

When the Mail Rode First Class on the 20th Century Limited

Presented to the *New York Railroad Enthusiasts*
September 22, 2023



*Railway Mail Service Library
in the former N&W Railway station at Boyce, Virginia*

Good evening! My name is Frank Scheer. I am Curator of the Railway Mail Service Library (RMSL). I am also Secretary-Treasurer of the RMSL Foundation which preserves the collection at the Nagle Archival Center in Boyce, Virginia. During today's New York Railroad Enthusiasts presentation, I will provide a glimpse of perhaps the most famous Railway Post Office (RPO) trains: the New York Central System's Twentieth Century Limited. A handout that will be downloaded to attendees via WeTransfer.com includes this presentation as well as notes pages that provide additional content. Also, a DVD is available which has two videos that show and describe how RPOs functioned. They also depict how RPOs interconnected within a national network of mobile units and stationary facilities. The DVD is available for \$20 plus \$6 for mailing expense. There is no "region code" imbedded in the recording so it will play on any Digital Video Disk machine worldwide.

The Railway Mail Service Library's home is the former Norfolk & Western 1913 railway depot at Boyce, Virginia. During 2024 and 2025, the collection will be relocated to the Paul A. Nagle Archival Center. Information about the Railway Mail Service Library Foundation and the Boyce Railway Depot Foundation is attached. Your future support for either or both foundations is welcomed!



Presentation Overview

1. The “Fast Mail”
Mail-Only Trains
2. The 20th Century Limited
1902-1967
3. Cover Examples
*Non-Philatelic Usage, Philatelic and
Railroad Event*
4. Summary
*The train is only a memory, but ephemera
remains!*



Since a half-hour is available for my presentation, we will move quickly. Presentation slides and notes pages include all of the information covered which can be reviewed at the reader's leisure. The RMSLF will provide the complete presentation to members and friends for future reference.

First, we'll review highlights of the Railway Mail Service's Fast Mail circa 1875. Next, we will cover operating details of the New York & Chicago RPO route. In general principal, there are substantial similarities between Great Britain's Traveling Post Offices and the Railway Post Offices which operated in the United States of America. We will conclude with routine and special commemorative event cover examples for the Twentieth Century Limited and a brief summary of presentation highlights. The picture below shows the Century eastbound at Peekskill, New York, in early morning light. .



The “Fast Mail”

HARPER'S MAGAZINE ADVERTISER.



The Government Fast Mails

The Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Ry.—the road that carries the mail. The road that thirty years and more ago first electrified the entire country through its initial performance in the installation of the famous “White Mail” trains, is to-day the greatest through mail route in the world; its trade mark, a Government mail pouch, is symbolic of this great service.

While the Lake Shore is famed as the Government’s selection to operate the great mail trains, it is also as widely noted for the extent and excellent character of its passenger train service, enjoying, in the fullest degree, the public’s confidence in the fact that its tickets are absolutely representative of the best in travel that money can buy.

Through trains between Chicago and Toledo, Cleveland, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Pittsburg, Buffalo, New York and Boston.

For “Book of Trains” and “Travel Privileges” or information about travel over the Lake Shore, address
C. F. DALY, Pass. Traffic Mgr., Chicago, Ill. A. J. SMITH, G. P. & T. A. Cleveland, Ohio

Early railroads rarely had long-distance routes. During the first two decades of their development, rail-beds were laid between a port and a nearby city that was upstream along an un-navigable river. Their next phase was connecting two or more nearby town via overland routes.

Following the mid-1800s, “railroad fever” prompted railroad route extensions either through new construction as with the Pacific Railroad or through acquisition of formerly independent lines. The Vanderbilt control of the New York Central & Hudson River, the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern (LS&MS), and others forged through, accelerated train services between the east and mid-west.

“Fast Mail” appropriations by Congress enabled the Post Office Department to pay a higher rate for expedited mail transportation services. The LS&MS capitalized on that arrangement to promote the speed and reliability of its passenger services –most of which included a RPO in the train consist.

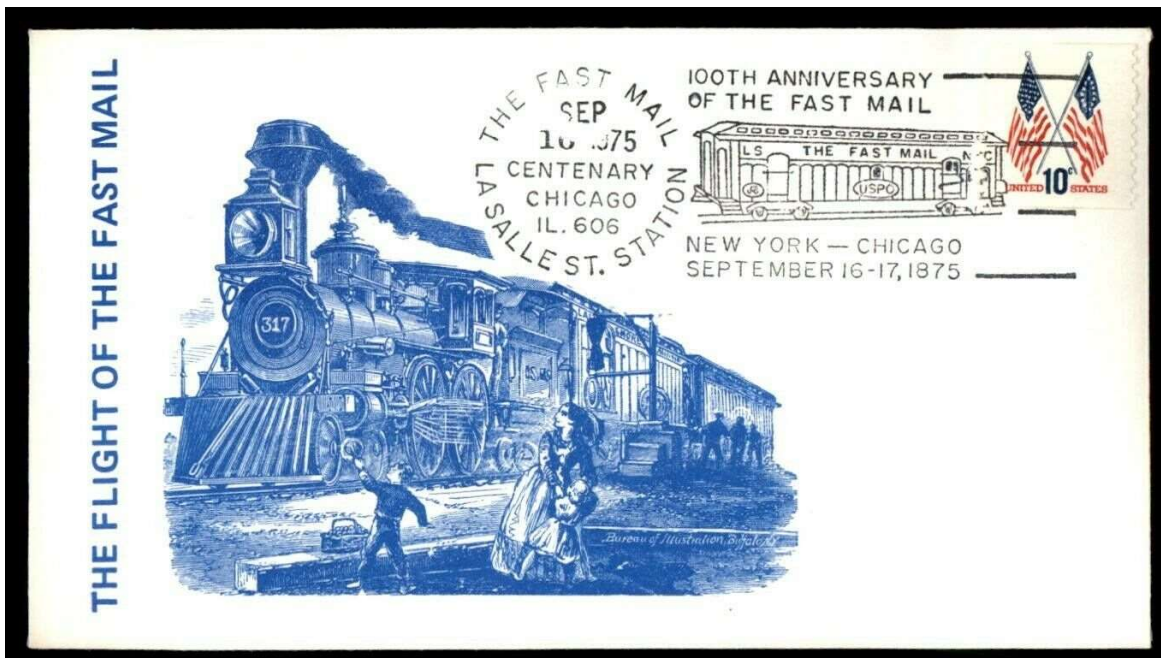


The “Fast Mail”

The “Fast Mail” over the NYC&HR and LS&MS in 1875 was the first expedited mail transportation in the United States, unrivaled until the introduction of Air Mail services in 1918.

- First class mail was routinely handled overnight between New York City, Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and St. Louis.

Inter-city mail service for distances between 50 and 700 miles via the RPO network cannot be replicated today. Mail transit times for first class mail was typically next-day service. It was the rule –not the exception– that mail posted in Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Indianapolis reached most destination Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois cities within 24 to 36 hours. That included Sundays and holidays if the recipient in a large city had a post office box. The CLEVELAND & CINCINNATI RPO intersected several east-west routes, some of which were other routes spanning the CCC&StL and LS&MS which had coordinated train schedules with the main-line trains. This enhanced the reach of CCC&StL and LS&MS RPO routes in providing excellent service to the American public.



The “Fast Mail”

The eastbound Fast Mail was Train 8 on the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad, as identified by this postmark



The New York Central and Hudson River schedule in the October 1881 **TRAVELERS OFFICIAL GUIDE** does not include train numbers, so positive identification of “Tr. 8” is believed to be shown below in this clipped image from page 78.

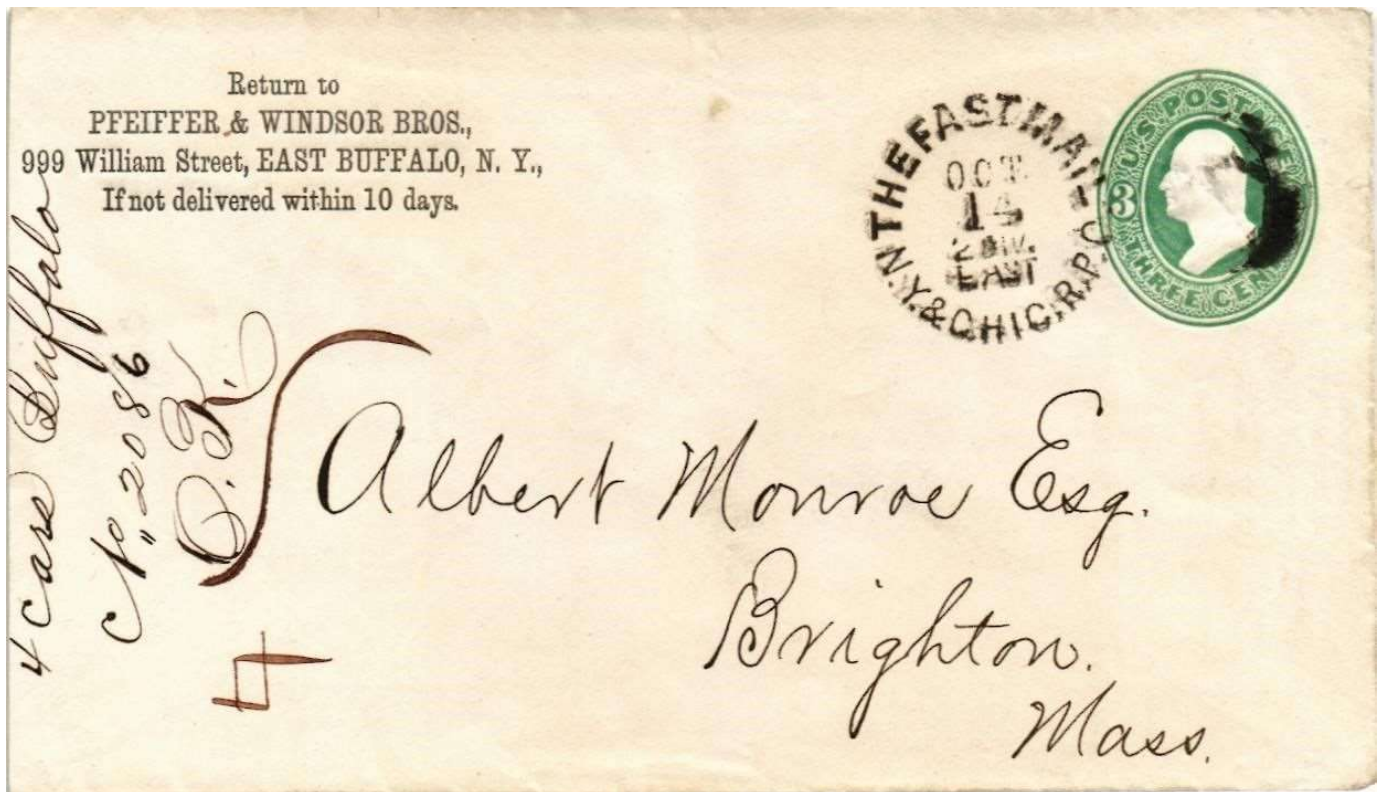
July 11, 1881.		Mail
LEAVE]	[ARRIVE	A. M.
.....	New York	6 00
LEAVE]	[ARRIVE	
.....	Troy	.....
(Albany time.)		N ^{HT}
lve. +	Albany ⁸	arr. 12 25
ar. {	+ Schen-	lv. 11 50
lv. {	ectady ¹⁰	ar. 11 50
+ ..	Amsterdam	.....
+ ..	Fonda ¹¹	.....
+ ..	Palatine Bridge	.....
+ ..	Fort Plain	.....
+ ..	Little Falls	.....
+ ..	Herkimer	.....
+ ..	Ilion	.....
ar. {	+ Utica ¹²	lv. 9 30
lv. {	.....	ar. 9 23
.....	Whitesboro	.....
.....	Oriskany	.....
+ ..	Rome ¹³	8 59
+ ..	Oneida	8 31
+ ..	Canastota ¹⁴	.....
.....	Canaseraga	.....
+ ..	Chittenango	.....
.....	Manlius	.....
ar. +	Syracuse ¹⁵	lv. 7 40

