

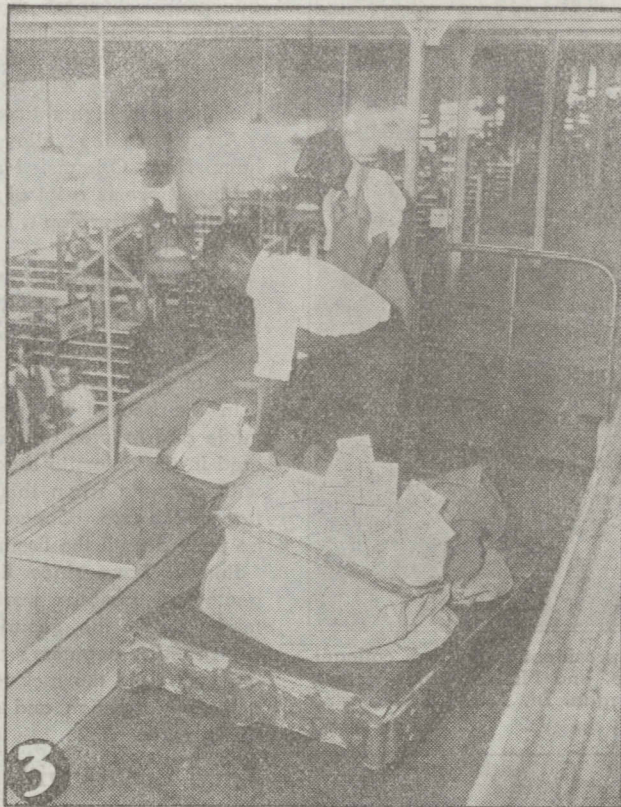
A Letter from Chicago to St. Louis



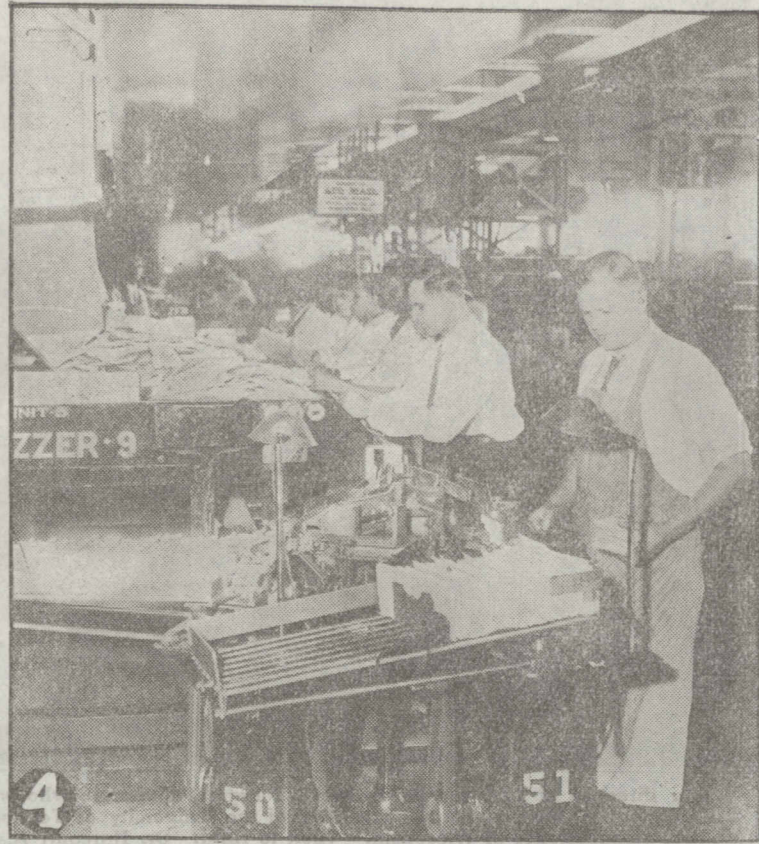
What happens to a letter after it is placed in the corner mail box? Let's follow one and see. Here is Miss Evelyn Hirsch of Chicago, pictured as she places a letter to a friend in St. Louis in the letter box at Chicago and Laramie avenues at about 7 p. m. The letter, of course, bears a three-cent postage stamp and is properly addressed. At the moment it is placed in the box it becomes part of the United States mails and the responsibility for its transportation and delivery to the addressee automatically passes to the postoffice department. The letter remains in the box until the time of the next scheduled collection.



