

POSTAL A'S NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1991

EDITOR'S COMMENT

Much as we try to put out a quality newsletter, our normally highly competent (?) editorial staff (me) messes up on occasion. Over the years we have let a few typos and misspellings get through the final proofreading process, which we regret, but henceforth more attention must be exerted on our highly underpaid (you can read that as volunteer, and again me) collators and assemblers. I suspect all of you eventually realized that pages 3 and 4 of the last Newsletter were flipflopped. We apologize.

This is the time of the year again when we reduce the mailing list to only those who have paid their 1991 dues. From a high of 74 paid members at the end of last year, we are down to 62--a very disturbing 16% loss, and one which will be hard to reclaim with new members this year. Perhaps part of the problem is mine in assuming everyone knows the yearly dues are only \$5, but neglecting to mention it when the dues notices come out. As the Editor/Publisher of the Newsletter, it is certainly a good feeling to hear words of encouragement and assorted ATT-A-BOYS from those of you who appreciate whatever the efforts are, but discouraging to not know what is missing or what to correct for those that drop out.

In this issue I had intended to get back to providing more technical information and helpful hints related to correct restoration of Mail Trucks, but the increase in postage rates, coupled with the limitations of space imposed by weight limits (five sheets per ounce) prompted me to include some historical data on postage rates (and including some additional editorial comments). To somewhat compensate for the lack of technical content in this issue, we have made this another "picture" issue, with some Postal Memorabilia. Perhaps in the Summer issue we may have to pay the additional postage for an oversized edition and get somewhat caught up.

As noted elsewhere in this Newsletter, we expect to have a Postal A presence at the 1991 MARC National Meet in Indianapolis and impress them with the viability and importance of the Postal A's to support our request for Regional status.

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FROM THE MAILBAG--

The video tape that **Tom Miles** put together from the 1990 MAFCA National in San Diego has made the initial rounds of those who had requested to see it. It is now in the "Postal A Archives" and available for borrowing. Tom has done a really nice professional job of making this tape, and although I might have preferred a little more commentary from him in a few places, it was kind of nice to just look at the various cars without any voice overrides. Thanks, again, to Tom for this contribution.

Speaking of videos, **Stephen Morgan** has sent me a copy of the video produced by the Indianapolis TV station that sponsored the tour out that way last summer. It consists of two parts, the first part is the nicely edited show that was actually shown on TV, while the second part (longer) seems to be a collection of most of the good footage from which they edited the tape. Included is a rolling interview with Stephen in his Mail Truck. Since the tour was for antique cars (not just Model A's), there are some really nice shots of some classic (and some not so classic, but just good looking tour) cars, and the interesting spots the tour visited. Thanks to Stephen for this contribution to our tape library. Anyone interested in borrowing this tape, let me know. Incidentally, we are getting quite a tape library, with two different (unedited) tapes from the 1988 MAFCA National in Sturbridge, **John Walther's** "What is this Part?" tape, plus the two above.

Another item from the video department, **Bill Evans** reports that he has finally received a copy of the tape that was shown on one of the cable networks in Michigan that featured his truck. This was the presentation we had heard about earlier in their Collectible series (see Winter 1991 Newsletter for details). We're hoping to add a copy of this to our tape library.

A number of you who have copies of the U.S. Government Specification for the Mail Trucks have questioned what a "sloat" is. This term is used in the specification, and I had wondered the same thing, but had never been able to find a definition anywhere--even in one of those 8-inch thick Webster's! Finally, I took myself off to our local library and with the help of our friendly librarian, I found in the 13 volume Oxford English Dictionary that **sloat** is a variation of **slote** (also see **sloot**, **solote**), and that is defined (at least the definition that applies to wood construction) as: *slote, n., a bar; a cross-bar; also in special senses* **DICT. TRADE SLOAT: a piece of wood used as a stretcher, as the bar of a chair, the sloats of a cart.** In the case of the Mail Truck Specification, it apparently refers to the transverse 2" x 4" wood bar that forms the riser between the driver's compartment and the baggage compartment.

