

Strenuous Sons of Uncle Sam Who Risk Life in Carrying Letters



W.S. Mettlen, CHIEF CLERK RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE, AND Merle C. Rush, STENOGRAPHER



Interior View New Steel Car

A CREW OF RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS

SENEROUS measure of history space has been set apart for thrilling recital of soldier bravery—and justly so. Volume after volume has been written into newspapers, magazines and books, concerning deeds of valor on battlefields floating the stars and stripes—and justly so. But there is another army of heroes in the service of Uncle Sam—the railway postal clerks, 17,000 strong—and that army is undisciplined and unsung.

Why? Because the great mass of patriotic Americans lacks full understanding of the hazard to life that attends railway postal service.

"But," queries the skeptic, "by what token is the postal clerk catalogued as a hero—why is his daily routine dangerous when he has nothing to do but ride?"

If you would know intimately just how hazardous is the railway postal clerk's occupation, you have but to consider the fact that, as a general rule, the danger end of a railroad wreck is the end next to the engine—and that is where the postal clerk, snuggled in filmy wooden cars, is located in the make-up of a train.

"But, why is his place more of a risk than the places occupied by the engineer and fireman, and are they not heroes, too?"

True enough, the typical locomotive engineer or fireman is a hero. The locomotive cab is no place for mollicoddies. Mollicoddies seldom get there—and never stay there. So, the courage and the heroism of the locomotive crew is granted without further discussion, but it should be remembered that in case of a missing bridge, a washout, a landslide or impending collision, the engineer and fireman by reason of the vantage point they occupy, have at least the chance of jumping as a protection to life. Many a noble engineer and many a noble fireman has staid by his engine, refusing to jump, yet it must be admitted that the opportunity is there subject to discretion. The postal clerk has no chance to jump. He can not see the track ahead. He is on the inside of his car, engrossed in the intricacies of sorting and dispatching thousands of letters to thousands of postoffices all over the world. The great coast. He is caught unaware. He is like a rat in a trap. The same danger that menaces the life of the engine man must perforce doubly menace him, for if the engine strikes an obstruction sufficient to derail it, nine times out of ten the mail car will follow. It may not be a fatal wreck, or it may be fatal. It is all a chance—but the danger is there, nevertheless. The engine and the mail car, the express and the baggage may all go into the ditch and yet the chair cars and the Pullman may and most of the time do, hold their places on the track.

Old line insurance companies were early to spy the hazardous nature of the postal clerk's occupation, and the more reliable fraternal associations were prompt to follow. Raise after raise was made in the price of postal clerk insurance both by companies and fraternalists. At last the premium rate reached prohibitive proportions. Then came application of the old adage, "necessity is the mother of invention," and the postal clerks, dropping other insurance, organized a beneficiary association of their own, officially known as "The Railway Mail Association." None but railway postal clerks in actual service are permitted to join, and the membership now totals in round numbers 15,000 out of a possible 17,000, for the latter figure represents the total number of men so engaged in the United States. This association furnishes a \$4,000 insurance policy at a cost of about 1/2 cent annually to each member. There is also a scale of benefits for sickness or injury in accidents. Thus the postal clerk has worked out his own salvation along insurance lines.

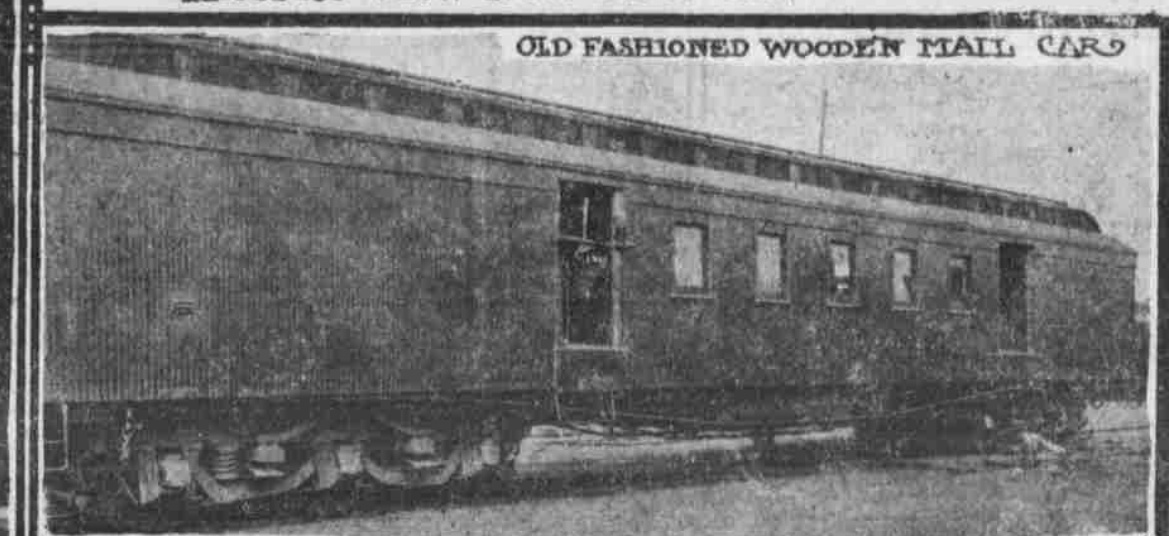
By way of illustrating the magnitude of the railway mail clerks' insurance association the following figures are taken from official records: Since the organization first began the sum of \$1,000,000 has been paid to 1,000's and mothers of mail clerks, representing death benefits. Covering the same period, \$7,000 has been paid for injury to eyes of clerks; \$3,000 for broken legs and \$37,413.33 has been devoted to the payment of benefits due members by reason of miscellaneous injuries received while on duty. All of this disbursement aggregates \$981,413.33—almost a round million which the railway postal clerks have handled for the benefit of stricken brothers and their families.

