

THE R.P.O. NEWSLETTER

OF THE CANADIAN R.P.O. STUDY GROUP (B.N.A.P.S.)

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Volume 24 - No.3

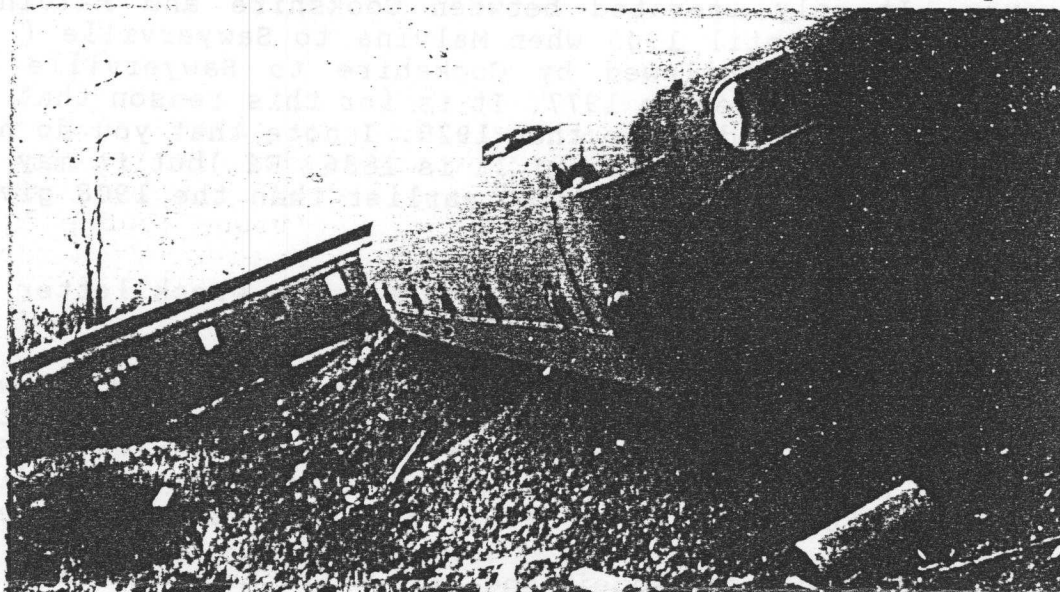
Whole No.122

March, 1996

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BNAPS PACIFIC NORTHWEST REGIONAL GROUP - are having a meeting at Chilliwack, sixty-five miles east of Vancouver, B.C., on the weekend of March 8 to 10, 1996. Several members of this Study Group will be attending, and this Newsletter is being prepared for this meeting.

JOHN SIVERTS AWARD - The No. 10 Issue of BNAPortraits, January-March 1996, contains a mention that this Newsletter received the Siverts award as the best over all Study Group Newsletter for the year 1995. As your Editor wasn't present at the Edmonton Convention, and no one who attended mentioned the award, this is the first inkling we have had. We haven't yet seen any tangible evidence of the award yet either. In any case, congratulations to all the Study Group members whose contributions made this possible.



WRECK NEAR RICHMOND, QUE. MAY 9 1914, SHOWING
FIRST CLASS PASSENGER AND BAGGAGE CARS.

TRAIN WRECK - Here is a photograph of a train wreck, May 9, 1914, on the Grand Trunk Railway, near Richmond, Quebec. Note the combination baggage and Post Office car. Does anyone have cancels or covers about this date which might have been on this train? Thanks to Peter McCarthy for the fine card.

ANNUAL DUES FOR 1995-96 - There are still the following members who have not paid these dues - Bednarczyk, Burega, Carr, Cohn, Coates, Covert, Gagne, Goben, Godfrey, Hannan, McInnis, Michaud, Moffat, Moss, Mowat, Peatman, Rosborough, Seymour, Shelton, Smalley, Soper, Southey, Topping, White, Bruce Wilson, Don Wilson. Your contributions are required as soon as possible - \$ 10 CAN or \$ 9 US - or this will be the last Newsletter you receive.

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J.L.FRENCH, Railway Mail Clerk, EATON CANADA - Please refer to Page 10 of Newsletter 120, where Ross Gray reported this marking. We have received the following explanation from Lionel Gillam -

"EATON was on one line of the HEREFORD RAILWAY which ran from Lime Ridge via Cookshire to Beecher Falls, as in the postmarks. The line was built from Cookshire to Beecher Falls in Vermont in 1888-89, actually completed on 6th January 1889. In 1890 it was leased to the Maine Central, at which time the line of the Dominion Lime Co. (from Cookshire to Lime Ridge) was taken over, hence the two RPO markings Beechers Falls & Dudswell Jnc., and Beecher Falls & Lime Ridge. In order, the stations were - Lime Ridge, Dudswell Jct., Cookshire, Eaton Corners, Sawyerville, Malvina, and Beecher Falls.

On October 31, 1925, the Maine Central ceased operating the line, and it was not until 1927 (probably in May) that the C.P.R. took it over. It only operated between Cookshire and Malvina, however. This lasted until 1945 when Malvina to Sawyerville (16 miles) was abandoned; followed by Cookshire to Sawyerville (7 miles), which was abandoned in 1977. It is for this reason that Q-10 will not be found dated later than 1925. I note that you do not give the year date of Ross' cover, (It is 1886, Ed.)but it may be that postmark Q-9 will be found dated earlier than the 1908 given in the catalogue. "