Jim Byrne sent me a copy of an article about him and the finding of his Mail Truck. The article had been published back in 1983 by a local newspaper and parts of it have apparently been reprinted more recently in one of the Postal journals as part of their coverage of the 100th birthday celebration of the National Association of Letter Carriers.

THE POSTAL A'S NEWSLETTER

The Postal A's is a Body Style Chapter of the Model A Ford Club of America (MAFCA) whose purpose is to aid its members in the authentic restoration, use and enjoyment of a limited production of commercial bodies built for the U.S. Post Office and mounted on Ford Model A chassis. To achieve this purpose, it publishes the Postal A's Newsletter on a completely volunteer basis by its Editor. It is written, edited, typed, printed and mailed from 22 Burlington Rd., Bedford, MA 01730. All signed materials are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Editor or the Postal A's. Any unsigned material, facts, opinions or other information is the sole responsibility of the Editor, is believed to be the most current and accurate information available on the Model A Mail Trucks, but does not necessarily represent an official position of the Postal A's or MAFCA. Authorization to quote or reprint from the Postal A's Newsletter is granted, provided due credit is given.

I learn something new about Mail Truck construction every few weeks, and **Dave Zimmerli** has been a pretty good teacher. The latest bit of not-quite trivia that I had not been aware of is a construction detail difference between the 1929 and the 1931 side door bottom retaining straps. Common to both doors is a J-shaped steel strap fastened to the inside of the door. The door is guided and restrained by a piece of steel, fastened to the edge of the floor, which rides in the turned up foot of the J. On the 1931 bodies, the steel retaining strap is just a flat piece of steel and the wooden floor is rabbeted out 3/8" x 3/8" to allow clearance for the foot of the J. On the 1929 bodies, however, the floor strap is offset 3/16" (horizontally) to provide clearance for the J-strap without rabbeting the floor. Dave sent me both his originals and some repros he had made up--for more details, see ad in the WANTED/AVAILABLE section for details on that.

I had a call early this year from someone out in upper New York state who wanted some information about Mail Trucks. As it turned out, he was a stringer for *Old Cars Weekly* (I believe they have recently come up with a new and slightly different name) who was writing an article for them based primarily on **Wayne Schweitzer's** truck. I gave him what information he requested and, if you have seen the February 28, 1991 issue, you can read all about it.

Had a brief note from **Wendell Mahany** recently that both he and his son, **Jack**, are on a holding pattern on the restoration of their truck. A combination of health, time and spare cash has slowed their progress.

A short note from **Leland Scott** tells me that he is making quite some progress on his restoration. All the missing wood has been cut and shaped and he is beginning to assemble the puzzle. In spite of his son's thinking there has to be an easier way to make the body, Leland keeps explaining to him that, right or wrong, it is the government way to do it!

In a brief note from **Jon Bowles**, he indicated that he is really serious about Mail Trucks and wants to add one of the little ones to his "fleet". As far as I can recall, only **Ed Towe** has one of each size in his collection, although several of you have two or more of one size. That isn't all the story (see his ad elsewhere in this issue) that is unfolding. In order to keep his AA under cover, he needed to build storage for it. Well, here is one for the books--the village where he lives has a height restriction on outbuildings, and would not grant him a variance on height to get a building with a door high enough to fit the AA Mail Truck!