There has of late years been much agitation for steel mail cars to take the place of the timber boxes in common use. Gradually the steel car is coming. On some of the Omaha roads steel has largely taken the place of wood already in mail car construction, yet it will probably be several years before the old wooden car is entirely eliminated. The benefit of the steel car is obvious. Suppose there is a collision the steel car will stand the crash much better than the wooden car. Another argument in favor of steel is that the increased durability in part at least compensates for the additional cost.

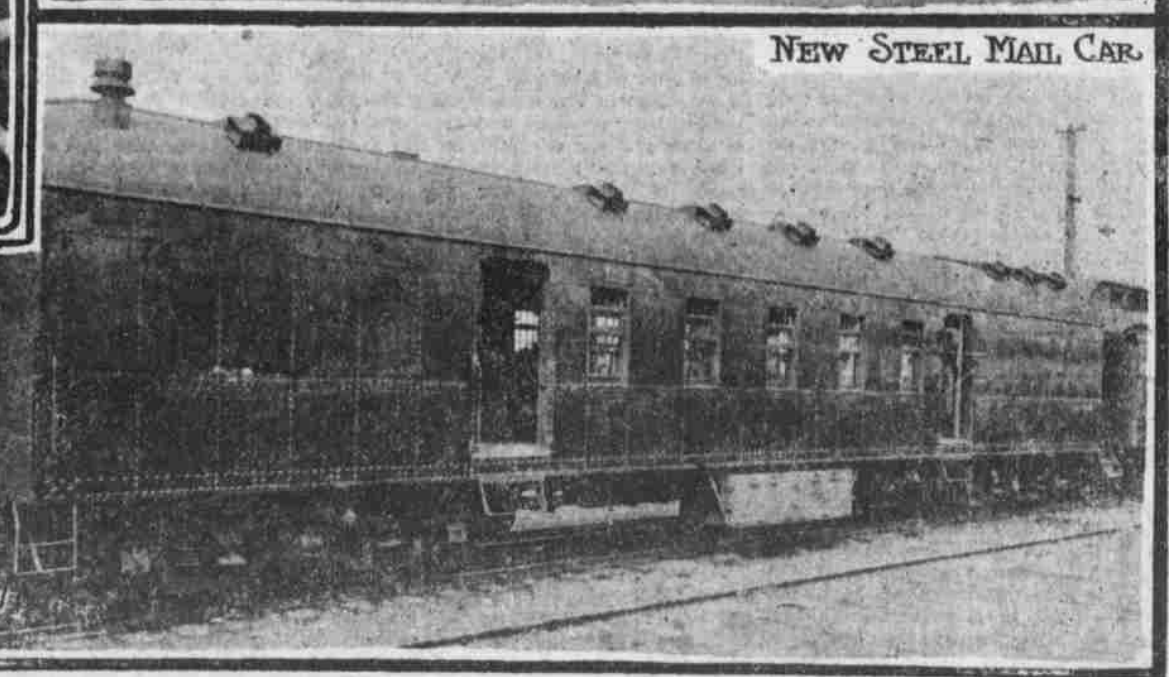
At the last session of congress provision was made in the general deficiency bill for an appropriation out of which to pay a salary of \$1,000 annually to a messenger, whose duty it shall hereafter be to "run down" United States senators, but in dealing with railway postal clerks, Uncle Sam is hardly so generous. If the railway clerk takes a message, he pays for it out of his salary, which ranges all the way from \$60 to \$1,000 per year, owing to the length of time he has been in the service. The average time devoted to a "run"—that is the



Interior View of Old Fashioned Wooden Car



OLD FASHIONED WOODEN MAIL CAR



NEW STEEL MAIL CAR

technical name for each trip—is about twelve hours. On this point there is considerable variation, owing to distances covered. Following a run of twelve hours, there is a lay off of equal time. But the term "lay off" does not mean vacation. Far from it, for while laying off at the end of his run, the mail clerk must "study."