The "Fast Mail"

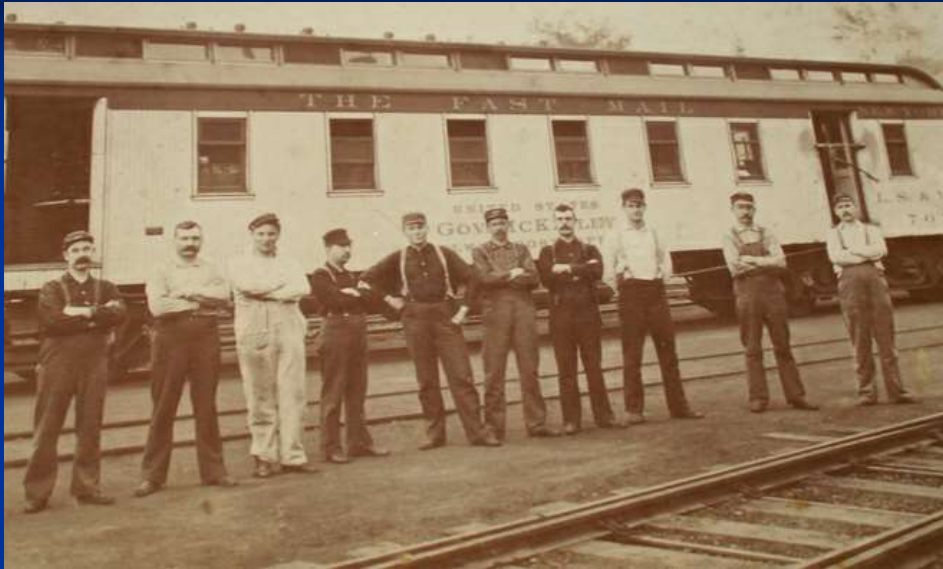
Sample Cover:



The cover above was posted at New York City on the westbound train. Division 1 was the crew between New York and Syracuse. A similar cover mailed at Buffalo, New York, on an eastbound train appears below. "2 Div" was the segment between Cleveland and Syracuse.

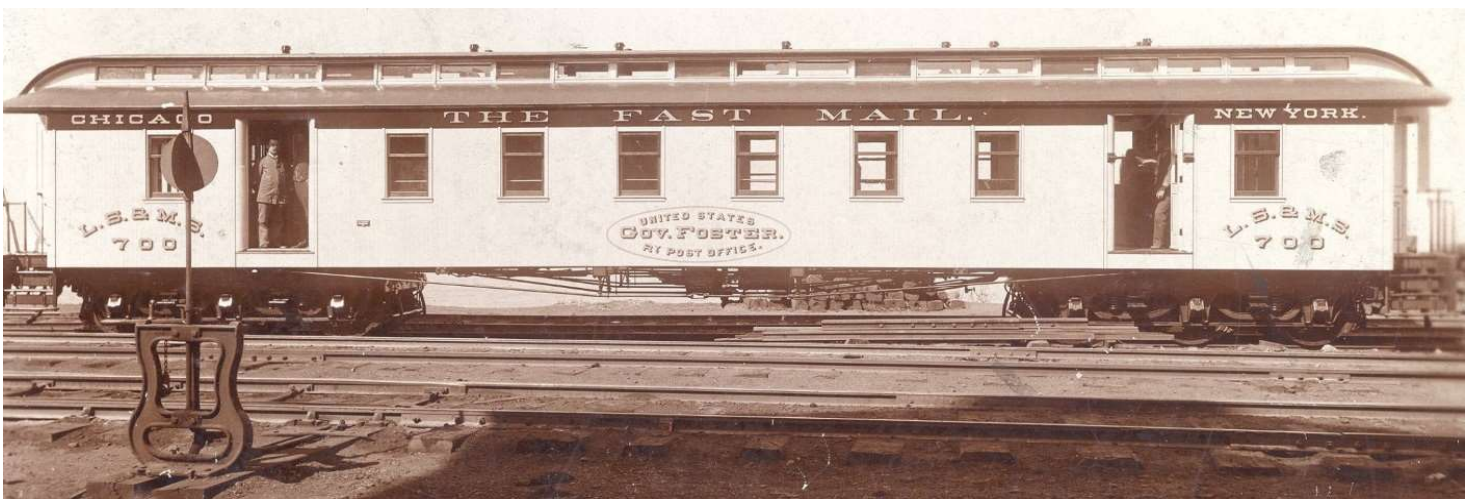


LS&MS Fast Mail Equipment



LS&MS 701 Gov. McKinley and Crew

The LS&MS – NYC&HR *FAST MAIL* was inspired by RMS General Superintendent George Bangs. Although Congressional Funding only lasted for one year, it demonstrated the effectiveness of a mail-only express train operating on an expedited schedule. During later years, it was re-established along with other “Fast Mail” routes such as the CHICAGO & COUNCIL BLUFFS RPO operated over the CB&Q, and the CHICAGO & MINNEAPOLIS RPO on the CM&StP.

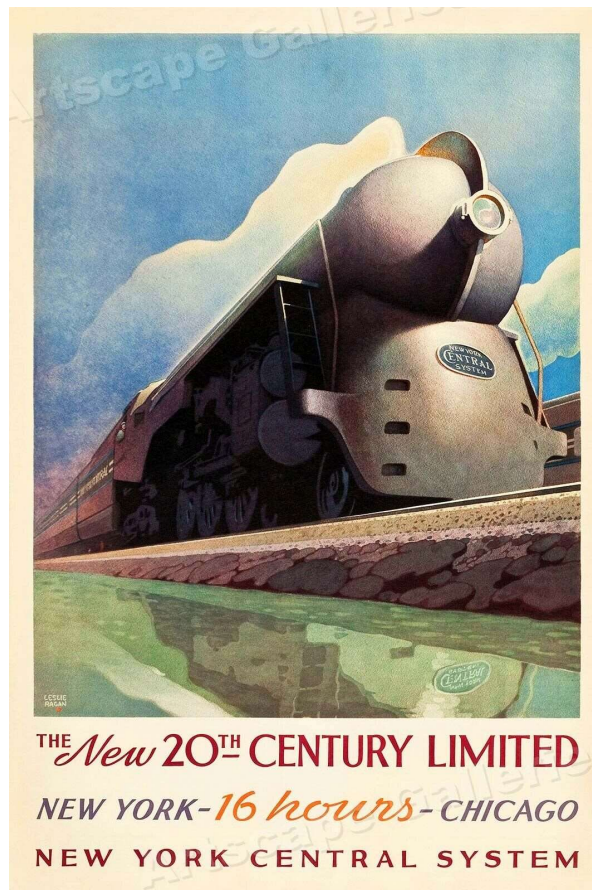


The 20th Century Limited

- The Railway Post Office is visible behind the tender in this circa 1938 view departing Chicago, Illinois.



A circa 1938 poster featuring the streamlined 20th Century Limited.



The 20th Century Limited

- The Railway Post Office is visible behind the locomotives in this 1947 early morning view at Cold Spring, New York.



A circa 1937 Railway Mail Service schedule for the 20th Century Limited RPO.

★NEW YORK & CHICAGO R. P. O.

WEST		EAST		WEST		EAST	
Eastern Time Aug. 1, 1945	25a	Aug. 1, 1945	26a	Eastern Time Aug. 1, 1945	25a	Aug. 1, 1945	26a
† New York, N. Y. (Grand Cent. Term.)	L 5 31	† Chicago, Ill. (La Salle St. Sta.)	L 3 30	Toronto, Ont.	{ A 8 00 L 8 05	St. Louis, Mo.	L 9 25
New York, N. Y. (29th St.)	6:19	Englewood, Ill.	3 44	Detroit, M.	A 7 35	Collinw'd Jct. (n.o.), O.	10 17
Harmon, N. Y.	8 08	† La Porte, Ind.	5 10	Chicago, Ill. (C. T.)	A	† Painesville, O.	10 17
Poughkeepsie, N. Y.	8 08	† South Bend, Ind.	5 10	Dunkirk, N. Y.	4 20	† Ashtabula, O.	10 17
Hudson, N. Y.	8 08	† Mishawaka, Ind.	5 10	Westfield, N. Y.	4 40	Conneaut, O.	10 17
† Albany, N. Y.	8 13	Central Time	A 5 10	† Erie, Pa.	4 40	† Erie, Pa.	10 17
Schenectady, N. Y.	8 13	† Elkhart, Ind.	6 13	Conneaut, O.	4 40	Westfield, N. Y.	10 17
† Utica, N. Y.	8 13	Eastern Time	L 6 13	† Ashtabula, O.	4 40	Dunkirk, N. Y.	10 17
Oneida, N. Y.	10 40	† Goshen, Ind.	8 14	Painesville, O.	4 40	† Buffalo, N. Y.	{ A 1 20 L 1 25
Canastota, N. Y.	10 40	Kendallville, Ind.	8 14	Collinwood Jct. (n.o.), O.	{ A 4 20 L 4 40	Toronto, Ont.	{ A 8 00 L 8 05
† Syracuse, N. Y.	10 45	Waterloo, Ind.	8 19	† Cleveland, O. U. T.	L 3 30	Chicago, Ill.	L
† Rochester, N. Y.	10 45	White Pigeon, M.	8 19	St. Louis, Mo.	A 4 58	Detroit, M.	L 7 20
Batavia, N. Y.	1 15	Sturgis, M.	8 19	Kansas City, M.	A 11 55	Batavia, N. Y.	7 20
† Buffalo, N. Y.	1 25	Hillsdale, M.	8 19	Linndale (N. O.), O.	11 55	† Rochester, N. Y.	{ A 3 50 L 3 55
		Adrian, M.	8 19	Elyria, O.	6 18	† Syracuse, N. Y.	{ A 3 50 L 3 55
		† Toledo, O.	8 19	† Sandusky, O.	6 23	Oneida, N. Y.	{ A 3 50 L 3 55
		St. Louis, Mo.	8 19	† Toledo, O.	{ A 6 18 L 6 23	† Utica, N. Y.	{ A 3 50 L 3 55
		† Sandusky, O.	10 45	Waterloo, Ind.	6 23	Fonda, N. Y.	3 55
		Elyria, O.	10 45	Kendallville, Ind.	6 23	Schenectady, N. Y.	3 55
		Linndale (n.o.), O.	10 45	Goshen, Ind.	6 23	† Albany, N. Y.	6 25
		† Cleveland, O. U. T.	9 40	† Elkhart, Ind. (E.T.)	{ A 8 22 L 7 27	Hudson, N. Y.	6 30
				(Central Time)	L 7 27	Poughkeepsie, N. Y.	6 30
				† Mishawaka, Ind.	8 22	Harmon, N. Y.	8 38
				† South Bend, Ind.	7 27	New York, N. Y. (29th St.)	9 30
				† La Porte, Ind.	9 16	† New York, N. Y. (Grd. Cent. Term.)	9 30
				Gary, Ind.	9 30		
				Englewood, Ill.	9 30		
				† Chicago, Ill. (La Salle St. Sta.)	9 30		

