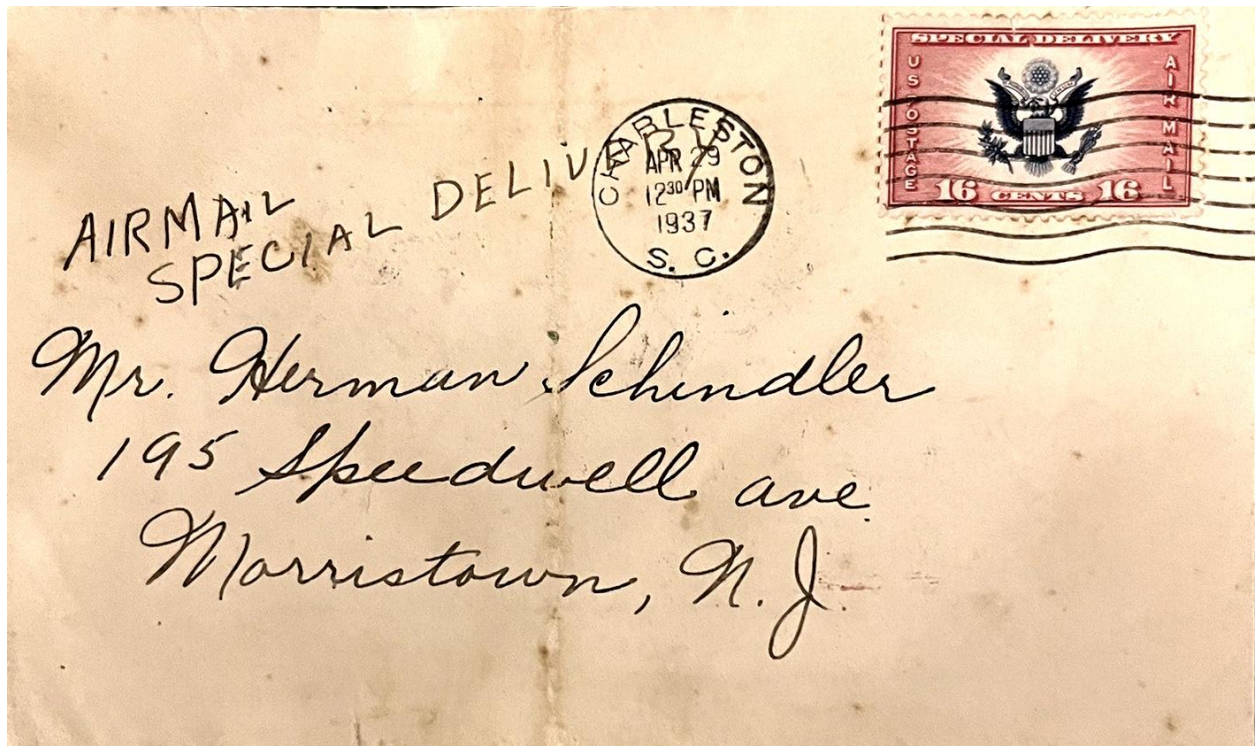


# When Railway Mail was faster than Air Mail

Frank R. Scheer, Railway Mail Service Library<sup>1</sup>

Special Delivery covers are research-worthy because they document the movement of a letter between a sender and recipient. Each time the letter was sorted, a back-stamp of the distributing unit was applied to the back of the envelope. Special Delivery was a supplemental service for First Class Mail, so insights are gained about how letters traveled through the postal network even if they were not Special Delivery. The differences between the two are that First Class letters were not back-stamped each time they were sorted and their delivery at destination was held until the next scheduled carrier run.

Many surviving Special Delivery envelopes received one or two backstamps. It is very unusual to observe three Railway Post Office markings on a single letter. Even less likely is when it was supposed to be an Air Mail letter and Charleston was an air stop on Air Mail Route 6 during 1937. These postmarks provide nearly complete documentation for the routing of a letter from Charleston, South Carolina, to Morristown, New Jersey during 1937.



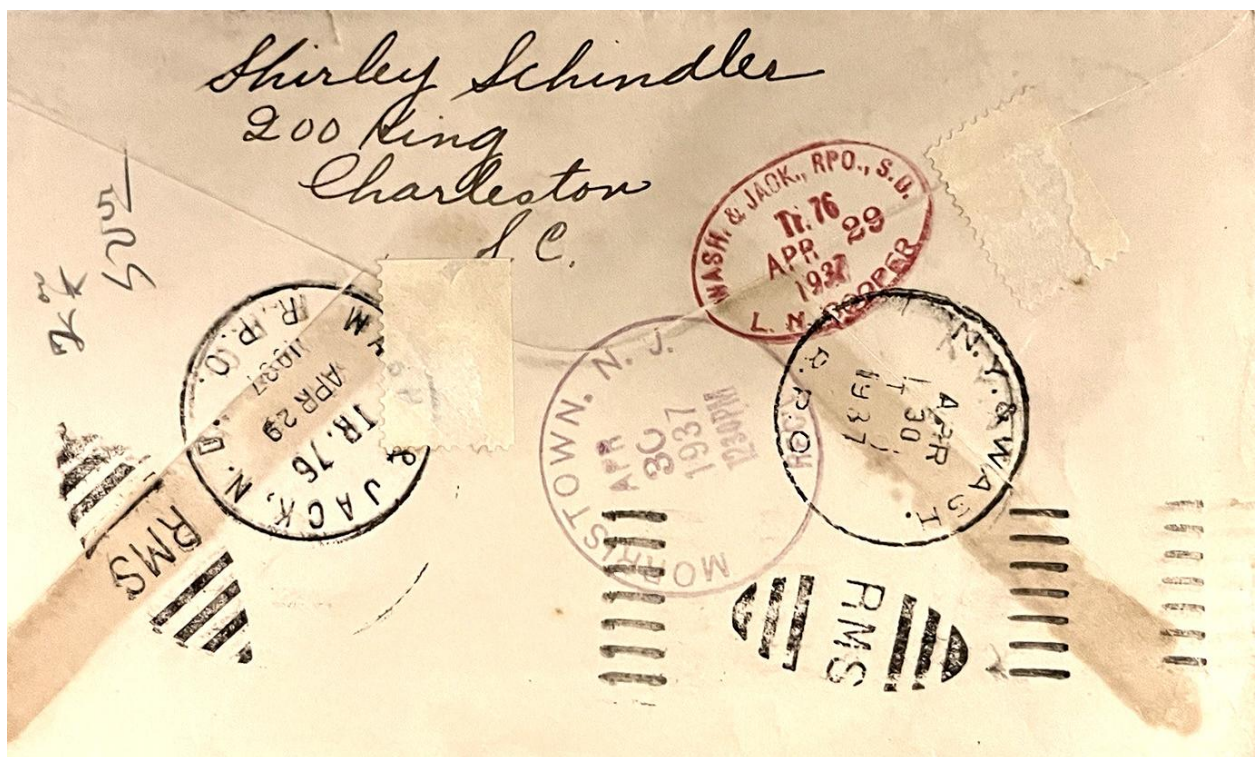
**Figure 1** - Front of the Charleston, South Carolina, 1937 Air Mail Special Delivery cover.

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<sup>1</sup> The content of this article is prepared solely by references to primary and secondary sources deemed reliable in the Railway Mail Service Library (RMSL) collection, as well as the author's personal observations about post office history garnered during more than sixty years of historical research and writing.

Postal historians refer to postmarked envelopes as “covers.” This one bears an April 29, 1937, date. The “12:30 PM” does not indicate when the letter was deposited at a post office. Rather, it indicates the closing time for the next dispatch from that office. The letter may have been in a collection box or taken to the Charleston post office sometime prior to cancelling the postage stamp but after the previous closing time. The postmark time was changed to the next closing time when the previous one had passed. Larger offices such as Charleston often had several closing times during a 24-hour period, while smaller offices may have had one in the morning and another later that day. Generally, inbound mail to the post office was received during the morning and outbound was dispatched at the end of each day. For this research, we will use 12:30 PM as the beginning time of this letter’s journey northward.

The strength of the Railway Mail Service was the interconnected network of routes with timely connections at junction points. This characteristic is depicted by the three RPO postmarks on the back of this letter along with the Morristown, New Jersey received postmark.



