; however, they usually work only six to seven and three-quarter hours a day, depending on whether it is night or day work. On the trains "FM" (foreign mail) sorters work up to twenty-seven hours without rest, and special R.P.O. trains for such mails are normally operated out of Bombay.

R.P.O.s are called *R.M.S. Sections*, and a typical example is the Darjeeling Mail, which is officially "Section E-11" (11th run in "E" Division) on the Ben. & A. and D. H. Rys. Cars on this line are painted "DARJEELING MAIL" in large letters with a royal crest underneath, and have a "late fee" mail slot; wing cases, with boxes twice as big as ours, are found inside. (This line operates from Parbatipur to Darjeeling, up in the Mount Everest foothills.) A typical trunk line, on the G.I.P. Railway from Bombay to Delhi, consists of Sections B-19, F-1, and A-15. Trains are numbered, but "in" and "out" designations are usually used.

The Indian R.M.S. dates from 1863, when the first sorting section was established on the G.I.P. Railway from Allahabad to Cawnpore. After heated arguments over railroad mail pay, the Post Office was able to expand the services over the country. Old postmarks reveal that both the terms "R.P.O." and "T.P.O." were used at first, but later dropped in favor of R.M.S.; "Mail Guards" and "Mail Agents," each with their own R.M.S. cancelers, appeared. Today R.P.O. trains use postmarkers showing simply the number of the section, as

"B-2," and of the crew or *set* on duty, such as "SET 1." Sorters must turn in detailed trip reports with every irregularity recorded. There is only one "Schedule of R.P.O. Trains" for all of India, and this is published as a fifty-page appendix to the *Postal Guide* or *List of Indian Post Offices*; called the *List of R.M.S. Sections*, this appendix includes all necessary timetable data (including junction connections) for every section operated. Compiled in tabulated list form, with section titles all in one left-hand column, it appears thoroughly complicated to our eyes—in fact, almost as remarkably complex as our P.T.S. brochures appear to Indian R.M.S. men! India's schemes or *sorting lists* seem to be even more hopelessly confused; issued separately from each large postal center, they consist of non-alphabetical regional standpoint schemes with the post offices listed in arbitrary order.

India had one of the world's first planned training programs for new R.M.S. men. Some interesting excerpts are given here from a significant report by Nilkanth D. Purandare, retired R.M.S. inspector at Poona who has conducted many such courses between 1928 and 1943. Mr. Purandare (whose father founded the Foreign Mail Sections) thus describes the wartime revival of the classes in September 1943:

Seventeen such classes were opened at the Headquarters stations of the R.M.S. Divisions . . . Taking into consideration the costly living in Bombay . . . the Government decided to pay regular pay and other allowances to the twenty trainees to be deputed to the R.M.S. Training Center, Bombay G.P.O. . . . The Sorting Office of the Bombay R.M.S. is the biggest in the whole of India . . . As the number of post offices to be learned by heart by a trainee in the Bombay R.M.S. is much larger, I got the period extended to three months . . . For practical work they used to be deputed for actual sorting to the R.M.S. Mail Office.

The number of post offices to be learned by heart . . . was about four thousand during the course of about twelve weeks. I had, therefore, fixed a quota of three hundred to three hundred and fifty per week, or about sixty per day. I had about four or five copies of the List

of Indian P.O.s, and introduced the system of dictating the names of the P.O.'s in the class. . . . Notebooks were introduced . . . This copying work in two places had a good result, as the trainees had a good practice in spelling . . .

We had map reading, and explaining of train connections of the R.M.S. sorting sections in India, for which bags are closed by the Bombay R.M.S.; . . . the beats of R.M.S. sections and the situation of postoffices on the several railway lines etc. . . . I introduced the system of a written test . . . A monthly report on the progress of each trainee was sent to the Division Superintendent . . . about one hundred and sixty boys received training . . . It was a pleasure to teach others what you know, and be of use to the community at large. It was a duty after my own heart.

R.P.O.s in Pakistan and Burma closely resemble those in India proper. Pakistan has adopted some new postmarkers for use on air mail and registers sorted on the lines, the cancel indicating one or both functions. Burma's Rangoon-Mandalay Mail and Moulmein Night Mail are well known; newer postmarks, like that of the Minhla-Thayetmo R.P.O., show the route title.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Costa Rica.—R.P.O.s, called *Ambulantes* or *Ferrocarril*, from San Jose to Ramal, to Limon, et cetera; two or three routes, one reported as early as 1907.

Cuba.—About seventy routes, called *Ambulates* (or *S.P.C.*), except for immediately following the Spanish-American War. Then our R.M.S. took over and renamed them accordingly—thus the "Cardenas y Santa Clara Ambulate" became the "Cardenas & Santa Clara R.P.O." from 1899 to 1902. A main line is the Habana y Camaguey Ambulate (URH-CubRR). Two boat R.P.O.s (called *Vapor*) and three H.P.O.s (*Camion*) operate, including the *Camion* Habana y Managua.

Guatemala.—Five current routes operate, with twelve runs thereon (numbered in order), from Guatemala City to San

José and other points. Clerks postmark and sort loose letters handed in, but otherwise are said to handle closed pouches only; lines are designated *Correos Nacionales—Ambulante*, says specialist George K. Clough.

Jamaica.—Two routes, evidently operated as one, and called simply the "T.P.O.—Jamaica"; the government's narrow-gauge railway, starting at Kingston, diverges into two long branches to Montego Bay and to Port Antonio. Established in 1901. (For *Puerto Rico*, *Panama*, see "U. S. Territories.")

EUROPE

Austria.—About seven hundred R.P.O. runs, numbered in order, on some forty "first-class" and seventy "second-class" routes. Designated as *Fahrendes Postamt*, the R.P.O.s are typified by the Wien-Innsbruck (14) and Innsbruck-Lindau (61,62) east-west trunk line. Established about 1852, the system uses postal cars, each known as a *postambulance*. Austria has, or did have, our only known cable-incline R.P.O.—the St. Anton-am-Arlberg, operated with special cancel for a winter mountain-sports event.

Belgium.—About fifty short runs, with such titles as *Nord I* and *Nord II* (i.e., North route, No. 1 and 2), Brussels-Anvers; *Midi IV* (Namur-Brussels), et cetera. First run was about 1849 (Liege-Verviers); supervised by Office of Travelling Posts. One seapost to England, the Oostende-Dover.

Bulgaria.—About one hundred and fifteen runs, such as the *Amb.* Gyveshevo-Sofia, Varna-Sofia, et cetera.

Cyprus.—This island's various "R.P.O." postmarks actually originate at small "railway (i.e., trackside) post offices"; no postal cars are operated at all!

Czechoslovakia.—About three hundred routes, with no less than 996 runs, all numbered, with up to four clerks per thirty-foot car. Large boxes for newspapers and parcels, well padded, are typical of the sorting cases. "Praha-Plzen" and "Praha-Cheb" are two heavy routes. Depots have terminal R.P.O.s.

Denmark.—About three hundred modern R.P.O.s, called *Dansk Bureauer*, manned by four hundred and fifty clerks; the first one was operated 1852. A great trunk R.P.O., Bureauer 2085 between Copenhagen and Frederikshavn (600 kilometers), consists of an all-postal train of two or three postal cars with fifteen clerks; it connects many other routes, all designated by train number only. R.P.O. cars are divided by partition into "office" (letter and newspaper) and "parcel" sections (all other traffic). Clerks, carefully trained, are selected from the post offices and work a straight six-day week.

Eire (Ireland).—Dublin & Cork T.P.O. and Dublin & Galway T.P.O., Day and Night,¹ were only runs operating in Eire at last report, due to the coal shortage. Normally, the Portadown & Derry and Belfast & Northern Counties (to Coleraine) T.P.O.s operate in British North Ireland, and others in Eire; but the two lines are isolated from Eire's and from each other (the Dublin & Belfast formerly connected to both). Dating from 1855, Irish services are on the English pattern; however, labeled cases and decorative interior trim are found. (Carrier: Amalgamated Transport of Eire.)

Finland.—About thirty-three R.P.O.s (184 runs), including Helsinki-Turku, Vaasa-Seinäjoki.

France.—Some 160 *Bureaux Ambulants* (regular R.P.O.s), *Courriers-Convoyeurs* (local branch lines), and *Wagons-Postes* (Fast Mails) on the *Rapides* or express trains traverse the country. Main lines, showing railways traversed, include the *Ambulants* Paris à Marseille (Sud-Est) and *Marseille à Lyon Rapide* (Méditerranée). The best French postal cars contain sorting cases with holes of all sizes, wide case tables with drawers and cupboards, and even nicely cushioned chairs (at least before the war). But other clerks work only in dangerous old wooden cars or in tiny compartments in second-class passenger or baggage vans. A few runs operated even throughout World War II. Many *brigades* (crews) used characteristic wavy-circle postmarkers, reports Dr. Carroll Chase (leading

¹Actual place names and postmarks are in Gaelic.

United States authority). Operated since 1844, the centenary of the *ambulants* was marked in 1944 by a special stamp, only one of its kind on record. There are day (1°) and night (2°) runs. (Army R.P.O.s: See Chapter 11.) The *C.-Convoyeur* Mulhouse-Ensisheim, 15 km., is a real trolley R.P.O. on the Mulhouse Tramways.

Germany.—In 1937 Germany had over five thousand *Bahnposts* (R.P.O. runs) over probably about five hundred routes, and most have been restored to service. Trunk lines include the Berlin-Hannover and Koln-Hannover *Bahnposts* (all German State Railways). Like our P.T.S., the *Bahnposts* are a separate service, divided into numbered districts, and clerks are assigned to districts only (detailed to any or all runs as directed). After special training (case examinations are not used), clerks are assigned to duties on an eight-hour day basis, under supervision of the Military Governments' communication branch. Since 1890, *Bahnpost* clerks have had travel allowances and higher pay than post-office clerks; night differential, annual and sick leave are granted. The *Reichpost* succeeded in operating some routes even throughout World War II, though others were annihilated by bombs. When the military governments took over in 1945 some prewar cars still had skylights and prettily decorated interiors, in conformance with Reichsführer Hitler's "beauty of work" edicts; the newest cars are all steel, about 21.6 meters long, with a special bag-opening compartment in the center—encircled by extra-large pigeonholes to accommodate contents (in lieu of pouch rack). Ingenious dust-eliminating devices and revolving cases are found. The *Bahnposts* have operated since 1841, the various states having differing types at first (e.g., "K.WURTT. BAHNPOST" in Wurttemberg). While the *Strassenbahn-briefkasten* (streetcar with letter box) in Hamburg is not a trolley R.P.O. as reported, there may be electric-car *Bahnposts* at Frankfurt-am-Main. There is an international line into Belgium (Herbesthal-Cologne) which pouches on offices in three countries. Postmarks show "BAHNPOST," and train number as "ZUG."

Greece.—Several routes, as Larissa-Piraeus, and another into Athens, have been restored since the war.

Hungary.—In 1939 there were over fourteen hundred R.P.O. runs on 297 routes, but by 1947 only 111 postal cars had been salvaged following war damage. The first run, to Vienna, was established 1868; later ones were Budapest-Oderberg, Pest-Kassa, et cetera.

Italy.—About 250 R.P.O.s, including Torino-Roma (Turin & Rome), and (earlier) the *Amb.* Firenze-Massa, Bologna-Milan, et cetera. Fifty-seven runs operated by 1889. The routes traverse the Italian State Railways. (See *Sardinia*.)

Luxemburg.—Both *ambulants* and *Bahnposts* recorded; Luxemburg-Trier, Luxembourg-Echternach, 3 other lines.

Netherlands.—Twenty-four rail and boat R.P.O.s now operated, such as Amsterdam-Eindhoven and Rotterdam-Utrecht. Several R.P.O.s connected a Flushing-Harwich Seapost run to England until 1939. Of great interest are four steam tramway R.P.O.s (Burgh Haamstede-Zijpe, Rotterdam-Hellevoetsluis, Rotterdam-Zuid Beijerland, and Spijkenisse-Oostvoorne, with reverse runs, on the Rotterdamshe Tramweg Maatschappij). They use box-like cars with five small, high windows (and a door) on each side; five earlier runs on the Arnhem-Zeist route (NBMaat) used electric train cars.

Norway.—About three hundred clerks man the two hundred-odd R.P.O.s on the Norwegian State Railways, the service being designated *Reisende Postekspedisjoner*. Important lines are Oslo-Trondheim and Oslo-Kornsjö (into Sweden). Mails are divided to line segments and sorted in small cars. Clerks, interchanged with those in post offices, work a forty-hour week; and enjoy excellent single-room layover facilities (government-furnished) plus twenty-one days' annual leave.

Poland.—There were only six *Poczt. Wagonie* (R.P.O.s) reported in 1937; many more doubtless exist now. Numerous new postal cars have been built in double-quick time since 1945; full cars contain large and small case boxes and pouch table; others use half of a passenger coach. Poland had R.P.O.s

before we did, and by 1863 had lines from Warsaw to Czeszochowa (connecting to Vienna), Bydgoszcz (to Berlin) and Grodno. Present routes also include Bielsko-Kalwaria (?); but the heavy line Warsaw-Leningrad has always been operated by the Russians.

Portugal.—About twenty-eight *Ambulantes*.² Postmarks, at least early ones, show no routes.

Sardinia.—There is doubtless R.P.O. service from Cagliari to the island's north end, but available records of Sardinian posts deal mostly with Piedmont, its former mainland province (now Italy). Turin-Genoa *Poste Amb.* ran there.

Soviet Russia (also *Latvia, Estonia*).—*Poshtovy Vagony* (postal cars) of Russia operate over a vast network of railways, although no current information could be obtained from Soviet representatives. The Trans-Siberian Express from Moscow to Vladivostok, Siberia, carries an R.P.O. route which is perhaps the world's longest. Beside the P.V. Leningrad-Warsaw (see Poland), other routes connect to Moscow and all other centers; lines are designated by number only, there being at least seventy-eight routes. Terminals (depot sorting units) exist at many points. About five *Postvaguns* operate in Soviet Estonia (Tallin-Sadam, Valk-Tallin), and several in Latvia (Ritupe-Riga, Riga-Valka), as well as in Lithuania and the Ukraine.

Spain.—At least forty-one *Ambulante* traverse Spain, including Irun-Madrid, Malaga-Seville, Madrid-Vigo (an express run). Others are on slow mixed trains, even showing "MIX." (*tren mixto*) in the cancel. (TRANVIAS/BARCELONA, a tramway postmark, is applied to car-letter-box mail; it is not a trolley R.P.O.) Postal cars are about forty feet, divided into working and storage sections; mailbags are hung on the walls and sealed as in England. The fast Midnight Mail from Madrid to France has three compartments manned by six uniformed clerks (wearing tan smocks). Permanently labeled porcelain headers are used by letter clerks, with "dis" offices

²Or *Ambulancia*.

printed in red on each; while their mailbags are colorfully embroidered with embossed letters in red, yellow, and blue.

Sweden.—The *Postkupe Svenska* operates a highly efficient network of some 217 *P.K.P.s* (RPOs) which are designated by number (independent of train number). Huge seventy-five foot., forty-ton cars are often used (among the very longest) containing cases with all sizes of boxes as well as pouch racks like ours, overhead racks for parcels, and numerous cupboards. Important routes are P.K.P. 9 and 46 (Stockholm-Bollnäs), 81 (Göteborg Malmö), and 308 (Boden-Kiruna), the latter going far north of the Arctic Circle and using electric locomotives of the Lapland Railway. The eight hundred clerks sort mails much on the United States principle, using a large R.P.O. schedule (*Tidtabeller för Järnvägsposterna* and *scheme* (*Förteckning*), each covering the whole of Sweden and incorporating ingenious maps and diagrams. There are about fifteen men to a car, carefully trained and interchangeable with post-office staff; they receive annual leave up to thirty-five days annually but have no layoffs. Most lines are electrified and are on the Swedish State Rys.

Switzerland.—R.P.O. operations, designated both as *Bahnpost* and *Ambulant* in bilingual postmarks, include the Zurich-Basel line and an express run out of Geneva. Most lines are electrified, including at least one using single electric cars—the Stansstad-Engelberg segment, Luzerne-Engleberg *Bahnpost*.

Turkey.—The Turkish "Mobile Service" system has just been converted into a complete modern R.P.O. network for the first time, under supervision of Virgil Jones (a P.T.S. superintendent from Kansas) and his United States Postal Mission; there are over one hundred runs. A scheme and complete R.P.O. schedule of Turkey were both issued last year, and the Istanbul-Adana became one of two trunk R.P.O.s out of Istanbul, replacing primitive route-agent service—the other is the Istanbul-Ankara.

Yugoslavia.—There are about one hundred and fifteen lines, with some R.P.O.s over three hundred miles long; routes

include Sarajevo-Burgojno, Tuzla-Doboj, et cetera. Cars on long runs contain two beds, a shower, and an ice-cooled food cupboard; clerks receive free board and lodging on layovers, as well as a "subsistence allowance" higher than that of traveling officials!

AUSTRALASIA

Australia.—Authorities state that the only R.P.O.s still operating in this subcontinent are those of New South Wales, except for one very unusual one, operating only once a month, attached to the Pay Train, Trans-Australian Railway (postmark reads just that); Pay Train 1 runs from Port Augusta to Watson, and Train 2 from Fisher to Kalgoorlie. The N.S.W. lines, using late-fee letter slots, consist of the SOUTH (Sydney-June), WEST (Sydney-Dubbo), NORTHWEST (Sydney-Werris Creek-Narrabu) and NORTH (Werris Creek Junction-Glen Innes) "T.P.O." runs. However, very recently reported were a Sydney-Brisbane and Sydney-Albury run, and a Quoran-Alice Springs T.P.O. (South Australia, 1918) in addition. Clerks work in uniforms, including officer-type caps, and work at permanently labeled cases (with large compartments for parcels). Cancels read "T.P.O. 2 NORTH/N.S.W.-AUST." et cetera. The first T.P.O.s operated about 1870 and at one time traversed most states of the Commonwealth; but T.P.O.s in Queensland, Victoria, and Tasmania quit in 1932. (South Australia had a "P.O. RAILWAY" postmarking mail as early as 1867.) Early T.P.O.s used two compartments of a passenger car painted "ROYAL MAIL VAN" and used candles; when letters were burned by the latter, kerosene lamps were put in.

Indonesia (Java).—At least one line, the North Borneo R.P.O., operates out of Batavia, Java. Clerks use large-holed sorting cases but no racks.

New Zealand.—One main-line R.P.O., only, still operates—the "T.P.O. MAIN TRUNK" (postmark includes "Auckland, N.Z."), from Auckland to Wellington. Many shorter lines once operated, including branches of this one to New

Plymouth, Thames, and Woodville; also from Wellington to Napier via Woodville. On the South Island there was a main line from Invercargill to Christchurch (via Dunedin) and two branches out of Christchurch. Long called Railway Travelling Post Offices, these services began in 1878. The remaining 426-mile main line uses modern four-truck cars on fast trains, with two senior clerks—called “train agents”—as the crew. A detailed local service is given at all stations. A small restroom equipped with stove and many conveniences is furnished the clerks, who travel 300,000 miles a year; service was suspended in World War II. Clerks from post-office mail rooms man the R.P.O., working five weeks in the office for each one on the road. Trains leave at 3 P.M. both ways, make sixteen stops.

Philippine Republic.—About twenty-eight railway postal clerks now run on the newly-restored routes in the Philippines under direction of Vincente Gonzales, Chief, Railway Mail Service (Bureau of Posts); these consist of the Manila-San Fernando and Manila-Naga City R.P.O.s (ManilaRR) on Luzon, and the Iloilo-Capiz R.P.O. (Philippine Railway) on Panay Island. The 378-kilometer Manila-Naga line is the longest, and carries two clerks in each direction. Operating practice, which was under the U. S. Railway Mail Service for many years after 1899 and used the same official postmark designs, closely resembles ours. Until the Japanese invasion in 1941, the Manila-Naga Camarine Sur operated in addition to the other R.P.O.s; all were taken over by the Japanese but operated almost entirely as closed-pouch service. Earlier there were as many as ten lines—many of them organized by our military forces in 1898 or by an R.M.S. postal mission then (see Chapter 11). Some Spanish routes operated still earlier, but no records seem available.

SOUTH AMERICA — ASIA — AFRICA

We must apologize to our good friends to the south, as well as those in the other two continents, outside of India, for our inability to include specific information on their very interest-

ing and progressive railway postal services—both because of a lack of space and an extreme paucity of available data other than technical postmark information. Korea, despite its new significance in world affairs, has apparently never had R.P.O.s according to its Consul General.

South America has interesting *Ambulancias* in Bolivia and Chile and extensive R.P.O. services in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, British Guiana, and most other countries. The "Transvaal T.P.O.," one of two in South Africa, is particularly interesting—a long run from Johannesburg to De Aar. Japan has some twenty-eight routes, using small compartments in view of the passengers, in which clerks sort into big-holed cases; many lines are electrified. China had several routes before its collapse, including the Pieping-Yukuan and Shanghai-Nanking R.P.O.s and a Yangtze seapost route (publicity exhibits for an expansion program even included model R.P.O. cars).

TRANSIT MAIL LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

When I've made my last trip in the new tin train,
And have tied out my last sack;
And have headed west toward the land of rest,
From whence no once comes back,
It would soothe my dream to be pulled by steam
On that ride down the Glory track.

— ROBERT L. SIMPSON



The bright future prospects of the P.T.S. are closely linked with the impact made upon the Service by today's innovations—and, conversely, with the impression made by the P.T.S. upon the nation at large, as revealed in contemporary literary and artistic media and in its contribution thereto of so many distinguished professional leaders. In closing, an appraisal of these interesting trends is fitting.

The sudden advent of air mail, with a speed factor completely offsetting the time saved by transit-sorting when long distances are involved, has presented an unprecedented challenge to the future of mail distribution en route. From the very first experimental balloon-mail flight in pre-railroad days (1835) up to the inception of mail-plane trials around 1911 and establishment of our first air-mail route in 1918, an implied threat to the future of R.P.O. service as we know it has existed; and the expansion of air services since has intensified it. For-

tunately, the Railway Mail Service—as the natural channel for transit mail—was very early assigned the task of establishing “air-mail fields” to sort the air mail; for it had to be kept separate from ordinary letters, and post offices obviously could not furnish the facilities. Handily located right at each major airport, the A.M.F.s soon became a vitally important part of the Service.

Today the Postal Transportation Service operates nearly forty Air Mail Fields manned by over twelve hundred clerks. The complex special schemes needed for sorting air mail, which cannot as yet be routed to distributing lines, eventually assumed their present form (listing definite dispatches for each first- and second-class office, but massing others on distributing centers). A.M.F. clerks handle in the mails many rare items and unusual articles having vital time priority. Biologicals, cut flowers, anti-borer insects (with a life cycle too short for sea transport to Hawaii), wasps for pollination, fresh poultry, bees, news mats, and urgently needed spare parts are quickly rushed by them to all corners of the earth. They are expert sorters; at Omaha (Nebraska) A.M.F., for example, clerks work New York City air mail out to stations between planes and often take 1,000-card examinations 100 per cent correct, at up to forty cards per minute.

In spite of trials, such as their unreasonably low salary classification, A.M.F. clerks do yeoman service in the hours between their long commuting trips (in post-office trucks or by such little public transportation as exists). Since most air mail must finish its trips to smaller offices by land, they pouch on all nearby R.P.O. routes and distributing offices. The “fly-paper fields” are already developing tales and traditions of their own in the P.T.S. pattern. A favorite story at Jacksonville (Florida) A.M.F. deals with former Postmaster General Hannegan’s unexpected visit there while waiting to change planes. He walked in and greeted Clerk J. B. Glover with “I’m Bob Hannegan, the Postmaster General.” Grover, not even glancing upward, retorted, “Yes, and I’m President Truman.” Only after insistent explanations was he convinced, amid many a hearty laugh at his confusion.

Years ago, however, farsighted railway mail clerks became convinced that the A.M.F.s were not enough—that for maximum cross-country speed to the ultimate degree air-mail service should be combined with actual distribution aloft in the planes. It is not known who first suggested the idea, but it was probably put forth well before the first news of such experiments (overseas) reached this country in 1928. For the world's first Flying Post Office was not the one recently operated across America as a result of such suggestions; it was actually the Stockholm-London Air Post Office, which operated intermittently from June 18 to September 6, 1928, from Sweden to England via Malmö. Actual sorting of letters aloft was performed by expert clerks from the Stockholm G.P.O. on ten flights, sponsored by the Swedish Air Traffic Association (English and Swedish postmarks).

Here in America a planned attempt to have a clerk placed on a plane (to sort mail between Forth Worth and San Antonio, Texas) was first put forth by Superintendent C. J. Taylor of the 11th Division, R.M.S., in the early 1930s; but Washington disapproved the suggestion. About 1935, Walter W. Mahone, of the Rich. & Clif. Forge (C&O) in Virginia, introduced perhaps the first R.M.A. resolution for sortation on planes; and by 1939 the Association was approving similar resolutions at each national convention. That same year actual non-stop catch-and-delivery service by planes was introduced around Pittsburgh experimentally on May twelfth (the permanent service began August 12, 1940); All-American Airlines operated this route to Huntington, West Virginia, and others to eastern Pennsylvania for ten years. No clerk was carried and no letters distributed, but the flight mechanic (or *sky clerk*) did "sort" small pouches of mail en route into the rubber containers which were thrown off at way points; mails to be "caught" were placed in similar containers hung in a ring of nylon rope which was hooked up by a second rope from the plane and reeled upward. One hundred twenty-five stops were served, but service was discontinued on June 30, 1949.

Clerks renewed their efforts to put clerks aloft as the result of the "pickup service" impetus, but Department officials re-

jected all such suggestions as impracticable until early in 1943. At that time Postmaster General Walker broke with tradition to declare that studies were being made of "distribution of mail en route in transcontinental airplanes" and that railway postal clerks—excellently fitted for the work—should be used therein. Although other air-mail officials scoffed by saying that letters would slide out of the case whenever the plane banked, plans were steadily perfected and were publicly announced by Postmaster General Robert Hannegan in January 1946; and on March thirty-first, Fairchild Aircraft released its "Flying Mail Car" plans.