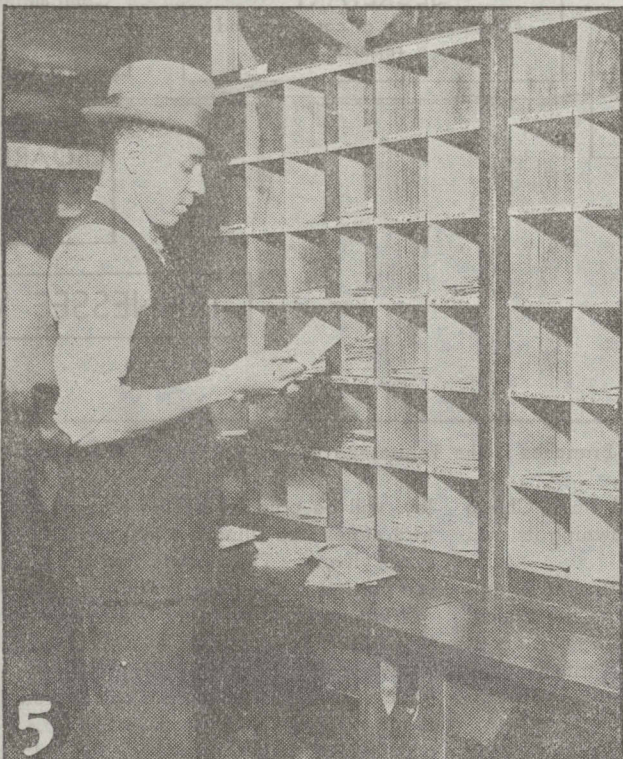
It is about 8:30 p. m. A mail collector, driving a postoffice truck, stops at the letter box at Chicago and Laramie avenues. Into a canvas bag shaped like a valise he dumps all of the mail contained in the letter box. He is just completing his collection rounds and his next stop is the Cragin subpostoffice station. There the mail he has collected is transferred at 9 p. m. to a larger truck, which takes the mail to the general postoffice at Canal street and Jackson boulevard.



At the main postoffice the canvas bags of collected mail are placed in an elevator and taken up to one of the several mail-distributing floors. It is now 10:15 p. m. The bags are loaded on hand trucks and pushed along a mezzanine runway. At intervals the man pushing the truck dumps all of the mail in a bag down a metal chute. This is bulk mail, just as it was collected. It may contain air mail letters, parcel post packages, etc.



The mail dropped into the chute tumbles down onto a table below, in front of which are seated half a dozen workers. These men and women sort out the various classifications of mail. There are two moving belts in front and above them. Packages and air mail letters are tossed on these belts, to be taken to the proper distributing room. First class letters are placed on another moving belt directly in front of them. The letters then pass through a machine, shown in foreground, which cancels the stamp and prints the postmark on each letter.