**Figure 2** - Back of the Charleston, South Carolina, 1937 Air Mail Special Delivery cover.

It is likely that Mr. Shindler did not know the significance of these markings and probably did not care –although fortunately the envelope was opened carefully by the flap



and seems to have been resealed using two white portions of stamp selvage. Only one postmark is partially covered but is completely recognizable,

During 2025, the distance and driving time between Charleston and Morristown is 11 hours and 32 minutes for 766 miles, mostly over Interstate Highway 95 and US Highway 202.<sup>2</sup> 88 years ago, there were no highways with 70 mile per hour speed limits and the primary highways had average speeds half of that. The distance comparison –766 miles versus 774 miles—illustrates that the best postal routing was not always the shortest distance. The guideline adhered to by Railway Postal Clerks was that the dispatch which produced the shortest overall transit time was the correct routing. That applied also to the choice of the Charleston postal clerk to dispatch the letter to Washington & Jacksonville South Division Railway Post Office (RPO) Train 76 as will be observed below.

The Excel spreadsheet table below summarizes the routes that this letter traversed between South Carolina and New Jersey. Most of the journey is depicted in these markings while the final steps by ferry and an additional RPO are not. Since markings were applied each time a Special Delivery mail piece was sorted, if it was transferred within a “letter package” –usually a grouping of ten or more letters tied into a bundle with a facing slip included on the back-side– or locked pouch that was unopened over a particular segment, there is no marking. The research in this article fills those final two gaps for a postal historian.

YEAR	MONTH	DAY	ROUTE	TRAIN	RECEIVED AT	TIME	AM or PM	DISPATCHED AT	TIME	AM or PM	MILES
1937	APRIL	29			CHARLESTON POST OFFICE WINDOW	11:00	AM	CHARLESTON POST OFFICE	12:30	PM	0
1937	APRIL	29	MAIL MESSENGER		CHARLESTON POST OFFICE OUTBOUND	12:30	PM	CHARLESTON UNION STATION	12:45	PM	1
1937	APRIL	29	WASHINGTON & JACSONVILLE SOUTH DIVISION RPO	76	CHARLESTON UNION STATION	1:20	PM	FLORENCE ATLANTIC COAST LINE STATION	3:45	PM	101
1937	APRIL	29	WASHINGTON & JACSONVILLE NORTH DIVISION RPO	76	FLORENCE ATLANTIC COAST LINE STATION	3:55	PM	WASHINGTON UNION STATION	1:25	AM	410
1937	APRIL	30	NEW YORK & WASHINGTON RPO	110	WASHINGTON UNION STATION	1:45	AM	NEW YORK - PENNSYLVANIA STATION	6:45	AM	225
1937	APRIL	30	NEW YORK CITY POST OFFICE - VEHICLE SERVICE		NEW YORK - PENNSYLVANIA STATION	7:00	AM	DELAWARE, LACKAWANNA & WESTERN 44TH STREET	7:15	AM	2
1937	APRIL	30	DELAWARE, LACKAWANNA & WESTERN (DL&W) FERRY		DELAWARE, LACKAWANNA & WESTERN 44TH STREET FERRY	7:30	AM	DL&W HOBOKEN TERMINAL	7:45	AM	1
1937	APRIL	30	NEW YORK & BUFFALO RPO	3	DL&W HOBOKEN TERMINAL	8:01	AM	MORRISTOWN DEPOT	8:48	AM	31
1937	APRIL	30	MAIL MESSENGER		MORRISTOWN DEPOT	9:15	AM	MORRISTOWN POST OFFICE INBOUND	12:30	PM	2
1937	APRIL	30			MORRISTOWN POST OFFICE INBOUND	12:30	PM	MORRISTOWN POST OFFICE SPECIAL DELIVERY	12:45	PM	0
1937	APRIL	30	SPECIAL DELIVERY MESSENGER		MORRISTOWN POST OFFICE SPECIAL DELIVERY SECTION	1:00	PM	195 SPEEDWELL AVENUE, MORRISTOWN	2:00	PM	1
Times in red are estimated						Elapsed Time =	26 HOURS			Miles	774

**Figure 3** - Summary of mail routes, connections, times, and distance between Charleston and Morristown.

<sup>2</sup> MapQuest routing as of July 10, 2025: <https://www.mapquest.com/directions/from/us/south-carolina/charleston/29401-3109/200-king-st-32.77966,-79.93287/to/us/new-jersey/morristown/07960-9511/195-speedwell-ave-40.80523,-74.48229?scheduleType=leave-now>

The table above compiles the information from primary source documentation that corresponds to the envelope markings. Some times are estimated among 11 activities and do not appear in schedules but are consistent with known arrivals and departures.



The South Carolina and New Jersey General Scheme information is close to but not exactly circa 1937. The RPO route schedules and other information from Second, Third, and Fourth Division Schedules of Mail Routes are circa 1937. The Railway Mail Service Library has digitized many of these primary source documents, so for convenience the information that is readily available has been used. During this period, train schedules and mail routing information did not change dramatically within a few years despite occurring toward the end of the Great Depression. There is sufficient confidence that the information included fairly represents this letter's transit during 1937.

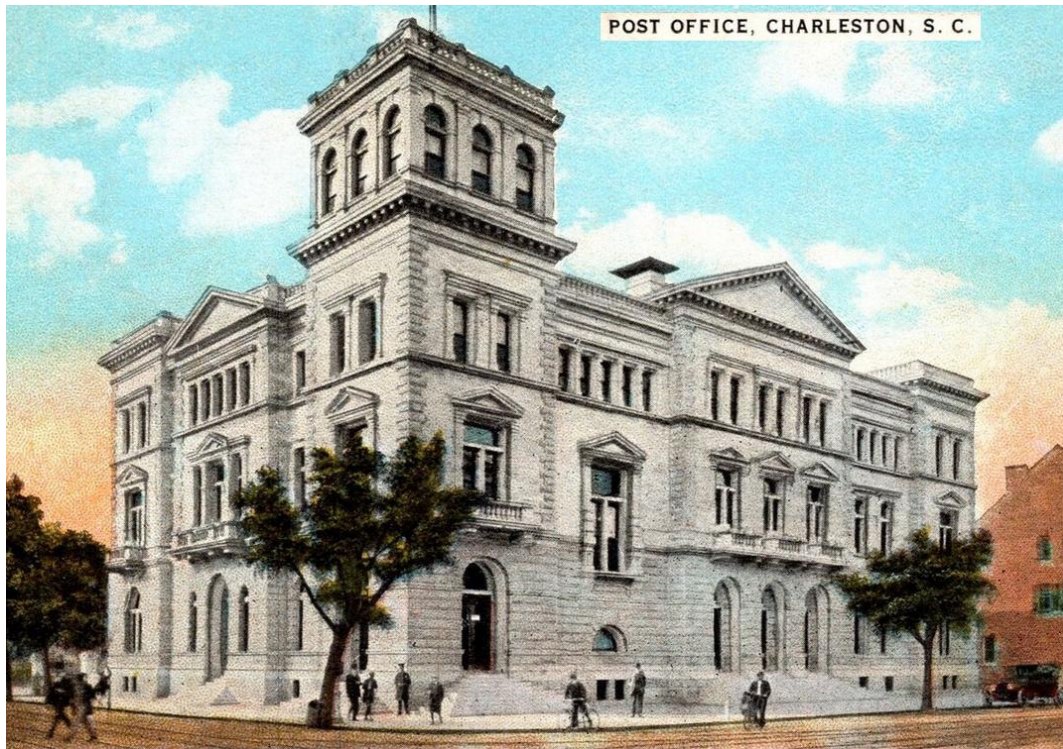
**Figure 4** - 200 King Street, Charleston, circa 2025. Source: Google Street View.

We begin this story during the morning at 200 King Street, Charleston, on April 29<sup>th</sup>. Figure 4 is a current view of the building at that address. It is a typical first-floor retail store with two floors of apartments above.

Although there was likely a nearby street letter collection box, not many people kept Air Mail Special Delivery stamps available. That was a premium service at 16 cents, which



is the equivalent of \$3.57 during 2025.<sup>3</sup> It is likely that Shirley Schindler walked about nine blocks to the city post office located at the southwest corner of Meeting and Broad streets to purchase the stamp and put it in the lobby mail slot.



**Figure 5** - U.S. Post Office and Courthouse at Charleston, completed in 1896. Post card view published by J. S. Pinkussohn Cigar Company.

After the letter reached the Charleston Post Office, it was postmarked on a Pitney-Bowes Model G canceling machine. The lettering on the “ring die” postmark and the appearance of the month, date, closing time, and year type are the basis for that determination.

After canceling the letter, it went to a distribution clerk in the outbound section. The South Carolina General Scheme listed several possible choices for dispatch. The preferred option depended upon the day of the week, time of day, and any known issues such as poor weather that may result in transportation delays. Ultimate destination and travel direction were also consideration factors.