East Division—New York to Syracuse 288.94 m's.
Middle Division—Syracuse to Cleveland 332.10 m's
West Division—Cleveland to Chicago
Via Sandusky and Michigan Divisions 349.58 m's

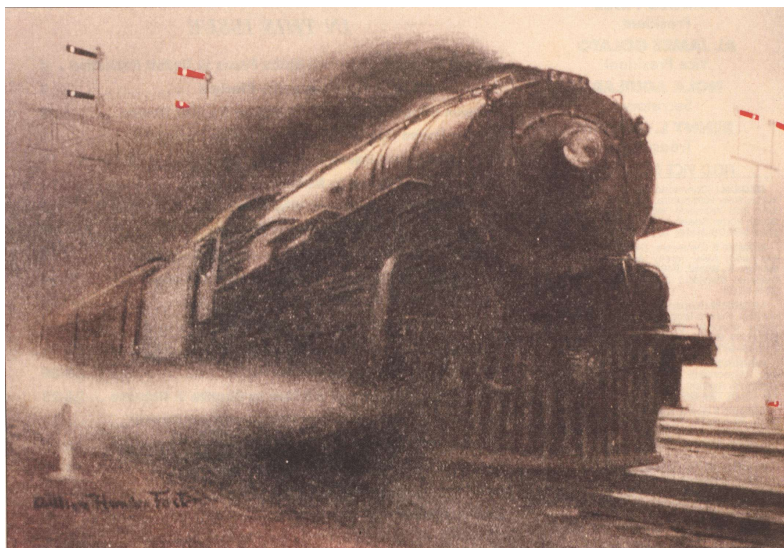
Railway Post Office Functions

- The first trip of the Twentieth Century Limited was on June 17, 1902. It is believed that a Railway Post Office car was assigned to train 26 in approximately 1908. By 1912, both trains 25 and 26 had a RPO assigned to the train.
- The average trip length for a 60-foot RPO crew was 300 miles. Many crews had an additional two to four hours of “advance time” before departure from the initial terminal.
- The RPO crews switched at Syracuse and Cleveland, but the same car ran through between New York and Chicago.

The New York Central Railroad owned the RPO cars and rented them to the RMS on a per mile basis. Storage mail cars and “closed-pouch mail” in baggage cars were utilized according to space-used and mileage. Terminals and Transfer Office facilities were leased for stationary mail handling and distribution. Altogether, revenue from handling mail was a significant contribution to railroad “head –end traffic.”

“Head-end” operations on passenger trains also included railway express, baggage, and milk. Mail transportation on along branch-lines, short-lines, or inter-urban were often included in combined passenger and freight trains, referred to as “mixed freight.” However, there was no head-end traffic on the 20th Century Limited other than mail in the RPO car and checked baggage.

The painting below of the 20th Century Limited was commissioned by the NYC circa 1925.



The 20th Century Limited Boston & Albany Connection

A U.S. POST OFFICE *DAILY BULLETIN* #9010, 09-17-1909-1914 announced RPO service between Albany, New York, and Boston, Massachusetts on trains 25 and 26.

R. P. O. SERVICE ESTABLISHED.

Additional R. P. O. service has been established on the line of the Boston & Albany RR. in trains 25 and 26 between Boston, Mass., and Albany, N. Y.,—208.25 ms. Service to be covered by the Boston & Albany R. P. O. [17 sept 09

A 1914 Railway Mail Service schedule shows the pouch list for trains 25 and 26. The Railway Postal Clerks only worked first class mail in 30-foot apartment Railway Post Offices, as shown on the notes in the next slide.

TRAIN 25.			
Albany D. & D. <i>a</i>	Albany.	C, W.L. & C.B., tr. 7 <i>b</i>	Albany.
Chi. & Minn., tr. 17 <i>b</i>	"	N. Y. & Chic., tr. 9,	
C.F.M. & K.C., tr. 15 <i>b</i>	"	Michigan <i>b</i>	"
Chi. & Omaha, tr. 13 <i>b</i>	"	N. Y. & Chi., tr. 9, 2 <i>b</i>	"
Chicago, Ill., D & D <i>a</i>	"	N. Y. & Chi., tr. 11 <i>a</i>	"
Cleveland, O. <i>b</i>	"	N. Y. & Chi., tr. 11,	
Cle. & St. Lo; tr. 41-	"	Ohio <i>b</i>	"
11, via Cleveland <i>b</i>	"		

TRAIN 26.			
Attleboro, Mass. <i>a</i>	Boston.	Gro. & Bos., tr. 69, 2 <i>b</i>	Boston.
Alrg & Alb., tr. 73 <i>b</i>	Albany.	Hartford, Conn. <i>a</i>	Spring.
Alrg & Bo., tr. 517,		Lo. & N. Be., tr. 6033 <i>b</i>	S. Fram.
No. of Winch. <i>b</i>	Worces.	New. Cir., tr. 171 <i>b</i>	Boston.
Bos. & Alb., tr. 41 <i>a</i>	"	No. Co. & Bo., tr. 515 <i>b</i>	"
Bos. & Alb., tr. 6 <i>b</i>	Pittsfield	New Haven, Ct. <i>a</i>	Spring.
B., S. & N. Y., tr. 77, 1 <i>e</i>	Spring.	Providence, R. I. <i>a</i>	Worces.
B., S. & N. Y., tr. 77, 2 <i>e</i>	"	Port. & Bos., tr. 17 <i>b</i>	Boston.
B., S. & N. Y., tr. 809, 1 <i>b</i>	"	Roxbury Sta., Ms. <i>b</i>	"
B., S. & N. Y., tr. 809, 2 <i>b</i>	"	St. Alb. & Spr., tr. 85 <i>a</i>	Spring.
Boston Banks <i>a</i>	Boston.	S. F. & N. H., tr. 1104 <i>b</i>	Westfield
Boston Carriers <i>a</i>	"	S. F. & N. H., tr. 1107 <i>b</i>	"
Back Bay, Mass. <i>a</i>	"	Springfield Term. <i>b</i>	Spring.
B., Tr. & Alb., tr. 8 <i>b</i>	Worces.	T. R., So. Sta., Stas. <i>a</i>	Boston.
Ban. & Bos., tr. 45 <i>a</i>	Boston.	T. R.'m, S. Sta., Dis. <i>a</i>	"
Bo. & C. C., tr. 5097 <i>b</i>	"	T. R.'m, S. Sta. (For	
B., W. & Pr., tr. 3097 <i>b</i>	"	No. Postal Sta.) <i>a</i>	"
Brat. & N. L., tr. 6 <i>b</i>	Palmer.	T. Room., So. Sta.,	
Essex St. Sta., Ms. <i>a</i>	Bostoe.	Close Connec'n <i>a</i>	"

The 20th Century Limited Boston & Albany Connection

A 1914 First Division Schedule of Mail Trains #181 shows the RPO service between Albany, New York, and Boston, Massachusetts..

*Boston & Albany R. P. O. Dist. 2																
(Boston & Albany R. R. 203.25 miles. Route 104025.)																
11	11		11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11		
A43	A35	B29	A31	A25	A41	B3	2-1-14	A32	B22	A46	A26	B6	A16	A18	B14	A34
11 15	7 30	5 00	1 25	0 30	10 00	4 05	Le. Boston, Mass.....Ar.	7 05	10 05	10 55	11 55	2 35	6 05	8 35	0 20	5 30
11 52	5 33	1 58	10 33	4 54	S. Framingham.....	6 31	9 31	1 48	8 00	11 42	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
0 25	8 30	6 06	2 30	1 31	11 06	5 36	Ar. Worcester, Ms.....Le.	6 00	8 50	9 50	10 55	1 02	5 00	7 27	11 06	4 25
0 38	8 34	6 09	2 35	1 34	11 11	5 44	Le. Worcester, Ms.....Ar.	5 52	8 45	9 45	10 51	0 56	4 56	7 22	10 53	4 13
1 46	.....	7 34	3 46	.....	0 14	7 10	Palmer, Mass.....	4 49	7 22	.....	.....	11 30	.....	6 21	9 45	.....
2 19	9 48	8 00	4 09	2 49	0 35	7 35	Ar. Springfield, Ms.....Le.	4 24	6 50	8 14	9 32	11 00	3 35	5 55	9 15	2 50
2 25	10 03	.....	4 17	2 55	0 40	7 54	Le. Springfield, Ms.....Ar.	4 12	.....	8 08	9 27	10 51	3 30	5 50	9 08	2 30
2 44	.....	.....	4 34	.....	0 57	8 14	Westfield, Ms.....	.....	.....	7 50	.....	10 31	3 10	5 33	8 50	.....
4 15	11 32	.....	5 57	4 27	2 20	9 49	Ar. Pittsfield, Mass.....Le.	2 38	.....	6 34	8 05	8 52	1 54	4 18	7 23	1 06
4 22	11 37	.....	6 00	4 30	2 25	9 55	Le. Pittsfield, Mass.....Ar.	2 31	.....	6 29	8 02	8 47	1 47	4 11	7 13	1 03
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	10 18	State Line, Ms.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	8 20	.....	.....	6 46	.....
5 12	.....	.....	6 46	.....	3 07	10 50	Chatham, N. Y.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	7 43	.....	3 22	6 09
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	11 36	Rensselaer, N. Y.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	6 58	.....	.....	5 18
6 00	0 50	.....	7 25	5 40	3 45	11 40	Ar. Albany, N. Y.....Le.	1 00	.....	4 55	6 40	6 55	0 10	2 40	5 15	11 40
9 45	1 40	.....	9 10	.....	7 10	2 05	Ar. Detroit, Mich.....Le.	7 00	.....	9 15	4 50	.....	.....	1 00	.....	6 30
4 30	11 25	.....	7 30	2 30	2 25	10 25	Ar. Cleveland, O.....	11 30	.....	4 20	7 35	7 45	10 35	1 55	.....	8 00
7 05	2 10	.....	10 00	4 45	5 05	0 55	Toledo, O.....	8 50	.....	1 45	5 15	4 45	7 45	10 50	.....	4 35
1 20	8 20	.....	4 00	9 45	11 43	6 30	Chicago, Ill.....Le.	3 00	.....	8 25	0 40	10 30	1 40	5 25	.....	11 10

Boston City mail distributed on trains 34, 26, 32, 6, and 44.
Hartford City mail distributed on trains 34 and 32.
Trains 25 and 26 handle first-class mail only.