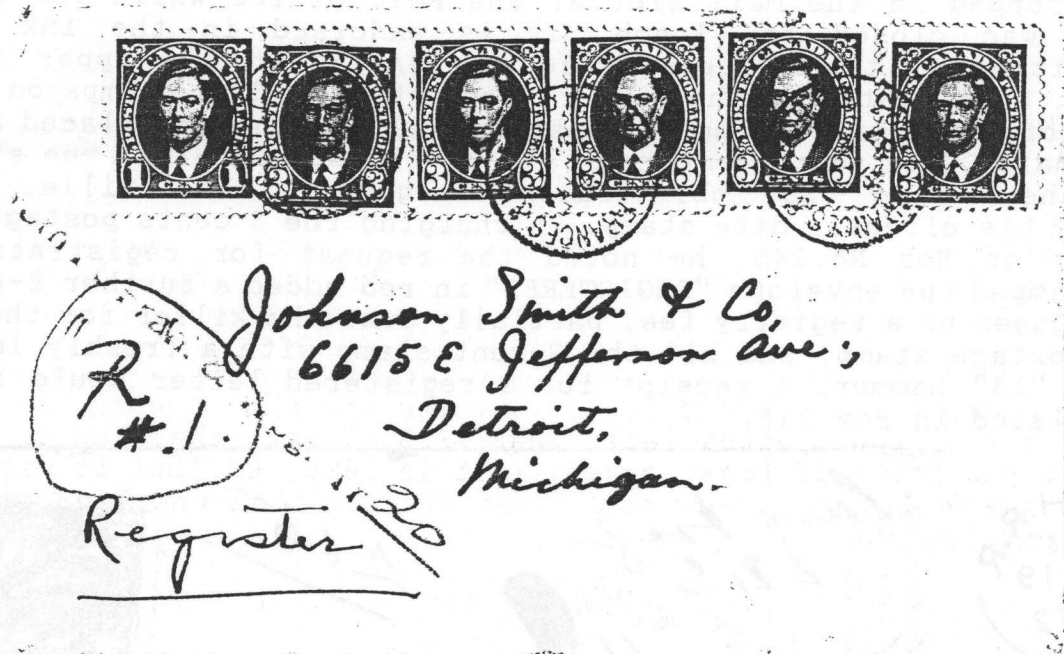
Lionel also writes about Warren Bosch's train wreck letter on Page 2 of Issue 120 -

"No! Unfortunately, Mr. Alvin Leonard of London, Ont., was quite wrong in saying that the train wreck/fire in 1874 was "the worst thing that ever happened on the Great Western Railway." See CANADIAN MAIL BY RAIL, pages 66-67". This describes the Desjardins Canal Bridge disaster of 12 March 1857, in which sixty lives were lost.

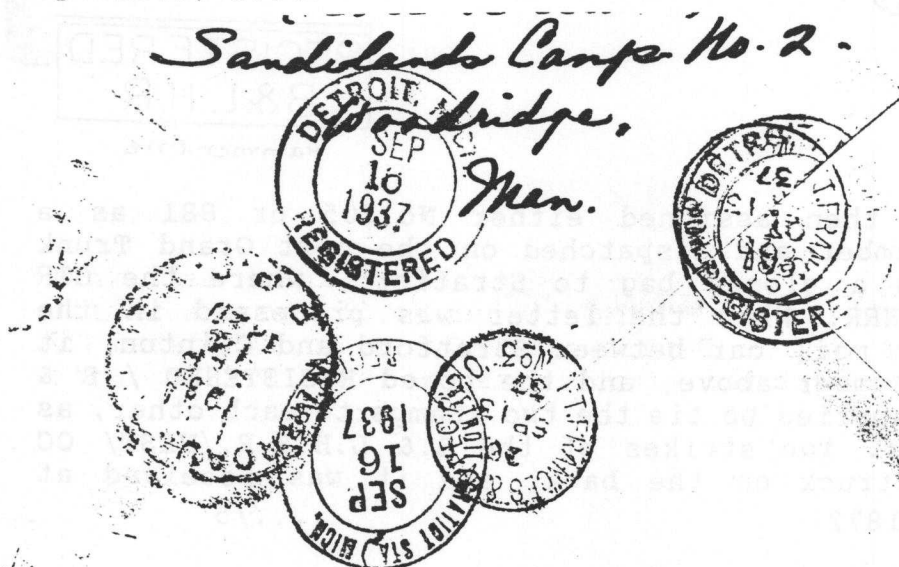
THE INTERNET - Members Joe Fishbein and Jack White both reported an article here from the USPS International Mail Manual "IMM 15" under the heading Canada, Country Conditions for Mailing, D3 - stating that "Honey bees may only be addressed to places served by railway post offices or motor vehicles. Mailers must ascertain whether the addresses of parcels containing honey bees are located in places to which such shipments can be sent. This information can be obtained from the Canadian postmaster at the office of address. After obtaining the information, the sender must mark the wrapper of his or her parcel "Office of Address served by R.P.O.", or "Office of Address served by motor vehicle."

THE USE OF R.P.O. in place of M.C. - Member Rick Parama asks when R.P.O. came into use. Please check Newsletter No.75, page 4, which has a reprint of Post Office Departmental Order No.38, dated 22 February, 1897. This advises the establishment of the "Railway Mail Service" Branch effective 1 April, 1897. Hammers ordered after that date appear to contain the wording "R.P.O."

ANOTHER POSTED ON TRAIN REGISTRATION MARKING - Recently we have shown examples from the Saskatoon & Eston R.P.O. (Issue 121), Edmonton & Dawson Creek (Issue 118), and Edmonton & Prince George (Issue 114). This one, submitted by member Jim Miller, is on a commercial cover posted on the Fort Frances and Winnipeg R.P.O.