At 1 P.M. on September 25, 1946, the first flight of the experimental "Washington, Dayton & Chicago Flying Post Office" (TWA) actually took off from the Washington National Airport, and mails were sorted aloft for the first time in America. The specially equipped cargo liner had been on display since 9 A.M., and elaborate ceremonies preceding the take-off had involved Postmaster General Hannegan, Second Assistant Postmaster General Gael Sullivan, and Air Mail, War Department, and T.W.A. officials. Mr. Sullivan and the other officials on board the flight sorted the air mail (mostly collectors' covers) out to states and directs in the compact case; but no postmark was applied—the mail was canceled in Washington, with special cachets used. Arriving at Chicago in three and one-half hours, the plane was then routed to Pittsburgh and New York. On October first, another F.P.O. flight was operated clear from Boston to Los Angeles on American Air Lines' *Midnight Expediter*; and on the same day the Fairchild Packet (Flying Mail Car) got its chance. United Air Lines flew it from New York to San Francisco in exactly twelve hours; and on October third, it was routed to Seattle and then back to New York the next day. The Packet's squared fuselage accommodates a unique semicircular letter case, two pouch racks and a table, mail chutes, ten overhead boxes with gates, intercom phone, and a special cushioned chair for sorting while seated. Soothing color schemes, fluorescent lighting, and other modern devices are used.

All Flying Post Office operations were suspended after

October 4, 1946, and have not been resumed at this writing; but officials involved declared the experiment an unqualified success, and its permanent establishment has long been expected. No definite routes have yet been authorized, nor any mail postmarked aloft (although cachets, only, were applied on the *Expediter*). Carrying up to twelve thousand pounds of bag mail in addition to that for sorting (an estimated one-fourth of total), the service could greatly speed up all long-distance air mail in conjunction with C.P. feeder routes. If air mail is ever to travel *as speedily as the air-line passenger*, flying post offices are an obvious "must" (cf. Armstrong excerpt, Chap. 7).

To sum things up, careful studies seem to indicate that the triumphal entry and advance of modern air-mail facilities represent an encouraging challenge—not a threat—to the future progress of our railway post offices and of mail sortation in transit generally. And this is said even with all due regard to the dire predictions of both clerks and officials, here and there, who in recent years have painted dark pictures of our R.P.O.s becoming nearly or totally extinct—with "all first-class mails being sent by air" in closed pouches. The living proof that such fears are groundless is found in the postal systems of Canada, France, and Norway, where all long-distance letter mails have been sent by air mail for years, yet with almost *no* curtailment whatever of their flourishing R.P.O. networks having resulted! Most letters travel not over three hundred to five hundred miles or so, and over such distances R.P.O.s are *faster* than planes in elapsed mail-transit time—for sorting in transit, plus elimination of truck hauls to airports, overcomes the speed differential of air travel. The advent of air mail has encouraged a corresponding upsurge in the use of surface mails; and furthermore, when air mails are grounded by bad weather, still more traffic is thrown to the R.P.O.s. And it is essential that R.P.O.s be preserved for such eventualities, as well as to handle newspapers and other time-value mail, and, further, to deliver *air mail* to all the many smaller destinations that have no airfields! The case for the future seems self-evident: A co-ordinated network of R.P.O.s, H.P.O.s, and

Flying Post Offices must, and certainly will, furnish the backbone for the Postal Service of Tomorrow.¹

The second great modern innovation in mail transportation is the new Highway Post Office—welcomed by all railway mail men with open arms, in sharp contrast to the coming of air mail. True highway-borne R.P.O.s, these new mail-sorting buses are equally popular with the public and are operated under laws designed to protect short-line railways from competition. The expansion of this new service has “top priority in Post Office Department planning,” with at least one hundred more routes projected in addition to the similar number now operated. Detailed analyses of costs and operations of the *hypos* or *high-wheelers*, as the clerks call them, have proved them to be a magnificent and permanent success after nine and one-half years of close observation. The one factor of eliminating mail-messenger costs and delays (for the H.P.O. drives direct to post-office doors) at stations has saved the government thousands of dollars. It is planned to re-establish most discontinued R.P.O.s in this new form and to place H.P.O.s on many long star routes.

It will amaze most of us to learn that America's first sorting of mails on moving highway vehicles occurred in 1896! These early, horse-drawn “H.P.O.s” were called Collection & Distribution Wagons in the cities and Experimental Postal Wagons in rural areas. The first of these were two vehicles, each designated simply as “COLLECT'N & DIST'N WAGON NO. 1,” which began operation simultaneously in New York and in Washington on October 1, 1896; they were manned respectively by Clerks J. P. Connolly and R. N. Jefferson, among others. Operated not by the R.M.S. but by city post offices, these wagons performed local city distribution along with the streetcar R.P.O.s, with which they were coordinated, but they concentrated on collecting and sorting

¹At present, universal three-cent air mail for long distances would be economically fantastic. Figures from both the *Postal Transport Journal* and *Railroad Magazine* reveal that the air lines are paid as much (and sometimes far more) for transporting all air mails as the railways—unsubsidized—are paid for carrying ten to eighteen times as much!

drop mails en route to the post office. The idea was borrowed either from the R.M.S. or from a similar service in Berlin, Germany, the latter having apparently been the first such service on record. The usual letter cases and pouch racks were installed, and wagons pouched on outgoing R.P.O. trains (supposedly relieving post offices of up to 50 per cent of outgoing distribution). Actually, business firms hopelessly swamped the wagons, seeking these early dispatches, and both wagons were soon transferred—to Buffalo and St. Louis, where they were discontinued in 1903 or 1904 (*Note 20*).

The odd Experimental Postal Wagon Service had its beginning April 3, 1899, at Westminster, Maryland—the invention of E. W. Shriver of that post office. Its first eight-foot, two-horse wagon was painted in blue and gold ("U. S. POSTAL WAGON") and fitted with a counter, drawers, and fifty-eight-box case. It served a thirty-mile rural route out of Westminster, delivering mail direct to patrons in sixty-three rural hamlets (largely fourth-class post offices, then discontinued) and farm stops. The clerk or "postmaster" not only expedited his carrier deliveries by doing his usual preliminary sorting while traveling, but also sold stamps and money orders, just as in a regular post office. On December twentieth, this service became Route A as three additional ones (B,C,D) were established from that office, covering Carroll County; other routes followed at Frederick, Maryland, and in Pennsylvania and Missouri. The clerk canceled mail from patrons with a rimless postmarker bearing a straight bar biller. Soon after 1905 the routes became ordinary R.F.D.s. But none of these wagon services sorted mail *between* offices.

The first verified, recorded suggestion for H.P.O.s within the Railway Mail Service was the brain-child of James F. Cooper of the old Tuolumne & Stockton (Sierra Railway) and the late Carl E. Allen (Sacramento & San Francisco—SP) in California; utterly unaware of any other alleged like proposals, they hit on the idea of H.P.O.s during conversations in 1925. Noting that a new highway between Cooper's termini was ten miles shorter than his run and was siphoning so much traffic (including bag mails) from the railway that

abandonment was imminent, they took action and began publicly advocating "bus R.P.O." service. Cooper introduced the first Division Convention resolution for H.P.O.s at San Francisco in 1927, following its approval by his Sacramento Branch, R.M.A. He wrote letters to bus companies, clerks, and officials plugging the idea, and 8th (California) Division delegates were finally directed to support H.P.O.s at the Nation Convention. L. C. Macomber (who claimed to have introduced a national H.P.O. resolution in 1915—not found in the records) and others, too, hammered away at the proposal; but no action was taken, and Cooper's line quit in 1938.

Meanwhile the first true highway post office in the world (sorting mail between offices en route) is said to have been established in Germany in 1929. No details are available, and France also claims to have been first to operate a route, although her *poste automobile rurale* (founded September 1, 1926) was much more like our Experimental Postal Wagons and may not have even sorted mail while moving. In this country clerks redoubled their efforts, and in that same year of 1929, Walter W. Mahone (the Flying P.O. proposer mentioned earlier) vigorously proposed the use of H.P.O.s on star routes and elsewhere—only to have his resolution soundly voted down at his Washington (D.C.) Branch meeting. The Department, in turn, rejected an officially submitted suggestion of Clerk H. E. Weiler for such service as "too far ahead of the times, and Congress will not appropriate money." But six years later the Mahone resolution was adopted both by his branch and the 3rd Division Convention, and that same year (1935) the National R.M.A. voted likewise.

Then in July 1937 the first American motor vehicle to sort mails en route began operation, but not as an H.P.O. This surprising and little-known service was operated in Miami, Florida, by the post office there, until December 1941; it consisted of a three-ton, thirteen-foot Autocar truck manned by three clerks who sorted foreign registered air mail, only, in transit between the Miami A.M.F. and the Pan-American Airport at Dinner Key Base—using a thirty-six-box letter case. (The restoration and expansion of similar services, on post

office-airport-railroad station circuits operated by the P.T.S., has been suggested in a meritorious proposal publicized by one clerk in the *Postal Transport Journal*. Runs to distant airports would permit a good bit of sorting, and both air and ordinary mail could perhaps be expedited.)

In 1938 an investigating committee discovered that branch-line R.P.O. service had been cut by twenty-two million miles annually since 1922, and that mail circulation was being stagnated by the resulting unwieldy star routes. The urgent need and the economy and convenience of proposed H.P.O.s on such lines was stressed; newspapers like the Greensboro (North Carolina) *News* took up the fight for "bus post offices." At a 1939 congressional hearing it was shown that German H.P.O.s were successfully expanding, and Representative Gillie of Indiana pleaded for such service to replace discontinued interurban and other R.P.O.s. (Clerks in the Indianapolis area had been so outspoken in suggesting the new service that one authority credits their office there with originating the idea.) The route particularly in question was the short-lived, already-doomed Peru & Indianapolis R.P.O. (IRR) described in Chapter 12.

Through concerted efforts by the R.M.A., Mr. Gillie, and others, Congress finally passed a joint resolution authorizing an experimental H.P.O. over this route. But even though the electric line had already designed the mail-sorting bus it planned to use thereon, President Roosevelt vetoed the bill at Departmental urging—on the grounds that volume of available mail was insufficient, that other R.P.O.s supplied all its larger offices, and that the legislation was restrictive (to one line only). At last, in 1940, a second bill was introduced by the Department allowing it to establish routes anywhere—and, backed by clerks and officials alike, it was enacted.

On February 10, 1941, the Washington & Harrisonburg Highway Post Office — first in America — left the national capital on its inaugural 142-mile journey through Virginia's beautiful Shenandoah Valley (over Highways 50, 15, Va.-55, and 11). Despite Indiana's pleas, it was the first route authorized; a spruce new government-operated White bus was

used—a Model 788, with full R.P.O. equipment and powerful underfloor engine, finished in shiny red, blue, and silver with the lettering “UNITED STATES MAIL — HIGHWAY POST OFFICE.” The route was set up to supplement single-trip R.P.O. service on the old Wash. & Lexington (Sou) which connected the same two points. Oddly enough, the first letter had been mailed in the new H.P.O. eleven days before—by President Roosevelt, on his birthday (January 30), as it posed before the White House for photos.

In the cool darkness of that early dawn on February tenth a little knot of postal officials and an interested clerk or two (including this writer) gathered to witness the historic event. Genial John D. Hardy, then General Superintendent of the R.M.S. (which was assigned to operate all H.P.O.s), entered the vehicle to distribute the first mail—consisting mostly of collectors’ covers, over fifty thousand being mailed. Amid new fittings exactly like those of an R.P.O. apartment, Clerk-in-Charge Clyde C. Peters, of Harrisonburg (a Washington & Lexington veteran), worked with the busy assistance of Clerks O. R. Liskey, L. H. Grove, and C. M. Dellinger. Both Mr. Hardy and his superior, Honorable Smith W. Purdum (Second Assistant Postmaster General), rode the thirty-three-foot bus on the first trip as the clerks sorted mail into 120 letter-case separations and three five-foot racks of pouches. Safety belts, supplied to all, were not needed, because of the smooth riding of the streamlined vehicle.

Although the citizenry of Washington was conspicuous by its absence on this much-publicized occasion, any doubts as to the people’s reception of the innovation in Virginia were soon dispelled. Cheering crowds, brass bands, and special receptions greeted the colorful bus at Middleburg, Front Royal, Strasburg, Toms Brook, Woodstock, and Harrisonburg. A Middleburg restaurant treated crew and spectators to coffee and pastries, and after stirring speeches at Harrisonburg, A. G. Carter (“cowboy postmaster” of Edinburg, also on the route) presented Mr. Purdum with a pistol he had used riding the Montana ranges. Arrival at this terminus was right on time (11 A.M.), with the return trip being made on sched-

ule with equal punctuality. The H.P.O. was the first distributing line to serve the great suburban metropolis of Arlington, Virginia (adjoining Washington), although this particular mail supply was recently discontinued. The route itself, an outstanding success, continues to operate every weekday, supplying superbly efficient service to the Valley.

The triumphal commencement of the first route fired the two principal groups of H.P.O. backers within the R.M.A. with new enthusiasm, and it was natural that the second and third routes should go to their areas. By extending the Peru & Indianapolis route north to South Bend, all objections to revival of this now-defunct line had been met; and the 152-mile South Bend, Peru & Indpls. H.P.O. began operating May 3, 1941, over Highways 12-22-31. While the interurban trolley company ruefully ditched its blueprints for a contract-operated bus (the government provided the vehicle), the populace went wild with enthusiasm; the eight-car official motorcade was greeted with receptions everywhere by many of the 780,000 postal patrons whom it still benefits. Then came the San Francisco & Pacific Grove (Calif., 151 miles) on August fourth, with an even more ceremonious inauguration at which James F. Cooper was deservedly the honor guest; he was given a reception at his home town of San Leandro, and a specially inscribed souvenir bell (rung at each stop) for his nationally known bell collection. Nine officials made the run, which likewise traversed at one end the route of a discontinued trolley R.P.O. (the "Hay & Oak" of Chapter 12).

Further establishment of H.P.O.s was delayed by World War II until 1946; but of the three routes established that year, two are particularly noteworthy. One, the 184-mile Union & Mobile (Gulf Transport Co.) from Mississippi to Alabama, was the first postwar and first interstate R.P.O., the first one operated by contract carrier (as R.P.O.s are), and the longest one yet established; it replaced a C.P. railroad-truck route of the same name, formerly an R.P.O. The other, unfortunately, was to become the first and only H.P.O. to be abandoned thus far—the old Jackson & Benton Harbor, in Michigan (October 15, 1946-July 31, 1947). It was terminated

after less than a year "because of excessive costs for factory maintenance under private contract," with the expensive vehicle deteriorating to a very serious extent.

After 1946 there was another lull until the new Belleville & Wichita H.P.O. bloomed forth in Kansas in June 1948—but that was the signal for a steady stream of new routes to appear, without interruption, from then until the present day. Almost one hundred H.P.O. routes are now in operation, with new ones being added nearly every month. The longest run is the new Richmond & Sanford (283.6 miles) from Virginia to North Carolina; while the shortest, thus far, is the Los Angeles & San Pedro (California, 58-61 miles). Two of the new H.P.O.s traverse, almost exactly, proposed routes suggested in the original script of this book. One, the 114-mile Baltimore & Washington (in Maryland) restored service largely along the long-defunct routes of the old Balt. & Annapolis (WB&A) and Hyattsville & Chesapeake Beach (CBRR) R.P.O.s, as well as serving new territory around Prince Frederick and near Annapolis.

The second of these two H.P.O.s, the Goshen & Newark (N. Y. State-New Jersey), is already adding to the colorful traditions of the P.T.S. It seems that for a long time Clerks C. W. McMickle, William Norkaitis, and Charles Sullo (and their driver) had been slowing down the H.P.O. to wave to an invalid brother and sister at Butler, New Jersey; and when Christmas (1949) arrived they surprised the shut-ins with a big Christmas party with gifts of goodies, books, and money from themselves and others. This H.P.O. was established as the Middletown & Newark on November 29, 1948, only to be slightly rerouted into Goshen and accordingly renamed the following January 24—to the consternation of postmark collectors who failed to get the Middletown standard cancel! It replaces the old Wanaque & N. Y. R.P.O. (Erie) and restored service to dozens of towns on the former Middletown & N. Y.'s (NYS&W) west end—also furnishing it to the upper-bracket Montclair-Caldwell suburban area. "The Gosh," as it is called, has a companion route — the Wanaque & Newark H.P.O., which took over the east end of the N. Y. S. & W.

(then curtailed as the Butler & N. Y.) on the same date. The new Wanaque run has established a real record for speed in delivery; officials report one letter mailed at Ridgefield Park, New Jersey, at 11 A.M. delivered to the *addressee* in North Bergen, via H.P.O. and special-delivery messenger, at 12:45 P.M. same day!

On the human side, life on the H.P.O.s differs quite a bit from that on the mail trains. There is no coffee man on the H.P.O. bus; at lunch time the driver merely makes an unofficial stop at a roadside restaurant and all hands partake of a good hot meal! To avoid going "stuck," clerks on the *hypos* have doubtless persuaded more than one driver to stage a slight slowdown or to linger a bit while important connections are tied out. Styles in H.P.O. vehicles are already changing—the once-universal red, blue, and silver color scheme is giving way to two shades of rich maroon, with only one stripe of the patriotic hues; and new models are even more streamlined than early ones, many of them being huge articulated "two-car" units which bend in the middle. The H.P.O.s have suffered only a few accidents on the road, with no injuries.

The law which prohibits establishment of H.P.O.s so as to compete with or exterminate existing short-line R.P.O.s is presently interpreted rather liberally. H.P.O.s can be established² wherever R.P.O. service is "insufficient;" and where existing R.P.O. service is not sufficiently economical, frequent, or speedy in the eyes of the Department, it has ruled that such facilities are insufficient for the public interest. Both of the New Jersey H.P.O.s mentioned, as well as most of those out of Los Angeles, were established to *replace* existing R.P.O.s (although railroad service continued to operate) in the interests of economy and flexibility. Establishment of both of our first two H.P.O.s was later followed by discontinuance of R.P.O. service between the same termini, although routes differed. Although it cannot be proven that the new service

²Provided, according to official policy, that supervision and garage facilities are available, that climate is satisfactory, that grades do not exceed 6 per cent, and that there are sufficient large post offices supplied without making the route too long.

hastened the demise of either R.P.O., it cannot be denied that when a mail contract is the final economic factor which enables a railroad "short line" to survive, substitution of H.P.O.s *could* be fatal and affect adversely many communities served in spite of the very beneficial mail service supplied. While a vast majority (if not all) of our current H.P.O.s were needed very badly to provide good service, it is to be hoped that future routes may be established more particularly in areas having no R.P.O. service whatever. Such territories, needing H.P.O. service urgently, include the south half of New Jersey (with only two short R.P.O.s left); the Southern Maryland-Northern Neck (Virginia) area, where a "Washington & Fredericksburg H.P.O." via the Morgantown bridge (to replace the huge motor-route networks out of both cities) would do wonders; and vast portions of New England, the Mountain states, Oregon, Washington, and elsewhere. Simultaneous pouches made by a connecting line show that the Wash. & Fred. route (in Maryland alone) would receive over twice the mail handled by the new Balt. & Wash.

But to return to the true Railway Post Office, it too is undergoing a modern transformation. Today is the age of the streamliner; of the swift and colorful Diesel-electric giants which haul our transcontinental expresses. Even America's earliest streamliner of all, the Burlington's *Pioneer Zephyr*, was an R.P.O. train (Lincoln & Kansas City); and since its inaugural run November 11, 1934, millions of high-speed miles have been run by P.T.C.s on streamliners—despite crack-ups like that of the *Zephyr* at Napier, Missouri, in 1939. With most of our principal trunk lines now using the new-type equipment, schedules have been speeded by several hours on many R.P.O.s, mails advanced beyond all previous records, and railway mail clerks forced to work at a more frenzied pace than ever before.

Well-known R.P.O. streamliners of today include the famed *20th Century Limited* (Note 8); the Santa Fe's *Chief* (Kan. City & Albuquerque—Alb. & Los A. R.P.O.s); the B&O's *Capitol Limited* (N.Y., Balt. & Wash.) and *Continental* (Wash. & Chicago); the Lehigh Valley's *Black Diamond* and *Asa*

Packer, which are New York, Geneva & Buffalo Trains 9, 10, 25, and 26; the *Broadway Limited* (see Chapter 3), electric and steam semi-streamliner, which made its first trip on the PRR's New York & Pittsburgh, June 15, 1902; the *Tennessean*, Trains 45 and 46 on the Southern, whose R.P.O. cars on the Wash. and Bristol, continuing to Memphis, are named the *Corinth* and *Grand Junction*; and so on.

To the postal transportation clerk himself a more welcome sequel to the streamliners' advent has been that of the latest style modern R.P.O. car. Still few in number, the new cars are styled for real comfort and efficiency. There had been almost no change in R.P.O. car design and furnishings since the 1890s, but one day in April 1946 the Pennsylvania Railroad presented to the Department its new "dream car," the *Robert E. Hannegan*—designed jointly by railroad and postal authorities, incorporating many clerks' suggestions. Built at the Altoona Shops under direction of Dan M. Shaeffer, it was numbered 5239 and named after the Postmaster General, to whom it was dedicated at Union Station, Chicago, on April twenty-third. This car has new safety features, wider doors, modernized heating and lighting systems, a stainless-steel steam cooker, large enclosed washroom and closet with automatic light, unbarred double safety-glass windows, luggage compartments, some case boxes for oversize mail, automatic platform lights, and other improvements such as ball-bearing trucks. It was put in service on the *Broadway Limited* (N.Y. & Pitts.—Pitts. & Chic. Trs. 28 & 29) on May 8, 1946 (with collectors' cachet to celebrate), and has served on that route (sometimes on the New York & Washington) ever since.

Even the *Hannegan* leaves much to be desired, and has been often shopped for repairs; but the newest cars incorporate many more superior features. Specifications for such cars are now drawn up by the joint N.P.T.A.-P.T.S. Car Construction Committee, and as a result the Milwaukee Road built a model of one new car type which is a postal clerk's dream. Fluorescent lighting, automatic non-stop-exchange signals, electric hot plates that really boil coffee, electric refrigerators, plastic table coverings, and three closets are just a few of the

ultramodern improvements included. Some of these refinements have actually appeared in the newest cars, but government experts and railroad engineers still object to the hot plates and fluorescent lights as "unnecessary." It is to be hoped that the committee's toned-down current specifications (which still permit mere steam pots, strong electric bulbs, iceboxes, and folding basins) will be revamped with enough "teeth" to insist on *all* essential improvements of the Milwaukee plan, as well as at least two rows of wide "oversize" boxes (which need be but half as high) at *every* case instead of at only the registry case. Nevertheless, excellent new cars have been introduced on many lines—the El Paso & Los Angeles (SP's *Golden State Limited*), the Burlington's Chicago & Council Bluffs (whose beautiful new car, *Silver Post*, was dedicated by high officials on March 25, 1948), on many Milwaukee Road lines, on some Pennsy and ACL routes, and several others.

Of particular significance are two important suggestions for radical changes in distributing equipment (in the cars) which have been considered by the committee. One of these innovations has met with its enthusiastic approval, as well as that of clerks and officials generally—the new lightweight rack extension and table combination invented by the late Monroe Williams, a clerk who became a leading R.M.A. division president and editor. It does away with the entire present setup of cumbersome pedestals, bars, and heavy tables by substituting feather-light folding-leg tray tables alternated with "rack-arm" extensions of the pouch rack (furnishing extra separations). First tested on the SP's Ogden & San Francisco on April 17, 1946, it was permanently installed thereon on December thirty-first and has received hearty approval since from nearly all concerned (there has been some objection on Omaha-Ogden runs). The Department has made the new installation optional in all new-car specifications; and, as it is cheaper to construct, it is likely that all railroad companies will adopt it for new car-building. The other suggestion, disapproved by the committee, is nevertheless an idea for which a vast number of clerks have continuously agitated—the "center-case" car, with pouch rack at one end and paper rack

at the other, which eliminates the danger and loss of time resulting from so many clerks having to stop to pass bagmail up and down the alley. Most existing cars have the pouch table in the center, and letter or paper distribution must cease whenever pouches are passed to or from the door. It would seem that this suggestion deserves equally prompt adoption.

A still more welcome innovation is the all-too-infrequent air-conditioned postal car. Most air-cooled trains carrying mail cars still omit the latter from the air-conditioned setup, and strenuously working clerks must swelter in it all summer. In 1910 the country's first air-cooled R.P.O. cars were installed on the Kansas City Southern Railroad (K. C. & Siloam Springs and connecting R.P.O.s) by order of its president, ex-P.T.C. Harvey C. Couch. Air conditioning was recently introduced on the Mpls. & Miles Cy. (NP) run and a few others, and further experiments are under way. Long called for in N.P.T.A. resolutions, this improvement is desperately needed in all warmer climates. Some officials have objected that frequent door openings make it impracticable, but buses and trolleys stopping for passengers much more often have been successfully air-conditioned in practice.

A comprehensive program of drastic reorganization and improvement of the entire postal transport organization was begun in 1946, which had its final culmination in the creation of the Postal Transportation Service on November 1, 1949. Improved personnel practices were to be the first step in this long-range program, and as a result the first stage was put into effect with the appointment of fifteen new Counselor-Instructors, one in each division, on April 16, 1946. These men, besides assisting new substitutes, were available to regular clerks also. (Terminated in 1950—see Chapter 3.)