The two choices from the dispatch list appearing in Figure 6 are Air Mail Route 6 and Washington & Jacksonville South Division RPO Train 76. As one will observe, precision mail dispatching decisions often hinged on minutes, not hours.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/>

# CHARLESTON

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*Charleston (ch)	Air Mail Routes
Citadel (Sta)	6; 24; 31; 54
Charleston	Ash & Charles
Shipyard (Br)	Charleston &
Dorchester-Waylyn	Blackville
(Br)	Sta SR
Folly Beach	Charles & Cola
Isle of Palms	Charleston & Edi-
Liberty Homes	sto Island SR
(Sta)	
Moultrieville	Florence & Char-
Mount Pleasant	leston SR trips
Myers	14, 19, 20, 21
Naval Base (Br) g	Florence & Jack
North Charleston h	a Sta. Charleston
Riverland Terrace	PO
(R Sta)	f North Charleston
St. Andrews (Sta)	g Also supplied by
Starke General	Florence & Jack
Hospital (Br)	75j, 76j, 77j, 80r
Whipper Baroney	h Also supplied by
(Br)	Florence & Jack
	75j

Figure 6 - South Carolina General Scheme, 1945, page 24, which was similar to dispatches available during 1937.

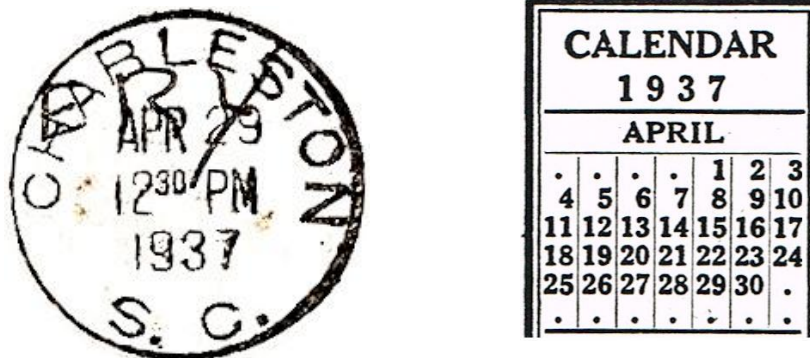


Figure 7 - Postmark and April 1937 calendar.

When researching letter handling, the date it was mailed and when it was received are important considerations. For this letter, it was mailed on a Thursday and received on a Friday. Defining the frequency notations that appear in mail route schedules are not needed since all services operated during weekdays and no legal holidays intervened.



The first choice of the Charleston outbound distribution would ordinarily be Air Mail Route 6 to New York. There were two northbound flights departing the Charleston airport at 1 PM and 12:50 AM.

**AM-6 & 31**

**NEW YORK TO MIAMI**

AM-6, Newark to Miami, 1,196 miles; contractor, North American Aviation, Inc.

AM-31, Daytona Beach to Miami, 367 miles; contractor, G. T. Baker. Newark to Raleigh, 3d Div. (Dist. 6); balance of routes, 4th Div

Aug. 4, 1937											
Eastern time											
		85a	5a	3a				6a	4a	44j	
		8 00	9 10	10 00	Lv	New York, N. Y. (Newark)	Ar	5 50	5 20	2 20	
		8 40				Philadelphia, Pa. (Camden)					
		9 30				Baltimore, Md.					
		9 50	10 35	11 20	Ar	Washington, D. C.	Lv	4 30	4 00	1 00	
			10 45	11 35	Lv	Richmond, Va.	Ar	4 10	3 40	12 55	
				1 20		Raleigh, N. C.		2 35		12 10	
			1 35	2 45	Ar	Charleston, S. C.	Lv	1 00	12 50		
			1 45	2 55	Lv	Savannah, Ga. <sup>1</sup>	Ar	12 50	12 40		
			3 05	4 15	Ar	Jacksonville, Fla.	Lv	11 30	11 20		
3a	1a	9a	7a							10a	8a
		7 10	3 15	3 20	4 30	Lv	Daytona Beach, Fla.	Ar	11 10	11 10	11 05
		7 50	3 55			Ar	Orlando, Fla.	Lv			10 25
8 00	5 00	7 55	4 00			Lv	Lakeland, Fla.	Ar			10 05
8 30	5 30						Tampa, Fla.				8 40
9 00	6 00						St. Petersburg, Fla.	Lv			8 10
9 25	6 25						Tampa, Fla.	Ar			9 40
9 35	6 35						Sarasota, Fla.				9 10
	7 15						Fort Myers, Fla.				7 40
	7 30						Vero Beach, Fla.				7 15
	7 50						West Palm Beach, Fla.				8 45
	8 35						Miami, Fla.	Lv			7 00
		8 50									8 30
				6 20							6 25
9 50	9 45	5 30	5 30	6 50	Ar			9 00	9 00	8 15	8 40
											4 00

<sup>1</sup> Stop suspended pending airport improvements.

7289°—37—3

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**Figure 8** - Air Mail Route 6, Charleston-New York, effective August 4, 1937. Source: Second Division RMS *Schedule of Mail Routes 436*, page 16, May 17, 1937

However, as shown in the table appearing in Figure 9, the airport was eleven miles from the downtown post office and required 40 minutes travel time. Given that the letter was ready for dispatch shortly after 12:30 PM, flight 6 leaving at 1 PM would have been missed.

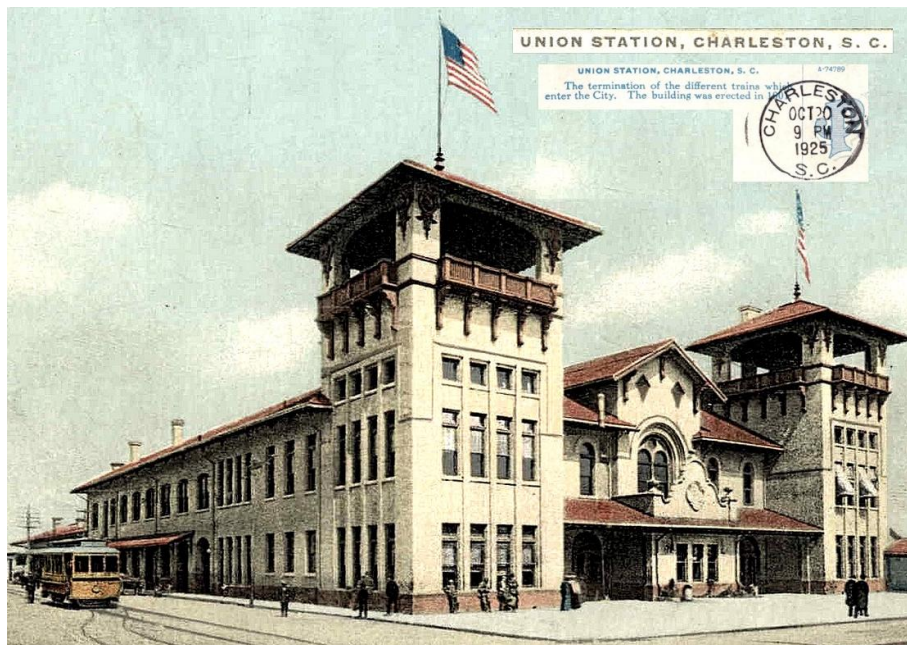
## AIR MAIL ROUTES

Distance Between Post Office and Air Field and Time Required  
for Transfer

FROM	Distance	Time	FROM	Distance	Time
	Miles	Min.		Miles	Min.
Atlanta, Ga.-----	8.00	30	Macon, Ga.-----	4.00	20
Augusta, Ga.-----	4.75	25	Memphis, Tenn.-----	10.70	40
Birmingham, Ala..	6.20	25	Meridian, Miss.-----	3.75	10
Bristol, Va.-----	4.40	15	Miami, Fla.-----	6.00	20
Charleston, S. C.---	11.00	40	Mobile, Ala.-----	5.10	14
Charlotte, N. C.---	3.70	20	Montgomery, Ala.---	6.50	20
Chattanooga, Tenn.	9.50	30	Nashville, Tenn.---	24.40	60
Columbia, S. C.---	3.50	20	New Orleans, La.---	6.65	30
Daytona Beach, Fla.	4.00	11	Orlando, Fla.-----	2.00	20
Florence, S. C.---	3.10	20	St. Petersburg, Fla.	1.00	10
Greenville, S. C.---	3.40	25	Savannah, Ga.-----	5.80	30
Jackson, Miss.-----	3.50	20	Spartanburg, S. C.---	4.00	15
Jacksonville, Fla.---	8.00	30	Tampa, Fla.-----	6.00	15
Knoxville, Tenn.---	3.20	10	Vero Beach, Fla.---	1.10	10
Lakeland, Fla.-----	2.70	15	Winston-Salem, N.C.	3.30	8

**Figure 9** - Distances between post offices and airports handling Air Mail. Source: Second Division RMS *Schedule of Mail Routes 436*, page 211, May 17, 1937

The clerk instead made a dispatch to the Washington & Jacksonville South Division Train 76 which operated over the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. Charleston Union Station was in downtown Charleston at the intersection of Columbus and East Bay Streets. This depot was about a mile from the post office and had frequent mail messenger trips because most of the mail to and from Charleston flowed through Union Station.