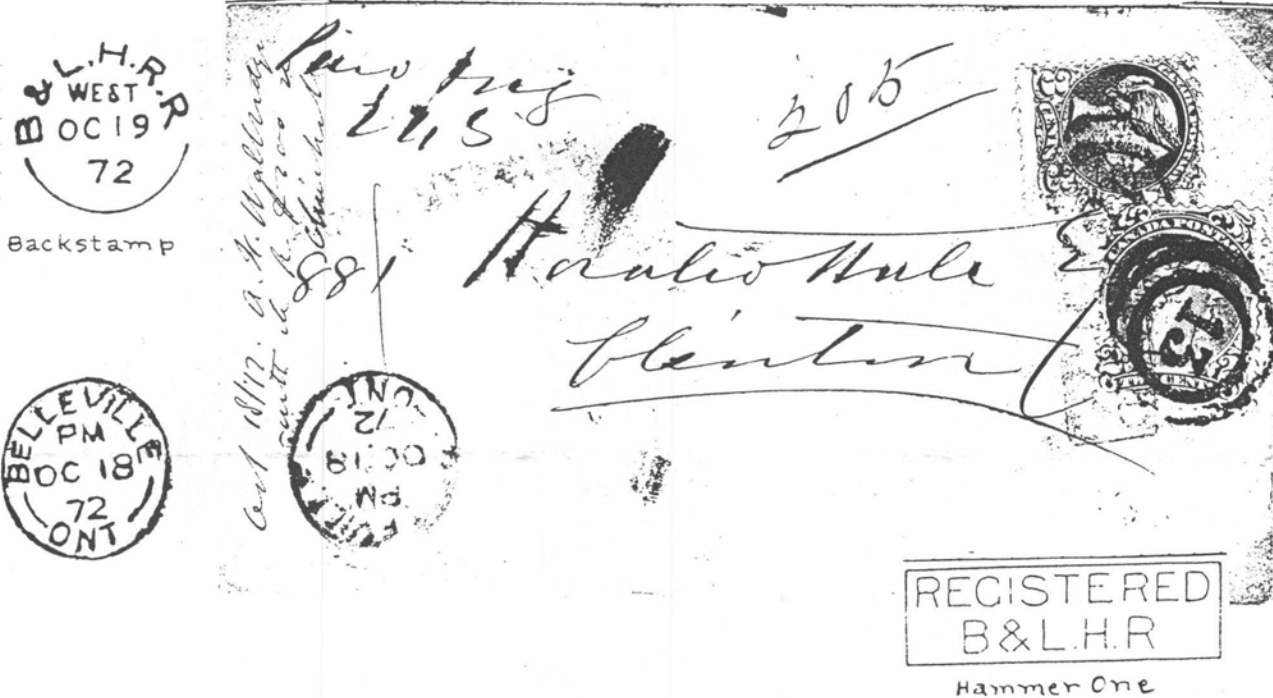


The cover has three strikes of the FORT FRANCES & WPEG. R.P.O./No.3 cancel, O-71, dated September 13, 1937. The registration marking, which will be listed as RG-62, consists of a manuscript "R#1" combined with the straight-line "From Ft.Fran.&Wpg.Tr 20", which is recorded as O-71B. Backstamps include WARROAD & DULUTH/R.P.O. (O-427), dated SEP 14, 1937, Train 20, and arrival markings at Detroit on September 16. A very interesting cross-border cover. See also Frank Waite's report of O-427 on Page 1 of Issue No. 113, September, 1994.



CHARGE ACCOUNTS AND PERSONAL SERVICE - by member Horace Harrison

It was a common practice in Canada for Postmasters to carry charge accounts for their postal patrons, and to provide personal services in dispatching letters for them. Figure 1 shows an envelope from Belleville, Ontario, October 18, 1872, which may have been dropped in the mail slot at the Post Office while the Post Office was closed for lunch. It is endorsed in the ink and handwriting of the address "Paid & reg/245" in the upper left corner. When posted by the sender, the letter had no stamps on it. In the original processing for dispatch, the Postmaster placed a 3-cent Small Queen postage stamp on the envelope, cancelled the stamp with the 2-ring "13" obliterator assigned to Belleville, and applied his circular date stamp. In charging the 3 cents postage to Account or Box No.245, he noted the request for registration, handstamped the envelope "REGISTERED" in red added a further 2-cent Large Queen as a registry fee, partially over the killer for the 3-cent postage stamp, and hit the 2-cent stamp with a freshly inked 2-ring "13" hammer. A receipt for a registered letter would have been placed in Box 245.



The letter was then assigned either No.205 or 881 as a registered letter number and dispatched on the next Grand Trunk Railway mail car in a closed bag to Stratford, where the GTR intersected the B&LHRR. When the letter was processed in the Buffalo & Lake Huron mail car between Stratford and Clinton, it received the other number above, and the boxed REGISTERED / B & L.H.R. handstamp was applied to tie the two stamps to each other, as well as to the cover. Two strikes of the B. & L.H.R.R./WEST/ OC 19/72 c.d.s. were struck on the back, and it was received at Clinton October 19, 1872.

Last month, we began our look at headend cars by examining the various types of baggage cars and their different uses. In this installment we will focus on the cars used by the railroads to move the mail.

Class M: The postal cars

The postals were a class of headend cars devoted to the transport of the United States mail.

In 1950, there were 7,666 mail-carrying trains operating daily on U.S. railroads. These trains traversed 600,000 route miles per day. Twenty-six hundred of these trains carried mail sorting (Class MA or MB) cars.

Let's look at the order of headend and passenger carrying cars in a typical passenger train car consist: locomotive; Class BX box express, and/or Class BR express refrigerator; Class BE baggage express; Class MA (or Class MB) RPO

or RPO-express; Class MR storage mail; Class BEM express messenger; coaches; diner; lounge; sleepers; and observation.

Notice that the mail sorting cars (Class MA or Class MB) are not typically at the head of a consist. For safety reasons, the Railway Mail Service put considerable pressure on the railroads to keep their manned cars as far from the locomotive as possible.

The beginning of this article noted that headend cars typically rode at the "head end" of a consist. Numerous examples of the cars riding on the "rear end" of passenger trains exist. Such practices were almost always for the convenience of switch crews and not a reflection of the condition of the headend cars. One example will suffice.

Santa Fe's *Antelope*, train 28 (Oklahoma City to Kansas City), picked up an express boxcar in Newton, Kansas.

The car was way-billed for Kansas City. Steam locomotives were watered and fueled at Newton, a major division point.