The second stage of the program—national joint conferences between the Department, the N.P.T.A., and the carriers—began just six days later (April 22, 1946). At Chicago all R.M.S. officials, from the rank of former chief clerk on up, attended their first big conference as Association, railroad, and air-line officers joined in the conclaves on that day. The conference laid far-reaching plans for departmental and

field reorganization, improved distribution facilities everywhere, postwar schedule changes, improved labor-management relations, the challenge of air mail to other mail transportation, faster mail-handling techniques and transportation, and many similar topics. Many of the plans advanced have since been carried out, particularly the establishment of "line committees" (or "organization committees") to represent the men of each line—as long urged by the R.M.A.—in all reorganizations.

The third phase—complete reorganization of the Second Assistant Postmaster General's office and all postal transport facilities—took place September 22, 1946. At this time the General Superintendent R.M.S. became the Deputy (2nd) Assistant Postmaster General, Surface Postal Transport; and the various division superintendents and chief clerks were given the new titles outlined in Chapter 3. The Bureau of Railway Mail Service at Washington became that of Surface Postal Transport—and the R.M.S. title was to survive in the field for only three more years. There was much agitation for a change therein from R.M.A. members, for the R.M.S. had expanded to include numerous highway, terminal, and air-mail facilities and was beginning to lose control over the latter. But suggestions for a new name varied from the lengthy one finally adopted to such simple titles as "Transit Mail Service"—put forth by the R.M.A.'s largest branch, by its big Sixth Division, and by this writer. It was earnestly felt that such a brief and apt title would emphasize that railway mail clerks do not just "transport" the mail but sort it *in transit*, and that it would be handy and involve change of only one word or letter (R.M.S. to T.M.S.). In fact, the corresponding title of "Transit Mail Association" narrowly missed adoption by the N.P.T.A. as its new name at the same time, due to parliamentary maneuvers. But postal officials, pointing out that clerks handled some other mails as well as transit mails, effected consolidation of the R.M.S. with the semi-independent "Air Mail Service" on November 1, 1949, under the title of Postal Transportation Service. Corresponding name changes took place in the field,

and others in Washington; in 1950 the head office became the Bureau of Transportation, and the chief of the Service again redesignated as the Assistant Executive Director thereof.

In 1949 the Hoover Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch issued a report recommending a sweeping reorganization of all postal services. Many meritorious proposals were included (and some adopted); but its short-sighted suggestion to have the post offices absorb the Terminals, P.T.S., was fortunately disapproved. Often falsely accused of "duplicating" post office functions, the terminals are a vital, co-ordinated part of the P.T.S.

Another major innovation which has greatly affected the P.T.S., though not a part of it, is our interesting new postal zone-number system. Its absorbing history cannot be given here, but suffice it to say that it was a railway mail clerk—Nathan A. Gardner of the Ogden (Utah) Branch, N.P.T.A.—who apparently first suggested zone numbers for *all* large cities. He publicized a plan in the October 1940 *Railway Post Office* calling for a system almost identical with that finally adopted nationally by the Department in 122 large cities in May 1943. Already in use in Pittsburgh (and, partly, in Cambridge, Massachusetts) at the time, the plan—long in use in European cities—proved popular and helpful in sorting of wartime mails by new clerks and soon showed its value as a permanent fixture. It permits instant sorting of city mail to stations.

City clerks in R.P.O. trains were soon furnished suitable lists and requested to add the zone numbers of their city to the station case headers they used; later all P.T.C.s were asked to make separate zoned and unzoned packages for any cities made up direct. Veteran clerks, mostly distrustful of the whole idea, often snorted and disregarded the numbers altogether; it was freely claimed that patrons usually used the wrong numbers anyhow and that "zoning" was a menace to the jobs of expert city sorters—low-paid, untrained non-distributors would soon take over. But other city clerks, particularly new ones just learning their assignment, were pleased at the ease and speed with which any zoned letter could be sorted. Clerks

on state cases occasionally began making up the unzoned and zoned separations requested, despite fun-poking from the veterans, who still used the traditional two boxes for each city's "long" and "short" letters instead (as many still do).

As a matter of fact, tests show that close to 99 per cent of all zone numbers used are correct, and that there will always be enough unzoned mail to require the usual number of expert city clerks on the lines. The zone numbers have been a godsend to numerous R.P.O.s which formerly went "stuck" on city mail regularly; it is the ideal assignment for the new subs who are always being broken in.

According to the N.P.T.A., the real threat today to efficient city-distribution assignments comes not from the zone numbers but from the radical new alphabetical system of sortation now ordered used on trains working city mail for Dallas and Milwaukee. Highly praised by Department officials as more economical and speedier than the system of sorting direct to carrier stations, this new method proposes an unbelievably simple separation of the mail by alphabetical groups according to street names—those beginning with A-B-C to one box, with D-E-F to a second, and so on. Only a very few downtown streets, firms, and so on are sorted by the old method; the bulky city scheme and complex examinations are cut out.

It is not disclosed how the mail ever reaches its carrier stations under this strange system, and Association officers claim that at least one rehandling of all mail must take place and that specific reports of delayed mail have been unearthed as a result. On the other hand, postal officials claim that less handlings are involved and that Texas clerks particularly are much pleased with the innovation. Wisconsin clerks have protested vociferously, however, and are anxious to retain the former system of "expeditious delivery of important mails direct to patrons . . . at the earliest possible moment after arrival . . ." and to continue to study their city examinations to qualify for such service. If expanded, the alphabetical method will at the very least constitute a threat to handy zone-number distribution, and it is to be hoped that the obvious advantages of the zoning system will prevail in the end.

Another improvement in the Postal Service, not primarily a P.T.S. function, nevertheless affects its clerks markedly—the Postal Suggestion Program. Clerks are now publicly presented with cash awards or certificates for approved suggestions for improved postal devices or operations. Railway mail men have been at the forefront in submitting worth-while proposals, and the first nine cash awards to P.T.S. officials and clerks were made in 1948. At impressive ceremonies W. L. Lanier (a clerk-in-charge at the Air Mail Field, Washington, D. C.) was awarded \$375 for his suggestion of additional uses for an existing form, eliminating entry of registered pouches on a second form. Second prize went to A.A. Chiccott, a Pittsburgh office clerk, for proposed discontinuance of an unused space form. The most recent award was one to Clerk-in-Charge William F. Leutwyler of the Philadelphia Terminal, P.T.S.

A more specific recent P.T.S. improvement is a co-operative safety program involving the N.P.T.A., service officials, the Compensation Bureau, and even Congress. Honorable George D. Riley, staff director of the Senate's postal committee, even made a tour of the country exclusively in R.P.O. cars in 1947; he had numerous unsafe or unsanitary conditions corrected on the spot and others reported. N.P.T.A. officers have made special surveys of many lines and terminals, too, and have provided new detailed forms for special reports. Inadequate medical facilities in terminals are being publicized; a national N.P.T.A. survey of all mail cars was completed in February, 1950.

Experimental installations of devices for automatic exchanges at "catcher" stations have been tried out for years. One of these appliances was invented by Albert Hupp, of Kansas City, and was tried on the old Hyattsville & Chesapeake Beach (CBRR) at the Chesapeake Junction (D.C.) station—attracting so much official attention to the ceremonies that even President Taft turned up, and for the first time in history a United States president rode in an R.P.O. car! But this experiment of 1912, using six cranes with special catcher arms which engaged a three-pronged device on the car, failed

to make a hit despite its apparent success. Officials have often examined the ingenious English catcher apparatus but do not feel it is adaptable for our usual exchange of one small pouch only. Other experiments were tried even back in the Gay Nineties and earlier. Our newest such device, at last report, was still being operated—but only on one line, the Eastport & Spokane (SIRy., Ida.-Wash.). The car has a dispatching arm which makes a half turn as soon as the crane shears off the pouch, thus causing the same arm to hook the incoming pouch from the crane. But if there is too much or too little mail in the pouch, it does not work, and the ideal device is still to be found. Although not automatic, an ingenious improvement of the conventional catcher hook has been modeled by Joseph Goodrich, formerly of the Eureka & San Francisco (NWP); it can be reversed instantly without removal. Lloyd A. Wilsey of the Elroy & Rap. City (C&NW) has launched a new campaign for automatic or improved catchers and restoration of catcher and R.P.O. service.

Electric warning devices for approach to the crane are an improvement needed even more, and the first experimental installation was probably an electric bell in the car, rung by the engineer, which was installed in R.P.O. service on the Rock Island in 1940. While this was successful, clerks prefer an automatic device; and after many other experiments such an appliance was invented by the Minneapolis-Honeywell Regulator Company. Its earliest model appeared in 1942 and was later successfully tested on Milwaukee Road runs. (An installation on the rails, near stop points, actuates an electronic circuit when train wheels engage it.) It has been approved by the N.P.T.A. Board of Directors, but officials have still not accepted it as a "satisfactory device." The newest proposed installation is one invented by Ben B. Kirby, a Kansas City clerk, and demonstrated at the 1949 Convention; it has a film tape which indicates distance between stations, buzzes automatically a mile from the station, and also indicates which side of the train it is on.

In the field of administrative and personnel relations, too, some very welcome innovations have actually taken place. In

1947 a joint R.M.A.-R.M.S. committee revised the 314 complex questions and answers of the standard annual P.L. & R. examination to eliminate twenty-four obsolete or confusing queries, and in 1949 officials made many clarifying revisions and substitutions therein and reduced the total questions to only (!) 284. However, much remains to be done in further amelioration, especially in connection with the many complicated registry queries which affect very few clerks. The secret "rating" of clerks by their clerks-in-charge on forms known only to the office, much resented by the rank and file, has been eliminated—clerks are advised of rating now and permitted to inspect report forms. In 1947, Senator William Langer made a personal survey of R.M.S. working conditions, pay scales, and operating practice, writing letters to each clerk; welcomed by all of them, they replied in frankness and in detail, with considerable benefit resulting.

Efforts to publicize the Postal Transportation Service to our citizens generally have been redoubled in recent years. The radio, particularly, has been put to good use. A series of numerous outstanding talks on the Postal Service, mostly on the (then) R.M.S., was given by Charles A. Kepner (late 6th Division R.M.A. president) in Chicago for several years over WJJD, beginning in 1936. Three of his principal R.M.S. addresses (later duplicated and broadcast elsewhere) were *The Journey of a Letter* (the detailed handling of an R.F.D.-mailed letter as sorted by Chicago city clerks on the Chicago & Carbondale—IC Train 26); *Examinations in the R.M.S.* (partly in verse form); and *The Story of a Railway Postal Clerk*, based on Clarence Votaw's book mentioned later. Some programs took the form of short plays by Clerk C. W. Edwards and others, and fan mail displayed marked interest. In December 1946 a fifteen-minute R.M.S. interview was broadcast to Californians by office clerk Lyle Lane, of Los Angeles, over KGER's Civil Service News program; and in April 1948 the new 6th Division president—Joe Baccarossa—revived Kepner's idea by talking on the R.M.S. and Postal Service over WCFL.

Of probable interest to readers is the fact that a program based particularly on one part of this book (the saving of an

express train from wreck by Clerk Reed—see Chapter 11) was broadcast two years before publication by the state of New Jersey (Department of Economic Welfare) in 1948 over a series of a dozen different stations—WNJR, Newark, and others—on “This is New Jersey,” December 20, 1948-January 31, 1949. On May 19, 1949, 8th Division N.P.T.A. leaders put on a program over KRKD, Los Angeles, which also proved very popular. One commercial program recently referred humorously to the “college cheer of the railway mail clerks: ‘Swing and Sway on the Santa Fe!’” But perhaps the most dramatic of all railway mail broadcasts on record was the one from an actual R.P.O. car in motion, on New York & Chicago (NYCent) Train 47 at Schenectady, New York, April 12, 1938—the direct sounds of the train and a greeting from C-in-C Bert R. Decker were sent over a national network via Station WGY on a “Postal Service at Work” program. Railway mail clerks have also made an outstanding showing in popular intercity quiz programs; Memphis clerks bested a team of engineers by the highest score ever made (23 to 3) on WMC’s “It’s a Hit” program, while several “Quiz of Two Cities” programs (Los Angeles-San Francisco and Dallas-Fort Worth) have featured PTCs.

There have been several motion-picture films dealing at least in part with the P.T.S. One of them—*Here Comes the Mail*, featuring railway mail clerks and other postal men at work—was produced in 1935 by H. L. Hanson (and Gil Hyatt) of the St. Paul post office, for a postal employees’ joint council; but the St. Louis Branch, R.M.A., doubtless made the most use of the film. It was shown 281 times to over forty thousand people between 1935 and 1947, including clubs, churches, and colleges as well as postal groups; it drew high praise from prominent Americans. Bret Callicott acted as narrator for this film, showing a thirty-foot R.P.O. car in full operation. A second film of this same title was planned in 1947 by Carl Dudley Productions at Beverly Hills, California; but unfortunately the footage then shot had to be scrapped. It contained a dozen R.P.O. scenes showing a full Southern Pacific R.P.O. car, with seven clerks loading and distributing

mail; R. A. Norris, the C-in-C, even exhibited a "clerk-in-charge badge" (ink spot on pants from sitting on postmark pad) to make it authentic! Los Angeles area clerks were used.

Two other railroad films dealing in part with the R.M.S. were shot by Dudley during the same year for the Association of American Railroads—*Main Line, U.S.A.* and *Big Trains Rolling*, relating mostly to trains in general. However, they also produced a film strip *Railroads and Our Mail* (for still projector) dealing exclusively with railway mail operations—also in California, in Technicolor, in 1948; it shows all phases of mail handling by R.P.O. trains, with Los Angeles Branch President Moyes and three other clerks featured therein. Two or three Hollywood feature pictures, including *Joe and Ethel Turp Call on the President* and *Special Investigator*, have contained fictional sequences based on R.P.O. operations; also 20th Century-Fox's "March of Time" film, *Watch Dogs of the Mail* (1948-49), dealt largely with the same subject. The New York Central Railroad produced a film for its employees in 1948, *Within the Oval*, which showed Clerk Ray Smith, of their N.Y. & Chi. R.P.O., on duty in the Century's postal car; and Clerk Gil Mereweather of the N.Y. & Chic. (NYC) produced a complete film, *Take a Letter* (1948—shows all stages of a letter's trip). Filmosound, Inc., has issued *The Mail*, showing a letter's journey on a fast streamlined R.P.O.; and the Educational Film Service (Battle Creek, Mich.) a film *Post Office*—the "complete story of mailing a letter," with train scenes.

And the P.T.S. has just made its debut over television! On October 19, 1949, WOW-TV at Omaha televised Hugo Palmquist and R. Matthews of the Omaha & Denver (CB&Q) and Omaha & Ogden (UP) working mail in the N.P.T.A. Convention exhibit car (Chapter 13).

But in the field of literature no full-size printed, descriptive book dealing primarily with the R.M.S. or P.T.S.—other than this volume—has appeared since 1916. The *Saturday Evening Post* for February 1, 1947, featured two pages of full-color photos (not too authentic) and much additional text in its absorbing article "Postman on Wheels" by Richard

Thruelson; it featured Ed Nemeth on the N.Y. & Wash. (PRR). Similarly, the *Santa Fe Magazine* (July 1946) printed a feature "R.M.S." by Gordon Stratchan—dealing with their Albuquerque & Los Angeles run—which was so popular that it was reprinted and expanded as a booklet with many photos. Considerable other material on the Service, including this writer's "Mail-Key Railroaders," will be found listed in the Bibliography along with many pamphlets and miscellany.

The government has issued no public literature on the P.T.S. since the 1880s, when its big technical book, *History of the Railway Mail Service*, was prepared by the Department as Senate Executive Document #40,³ followed by a handsome leatherette pamphlet, the *Railway Mail Service* (by Postmaster General Thomas Jones; embossed gold stamping, excellent text and photos). With the exception of bound volumes of government R.M.S. reports and clerks' data, technical books on railway mail pay, and general postal books with incidental R.M.S. mention, there have been only about five real bound volumes ever issued on our subject. They include C. E. Votaw's *Jasper Hunnicutt of Jimsonhorst* (a delightful humorous fiction story, 1907); General Superintendent J. E. White's *Life Span and Reminiscences of the R.M.S.*, far more readable and interesting than the *History* (1910); Professor W. J. Dennis' *The Travelling Post Office* (1916); Earl L. Newton's *The Nixie Box*, consisting of R.M.S. poetry only, of a most enjoyable type (1927); and possibly S. D. Spero's *Labor Movement in a Government Industry* (nearly half R.M.S. matter, 1924). Except for the last, all these volumes were written by onetime clerks and were more or less privately published—as was one sizable mimeographed book, W. F. Kilman's *Two Million Miles on the Railroad* (printed covers, 1946); and a paper-bound printed book of Postal Service incidents, James L. Stice's *Free Enterprise* (about one third R.M.S. matter, 1945).

Only two known published short stories of the R.M.S., as it then was, have appeared—E. S. Dellinger's entertaining "T-

³Forty-eighth Congress, 2nd Session; by Maynard.

Series Mail Key," in *Railroad* for June 1936, and this writer's "By Return Mail" (*Our Youth*, July 17, 1949). Many newspaper stories of the Service have appeared; on an inspection trip on one R.P.O., Doug Welch, of the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*, relates how he dared not touch even one letter in the awesome presence of this heavily armed "relatively small and select group of postal employees"! Within the P.T.S. we have, of course, the *Postal Transport Journal*; a frequently issued *News Bulletin*, likewise published by the N.P.T.A.; the Department's monthly *Post Haste* and its divisional *General Orders*; and many N.P.T.A. regional periodicals, such as the *Open Pouch* and the *8th Division News-Letter*—the latter including, until recent years, a colorful historical supplement founded in 1941 by Monroe Williams as the *Go-Back Pouch* (from which we've quoted liberally). There are scores of others (Note 21). The N.P.T.A. also publishes an excellent illustrated booklet, *The N.P.T.A. and the Postal Transportation Clerk* (formerly *The R.M.A. and the Railway Postal Clerk*); and there are the stamp and R.P.O. hobby journals.

Railway mail clerks have made outstanding records as distinguished Americans. The late Senator Clyde M. Reed, formerly governor of Kansas and prominent newspaper publisher (*Parsons Sun*), was a clerk on the old Sedalia & Denison (M-K-T, Mo-Texas), appointed in 1889 at \$800 yearly. Later a division superintendent, he saved the lives of three clerks in a safety campaign, saved the government huge sums in mail pay by exposing railroads' false weight divisors, and was later elected to the Senate and was active on the Post Office and Post Office Roads Committee (although strictly following Departmental viewpoints on legislation). Several other clerks have attained seats in Congress, including Carl Van Dyke (as noted) and, just recently, A. C. Multer (New York) and G. L. Moser (Pennsylvania)—who have assisted in beneficial legislation, as Van Dyke did.

Railroad president Harvey C. Couch, of the Kansas City Southern, was appointed as a clerk on the St. Louis & Texarkana (MoPac) in 1899; he organized a telephone company in spare time, resigned from the Service in 1905, sold out to

Bell, and acquired control of nearby gas and electric companies and eventually of two small railroads. Merging them with the K.C.S., he became president of the consolidation in the late 1920s and was active also, as we know, in putting air-conditioned R.P.O. cars thereon. All his life he was active in installing other benefits for the clerks, riding and chatting with them and entertaining them royally at his summer home.

Theodore Newton Vail, distinguished former president of American Telephone and Telegraph, was a former Omaha & Ogden (UP) clerk who later became general superintendent of the R.M.S. In his telephone career he originated the coveted Vail Gold Medal, still awarded to phone employees for outstanding devotion and loyalty. In more recent times the brilliant and checkered career of Peter J. Schardt, retired high Southern Railway official was still making history up to his recent death (April 19, 1950). Appointed in 1900 from Saukville, Wisconsin, to the C&NW's Ishpeming & Chic. R.P.O., he soon began his spectacular rise to innumerable high positions as outlined in Chapters 9 and 11; he was chairman of the National A.A.R. Committee on Railway Mail Transportation and a very popular speaker. A Brigadier General when assigned to Germany in 1945, he was awarded the coveted Medal of Freedom for his "exceptionally meritorious achievement" in postal work there. H. C. Forgy and F. W. Hickson, former and present Managers of Mail and Express for the UP, were *both* ex-clerks.

Still in the Service at last report were Frank Cumisky, Olympic gymnastic champion, and James W. Garnett, who served as president of the world's largest Bible class. Cumisky, a clerk in New York's West Side Terminal, P.T.S., has been American gymnastic champion for years and an Olympic star since 1932; while Garnett, whose class met at the First Baptist Church of Kansas City, was a leader in the R.M.A. and M.B.A. there and later an assistant district superintendent. Many other clerks are active in religious work, and quite a few, like Reverend C. T. Wilhelm and Reverend Lawrence Fuqua, have become ministers eventually.

A remarkable number of railway mail men have attained

prominence as writers. Karl Baarslag, of Silver Spring, Maryland, the distinguished *Reader's Digest* contributor and author of four popular books (one from Oxford University Press), such as *Robbery by Mail*, was once a sub on the old Grand Rapids & Jackson (MC) in Michigan. Samuel Blas, still employed in the Penn Terminal (New York), sells first-rank fiction to national magazines; his recent story, "Revenge," made *Collier's*. Donald M. Steffee, of Brooklyn, leading United States authority on high-speed train operation and schedules, sells articles regularly at top rates to *Railroad Magazine* and occasionally to newspapers; long at West Side with Cumiskey, he is now on the N.Y. & Chic. (NYCent). Both Steffee and Sidney Goodman, another Penn Terminal clerk, are chess champions as well as writers; Goodman is the author of the new book, *World Chess Championship, 1948*, issued by Chess Press. Bert Bemis, once of the Omaha & Denver (CB&Q), writes for *Coronet* and similar magazines; while a former clerk in the Washington (D.C.) Terminal—name withheld by request—is now one of America's highest paid naval writers. Roy V. McPherson, just retired from the Utica (New York) Terminal, has sold numerous articles to *Fate* magazine and to newspapers.

Professor W. Jefferson Dennis, of Parsons College, Fairfield, Iowa, is the author of several other volumes besides *The Travelling Post Office*; his *Tacna and Arica* (Yale University Press) is the standard text on the subject. He was once a clerk on the Des Moines & Sioux City (C&NW) in Iowa. Clarence E. Votaw, author of both *Jasper Hunnicutt* and *Patriotism*, was a clerk on the PRR's Pittsburgh & St. Louis who became an assistant division superintendent; retired at Fountain City, Indiana, twenty-eight years until his death at ninety-five in 1948, he was an energetic traveler, Christian worker, woodsman, and contributor to newspapers as long as he lived. His son, William I. Votaw, left the Monon's Chic., Monon. & Cin. R.P.O. to become a Seapost official and, presently, one of the heads of United States Lines. Thomas J. Flanagan of the Atlanta & Albany (CGa) is the author of books like *The Road to Mt. McKeithen* and *By Pine Knot Torches*

(by *Atlanta Independent Press*), and of published poems and prose in the *Atlanta Constitution* and college journals. The late Guy M. Smith, retired from the Indpls. & Peoria (CCC&StL), wrote two books—*Romance of Danville Junction* and *100 Years of Baseball* (just published, in 1950).

Purely in connection with their work in the Service, numerous clerks have attained national prominence as high postal officials, or have sacrificed chances of official promotion to dedicate their lives to fellow clerks as N.P.T.A. workers. The late Henry W. Strickland, editor of *The Railway Post Office* for twenty-eight years, was an outstanding example—and he, too, was hailed as an “able and versatile writer.” A former Kansas City *Star* reporter, then a clerk on the Rock Island & Kansas City (Rock I.), he became editor in 1915 and industrial secretary in 1921. Friendly, tolerant, modest, he was also a staunch champion of A. F. of L. unionism, and his sudden death (on the job, June 14, 1943) was a great blow to all concerned—including the writer, who was proud to have been his friend. The magazine staff could find no picture of their modest editor for publication when they searched his photo files that day. Of strong Christian convictions, he had a helping hand for all, and he wanted no profane or questionable material in the *Railway Post Office*.

Long known as the “Dean of Railway Mail Clerks,” John H. Pitney, of the present Boston & Troy (B&M), was appointed a pre-R.M.S. route agent in 1861 and worked on the mail trains for fifty-five years; a song composer and community benefactor, he was feted by the highest officials on his golden wedding and was beloved by his townspeople in Eagle Bridge, New York, for the Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church which he built in 1882, partly in honor of the R.M.S. (Its gable window depicts the story of postal transport, showing an R.P.O. train.)⁴ Similarly, David E. “Daddy” Barnes of Kansas City, who just passed on, was called the “Grand Old Man” of the R.M.S.; he was a charter organizer and later

⁴After surviving three frightful wrecks, Pitney met an ironic fate in 1920—fatally injured by a runaway R.M.S. truck, years after his retirement!

national president of the N.A.R.P.C. (now N.P.T.A.). Starting as a clerk on the Rock Island's Kansas City & Caldwell, he was noted for his abstemious habits, conscientiousness, intercession for the rights of fellow clerks, and addiction to clean speech. Today's Assistant Executive Director of Transportation (General Supt. R.M.S.), George E. Miller, was a clerk on the PRR's New York & Washington and an active Baltimore R.M.A. leader; all his predecessors in that position, for uncounted decades, have been clerks who worked their way to the top. And the late beloved Honorable Smith W. Purdum, who reached the still higher position of Second Assistant Postmaster General, was a clerk on the same line; a long-time resident of Hyattsville, Maryland, he literally "worked himself to death" on the job (foregoing all sick and annual leave), living only three days after his retirement in 1945. He was esteemed alike by the clerks and by all who knew him. More R.P.O. men, unquestionably, have climbed to high Post Office Department positions than those of any other Postal Service branch—but space forbids elaboration. Clerk Fred A. Ryle of the Den. & San Ant. (M-K-T-Tex) was awarded the Carnegie Medal for heroically rescuing a trapped railroader amid great danger in a wreck and fire at Comol, Texas in December, 1947.