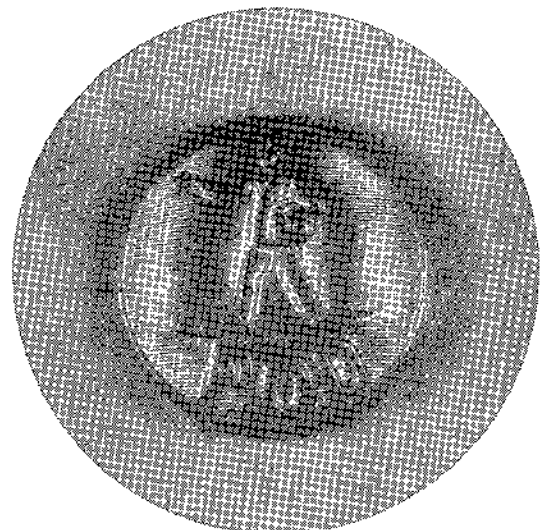
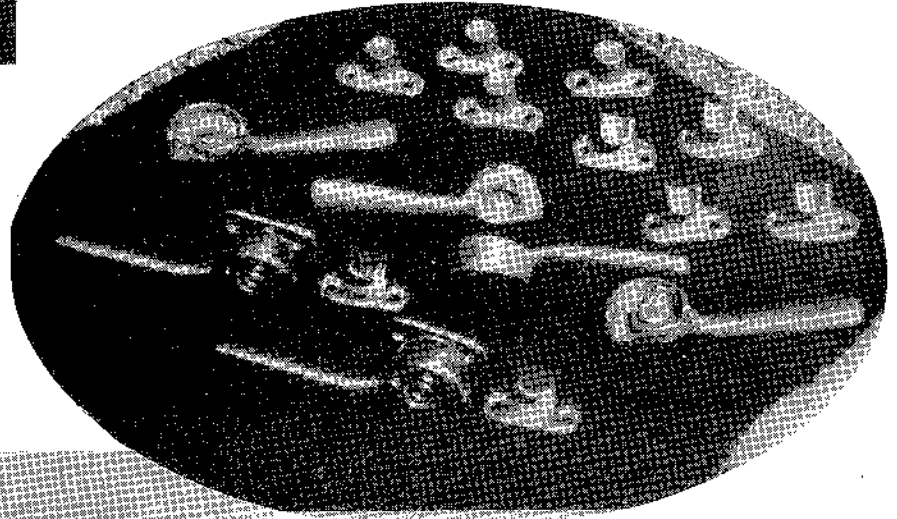
Note from **Dan Smith** (sort of tear stained) states that he has sold his truck and is awaiting shipment to the new owner in Chicago. Since he has put in a good word for the Postal A's, and my follow-up letter to the new owner, we can expect to add a new name to the roster soon. I have since had a phone call from the new owner and he was eagerly planning his trip to San Diego to pick up the truck. When he gets it back home, then we'll put the pressure on him to join the Postal A's.

Had a letter from **Larry Johnson** which gave me an update on his truck. After bringing the truck up from Florida last July, he debated whether to sell it as is, restore it or just what. After getting no response from ads in several magazines, he decided to undertake a reasonable restoration to make it more saleable at Carlisle or Hershey, but ran out of time to get it all done in time. Lots of interest (but no serious buyers) at both shows until the rains came, and that ended that excursion. So, home and put it up for the winter. Truck is still for sale, but Larry says he really wouldn't be broken hearted if he had to keep it and drive it around for a season or two.

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**SOME
POSTAL
MEMORABILIA**



PICTURE PAGE--

On the page opposite are some pictures of some Mail Truck memorabilia--mostly in the clothing department. From the top RH corner clockwise: Correct shoulder patch for the Model A era (Bill Evans).

A nice display of the repro door latches that Charles Tomlinson had made up some years ago.

Standard P.O.D. uniform button.

Postal uniform cap (Ivan Jergensen).

One of Olive and Dennis Sanborn's matched sweaters. These were hand knitted by a lady in Maine and given to Olive and Dennis by his mother a couple of Christmas's ago.