Eastbound, it was not necessary to uncouple the locomotive from the consist to move it to the water crane. Thus, it was much more convenient for the Newton depot switch crew to attach the Class BX car on the rear end of the train, hook up the steam signal and air lines, hang on the marker lamps and wish it godspeed.

Class MA

Postal car: For use of United States Mail Service, fitted with side doors, with or without mail-bag hook, and having suitable apparatus for the sorting and classifying of mail in transit, with or without end doors or windows.

These are the true Railway Post Office cars. Typically 60-feet long, they

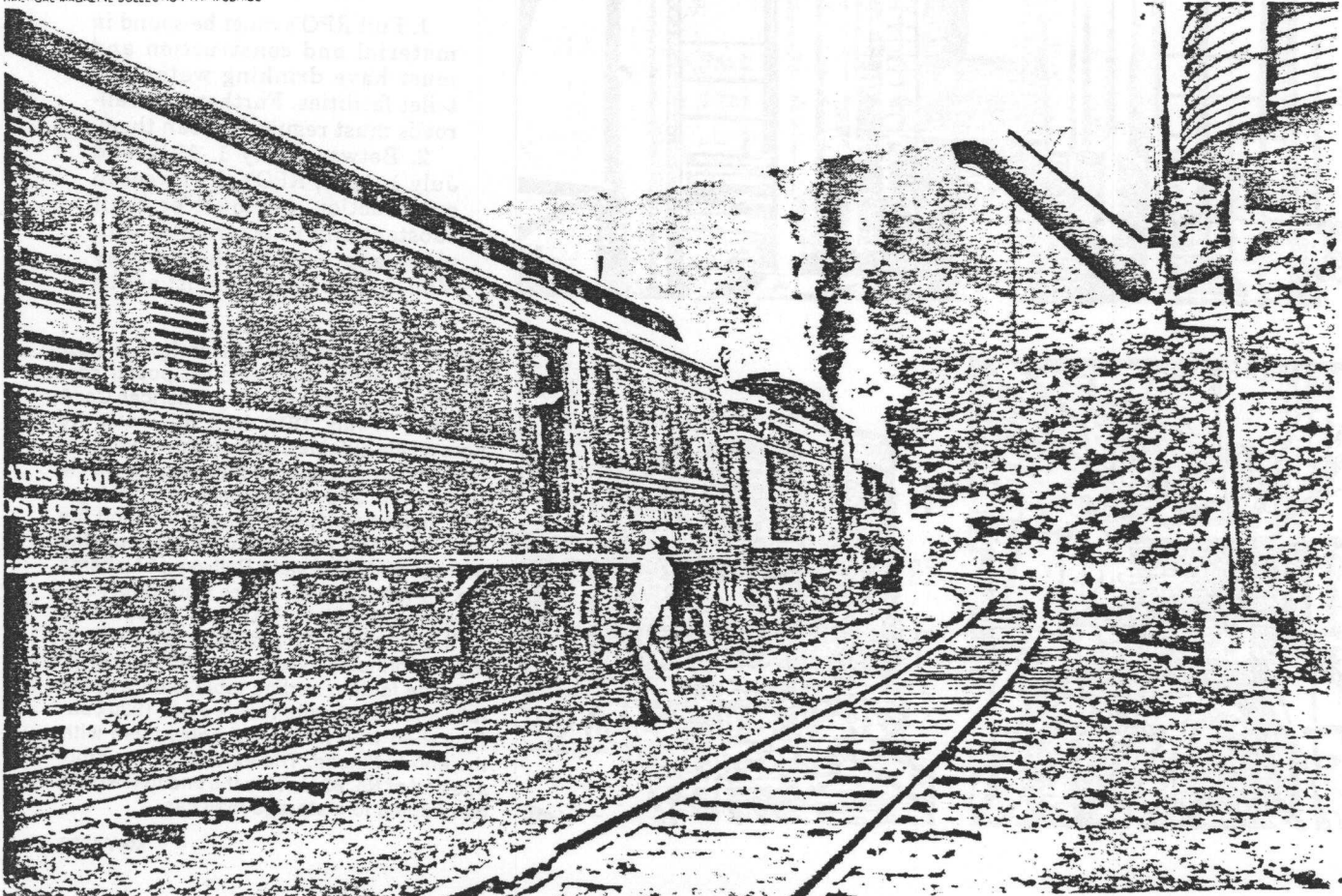
Headend cars: Pt. II

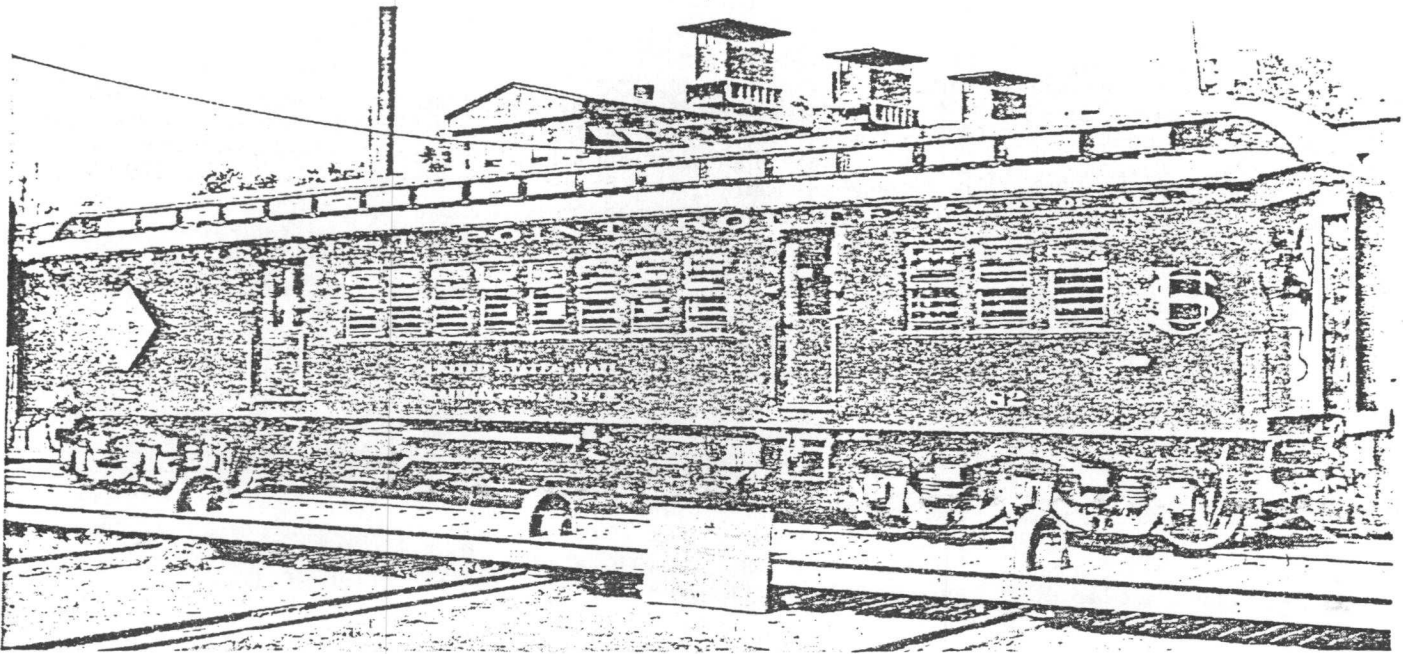
A look at postal cars used on passenger trains/David G. and Jennie L. Lambert

While Western Maryland train No. 10 stops for water at Shaw, W.V., on its way East towards Cumberland, Maryland, the baggage

handler engages in conversation from the door of the baggage/RPO car. This Class MB car carries both mail and baggage.

RAILROAD MAGAZINE COLLECTION H.A. MCBRIDE





FOUR PHOTOS D.G. LAMBERT COLLECTION ACF ARCHIVES PHOTOS ST CHARLES, MO JULY 1911



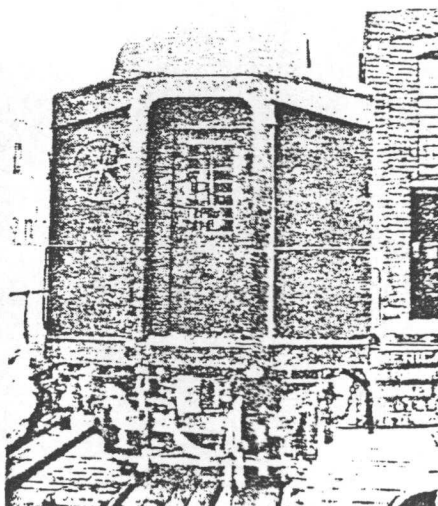
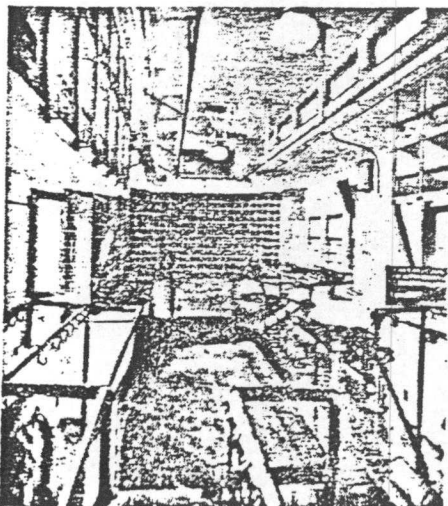
were designed strictly for mail sorting en route.

Prior the March 4, 1911, Class MA cars were frequently the oldest and/or weakest cars in the passenger train consist. They had often been rebuilt from aged (wooden underframe) Class BM cars or old coaches.

On March 4, 1911, the Congress of the United States passed legislation which could be summarized as follows:

1. Full RPO's must be sound in material and construction and must have drinking water and toilet facilities. Further, the railroads must regularly clean them.

2. Between July 1, 1911 and July 1, 1917, RPO's, if of wooden construction, (a) must be built substantially in accordance with plans approved by the Railway Mail Service, and (b) must not be



