

Ho! The Letter Carriers Come!

Their National Convention is to be Held in Omaha This Week!!

THE FAMILIAR man who stalks briskly to your door twice a day, year after year, is in Omaha to stay a week. He is the man who every day kicks his way through the dust of the streets, splashes his way through the mud, or slashes his way through the snowdrifts when the mercury hides in the bulb, in order that you may get your letters from home regularly.

Before sunset Monday evening there are to be perhaps no less than 1,500 letter carriers in Omaha, representing all the states in the union. This is the week of the convention of the National Association of Letter Carriers.

A convention, yes, for these brave, smiling men that breeze up to the door, drop a letter with a cheerful "good morning," and are gone, have some interests of their own to thresh out. They have problems of life that they must solve for themselves.

A given number of hours each day they deliver letters, postcards and magazines in the service of Uncle Sam. After that they are just men with families at home. After they deliver your letter they hoe potatoes in the garden, squirt city water on the lawn, set hens and raise chickens, read the daily paper by the fire, or bounce the babies on their knees.

They are not perfect walking machines in neat gray uniforms. They are human beings with big, human souls and big, human problems to meet.

For twenty years these men have had an association, which has solved one problem after another, and which still has many problems to solve. Every year the association gains in membership, for every year more and more of the men see the importance of being a member of the association, and each year there are more and more carriers.

Now, while Uncle Sam has a reputation of paying his help pretty well, of paying pretty promptly and giving no bad checks, still the cost of living has advanced so rapidly that even Uncle Sam has perhaps not always kept informed as to the immediate price of steak. If he should ever become grossly delinquent in his lack of such information, this association will appoint a committee to educate him most respectfully.

Again, this cheerful man in the gray uniform, does not live forever. He cannot be repaired as a machine can. He becomes old in time, and must be discarded.

Discarded—ah, there is another problem. If he has not been able to save from his wages enough to keep him in his old age when he shall no longer be of use to the service, what shall he and his family do?

The association knows what it wants its members to do in these cases.

It wants them to be able to draw a regular check from Uncle Sam from a retirement fund for superannuated carriers.

The association believes and has long believed that after a man has given all the years of his life to the carrying of letters for Uncle Sam, Uncle Sam should take care of him in his last years. So important does the association consider this matter that it is the first of the topics mentioned to be taken up at the Omaha convention. They point to the fact that many large corporations are now providing funds for such annuities for the superannuated employes.

Again, this man who smiles and hands you your letter is always strictly confined to certain rules. If he be sick in the hospital 150 days he is out of a job.

Nor is it necessary that he be in the hospital. If, for any reason, he is not working at his job for a period of 150 consecutive days, he is "fired" in plain English.

"No excuses go," is what the department says when a carrier attempts to explain that he was laid up with typhoid fever, appendicitis, a broken leg, or any possible complication of ailments.

An old veteran of the civil war a few years ago, after carrying mail for almost a quarter of a century, began to suffer from an old wound. He was compelled to be off duty 150 days. He was notified that he must return to work at once or be discharged from the service.

He was unable to return. He sent word explaining the facts.

"No excuses go," came the stern reply from Washington.

"Surely," said the aged wife of the veteran, "surely they will not discharge you. How can they do it? You fought through the civil war, gave those years to the service of your country, and have given the years since that time in the employ of the government. No—it cannot be. There is some mistake. Surely, surely, a great government like this will not discharge you now and leave us unprovided for."

But the red tape of Washington is a machine, not a man with a soul that can be touched. "Discharged," came the order.

It were idle to follow this sad case further. It is enough to know that cases like these have aroused the carriers to seek the institution of a better system in this respect.

So they are asking to have the 150-day rule modified. They feel that in case of sickness or other good reasons for absence from duty for a period of 150 days a man should not necessarily be dropped from the service. They feel that the figure is set at 150 days arbitrarily and without good reason. They feel, in other words, that circumstances should influence the case.

Then the carriers want a compensation bill that will provide more liberal benefits to the employes than those contained in the Reilly compensation law.

They want the sanitary conditions of the post-offices throughout the country improved. They want better lighting facilities in the offices because they say that many clerks and carriers have had their sight permanently and seriously af-

Our Letter Carrier Army

Total number of Post Offices.....56,810
Number of Post Offices having
city delivery service.....1,759
Number of city delivery carriers...32,292
Number of rural delivery carriers...43,534
Total city and rural carriers.....75,826

Official Figures for the Year 1914.

affected by improper or artificial lighting.

They desire the institution of a court to pass upon cases of employes who are charged with offenses and are recommended for reduction in grade or removal from service.

They seek the complete divorcement of politics from civil service.