Other active clerks have made outstanding achievements in fields outside the Service. William B. Carpenter, of the Boston & Albany (B&A), is acclaimed by the *New York Times* as one of our leading Shakespearean scholars, and several other clerks have qualified as experts on the works of Shakespeare and other classicists. Clerks in New York State, Florida, Missouri, the Dakotas, and elsewhere have become leading state legislators. And just at random we take note of such men as Judge M. S. Morgan, prominent Texas jurist in *Who's Who* (once with the R.M.S.); Labor Commissioner William J. McCain of Arkansas (ex-Little Rock and Forth Worth, MP-T&P-CRI&P); Brigadier General Thomas C. Dedell, late army hero and Utica Public Safety Commissioner (a clerk for forty years); Dr. K. J. Foreman, Professor of Philosophy and Bible at Davidson College (who subbed under Greensboro,

North Carolina, R.M.S. office); John F. Stahl, featured by Ernie Pyle as hiking from Panama to Texas at fifty-seven (a former clerk); several clerks who became talented artists with pen or brush while remaining in the P.T.S., such as Roger Gaver (N.Y. & Wash., PRR), Otto Augsburg (Superintendent District 3, Chicago, retired), and the late George Risinger (Dodge City & Trinidad, Santa Fe); W. H. Strauss, leading Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, industrialist (ex-N.Y. & Pitts., PRR); and numerous other prominent leaders in professional fields of every description—not to forget the many P.T.S. officials, like Virgil Jones (Chapter 15), who have been assigned to reorganize the postal system of some entire foreign country—Turkey, Germany, Japan, the Philippines, or some other nation.

As for the myriad amateur composers and talented musicians within the P.T.S., this topic is closely linked with that of the few songs and other musical pieces which deal with the Service. Larry G. Cowe, one of the famed N.B.C. Troubadours, is a clerk out of Pocatello, Idaho. Several unpublished P.T.S. compositions, some of them circulated in duplicated form, have been written by clerks in New York's Penn Terminal, including "In the Good Old R.M.S." and "The Boys of the R.M.S.," by Barney Duckman (1939, 1941); "There's a Story I Must Tell," by Charles Haller of Jamaica (1941); and "A Day in Penn Terminal," a piano solo (1945) by Herman Hammerman of Brooklyn. (Hammerman's song, "Land of Hope," with words by Guiterman, was published by Empire Music.) Two other P.T.S. songs have been privately published or circulated somewhat—"Railway Mail," by Joseph H. Grubbs, retired from the Seaboard's Washington & Hamlet; and "Mail Train," by this writer. Ladies of the N.P.T.A. Auxiliary have produced two songs, both composed by clerks' wives; and Mrs. Harriet Locey's "National W.A.R.M.A. Loyalty Song" (1945) is perhaps the best Service song yet written. It was preceded as their official song by an earlier one, "Auxiliary Day" (1935), by Mrs. E. J. Mullins and Mrs. I. L. Johnson. The only known railway mail song issued as standard sheet music, other than the "Loyalty Song," was the

Burlington Railroad's number, "The Fast Mail," by A. M. Bruner (1897) but it did not mention clerks or mail-sorting.

A work of this kind should not close without mention of at least some of the more undesirable conditions within the P.T.S. which can be corrected, and which the N.P.T.A., as well as many officials, are attempting to remedy as rapidly as possible. In fact, such conditions are very often not the fault of Department heads, but rather the result of insufficient congressional appropriations or of the unjust provisions of existing laws. (These constructive criticisms, like our future recommendations, represent the views of the authors as private citizens and not, necessarily, those of P.T.S. or N.P.T.A. heads.) Thus it is now illegal to ship livestock next to the engine on a train, but still permissible to spot R.P.O. cars with human occupants in this dangerous and rough-riding position! (The P. L. & R. discourages, but does not prohibit the practice.) There are other unsafe practices still needing correction, although one of the worst—operation of single-unit branch trains with gasoline motors and R.P.O. unit housed together—has just been legally prohibited; and the last of the dim and dangerous old oil lamps formerly used have just been eliminated.

The terminals, P.T.S., are particularly the subject of troublesome discrimination under the law. Terminal clerks are lower paid, for the maximum grade is held at two steps below road levels; they are allowed no study time or time for correcting schemes and schedules (though their time slips show spaces for same); they have been recently again denied the privilege of eating, washing up, and changing work clothes on official time, as is justly enjoyed by train clerks. The same applies to P.T.S. Air Mail Fields.

Others—notably, the road men—are seriously concerned over such things as the recent expansion of time deficiencies in assigned working schedules, whereby most overtime and extra trips bring no extra pay (due to cutting of advance time far below that necessary for clerks to work the required forty-hour-week equivalent). And the advent of high-speed trains had previously resulted in all too much "deficiency" even be-

fore; clerks do not work on a mileage basis like railroad men. And although a speed differential (providing extra time credits for clerks running on trains at speeds of over 42½ mph) was introduced May 25, 1936, official investigations declared it to be technically illegal. On November 28, 1949, the differential was raised to 50 mph (a decided cut in benefits) and was then terminated entirely June 30, 1950—the grace period being granted only to permit the N.P.T.A. to initiate mileage legislation in Congress. Such legislation, planned by the association for years, was introduced, using a 42-mph factor to place all road work on a mileage basis—with deficiency eliminated; but the government disapproved it, and Congress did not pass the law. As a result, clerks now make many additional trips at “no pay.”

Then there are such matters as the recent elimination (except in heavy road service and transfer assignments) of the standard well-deserved pay differential long existing between post-office clerks and all classes of railway mail clerks in the P.T.S.'s favor; the “reduction” of many clerks-in-charge through no fault of theirs; the petty technical P. L. & R. rulings, such as orders to check “all” errors and report all letter packages without slips, which it is impossible to observe in a busy postal car without very serious delay; the over-employment of temporary help and elimination of needed overtime for experienced clerks; the denial of time and a half to substitutes; the recent assignment of terminal mail handlers (laborers) to actual distribution of primary parcel post and similar duties, which is properly done much more efficiently by clerks who know the routings—many small offices and localities are included in primary “directs;” and the economic plight of active clerks, and particularly of retired ones, during periods of inflation. (From 1939 to 1947 food costs rose 103 per cent, general living costs 65 per cent, and clerks' incomes only 30 per cent—and latest pay raises involved only a trifling percentage increase.) Betterment of such conditions is to be earnestly hoped for; for the last two, in particular, can result in serious losses of efficient clerical personnel in P.T.S. organizations everywhere.

Clerks differ as to the means which should be taken to solve such problems, although most agree that all efforts should be channeled through the N.P.T.A. But some have taken matters into their own hands. When terminal clerks were reduced to their present relative grade in the 1930s, some clerks sued the government personally for restoration, with back pay, and succeeded; but in at least one case alleged reprisal was suffered by a lady terminal clerk who was reassigned to an air-mail field one and one-half miles from transportation. Other clerks have personally presented data to congressmen; when one exhibited his entire working equipment (PL&R, schemes, cards, trip report, space data, and so on), the impressed representative declared the job should pay twice what it did. Another clerk (in the clerks' *Journal*) advised publicizing to all "the fun of poking letters for twelve hours, of carrying a one-hundred-pound pouch through crowded aisles on a 60-mph curve, of getting up at midnight to work the rest of the night . . . of breathing those sulfur fumes for a half hour after passing that tunnel . . . those dirty clothes on washday after a 'nice' paper run in July," not to mention pasting scheme corrections that don't fit!

The ingenious clerk, like the one faster or slower than average, has his particular troubles. One chap on a one-man run, on his day off around Christmas time, noticed three truckloads of working mail waiting at the depot for his R.P.O.'s next trip. Rather than go stuck then and delay the mail, the clerk got into his car (standing near by) and worked up all this mail on his own time, making no claim for overtime in his report of the case. He was severely censured, without a word of praise, and told not to do it again! A typical "fast" clerk out West, who recently resigned, wrote, "I am tired of the dirt and lousy conditions . . . I hate to be penalized because I am fast, by having to 'carry' the drunkards and the brainless idiots," i.e., slow men whose "work is full of mistakes." While an extreme case, it is true that no excuse exists for the clerk who is deliberately lazy or intemperate; and a good clerk resents, for example, an insinuation that he must slow down or his terminal's average "count" will be raised to a level difficult

to maintain. On the other hand, the efficient and hard-working clerk whose best speed is a little lower than average suffers much undeserved persecution from his fellows. He is often painstakingly accurate, except when he works himself into a nervous frenzy trying to keep up with others—often skipping lunch, he works harder than the “speed demon” in actuality, as one veteran pointed out.

Besides other current complaints mentioned earlier, there are such problems as the frequent loss of certain transit-mail distribution to the post offices in cases where the P.T.S. should properly work it, and more efficiently; the prolonged assignment of clerks *vice* a C-in-C on leave, without being paid accordingly; outmoded surroundings, devoid of needed comforts and attractive appearance; the post-office policy of permitting patrons to address parcels on one side only (often delaying sorting by having to turn it over six times to read the address, or preventing delivery by loss of only label); and the current policies regarding road grips. Not only must clerks pay for both grips (used for government property) and carrying charges, but they also must contend with congested grip rooms and lack of lockers.

And if the facts were known about the serious mail delays due to broken train connections resulting from the “daylight saving time” fad, the public would soon demand its elimination—or its universal, year-round application. (Mothers of infants, at least, would rally to the cause!)

A major problem, however, is that occasioned by the wholesale abandonment of short R.P.O.s on branch lines and the curtailment of distribution on some through routes—both resulting in slower and poorer mail service. With some exceptions, the former results simply from passenger service abandonments on the part of the railroad; and while H.P.O.s are often substituted today, all too often a non-distributing star route is the only replacement. While much of the distribution may be retained in the P.T.S. and performed on an adjoining trunk line, the local-exchange service suffers considerably. Sometimes main-line personnel is expanded to cover branch curtailments, but on the New York & Chicago (NYCent) and

other lines, clerical force has been cut instead while connecting side lines folded up. In the 8th (San Francisco) Division alone the number of R.P.O.s declined from eighty-six in 1911 to twenty-eight today, with existing lines curtailed sharply. The reason for the familiar current slowness of the mails in most areas without rail passenger service will now be obvious to all! (*See Note 22.*)

Commuter short lines, particularly, present a grave problem, because their principal traffic flow is in reverse direction to R.P.O. requirements; and if service is curtailed to only city-bound morning trains and outbound evening ones, no R.P.O. service can properly operate even though some passenger trains remain. A vivid example was on the old Spring Valley & New York R.P.O. (NJ&NY-Erie), which until 1940 still had one outbound morning train (serving mail to all stations) and an inbound one to collect all mail posted during the day. When the two R.P.O. trains were pulled off it was useless to put an R.P.O. on the wrong-direction commuter runs. The line's demise was a severe loss to the local postal economy, as evidenced (at a farewell dinner to Clerk David Gladstone) by the statements of over one-hundred postmasters and guests from along the line who testified to the improved service the R.P.O. had brought to the communities. As for main lines, service on the SP's Ogden & San Francisco has been cut since 1915 from three to two through runs daily, from five large city distributions to two small ones, and the local service to nothing east of Sacramento.

Still more alarming, however, has been a recent tendency to discontinue certain important R.P.O. runs when passenger trains still operate at apparently suitable hours. When existing postal trains were recently withdrawn by the PRR from the Detroit & Mansfield and the Philadelphia & Atlantic City R.P.O.s (in Michigan-Ohio and in New Jersey), no R.P.O. service was placed on any of the remaining fast passenger trains, which still leave the various termini at ideal early morning hours for mail distribution. Over a long period of time the Philadelphia & Cape May (P-RSL) suffered a similar fate, although early passenger trains still run on this route to

both Cape May and Wildwood; now all these leading New Jersey resorts—even the metropolis of Atlantic City—are completely without R.P.O. service. The Reading from Bound Brook to Trenton in the same State is now without local service, though through R.P.O. and local passenger trains operate. The entire service of the Bay City & Detroit R.P.O.—two round trips—was eliminated when all four local trains were pulled off by the railroad, although two new fast expresses now operate. Possibly the lack of local trains was deemed a factor making mandatory the discontinuance of most of the R.P.O.s listed. But it is to be hoped, certainly, that the possibility of restoring transit distribution to all these routes—with catcher service for “the local”—is a very real one; and there are numerous similar cases elsewhere needing correction.

P.T.S. clerks have publicized some very worth-while suggestions on preventing branch-line curtailments in general. Many suggest that the Department actively advocate or assist the survival of existing short lines with better contract offers, intervention at hearings, and so on—particularly if a continued contract might avoid actual abandonment, with resulting loss of railway rates, higher local taxes, unemployment, poorer mail service if H.P.O.s are not put on, and hardships to the public outweighing any money saved. (On the contrary, P.T.S. men are forbidden to testify or protest, as clerks or officials, at abandonment proceedings.) One clerk proposes government-operated H.P.O.-type, flanged-wheel units on the numerous ex-R.P.O. branch lines where freight service still exists (“... thus saving tire expenses . . . traffic jams and rough roads”). Such plans, plus H.P.O.s, would help out greatly—as would wide use of the new RDC-4 rail car.

But we would also recommend a careful study of *existing* passenger schedules of all railways listing same in the *Official Guide*. A surprising number of branch lines still operate a daily trip with some sort of unit for passengers, often at convenient early hours for R.P.O. service and yet which are not thus equipped. Where volume of mail justifies, possibly considerable much-needed R.P.O. service could thus be begun or restored in many areas needing it.

It is hard to believe, but even today there are those who would do away with the P.T.S. and the R.P.O.s entirely. They include airmail-minded leaders in high places in government and commerce, backed by political contributions, it is claimed; and we must all be alert to protect America's splendid Postal Service from this threat.

Making no pretense of expert knowledge, we might venture to offer a few proposed general reforms or new improvements of possible benefit to the P.T.S., in addition to those already put forth; they are mostly ideas submitted by us to the Department's suggestion program or borrowed from the pages of the *Postal Transport Journal*. Some of these apparent needs in employee benefits and Service improvements include the immediate granting of twenty-six days' annual and fifteen days' sick leave—such as is enjoyed by all other government employees; the periodical laundering of sacks and pouches, as done by some other countries and as recommended by many officials; air-conditioning, a "must" in intolerably hot weather; strong, lintless twine; printed office-and-number registry labels, as used in other nations; and the substitution of a modernized version of the "weight system" for the present complex and costly space basis of railroad mail pay. According to clerks' claims the current system has choked needed distributing space with storage mails, has devoured vast sums in payment for empty return movements and other unused space (no other shippers pay for it), and has become a general headache to all clerks-in-charge who struggle with the forms. One shipper figured that the government lost \$85 on one carload of light straw hats, after figuring all postage paid and space costs; on a weight system, a profit would show. However, new space rules eliminating paid deadhead movements are now being requested by the Department at hearings.

Legal regulation of the size of greeting cards is a crying need within the P.T.S., for case boxes in R.P.O. cars are smaller than anywhere else. Besides persuasive programs or extra-postage charges, we need the definite, statutory prohibition within the United States mails of envelopes or greeting cards in *widths* between four and one-half and six and one-half

inches (those few over six and one-half inches can be tossed into pouches). Even government departments often enclose four-inch-wide material in five-inch envelopes that do not fit cases. It is not the public's fault; the greeting card manufacturers, who willingly united to outlaw glittering mineral particles in the interest of "safety of the clerks" (?), simply have declined to co-operate here. As a temporary immediate step, we would suggest that posted statements urging use of 4½-inch-wide (or smaller) greeting cards, only, be given prominence over all other holiday notices in post-office lobbies. To improve both services and revenues, we would also suggest a 4¢ rate for all first-class matter not bearing proper zone number (if applicable) or not conforming to the size limits mentioned—such matter to be rated with postage due if mailed otherwise.

While many clerks will disagree, we feel that through-run titles like "Wash. & St. Louis R.P.O.," which were tried out from about 1935 to 1943 and then dropped, are far preferable in many cases to the current short-run titles (Wash. & Graf., Graf. & Cin., etc.—B&O). Where the same trains (with same numbers) continue over most of the through route, the logical and progressive titles then used showed general direction far better (with large, well-known city names), and simplified case examinations also.

We would also suggest a careful review of the growing practice of supplying important suburban and other post offices exclusively by city mail-truck service in certain cases where R.P.O. trains or H.P.O.s actually traverse the town. While the city "supply" is often needed too, the distributing-line outlet often seems neglected—as at Halethorpe, Maryland, which is supplied only as a branch of the Baltimore post office although it is literally a junction of two railroads (with stations) carrying three R.P.O. routes. Although almost none of the twenty-odd R.P.O. trains passing there actually stop, many could serve it (and three subsidiary branches) by "catcher." P.T.S. schemes, which are the primary index of all mail routes, need improvement too. Restoration of the alphabetical arrangement should be considered, and R. E. Jones has

proposed a new type of scheme with multiple listings, combining that arrangement with the scheming of all "dis" points under the supplying office—it deserves a careful trial. Schemes should include *all* postal contract stations located in named communities centering thereat—too many, like Montclair Heights, New Jersey (a numbered station of Montclair) or Arbutus (numbered station of Baltimore, via Halethorpe) and Cottage City (the same of Brentwood), Maryland, are not found in any scheme (nor alphabetized in *Postal Guide*) because they are not "named" stations; mail goes astray if addressed to them alone. Similarly, stations in communities consolidated as part of a city should be named for the original communities instead of being named arbitrarily—such as "North Station" and "South Station" in Arlington, Virginia, whereas the original towns composing it were named Clarendon, Ballston, Cherrydale, and so on. Fortunately, New York, Brooklyn, and other cities have restored many such old local station names—which makes for prompt delivery of mail thus addressed; but large Buffalo suburbs like Eggertsville and Cheektowaga have just *lost* their station names (and *Postal Guide* listing) instead!

The new postal zone-number system should be broadened to include these numbers in *every* case where any slip, label, postmark, case header, scheme, postal guide, or other form used in the P.T.S. bears the name of any "zoned" station or branch of any city; long practiced in England, this policy would benefit new clerks amazingly and speed distribution. Clerks and their families deserve real railroad passes, in place of their restricted commissions, as much as railroad men do. In the Postal Service generally these facts need some publicizing: that it does *not* operate under a deficit when the huge volume of franked congressional mail, government penalty mail, and other free services are figured in; that many political postmasterships could be economically combined with the assistant postmaster positions under Civil Service at large offices; and that enough money could be saved in these categories (if Congress and the Departments paid their postage)

to pay for most of the postal improvements and benefits needed within the P.T.S.

To simplify and standardize the titles of Service heads, we would suggest the brief and dignified one of "Chief Superintendent, P.T.S." for the present Assistant Executive Director, Bureau of Transportation, as a start; similar titles used in Canada and Britain have proven very satisfactory. Other clerks have suggested such innovations as twenty-foot and forty-foot R.P.O. apartments; registry cages and counter in full R.P.O.s; intercom radio or telephone service in postal cars; and the valuable ideas of issuing schemes in loose-leaf form (with new pages to replace old ones being modified, as has long been standard practice with the telegraph company), and of furnishing recorded music while working—an accepted benefit in industry.

With a final look to the past and to the future, we approach our conclusion. Some significant memorials, relics, and picturizations dealing with the Railway Mail Service of days gone by deserve our attention, and those of Armstrong and Pitney have been already mentioned. The Burlington Route, which is credited by this writer⁵ with operating the first experimental "railway post office" on its Hannibal-St. Joe route, keeps a replica of the original car used for display at expositions and conventions; a painting of it and a memorial tablet is in the St. Joseph, Missouri, post office. (The R.M.A. installed a bronze plaque, years ago, in Chicago's Union Station to commemorate the Burlington's experiment.) Other art work showing R.P.O. operations includes many famed Currier & Ives prints depicting postal cars, as well as a sadly distorted post office mural of an R.P.O. interior at Hagerstown, Maryland (clerks are lazily sprawled every which way, with almost no mail in view). The grave of General Superintendent Bangs at Chicago shows the postal car on the end of an R.P.O. train disappearing in a tunnel, all in stonework. Some valuable historical collections of R.M.S. relics have been made by 9th Division Superintendent E. R. Chapin of Cleveland, includ-

⁵Long.

ing rare old schemes and a "Rogues' Gallery" of old-time crew pictures in six volumes; by Irving Cannon (a Detroit clerk) and J. F. Cooper (San Leandro, California), who both compiled historical scrapbooks; by Assistant Superintendent I. L. Johnson of St. Louis; by the late C. A. Kepner (of radio fame) at Chicago; and by the writer of this book, in New Jersey, for an "Eastern Railway Mail Museum" in connection with the AMERPO society library.

Looking to the future, the day may come when the railway mail clerk will work at the keyboard of a huge machine, sorting twice the volume of mail the P.T.C. of today does. As early as 1939 the Transorma Letter Distributing Machine (from Holland) was sorting fifty-two letters a minute, tied by an automatic binder, at the World's Fair, New York. Experiments with sorting mechanisms have taken place in the Cleveland Post Office, and, just recently, in Chicago's—where Assistant Superintendent of Mails John Sestak has perfected a semi-manual machine of which three full-size duplicates have been ordered for that office. The government has appropriated fifty thousand dollars for perfection of a new distributing machine by Remington Rand, and such devices may be in common use someday in big P.T.S. terminals if not on the road.

Whoever mails a letter or a paper can do much, without effort, to ease the lot of the P.T.C. and speed his own mail at the same time. By using zone numbers, by boycotting wide greeting cards, by addressing mail only to post-office points, by spacing bulk mailings through the day at intervals, and by writing the actual postal station or post office of delivery as the first word in the *last* line of address, both results can be assured. For fast and easy handling in transit, unstamped bulk mailings, precancels, and metered letters should be tied in bundles, faced with addresses turned the *same way*, and separated to states and cities if in quantity. (And when you *write* that letter, remember that the Cleveland Branch. N.P.T.A.—then the R.M.A.—originated National Letter Writing Week!)

If postal efficiencies are safeguarded, the Postal Transportation Service has a brilliant future ahead. There are more

postal clerks within its ranks today, sorting more mail in transit, than ever before. It is fortunate that this great Service has been controlled by the people, through Congress, rather than operated as a great corporation with princely official salaries, miserly pay for clerks, offices overstaffed with relatives and people with pull, and costly wastefulness all around—at least so writes one clerk in the *Journal*. We are thankful that our self-reliant men of the mail trains work under better conditions than that.

Between the populous New England cities, across the rich farming states and industrialized Midwest, over the Rockies, through semitropical groves, mighty forests, great canyons, weaving their lifelines of communication and commerce through the greatest and best empire in the world, speed the never-resting R.P.O. train and the H.P.O. bus. Many a grizzled veteran of the iron road, tired of his years of grinding labor, might ponder at this point . . . Is it all worth while?

We who have looked "beyond the ordinary" can answer that. We who have seen the dingy industrial drabness of Gray's Ferry, entering Philadelphia, magically transformed into a shimmering golden panorama of radiant beauty at sunrise, while passengers slept; we who have watched daily for some winsome little lass who always brought a sweet-scented note to the train to mail to faraway Maine, then one day never came again; we who have thrilled to the glorious fragrance of wild Maryland honeysuckle as the train crossed the Mason-Dixon line, unsensed by those in the air-conditioned coaches—we can respond with a fervent Yes. This is our Service, now and always, whatever our occupation—an indispensable, ingenious network of living and pulsating mail-sorting arteries of which nearly every American makes use . . . of which every American should be proud.

THE MAIL CLERK'S WIFE

(A closing tribute, from two sources)

Let me sing you a song, just a wee little song
Of a picture that's taken from life:
Not of mail clerks so brave (be they angel or knave),
But the song of the postal clerk's wife.
Oh, her husband, you know, is the man on the go,
"In-and-outer" he is, with a will!
Of course mostly he's "out," don't you envy the lout—
Don't you wish you could travel with Bill?
But the woman at home, nary once does she roam,
She's the wife of the mail clerk so great.
And it's up to her now, just to whistle somehow,
Just to whistle and hustle and wait.
Someone phones "Can you play?" No indeed, not today.
"No indeedy, for Bill's on the road.
In some dim distant day he'll retire, then I'll play"—
And she takes up the twosome-made load.
Yes, she works with a will, as she pinch-hits for Bill,
For she loves him, that guy on the train.
So when singing your song to the valiant and strong,
Sing the "wife of the mail clerk's" refrain.

— LETA BONIFIELD FOLEY

The house must be still; "Quiet, children, no fun,"
Ma walks on tiptoe her work to get done,
For cards have appeared all over the place,
And Pa has assumed his "pre-exam face" . . .

— J. L. SIMPSON

Listen, folks, and you shall hear
Not the midnight ride of Paul Revere
But rather a tale so aged and true
Of what makes mail clerks' wives so blue.
On Monday morning all is well,
'Til in less time than it takes to tell,
While dusting off the mantel case
She upsets labels all o'er the place.
The postman loudly rings the bell
And brings a card John's sent to tell
Her: please to hunt around real hard—
He hasn't nary a register card!
She bundles them and sends them off;
But even then she doesn't scoff
When the next mail brings a note of sorts:
"Can you find me any more trip reports?"
Then when at last the week is o'er
And John again comes in the door,
She's glad to see him—and then unlocks
His case of dirty shirts and socks.
It seems to me—I've thought and thought—
It's not unreasonable, indeed it's not,
To think Saint Peter, watching o'er our lives,
Has a tender heart for mail clerks' wives!

— J. L. SIMPSON

TECHNICAL NOTES

NOTE 1.—*Case and Rack Separations.* Cases consist of banks of pigeonholes, built flat against the car walls—except where case sections are bent inward at a 45° angle to enable clerks to reach distant boxes more easily. (These are called *wing cases*; or, if the second case in a small car, a *bob tail*.) Each case section measures ten or eleven pigeonholes high and four to twelve columns wide; holes measure three to four inches high and exactly four and a half (or four and a quarter) inches wide—far too narrow to hold most greeting cards. A wide ledge runs the length of all the cases, with drawers underneath for supplies and excess hats or clothing. Case headers—when loose or “false” headers are used—are cards about 4 by 7½ inches with an inch-wide strip bent down to serve as a label, the name of the separation being lettered thereon. “Permanent” headers, used on smaller lines especially, are printed on strips of paper glued on various sides of the square revolving sticks found at the top front of every pigeonhole. Most clerks arrange their headers in a rough geographical sequence, with each column representing an R.P.O. line—the line package being made up at bottom and the directs above it—in station order, order of size, or no order at all; occasionally a clerk arranges all the lighter separations alphabetically in the vertical sense, and simple cases for “directs” used by subs are usually alphabetical. But in all cases exceptions are made for the heaviest boxes—which are concentrated at lower right, for easy access. Many P.T.S. offices issue official case diagrams and require all clerks to follow them; the advantage of uniformity is obtained, but at the sacrifice of efficiency from clerks who can work better at a case designed to their personal ideas of correctness and in cases of sudden mail-volume change.