Western Railway of Alabama No. 82 (top) was one of the first all-steel postal cars when it was outshopped by American Car & Foundry in July, 1911. Note the protective bars on the outside of the windows adjacent to the letter end door. A letter slot is visible to the left of and slightly below the US logo. The mail bag stacking stanchions and the interior brake wheel can be seen on the storage end of Western Railway of Alabama No. 93 (above left). There were doorways on each end of this RPO. The "creep" door on the letter end (far left) is visible beneath the pigeonholes used for sorting mail. Also, note the folding sorting table, safety handrails and washbasin. This is a pre-1920 configuration with the pigeonholes flush with the end bulkhead. The exterior of the storage end of No. 93 (left) is the end that would be coupled to a storage mail car.



RAILROAD MAGAZINE COLLECTION SOUTHERN RAILWAY

run between adjoining steel cars or between the engine and an adjoining steel car.

3. After June 30, 1913, not less than 25% of the existing wooden full RPO's must be replaced in steel annually.

4. After July 1, 1917, all full RPO's must be of steel or steel framing over steel underframe construction.

5. After August 24, 1912, no additional full RPO's of wood or wood superstructure over steel underframe may be put into service.

Needless to say, the mid-teens saw an avalanche of steel RPO orders engulf the car builders.

The RMS further refined the plans for the interiors of full RPO's—publishing the final set on February 2, 1920. This provided that the car builders were to avoid a blind letter-end door and provide mail storage vestibules at each end.

Even with this new design, there was very little space in the car for the storage of mail that already had been sorted and sacked. Hence, on any but the shortest of RPO routes, the RPO was

coupled on its end opposite the letter-sorting end to a mail storage car.

