



# Smithsonian

## *National Postal Museum*

### Railway Mail Service Maps

Mitch Toda, Head Archivist, July 2024

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Postal Museum Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Railway Mail Service Maps
<b>Date:</b>	1905-1909
<b>Identifier:</b>	NPMA.2024.3
<b>Extent:</b>	0.1 Cubic feet (Two (2) oversize folders)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	This collection consists of nine Railway Mail Service maps for various areas in the United States published by the International Correspondence Schools in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The maps were engraved by E. F. Fisk of New York and were used to help employees locate post offices and railway lines and to assist prospective workers to learn about the various railway routes.
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Image(s): Map - Division 4 - Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, Florida and parts of Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina, 1905</a>

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Donated by Anthony Skitromo, 2024.

### Related Materials

The National Postal Museum holds additional collection items related to the [Railway Mail Service](#) .

The Norman B. Leventhal Map and Education Center at the Boston Public Library provides access to digitized versions of the [Railway Mail Services](#) maps in their collection.

For more information about the International Correspondence Schools, the University of Scranton Archives and McHugh Family Special Collections holds the [International Correspondence Schools of Scranton Collection](#) .

### Processing Information

Processed by Mitch Toda, July 2024.

### Preferred Citation

Railway Mail Service Maps, NPMA.2024.3, National Postal Museum, Smithsonian Institution

### Restrictions

Collection is open for research. Access to original archival materials is by appointment only. Researchers must submit request for appointment in writing. Please direct reference inquiries to the National Postal Museum Archives: [NPM\\_Archives@si.edu](mailto:NPM_Archives@si.edu).

## Conditions Governing Use

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## Biographical / Historical

Beginning in 1832 train cars were used to carry the mail, and then in 1864 postal officials inaugurated the Railway Mail Service. Instead of simply using train cars to transport mail, clerks on board specially-designed Railway Post Office (RPO) cars sorted mail while moving.

For stations where the train did not stop, mail cranes were erected next to the track for an exchange while the train passed. Before the train appeared, the postmaster suspended the town's outgoing mail in a tough canvas pouch on the crane. As the mail car passed, a clerk on board maneuvered a hook to grab the pouch and bring it into the car. Any mail for that town was tossed off the train in a similar pouch. This system was known as 'mail on-the-fly'.

Railway Mail Service carried the majority of U.S. mail for many decades. As the postal service decentralized its operations, it concentrated on sorting much of the growing volume of mail while it was being carried on the nation's rail lines. Not only were mail cars added to trains crisscrossing the nation, but special "Fast Mail Trains" comprised of nothing but mail sorting cars helped move massive amounts of mail between some of the nation's largest cities. The service ended on June 30, 1977. (Railway Mail Service history note courtesy of Nancy A. Pope, National Postal Museum)

International Correspondence Schools was founded in 1891 by Thomas J. Foster, publisher of the journal, *Colliery Engineer and Metal Miner*. In just the span of eight years, the school had over 190,000 students enrolled in its courses. For a more detailed history of the school, see the finding aid to the [International Correspondence Schools of Scranton Collection](#), held at the University of Scranton Archives and McHugh Family Special Collections.

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## Content Description

This collection consists of nine Railway Mail Service maps for various areas in the United States states published by the International Correspondence Schools in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The maps were engraved by E. F. Fisk of New York and were used to help employees locate post offices and railway lines and to assist prospective workers to learn about the various railway routes.

For more information about Railway Mail Service, see the National Postal Museum's topical reference page: "[Railway Mail Service](#)".

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## Arrangement

Chronologic.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Correspondence schools and courses  
Employees -- Training of  
Maps  
Railway mail service -- United States

Places:

Scranton (Pa.)

## Container Listing

Flat-file 1, Map-folder 1	Railway Mail Service maps, International Correspondence Schools, Scranton, Pennsylvania, 1905-1908
Flat-file 1, Map-folder 1, Item 1	<a href="#">Map - Division 4 - Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, Florida and parts of Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina, 1905</a>
Flat-file 1, Map-folder 1, Item 2	<a href="#">Map - Northeast states, 1906</a>
Flat-file 1, Map-folder 1, Item 3	<a href="#">Map - Division 5 - Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky and Tennessee, 1908</a>
Flat-file 2, Map-folder 2	Railway Mail Service maps, International Correspondence Schools, Scranton, Pennsylvania, 1908-1909
Flat-file 2, Map-folder 2, Item 1	Map - Division 6 - Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, Wyoming and parts of Colorado, Utah, Idaho and Montana, 1908
Flat-file 2, Map-folder 2, Item 2	Map - Division 7 - Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado, and New Mexico, 1908
Flat-file 2, Map-folder 2, Item 3	Map - Division 8 - Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Utah and Arizona, 1908
Flat-file 2, Map-folder 2, Item 4	Map - Division 9 - Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana and Ohio, 1908
Flat-file 2, Map-folder 2, Item 5	Map - Division 10 - Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois (partial), Iowa (partial), Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska (partial), Wyoming (partial), Montana, and Idaho (partial), 1908
Flat-file 2, Map-folder 2, Item 6	Map - Division 11 - Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana, with portions of surrounding states, 1909