Joseph Newton Sparks papers

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2020
Descriptive Summary
Title: Joseph Newton Sparks papers
Dates: 1927-1977
Collection Number: MS 635
Creator/Collector: Sparks (Joseph Newton)
Extent: 1 half-box
Repository: California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives
Sacramento, California 95814
Abstract: This collection includes material documenting the thirty-one year career of Joseph Newton Sparks with the Railway Mail Service.
Language of Material: English
Access
This collection is open for research at our off-site storage facility with one week's notice. Contact Library & Archives staff to arrange for access.
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Preferred Citation
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Acquisition Information
Biography/Administrative History
Joseph Newton Sparks was born on July 19, 1894 in Granville, Missouri. He graduated from the Keyser Preparatory School in Keyser, West Virginia and then spent several years as a farmer in Springfield, West Virginia. In 1921, he went to work in the Kelly-Springfield Tire Company in Cumberland, Maryland. He entered the Railway Mail Service on October 22, 1928 as a substitute Railway Postal Clerk in Baltimore, Maryland, became a clerk in 1936, was appointed Assistant Superintendent in April 1947 of the Postal Transportation Service (formerly the Railway Mail Service) and in November 1947 became District Superintendent and District Transportation Manager on the lines of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad between Jersey City, New Jersey and Washington, D.C. and between Washington and Grafton, West Virginia and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. When District offices were discontinued in 1958, he became a Field Services Officer in the Baltimore area. Joseph Sparks retired on November 30, 1959 after 31 years with the U.S. Post Office Department. On February 9, 1933, he married Margaret Catherine Arnold in Maryland. The Sparks had a son, Joseph F. and two daughters, Mary L. and Margaret J.
Scope and Content of Collection
This collection includes material documenting the thirty-one year career of Joseph Newton Sparks with the Railway Mail Service. It includes a detailed set of personnel records, with applications for transfer, action notices, position description, promotion notices and letters of appreciation. Also includes: certificate of honorary recognition for thirty-one years of service, position descriptions with organization charts for Sparks' office while he was District Transportation Manager, which includes the salary level, basic function, duties and responsibilities, and, information about where the mail is delivered to each station, a diagram of the interior of a RPO car showing where each railway clerk was stationed, a photograph file with group photographs from 1939 of Railway Mail Service office staff from Virginia, North Carolina, Washington, D.C., West Virginia and Maryland sent to District 7 for inclusion in a former Superintendent's memory book, three cancellations, pouch and paper case location tables and diagrams. Also includes clippings related to the last RPO car, early Western mail service, Southern Pacific's Shasta Route mail service, and two issues of "Transit Postmark Collector" for 1973, which includes a history of the railway mail service written in 1902 and an article about mail service on board the Delta Queen. The correspondence file includes a letter from Tom Greco asking for Mr. Sparks' comments on an article (typescript included) about RPO service on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Arranged alphabetically by subject / type of material.