RPO's sometimes were operated in tandem, especially on large and long-distance mail trains. When this was done, the letter-sorting ends of the cars were always back to back. The Pennsylvania Railroad used the designation L.E.E. and L.E.W.—"letter end east" and "letter end west"—to help terminal switch crews spot tandem RPO's cor-

rectly. (The L.E.E./L.E.W. configuration was for a westbound train). This arrangement was used because, historically, the "letter end" is the blind end of an RPO. Hence, the car end with the door was coupled to a mail-storage car. For safety reasons, this practice was maintained even after the 1920 specifications were adopted.

Some cars traveled on six wheel trucks, others four wheel. The RMS specifications were not specific on this point.

RPO's were almost never interchanged from their home rails.

Class MB

Baggage and mail: A car having two compartments, one for baggage and one for mail, separated by bulkheads; the mail end fitted with suitable apparatus for sorting and classifying mail, and with or without mail-bag catchers, with or without end doors or windows and having suitable side doors.

Most often used in trains which were not required to make many mail pickups or sorts en route, these cars came equipped, typically, with 15 or 30-foot postal "apartments". The remainder of the car's length was used for express as the two compartments were joined by nothing but a "creep" door. The letter end of a Class MB car was on the bulkhead between the two compartments. These cars generally followed railway mail service regulations in their construction and were constructed of all-steel design by late 1916.

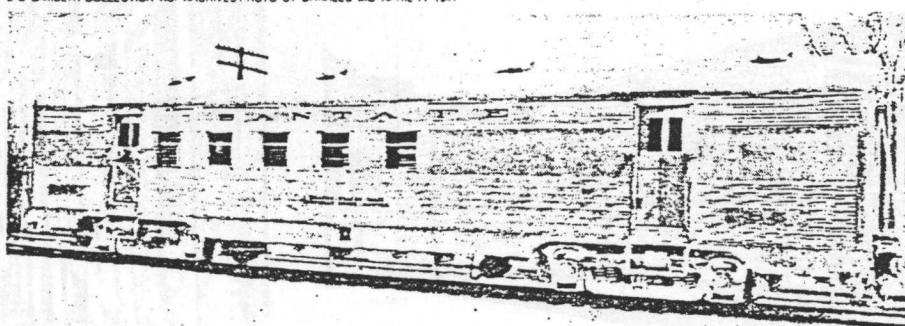
They most often ran on six-wheel trucks because they generally were 70 or more feet long, although examples of 60-foot Class MB cars abound.

Class MR

Postal service cars: For United States Mail Service, suitable to carry mail in bulk, without appliances for sorting or classifying, fitted with side

A working RPO could be a cramped, busy place, as this Southern Railway photo illustrates (above). Santa Fe 85 (below) was one of seven cars outshopped as Lot 2854 in April, 1947, from ACF for service on the *Chief* and *Super Chief*. If you compare this car to the Western Railway of Alabama car you can see how little the configuration of the RPO had changed. RPO's tended to be numbered very low in the passenger car numbering scheme.

D G LAMBERT COLLECTION ACF ARCHIVES PHOTO ST CHARLES MO APRIL 11 1947



Headend cars: Pt. II

doors and stanchions and with or without end doors or windows.

The mail storage cars were often externally indistinguishable from their Class BE sisters. Internally, they were quite different.

Most were equipped with fixed or "swing" stanchions used to facilitate stacking mail sacks. Many RPO's, no longer needed for mail sorting, were gutted and converted to Class MR cars. The Union Pacific and Santa Fe practiced this conversion.

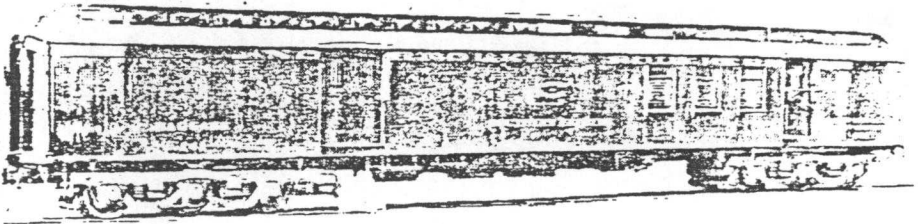
However, some railroads chose to build cars expressly for storage mail service.

Although not built for the purpose, express refrigerator cars were often used between perishable or dry express moves to haul storage mail. Their fine riding properties were highly prized by the Post Office department. On the other end of the scale, storage mail was often handled in express boxcars, or even in freight boxcars on special, expedited schedule trains such as those run by the Baltimore & Ohio during the Christmas season.

We hope the foregoing has been useful, if not entertaining. Give passenger train operation a try—the possibilities are endlessly fascinating.

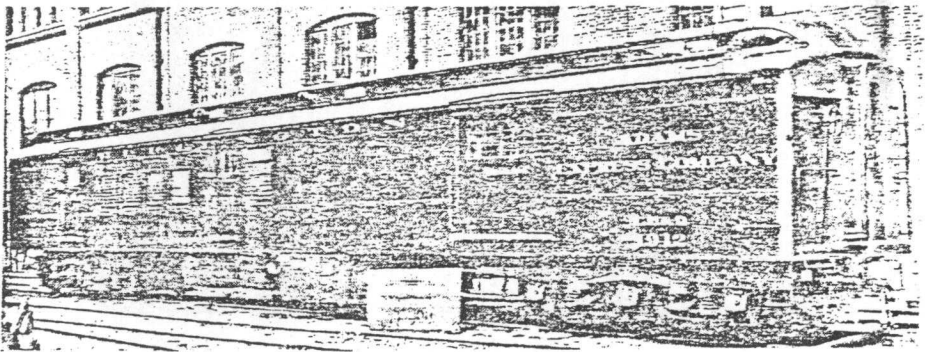
Norfolk & Western 1403 (right) was one of 25 Class MR cars in the series 1400-1424. These cars were used for carrying mail in bulk. The outside lettering is the only clue to the car's intended service. Pennsylvania Class X-42 mail storage car 2542 (below) is shown in its builder's portrait at Altoona, Pennsylvania in October, 1950. Notice the plug-in terminal electric lighting receptacles to the left of each door. The interior of a PRR Class X-42 mail storage car is shown (below right). Notice the "swing" (foldable) stanchions for stacking mail bags, the plug-in terminal electric lighting and the safety railings so the car could be shunted in the station while occupied. This car clearly was built as a Class MR.