**Figure 10** - Charleston Union station, 1905-1947. Post card view by Detroit Publishing Company.



Train 76 departed from Charleston at 1:20 PM. For the following 23 hours, the letter was in motion with tight connections between routes. During that travel time, it was sorted in three different RPOs and prepared for dispatch directly from New York to Morristown.

WASHINGTON & JACKSONVILLE R. P. O.—Continued									
May 14, 1937									
71cu	83a	89a	75a			80a	82a	72d	76a
	1 05	3 20	9 04	Lv	Rocky Mount, N. C.	Ar	2 45	1 00	6 16
8 19	1 10	3 25	9 09	Ar	So. Rocky Mount (n. o.)	Lv	2 40	12 55	6 11
8 24	1 15	3 30	9 14	Lv	Wilson, N. C.	Ar	2 30	12 40	6 06
	1 35	3 55	9 34				2 00	12 15	
	2 10	4 37	10 02	Ar	Selma, N. C.	Lv	1 07	11 30	
	2 10	4 37	10 02	Lv	Dunn, N. C.	Ar	1 07	11 25	
	2 47	5 19	10 32				12 14	10 53	
	3 30	6 05	11 10	Ar	Fayetteville, N. C.	Lv	11 25	10 15	
	3 30	6 10	11 16	Lv	Hope Mills, N. C.	Ar	11 20	10 10	
	3 41	6 23	11 20				11 04	10 00	
	3 50	6 35	11 28				11 50	9 50	
	4 12	7 09	11 47				10 05	9 23	
	4 22	7 19	11 52				9 54	9 15	
	4 50	7 46	12 08				9 23	8 52	
	5 30	8 20	12 27				8 50	8 25	
11 39	5 55	8 45	12 47	Ar	Pee Dee, S. C.	Lv	8 30	8 05	2 45
71a								72b	
11 47	6 10	9 10	12 57	Lv	Florence, S. C.	Ar	7 35	7 40	2 35
	9 30	11 40	3 16	Ar	Charleston, S. C.	Lv	4 35	4 15	
	9 45	11 55	2 15	Lv		Ar	4 20	4 00	
3 40	12 55	2 40	5 10	Ar	Savannah, Ga.	Lv	1 35	12 50	10 45
	57cu								58cu
3 50	7 50	2 55	5 20	Lv	Jessup, Ga.	Ar	1 20		10 35
	9 20	4 10	6 35				11 40		8 15
	10 25	5 15		Ar	Waycross, Ga.	Lv	10 25		6 37
									5 30
		5 30		Lv	Jacksonville, Fla.	Ar	9 55		
7 00		7 25	8 45	Ar		Lv	8 15		7 30
									8 15

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**Figure 11** - Schedule between Charleston and Rocky Mount. The North and South Divisions split at Florence.  
Source: Third Division RMS *Schedule of Mail Routes 518*, page 122, 1937.



According to Fourth Division RMS *Schedule of Mail Routes 569*, Page 109, 1936, (not shown), Atlantic Coast Line Train 76's consist included a 30-foot apartment RPO car. Number 734, appearing in Figure 12, is representative of the car which carried this letter and had Railway Postal Clerk L. N. Cooper aboard.

**Figure 12** - L. N. Coopers personal date stamp which appears on the back of the envelope.





**Figure 13** - ACL mail and express car 734. The RPO occupied 30 feet of the interior.

**★WASHINGTON & JACKSONVILLE R. P. O.**

★ Exc. 57, 58 (S. D.)

North Division, Washington to Florence; South Division, Florence to Jacksonville. R., F. & P. R. R., Washington to Richmond, 113.07 miles southbound, 113.51 miles northbound. Rt. 103760; A. C. L. R. R., Richmond to Rocky Mount, 124.45 miles southbound, 124.01 miles northbound; Rocky Mount to Fayetteville, 90.11 miles; Fayetteville to Florence, 82.56 miles. Rt. 103769. S. R. -14424, Richmond to Petersburg (N. & W. Sta.), 22 miles. Third Div., Dist. 3. A. C. L. R. R. Florence to Jacksonville via Charleston and Waycross, 383.43 miles. Florence via N. Charleston, Jessup and Folkston to Jacksonville, 351.66 miles. Rt. 104802. Fourth Div., Dist. 6.

		9 30	1 30	2 40	10 10	Lv	---New York, N. Y. (Penn. R. R. Sta.)---	Ar	5 50	12 02	3 45	12 25	6 45			
		29b	71cu	83a	89a	75a	May 14, 1937									
		3 30	3 00	6 50	8 00	3 15	Lv	---†Washington, D. C. (Union Sta.)---	Ar	10 45	7 20	11 40	6 15	1 25	7 53	9 55
		3 50		7 07	8 18	3 32		○Alexandria, Va.		10 21	6 59		5 55		8 23	9 35
		5 05		8 08	9 32	4 40		○Fredericksburg, Va.		9 14	5 51	10 16	4 59	11 56	6 20	7 21
		6 05		8 54	10 29	5 26		Doswell, Va.		8 20			4 18	11 06		6 45
		6 50	5 35	9 30	11 00	6 00	Ar		Lv	7 45	4 35	9 00	3 50	10 35		
*b	27b	25b						○†Richmond, Va. (Broad St. Sta.)				24b		28a	26a	*b
4 10	10 35	1 55	5 45	9 45	11 20	6 30	Lv		Ar	6 45	4 20	8 50	11 50	10 20	7 55	3 45
5 15	11 10	2 40		10 23	12 03	7 00	Ar		Lv	5 55	3 35		11 10	9 26	7 15	3 05
								---†Petersburg, Va.---								
				10 35	12 18	7 00	Lv		Ar	5 45	3 25			9 26		
				11 15	1 07	7 37		---Jarratt, Va.---		4 49	2 38			8 54		
				11 27	1 25	7 47		---North Emporia, Va.---		4 35	2 25			8 43		
				11 50	1 55	8 15	Ar		Lv	4 00	1 55			8 17		
				11 55	2 05	8 15	Lv	○Weldon, N. C.	Ar	4 00	1 55			8 17		
				12 50	3 10	9 04	Ar	○Rocky Mount, N. C.	Lv	2 55	1 10	6 16		7 38		

Tr. 20e, Richmond 8 15; Milford 9 11.

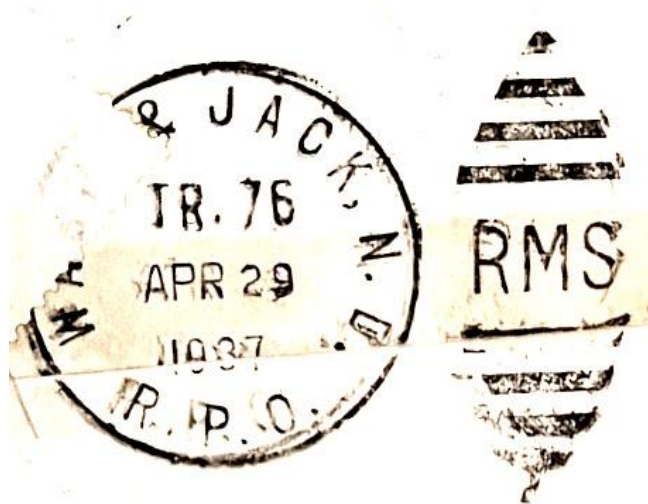
**Figure 14** - The North Division continued past Rocky Mount via Richmond to Washington. Source: Third Division RMS *Schedule of Mail Route 518*, page 122, 1937

Railway Postal Clerk Cooper applied his personal marking stamp to the envelope back, so we know a specific person who handled this letter. Each clerk had a rubber dating stamp with their route, changeable date, and name which was normally used on facing slips covering a letter bundle tied with twine, or the back of a pouch or sack label. Its



purpose was to show who worked the bundle, pouch, or sack in case there were errors. A Railway Postal Clerk was assessed demerits for each incorrectly sorted or dispatched item.

