

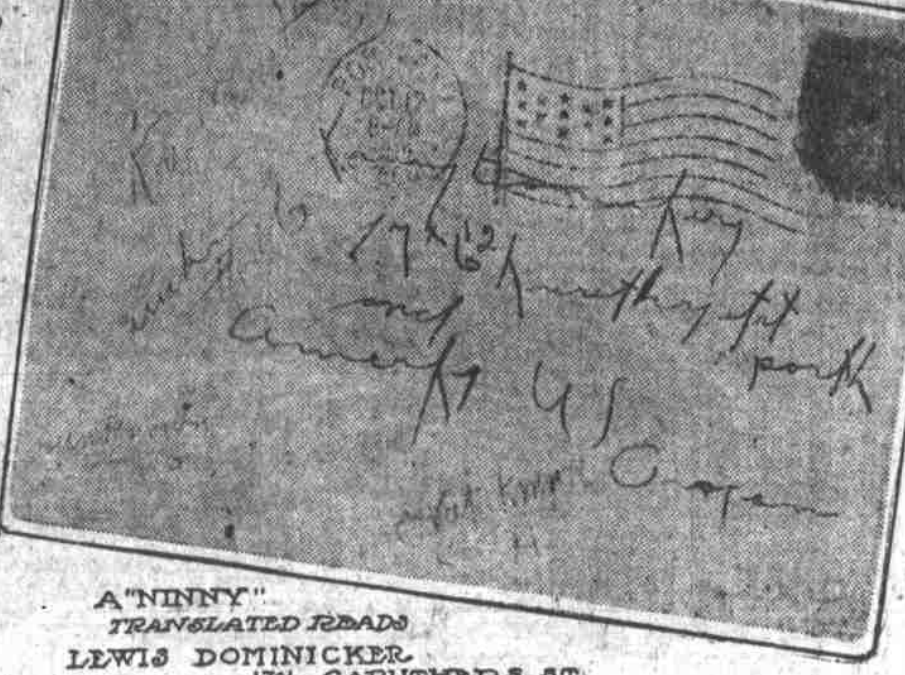
TRIALS OF THOSE WHO HANDLE YOUR MAIL

What You and Your Neighbor Can Do to Facilitate Work of Postal Clerks and Carriers in Portland



Sorting Mail in Portland Post Office

Phenomenal increase of business at Portland postoffice:
 Receipts for year ending September 30, 1910... \$847,692.15
 Receipts for year ending September 30, 1909... 299,725.60
 Increase of 1910 over 1909... \$547,966.55
 Increase per cent... 183.7
 Receipts for year ending September 30, 1909... \$742,649.05
 Increase of 1910 over 1909... 131,063.10
 Increase per cent over 1909... 17.75



A "NINNY" TRANSLATED READS
 LEWIS DOMINICKER
 1741 CARUTHERS ST.
 PORTLAND, OREGON.
 U.S. OF AMERICA

By Marshall N. Dana.
 THE Oldest Mail Carrier scratched his head. He wrinkled his brow in disgust. He tried again to decipher the address on the envelope. Then he growled:

"Thirty-seven different varieties in the spelling of Caruthers street. Twenty-three varieties begin with 'C,' the rest with 'K.' How's a man on this job going to make 37 different varieties of excuses for failing to deliver such a scratch on time?"

Carrier No. 16 had given up the job of either making out the address or of finding the letter's owner. Carrier No. 10 made a trial and used strictly untechnical but forceful language. No. 31 wrote "Unknown." The Oldest Carrier, on duty, No. 1, L. Gilham by name—puzzled until he looked out the window; then he found the man and delivered the message. The illustration shows what he was up against.

"Would that all men were required to take a course in printing out words before they are permitted to address letters," is one of the prayers of the mail carrier.

"Would that all men, women, and children who come to Portland might be made to understand the importance of giving their addresses plainly to the friends who write to them," is the semi-complaint of the Portland postoffice.