Go into a railway postal clerk's sleeping room, no matter whether it be at home or in a lodging house, and you will find a miniature letter case, patterned after the ones used in the postal service. Into this case he throws cards bearing the names of postoffices, routes, etc. It is his aim to throw the cards as nearly as possible with-

out error. He must be a perfect encyclopedia as to United States geography. He must know, without waiting to ponder, exactly where Roaring Fork, Ark., is, on what railroad, if any, it is located, what terminal point is gateway to it, and all else that pertains to a quick journey to Roaring Fork. Think for a moment of the vast number of postoffices, big and little, that must be remembered by the postal clerk, and then you begin to realize, at least slightly, the enormity of his task, and, moreover, you will appreciate why he must study almost incessantly while taking his lay off at the end of his run.

There is some indescribable fascination

about the railway mail service that attracts young men. Country town boys, especially, standing on the depot platform to watch "Old No. 9" roll in—country boys always know trains by number—look with envy upon the brave fellow who slides the side door of the mail car and tosses the sacks out to the village worthy who holds a government contract for transporting mail to and from the railway station. The mail clerk, if he remains long on the same run, forms acquaintances all along the line. Boys and girls of the villages enroute come to know him by sight at least, and since it is the habit in rural communities for most everybody to visit the depot

at train time, it is an easy matter for acquaintances thus formed to expand day after day.

The village belles cherish their impromptu speaking, or more likely, mere bowing acquaintance with the postal clerk. They talk about it. Boys hear the talk and contract the postal clerk fever. They learn by inquiry that railway postal clerk jobs are given out by the civil service plan. They devote some time to study and at last pass the examination. Then they are given a probationary engagement. If, after six months, they have a good record to their credit they are placed on a regular run. Then they are lionized when they go back home on a visit. Of course the city youth is also well represented in the railway mail service, but a large proportion of the men now highest in the service came originally from the country towns. The city youth has more opportunity to take up other employment. Great power of physical endurance, as well as mental alertness, is a necessary factor in the makeup of the railway mail clerk, and here is where the country boy comes in to good advantage. As a rule he is gifted with strength of nerve as well as of muscle, and he is recorded as a certainty that the work of a postal clerk on wheels is a test of nerve power.

Omaha is a railway mail center of more than ordinary importance. The entire system of the United States is divided into thirteen divisions, each division being under a superintendent. The center of all, of course, is in Washington City, and the second assistant postmaster general is the official head of this branch of the postal department. Next to him and also located in Washington is a general superintendent. Omaha is a part of what is known as the "sixth division," the headquarters of which are in Chicago. This division includes Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska and Wyoming. Eckhardt L. West is the superintendent for the division to which Omaha belongs. In Omaha there is located a chief clerk, who is directly in charge of the clerks who run in and out of Omaha. Government figures show that 400 railway postal clerks work out of Omaha and there are twenty railway post-offices running from Omaha. A railway postoffice, treated with primer explanation, is a chain of mail cars operating between two given points. On these twenty postoffices fifty mail cars are in use. Take, for example, the Omaha-Ogden railroad postoffice which operates over the Union Pacific. There, on trains 9 and 19, which run five minutes apart and are practically sections of the same train, six crews of sixteen men each run out of Omaha. These carry four sixty-foot cars for handling mail matter, two of which go to Portland and two to San Francisco. There are also from three to four storage mail cars, one to Portland and from two to three for San Francisco. The trains mentioned are exclusive mail and express trains and carry all the government's Trans-Pacific foreign mail. Each of these crews of sixteen has a "clerk-in-charge." These for the train in question are J. S. Hart, G. G. Whitmore, W. J. Nash, F. B. Eastland, W. H. Herbert, A. W. Griffin. There are two other trains

running west on this same line, each of which carries but one mail car. Ten different men have from time to time been in charge of the Omaha office in the capacity of chief clerk. Of these, Captain James E. White, later became general superintendent, and he is generally credited with having done a lion's share in perfecting the system that now makes Uncle Sam's transportation of mail the best in all the world. W. J. Mettlen is the present chief clerk in charge in Omaha. Others who have held that place, later

being transferred to other branches of the service, are: Lew Hill, Paul Vandervoort, Horace F. Shearer, James D. Stacey, J. E. Cramer, Andrew W. Griffen, Warren Vandervoort and Floyd L. Keller. The first lion west of the Missouri river was the present great transcontinental route known as the Omaha and Ogden. That was in 1867, and the railway mail service was then in its infancy. Later as other railroads came to Nebraska and then on west, the service expanded here as elsewhere throughout the United States.

