

Railway Post Offices (R.P.O.) on Streetcars

This exhibit shares the history and postal markings of Railway Post Offices (R.P.O.) on **streetcars**. R.P.O. service on **streetcars** began in the late 1800s and ended in the early 1900s when automobile and truck travel became the travel/delivery norm.

Streetcars had one or more mail clerks who were Post Office employees. Clerks collected mail from street corner mailboxes and Post Offices, canceled postage, sorted mail to various routes, and delivered mail to the next corner box for route delivery or the next Post Office for out-of-area delivery. Mail was posted to slots on **streetcars** or handed to the clerks. A local letter or postcard could reach its destination within an hour.

Some **streetcars** were trailers; most were mail only while others also carried passengers. All were painted white to distinguish them from passenger only service.

Each city with streetcar R.P.O. is explored in date of establishment order. Also included are the Chattanooga Electric Car and Collection and Distribution Car Wagons, closely related services.

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Postal rates shown are typical of the late 1890 – 1930 era: letters two cents, postal/post cards one cent. In the WW1 era, November 1917, to July 1919, rates: letters three cents, cards two cents.

Towle rarity factors are listed for each cover/card. Rarity factors of Abundant, Very Common, Common, Fairly Common, Uncommon, and Scarce are yellow highlighted. Rare, Very Rare, Extra Rare, and Unique are yellow highlighted and covers have a red background