Some clerks economize by using narrow “half-headers,” or with only column of headers to each three rows (three names being lettered on each). On a certain Washington & Charlotte (Sou) train the Atlanta City clerk in one crew spelled out his headers with colored letters cut from magazines; the city clerk in another crew cut printed trademark headings from ads of all the big concerns for which firm mail was made up—Coca-Cola Company, *Atlanta Constitution*, and pasted them on! Some clerks use a colored pencil or, with difficulty, a bit of chalk to mark up names on the square sticks.

The pouch rack consists of from two to six units, usually fourteen pouches each, evenly divided between both sides of the car, the aisles and tables running between them. Toward the head of the car there is usually an extension of the rack on the left side only, used partly by the clerks at the letter case immediately opposite and partly for restricted purposes. Collapsible frames of steel piping form the basis of the rack arrangement; a series of loose hooks holds the strap-locked canvas pouches with their rolled, braided edges and the loose-mouthed sacks, which are closed by a cord and fastener running through holes about the edge. Pouches have a few similar holes, for hanging. The pouch diagram is almost never alphabetical or in any other semblance of orderly arrangement, except that rough geographical divisions may be observed, and similar pouches are usually hung adjacent. The one general rule, as observed in the official pouch diagrams issued by all P.T.S. offices, is that the heaviest bag separations are usually hung in the front row next to the aisle; then come those in the other front row, then those in the two back rows, and last of all (the lightest pouches) the separations in the overhead boxes. Light pouches for immediate dispatch are hung in the aisle, limp, on the front rail. Sacks are arranged likewise. (No one but the greenest sub, in a mail car, ever says bag; all are either pouches or sacks.)

Sacks used in the P.T.S. are nearly always the largest or No. 1 size, except for the No. 2 sacks used for papers in terminals; but a number of small No. 3 sacks are usually received containing mail. Although twice too big for proper hanging in the car, the No. 1 sacks are the only ones big enough to hold the huge volume of papers distributed therein. All regular pouches are standardized in the No. 2 size, except for the special flat, heavy "catcher" pouch. Sacks and pouches, almost never washed, soon become very gray and grimy from the constant dragging on floors and platforms, and the dust and dirt is quickly transferred to hands, clothing, and air.

NOTE 2.—*Direct, Line, and "Dis" Make-ups.* There is a separate case for each state distributed in the railway post office car, and on each one, except on the "mixed states" case, there is one box for each large city and sizable town in a given state. When full, these boxes are tied out with a blank stamped slip on the back to become a *direct package*, the address on the top letter serving as that for the whole bundle. Names of small post offices served out of a medium-sized "direct" office are often penciled on the appropriate header and its letters included with the other mail in it. The largest cities, however, have a great many such small offices supplied therefrom, and their mail must be made up as separate *dis packages*, labeled accordingly—the headers reading "BALTIMORE DIS" or a similar wording. And, finally, letters for all the state's rural offices served directly or indirectly from an R.P.O. line are placed in the *line packages* addressed to the various R.P.O.s

serving the state. Some clerks include lists of offices served thereby on both their *line* and *dis* headers. Cut twine, removed from working packages, presents a real disposal problem; newer cars have little space under ledges for discarding it, and clerks resent it on the floor. The only alternative is constant time-consuming trips to the waste bag.

As illustrated in Chapter 2, the slips placed in the *line* and *dis* boxes for use as package labels show the destination as first line printed thereon, the nature of contents as the second line, and the R.P.O. of origin as the third (with the abbreviation "FR" for "from"). The clerk's dated name-stamp impression appears on the bottom half of the slip—or on the back of pouch labels for similar separations on the rack, the labels being printed identically; many hundreds of such slips and labels must usually be stamped and arranged at home each layoff.

The pouch rack contains the same three classifications of *direct*, *line*, and *dis* pouches—though necessarily much fewer in number. *Dis* pouches are made for only the very largest distributing offices, and *line* pouches only where close connections or quantities justify. All in all, at least seven categories of incoming mail matter must be disposed of by the pouch clerk: (1) *Mixed-states* letter packages (whether or not labeled to this R.P.O.), thrown to the mixed case—the clerk thereon transferring any mail for states worked to other cases; (2) bundles addressed to *local states*, or to that section of them "local" to this line, which are transferred (directly or indirectly) to the proper state case—any state distributed being considered "local" in this sense; (3) *distant state* working packages, labeled to the state only, which are thrown to connecting R.P.O.s distributing same; (4) *packages for other R.P.O.s*, labeled to a specific line and containing letters local thereto; if the line addressed is not "pouched on," it will be thrown to a connecting R.P.O. or to a *dis* (or direct) pouch for a city which does pouch it; (5) *dis packages*, containing mail for distribution from large post offices, which are thrown into a *dis* or *direct* pouch for the city named if made, otherwise to a connecting R.P.O.—many times such packages (and packages for connecting R.P.O.s) are voluntarily cut and reworked to a finer degree by letter clerks; (6) *direct packages* for post office named on top letter, thrown to best dispatch available (direct pouch if made, otherwise to R.P.O. or to some *dis* pouch according to scheme); and (7) *flats* or *slugs* (large single pieces), handled exactly like direct packages.

NOTE 3.—*Terms Used in Calling Pouches.* There is no time in a busy R.P.O. to read off an entire label like "New York & Pittsburgh Train 11, two, from Madison Square Station, New York, N. Y.,"; so the caller simply yells, "From the Madhouse with a two!" as indicated. Similarly, all the other strange names in this paragraph (Chapter 2) simply indicate the office or line of origin, and the contents (if other than mixed mails); many other such nicknames of post offices and lines are heard. The numbers "with a two," and so forth, are serial numbers, explained later

in the chapter. To sum up the other names called off in this case, "Tom Cat" refers to a pouch from the local transfer clerk or "T.C."; "Rockin' Chair Line" is some light connecting line, allegedly a "soft snap"; "The Dog-house" could be either the Kansas City & Pueblo R.P.O. (MoPac) or the Philadelphia Terminal, P.T.S. Next we have the Winsted & Bridgeport R.P.O. (NYNH&H, in Connecticut); West States working mail from Holyoke, Massachusetts; a pouch from some city that is reputedly a "living cemetery"; direct packages from Chatham & New York (NYCent) Train 438; a working pouch from the same; Train 46 of some well-known R.P.O.; a second Chatham & New York train; the sixth pouch of New York State received from the G.P.O.; Ohio working mail from Grand Central Station of New York Post Office; and the New York & Far Rockaway R.P.O. (LIRR).

NOTE 4.—*A Paradox at "Wash-up" Time.* On practically every two-car R.P.O. train this laughable situation is sure to occur when clerks attempt to wash up. First the man washing hastens to bar the "end door" from within, so he can stand in the aisle beside the washbowl without the door being suddenly opened and flung against him with violence. However, some clerk in the second car is sure to want admittance immediately thereafter, and he must needs kick and bang on the door frantically to attract the washer's attention above the train noise. Finally, after much delay and annoyance on both sides, the door will be opened for the man to come through to the first car! Amusingly enough, this is all avoidable if only the clerk will squeeze in *front* of the basin, in normal position and completely out of the aisle.

NOTE 5.—*Assignments of Postal Transportation Clerks to Various Units.* About half of our 32,000 railway mail clerks are assigned to the 3,000-odd R.P.O. trains operated daily in the United States, including electric-car suburban trains—14,604 of them on June 30, 1950. (Only one or two clerks run part time on boat lines, the other boat R.P.O.s being served by joint employees; and the last trolley-car R.P.O. carrying clerks quit in May 1950.) 6,564 other clerks work in the terminals, P.T.S.; 1,432 are transfer clerks, and some 445 (rapidly increasing) are on H.P.O.s. About 1,300 (including officials) are in field offices, while the remaining number of seven thousand or so consists mostly of substitutes, in all these categories, plus mail handlers (laborers) in terminals.

NOTE 6.—*The Boston & New York and Boston, Springfield & New York R.P.O.s.* The latter route—the well-known "Spring Line"—operates over part of one of our earliest pre-R.P.O. "route-agent" runs, the Springfield-Boston line, begun in 1840 with two agents (who did little sorting). The agent runs were expanded to form several New York-Boston routes, one including a ferry to Long Island (from Stonington to Greenport, thence via LIRR, 1845-48). True R.P.O. service on this

line via Springfield was first arranged for in 1865, when four postal cars were built and labeled, clerks appointed, and the starting date set. Then at the last minute one of the railways involved refused use of its tracks unless much extra compensation was paid. Not until December 11, 1867, was the trouble alleviated and the first Spring Line train operated as an R.P.O.—then designated as the Boston & New York—under the direction of Chief Clerk W. H. Postley. The “Shore Line” route to New York (the present Boston & New York, or “Big Line”) was added a few years later and became the Boston, Providence & New York; but in fairly recent years the present titles were adopted instead. It is the boast of either line (both NYNH&H) that they can handle all mails from the New York gateway for any point throughout New England. The Spring Line has over twenty-five R.P.O. trains daily; the Shore Line, about seventeen.

NOTE 7.—*The New York & Washington R.P.O.* This vitally important PRR route is the only all-electric main-line R.P.O. in America and connects the nation's metropolis and capital. It traces its origin to one of our earliest railways, the historic Camden & Amboy Railroad (Perth Amboy to Camden, New Jersey, via Bordentown, with ferries to New York and Philadelphia), which began carrying part of the New York-Washington mails in 1832. Likewise—to the south—the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad at first carried mail and passengers only from New Castle, Delaware, to Frenchtown (near Perryville), Maryland, with still longer boat connections to terminal points; while the B&O had the Baltimore-Washington link. But by 1837 the gaps had been spanned by rail, and in May, John E. Kendall—first postal route agent in America—was appointed to run through from Philadelphia to Washington to “superintendent the mails.” The facilities soon developed into a regular “traveling post office,” as noted in detail in Chapter 6. By 1838 the connecting New York-Philadelphia segment was carrying two tons of mail daily, including five hundred pounds of letters; and by 1844 the railroad had assigned their conductors to act as mail agents—replaced by postal route agents about 1848. (The carriers made heated objections to this change, protesting “. . . Nor is there any occasion for such agents. The conductors . . . now perform all of the duties they would have to discharge. They receive letters up to the point of departure, and at all points on the road . . . They assort and mail them in the apartments on the cars. Traveling postmasters can do no more.” Cf. Chapter 6.) The Postmaster General later complained that New York firms were swamping the train-mail box. As for the earliest known postmark connected with this route—a straight-line “PHILADA RAIL ROAD,” March 28, 1844—some authorities claim this was applied by the train's conductor-agent, but the consensus is that the New York D.P.O. applied it.

Despite numerous squabbles over mail pay both before and after the

line became a true railway post office, experimental R.P.O. trips were finally operated in May and September 1864 (both involving north-bound trips only, with N. Y. City distribution); and the New York & Washington Railway Post Office was permanently established on October 15th of that year. This eventful occasion, following by four years the introduction of through express-agent service, saw H. A. Stoneall and Ed Brennan of the New York G. P.O. making the inaugural trip in 1864. Our second true R.P.O., it still traversed the Camden & Amboy but made connection to Jersey City over the N.J.R.R. & Transportation Company's tracks (to this day the street paralleling the line in Newark is N.J.R.R. Avenue); years later the route was shifted westward to a new main line via Trenton and Bristol, which removed it from "The Amboy" entirely. The R.P.O. train, which left Washington at 5:20 P.M. to arrive at the New York ferry at six in the morning, used some old red forty-five foot baggage cars fitted with steep-sloping (45°) letter boxes because of the train's swaying—but there was a handsome lounge in the end of the car, for use of both clerks and visitors! While letters, only, were sorted, the work even included distributing New York City mail to boxes and stations, and the line's first regular clerk (succeeding the G.P.O. men) was soon appointed—H. G. Pearson.

In 1865 catchers and cranes were first installed below Baltimore, and in 1867 a second pair of trains was added for daytime operation. Quickly dubbed "The Day Line" at the time, these same two trains (now Numbers 109 & 134) are still called that today, eighty-three years later! Services rapidly increased; in the early 1900s the old Jersey City terminal was replaced by the electrified Penn Station in New York, and by 1935 the electrification—after several earlier extensions—had enveloped the entire line. Over three hundred clerks now serve on the line's numerous R.P.O. trains—about twenty-two daily.

(See under "N.Y. & Washington" in Appendix I for many other interesting index references dealing with this line.)

NOTE 8.—*New York & Chicago, N. Y. & Pitts.—Pitts. & Chic. R.P.O.s.* First R.P.O. service on the New York Central's noted New York & Chicago was from New York to Buffalo on July 13, 1868, under the designations of Albany & New York and Albany & Buffalo R.P.O.s. It doubtless succeeded earlier route agent runs, for the first clerk-in-charge of the new R.P.O., R. C. Jackson, was designated "Special Agent." From the very start some ten different crews performed duty. Years later (Chapter 8) the great "Fast Mail" made the line famous, and in May 1903 the noted *20th Century Limited* was first launched as an R.P.O. on this route, cases being installed in the club car. The *Century* received its first sixty-foot R.P.O. cars in 1923 and its first streamlined equipment on June 15, 1938; specially canceled cachets for collectors marked the event. As Trains 25 & 26, the *Century* of today indeed represents the Fast Mail's grandest reincarnation, with its great eighty-

foot streamlined R.P.O. cars (see Chapter 10). "The Chic," as we have shown, holds the records for size of cars, R.P.O. trains, and personnel.

"The Pitts," as the PRR's corresponding route is known, began as the old Philadelphia & Pittsburgh R.P.O. on May 21, 1865, with S. S. Talbot as head clerk on its lone train. It later became (together with the present Pittsburgh & Chicago, holder of R.P.O. speed record—Chapter 10) part of the famous Limited Mail route. Today the line includes the de luxe *Broadway Limited* passenger-R.P.O. streamliner, as well as the noted *Paoli Local* of Philadelphia's fashionable suburban "Main Line" (Chapter 12). (See under R.P.O. titles, in Appendix I, for index to further reference—all 3 lines.) The *Broadway Limited* made a special stop at Bucyrus, Ohio, in 1949 in honor of Clerk J. F. Fields of that town, who finished his 42 years' service that day.

NOTE 9.—*Operations and Labeling in P.T.S. Terminals.* Terminal clerks stamp a set of printed slips or labels for addressing mail, daily, just after going on duty. Direct or line packages, or sacks, are tied out and dispatched in the usual way (the stamped strip labels being used on the latter), but mail for the secondary or residue cases is carried thence by hand or in open sacks or tubs—usually banded with carriers' straps in the case of circulars—and the appropriate labels transferred. Labels of incoming sacks are stamped with the time and date and must be worked in order—and before getting too "old." Partly empty or "skin" sacks of circulars are outlawed and must be consolidated into full sacks before release to the clerks—otherwise a full day's "count" might be worked by someone in an hour or so! Terminal clerks still perform their usual duties at home, including many hours of examination study, at no extra pay (road clerks are paid more yet work fewer hours). Compensatory time off is given for examinations taken on duty, and compensatory days off when work on holidays is required. Weekly days off are staggered, and usually only senior clerks get Saturday-Sunday or Sunday-Monday layoffs. (Terminal clerks, like road men, have a fine sense of fraternalism; clerks in the St. Louis (Missouri) Terminal raised one hundred dollars in just a few days, quietly and unobtrusively, to send a sick mail handler to the hospital.) Sack racks used in terminals are built of piping, like those in the cars, but are far more commodious and are in easily moved sections (holding Number 2 or Number 1 sacks hung wide open) for quick tying-out. Compartments for storing extra labels are found behind the permanent headers thereon, but many clerks just let the ribbon labels dangle in long strips from the holders of their sacks.

NOTE 10.—*The Seapost Service.* As of Nov., 1950, this colorful service had still not been restored after its World War II suspension period, although funds were appropriated for this purpose about 1947. Although the British had a seapost as early as 1857 and Australia had a

line reaching San Francisco by 1876, America's first own route was the U. S.-German Seapost which began operating on the S.S. *Havel* (North German Lloyd) March 31, 1891. Rapidly expanded with routes to Britain, Central and South America, and Asia, the Seapost was employing about fifty-five clerks by 1941 and sorted over fifty million letters annually on Atlantic runs alone. Suitable mail rooms, equipped with cases and racks, are supplied by each steamship company for such services, and clerks must be furnished first-class board and quarters free. They have plenty of time for visiting in foreign ports and are allowed full salary plus subsistence allowances while abroad; a diplomatic commission is furnished, while brings instant admission to the most exclusive and desirable foreign facilities. Clerks must have a high degree of sophistication and be flawlessly dressed when off duty, however, or their chances of appointment or retention by the Seapost are practically nil. Seapost clerks must be experts at geography, at deciphering strange scripts and foreign abbreviations, and at preparing complex international records and letter bills. Seapost offices usually sort mail direct to foreign R.P.O.s eastbound and to cities, states, and stations of New York City westbound—most residue sorting being done by the foreign clerks on shipboard, in the first instance, and by post-office clerks in New York's Morgan Station in the second. Seapost clerks are noted for their fidelity to duty in face of great danger; some have given their lives in tragic shipwrecks and fires, and several were lost on the *Titanic* after carefully conveying registered mails to safety. In their most recent special service they detoured mails for Czechoslovakia in the nick of time to keep them out of the hands of invading Germans. No seapost clerk has ever been convicted of stealing from (or interfering with) the mails anywhere. However, on October 19, 1941, the Seapost's suspension became complete as its last route (to South America) closed down, with its few remaining clerks transferred to the P.T.S.; and the service has been sadly missed by all patrons of the overseas surface-mail facilities, now greatly slowed. [The world's largest Seapost service was India's former Bombay-Aden S.P.O. (P&OCo), operated from 1868 to 1914 with some hundred and three clerks on board, dwarfing any other S.P.O.] Transatlantic seapost service to New York *has* been restored now, but by foreign lines only—such as Sweden's "SJP 7, Göteborg-New York" and others.

NOTE 11.—*Case Examinations and Schemes*. A typical scheme is mostly composed of pages like the one illustrated in Chapter 4, but it also contains an alphabetical index, R.P.O. separation list, and notes. As shown, offices in a county are included in the same *brace* as long as they have just the same mail supply (which is usually an R.P.O. or distributing office, but may be a terminal or transfer clerk). A practice card is printed for each office in the state, with the route or routes shown on back of card exactly as in scheme (Fig. 2, Chapter 4). Following this,

the cards must be arranged in scheme order and carefully checked thereby. Junctions of two or more R.P.O.s or air-mail routes are indicated by asterisk in scheme and cards, and offices may be schemed as *dis* to all such junctions (some states have nearly one hundred junctions, with all routes on each to be memorized!). Clerks arrange their case labels, like their car headers, as they prefer—generally as outlined in Note 1; and these are later taken (together with clerk's own case if he prefers) to the examination room. Cards must be constantly shuffled, thrown, and missed ones separated for restudy. A perfect grade on cards and junctions at the final test brings the clerk fifty merits, with prorated merit citations for lesser grades down to 98 per cent (ten merits); special merits are given for consistent grades of 99.5 per cent or over at at least thirty cards per minute. All government property, including corrected scheme and schedules (and spotless revolver) must be presented before examination credit is given. A few unfortunate substitutes never make the grade on these exacting tests and are forced to resign and seek other work. One such sub, flunked for having thrown only 175 cards in half an hour (seventy of them wrong), complained he couldn't understand it—he made 100 per cent at home and “only looked at his map a few times”! To fail any case exam brings a serious charge of twenty-five to forty demerits, plus a required recasing with no extra time given.

NOTE 12.—*Grades and Appointments.* Grades of regular clerks, including clerks-in-charge and clerks in special assignments over Grade 11, range from Grade 1 at \$2,870 annually in regular \$100 steps up to Grade 17 at \$4,470. On all main lines and in transfer offices, clerks receive automatic annual promotions up to Grade 11 (\$3,870); but for clerks otherwise assigned, the progression is only to Grade 9 (\$3,670). At longer intervals in later years, longevity increases are given to Grades 11A, 11B, or 9A, 9B, etc. Substitute registers are drawn up, one for each state, except in Michigan (which has one for each peninsula) and the District of Columbia (whose eligibles must choose Maryland or Virginia rights). In very populous states, such as New York and Pennsylvania, substitutes and junior clerks must often wait ten or more years before their seniority entitles them to a road job; while those in a smaller state with considerable R.P.O. mileage, such as Maryland, can secure such a place almost immediately. Senior subs are notified of possible vacancies on the usual “This-is-not-an-offer-of-appointment” form, and they may accept or not, as they choose; sometimes a *king sub* waits for months before leisurely accepting just the ideal job. Final appointment is made by Departmental letter of assignment according to bids on file.

NOTE 13.—*Classes of Runs and Hours Involved.* All lighter runs, such as one-man branch lines, or other runs whose units of mail worked are below a certain norm, are designated “Class A” organizations—which are

in the lower salary grade along with terminals and airfields; the major lines are all in Class B, with the exception of short local runs on such routes. On a basis of 253 days per annum, the Class A clerk must average at least seven hours and ten minutes of daily road duty, with fifty minutes credited for home duties to make up his eight-hour day. Class B road clerks require only a six-hour, twenty-five-minute daily average, with one hour thirty-five minutes' home allowance. Some Class B runs are so long that the ten to sixteen hours on duty at a stretch entitles the clerks to incredibly long layoffs (Chapter 10); conversely, many short branch-line or suburban runs either require a five- or six-day work week without layoffs, or else necessitate a clerk putting in extra time daily in a terminal (or connecting R.P.O.) to make up his seven and one-sixth hours.

NOTE 14.—*The Rotary-Lock "Alphabet."* Some of the popular key words for calling off the lock letters on valuable mails are:

Apple	Harry, Huckle-	Nuts	Uncle
Boy, Baby	berry	Oscar	Vinegar, Victory
Cat, Charley	Johnny	Peter	Willy
Dog	King	Queen	X-Ray
Eddie	Lucky (See	Rats	Yellow
Funny	Chapter 14)	Sammy	Zebra
Goat, Good	Money	Tommy	

There are no "I" locks. Telegraph and telephone companies use similar alphabets but they vary a good bit.

NOTE 15.—*Boat R.P.O.s and Related Water Services.* Some interesting former R.P.O. boat lines include the old Baltimore & Norfolk and Baltimore & West Point (Virginia), operated on the *City of Richmond* and other Chesapeake Bay steamers until the 1940s; the historic 44.2-mile Ticonderoga & Lake George R.P.O. (Champlain Transportation Company) on Lake Champlain in New York State; the storied Sacramento River R.P.O. on the steamers *Apache* and *Modoc*, from Sacramento to San Francisco, California; the old Baltimore & Hicks Wharf, terminating at a little Virginia landing no longer even a post office; the Detroit & Algonac (White Star) combination R.P.O. and R.F.D. in Michigan; the unique New York & St. George and the Jersey City & Brooklyn, both in New York Harbor during the 1890s; the Alexandria Bay & Clayton (Thousand Islands Steamboat Company, seventeen miles) and the Wanakena & Cranberry Lake (later a boat R.F.D.), both in New York State. The New York & San Juan and New York & Canal Zone Sea Post Offices, normally connecting to our Caribbean territories, were long designated as boat R.P.O.s. Other mail-boat routes which still operate and which are said to still sort certain mails in transit include the Chain O' Lakes R.F.D. out of Waupaca, Wisconsin (originally R.P.O.

from Wisconsin Veterans Home, King, Wisconsin); the Bay View-Lake View route on Lake Pend Oreille, Idaho; one on Coeur d'Alene Lake, Idaho, from Coeur d'Alene to Black Rock Landing; and one on Coos Bay, Oregon. Some noted former part-boat R.P.O.s included the old Calistoga & Vallejo Junction, described in Chapter 12, and the Centralia & Hoquiam (NP-PS&GHTCo) in Washington, 1891-1942 but with all service on U.P. rail lines in recent years; also the Baton Rouge & Houston (NOTex&Mex), which used a car ferry across the Mississippi until bridged in 1947.

Now a closed-pouch route, our longest boat-line R.P.O. of all was the Seattle & Seward (Alaska Steamship Company), 2070 miles, from Washington State to Alaska; its suspension in 1942 proved permanent. It served Juneau, Skagway, and Kodiak as well as no-office points where clerks were authorized to deliver mail. Steamers like the *S.S. Alaska* and *Baranof* had to navigate the British Columbia straits in night fogs solely by whistle echoes from the two shores, and when the whistle broke, Clerk O. L. Brooks was called upon one night to fire his revolver for an hour instead. It was a costly service; the company charged four thousand dollars for each round trip of clerk and mails, and one boat sank in nine minutes with all mail after striking a rock (all hands escaped). Like the old Seattle & Skagway, this line connected with such other old time Alaska boat routes as the Seward & Unalaska (*S.S. Starr*), Goodnews & Unalaska Bay (1942), Seattle & Sitka, Cordova & Kodiak, and Valdez & Uyakta. Until recently the Nenana & Eagle R.P.O. operated on the eastern Yukon, apparently on the *S.S. Yukon*; it succeeded the former Dawson & Nenana out of Dawson, Y. T., the only United States R.P.O. ever to be named from a foreign terminus, with its motor launch *Kusko*. The Sunrise & Seldovia and Tanana River R.P.O.s are also reported as long-abandoned boat lines in Alaska.