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WANTED/AVAILABLE

Jon Bowles

P.O. Box 412

Clinton

MI 49236

(as reported in the last issue) has some spare parts for sale, including the partition bulkhead (with door and roller tracks), mirror brackets (no glass or glass frames), and rear springs, front drums and motor mounts (all AA?). Also, Jon (see Mailbag for details) is now trying to sell his 1931 AA Mail Truck, number 19199. The box is in good shape, runs, drives, and will include the extra parts above. Has complete history of truck since new, and it is reasonably priced. He would send pictures upon request.

Richard Elderkin

1050 Straits Tpk. (Rt. 63) Middlebury CT 06762

still has for sale one 1931 A Mail Truck body (needs restoration) and one complete (he claims A1 shape) 1931 A Mail Truck as well has several tons of Model A parts. Willing to sell individually or in any combination. Write for details or call him (203-598-0807).

See the Mailbag section for details, but the AVAILABLE parts from **Dave Zimmerli's** recent barn cleaning includes (all for the 1929 A size) one pr. original side door retaining straps and four pr. repros, one pr. original side door J-straps and four pr. repros, one original wheel well brace, one pr. original back support brackets, one partition window frame, two original LH mirror brackets (no glass or glass frames), one original corner diagonal brace, one original partition door latch, two original door roller brackets (with rollers), two side door pulls, one pr. (unassembled) original shallow cup side door latch, one repro (unassembled) deep cup side door latch, and three repro route card (or certificate) holders. There are also a few odds and ends of original straps. Dave has sent the above to me "on consignment", without specifying price or expectation of remuneration. So, if you are interested in any of the above, let me know and we'll work out some kind of a fair deal to at least reimburse Dave for his costs including shipping to me.

Earl Betts

Rt. 3, Box B-7

Provo (Sundance) UT 84604

needs a late '31 AA chassis (for one truck) and a '29 cowl (for the other). He is willing to accept collect calls at 801-226-8301 for any help and/or good leads to either (or both) of these needs so that he can proceed.

Through the efforts of Cal Allan, I have acquired several Mail Pouch locks (see Fig. 3, Padlock Feature in Winter 1985 issue). These are the locks used to secure Registered Mail pouches and similar such mail bags. These locks are all keyed alike but I have no authentic Post Office keys (that may be a Federal offense?). They will not work on either inner door nor the rear door latch. Anyone interested in such a lock let me know--I am willing to sell them for what I have in them. Included could be either one of my homemade keys or instructions for cutting your own (but no key blanks).

A FINANCIAL STATEMENT (of sorts)

No one has ever asked, but it seems only reasonable and proper that some kind of an accounting of funds entrusted to me for the Postal A's be issued periodically. Herewith, then, is an explanation for the record. Anyone wanting an audit is free to come and do same at our mutual convenience. I really don't know how to evaluate some of the Postal A "assets" (mail bags from Stephen Morgan, research files from Dave Zimmerli, various donated books and periodicals, etc.), nor do I really want to mess with Deferred Liabilities (i.e., prepaid dues) and such, so I won't even attempt to fancy up a Balance Sheet, but we have no debt, and we are solvent with a small Reserve.

Before getting into the details, it may be helpful to identify the footnotes first. The Postal A's bookkeeping is based on:

1. Accounting is done on the "nearest half dollar" basis (rather than "whole dollar" or "to the penny").
2. Sales of inventory items includes copies of reprints of the U.S. Government specifications, jacket patches, donated (rarely purchased from Postal A funds) hardware items (a la the Zimmerli items), etc.
3. Dues includes both periodic (annual) dues and entry fees (where the entry fee for new members equals the total dues paid by every other member to date, and for which the new member receives all back issues of the Newsletter, jacket patches, certificate, etc. that everyone else has received or is entitled to. Any prepaid dues and surplus contributions over and above the current required dues are included as dues.
4. Postage includes mailing of the Newsletter, mailing of the New Member packets, and stamps for promotion and/or member service.
5. Printing includes actual printing of the Newsletter (including extra copies), and copier machine reproduction of drawings and/or handouts for member service.
6. Any costs for printing or reprinting inventory items are identified as such.
7. We maintain in an interest-bearing savings account (in a good solid bank!), a cash reserve (including prepaid dues) which provides a very modest interest income.

