United States Railway Mail Service Postmark Collection

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2017
Descriptive Summary

Title: United States Railway Mail Service Postmark Collection

Dates: 1900-1967

Collection Number: MS 685

Creator/Collector: United States Railway Mail Service

Extent: 1 half-box

Repository: California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives
Sacramento, California 95814

Abstract: Includes sixteen envelopes and fifty-six postcards with Railway Mail Service (RMS) or Postal Transportation Service (PTS) cancels.

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

United States Railway Mail Service Postmark Collection. California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives

Acquisition Information

Gift of Skip Herbert, 2003

Biography/Administrative History

The Railway Mail Service (RMS), a Department of the United States Post Office, and its successor the Postal Transportation Service (PTS), carried most of the mail in the United States between 1890 and 1970. Established in 1869, the Railway Mail Service provided for the movement of mail by train. Highly trained RMS postal clerks staffed the Railway Post Office (RPO), a separate car on a passenger train. Mail sorted en route, received a cancellation just as if it had been mailed at a local post office. On October 1, 1948, the Railway Mail Service was renamed the Postal Transportation Service. The last railway post office car operated between New York and Washington, D.C. on June 30, 1977.

Scope and Content of Collection

Includes sixteen envelopes and fifty-six postcards with Railway Mail Service (RMS) or Postal Transportation Service (PTS) cancels. An index notes the postmark, date, train number, name of the train, and the railroad for each item. Postmarks from trains operated by the Southern Pacific, Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, Union Pacific, Virginia & Truckee, Spokane, Portland & Seattle, Sierra, and Northwestern Pacific railroads are represented. Arranged chronologically.