NOTE 16.—*City Distribution*. Despite the amazing fact that experimental New York City distribution on trains was done as early as 1864 (Note 7), regular sortation of city mails on appropriate trains was not authorized until 1882 or 1883—and amid considerable opposition from postmasters. But later they enthusiastically endorsed the idea, and at first the city clerks were borrowed from the appropriate post office (as in England). Later they were returned to their home offices in a "personnel trade" whereby they were exchanged for the R.P.O. clerks on the streetcar routes. By 1900 some postmasters were even insisting on excessively detailed distribution and at unseasonable hours, meanwhile changing station boundaries in complex fashion, and the service had to be curtailed somewhat. But it is still done on a remarkable scale; New York City is sorted on lines as far away as California and Florida. Oddly enough, R.P.O. lines are no longer permitted to sort city mails for St. Louis, Missouri (reportedly by request of postmaster), and its service suffers accordingly. Substitutes must now carry zone headers.

NOTE 17.—*Transit-Mail Routes Around the World.* In normal times the following route represents one chain of R.P.O.s and S.P.O.s (seaposts) girdling the globe. It follows the largely water-bound path indicated largely because of absence of seapost connections out of Vladivostock (there are continuous connecting R.P.O.s across the Eurasian continent from that point west to Portugal). This route is based on actual postmarks in the Robert Gordon collection:

1—New York & Chicago R.P.O. (NYCent); 2—Chic. & Omaha (C&NW); 3—Omaha & Ogden (UP); 4—Ogden & San Francisco (SP); 5—Nippon Seapost (*Asama Maru*, and so forth), San Francisco to Yokohama; 6—Marseille à Yokohama *Poste Maritime*, Yokohama (Japan) to Marseilles (France); 7—Marseille à Paris *Ambulant* (Sud-Est RR); 8—Paris au Havre *Ambulant* (l'Ouest RR); and 9—Le Havre à New-York *Poste-Maritime*.

NOTE 18.—*Historical Notes, English T.P.O.s.* The first mail was carried by rail in Britain on November 11, 1830, from Liverpool to Manchester. (In 1837, while Americans celebrated Independence Day, the first special mail trains on the Grand Junction Railway began running and were soon carrying seven hundred bags daily). England's first T.P.O.—said to be the world's first railway post office—was the experimental Birmingham-Liverpool T.P.O. (Grand Junction Railway), which began operation using a converted horse boxcar with crude sorting shelves January 6, 1838; it was the suggestion of Frederick Karstadt. (Sir Rowland Hill, however, had suggested sortation in transit on stagecoaches in 1826.) The original route is now part of the Birmingham-Crewe and other T.P.O.s.

Further T.P.O.s were established the same year on the North Union and the London & Birmingham railways, and soon there was a network; the first out of London was from Euston Station to Bletchley, extended to Preston on October first. The exchange apparatus was invented by G.P.O. men the very first year; and the story was told soon afterwards of a kitten, mailed in a parcel by a foolish patron, which was "caught" by apparatus and later rescued unharmed. An enthusiastic account of the system in 1842 describes this net apparatus, and the sorting of letters into "holes around the wall" over the table, while local mails were exchanged in bags with each town.

The present all-mail Down/Up Special was first arranged for by the Postmaster General in 1855 but did not get started until July 1, 1885; however, all-mail trains from London as far as Bristol were established in '55, and the Great Western (whose first night T.P.O.s operated in 1840) was speeded up. In 1859, T.P.O.s were instructed to stamp *all* letters handled. The London & Northwest T.P.O. began in 1865. Oddly enough major British routes had titles and date stamps like our own "JY 31 63" (instead of 31 July, as now) on the Southeastern R.P.O.;

and for many years, mails were sorted to railway divisions (much as in America). The present county-division sorting was introduced by C. W. Ward, author of *British T.P.O.s*. Paid overtime (aggregation) for clerks began in 1897, and other benefits soon afterward. Earlier R.P.O. designations, such as "Sorting Tender" and "Railway Sorting Carriage" gradually disappeared, with only the present "T.P.O." and "S.C." remaining. All T.P.O.s were suspended for World War II by September 21, 1940, but most were restored beginning in 1945. Considerable celebration marked some resummptions; a gay "Pig's Head Supper," with outstanding guest talent, was put on by T.P.O. men soon after.

[In addition to the fatal wrecks reported in Chap. 14, the old Tamworth-Lincoln S.C. (LMS) landed in a field years ago, killing one clerk.]

NOTE 19.—*Writers of the P.T.S.* (In addition to those in Chapter 16.) LaVern R. ZARR of the Chicago & Council Bluffs (CB&Q) has sold articles on the P.T.S. and other subjects to newspapers. Captain James E. WHITE (later General Superintendent R.M.S.) also wrote Service articles for periodicals in addition to his book, *A Lifespan and Reminiscences*, we've mentioned. Bruce L. BIRMINGHAM, retired (Illinois Branch 10th Division, N.P.T.A.), writer of the Chicago *Tribune's* "Wake of the News" column, also wrote a poetry book, *Beckoning Trails*. Samuel M. GAINES, late 11th Division superintendent with a fifty-year service record, wrote published poetry of considerable charm ("I have lived, I have loved, I have laughed—Life's glorious wine I have quaffed . . .") and was an art collector and air-mail expert. Dr. Erwin A. SHAFFER (ex-Buffalo & Washington, PRR) is the author of three non-P.T.S. books (*Major Washington, Cavalier Prince, The Pennsylvanian*) and has degrees from six colleges. Honorable William D. STEWART (ex-Ninevah & Wilkes-Barre, D&H—New York to Pennsylvania), later a New York State legislator, wrote the book *Kanisteo Valley* as well as magazine articles. Tudor F. BROWN, Pittsburgh & St. Louis (PRR), wrote a poetry book (*Beyond the Blue*) and other published verse—and the poetry of Hugh GORDON (ex-St. Louis & Monett, StL-SF) has appeared in books also. J. P. CONNOLLY of the New York & Washington (PRR) and Third Avenue R.P.O. (TARy) sold two articles to *Railroad Magazine*. Fred S. WIGHTMAN, retired R.M.A. leader of the Williston & Seattle (GN), wrote a noteworthy article for the same journal—"10 Days on a Train in the Cascades"—and is secretary of the Seattle Retired Clerks Club.

Earl L. NEWTON, *Nixie Box* author, wrote other equally excellent verse and is in retirement at Kalamazoo, Michigan. James L. STICE, the *Free Enterprise* writer, has been mentioned frequently herein; he was an early case-exam medal winner, checked nearly seventy-five hundred errors on other clerks (only 282 were checked on him), and became a division superintendent and an inspector. Hubert C. WELSH of the Salisbury & Knoxville (Sou) writes verse of much merit, including one

much-reprinted poem about the heavy mails to Montreat and Ridgecrest, North Carolina, on his line in summer. Harold KIMBALL, another *Railroad Magazine* contributor, runs on the St. Albans & Boston (see Chap'er 11), and E. Ray LOVE of Tiffin, Ohio, writes P.T.S. short stories, as did Votaw. Leander POOLE of the Chattanooga & Meridian (AGS, Tenn.-Miss.), a friend of Jack London, wrote for national magazines under the name of Bill Sykes. John E. THWAITTS (once shipwrecked, on Alaska's old Seward & Unalaska) wrote for various magazines. H. H. HAIN, retired from the New York & Pittsburgh (PRR), wrote the first history of Perry County, Pennsylvania (1,088 pages). Stan GOULD, another ex-clerk, wrote the book *An American System of Self Defense* (Eastern Press, Chicago). J. P. CLELAND of Omaha, Nebraska, a clerk for forty years, was a lecturer and world traveled as well as a writer. Frank GOLDMAN of the Philadelphia Terminal, P.T.S., wrote a prize-winning article for Scribner's *Commentator* (1942). LeRoy O. CLARK of the 14th Division office at Omaha writes short-short stories. Scores of other clerks write articles often for the *Postal Transport Journal* and doubtless for other journals also; M. A. PRIESTLY of the Wash. & Cin. (C&O) won a prize with an H.P.O. article in the Huntington (W.Va.) *Herald-Advertiser*, and Assistant Postmaster General REDDING (over-all head of the P.T.S.) is a leading journalist and author.

NOTE 20.—*Collection & Distribution Wagons*. These early horse-drawn "H.P.O.s" were painted white with gold striping, like the trolley R.P.O.s, and contained a postmarking table as well as the cases and pouch rack. They advanced mails to trains by as much as twenty-four hours in both New York and Washington (daily trips in each city were sixteen and nine respectively). The Washington wagon had a door in the rear and carried two postmen to gather in the letter-box mail; clerks postmarked the mail and distributed it to states, city directs, and local R.P.O.s; but by evening there was too much mail even to postmark. Postmarks were of the large single-circle type, with two lines of print in the upper arc, and read "COLLECT'N & DIST'N/ WASH'N D.C./WAGON No. 1," the latter figure being repeated in a lens-sect bar killer. The New York route operated past the West Side stations from Fourteenth Street to Thirty-fourth Street and beyond, and had a hectic special run one day; reporter Dorothy Dare of the *World* had been sworn in as an auxiliary clerk when that paper decided to "cover" this trip and was soon proudly postmarking letters so fast that only blurs resulted. A regular clerk had to stop her, and she took her revenge in an article in the *World* next day! The service there lasted only ten months—it was discontinued August 2, 1897, when the new pneumatic-tube service replaced it, with the wagon transferred to Buffalo, where it made only seven trips a day. On June 30, 1899, both wagons were transferred to St. Louis, where they ended their days.

NOTE 21.—*The "Go-Back Pouch" and Other Regional Publications.* Monroe Williams, late editor of the *Go-Back Pouch* during its recently terminated but colorful career, outlined its purpose in that popular publication's "First Dispatch":

The "Go-Back Pouch," like charity, covers a multitude of sins. We all know that what goes into this convenient separation is off the record and not meant to be recalled until it has had time to be forgotten. Likewise, we know that in the memories of the old-timers . . . in the files of their own personal go-backs, there is a wealth of information on the early history and traditions of our Service . . . It is hoped that we may provide here . . . a place where these recollections may be recorded, that the flavor and essence of the early days . . . may not be forever lost.

N.P.T.A. division and branch publications still being published include the *8th Division News Letter* (parent medium of the *Go-Back Pouch*), *Official News Bulletin* (3rd Division), *12th Division News, Up to the Second* (2nd Division), *The First Word* (1st Division), and *Division News Letter* (10th Division); and the following publications of branches indicated: *Texarkana RePerCussions*, *Postal Transit* (Kansas City), *Tall Corn Bulletin* (Des Moines, Iowa), *Little Rocket* (Little Rock, Arkansas), *Long Island Sound* (Long Island Branch, Jamaica, New York), *Pick-Up* (St. Louis), *Booster* (Florida Branch), *Nixie News* (Cincinnati), *Philly Sentinel* (Philadelphia), two called *The Standpoint* (Los Angeles and Fort Worth); and the following, all entitled *Branch News* preceded by name of branch indicated: Alabama, Georgia, Buffalo, South Carolina, and Illinois.

NOTE 22.—*Addenda.* In *Chapter 10* (p. 171) our shortest R.P.O., the Carb. & Scrant., should have been noted as having been formerly the much longer Ninevah & Wilkes-Barre (D&H) starting from New York State (see *Note 19*, W. D. Stewart); and on p. 190, after Nowling's exam record, add that of S. M. Atkinson of the Cin. & Nashville (I&N)—all 100's thus far, after 3 years' service. In *Chap. 13* on p. 259, British readers should make note that membership in the T.P.O. & Seapost Society is 5/— to accepted applicants (inquiries to N. Hill, Netherleigh, Old Wortley Rd., Rotherham, Yorks.); U. S. readers, note that *The R.P.O.-H.P.O. Magazine* is to be published monthly at \$1 annually by M. Jarosak, 62 New York Ave., Brooklyn 16. In *Chap. 16* (p. 360), it should be noted that the substitution of closed-pouch service for local R.P.O.s in New Jersey and elsewhere is particularly to be deplored in view of the fact that not even local mails can then be exchanged by way-pouch in star route fashion—mails must sometimes cross the state to a terminal for sorting, just to be delivered in the next town.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX I.

R.P.O.s AND H.P.O.s OF THE UNITED STATES, CANADA, AND BRITAIN

Listed herewith in three tables will be found the titles and related data of all Railway and Highway Post Office routes currently operated in each nation indicated, at the time of going to press, with page references.

TABLE I.

Current R.P.O.s and H.P.O.s of the United States & Possessions

With acknowledgments to William Koelln, Hershel Rankin, and Michael Jarosak

This is both an R.P.O. and an H.P.O. check list, since the latter routes are distinguished by the sign (*); electric routes are designated by (#), and boat or seapost routes by (°). Following each title is its location; then, in parentheses, its approximate mileage, railway or carrier, and P.T.S. division; and finally, any nicknames known to us, plus the page numbers if discussed in the text. When an R.P.O. run does not actually reach one named terminus, the state thereof is shown in *italics*; if all within one state, the unreached terminus is the second one unless an (f) indicates it is the first. Some routes listed will doubtless have been discontinued or changed after our press date. The letter "N" before a page number indicates that nickname is found in text there. Only one route listed is now narrow gage (Ala. & Durango) and only one remains which is outside the United States proper (Panama Canal R.P.O.). The discontinued Jack. & B. Harb. H.P.O. is not listed.

ABERDEEN & HURON, S.D. (83 C&NW 10) "The Oakes"
 ABERDEEN & MILES CITY, S.D.-Mont. (412 CMSHP&P 10)
 ABERDEEN & SIOUX CITY, S.D.-Ia. (265 CMSHP&P 10)

ABINGDON & WEST JEFFERSON, Va.-N.C. (56 N&W 3)
 ALAMOSA & DURANGO, Colo. (200 DRGW 14), "N" 176
 ALBANY & BINGHAMTON, N.Y. (113 D&H 2)
 ALBANY, KINGSTON & NEW YORK, N.Y.-N.Y. (142 NYC-WS 2) "The Albany King; West Shore", 199, 201
 ALBANY & MONTGOMERY, Ga.-Ala. (160 CGa 4)
 ALBANY & PANAMA CITY, Ga.-Fla. (164 CGa 4)
 ALBANY & TAMPA, Ga.-Fla. (314 ACL 4)
 ALBERT LEA & ALBIA, Minn.-Ia. (206 M&SL 6) "The Albia"
 ALBUQUERQUE & EL PASO, N.M.-Tex. (253 SFe 11), 131, "N" 183
 ALBUQUERQUE & LOS ANGELES, N.M.-Calif. (903 SFe 8)
 "The Ashfork, Alb, Santa Fe", 32, 33, 134, 143, 181, 193-4, 225, 337, 349
 ALBURN & BOSTON, (PQ) Vt.-Mass. (276 Rut-B&M-CN 1)
 ALGONA & CHAMBERLAIN, Ia.-S.D. (273 CMSHP&P 10)
 ALLENTOWN & HARRISBURG, Pa. (89 Rdg 15) "The Dutch"
 ALLENTOWN & PHILADELPHIA, Pa. (68 Rdg 15) "The Allen & Philly," 16
 ALLIANCE & CASPER, Neb.-Wyo. (242 CB&Q 14) "Casper," 189

ATLANTA, VALDOSTA & JACKSONVILLE, Ga.-Fla. (350 Sou-
G&SF 4), 225
ATLANTA & WAYCROSS, Ga. (279 ACL 4)
AUGUSTA & ATLANTA, Ga. (171 GARR 4)
AUGUSTA & PORT ROYAL, Ga.-S.C. (114 C&WC 4)
AUGUSTA & SAVANNAH, Ga. (133 CGa 4)

BALTIMORE & CUMBERLAND, Md. (166 WMD 3) "The
Cherry Run," 123
*BALTIMORE & WASHINGTON, Md.-D.C. (114 Gvt 3), 260,
335, 337
BANGOR & BOSTON, Me.-Mass. (248 MeC 1), 3
BATON ROUGE & HOUSTON, La.-Tex. (278 NOT&M II)
BAY CITY & JACKSON, Mich. (145 MC 9)
BEARDSTOWN & HERRIN, Ill. (201 CB&Q 6) "The Beard &
Hair"
BEARDSTOWN & SHAWNEETOWN, Ill. (229 B&O 6)
BEAUMONT & SONERVILLE, Tex. (174 GC&SF II)
BELFAST & BURNHAM, Me. (33 B&ML 1)
*BELLEVILLE & WICHITA, Kan. (170 Gvt 7), 335
BEMIDJI & SAUK CENTRE, Minn. (156 GN 10)
BENSON & HURON, Minn.-Mich. (162 GN 10)
BERLIN & WHITE RIVER JCT., N.H.-Vt. (101 B&M 1)
*BERRYVILLE & LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (179 IntercityTrCo I2)
BERTHOLD & CROSBY, N.D. (89 GN 10)
BETHLEHEM & PHILADELPHIA, Pa. (57 Rdg 15) "The Beth;
Dutch Pike"
BILLINGS & DENVER, Mont.-Col. (672 CB&Q 14)
BILLINGS & SWEETGRASS, Mont. (373 GN 13)
BINGHAM & LEWISTON, Me. (55 MeC 1)
BINGHAMTON & PHILADELPHIA, N.Y.-Pa. (223 Rdg-DL&W-
CNJ) "The Bing; Bing-Bang"
BIRMINGHAM & CALFRA, Ala. (122 L&N 4)
BIRMINGHAM & MEMPHIS, Ala.-Tenn. (252 StL-SF I2)
BIRMINGHAM & MOBILE, Ala. (266 Sou 12)
BLAINE & SEATTLE, Wash. (119 GN 13) "The Blaine," 34

ALLIANCE & DENVER, Neb.-Col. (237 CB&Q I4) "The Alliance"
ALPENA & DURAND, Mich. (177 D&M-GT&V 9), 171
•ALTON BAY & MERRYMOUNT, N.H. (93 LP&Beck I), 179
•ALTOONA & OIL CITY, Pa. (156 Gvt 15) "The Oil City"
•ALTOONA & PITTSBURGH, Pa. (141 Gvt 15)
ALTUS & SAN ANGELO, Okla.-Tex. (250 P&SF 11)
AMARILLO & ALBUQUERQUE, Tex.-N.M. (343 P&SF-SFe II)
"The Cut-Off"
AMARILLO & FT. WORTH, Tex. (337 FtW&DC II)
AMARILLO & LUBBOCK, Tex. (122 P&SF II) "The Lubbock"
AMARILLO & TUCUMCARI, Tex.-N.M. (113 CR&P II)
AMORY & PENSACOLA, Miss.-Fla. (305 StL-SF I2) "The A & P"
ANTLER & RUGBY, N.D. (80 GN 10) "The A & R"
ARKANSAS CITY & LINDSAY, Kan.-Okla. (242 SFe II) "The
Santa Fe High Line"
•ASHEVILLE & BLUE RIDGE, N.C.-Ga. (151 Gvt 3)
ASHEVILLE & COLUMBIA, N.C.-S.C. (163 Sou 4) "The Ash n'
Charles," 12
ASHFORK & PHOENIX, Ariz. (191 SFe 8) "The Peavine," 60
ASHLAND & LOUISVILLE, Kv. (208 C&O 5)
ASHLAND & MILWAUKEE, Wisc. (475 C&NW 10) "The Ash-
land," 200
ASHLAND & PRAISE, Ky. (134 C&O 5)
ASHLAND & SPENCER, Wisc. (146 MS&P&SSM 10) "The
Abbotsford"
•ASQUAM LAKE, Holderness-Sandwich Point, N.H. (10 Squam
Liv 1), 179
ATCHISON & DOWNS, Kan. (208 MoPac I4), 75
ATHENS & MACON, Ga. (106 CGa 4)
ATLANTA & ALBANY, Ga. (209 CGa 4)
ATLANTA & BIRMINGHAM, Ga.-Ala. (168 Sou 4)
•ATLANTA & COLUMBUS, Ga. (126 JCSSteinmetz 4)
ATLANTA & JACKSONVILLE, Ga.-Fla. (331 Sou 4), 33
ATLANTA & MONTGOMERY, Ga.-Ala. (172 WofAla 4), 33
ATLANTA, ROCKMART & BIRMINGHAM, Ga.-Ala. (166 SAL
4) "The Ham & Birm"
ATLANTA & SAVANNAH, Ga. (294 CGa 4) "The Central"

- BLOOMINGTON & KANSAS CITY, Ill.-Mo. (362 CM&O 7) "The Bloom"
- BLUEFIELD & NORTON, W.Va.-Va. (106 N&W 3)
- BOBSON & ALBANY, Mass.-N.Y. (201 B&A 1), 76, 114, 121, 181
- BOSTON & CAPE COD (to Hyannis), Mass. (79 NYNH&H 1) "The Cape," 31
- *BOSTON & ORLEANS, Mass. (61 Gvt 1)
- *BOSTON & NEWPORT, Mass.-R.I. (98 Gvt 1), 71
- BOSTON & NEW YORK, Mass.-N.Y. (222 NYNH&H 1), "N" *Note* 6, 4, 31, 78, 120, 168, 191, 223
- BOSTON, SPRINGFIELD & NEW YORK, Mass.-N.Y. (253 NY NH&H-B&A 1), "N" *Note* 6, 55, 57, 168, 198
- BOSTON & TROY, Mass.-N.Y. (191 B&M 1), 353
- BOSTON & WATERBURY, Mass.-Conn. (149 NYNH&H 1)
- BOUNDARY LINE & GLENWOOD, Minn. (266 MSt&SSM 10) "The B-Line," 52, 53, 93
- BOUNDARY LINE & GRAND FORKS, Minn.-N.D. (129 GN 10) "The Fork; B-Line"
- BOWLING GREEN & MEMPHIS, Ky.-Tenn. (266 L&N 12)
- BRECKINRIDGE & ABERDEEN, Minn.-S.D. (137 GN 10) "The Breck"
- BREWSTER & NEW YORK, N.Y. (52 NYC-PutDiv 2) "The Put; Brewster," 55, 57, 173
- BRISTOL & CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (242 Sou 4) "The Chatt"
- BUFFALO & CHICAGO, N.Y.-Ill. (523 NYC-MC 9)
- BUFFALO, SALAMANCA & PITTSBURGH, N.Y.-Pa. (292 B&O 15)
- BUFFALO & WASHINGTON, N.Y.-D.C. (436 PRR 15) "The Wash," 224, *Note* 19
- *BURLINGTON & ALBANY, Vt.-N.Y. (164 Gvt 2)
- BURLINGTON & QUINCY, Iowa-Ill. (72 CB&Q 6)
- BURLINGTON & ST. LOUIS, Iowa-Mo. (220 CB&Q 7) "The K-Line; Buil"
- BURLINGTON & TROY, Vt.-N.Y. (153 B&M-Rut 1)
- BURNSVILLE & RICHWOOD, W. Va. (72 B&O 3)
- BUTTE & SALT LAKE CITY, Mont.-Ut. (434 UP 13) "The Short Line"
- BUTTE & SEATTLE, Mont.-Wash. (667 CMSUP&P 13)
- CALAIS & BANGOR, Me. (134 McC 1)
- CALDWELL & F.I. WORTH, Kan.-Tex. (319 CRI&P 11)
- CAMIAK & MACON, Ga. (178 GaRR 4)
- CANANDAIGUA & WILLIAMSPORT, N.Y.-Pa. (144 PRR 2) "The Can n' Bill"
- CARBONDALE & SCRANTON, Pa. (16 D&H 2), 171, *Note* 22
- CARROLL & SIOUX CITY, Iowa (121 C&NW 10)
- CARRINGTON & TURILE LAKE, N.D. (85 NP 10) "The Tuttle Lake"
- CEDAR RAPIDS & ESTHERVILLE, Iowa (207 CRI&P 6) "The Cedar Falls"
- CENTRALIA & SOUTH BEND, Wash. (61 NP 13)
- CHAMBERLAIN & RAPID CITY, S.D. (219 CMSUP&P 10)
- CHAMPION & MILWAUKEE, Mich.-Wis. (381 CMSUP&P 10) "The Champ"
- CHARITON & ST. JOSEPH, Ia.-Mo. (149 CB&Q 14) "The Chariton"
- *CHARLESTON & AUGUSTA, S.C.-Ga. (177 Gvt 4)
- CHARLOTTE & ATLANTA, N.C.-Ga. (260 Sou 4) "The Charlotte," 88, 191
- *CHARLOTTE & ASHEVILLE, N.C. (158 Gvt 3)
- CHARLOTTE & AUGUSTA, N.C.-Ga. (192 Sou 4)
- *CHARLOTTE & FLORENCE, N.C.-S.C. (140 Gvt 4)
- *CHARLOTTE & MARION, N.C.-S.C.-N.C. (145 Gvt 4)
- CHATHAM & NEW YORK, N.Y. (128 NYC&P 2) "The Chat," 55, 75, 186
- CHATTANOOGA & ATLANTA, Tenn.-Ga. (152 Sou 4)
- CHATTANOOGA & GRIFFIN, Tenn.-Ga. (198 CGa 4)
- CHATTANOOGA & MEMPHIS, Tenn. (315 Sou 4) "The Chatt; Memphis," 338
- CHATT. & MERIDIAN, Tenn.-Ga. (298 AGS 4) "The AGS"
- CHEROKEE & SIOUX FALLS, Ia.-S.D. (97 IC 6)
- CHEYENNE & DENVER, Wyo.-Col. (106 UP 11)
- CHICAGO & ALGONA, Ill.-Iowa (407 CMSUP&P 6) "The Prairie; Algona"