"Would that persons intending to stay even a few days in the city might give their street or hotel addresses so that the general delivery system may not be burdened by unnecessary calls," is the petition of Superintendent of General Delivery Ross, and one could easily imagine that Postmaster Merrick and his assistant, Mr. Williamson, were exclaiming in chorus, "Come now, millennium, with mail automatically delivered and the mouths that complain forever silent."

For a peculiar situation has developed at the Portland postoffice. The transition from Portland the village to Portland the city has given the postoffice department more than its share of growing pains. All the charity in the world, combined with the greatest possible ambition to please on the part of the force, cannot change the fact that the postal service in Portland is not what a city of Portland's size deserves.

Where Lies the Difficulty.

The carriers go out every morning loaded like packhorses with letters and papers. At the same time the general delivery department complains that nearly everybody in the town is showing a preference for calling at the office for mail rather than to wait on the carriers. But please do not misunderstand. There is no bad feeling between the different departments of the Portland postoffice, and little on the part of the people. No one here is to blame. In fact, the wonder is that the work is done as well as it is with the equipment provided and men employed. The fault, if it is fault, lies at Washington. Over in that staid city of slow growth, the high officials of the postoffice department apparently haven't awakened to the fact that in the west a village is a city over night—that Portland is a metropolis. It may be that in receiving reports of 100 per cent increase in business in a year, those same officials look upon the fact shown by tabulations more as an indication of the need of solid increase with corresponding demands for better service. It is true that a new postoffice building has been authorized, but not enough money was appropriated for the building that must serve Portland's needs for perhaps a score of years. And from present indications it seems hardly possible a site suited to necessities will be selected within reasonable time.

In Portland there are closely built houses where but a short time since there were long stretches of vacant lots or perhaps farms overgrown with weeds. Carriers assigned to certain districts last year or the year before find their daily burden of mail growing heavier, and daily the difficulty of covering the district becomes greater. As the present time the carriers employed by the Portland postoffice are able to cover only a portion of the city. The residents in the remaining sections must either get mail by rural delivery in boxes at the street side or call at the general delivery windows. This condition is responsible for the congestion. It explains why the working people crowd the lobby of the postoffice every evening on their way home, and why other thousands line up outside Sunday mornings waiting for the hour of eleven to come and with it the chance to struggle through the postoffice hoping for a letter. The importance that attaches to every

message, the interest it bears to the one addressed, the news it carries, the way the mail carrier learns the human interest side of life, the pathos and the joy and the tears of it all is another story. Dealing with present conditions, looking forward to the dignity of improvement commensurate with necessity, read information furnished by Superintendent of Carriers Jones.

Facts of Local Postal Service.

Portland's carrier delivery limits covers approximately 44 square miles, the city limits include a little over 50 square miles, leaving more than six square miles of the city that has no carrier service.

Many people think that if they are in the city limits they are entitled to have their mail delivered at their door. But such is not the case. Before a postoffice inspector will recommend an extension of delivery limits the territory must have graded streets with sidewalks, street signs, houses numbered and each with a receptacle, either a box or a slot in the door. In this way the department works with "better citizens" toward a permanently built city, and, in so far, good.

The department specifies no certain kind of a box but desires one that will keep the mail dry and secure.

Portland's Dead Letters.

Much letter mail is returned to the office daily by carriers in the residence sections on account of "no response." Three efforts are made to deliver such mail, then the date and hour is entered on the letter after which it is placed in the general delivery subject to call until it is time to return it to the sender or send it on to the dead letter office. The number of letters sent to the dead letter office from the Portland postoffice averages about 1500 every week, with about 600 post cards during the same time.

The amount of time lost by carriers waiting at doors for responses to their rings is surprising, although at the same time, they are not allowed to wait more than 30 seconds. It is calculated that each carrier wastes one-eighth of his time waiting at doors. There are 26,000 carriers in the United States, each loses one hour a day, meaning that the postoffice department must pay out daily the sum of \$7800, or \$2,418,000 annually, because people are slow answering door bells. This amount expended for additional carriers would add about 2653 to the force, and of this number Portland would receive 14, a number sufficient to give efficient service over the whole city, and possibly the delivery in some parts of the city would be increased in number. So if the people really want better carrier service they can secure it by always being ready to answer a summons at the front door.