TWO PHOTOS ALTOONA PUBLIC LIBRARY COLLECTION ALTOONA PA OCTOBER 1950

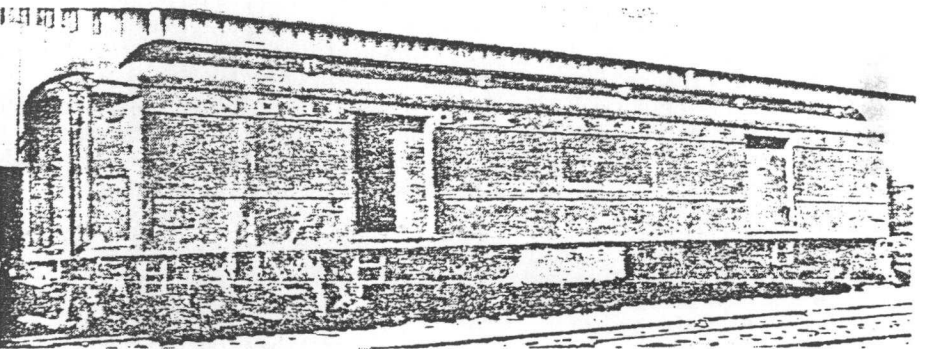


D.G. LAMBERT COLLECTION ACF ARCHIVES PHOTO WILMINGTON DE MARCH 26 1914

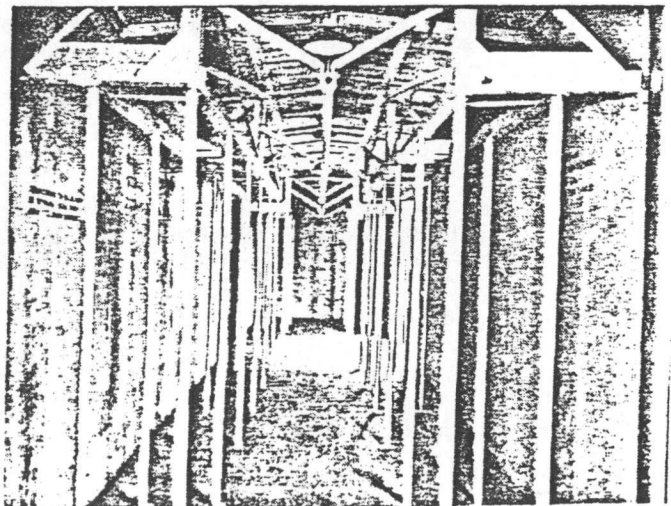
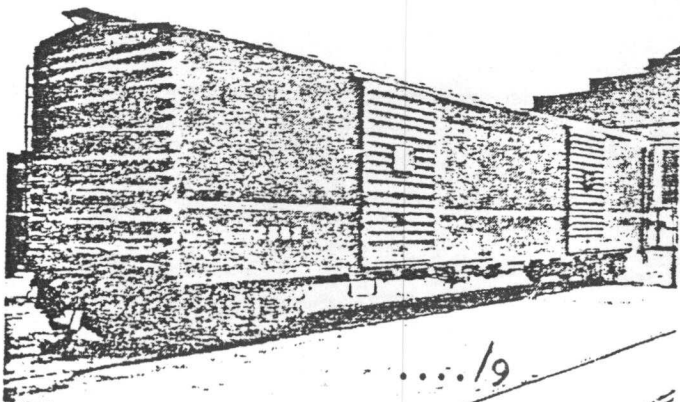
Norfolk Southern 141 (above) is a classic wood-sheathed, steel-underframe and ends Class MB car. This 30-foot postal apartment-equipped car was outshopped by Jackson & Sharp in March, 1914. New postal regulations that summer effectively ended the construction of wooden postal apartment cars. Chicago, Burlington & Quincy No. 1912 (below) was built by ACF in June, 1913. A wonderful example of early heavyweight construction, this car is an unusual example of a Class MB. Although CB&Q car diagrams as early as 1928 show this series as having a single mail door and a 30-foot postal apartment, this photo shows something different. The two postal doors and window arrangement seem to indicate a 40 or 45-foot apartment. Adams Express operated over the CB&Q in 1913.