The Washington & Jacksonville North Division RPO on train 76 continued with a new crew between Florence and Washington. The letter was included in a letter package that was sorted a second time to make a northbound connection at Union Station, Washington.



**Figure 15** - North Division postmark which appears on the back of the envelope.

Not all RPOs distributed the same mail in each direction. Figure 16 illustrates a table exhibiting what mail was sorted on each train. New Jersey mail is not on the list for the North Division Train 76 crew. Consequently, the crew made a dispatch to New York & Washington Train 110 at Washington Union Station for the continued northbound journey.

Neither South nor North Division Washington & Jacksonville RPO crews prepared direct pouches to New Jersey post offices. A Railway Postal Clerk therefore distributed letters to states and labeled the letter bundle “tie-out” to the connecting RPO. The general principle was that if there were not at least ten letters for a state that the letter package was labeled “Mixed State(s).” As the RPO chain traveled further north, the number of New Jersey-destined letters would increase to the point that one or more letter package could be made and labeled “New Jersey.” Being the courthouse location of Morris County, Morristown may have had sufficient letters to make a direct letter package. It was likely to have been in a New Jersey letter package since the letter is back-stamped by the New York & Washington RPO Train 110.

### MAILS WORKED (N. D.)

Tr. 80, Md., Va., #N. Y., #Penn., #W. Va. New York City, †Philadelphia City (a), Conn. (directs), New Jersey (directs).

Tr. 72, Del., Md., Va.; †New York City (d); #Penn., #N. Y. †N. J. (directs).

Tr. 82, Md., N. C., Va.; #Mass., #N. Y., #Penn., #W. Va.; New York City and Philadelphia letters (stations) (a); †Baltimore, Md. (a) †Washington, D. C. Official (a) Conn. (directs); New Jersey (directs).

Tr. 76, Md., N. C., Va.; #N. Y., #Penn., #W. Va.; New York City letters (Sta's.) (a).

Tr. 83, Fla., Ga., N. C., S. C., Va.; Charleston, S. C. (letters) (a).

Tr. 71, Fla., Ga.

Tr. 89, Ga., N. C., S. C., Va.

Tr. 16, Md., Va.; #N. Y. State, #Penn., #W. Va.; New Jersey (directs).

Tr. 75, Fla., N. C., S. C., Va.; Richmond City letters (carriers). (a).

All trains class (B).

### Train 76

Cols. & Norfolk...15b	Petersburg.	Rich. & Danville...11b	Richmond.
Cols. & Norfolk...16b	Petersburg.	Wash. & Atl.....33a	Washington.
Golds. & Greens...111a	Selma.	Wash. & Jack.....75a	Washington.
§Mt. Airy & Wilm...56b	Fayetteville.	Wash. & Jack.....89a	Fayetteville.
§N. Y. & Wash...110a	Washington.	Wash. & Jack.....83a	No. Emporia.
Norf. & Danville...3b	No. Emporia.	Wash. & Hamlet...5a	Richmond.
Norf. & Wilm.....41a	Rocky Mt.	Wilm. & Ruth....13a	Pembroke.

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**Figure 16** - Third Division RMS Schedule of Mail Routes 518, Mail Worked and Train 76 Dispatch List, Page 125, 1937.

At Washington, DC's Union Station, Train 76 made a connection with New York & Washington train 110. Train 76 arrived at 1:25 AM on Friday morning, April 30<sup>th</sup>. The letter was now about halfway to its destination both in time and mileage.



**Figure 17** - New York & Washington RPO postmark which appears on the back of the envelope.



Although the train number appearing in the postmark above is not entirely legible, the schedule table below as well as the previous citation for northward connection confirms that it was Train 110.

★NEW YORK & WASHINGTON R. P. O.		
Penn. R. R. (N. Y., Md. & Balt. Divs.), 224.90		
Rt. 102,789—Dist. 1.		
April 25, 1937		110a
Lv... New York, N. Y. (Hud. Term.).....	Ar	6 52
Lv... †New York, N. Y. (Penna. R. R. Sta.)	Ar	6 45
Lv... Manhattan Transfer (n. o.), N. J....	Ar	6 31
... †Newark, N. J.....		6 27
... †Elizabeth, N. J.....		
... Rahway, N. J.....		
... †New Brunswick, N. J.....		6 01
... Princeton Jc., N. J.....		
... †Trenton, N. J.....		5 34
... North Philadelphia, Pa.....		5 06
Ar } .. Philadelphia, Pa. (30th St.).....	Lv	4 56
Lv } .. †Chester, Pa.....	Ar	4 52
Ar } .. †Wilmington, Del.....	Lv	4 17
Lv } .. Newark, Del.....	Ar	4 17
... Elkton, Md.....		
... Perryville, Md.....		
Ar } .. †Baltimore, Md.....	Lv	3 01
Lv } .. †Washington, D. C.....	Ar	2 49
Ar... †Washington, D. C.....	Lv	2 00

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**Figure 18** - Second Division RMS Schedule of Mail Routes 436, Page 122, 1937. There were many other RPO trains on this route, so this graphic is edited to only show Train 110.

Train 110 departed Washington, DC, at 2:00 AM and arrived at New York City's Pennsylvania Station at 6:45 AM. The "Mails Distributed..." table indicates that the crew on train 110 worked New Jersey letters. At the pouch rack, there was a direct pouch for New York & Buffalo RPO Train 3 at Hoboken. A postmark for that route does not appear as a backstamp because a Railway Postal Clerk on the "NY & Wash" was the last person to sort the letter and include it in a "tie-out" for Morristown. Once the letter was in a direct pouch, it could be carried by one or more other RPOs and mail vehicles to its destination post office without being opened and contents re-sorted.

# **MAILS DISTRIBUTED** x Letters only.

Baltimore City...	
Brooklyn, N. Y...	x110b
¶Connecticut....	x110
Delaware.....	110
Foreign.....	x110
Georgia.....	
Maryland.....	110
¶Massachusetts..	x110
New York City..	x110a
New York State..	110
North Carolina...	
New Jersey.....	110
¶New Hampshire.	x110
Philadelphia City.	x110a
Pennsylvania....	110
South Carolina...	
¶Vermont.....	110
Virginia.....	
West Virginia....	
Washington City	

## Train 110

A. M. F., Newark, N. J.	a	Newark.
Allen & Phila. 91-41...	b	30thSt., Phila.
Atlantic City, N. J.	a	30thSt., Phila.
Balti. & Cumb. 1.....	b	Baltimore.
Bayonne, N. J.	b	New Bruns.
Beth. & Phila. 2359....	@	30thSt., Phila.
Binghamton, N. Y., Term.	e	New York.
Bloomfield, N. J.	a	Newark.
Boston, Mass.	e	New York.
Bos. & N. Y. 8.....	f	Washington.
Do. .... 176.....	e	New York.
Bos. Spgf. & N. Y. 50...	b	New York.
Bd. Bk. & Phila. 530....	ft	No. Phila.
Bridgeport, Conn.	e	New York.
Bristol, Pa.	b	Trenton.
Brooklyn, N. Y.	j	Man. Trans.
Do. ....	f	Washington.
Do. ....	y	New York.
Buff. & Wash. 991.....	b	Baltimore.
Camden, N. J.	a	30thSt., Phila.
Camden, N. J., Term.	a	30thSt., Phila.
Cent. Term. J. C., N. J.	a	New York.
Chat. & N. Y. 1005-05...	b	New York.
Chester, Pa.	a	30thSt., Phila.
East Orange, N. J.	a	Newark.
E. Strouds & Trent. 356.	b	Trenton.