- CHICAGO & CAIRO, III. (390 CCC&StL 6) "The Cairo," 114, 118, 121, 125
- CHICAGO & CARBONDALE, III. (307 IC 6) "The Carbondale," 8, 346
- CHICAGO& CINCINNATI, III.-O. (302 IC-CCC&StL 5) "The Big Chick"
- CHICAGO & COUNCIL BLUFFS, III.-Ia. (496 CB&Q 6) "The Burl; (Council Bluffs)," 77, 82, 89, 125-6-7, 185, 339
- CHICAGO, DECATUR & ST. LOUIS, III.-Mo. (291 Walbash 6)
- CHICAGO & EVANSVILLE, III.-Ind. (287 C&EJ 6), 223
- CHICAGO, FT. MADISON & KANSAS CITY, III.-Mo. (451 Sfe 6) "The Ft. Mad; Santa Fe"
- CHICAGO, GILMAN & ST. LOUIS, III.-Mo. (291 IC 6) "The Gilman"
- CHICAGO & INDIANAPOLIS, III.-Ind. (181 C&L 5) "The Monon"
- CHICAGO & KANSAS CITY, III.-Mo. (490 CB&Q 6) "The Hannibal; Ely; Dude," 106
- CHICAGO, LOGANSPOUT & LOUIS., III.-Ky. (314 PRR 5)
- CHICAGO & LOUISVILLE, III.-Ky. (326 C&L 5)
- CHICAGO, MARION & OMAHA, III.-Neb. (488 CMSt&P 6) "The Marion"
- CHICAGO & MEMPHIS, III.-Tenn. (527 IC 6), 172
- CHICAGO & MINNEAPOLIS, III.-Minn. (421 CMSt&P 10) "The Mpls; Minnie," 155, 160, 186, 227
- CHICAGO & OELAFIN, III.-Ia. (246 CGW 6) "The Dubuque"
- CHICAGO & OMAHA, III.-Neb. (488 C&NW 6) "The Omaha," 30, 31, 82, 85, 112, 126, 171, 222, 224, 263, 265
- CHICAGO & OWEN, III.-Wis. (309 MSt&SS&T 10) "The Owen"
- CHICAGO & PEORIA, III. (161 CR&P 6) "The Peoria"
- CHICAGO, RICHMOND & CINCINNATI, III.-O. (298 PRR 5)
- CHICAGO & ST. LOUIS, III.-Mo. (282 GM&O 6) "The Alton; Spring"
- CHICAGO & ST. PAUL, III.-Minn. (423 C&NW-CC&P&O 10) "The Eroy; (St.) Paul"
- CHICAGO & SAVANNA, III. (146 CB&Q 10) "The Savanna"
- CHICAGO & SIOUX CITY, III.-Ia. (510 IC 6), "N" 183, 189, 191
- CHICAGO, WEST LIBERTY & OMAHA, III.-Neb. (358 CR&P 6) "The Rock Island; W. Lib (city)"
- CHICAGO & ZEARING, III. (141 CB&Q 6) "The Streator" (old title), 225
- CINCINNATI & CHATTANOOGA, O.-Tenn. (336 CNO&TP 5)
- CINCINNATI & KNOXVILLE, O.-Tenn. (293 L&N 5)
- CINCINNATI & NASHVILLE, O.-Tenn. (300 L&N 5)
- CINCINNATI & ST. LOUIS, O.-Mo. (339 B&O 5), "N" 181
- CLAREMORE & LITTLE ROCK, Okla.-Ark. (281 MoPac 12) "The Colley"
- *CLARKSDALE, GREENWOOD & JACKSON, Miss. (180 Gvt 12)
- *CLARKSDALE & JACKSON, Miss. (184 Gvt 12)
- CLEVELAND & CHICAGO, O.-Ill. (310 NYC&StL 9) "The Nickel (Plate)"
- CLEVELAND & CINCINNATI, Ohio (258 CCC&StL 5)
- CLEVELAND & PITTSBURGH, O.-Pa. (139 PRR 9)
- CLEVELAND & ST. LOUIS, O.-Mo. (536 CCC&StL 5) "The B-Line; Big 4; Cleve," 9, 193
- CLEVELAND & WHEELING, O.-W.Va. (127 B&O 15)
- CLOVIS & PECOS, N.M.-Tex. (181 Sfe 11)
- COFFEYVILLE & ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (100 MoPac 7)
- *COFFEYVILLE & WICHITA, Kan. (130 Gvt 7)
- COLUMBIA & FLORENCE, Tenn.-Ala. (84 L&N 4)
- COLUMBUS & ANDALUSIA, Ga.-Ala. (138 CGA 4)
- COLUMBUS & CHICAGO, O.-Ill. (311 PRR 5)
- *COLUMBUS & DURANT, Miss. (159 Gvt 12)
- *COLUMBUS & GALLIPOLIS, O. (156 Gvt 5)
- *COLUMBUS & GREENVILLE, Miss. (194 Gvt 12)
- COLUMBUS & LINCOLN, Neb. (71 CB&Q 11)
- COLUMBUS & NORFOLK, O.-Va. (664 N&W 3) "The Norfolk," 181
- *COLUMBUS & PORTSMOUTH, Ohio (171 Gvt 5)
- *COLUMBUS & SELMA, Miss.-Ala. (172 Gvt 12)
- CONCORD & CLAREMONT JCT., N.H. (57 B&M 1)
- CONCORD & EMPORIA, Kan. (138 Sfe 7)

CONCORD & WORCESTER, N.H.-Mass. (52 B&M 1)
 CONNELLSVILLE & GRAFTON, Pa.-W.Va. (93 B&O 3)
 COUNCIL BLUFFS & KANSAS CITY, Ia.-Mo. (196 CB&Q 14)
 "The Valley"
 CORRY & PITTSBURGH, Pa. (166 PRR 15)
 CRESTON & ST. JOSEPH, Ia.-Mo. (196 CB&Q 14)
 CUMBERLAND & DURBIN, Md.-W.Va. (159 WMD 3)
 CUTHBERT & TALLAHASSEE, Ga.-Fla. (106 SAL 4)

DALLAS & BEAUMONT, Tex. (2 93 T&NO 11) "The Beaumont"
 DALLAS & HOUSTON, Tex. (264 T&NO 11) "The Hustler; Central"
 DALLAS, WAXAHACHIE & HOUSTON, Tex. (249 Burl-RI 11)
 "The Burl"

DAVENPORT & KANSAS CITY, Ia.-Mo. (313 CMStP&P 6), 53
 DECHERD & LEWISBURG, Tenn. (68 NC&StL 4)

•DENISON & DALLAS, Tex. (77 Transcontinental 11), 250

DENISON & HOUSTON, Tex. (415 M-K-T 11) "The Little Katy"

DENISON & SAN ANTONIO, Tex. (399 M-K-T 11) "The (Big) Katy; Mule Train (5&6)," 354

DENISON & WICHITA FALLS, Tex. (129 M-K-T 11)

DENVER & ALAMOSA, Colo. (247 D&RGW 14) "The Mexican Zephyr"

DENVER & AMARILLO, Col.-Tex. (466 CB&Q-C&S 14) "The Amarillo"

DENVER & CRAIG, Colo. (232 Den&SL 14) "The Craig"

DENVER & GRAND JCT., Colo. (274 D&RGW 14) "The Rio"

DENVER & LA JUNTA, Colo. (183 SFe 14)

DES MOINES & HAWARDEN, Iowa (205 C&NW 6) "The Hawarden"

DES MOINES & KANSAS CITY, Ia.-Mo. (220 CRI&P 6), 188

DES MOINES & MOBERLY, Ia.-Mo. (192 Wabash 6)

DES MOINES & OTTUMWA, Ia. (92 CB&Q 6)

•DES MOINES & SHENANDOAH, Ia. (171 SMBStages 6)

DETROIT & CINCINNATI, Mich.-O. (258 R&O-C&O 5), 225
 DETROIT & FT. WAYNE, Mich.-Ind. (146 Wabash 9) "The Wabash"

DETROIT & GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (152 C&O 9) "The Ledge," "N" 183

DETROIT & MUSKEGON, Mich. (197 GTW 9) "The Grand Trunk"

DETROIT & PITTSBURGH, Mich.-Pa. (296 NYC-P&LE-Erie-NC 9)

DOT & POCAHONTAS, W.Va.-Va. (33 N&W 3), 172

DRAKE & BISMARCK, N.D. (140 MStP&SSM 10) "The Drake"

DULUTH & ALTOONA, Minn.-Wis. (161 Cst PM&O 10) "The Altoona"

DULUTH & DRESSER, Minn.-Wis. (113 MStP&SSM 10) "The Dresser"

DULUTH & GRAND FORKS, Minn.-N.D. (295 GN 10) "The Grand Forks"

DULUTH & MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. (209 NP 10), "N" 184

DULUTH & ST. PAUL, Minn. (169 GN 10) "The Brookpark"

DULUTH & SPENCER, Minn.-Wis. (181 MStP&SSM 10) "The Spencer"

DULUTH & STAPLES, Minn. (148 NP 10) "The Staples"

DULUTH & THIEF RIVER FALLS, Minn. (260 MStP&SSM 10)

DURBIN & RONCEVERTE, W.Va. (99 C&O 3) "The Roncer; Greenbrier"

EASTPORT & SPOKANE, (BC) Ida.-Wash. (142 SFRy 13), 345
 ELAND & MERILLIAN, Wis. (102 C&NW 10), 78

ELLIS & DENVER, Kan.-Col. (337 UP 14)

EL PASO & LOS ANGELES, Tex.-Cal. (885 UP-SP 8) "The Sunset; El Paso," 33, 175, 182, 339

ELROY & RAPID CITY, Wis.-S.D. (776 C&NW 10) "The Peter; Elroy; Pierre," 146, 149, 345

ENID & VERNON, Okla.-Tex. (203 StL-SF 11)

ERIE & GREENVILLE, Pa. (63 R&LE 15)

•ERIE & PITTSBURGH, Pa. (175 Gvt 15)

ERWIN & SPARTANBURG, Tenn.-S.C. (141 Clinchf 3)
EUGENE & COOS BAY, Ore. (115 SP 13) "The Goose, Pow-Wow,
Coos Bay," 183
(*)EUREKA & SAN FRANCISCO, Calif., part HPO (267 NWP
and 140 Gvt 8) "The Eureka"

FARGO & DEVILS LAKE, N.D. (142 GN 10) "The Aneta Line"
FARGO & MARION, N.D. (80 NP 10) "The Marion; Female
Line"

FARGO & MINOT, N.D. (286 GN 10) "The Minot"

FARGO & STREETER, N.D. (148 NP 10) "The Streeter"

FARMINGTON & PORTLAND, Me. (83 McC 1)

*FAYETTEVILLE & CHARLESTON, W.Va. (99 Gvt 3)

*FAYETTEVILLE & FLORENCE, N.C.-S.C. (191 Gvt 4)

FLAXTON & WHITEHALL, N.D.-Mont. (136 MstP&SSM 10), 254

FLORENCE & ELLENWOOD, Kan. (99 SFe 7)

FLORENCE & JACKSONVILLE, S.C.-Fla. (352 ACL 4), 4, 69,
"N" 184

FOND DU LAC & MARSHFIELD, Wis. (122 C&NW 10)

FT. KENT & OAKFIELD, Me. (95 BAR 1)

FT. MONROE & RICHMOND (f), Ia. (84 C&O 3)

*FT. WARRNE & INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. (152 Gvt 5), 247

FT. WORTH & EL PASO, Tex. (615 T&P 11) "The T & P"

FT. WORTH & GALVESTON, Tex. (369 GC&SF 11)

FT. WORTH & SAN ANGELO, Tex. (211 GC&SF 11)

FOSTORIA & PFORIA, O.-Ill. (373 NYC&StL 5)

FOXLAKE & EAGLE GROVE, Minn.-Ia. (90 C&NW 6)

FRANKFORD & ST. LOUIS, Ind.-Mo. (217 NYC&StL 5) "The
Cloverleaf; Nickel Plate"

FRANKLIN & CORNELIA, N.C.-Ga. (57 TalFls 4), 60

*FRESNO & BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (175 Gvt 8)

FULTON & BIRMINGHAM, Ky.-Ala. (284 IC 12) "The I C"

GALESBURG & BURLINGTON, Ill.-Iowa (110 CB&Q 6) "The
Dolly"

GARRETSON & YANKTON, S.D. (81 GN 10)

GOLDSBORO & GREENSBORO, N.C. (130 Sou 3) "The Golden
Greens"

*GOSHEN & NEWARK, N.Y.-N.J. (107 Gvt 2), 335

GRAFTON & CHARLESTON, W.Va. (189 B&O 3)

GRAFTON & CINCINNATI, W.Va.-O. (297 B&O 5) "The
Grafton," 363

GRAFTON & WHEELING, W.Va. (100 B&O 3)

GRAND JCT. & MONTROSE, Colo. (73 D&RGW 14)

GRAND JCT. & OGDEN, Colo.-Ut. (333 D&RGW 8) "The Rio,"
"N" 183

GRAND RAPIDS & CHICAGO, Mich.-Ill. (184 C&O 9) "The
Chi (ca'o)"

GRANGEVILLE & LEWISTON, Ida. (77 CamPr 13)

GREAT FALLS & HARLOWTON, Mont. (200 CMS&P 13)

GREENPORT & NEW YORK, N.Y. (96 LIRR 2) "The Green-
port"

GREEN RIVER & PORTLAND, Wyo.-Ore. (970 UP 13) "The
Rose; Green River; Poke & Bake (MD)," 126

*GREENSBORO & BOONE, N.C. (158 Gvt 3)

*GREENSBORO & FLORENCE, N.C.-S.C. (159 Gvt 3)

*GREENSBORO & NORTH WILKESBORO, N.C. (103 Sou 3)

*GRENSPORO & WARSAW, N.C. (149 Gvt 3)

*GREENSBURG & PITTSBURGH, Pa. (113 Gvt 15)

*GREENVILLE & AUGUSTA, S.C.-Ga. (188 Gvt 4)

*GREENVILLE, ANDERSON & COLUMBIA (172 Gvt 4) Ex-
Greenv., Clint. & Cola. HPO

GREENVILLE & COLUMBIA, S.C. (145 Sou 4) "The Green n'
Colum"

GREENVILLE JCT. & RANGOR, Me. (91 McC-BAR 1)

GURDON & COLLINSTON, Ark.-La. (134 MoPac 12)

HAGERSTOWN & ROANOKE, Md.-Va. (238 N&W 3)

HAMILTON & INDIANAPOLIS, O.-Ind. (99 B&O 5)

HAWAII & ATLANTA, N.C.-Ga. (925 SAL 4)

HAMLET & GFORGETOWN, N.C.-S.C. (130 SAL 4)

HAMLET & JACKSONVILLE, N.C.-Fla. (386 SAL 4) "The Jack"

HANKINSON & BISMARCK, N.D. (284 MStP&SSM 10) "The Hank"
 HANNAH & GRAND FORKS, N.D. (125 GN 10) "The Hannah"
 HARRINGEN & MISSION, Tex. (40 StL&M 11)
 HARRIMAN & NASHVILLE, Tenn. (165 TennC 4) "The Wooden Asle; Ten Cent," 183
 *HARRISBURG & WINCHESTER, Pa.-Va. (144 Gvt 15), 32
 HAVRE & BUTTE, Mont. (295 GN 13) "The Monkey (Montana) Central"
 HAYFIELD & KANSAS CITY, Minn.-Mo. (452 CGW 6)
 HIBBING & DULUTH, Minn. (137 DM&R 10)
 HOPE & ARDMORE, Ark.-Okla. (223 StL-SF 11)
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 JACKSON & NEW ORLEANS, Tenn.-La. (490 GMR&O 12) "The Rebel"
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 JACKSONVILLE, OCALA & ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (266 SAL 4) "The Jack-O; Okie"
 JACKSONVILLE & PENSACOLA, Fla. (369 SAL 4) "The Pens"
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 LEEDS & JAMESTOWN, N.D. (109 NP 10)
 LEHIGHTON & HAZLETON, Pa. (26 LV 2)
 LEWISTON & RIPARIA, Ida.-Wash. (72 UP 13)
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 LENIXTON & LOUISVILLE, Ky. (98 L&N 5)
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 LOUISVILLE & EVANSVILLE, Ky.-Ind. (156 L&N 5)
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 McALESTER & AMARILLO, Okla.-Tex. (397 CRi&P 11) "The
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MANDAN & KILLDEER, N.D. (122 NP 10) "The Killdeer"

MANDAN & MOIT, N.D. (126 NP 10) "The Mott"

*MANISTEE & GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (144 Gvt 9) "The Manistee"

MASSENA & SYRACUSE, N.Y. (164 NYCent 2)

MASSENA & UTICA, N.Y. (227 NYCent 2—Brch. Phila.-Ogdensburg) "The Hojack; Black River"

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MERIDIAN & SHREVEPORT, Miss.-La. (313 IC 12)

(MIDD. & NEWARK—Now *Goshen & Newark, q.v.)

MILES CITY & BUTTE, Mont. (402 CMSt&P 12) "The Butte"

MILES CITY & SEATTLE, Mont.-Wash. (1161 NP 13) "The Miles City"

MILWAUKEE & BERLIN, Wisc. (96 CMSt&P 10) "The Berlin"

MILWAUKEE & DAVENPORT, Wisc. (212 CMSt&P 10) "The Davenport"

MILWAUKEE & LANCASTER, Wisc. (175 C&NW 10) "The Galena; Lancaster"

MILWAUKEE & MINERAL POINT, Wisc. (138 CMSt&P)

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MINNEAPOLIS & SIOUX CITY, Minn.-Ia. (277 CStPM&O 10) "The 500 City"

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*MUSKOGEE & OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. (165 Pat&Wil 11)

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NASHVILLE & ATLANTA, Tenn.-Ga. (287 NC&StL 4)

*NASHVILLE & JACKSON, Tenn. (176 Gvt 4)

NASHVILLE & MEMPHIS, Tenn. (237 NC&StL 4)

NASHVILLE & MONTGOMERY, Tenn.-Ala. (303 L&N 4)

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PUEBLO & GRAND JCT., Colo. (320 D&RGW 14) "The P & G"

PULASKI & MT. AIRY, Va.-N.C. (57 N&W 3) "The Monkey Wrench"

QUINCY & MILAN, Ill.-Mo. (105 CB&Q 7) "The Kirkville"

RED BANK & TRENTON, N.J. (67 PRR 2)

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 *SAN FRANCISCO & PACIFIC GROVE, Calif. (151 Gvt 8) "The
 Pee-Gee," 334
 SAN FRANCISCO, SAN JOSE & LOS ANGELES, Calif. (470 SP
 8) "The Coast Line," 92, 184
 *SAN JACINTO & LOS ANGELES, Calif. (143 Gvt 8) "The San
 Jac"
 SABLES & LAKOTA, N.D. (73 GN 10)
 SAULT SAINT MARIE & MINNEAPOLIS, Mich.-Minn. (514
 MS&P&SSM)
 *SAVANNAH & CORDELE, Ga. (186 Gvt 4)
 SAVANNAH & MONTGOMERY, Ga.-Ala. (338 SAL 4) "The
 Monkey"
 *SAVANNAH & TENNILE, Ga. (174 Gvt 4)
 *SCRANTON & HARRISBURG, Pa. (156 Gvt 15)
 SEATTLE & HOQUIAM, Wash. (136 NP 13) "The Hoquiam"
 SEATTLE & PORTLAND, Wash.-Ore. (319 GN-UP 13) "The
 Northern; Port," 134, 306
 SELMA & FLOMATON, Ala. (112 L&N 12)
 SHALOKIN & PHILADELPHIA, Pa. (149 Rdg 15) "The Potts;
 Willy & Philly," 90
 SHARON & PITTSBURGH, Pa. (69 PRR 15)
 SHEFFIELD & PARRISH, Ala. (97 Sou 12)
 SHERWOOD & GRANVILLE, N.D. (61 GN 10)
 SHREVEPORT & HOUSTON, La.-Tex. (232 TENO 11) "The
 Rabbit"
 SIOUX SPRINGS & TEXARKANA, Ark. (260 KCS 12)
 SIOUX FALLS & MANILLA, Iowa (180 CMStP&P 10)
 SKIDMORE & BROWNSVILLE, Tex. (224 SP-TENO 11)
 *SOUTH BEND, PERU & INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. (152 Gvt 5)
 "The South Bend," 246, 332, 334

SPIRIT LAKE & DES MOINES, Iowa (178 CMStP&P 6)
 SPOKANE & COULEE CITY, Wash. (125 NP 13), "The Coulee,"
 "N," 183
 SPOKANE & LEWISTON, Wash.-Ida. (146 NP 13)
 SPOKANE, PASCO & PORTLAND, Wash.-Ore. (430 SP&S-OTR
 13) "The North Bank," 174, 179
 SPOKANE & PORTLAND, Wash.-Ore. (367 UP 13) "The Port-
 land"
 SPRINGFIELD & JACKSON, Ohio (109 DT&I 5)
 STANLEY & GLENORA, N.D. (88 GN 10)
 STAPLES & OAKES, Minn.-N.D. (169 NP 10)
 STITES & LEWISTON, Ida. (76 CamPr 13)
 *STOCKTON & FRESNO, Calif. (172 Gvt 8)
 STREATOR & PEKIN, Ill. (61 Sfe 6)
 *SUFFOLK & ROCKY MOUNT, Va.-N.C. (135 Gvt 3)
 *SUMMERSVILLE & CHARLESTON, W.Va. (68 Gvt 3)
 #SUMMIT & GLADSTONE, N.J. (22 DL&W 2) "The P & D,"
 233, 234
 *SYRACUSE, AUBURN & BINGHAMTON, N.Y. (142 Gvt 2)
 *SYRACUSE, CORTLAND & BINGHAMTON, N.Y. (131 Gvt 2)
 *SYRACUSE, OSWEGO & ROCHESTER, N.Y. (118 Gvt 2)
 SYRACUSE & ROCHESTER, N.Y. (103 NYC-GenBrch 9)
 TAMPA & BOCAGRANDE, Fla. (130 SAL 4)
 TAMPA & VENICE, Fla. (87 SAL 4)
 TEMPLE & CLOVIS, Tex. (467 GC&SF-P&SF 11)
 TEXARKANA & DALLAS, Tex. (194 StL-SW 11) "The Cotton
 Belt"
 TEXARKANA & PORT ARTHUR, Tex. (302 KCS 11) "The
 Port Arthur," 88
 TOLEDO & CHARLESTON, Ohio-W.Va. (135 NYCent 5) "The
 Charlie," 171
 TOLEDO & HUNTINGTON, Ohio-W.Va. (261 C&O 5) "The
 Hunt"
 TOLEDO & ST. LOUIS, Ohio-Mo. (445 Wabash 5) "The Wa-
 bash," 9, 68, 87, 198

TOMS RIVER & PHILADELPHIA, N.J.-Pa. (52 PRR 15) "The Point 'n Philly"
 TUCSON & NOGALES, Ariz. (66 SP 8) "The Burro"
 TUCUMCARI & EL PASO, N.M.-Tex. (332 SP 11), 9
 TULSA & ENID, Okla. (122 StL-SF 11) "The Frisco Highline"
 TULSA & SHERMAN, Okla. (222 StL-SF 11) "The Sap"

•UNION & MOBILE, Miss.-Ala. (183 GulfTrCo 12), 334
 •UTICA & BINGHAMTON, N.Y. (119 Gvt 2)
 •UTICA, ONEONTA & BINGHAMTON, N.Y. (164 Gvt 2), 252
 VAN BUREN & BANGOR, Me. (236 MeC-BAR 1)
 VANCEBORO & BANGOR, Me. (114 MeC 1)
 VICTOR & IDAHO FALLS, Ida. (96 UP 13)

•WACO & EASTLAND, Tex. (160 Gvt 11) "The Tin Can"
 •WACO & YOAKUM, Tex. (179 Gvt 11)
 WALLACE & SPOKANE, Ida.-Wash. (130 UP 13)
 WALLA WALLA & WALLULA (Christmas only), Wash. (30 UP 13), 197

•WANAUKE & NEWARK, N.J. (65 Gvt 2), 335
 WARROAD & CROOKSTON, Minn. (134 GN 10)
 WARROAD & DULUTH, Minn.-Ont.-Minn. (215 CN-DW&P 10), 302

WASHINGTON & BLUEMONT, D.C.-Pa. (45 W&OD 3) "The Blument," "N" 183, 233

WASHINGTON & BRISTOL, D.C.-Va. (376 Sou-N&W 3) "The Chatt; Bristol," 87, 93, 338

WASHINGTON & CHARLOTTE, D.C.-N.C. (378 Sou 3) "The Charlotte," 87, 174, 191, 223

WASHINGTON & CHICAGO, D.C.-Ill. (784 B&O-P&LE 3/15) "The Chic; Pitts," 34, 337

WASHINGTON & CINCINNATI, D.C.-Ohio (600 C&O 3/15) "The C & O"

WASHINGTON & FLORENCE, D.C.-S.C. (410 RF&P-ACL 3) "The Coast Line; Goat Line," 4, 184

WASHINGTON & GRAFTON, D.C.-W.Va. (253 B&O 3) "The Grafton," 32, 78, 363

WASHINGTON & HAMLET, D.C.-N.C. (370 RF&P-SAL 3) "The Ham; Seaboard," 31, 356

•WASHINGTON & HARRISONBURG, D.C.-Va. (147 Gvt 3) "The Harris; High-Wheeler," 260, 332

WATERSMEET & MONICO, Mich.-Wis. (52 C&NW 10) "The Watersmeet"

WATERTOWN & SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (104 GN 10)

WATSEKA & CYPRESS, Ill. (268 C&EI 6)

WAYCROSS & ALBANY, Ga. (112 ACL 4)

WAYCROSS & MONTGOMERY, Ga.-Ala. (315 ACL 4) "The Waycross," 261

•WELCH & BRISTOL, W.Va.-Va. (147 Gvt 3), 2nd photo section
 #WEST TRENTON & PHILADELPHIA, N.J.-Pa. (33 Rdg 15)
 "The Bound Brook," 235

WHEELING & CHICAGO, W.Va.-Ill. (475 B&O 5)
 WHEELING & CINCINNATI, W.Va.-Ohio (257 B&O)

WICHITA & ALTUS, Kan.-Okla. (292 SFe 7) "The Little Pan-handle; Orient"

WICHITA & ENGLEWOOD, Kan. (167 SFe 7)

WIDWOOD & MIAMI, Fla. (279 SAL 4)

•WILLIAMSPORT & ALTOONA, Pa. (143 Gvt 14)

WILLIAMSPORT & GLENDALE, N.D.-Mont. (137 GN 10)

WILLISTON & SCOREY, N.D.-Mont. (136 GN 13) "The Ophelm"

WILLISTON & SEATTLE, N.D.-Wash. (1169 GN 13) "The Big G; Williston; Highline," 9, 171

WILLMAR & HURON, Minn.-S.D. (192 GN 10)

WILLMAR & SIOUX CITY, Minn.-Ia. (225 GN 10)

WILMINGTON & AUGUSTA, N.C.-Ga. (277 ACL 4)

WILMINGTON & RUTHERFORDTON, N.C. (268 SAL 3) "The Will & Ruth"

WINSTED & BRIDGEPORT, Conn. (61 NYNH&H 1), 19

WINTON & DULUTH, Minn. (123 DM&R 10)

WOODSVILLE & BOSTON, N.H.-Mass. (167 P&M 1), 179, 180

WOODSVILLE & MONTPELIER, N.H.-Vt. (38 B&Ch 1)

WOODWARD & WICHITA FALLS, Okla.-Tex. (221 M-K-T 11)
 "The Foigan"
 WORCESTER & PROVIDENCE, Mass.-R.I. (43 NYNH&H 1)
 WORTHINGTON & MITCHELL, Minn.-S.D. (131 CSPM&O 10)
 WYMORE & CONCORDIA, Neb.-Kan. (81 CB&Q 14)

WYMORE & OXFORD, Neb. (168 CB&Q 14)

YORK & BALTIMORE, Pa.-Md. (79 Md&Pa 3) "N" 60

ZANESVILLE & PARKERSBURG, Ohio-W.Va. (38 B&O 5)

TABLE 2.