INCOME/EXPENSE STATEMENT 1990 Calendar Year

INCOME	
Dues and Contributions	\$719.50
Sales from Inventory	30.00
Interest and Other Income	79.50
TOTAL INCOME	\$824.00
EXPENSE	
Printing	\$301.00
Postage	108.00
Additions to Inventory	49.00
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$458.00
ADDITION TO RESERVES (includes prepaid dues)	\$366.00
	\$824.00

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POSTAL TRIVIA QUESTION

Name three obvious differences between the original 1929 AA and the original 1931 AA Mail Trucks.

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MAFCA News--

Now that I am no longer on the MAFCA Board of Directors, I will have to depend more on some other sources of information for news of what is going on at the National level. However, the Postal A's are on the list of Chapters that receive Minutes of the Board Meetings, and to that end I can report that there have been two meetings since the last Newsletter. The meeting in January, typically, sets the agenda for the year, has some initial talks about budgets, makes committee appointments and takes care of getting organized for the year. Among the recorded actions were: membership renewals are coming in strongly (over 10,000 at the start of the year); Jerry Wilhelm has asked to be relieved of his position on the Judging Standards Committee and as Chief Judge for the 1992 Convention; the Bylaw Revision Committee (dormant last year) has been provided "marching orders" to complete its work; the financial situation is grim for the remainder of the year, and budgets for next year will have to be tightened; accounting by computer is still not fully functional and results for the first six months are still unclear; the Third Ten-Year Index of **RESTORER** articles is in print and being distributed to those who have ordered it; and finally the MAFCA Library policy is being revised to provide (on request and for cost) reprints of articles from past **RESTORERS** that are out of print. As of this writing, the Minutes of the March Board Meeting were not yet available.

We will include under this heading this time a progress report on MARC activities. The Postal A's has formally requested that it be granted Regional status in MARC. As yet, no response to the request, but then we submitted it too late for action at their Membership Meeting in March, so hopefully it will come for approval during the Meet in Indianapolis.

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Reproduced below is a copy of the program at the acceptance ceremony by the National Museum of American History on October 17, 1990, of the gift of a 1931 Model A Mail Truck donated by Postal A'ers Wayne and Lois Schweitzer. A hearty THANK YOU to the Schweitzers from the Postal A's for their generous gift and hence the preservation for generations to come of the Model A Mail Trucks.

Acceptance Ceremony

National Museum of American History

October 17, 1990

Presiding	James H. Bruns <i>Deputy Executive Director</i> National Philatelic Collection
Welcoming Remarks	Roger G. Kennedy <i>Director</i> National Museum of American History
Introduction of Distinguished Guests	Douglas E. Evelyn <i>Deputy Director</i> National Museum of American History
Remarks	Anthony M. Frank <i>Postmaster General</i> United States Postal Service
	Vincent R. Sombroto <i>President</i> National Association of Letter Carriers
Honored Guests	Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Schweitzer <i>Donors</i> Herbert R. Collins <i>Executive Director</i> National Philatelic Collection Arthur Porwick <i>Assistant Postmaster General</i> Gordon C. Morison <i>Assistant Postmaster General</i> W. L. Davidson, Jr. <i>Office of Product Licensing</i> United States Postal Service Robert St. Francis <i>Office of Fleet Management</i> United States Postal Service Rita Moroney <i>Historian</i> United States Postal Service

FORD Model A [1931]

Between 1929 and 1931, a total of 1,500 Ford Model A mail trucks were acquired by the Post Office Department. These vehicles were the workhorses of the postal fleet until the end of the Korean War. They were made to be used, and they were. Because the Post Office was unable to acquire replacement vehicles during World War II, these trucks were driven until they almost fell apart.