The 1914 Railway Mail Service schedule shows space assignments for each train.

Authorized five lines 60', one line 50' and two lines 40'.
Car assignment :

Tr. 3 }
Tr. 44 } one line 60' and one 60' storage.

Tr. 31, one 60' storage, Springfield, Mass., to }
Albany, N. Y. } one line 60'.

Tr. 16, one 60' storage

Tr. 35, two halves, 60', one half 40', and }
four 60' storage } two lines 60' and
one line 40'.

Tr. 18, one-half 60' and one 60' storage }
Tr. 32, one-half 60' and one 60' storage }
Tr. 14, one-half 40' }

Tr. 43, one 60' storage }
Tr. 34, two 60' storage } one line 60' and one line 50'.

Tr. 41, one 60' storage, Saturdays only }
Tr. 6 } one line 40'.

Tr. 10, one 60' storage.

All full R. P. O. service on this line performed in 60' cars.

Trs. 25 and 26, 30' apartment. (30' needed).

Trs. 29 and 22, 33' apartment. (20' needed).

III.

The 20th Century Limited Postmarks



RMS N.Y. & CHI. W.D. R.P.O postmarker, last used during 1948

Our focus now shifts to the markings that Railway Post Office historians may observe on covers and postal documents. A steel postmarking hand-stamp issued to a Clerk-in-Charge on the NEW YORK & CHICAGO WEST DIVISION RPO is illustrated. The East and Middle Division hand-stamps have a similar design. These devices were manufactured by the Chambers Shop at Lodge, Virginia, prior to 1931.

The left image is as the device appears in the RMS Library collection. The right image has been flipped for easy reading of the engraved lettering on this postmarking handstamp.

A 1910 condensed schedule for the eastbound and westbound “Century” appears below.

NEW YORK CENTRAL LINES		NYC LINES		AMERICA'S GREATEST RAILROAD.	
CONDENSED TIME-TABLE					
To the West.	No. 25 The 20th Century Limited.	From the West.	No. 26 The 20th Century Limited.	No. 26	The 20th Century Limited.
December 21, 1909. (Eastern time.)		December 21, 1909.		A.M.	
(N. Y. C. & H. R. R.R.)	.....	(C. C. & St. L. Ry.)	.....	.....	.....
New York (Gd. Cent. Sta.) lve.	*3 50 P M	St. Louis.....lve.	.....	.....	*8 45
125th Street.....	—	Indianapolis.....lve.	.....	.....	2 20
(Boston & Albany R.R.)	.....	Cincinnati.....lve.	.....	.....	3 00
Boston.....lve.	*1 00 P M	Columbus.....lve.	.....	.....	5 43
(N. Y. C. & H. R. R.R.)	.....	Cleveland.....arr.	.....	.....	8 40
Albany.....lve.	*6 24 P M	(L. S. & M. S. Ry.)	.....	.....	P M
Utica.....lve.	*8 06 P M	Chicago.....lve.	*2 30 P M	.....	.....
Syracuse.....lve.	9 11 P M	Elkhart.....lve.	4 25 P M	.....	.....
Rochester.....lve.	10 36 P M	Toledo.....lve.	6 38 P M	.....	P M
Buffalo.....arr.	—	Cleveland.....lve.	8 40 P M	*8 40	.....
Niagara Falls.....arr.	—	Erie.....lve.	—	—	—
(Eastern time.)	.....	Buffalo.....arr.	—	—	—
(L. S. & M. S. Ry.)	.....	(N. Y. C. & H. R. R.R.)	.....	.....	.....
Buffalo (Central time) lve.	—	Niagara Falls.....lve.	.....	.....	.....
Erie.....arr.	—	Buffalo.....lve.	—	—	—
Cleveland.....arr.	—	Rochester.....arr.	—	—	—
Toledo.....arr.	—	Syracuse.....arr.	—	—	—
Elkhart.....arr.	6 21 A M	Utica.....lve.	.....	.....	.....
Chicago.....arr.	8 30 A M	Albany.....arr.	6 27 A M	6 27	A M
(Boston & Albany R.R.)	.....	(Boston & Albany R.R.)	.....	.....	A M
Boston.....arr.	11 50 A M	Boston.....arr.	11 50 A M	11 50	A M
125th Street.....arr.	—	125th Street.....arr.	—	—	—
Grand Central Sta. arr.	9 30 A M	Grand Central Sta. arr.	9 30 A M	9 45	A M
New York.....	.....	New York.....	.....	.....	.....

20th Century Ltd. RPO Markings

- *There are three types of markings applied in RPOs:*
 - *Postmarks applied to cancel first class mail postage*
 - *Back-stamps for special delivery and missent mail*
 - *Postmarks on postal forms*

- Postmarking devices used were:
 - *The “Road” stamp issued by the RMS/PTS/BT*
 - *Auxiliary marking devices such as “MISSENT”*
 - *A clerk’s personal rubber stamp*

Publications such as the **U.S. TRANSIT MARKINGS CATALOG** published by the Mobile Post Office Society have sought to identify all known postmarks and assign catalog numbers. Although these resources can be helpful references, post office historians should be aware of their limitations. These aspects include:

1. The absence of killers which were integral to the postmarking device;
2. Marking inclusions in catalogs are based on what have been observed in collections, not the universe of devices that existed;
3. During route transitions, an older device for a predecessor route may have continued in use for a replacement route;
4. Auxiliary and clerks’ personal rubber stamps are not cataloged but may be important characteristics of a cover; and,
5. Mechanized engraving techniques after 1931 yielded identical hand-stamps that are indistinguishable from one another for a particular route.

This section will outline the design and construction of postal marking devices used by Railway Postal Clerks. This foundation knowledge will be useful as we perform cover analysis.

20th Century Ltd. RPO Markings

Sample "Commercial" Special Delivery Cover:

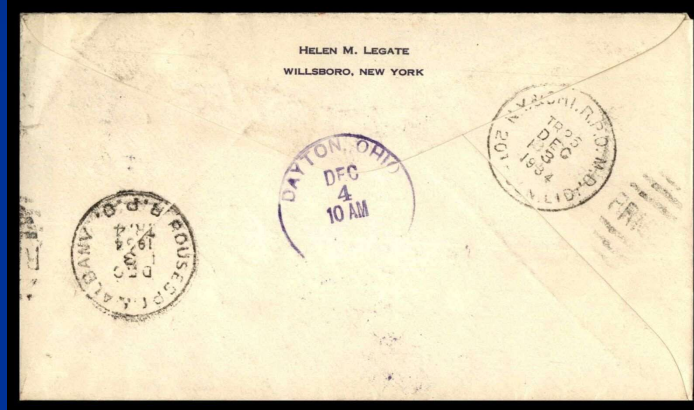


The cover front:

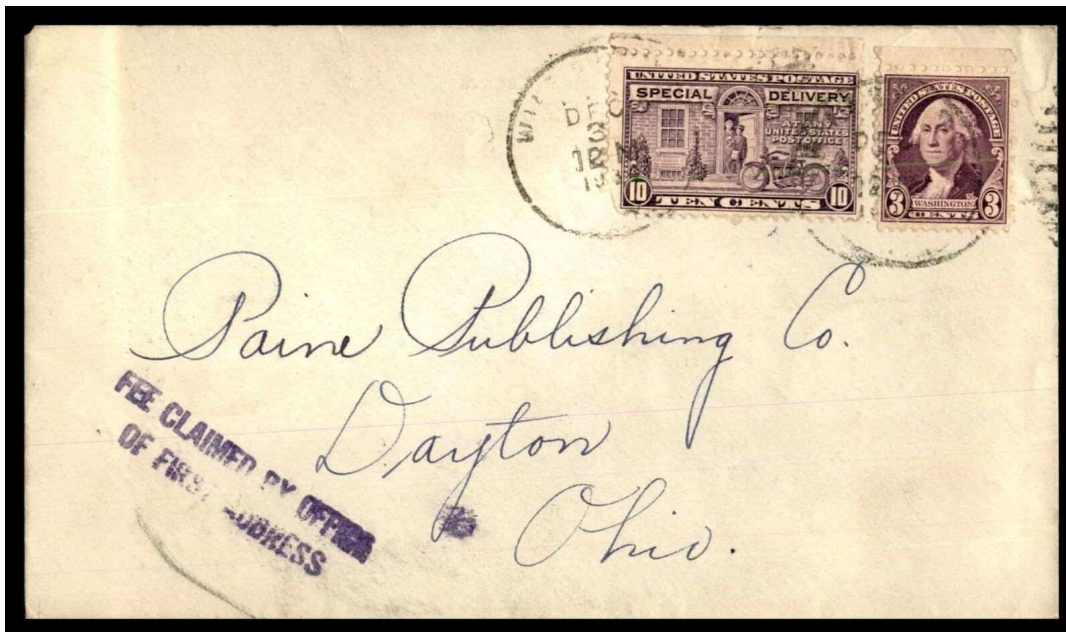


20th Century Ltd. RPO Markings

Sample "Commercial" Special Delivery Cover:

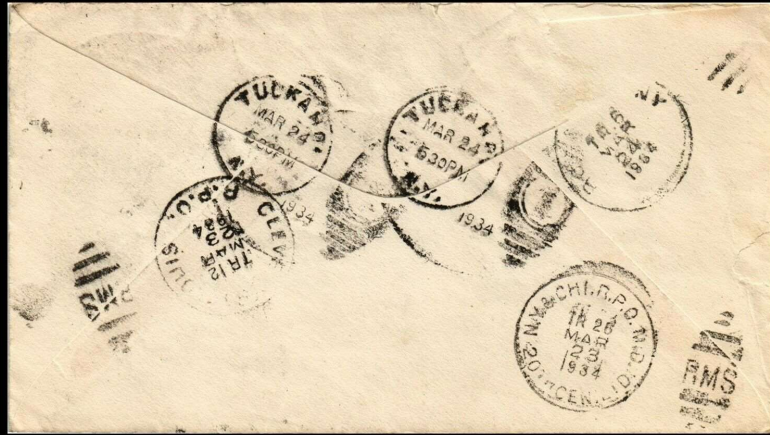


The cover front:



20th Century Ltd. RPO Markings

Sample "Commercial" Special Delivery Cover:



The cover front:

