



“SYMBOL OF PROGRESS AND FORWARD STRIDE”: The Highway Post Office

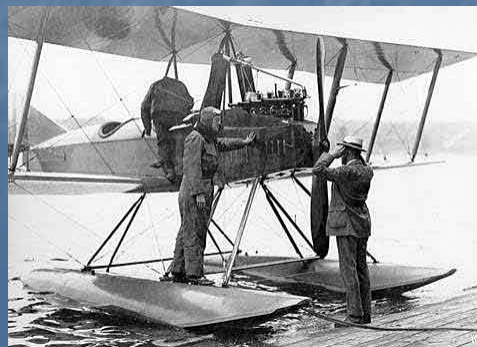
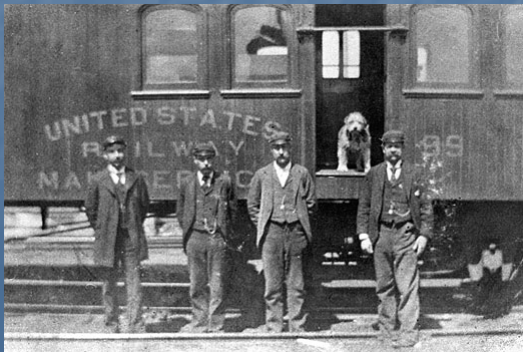
Presented by Robert G. Cullen,
The American Association of State Highway
and Transportation Officials

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*“Symbol of progress and forward stride;
We sing its praise and greet with pride;
Equal in portent and true progress;
To the ‘Rail,’ ‘Airmail,’ and ‘Pony Express.’”*

-- Dabny Simpson, 1941

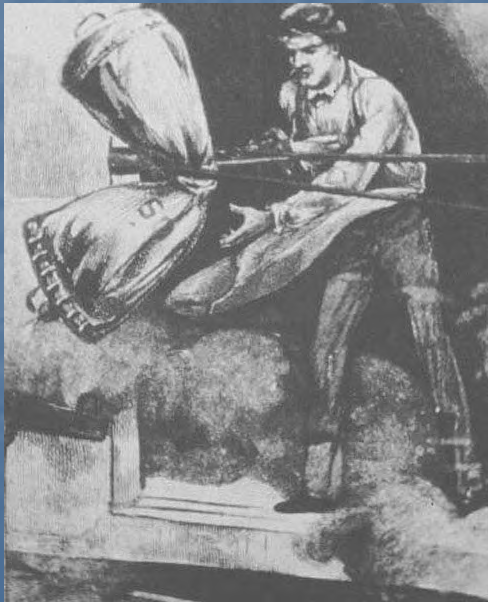




The Highway Post Office 1941-1974



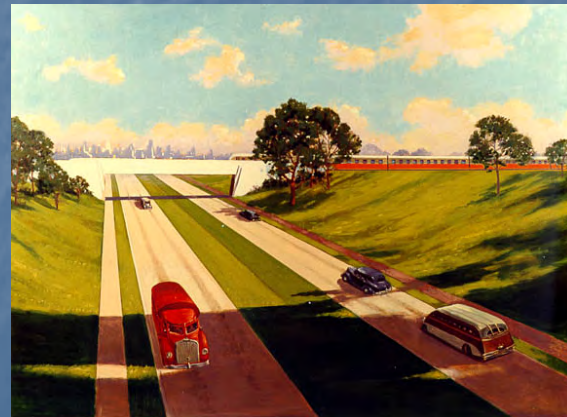
Railway Mail Service



- Established in the 19th century
- A more vigorous, comprehensive, high-speed means of postal transportation
- The service basically became the U.S. Post Office Department's backbone
- In the 1920s and 1930s, however, many of the railway post offices were terminated

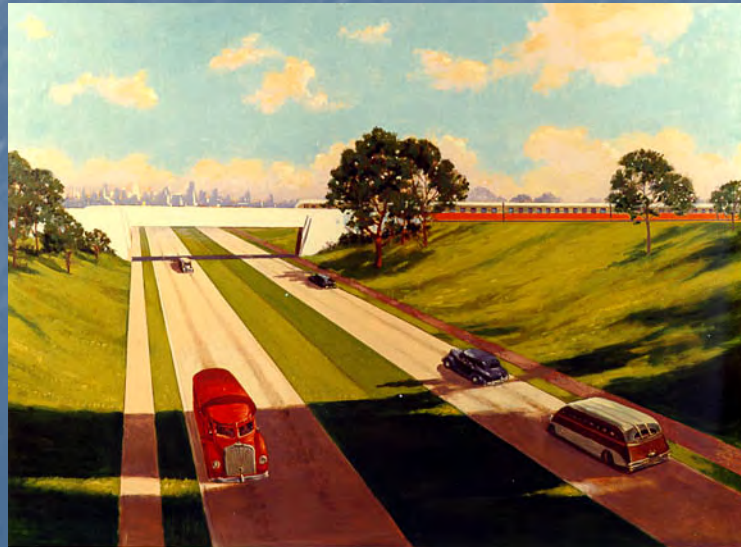
The Golden Age of U.S. Roadbuilding

- Highways grew in significance and size during the 1920s and 1930s
- Key reasons for this growth included:
 - Renewed federal legislative support
 - Technological innovations



In Search of a Solution . . .

