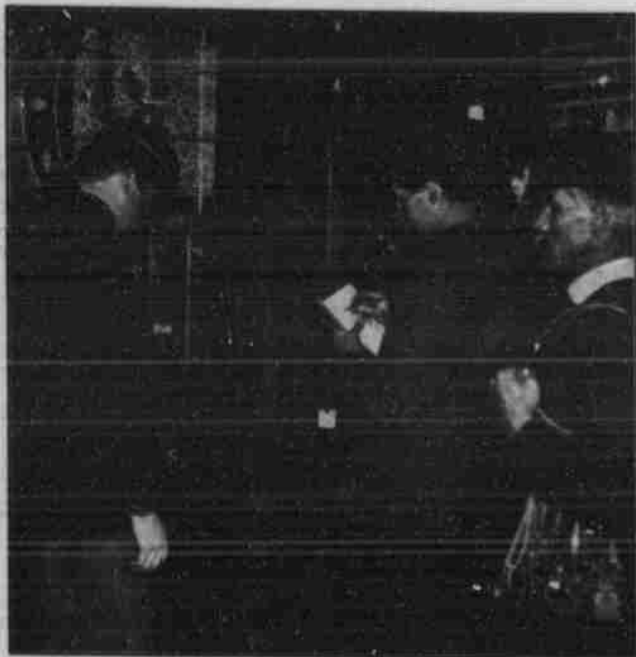


# Modern Railroad Methods of Handling Baggage



PUTTING LABELS ON OUTGOING LUGGAGE—Photo by Staff Artist.



CHECKING UP INCOMING LUGGAGE—Photo by Staff Artist.



INSPECTING CHECKS BEFORE LOADING ON TRAIN—Photo by a Staff Artist.

**B**AGGAGE must be trucked and not roiled, and in unloading it from a truck a pad must be used."

Ten years ago you would have gone a long way to find such a rule in a baggage room of a railroad station, but this legend in bold type now stares out from beneath the glass of a big black frame at the truckmen employed at Union station in Omaha. The rule means a lot more than appears on the face of it. The "pad" designated is a huge stuffed floor mat, which the truckmen call a "feather bed." It is very long and very wide and is stuffed solidly with hair and covered with three thicknesses of the heaviest canvas ducking known to man.

On these downy couches are received the divers trunks and traps of the present-day traveler whose possessions chance through Omaha. There is absolutely no deviation from the rule. Indeed, the sound of a trunk falling upon the floor is as good as the gong that sounds the discharge of the man handling it. As a result of this strictness the pads are used so assiduously that they are worn out in an incredibly short space of time. One descending biff from the iron-bound corner of a monster sample case is often sufficient to split the cover of the catch-bed, and then it is but short-lived.

But the use of pads is not the only improvement which modernity has brought to the methods of handling baggage. The clause which provides that baggage shall be trucked, not roiled, is a big feature. The difference in the wear and tear on a trunk when it is zig-zagged bumpety-bump thirty or forty yards over wood and stone and when it is hauled the same distance on a wheeled truck can be readily understood.

#### Doctor Damaged Trunks.

Then there is another rule exhibiting further the large-heartedness of the later baggage arrangements. This provides that "baggage in bad order should be repaired promptly and held for that purpose when necessary, if for outgoing trains." What a boon the observance of this regulation may become can be best realized by those who have in the years gone by had their baggage carted to the house strewn the contents abroad from many gaping wounds, and held together but precariously by a rope temporarily knotted about it.

This vast increase in the care devoted to the handling of baggage is probably the most interesting feature to most people of the great strides which have been made during the last decade or so in this important feature of the railroad business. As a matter of fact, in no other department, trackage, equipment, running service or personal attention aboard, has there been a more marked improvement than in the transportation of luggage. This has been

due partly to necessity, partly to an intent to preserve the balance of progress in all departments.

#### Contributes to Service Generally.

But the betterment of the baggage service has been more strikingly shown in the details of the work than in its delicacies. In every important phase of it, speed, certainty, capacity, the advance has been marvelous. It is seldom now that the scheduled resting time of a train is not sufficient for the transmission of all luggage to and from it; nor is baggage lost any more, even temporarily, save on rare occasions, when it is always traced and found; neither are the capacious modern baggage room quarters ever so overtaxed that the forces employed are swamped and unable to do the day's work in a day.

All this, too, has had its great effect upon the wonderful strides made in modern train service. Ball-bearing coaches, drawn by 100-ton engines over eighty-pound steel rails laid in curveless, gradeless lines, are not the only factors that have been instrumental in bringing Chicago within three days of San Francisco. The prompt manipulation of the baggage that accompanies

these trains, without mistake and without delay, has had a considerable voice in the reduction of the time schedules.

#### System the Order of the Day.

The attainment of rapidity in handling luggage has resulted purely from the establishment of absolute system. If you enter any baggage rooms in Omaha today you will see on one side of the room a row of loaded trucks, opposite these a line of baggage stacks. At Union station there is a truck and a pile for every road of the seven which run in there. The trucks contain the luggage that is outward bound. That which is brought in is put in its proper pile. At the Burlington station there is but one road to handle, but the baggage for different trains is carefully segregated. At Webster Street station three roads enter and depart and their respective baggage is separately handled.

Then, every man in the room now has his specified duties. There are truckmen, checkmen, mailmen and baggagemen, all so designated above the visors of their official caps. Each knows his work and does it. All the confusion and excitement and tangle

of the time when everybody did anything has disappeared.