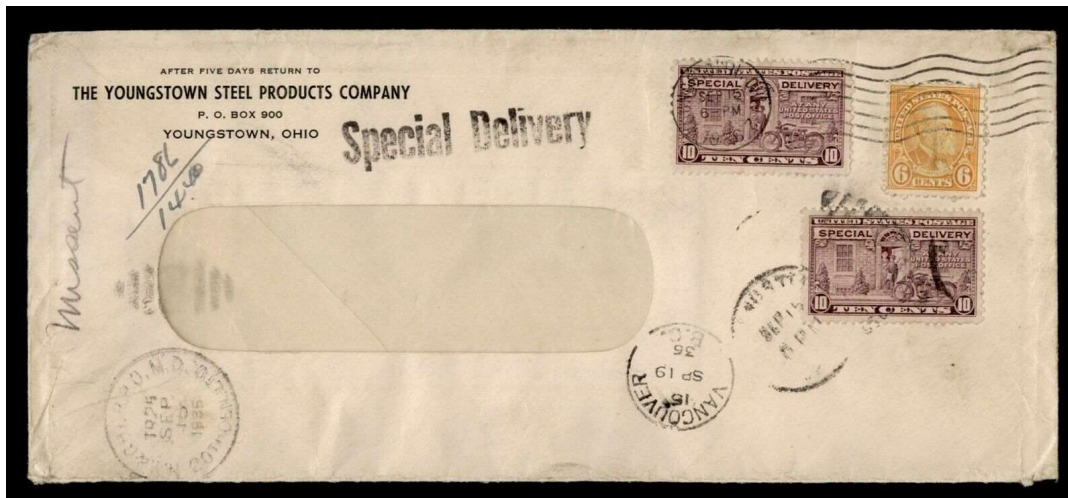


20th Century Ltd. RPO Markings

Sample “Commercial” Special Delivery Cover:



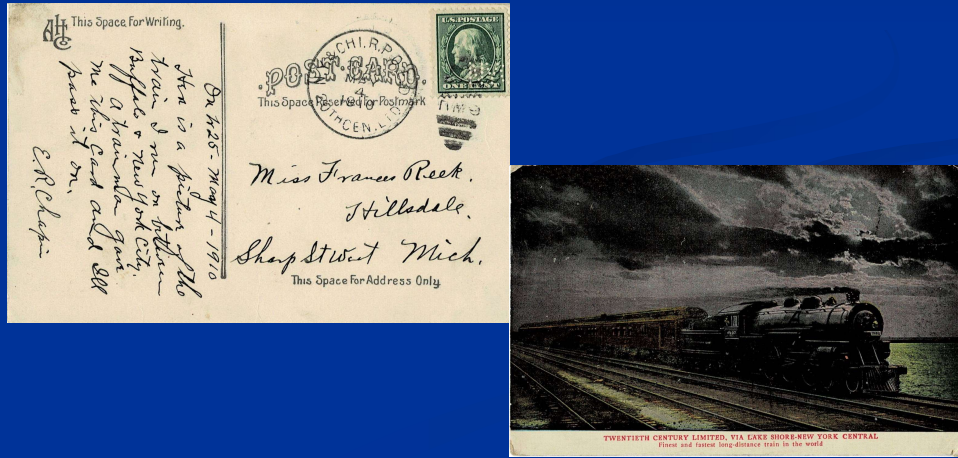
The cover front:



Note the rubber “personal postmarker” that belonged to the Railway Postal Clerk on Train 26 in the upper right of the cover’s back. Any New York & Chicago RPO postmark bearing “Tr 25” or “Tr 26” is a 20th Century Limited cover.

20th Century Ltd. RPO Markings

Post Card mailed by Railway Postal Clerk E. R. Chapin
aboard Train 25 during 1910:



E. R. Chapin has been researched on Ancestry.com . The OFFICIAL REGISTER... confirms his employment as a Railway Postal Clerk between Chicago and Buffalo. This makes this postal card even more significant, in addition to its early postmark as well as that it was mailed en route on Train 25.

Earl Rolin Chapin Jr
BIRTH 13 OCT 1881 • Tuscola County, Michigan
DEATH 28 JAN 1946 • West Branch, Ogemaw, Michigan, USA

LifeStory Facts Gallery Hints

Facts Filter Add

- 1881 (AGE)**
Birth
13 Oct 1881 • Tuscola County, Michigan
1 source
- Possible marriage records** Search
- 1907 (AGE)**
Employment
1907 • Hillsdale County, Michigan, USA
E. R. Chapin Jr. was a Railway Postal Clerk assigned to the New York & Chicago Railway Post Office route between Buffalo, New York, and New York City, New York.
1 media
- 1910 (AGE)**
Employment
1910 • Buffalo, Erie, New York, USA
E. R. Chapin Jr. was a Railway Postal Clerk assigned to the New York & Chicago Railway Post Office route between Buffalo, New York, and New York City, New York.
2 media
- 1911 (AGE)**
Employment
1911 • Hillsdale County, Michigan, USA
E. R. Chapin Jr. was a Railway Postal Clerk assigned to the New York & Chicago Railway Post Office route between Buffalo, New York, and New York City, New York.
1 media
- 1915 (AGE)**
Birth of son Dallas James Chapin (1915-2005)
15 Feb 1915 • West Branch, Michigan, USA

Sources Add

Ancestry sources

- Michigan, U.S., Death Records, 1867-1952
- U.S., Newspapers.com Obituary Index, 1800s-current
- U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007
- U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947
- U.S., World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942

Q Search on Ancestry

Add source

Add web link

Family Add

Parents

- James Rolin Chapin
- Elta Sheffield

Spouse and children

- Ethel Crandell
- Dallas James Chapin 1915-2005

Add family

20th Century Ltd. RPO Markings

Schedule for the "Century" during 1910:

NEW YORK CENTRAL LINES		NYC LINES	
		AMERICA'S GREATEST RAILROAD.	
CONDENSED TIME-TABLE			
To the West.		From the West.	
December 21, 1909. (Eastern time.)		December 21, 1909.	
No. 25 The Century Limited.		No. 26 The Century Limited.	
(N. Y. C. & H. R. R.R.)		(C. C. C. & St. L. Ry.)	
New York (Gd. Cent. Sta.) lve.	5:50 P M	St. Louis lve.	8:45 A M
25th Street lve.	—	Indianapolis lve.	2:20 P M
(Boston & Albany R.R.)	—	Cincinnati lve.	5:45 P M
Boston lve.	1:00 P M	Cleveland lve.	8:40 P M
(N. Y. C. & H. R. R.R.)	—	(L. S. & M. S. Ry.)	—
Albany lve.	6:24 P M	Chicago lve.	9:50 P M
Utica lve.	8:56 P M	Elkhart lve.	4:25 P M
Syracuse lve.	9:11 P M	Toledo lve.	6:38 P M
Rochester lve.	10:36 P M	Cleveland lve.	8:40 P M
Buffalo lve.	—	Erie lve.	—
Niagara Falls lve.	—	Buffalo lve.	—
(Eastern time.)	—	(N. Y. C. & H. R. R.R.)	—
(L. S. & M. S. Ry.)	—	Niagara Falls lve.	—
Buffalo (Central time) lve.	—	Buffalo lve.	—
Erie lve.	—	Rochester lve.	—
Cleveland lve.	—	Syracuse lve.	—
Toledo lve.	—	Utica lve.	—
Elkhart lve.	—	Albany lve.	6:27 A M
Chicago lve.	8:30 A M	(Boston & Albany R.R.)	—
		Boston lve.	11:50 A M
		25th Street lve.	—
		Grand Central Sta. lve.	9:30 A M
		New York lve.	9:45 A M

E. R. Chapin worked this schedule on Trains 25 and 26. during 1910. Ancestry.com research for Frances Reek to whom the previous post card was addressed was later married to another person. Regrettably, her information is derived from the tragic death certificate of her two year old son in 1929.

Michigan, U.S., Death Records, 1867-1952 for Frances E Reek
 Certificates, 1921-1945 > 163: Hillsdale (Hillsdale), 1921-1939

1 PLACE OF DEATH
 County Hillsdale.
 Township
 Village Hillsdale.
 City Hillsdale. (No. City Hospital. St. Registrar No. 99
 (If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give its NAME instead of street and number)

2 FULL NAME John Fred Sindecuse.
 a) Residence No. 22 West Sharp. b) Ward. (If non-resident give city or town and state)
 Length of residence in city or town where death occurred yrs. 5 mos. da. How long in U. S. if foreign birth? yrs. mos. da.

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS
 3 SEX Male. 4 Color or Race White. 5 Single, Married, Widowed or Divorced (WRITE the word) Single.
 6a If married, widowed or divorced HUSBAND of (or) WIFE of
 4 DATE OF BIRTH (Month, day and year) Feb 27 1927.
 7 AGE Years 2 Months 9 Days 3. If LESS than 1 day...hrs. OR...min.
 8 OCCUPATION OF DECEASED (a) Trade, profession or particular kind of work None. (b) General nature of industry, business, or establishment in which employed (or employer). (c) Name of employer.

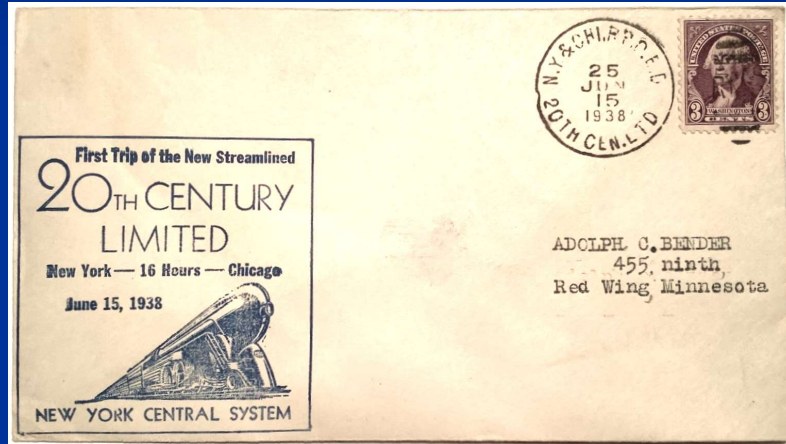
9 BIRTHPLACE (city or town) Eaton Rapids. (state or country) Mich.
 10 NAME OF FATHER Earl A Sindecuse.
 11 BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER (city or town) Jonesville. (state or country) Mich.
 12 MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER Frances E Reek.
 13 BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER (city or town) Hillsdale. (state or country) Mich.