Specimen of Carter Lake Fish



VICTOR BOCK AND HIS EIGHT POUND FISH

"Dead" Man Talks to Family

MEDICAL circles and psychological students are interested in the peculiar phenomena accompanying the death in a private hospital in Philadelphia of Theodore P. Bailey, assistant manager of the Philadelphia offices of the General Electrical company. Blood poisoning following a delayed operation for appendicitis apparently caused Bailey's death at 11:45 o'clock last Saturday morning.

At that moment all pulsation stopped, his eyes became glazed and closed, his limbs rigid and his body cold.

But for twenty-seven minutes he continued to talk to his wife and daughter till his vocal organs became paralyzed. He continued the conversation for eighteen minutes more with his daughter by means of the official head of this branch of the postal department. Next to him and also located in Washington is a general superintendent. Omaha is a part of what is known as the "sixth division," the headquarters of which are in Chicago. This division includes Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska and Wyoming. Eckhardt L. West is the superintendent for the division to which Omaha belongs. In Omaha there is located a chief clerk, who is directly in charge of the clerks who run in and out of Omaha. Government figures show that 400 railway postal clerks work out of Omaha and there are twenty railway post-offices running from Omaha. A railway postoffice, treated with primer explanation, is a chain of mail cars operating between two given points. On these twenty postoffices fifty mail cars are in use. Take, for example, the Omaha-Ogden railroad postoffice which operates over the Union Pacific. There, on trains 9 and 19, which run five minutes apart and are practically sections of the same train, six crews of sixteen men each run out of Omaha. These carry four sixty-foot cars for handling mail matter, two of which go to Portland and two to San Francisco. There are also from three to four storage mail cars, one to Portland and from two to three for San Francisco. The trains mentioned are exclusive mail and express trains and carry all the government's Trans-Pacific foreign mail. Each of these crews of sixteen has a "clerk-in-charge." These for the train in question are J. S. Hart, G. G. Whitmore, W. J. Nash, F. B. Eastland, W. H. Herbert, A. W. Griffin. There are two other trains

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At 11:45 he died, to all appearances. His eyes became fixed, a slight tremor passed through his body and then it became rigid with the exception of hands and throat. His eyes nearly closed. The nurse indicated that death had come. Word was sent to friends who waited outside.

Then, in a whisper, with tremendous mental effort to master the inert muscles of his throat, Bailey began again to talk. For twenty-seven minutes he gave directions for the care of his estate and the education of his daughter, Laura, 15 years old, besides uttering phrases for the comfort of his wife. All this time his eyes were half closed and fixed.

At 12:12 his voice failed him. After trying to master it he made a motion with his hand indicating he wished to write. A pencil and pad was brought. He scribbled meaningless lines at first, but then clearly wrote "paralytic," indicating by a motion the cords of the throat. A moment after one hand, resting on the pillow was lifted till a finger touched his forehead, indicating that he was still conscious. His eyes were closed and there was no indication of pulse. He had all the appearance of a dead person, but gradually his fingers began to work.

At 12:30 his voice failed him. After trying to master it he made a motion with his hand indicating he wished to write. A pencil and pad was brought. He scribbled meaningless lines at first, but then clearly wrote "paralytic," indicating by a motion the cords of the throat. A moment after one hand, resting on the pillow was lifted till a finger touched his forehead, indicating that he was still conscious. His eyes were closed and there was no indication of pulse. He had all the appearance of a dead person, but gradually his fingers began to work.

In his younger days Bailey had studied the deaf and dumb alphabet as an amusement. After the birth of his daughter, Laura, the family lived near a deaf and dumb institution in Germantown, and the little girl became proficient in talking the inmates. The wife and daughter stood by his deathbed, the fingers on the counterpane moved and the little girl bending over translated the messages that his throat could no longer articulate. They were words of cheer and comfort for his wife and his daughter, and a message to the secretary: "Miss Connelly, you must be a sister to Mrs. Bailey."

When Laura bent over and kissed her father on the forehead thinking he was beyond movement, the fingers worked again and she read:

"Kiss me on the mouth, dear."

At 12:33 the fingers became still and did not move again.—Philadelphia American.

Saturday morning Dr. J. W. Kennedy, the