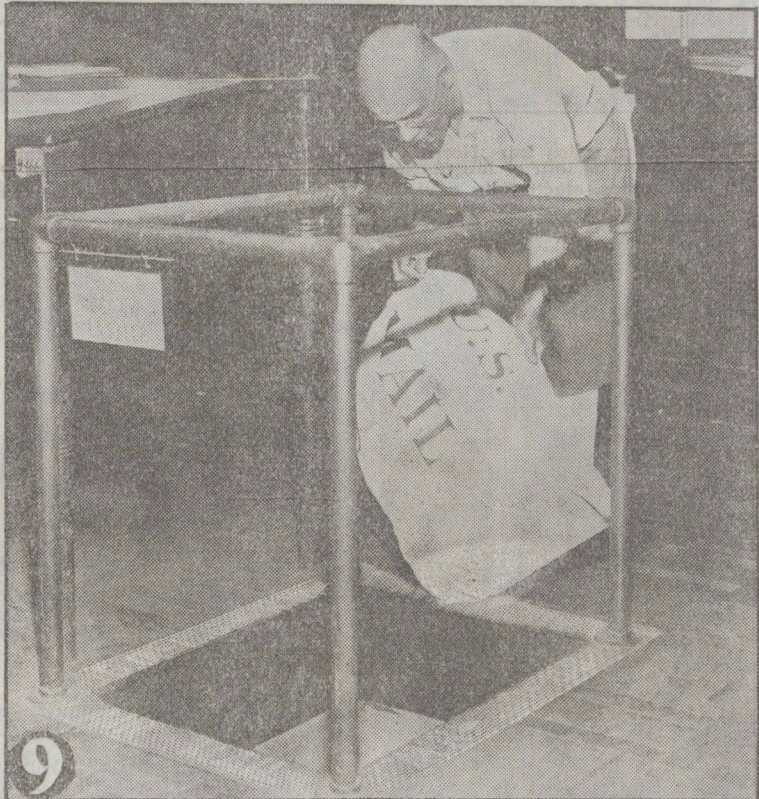
The postmarked letters are gathered up in bunches and taken to a primary distribution unit, of which there are many. Here the letters are distributed into cubbyholes marked with the names of the various states. The picture shows the clerk placing Miss Hirsch's letter to St. Louis in the Missouri box. The postmark showing the time of cancellation reads 10:30 p. m. The clerk is an expert and quickly distributes dozens of letters into the proper boxes, from which they are collected at frequent intervals.



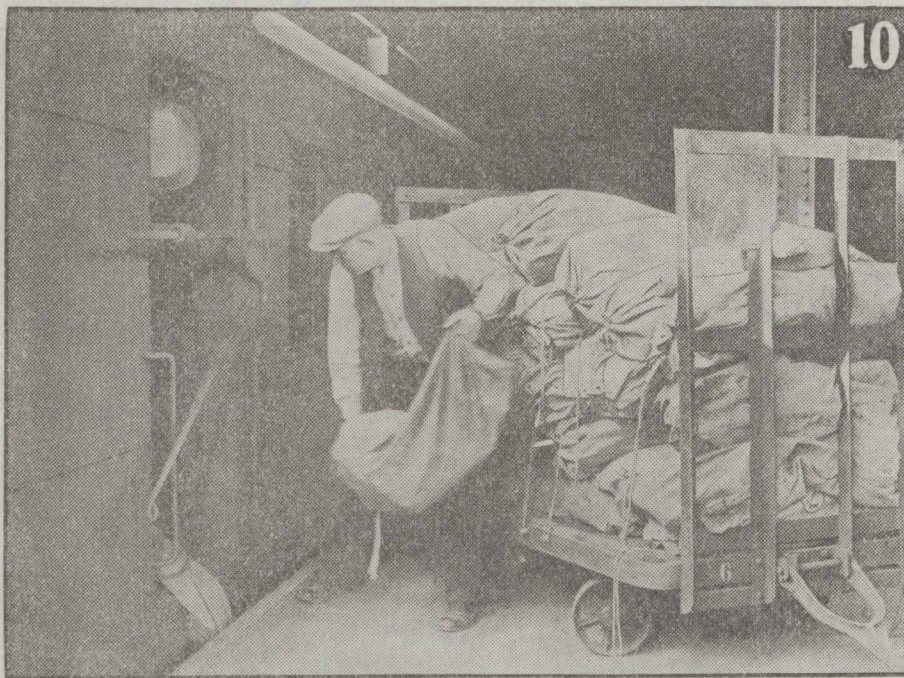
Letters collected from the primary distribution units are placed in metal box containers, a separate box for each state. The boxes are put on a moving belt which delivers them to the secondary distributing units. This belt, of metal, and the boxes are parts of a mechanism. When a box of letters destined for Missouri is placed on the belt the box is automatically delivered to the Missouri distributing unit. This destination is on the opposite side of the building.