14 Informant Earl A Sindecuse. (Address) Hillsdale, Mich.
 15 Filed Dec 2 1929 Registrar J. H. Miner, Hillsdale, Mich.

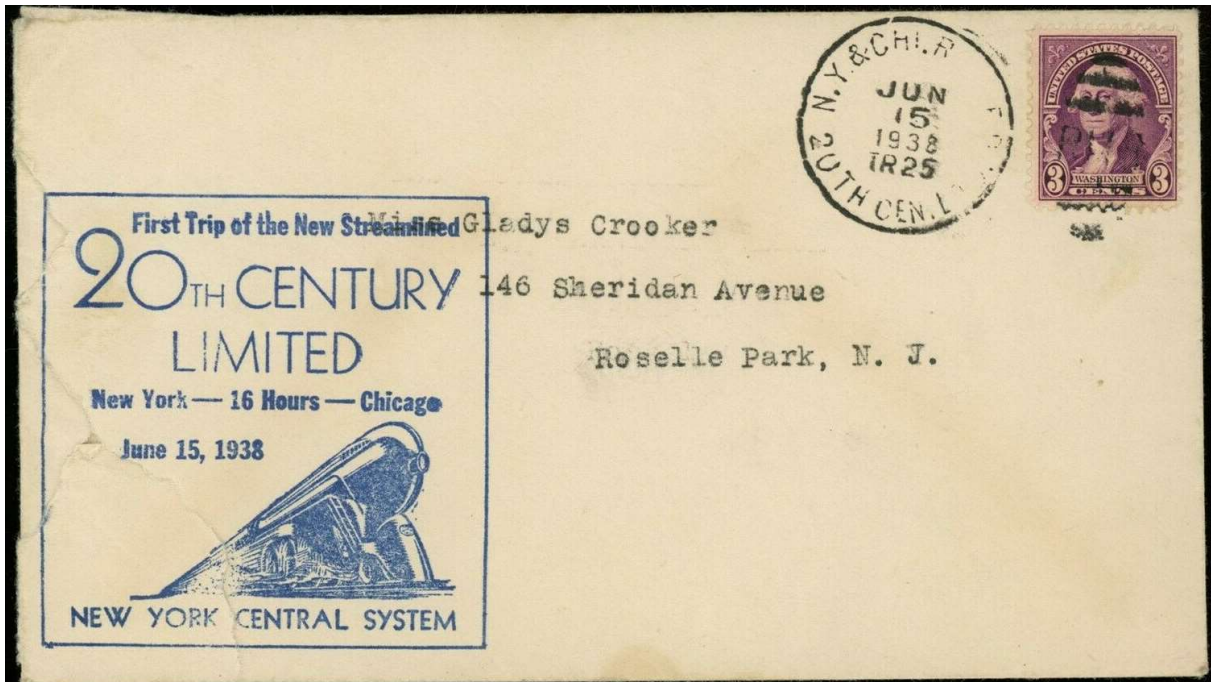
MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
 16 DATE OF DEATH (Month, day and year) Nov 30 1929.
 17 I HEREBY CERTIFY that I attended deceased from Nov. 27 1929 to Nov. 30 1929 that I last saw him alive on Nov. 30 1929 and that death occurred on the date stated above at 2:30 P.M.
 The CAUSE OF DEATH* was as follows:
 Peritonitis due to obstruction of Bowels
 (duration) yrs. mos. 4 da.
 CONTRIBUTORY* Peritonitis adhesions - due to intestinal fistula and operation stage of 9 mo. (duration) yrs. mos. 4 da.
 18 Where was disease contracted? If not at place of death? Date of Nov 26/29
 Did an operation precede death? No
 Was there an autopsy? No
 What test confirmed diagnosis?
 (Signed) B. F. Green M. D.
 Dec 2 1929 Address Hillsdale
 *State the Disease Causing Death, or in deaths from Violent Causes, state (1) Means and nature of Injury, and (2) whether Accidental, Suicidal, or Homicidal.
 (See reverse side for further instructions.)
 19 PLACE OF BURIAL, CREMATION, OR REMOVAL Date of Burial
 Hillsdale, Mich. Dec 2 1929.
 334 of 1758
 J. H. Miner, Hillsdale, Mich.

20th Century Ltd. RPO Markings

Sample "Philatelic" Event Cover - 1938:

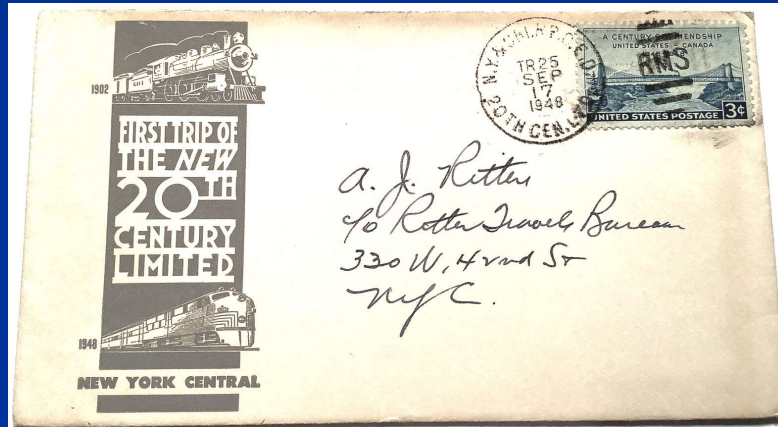


...and another cover:



20th Century Ltd. RPO Markings

Sample “Philatelic” Event Cover - 1948:



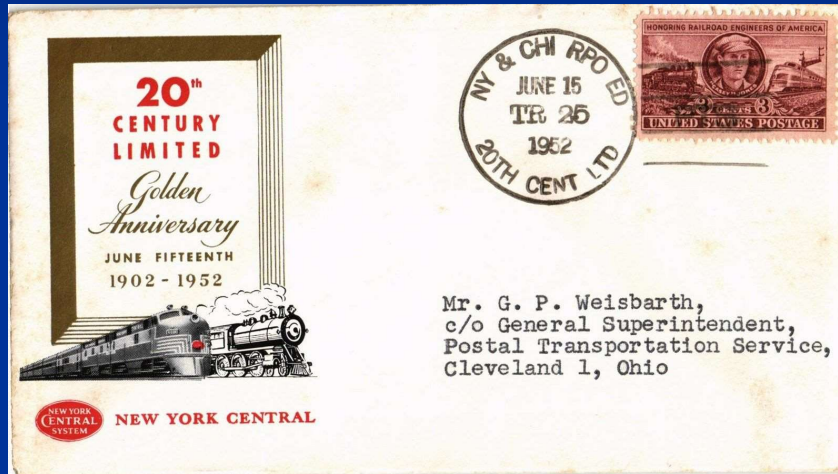
The “new” Twentieth Century Limited equipment was delivered to the NYCS in 1948. The diesel-electric locomotives were from the Electro-Motive Division (EMD) of General Motors, The RPO and other passenger cars were manufactured by the Pullman-Standard Company. Railroads thought that the World War II surge of passenger travel would continue. However, the improved highway network and growing airline system eroded that passenger traffic until the train was discontinued on December 2, 1967, bringing all-sleeping car train service to an end on the New York Central System.

The picture below is by Richard Pennisi showing the “Century” RPO at Peekskill, New York on July 29th, 1967. This may be the last photograph ever taken of the RPO on this train before it was removed by August 4, 1967.

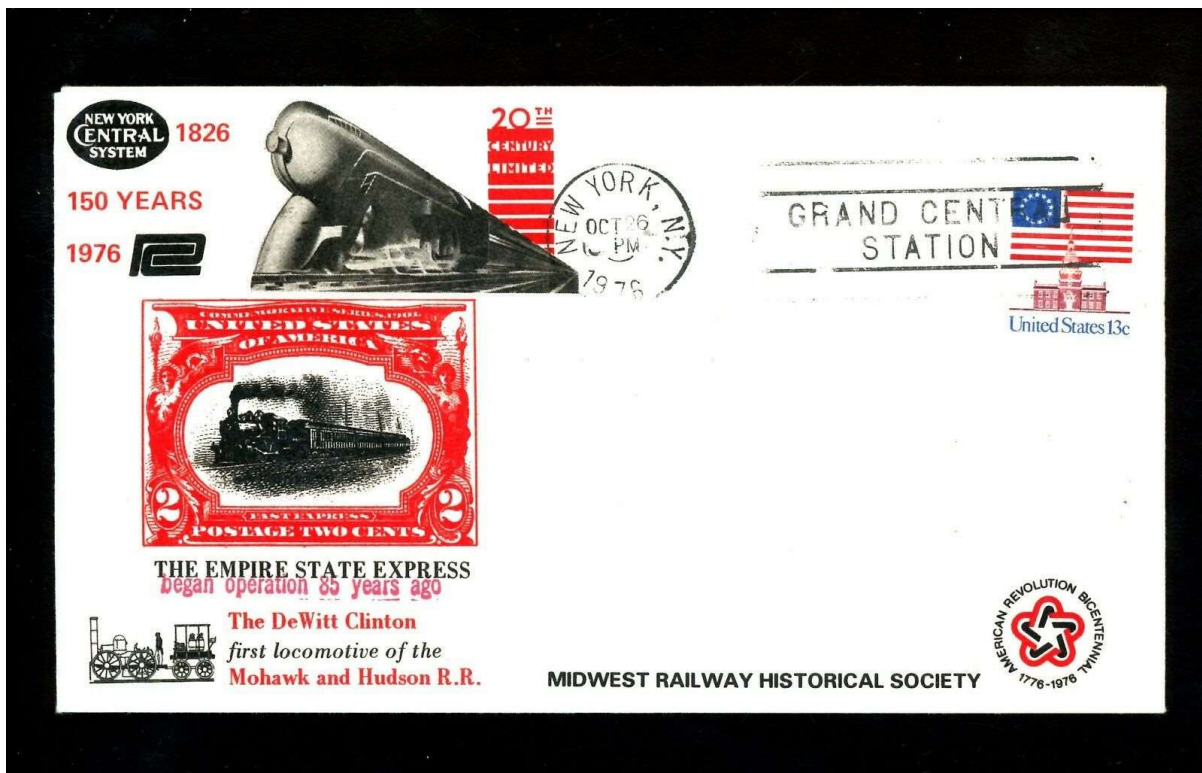


20th Century Ltd. RPO Markings

Sample "Philatelic" Event Cover - 1952:



The cover above has a rubber-stamp postmark that was used only on June 15, 1952, to commemorate the 20th Century Limited's Golden Anniversary. However, it may not have been used on the train. Here is another cover circa 1976.



20th Century Ltd. RPO Markings

The last RPO schedule for Trains 25 and 26:

TABLE 29
***NEW YORK & CHICAGO ED - WESTBOUND**
 (I.E. CAN. D.R.)
 N.Y.C. RR Rt. 022962
 EAST DIVISION - P.M. NEW YORK, N.Y. 10001
 New York to Buffalo - 436.46 miles
 WEST DIVISION - P.M. CLEVELAND, OH 44101
 Buffalo to Chicago - 525.34 miles

R.P.O. SERVICE (Local Time)

TRP	FRQ	26	90	96	14	60
Boston, Mass.	L	2301	1200	1800	1500	2000
July 2, 1967	TRP	45	51	15	25	30
N.Y., N.Y. (GC Sta.)	L	0011	0200	0816	1606	1801
Yonkers	A	0038	0224	0905	1455	1846
Harmon RR Sta. (Incl.)	L	0107	0254	0935	1455	1846
Poughkeepsie	L	0119	0308	0911	1502	1850
Hudson	L	0307	0450	1050	1640	1930
Albany	L	0400	0500	1100	1640	1930
Schenectady	L	0540	1115	1715	2048	0235
Amsterdam	L	0620	1200	1807	0205	0435
Utica	L	0700	1255	1910	0245	0435
Rome	L	0800	1340	1929	0325	0427
Syracuse	L	0800	1340	1929	0325	0427
Newark	L	0808	1355	2025	0301	0605
Rochester	L	0923	1510	2140	0728	0552
Batavia	L	0933	1515	2150	0738	0607
Buffalo	L	1016	1626	2255	0719	0824

VIA NY & CHI RPO (West Div.)
 (P.M. Cleveland OH 44101)

TRP	FRQ	26	90	96	14	60
Buffalo	L	1108	1700	2326	0138	0748
Dunkirk	L	1145	1745	2345	0138	0748
Westfield	L	1180	1780	2380	0138	0748
Erie, Pa.	L	1215	1815	2415	0138	0748
Cleveland, Ohio	L	1425	2055	0236	0440	1057
Union Term.	L	1505	2245	0320	0310	1127
Columbus, Ohio	L	1540	2240	0340	0310	1127
Cincinnati, Ohio	L	1600	2300	0400	0310	1127
Toledo, Ohio	L	1630	2330	0430	0310	1127
Chicago, Ill.	L	1830	2530	0630	0310	1127
(LaSalle St. Sta.)	L	2015	0630	0900	0310	1127

RPO Authorizations: Tr. 5, 15, 25, 35, 45, 51, 57, 60.
 Tr. 59, 120 (M67), 60 (D67).
 ① Syracuse mails leave PO 50 min. prior to train arrival.
 ② Syracuse mails arrive PO 50 min. after train arrival.
 ③ No RPO service 5/30, 7/4, 9/2, 12/23, 12/30.
 ④ Via shuttle service at Collingwood. ⑤ RPO exchange only. ⑥ CP (B7).
 ⑦ CP (D7). ⑧ CP 9/3, 12/24, 12/31.
 ⑨ CP (V). ⑩ CP (S). ⑪ CP (A).