## Train 110—Continued

Elizabeth, N. J.	j	New Bruns.
Do. ....	y	Newark.
Erie Term., J. C., N. J.	a	New York.
Flushing, N. Y.	j	New York.
Greenp. & N. Y. 204....	b	New York.
Harrisburg, Pa.	e	Baltimore.
Harrisburg, Pa., Term.	e	Baltimore.
Hartford, Conn.	e	New York.
Hoboken, N. J. (D. & D.)	b	Newark.
Hoboken, N. J., Term.	a	New York.
Jamaica, N. Y.	e	New York.
Jersey City, N. J.	j	Newark.
Jersey City, N. J.	y	New York.
Long Island City, N. Y.	a	New York.
Montclair, N. J.	a	Newark.
N. Y. & Buff.	f	Washington.
Do. .... 3.....	b	New York.
New Haven, Conn.	e	New York.
N. Y., N. Y. G. P. O.		
(wkd).....	f	Washington.
N. Y. H. T. Anx.	j	Man. Trans.
N. Y.-Branch. 605-1013.	b	Washington.
N. Y. & Chi. 51.....	a	New York.
N. Y. & Far Rock. 1124.	j	New York.
N. Y. Gen. & Buff. 27...	b	New York.
N. Y. & Phila. 2554....	j	30thSt., Phila.
N. Y. & Pitts. 13.....	a	Baltimore.
Do. .... 15.....	b	30thSt., Phila.
N. Y. & Pt. Pleas. 3305.	j	New Bruns.
N. Y. & Sala. 1.....	b	New York.
N. Y. & Wash. 102.....	m	Washington.
Do. .... 107.....	a	Wilmington.
Do. .... 169.....	a	New York.
Do. .... 258.....	b	No. Phila.
Orange, N. J.	a	Newark.
Oyster Bay & N. Y. 516.	z	New York.
Paterson, N. J.	a	New York.
Philadelphia, Pa. (Air Mail)	a	30thSt., Phila.
Phila. & Norf. 451.....	b	Wilmington.
Phila. & Perry. 4501....	b	30thSt., Phila.
Do. .... M.D. 59....	b	30thSt., Phila.
Plainfield, N. J.	j	New Bruns.
Pt. Jeff. & N. Y. 610...	b	New York.
Princeton, N. J.	b	Trenton.
Providence, R. I.	a	New York.
Rahway, N. J.	j	New Bruns.
Do. ....	z	Newark.
Reading Term.	a	30thSt., Phila.
Seranton, Pa.	e	New York.
Sidney & N. Y. 1.....	f	Washington.
Springfield, Mass.	e	New York.
Staten Island, N. Y.	j	Man. Trans.
Do. ....	z	New York.
Sussex & N. Y. 909....	j	New York.
T. C., Wilmington, Del.	rr	Wilmington.
Trent. & Lg. Br. 804....	j	Trenton.
Do. .... 832....	j	Trenton.
Vance & Bos. 257.....	e	New York.
Weehawken, N. J., Term.	a	New York.
White Plains, N. Y.	e	New York.
York, Pa.	e	Baltimore.

Figure 19 - Second Division RMS Schedule of Mail Routes 436, Page 127 edited, 1937.



Figure 19 includes a partial list of dispatches made by train 110. In the second column, New York & Buffalo (N.Y. & Buff.) Train 3 appears. This confirms that there was a connection between these two trains even though there is no back-stamp for the receiving route.



**Figure 20** - PRR 6579 RPO was typical of New York & Washington RPO car assignments during 1937.

Pennsylvania Railroad train 110 arrived at Pennsylvania Station. Delaware, Lackawanna & Western (DL&W or “Lackawanna”) train 3 departed from its Hoboken Terminal on the west side of the Hudson River. The letter was in a locked pouch and entered the New York General Post Office (GPO, later called the Farley Building) which was above the train platforms. From there it was loaded into a New York Post Office Motor Vehicle Service truck and transferred about two miles along Seventh Avenue and Christopher Street to pier 44 via New York Post Office’s Motor Vehicle Service. Trucks shuttled between the piers and ferries continuously during the day and night, weekends and holidays included. The one-way transit time including road and water transportation was 25 minutes according to Figure 21. A portion of the New York City map circa 1938 shows the location of Pennsylvania Station and the Pier 44 ferry terminal.

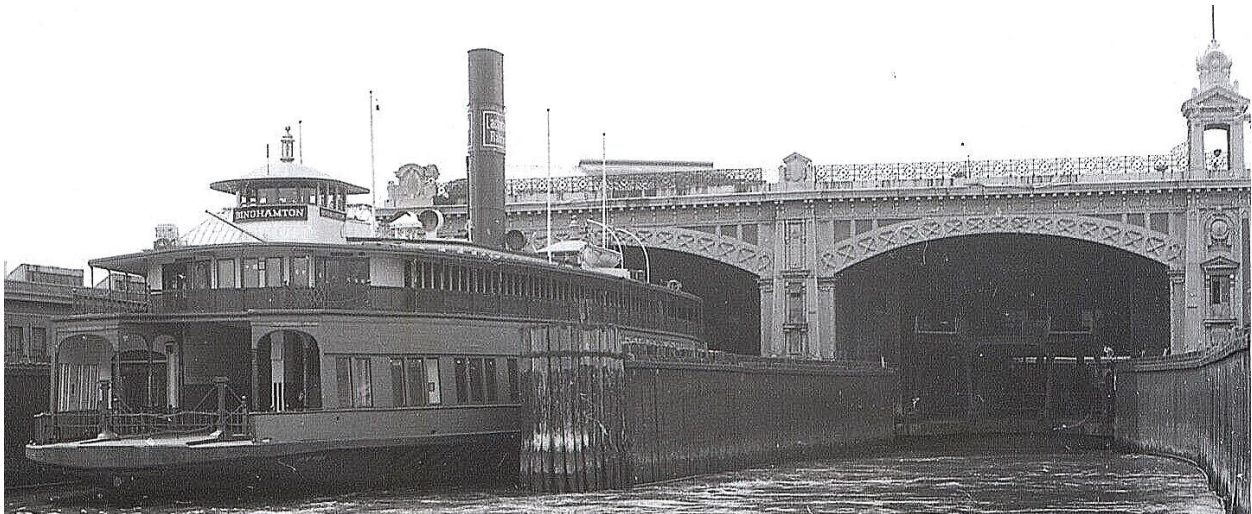
The ferries carried vehicles, so it is likely that the mail truck rolled aboard the next available ferry at the Manhattan pier, made the crossing, then drove within the Lackawanna Terminal to the Transfer Office. Porters would unload the pouches and sacks, transferring them to four-wheel carts for the final distance to an awaiting RPO during its advance time. Meanwhile, there was probably mail that was off-loaded from trains that filled the truck for its return to the GPO. This cycle continued throughout the 24-hour period between various New Jersey railway passenger terminals and the GPO listed in Figure 21.

**DISTANCES BETWEEN RAILROAD STATIONS AT IMPORTANT  
JUNCTIONS AND TIME REQUIRED FOR TRANSFER**

Junction	From—	To—	Distance Miles	Running Time
New York, N. Y.	N. Y. Central.....	Penn. Sta., N. Y.....	1.80	25
Do.....	Do.....	D. L. & W. (Hoboken, N. J.)	3.77	43
Do.....	Do.....	Erie Sta., J. C., N. J. (via 23rd St. Ferry).....	4.41	52
Do.....	Do.....	Erie Sta., J. C., N. J. (via Chambers St. Ferry).....	4.65	47
Do.....	Do.....	N. Y. C. (Weehawken).....	2.54	30
Do.....	Do.....	West Side Term.....	2.30	30
Do.....	Penn. Sta., N. Y..	Penn. Sta., J. C., N. J. (via Cortlandt St. Ferry).....	3.35	40
Do.....	Do.....	D. L. & W. (Hoboken, N. J.)	2.77	25
Do.....	Do.....	Erie Sta., J. C., N. J. (via 23rd St. Ferry).....	3.41	32
Do.....	Do.....	Erie Sta., J. C., N. J. (via Chambers St. Ferry).....	4.15	35
Do.....	Do.....	Cent. R. R. Sta., J. C., N. J. (via 23rd St. Ferry).....	4.69	35
Do.....	Do.....	Cent. R. R. Sta., J. C., N. J. (via Liberty St. Ferry)....	4.57	38
Do.....	Do.....	N. Y. C. (Weehawken).....	2.14	25
Do.....	Do.....	West Side Term.....	50	05

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**Figure 21** - Second Division RMS Schedule of Mail Routes 436, Page 211, 1937.



**Figure 22** - DL&W ferry "Hoboken" at the Hoboken Terminal ferry slip.







Charles King, who was hired by the Erie-Lackawanna Railroad during 1970, provided this supplement information which has been summarized.

*Most of the mail handling equipment ... consisted of a conveyor belt going from the floor of the ferry slips to the upper floor where there was a post office facility. This was walled off so passengers getting to or from the upper decks of the boats could not enter the mail room. [Transfer Office clerks] did sorting; there were chutes going down to a couple of loading docks on the street side at the north end of the terminal for truck loading. There was also a conveyor to handle mail to be loaded on carts along the platforms [for loading] onto trains. So, truckloads of mail came in by ferry boat, went upstairs, was sorted, [then] loaded on local trucks or trains.*

The 1937 schedule for the New York & Buffalo RPOs trains appears in Figure 24. A snip from the 1936 New Jersey General Scheme for Morristown is included in Figure 25.