Transients Are Troublesome.

The "moving population" of the city find fault with the postoffice on account of having mail delivered where he is addressed. Some people only stay in one place long enough to get acquainted and then expect the carriers to readress their letters and papers from one address to another for months and sometimes years. The address making no effort whatever to have his or her mail changed to the new location. The regular carriers attend to this part of their correspondence and rarely overlook a change, notwithstanding the fact that several of the routes where numerous hotels and lodging houses are located average over 20 changes daily. But when a substitute takes the place of the regular carrier, he delivers the mail as addressed.

Calls are occasionally received from some old settlers who were a pioneer in Portland when there were but seven houses on Front street, who tells of his long residence here and adds that he has been receiving mail through this postoffice all this time and that everybody knows who he is. Here is just where he is badly mistaken. Everyone

in Portland knew him, no doubt, when there were but seven houses, but he fails to realize that Portland is no longer a village and it is necessary to have his mail addressed to street and number in order to have it reach him promptly.

Railway Clerks' Work.

A great deal of the letter mail is "worked out" on the trains by railway mail clerks who run in to Portland. They are entirely unfamiliar with the business houses and depend altogether on plans and maps to work by. In this manner they work and tie out, ready for the carrier, all letter mail bearing a street address. The mail worked thus is given the quickest possible dispatch by carrier.

For instance, the mail from the Shasta Limited when arrives at the depot at 2:30 p. m. is transferred from the screen wagon service to the postoffice where it arrives about 2:50 p. m. and by 2:55 p. m. the carriers for the business districts are out delivering it. But the mail bearing no street address undergoes a far slower process.

Railway mail clerks tie up such mail in packages and label it "Nixies," and on its arrival to the postoffice it is passed up to the head city distributor, class of the community. In Chicago they are generally committed by that discarded and degraded element which has been described. Oftener than not they are a result of drunken brawls. But, nevertheless, when life is held cheaply by the criminal class, no man is safe.

All these things are today, and have been for a long while, the subject of profound thought by the members of the legal profession. Yet, so far, no effective remedial plans have been advanced. Precedent and technicality are so ponderous to the lawyers that progress is necessarily slow. A little bluster upon one finger will make an impression that will never be effaced.

Why is the lesson so effective? Because the punishment is always instant and certain. In order, however, that punishments shall be most effective they must be both swift and certain. A fiendish and horrible death is sure to follow the regular and constant introduction into the human system of opium and cocaine. But this death, while certain, is not instant; hence, we have several thousand cocaine and opium fiends in this city who have the form and figures of men and women, but here the likeness stops.

Crippen Case as Example.

What is the reason for all this? In England one of the most celebrated of murder cases in a generation, that of Dr. Hawley H. Crippen, was decided in a few days. The lord chief justice, Baron Alverstone, sat in judgment. Whereas in the preliminary hearing the counsel for the defense had made a brilliant showing, had introduced many points novel to British barristers, had, in fact, introduced ultra-American methods, during the real trial he seemed to figure little, if at all. Baron Alverstone hesitated not to pronounce Crippen undeniably guilty of the crime of murdering his wife, even though the evidence was purely circumstantial and there were great technical difficulties in the way of proving that the mutilated body found was that of the actress, Belle Elmore, who had murdered Doctor Crippen.

It is generally regarded as not polite to criticize the courts. Indeed, any suspicion of doing so is likely to raise a cry of anarchy or something equally terrible. Yet, in the case of Chicago at least, it is shown that murder often goes unpunished and that human life is cheapened by the knowledge that lawlessness is frequently not punished.

who works out what he can and throws the rest of it to the delivery clerks, who, sitting in long lines in the main postoffice room, search through the directories and supply street addresses for as many as possible, the remainder being placed in the general delivery subject to call.