***NEW YORK & CHICAGO ED - EASTBOUND**
 (I.E. CAN. D.R.)
R.P.O. SERVICES
VIA NY & CHIC W.D. RPO
 (P.M. CLEVELAND, OH 44101)

TRP	FRQ	26	90	96	14	60
Chicago, Ill.	L	1630	2145	2345	0700	0930
(LaSalle St. Sta.)	L	1630	2145	2345	0700	0930
Toledo, Ohio	L	2115	0335	0600	1155	1453
Cleveland, Ohio	L	0001	0545	0815	1345	1701
Union Term.	L	0001	0545	0815	1345	1701
Erie, Pa.	L	2220	0710	0925	1415	1738
Westfield	L	0910	1130	1557	1943	0213
Dunkirk	L	0945	1010	1410	2013	0213
Buffalo	L	0152	1103	1300	1725	2120

TRP	FRQ	26	90	96	14	60
Buffalo	L	0203	1136	1446	1800	2210
Rochester	L	0235	1235	1545	1900	2310
Syracuse	L	0251	1251	1555	1915	2330
Utica	L	0418	1410	1715	2035	0050
Albany	L	0426	1420	1725	2030	0110
Hudson	L	0500	1500	1808	2132	0150
Poughkeepsie	L	0510	1510	1820	2148	0205
Harmon RR Sta. (Incl.)	L	0633	1630	2000	2325	0340
Yonkers	L	0648	1725	2035	0010	0405
N.Y., N.Y. (GC Sta.)	L	0838	1841	2153	0010	0515
Boston, Mass.	L	0838	1944	2255	0222	0618
	L	0932	2043	2359	0315	0715
	L	1230	2335	0535	0315	0715

RPO Authorizations: Tr. 8, 26, 90, 96, 60.
 Tr. 6 = 120 (M67), 60 (D7).
 Tr. 14 = 120 (M67), 60 (D67) Buff to Alb.
 180 (M67), 120 (A6), 60 (L1) Alb to NY.
 ① Syracuse mails leave PO 50 min. prior to train arrival.
 ② Syracuse mails arrive PO 50 min. after train arrival.
 ③ CP (B7).
 ④ Via shuttle service at Collingwood.
 ⑤ CP (B67) Chi-Cleve, (67) Cleve-Buff.
 ⑥ CP (B67).
 ⑦ CP (A6).
 ⑧ CP (6).
 ⑨ CP (D7).
 ⑩ No RPO service 5/30, 7/4, 9/2, 12/23, 12/30.

The end came for Railway Post Offices (RPOs) on the 20th Century Limited on or before August 4, 1967. The updated schedule page effective on August 5th appears below. No RPOs operated east of Buffalo and only one pair of trains made a round trip between Chicago and Buffalo.

New York Central RR Co. 960.85 miles
EAST DIVISION - P.M. NEW YORK, NY 10001
New York to Buffalo
WEST DIVISION - P.M. CLEVELAND OH 44101
Route 042963
Buffalo to Chicago via Cleveland (CUT) 525.34 miles
Buffalo to Chicago via Cleveland (Front St) 522.73 miles
Buffalo to Cleveland (CUT) 185.16 miles, (Front St) 182.77 miles
Cleveland to Chicago (CUT) 340.18 miles, (Front St) 339.96 miles
Cleveland to Toledo 106.63 miles Toledo to Elkhart 133.01 miles

NEW YORK & CHICAGO RPO

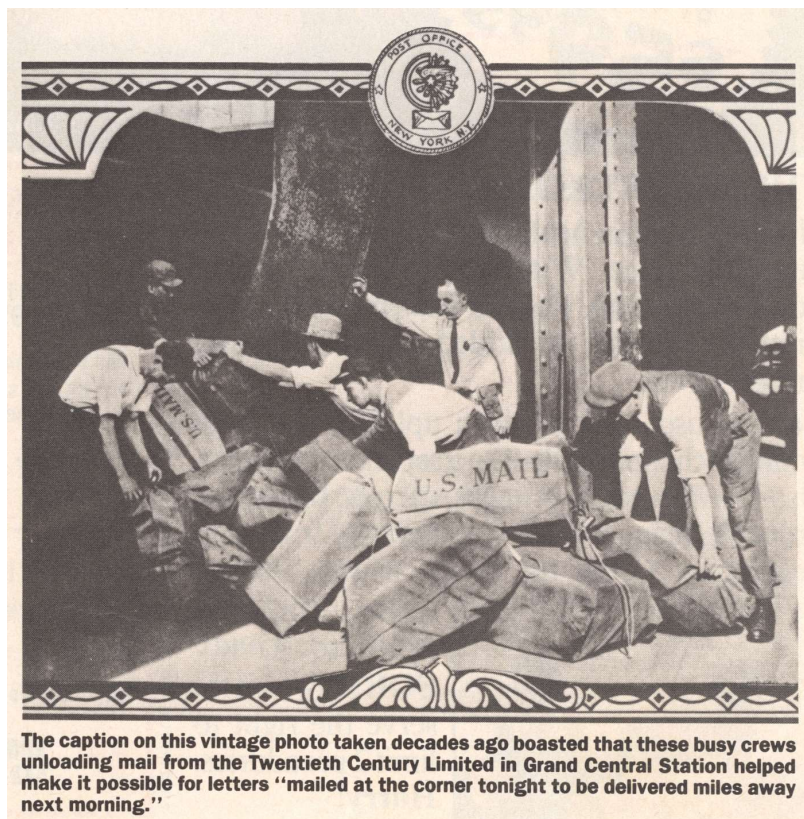
Cin Reg

90	TR	TR	51
60'	FRQ	FRQ	60'
	RPO Authorizations		
2145	L Chicago IL (CDT)	A	0430
	Englewood St		0412
2229	Gary IN		0333
2337	A So Bend	L	0235
2338	L So Bend	A	0234
0315	A Toledo OH (EDT)	L	0100
0335	L Toledo	A	0030
0545	A Cleveland	L	2245
0710	L Cleveland	A	2055
0910	Erie PA		
1105	A Buffalo	L	1700
	L Buffalo	A	
	Albany		
	A New York NY	L	
	A Boston MA	L	

In Summary...

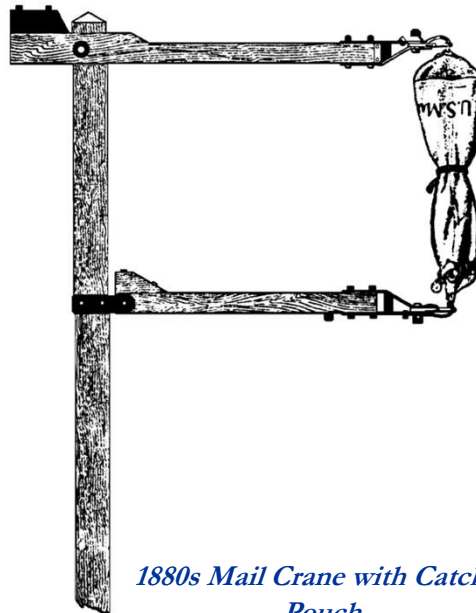
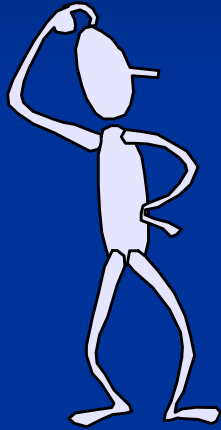
- The 20th Century Limited, an all-Pullman train for first class passengers, included a Railway Post Office.
- Many of the covers include “20th Cent. Ltd.” in the postmark, while others only had “TR 25” or “TR 26.”
- Ephemera of many types and eras remain, creating rich resources for historical preservation.
- Information resources are the means for interpreting these RPO markings such as the route schedules. These primary sources facilitate cover research and open new avenues for exhibit preparation.

Thank you for attending today’s Mass Bay RRE’s 20th Century Limited Railway Post Office history. The past approach to “postal history” is to catalog markings and other cover characteristics. A richer interpretation of RPO markings and other ephemera is facilitated by comprehending how mail distribution was performed with the objective of the fastest possible transit between sender and recipient. Knowing more about the men and methods employed yields a new appreciation of the marvel that was the Railway Mail Service –as well as this prominent train.



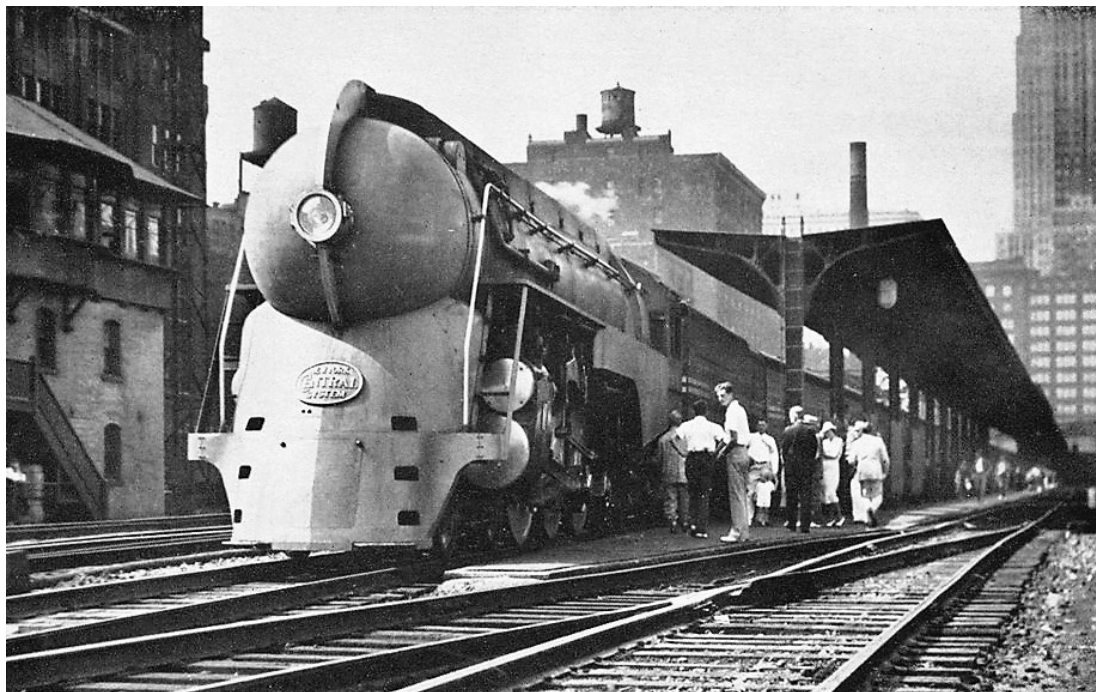
The caption on this vintage photo taken decades ago boasted that these busy crews unloading mail from the Twentieth Century Limited in Grand Central Station helped make it possible for letters “mailed at the corner tonight to be delivered miles away next morning.”