# ★NEW YORK & BUFFALO R. P. O.

D., L. & W. R. R., 397.46 miles. Hoboken to Binghamton (via Paterson & Slate. cutoff), 191.70 miles. Hoboken to Scranton (via Paterson & Washington). 143.56 miles. Hoboken to Binghamton (via Newark & Slate. cutoff), 194.07 miles. Rt. 102,758.—Dist. 2.

April 25, 1937

9%	1049b	25b	3cu	1b	15a		2b	6cu	42b	10cu	8a
8 18	3 15	3 15	9 15	6 15	12 48	Lv... †New York, N. Y., G. P. O. ....	Ar 3 11	7 41	8 38	6 08	8 41
8 55	4 00	3 55	10 20	7 00	1 25	Lv... †Hoboken, N. J. ....	Ar 2 10	6 59	7 55	5 20	7 50
9 10		4 10	10 35			... †Newark, N. J. ....	1 55	6 40			7 33
						... Morristown, N. J. ....					
	4 18			7 15		... Lyndhurst, N. J. ....			7 21		
	4 33			7 32		... †Paterson, N. J. ....			7 07	4 55	
	5 11					... Denville, N. J. ....					
				8 07		... Rockaway, N. J. ....					
	5 20	4 59		8 15		... Dover, N. J. ....	1 10	5 56	6 37	4 17	6 35
				8 34		... Netcong, N. J. ....			6 18		
				9 05		... Washington, N. J. ....			5 45		
				9 37		... Delaware, N. J. ....			5 10		
				9 42		... Portland, Pa. ....			5 05		
		5 54		9 50		... Slateford Jc. (n.o.), Pa. ....					
11 05		6 09	12 23	10 00	3 26	... Delaware Water Gap, Pa. ....	12 18		4 55		
12 25		7 40	1 43	11 40	4 55	Ar } ... East Stroudsburg, Pa. ....	Lv 12 08	4 58	4 45	3 20	5 35
						Ar } ... †Scranton, Pa. ....	Lv 10 35	3 35	2 45	1 45	4 15
									28b		
12 35		7 50	1 50	7 15	5 05	Lv } ... †Binghamton, N. Y. ....	Ar 10 25	3 30	8 05	1 35	4 05
1 55		9 05	3 07	8 50	6 30	Ar } ...	Lv 9 00	2 15	6 35	12 20	2 50
2 05		9 15	3 15		7 00	Lv } ...	Ar 8 50	2 05		12 00	2 38
2 32		9 44	3 41		7 33	... Owego, N. Y. ....	8 20	1 37		11 21	
	5b	10 11	4 04		8 03	... Waverly, N. Y. ....	7 54	1 12		10 54	1 51
3 18	11 05	10 40	4 25		8 35	... †Elmira, N. Y. ....	7 20	12 45		10 20	1 25
3 48	11 27		4 52		9 03	... Corning, N. Y. ....	6 55	12 23		9 52	1 03
4 12	11 51		5 15		9 30	... Bath, N. Y. ....	6 24	12 03		9 22	12 40
					10 13	... Wayland, N. Y. ....				8 35	
5 11	12 49		6 15		10 47	... Mount Morris, N. Y. ....	5 05	10 56		7 45	11 39
6 35	2 15		7 35		12 15	Ar... †Buffalo, N. Y. ....	Lv 3 50	9 45		7 17	
										6 15	10 25

%R. P. O., c; C. P., g.

Trs. 1049, 27, 28, CLASS A; all others, CLASS B.

Tr. 10 runs via Slateford cutoff and Paterson.

Tr. 42 runs via Washington and Paterson, N. J.

Tr. 1 runs via Paterson, Rockaway and Washington, N. J.

Trs. 3, 25-5 and 9 run via Newark and Slateford Jc. cutoff.

Trs. 2, 6 and 8 run via Slateford cutoff and Newark.

Tr. 15, runs via Paterson and Slateford cutoff.

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Figure 24 - Second Division RMS Schedule of Mail Routes 436, Page 91, 1937.

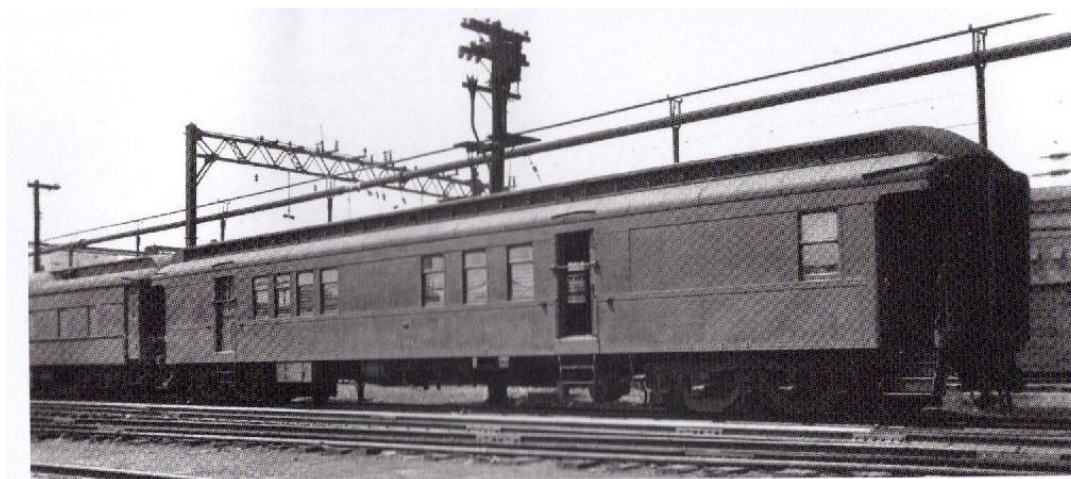


MORRIS		48
Morristown (c. h.)-----	{	N. Y. & Branchv. Summit to Denville.
		N. Y. & Buffalo. Summit to Denville. Trs. 3, 8c

**Figure 25** - New Jersey 1936 General Scheme entry on page 48 showing the mail supplies for Morristown.

New York & Washington RPO Train 110 arrived at 6:45 AM in Pennsylvania Station. Platforms were located under the New York General Post Office (GPO) and likely entered via platform trucks or conveyors and hour later. The New York & Buffalo RPO schedule includes a departure from the GPO to Hoboken Terminal to meet train 3. Departure from the GPO was 9:15 AM in time for train 3 to leave westbound at 10:20 AM.

The Lackawanna Railroad had several 60-foot RPO cars in its equipment roster. Figure 26 shows one that could have possibly carried this letter to its Morristown dispatch point.

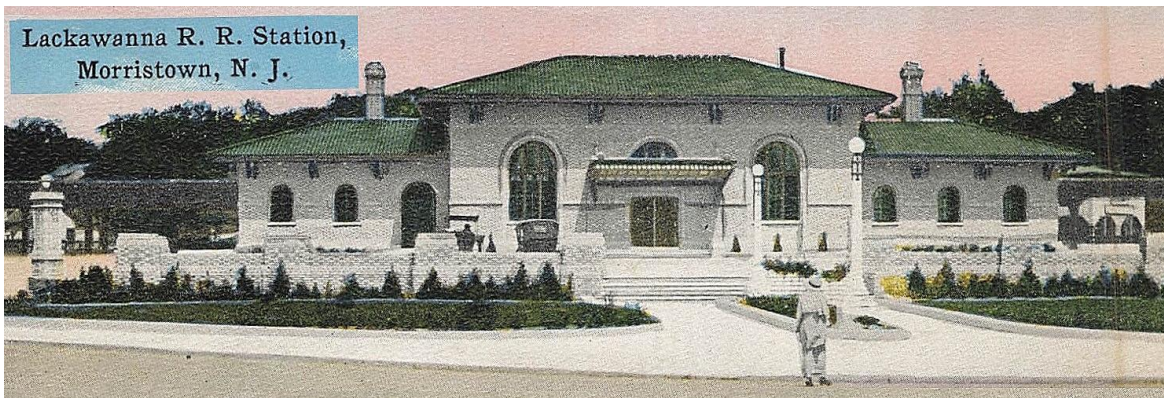


ABOVE DL&W 1802 was the third "non-vestibule" mail car (MA) in a group of three cars built in 1915. The other two (1800, 1801) had their floor plans and exterior window arrangements modified and were later modernized with rounded roofs. RPO 1802 apparently kept its original floorplan and 4+3 window arrangement and was retired and sold to Summer & Company in April 1951. *GEORGE VOTAVA*