"When you hear talk of keeping a vehicle together with baling wire, believe me, the Post Office was good at it!" recalled Jim Byrne, a retired letter carrier from Baltimore. By the time Byrne joined the postal system in 1944, the entire fleet was about as old as he was. The first mail truck he drove was a Model A Ford. "Even if one got smashed up, they kept it for parts," he told *The Postal Record*, the journal of the National Association of Letter Carriers.

The particular Model A acquired today--vehicle number 11617--was originally used in Boston, Massachusetts. It was subsequently transferred to Enfield, Connecticut, where it was sold as surplus in the early 1950s for \$50.

The truck was restored and donated by Wayne and Lois A. Schweitzer of Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

SOME THOUGHTS ON POSTAGE RATES

by

Aldie E. Johnson Jr.

When you only send a few letters every month, an increase of 16% in the cost of stamps may not seem like enough to worry about. However, it really hits a sore spot when it takes almost the entire yearly dues from one member just to pay the increase in mailing costs for one issue of this Newsletter! While we have no real quarrel with the U.S. Postal Service operating in the black, one has to wonder whether there is any fairness in only an 8.9% increase to deliver unnecessary, unwanted and unread junk mail to our doors. The increase in rates (and at this writing I am not sure whether yours will have the "F" stamp or the makeup stamp plus the 25-cent flag) caused me to start thinking back to the "good old days".

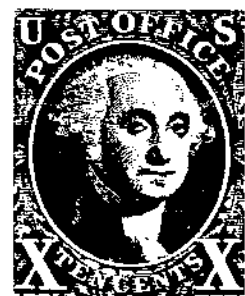
It has been 144 years since the first official U.S. Government adhesive (prepaid) stamp was issued. Prior to that it had been a "collect on delivery" (COD) system although by the 1840's some individual postmasters had begun to issue adhesive backed prepayment stamps with their own name or signature, and in some cases they issued hand stamped letters. These so-called "postmaster provisionals" became popular (at least with the postmasters) as a way of reducing their losses for undelivered (or refused delivery) letters.

Shortly after being appointed Postmaster of New York by President James Polk in 1845, Robert Hunter Morris wrote Postmaster General Cave Johnson (served as PG from March 6, 1845 to March 8, 1849) informing him of the use of the provisional stamps, as follow, "I have adopted this plan first for the accommodation of the public, and second, to enable me practically to judge of the benefits of it, that you might make representation to the next congress and procure if desirable, a law authorizing government stamps, and I hope, a system of prepayment of letters."

Postmaster General Johnson took the idea to Congress, and in 1847 adhesive postage stamps were authorized. Only two denominations went on sale



(in New York City on July 1, 1847)--a 5-cent stamp bearing Benjamin Franklin's portrait in a bronze tint (remember, Franklin was the first Postmaster General appointed by the Continental Congress on July 26, 1775), and a 10-cent stamp of George Washington in a black tint. The new federal stamp was not very popular with the 15,000 or so postmasters across the country who were



satisfied with the "provisionals" and resisted any reforms. However, starting on January 1, 1856, prepayment of postage was enforced.

It took over 100 years (until 1971) to double the cost of sending a one ounce letter (to 8 cents), but only another 10 years (plus the conversion to the U.S. Postal Service) to double that (to 18 cents on November 1, 1981). If it is any consolation, it was 13 years ago that the rate was half the new rate. See the table on the next page for details.