These things the carriers seek, and on these points they respectfully negotiate with their worthy Uncle Samuel, their employer.

Then there are auxiliary organizations to the main body. The Ladies' Auxiliary is one that has ardently fought for years for a sentiment that is eventually to become strong enough to bring about a pension bill for the carriers and an annuity for the superannuated.

Then there is the National Sick Benefit association.

Although this association is but a few years old, it already has in its membership over one-third of all the members of the National Association of Letter Carriers. There are 35,000 members in the big association, and 13,000 in the Sick Benefit.

The Sick Benefit has paid \$105,000 in the last two years to its sick members, according to Chief Clerk John T. Mugavin of Cincinnati.

It pays as high as \$9 a week for as many as twenty-six weeks of sickness in any one year.

Every member of the National Association of Letter Carriers is eligible to the Sick Benefit association. Over one-third of them have already become members.

Then there is the Mutual Benefit association, the principal feature of which is mutual insurance. This pays death losses ranging from \$500 to \$3,000.

This insurance association has paid \$2,000,000 in death losses since its organization in 1891. It has a reserve fund of \$500,000 today.

Officers of the National Association of Letter Carriers have been arriving in Omaha for a week. Edward J. Gainer of Muncie, Ind., is president of the association. George W. Johnson of Columbus, O., is vice president. Edward J. Cantwell of Washington, D. C., is secretary. Charles D. Duffy of Chicago is treasurer.

The local branch of the national association in Omaha has been very busy for months making arrangements and looking after details for the big convention.

The local branch is known as Gate City Branch No. 5. William Maher of Omaha, president of the local branch, has been especially active in making preparations. Robert J. McAuliffe, recording and corresponding secretary, has been one of the busy ones. W. C. Bouk, secretary of the local committee on arrangements, has been the real busy bee of the lot, maintaining headquarters for some time at the Henshaw hotel.

Each year it has been customary for one of the national officers or leading committeemen to be picked from the local branch of the city in which the convention is held. The local branch endorses some one of its members for this position. William Maher has been endorsed in Omaha by both the local branch and the state association.

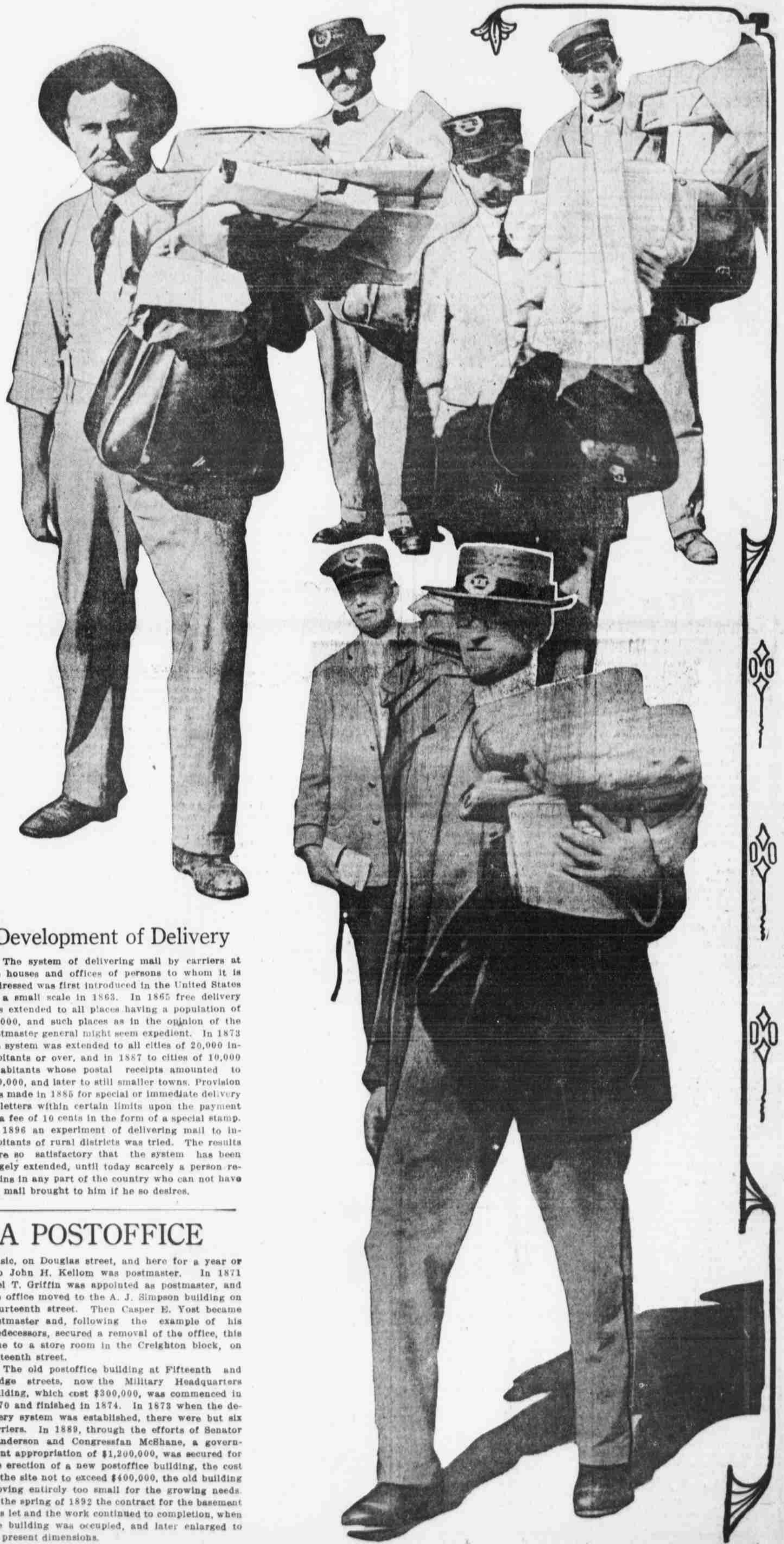
A program of entertainment and business has been prepared for the week.