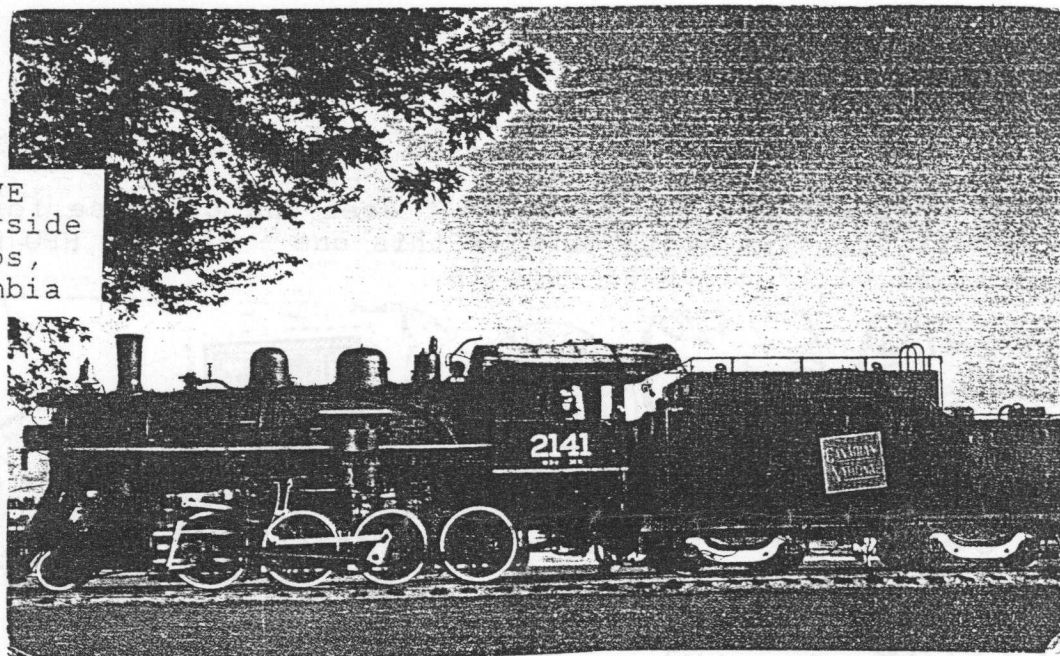
D.G. LAMBERT COLLECTION ARTHUR B. RIORDAN PHOTO KANSAS CITY MO SEPTEMBER 1967



D.G. LAMBERT COLLECTION ACF ARCHIVES PHOTO ST CHARLES MO JUNE 26 1913



CNR LOCOMOTIVE
2141 in Riverside
Park, Kamloops,
British Columbia



The Financial Post Thursday

The Financial Post

CP Rail reviews viability of a quarter of its track

BY MARK HALLMAN

Transportation Reporter *The Financial Post*

CP Rail System is reviewing the viability of 7,600 kilometres of track — 25% of its North American network.

The extent of the review was outlined for the first time yesterday by CP Rail spokesman Barry Scott responding to queries about an investment analyst's report.

"These are lines that do not form part of the core network and have to be looked at very closely," Scott said.

That doesn't mean, however, that all the track being reviewed will be abandoned, sold to shortline operators or turned into low-cost internal shortlines, he said.

The priority is 3,200 km of track, including 440 km of grain-dependent lines in Western Canada, 1,600 km in the U.S. Midwest, a 320-km line between Montreal and Quebec City and 480 km in the Ottawa Valley.

CP Rail is in active negotiations to sell 400 km of track in the region bounded by Montreal, Sherbrooke, Que., and northern Vermont.

Scott said a decision will be made on all the track within three years.

The review parallels CP Rail's restructuring plan to cut costs.

In a recent report, Nesbitt Burns Inc. analyst Paul Campbell said CP Rail expects to save \$198 million a year by 1997 through eliminating 1,450 administrative jobs, writing down assets, and savings in productivity from capital spending on loco-

motives and freight cars.

Canadian National Railway Co. also plans to shed significant amounts of track. It has identified 6,400 km of low-density lines (22% of its network) for rationalization by 1999.

Most of that track is in Eastern Canada.

Both railways are expected to start selling and abandoning track aggressively after the new Canada Transportation Act is passed, likely by March.

The act will simplify abandonments and shortline sales, and require CN and CP Rail to publish rolling three-year plans identifying what they will retain, shortline or abandon.

Independent shortlines, formed from the lines of major carriers, traditionally employ non-unionized labor and flexible work rules to generate profits where losses were the rule.

Internal shortlines, which become semi-autonomous units of major railways, are restructured to lower labor costs and make affected lines viable.

Under recent pacts, CN cut labor costs by 35% on a 1,855-km network in northern Quebec. Up to 30% of its lines east of Winnipeg could become internal shortlines.

Campbell at Nesbitt Burns said the savings from CP Rail's restructuring, announced in November, should boost earnings.

He estimates CP Rail will have a net loss of \$611.9 million in 1995, including a \$700-million restructuring charge.

He expects this to turn to net income of \$173.4 million in 1996, \$226.1 million in 1997 and \$258.7 million in 1998.

Research reports by John Young of Richardson Greenshields of Canada Ltd. and Ted Larkin of Bunting Warburg Inc. also predict significant improvement in net income at CN flowing from cost cutting.

Both analysts expect recently privatized CN to post a \$1-billion-plus net loss for 1995 because of special charges of more than \$1.4 billion.

For 1996, Young puts CN's net income at \$453.7 million, increasing to \$515.6 million in 1997 and \$590 million in 1998.

Larkin estimates CN will have net income of \$484.1 million for 1996, increasing to \$534.9 million in 1997 and \$609.6 million in 1998, before falling to \$465.9 million in 1999.

CN's first instalment receipts (CNRTSE) should reach \$27.25 by year-end 1996, said Larkin. On a fully paid basis, CN shares should close the year at \$37.50, for a total projected return of 24% over one year.

Yesterday, the first instalment receipts closed at \$22, down 5%. The second instalment of \$10.25 is payable in November.

Young has a 1996 target of \$23 for the receipts and a fully paid share target of \$33.75.

HOW MANY CANCELS ? - We haven't seen one of these for some time. Member Carleton Smith submits this one - with 11 RPO markings and a total of 19 circular cancels.

**RAILWAY PASSENGERS
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OF LONDON, ENGLAND

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577 Ingersoll Ave

ADVERTISEMENT - On page 8 of Issue No. 119, member David Harding advised that he was disposing of his extensive collection of Western RPOs and Ontario runs into Winnipeg. Several members responded, and there are now about 1300 items on stamp or piece and 250 on cover available. For a priced list, contact David at #125 - 1900 Mayfair Drive, Victoria, B.C., V8P 1P9.

ANNUAL DUES - If your name is on the front page, please don't forget to remit \$ 10 CAN or \$9 US as soon as possible.

THIS IS YOUR LAST NOTICE.

W.G. Robinson
5830 Cartier St.
Vancouver, B.C.
V6M 3A7