Current R.P.O.s of the Dominion of Canada

With acknowledgments to G. Herring, Lester Small, H. E. Rankin, and H. T. Moulton

Canadian R.P.O.s, like those of the States, are apportioned among divisions, called postal districts, as follows: 1. Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; 2. Halifax, Nova Scotia; 3. St. John, New Brunswick; 4. Quebec, Province of Quebec; 5. Montreal, Province of Quebec; 6. Ottawa, Ontario; 7. Toronto, Ontario; 8. London, Ontario; 9. North Bay, Ontario; 10. Winnipeg, Manitoba; 11. Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; 12. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; 13. Calgary, Alberta; 14. Edmonton, Alberta; 15. Vancouver,

British Columbia; and 16. St. Johns, Newfoundland. The title of each route is followed by its location and, in parentheses, by its mileage, carrier and postal district. Subsidiary R.P.O.s, showing titles used in schemes and labels only, are listed under the main-line title comprising them. Newfoundland lines, and the few in Prince Edward Island, are listed at the end for the convenience of Newfoundland collectors. The symbol ° indicates a boat line, and the letter n a narrow-gauge route.

Mainland Provinces

ARMSTRONG & WINNIPEG, Ont.-Man. (391 CN 10)

BRANDON & ESTEVAN, Man.-Sask. (164 CP 11)
 BRANDON, BULYEA & REGINA, Man.-Sask. (304 CP 11)
 BREDBURY & SASKATOON, Sask. (227 CP 12)
 BROCKVILLE & OTTAWA, Ont. (76 CP 6)
 (BURREARD, T.P.O.—See Ind. Riv. & Vancouver)

BEETON & COLLINGWOOD, Ont. (41 CN 7)
 BELLEVILLE, PETERBORO & TORONTO, Ont. (155 CN 7)
 BIGGAR & LOVERNA, Sask. (105 CN 12)
 BLACKWATER JCT. & MIDLAND, Ont. (74 CN 7)

Black Jct. & Orillia, Ont. & Mid.
 BLAINE & VANCOUVER, Wash.-B.C. (36 GN 15), continues into U. S. as Blaine & Seattle
 BONNYVILLE & EDMONTON, Alta. (150 CN 14)
 BOUNDARY LINE & WINNIPEG, Man. (65 GN 10), continues into U.S. as Boundary Line & Glenwood

CALGARY & CAMBROSE, Alta. (78 CN 13)
 CALGARY & EDMONTON, Alta. (194 CP 13)
 CALGARY, MIRROR & EDMONTON, Alta. (232 CN 13)
 CALGARY & VANCOUVER, Alta.-B.C. (612 CP 15)
 CAMPBELLTON & LEVIS, N.B.-P.Q. (303 CN 4)
 Camp. & Rivière du Loup, R. du L. & Lévis.

CAPREOL & ARMSTRONG STA., Ont. (510 CN 9)
CORNWALL & OTTAWA, Ont. (56 NYCent 6)
CORONATION & LAGOMBRE, Alta. (107 CP 13)

EDMONTON & DAWSON CREEK, Alta.-B.C. (495 NthnAlta 14)
EDMONTON & PRINCE GEORGE, Alta.-B.C. (489 CN 14)
ELK POINT & EDMONTON, Alta. (116 CN 14)

FT. ERIE & BRANTFORD, Ont. (76 CN 8)

FT. ERIE & ST. THOMAS, Ont. (118 NYCent 8)

FT. FRANCES & WINNIPEG, Ont.-Man. (207 CN 10), continues
into U. S. as Winroad & Duluth

FT. WILLIAMS & WINNIPEG, Ont.-Man. (419 CP 10)

GASPE & CAMPBELLTON, P.Q.-N.B. (202 CN 4)

GUELPH & GODERICH, Ont. (80 CP 8)

HALIFAX, BRIDGEWATER & YARMOUTH, N. S. (250 CN 2)

Hal. & Bridge, Lockport, Lock. & Yar.

(HALIFAX & CAMPBELLTON—See Hal. & Moncton, Monc. &
Camp.; old postmark still in use.)

HALIFAX, DIGBY & YARMOUTH, N.S. (217 DomAd 2)

Hal. & Middleton, Mid. & Dig., Dig. & Yar.

HALIFAX & MONCTON, N.S.-N.B. (189 CN 2/3)

HALIFAX & TRURO, N.S. (61 CN 2/3)

HAMILTON & MEAFORD, Ont. (141 CN 7)

Ham. & Allandale, Allan. & Meaford

HAMILTON & OWEN SOUND, Ont. (166 CN 8)

Ham. & Guelph, Gue. & Palmerston, Palm. & O.S.

HAMILTON & WINDSOR, Ont. (190 CN 8)

Ham. & London, Lon. & Windsor

HOPE & VANCOUVER, B.C. (90 CP 15)

HUDSON BAY JCT. & FLIN FLON, Man. (180 CN 12)

INDIAN RIVER & VANCOUVER, B.C. (21 *Scenic* 12)

(TPO Burrard Inlet or Burrard Inlet, B.C.—Burrard P.O.)

ISLAND POND & MONTREAL, At. P.Q. (115 CN 5)

I.P. & Richmond, Rich. & Mont., continues into U. S. as
Port. & Bound. Line

KAMSACK & SASKATOON, Sask. (225 CN 12)

KELOWNA & SICAMOUS, B.C. (80 CP 15)

KINGSGATE & YAHK, B.C. (10 SIRy 15)

Uses decks of. and continues into U.S. as, East. & Spokane
KINGSTON, SHARBOULT LAKE & RENFREW, Ont. (104 CP 6)

King. & Sh. Lake, Sh. Lake & Renf.

LAC FRONTIERE, VALLEE JONCTION & QUEBEC, P.Q. (127
QC 4)

LAC MEGANTIC & TRING JCT., P.Q. (60 QC 4)

LA MALBAIE & QUEBEC, P.Q. (88 CN 4)

LACOMBE, BREJON & EDMONTON, Alta. (132 CP 14)

LETHBRIDGE & CALGARY, Alta. (126 CP 13)

LEVIS & DESCHAILLONS, P.Q. (63 CN 4)

LEVIS & MONTREAL, P.Q. (161 CN 4)

LINDSAY & HOWLAND JCT., Ont. (55 CN 7)

LINDAY & HALLBURTON, Ont. (56 CN 7)

LLOYDMINSTER & EDMONTON, Sask-Alta. (170 CN 14)

LONDON & CLINTON, Ont. (50 CN 8)

LONDON & SARINIA, Ont. (49 CN 8)

LONDON & SOUTHAMPTON, Ont. (129 CN 8)

Lond. & Palmerston, Palm. & South.

MCLENNAN & HINES CREEK, Alta. (115 NthnAlta 14)

MALONE & MONTREAL, N.Y.-P.Q. (66 NYCent 5), continues
into U.S. as Mal. & Utica

MEDICINE HAT & NELSON, Alta.-B.C. (419 CP 13)

MONCTON & CAMPBELLTON, N.B. (187 CN 2/3)

MONCTON & ST. JOHN, N.B. (89 CN 3)

MONTREAL, CALUMET & OTTAWA, P.Q.-Ont. (120 CP 5/6)
Mont. & Calumet, Calu. & Ont.

MONTREAL, COLEAU & OTTAWA, P.Q.-Ont. (118 CN 6)

MONTREAL & FT. COVINGTON, P.Q.-N.Y. (71 CN 5)

MONTREAL & MONT LAURIER, P.Q. (158 CP 5)

MONTREAL & NORTH BAY, P.Q.-Ont. (359 CP 6)

MONTREAL, RIGAUD & OTTAWA, P.Q.-Ont. (111 CP 6)

MONTREAL, SMITHS FALLS & TORONTO, P.Q.-Ont. (341 CP 6)

Mont. & Sm.F., Sm.F. & Tor.

MONTREAL & TORONTO, P.Q. Ont. (336 CN 5/7)

Mont. & Brockville, Brock. & Kingston. King. & Tor.

MOOSE JAW & CALGARY, Sask.-Alta. (134 CP 13)

MOOSE JAW & MACKLIN, Sask. (268 CP 11)

M. Jaw & Outlook, Ont. & Mack.

MOOSE JAW & SHAUNAVON, Sask. (186 CP 11)

°MUSKOKA LAKES STEAMER, Ont. (123 MLNav&HCo 7)

Gravenhurst & Roseau, Bala & Port Carling

NEILSON & MIDWAY, B.C. (127 CP 15)

NEWCASTLE & FREDERICKTON, N.B. (114 CN 3)

NEWPORT & MONTREAL, Vt.-P.Q. (108 CP 5)

NIAGARA FALLS & HAMILTON, Ont. (43 CN 7)

NORTH BATTLEFORD & EDMONTON, Sask.-Alta. (354 CN 12)

NORTH BAY & FT. WILLIAMS, Ont. (631 CP 9)

N. Bay & Sudbury, Sud. & Ft. W.

NORTH BAY, SUDBURY & SAULT STEPHENIE MARIE, Ont. (258 CP 9)

N. Bay & Sud., Sud. & S.Ste.M.

NORTH BAY & TIMMINS, Ont. (259 O&N 9)

NORTH PORTAL & MOOSE JAW, Sask. (168 CP 11), continues into U.S. as St. Paul & Portal

ORANGEVILLE & TEESWATER, Ont. (83 CP 7)

OTTAWA & BARRYS BAY, Ont. (109 CN 6)

OTTAWA & MANIWAKI, Ont.-P.Q. (82 CP 6)

OTTAWA & PEMBROKE, Ont. (108 CP 6)

OTTAWA & TORONTO, Ont. (217 CP 6/7)

OTTAWA & WALTHAM, Ont.-P.Q. (80 CP 6)

PALMERSTON & KINCARDINE, Ont. (67 CN 8)

PEMBINA & WINNIPEG, N.D.-Man. (68 NP 10), continues into U.S. as Pemb. & Nan. Jct.

PICTOU & OXFORD JCT., N.S. (69 CN 2)

POINT TUPPER & INVERNESS, N.S. (62 CN 2)

PORQUOIS JUNCTION & HEARST, Ont. (157 CN 9)

PORT HOPE, PETERBORO & TORONTO, Ont. (124 CN 7)

Pt. Hope & Blackwater Jct., Toronto & Black. Jct.; also 63-mile Belleville & Peterboro

PORT ROWAN & HAMILTON, Ont. (54 CN 8)

PRESCOTT & OTTAWA, Ont. (53 CP 6)

PRINCE ALBERT & N. BATTLEFORD, Sask. (131 CN 12)

PRINCE GEORGE & PRINCE RUPERT, B.C. (467 CN 15)

°QUEBEC & BLANC SABLON (Seapost), P.Q. (898 CSSCo 4)

(Part of Que., Nat. & N. Shore)

QUEBEC & CHICOUTIMI, P.Q. (227 CN 4)

QUEBEC, GARNEAU JUNCTION & MONTREAL, P.Q. (177 CN 4)

°QUEBEC-LOURDES DU BLANC SABLON (Seapost), P.Q. (787 CSSCo 4) (Part of Que., Nat. & N. Shore)

QUEBEC & MONTREAL, P.Q. (178 CP 4)

°QUEBEC, NATASHQUAN & NORTH SHORE,¹ P.Q. (898 CSSCo 4)

QUEBEC & NORANDA, P.Q. (493 CN 4)

QUEBEC & RICHMOND, P.Q. (103 CN 4)

REGINA & COLONSAV, Sask. (134 CP 11)

REGINA & GRONLID, Sask. (207 CP 11)

Reg. & Lanigan, Lan. & Gronlid

¹This route is composed of three runs having separate postmarks and hence listed separately in main list (Que. & Bl S., Que.-L. du Bl S., Rim. & Sept 1); it uses Clarke S.S. Co. boats S.S. *North Pioneer*, S.S. *North Shore*, and M. V. *Jean Brillant* (also M. V. *Matane*) respectively.

- REGINA & HUDSON BAY, Sask.** (246 CN 12)
Reg. & Yorkton, York. & H. Bay
- REGINA & N. BAFFLEFORD, Sask.** (258 CN 12)
- REGINA & SWAN RIVER, Sask.-Man.** (242 CN 11)
Reg. & Yorkton, York. & Swan R.
- RESTON & WOLSELEY, Man.-Sask.** (122 CP 11)
- *RIMOUSKI & SEPT ÎLES (Poste Fluviale), P.Q.** (166 C55Co 4)
(Part of Que., Nat. & N. Shore)
- RIVERS & SASKATOON, Man.-Sask.** (328 CN 12)
- RIVIERE A PIERRE & MONTREAL, P.Q.** (138 CN 5)
- *ROBSON & ARROWHEAD, B.C.** (127 S5.Minto 15)
- ST. JOHN & EDMUNDSTON, N.B.** (246 CP 3)
St.J. & McAdams, McA. & Bath, Bath & Edm.
- ST. JOHN & MONTREAL, N.B.-Mc.-P.Q.** (482 CP 3/5)
St.J. & Lac Megantic, Lac M. & Mont.
- SASKATOON & DRUMHILLER, Sask.-Alta.** (315 CN 12)
- SASKATOON & ESTON, Sask.** (161 CN 12)
- SASKATOON, HARDISTY & EDMONTON, Sask.-Alta.** (368 CP 12)
- SASKATOON & PRINCE ALBERT, Sask.** (87 CN 12)
- SASKATOON, WAINWRIGHT & EDMONTON, Sask.-Alta.** (331 CN 12)
- SENNETERRE & COCHRANE, P.Q.-Ont.** (184 CN 9)
- SHERBROOKE & QUEBEC, P.Q.** (147 QC 4)
Sher. & Tring Jct., Tring Jct. & Quec.
- SHERBROOKE & MONTREAL, P.Q.** (106 CP 5)
- SQUAMISH & QUESNEL, B.C.** (317 PGE 15)
- STRAITFORD & SARNIA, Ont.** (81 CN 8)
- SUDBURY & LITTLE CURRENT, Ont.** (83 CP 9)
- SUTTON & DRUMMONDAILLE, P.Q.** (62 CP 5)
- SWAN RIVER & PRINCE ALBERT, Man.-Sask.** (262 CN 12)
- SWIFT CURRENT & EMPRESS, Sask.-Alta.** (118 CP 11)
- SYDNEY & TRURO, N.S.** (221 CN 2)
Sidney & Pt. Tupper, ferry, Mulgrave & New Glasgow,
New G. & Truro
- TORONTO & FT. WILLIAM, Ont.** (812 CP 7)
Tor. & Sudbury, Sud. & Ft. Wm.
- (TOR., HAMILTON & LONDON—See Tor. & Ham., Ham. & Windsor; old postmark still used)**
- TORONTO & HAMILTON, Ont.** (39 CN 7)
- TORONTO & LONDON, Ont.** (116 CP 7)
- (TOR., LONDON & WINDSOR—See Tor. & Ham., Ham. & Windsor; old postmark still used)**
- TORONTO & NIAGARA FALLS, Ont.** (82 CN 7)
- TORONTO & NORFOLK BAY, Ont.** (228 CN 7)
- Tor. & Allandale, All. & Gravenhurst, Grav. & N. Bay**
- TORONTO & OWEN SOUND, Ont.** (129 CP 7)
Tor., Catawact & Orangeville; Or. & Ow. S.
- TORONTO, STRATFORD & GODERICH, Ont.** (135 CN 8)
Tor. & Stratford, Strat. & Goder.
- TOURVILLE & QUEBEC, P.Q.** (118 CP 4)
- TRACADIE & BATHURST, N.B.** (91 CN 3)
- TROIS RIVIERES & GRAND MERE, P.Q.** (27 CP 4)
- VICTORIA & COURTENAY, B.C.** (140 E&N 15)
- VICTORIAVILLE & MONTREAL, P.Q.** (106 CN 5)
- WEYBURN & ASSINIBOIA, Sask.** (111 CP 11)
- WINNIPEG & BISCARTH, Man.** (211 CP 10)
- WINNIPEG, BRANDON & REGINA, Man.** (357 CP 10)
- WINNIPEG & BREIDENBURY, Man.-Sask.** (253 CP 10)
- WINNIPEG & DELORAIN, Man.** (203 CP 10)
- WINNIPEG & KAMSACK, Man.** (278 CN 10)
- WINNIPEG & MOOSE JAW, Man.-Sask.** (398 CP 10)
Wm. & Broadview, Broad. & Regina, Reg. & M. Jaw
- WINNIPEG & RIVERS, Man.** (142 CN 10)
- WINNIPEG, SOURIS & REGINA, Man.** (368 CP 10)
- WINNIPEG & SWAN RIVER, Man.** (293 CN 10)
- WINNIPEG & VIRDEN, Man.** (218 CN 10)

Island Provinces

The boat routes, indicated by (*), are all designated as T.P.O.s. All lines are in Newfoundland, unless otherwise indicated. Former Dominion of Newfoundland titles are indented under current ones, in parentheses.

- ARGENTINA & ISLE VALEN (— S.S. *Burin* 16)
(Placentia Bay North)
- ARGENTIA & MARYSTOWN (— S.S. *Burin* 16)
(Placentia Bay West)
- ARGENTIA & NORTH SYDNEY, Newf.-N.S. (564 CN 16); S.S. *Bar Haven*, S.S. *Baccalieu*
(Port aux B. & N. Sydney or Cabot Strait T.P.O., plus ex-Coastal West T.P.O.)
- CHARLOTTETOWN & SACKVILLE, P.E.I.-N.B. (89 CN 1)
Charl. & Port Borden, *Car ferry to Cape Tormentine, Cape T. & Sack.
- CHARLOTTETOWN & TIGNISH, P.E.I. (115 CN 1)
Charl. & Summerside, Sum. & Tig.
- CLARENVILLE & BONAVISTA (90 NRY-CN 16)
(Bonavista Branch Ry. T.P.O. etc.)
- CORNER BROOK & BATTLE HARBOUR (— S.S. *Clareville* 16)
(Straits T.P.O.)
- LEWISPORTE & COOKE'S HARBOUR (— S.S. *Codroy* 16)
- LEWISPORTE & FOGO (116 CN 16); S.S. *Springdale*
(Notre Dame Bay South T.P.O.)
- LEWISPORTE & SHOE COVE (193 CN 16); S.S. *Springdale*
(Notre Dame Bay North T.P.O.)
- ST. JOHNS & ARGENTIA (83 NRY-CN 16)
(Argentia R.P.O. or Ry. T.P.O.)
- ST. JOHNS & CARBONEAR (80 NRY-CN 16)
(Carboncar, on Conception Bay R.P.O.)
- ST. JOHNS, COOKE'S HARBOUR & CORNER BROOK (700 CN 16); S.S. *Northern Ranger*
(St. Johns & Cooke's Harbour T.P.O.)
- ST. JOHNS & HOPEDALE, Newf.-Lab. (845 CN 16); S.S. *Kyle*
(Labrador T.P.O.)
- ST. JOHNS & LEWISPORTE (356 CN 16); S.S. *Glencoe*
(Fogo District T.P.O.)
- ST. JOHNS & PORT AUX BASQUES (547 NRY-CN 16)
(Express R.P.O.)
- SOURIS EAST & CHARLOTTETOWN, P.E.I. (60 CN 1)
Sour. E. & Mt. Stewart, Mt. St. & Charl.

TABLE 3.

Current Travelling Post Offices (R.P.O.s) of Great Britain

With Acknowledgements to General Post Office, London, and to T.P.O.

Each Travelling Post Office in Great Britain is a separate R.P.O. train, not an R.P.O. route. Conforming to our other R.P.O. tables, we publish herewith the first actual tabulation of T.P.O. routes in print; each route, if carrying two or more pairs of trains with clerks, is referred to in Britain as a Group of T.P.O.s. Where trains of a given Group branch off onto a different route

they are, of course, listed separately here. All lines are designated as T.P.O.s unless shown as "S.C." (sorting carriage); and titles given are those in universal popular use (officially, some should read "North Western," "South Eastern," etc.). "LMS" means Midland Region, British Railways, unless otherwise shown; "GWR"—Great Western Region, "LNER"—North East Region,

and "Sou"—Southern Region. Route titles are followed by location and mileages in parentheses; and the names of each train thereon are indented below:

- BANGOR—CREWE** (North Wales, LMS)
Bangor-Crewe; Crewe-Bangor
- BIRMINGHAM—CREWE** (West England, LMS)
Birmingham-Crewe; Crewe-Birmingham
- CARLISLE—AVR S.C.** (South Scotland, LMS-Scottish Region)
Carlisle-Ayr; Ayr-Carlisle.
- CARLISLE—EDINBURGH** (North England-Scot., LMS)²
Carlisle-Edinburgh S.C.
Caledonian T.P.O. Day Up—Edinburgh Section
- CREWE—CARDIFF** (West England to South Wales, GWR)
Crewe-Cardiff; Cardiff-Crewe
- CREWE—GLASGOW** (English-Scottish West Coast, LMS, part Scottish Region)
Crewe-Glasgow S.C. (Down Special); Up Special T.P.O.—Glasgow Section; Caledonian T.P.O. Day Up, Glasgow Section (Glasgow to Carlisle only)
- (DOWN SPECIAL, etc.—See N.W. GROUP)**
- EAST ANGLIAN—NORWICH—LONDON** (East Anglia, LNER)
East Anglian T.P.O. Down; East Anglian T.P.O. Up; Norwich-London T.P.O.
- EAST ANGLIAN—PETERBORO SECTION** (East Anglia, LNER)
Down (London to Peterboro via Haughley)
Up (Peterboro to London via Haughley)
- GREAT WESTERN** (Cornwall Peninsula, GWR)
Down (London to Penzance); Up (Penzance to London)
- HIGHLAND** (North Scotland, Scottish Region)
Down (Perth to Helmsdale); Up (Helmsdale to Perth)

²The Carlisle-Edinburgh S.C. is the Edinburgh Section of the Down Special T.P.O. (N.W. Group) which is detached at Carlisle. It returns from Edinburgh to join the Up Special as a closed-pouch unit only. The Caledonian Day Up has the Edinburgh-to-Carlisle run.

LIVERPOOL—HUDDERSFIELD (West England, LMS)

T.P.O. one way only.

MIDLAND GROUP T.P.O.S (Midlands, LMS)—Newcastle-on-Tyne to Bristol

Midland T.P.O. Going North; Midland T.P.O. Going South; Bristol-Derby (short run); Derby-Bristol (short run).

NORTH EAST GROUP T.P.O.s (East Coast, LNER)—London to Edinburgh

N.E. T.P.O. Night Down (as above); N.E. T.P.O. Night Up (Newcastle-London, short run); London-York-Edinburgh T.P.O.; Edinburgh-York (short run) T.P.O.

NORTH EAST T.P.O.—LEEDS SECTION (Yorkshire, LNER)

One train thus titled, operates Leeds to Doncaster one way, couples to N.E. T.P.O. Night Up

NORTH WEST GROUP T.P.O.s (West Coast, LMS and Scottish Region)—London to Aberdeen

Up Special (southbound); Down Special (northbound); North West T.P.O. Night Down (London-Carlisle short run); Caledonian T.P.O. Day Down (Carlisle-Perth only); Caledonian T.P.O. Day Up—Perth Section (Perth-Carlisle only)

PRESTON—WHITEHAVEN (Lancashire and Cumberland, LMS)

Preston-Whitehaven; Whitehaven-Preston

SOUTH EAST (Kent and Surrey, Sou)

Down (London to Dover); Up (Dover to London)

SOUTH WALES (South Wales, GWR)

Down (Bristol to Carmathen); Up (Carmathen to Bristol)

SOUTH WEST (Southern England, Sou)

Down (London-Dorchester); Up (Dorchester-London)

YORK—SHREWSBURY (Midlands, LMS)

York-Shrewsbury, Shrewsbury-York

APPENDIX II

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Although only a short partial bibliography, this listing includes all known bound books in English dealing primarily with our subject, with the exception of purely technical volumes (such as those on railroad mail pay, weighings, or legal questions and those issued by the Post Office Department or as Congressional reports). In general, other material is listed only if referred to in text; and if starred (*) it deals only in minor part with our subject. It is hoped to publish a complete Bibliography in separate form, or as part of the next edition of this book.

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