- As railroad operations continued to shrink, the U.S. Post Office Department struggled with how to preserve the fast-mail service being lost in the process.
- A consensus emerged that highways, which created the problem in the first place, could also help solve it.

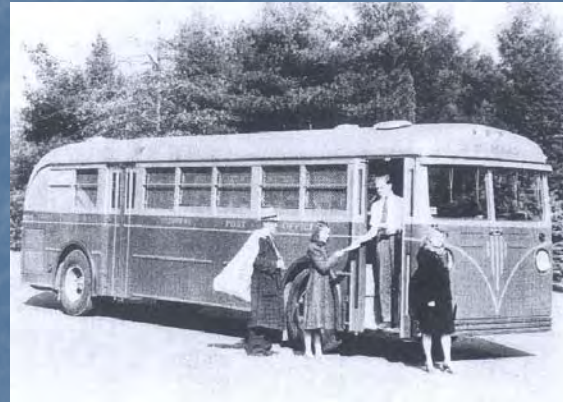


The Highway Post Office

- On July 11, 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law H.R. 6424, which provided for the transportation and handling of mail on motor vehicles where adequate railroad facilities were not available.
- A U.S. Post Office Department committee was subsequently formed to implement that law's provisions.



The Highway Post Office

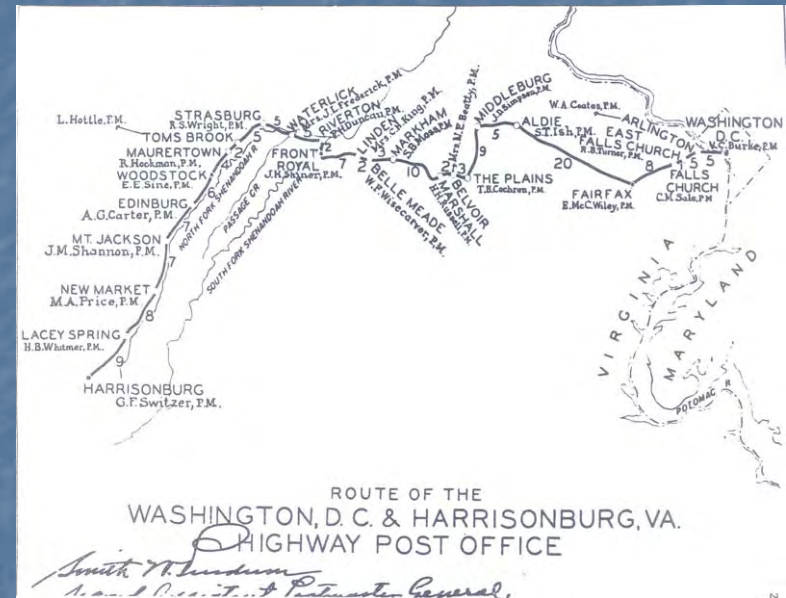


Three types of vehicles were selected for consideration as Highway Post Offices:

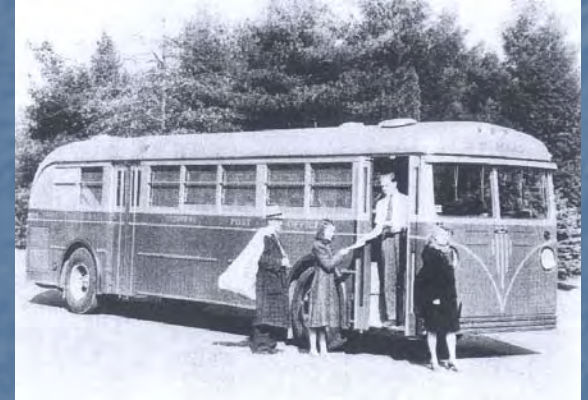
- A standard passenger bus with the engine under the floor
- A passenger bus with the engine in the rear
- A tractor-trailer

The Highway Post Office

- The first experimental Highway Post Office route was between Washington, D.C., and Harrisonburg, Virginia.
- That route's first trip took place on February 10, 1941.



The Highway Post Office



Among the three vehicles tested in 1941, the White Motor Company bus was the most reliable and therefore became the standard for future Highway Post Offices.

The Highway Post Office



- Highway Post Office service experienced major growth in the years after World War II.
- By the mid-1950s, the number of Highway Post Office routes had mushroomed to approximately 400.



The Highway Post Office



- By the 1960s, Sectional Service Facilities offered more sophisticated and higher-speed sorting capacities that made the Highway Post Offices less relevant.
- The Highway Post Office service made its final run on June 30, 1974.

The Highway Post Office



- The Highway Post Office played a pivotal role in keeping the nation's fast-mail supply chain both intact and viable during a critical period.
- That service remains an invaluable case study of postal transportation technology in action.



Questions?

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