



EMPIRE STATE  
POSTAL HISTORY  
SOCIETY

APS UNIT 28

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## MOVING THE MAIL BY HIGHWAY

By Alfred Carroccia

The highway post office was implemented by the US Post Office Department in 1941 to counter the withdrawal of railway post office trains and to introduce service to rural areas not accessed by rail. Service was typically between two large cities that could be traveled on one tank of gas with stops at post offices in small towns on the way to distribute and pick up mail.

Bids were sought for a vehicle, typically a bus, which could be refurbished into a rolling post office on wheels. One advantage HPOs had over the railroads was door-to-door service. With trains mail had to be dispatched from post office to the train depot.

On September 15, 1952, the USPOD inaugurated the 140-mile Buffalo and Oil City, Pennsylvania, HPO. Oil City was the largest city between Pittsburgh and Buffalo and it was not on a direct rail route. Mail was processed in Oil City to be dispatched to Pittsburgh by rail. The route was discontinued with the final trip on June 30, 1960.

Round trip service between Buffalo and Oil City was made six days a week with a truck leaving Buffalo at 4:30 a.m. and arriving in Oil City by 12:15 p.m. The return trip would begin at 1:15 p.m. and arrive in Buffalo at 9 p.m. Major stops in New York included Hamburg, Eden, Collins, Gowanda, and Dayton before crossing into Pennsylvania.

Collectors took advantage of highway post office routes to obtain many of the markings and cancellations. The USPOD encouraged this with an announcement in the August 21, 1952, *Postal Bulletin* that first trip cachets and collations would be available for the Buffalo–Oil City route. As a result many HPO covers are philatelic creations for first and last trips.

The postal card shown is not philatelic, but a genuine usage. It is struck with a Trip 2 cancellation dated July 8, 1958. It was mailed from the Eden post office and dispatched on the return trip to Buffalo. There are no receiving markings on the reverse but it is a very fine cancellation and a nice example of a cover that traveled and was processed in an HPO. ■