FIRST CLASS MAIL RATES

<u>Letters</u>				<u>Cards</u>		
<u>Effective Date</u>	<u>Per 1/2 Oz. (Cents)</u>	<u>Per 1 Oz. (Cents)</u>	<u>Add'l 1 Oz. (Cents)</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>	<u>Postal</u>	<u>Private</u>
March 3, 1863	2			May 1, 1873	1	
March 3, 1883	3			July 1, 1898	1	1
July 1, 1885		2		November 3, 1917	2	2
November 3, 1917		3		July 1, 1919	1	1
July 1, 1919		2		April 15, 1925	1	2
				July 1, 1928	1	1
August 1, 1958		4		January 1, 1952	2	2
January 7, 1963		5		August 1, 1958	3	3
January 7, 1968		6		January 7, 1963	4	4
May 16, 1971		8		January 7, 1968	5	5
July 1, 1971	U.S. Post Office Department becomes quasi-governmental U.S. Postal Service			May 16, 1971	6	6
March 2, 1974	10			March 2, 1974	8	8
September 14, 1975	10	9		September 1975	7	7
December 31, 1975	13	11		December 31, 1975	9	9
May 29, 1978	15	13		May 29, 1978	10	10
March 22, 1981	18	17		March 22, 1981	12	12
November 1, 1981	20	17		November 1, 1981	13	13
February 17, 1985	22	17		February 17, 1985	14	14
April 1988	25	20		April 1988	15	15
February 3, 1991	29	23		February 3, 1991	19	19

POSTAL A SEMINAR--1991--

Plans are being developed for a scheduled Postal A gathering in 1991, whether it will be called a meeting, or seminar, a workshop, or possibly just a get-together is anybody's guess at this time. However, since it is being planned for the 1991 National MARC Meet in Indianapolis the last week in June, this will be the only notice you will have of it. As in previous years, when it appears that there will be more than a couple of Postal A'ers at any National Model A Meet or Convention, we have tried to put together some kind of a semi-formal gathering. If nothing more, it provides an opportunity to meet other Postal A members, and gives us a good opportunity to help each other, answering questions, etc. At the moment Lew Palmer is working on the details which are (tentatively) scheduled for Thursday afternoon, June 27 (2:00 to 4:00). Lew suggests a session of "Show and Tell", parts swap, and general discussion. Whether you can attend or not, send displays or parts to Lew or call him (219-288-9633) and let him know what you can contribute to the meeting, or what you would like to see, do, or talk about. Wouldn't it be great to cruise the Indianapolis brickyard in a string of Model A Mail Trucks?

"I'm not creating a social problem at all. I'm going to democratize the automobile. When I'm through everybody will be able to afford one and about everybody will have one. The automobile will be taken for granted and there won't be any problem".---Henry Ford, testifying during the trial which subsequently "broke" the Selden patent.



IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER--

In trying to decide what can be said here, I am reminded of the youngster whose eyes are bigger than his stomach. It seems like we keep promising to print up some things in the next issue that we never quite get to. We still haven't finished the supplements to the Mail Truck Supplement in the *Judging Standards and Restoration Guidelines*, an interesting article on Mail Locks, a couple of articles which didn't get used in the Mail Trucks Revisited issue of **THE RESTORER**, (and that was a year ago), some further information on the Mail Truck Numbering system, top installation, seats and seat backs, etc. Since I don't have very much adverse feedback that what you have been getting is not what you need, want or are looking for, we will continue to provide the news of new members, old members and their doings, news of national events, want ads, etc. Stay with us for another surprise issue--what it eventually will contain will probably even surprise me!

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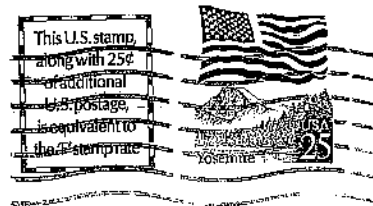
POSTAL TRIVIA ANSWER

The 1929 AA Mail Trucks did not carry an outside spare since there was no welled fender available for AA's in 1929. The 1931 AA's did carry a spare tire in a right welled fender. The 1929 AA bodies had four panels behind the side sliding doors, and the design was changed to only three panels for the 1931 bodies. The 1929 AA chassis were supplied with long running boards and rear fenders. The 1931 AA chassis came with short running boards and splash shields with no reference to rear fenders, although the assembly instructions do make reference to long running boards and rear fenders furnished by Ford.

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