Questions?



1880s Mail Crane with Catcher Pouch

There's only so much that one can cover during a single presentation. I'll welcome your questions—after all, that is the purpose of the Railway Mail Service Library existence. Please look for me following the presentation, or contact me via email at f_scheer@yahoo.com My complete contact information appears on the next slide. Meanwhile, here is a final glimpse of the Century at Dearborn Station, Chicago, on June 15, 1938, when it was still a train of the future.



Thank you!

Frank R. Scheer

Railway Mail Service Library

fscheer@railwaymailservicelibrary.org

117 East Main Street


Boyce, VA 22620-9639

I'll welcome your questions as well as your visit to the RMS Library. After today's presentation, please contact me via email at fscheer@railwaymailservicelibrary.org

Thank you for attending!



RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE LIBRARY FOUNDATION



RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE LIBRARY
at the former 1913 N. & W. Railway depot
fscbeer@railwaymailservicelibrary.org

117 East Main Street
Boyce, VA 22620-9639 USA
<http://www.railwaymailservicelibrary.org>

The Railway Mail Service Library Foundation (RMSLF) was chartered on March 3, 2017, organized as a non-profit Virginia corporation for stewardship, preservation, and post office history research of the Railway Mail Service Library collection at Boyce, Virginia.

The chief focus during 2021 will be developing a strong, capable membership base. Those who welcome leadership roles can be nominated by members to the Board of Directors. Officer positions will be filled from the Directors. Officer positions will be filled from the Directors. Elections to the Board of Directors will be made during the fourth membership meeting during November 2021.

Annual membership dues are \$10, payable to the **RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE LIBRARY FOUNDATION**. Life membership is available for \$250. Members and volunteers will initially support collection sorting, filing, and document conservation. The longer term vision is for the RMSLF to construct and maintain a new building for the collection through a gift from Paul Nagle, a former Railway Mail Clerk who became President of the National Postal Transport Association.

Come join us! Please write to:

RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE LIBRARY FOUNDATION
rmslf@railwaymailservicelibrary.org
117 EAST MAIN STREET
BOYCE VA 22620-9639

Please consider joining the Railway Mail Service Library Foundation. You can guide the future of Railway and Highway Postal History research and document preservation!



Certificate Number _____

INCORPORATED UNDER THE LAWS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE LIBRARY FOUNDATION, INC.

MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATE

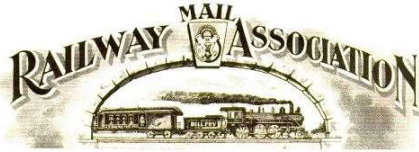
*THIS IS TO CERTIFY that **SPECIMEN** _____ is a member of the above corporation incorporated under the laws of this state and is entitled to the full benefits and privileges of such membership, subject to the duties and obligations, as more fully set forth in the Corporation's By-Laws, Rules and Regulations.*

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Corporation has caused this certificate to be executed by its duly authorized officers and its corporate seal to be hereunto affixed.

Dated _____

SECRETARY-TREASURER

PRESIDENT



RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE LIBRARY FOUNDATION
POSTAL HISTORY RESEARCH - ARTIFACTS PRESERVATION

<https://railwaymail.org/>
(540) 837-9090 - TELEPHONE
(571) 379-3409 - TEXT MESSAGE
rmslf@railwaymailservicelibrary.org - e-MAIL
117 EAST MAIN STREET
BOYCE VA 22620-9639

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Your membership in the Railway Mail Service Library Foundation will support stewardship, preservation, and post office history research of the Railway Mail Service Library collection. Annual dues are \$10 and a life membership is \$250. Please provide the information below for the membership roster:

First, Middle Initial, Last Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City, State, Postal Code, Country: _____
Telephone Number: _____
eMail Address: _____

Donations are also invited. The Railway Mail Service Library Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity and donations or contributions are tax deductible as provided for and to the extent provided by law. Please check this box if your employer will match your donation: If the employer requires an invoice, please provide contact information.

Thank you very much for your interest. If you have questions, please call or write.

Sincerely yours,

Frank R. Scheer, Secretary-Treasurer

RMSLF EIN: 37-1852514

AN OVERVIEW OF THE RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE LIBRARY

The Railway Mail Service (RMS) Library is major collection of materials pertaining to en route distribution history. It can assist researchers interested in route agent, Seapost, railway, and highway post office (RPO and HPO) history. The collection has many unique, original-source documents that provide answers to questions dealing with the transportation and distribution of USA Mail between 1862 and 1977, as well as other countries during the 19th and 20th centuries.

The R.M.S. Library has grown from the AmerRPO ("American RPO") Society Library established in the early 1950s by Bryant Alden Long, co-author of the superb book on the subject, **MAIL BY RAIL**. After a period of stagnation it was acquired by Hershel Rankin, who renamed it the R.M.S. Library. When he was 80 years old and no longer to handle research requests, Dr. Frank R. Scheer purchased the collection. Over a two-year period, the collection was moved from Florida to Virginia and renamed the "Railway Mail Service Library." Since 1982, several major additions have been made to the collection. These include the Edwin Bergman scheme and schedule collection, Lloyd Jackson's, John Kay's, Lawrence Kruse's, Anne and Ed Maloney's, and Roy Schmidt's postal artifacts, Cam Cosentino's Transfer Office covers, Charles Scott's Fifth Division RMS records, worldwide postal emblems assembled by Len Cohen, James Mundy's postal locks, Lt. Col (ret) A. B. "Chip" Komoroske's railroad books, H. W. "Red" Reed's post office route maps, John McClelland's 1905 to 1949 bound issues of **THE RAILWAY POST OFFICE**, as well as Paul Nagle's set of the **POSTAL TRANSPORT JOURNAL** between 1950 and 1959. The important Kenneth Wilson - American Postal Workers Accident Benefit Association Collection was received during January 2016, documenting the early history of the Railway Mail Accident Benefit Association that was established in 1891, as well as the Women's Auxiliary of the Railway Mail Association. A multitude of other historically-significant resources have been acquired from many former railway and highway postal clerks.

As with most archival libraries, the principal activities are assisting research inquiries, organizing and filing the collection, as well as preservation of materials. The Railway Mail Service Library Foundation will erect a new Paul Nagle Center for the collection with funding from Mr. Nagle who served as President - National Postal Transport Association. In addition to a secure, climate-controlled library facility, a garage is planned for housing a 1967 Highway Post Office as well as a 1930 Ford Model A mail truck.

These historical materials and artifacts are held by the Railway Mail Service Library Trust. The trust has a loan agreement with the Railway Mail Service Library Foundation for volunteer support in managing the collection and supporting post office history research requests. Inquiries pertaining to RMS Library holdings or persons seeking research assistance should contact the:

RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE LIBRARY, INC.
fscheer@railwaymailservicelibrary.org - e-Mail
117 EAST MAIN ST
BOYCE VA 22620-9639 USA

The 1913 N&W Boyce Railway Depot



A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF BOYCE RAILWAY STATION

The Town of Boyce and its railway depot have enjoyed a long history together. Nearly as old as the town, the 1913 structure has served as its public gathering place, the portal through which travel and commerce passed, as well as becoming Boyce's icon.

Indeed, it was the crossing of a newly-built Shenandoah Valley Railroad with the Winchester and Berry's Ferry Turnpike that prompted the birth of a new community in formerly dense, forested land. Unlike Berryville, White Post, and Millwood, the Boyce community—briefly named Boyceville—sprung forth around a stop along the tracks relatively late in Clarke County's development. The town would not have existed were it not for the arrival of the Shenandoah Valley Railroad in 1879.

The current depot, reconstructed by John P. Pettyjohn & Co. of Lynchburg, Virginia, replaced an 1880s wooden station adjacent to the turnpike, now named East Main Street and county route 723. The Norfolk & Western Railway (N&W), which acquired the Shenandoah Valley Railroad in 1890, undertook improvements during the early 1900s, including depot replacement. In 1912, it announced plans to construct a new station on the west side of the track, within the boundaries of the newly-incorporated town. The station was planned to be a modest building similar to those in other villages of less than 1,000 residents, at a projected cost of \$7,500. It would have been of wood construction with stoves for heating, oil lamps, and outside facilities.

Mr. Peter H. Mayo negotiated with the N&W to build a "first class" station instead of a smaller structure. Principal enhancements included masonry construction, clerestory windows for better air circulation during summer months, a fashionable stucco design, with electric lighting, central heating, and inside restrooms. It was spacious, modern, and comfortable—rivaling the best contemporary railway stations in small cities.

These improvements were added at substantial cost. Mr. Mayo, along with Ms. Hattie Gilpin and Mr. R. Powell Page, contributed \$17,500, bringing the station's value to \$25,000—a sizeable sum in 1913!

The station not only served passengers traveling locally or beyond Hagerstown and Roanoke. It was the Western Union telegraph office, Railway Express Agency, handled carload and less-than-carload freight, livestock loading, exchanged U.S. Mail from Railway Post Office routes, and supported N&W Railway operations.

During its 45 years of operation, four agents were assigned to the station: Morton J. Dunlap, Theodore M. Sheetz, Sylvester M. Lane, and Lee C. Murray. Mr. Dunlap was also a Boyce Town Council member.

Boyce depot was sold to a private owner during 1959. The larger of the two waiting rooms was rented to the Post Office Department as the town's Post Office. Thus, it continued as a community hub until the Post Office moved to its present location on West Main Street in 1984. Benjamin Harrison, Russell B. Lloyd, and Eva P. Kibler were Postmasters during the 29 years that the Post Office was at the station. Several clerks and Rural Free Delivery carriers also worked there.

The N&W agency, Railway Express, and Western Union services closed on or before December 31st, 1958. The building was sold again and passed through several owners between then and 2003. It had multiple uses, such as farm supply storage, a FISH charity, restaurant, and a woodworking shop. It is now looking toward to future preservation and community uses under the stewardship of the Boyce Railway Depot Foundation!

The Twentieth Century Limited at "Milepost 25"



Painting by Walter L. Green, 1925

The illustration is the center spread from a 25th Anniversary booklet prepared by the New York Central Railroad which includes a brief history and other paintings.