Monday afternoon, which is Labor day, the carriers are to have a big parade in the streets of Omaha. All the delegates, together with the various auxiliaries, are to be in the parade. The various delegations will be headed by their respective bands.

On Thursday evening there is to be a big ball of the carriers at the Auditorium. The convention is to be held in the Auditorium also.

The Omaha delegates to the convention are to have the week off in order that they may attend regularly. That does not mean that there will be no deliveries in Omaha, for there are many mail carriers in the city besides those who are delegates to the convention.

No, the service will not be disturbed.



Development of Delivery

The system of delivering mail by carriers at the houses and offices of persons to whom it is addressed was first introduced in the United States on a small scale in 1863. In 1865 free delivery was extended to all places having a population of 50,000, and such places as in the opinion of the postmaster general might seem expedient. In 1873 the system was extended to all cities of 20,000 inhabitants or over, and in 1887 to cities of 10,000 inhabitants whose postal receipts amounted to \$10,000, and later to still smaller towns. Provision was made in 1885 for special or immediate delivery of letters within certain limits upon the payment of a fee of 10 cents in the form of a special stamp. In 1896 an experiment of delivering mail to inhabitants of rural districts was tried. The results were so satisfactory that the system has been largely extended, until today scarcely a person remains in any part of the country who can not have his mail brought to him if he so desires.

STORY OF OMAHA POSTOFFICE

The Omaha postoffice was established May 5, 1854, by the efforts of Hon. Bernhard Henn, then a member of congress from Iowa, who also secured the appointment of A. D. Jones as postmaster, famous for having carried the letters around with him in his hat.

The first building used for postoffice purposes was a small house on Thirteenth street, directly in rear of the Douglas house, David Lindley, who conducted the hotel, taking charge of the mail as Mr. Jones' deputy. Mr. W. W. Wyman was then appointed postmaster, and a building at the corner of Eleventh and Harney was occupied as the postoffice. Mr. Wyman erected a two-story brick at the northwest corner of Thirteenth and Douglas, using the first floor for a postoffice and the upper floor as a printing office, he then being the publisher of the Omaha Times. Mr. Wyman was a democrat, and in consequence of Mr. Lincoln's election lost his official position, and George Smith became postmaster of Omaha. The office was then moved to the building at the northeast corner of Farnam and Fourteenth. A few years later it was moved to the store room under the Academy of

Music, on Douglas street, and here for a year or two John H. Kellom was postmaster. In 1871 Joel T. Griffin was appointed as postmaster, and the office moved to the A. J. Simpson building on Fourteenth street. Then Casper E. Yost became postmaster and, following the example of his predecessors, secured a removal of the office, this time to a store room in the Creighton block, on Fifteenth street.

The old postoffice building at Fifteenth and Dodge streets, now the Military Headquarters building, which cost \$300,000, was commenced in 1870 and finished in 1874. In 1873 when the delivery system was established, there were but six carriers. In 1889, through the efforts of Senator Manderson and Congressman McShane, a government appropriation of \$1,200,000, was secured for the erection of a new postoffice building, the cost of the site not to exceed \$400,000, the old building proving entirely too small for the growing needs. In the spring of 1892 the contract for the basement was let and the work continued to completion, when the building was occupied, and later enlarged to its present dimensions.