**Figure 26** - DL&W 1802 photograph from "Lackawanna's-RPO cars," *DIAMOND* journal, Volume 37, Number 1, Page 6, 2022.

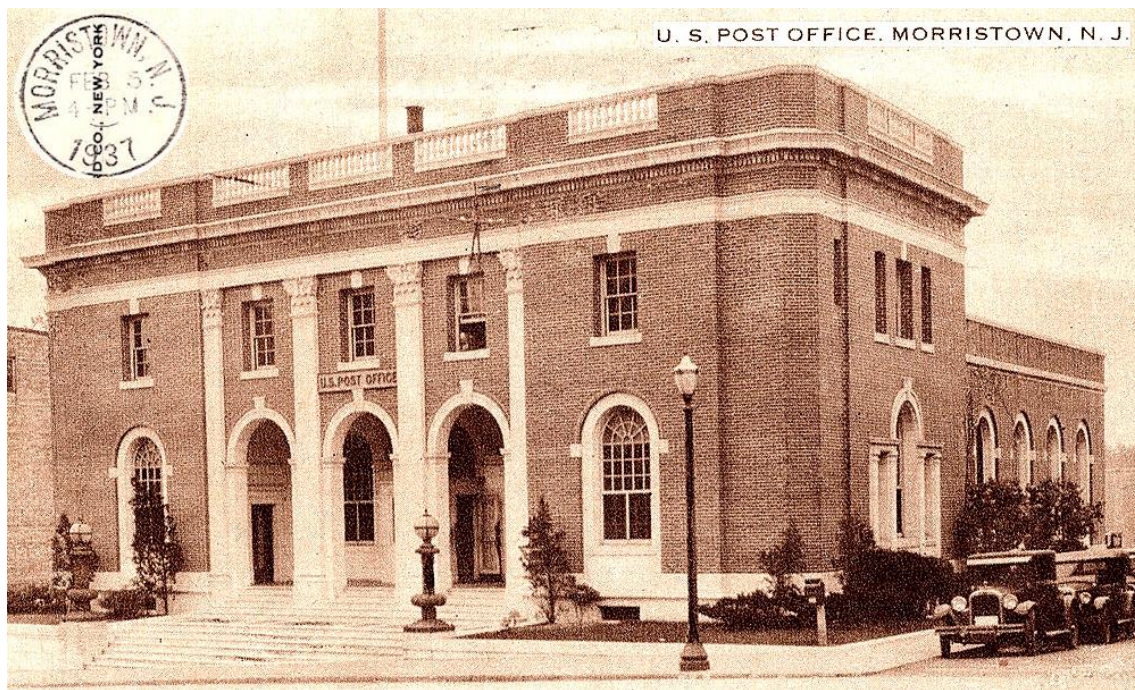
The letter arrived at the Morristown depot at approximately 11 AM. This station was a conditional stop for train 3, but mail could be received and dispatched whether the train stopped or not. Figure 25 indicates that train 3 picked up and dispatched mail daily.





**Figure 27** - A 1915 post card view of Morristown station, printed by an unidentified publisher.

A Mail Messenger was a contract employee hired by a postmaster to make short-distance connections between a mail supply location –in this example, Morristown’s Lackawanna station --and the destination Post Office appearing in Figure 27.



**Figure 28** - A post card postmarked 1937 of the Morristown Post Office, printed by Eagle Post Card Company, New York.





**Figure 29** - The Morristown receiving rubber stamp postmark which appears on the back of the envelope.

Ordinarily, Special Delivery covers are back-stamped with a circular date stamp indicating the arrival date and time. They are also usually endorsed “Fee Claimed by Office of First Delivery.” Only the back-stamp indicating the 12:30 PM arrival at the Morristown Post Office appears. “Special Delivery” secured immediate delivery from a post office to the addressee after arrival at the post office responsible for delivering it, rather than waiting for the next regular delivery to the addressee.<sup>4</sup> Since the arrival at the Morristown post office was 12:30 PM, a conjecture is that the addressee received this letter at approximately 2 PM, about 26 hours after posting at Charleston.



**Figure 30** - 195 Speedwell Avenue as it appears in 2025. During 1937, the ground floor was a grocery with an apartment above. Source: Google Street View.

## Provenance

Who was Shirley Schindler, sender, and Herman Schindler, recipient? Reviewing Charleston and Morristown 1930s city directories do not reveal either name. Other searches of U.S. Census within Ancestry.com yielded no results. There appears to be a family relationship, but it is not known whether they were spouses, father-daughter, mother-son, or another combination. Whatever linked them through urgency was likely included in the missing enclosure. Even though further disclosure of who each person was is not possible, the research in this article conclusively

<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S.\\_Special\\_Delivery\\_\(postal\\_service\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Special_Delivery_(postal_service))

defines how the letter moved within approximately 26 hours. The Post Office Department bound the nation –but it was the Railway Mail Service that kept the laces tight.

This envelope was purchased from Bookending Collectibles, Charles M. Kneisley, on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025. No further information was available from the seller. It is now in the RMS Library collection.

## **Closing thoughts**

There are significant orientation differences between “philately,” “postal history,” and “post office history.” A philatelist will focus upon a postage stamp, such as design, color, perforations, and other attributes. That person will view the envelope and identify the postage stamp as “CE2 - 1936 16c Airmail Special Delivery.” The history of that stamp will be read differently than the preceding pages, focusing upon such things as design, ink, and printing history.

A postal historian will evaluate the postage stamps used on a mailed item in combination with other postal markings. Those markings include the postmark, canceling bars or obliterator, plus auxiliary imprints such as “damaged by canceling machine” or “forwarded.” The mailing date may be especially relevant to the first day of usage, the last day a post office was open, or another noteworthy news event. That focus will likewise result in a shorter analysis than 22 pages.

Post office history involves a much deeper analysis, delving into operational procedures and organizational alignments. A cover represents success –or sometimes failure such as a wreck—of how the logistical chain and mail distribution work was performed. Perhaps a reason that this research is seldom performed is limited access to primary source documentation. It also requires foundational understanding of the Post Office Department and Postal Service. Distribution, transportation, and mail processing awareness are essential.

The Railway Mail Service remained near peak efficiency during the Great Depression decade. It relied upon four factors to continue vibrancy:

1. Highly skilled mail distributors who were said to know mail dispatches for as many as 10,000 post offices with at least 97 percent accuracy.
2. Sufficiently frequent RPOs on trains in major city-pair corridors as well as reaching smaller villages along railroad branch lines. The general minimum frequency was about three RPO trains in each direction daily, spaced about eight hours apart.
3. RPO space and crews that could handle the first-class periodical, and registered mail volume traveling along a route.
4. Closely scheduled and frequent connections between mail routes of all types.

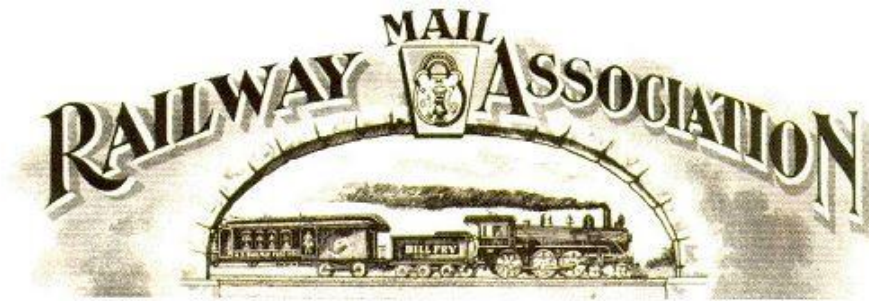
Changes after World War II and particularly during the 1960s resulted in service capability erosion. Those key factors include:

1. Expansion of the air mail network in both air stop locations and flight frequency.
2. Decline of railroad passenger service which eliminated branch line trains and reduced the frequency of main line city-pair trips.



3. Shift to centralized mail processing utilizing mechanization and later automation equipment.
4. Reduction of postal communications use by the public as other alternatives developed.

In its time and place, the Railway Mail Service achieved accolades during the 113 years that RPOs operated. Business courses teach that there is a “product life cycle” of a developmental period, productive years, and decline.<sup>5</sup> Any service that continued successfully for more than a century earns recognition for the legacy it left behind as well as a well-earned rest in history.



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The Railway Mail Service (RMS) Library is a major collection of materials pertaining to en route distribution history. It can assist researchers interested in Route Agent, Seapost, railway, and highway post office (RPO and HPO) history. The collection has many unique, original-source documents that provide answers to questions dealing with the transportation and distribution of USA Mail between 1862 and 1977, as well as other countries during the 19th and 20th centuries. Research inquiries may be sent to the address above or by email to [fscheer@railwaymailservicelibrary.org](mailto:fscheer@railwaymailservicelibrary.org).

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<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.salesforce.com/au/blog/product-life-cycle/>



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