As a result baggage is now handled but twice at the station. The expressman brings it to the doorway and dumps it on the floor. It is weighed, checked and hoisted on a truck to go out when the time comes. Later it is transferred to the train. And all this system means a saving of time. All incoming stuff is plainly dated at once, to facilitate probable storage calculations.

The second great feature of the improvement is in the safety which baggage now enjoys, both as regards identity and treatment. At Union station there has not been a piece of baggage lost since the place was built. Ten years ago pieces of luggage were constantly going wrong, and much of the time they were never found at all.

#### Change in Checking Method.

This immunity from loss results from the adoption of a new system of checking which has been gradually introduced for some two years past on western railroads. The old brass checks are being abolished as rapidly as possible for paper ones. This is being done through the medium of the more im-

portant stations, where the substitutions are made.

The benefit is obvious. The brass checks carried merely the name of the railroad and the check number. There was nothing to show source, and the destination was tagged on the trunk. The same style of check answered for all purposes, local, foreign, transfer, exchange, excess and all. If a trunk went wrong it was difficult to locate it, for there was no way to tell its course except by breaking it open and sometimes that was not successful.

A complete record of the property and a subdivision of the different styles of baggage is the secret of the new scheme and its success. There are seven different kinds of checks for use in different circumstances. There is the local check, which is attached to a trunk that is to travel merely between points on one railroad. This bears the name of starting point, name of destination, date and name of railway. The owner of the baggage gets an exact duplicate of the piece which goes on his trunk.

Then comes the special check, providing for transmission over two or more different systems. This bears in addition to the information on the local check the names of all stations where transfers are made and the names of the railroads over which the luggage is to pass.

The local excess and foreign excess checks correspond to these first two, but they carry the additional information of how much excess was paid and what is the name of the owner. Besides these there are local and foreign C. O. D. checks and an exchange check.

#### Done to Avoid Damage Suits.

The marked gentleness with which baggage is now handled is not due entirely to the philanthropy of the railroads. They are in a measure compelled to "handle with care." Numerous damage suits resulting successfully for the plaintiffs have brought them to it. Formerly people expected to have their property smashed and battered and did not resent it. But some one more indignant than the rest instituted court proceedings on day to recover the value of a valuable trunk load, and he recovered. That started the whirlwind, and now a truckman cannot break open trunks and be a truckman long. Of course some luggage is on the verge of collapse when it is shipped, and allowance is made for this, and the condition of the piece is carefully noted as a safeguard.

To the capacity for handling baggage there is now practically no limit. Perfect system makes possible the direction of extensive forces of employes at this work, and the baggage rooms of modern depots have extensive emergency room sufficient for almost any crush. At the time of the

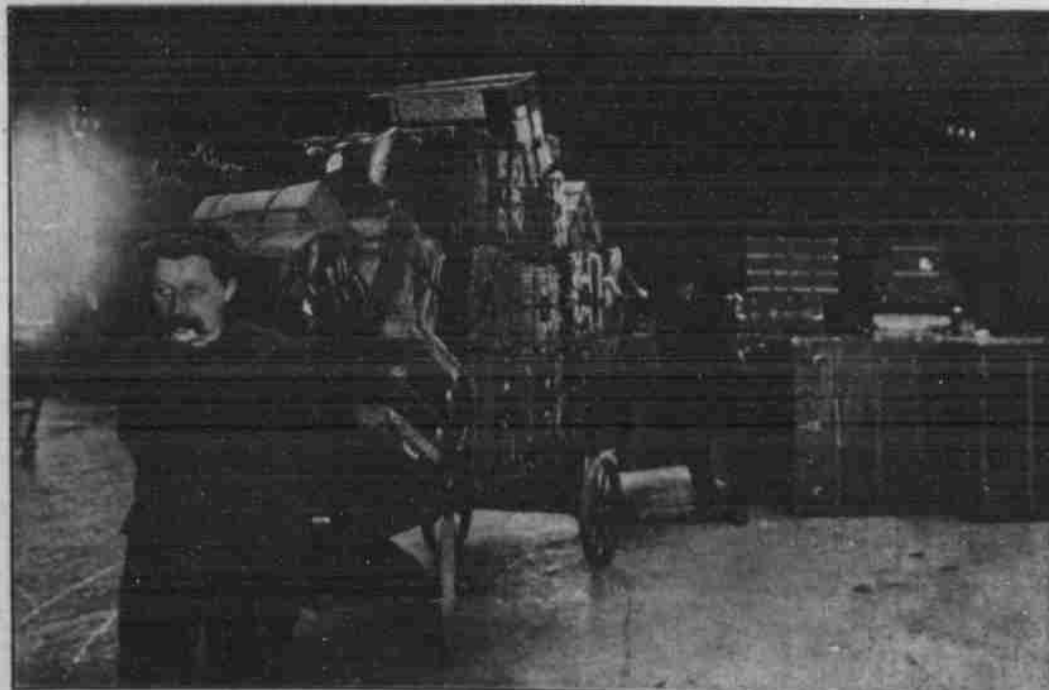
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COUNTER IN BAGGAGE ROOM WHERE TRAVELERS GET CHECKS—Photo by Staff Artist.



LOADING LUGGAGE ON THE TRAIN—Photo by Staff Artist.



TRUCK ON ITS WAY TO THE TRAIN—Photo by Staff Artist.