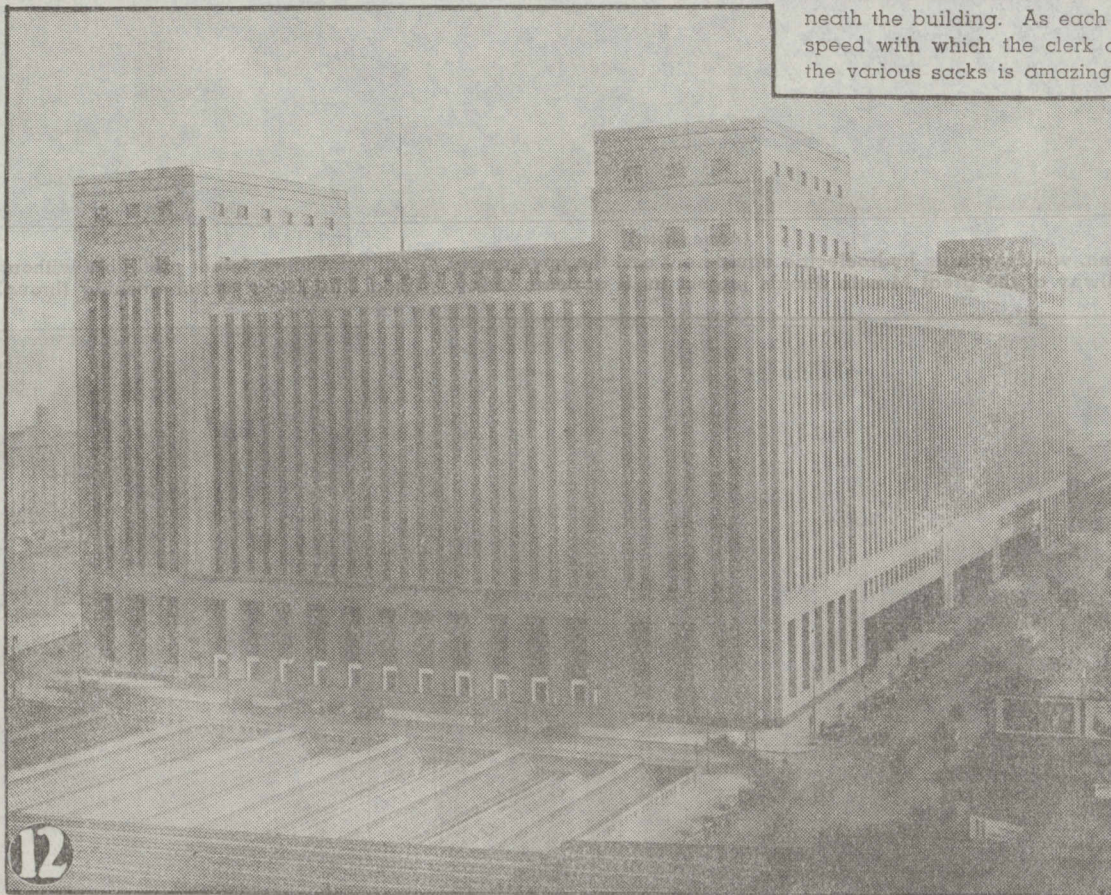
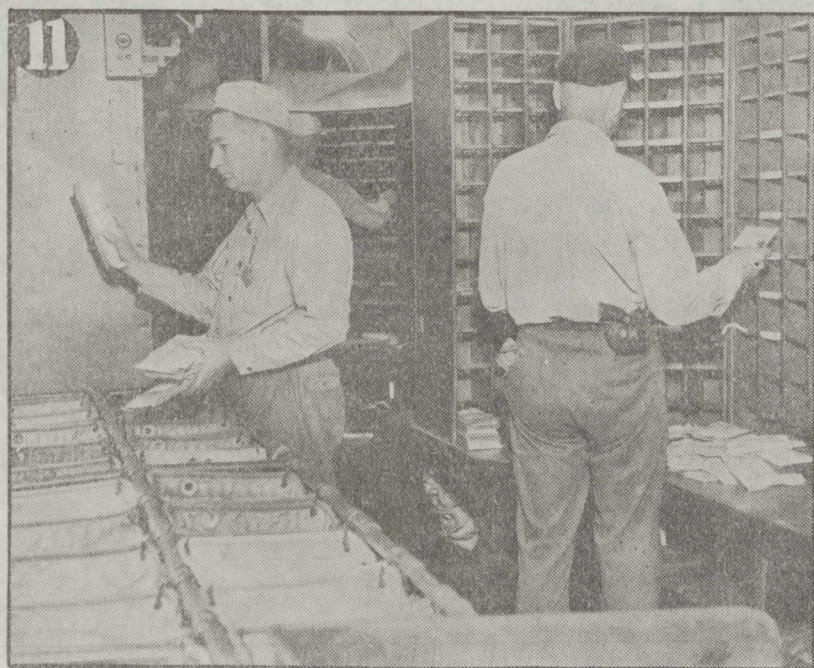
The letters for Missouri, having been delivered to the secondary distributing unit, are now redistributed into cubbyholes bearing the names of the various towns and cities of Missouri. It is now about 11 p. m. At intervals, when one of the cubbyholes is filled, the letters for St. Louis, as an example, are tied with string into a bundle. All of the Missouri bundles next are placed on a moving belt which takes them to a mail sack distributing unit, along with bundles of letters from other secondary distributing units. The secondary distribution requires only a short time and it is now only a few minutes after 11 p. m. The clerk is holding the St. Louis letter.