Thousands of letters are delayed every day because they are not correctly addressed. Several hundred belonging at station B (Albina) are sent daily to station D (Brooklyn) simply because the writer failed to add the essential word "north." For instance, a letter addressed to 530 Union avenue is sent to station D. When the carrier indorses it, "No such number" it is sent back to the main office, redistributed and sent out to 530 Union avenue north, where the addressee is found. Meanwhile there has been a delay of about 24 hours because of the omission of the exact address. Mail delivery for patrons living on the east side would often be expedited many hours in delivery if written like this: "John Doe, 425 East Seventh street north, station B, Portland, Or." If the sender neglected to add the "north" there would be no delay, as "Station B" would clearly indicate that it was intended to go to the northeast section

of the city. Postmaster Merrick has recently been sending letters to all firms whose stationery does not bear a return address, asking that these be supplied, in order that time may be saved the department and annoyance kept from the recipients of mail. This communication is having an extremely beneficial effect.

Mail should never be addressed to the intersection of streets if the number can be supplied, as "Joe Doe, Fourth and Washington streets." Fourth and Washington constitutes the dividing lines for four different routes and may go into the hands of three carriers before it finally reaches the right one whose duty it is to make the delivery. Mail for occupants of large buildings is often delayed because the room number is not appended.

The Carrier's Trials.

So much for the technical side of mail delivery. Now read this statement from the oldest carrier, Mr. Gilham. It shows what a flesh and blood man is up against and the strain his temper must stand:

"It is a letter to sender. We don't want it here—common remark. I've a letter decorated all over, with signs of writing and bearing marks of a

trip across sea; to the lay mind it has a small chance to reach its destination. The business of postal employees, however, is to have such a letter read by the proper person, not simply to get rid of it. Otherwise the postoffice would be cluttered with 'Nixies'."

"The carrier has the advantage of two looks at the letter—when he cases it, and when he delivers it. Besides the clerk it handicapped by artificial light. The letter often looks quite different in daylight and at a different angle. From a first class 'Powell & Mason, Portland, Or.' there may develop a perfect 'Purcell & Munson, Portland, Me.' when the fine lines show up. However, great latitude is given the clerk on this account, but practically none to the carrier. He must correct the mistakes of all his predecessors. No excuses are taken unless the address is absolutely illegible. He must case his 500 to 2000 pieces of mail at the rate of 14 to the minute, taking in everything in the address at a quick glance. Don't waste pity on a carrier, he must people do his job or his head or the amount of walking he does. He cares little for either. His troubles are, reading headless, correcting other people's mistakes and above all remembering changes of residence from 3 to 15 a day. Multiply them by the days in a year and the changes run rapidly into the thousands."

"If a carrier has not a perfect memory he soon drops off the toll, for 'forgetting' is a thing not tolerated about the postoffice. But he generally finds memory when his living depends on it. It is astonishing how memory develops in practice—there seems to be no limit. A patron will meet a carrier on the street. 'Anything for me?' he asks. 'Oh, yes, there's a one cent circular and card way down in the pack.' The man thinks nothing of this—he is only one of the carriers who have the carrier could tell contents of the whole bundle in the same way."

IS LAWLESSNESS CHEAPENING LIFE?

(Continued from First Page of This Section.)

Gemmell, of the Chicago municipal court, analyzed conditions in his city, and, in principle, much of what he wrote may be taken as applying to any community.

"Criminal statistics clearly prove," he said, "that crimes have increased or decreased just in the proportion that the punishments therefor have been swift and certain. This law is as true in the social world as it is in the natural world. A child puts its hand in the fire but once. If he lives a hundred years, this one lesson will suffice. It is not necessary that the hand should be burned off to teach the lesson, but a little blister upon one finger will make an impression that will never be effaced."