Picture No. 8, above, shows the letter bundles, arrived at a mail sack distributing unit, being tossed into the various sacks by a clerk. Each sack is destined for a certain railway mail car waiting on the tracks underneath the building. As each sack is filled it is tied and locked. The speed with which the clerk accurately tosses the letter bundles into the various sacks is amazing. Filled sacks, as shown in picture No. 9, are taken to a chute, through which they drop to the train platforms below. The Missouri sacks are dropped through the chute at about 11:15 p. m. On the platform below they are put on hand trucks. Since late afternoon the train platforms have presented a busy scene. Dozens of loaded hand trucks are being wheeled back and forth, to and from the incoming and outgoing railway mail cars along the platforms.



Inside the mail car bound for Missouri there is considerable activity. It is getting close to 11:30 p. m. The sacks delivered from the hand trucks on the platform have been opened and placed in racks. The bundles of letters, each marked for a specific Missouri postoffice, are now rearranged. Letters destined for St. Louis and the larger towns are untied and distributed over again in accordance with the district mail routes of the cities. This distribution is for the purpose of saving time. The train is due to arrive in St. Louis at 6:45 a. m. The letters for St. Louis, by that time, will be in bundles addressed to the various postal districts of the city. No time will be lost in getting the letters into the first morning delivery, completed before 10:30 a. m.



The imposing new Chicago postoffice building at Jackson boulevard and Canal street. Here all of the mail of the country's second city is handled. At only one of the many subpostal stations in the city is the mail handled and distributed as it is in the main postoffice. This is the Englewood station, which serves the stockyards and neighboring districts. A letter mailed, for instance, at Western avenue and 75th street would go to the Englewood station for marking and distribution.