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MAIL BUSINESS RUSHING

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"Hundreds of people go out of town during summer. 'Send my mail to office—family at Seaside,' he says or 'time or looking for orders.' In the course of years the carrier can detect an unstamped letter in taking them from the box, without going through the lot—this seems incredible, but it is explained by the fact that the glow from a new stamp reflects faintly on surrounding letters. The carrier can tell whether an office is occupied by knocking on the door or whether the people are at home by listening to intonation of the bell. If a home or room has no occupant the bell has a hollow sound. Great leniency is shown a 'rube' or new man, but an old carrier is expected to take any route at an hour's notice. If emergency demand it, and he is expected to make the deliveries accordingly."

"I have been in the service of the Portland postoffice longer than any other man now here," continued Mr. Gilham. "I commenced 27½ years ago. During the first four years I carried mail came every three days by steamer from San Francisco. I often climbed in the window at 4 a. m., picked out my mail and got into shape to make an early start. John M. Lewis, county treasurer was night clerk then. Many of the oldcountry people along the river front where my present route lies, depend on me to collect their money orders, address their letters and often to read them. Most of them never knew any other postoffice."

The general delivery department has its troubles too. Superintendent of General Delivery Ross the other day explained certain of the difficulties besetting his department, because of the restricted carrier service in Portland and the habit some people have of failing to put street addresses on communications. To some of the people who think mail addressed or unnamed should be delivered just the same, Mr. Ross has this reminder:

delivered to the person addressed or according to his written order."

"When a postmaster is in doubt as to the identity of the addressee, he may require proof."

"Where two or more persons of the same name receive mail at the same postoffice, the postmaster should advise them to adopt some address or means by which their mail may be distinguished."

"Postmasters will deliver such mail according to their best judgment."

At each of the eight general delivery windows of the Portland postoffice there are daily about 1000 callers, or about 8000 altogether. The clerk cannot remember all these people and it is out of the question for him to try to require identification of the ones he does not remember.

Three or four persons are often calling at the same time for the same name. The Smiths, Johnsons, and a score of other common names are being delivered to the first one who calls for the reason that there is no possible way in the case of so many duplications to tell one from another. It would save a great deal of time and trouble at the general delivery windows if people would give their full name when calling for their mail. For example, John A. Johnson calls for his mail. He says, "Anything for me?" Replied John A. Johnson, "The clerk J. J. C. and James Joseph and so forth Johnson, therefore he must question the man about his first name and his middle initial which takes about twice as long as it does to wait on a man who gives his full name at once. One man when asked to give his full name, replied that his name was just the same whether he was 'full or sobor.' Another said to the clerk, 'It is none of your business what my first name is, and I don't intend to tell you. If you don't have my mail I will report you to the postmaster.' A young lady when asked for a ticket to change her name. She meant a change of address card, but the clerk thought she might be hinting at a leap year proposal. There is much more to tell about the way a letter goes from your friend to you, but enough has been said to give some understanding of the greatest need of all, cooperation between the postal force and the people.

The Dollar Dress.

From the New York Globe.
 More than a tenth of the 243 girls who graduated from Washington Irving high school wore dresses costing from 72 cents to \$1. And, according to the report, it was impossible to say who wore the inexpensive dresses. One girl whose father supposed she was wearing a gown costing \$15 appeared in one costing 82 cents and the fond parent was none the wiser. And this girl had the added satisfaction of knowing that she was helping to make the poorer girls feel content.

The dollar dress idea is a creditable one—creditable to the teachers who suggested it and creditable to the girls who enthusiastically carried it through. It proved a lesson in clothes economy, in how to make a little go a long way, and perhaps it will serve a little to correct a tendency which has become so serious of late as to be actually embarrassing to many families—the tendency to make graduation, whether from high school or college, almost as much of a clothes event as is a wedding.

Women who recently attended the tenth anniversary of their graduation from college have been heard to remark upon the great change that has taken place in commencement gowns. Ten years ago the gowns seemed simple as compared with those that are worn today. And probably much the same thing is true of the high school girls' dresses.